



FREE STATE FLY FISHERS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2020

President's Message: Why FSFF is so unique and special



So what makes fly fishing and specifically Free State Fly Fishers so special? Simple answer...us members.

I thought Jim Delle Bovi's August 11, 2020 email to the FSFF group email on his guide-led trip to the Eastern Shore effectively captured why we fly fish:

"Went out with Chris Karwacki of Chesapeake On The Fly on a VERY HOT day yesterday out of Crisfield. Kept the trip to 5 hours because of the heat. Got this speckled trout and Bluefish using Chris' Sage 8wt. Even though it was tough heat it still feels great to get out. I told Chris he is providing an essential service, as all guides are, in helping people deal with the stress of the times. Still nothing beats a tight line as good medicine for having to see less of friends, staying more isolated for safety reasons, etc. If things start getting to me, turning off the news, getting out on the water, is STILL the best medicine. Nothing like a tight line to help forget about the rest. I'm sure that's true for a lot of us these days. Definitely looking forward to September/October temps though. In these temperatures, 5 hours out there is plenty at my age ! LOL Jim"

We are coming up on our 50th anniversary of as an organization. Having been a member since 1985, here's what I have experienced being part of this unique club.

We have always been about sharing our fly fishing experiences and expertise with other club

members and members of the public. Whether its leading a fly tying session or a Saturday hands0in session or a club sponsored outing, our members are always willing to give their time to help others expand their enjoyment of our shared sport.

Free State Fly Fishers don't take themselves too seriously. If we can catch it on a fly, be it a trout, a bluegill, a snakehead or a carp, we will fish for it and sponsor outings and fly tying sessions to target it. And the flies we tie can be somewhat unique!

As members, we truly enjoy just being together, whether we are actually out fly fishing or eating lunch together after fishing all morning or gathering at the clubhouse for a fly casting session or working on a conservation-related project.

As a club, we have always been dependent on the involvement of so many members for the successful operation of the club. Currently we have a combination of 23 different club officer and coordinator positions, from president to outings coordinator to treasurer to clubhouse coordinator. And beyond these positions, club members have stepped up to lead fly tying sessions, present at club meetings, participate in clubhouse work days, lead club sponsored outings and participate in fly fishing shows and other opportunities to share our sport with members of the public.

So come out and experience this sport that brings us together and forms the basis of this very unique fly fishing club. You will definitely learn something new while enjoying time w/your fellow members!

Tight Lines,

Rich

Upcoming FSFF Sponsored Meetings, Events and Activities



As we continue to meet virtually, thanks to Mark Bange, Wayne Blake Hedges and Rich Batiuk, we have club meeting speakers, fly

tying session leaders, and Saturday hands-on session presenters scheduled for the rest of 2020 and into 2021!

We still need to get to the next stage of reopening in the county before we can get back together again at the clubhouse. Until we do, we will proceed forward with all our club meetings with speakers and all of our fly tying sessions virtually via Zoom. Information on each club sponsored meeting, event and activity will be posted on the club website's calendar of events and described in our week-in-advance automatic email messages.

Wednesday Club Meeting Presentations

November 4 – Gary Grey -- Adirondack Fishing Opportunities For many years Gary, a FSFF member, has been traveling north to the Adirondacks in up-state New York for camping and fishing trips. During his trips, he has often targeted northern pike, but has also caught his share of smallmouth bass and largemouth bass. Gary will share information about the multitude of fishing opportunities in the hundreds of lakes and ponds and miles of streams and rivers throughout the Adirondacks.

December 2—Open Discussion Between Club Members' Replacing our canceled Holiday Dinner and Party, our December Zoom meeting will be an open mic with participating club members welcome to share their recent fishing trips and other fishing related experiences.



(Katlin Groundwater presenting to club members during our September 2 virtual club meeting.)

January 6 John McMinn – Fly Fishing for Great Lakes-run Trout and Salmon

February 3 – Tom Parham – Maryland Department of Natural Resources' *Click Before You Cast* Website

Saturday Morning Hands-on Sessions

Here's our current schedule for club sponsored hands-on sessions scheduled for Saturday mornings. When we are able to do so, we will gather together at the clubhouse for these club member-led hands-on learning sessions. Until then, we will be scheduling our "hands-on" session which don't depend on direct personal interactions as virtual Zoom "hands-on" sessions. Once we can meet together in person, we will re-schedule those sessions which are truly hands-on.



October 24th Paring Down Your Set of Fishing Tackle Joe Bruce will talk to participants on how to reduce all the fly fishing tackle you end up bringing out on the stream and in your kayak, canoe or boat down to the essentials.

November 14th Organizing Your Fly Fishing Everything...Tackle, Books, Flies and Fly Tying Materials Rich Batiuk will present a host of ideas on how you can organize, store and ensure ready access to all your fly fishing rods, reels, nets, waders, boots, and other equipment as well as fly fishing books, flies and fly tying materials and tools.



December 12th Shallow-water Fishing Presentation with Demonstration of Fishing Techniques Joe Bruce will share his excellent shallow-water fishing techniques and demonstrate how he works shallow-water structures and vegetation.

Saturday Morning Fly Tying Sessions

Join us on the first Saturday morning of every month from now through June for our club member led fly tying sessions. Wayne Blake-Hedges, our FSFF Fly Tying Coordinator, will share the upcoming schedule of fly tying sessions via email and postings on the club's website letting everyone know which club members are leading which sessions and which fly patterns they plan to tie during their session.

Our club member-led fly tying sessions (whether in-person or virtual) will start at 10 AM on the following dates:

- Saturday, November 7th
- Saturday, December 5th
- Saturday, January 2nd
- Saturday, February 6th

Until we are able to gather in person at the clubhouse, we will be using the club's Zoom account to enable club members to connect in, watch each fly pattern being tied, and ask questions of the fly tying session leader.



November 7—Joe Bruce Tying the Bullethead Darter Joe, a nationally recognized expert fly tyer, will share how to tie his very effective bullethead darter, used to catch a multitude of different species. Your fly boxes need to include a host of Bullethead Darters in several colors as well as a variety of sizes with some tied as articulated.



December 2—Ken Moser Tying Redfish Patterns Longtime FSFF member Ken Moser moved to Wesley Chapel, Florida, which is north of Tampa, years ago after retiring. He has stayed in touch and also has remained a member of our

club which we very much appreciate. Ken has enjoyed catching redfish on the fly in Tampa's beautiful waters. He will be teaching us how to tie redfish fly patterns that he has used for fly fishing for Florida redfish. With redfish now inhabiting much of the Bay tidal waters during the summer, we all need some redfish flies in our fly boxes!

