



# FREE STATE FLY FISHERS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2023

## President's Message:

Of the many new opportunities that a new year brings is the chance to take a step back, look at what's in front of you and implement an overall refresh. For many of us I think this a good feeling as we tend to get bogged down and overwhelmed by a monotony of details that life throws at us day in and day out. "In the weeds" or "Managing the minutiae" or however you refer to repetitive challenges, it is easy to lose sight of all of the great opportunities that we have in front of us.

As we go through the holiday season and hopefully get a chance to reflect on the past year and look forward to the possibilities of a new one, sometimes we look ahead and think "this is what I am going to do differently and this is how I am going to do it."

There is no doubt that is where my head is right now. Seemingly that is where my head is every year at this time but this year with new opportunities that not only have me engaged and frankly a little nervous but also super excited! For me 2022 was a truly fantastic year. My professional work life was great, personal relationships truly wonderful, my family and loved ones mostly healthy and happy, and Betty White (my golden retriever) greeted me with a smile every day I came home to her. And last but not least I was blessed with the health and physical and mental ability to pursue my passion—my love of fly fishing and sharing it with others.

When I made my decision to end my career with the Orvis Company in 2017 I was concerned that I wouldn't have the same opportunities to teach and

share my love of fly fishing with others and then I found Free State Fly Fishers...

As I look forward to 2023 and the great fortune I am afforded by serving as president for this amazing club, I am not just thrilled by the prospects but truly humbled by the opportunities. Casting clinics, hands on sessions, streamside FF-101's, various outings, fly rod building classes, trout school, monthly meetings and presentations, fly tying, the swap meet, the club picnic, the holiday dinner. Opportunities abound for those of us that are members of Free State Fly Fishers. Let's kick it up a notch this year and make the effort to fish a little more with others, take a few more pictures, fish some different waters and catch some different fish. We are all truly fortunate to share our love of the sport with one another as we embrace a new year through fellowship in fly fishing.

Tight lines,

*Duber*

Duber Winters

2023 Free State Fly Fishers President



## Upcoming FSFF Sponsored Meetings, Events and Activities

It's January and it may be too cold outside to get out fly fishing (we are talking ice forming temperatures), but it's warm in the clubhouse and we have a lot of great meetings, fly tying sessions, Saturday Hands-on Sessions, and more scheduled in the coming months.

Any time, day or night, you can find out what the club has to offer you as members via our club website's events page at <https://fsff.com/index.php/events-2/>. And many of these club sponsored events are led by our very own members. So come out of the cold and join your fellow club members where the coffee is hot, the jokes are old, and you will be welcome among your fellow fly fishers!



### Wednesday Club Meeting Presentations

Here's our current club meeting schedule.

**February 1:** Mr. Damien Cook, owner of Lowland Outfitters, and Matt Fletcher guide for LLO and custom rod maker will be presenting about kayak fishing for Snakehead. Lowland Outfitters is a kayak fishing guide service based in Dorchester County on the Maryland Eastern Shore specializing in Snakehead fishing from kayaks. They will share information on fishing local rivers, seasons, lures, and how to get it done!

**March 1:** Tim Sherman, i.e., "Tackle Box Tim", writes the monthly article in the free monthly magazine "Hunting and Fishing Journal" which is distributed commonly along with "Fishtalk" and "Proptalk" magazines. He will talk to us about fishing the tidal tributaries of the upper Chesapeake Bay with a slant towards largemouth bass fishing.

**April 5:** Our April speakers will be members of our very own FSFF, who will present a series of 10 minute talks on their favorite or most interesting fishing trips. We'll hear about saltwater flats fishing, Canada Pike fishing, Trout fishing, and more. No lie detector tests will be administered before the presentations, so they will be most interesting, indeed!

**May 3:** Our May speaker will be our very own Andy Grosko who is our club's resident expert on fishing the upper Patapsco River for stocked trout and smallmouth bass. He will present a talk on all aspects of fishing this great, underutilized, local fishery. He'll discuss the different sections of the river, access points, the aquatic insects under those many rocks, and the best flies and streamers to imitate them. Come and take notes!

### Saturday Morning Fly Tying Sessions

We are continuing our first Saturday of the month club member led fly tying sessions from September through June. Come join your fellow club members starting at 10 AM at the clubhouse to learn how to tie several new fly patterns. In advance of each fly tying session, members will receive an email message listing the member leading that session, what fly patterns will be tied and any materials you need to bring to the session. For most sessions, materials will be provided. See the club website's calendar of events in advance for more details.

And there is tying equipment available for use by anyone participating in these member-led sessions as well as assorted fly tying material in the back storage room available for use by everyone.





Member-led fly tying sessions are scheduled for:

- February 4: Mark Bange - a simple foam spider; Harry Steiner - soft hackle flies
- March 4<sup>th</sup>: Joe DeMeo - baitfish flies with dubbing
- April 1<sup>st</sup>: Ryan Harvey
- May 6<sup>th</sup>: Scott Hipple - trout fly patterns
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>: TBD

### Saturday Morning Hands-on Sessions

Thanks to our fellow club members' willingness to share their experiences, we have Hands-on Sessions already scheduled through June. All Hands-on Sessions will be held on the third Saturday of the month at the clubhouse from 10 AM to 12 PM unless otherwise noted.



Want more information on a specific Saturday Hands-on Session? The club's website has one page flyers on each session in the calendar of events which include descriptions of the session and any additional logistics information.

### January 21: Joe Bruce's "A Host of Fly Tying Techniques and Tips from a Commercial Fly Tyer"

There are many, many fly tyers not only within our club, but across the mid-Atlantic and beyond who have learned many new fly tying techniques from Joe, both in person and via his dozens of published books. Here's your incredible opportunity to learn what Joe has learned from his 348 years of tying flies professionally. (Yep, he taught George Washington how to tie flies instead of cutting down cherry trees for a hobby! Martha was very excited.)



