

Minutes of the 6 January 2018 FSFF Annual Planning Meeting
Compiled by Mark Bange and Joe Slayton

On 6 January 2018 the following elected officers, committee leaders and members of the Free State Fly Fishers met for two hours and forty-five minutes to plan a course for the direction of the club in 2018 and beyond:

Mark Bange

Frank Bowne

Rich Batiuk

Mike Mattia

Bob Ruck

Dick Friis

Denis LaCroix

Joseph DeMeo

Glenn Davis

Bob Smith

Dale Read

Tom Gooding

Luis Santiago

Joe Slayton

Their discussion was based on member input collected by FSFF president Mark Bange prior to the meeting. A copy of that input is found in Attachment 1 of this summary. The Agenda followed at the meeting is found in Attachment 2.

The ensuing paragraphs briefly summarize the discussions that occurred on 6 January and the actions that resulted from them. The areas discussed can be broadly categorized as Outreach Activities and FSFF Operations. Each will be discussed in turn below:

A. OUTREACH

Outreach encompasses activities that the club can pursue to attract new members and support for existing members. Expanding our outreach was the most common need expressed by members and it occupied the majority of the planning session.

Meeting participants agreed that many opportunities exist to publicize the club and to improve our support to members. We simply have to be more diligent in pursuing them.

We discussed what worked in the past and what failed and why. In the end we decided to concentrate on four categories of outreach for the time being. Each category is highlighted in bold type.

Print Media – We will increase our use of local print media to include:

1. *The Annapolis Capital, Lenny Rudow's Fish Talk Magazine, The Fishing and Hunting Journal.* Note that there are other local publications that we can target. Our goal is to place articles and/or notices about the FSFF into those publications. **Action Officers: Dale Read and Joe Slayton with articles/input supplied to Dale and Joe by FSFF members upon request.**
2. Create a flyer about the FSFF to leave at various retail outlets that sell fishing supplies and at winter fishing events and shows. (Note: The first iteration of this flyer has already been drafted for use at a Bass Pro event in January.) **Action Officers: Luis Santiago will distribute the flyer at fly fishing shows and other winter fishing events in the area. Additionally, Luis will advertise the March FSFF swap meet at the upcoming Lefty Kreh's Tiefert. Mark Bange will seek placement of the flyer at retail establishments. Frank Bowne will post the two-page flyer on the club's website.**
3. Write a letter to new members to formally welcome them to the club. Thank them for joining and advise them of club benefits, upcoming club activities and ask them if they would like to have a fly fishing mentor from the club to help them learn the basics of fly fishing. **Action Officer: Mark Bange**
4. Add a question concerning the desire for a mentor on printed and electronic membership forms. Together with the "welcome letter" we will use that data point to glean who desires a mentor. Club mentors would be volunteers chosen for geographic proximity to the new member, expertise and a willingness to serve in that role. **Action Officers: Frank Bowne to modify membership form. Denis LaCroix, Luis Santiago and Mark Bange will assist in making mentor assignments.**
5. Create FSFF stickers/decals for members to use to publicize club. **Action Officer: Luis Santiago**

Electronic Media

1. Restart publication of an electronic FSFF Newsletter and make it available to members on our website. Distribution will be quarterly starting in March. It will contain a president's message in each issue and as appropriate the following kinds of information: profiles of meeting speakers, notices of upcoming club events and outings, profiles of local fishing sites, member profiles, book reviews and fly descriptions. **Action Officer: Rich Batiuk. Please note that Rich**

volunteered to be the editor but it is incumbent upon all members and club leaders to participate in this activity with timely article and input submissions.

