



FREE STATE FLY FISHERS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023

President's Message: Spring Time is Fly Fishing Prime Time!

I have always said that of the many great things that fly fishing has to offer is that there is not a time of year in this part of the country that you can't go out and be successful in catching fish. Of course there are times when certain species of fish will be more readily available and more willing to eat a fly and there are times when the weather is just not comfortable for us to be out floating on a river or standing in a stream but the beautiful reality is that there are fish in the waters that surround us that can be encouraged to bite a fly during any month of the calendar year.

When I assess my local fishing calendar at the beginning of the year, I definitely plan to target trout, steelhead and pickerel from January to April, bass and carp from April to June, rockfish and perch from May to July, offshore trips from July to September, redfish in the summer and fall and steelhead and trout again from October through December. Sprinkle in a few destination trips for bonefish, tarpon and snook and my calendar is set for the year. Of course this timeline is not absolute but year after year this seems to be my general path.

With that said there really is something special about the months of April and May as many of the fish that we like to target on fly are coming out of their winter haunts and starting to actively feed. This coupled with the rebirth of life in nature, the trees budding and birds chirping just gets me thinking about getting on the water and staying there for as long as humanly possible. I have always

said that May is the best time of year to chase so many different types of fish in our area and that if I had to pick one month to just fish, May would be the winner. It seems as though over the last 10-15 years or so April has been running a very close second to May, giving October a serious run for its money.

And with this renewed excitement to be on the water chasing all of these feeding fish, Free State Fly Fishers is getting more and more active as well. The list of fishy activities sponsored by the club not only continues to grow but is getting better and better all the time. So as you look at your fishing calendar for April, May and June be sure to check it against the FSFF Events calendar to benefit from all of the great things we have going on for our



members and to connect with others through fellowship through fly fishing.

So let's fish!!

Duber

Duber Winters
2023 Free State
Fly Fishers
President

FSFF Sponsored Meetings, Events and Activities

In the month of April alone, the club has 8 different activities which members could actively participate in! Yes, 8 different activities. Let's count them together: 1) April 5 Monthly Club Meeting at the Clubhouse; 2) April 8 Casting Clinic Part 1 at the clubhouse; 3) April 15 Trout School in Virginia; 4) April 16 "Rods and Reels in the Park" in Patapsco Valley State Park; 5) April 20 Western Maryland Trout Fishing Outing; 6) April 22 Casting Clinic Part 2 at Melford pond in Bowie; 7) April 26 Beer Tie at Killarney House Irish Pub; and 8) April 27 Fly Fishing Film Tour.

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/>. Mark your calendars and come out and join your fellow members. Better yet, subscribe to the club's events so that they automatically appear in your smartphone's calendar. See instructions below.

Wednesday Club Meeting Presentations



Here's our current club meeting schedule through May given our June meeting will be our next casting clinic and we don't meet in July or August.

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!



May 6th Swap Meet

Come out to the clubhouse for opportunity to choose from a wide array of fly fishing and other fishing related rods, reels, fly lines, equipment, clothing and books will be available for sale, all at incredible prices. And you can sell your unused fly gear and fly tying material. Join your fellow members from 9 AM – 12 PM on Saturday, May 6th.

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.

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:

- May 13th: Scott Hipple - trout fly patterns (moved to 2nd Saturday due to Swap Meet)
- June 3rd: TBD
- September 2nd: Bob O'Donnell

Saturday Morning Hands-on Sessions

Thanks to our fellow club members' willingness to share their experiences, we had a full schedule of Hands-on Sessions scheduled from September through May this year. 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.



Please note that our May 20 "How to Attack the Pads and Catch More Fish" which was to be led by Joe Bruce will be rescheduled due to a conflict with the club's May 20 Trap Pond Outing and Picnic.

And the April 15 "A Virtual Fly Fishing Tour of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore Ponds" had to be postponed as well due to a schedule conflict with the club's Trout Fly Fishing School. Rich Batiuk, the club's Saturday Hands-on Sessions Coordinator, will be lining up Hands-on Sessions for September 2023 – May 2024 in the coming months.

A complete schedule will be published in the Summer 2023 newsletter and on the club's website. The club website's calendar of events will also include one page flyers on each session with descriptions of the session and any additional logistics information.

Casting Clinics



The club will continue hosting the new two-part fly casting clinics. The first part will be our regular casting clinic hosted on the lawn behind the clubhouse. The second part will be an on-water casting clinic located at a waterbody nearby the clubhouse. More details will be provided on the club website's calendar of events.

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

June 17: On Water Casting Clinic. Adelphi Park in Adelphi, Maryland

Tim Ruthemeyer, FSFF Casting Clinic Coordinator

Wednesday Night Beer Ties

Thanks to Frank Bowne, we're continuing another long held club tradition...Beer Ties at the Killarney House located at 584 W Central Avenue 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.



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

- April 26th
- June 28th
- August 23rd
- October 25th

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.

Trap Pond Outing and Picnic May 20

Another long held club tradition is hosting a club outing at Trap Pond in Delaware and getting together for lunch and sharing stories about just how many bluegills each of us caught that morning!

If you plan to join your fellow members, please reach out to Ryan Harvey at rybeer@gmail.com so you can sign up for what you will bring to the lunch in the way of food, drinks, desserts or plates/cups/utensils.

