



FREE STATE FLY FISHERS NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

President's Message: You can take it with you... and you should!!

The summertime season is prime vacation time for many of us. Kids are out of school and families take advantage of this "free" time to travel to see friends, family and see the sights of both domestic and international destinations. As an outfitter and having worked in various fly shops over the years, customers would often share with me their excitement for upcoming trips. Many vacation destinations are popular amongst folks living on the east coast as I certainly recall hearing about upcoming trips to Martha's Vineyard or Charleston, SC or Asheville, NC in addition to west coast trips to Montana or Jackson Hole, Wyoming and of course Alaska. Naturally my initial response would often be "so where do you plan to fish on this trip?" And more often than not the response was "oh this is just a family trip, not a fishing trip".

For the sake of not contributing to lawyer's fees and the sky rocketing divorce rate in this country I would often scale back my frustrated reply to a subdued suggestion of local waterways to fish and guides to contact and of course the gear they needed to buy from me to catch fish at or near to the destination they were traveling too...if they were so inclined. I would often hear excuses such as "I can't haul all that gear with me" or "I won't have time to fish" to which I would reply "Really? All you need is a rod tube, a box of flies and a four hour stretch of time one morning and you can catch and release many, many fish before your family even wakes up!" This is usually when I could see wheels begin to turn as the hopeful angler would mentally review their vacation schedule for possible openings to wet a line.

What's the harm in being prepared? I inferred. If it doesn't work out then so be it but isn't there something to be said for everyone (including you); to do something you would really enjoy on vacation? To fish a memorable and special body of water and catch that special fish that maybe doesn't swim in the waters near home?

It was typically about this point in the conversation that I had an idea if the angler had a shot at fishing on this family trip. If I thought they were truly interested, I would confirm the dates, grab my phone and text a guide friend in the area to see if they were available to fish the angler and get a fishing report. If these things came together then I knew we were close to putting it together. At least sometimes anyhow.

For those that heeded my recommendations I knew I would often see them again. Some would return to the shop after their trip glowing after a successful outing and pulling out their phone to show me fish pics. And of course some would simply return the next day with the shopping bag of gear they bought and receipt in hand to return their purchase.

So I recall the expression "No harm, no foul" when considering fishing on a family vacation. Even if it works out that you don't have time to fish, or if bad weather would move in, you can't go if you don't have the gear so by all means you and can take it with you and you should!

So let's fish!!

Duber

Duber Winters
2023 Free State Fly Fishers President

FSFF Sponsored Meetings, Events and Activities

Summertime is when the club takes a break from our usual incredible schedule of monthly club meetings along with Saturday morning fly tying sessions and Saturday morning hands-on sessions not to mention holiday dinners and the spring swap meeting, and the now infamous fly swap. We could add rod building classes, fly casting clinics, Icelandic wool dyeing sessions along with club sponsored outings.

Well, read on my fellow club members as some of your fellow club coordinators have been busy working up a schedule of club events for the coming year. Just remember, 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://fs-ff.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 from September through May with our June meeting being devoted to a casting clinic complete with dinner. Meetings are 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM in the club house at 3789 Queen Anne Bridge Road Davidsonville, MD 21035. Thanks to Gary Grey, our

Meeting Speaker Coordinator, for lining up this excellent array of speakers, thanks to Ryan Harvey for working to get announcements about our upcoming meetings in local and regional newspapers and other publications, and thanks to Frank Bowne for updating the club website's calendar with information on these and all other club sponsored events.

September 6: Shawn Kimbro. Well known Maryland fisherman and author Shawn Kimbro will present a talk on 'Fly Casting for Panfish in the Chesapeake Region'. Shawn has authored several books on fishing in Maryland, with perhaps Chesapeake Light Tackle being his best known. Shawn also has his own Facebook page and YouTube Channel.

October 4: Erik Zlokovitz, Maryland DNR Fisheries: Erik Zlokovitz, the Maryland DNR Fisheries Outreach Specialist will present a talk covering current topics and issues relevant to Maryland fishing, including the Striped bass fishery and the fish kill in the Maryland DNR trout hatchery in Hagerstown last April.



November 1: Mark Bange, John Rentch, Larry Oakley, and Mike Mattia will present a talk titled "A virtual fly fishing tour of Delaware and Maryland Eastern Shore ponds". This will provide the newcomer with everything needed to fish these ponds except for the kayak/canoe!

January 3: Joseph Evans: Joe will talk about "Gear and strategies for fly fishing the Chesapeake Bay". At present, Joe is the only Orvis Endorsed fishing

guide on the Chesapeake Bay. He has also worked as a regional sales manager for Orvis, promotions manager for Bass Pro Shops, founding editor of PropTalk Magazine, information officer at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Service, and Editor in Chief of Chesapeake Bay Magazine.

February 7: Walleye Pete: Walleye Pete is a light tackle fishing guide on the Chesapeake Bay, specializing in fishing the Tangier Sound area of the Chesapeake Bay for Striped Bass and Specs.

March 6: Meeting speaker still to be determined.

April 3: Mike Sleplesky: Mike is a fly fishing guide from the Tightlining MD Guide Service. He specialized in fly fishing for trout in the Central Maryland Area and his presentation will discuss several local streams suitable for fly fishing for trout.

May 1: Meeting speaker to be determined.

If you have ideas for club meeting speakers or would be willing to present to your fellow club members, please reach out to me at garygrey74@gmail.com.

Gary Grey, FSFF Meeting Speaker Coordinator

Saturday Morning Fly Tying Sessions

This coming September, we will re-start our first Saturday of the month club member-led fly tying sessions all the way through June. Come join your fellow club members starting at 10 AM at the clubhouse at 3789 Queen Anne Bridge Road Davidsonville, MD 21035 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.



New to fly tying? You have come to the right place as each fly tying session is geared towards teaching fly tyers of all experience levels how to tie each pattern. And there is tying equipment available for use by anyone participating in these member-led sessions including fly tying vises, thanks to Luis Santiago 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:

- September 2nd: Bob O'Donnell San Don Juan fly
- October 7th.
- November 4th.
- December 2nd.
- January 6th.
- February 3rd.
- March 2nd.
- April 6th.

