

FISHIN' POLE, PACK & PADDLE

FLOAT FISHERMEN OF VIRGINIA

FALL 2013 ISSUE



PRESIDENT'S PADDLE

As most of you know by now, we have lost another original member of The Float Fishermen. By all accounts, Dick Mattox was the embodiment of the spirit of the Float Fishermen and especially the Scotts Creek Chapter. The stories of the man, quite a character, are countless; just ask Catherine Van de Sande of the time when Dick decided that she and Stephen needed a flower bed in the yard of their new home. Hearing no objections and being heard to say, "Don't just stand there" as he took his roto-tiller from his truck, tilled a forty foot area, left and returned with a load of horse manure and tilled it in. "Can't have flowers without the right s—t." My kind of guy!

Now, during the service Rick Mattox mentioned Dick's avid devotion to the Redskins and while saying goodbye to his dad he suggested that Dick put in a good word with the 'Big guy' for the team. The Skins beat the Raiders in their house in Oakland the next day - I might add. Hail to the Redskins! His seemingly limitless kindness and consideration of others is the ever present theme of his time on earth. Our collective condolences go out to the extended family and friends of Dick Mattox.

The 'Labor Day Float and River Clean Up' was highlighted by Tim and Harry's four hour musical performance and plenty of water in the James. Congratulations to Dee, Katherine and Chris for making their maiden voyage through Balcony Falls. That section is a smile maker for sure!

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photo courtesy of Bill Tanger

Our new Assistant Webmaster, Scott McEwen: (asstwebmaster@floatfishermen.org), is willing to be our "go to person" for any pictures videos or information updates for the Float Fishermen Website. Thank you Scott! Please send your paddle and camping pic's to him.

The Winter Business Meeting will be held December 7th on the Slate River Property at 11:00 am. Please see the most recent minutes on the website before we get together. Hoping for a good turnout as we have some important items to discuss.

"Guap"

LABOR DAY MEETING NOTES

Meeting Minutes 9/1/2013 as recorded by Allison Herbert on behalf of Ginnie Peck

President Tony Adams (president@floatfishermen.org) called the meeting to order. A reminder was mentioned to the group that the proper takeout after Balcony Falls is past the footbridge, river left. Mid-meeting, he also paused to thank Tim Ryalls and Harry Faulkner for a wonderful evening of musical entertainment.

Secretary Ginnie Peck (secretary@floatfishermen.org) was absent for the meeting. Meeting minutes from the Memorial Day meeting as posted online were approved.

Treasurer Katherine Waller (treasurer@floatfishermen.org) presented the treasurer report. \$500.00 in dues have been collected so far this year. River tax reminder was also discussed and Bryon Jones was designated collector of the river tax for the entire group due to the smaller turnout. After reviewing the costs incurred to date for the organization, a budget will be created and reviewed at the winter business meeting for the following year. Katherine also noted that membership dues collection needs to be discussed as dues are not coming in or not coming in until very late in the year.

Membership Chair Tim Stuller (membership@floatfishermen.org) was absent for the meeting. In his absence, President Tony Adams shared an email from Tim, noting that we had 198 members as of the end of August. Tim's email also noted the need for review of the membership spreadsheet - specifically the month due column on the active members tab. It was discussed that the spreadsheet needed to be updated in terms of usability, and it was mentioned that this should be discussed further (perhaps at the winter meeting?)

Newsletter Editor Allison Herbert (editor@floatfishermen.org) reviewed the email statistics with the group. 9 emails have been sent to members to date and they are averaging over 45% open and over 13% click through rates. As of the meeting, there are 167 email addresses that we are sending to, and 35-40 members that still prefer to receive their newsletters by email. It was also discussed that in order to avoid confusion, the state email address, editor@floatfishermen.org should be used when sending any email communications to the newsletter editor.