You can spend the day or camp out overnight/stay locally overnight and get more time on the water chasing down that 9"+ bluegills!



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. For more information, please contact Gary Grey at garygrey74@gmail.com.

Club News

Biggest Pickerel Contest 2022/2023 Standings

Our club's Biggest Pickerel Contest opened November 1, 2022 and will close on April 30, 2023. Here's the current standings.



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



Second Place -- John Rentch, 23.5 inches, Concord Pond, DE on a Schminnow.



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



The winners will be announced at the May club meeting. 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, FSFF Pickerel Contest Coordinator

2023 Biggest (and Smallest) Bluegill Contest



We are pleased to announce the club's 2023 Biggest (and Smallest!) Bluegill Tournament officially opened on Saturday April 1, 2023.

Remember, last year we added a prize for the smallest bluegill. Andy Grosko took that prize last year with an entry that he did not have a ruler small enough to measure his tiny bluegill. So if you have to use a quarter to show the size of your bluegill, be sure to submit a photo for this year's contest!!

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

John Rentch is off to a good start in our 2023 Contest with this 9-inch entry now in first place. He caught it on a black woolly bugger in Blairs Pond, Milford, DE on Thursday, 20 April. Congratulations to John for his catch.

We are entering prime bluegill season. So, let's fill up our leaderboard from first to fifth place. Also,



don't forget our special recognition for the smallest bluegill caught on a fly.

Mark Bange, FSFF Bluegill Contest Coordinator

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

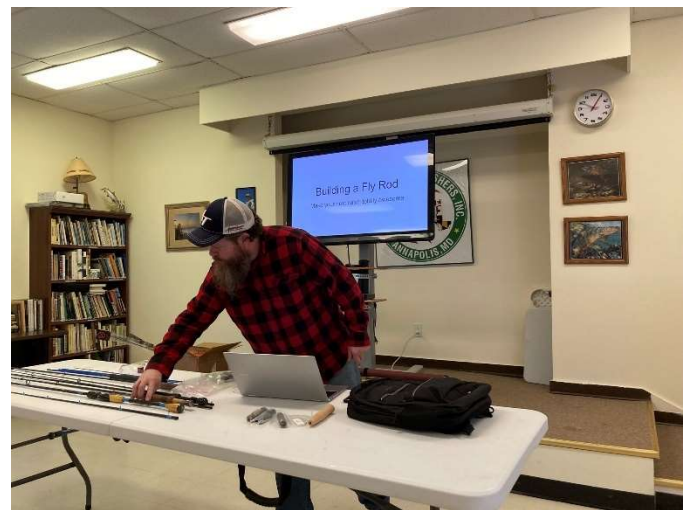


addition, Frank had new club business cards printed for use by club members to hand out to other fly fishers on the stream or ponside or people expressing an interest in fly fishing. Each card provides the club's website and other information about the club. Pick up a set of these club business cards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



Fly Rod Building Class Results in Beautiful Fly Rods

John Keough taught the club's first fly rod building class this past January and February. The resultant fly rods built by the class members were truly incredible! In just two to three classes, John worked the class participants through all the steps in building their own fly rods.



John has offered to teach future fly rod building classes for our fellow members if there is enough

interest. Providing a menu of options for the rod blanks as well as fly rod building materials and equipment, John orders everything for the fly rod building class participants. Stay tuned for future fly rod building classes sponsored by the club.

Another Successful Duberfly Trout Fishing Class

Once again, Duber Winters hosted Trout School for 12 club members on April 15, 2023 on Cedar Creek at Double Spur Outfitters in Star Tannery Virginia. In addition to Duber, professional fly fishing guides Mike Hatfield and Kaitlin Groundwater instructed and guided participating club members.



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. Two 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 Includes Record Number of Participants

During this year's Fly Swap, we had a record 12 participants sharing an array of flies. The theme for this year's Fly Swap was foam flies. And as you can see in the below photo, our fellow club members were very ingenious in how they used foam in their respective two share fly patterns.



Here's the list of flies which were swapped this past March:

- STP frog fly
- Stickie 3.0
- Brown-eyed damsel
- Chartreuse bee
- Strip-teaser
- Green foam popper
- Bee popper
- Stomper
- Bionic ant 2.0
- Chubby Chernobyl
- White foam ant popper
- Crease fly
- South fork Chernobyl ant
- KY bluegill fly
- Stealth bomber
- Dragon fly
- Foam ant
- Whitlock gorilla damsel/dragon fly
- Grumpy frumpy
- Foam bee
- #16 Pink midge
- #20 Trico
- It's a Bug Bluegill
- Clouser floating minnow.

So be sure to sign up for next year's Fly Swap starting at the January 2024 club meeting.

Luis Santiago, FSFF Fly Swap Coordinator

Wading Safely Article

As many of us are preparing for wading streams and rivers this spring, it might be time to review wade fishing safety. Here is a link to a recent article from Orvis News entitled "Pro Tips: How to Wade Safely and What to Do If You Fall In."

<https://news.orvis.com/fly-fishing/pro-tips-how-to-wade-safely-and-what-to-do-if-you-fall-in>

Bill Smith, FSFF First Vice President

About the Fish

- Trivia
- Habitat
- Ecology
- Spawning

How to Catch Them

- Fly Rods & Reels
- Lines and Leaders
- Flies
- Tools
- Techniques

Locations

- Tidal Creeks
- Ponds

Agenda



Saturday Hands-on session "The Bluegill – Lots of Fun in a Small Package" Presentation Available

I've gotten many requests for copies of the slides I used during my presentation on bluegills. I very much appreciate the interest that my topic generated.