### February 18: Mark Bange's "Kayak Fishing in Local Waters" class 10 AM – 2 PM (with group lunch)

Back by popular demand and coming off two prior sell-out crowds (due to the offer of a free lunch with dessert!), Mark will be teaching his truly informative kayak fishing class. Given he updates his presentation and information delivery for every new class, if you have been in this class before, it's worth auditing the class this time as you are guaranteed to learn something new. And who knows, maybe this time Mark will sell his fishing kayak to someone in the audience versus having to carry it back home after the class! 😊

**March 18: Joe Bruce's "Everything You Need to Know About Fishing for Pickerel"**

And speaking of being back by popular demand, we have asked Joe to come back (again) and share how in the heck he consistently catches all those HUGE pickerel, one after the other. Some of us are convinced he has learned how to speak pickerel and has found out exactly which colors they see underwater and what retrieve drives them to attack a fly. And Joe will be bringing his fishing kayak, all rigged up for pickerel and will be actively demonstrating his pickerel fly fishing retrieve techniques. So come out and learn from the pickerel master.



**April 15: Mike Mattia, Rich Batiuk, and John Rentsch's "A Virtual Fly Fishing Tour of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore Ponds"**

Not since the Beatles landed in the United States has there been such excitement about this new threesome and their upcoming 'virtual tour'. Well

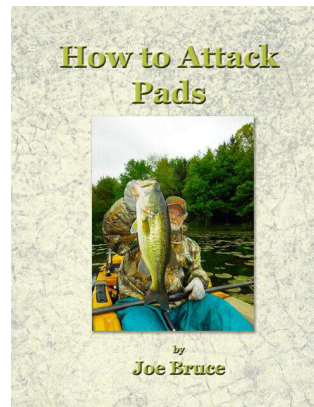


ok, we promise not to ask Mike Mattia to sing or Rich Batiuk to hum in the background. But we can promise they will share some outstanding insights on where to fly fish on the Eastern Shore. See the one page flyer posted on the club's website's calendar of

event for this Saturday Hands-on Session for the menu of ponds to be the focus of this session. Come prepared to find out where to fly fish on the Eastern Shore!

**May 20: Joe Bruce's "How to Attack the Pads and Catch More Fish"**

Only one person in our club could talk about "attacking the pads" and fill the clubhouse with



fellow fly fishers interested in what he has to say. Well, this is the topic of Joe's recent book, now on sale with copies available at this Saturday Hands-on Session. There are years if not decades of photographic evidence that there are some very

BIG fish just waiting under the lily pads for their next meal—just look at the cover of Joe's new book. Now we will all learn how to extract these fish from this heavy cover and document just how big they are with our own selfies!

**Casting Clinics**

Thanks to Tim Ruthemeyer for stepping in as the club's Casting Clinic Coordinator, taking Rich Batiuk's place (thanks to Rich for scheduling and hosting these clinics for the past 5 years). In addition to our regular casting clinic hosted on the lawn behind the clubhouse, Tim has scheduled on-water casting clinics. See below for more details.





**April 8 Casting Clinic Part 1: Casting clinic with Members Casting with Their Own Fly Rods FSFF Clubhouse 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**April 22 Casting Clinic Part 2: On the Water Melford Pond, Bowie, MD 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**June 7: Casting clinic with Members Casting with Their Own Fly Rods FSFF Clubhouse 6:30-8:30 PM (includes group dinner)**

It wouldn't be a June club meeting without another one of our extremely successful fly casting clinics. All of us who have participated in one of these clinics over the years has come away with some new insight into how to fly cast better. This includes fly casting while sitting down in a kayak. Once again we will have a team of fly casting instructors available for all participating club members and guests to self-select which set of fly casting skills do they want to focus on for the evening. A truly hands on session. And a group dinner is included in the cost...yeah, it's free, with drinks and dessert!



**June 16: On Water Casting Clinic. Adelphi Park in Adelphi, Maryland**

will be the location of the club's second (hopefully, of many more) on-water fly

rod casting clinics. More details will follow, but Tim is promising some more new additions to the club's already popular casting clinics.

### **Wednesday Night Beer Ties**

We're continuing another long held club tradition...Beer Ties at the Killarney House in Davidsonville. And yes, this is just an excuse for club members, friends, family members and guests to gather together to drink adult beverages, eat bar food, talk, share fishing stories...and, oh yeah, tie flies.

Wednesday Night Beer Ties at 6:00 PM are on the fourth Wednesday night of every even numbered month throughout the year:

- February 22<sup>nd</sup>
- April 26<sup>th</sup>
- June 28<sup>th</sup>

### **Club Sponsored Outings**

See the club website's calendar of events for more details on upcoming club sponsored outings. And remember you need to have signed the club's liability waiver form prior to participating in any club sponsored outing.

### **Sign up for July Adirondacks Fly Fishing Outing**

Once again, Gary Grey is leading a Club trip to the Adirondacks this year. The trip will be from July 1- July 5, 2023. This is a great opportunity to do some Pike, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, and Trout fishing in a beautiful setting. You can camp in Lake Harris Campground or rent the Pilot House Cabin from the local Outfitter for your stay. A detailed trip description is posted on the club's

website under events/outings. For more information, please contact Gary Grey at [garygrey74@gmail.com](mailto:garygrey74@gmail.com).



## Club News

### What a Great Holiday Party!

Thanks to Don Vance for organizing the party and to Jack Prouty for organizing the raffle prizes, we had a great turnout of members and their husbands, wives, partners and friends and enough raffle prizes for just about everyone to come away with a prize.



It was great to look across the room at Mike's Restaurant and see all those familiar faces and hearing dozens of different conversations. Just like one huge extended family getting together for the

holidays, filled with crazy aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters we haven't seen for a while!

And we ended up with over 30 different raffle prizes, from fly rods and reels to fly fishing books to fly casting lessons to wine to fly fishing gear and more! We were all like kids coming downstairs and seeing piles of presents...but without any name



tags on them. Let's just say there were a lot of raffle tickets sold that night. Great job, Jack!

However, we won't mention any specific names of a single club member who won MORE than his fair share of prizes, but it seemed about every third raffle prize went home with this individual! (We still love you, Tom, but absolutely no raffle tickets for you next year!)





## 2022 Bluegill Tournament Winners



We are pleased to announce the winners of the club's 2022 Biggest (and Smallest!) Bluegill Tournament which officially closed on

Tuesday, November 15, 2022. And this year we have added a prize for the smallest bluegill...and yes, now our members will be seen casting for bluegills the size of a big minnows when no one was watching!

