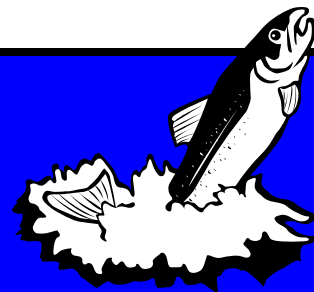


Brule River

Sportsmen's Club, Inc.



June 2026

OVER 500 MEMBERS DEDICATED TO THE IMPROVEMENT AND PRESERVATION OF THE BRULE

Reflections from the “Barrier Bus Seat”

by Bill Gobin, former BRSC Financial Secretary

The Brule River Lamprey Barrier/Fishway became operational in 1986, so this year marks its 40th anniversary. I was hired in April 1987 as the “Barrier Operator” by Dennis Pratt, area fisheries biologist. This was a limited-term position (LTE). I knew about the Brule River, having grown up in Superior, and my grandfather had fished the Brule. I’d been to the Brule Fish Hatchery, but I had no idea what “the barrier” was. I would soon learn that this important fisheries management tool was a new way to control sea lamprey and to census the Brule’s migratory salmonids.

Lamprey control.

Sea lamprey, a primitive parasitic fish native to the Atlantic Ocean, gained access to the Great Lakes after the St. Lawrence Seaway opened. By the late 1940s, spawning populations were established in all the Great Lakes. Lampreys thrive in the Brule because of its high-quality water, consistent flows, and lack of an impassable upstream barrier provide excellent spawning and nursery habitat.



The lamprey barrier is essentially a dam across the river with a fish ladder on one side (see Figure 1). A movable gate (1) was built into the fish ladder. When the gate is raised (to 18 inches high), it prevents the poor swimming lamprey from moving further upstream. Additionally, a trap (2) next to the moveable gate with a water flow through it attracts lamprey into it, where they can be removed and destroyed. The barrier limited spawning lampreys to the lower 6 miles of the river, meaning the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needed to treat less water with the lampicide TFM. Another unique addition to the fish ladder was an observation window (3) built into the structure at the upstream end. This allowed all of the fish that passed upstream through the fish ladder to be observed before they exited back to the river. It also provided a check to make sure lampreys were not moving upstream.

Part of my job was to clean out the trap, mark some lampreys and transport them downstream. We marked the 2 dorsal fins, as sea lamprey have no other fins. I also looked for previous marks (allowing for a mark/recapture population estimate) and tallied the total each day. All lampreys were taken to the landfill. Lampreys

are primitive fish with no bones or traditional gills; they are poor swimmers and are very slimy and stinky. The slime was so bad, you had to scrub to remove it from your hands after handling them. The work was administered through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s Sea Lamprey control unit based in Michigan.

Early census years.

The ability to observe fish passing through the ladder became an integral part of management of the Brule River fisheries, particularly steelhead. Two other LTEs and I identified by species and counted all the anadromous fish moving upstream past the window. I was the lead LTE and set the work schedule, which was randomized like a creel census. We had 3 shifts: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 6 a.m. We would work 5 days a week, but it could be any days. Sometimes you would be done at 2 p.m. and then back at midnight. The DNR stored a 3-wheel ATV in a shed off of Highway 13 across from Loveland Road that we used to drive the 2-mile trip to the barrier. Loveland Road was not drivable past the gate then, requiring us to drive the ATV to the barrier.

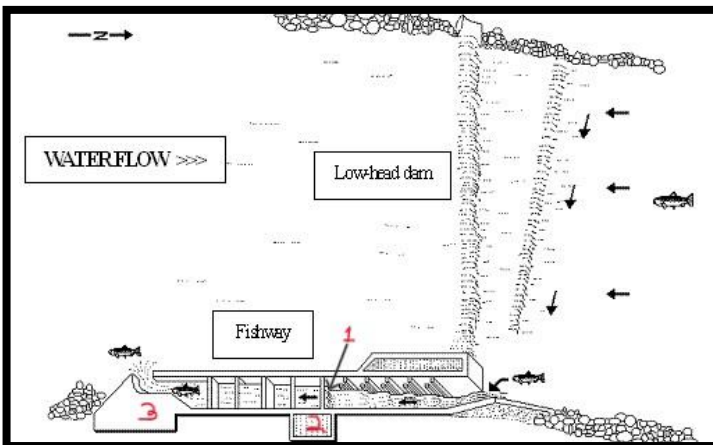


Figure 1. Barrier and fishway schematic.