Frank Bowne has kindly put a PDF version of the slides on our FSFF website at this link: [Past Meetings \(fs-ff.com\)](https://www.fs-ff.com). At the moment, it is the first item listed on that page. The PDF version is nice but it is not able to show the animations I used on several of the slides.

If you have PowerPoint software on your computer, I can email the presentation in that format. That way you will see the information precisely as I presented it. Again, thanks for your interest. And don't forget that our 2023 bluegill contest started 1 April. Good luck to all who participate.

Mark Bange, FSFF Bluegill Contest Coordinator

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

Reminder: FSFF Calendar Subscription for Your Smartphone!

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

Expansions of Our 2023 Bluegill Contest

We have expanded the eligible waters for our contest so that all FSFF members regardless of where they live may participate. We have done this because our membership has grown well beyond the Delmarva region.

We have also specifically stated in the rules that all *Lepomis* species are eligible for entry. We have

been doing this since the inception of the contest. However, we have formalized it in the rules.



Lepomis is the genus of the bluegill, redear, pumpkinseed, and 10 other true sunfish species. Additionally, as I explained during the recent Saturday Hands-on Session focused on bluegills, the *Lepomis* species may occasionally hybridize in nature. Further, a popular *Lepomis* hatchery-produced hybrid for stocking is the Bluegill male and Green Sunfish female cross. That means we may catch a sunfish that does not nicely match the pictures above. That's OK. Enter it.

Finally, *Lepomis* species are warm water fish. They are most active when the water is between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. They will spawn when the water temperature nears 70 degrees. However, they are looking for meals now with our water temperatures in the low 50s. The males have not assumed their rich, vibrant spawning colors yet, but both genders are out and about and can be enticed to bite flies.

Mark Bange, FSFF Bluegill Contest Coordinator

Kayak Fly Fishing Class Presentation Available

Thanks to all who attended the February 18th "Kayak Fly Fishing in Local Waters" class. You were an attentive and interactive audience which made my job as the presenter much easier. I had a great time.

Thanks also to Frank Bowne who posted the slides I used to the club's website at: <http://fs-ff.com/wp->

<content/uploads/2023/02/Kayak-Fishing-Course-Fly-Fishing-Copy.pdf>.

Mark Bange



Opportunities for Fishing for Snakehead

At the club's February 1st meeting, Damien Cook, owner of Lowland Outfitters, and Matt Fletcher Lowland Outfitters guide, presented 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. For further information, please call Damien at 410-443-1528 or check out their website at:

www.lowlandoutfitters.com



New Loaner Fly Tying Vises for Use in Club Fly Tying Sessions and Classes

I am happy to announce a welcome upgrade to our loaner equipment for fly tying classes. With the help of your dues and special pricing provided by Regal we were able to secure several Regal Medallion vises with brass pocket bases for club use.

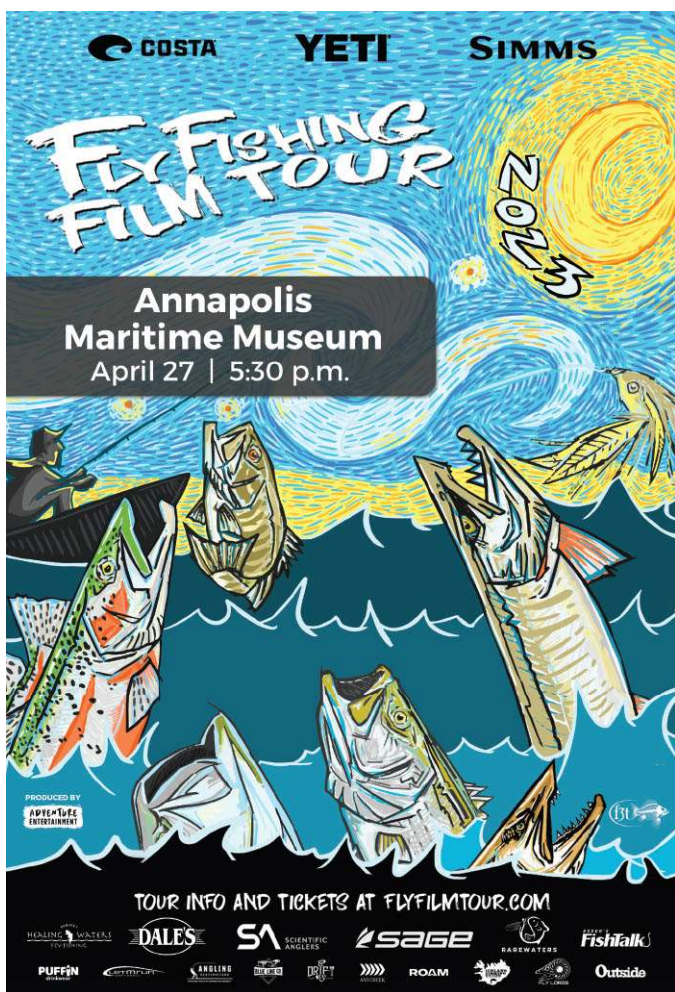


For those members that are frustrated with your current vise, unable to clamp it to the table or having a hard time securing a hook feel free to make use of the club vise in the future. If you don't have any gear and are looking to try your hand at fly tying, Saturday classes are always open to all levels and a wonderful opportunity to jump in and get your feet wet.