Webmaster Bob Born (webmaster@floatfishermen.org) was absent for the meeting. In the last meeting, Trey Mattox was appointed as Assistant to the Webmaster. Trey is no longer available to serve under this position and a replacement was requested. Scott McEwen from the George Dickel chapter volunteered to take over the Assistant's position.

Conservation Chair Bill Tanger (conservation@floatfishermen.org) reviewed river access issues with the group. Bill shared a Botetourt County Blueway map and the Allegheny County map with the group and noted several new and improved river access points in these two counties, most notably Gala Campground and Sharon Park. Bill noted that the Sharon Park access has great access for the Cowpasture River and he recommended it to the group as a possible float option for the weekend.

In addition to the new and improved river access points, Bill discussed the DGIF's plans to start charging a fee for use of these river access points. Currently, Wildlife Management Areas across the state require an access fee to be paid for daily use of these areas. The fee is covered under any Virginia fishing or hunting license and one time daily use permits can be purchased online. A similar fee structure is being discussed at DGIF and when more information is available on this topic, Bill will share with the group.

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Editor's Note

The opinions expressed in FPP&P are those of the author and not necessarily those of FFV or its members. Articles and material for publication may be submitted to the FPP&P editor. Preferred format: E-mail with attachments in Word, RTF, and/or JPEG. Dates for submitting material for publication: 1st of February, April, August and November. The Editor reserves the right to edit as needed. Comments, criticism and compliments are always welcome.

LABOR DAY NOTES (CONTINUED)

Another river access issue to be aware of is the Howardsville access on the James. This river access has been de-listed by DGIF and is considered “not in use” by the state. This access issue is further complicated as a neighboring property owner is trying to claim the property as well. If you are able to provide assistance with research on this issue, please contact Bill. Bill will reach out to Scott McEwen for some help getting documents from the Albemarle County courthouse.

The river access at Balcony Falls/Snowden has run into several boaters getting tickets from the US Park Service (Note: This is different from tickets from DGIF, the Park Service claims that the Appalachian Trail lot is for hiker use only). Please keep in mind that the second takeout after the footbridge is the only DGIF approved takeout for this area. Boaters choosing to use the Appalachian trail parking lot are subject to ticketing. Bill is working on an at-grade crossing further up river with CSX, and the ticketing issue above may help expedite the issue. Bill has asked that if any member is ticketed as mentioned above to please contact him with the details of the ticket.

Bill mentioned a property for sale on the James River near the Maidens access. Tony Adams is familiar with the land and mentioned looking into the property for additional information. If you are interested in this property, please contact Tony or Bill for more information. Tony will look into details of this property.

In regards to conservation issues, Bill noted that stormwater management will be an important topic to watch for in the next few years. Many cities and counties are currently assessing the implementation of fees to cover a stormwater management program for the city’s aging system. Other municipalities across the state already charge a fee for this same need, Roanoke will be the next to review their management plan and determine if and when fees are needed.

Bill also shared the nomination for the Randy Carter award. Rock Willoughby also had another candidate for this award. Please contact Bill or Rock if you would like additional information on either nominee. The award will be voted on at the Winter Business Meeting.

Old Business:

Nominating Committee member Brian Van de Sande noted that existing secretary and treasurer positions will remain as is for the next year. The newsletter editor position will need to be filled by Memorial Day of 2014. Nominations for the next year will also be discussed at the winter business meeting.

New Business:

President Tony Adams expressed his concern over the lack of communication within the group. Tony recommended a consultant be brought in to help the organization streamline the issues and pain points the officers are currently dealing with. Newsletter Editor Allison Herbert also added that including additional time at the winter business meeting for officers to discuss some of the communication issues may be a good idea. The discussion was tabled due to length of the meeting and the meeting was adjourned.



LABOR DAY WEEKEND

photos courtesy of Bill Tanger

IN THE BEGINNING

By Rick Mattox

Once upon a time there were 3 paddlers who enjoyed canoeing, fishing and most of all preserving Virginia's free flowing streams so much that they started an organization they called The Float Fishermen of Virginia. Those 3 float fishing legends were Reb Stewart, Jack Albert and Peter Pine. One of the first members of this new organization was their friend and my dad, Dick Mattox. This group eventually became the Tidewater Chapter of the FFV.