Luis Santiago, FSFF Fly Tying Sessions Coordinator

Saturday Morning Hands-on Sessions

Thanks to our fellow club members' willingness to share their experiences, we have scheduled Saturday Hands-on Sessions from September through May covering an incredible array of topics. All Hands-on Sessions will be held on the third Saturday of the month at the clubhouse at 3789 Queen Anne Bridge Road Davidsonville, MD 21035 from 10 AM to 12 PM unless otherwise noted.



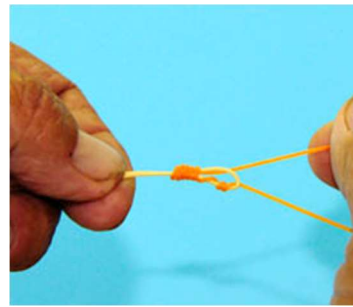
September 16: Luis Santiago and James Andrews’ “Fly fishing the Maryland and Virginia Eastern Shore’s Marshlands”. [To be confirmed]

October 21: TBD



November 18: Duber Winter’s “Planning for and Going on Fly Fishing Trips with Guides”.

December 16: Rich Batiuk’s “Organizing Your Fly Fishing Everything...Tackle, Books, Flies and Fly Tying Materials”.



January 20: Joe Bruce and Duber Winters’ “Tying Fishing Knots for Every Fly Fishing Situation”.



February 17: Mark Bange’s “Kayak Fishing in Local Waters” class 10 AM – 2 PM (includes group lunch).



March 16: Joe Bruce’s “Everything You Need to Know About Fishing for Pickerel”.

April 20: Joe Bruce’s “How to Attack the Pads and Catch More Fish”.

May 18: Joe Bruce’s

“Using Different Fish Catching Retrieves with Your Fly Rod” (everyone should bring a fly rod with reel and line to practice the retrieves).

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 you will need to join your fellow club members.

Rich Batiuk, FSFF Saturday Hands-on Session Coordinator



Casting Clinics

The club will continue hosting the two-part fly casting clinics. The first part will be our regular casting clinic hosted on the lawn behind the clubhouse at 3789 Queen Anne Bridge Road Davidsonville, MD 21035. The second part will be an on-water casting clinic located at a waterbody near the clubhouse. More details will be provided on the club website’s calendar of events.

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:

- August 23rd
- October 25th
- December 27th
- February 28th
- April 24th
- June 26th
- August 28rd



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.



Smallmouth Bass Float Trips

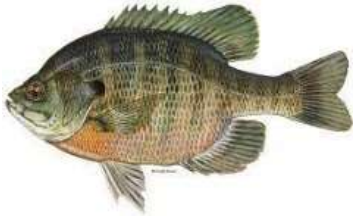
Rich Batiuk is working to set up and schedule three one-day smallmouth bass float trips on the South Fork Shenandoah River, upper Rappahannock River and Juniata River this summer to early fall. He will send out an email to all club

members with more details on each float trip and will be asking interested participants to get back in contact with him to help set specific dates based on the interested participants availability.

Club News

2023 Biggest (and Smallest) Bluegill Contest

We are well into the club's 2023 Biggest (and Smallest!) Bluegill Tournament which officially opened on Saturday April 1, 2023. You can find the current rules for the 2023 Biggest Bluegill Contest on the club's website at: <https://fsff.com/index.php/bluegill-tournament-2023/>.



The leader board is filled with bluegills ranging from 10 inches to 2.5 inches, with entries from North and South

Carolina up to West Virginia, Maryland and Delaware! Here's the Biggest (and Smallest) Bluegill Contest standings as of July 11, 2023:

Largest Bluegill

First – Larry Oakey, 10-inches, 7/11/23, Biltmore Estate, Asheville, NC

Second – Pat Brophy, 9.5 inches, 6/3/23, Alpine Lake, Terra Alta, WV

Third – Mike Nichols, 9.5-inches, 7/5/23, Private Pond, Kent County, MD

Fourth – Amy Holstein, 9.5 inches, 7/1/23, Private Pond, Enoree, SC

Fifth – Rich Batiuk, 9.375-inches, 5/12/23 Ingrams Pond, Millsboro, DE

Sixth – Randy Wolf, 9.375-inches, 5/29/23. Private Pond, Henderson, MD

Seventh – Andy Grosko, 9.125 inches, 4/25/23, Blairs Pond, Milford, DE

Eighth – John Rentch, 9-inches, 4/20/23, Blairs Pond, Milford, DE

Ninth – Mike Mattia, 8.5-inches, 4/29/23, Private Pond, Cheltenham, MD

Tenth – Frank Bowne, 7-inches, 5/20/23, Trap Pond, Laurel, DE

Smallest Bluegill

First – Andy Grosko, 2.5 inches, 6/25/23, Upper Patapsco River, Sykesville, MD

Second Pat Brophy, 3.5-inches, 6/3/23, Alpine Lake, Terra Alta, WV

Third – Amy Holstein, 4.125-inches, 5/15/23, Private Pond, Mt. Airy, MD

Fourth -- Rich Batiuk, 5-inches, 5/18/23, Trussum Pond, Laurel, DE

Fifth-- Ryan Harvey, 5.25-inches 5/20/23, Trap Pond, Laurel, DE

Sixth -- Rich Galena, 6.5-inches, 4/27/23, Arundel Golf Park, Glen Burnie, MD

It's clearly time to start hunting for those prime 10+ inch bluegills to knock Larry out of first place with the bluegill he caught in a royal estate pond! And let's not enable Andy to lay claim to a second year winning streak for the smallest bluegill—time to go really small with your favorite bluegill 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 (\$2), perfect additions for your fishing kayaks, canoes, boats 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 pondside 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.



Interested in Another Fly Rod Building Class?

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.

If you are interested in participating in another fly rod building class, please sign up at the upcoming September, October or November club meetings. Given enough participants, John will schedule the next rod building class for this coming winter.

Spring Swap Meet = Happy Fly Fishers!

This past May’s Swap Meet was a tremendous success for everyone who came to sell their fly fishing gear/fly tying materials, those who came to add to their existing collection of fly rods, reels and related gear, and to the club overall. We estimate that at least 40 fly rods were sold during the Swap Meet, all of which were incredible bargains for those purchasing these rods which ranged from 2 weight up to 12 weight!