Luis Santiago, FSFF Fly Tying Coordinator

Fly Fishing Film Tour Comes to Annapolis

The Fly Fishing Film Tour (F3T) is coming to Annapolis. In the past we had to go to Arlington, VA or Hunt Valley, MD to attend. Not anymore! Organizers Mikael Lindsley and our own Tony Kupersmith wanted to extend an invitation to FSFF members. Here is the info for the event.



FSFF Trout Fly Fishing 101 Check List By Duber Winters

- Maryland fishing license and Trout Stamp if applicable
- 8.5-9' 4-5 weight fly rod
- Floating line (additional sinking line is optional)
- 9' leaders – 4 X and 5 X
- Tippet material to match leaders
- Split shot
- Strike indicators
- Floatant
- Nippers
- Forceps
- Net
- Magnifiers
- Polarized glasses
- Cap or hat
- Camera
- Waders
- Gloves if preferred
- Camera
- A variety of streamers to include wooly buggers and golden retrievers in sizes 10, 12 and cone head bunny muddlers in sizes 2,4,6
- A variety of dry flies to include blue winged olives in sizes 16,18, caddis in sizes 14,16,18, parachute Adams in sizes 16,18,20, Royal Wulff in sizes 14, 16,18 and Griffiths gnats as small as possible
- A variety of nymphs to include bead head pheasant tails in sizes 16,18,20 (also flash backs), hare's ear in sizes 16, 18, 20 (and flash backs), prince nymph (bead head) in sizes 16, 18, 20 and zebra midge in sizes 18,20,22
- Other flies: mop Flies and egg patterns in various colors and sizes, squirmy wormy red as small as possible and green weenies in sizes 14, 16, 18.

Date: Thursday April, 27th - doors open 5:30pm, show starts promptly at 7:00pm

Location: Annapolis Maritime Museum
723 Second Street
Annapolis, MD 21403

Cost of admission: \$30/all ages

Purchase tickets:
[F3T Chesapeake - 4/27/2023](https://www.flyfilm.com/tickets)

This is to benefit Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing. Giveaways, raffles, local beer (Forward Brewing), food, casting demos, fly tyers.

Duber Winters, FSFF President
Frank Bowne, FSFF Membership Coordinator

This is a general spring time trout fly pattern list that features effective patterns for streams in our area during the time we will be fishing.

Featured Fly: Tying the Partridge & Orange Soft Hackle Fly
By Harry Steiner

Material List

Hook: Nymph sizes 10-18

Thread: Orange

Dubbing: Hares Ear

Hackle: Partridge

Fly Tying Procedure

Start thread at front of hook leaving approximately one hook eye space. Wrap to bend in hook and back.



Add small amount of dubbing near the eye of the hook.



Prepare the Partridge feather as shown below.



Tie in tip of feather in front of dubbing



Wrap feather 1-1 ½ times around hook and tie in.



Wrap thread in front of hackle forcing barbs in direction of hook bend.



Finish forming the head and tie off.



How to Fly Fish Even Better: Controlling Your Fly Line

By Joe Bruce



1. **Your rod tip should always be pointing to the fly line.** Slack is your worst enemy as you can't make a cast properly until the end of the fly line starts to move. If the rod isn't pointing toward the fly line, the rod must remove the slack to start the initial portion of the cast.
2. **The Rod tip should be low to the water to make a cast.** Remove any slack in the line.
3. **Most fly lines have the weight concentrated in the first 30 to 46 feet, the rest is a thin running line.** You only need one false cast after you get the head out (the heavy portion of the line). More is both a waste of time and mechanics.
4. **When using sinking lines and weighted flies an underhand cast is best. It also works well with a standard floating line.** The heavier sinking line wants to fall, so by bringing the fly line up on the back cast, it will lift the line.
5. **Don't set the hook with the rod tip.** A fly rod has two sections. The tip section is for casting and produces little power to set the hook, and the butt is for fighting the fish. The power to set the hook is in the butt section of your fly rod.
6. **Clean your fly line.** A clean fly line moves easier through the snake guides than a dirty line. No need to go out and purchase a line cleaner, hair conditioners work well, and they are free at a motel stay.
7. **With sinking lines, a short three or four-foot tippet is best.** The idea is to get the fly down, so a longer leader defeats the purpose of the sink-tip given monofilament floats.
8. **During the retrieve, you will get more animation of the fly by lifting the rod tip farther from the surface of the water.** Never lift the rod tip above your waist as this will interfere with the hook set.
9. **Don't use the rod tip to add action to the fly.** Use the line hand. Moving the rod tip from the end of the line causes slack.
10. **Learn to cast in many planes.** In different fishing situations, your cast cannot always be done as practiced. You need to learn to cast from a horizontal position all the way through a vertical position. Also, you need to learn to cast backhand.

Although this might be considered casting, it is controlling the rod and line for more efficient fishing conditions. You want to work easier, not harder and these tips will work to make your fly fishing more productive.



Places to Fish: Anacostia River, Washington D.C.: Local – But Totally Wild!