2. Increase use of club-specific emails sent to members from the president and outings coordinator. The emails will be sent two weeks prior to club meetings and club events and one week prior to outings they are intended to publicize. **Action Officers: Mark Bange (club meetings, events) and Rich Batiuk (club outings).**
3. Send email to new members providing them links to club website, Facebook Page and registration steps to logon to our YAHOO Group. **Action Officer: Frank Bowne. Note: Frank has already implemented this action.**

Conservation Efforts

The FSFF currently donates money to at least one local conservation organization. We discussed potentially including hands-on contributions (stream cleanups, stocking fish, planting erosion control grasses, etc.) as a way to publicize our club within the community. In past years, FSFF had a designated coordinator for this kind of work. Rather than volunteer for such efforts without club backing to do so, we decided to canvass the membership to see if there is interest among our members in doing such work and to see if a coordinator for those efforts will come forward. **Action Officer: Mark Bange Note: This topic will be revisited on April 7th when the FSFF leadership team meets again.**

Attracting Younger Members

Reach out to the local Boy Scout Troop that operates at the Davidsonville Family Recreation Center. The goal is to let the Troop know that we would welcome Scouts interested in fly fishing and those seeking merit badges in that discipline. Dick Friis has already provided contact information for the Boy Scout Troop Leader to Mark Bange who will initiate that contact. **Action Officer: Mark Bange**

Increasing Diversity/Number of Outings

Continue to work to increase the number of FSFF sponsored outings as well as the diversity of these outings to attract members with different fishing interests and physical capabilities. **Action Officer: Rich Batiuk.**

B. FSFF OPERATIONS

This topic led to discussions about the administrative activities of the club. Specifically, we delved into Planning Meetings, Club Documentation, our use of Social Media, the conduct of Monthly Membership Meetings and Finances.

Planning Meetings

1. Re-establish regular planning meetings. Our club By-Laws call for an Annual Meeting of the elected officers to occur each January. It was noted by some that the officers had not met for a formal planning session in years and that it was a good step to do so now. Some participants felt that more than one planning session per year was advisable for continuity and to check on the status of actions established at the January Annual Meeting. We therefore agreed to a quarterly club leadership planning meeting schedule for 2018. Our next club leadership planning meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 7 April and will be by invitation only for Board Members, Officers and Coordinators. **Action Officers: Mark Bange and 2018's elected officers.**
2. Prepare written minutes of club leadership planning meetings. We agreed to provide a written report of substantive decisions at the meeting (and subsequent ones) to the entire membership. That is the purpose of this document. **Action Officer: Mark Bange**

Club Documentation

1. Review our By-Laws. FSFF By-Laws are 45 years old and have withstood the test of time very well. But there are aspects of them that are unclear and perhaps not relevant to the way club operations have evolved. Additionally, there is no mention of electronic media or the formalization of club positions to manage them in our By-Laws. We agreed to discuss potential By-Laws amendments at a We will revisit this topic at the April FSFF leadership meeting.
2. Prepare Operating Procedures. Much of the administrative work in the FSFF is done by coordinators (e.g. meeting speakers, outings), our Treasurer and our DFRC Representative. How those jobs get done is often known only to the people who do them. In the interest of continuity in case a key club member becomes incapacitated we have asked those coordinators, our Treasurer and DFRC representative to write down key aspects of their jobs to include critical points of contacts, due dates, etc. The writeups need not be extensive but a simple outline of the major functions of their positions. The areas we are seeking input are in Attachment 1, paragraph 2. B. b. Note that some have already been submitted. We would like to have the others by our 7 April planning meeting. **Action Officers: Committee Leads, Tom Gooding and Dick Friis and elected officers as appropriate.**

Social Media

Much discussion occurred concerning the use of our YAHOO Group as a major vehicle for disseminating time-sensitive information to registered users of the club via email. Although expertly managed for the FSFF by George Vincent for

years, some club users suggest that YAHOO can be unwieldy. Indeed, some members at the planning meeting said they don't use it. Further, there is much chatter on-line by various hobby clubs who are seeking an alternative to YAHOO given the belief that support for the product may be discontinued given YAHOO's tenuous position in the cyber world. Lastly, there was the matter of the YAHOO group sending out erroneous fly tying session information to members since it had not been updated to reflect our new tying schedule. Two actions resulted from this discussion. The first was to contact Mr. Vincent to make sure he had the latest club calendar information to post onto YAHOO. That has been done. Mark Bange and Frank Bowne have both spoken to Mr. Vincent who said he would help us keep the YAHOO Group current as long as we provided him the updated information. The second action was to investigate alternatives to the YAHOO Group should we decide to transition to new email group. **Action Officers: Frank Bowne and Luis Santiago to investigate a new source.**

Regular Club Meetings

Several minor changes to our monthly member meetings were discussed each with the goal to increase time for speakers and to provide more opportunities for members to socialize.