Wednesday Night Beer Ties

Our club tradition of gathering together on the fourth Wednesday of every even numbered months for beer ties continues...currently virtually via Zoom meetings on:

- Wednesday, October 28th
- Wednesday, December 23rd
- Wednesday, February 24th

This is your chance to socialize, eat and drink with your FSFF fellow members while tying flies and talking fishing from 6:00-8:00 PM. Even if you don't plan to tie flies, please join the rest of us for the conversation, laughs, fly tying tips and, of course, the fellowship. It's worth the price of admission....free!

How to Fly Fish Even Better

Fish the Tributaries in the fall

By Joe Bruce

When the summer heat starts to be a thing of the past, the Chesapeake Bay tidal tributaries start to heat up. I'm not talking temperatures, but the abundance of fish present as the water cools.

All summer these waters have been home to great schools of baitfish, pretty much unmolested because it was too hot for stripers to enter--not so in the fall.



This a great time for the fly rodder! Poppers in the morning and sink-tips and sinking lines during the

day, arm your 14 lbs. tippets with Clouser Minnows and do battle.

Sizing your Clouser to a #4 hook will not only catch you stripers, but white and yellow perch. My color choices are all yellow and all white top and bottom. For more fish I like a 10' sink-tip and a three to four foot piece of leader.

I go to the more out of the way waters in my kayak to avoid a lot of boat traffic. My yak doesn't handle wave action, so I keep to the head waters mostly.



Here is some of my secret places: Skipton Creek off of the Wye River; the Wye River is good also up river; Leeds Creek for stripers and big perch; Hunting Creek off the Miles River; and Trappe Creek is another gem. These are all Maryland

Eastern Shore waters, less populated, so less traffic and the auto traffic is dropping off to boot.

A dear friend of mine, who is fishing other waters now, once caught 193 stripers from 6" to six pounds on light fly rods, in a day, and we were never more than ¾ mile from the Wye Landing.

We really need to have our hands on session on making sink-tip. I can't express the difference this makes in having a successful day in the salt. All predators in the salt chase their food, whereas in the freshwater, the fish are ambush predators.

Club News

Proposed 2021 Club Officers and Directors

Here's the proposed 2021 club officers. Members participating in the November 4th club Zoom meeting will be asked to vote on:

President: Gary Grey

1st Vice President: Duber Winters

2nd Vice President: Luis Santiago

Treasurer: Mark Jacobs

Secretary: Frank Bowne

And based on the club's bylaws, one Director is the Immediate Past President and the second Director is selected by the newly elected Officers.

Please Renew Your 2021 Club Membership Now

You can access the club's 2021 membership application along with the liability waiver on the club's website at <http://fs-ff.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Free-State-Fly-Fishers-2021-Membership-Application.pdf>. Please fill out your application as well as sign and date your liability waiver and mail both along with your dues to Frank Bowne at the address on the application.

Club Has a New Publicity Coordinator

Thanks to Cliff Young for his two years of getting word out to the media about our events. Ryan Harvey has stepped in as the club's Publicity Coordinator, picking up on the great work of Cliff. Thanks Ryan for helping with the operation of the club.

2020 FSFF Biggest Bluegill Tournament Current Standings

There is still time to submit your entry for the club's Biggest Bluegill Tournament to knock Rich, Rich, Mike or John out of their current standings—submit your photo to Mark Bange by Nov 15th.

The current standings for the club's 2020 Biggest Bluegill Tournament are as follows:



1st – Rich Batiuk, 10.75 inches, Unicorn Lake, MD, May 29th.



2nd -- Rich Galena, 10 inches, Fawn Lake, PA, May 9th.



3rd -- Mike Mattia, 8.5 inches, Smithville Lake, MD, May 8th.



4th -- John Rentch, 8.25 inches, Smithville. Lake, MD, May 13th.

You can continue to follow the club's 2020 Bluegill Tournament standings on the club's website with full set of photos of entries, size, date and place caught at: <https://fs-ff.com/index.php/bluegill-tournament-2020/>. All entries are judged by our very own Mark Bange. The full set of tournament rules are also available on that same page on the club's website.

Door Prizes at Virtual meetings



Thanks to Joe DeMeo, we have been awarding door prizes at each our Wednesday evening virtual club meetings this year. Joe has tied up literally hundreds of flies and poppers and placed them in theme-based fly boxes. Members participating in each virtual meeting pick a number between 1 and 50 at the beginning of the meeting. The member with the number closest to the randomly selected

number generated by Joe prior to the meeting selects one of several fly boxes. Thanks Joe! This is just one more reason why Free State Fly Fishers is such a unique club.



Coming to the Club in 2020—FSFF Biggest Pickerel Tournament

Given last year's success with the Biggest Bluegill Tournament, the club is adding a Biggest Pickerel Tournament this year. The exact same rules for the Biggest Bluegill Tournament apply to the Biggest Pickerel Tournament:

- Open to all 2020/2021 FSFF members. (Note: Entrant must be a FSFF member on date the fish was caught.)
- The contest runs from **1 November 2020 to 30 April 2021**.
- Fish must be caught on a fly via a flyrod. (No live or cut bait, or lures for conventional tackle may be used.)
- Fishing may take place in any waters of MD, DC, DE, PA, and VA.
- Entries are limited to chain pickerel. No other members of pike family of fishes are eligible.
- This is a catch and release photo contest governed by the honor system.
- All fish must be alive when photographed and released thereafter.
- Photos must be taken against any standard ruler or measuring device that clearly shows length of fish in inches from tail to mouth.
- Photo should show fly if possible.

- Entries are to be emailed throughout the tournament dates to Mark Bange, mbange54@gmail.com (Note: Positions of entries will be listed on FSFF website.)
- Tie breakers will be determined by date and time of entry submission with preference to earlier entry.
- Longest fish in inches wins.
- Entry email must contain following information: name of contestant, body of water where fish was caught, date fish was caught, name of fly used and recorded length of the pickerel.
- Mark Bange will consult with club officers, if necessary, for ruling on close entries to determine length of winning fish.
- Winners will be recognized and awards presented at June 2, 2021 club meeting.
- Awards:
 First place – Personal Trophy and name on Clubhouse Plaque.
 Second place – Personal Trophy
 Third place – Personal Trophy
 Fourth place – Personal trophy

Clubhouse Interior Has a Fresh Coat of Paint Due to Fall Clubhouse Work Day

During a very productive Fall Clubhouse Work Day on October 17th, participating club members painted all the interior walls, making the clubhouse look brand new.