Our fish counting process was makeshift at first. We used a car headlight powered by a car battery that shone down through the water outside of the ladder’s observation window to illuminate fish passing through. This gave the water a very yellow appearance. Batteries had to

See “Bus Seat” on pg. 3



BRSC Calendar:

The next two board meetings will be held at the KroBar on Mondays, June 22 and July 27, at 6 p.m.





Brule River Sportsmen's Club Meeting Minutes May 25, 2026



President Dennis Pratt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Kro Bar in Brule.

Officers and Directors: Present - Ed Chaplinski, Glen Hill, Courtney Johnson, Ken Lundberg, Dennis Pratt, Mike Sierszen, Den Smet, Jeff Stollenwerk, Walt Swanson, Jim Waletzko, Mike Zicus, and Ken Zivic.

Minutes of the April Meeting: The minutes as written in the April newsletter were approved following a motion by Ken Lundberg, second by Mike Sierszen, and unanimous approval by voice vote.

Treasurer's and Financial Secretary's Reports: Treasurer Jeff Stollenwerk reported that April's beginning balance was \$11,815.84, and the ending balance was \$11,649.87 with the following expenses: Katie Thompson (April newsletter) \$200; ProPrint (April newsletter) \$137.27; WI Dept of Financial Inst. (Form 5 Non-Stock Corp) \$50; JM Screen Printing (25 Men's caps) \$362.50; Computing Done Right (Professional email annual) \$180. The Treasurer's report was approved following a motion by Mike Zicus, second by Courtney Johnson, and unanimous approval by voice vote. President Dennis Pratt reported Financial Secretary Dean Wellman that there was \$515 in total deposits into the general fund since the last meeting and that the Club had 2 new members and 2 renewals. The Financial Secretary's report was approved following a motion by Jim Waletzko and a second by Ken Zivic.

Committee Reports

Legislative: Ken Lundberg – Tom Johnson from Friends of the Wisconsin Fisheries spearheaded the effort to keep the Brule River Hatchery open. Ken Lundberg made a motion for funding help if needed to support this type of effort, seconded by Mike Sierszen and unanimous approval by voice vote.

Audit, Education, Social Media and Membership: Nothing to report.

Habitat: Dennis Pratt – We will be assisting Paul Piszczek with a brush cutting project below the Brule Hatchery on August 8. Tree planting project on the Little Brule went very well.

Scholarship: Mike Sierszen/Paul Helbach – Sierszen presented the 2026 College Scholarship nominee Wyatt Hiltner for board approval. Wyatt is a grad student at the U of M Duluth. Mike Zicus made a motion to approve, followed by a second from Ken Lundberg, with unanimous approval by voice vote from the Board. Breena Kroll, Northwestern High School

counselor, announced Anthony Butkus as the recipient of the High School Scholarship this year. He will be attending Michigan Tech for chemical engineering.

Other Business

Status of the Family Fun Day Event – Dennis Pratt reported that no decision has been made yet on if this event will be held.

Brule Preservation Board – Ken Lundberg attended their annual board meeting, the Club will receive \$500 for each scholarship, plus another \$500 for the Family Fun Day if it happens. Ken also said that Brule Preservation will again fund "host" positions through the DNR at a couple canoe accesses. Hosts will remind visitors of the regulation governing containers etc. and about respectful use of the river.

June Fly of the Month – Dean Wellman has selected the Prime Mouradain.

Nebagamon Grade Removal Celebration – Dean Wellman has suggested that we should hold a celebration for everything that went into getting this project finally completed. Dennis mentioned that Brule Preservation thought it was a good idea too. Mike Zicus made a motion to have Dean assemble a team to plan a celebration. This was followed by a second from Walt Swanson with unanimous approval by voice vote from the Board.

Raffle status – Tickets are being printed.

Little Brule and Sandy Run Culverts – Dennis Pratt discussed these projects that are coming with no firm dates or plans yet.

Rainbow Trout / Salmon Identification Cards – Dennis Pratt mentioned that the inventory was running low. Ken Lundberg made a motion to order an additional 500, followed by a second from Tim Spangenberg with unanimous approval by voice vote from the Board.

Next In-person Meeting is Scheduled for June 22.

Upcoming Events – Please check our Club calendar at <https://brulriversportsmensclub.com/category/club-calendar/> for the latest events.