**First Place** – John Rentch, 11.5 inches, 26 May, Blairs Pond, DE on a yellow popper.



**Second Place** -- Larry Oakey, 9.625 inches, Private Pond, Henderson, MD, on a red triangle foam bug.



**Third Place** – Rich Galena, 9.25 inches, 7 June, Alpine Lake, WV on a yellow popper w/red face.



**Fourth Place** – Pat Brophy, 9.0 inches, 7 June, Alpine Lake, WV on a white popper.



**Fifth Place** -- Mike Mattia, 8.75 inches, 10 May, Private Pond, DE.





**Smallest Bluegill** -- Andy Grosko, 2 5/8" Unicorn Lake, MD on a black wooly bugger with a pink head.



Mark Bange, Bluegill Tournament Coordinator

### **Pickrel Contest 2022/2023**



Our club's Biggest Pickerel Contest opened

November 1, 2022 and will close on April 30, 2023. The great news is we already have three entries, but plenty of room on the leader board and plenty of time to get your entry listed up on the club's website!



**First Place** -- Adam Bange, 24 inches, Cockey Creek, MD on a stacked deer hair fly.



**Second Place** -- John Rentch, 21.5 inches, Concord Pond, DE on a yellow bendback minnow.



**Third Place** -- Don Vance, 19 inches, Severn River, MD on a Pistol Pete.

Now is the absolute perfect time to get out fly fishing for pickerel. You will find hungry pickerel on tidal rivers like the Severn and Magothy Rivers as well as in numerous ponds on the Eastern Shore in Maryland and Delaware.

You can find the current rules for the Biggest Pickerel Contest on the club's website at: <https://fs-ff.com/index.php/pickerel-tournament-2022-2023/>.

Mark Bange, Pickerel Contest Coordinator

**Editor's Note:** Go to page 17 and read Mark's "Kayaks and Pickerels – A Cure for Winter Doldrums" for a lot of great ideas on how to catch winter pickerel and get yourself on the leader board. You can even thank our Tournament Judge!



### Club Waterproof Stickers and Business Cards

Thanks to Frank Bowne, the club is now selling club logo waterproof stickers, perfect additions for your fishing kayaks, canoes, boat and paddleboards!



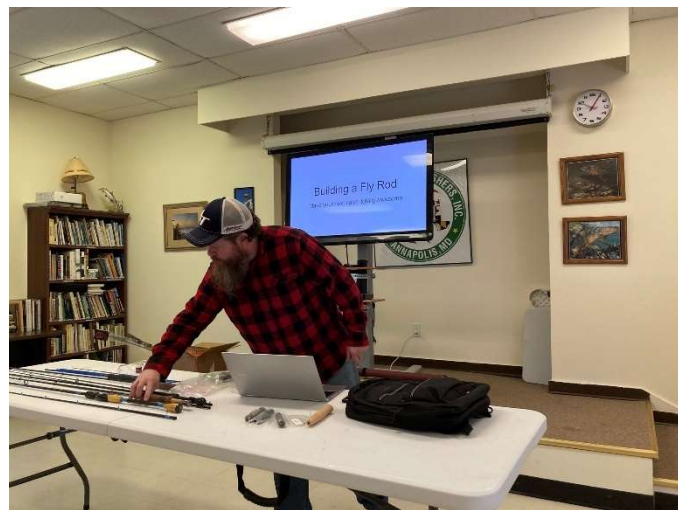
In addition, Frank had new club business cards printed for use by club members to hand out to other fly fishers on the stream or ponds side or people expressing an interest in fly fishing. Each card provides the club's website and other information about the club. Pick up a set of these



club business cards the next time you are at the clubhouse.

### Fly Rod Building Class

John Keough is teaching the club's first fly rod building class this January and February. Club members who signed up selected the fly rod blank they want to build and John ordered not only the fly rod blanks but all the other rod building materials and tools. The classes are being held at the clubhouse on Saturday, January 21 (12 PM start time), January 28 (9 AM start time), and February 11 (9 AM start time). Club members who did not sign up for the class and purchase a rod blank in



advance, but who want to watch and learn are welcome to participate in these classes. Thanks to John for sharing his amazing fly rod building skills with his fellow club members.

### Duberfly Trout Fishing Class

Once again, Duber Winters is hosting Trout School for club members on April 15, 2023 on Cedar Creek at Double Spur Outfitters in Star Tannery Virginia. This one day school is limited to 12 anglers and he has reserved the entire stream for this event. In addition to Duber, professional fly fishing guides Mike Hatfield and Kaitlin Groundwater will be instructing and guiding participating anglers.

This year's Trout School has already filled with 12 attendees. Duber has encouraged interested members to sign up to go on the waitlist—please email Duber directly at [duberfly@gmail.com](mailto:duberfly@gmail.com).





Please consider signing up for next year's Trout Fishing Class as here is what you can expect to experience:

- Double Spur Outfitters is a 2 hour drive from Annapolis Maryland so lodging is not necessary for those willing to get an early start and getting home by dinner time is also doable.
- Lodging could be available on site and certainly nearby in Strasburg VA for those interested. Camping at Double Spur is also an option.
- This is a prime opportunity to learn proven techniques from qualified instructors on a private stretch of water that holds average to exceptionally large trout.



- Double Spur is one of few outfitters that allows for harvesting fish. 2 trout per angler for those interested in fresh trout dinner.
- Attending anglers will come away from this school with the knowledge and confidence to approach trout with a fly rod anywhere.
- This school makes a great gift!

### **2023 Fly Swap Rules and Logistics**

First, thank you to all the participants of last year's swap. I hope our successful fly swap brought many fish to your nets. Thank you to Tim Ruthemeyer for inspiring this year's swap with his foam fly tying session. Now that the holidays are over and winter sets in, there is no better time to get back to your vises and replenish your fly boxes. With that in mind, I am happy to announce our next fly swap.



The theme again for this next swap will be Foam flies. This swap is open to all club members of all levels. I encourage our new members and beginner tiers to participate. Swaps are designed to help motivate you. Practice and refine your technique, share thoughts and questions with fellow tiers and in return receive several new patterns for you to copy, fish and discuss.