By James Andrews

While the area surrounding the Anacostia River is intensely developed by Washington D.C. and its suburbs the river itself gets little fishing pressure from boating/kayaking anglers. A railroad bridge towards the southern end of the Anacostia just upriver from all the marinas near its confluence with the Potomac, and few access options keep the upper river pretty empty. Rowing teams frequent the upper stretch, but not the fishing zone.

Lower River Access

Anacostia Park Boat Ramp (far North end of the park) 1500 Anacostia Dr, Washington, DC 20020. This area is tidal and if in a boat the railroad bridge at high tide can be tight to pass under. Kayaks should be fine in terms of clearance at any tide. The last time we retrieved our boat from the brown soup that is the Anacostia, a local police officer pulled up. We asked if many people fished here by boat – he looked at us with a friendly smile, a bit of a laugh at our expense and said “No!”

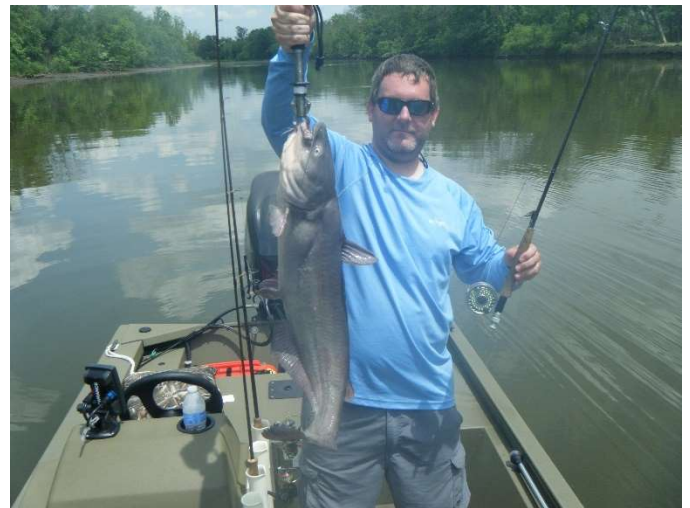
Upper River Access

Bladensburg Waterfront Park, 4601 Annapolis Rd, Bladensburg, MD 20710. The prime fishing zone is several miles south from here so this is only suitable if you are in a boat. The Maryland portion of the upper tidal section lacks structure and does not hold many fish, with the exception of this park which has decent fishing. Fishing from shore in this park is available and popular. It is where the tidal Anacostia meets the flowing river and we have seen Blue Catfish, Carp and Snakehead pulled out by shore anglers. Boat trailer parking here can be a challenge. I recommend weekdays and parking along the wooden bollards by the railcar if the spots are otherwise full. The park office adjacent to the boat launch can provide advice as well. The

headwaters above the park run clear if it hasn't just rained.

In several years of frequenting the above two boat launches, we never saw another angler put a boat in. There were shore fishing folks worm dunking. The common perception of this being a gross, polluted, and lifeless river is only partially true, there is plenty of life.

Blue catfish and gar are the most frequent species we encounter, but the river also holds snakeheads, carp, sunfish, largemouth bass, white perch, striped bass, and white catfish occasionally. Wildlife is common along the river including beavers, deer, and many birds including bald eagles.



Best Locations and Tactics

Just a few hundred yards upriver from the railroad bridge at Anacostia Park on the west side of the river are some large outflow drains. Hundreds of gar stage there during the summer and using a gar fly (just a few synthetic rope strands) you can target them. They become active for 5-10 minutes and then disappear for 30 minutes in a cycle of sorts; be patient and if they are there and you wait long enough you will see them. They are good sized and a great fight - careful of the teeth! Additional caution: These drains are some sort of sewage overflow. Do not fish here if it has rained

recently! I don't know the status of the project, but this was in the works to be fixed.

These gar were the kind of thing that you discover after fishing a spot and keeping your eyes peeled many times – a location and time specific phenomenon only local knowledge can deliver.



Blue Catfish on a Fly

Any structure at any depth, bridge, even just the river bottom, fished with any fly that sinks and is moved along slowly has a good chance of producing a fish. A brown beadhead wooly bugger was my go-to fly. For non-fly anglers, a root beer

color grub on a jig head also works well. Great specific locations include the deep hole at the hard turn of the river ½ mile south of Route 50, then every bridge piling that has both depth and some current around it – as tight to the piling as you can get. Stumps and debris near the river bank also produce (especially if it's a cool morning).

The fishy zone of this river extends from the railroad bridge on the south to the hard turn of the river 2.6 miles north of there and is entirely in DC. Coming from Bladensburg, this hard turn of the river is about ½ mile south of where Route 50 crosses the river. I don't recommend fishing outside this zone. A Washington DC Fishing license is required and is inexpensive and available online.

Fly Fishing Essentials: Knots – Part 2

By Joe Bruce and Duber Winters

Joe Bruce and the Palomar Knot

As a reminder, 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:

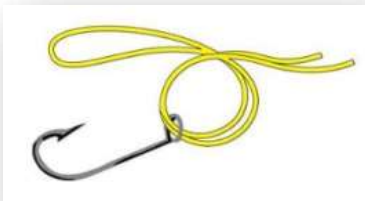
- 1) If I think I tied the knot wrong, I re-tie.
- 2) I re-tie often.
- 3) After every fishing session I re-tie all my knots.

