

# The Cast



Russian River Fly Fishers

Sonoma County  
California  
Volume 43 Number 9

## A Red Eye With An Appetite

Since June 1977  
Visit our website at  
[www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

## President's Message

### *Another Lousy Day in Paradise*

John Gierach coined that phrase in a story he wrote about enduring sub-arctic weather while catching Jurassic-sized brook trout in Labrador. His point was that even though the physical conditions were miserable, success in hooking hefty fish can usually lift a fly fisher's spirits above the pain. Most experienced fishers have had at least a few days like that, creating memories that last for years. It's the stuff that keeps us coming back for more (even when nature decides not to cooperate).

One of the things I am most proud of our club is its quantity and quality of sponsored outings. In this era of "virtual reality", our outings provide an opportunity for real adventure in the company of our fly fishing comrades. They provide a chance to see what the other guys are using, and to learn new tricks and tips that you may not find on the internet.

We have a great calendar of outings for this fall. Camping at beautiful Lake Manzanita, trout fishing at Lake Davis and Lewiston Reservoir, and a shot at steelhead on the Trinity River. Instead, you could stay home and watch football...

But then you would miss a chance for another lousy day in paradise.

See you there.

~ Ed Barich

## Conservation Corner . . .

### **What's Going on with The Delta?**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the largest freshwater delta on the West Coast. It has supported the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest series of runs of Chinook salmon and a substantial steelhead return. It's waters have also served to create one of the world's

most productive farmlands and has fueled growth in population centers up to 600 miles away. But today, its Fall run of Chinook is almost extinct, steelhead runs exist almost exclusively through hatchery programs, native fish like sturgeon and Delta smelt are dwindling and even formerly healthy non-native populations like striped bass are suffering. The reasons are not hard to find and should be familiar; habitat loss through channeling and water diversions, dams restricting access to spawning beds, and hatchery competition and genetic weakening. And the last 5 years of record-setting drought have not helped. The reaction to this has been complex.

As water gets scarce, nobody gets what they think they are due. Fish suffer as human-induced environmental damage gets amplified. Science-driven responses that restrict flow to farmers or cities create a hue and cry heard all the way to Washington, D.C. [Striped bass anglers](#) fight salmon and [steelhead anglers](#) over which species are more important to save. Byzantine water rights rules prevent attempts to save water and implement adaptive management plans.

So what is happening now and how might we move forward?

In April 2015 state and federal agencies announced a new alternative to the California Department of Water Resources Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). This alternative differs in that it separates the conveyance facility and habitat restoration measures into two efforts: California WaterFix and California EcoRestore. The second major difference is that the original BDCP was based on a 50-year project permit whereas the Eco Restore proposal involves short-term permits for each endangered species that is encountered. The third difference is that in the new EcoRestore project 30,000 acres are set to be restored over five years at a cost of \$300 million while the original BDCP included restoration of 100,000 acres over a span of 50 years ([Wikipedia](#)).

The \$15 billion WaterFix is highlighted by the goal of building two tunnels (The “Twin Tunnels”) to carry fresh water from the Sacramento River under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta toward the intake stations for the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. Each tunnel would be 150 feet below ground, 40 feet in diameter and 30 miles in length. The project would also include three new intakes that essentially move the current Southern Delta intakes about 40 miles North and would provide a

total annual yield of 4.9 million acre-feet. The funding is planned to primarily come from urban water users who will have an additional payment of \$5 each month.

While pointing out the problems of past geo-engineering projects of this scale, noted fisheries experts such as Peter Moyle at UC Davis have also [made it clear](#) that the current situation with Southern Delta intakes has altered the normal direction of water flow and the location of the fresh water gradient in the Delta. This issue, not striped bass predation, has caused massive damage to the health of Delta fish. Though the updated BDCP proposal aims to resolve some issues such as this, there are also many it does not address. There is no plan for the possibility that there is less flow in the Sacramento River in the future, or for allocation of water to fisheries from the Delta. There are also no plans to deal with the [extreme subsidence](#) that is happening in the Delta. And some of the funding for EcoRestore comes from Proposition 1 tax-payer dollars (rather than the promised rate payers). Moyle and other scientists such as CalTrout’s Jacob Katz believe that recovery of the fisheries will not be possible with the WaterFix only. More systems-wide approaches such as using historic floodplains for both rice farming and [fish refuges](#) are the path forward.

