

## Council Focus

There are 36 councils of TU. A TU council, typically organized by state, serves as an umbrella organization for its chapters. A look at the more successful councils across the nation reveals consistent and widespread support for each council by its chapters. These chapters realize that many of the forces that threaten trout and salmon are too broad to be handled by local organizations acting alone, but can be effectively tackled when the chapters speak with a strong, unified voice through a state council. A good, well-organized council can provide critical support for TU chapters. A council tends to bring chapters closer together, and experience has proven that a strong council usually results in strong, effective chapters, and vice versa.

Responsibilities of the council include:

- Facilitating communication between volunteers in the state and TU's national office.
- Ensuring that TU members within the state are effectively represented and served by all levels of TU's organization.
- Working with the national staff and all available resource experts to form statewide policy for TU.
- Providing routine organizational, administrative and supervisory support for chapters in their state/region.
- Working as representatives with important government and private groups that affect trout and salmon resources.
- Working on projects of statewide importance.
- Working with other councils and TU national staff on regional projects.
- Acting as an arbitrator or mediator if problems arise that cannot be resolved within the chapter, such as interpretations of council and chapter bylaws, personality problems among officers, etc.
- Coordinating the financial activity and financial reporting of local chapters throughout the state.
- Ensuring that the council files its Annual Financial Report with national on time (before November 15) and assisting chapters do the same.
- Recommending the chartering, rechartering and dechartering of chapters in accordance with the Chapter Focus project.
- [Consider holding an annual meeting](#)

Councils are a level of the organization that requires excellent leadership, strong committees, thorough communications, and active involvement by all the chapters in the state. A successful council is one that has the support of the local chapters. It is effective at dealing with state-level conservation issues, as well as communicating the status and needs of pertinent issues to the national organization. A successful council provides direction and sustainable leadership, while developing key partnerships with state, federal and local agencies and other organizations while collaborating with TU staff on National Conservation Agenda issues.

A TU council, like a chapter, should be structured to take maximum advantage of valuable volunteer time and talent. Generally, the best policy is: keep it simple. An organizational structure that is too complicated and involved will turn people off and provide more chances for "weak links" to develop. The council is a representative body made up of appointed or elected delegates from its member chapters - all the chapters that come under the jurisdiction of the council covering a particular state or region. There are several possible methods of apportioning representation. Some examples:

- The president of each chapter and one additional delegate.
- The president of each chapter and one additional delegate for every 50 members or major fraction thereof.
- The president of each chapter, one additional delegate for every 50 members and the chairmen of two or more of each chapter's key committees such as conservation chair or membership chair.

EXAMPLES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Chapter presidents + one additional delegate/chapter	Simple and small chapters will not feel they are being overwhelmed by larger chapters.	Limits the pool of council volunteers and larger chapters may object .

Chapter presidents + one additional delegate for every 50 chapter members	Relatively equitable system of chapter representation with good human resource pool.	Smaller chapters may feel overwhelmed by larger chapters' delegations.
Chapter presidents + one additional delegate for every 50 chapter members + key chapter committee chairs (e.g. conservation or membership)	Equal representation, sufficient numbers, the desirability of having important chapter committee heads actively involved in council.	May become cumbersome in larger councils and chapters may have difficulty recruiting volunteers for positions that automatically have council responsibilities.

These points should be seriously considered in shaping a formula for determining chapter representation. Certain factors which may be pertinent to smaller councils may not be major concerns with larger councils, and vice versa. However, a good volunteer pool is essential regardless of size. The number of potential volunteers at the council level is much more limited than on the chapter level, so it is important that a sufficient number of people are involved and the workload distributed as fairly and uniformly as possible.

TU councils vary considerably from state to state and region to region. However, some good councils around the country do share some common practices:

- Council meetings are usually held quarterly.
- Meetings are regular from year to year and scheduled well ahead of time so people can set their calendars accordingly.
- In larger states, move the sites of council meetings around, allowing different chapters to be “hosts” and become more involved with the council.
- Many hold committee meetings on a Saturday or Sunday morning, with the full council convening in the afternoon.
- Executive Committees should meet at least once prior to each council meeting (and sometimes as often as monthly) to establish priorities and formulate an agenda, and specific plans and recommendations to be presented to the council for consideration.
- Prepare your board meeting agendas carefully to include resource, business, and organizational issues where relevant. Keep in mind that turnover in chapter officers requires some redundancy in the agenda and presentations.
- To enhance council cohesion one of the annual meetings should include lots of FUN. If it can be arranged, a two-day meeting held at a site where there is good fishing allows for the necessary time on serious business items, plenty of sharing between different chapters, a money making banquet and perhaps even a speaker. People will look forward to and plan on being there the following year. New chapter officers should be offered incentives to attend and become part of the council deliberations.

### **Cash Management and Internal Controls**

In order to ensure that council funds are used in correctly and in accordance with the budget, internal controls should be implemented. Although determining the best method of internal control is completely up to the council, a person or group that is not signatory to the council accounts should review bank statements to ensure proper use of funds. If this role proves difficult to fill, then the responsibility may fall to the board of directors. In this scenario, the council treasurer should periodically present the financial spending records to the board to ensure that the accounts of the council are being used properly. Of course, careful budgeting is also an effective internal control and exposes any inconsistencies in spending.