We will need an even number of swappers and to be added to the list of participants please send me an email message. We will go with 6 participants, but I would prefer 10, with a maximum 12. This



year we will be each tying two flies. With 6 players you will tie 10 flies (5 of each pattern) and, in turn, receive the same amount tied by the other participants.



The rules and procedures of the fly swap are as follows:

1. If you would like to participate, please email me at [imsantiago05@yahoo.com](mailto:imsantiago05@yahoo.com) ASAP as the closing date for signing up is January 20.
2. Each tier will tie two different patterns. Flies that target any species are acceptable. Any color, any shape or size is acceptable but all flies must have foam incorporated within the fly. The number of flies each participant will need to tie will be announced once the closing date for signing up has pass. In turn, you will receive a variety of 10 – 24 distinct flies tied by fellow club members.
3. The swap is done primarily via mail. Your dozen or less flies will need be shipped to me to arrive before cutoff date of March 11. A self-addressed stamped envelope will need to be included with your flies for me to return your package. A crush proof container would help keep you flies in good shape. A condiment container, Altoid or pill box work well for this. If you choose to not send a self-addressed stamped envelope, please include \$5.00 to cover stamp, and envelope. We can complete swaps at an upcoming club

meeting or fly tying session if you choose to skip the shipping. I will have the flies returned to you by March 20 as long as everyone meets the March 11 deadline.

4. Each fly should have a toe tag for identification. Since you will be getting 10-20 mixed flies it is an easy way to ID who tied a particular fly and what the fly is called. A small slip of paper with the info attached on the hooks works great. That way, if you wish to ask questions about the fly you can speak to tier without having to send out a mass message asking who tied the fly and your question. I will usually place a piece of tape on the small slip of paper to reinforce it so it doesn't come off in transit.

Dates to remember:

- Sign up by January 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Flies completed and shipped before March 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Flies returned around March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Luis Santiago, FSFF Fly Swap Coordinator

### **Maryland Fly Fishing and Collectible Tackle Show**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Maryland Fly Fishing & Collectible Tackle Show is being hosted at Towson University. For anyone interested in classic tackle, such as bamboo, this should be a good event. The show will be attended by a few interesting bamboo/classic tackle personalities, including Marc Aroner, who is a highly regarded bamboo builder



owing to his time at the Leonard Rod Co. and Thomas and Thomas; Hoagy Carmichael who authored "The Book", which shed light on Everett Garrison's process for building bamboo rods; and, Jerry Kustich of Sweetgrass Rods

(formerly of Winston rods). For more information, please see <https://marylandflyfishingshow.com/>.

### **Ride Shares to Upcoming Fly Fishing Shows**

The club is sponsoring ride shares to the upcoming Fly Fishing Shows in our region. The Edison, New Jersey show is scheduled for January 27, 28 and 29 with the Lancaster, Pennsylvania show scheduled for March 4 and 5. You can sign up for ride sharing to the Friday, January 27 NJ show and the Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> PA show by emailing Rich Batiuk at [richbatiuk@gmail.com](mailto:richbatiuk@gmail.com).

Rich Batiuk, FSFF Newsletter Editor

### **Pay for New/Renewal Memberships Electronically**



You can now renew your FSFF membership dues or make a donation on-line: <http://fsff.com/index.php/join-or-renew-membership/>. Also, if you haven't signed your Liability Waiver there is a link to it on the same page. And if you want to pay your

membership dues at the clubhouse you can point your phone's camera at the QR code on the back table.

Frank Bowne, FSFF Membership Coordinator

### **New: FSFF Calendar Subscription**

Once you are a paid member and you join the club Email Group you can get all club events to show up in your smartphone calendar in real time automatically. Follow these simple steps (this example is for Apple iOS but should be similar for Android):

Open the smartphone's Calendar app

Tap on Calendars

Add Calendar

Add Subscription Calendar

Subscription URL: <https://FSFF.groups.io/g/main/ics/1859633/911902081/feed.ics>

Name: FSFF Group (or any name of your choice)

Frank Bowne, FSFF Membership Coordinator

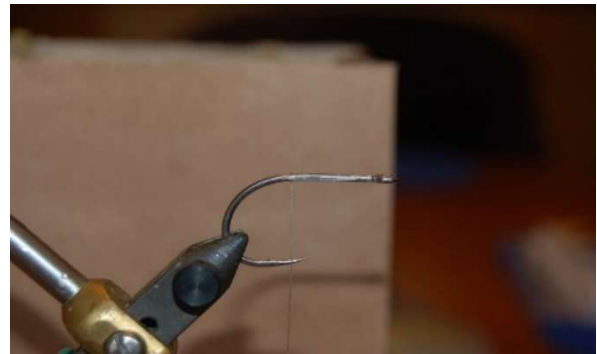
### **Featured Fly: Baitfish Pattern with Dubbing** **By Joe DeMeo**

#### **Material List**

- Ahrex 280 Minnow Hook, 1/0
- Congo Hair, White or Polar Bear
- Krystal Flash, Pearl
- Letera Magnum Dubbing, Pearl, Alewife, Minnow
- Hareline Holographic Eyes, Super Pearl, ¼"
- Thread, Danville, White, 3/0

#### **Fly Tying Procedure**

1. Place hook in vise and tie the thread from hook eye back to slightly beyond the hook point.



2. Select a small bundle of Congo hair and cut it to about 4 inches long. Taper the bundle by pulling out the hair slightly at one end.





3. Tie in the Congo hair bundle at the 60/40 point. 40% toward the rear of the hook and 60% toward the eye of the hook.



4. Tie in two strands of pearl krystal flash at the top of the Congo hair.



5. Fold the Congo hair that is toward the eye of the hook back over to the rear of the hook and tie down.



6. Cut another bundle of Congo hair slightly shorter than the first piece and tie it in at the 50-50 point immediately in front of the installed Congo hair.



7. Separate the front portion of the Congo hair into two equal parts.



8. Sweep the two Congo hair bundles down under the hook and tie in. This forms the support and shape for the dubbing minnow body.



9. Tie in two strands of pearl krystal flash on each side of the Congo hair.



10. Remove the pearl dubbing from its envelope. It looks like a blob of dubbing!



11. Hold the dubbing in your left hand and with the thumb and forefinger of your right hand pull off a small piece of the dubbing.