Opposition to the WaterFix has banded unlikely bedfellows such as Democratic Valley lawmakers like [John Garramendi](#) and Susan Talamantes Eggman and conservative Valley farmers. Eggman’s Assembly Bill 1713 would prohibit the building of the twin tunnels without a vote in favor from Californians. As reported in [Maven’s Notebook](#), recently a group of conservation and fishing organizations, including the CA Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Restore the Delta and The Sierra Club, [sent a letter](#) to state and federal agencies requesting a new environmental analysis of the WaterFix proposal. The groups claim the proposal as currently submitted violates the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act. Among the claims made by the coalition are that the US Bureau of Reclamation has now issued a biological assessment admitting the project is “likely to adversely affect” endangered and threatened fish species and their designated critical habitats. That contradicts Reclamation’s denials of adverse effects in the earlier Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

A new White House guidance requires consideration of the effects of climate change on federally permitted projects.

So where does that leave us? The current state of affairs isn't working for fish, even in good years. Future water uncertainty is almost a sure thing with climate change. Population continues to grow in Southern California. Farming isn't growing suddenly more efficient in the Central Valley. Whether the WaterFix goes forward or we find ways to improve what we have, my hope lies in following the guidance of dedicated fisheries biologists such as Moyle and systems-wide solutions such as the [Nigiri Project](#) and the potential of the proposed CalTrout-Trout Unlimited [Central Valley Salmon Partnership](#). And maybe they can provide a model for partnerships on our local waters.

~ Derek Campbell  
Conservation Chairman

## Four Seasons of the Trinity River



### Andrew Harris – September Speaker

Andrew's presentation will cover the Trinity River watershed from top to bottom. He will cover the high-country trout fishing, Stillwater opportunities, steelhead fishing with both single and two-handed rods, and techniques for catching the plentiful wild brown trout on the Trinity River. Andrew is excited to share his knowledge of this exciting destination with you!

Andrew began his guiding career at Clearwater House on Hat Creek in 1997, guiding clients on the rivers surrounding Mt. Shasta and Mt. Lassen.

Andrew is the author of "Plumas National Forest Trout Fishing Guide" and is a frequent contributor to California Fly Fisher magazine. Andrew lives in Red Bluff, California. His current guide destinations include trout and stripers on the Lower Sac, steelhead on the Trinity River, and dry fly fishing on Battle Creek.

Please Join me in welcoming our guest speaker at the [Wednesday, September 14 General Meeting](#).

~ Joe Banovich  
RRFF Program and Speaker Chairman

## ~ Just about the most fun we have ever had.....

This statement is how my wife recapped our Alaska float trip adventure at the end of the trip.

In July, my son-in-law and I assembled camping gear and food, rented two 14 ft rowing frame rafts and hired a float plane pilot to fly our families out to Upnuk Lake. It took two plane trips to get us all out there with our food and gear. We had a party of nine – my wife, our two daughters, one son-in-law, 4 grandkids ages 4 to 8. We had room but they decided to leave one 3 year old grandchild home. Our goal was a 5 day float from Upnuk lake to Tikchik Lake on the Tikchik River, about 45 river miles.



The Lakes are two of the nine lakes in the Wood-Tikchik state park, largest and most remote state park in the US, about 1.6 million acres. The lakes are located about a one-hour flight in a de Havilland Beaver from Dillingham, Alaska where one daughter

lives. Dillingham is located at the mouth of the Nushagak River on Bristol Bay in southwest Alaska. The river was very tame and we only had to dodge rocks and log jams and avoid a few “sweepers” (trees that had fallen across the river). Weather was very nice with mostly sunny days and a bit of rain one morning. The bugs were not bad – only a few mosquitoes and no-see-ums.



We floated about 4-6 hours each day and camped out on gravel bars each night.

The sun set each evening about 11:30 pm but it never really got very dark at night.



