



Photo of the Space Coast, FL borrowed from a presentation to our Club by Josh Hendry

## **SALTY BYTES**

The quarterly newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware

**November, 2020 – January, 2021**

**Writer/Editor: Roy Miller**

On the internet at [www.sfaod.com](http://www.sfaod.com), our club message board is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sfaod/> For club-related questions, inquiries and suggestions, here is the **Board of Directors** contact information:

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### **A Note from the Editor**

As always, contributions of articles, comments, or pictures that I can include in subsequent newsletters are welcome. You can reach me at home (see above) or by email.

Due to the restrictions associated with the COVID 19 pandemic, there were no in-person meetings at the normal Club venue at the Rolling Meadows Clubhouse after the March 11, 2020. All Club meetings since September 2020 have been via Zoom. Informal Zoom Club get-togethers were conducted weekly for the most part during the COVID restricted period, mostly on Thursday evenings, beginning at 8:00. Many thanks to Jim DiDonato for making this happen and serving as our Zoom host. Anyone in the Club who wishes to tune in is encouraged to do so, and our Club is paying the monthly fee so that our Zoom meetings are not restricted to 40 minutes per session. Each week a Club-wide email is sent out that contains the hot link to click on for that week. If you haven't used Zoom before on your device (computer, ipad, or smartphone), follow the instructions for accessing Zoom. It's really easy. In addition, since January 9 our Club has been hosting Zoom fly tying sessions from 9-12 noon on Saturdays. Even if you are not a fly tier, you may want to check it out to listen in and participate in the Saturday morning fishing talk.

**SFAOD Meeting Nov. 11, 2020**

This Zoom meeting started at 7:00 p.m. Board members present on the call included: Ed Barry, Walt Clark, Jim DiDonato, Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor, Bernie Stasko, and Roy Miller. The total number of Club members tuning in was 16. Club President Ed Barry called the meeting to order. He announced that Mike Collier is stepping down from the Board and that Jim DiDonato has been appointed to serve on the Board in his place until approved by the rest of the Club. In anticipation of a Board of Director election next month, Joe Schmoyer re-nominated the present Board of Directors to serve in the New Year, and Ron Smith seconded the motion. Members were invited to make any additional nominations via email to Bill O'Connor before next month's election on Dec. 9. There being no further nominations, the nominations were closed for the evening.

Treasurer Walt Clark announced that we had \$3,775 in our Club treasury by the end of October. Jim DiDonato announced that Bob Clouser will be the speaker at our Board meeting in January. Bob is now living in FL and will give his presentation on Zoom from his home. Roy Miller will present the program at the December Zoom meeting. Roy will give an update on what is new in the way of fishery management measures approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Roy continues to serve as the Delaware Governor's Appointee to the Commission. Roy also will show some Power Point slides of some fishing trips he made in 2020 to Turks and Caicos and locally.

Our Club is selling tickets for our Grand Raffle which was postponed until May 2021 at our tentatively scheduled annual picnic. Bernie Stasko has donated a chest of flies that will be part of the Grand Raffle. All prizes originally planned to be part of the 2020 raffle have been retained for the 2021 raffle. Bill O'Connor, our new membership Chair, said that member Ron Smith will help print up new Club membership flyers at Ron's church so that we will have 200 or so flyers to distribute to local tackle shops and marinas. Loretta Smith announced that the fall chain pickerel fly fishing contest will be held as originally scheduled on November 21 this year. Two person boat teams may sign up to compete. Fishing may be conducted at any State-owned pond of your choosing in Kent or Sussex Counties. No formal weigh-in will be used and all pickerel must be measured and released immediately. Loretta has sign up forms and a page of tournament rules.

**Fishing Reports** – Jim DiDonato has been fishing some stormwater retention ponds for warmwater species like bass, bluegill, and crappie. He also reported fishing at Roosevelt Inlet and catching a few stripers and some hickory shad at night. Roy Miller reported that he heard there were some false albacore just outside of Delaware Bay, but no one on the Zoom meeting was able to confirm that. Shawn Rakes fished in freshwater three times recently and caught some nice pickerel in "the upper Choptank." That is a euphemism Shawn employs when he doesn't want to give away his fishing spots. He has been using larger flies and also has taken some largemouth bass as by-catch. Hans Feindt reported catching 10 stripers on the south side of Indian River Bay west of White's Creek. Ron Smith said that he caught some small stripers and white perch in Fresh Pond. Walt Clark reported that he had some boat trouble on the Broadkill and had to be towed back to the launch ramp. John McMinn fished with guides for false albacore off of coastal NC. He said the fishing was "lights out" in the three days he was there. Rick Ranalli has been doing some freshwater trout fishing on the Tulpehocken in PA.

**Speaker** – Our speaker was Club and new Board of Director member Jim DiDonato. Jim said that he fished in FL near the Space Coast and Banana River with guide Josh Hendry aboard Josh's flats boat. Jim jumped a tarpon and caught jack crevalle, ladyfish, and mangrove snappers on a white fly. Jim fished with Club member Nils Olson. He proceeded further south to Fort Lauderdale and north Miami. There he visited the Gold Coast and caught Mayan cichlids and peacock bass on a chartreuse and white Clouser minnow. The next stop was the Tamiami Trail west of Route 41 where he caught a nice oscar on a fly. He also fished the Naples area and caught an inshore lizardfish on a fly from the beach. He then fished a causeway at the Sun Coast near Sanibel and caught a gag grouper and pinfish. Altogether he caught 13 different species on his various stops. He enlisted guide Josh Hendry as a speaker for our February 2021 Zoom meeting.