12. Hold the dubbing piece in your left hand and with the thumb and forefinger of your right hand pull on the dubbing until a piece breaks free and layer that piece to the middle of the piece you're holding in your left hand. Continue this process until you have the length required which is about 4". Remove a second

piece of dubbing from the blob and perform the same process as done for the first piece. This is what you should end up with.



13. Tie the two pieces of dubbing in an 'X' wrap style. One on top of the hook and one under the hook immediately in front of the previous material tied in. The 'X' wrap is made by tying the pieces 45 degrees to the hook shank as shown in the photo.



14. Fold the top piece back on top and fold the bottom piece back underneath the hook and tie in.





15. For the next X wrap, the top piece will be the alewife color dubbing and the bottom piece will be pearl. After layering each piece twice, cut about ½ inch off of each end and then continue layering until you have two pieces like this.



16. Continue the X wrap with the shortened alewife and pearl pieces until you reach about a 1/16 inch from the eye of the hook. For the last X wrap use a long piece of the minnow-colored dubbing at the top along with a short pearl piece at the bottom. Fold these back like the previous wraps.



17. Using liquid super glue, attach ¼ inch 3-D holographic eyes to each side.



18. Brush or comb the fibers to blend everything together and slightly dampen to obtain the desired baitfish profile.



## How to Fly Fish Even Better: Essential Tools for Chain Pickerel

By Joe Bruce

Two items to always have immediate access to are pliers and jaw spreaders. You won't have a good day trying to lip pickerel. It can be done, once with each thumb and then a trip to the hospital to get bandaged up. Pickerel have thousands of teeth in their mouths for holding on to their prey. Our fingers are not prey. Pickerel have large mouths and can easily suck in a fly or lure. I have already mentioned keeping these tools handy, not in the tackle box. You owe it to these festy cold weather fish to release them with care and in a speedy manner.



Both tools are on lanyards attached to a "D" ring on my kayak. I can slide the spreaders in the fish's mouth in

seconds and remove the hook with the pliers and release the fish in five to ten seconds.

The lanyards are just as important as the tools, I have lost both tools to shaking fish more times

than I would like to say. Use lanyards, it will keep you from running to the store after a fishing trip to purchase them again. This is experience talking. We all want an enjoyable day on the water; these tools will accomplish that and do no harm to the fish to hopefully catch it another day.

## Places to Fish: Rainbow Lake

By Jim Delle Bovi

Ever have that urge to “go light” and leave the waders, boots, kayaks, backpacks, fishing vests, wading sticks, and everything else we’ve grown accustomed to cramming into our vehicles behind? Feel like strolling out of the house with nothing more than a fly rod, a tackle bag, lunch and a smile? (Fully clothed, of course). I’ve got the place for you!

So many of our excursions require lots of “stuff”, for safety reasons, mobility, etc., I’ve learned that it’s great once in a while to leave it all behind, grab a few essentials, and out the door you go. Particularly, for me, because the typical season requires so much stuff as I enjoy inshore kayak saltwater fishing as much as freshwater wade fishing for both fly and spin casting.



Rainbow lake is a picturesque 8 acre freshwater lake just outside of Emmitsburg, MD. A variety of fish can be found including catfish, largemouth bass, rainbow trout, brown trout, bream, and

bluegill. There is NO BOATING allowed, NO SWIMMING, and NO WADING as it is a conservation area and provides drinking water for surrounding communities. As a result, the water is crystal-clear clean, and gets very little pressure.

There are plenty of spots open enough for fly casting. In fact, there is one flat rock outcropping that stretches pretty far out into the lake. From it you can easily cast to the middle of the lake or hit the shorelines with either flies or streamers.

On my last visit I brought a single 5 weight rod and one box of flies, streamers, and nymphs. All I did the entire day was strip a single size 12 gold-ribbed hare’s ear through the water and caught smallmouth, largemouth, and panfish on every other cast! I was very surprised at the size of some of them.

It was a great day of “low budget”, “low overhead” catch and return. Be sure to bring along a lawn chair to sit back and relax for lunch.

It's also a great place to bring the youngsters to start developing those casting skills. Plenty of open shoreline, and plenty of willing bluegill to keep them interested!

And now for the logistics...you need a free permit to fish Rainbow Lake and can get it from the Emmitsburg Town Office (300A South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727) the same day you plan to fish. It’s very close to the lake. Just bring your Maryland fishing license and they will give you a permit good for the same timeframe that is specified on your MD license.

So leave all that stuff you’re lugging around at home to use on another occasion and go “minimalist” for the day! You’ll be glad you did.

Access Point: Off of Hampton Valley Road  
(39.695454,-77.388407)



## Feature Article: Kayaks and Pickerels – A Cure for Winter Doldrums

By Mark Bange

I love to catch pickerels. It didn't used to be that way. The first one I caught was in Trap Pond during a springtime family camping trip about 35 years ago. I was fly fishing for bluegills in my Old Town Discovery canoe. A small "hammer handle" pickerel hit my yellow Gaines "Pan Pop" fly. I remember precisely where I caught it along the campground shoreline. The contours of that shoreline have not changed since then and I still catch fish at that spot today.

To be honest, my first pickerel scared me. I saw teeth and a slender body and I thought I had hooked a mutant water snake. I grabbed the leader and the fish *shimmied* and shook and released itself outside the confines of my canoe. What a relief!

What I didn't realize then was that I had met what was to become my favorite fly rod fish. Fast forward two and a half decades. I was catching pickerels in the late fall and winter from my kayak in local tidal creeks. I caught most of them on small homemade spinner baits.

I poured my own 1/8 oz. lead jigs, powder painted them, tied bucktails to them and attached a size 3 Colorado spinner blade. Voila – a terrific lure for pickerels. And as it turned out, a host of other species to include white perch, stripers, channel cats, bass and redfish. To be honest, I've lost count of the species I have caught with these small spinners.



Catching tidal pickerels was quite easy – when they were willing. Cast a spinner to the shoreline with a

lightweight spinning rod and retrieve. Not much strategy or thinking involved. Monotonous. However, I did not know how to catch them regularly with a fly.