The **Palomar** is an easy knot to tie and has 100% knot strength when tied right. It works well with plugs, bait hooks and jigs.

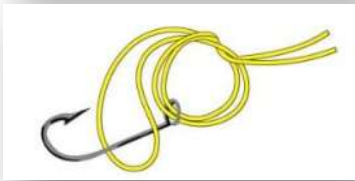


Double the line about 6 to 8" and slip the loop through the eye of the hook.

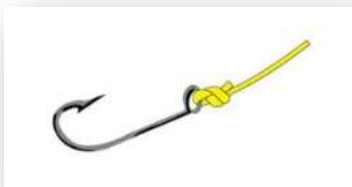
Duber Winters and the Double Surgeons Knot



Form an overhand knot.



Slip the overhand knot over the hook.



While pulling on the standing line pull the loop knot over the standing line and moisten and tighten the knot. Pull

on the tag line to secure. Cut the tag.

The double surgeons knot is an excellent knot for marrying two lines together. As with most knots, there are many types of knots that can be used to achieve the same purpose but I find the double surgeons easy to teach, easy to remember and provide good knot strength for most applications.

This knot is my go-to knot while trout fishing. The double surgeons is great for marrying lines of the same or different diameters.

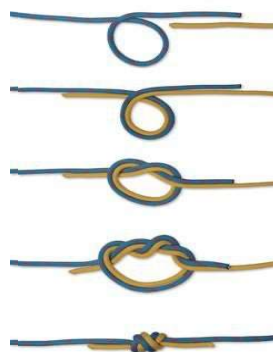
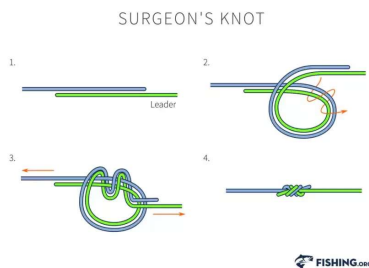
Some knot strength tests have concluded that the double surgeons will break at 6-11 lbs. of pressure and the triple surgeons will break at 11-15 lbs. of pressure making both versions a great choice for fly anglers.

Personally, I only use the triple surgeons while fishing with super thin diameter lines such as 6x-7x for trout.

[Editor's Note: This article is the second 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. The Winter 2023 newsletter

featured the Albright (Joe) and Clinch (Duber) knots. Upcoming club newsletters will feature Improved Clinch, Non-slip Loop Knot and The Homer Rhoads Knot by Joe and Duber's Back to Back Uni Knots, the Not the Duber Knot, and the Two Fly Drop Shot Knot. We will continue to share two more fly fishing knots each in the coming summer, fall and winter newsletters.]

DOUBLE SURGEONS KNOT



Essential Fly Fishing Gear: Leaders and Tippet Oh My!

By Duber Winters

Of the many different and confusing things to learn and know when it comes to the great sport of fly fishing, there is no doubt that leaders and tippet material are amongst the top. I think one of the primary reasons for this confusion is that this category of materials does not carry over from spinning or conventional angling in the same way. If you ask a conventional angler to tie a jig on to his leader he will likely look at you as if you have no idea what you are talking about. And rightfully so and that is because we don't typically need leaders when fishing with conventional gear. When it is time to tie on a hook or lure to that spinning rod rig, all you need to do is find the end of the fishing line itself and tie on the lure of choice. Since the introduction of braid as a main line to spinning and conventional gear there are now some anglers that will tie on a piece of monofilament or fluorocarbon to the end of the braid but all anglers do not employ this tactic and even fewer call it a leader. Now try to tie a fly on to that plastic floating fly line on that fly rod and one will quickly understand the need for a thinner, easier to tie leader material to tie on to. Enter the use and need of a monofilament or fluorocarbon leader.

Leaders accomplish several challenges for the fly angler that include:

- Connecting the fly to a material that is less visible to the fish than fly line
- Provide a thin material that is small enough to thread through the eye of the hook
- Keep the fly some distance from the fly line itself
- Allow the fly to act naturally while being fished
- Allow the fly to extend and "lay out" when cast properly

When a leader is connected to a floating fly line, the leader is often tapered which is to say that it is thicker on one end and thinner on the other. Having a tapered leader is no doubt purposeful but ultimately provides a challenge... After tying on several different flies to the same leader, the leader gets shorter and shorter and ultimately starts to negate the original benefits of the leader itself. As a result, tippet material was introduced so that one could tie on a new piece of thinner material to the existing leader once it got shortened. This rebuild of the original leader would make it longer again and provide a thinner material that could be threaded and tied easily and would cast well too.

When a leader is connected to a sinking line it does not need to be tapered. It is best to use a straight, level piece of fluorocarbon. Specific length is variable but 3-5 feet long is typical.

Buying vs. Building a leader

Once an angler knows the various knots needed to marry 2 different diameter sized lines together- would there ever be a need to buy a leader from a store? The answer depends on the angler's ability and willingness to purchase several different diameter sized lines, measure out the pieces and tie them together to create a tapered leader that is built properly to cast or layout a specific fly. Often this decision of buy versus build will be dictated by the species being fished as well. For example, many dry fly anglers that are targeting trout prefer a store bought leader because those leaders are typically knotless which can allow for super tight casting loops and reduce the chance of making a tangled mess of your leader.