The story goes that on one Sunday afternoon while taking out at Bremono Bluff they came upon 3 canoeists from Charlottesville also taking out at Bremono. These 2 groups of paddlers started sharing river stories next to the railroad track at Bremono while passing around a bottle of George Dickel courtesy of the Charlottesville paddlers. The FFV paddlers convinced the Charlottesville paddlers that they should join this new organization. Thus was born the George Dickel Chapter.

One summer day in 1973 my dad pretty much told Deb and I that we were going canoeing with my mom and him on the Nottoway River the next day. We didn't know anything about canoeing, had never really thought about it and really didn't have a desire to go, but since it seemed like an order and not a request, we went and had a great time.

We had such a good time on that first trip that one month later we went on our 1st annual FFV Labor Day trip at Camp Friendship. By that time we were hooked, so to speak, on canoeing with the FFV. We had so much fun on those trips that we started inviting our friends, who would invite friends. Soon, thereafter, Jack Albert suggested that we start our own chapter of the FFV. Thus was born the Scott's Creek Chapter. It is still unclear whether Jack was more interested in a new chapter for the FFV or just getting me and my friends out of the Tidewater Chapter. At any rate, it was the beginning of the Creekers.

A few years later we introduced our kids, Loren and Trey to their first FFV experience before their first birthdays. As they grew older, they started inviting their friends, who would invite friends and the Creeker Chapter continued to grow.

We now have the fortune of having 2 grandkids, Liam and Tucker who went on their first FFV trip prior to their first birthday.

Hopefully, in a few years they will start inviting their friends and continue to support FFV for generations to come.

My Dad in his earlier years was the self proclaimed "head chef and chief bottle washer" for the Creekers that meant making bacon in the morning, chicken for dinner and cabbage and potatoes for late night snack; doing all the cooking over the campfire. He was also the one in charge of making all that great bar-b-que the Creekers served for so many years at the statewide meetings and VIP Floats.

The point of the story is that on September 24th my dad peacefully left this life after a 2 week battle to hold on. He achieved a great deal in his 87 years and did a lot of things for a lot of people. The one thing he did that I most appreciate was taking Deb and me canoeing on the Nottoway River that summer day in 1973. If not for his insistence me, my family and the Creekers might not have had the opportunity to canoe the rivers of Virginia and enjoy that great natural resource with such a great organization and group of friends as the Float Fishermen of Virginia. Here we are 40 years and 4 generations later and still looking forward to those Memorial Day and Labor Day weekend floats.

To my dad now canoeing that great river in the sky I say enjoy the trip, we'll see you downstream and thanks for the memories.



photo courtesy of Rick Mattox

RIVER STORIES

FLOAT FISHERMEN OF VIRGINIA STATE OFFICERS

President

Tony Adams
president@floatfishermen.org

Vice Presidents

Bill Duncan
Ken Ingram
Erica Sims Goode
Roc Cooper

Secretary

Ginnie Peck
secretary@floatfishermen.org

Treasurer

Katherine Waller
PO Box 35555
North Chesterfield, VA 23235
treasurer@floatfishermen.org

Conservation

Bill Tanger
P.O. Box 1750
Roanoke, VA 24008-1750
(540) 366-2228 H
conservation@floatfishermen.org

Membership

Tim Stuller
membership@floatfishermen.org

Webmaster

Bob Born
524 Columbia Ave.
Ramseur, NC 27316
webmaster@floatfishermen.org

Assistant Webmaster

Scott McEwen
asstwebmaster@floatfishermen.org

Newsletter

Allison Herbert
editor@floatfishermen.org

CREEKERS ARE RESOURCEFUL!