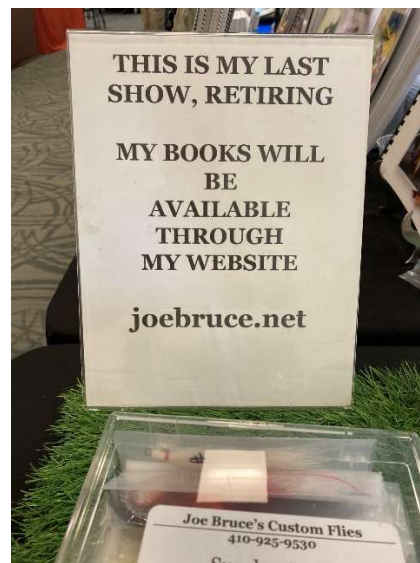
And there was great news for the club as a whole. Combined with continued sales of donated Swap Meet gear and fly tying materials during the June Fly Casting Clinic, the club made over \$800 in sales! All these funds go back into supporting the club’s many sponsored meetings, events, activities and outings as well as upkeep of the clubhouse.

But no worries, there was still some leftover inventory of donated gear and materials now stored in the back storage room at the clubhouse, ready for sale at next May’s Swap Meet.

Rich Batiuk and Mark Bange, FSFF Swap Meet Co-coordinators



It’s True: Joe Bruce is Retiring...from Future Shows!



After 856 years of participating in local and regional fly fishing shows, Joe Bruce is ‘retiring’ from selling his books, flies and materials at future shows. The Maryland Fly Fishing Show in Towson this past spring was his last show.



However, no worries as: 1) we have already signed up Joe to lead at least 65 of the club's Saturday Hands-on Sessions and 45 of the club's fly tying sessions over the next 10 years; 2) Joe will continue to sell his truly incredible array of fly fishing books (I counted 26!) by contacting him via email at saltflies@comcast.net; and 3) there will be a time when club members will need a new supply of dyed Icelandic wool and we will ask Joe to lead another dying session for club members.

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

FSFF at Annapolis Fly Fishing Film Tour

The Fly Fishing Film Tour (F3T) came to Annapolis this past April. In the past we had to go to Arlington, VA or Hunt Valley, MD to attend. Not anymore! FSFF was invited to participate as a recognized fly fishing club so the characters in the photo below represented the club and ended up signing up several new members during the evening event. (Please note for accuracy sake that a certain to remain nameless fellow FSFF member participating in the Film Tour photobombed us when this photo was taken. Jim, no worries as the sunglasses and jean jacket will protect your identity!)



Thanks to Duber Winters for setting up the opportunity for the club to have a table at the Annapolis Film Tour. (Duber is the gentleman holding onto his beer and being leaned on by the still unnamed FSFF member in the sunglasses and jean jacket in the act of photobombing.)

Given the size of the crowd that participated, we are expecting to see the Fly Fishing Film Tour return to Annapolis next year and hope to be invited back to also participate as a club.

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://FS-](https://FS-FF.groups.io/g/main/ics/1859633/911902081/feed)

[FF.groups.io/g/main/ics/1859633/911902081/feed](https://FS-FF.groups.io/g/main/ics/1859633/911902081/feed)
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Name: FSFF Group (or any name of your choice)

Frank Bowne, FSFF Membership Coordinator

Fly Fishing Books Available for Free!

When we closed out this past May's very successful Swap Meet, we were left with about 100 books addressing just about every aspect of fly fishing. Therefore, all the books shown in the below photo will be available for free at the September, October and November meetings. All the books remaining at the end of the November meeting will be donated to the BIG International to support their work in delivering books all around the world to kids and communities in need of reading materials.



So help yourself to some great fly fishing books located in the back right hand corner of the clubhouse this fall during upcoming club meetings, fly tying sessions and Saturday hands-on sessions. No limits on the number of books you can bring home to your own fly fishing library! This is just one of the many benefits of being a Free State Fly Fishers member.

John Rentch, FSFF Clubhouse Coordinator

Rich Batiuk, Swap Meet Co-coordinator

Our Clubhouse is in Great Hands

Thanks to the efforts of John Rentch, our FSFF Clubhouse Coordinator, our clubhouse is in the best shape it has been since the club 'moved in' back in the early 1990s. This summer, John oversaw the latest upgrades to the clubhouse— replacement of the overhead lights and the associated wiring. Now when you enter the clubhouse, you will find the entire clubhouse well-lit and brighter than it has been for a long time. (And no more bugs trapped in the lights!!!)



Next on our list of clubhouse improvements will be repairs to the front stage. The floor just behind the walls to either side where we store our tables is beginning to break down. John will be working with Larry Oakey to get a construction contractor in to assess what needs to be repaired or replaced and make the entire stage area safe once again.

Duber Winters, FSFF President

How to Catch More Fish: Fish with the Wind in Your Face

By Joe Bruce

This has become my most important first rule when fishing. Only good things can come from it. We need to stop being lazy and use the wind to our advantage, and this doesn't mean drifting with it!

You will catch more fish, fishing into the wind.

I was snakeheading recently with a northerly breeze a bit more than I wanted, but I knew this was the way to catch more fish. Fishing into the wind has advantages that maybe a fisherman hasn't considered.



One, you will never be fishing in disturbed water. The breeze will push you back from this water while readjusting the hook, retying a lure, looking for some piece of gear, making the next cast, and

even pushing you back fighting a fish. In every case you will not move into unfished water.

When making repeated casts you are working new water as well as moving over water from the previous cast. This is working the water well, covering old water that might have given a fish time to set up to ambush whatever disturbed its territory.

Yes, you will have to work a bit harder moving back into position for the next cast, but the success you will achieve is well worth the effort.

Secondly, your hook sets will be much more positive. The breeze is helping to pull the line tight, eliminating slack for a better set.

An example of a better set, I was fishing on one of my favorite snakehead grounds following the edge of a hydrilla field. The breeze was at my back. I lost four snakeheads in a row. I don't lose four fish in a row. I checked my hook, and it was sharp. This got me thinking why I'm not getting a good hook set?