The business meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

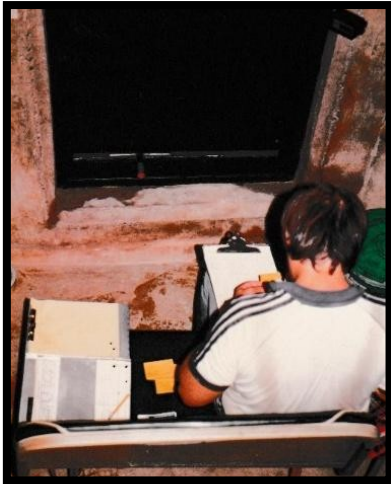
Recorded by Walt Swanson



BRULE RIVER SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, JUNE 2026

"Bus Seat" from pg. 1

be switched so they could be recharged after every shift. The observation room was like a concrete bunker inside, cold and damp. We used a squeegee to clean condensation from the window. The water collected on the floor and had to be swept to a pit and scooped down a pipe out of the room. The door to the room was a square iron manhole cover that was so heavy that it was cut in half so one person could open it. We left it half open and put a screen in to keep the bugs out. When it rained, we replaced the screen with a piece of plywood. If the door closed on you, you were stuck. It couldn't be lifted from inside since the ladder into the room was straight up and down on the wall.



The bus seat in the observation room

The recording room was furnished with an old school bus seat, a propane heater, a battery powered radio and a flashlight. We recorded fish observations in a notebook. You needed coffee if you were on a night shift, especially during slow migration times. Staring at water moving by does wonders for insomnia! I knew how to ID stream trout, but anadromous fish fresh out of Lake Superior were another matter, especially steelheads and cohos. My education began in July with the brown trout run. The first big brown that went by was impressive. I'd never seen trout that big before! By fall, I had my fish ID down and things ran smoothly. We couldn't cover 24 hours for every day of the fish runs, which was a drawback. The DNR biologist still had to estimate the population of each species ascending the river. My job ended in November, but I was asked to come back in 1988.

I had 2 new LTEs with me in 1988. We first helped convert the barrier from winter to summer operations. This was a complicated and arduous affair involving a lot of heavy lifting. Stoplogs were added at the upstream exit of the ladder to prevent river flow through the ladder so that we could



Lake-run brown trout

work. The movable gate that blocked upstream lamprey movement was designed to be cranked down underwater for the winter, but after the first winter it was apparent that this wouldn't work due to the high volume of sand moving downstream over winter. In the following years, we cranked the gate up above the water for the winter and then down and resealed it to make a seal to block the lampreys in the spring. Originally a hand crank was used, but this could take quite a while and a lot of arm strength!

The fishway operation was a novelty, and various groups or individuals soon requested tours. Tours were limited to random fishermen or groups since the barrier was a mile walk from the Loveland Road gate. After the road was improved in about 1989, we'd open the gate if they called ahead so they could drive to the top of the hill and walk down from there. Many school groups of all ages came. Lamprey season was most popular when I could show them live lampreys. Seeing a fish swim by the window during the day was a rare occurrence.

A fish refuge was established, extending 500 feet up and downstream from the barrier. Some fishermen tried to push this zone, hoping that the fish were "stacked up"

See "Bus Seat" on pg. 4

The Prime Mouradian

Dean Wellman, BRSC
Financial Secretary – Brule, WI



This fly was invented by Mike Mouradain of Ann Arbor, Michigan. I first saw Mike's video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcRrse5ENRc>) last June. It caught my eye because he described his fly as, "The only fly you need, but can't buy." Mike is a past president of the Ann Arbor chapter of Trout Unlimited, and he is an instructor at the TU Fly Fishing School. Mike refers to his fly as a "guide fly." It ties quickly and uses only deer hair, peacock herl, and rubber legs.

After tying a half dozen and field testing them, they worked as well as Mike claimed. I tracked down Mike's email through TU and told him what a great fly I thought he'd invented. He gave me his permission to use his fly in our Fly of the Month series. It is a great "general purpose" fly that can imitate many different bugs from mayflies and stoneflies to hoppers. It is a hybrid humpy with a half bullet head on top and a deer hair wing. It's almost a miniature Dahlberg Diver when submerged. It's a fly to have anywhere fish swim. With a little practice, this fly can be made in minutes. Thanks, Mike.

A recipe for the fly can be found at

<https://brulerriversportsmensclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026-June.pdf>



Wyatt Hiltner –
College Scholarship
recipient (above)

Anthony Butkus –
Northwestern High
School Scholarship
recipient (at right)



2026 Scholarship Recipients

(write-ups on each
in our July newsletter)



BRULE RIVER SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, JUNE 2026

"Bus Seat" from pg. 3

waiting to go in or out. We posted signs along both sides of the river noting the refuge, but occasionally someone would violate. I could do nothing about this since I had no law enforcement credentials or a phone to call anyone. One time I found a guy fishing on the head of the barrier, casting into the river right in front of the exit. I asked him how fishing was. He said, "Slow." I asked if he saw the bright yellow sign next to him indicating he was in a fish refuge. He said, "Yeah, but I thought I'd take a few casts anyway since no one was around." I encouraged him to move on!