There is no doubt that making your own leaders is the most cost effective way to go when building up a supply of leaders. The following are some key points to consider when building leaders:

- Purchase the proper leader material (monofilament or Fluorocarbon, stretch or

no stretch) Abrasion resistance and memory

- The step down from one segment to the next can't be too great (50 lbs. to 10 lbs. would not marry together very well and would likely hinge while casting) 40 lbs. to 25lb works well for example
- How long will the leader be?
- What pound test materials will be needed
- Will the tippet material be the same (fluorocarbon or monofilament) as the rest of the leader or something different?
- A heavier leader (45/25/12) would work well for a 7-8 weight rod but not as well for a 3-4 weight rod. Gauge the leader to the rod you are fishing.

Making a leader does need to be complicated and once you start and practice the process it does get easier and becomes more streamlined.

Determining what the target species will be, the type of flies that will be fished and the kind of water that will be fished will help in achieving a better finished result.

When purchasing leaders the greatest thing to consider is the tippet size and length of the leader. I would often tell new anglers to get leaders that are close to the length of the rod you will be fishing. For most situations an 8 ½' to 10' leader is ideal. Then determine the size (diameter) of the tippet that is needed for the species being targeted and the water that is being fished. Knowing what size (diameter) tippet material and what kind of material comes down to the angler knowing the fish and the water being fished. This can take some research for someone targeting a new species in new waters but it can be well worth the time. For example, bonefish are not likely to eat a fly connected to a 40# tippet for snook and snook might readily eat a fly on a 12# bonefish tippet but the end result will be the same and neither fish will get connected or stay connected for very long. A little bit of research can go a long way in limiting the trial and error.

Fluorocarbon and/or monofilament

Fluorocarbon and monofilament (nylon) are the 2 most common leader and tippet materials used today. While they are interchangeable, they do have certain individual characteristics that set them apart. The savvy angler will identify with these differences and utilize the strength of each material to their advantage. Let's take a quick look at both of these materials.

Monofilament is by far the most common leader and tippet used today. The two main reasons for this are that it has been around and in use for a greater period of time and because it is considerably less expensive than fluorocarbon. That said there are certain situations when it is the ideal material to use and then of course there are times when it simply is not.

Primary properties of monofilament for an angler to consider are:

- 1) It floats on its own. Monofilament does not want to sink and needs to be weighted to do so. It is nearly the same density as water so it will float or suspend. This is the material that you want to use while fishing a popper or dry flies.
- 2) It will stretch. There are a few situations where stretching of the line can be advantageous. Using mono while streamer fishing for large trout in shallow water can lead to less break offs. This can apply to other certain specific situations as well.
- 3) Monofilament leaders can lend themselves to casting better. This is noticeable when casting very light flies that have little to no weight to them.
- 4) Monofilament is less expensive than fluorocarbon.

Fluorocarbon is very good at doing the opposite of monofilament. Primary properties to consider are:

- 1) Fluorocarbon is denser than mono as well as fresh and salt water so it wants to sink.
- 2) Fluorocarbon will not stretch as much as mono making it more sensitive allowing anglers to “feel” a bite and have better connectivity to the fish.
- 3) Because it is denser than mono it is more abrasion resistant.
- 4) Subsurface it is less visible.
- 5) It is more expensive \$\$\$.

The decision here is not whether to fish monofilament or fluorocarbon rather it is when to fish the different types of leader or tippet and how to do so. By utilizing both materials properly an angler can purposefully fish the entire water column and do so effectively. The end result will be more hook ups, more releases and more fish catching fun!

Feature Article: Fly Fishing for Hickory Shad – The perfect start to the spring fishing season

By Tom Parham

Sometime in mid-March my pulse quickens. Subtle signs, imperceptible at first, announce the arrival of spring. Daffodils and crocus appear. Even our dormant lawn starts to show signs of life. No longer do I need to pass the time watching countless fishing videos on YouTube or scrolling through tackle websites announcing the latest fly rod built with space age technology. It is time to dust off my fishing tackle and make plans to fish the springtime runs of hickory shad in Maryland’s waters.

If you are getting ready to fish the annual shad run for the first time or thirty-first time, let me help prepare you for the total experience. Remember, there is more to fishing than just catching fish and this definitely applies to the spring hickory shad run.

Hickory Shad

Hickory shad are smaller cousins of the American shad and are lots of fun on light tackle. They fight hard, jump and will readily strike brightly colored flies in their path. Brightly silver colored with dark backs, they average about 13 inches to 18 inches in length and weigh less than two pounds. They usually show up in most of Maryland’s tidal rivers including the [Susquehanna](#), [Gunpowder](#), [Choptank](#), and [Patuxent](#) rivers en masse in April when water temperatures reach the low to mid 50s and depart in May when the water temperatures are consistently in the mid to upper 60s.

Tackle

One of the great things about shad fishing is that you don’t need to buy lots of new equipment to enjoy the thrills of this scrappy fighter. However, to maximize your enjoyment, they are best pursued with light fly rods. In fact, trout sized fly rods (4 to 6 weight) are commonly used in the smaller, shallower protected creeks. Combined with a matching short five-foot sink tip fly line, four feet of straight #8 leader and you are in business. If you are fishing from a boat in the main rivers, heavier fly rods (7 to 8 weight) are better suited to handle the 200 to 300 grain sinking lines necessary to keep the flies in the strike zone when hickory shad are holding in deeper water with stronger currents.