Then an odd thing happened in our local tidal creeks. The pickerels disappeared in the late two thousand teens. From 2017 through most of 2019, there were very few to be found in tidal waters. I was dismayed. I even wrote to the MD DNR asking for an explanation. Their answer: "Go to St. Mary's Lake if you want to catch them." I've since learned from other sources that tidal pickerels go through cycles where they will become scarce and then rebound. Indeed, that happened. I started catching tidal pickerels again in December of 2019 and they have remained active in our tidal creeks since.

During the period when tidal pickerel fishing was unproductive, I saw numerous Facebook photos posted by FSFF member Joe Bruce of enormous pickerels along with his smiling bearded countenance. I wondered where he was catching these beasts since they had disappeared from our tidal waters. But being respectful, and somewhat in awe of his prowess, I did not want to bother him. (I now know that was a mistake. Joe is exceedingly approachable and forthcoming with fishing advice.) As it turned out, Joe told all FSFF members how to catch pickerels during a presentation he gave at our clubhouse. He showed us photos of the Eastern Shore millponds where he was hooking these fish and described his methods for catching them on the fly and with spinning gear. But it got even better for me. He invited me to join him on his outings.

It was on those trips that I learned the most about catching pickerels. That included their holding patterns. As Joe says, pickerels "like a roof over their heads". When lily pads and spatterdock are thick in the ponds, pickerels will be under them. And don't overlook boat docks in tidal waters.

Pickerels will congregate near pilings and under the wooden decks.

As winter progresses and the topwater vegetation dies back, pickerels may still be holding in those formerly weedy areas. So, it pays to visit the deeper areas where the vegetation was visible during warmer months. The plants may not be seen on the surface in winter, but their roots and stems still exist underwater and attract fish. Yet, many winter pickerel anglers will continue to pound shorelines as if they were fishing in spring. They may catch a few, but they will catch more if they target the areas I mentioned above.

And here's another tip. In winter sleep in. There is no need for early morning outings. Wait until well after the sun rises, say 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. before arriving at a body of water to fish. An increase in water temperatures of only a degree or two may activate the fish. Yet they will still bite in very cold water. One of my best pond fishing trips happened when the late afternoon water temp was a frigid 38-degrees. Certainly, the water had been colder than that in the morning.

Another suggestion: If the water's surface is rippled by winds, intermediate line is helpful. Pickerels hold deeper in windblown water. A fly presentation with intermediate line only a few inches lower in the water column than floating line can be the key to success.

As for flies in winter, Joe's bullethead darters,



regular and articulated, are pickerel candy. However, I have never been pleased with my homemade

darters. To put it mildly, they look like hell. Not that the pickerels care about the appearance of my

darters, but I do. So, I started tying articulated crystal buggers a few years ago and they have worked very well for me.

Another fly I use when pickerel fishing is the Bendback Minnow. Because it is unweighted and rides with the hook point up, it's a great fly to thread through the early



winter remnants of topwater vegetation. It's almost weedless. An additional trick I learned from Joe – offset the hook point on your Bend Backs just a bit and you will increase hookups. I tie both flies on 2/0 Mustad 3366 hooks.

You will have to determine what kind of fly retrieval works best on a given day. Most of the time a simple strip, strip, pause method is best. Vary the cadence and the length of each strip until you find out what they want. In shallow water ponds, you will see the fish strike your flies because water clarity increases as the temperature drops. It's exciting to watch a pickerel slash at your fly with rocket like speed in such cold water. Another quote from Joe: "They have antifreeze in their veins."

My tackle approach to winter pickerel fishing is to carry two 7-weight, 9-foot rods in my kayak. On one I have floating line and an 8-foot tapered leader with a 30-to-40-pound mono bite tippet. On the other I have intermediate line with 4 feet of straight 30-to-40-pound mono as a leader. In tidal creeks, I find that pickerels bite best on a falling tide. I try to time my outings then but my availability will always override tide stages. In other words, I go when I can regardless of tides. Also, in local creeks, there is less topwater vegetation than in ponds. That means the pickerels will be holding slightly deeper than they would in



ponds. I am more apt to add a sink-tip on my floating line in tidal water. (Note: I use the same straight 4-foot leader on sink-tips that I use on intermediate line.) The further we get into winter, the more I will rely on the sink-tip in tidal creeks. In ponds, which are shallower than tidal water, I never use a sink-tip, just a floating line on one rod and an intermediate line on the other.

I will tie a Bendback to the tippet on one rod, and an articulated crystal bugger on the other. Does the color of the fly matter? Perhaps. You cannot go wrong with flies that are white, yellow or red or some combination thereof. But honestly, I have yet to find a color that does not work if the fish are active. I carry extra flies because pickerel teeth will shred your offerings after multiple catches. Also, check your tippet after several catches. While it's rare for a pickerel to bite through 30-to-40-pound mono, they will indeed break you off if your tippet has been abraded from multiple catches. I carry extra leaders and tippets.

Patience is key when fishing for pickerels. It's an interesting phenomenon that I cannot explain, but a trait about them in both tidal waters and ponds is that their peak activity is periodic. By that I mean, you can cast in all the right places. You can manipulate your fly at various depths with multiple actions. And you may get no bites for sustained periods. You know the fish are there. You may even see them in the clear water. But they will ignore your fly. And then suddenly for no apparent reason, they get aggressive. You'll know when that happens because you'll get hits on consecutive casts. You may even catch several in a row. Your fishing buddies will tell you via phone or VHF radio that they are getting strikes at the same time even if they are in different areas on the water. This period of activity may last an hour or more. Then as fast as the bite started it will stop. At the end of your outing, you will realize you caught most of your fish during specific periods of

time. It's rare that pickerel action lasts the entirety of your outing. So, it pays to wait them out. Eventually, their bite will turn on. My pickerel jaunts may last six or more hours. Those unpredictable, inexplicable periods of high activity make it all worthwhile.

For safety and comfort on these long winter outings, I dress appropriately. That includes wearing dry pants over fleece wading pants, neoprene boots, warm layers on top and always a Personal Floatation Device. Also, since there is increased protection in numbers, I fish with other kayak anglers in cold water.