Occasionally, a fisherman wandered by to see if they could garner some hot info on what fish had passed by. I gave the standard reply, "I can't say. We don't want to influence fishing pressure." This was usually enough for most anglers.

Larry and Marge Drews, who were club members, were the closest neighbors to the barrier. If you needed a phone, you had to go to their house and hope they were home. They usually were, and Marge always had cookies.

This was well before cell phones, so you needed a landline. When my grandmother passed away, Bill Blust had to drive out from Superior to let me know.

Improving the process.

I was offered a full-time LTE position in 1989. This meant I was now working year-round, still without benefits, but I was gaining experience. This brought some continuity to fish observations and population estimates. Many things had to happen before we could make physical improvements at the fishway. Money had to be budgeted. The road needed improvement, and we needed electricity at the site. The closest power was at Highway 13 and had to be run along Loveland Road. Finally, in 1990, we started making progress. I was just getting into movies on VHS at the time, and I knew that there were time-lapse video recorders available. Recording the fish on videotapes became a new goal. After we had power, we purchased a large drill to crank the lamprey gate up and down. We replaced many wooden parts of the fish ladder with lighter weight aluminum, which was much less prone to warping and swelling. That heavy door over the observation room was also

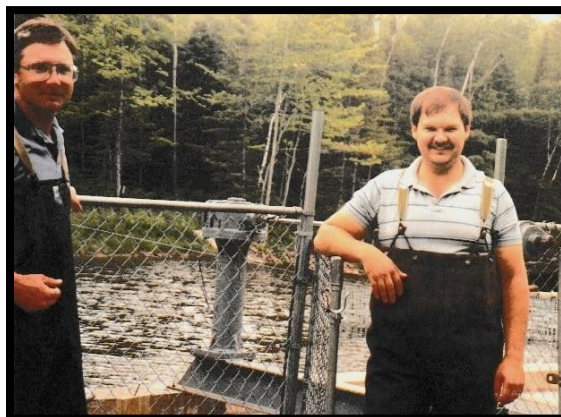
replaced with one made from aluminum!

DNR purchased a high-quality security camera, which was hard wired to the video recorder. The camera had to be turned on its side since the window was taller than it was wide. With electricity, we could install better lighting for the window, heat for the room, and an outside light and power outlets near the lamprey trap. We researched videotape machines and purchased first black and white and later color recorders. We still used human observers because the first tapes didn't record long enough. The black and white tapes had an 8-hour capacity, and we only had one recorder. So, someone had to change tapes every 8 hours. Next, we purchased 2 high-quality security-style super-VHS recorders. These recorders could record time-lapse video for 24 hours on one tape. We ran them synchronized with timers so you could go 48 hours without changing the tapes. Once we had an effective lighting and videotape system, human observers didn't have to watch the window anymore. We reviewed the tapes on fast forward to tally the fish

runs. Human errors, power outages, tape malfunctions or a flood were the only reasons for missed fish at this point!

We developed a way to measure fish on the video monitor, and knowledge about the run progressed even faster. Now, we could not only identify all fish to species, but we could count them all and sex and measure many of them. Combined with data from trapping and tagging fish, stream shocking, and aging through scales, we could estimate the numbers of fish of various ages ascending the river. For steelhead, this was especially important in crafting fishing regulations. We wanted to allow all female steelhead the chance to spawn at least once prior to possible harvest. These maiden spawners were of various ages, depending on how much time they spent in the river as juveniles and how much time in Lake Superior as adults prior to their first spawning run. Ultimately, most fishermen adopted catch and release when fishing for steelhead, but the option for harvest was still there with a 26-inch size limit and one fish in the bag.

The Lamprey Barrier/Fish Ladder is still operating today, and further improvements have been made over the years. I have no idea where the old bus seat went, but I still remember it well!



Bill Blust and Bill Gobin circa 1990

May 16 Little Brule Trout Habitat Project

Senior Fisheries Biologist Paul Piszczek with a group of volunteers met to plant trees on the site of last year's brush cutting project. We planted 700 trees of various species. At noon we gathered at the Brule Ranger station for a Club provided submarine sandwich lunch.

Volunteers:

Dennis Pratt	Mike Zicus	Avery Jehnke	Jason Nelson
Kurt Janko	Paul Piszczek	Greg Gerard	Glen and Judy Hill





BRULE RIVER SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, JUNE 2026

2026 BRULE RIVER SPORTSMEN'S CLUB RAFFLE

\$10 per ticket — Only 250 tickets to be sold!