Then the light switch flashed, and this has never been forgotten.

The snakehead was following my lure at the same time my kayak was being blown toward the fish. Between the two movements, it was creating slack on the normal hookset. It would have required much more force and movement of the rod and hands to deliver enough energy to set the hook properly.

I pulled away from the grass bed and paddled down the bottom of the bed and turned around and started working my way into the wind. I hooked four snakeheads and boated everyone. This is all I needed to reinforce my theory. It has never been forgotten.

Thirdly, prey is pushed by the wind. Think in terms of a stream or river. Food is being brought to the fish that are looking into the current.

This same thing happens on open water, prey like minnows or insects is being pushed along with the wind toward the predators that also are looking up current for their next meal.

An example, I was fishing a lily pad field that I have fished for years. There are a lot of bass in this field because of channels and depression in it.

The breeze was at my back, and I fished all the way to the shoreline without a strike. I stopped regrouping and was shocked I caught no fish. I had to paddle out from this field and decided to fish my way out. I caught six bass on the way out. The bass were looking into the wind and my bait was coming from the direction the bait would have been coming from.

Take the time and effort to work into the wind. I feel so strongly that this is a good technique that should always be used. It doesn't matter if you are fishing for bass, pickerel, snakeheads. Your success rate will tell you it is the right thing to do.

Sometimes I even will change where I had planned to go, just to be able to fish with the wind in my face. If you ever see me on a bass pond paddling past good fishing water, just look at which way the wind is blowing because I'm heading to the end to fish with the wind in my face.

For your information, I recently hooked seven snakeheads and boated five. The two I lost were hooked going down wind.

Editor's Note: Clearly it is still good advice not to spit into the wind. But now we all know from Joe that we should, in fact, fly fish into the wind. That's one of the many great things about fly fishing—we can still learn something new every day to help us catch more fish from our fellow fly fishers!

My Bluegill Fly Box

By Mark Bange

A bluegill is not a picky eater. There is no need to "match the hatch." Even if you see them sipping tiny bugs on the surface of the water, bluegills will not ignore any of the flies I am going share with you here. Save your size 16 dry flies and nymphs for trout. These fish love large meals.

Bluegills will succumb to any reasonable representation of an insect or minnow even if it is bigger than the natural foods they eat. Also, they will attack flies that look like nothing from nature in form or color. And they will hit flies designed for other species. Two of my favorite bluegill flies are patterns for shad and one is for bass.

Bigger flies catch bigger bluegills. Articles about fly fishing for bluegills often suggest flies tied on size 10 hooks and smaller. Indeed, smaller hooks will work. They will attract many 4-to 5-inch fish! But, if you want to catch 8-to-9-inchers, use larger flies. My bluegill flies are tied on hooks ranging from size 6 to 2. The larger hooks serve two purposes. They prevent smaller fish from eating them and they rarely gut-hook even the largest bluegills.



Clean hookups like this are the rule with larger flies.

The Flies

Descriptions of my favorite bluegill flies follow. Three are topwater flies and three are subsurface

flies. I use Danville's 210 Denier Flat Waxed Nylon thread for each fly. I will list the hooks and materials for them under their photos. Tying instructions should be self-evident. But if you need help, you may call or email me and I will elaborate.

One: Foam Spider (Topwater)



I use the preformed bodies you see in the photo and a Daiichi size 6, 1560 Wet/Nymph hook. The legs are rubber strands. I cinch the foam body to the hook with tying thread in two places as you see above. A little head cement along the hook shank keeps the foam body stable.

The foam spider allows a subtle presentation on the surface. Bluegills often hit it while it is motionless. It is especially effective during the hour before dusk.

Two: Foam Gurgler (Topwater)



I cut the foam body that you see to the right of the fly with a River Road foam cutter (above the ruler.)

The hook is a Daiichi size 6, 1560 Wet/Nymph hook. In addition to rubber legs, I palmer cactus chenille along the hook shank under the foam to enhance its buggy look.

A gurgler provides more surface disturbance than the spider to attract a bluegill's attention without overwhelming it. A few short strips and then allowing it to sit still will induce hits.

Three: Foam Popper (Topwater)



This is a Bass Popper that I make from a 3/8-inch foam cylinder. I shape the cylinders with the Krebs Popper Jig that you see above. The hook is a size 2, Mustad 3366. The tail is marabou and the legs are rubber strands. I glue the body to the hook shank with Super Glue. And yes, a determined 8-to-9-inch bluegill has no problem attaching itself to the size 2 hook. I use this fly when I am fishing for both bass and bluegills since they often occupy the same locations in a body of water.

The popper is a good choice when bluegills are hyper aggressive. I give it a couple of chugs and then allow it to sit motionless. If I get no hits, I repeat the action. Strikes usually occur while it is still or just as I start to move it again.

Four: Bead Chain Shad Fly (Subsurface)



Although this is a shad fly that I used to catch hickories, it works very well for bluegills (white and yellow perch too.) The bead chain eyes turn the fly over making it a good choice when ponds are choked with algae or hydrilla. I can also thread it over submerged logs and branches. I tie it on a size 6, Mustad 3366 hook. The head is fine chenille and the tail is calf tail. A little crystal flash in the tail and on the exposed shank adds to its attractiveness. For bluegills, allow it to sink out of sight and make short, slow, halting strips.

Five: Bead Head Estaz Shad Fly (Subsurface)



I tied these flashy flies in preparation for a hickory shad outing early this spring. They worked very well for shad and as I learned later in spring, bluegills loved them also. They are tied on a size 6, Mustad 3366 hook. The tail is Baitfish Emulator and the body is Estaz. The bead head helps to get it down in the water column.

I fish it the same way as the bead chain shad fly – very slow halting retrieve while keeping an eye on the fly line tip. When I see it the fly line dart forward, I lift the rod tip and the fun begins.