The exterior of the clubhouse got its final touches of renovation with the edging of the sidewalk from the parking lot to the clubhouse.



Hats, Patches and Stickers with the New Club Logo Now on Sale

Thanks to the efforts of Frank Bowne in working with local and regional businesses, club members can now purchase the latest hats, patches and stickers with the club's new logo.



The club's new hats are selling for only \$15. They make great Christmas, birthday, and anniversary presents! Every family member wants one!



New club patches for your fly fishing vest or favorite fishing shirts are available for \$5.

Clearly you need two...one for the front and one for the back! Free advertising for the club as well. And what a great deal, two for the price of two!



Every boat, skiff, kayak, canoe, and paddle board in your fleet needs a great looking FSFF sticker—available now for only \$1 each! What a bargain!

These are all available on the FOR SALE page on the FSFF website: <http://fs-ff.com/index.php/for-sale/>. Frank Bowne is mailing out all orders for hats, patches and stickers. You can also purchase this club bling at the next club meeting or other event sponsored by the club at the clubhouse.

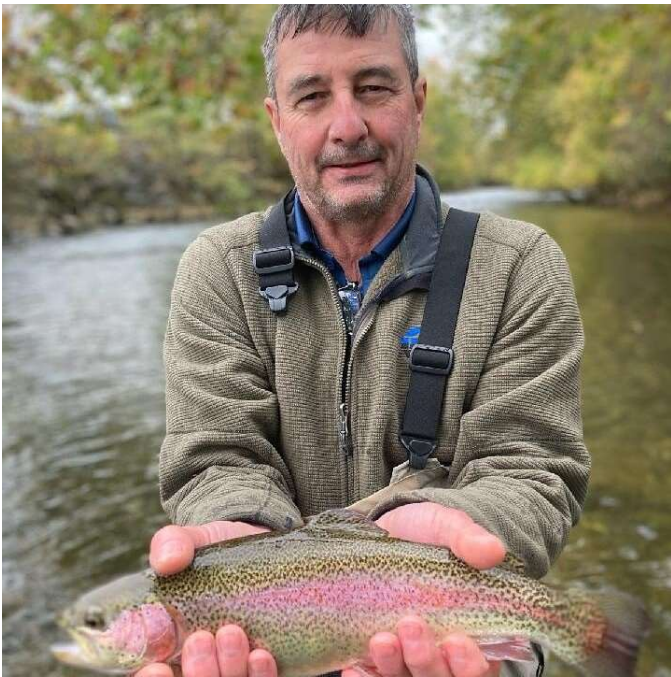
Using the Club's Group Email

Communicating with all the club members using the club's group email address is strongly encouraged for sharing fly fishing stories, selling fly fishing related equipment, and providing a heads up on upcoming club sponsored meetings, events and activities. However, when responding back to group emails, PLEASE don't just hit reply unless you plan to reply to all the rest of your fellow club members. If you just want to respond to the original email sender, please send a separate email responding back to original email sender. The email inboxes of your fellow club members thank you!

Sharing Photos to be Framed and Hung in the Fully Renovated Clubhouse

The freshly painted walls at the clubhouse are bare and are just waiting to be decorated with photos of members fly fishing and catching fish. Preferably they should be photos related to fly fishing. Here are some possibilities:

1. Members in the act of fishing
2. Scenic areas fished
3. Fish caught
4. Flies used
5. Group photos of members on outings



We are seeking **digital photos**, not your hard copies. Please email your digital photos to Mark Bange. (mbange54@gmail.com)

Mark gets them reproduced via an on-line source to an 8 x 10-inch photo and get them framed. Please do the following to help Mark accomplish this task:

1. Please title your email like this: FSFF Photos (Your Name) Example: **FSFF Photos Joe Member**.
2. At first, limit your submissions to no more than 3 photos.
3. Higher resolution photos reproduce better.

However, please limit your email file attachments to no more than 10 Megs per email. You can send multiple emails if necessary.

You may submit your photos starting now. I will acknowledge receipt of member emails who furnish photos and I will keep them posted of the process. Please note in advance that I may not be able to use every photo. I'd like to get as many members represented as possible. Also, I will inform members at large if I need more submissions or if I have enough. You may call or email me with your questions on this matter. I look forward to your participation.

Thank you, Mark Bange
410-591-5254

Magothy River Association Invitation to Help Monitor Yellow Perch Eggs Sacs

As a follow-up to the club's October club meeting, we have been invited to join other Magothy River Association members, beginning in the first two weeks of February, to walk the area between Catherine Ave and Lake Waterford to pick up some debris, look for egg sacs and take some water quality measurements, most importantly temperature. All one would need for this event is some boots fit for walking along a sometimes muddy bank. More logistics information will be shared in the Winter FSFF 2020 newsletter.

Back Issues of FSFF Newsletters Now Available On-line

Thanks to Frank Bowne, club members can now access back issues of the club's seasonal newsletters dating back to 2012. Six months after each new newsletter has been distributed to club members via email, that newsletter edition will be posted on the club's web site. You can access these back issues by clicking on the "Library" button on the front page of the web site and then clicking on "Past Newsletters" or <https://fsff.com/index.php/past-newsletters/>.

Featured Article

Bassin' on the Fly in the Fall Season

By Duber Winters

One of the greatest misconceptions by anglers when it comes to fly fishing for bass is that bass are only a "summer time" target species. And quite frankly that impression is one that makes good sense as bass are a warm water species and typically the catch rate for both largemouth and smallmouth bass tends to be higher as water temps begin to warm in the spring and then remain steady through the summer months. That said, expert anglers and guides that target largemouth bass on fly will tell you (that is if they like you and you promise them not to fish their favorite spots) that the fall season can be a very rewarding time to fish for big and or heavy bass.