1. Meetings will run from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., with 7:00 to 7:30 allowed for socializing among club members; 7:30 to 7:45 reserved for brief discussions of club business; speakers (and more socializing if times allows) will have from 7:45 to 9:00.
2. Minutes of the business portion of the meeting will be recorded by the president or whomever presides over the meeting and kept in club records. **Action Officer: Mark Bange**
3. Publicize meetings to members via email as discussed in paragraph 2 of **Electronic Media** above. **Action Officer: Mark Bange**
4. Provide name tags at all meetings to help all members remember names. **Action Officer: Joe Slayton**
5. Provide more publicity for raffle with signage at the clubhouse and mentioning in email notifications of meetings. **Action Officers: Joe Slayton and Mark Bange**
6. A June meeting will be added to the schedule. This will be a less formal meeting with no speaker planned and will serve as an open platform for members to discuss their fishing successes during the year so far. The goal is to provide another socialization opportunity for members.

7. Schedule "Movie Nights" in addition to Monthly Club Meetings. Announcements of Movie Night will be added to the FSFF event schedule to the extent possible.
Action Officer: Luis Santiago

Financial Management

The club is financially solvent and discussion, of course, centered on keeping us in that position. Two issues arose during the meeting relating to finances.

1. Dick Friis raised the matter of attending the Davidsonville Family Recreation Center meetings to make sure we are abreast of the latest news regarding county funding of the DFRC complex. A change in the county's fiscal backing of the DFRC could quickly place us in a situation where we would need to revisit our dues pricing structure. We agreed to have a club officer join Dick at those meetings. He will keep us apprised of the meeting schedule. **Action: We agreed to combine the DFRC and Clubhouse Coordinator positions into a single position.**
2. We discussed implementing an interface on our website for members to pay their dues on-line. It was agreed that an electronic payment interface may entice more people who find us via the internet to join. **Action Officer: Frank Bowne will investigate this matter and will discuss it further at the April 7th Planning Meeting.**

NEXT PLANNING MEETING – 7 APRIL 2018

We intend to discuss the following items at the next planning meeting:

1. The status of actions agreed to at the January 6 meeting.
2. The desirability of sponsoring public demonstrations of casting and fly tying as an outreach effort.
3. Adding either raffle or door prizes to our 50/50 raffle at regular club meetings.
4. The feasibility and need to revise the club's foundation documentation -- (By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation.)
5. The utility of electronic dues payment on our website.
6. The potential need to raise 2019 dues.
7. Staffing of key club positions for 2019.
8. Other FSFF issues that may arise before April.

Attachments:

- 1. Summary of Input from FSFF Members and Leaders on How to Reinvigorate the Club**
- 2. Discussion Outline for FSFF Planning Meeting 6 January 2018**

Attachment 1: Summary of Input from FSFF Members and Leaders on How to Reinvigorate the Club

Compiled by Mark Bange

Eight members, including myself, provided input. I have summarized their major themes and suggestions below:

1. OUTREACH

By far the most common concern was club outreach. How do we both increase the membership and reduce the average age of our club members? In 2017 we had slightly over 60 paid members. Note that we have a club roster of nearly 200 names of present and past-paid members. (That roster alone may be an important tool for outreach.) Further Ken Moser told me that in the mid-1990s we had 250 members.