Six: Bully Bugger (Subsurface)



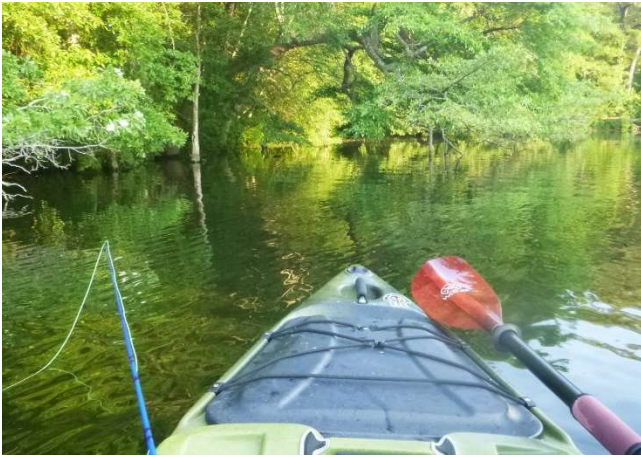
This is a pattern of my creation. I was looking for a fly like a Bluegill Bully that I could fish as a streamer in lieu of suspending it under a popper. I tie the Bully Bugger on a Daiichi #6, 1560 Wet/Nymph hook. I place ten wraps of .015 lead wire mid-shank before adding any materials. Unlike the Bluegill Bully where the wire is wrapped at the bend of the hook causing it to drop vertically, this fly suspends in the water column horizontally during retrieves. That horizontal position is also aided by the floatation properties of EP Fiber at the tail. The wing is four rubber strands and the body is chenille or Estaz.

I fish it the same way as the two shad flies listed above. It fits the bill as a small sinking buggy-looking fly. It is irresistible to bluegills and has become my go-to fly for them. Also, it has attracted bass, yellow perch, and pickerels.

Where to cast these flies

Shallow, shaded shoreline areas, 2 to 4 feet deep are ideal. You do not have to cast tight to shore. Most bluegill hits will come several yards off the shoreline.

A perfect area for bluegills – dark, calm water under overhanging branches:



While fly casting for bluegills from the shore can be productive, a kayak or canoe will significantly improve your access to them. The shallow draft of such vessels allows anglers to quietly approach the areas where they reside in spring through summer with no wake to disturb them. Three to 5-weight flyrods with a floating line and an 8 to 9-foot tapered monofilament leader are ideal for chasing these rambunctious fish. Then it is just a matter of presenting the fly to them as I have described above.

Finally, bluegills are not leader shy. A tapered trout leader ending in 4X or 5X tippets is an unnecessary expense. My bluegill leaders are homemade and consist of three sections of monofilament as follows: Butt section – Three feet of 30-pound test. I tie a perfection loop at the top of the butt section to connect it to the fly line. Middle section – Three feet of 20-pound test connected to the butt section with a double surgeon's knot. Tippet – Three feet of 10-pound test connected to the middle section with a double surgeon's knot.

Some may think that leader is too heavy for a small fish. However, when a toothy hammer handle pickerel attacks your bluegill fly or when a largemouth bass does the same and wraps your leader around a submerged branch, you will be glad your connection to the fly is strong enough to withstand both scenarios.

These six flies and my tips on how and where to use them will provide you with many bluegill encounters. Should you have questions on this subject, I can be reached by email on mbange54@gmail.com or by cell phone on 410-591-5254. Good luck to all.

Editor's Note: This is the first of what will hopefully be a regular column in our club's newsletter, with different club members sharing the contents of their species-specific fly boxes. So if your newsletter editor reaches out to you and asks you to share what's in your fly box, please say "yes"!

Places to fish – The Upper Patapsco River By Andy Grosko

Background Information

The upper Patapsco River is a gem of a place to fish, especially for the wading angler. The access points are many. It supports a variety of naturally reproducing fish and is one of the most heavily stocked trout streams in Central Maryland. Of course, I am a bit biased living within 5 miles of the river and fishing it for about 40 years. However, support for the river is widespread and its fisheries are improving and monitored.



The local communities take pride in this Patapsco Valley watershed. Several groups regularly monitor the river's water quality, benthic macroinvertebrate diversity, and advocate for protecting what is there and restoring fish runs to sections of the river's historically blocked by dams. The Maryland

Department of Natural Resources recognized the freshwater fishing opportunities the Patapsco River offers and enhanced them over the years. For instance, trout fishing regulations vary by section of the river. Initial trout stocking began in upper river in 1989 and expanded in 1990 under the usual 5 trout limits. The sections were added under the two-trout limit from about the Interstate 70 overpass to the Daniels Dam. And in the last few years, a Catch and Release/Delayed harvest until June 1st section was added starting at the Sykesville bridge and going about a mile upstream. In addition to spring trout stocking and fall trout stocking of some sections, the river offers consistent fishing for sunfish, rock bass and smallmouth bass. In the Avalon area, it is possible to catch migrating white perch and possibly river herring in the spring.



The removal of three dams downstream of Daniels Dam is enhancing the fisheries. The eel ladder at Daniels Dam passed about 30 eels annually before the lower dams were removed. Last year it passed about 36,000 young migrating eels. The Smithsonian researchers are monitoring the river to determine whether river herring and shad are migrating up as far as Daniels Dam. There have been reliable reports of snakehead migrating up to the Daniels Dam spill pool. The Maryland DNR has been transplanting a species of native mussels into upper sections of the river. Indices from our local macroinvertebrate sampling usually indicate

acceptable to good water quality. Generally, we find scuds, mayflies and caddis flies abundant as are the black fly and chironomid larvae. The riffles also hold many hellgrammites and sculpins. In the cold winter month, there are winter stone fly hatches. Most of spring and early summer there are mayfly and caddisfly hatches along with lots of midges.

Techniques

Fishing the Patapsco River is simple. Mostly I use a pair of flies and leave them on the leader trip after trip. One is a size 12 bead headed scud pattern, the other is a smaller fly, like a size 16 or 18 blue winged olive nymph. I find the smaller fly pattern does not really matter as much as the size and the way one fishes it. Most success is from drifting in the “believing lane” in riffles and runs. Good waders and a wading staff are essential to get into a comfortable location in a prime riffle/run. Once there it is just a matter of methodically fishing the pair of flies on a short line. Key is detecting subtle takes. Mostly I fish without an indicator/float. I just watch the end of my floating fly line for hesitation or change of direction and set the hook. The water I am fishing is only 2-4’ deep at the most and the river level is moderate or low—generally less than 250 cubic feet per second on the USGS Hollofield station gauge. This stream flow gauge is right under the Green Bridge.