For simplicity purposes we are going to look at fly fishing for bass from 4 different yet critical areas: **Where, When, How and What.**



specific body of water so let's just say for the purpose of this article that we are focusing on 1-4' of water and that more often than not we are fishing or casting near to the shoreline. In the summer months bass can be found in these same areas as fall, however, as the water warms through mid-summer bass typically only hang or feed in shallow water in low light levels-early morning or late evening before heading to cooler temps in

Where:

For those of us that like to target fish with a fly rod, we appreciate when the fish we are casting to are in shallow water. Of course the term 'shallow water' is relative to a

deeper water through mid-day. So knowing that we can fish the shore line throughout the day can definitely be advantageous for the angler.



Creeks that feed major rivers or lakes can hold fish at any time of day through the fall. This is a great advantage for those that are walking stream banks or wading. For anglers not fishing from a boat, rivers can be more approachable in the fall as we see less rain in the fall than in the spring resulting in lower water levels and easier access and wading. As opposed to just casting to or along the shore line, seek out points of islands and land masses. Points are always fishy areas to cast to but the fall season can find them feeding in these areas more consistently and in greater numbers. In addition, bass tend to hang on points in the fall specifically to feed not just to hang out. Typically feeding fish will be more likely to eat a fly than ones we need to coax to eat our offering.

When and why:

Throughout the years I have been asked time and time again "Hey Dube, I am going fishing this weekend, what is the best time to go"? My answer has and will always vary based on the species, weather and season, but I would always conclude my answer by saying "just go when you can go because you just never know!" And when it comes to fly fishing for bass in the fall season, this is not only sound advice it is universally applicable because the fish are not just shallow for a brief time in the morning and evening hours rather they could be found shallow throughout the day. Cloudy days *can* be better, but that doesn't mean you

should stay home if it is raining or sunny! Fishing during the middle of the day and evening can be more productive than fishing early as it can take the morning hours to warm the waters and get the bait moving.

Bass are shallow in the fall for 2 reasons: 1) water temps and oxygen levels are conducive for them to be there and 2) BAIT! They are feeding heavily to prepare for the winter months when the food will not be as readily available. As a result we have big and or heavy fish that are not only shallow but actively feeding. This can also be known as a fly fishers dream come true for any target species!



I have caught quality largemouth bass on fly in to late-December but the sweet spot is probably September through November. Catch rates are always dependent on many factors including water temperature, water quality, water flow (CFS), barometric pressure, angling

pressure, bait activity and availability, etc. And while it is always beneficial to approach any day of fishing from an educated standpoint, my advice remains, “just go when you can go because you just never know.”

How:

So the short answer to how is ‘any way you can.’ And the reason this answer is more so acceptable in the fall than the summer is because the feeding patterns of the fish are more diverse and often within casting range of any fly angler either wading or working a shoreline. Casting perpendicular or parallel to the shore can be equally effective. Those fishing from a boat can employ the same line of

thinking-cast towards the bank, shoreline or point and retrieve slowly. All forms of aquatic life are looking at a long winter and their respective metabolisms begin to slow—not much of anything is moving fast. Slow your retrieve to match the movement of the bait. This can be a forgiving and rewarding time to fly for bass...and pretty darn simple too.



What:

Another one of my favorite fishing expressions is “the best fly in your box is the one you have the most confidence in.” This is typically the fly that you caught fish with the last time you went fishing or one that you tie on when the fishing gets tough. Either way it is your go to fly and one that you should have several of on hand. Its also a good idea to have in multiple sizes colors and weights. Most anglers will throw this fly at the beginning, throughout and at the end of your outing, however, here are a few time tested fall patterns.

- 1) Deer hair frog patterns worked slowly
- 2) Trout terrestrials-hoppers on warm days
- 3) Baitfish patterns with neutral buoyancy-I love white baitfish flies in the fall!
- 4) The Autumn Splendor

5) Enrico Puglisi baitfish fly patterns
Floating lines work for most applications and if you feel you need to get the fly down try adding a little split shot about 15" above your fly or a small piece of sinking leader to the end of your fly line. A 5-8 weight fly rod is all you need to succeed!

A simple approach is often welcome to those of us fly anglers that are often inundated with technical advice and information. The fall bassin' season is a game that we can all play and truly have a chance at catching great fish.

Editor's Note: This article is a follow up to the power point presentation that Duber gave to the club via Zoom back during the April 2020 meeting. Duber updated some of the content to be relative to the fall fishing season.



Where to Fish Virginia's Eastern Shore –The Ocean Side Marshes

By James Andrews

The look of terror in my son's eyes and the loud splash I heard behind me where he was looking left no doubt in my mind what he had just seen. A shark, likely a Spinner, had just jumped clear out of the water behind our boat – probably feeding near

the surface over a deep hole. While not common, this is a scene I had witnessed nearby two years prior.



After about 15 trips to what I consider the "unfished" portion of the Virginia Eastern Shore I thought it might stop happening – but every time I go I see something new and often unbelievable in a place that is as wild as this area was before the first line was cast into the water. Waterspouts – 4 at once – a shock to even the local waterman, sharks finning at the surface, tarpon rolling in the early dawn, a washed up whale carcass, big bull red drum crashing crabs in water that cannot contain their girth, and deer swimming the channel between two barrier islands are just some of nature's beauty that I have witnessed.

Yet, there is little fishing pressure from anglers – especially considering the immense scale of this place. It is not uncommon to spend a whole day on the water and see only watermen working their oyster beds. The anglers that do venture this direction tend to go to more popular destinations such as Fisherman's Island to the South or Wachapreague to the North. In my experience, it is the waters between these two locations that are the real gem.

Your best bet to navigating this area is a boat with a very shallow draft and a complete distrust of the charts – they are generally inaccurate which makes trusting them dangerous. Going slow thru the

channels and open areas your first few trips and making your own routes on your chart plotter and building from there is the name of the game. I have run aground—hard—several times in the “channels”. This area is notorious for water being 30 feet deep then all of a sudden 6 inches, with no discernable difference visually or on the charts for that matter. A kayak is also sufficient for working the near shore marshes – especially if you are willing to do some paddling. Shore fishing is effectively non-existent.



Waiting for a good weather window is a necessity for this area, High winds are frequent and nearly impossible to fish due to large chop that forms in even moderately heavy winds thru some mythical process replicated nowhere else I have fished. Wind speeds of 15 MPH are borderline and over 20 MPH are a no-go. I use the “Chesapeake Bay OFS Wind Forecast Guidance” at www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov the day before I go to ensure winds will cooperate.

In my mind, most of the fun of this vast area is the exploring and discovery process. By spending many days on the water scouting out locations, then building a roster of them so you can move from one to another hitting it at the best tide and conditions makes for a thrilling day.