By Taylor Adams

This past Labor Day trip to Solitude was the first camping/canoeing trip that my friend, Chris, had ever been on. We arrived on Friday evening; everyone was getting comfortable and settling into their respective campsites. The campfire was warm; Shane and his son were playing guitar so that was the place to be for the majority of the “Creekers”. The younger kids were roaming around with their parents or with Chris and I, playing with their new handheld video games. Brian Vande Sande and my Dad got in a conversation about ice. My Dad gave him some and Brian offered to repay him with a five dollar bill. My dad passed the money in my direction with the explanation, “I leave the bills with my associate here.” I pocketed the money, the night went on, and the fiver was forgotten.

The next day we paddled beautiful Balcony Falls and its subsequent rapids. The day was perfect with the sun high in the sky shining warm rays onto us as we ate at Jump Rock. Everything, even the long flat-water paddle to the take out was serene and Chris was having a great time. It was an enjoyable paddle for everyone, until we got to the take out when we noticed rain clouds in the distance. This was particularly unsettling for us because we had left all the flaps open and unzipped in our tents. By the time we returned, we were prepared for the worst – and we found it.

Everything soaked to the core. It was difficult for my friend Chris who seemed to now be regretting his decision to come along...NOT a good first impression of a Float Fishermen trip. Suddenly, a stroke of genius. “Why don’t we dry them somewhere?” Sadly the nearest laundromat was an hour away in downtown Roanoke, but we didn’t care; we were desperate to have dry stuff.

On the way, we were asked if we could pick up a bag of charcoal to cook our dinner. I agreed and didn’t think anything else of it. We arrived at the laundromat, exhausted, but happy we were so close to victory. We threw everything into the dryers but when I reached for my wallet it wasn’t there. My heart sank. I was prepared to bail when I put my hand in my pocket and found the wrinkled five dollar bill I had gotten by chance the night before. It took every last quarter but we finally got our stuff dried.

Suddenly Chris pointed out that we used all of the money in the dryers, and had nothing left for the charcoal. We scrambled back to my car, looked under every seat for loose change, but only found fifty cents. T. Even after the miraculous recovery with the five dollar bill, we still ultimately failed! But again, Chris came in with a suggestion, “You know, we have those two guitars in your trunk; are you thinking what I’m thinking?” We laid the guitar cases open, sat on the sidewalk of downtown Roanoke, and played for charcoal money. Yes folks – WE PANHANDLED! After about a half hour, we had gotten some change. Not enough for the charcoal-it was getting late. Though not totally victorious, at least we had a great story; and Chris is ready for another adventure with the “Creekers” and the Float Fishermen.

RIVER STORIES

TRIP REPORT: Back Creek – ‘Round the Bend

By Bill Tanger

Several of us had tried to put a trip together on Back Creek in Roanoke County for a month, but weather and water issues stopped us until Sunday, May 12, 2013. Then the level dropped to 100 cfs, the weather was sunny and 65 degrees and we hit the road. Juanita and Bill Tanger and Tom Christenbury put in at Rt 116 (Jae Valley Road) where it crosses Back Creek.

This is a decent put-in, but needs a parking area and steps to the water. The highway bridge that crosses the creek is about to be rebuilt, and VDOT has the work area surveyed and staked out. So now should be a good the time to look into improved access to the creek at the bridge. The property around the bridge is owned by Roanoke City and is not being used for anything. It was formerly the property for the Sun Valley Swim Club.

We had just enough water so that only Juanita had to get out of her boat, and only once. The creek really moved along quickly with many riffles and the occasional Class II rapid. One dramatic rapid called for ducking under a huge 100 foot tree that was stretched across the river at a rocky curve in the creek. We probably scraped over rocks about a dozen times each, so we all agreed that 100 cfs was probably boating zero on any Randy Carter gauge.

This is a really well-hidden gem, a small tree-canopied creek, right in our back yard. Maybe it should be called Back Yard Creek. All three of us rated this creek section a 9 on a scale of 10. The topo map showed several horseshoe bends, but it turned out to be a very simplified map of the creek, which twisted and turned all day long. It has about a half-dozen horseshoe bends in it!