I could go on and on about my winter pickerel love affair. What I most appreciate about them is that they remain active when our other target fish have either vacated our kayak waters or gone dormant until spring. Indeed, a pickerel is usually the first and the last fish species I catch in my kayak each calendar year. If the winter waters I fish are not iced over and snow is not swirling and winds are not howling, I am anxious and willing to go pickerel fishing. I am grateful that they give us the opportunity to continue kayak fishing during the shortest and coldest days of the year.



**My final fish of 2021 – A New Year's Eve 22-inch pickerel caught on a Bend Back Minnow**

Kayak anglers who have stored their gear for the year at the onset of winter don't know what fun they are missing. Pickerels strike hard and pull vigorously. A 20-incher will put a big bend into your 7-weight rod. Smaller ones may even go airborne when hooked. A 24-incher is an absolute brute that may take you several minutes to subdue. I believe they are a vastly underappreciated game fish.

There is another aspect I like about winter pickerel fishing, especially when I visit millponds on the Eastern Shore. I find the drive to and from the Shore relaxing. While the ponds can be 60 to 90 miles from my house, in winter there are no Bay Bridge backups and traffic is light on Routes 404 and 301. Plus, there is something very comforting on the ride home, especially after a day of catching two dozen or more pickerels. I crank up the heater in my truck, open my waiting thermos of hot coffee, and turn on my satellite radio. I may stop briefly at a Royal Farms or McDonald's for a bite to eat. A warm truck cab, hot coffee at the ready, good music on the radio and a full stomach is a satisfying way to end a cold winter day on the water chasing my favorite fly rod fish.

Finally, my thanks to Joe Bruce for so graciously showing me his pickerel techniques. I've become a much better fly angler thanks to his guidance. Plus, he has inspired me to share what I have learned with others. "Pay it forward," as the saying goes. Indeed, I have tried to do that in my FSFF Newsletter articles, slide presentations and by providing advice to the folks who join me on outings. I can honestly say that I get as much of a charge seeing others catch pickerels on the fly as I do when I hook one myself. So, if this article has convinced you to cast flies at winter pickerels and if you would like some company and perhaps some helpful tips while fishing for them, just let me know. We will have a good time for sure.

## Fly Fishing Essentials: Knots

By Joe Bruce and Duber Winters

[Editor's Note: This article is a first in a series about fly fishing knots based on the November 19, 2022 "Tying Fishing Knots for Every Fly Fishing Situation" Saturday Hands-on Session taught by Duber and Joe. Upcoming newsletters will feature different knots recommended by Joe and Duber.]

**Joe Bruce and the Albright Knot** There are three parts to every knot. 1. The end or tag. 2. The standing portion or running line. 3. The bight.

I am a knot junkie, so here are my three rules:

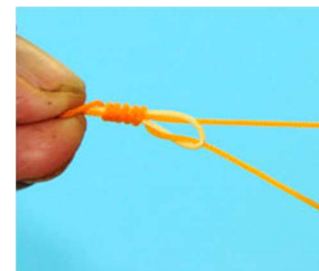
- 1) If I think I tied the knot wrong, I re-tie.
- 2) I re-tie often.
- 3) After every fishing session I re-tie all my knots.

For heavy duty and saltwater you only need five knots: The Albright Knot, Palomar, Improved Clinch, Non-slip Loop Knot and The Homer Rhodes. For this newsletter, we will start with the Albright Knot and the cover the remaining knots in upcoming club newsletters.



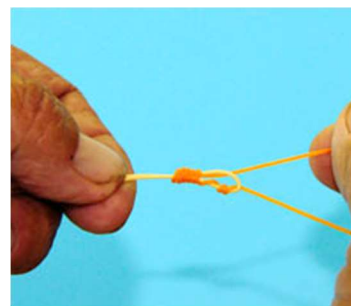
The **Albright Knot** is good for tying fly line to backing and joining two different diameter lines together. It is the best knot for adding

a bite tippet to a leader. I have developed a better way to tie the original knot.



Form a loop in the heavier material, take about 6 to 8" of the tag end of the thinner material and insert it in the loop. Pinch an inch of the thinner line between the thumb and index

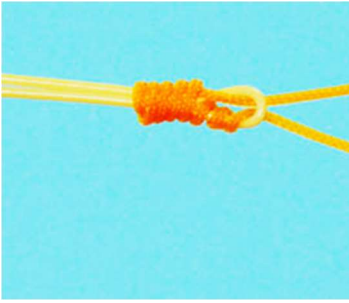
finger. Make 10 to 15 wraps of the thinner line around both sides of the loop and exit the tag out through the loop.



Make two more wraps through the loop. Take the standing (thin line) and start drawing the knots down to the top of the loop. Pull gently on the short thin tag line

and then pull the knot tight with the standing thin line.





This is what the knot will look like before tightening the loop shut.



Cut the tag ends of the heavier and thin lines. The knot is complete.

### Duber Winters and the Clinch Knot

The clinch knot is probably the most popular and universally known knot that there is. It was the first knot that I learned and it was called “the fisherman’s knot” or at least that was what I was told at the time. I recall struggling with this knot as a youngster and lost way too many hooks, rigs and lures and fish to count. I continued to use the knot and eventually learned the proper way to tie it.

Today I have specific uses for the **Clinch Knot** that include nymphs and dry flies for trout fishing. There is no doubt it could be used for many more applications and it certainly is. Again, it all comes down to preference and confidence.

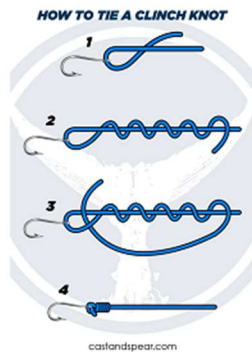
There are variations of this knot with the most popular being the “improved clinch knot”. I know many experienced anglers that tie this version of the knot and swear by it. I don’t tie the improved version simply because I have never found the need to do so. I realized that when I tie the basic clinch knot, the strength of the knot is adequate for the applications that I use it for. If you or someone you know likes the improved version then by all means go with it! The key to the clinch knot or any other knot is that it is tied properly.

