

2019 MWMC Carl Weber Award – Jim Gracie



When he was a young boy, Jim read every book in the Enoch Pratt Free Library about rivers and fishing for brown trout, rainbow trout, and salmon. He had never been to a trout stream but walked the ten minutes to Dead Run, where he cast flies with a casting rod and caught black-nosed dace (which he fantasized were

brown trout) and rosy-side dace (which were rainbows).

Together with Barton Walker III, Jim spearheaded an effort with state, county and city governments to allow cold water releases from the Prettyboy Dam into the Gunpowder River that would sustain a wild trout population. Because of Jim's efforts, the Gunpowder River - a warm water habitat holding mainly sunfish and carp - is now one of the top 100 trout streams in the US.

Although Jim played a direct role in many critical conservation efforts, he also has a unique ability to combine his contagious passion with his vast knowledge and leadership skills to empower volunteers to come together and enhance their own passion to act on behalf of Trout Unlimited.

In 1985, Jim left his successful career in the Chemical industry to found Brightwater, Inc., a local consulting firm dedicated to improving stream and water quality. Jim pioneered the natural channel design approach in Maryland, bringing national experts together with local agencies to design and construct the first stream restoration project in Maryland, Quail Creek. He has employed many and trained hundreds of local professionals in geomorphology and stream restoration. Jim has positively shaped policies relating to water quality. Jim served on the Board of the Mid-Atlantic Council and through his efforts; many Chapters initiated water quality monitoring programs.

In 1979, Jim proposed a program to create urban trout fishing opportunities through "put and take trout stocking" into suitable urban waters. On April 6,

1979, catchable size rainbow trout were released into the Baltimore waters of Herring Run and Jones Falls. In 1987, Jim convinced the DNR that written policies were necessary for proper planning and management of natural resources. As a result, a cold water fisheries management policy was officially adopted that same year.

Recently Jim helped on behalf of the Maryland Stream Restoration Association to organize a meeting with MDE and DNR to advocate for a partnership and opportunity for review and comment on the next round of MS4 permits and stream restoration protocols.