There are good fly hatches on the Patapsco River. On spring evenings, you will see caddis flies fluttering across pools and trout and other fish rising for those. Splashy rises. There are some hatches of big mayflies in late summer into September. These come off at just about dark, and it helps to be out on a moonlight night if you want to find your way back to the car. Scud pattern is a good one for imitating an abundance of natural food source in the Patapsco. Started fishing those after catching a smallmouth bass that had a mouthful of them. If you look carefully, you may see pods of scuds swimming in slower water areas almost any month of the year.

The Patapsco River has a high level of fishing pressure during the spring trout season; however, it is possible to have the river to yourself if you fish early or late in the day, or fish during other seasons. The pressure usually lessens once other areas with the 5 trout limit become available. That is why the 2-trout and delayed harvest areas are my favorite. Access via the Alberton Road parking lot is my favorite. The old, abandoned roadbed parallels most of the river for about a mile up to Daniels Dam. Several good pools and runs will be evident and easily accessible. Still though, you are at an advantage to have waders and a wading staff. There is plenty of deadwood along the river to use as a wading staff. Fish slowly. Once you find fish, stick with them. There are times when my buddy and I remained on a spot for 2 hours or more, catching fish in good riffles drifting nymphs. The trick is to find a good run and believe in your presentation. On sunny days pressured fish will seek cover over food. So you may have to wait on the setting sun to get fish actively feeding again.

Gear and Flies

Most of the time, a 5 or 6 weight floating line on a 9' rod is plenty good with light tippet.

For flies the wooly bugger, hare's ear, scuds and small nymph patterns work well. When a caddis fly hatch is on, the fish will take a size 12 elk hair caddis. To double your chances for both fish and tangles, add a sparkle pattern caddis nymph. It imitates a caddis fly rising to the surface and the bulky fibers of its body material capture an air bubble. That bubble makes it very realistic to the fish. A fishing buddy tied some up and out fished two of us until he gifted us a couple to use.

Seasons

In the early spring, February and March, slow and steady does it. Bill May wrote a wonderful article about fishing midges on the river with great success during those months.

By April through June you will find hatches and active fish rising. Despite that, I usually stick with nymphs – just what I enjoy. But you will find rising fish, especially in the evening. Now in addition to the trout, the river chubs, common shiners and some smallmouth will be actively feeding. They are great fish to practice nymphing on and to teach others to flyfish. One of my good friends from work learned fly fishing on this river and even got into fly tying because of it.

From June to early fall, the river has lower flows and sunfish and small to medium size smallmouth bass are predominant catches. About mid-October, there will be one planting of trout and they are not fished for much after a week or so, except by fly fisherman. It is possible to catch those trout even in December on dry fly imitations of winter stone flies. Not plentiful but possible.

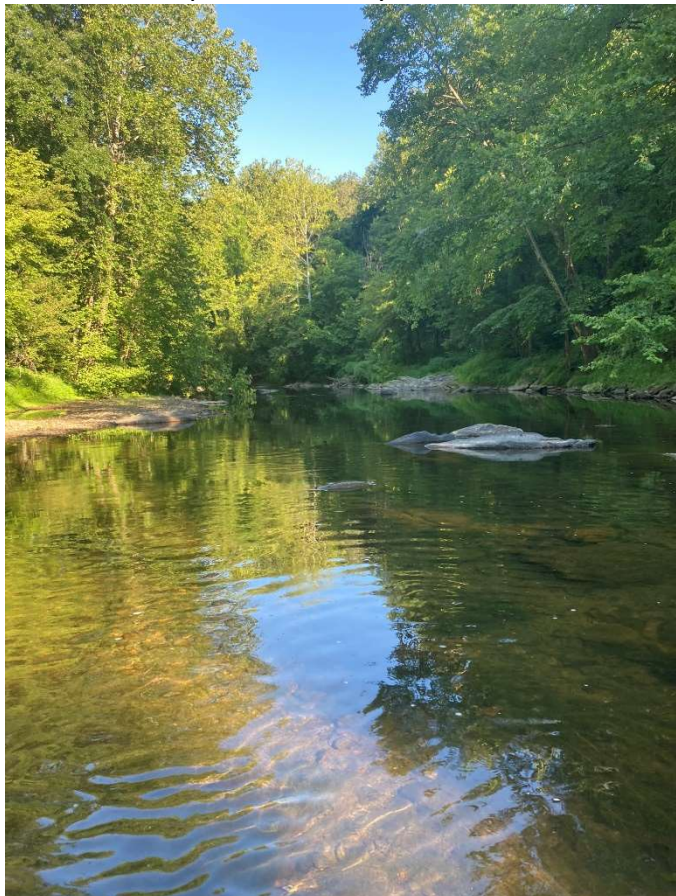
Another recommendation is to look at the two presentations on the Patapsco River in the FSFF meeting notes online on the club's website. One on May 3, 2023 and another – with excellent maps from March 7, 2018. You can find both at this link <https://fs-ff.com/index.php/past-meetings/>.

Access

There are more than a dozen good access points for the river. Left off this list were those that have extremely difficult river access or practically no parking or a very limited section to fish (even if very good). Below you will find access points to the upper Patapsco River listed in order of moving upstream.

Avalon Area. Enter via the park entrance fee booth off Route 1 and look for the large parking lots. Well stocked, with a 5 trout limit. Many of the deeper holes filled with silt/gravel since removal of 2 in-stream dams. Area near the swinging bridge holds trout and white perch seasonally, smallmouth and sunfish year-around. Steep banks on right (parking lot side). Swinging bridge area is good fishing.

Green Bridge at Old Frederick Road. Parking for maybe 10 vehicles. Howard County side take railroad track trail upstream or downstream. River stocked to the Interstate 70 bridge pilings/abutments. Heavily fished, heavily stocked. Two-trout limit keeps some trout year round.