I had entered the coordinates for the takeout lake into our Garmin GPS walkie-talkies to give us some idea of our progress each day. It turns out that 45 meandering river miles equals about 27 actual miles as the crow flies.

The most exciting incident that occurred was when we surprised some bears during a drift. As the lead raft rounded a bend, we surprised a momma griz with three cubs who were fishing for sockeye in a backwater pool. She gave a loud woof and started

to charge, taking about three big leaping steps before retreating. Luckily it turned out to be a false charge. She and the cubs quickly ran into the bushes. We, of course were not prepared - didn't have our bear spray at the ready and didn't have our cameras out.

Fishing consisted of a few big Lake Trout at the river mouth and at a confluence part of the way. We also easily caught 16-18" grayling on egg sucking leeches most places.



Sun rises over Tikchik mountain on our last morning.





The pilot showed up at the takeout at Tikchik Lake on the final morning at 10 am as promised ready to begin hauling us and our gear back to Dillingham. Our trip planning was near perfect having just finished off the last of the beer and wine the prior night.

We might have to pick out a different river and do this again next year.

~ Mike Spurlock

## Delta Smallmouths

When fly fishers consider the California Delta, they are usually thinking about its well-known striped and largemouth bass fisheries. But most are unaware that the Delta also harbors a significant population of smallmouth bass. Although typically smaller than their black bass cousins, smallmouths can provide excellent surface action. When hooked they will jump, and put up a fight that is out of proportion to their size. When Doug MacKay and I fished for stripers with Captain Maury Hatch last fall, he mentioned that he guided Delta smallmouth trips in the summer months. The possibility of getting into a school of these scrappy fighters using only surface flies was attractive, so we set up a date for this summer.

Although the Delta in August can be sweltering, the morning we picked was unusually cool and windy. Maury usually pilots his jet boat for these trips, but because the wind-driven swells were big he chose to bring his larger bay boat with a new 150 horsepower outboard. Doug and I put on windbreakers and screwed down our hats for an invigorating 50 mph ride up the Sacramento River to near the town of Locke where the smallmouths hang out.

Maury supplied us with fast Sage 5-weight rods that were rigged with Rio Outbound Short floating lines. The lines were over-weighted so that we could cast full-sized black bass poppers that would prevent smaller fish from getting hooked easily. He used hand-built leaders that tapered down to 15 lb. test at the tip to enable good turn-over of the bulky balsa poppers. These rigs made casting into the wind possible, while using rods that were light enough to let the smallmouths show their stuff.

We fished the out-going morning tide, which made the delta sloughs seem like fast-flowing valley streams. Unlike black bass fishing, our targets were not the lily pads and weed mat cover areas. Instead, smallmouths prefer the rocky sections of the island dikes that drop rapidly into the water, providing housing for their favorite prey: crayfish. Our mission was to place the fly as close to the water's edge as possible, then to use tight-line strips to make the fly "pop" in a tantalizing manner.

The morning started slow due to the cool weather, gusty winds and our learning curve in getting used to throwing the big poppers. There were several times when Doug and I were glad the rigs had 15 lb. tippets, as we occasionally tossed Maury's beautiful handmade flies into tree branches – no harm, no foul. But as the air warmed and the wind calmed (and we began to cast decently), the action warmed up too. Soon our flies were getting attacked on nearly every other cast. An interesting characteristic of smallmouth is that once they jump on a prey and miss, they generally won't come back for a second pass. So if we had a blow-up that didn't result in a hook-up, we just had to let the boat's trolling motor take us along to a new spot and a new cast. Fortunately, there are a *lot* of spots to cover in the Delta.

We never did get into any trophy-sized fish on this trip, but we did have plenty of action and pound-for-pound, smallies put up a good fight on a 5-weight rod. My favorite moment was when I made a

sidearm toss under willow branches to land the fly in the shade, just a few inches from the shore. All it took was one “pop” to cause an explosion and hook a hungry fish. That memory alone makes it worth coming back to the Delta for smallmouth on some future summer day.