Flies

There are dozens of good hickory shad patterns available and are usually tied on size 4-6 hooks. Popular colors include yellow, chartreuse, pink, and red with flash provided by

gold/silver tinsel. While flies should be fished at or near the bottom, weighted flies aren’t usually necessary since the sink-tip or sinking-head fly lines present the flies at the proper depth. After fishing

Maryland's rivers for hickory shad for more than 25 years, and trying countless patterns, I have narrowed my arsenal down to two can't-miss flies. The red and yellow shad fly and the chartreuse crystal bugger created by local legend Joe Bruce. Don't leave home without them!



Where to Catch Them

While hickory shad can be seen almost anywhere in the creeks and rivers, stick to the high percentage spots where they typically travel. The best locations to spot them are the tail of the pool immediately above any constriction point or the head of a pool directly below a constriction point. In between these points, to find the travel lanes, simply look for areas with frequent fish movement and/or zero in along the faster current. Once you can identify the shad travel lanes, cast across and slightly downstream and then allow your fly line to pick up speed and swing your fly across their path. Adjust your casting distance and casting position so you can systematically cover their entire travel lane to find the groups of fish. Super fun and very effective!

The Springtime Hickory Shad Experience

During the spring run, you can often catch dozens of shad. However, the magic of the area isn't just the spectacular fishing, it is the endless possibilities for discovery and enjoyment. Take some time to lose yourself in the nearby area to watch bald eagles, osprey, and herons hunt along the river.

Wander through the trails and listen to the roar of your favorite river, see fields of bluebells or hear the chatter of the belted kingfishers. Stand in the river and feel the cold invigorating water or smell the damp earth of the floodplain forest. Watch the fog burn off the river as the morning air warms or the cormorants dive for hidden fish.

I don't doubt that I have missed the strikes from many shad because I have been lost in thought enjoying the arrival of spring. While I can't guarantee that you will catch dozens of hickory shad, if you get immersed in these areas, I can guarantee you will make some lasting memories. So, whether you are a fisherman, birdwatcher, wildflower fan or just someone tired of the color of gray, I think you will find that visiting Maryland's tidal rivers and creeks is a great way to welcome the arrival of spring.





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

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First Vice-President: [Bill Smith](#)
Second Vice President: [Luis Santiago](#)
Secretary: [Frank Bowne](#)
Treasurer: [Bill Smith](#)
Member-at-Large: [Ryan Harvey](#)
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FREE STATE FLY FISHERS COORDINATORS

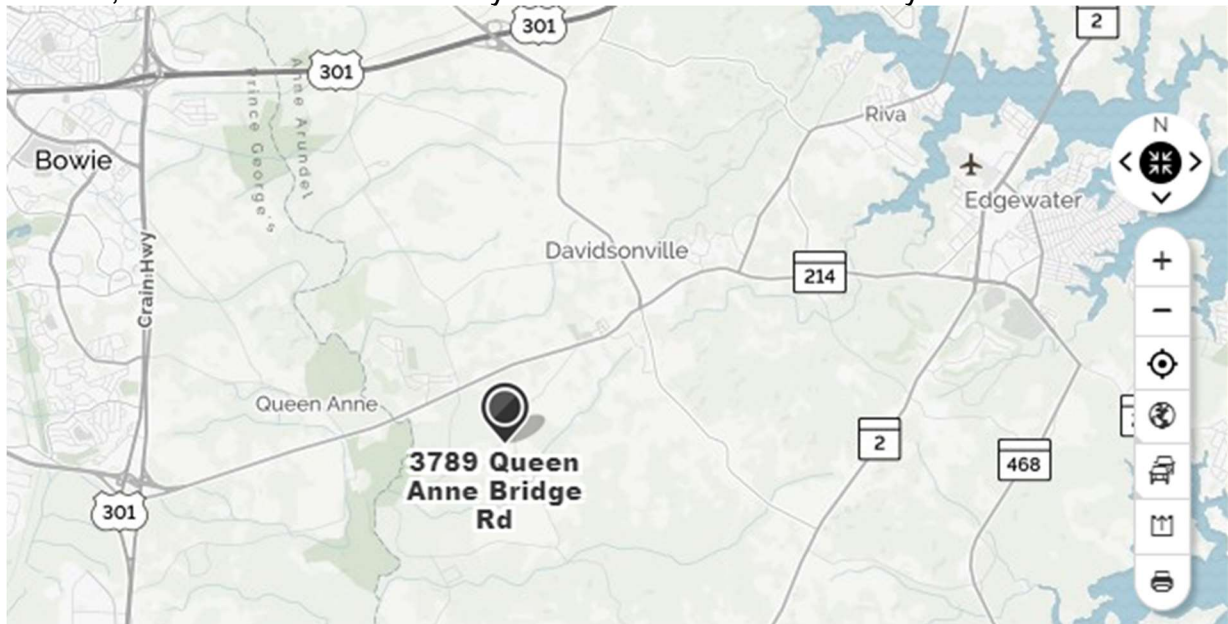
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Club Librarian: Vacant
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Please contact the appropriate FSFF Leadership Team member to get answers to any questions about Free State Fly Fishers and upcoming club sponsored events.



“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