Alberton Road immediately after you cross Dogwood Road bridge. There is a small parking lot to the left which accommodates 8 vehicles. Heavily fished and dogwalkers, sun bathers, and rock climbers park there. Two-trout limit. State stocks 4-5 major holes and fish spread out from there. Plenty of sunfish and some small to medium sized bass. You can hike from here to Daniels Dam, walking along the abandoned Alberton Road roadbed most of the way. Easy access. My favorite area.

Daniels Dam. The parking lot is at the dam's tailwaters, with approximately 10 parking spaces. Park above the dam, where there are 5 spaces and a canoe/kayak launch site. Downstream 2 trout limit

and heavily stocked. Holds fish, especially if wading but expect crowds and littering.

Marriottsville Road, Howard County side, parking lot on left for about 15 vehicles before the bridge. Walk upstream for about 4-6 big holes and nice riffles and runs. Maryland Department of Natural Resources stocks trout upstream to the railroad bridge. Easy access following railroad tracks for the horse trail that parallels the river. Five trout limit. Walk downstream of the Marriottsville parking lot to find a few good pools and confluence of Piney Run with South Branch. Walk further downstream (you can follow railroad tracks). There is a big hole that is heavily stocked just above the falls. Tough to flyrod fish, but it has fish early season. Be careful, water deep and banks steep

River Road at Sykesville. Parking in several places here. At the local park on the right as you approach Sykesville bridge, along River Road itself with 3 or 4 pull-offs along the creek, and a 5 vehicle parking area just before the river turns way from the road. The good news is that the river here is easily accessible and well stocked with trout, some years weekly stockings for 8 weeks. That is also bad news, as it brings intense fishing pressure. But catch it early or late in the day, especially weekdays and trout, smallmouth, chubs and sunfish are there too. But solitude is rare here. You can explore some by going downstream of River Road, on the Carrol County side.

Upstream of Sykesville Bridge. This is a delayed harvest area restricted to artificial lures/flyes only until June 1st. It holds trout seasonally, and has nice easy access from Gaither Road via Trail View Road (you will need to look at a detailed map to find this access point). Or you can walk up the railroad tracks from Sykesville bridge on Carrol County side. It is tough walk on the tracks. Best to check a Google map and get the access from an asphalt trail in the development off Trail View Road. The delayed harvest regulations and hike-in reduces the fishing pressure here – sometimes you can find solitude.

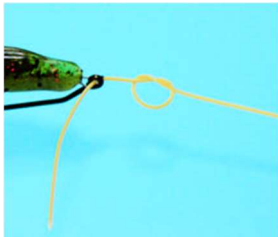
Editor's Note: Thanks to James Andrews for lining up club members to author these quarterly "Where to Fish" articles. And Andy Grosko has just set the bar for an extremely informative article with his detailed description of where to fish along the Patapsco River!

Fly Fishing Essentials: Knots – Part 3

By Joe Bruce and Duber Winters

Joe Bruce and the Non-Slip Knot

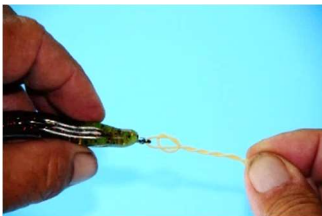
The non-slip loop knot is a great knot to animate the fly or lure. It is easy to tie and can be tied with any size material.



Pull about 6" of line and form an overhand knot, slide the tag end through the hook eye.



Pass the tag end through the loop. Make sure it is on the same side as the standing line.



For up to 12 lbs., 12 -14 lbs., 15-18 lbs., and greater than 20 lbs. make 6, 4, 3 and 2 wraps, respectively.



Pass the tag end through the small loop the same way the lines formed the loop and draw tight by pulling on the tag, hook and standing line at the

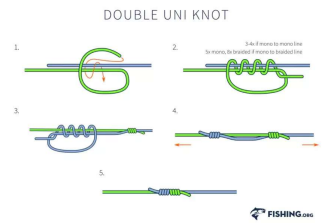
same time. Cut the tag.

Duber Winters and the Back to Back Uni Knot

The back to back uni knot is what I use for bass and all saltwater applications. This is another knot that has never failed me and I tie it with confidence each and every time. It is also easy to tie and provides

BACK TO BACK UNI KNOTS

- Great for building leaders
- Great for adding tippet to leaders
- Great for adding tippet to braid
- Smallest diameter gets the most wraps
- Quick and easy



greater than 90% knot strength. I use this knot to add tippet to leaders, build leaders and to add fluorocarbon to braid. Smaller diameter lines get the most wraps with the minimum being 5 wraps.

Book Review: Headwaters -- The Adventures, Obsession, and Evolution of a Fly Fisherman

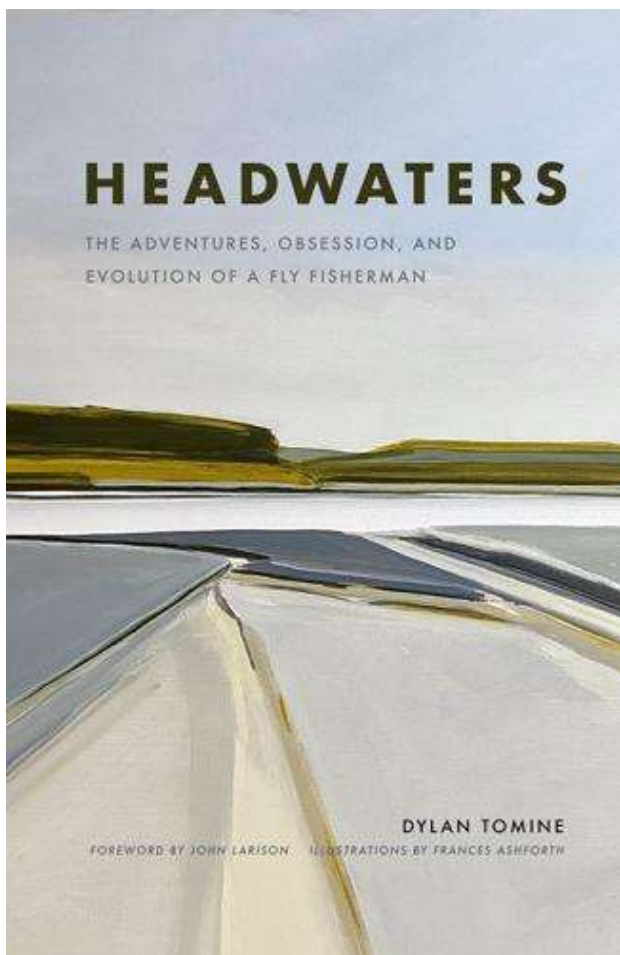
By Mark Bange

Dylan Tomine authors flyfishing articles for a variety of angling periodicals. He is also a staff writer for Sage, contributing articles to their catalogs. His book, *Headwaters*, is a collection of his previously published articles with updates when germane. Tomine is a steelhead fisherman, pursuing them in all corners of the earth from Russia to Argentina to the northwest region of the U.S. and Newfoundland, Canada. Although he delves into other flyfishing topics, the majority of the book concerns steelhead fishing and efforts to preserve their habitat.