For the fly angler—there are many species of fish you can target in some of the diverse habitats of this coastal marsh. Large flounder, red drum,

croaker, spot, seatrout, and even tarpon are regular visitors to these waters. Marsh edges, channel bottoms, “C” or “U” shaped mud beaches cut into the marshes, and interactions between two currents seem to be the best bets.

A typical day might be to start by searching out red drum on the inlet facing shallows of the marsh at low tide, then as the water rises, drift a channel looking for flounder and red drum, and then switch up flies and cover some deep holes for Croaker – they are so thick in some places that your fly is on the fish as soon as it hits the bottom (which can be a challenge with current). For croaker any small hook with heavy dumbbell eyes with something flashy tied to it will do the trick—they are not picky, but they do put up an enjoyable fight on a 6 wt. especially when you haul them up from 30 ft. down. For flounder, seatrout, and red drum I have had success with white half/half’s—but I think that many flies would do the trick here.

This area lends itself to you being prepared for many possibilities before you arrive, but focusing on what the day and the waters make most suitable. Things will change quickly, and your plan should as well to take most advantage of what opportunities arise. On my last trip the water was glassy and the sky was devoid of clouds. I had been very keen to see if I could attract some sharks to the boat on a drift and present them with a fly. With some cut croaker on a cotton string tied to a float (no hooks) we cast it behind the boat on a spinning rod. We attracted several nice spinner sharks over the course of a few drifts, three at once even, and had some takes with a “bait and switch” technique. The sharks were very fired up, but I wasn’t successful at hooking one on this attempt.

There are still many mysteries to me – the few Tarpon I have seen have proved a rare find and not around next time I looked in the same spot. A glance of a map has me realizing how little of this water I have covered in so many trips and how

many unique areas are left to discover, a lifetimes worth I think.

This is a unique area in many other respects as well: a near total lack of human impact due to the harshness of the environment; the only commercial fishing that does exist being beneficial (oysters farming); and with no freshwater from rivers or streams, the marsh retains full ocean salinity up to the boat launches making it a breeding ground for Sandbar Sharks, as well as many other ocean critters.



Logistics

The waters I am referencing lie between Wachapreague, VA to the North and Fisherman's Island, VA to the South. There are not as many boat launches as you would expect for such a long stretch, with my favorites being the public launches at Oyster, VA (Free) and in Quinby, VA (\$5 ramp fee, cash payable with an envelope on site).

Go down the day prior to fishing and stay at one of the hotels in Exmore, VA (Hampton Inn is best), and be at the boat launch for sunrise. Fish all day, then repeat as many days as you can get away with. Day trips are doable and if you have a zero wind day well worth it, but it's at least 3 hours each way which cuts into the fishing. The natural inlets of Quinby (Quinby, VA Launch) and Sand Shoal (Oyster, VA Launch), roughly 7-10 miles from the boat launches, are magical and the areas to focus on and begin your quest to learn the waters here.

Featured Article

Kayaking Fishing is a Year-long Pursuit

By Mark Bange

Cold weather is almost upon us. While some put their fishing gear away for the year, or travel south to continue fishing, I actually look forward to fishing locally from November right into the spring. Of course, I do not kayak in the main rivers of the Chesapeake, nor do I fish the Bay itself in winter. However, I continue kayak outings on our smaller waters. That means our tidal creeks and the many mill ponds on the Eastern Shore.

There are advantages to fish in the fall through the winter. A major one is that warm weather crowds will be gone. Often, the only other angler I see on the water during this timeframe is the person or persons I have joined on an outing. Sharing a mile-long creek or a 50 to 100-acre pond with only a few others definitely increases your odds of success. There are no boat wakes to contend with either.

Another advantage is the air temperature. Yes, I'm serious. I am vastly more comfortable fishing on a sunny 45-degree day in winter than I am on a humid 85-degree day in summer. I can stay out for hours in cold weather without fatigue. Now, I do dress the part. I may wear a wool cap instead of a hat with a brim. I wear dry pants so that my legs do not get wet during launching. Dry pants are essentially waders without the bib. On top, I wear layers of a long sleeve undershirt, a flannel shirt and sweatshirt over top of that. Sometimes I add a windbreaker. Generally, those layers with the addition of my PFD provide ample upper body warmth. For added comfort on a long outing, I bring a thermos of hot coffee or tea in lieu of the water I bring on warm weather trips.

Another advantage is that water will be clear. There are no algae blooms in cold water and vegetation, if any, is usually submerged. The result is crystal clear water. You may actually see the fish

hit your offerings. In fact, there are times when you can sight cast to fish.

Sleeping in is also an advantage in winter cold-water fishing. There is no need for early daybreak starts. If you do, you'll merely be paddling looking for fish until the sun rises high in the sky. Start later in the morning or even at noon. Give the sun a change to heat the water. An increase of only a few degrees may activate the fish.



And speaking of fish, your primary catch will be pickerel as the water chills. In fact, this coming cool weather season

promises something we have lacked in tidal waters in recent years—pickerel. After an inexplicable absence of several years, pickerel are back in their old tidal haunts. They have been caught this summer in the tidal tributary creeks of the Severn, Magothy, Patapsco and South Rivers. The outlook for those creeks to hold pickerel throughout the fall and winter is good. In the ponds, pickerel will dominate your catches. But even in the heart of winter the ponds will offer you a hungry bass, crappie or yellow perch with the same flies and lures you use for pickerel.

For gear I bring two 7 wt. fly rods. One has floating line, and one has intermediate. If the water surface is rippled by wind, you'll find the intermediate line will take your fly a little deeper which is where the pickerel go in such conditions. They are also likely to go deeper after a very cold night. Check the shallows and flats for them as the sun rises high and water warms.

I toss only streamers in cold weather. No poppers, although last January a pickerel snatched a dry streamer from the surface that had not yet sunk.

That marked the start of a memorable outing. You live to fish on days like that! My favorite streamers are Joe Bruce's articulated bullethead darter and bendback minnows. I've also caught cold water pickerel on fluffy wooly buggers and crystal buggers. I've caught more pickerel on streamers that are white or yellow or some combination thereof than other colors.

I bring at least one spinning rod and fish 3 to 4-inch paddletails (flukes) hooked weedless. As with the flies a slow start stop retrieve is usually warranted. Vary that. Pickerel can be extremely fast attackers, even in water below 40 degrees. However, I catch more on a start stop retrieve and they often hit the lure or fly as it suspends in the water column during the halt.