The creek has dozens of rocky cliffs straight up from the water,

with occasional groves of rhodo on the north side and some open farm fields on river left. On the whole trip we saw only three occupied homes, and even those were set back from the creek up on the bank. The scenery was glorious.

Right off the bat we saw a flock of turkey. Then we ran into deer, a hawk, an osprey, mallards, fish, carp, an 18” snapping turtle and more deer. We found a swimming box turtle that must have fallen into the river, so we fished him out and put him on a sandy bank.

One very strange phenomenon was a power line cable that lay along the river from Rt 116 for several miles, often four or five strands at a time. It appeared to be aluminum power line that might even be worth cutting up and hauling out. How it got there is a real mystery!

Towards the end of the trip we found an old falling down two-story, log cabin/cinderblock house that looked like it was built in the 1920’s and abandoned around 1930. It even had its own swimming pool and a beautiful sandy beach on the creek.

The section looks to be about 5 miles long. We did the trip in three and a half hours, taking out at Rutrough Point at our new access steps! Our efforts at improving the Rutrough access were very worthwhile. The fishermen on the steps were very accommodating as we hauled our craft up the steps to the roadbed.

This trip should be a club trip for sure each year. It has more bends per mile than any I have seen. You will be amazed at how often you will be going ‘round the bend.

The trick is to catch the right water and the right weather. But with some coordination by our trip planner we can make it happen.

And we need to improve the access.



photo courtesy of Bill Tanger



P.O.Box 35555, N. Chesterfield, VA 23235
www.floatfishermen.org | info@floatfishermen.org

SPECIAL NOTICE

If you have received a printed copy of this newsletter, we do not have an email address on file for you OR you have elected to receive your newsletter by standard mail. If you would like to receive future issues of the newsletter via email, please send your address to your local chapter treasurer or to our state membership chair at membership@floatfishermen.org.

No action is needed if you prefer to continue receiving your newsletter via standard mail.

WINTER BUSINESS MEETING SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7TH AT 11:00 AM SLATE RIVER PROPERTY

Potluck lunch - choose a snack or a meal to share with your paddling friends...BYOB! Join us for a corn hole tournament following the meeting. For details, please contact Tony Adams: president@floatfishermen.org or (804) 248-1186

DIRECTIONS TO THE WINTER MEETING

Please visit <http://www.floatfishermen.org/slateriver.html> for detailed directions

From points NORTH / WEST:

EAST on I-64 E toward RICHMOND to US-15 exit- EXIT 136- toward GORDONSVILLE / PALMYRA. RIGHT onto US-15 S / JAMES MADISON HWY. RIGHT at the fork to go on JAMES MADISON HWY / US-15. RIGHT onto VA-652 to Bridgeport, VA

From points EAST:

WEST on I-64 W toward CHARLOTTESVILLE. VA-617 exit- EXIT 167- toward OILVILLE / GOOCHLAND. LEFT onto OILVILLE RD. RIGHT onto US-250 / BROAD STREET RD. LEFT onto FAIRGROUND RD. LEFT onto SANDY HOOK RD / US-522. RIGHT onto VA-6. STRAIGHT to go onto US-15 / JAMES MADISON HWY. RIGHT onto VA-652 to Bridgeport, VA

From points SOUTH:

US-460 E toward APPOMATTOX. VA-24 E / VA-131 S ramp toward ROUTE 60 / APPOMATTOX. LEFT onto VA-131 / VA-24 / UNION BLVD. Continue on VA-24. SLIGHT RIGHT onto US-60 E / JAMES A ANDERSON HWY. LEFT onto US-15 N / JAMES MADISON HWY. LEFT onto VA-652 to Bridgeport, VA

Continue on VA Route 652 past Bridgeport to campground on left across railroad tracks and bridge over Slate River. Look for Float Fishermen Sign.