He confesses that he is a "steelhead bum" and his writing details many examples where his desire to catch steelhead overrode family, educational and career obligations. (It is no surprise that he is divorced.)

Tomine also exudes physical toughness. He describes wading swollen rivers during torrential rains, clearing the ice from the line guides of his spey rods, and enduring piercing winds in Patagonia

that were pelting him with airborne gravel. Perhaps his riskiest adventures took place in Russia during rides to distant wilderness rivers in antiquated Soviet military helicopters literally held together with duct tape. Indeed, Tomine lets no physical discomfort or threats to bodily harm deter him from chasing steelhead.



But notice the word “Evolution” in his book’s title. He still loves to fish but he also discusses changes in fishing philosophy over the years. He makes a poignant argument about how much is enough. In other words, just because we may find an area to catch unlimited numbers of fish on a particular outing, should we continue to do so? He reminds us that even catch and release fishing is a blood sport. Some of the fish we release perish from the struggle of being caught.

Also, Tomine delves into his conservation philosophies that have changed as he has matured. In particular he is a staunch proponent of dam removals to aid fish migration and he is extremely vocal about the negative impact of fish hatcheries. The hatcheries cost taxpayers millions to operate (he provides cost data) and particularly with steelhead, he argues that hatchery fish compete with natural fish for food. Also, he laments that hatchery fish, when they spawn with wild fish weaken the overall genetic vitality of the biomass.

He is descriptive and clear in his writing but not overbearing or redundant. Also, he writes with good humor when the topic calls for it. There is a very funny chapter about his participation in a Southern U.S. bass tournament with a buddy. They used an old Jon boat and could not travel far while their competitors were in glitter boats and charged away from the dock at 60 mph. They used fly rods and bass poppers exclusively. They didn’t win. They finished in the middle of the field. But they garnered the respect of their conventional gear competitors and they had a good time fishing in a way that could not be more different than swinging streamers with spey rods in frigid fast-moving rivers.

There are plenty of instructional books on fly fishing available today. But in my own evolution as a fly angler, I like reading more about the flyfishing experiences of others than instructional material. Headwaters is a good book for that purpose. Even though I have never fished for steelhead I found things I could relate to in Tomine’s book – fishing with guides, accommodations at distant locales, coping with bad weather and trying to manage family and career with my desire to fish more often.

Headwaters is a 2022 publication of Patagonia Books, Ventura, CA. It is available in the Anne Arundel County Public Library.



There is some basic arithmetic required







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](#)
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FREE STATE FLY FISHERS COORDINATORS

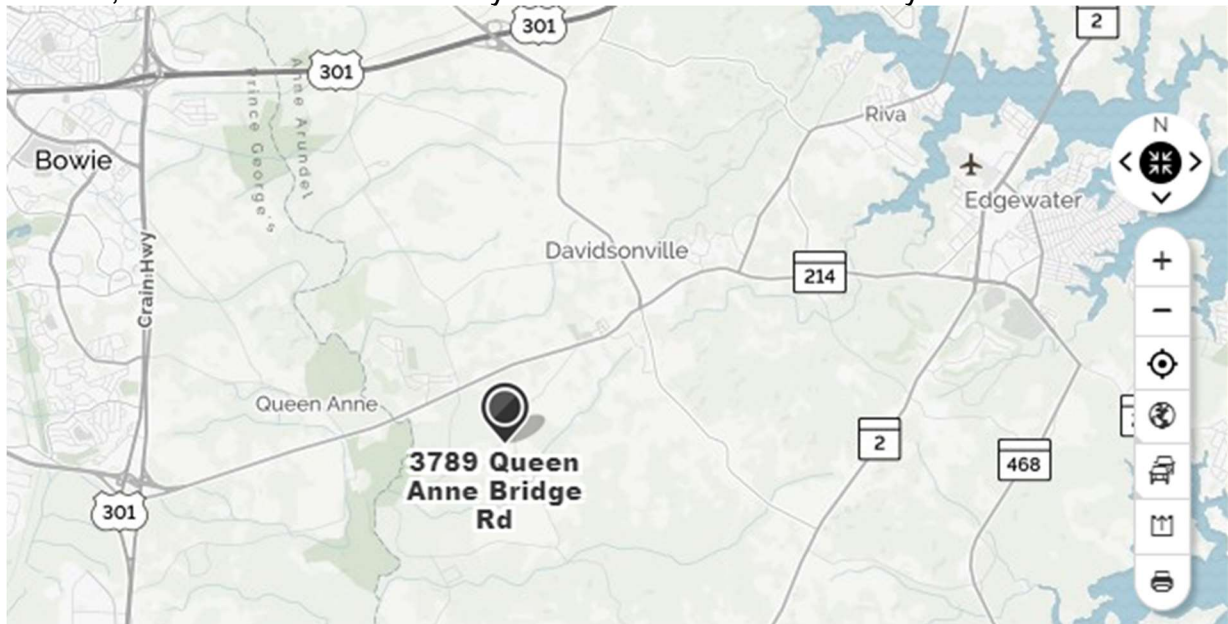
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Chesapeake Council – FFI Delegate: [Frank Bowne](#)
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Please contact the appropriate FSFF Leadership Team member to get answers to any questions about Free State Fly Fishers and upcoming club sponsored 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