Finally, a quick word about safety. Hypothermia is a serious threat. Before our COVID lockdown we had a January 2020 Saturday hands-on session presentation on the dangers of cold water. The US Coast Guard estimates you may lose consciousness in 15 to 30 minutes and will survive for only 30 to 90 minutes immersed in water between 33 and 40 degrees. A PFD is therefore an important safeguard to keep your head above water should you go over. I always wear mine in my kayak. Further, I do not fish alone in cold water. As I mentioned at the outset of this article, I do not kayak fish big water in winter. I am never far from shore. I am also mindful of the weather and will not fish in windy conditions. Ultimately, the decision to fish cold water is a personal one. Each angler who ventures out on cold water should



realistically access the conditions and their own survival capabilities before

doing so. However, the rewards are many for those who safely fish in cooler waters.

Free State Fly Fishers History: 1985-Present

By Rich Batiuk



By 1985, Free State Fly Fishers, Inc. (FSFF) members numbered about 50 with the club continuing to meet in the library at Hillsmere Elementary School in Annapolis. The club continued to bring in regionally and nationally recognized fly fishing speakers for its monthly meetings including Lefty Kreh, Bob Clouser, A. K. Best, Ed Jawarowski, Jack Dennis, C. Boyd Phieffer, and Joe Bruce.

And by this time in the club's history, there were already some well-established traditions:

- The club's motto, "fellowship through fly fishing", really defined how the club operated and focused its sponsored activities.
- The club welcomed members with all level of fly fishing experiences, supporting interests in catching a wide diversity of fish species by fly fishing small mountain streams to the coastal ocean.
- The club hosted an annual holiday party in December, a tradition started in the 1970s and still continues through today.
- Emphasis placed on sharing fly fishing related experiences through club sponsored fly tying sessions, beginner fly fishing classes, and member-led outings.

By the early 1990s, the increasing number of club members was out growing the Hillsmere Elementary School library meeting location. The club was fortunate enough to learn about the opportunity for much larger meeting space at the Davidsonville Family Recreation Center. A former Nike Missile site, the Anne Arundel County owned property had a variety of buildings made available

to non-profit organizations like Free State Fly Fishers at no cost.

Starting in 1993, the club was able to host the club's Wednesday night meetings in Ford Hall, a large meeting space complete with kitchen facilities. In addition, the club was given access to its own separate clubhouse which members invested a lot of time and energy in renovating into a facility which met the club's needs. The clubhouse was used for hosting fly tying sessions as well as fly fishing classes.

Due to the growth of another organization at Davidsonville Family Recreation Center which was sharing the use of Ford Hall for their activities, the Davidsonville Dance Club took over use of Ford Hall, forcing the club to move its monthly club meetings to the clubhouse by the late 1990s.

At the same time, the club was experiencing its highest membership levels, approaching 200. A key reason for the growth in membership was due to the array of club sponsored meetings, activities and events.

- A club newsletter with very informative articles written by club members mailed monthly to all club members.
- The club sponsored the annual Dave Davies Dinner, named after a long term club member and former club president, as a fundraiser for support conservation efforts with the dinner highlighted by a regionally or nationally recognized speaker.
- Active, hands-on conservation programs directed towards Thomas Point Park, South Branch Patapsco River, and Annapolis Waterworks as well as annual fish passage clean-ups at the Patapsco River dams.
- Hosting a winter time, day-long fly fishing beginners class taught by club members,

addressing all facets of fly fishing from gear selection to stream insect identification to fly tying to fly casting.

- Club sponsored outings scheduled monthly from April through October to a wide array of local and regional locations, with outings to Deer Creek for the spring shad runs to the June float trip down the South Fork of the Shenandoah River to wading the Potomac River at Brunswick at the end of July for the white fly hatch and smallmouth bass being long held traditional outings sponsored by the club.



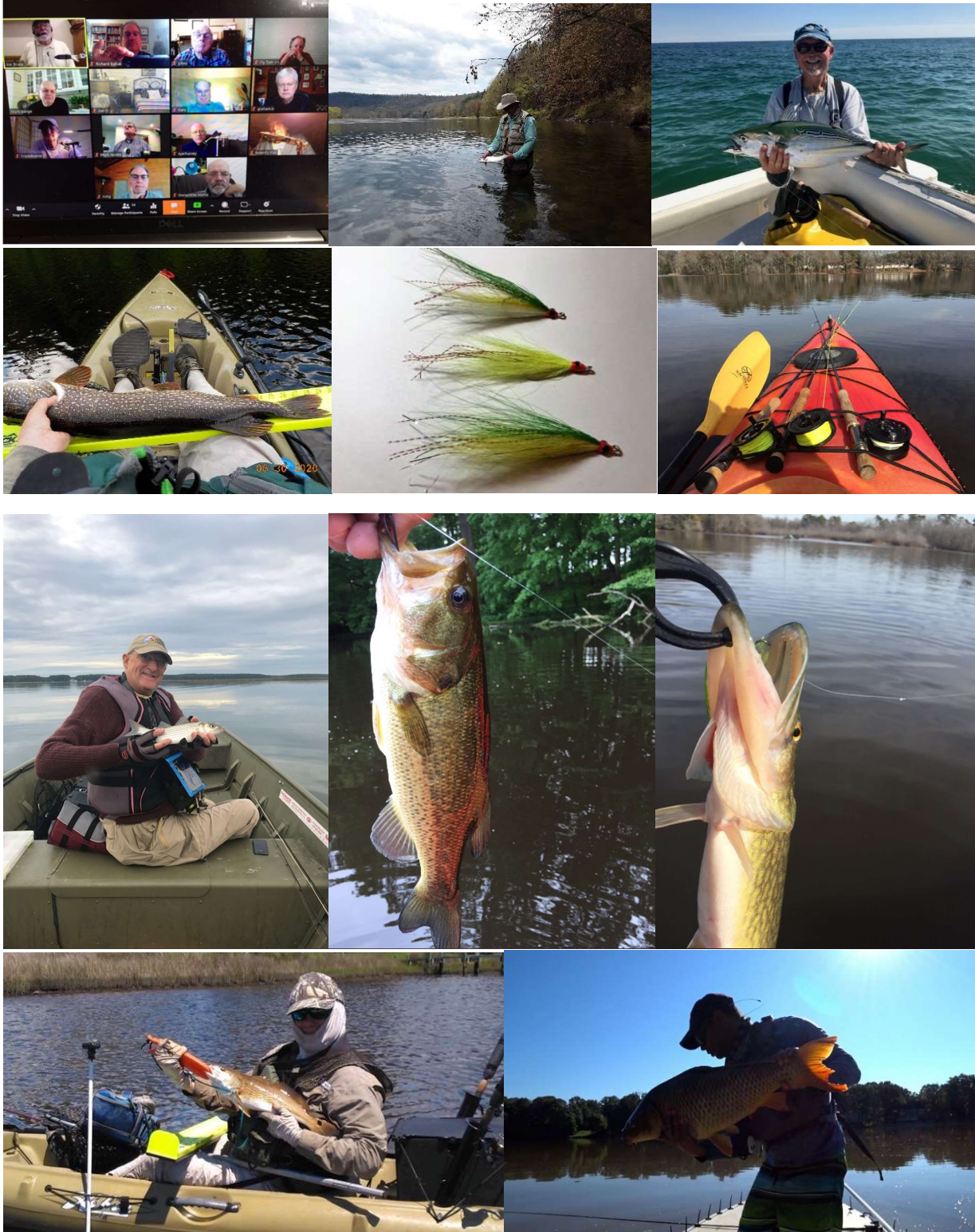
And as Free State Fly Fishers continued to evolve over the next two decades, the quality and quantity of club