That begs the question: How big do we want to be? Some of you remember the days when membership exceeded 200. Is that a reasonable and desirable goal for us? That's a question we should answer as we contemplate the suggestions to follow:

These are the specific outreach suggestions:

- A. *Print media – Expand our presence and contacts beyond The Annapolis Capital.*
 - a. *Distribute media alerts about upcoming FSFF sponsored meetings and events.*
 - b. *Submit articles (or seek interviews) about the FSFF for publication in various print media.*
 - c. *Create an updated, colorful FSFF tri-fold flyer*
 - d. *Get FSFF flyers placed at Bass Pro Shops' Fly Shop, Angler's, Tochterman's, the Fly Fishing Show, other locations.*
- B. *Obtain representation at various fishing and fly fishing forums*
 - a. *Kayak Fishing Flea Market, Odenton, Jan. 20.*
 - b. *Pasadena Sports Fishing Flea Market, February 17 and 18.*
 - c. *MD Saltwater Fishing Expo, Edgewater, February 24.*
 - d. *The Fly Fishing Show – Lancaster, March 3 and 4.*
- C. *Demonstrations – Look for opportunities to provide public demonstrations of fly casting and fly tying. (i.e. Bass Pro next week.)*
- D. *Participate in a local conservation project to enhance reputation and community awareness of the FSFF*
 - a. *Participate in a conservation project every year with some other established conservation group, e.g., Trout Unlimited, South River Federation, West/Rhode River Keeper, Severn River Association, Magothy River Association, etc.*
 - b. *Donate money to one or more those organizations in the name of the FSFF.*

E. Current members need outreach and attention too. We must be responsive to them via expanded club communications and a continuation of club-specific activities.

a. Newsletter -- Restart publication of a bi-monthly electronic newsletter distributed regularly to club members and posted on-line on the FSFF web site:

- i. Appoint a dedicated newsletter editor*
- ii. Assign leads for writing/collecting regular columns*
- iii. Obtain President's message*
- iv. Profile the monthly meeting speakers*
- v. Describe upcoming club events*
- vi. Describe upcoming club outings*
- vii. Profile of local fishing sites*
- viii. Profile members*
- ix. Profile favorite flies of members*
- x. Offer book reviews*

b. Provide routine and regular email correspondence with club members:

- i. From the President two weeks prior to each club meeting as reminder of the speaker and plans for the upcoming meeting.*
- ii. From the Outings Coordinator one week prior to each club outing, sharing the logistics for the upcoming outing.*
- iii. From the President two weeks prior to each club event, providing details about the event.*

c. Outings – Increase the number we offer as well as the diversity of those trips to attract members with different fishing interests and physical capabilities.

d. New members need extra attention to feel welcome and to hasten their sense of belonging into the FSFF.

i. Create a welcome package for new members that includes club history and contact information and a patch, hat, or decal.

ii. Follow-up with them to make sure they are enrolled and receiving electronic club news via email, the YAHOO Group, Facebook and the website.

iii. Assign a club mentor, an existing member knowledgeable of club activities, to help the new member assimilate into the FSFF. Note, this mentor can also help the new member as a fly fishing instructor if necessary.

2. FSFF OPERATIONS

Next to Outreach, the second most common topic commented on by respondents concerned club administrative matters. I am pleased to say that no one objected to holding or attending a major planning meeting. Everyone who commented said the session was needed and some even said it should be held biannually or quarterly. Clearly there is a desire among club leaders to plot a course for the club and to revisit that course periodically to make sure we are progressing. There was also a strong feeling that we need to do some foundational administrative work that has been long overlooked. Here is what our leaders said with respect to club operations:

- A. *Host planning meetings of the FSFF officers and committee leaders 2 to 4 times per year.*
 - a. *Meetings should be scheduled to allow significant time to thoroughly discuss topics and should always be moderated with a written agenda.*
 - b. *A report of all substantive decisions of the meeting should be submitted in writing to the general membership before the next general club meeting.*
- B. *Review, revise and/or create as necessary club documentation.*
 - a. *By-laws -- They have not been revised in over 40 years.*
 - i. *Make sure they provide flexibility and match the actual administration of the club given changes in club membership and changes in communications technology in the intervening years.*
 - ii. *Refile the with the state when completed.*
 - b. *Written club operating procedures are required in the following areas:*
 - i. *Managing electronic media*
 - ii. *Planning club outings*
 - iii. *Organizing and scheduling club meeting speakers*
 - iv. *Organizing the annual club holiday party*
 - v. *Setting up for the swap meet*
 - vi. *Running the fly tying sessions*
 - vii. *Teaching fly fishing classes*
 - viii. *Organizing clubhouse clean up days*
 - ix. *Keeping track of club membership*
 - x. *Access to the clubhouse*
 - xi. *Working with the Davidsonville FRC*

C. Review, formalize and improve use of electronic and social media.

a. Formally assign individuals responsible for administration and content of the club's three electronic vehicles: Website, Facebook and YAHOO Group (or a replacement).

b. Seek alternative to YAHOO given that site's tenuous future.

c. Obtain our own website account. Right now we are hosted on a member's personal account.

D. Make minor changes to club meetings.

a. Start meetings promptly on time and always welcome new members and guests.

b. Expand announced time of meetings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. to ensure time for club business, speakers and socialization. Designate 7:00 to 7:30 as a time for socialization. Start speakers or business promptly at 7:30.

c. Provide more food and snacks at meetings.

d. Restore June meetings to maintain continuity and to stay in touch with members in the summer.

e. Rely on internal expertise for at least at least one half of our speakers. NEVER pay for speakers, other than offering pre-meeting dinners for guest presenters.

f. Bring in more DNR speakers, regional light tackle experts and locally recognized fly tyers.

g. Offer raffle prizes in addition to 50/50 raffle.

h. Hold movie nights occasionally (or at other designated times) in lieu of obtaining speakers.

E. Financial Management

a. The club is solvent and fiscally healthy.

b. We can actually afford to be more generous in donations to conservation organizations and in funding outreach efforts as discussed in Section 1 above.

c. However, we must be vigilantly mindful of our expenditures and recognize that our annual dues are quite low. Therefore, we may wish to explore other fundraising activities in lieu of raising dues to accomplish all or most of what has been outlined above.

Attachment 2: Discussion Outline for FSFF Planning Meeting

6 January 2018

A. Introductions -- 15 Minutes

B. The Good News -- 10 Minutes

- a. We're a longstanding organization with excellent name recognition.*
- b. We have our own meeting facility (clubhouse).*
- c. We're financially solvent*
- d. We're legally formed as a non-profit organization*
- e. We have knowledgeable and motivated leaders*
- f. We have a web presence*
- g. We have a core of dedicated members who regularly attend meetings and participate in club activities*
- h. We have well established activities*
- i. We recognize there is room for improvement*

C. Input summary -- 30 to 45 Minutes (I will refer attendees to the 4-page handout which summarizes member input. I will review the two major categories of Outreach and FSFF Operations and take notes of participant comments. I will be seeking a sense of priority from them...which items we have to attend to.)

Break for 10 minutes

D. Outreach -- 30 Minutes (I will lead a discussion about these items with a special emphasis on getting agreement for each item and most important, seeking points of contact where necessary to carry out the tasks.)

- a. Print Media*
- b. Forum representation*
- c. Demonstrations*
- d. Conservation efforts*
- e. Current member care*

E. FSFF Operations -- 30 Minutes (As above, I will lead a discussion about these items with a special emphasis on getting agreement for each item and most important, seeking points of contact where necessary to carry out the tasks.)

- a. Continuation and future of planning meetings*

- b. Club Documentation*
- c. Electronic and Social Media*
- d. Club Meeting Procedures*
- e. Financial Management*

F. Summary -- 15 Minutes (I will review my notes as captured during the meeting and list what items we have agreed upon and which items we have tabled either entirely or for further discussion. I will use this summary to write a review of the meeting which I will pass to attendees for concurrence prior to dissemination to the membership.)