Doug with a Delta smallmouth

~ Ed Barich

## RRFF Members Fly -Tie'em -on at the Fair

On Wednesday August 3, club members; Bill Laurie, Ken Young, Lorrin Ngum and I brought our tying kits to the Sonoma County Fair’s Finley Building to demonstrate the art of fly tying. We spent 4 hours among the Fine Arts creations of other county residents. This was the third year that we offered fair goers the opportunity to learn how to tie “woolly buggers”. Unfortunately, we didn’t have very many folks sit down with us this time. I should have anticipated a smaller audience when the exhibit manager told me that many of the visitors would be there to see how their own art was judged.



In previous years, we were in the Arts and Crafts Hall on a weekend and had a lot more people come by to chat and tie. Hopefully, we can get back to our roots among the batik and weaver folk next year.

Our appreciation should go out to Bill, Lorrin and the Kens, for publically representing the Russian River Fly Fishers and bringing a nice service donation from the County to our treasury.

~ Ken Magoon

## Guide Trip . . .

Raffle Tickets for The Lance Gray donated guide trip for two are still available at \$20.00. Each ticket has a \$425 value.

Tickets may be purchased at the general meetings and the winner need not be present to win.

~ Editor

## *Join the RRFF on Facebook*

We currently have **745 members** on our RRFF Facebook page. You can keep up with the RRFF and our fly fishing and conservation community by joining us at:

<http://www.facebook.com/russianriverflyfishers>

## *Calendar of Events*

**Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics** – From 4:30 until 7:00 pm (weather permitting). Held every Thursday at the RRFF Casting Pond in Dan Galvin Park, Santa Rosa.

### September

**8 – 12 Manzanita Lake** Fish this beautiful lake for wild rainbows and browns in Lassen Volcanic National Park. Website has link to reserve a campsite. (K. Magoon)

**29 – Oct 2 Davis Lake** Stay in Davis Lake Resort with 8 others or camp in your RV. (K. Magoon)

### October

**20 – 24 Lewiston Lake** Lakeview Terrace Resort. Trout and Steelhead (E. Barich)

### November

**10 – 13 Trinity River** Indian Creek Lodge. Steelhead. (B. Laurie)

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### Santa Rosa Fishing Tackle Show

Sporting Collectible Show - March 9, 2012, 9 am to 5 pm and March 10, 2012, 8 am to 5 pm.  
Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building.  
Phone/fax (707) 539-3662,  
Red Johnson, [warrenjo@pacbell.net](mailto:warrenjo@pacbell.net).

### AJ Printing & Graphics, Inc.

Color copying, black and white copying, offset printing. 1350 Central Avenue, Suite 1, Santa Rosa, CA 95401,  
(707) 525-8600.

**Check out the Russian River Fly Fishers  
on the Internet at**

**[www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)**

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## Russian River Fly Fishers Membership Application

*I acknowledge in this agreement, and fully understand, that it is a release of liability. I further acknowledge that I am waiving any right that I may have to bring legal action or to assert a claim against Russian River Fly Fishers (RRFF) for its negligence. Any member who invites a non-member (including member's spouse and family) agrees that such guest is bound by the same conditions and agrees to so advise the guest. I have read this statement and agree to its terms as a condition of my membership in the Russian River Fly Fishers. This agreement is valid for all RRFF sanctioned events, (fishing outings, picnics, meetings).*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Referred by \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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How Can You Help the RRFF? \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_ \_\_\_\_\_

\* Required for e-mail newsletter

### Please mark one of the following categories:

**I apply as a new member:**  **Single membership** – \$50 annual dues  **Gold membership** - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

**Family membership** – \$55 annual dues [JOIN ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

**Junior membership** – \$25 annual dues

**Existing membership renewal:**  **Single membership** – \$50 annual dues  **Gold membership** - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

**Family membership** – \$55 annual dues [RENEW ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

**Junior membership** – \$25 annual dues

Dues paid by a new member joining the RRFF after March 30th of any year will cover the balance of that year and also the membership dues for the following fiscal year. The RRFF fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30<sup>th</sup>

Please mail this application and your check payable to: **Russian River Fly Fishers**  
c/o **Mike Spurlock, 20 San Domingo Way, Novato, CA 94945**