sponsored meetings, events, activities and outings increased as well.

- The club's annual Holiday Party raffle became legendary with many fly rods, reels, vises, fly boxes, books and more won by club members as well as the stories and fellowship among the members and their spouses.
 - The monthly club member led fly tying sessions the first Monday of each month were not enough so the club added open fly tying sessions on the rest of the Saturday mornings during the winter months providing more opportunities for club members to get together and tie flies.
 - The club's website as well as its Facebook page along with a group email system became the means of sharing information on upcoming club sponsored meetings, fly tying sessions, events and activities.
- Club sponsored outings were scheduled for all 12 months during the year, with over 30 outings hosted including overnight outings as well as outings located beyond the mid-Atlantic region.
 - Monthly Saturday hands-on sessions were scheduled at the clubhouse in response to club members asks for more opportunity for direct learning about more aspects of fly fishing and fly tying.
 - The club sponsored tables at local and regional fly fishing shows to expose more current and new fly fishers to the club and everything it had to offer them.
 - The club sponsored May outing and picnic to Trap Pond in Delaware is entering its third decade as a club tradition targeting the bluegill spawning season and a delicious lunch (with fudge brownies for dessert!).
 - The clubhouse evolved as well providing more technologies to improve meeting presentations as well as the fly tying and hands-on session experiences.
 - Improving club operations was a priority from setting up 16 different club coordinator positions to updating the club's 1975 by-laws in 2019 to establishing a liability release for signature by all members to formalizing the club's leadership team.

The Club has been in existence for 49 years. This would not have been possible if not for the many, many members who worked tirelessly over the years to make the club successful (and a lot of fun!).

[Editor's Note: This is the second of a series of three articles on the club's history. In the Summer 2020 newsletter, there was an article on the club's 1971-1984 history.]



Just a few photos over the past months of Fellowship Through Fly Fishing (even during a pandemic!). What a truly incredible club we are fortunate to be members of...with lots more memories waiting to be made. Come out and make time to participate, get involved, and stay engaged—help make us an even better club welcoming to fly fishers of all levels of skills and experience!



Free State Fly Fishers, Inc. Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims, Express Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity Agreement

Read carefully before signing

IN CONSIDERATION of being permitted to participate in the fly fishing and other activities (“Activities”) sponsored by the Free State Fly Fishers, Inc. (“FSFF”), I, for myself, my personal representatives, assigns, heirs, and next of kin, do hereby acknowledge and agree to the terms and conditions in this agreement (this “Agreement”). I understand that the inherent hazards and risks associated with participating in FSFF Activities, the movement of equipment related to the Activities, as well as travel to and from the Activity sites is potentially dangerous and physically demanding and hazardous. I am mentally and physically sufficiently fit to participate in such Activities. If at any time I believe the conditions to be unsafe, I will immediately discontinue further participation, and assume all risks inherent in my decision to do so. I understand that the Activities are dangerous and involve the risk of serious injury and/or death and/or property damage; any injuries may be compounded by negligent emergency response of FSFF; I am voluntarily participating in the Activities with knowledge of these dangers involved; and I agree to accept and assume any and all risks of injury, death, or property damage, whether caused by the negligence of FSFF or otherwise.

I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I expressly waive and release any and all claims, now hereafter known, against FSFF and its officers, directors, employees, agents, affiliates, successors, and assigns (collectively, “Releasees”), on account of injury, death, or property damage arising out of or attributable to my participation in the Activity, whether arising out of the negligence of the Releasees or otherwise. I covenant not to make or bring any such claim against the Releasees, and forever release and discharge the Releasees from liability under such claims.
2. I will wear and properly use all of the appropriate protective and safety. However, I am aware and understand that protective gear cannot guarantee the participant’s safety and gear.
3. I acknowledge that FSFF volunteers who lead FSFF Activities, outings, trips, or workshops are not professional leaders, guides or instructors, nor are they certified by an organization requiring certain skills or knowledge of safety practices. I am at all times fully and solely responsible for my own safety and well-being during trips, classes, courses and events involving fly fishing and related Activities conducted under the auspices, sponsorship or leadership of FSFF, its officers, agents and members, as well as in transit to and from such activities, and that I must consider and evaluate my ability to handle the conditions present at all times.
4. In the event that I am injured during an event, trip, workshop and/or other Activity of FSFF, I give permission for other participants to administer first aid and to seek medical assistance as deemed

necessary. I intend that the releases, waivers, indemnity agreements, and assumptions of risk contained in this agreement shall fully apply to any claim whatsoever on account of first aid treatment or service rendered to me during my participation in FSFF Activities, even if caused by the negligence of releasees or others.

I hereby release, covenant not to sue, save and hold harmless, and agree to promptly indemnify FSFF, its officers, directors, coordinators, outing leaders and other volunteers (“the releasees”), from liability and responsibility whatsoever for any and all liability, claims, demands, losses, injuries, damage to property, causes of action or other damages, including but not limited to the costs of litigation and attorneys' fees, that I, my estate, heirs, survivors, executors, or assigns may have for any and all personal injury, disability, property damage, wrongful death, and/or other losses, damage, and/or claims arising out of or resulting from or in connection with the Activities, whether caused by active or passive negligence of the releasees or otherwise.