As highlighted in the graphic below, the most critical mistake made when tying this knot is pulling on the tag end to cinch the clinch. The key to finishing this knot properly is to hold the fly with forceps or pliers and pulling on the main line. This will allow the wraps to seat on top of one another. The number of wraps used for the clinch knot is

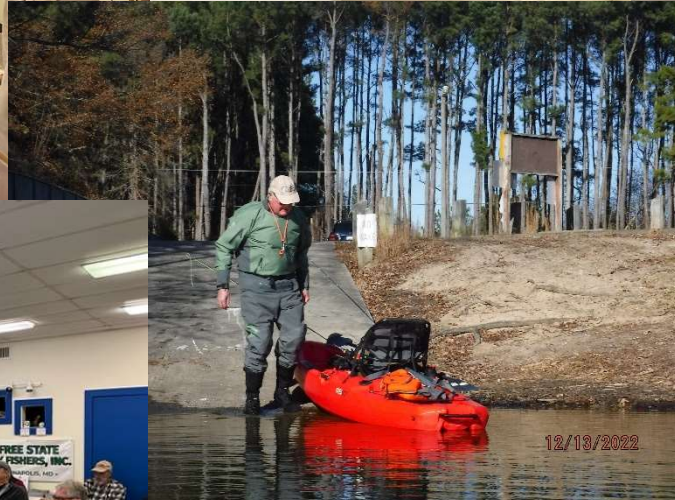
dictated by the diameter of the line and the material (monofilament or fluorocarbon). That said I think 5 wraps should be the minimum for most applications.

# CLINCH KNOT

- Good knot for small flies and tippet
- Easy to tie and remember!
- Critical step!!! Finish the knot by letting the tag end go as you pull on the main line to cinch the clinch









Click [here](#) to renew your membership on-line or mail in the forms below if paying by cash or check.



**FREE STATE FLY FISHERS, INC.**  
**2023 Membership Application**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Last)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_

**If renewal → Is this a new address, phone number or email address?** \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Dues: \$15.00 per year

Payment Method: Cash \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: FREE STATE FLY FISHERS, INC.

**May we share your contact information with other club members?** \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**Are you a member of Fly Fishers International?** \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Give the completed application and payment to Frank Bowne at an upcoming meeting or send the completed application and payment to:

Frank Bowne  
314 Chester Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21403



## **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 equipment. 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.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

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

## **FREE STATE FLY FISHERS 2023 LEADERSHIP TEAM**

President: [Duber Winters](#)

First Vice-President: [Bill Smith](#)

Second Vice President: [Luis Santiago](#)

Secretary: [Frank Bowne](#)

Treasurer: [Bill Smith](#)

Member-at-Large: [Ryan Harvey](#)

Directors: [Gary Grey](#) (Past President) / [Mike Mattia](#)

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DFRC Representative: [Mike Mattia](#)

Club Librarian: Vacant

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

Membership Coordinator: [Frank Bowne](#)

Social Media Coordinator: [Adam Bange](#)

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

Group Email Coordinators: [Luis Santiago](#) / [Frank Bowne](#)

Outings Coordinator: [Duber Winters](#)

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

Biggest Bluegill/Pickerel Tournaments Coordinator: [Mark Bange](#)

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

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Swap Meet Coordinators: [Rich Batiuk](#) / [Mark Bange](#)

Movie Night Coordinator: Vacant

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

Door Prizes Coordinator: [Joe DeMeo](#)

Newsletter Editor: [Rich Batiuk](#)

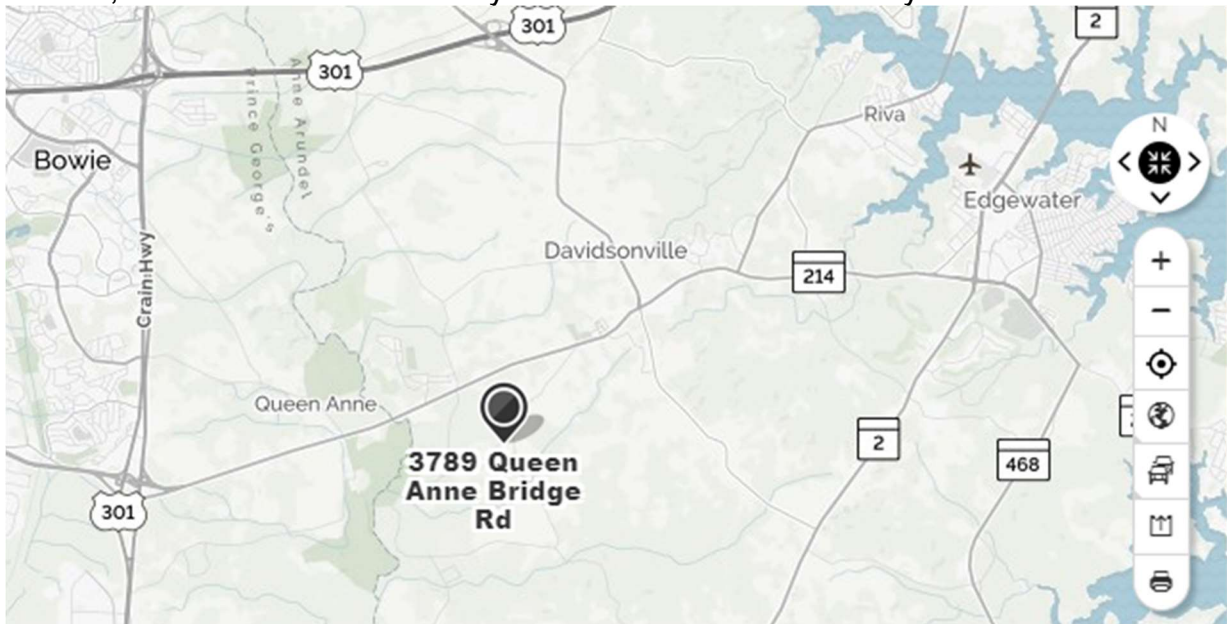
Please contact the appropriate FSFF leadership team member to get answers to any questions about Free State Fly Fishers and upcoming club sponsored events.





## “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/>

**Our YouTube Channel:** <http://youtube.com/@fsffmd>

**Email Us:** [fsffmd@gmail.com](mailto:fsffmd@gmail.com)