Available from now until they're gone (or the Aug 24th drawing date)

Grand Prize: Dave Norling handmade 7-foot, 4-wt, 2-piece Bamboo Fly Rod with Matching 406 Fly Line



Dave says their rods have been developed based on field use. Their rods are durable and responsive in addition to beautiful. They're not flashy, and Dave believes that "double barrel shotguns and fly rods should be more like a ruffed grouse than a rooster pheasant." They have developed their own rod tapers, most of which were based on E.C. Powell's work. The rod is hollow, has an internal taper, and is heat treated. \$2,400 value. The 406 Fly Line is manufactured by Scientific Anglers and was developed specifically for glass and bamboo rods. It has a smaller diameter while maintaining weight and floatability. Dave believes these lines best match his bamboo rods. They respond much more like the silk lines of days gone by, yet offer the modern-day convenience of a line that never sinks. The lines are indeed dissimilar to those currently marketed for fast action graphite rods. \$95 value.

See <https://rushriverrods.com/> for more about Dave and his rods.

2nd Prize: Brule River Fly Tying Kit (best kit ever!)



Courtesy of Dean Wellman, the kit includes a Regal Inex fly-tying vise with all the tools, box of threads, wire, lead wire, 400 hooks, box of dubbing, and 50 bags of exact materials and hooks to tie 6 of each of the 50 featured flies. The kit also includes examples of each fly, the recipes, and tips for each fly. The materials in the kit can easily tie hundreds more flies. Kit comes in a Plano storage box along with the Club's 2024 Brule River Fly of the Month Series booklet. \$600 value. See <https://bruleriversportsmensclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Kit-materials.pdf> for a list of included materials.

3rd Prize: Weber Heirloom Stainless Steel 6-inch Hunting Knife



Ron Weber's legacy includes this Rapala/Normark stainless-steel prototype made by J. Martini (Finland) sheathed in artfully illustrated leather. \$200 value. See <https://www.marttiini.fi/Products> for more about Martini knives.

REQUEST YOUR \$10 TICKETS TODAY!

--- Email ---

GENERAL: INQUIRY@BRULERIVERSPORTSMENSClub.COM

DENNIS PRATT: PRATTD@CHARTER.NET

MICHAEL SIERSZEN: MESIERSZEN@GMAIL.COM

DRAWING: MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2026 @ 6:00 PM

KRO BAR & GRILL – BRULE, WISCONSIN

(DO NOT NEED TO BE PRESENT TO WIN)

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE CLUB'S COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

BRSC Gift Store Order Form (prices include shipping & handling)			
#	Item	Cost	Total
	Lower river map poster of Brule (36"x24")	\$50	
	Women's baseball hat (ponytail back)	\$30	
	Lower Brule River map	\$10	
	Upper Brule River map	\$10	
	Men's baseball cap (mesh back)	\$30	
	Flies of the Month Series Book	\$25	

The Brule River Sportsmen's Club, Inc. is a tax-exempt organization defined by Chapter 501 (C) (3) of the IRS Tax Code.
<https://brulerriversportsmensclub.com/contact-us/join-the-club/>



What We Do:

Fisheries Habitat Projects — Club members and others volunteer during the summer months to restore features necessary for fish spawning, growing, and feeding.

Clean-ups — Keep the Brule clean and beautiful.

Monthly Membership Meetings — Frequently include guest speakers.

Monthly Newsletter — Helps generate understanding of fisheries and water quality, and keeps members and others informed about Club activities.

Scholarship Program — Provides financial support to students.

BRSC Membership Form

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
 e-mail _____

Membership Type: ☐ Renewal (due January 1st) ☐ New Membership

Email newsletter only: ☐ \$20 – Individual ☐ \$25 – Household

Paper newsletter only: ☐ \$30 – Individual ☐ \$35 – Household

Donations

College Scholarship \$ _____ Education \$ _____
 High School Scholarship \$ _____ Habitat \$ _____
 General \$ _____ Multiple \$ _____

Visit us online at www.brulerriversportsmensclub.com

All information contained herein is confidential.
 All but \$1.00 of your membership dues is tax deductible.
 Donations are 100 percent tax deductible.

Newsletter editor: Katie Thompson (goirish@cheqnet.net)

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 Vice President — Ed Chaplinski
 Financial Secretary — Dean Wellman
 Recording Secretary — Walt Swanson
 Treasurer — Jeff Stollenwerk

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