This Agreement is the sole and entire agreement of FSFF and me regarding the Activity and supersedes all prior and contemporaneous understandings, agreements, representations, and warranties, both written and oral regarding the Activity. If any part of this Agreement is invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, that shall not affect any other part of this Agreement. This Agreement is binding on and shall inure to the benefit of the Releasees and me and is made pursuant to and shall be governed by the laws of Maryland, without giving effect to any principles of conflict of laws. Any claim or cause of action arising under this Agreement shall be brought in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County or the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, Maryland and I hereby consent to the jurisdiction and venue therein.

I have carefully read this agreement, have been given the opportunity to review it by counsel of my choosing, and fully understand its contents. I am aware that this is a release and waiver of liability to all releasees and that by signing this agreement I am giving up important legal rights.

Signature **Date**

Signed on Behalf of _____ (Print Name of Minor), as that Child’s Parent or Legal Guardian

FREE STATE FLY FISHERS LEADERSHIP TEAM

President: [Rich Batiuk](#)

First Vice-President: [Gary Grey](#)

Second Vice President: [Luis Santiago](#)

Secretary: [Frank Bowne](#)

Treasurer: [Tom Gooding](#)

Directors: [Mark Bange](#) (Past President) / [Mike Mattia](#)

FSFF Coordinators:

Clubhouse Coordinator: [John Rentch](#)

DFRC Representative: [Mike Mattia](#)

Club Librarian: [Luis Santiago](#)

Chesapeake Council – FFI Delegate: [Frank Bowne](#)

Membership Coordinator: [Frank Bowne](#)

Social Media Coordinator: [Luis Santiago](#)

Webmasters: [Luis Santiago](#) / [Frank Bowne](#)

Outings Coordinator: [Gary Grey](#)

Pond-of-the-Month Outings Coordinator: [Mike Mattia](#)

Speakers Program Coordinator: [Mark Bange](#)

Fly Tying Coordinator: [Wayne Blake-Hedges](#)

Saturday Hands-on Sessions Coordinator: [Rich Batiuk](#)

Holiday Dinner Coordinator: [Don Vance](#)

Publicity Coordinator: [Ryan Harvey](#)

Raffles Coordinators: [Bob Ruck](#) / [Mike Mattia](#)

Newsletter Editor: [Rich Batiuk](#)

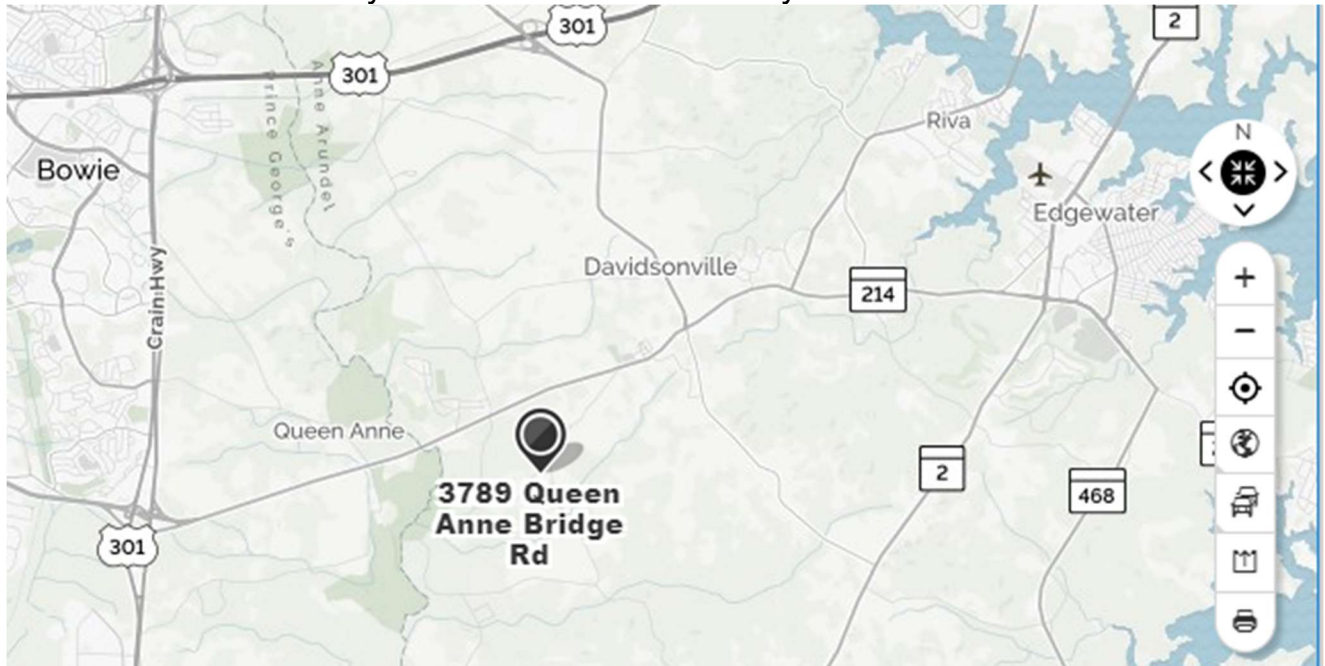
Please contact the appropriate FSFF leadership team member to get answers to any questions about Free State Fly Fishers and upcoming club sponsored events.

“Fellowship Through Fly Fishing”



Directions to the FSFF Clubhouse

Free State Fly Fishers (FSFF) meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month, September through June (except December), starting at 7:00 PM, at our **clubhouse** located at 3789 Queen Anne Bridge Rd., Davidsonville, MD 21035. The club house is on the grounds of the Davidsonville Family Recreation Center, an Anne Arundel County Recreation & Parks facility.



Directions: From Route 50, take Exit 16 to Route 424/ Davidsonville Road South. At the second traffic light, take a right turn onto Route 214/Central Avenue West and then take a left turn on Queen Anne Bridge Road. Take a left-hand turn into the Davidsonville Family Recreation Center through the open gate. Walk along the

parking lot and around and past Ford Hall to the clubhouse using the above map.

Our Website: <http://fs-ff.com/>

Our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/FSFFMD/>

Email Us: info@fs-ff.com