Budgeting should be at the top of the list of important tasks of each council. An active council can raise and spend a significant amount of money, and effective budgeting allows the council to make the most of its income and enjoy greater success with less pain. Newsletters, projects, chapter and council administration, etc. will need funding, and the budgeting process helps council leaders plan and prioritize activities each year. Budgeting and policy decisions go hand-in-hand. While the budgeting process may vary from council to council, there are simple fundamentals to successful budgeting:

- Maintain current and precise financial records for both income and expenses. Historical income and expenses are the best guide to projecting future finances. Without a true record of the past, estimates into the future lose the precision required to lessen financial anxieties for your chapter or council.
- Make conservative estimates. When estimating emergency expenses or future income, overly optimistic projections for either can be financially dangerous.
- Develop an annual budget with both projected income and projected expenses. Be conservative.
- Use the budget as a management tool. By periodically (e.g., quarterly) tracking “actual” expenses and income against the projected numbers, chapters and councils can plan accordingly.
- Provide continuity in financial and budgeting matters. The outgoing Treasurer has worked with the budget a few times and has a grasp of overall revenue and expenses. It is helpful to plan ahead and train the incoming treasurer -- officers with experience in budgeting (among other activities) should try to recruit the next treasurer and include them in the budgeting experience.

The simplest method of developing your council’s first budget is to use the outline of the financial report that you are required to submit to national at the end of the year. This report includes all the common areas of revenue and expenditures used by TU chapters and councils. The financial report function on the Leaders Only section allows you to view and print your council’s submission from previous years. Looking at previous reports gives you a good place to start for future budgeting. Councils may also access financial reports for the chapters in their state. This is important as it is the responsibility of the council to ensure that the participating chapters file annual financial reports.

### **Communications**

TU volunteer operations staff coordinates at least two council leader teleconference meetings per year. Council chairs also meet in person at TU’s annual meeting. Attending TU’s annual meeting is a legitimate (and encouraged) expense to be covered by the council. TU national covers the costs of the teleconferences. It is expected that all council chairs, or a designated alternate, participate in these teleconferences to ensure good communication within the organization.

### **Leadership Development**

Volunteer leadership development training workshops and resource materials are available through [TU’s volunteer operations staff](#), and in [the Tacklebox](#). Advance planning is required for the workshops, which are carried out jointly by the council and national staff members. Depending on funding availability, financial assistance may be available for special council efforts to build organizational capacity at the state level (e.g., developing an action plan, attracting active members, strategic planning). Contact [volunteer operations staff](#) for more information.

### **Council Volunteer Leader Position Descriptions**

It is important to note that all TU volunteer leaders must be active TU members.

#### **Council Chair**

The council chair is the chief executive officer of the council. This volunteer is responsible for the general and active management of the business and affairs of the council. The council chair presides at all membership meetings and should supervise the operations of the council and all of its chapters, making sure that the various officers and directors are performing their jobs properly, and offering them assistance whenever necessary. A good TU council chair is a good administrator, because many of his or her responsibilities will be overseeing the work of council committees, coordinating their activities and assisting them with various special projects from time to time. The chair is responsible (with the council treasurer) for the council and its chapters filing the Annual Financial Report on time, in addition to ensuring that council contact information is kept current in the Leaders Only Tools section of the website. The chair also must assume the responsibility for leadership development, to ensure the council’s continued success when the current leadership moves on.

A good council chair must also be a good listener, constantly aware of the mood and direction of the council. Without becoming a dictator, the chair must steer a basic course for the group. A chair should encourage members to approach him or her when they have a question or a problem. The chair serves as spokesperson for the council at public gatherings and hearings, and should maintain good relations with local/state press, conservation commissions, environmental organizations and government officials. The

chair is a key connection between the chapters in the state and TU national. One of the chair's most important duties is identifying and grooming his or her replacement. For a full checklist of duties, please visit [the Tacklebox](#). The below is an abridged version of items to consider when taking over as council chair:

- Communicate with the outgoing chair and ask for lessons learned.
- Confer with the council treasurer to make sure the signatories on the council bank account are current and proper controls are in place (e.g. no use of personal accounts for council funds, double signature requirement for large checks, periodic review of records, etc...)
- Work with national leadership council (NLC) representative on current initiatives in coordination with TU national.
- Ensure outgoing chair enters you as the new chair on the council officer roster and council contact information in the Leaders Only Tools section. This is critical for many reasons as it allows you to access rosters, print mailing labels, email your members, make chapter or leadership changes, as well as view and download various membership reports. It's also the only way we know you are a council chair and gives us the ability to communicate with you about important leader's specific information.
- Log in to the Leaders Only Tools section to update your council's information, including a council address, point of contact, website and more. This information displays in the chapter/council search.
- Ensure council financial report is filed with TU national in the Leaders Only Tools section between October 1 and November 15. Ensure that your chapters file reports by the November 15 deadline. Even if a chapter in your council has had little activity in the last year, submitting a financial statement is required. It is not acceptable to file zeros.
- File required forms to file with the IRS (Questions about the correct Form 990 to file? Please visit: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or contact TU national for more information.)
- Work with your chapters to help them complete Chapter Effectiveness Index (CEI) annually after filing financial report.
- Provide recommendations for chapter rechartering and dechartering to TU as required.
- When required provide recommendation for formation of new chapters and/or reassignment of zip codes among existing chapters.
- With council treasurer and other members of the Executive Committee, develop, approve and track a budget of council expenses and revenues each fiscal year.
- With the council treasurer, ensure that your council is set up with an electronic funds transfer (EFT,) to ensure delivery of council rebate.
- Ensure elections are held regularly in accordance with council bylaws and that you are identifying and grooming replacements throughout the year.
- Hold council meetings (both general and Executive Committee) in accordance with council bylaws; encourage all chapters to attend. Rotate location of meetings to maximize attendance.
- Publish a council newsletter, e-newsletter and/or website.
- If appropriate, coordinate conservation projects between chapters (e.g. if a small or urban chapter needs a project, match them up with another chapter with an existing project.)
- Participate in council chair phone conferences
- If council funds are available, attend TU annual meeting with council NLC representative in September.

### **Council Vice Chair**

The vice chair of a council is second in command at the council level. He or she should strive to maintain a relatively high profile in the council, be on friendly terms with all members and generally provide support and assistance to the chair. The vice chair helps the council chair guide the council in fulfilling its stated and chartered roles. In cooperation with the council chair, the vice chair supports and implements measures to ensure that the council's time and resources are invested wisely, and in a manner that will ensure the current and future health of the council. Often councils use the vice chair position as training for a volunteer to rise to the council chair position.

### **Council Secretary**

For a full checklist of duties, please visit [the Tacklebox](#). The below is an abridged version of items to consider when taking over as secretary:

- Preparing and distributing the meeting minutes of the council.

- Records retention (such as original council formation bylaws & revisions, board and committee rosters, agendas and minutes)
- Prepare general membership meeting agendas and minutes
- Prepare slate of board nominees for the annual general membership meeting
- Prepare and distribute notice of general membership meeting to members

### **Council Treasurer**

The role of a treasurer is without a doubt one of the most important in the council. It is critical that the treasurer be conscientious and has good systems in place; otherwise the council is at serious risk.

For a full checklist of duties, please visit [the Tacklebox](#). The below is an abridged version of items to consider when taking over as treasurer:

- Read through the entire TU Leadership Manual (paying particular attention to the chapter on liability and risk management.)
- Communicate with the outgoing treasurer and ask for lessons learned.
- Confer with council chair to make sure the signatories on the council bank account are current and proper controls are in place (e.g. no use of personal accounts for council funds, double signature requirement for large checks, periodic review of records, etc...)
- Ensure the council chair enters you as the new treasurer on the council officer roster and council contact information in the Leaders Only Tools section. This is critical for many reasons as it allows you to access the Annual Financial Report, among other things. It's also the only way we know you are a council treasurer and gives us the ability to communicate with you about important leader's specific information.
- Ensure council financial report is filed with TU national in the Leaders Only Tools section between October 1 and November 15. Ensure that your chapters file reports by the November 15 deadline. Even if a chapter in your council has had little activity in the last year, submitting a financial statement is required. It is not acceptable to file zeros.
- File required forms to file with the IRS (Questions about the correct Form 990 to file? Please visit: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or contact TU national for more information.)
- With council chair and other members of the executive committee, develop, approve and track a budget of council expenses and revenues each fiscal year.
- With the council chair, ensure that your council is set up with an electronic funds transfer (EFT,) to ensure delivery of council rebate.

### **National Council Leadership Representative**

The National Leadership Council representative is the conduit between the state council and TU national. NLC representatives bring issues and concerns from their state to the national level and then bring decisions and initiatives from the national level back to their state council. They also serve on workgroups that focus on specific conservation or organizational issues that span more than two states. The NLC meets annually in person at the annual meeting and via teleconferences throughout the year. A travel stipend for the annual meeting is available from the TU national office for NLC representatives.

### **Regional Vice President**

If you have a large council with many chapters, it may be difficult to manage efficiently with only the structure described above. Large councils sometimes divide their state into regions comprised of chapters with a geographic proximity and a community of interests. regional vice presidents (RVPs) are elected or appointed by the chapters in each area to provide advice, support and generally coordinate the activities of chapters in that region. The primary goals of an RVP structure are to promote and enhance communication and representation for the chapters in each region of the state. An RVP should regularly attend meetings of the chapters in their area, assist chapter officers with chapter management issues and be a liaison, both up and down, between the council and its chapters. Day-to-day operational or administrative problems of the chapters are best resolved at the regional level with help from the RVP.

### **Committee Chairs**

Because the officers listed above are often busy keeping the council running, it is usually a good practice to appoint other standing committees and committee chairs. Some additional committees that many TU councils find useful are: conservation, advocacy, membership, fundraising, chapter development. The duties of these committees will vary with the activities or priorities of the council.