Some of the slides Jim used in his talk. That's he and Nils with guide Josh Hendry left, and Jim with a ladyfish right.



Jim with a peacock bass

### **November 21 – SFAOD Pickerel Fly Fishing Contest**

The contest was held on November 21 and was open to any SFAOD Club members. The fishing was conducted in a State-owned pond of your choosing in Kent or Sussex Counties, DE. Two person teams competed from privately-owned boats, and the tournament fishing hours were 8-2:30. Only three teams entered the tournament. Team "Esox It To Me" consisting of Loretta Smith and Roy Miller won first place by landing 15 pickerel on Concord Pond. Roy caught the two largest fish of the day, a 24 and an 18 inch pickerel. The only fly Roy used was a Clouser-type fly in chartreuse and white with a white ostrich tail. Team "The Dark Sid" with Ron Smith and Walt Clark caught three in Concord as well. Team "Crawdad" (Bill O'Connor and wife Jackie) fished Ingram Pond, but did not make any catches during the regulation tournament hours. All fish caught were measured and then released immediately. Even though the tournament was held a bit late this fall, fortunately the tournament day was not excessively chilly and there was very little wind, thus making for a good outing. Because of COVID concerns, there was no traditional meal and get together at an area restaurant after the contest.



Left and center show Roy with his winning entries, a 24" pickerel and an 18" one. Loretta is on the right with an average size pickerel of 13-14" caught that day.

**SFAOD Meeting Dec. 9, 2020**

The December meeting was conducted via Zoom and was attended by 23 Club members. As a result of the nominations made at our meeting in November, a motion was made and seconded to approve the present Board of Directors for another year. There were no objections to the motion. Bill O'Connor will send out an email reminder about 2021 dues renewals this month, followed by a regular mail notice with raffle tickets in February and another email reminder in March. Ron Smith will have our Club membership applications updated with Bill's mailing address and will have them printed at his church.

Club Treasurer Walt Clark said that we have \$3,715 in our kitty. For our Jan. 13 Zoom meeting, Bob Clouser will be our speaker and will give his presentation from his home in FL. Bob will share with us tips for fishing the Clouser minnow and other flies he has made famous. Our February speaker will be Josh Henry, a FL fly fishing guide. Virginia guide Chris Karwacki will be our speaker in March.

Jim DiDonato gave an update on Project Healing Waters. Since no face to face meetings are permitted and contacts are limited to Zoom meetings, interest in the meetings has waned since the pandemic started. Jim is hopeful that interest will be re-kindled in 2021.

Our annual grand raffle is planned for the Club picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park on May 8, provided the Park facilities are available then and it is safe to have an outdoor social event. Dennis Lahiff is working on a new Club publication listing guides our members have hired over the years. Club members who have information to share on experiences with guides should contact Dennis. He also wants to contact Pete Duma to see if he will give a Zoom talk to our Club about fly fishing in Montauk. Jim DiDonato promised to summarize the data he received through mid-December from members on their entries in the Species Journal.

**Fishing Reports** - Ron Smith said he caught a 21" striper in the Broadkill River three weeks ago, his first striper of any size this year from the Broadkill. There have been no signs of visits by large migrating stripers so far this year according to DNREC enforcement personnel. Paul Temple has caught some schoolie-size stripers at Pot Nets, but very few bluefish. Shawn Rakes caught schoolie stripers at the Lewes Coast Guard Station and docks in late November. He reported some big shrimp sticking out of the mouths of a few of these stripers. Joe Helbe fished Martha's Vineyard in Oct. on the Edgartown side. Fish were hard to come by, although there were some albies around.



Here is Shawn Rakes with a very nice oscar he caught in FL in December.

**Speaker** – Club Secretary and Newsletter Editor Roy Miller was our speaker that night. Roy updated everyone on management decisions reached at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meetings over the past few months. Roy continues to serve as Governor Carney's Appointee to the Commission. The 4-day fall meeting was virtual as has been the case since May. Of particular interest to our Club is the anticipated release of a Public Information Document (PID) on Commission plans to prepare a new Amendment VII to the Striped Bass Plan. PIDs are the first step in the plan amendment process and this will be the first comprehensive change to the way



this species is governed since Amendment VI was approved in 2004. Since striped bass are currently classified as overfished with overfishing continuing, interest in restoration of this iconic species is expected to be intense. Topics to be covered in the new Amendment include commercial and recreational allocation of landings, consideration of different management regimes for producer areas as opposed to coastal areas, commercial allocations to each state, and steps necessary to reduce recreational discard mortality.

The other management initiative of considerable local interest are proposed changes to the way summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish are managed and what is the most desirable way to allocate these resources among commercial and recreational users. Climate change is presenting challenges in the management of these species as adult stocks of black sea bass and summer flounder stocks have moved further offshore and northward. Black sea bass in particular have become increasingly important fisheries in New England, apparently in response to climate change. Bluefish, in contrast to the other three species above, are presently classified as overfished, although the present rate of removal (overfishing) is not a problem. Expect to see draconic measures to protect bluefish until the stock is re-built in the next 4-7 years.

To finish the evening Roy showed some Power Point slides of a 1-day February bonefishing excursion with a friend to Turks and Caicos Island chain before the pandemic set in here. The bonefishing was fair to good there, although windy conditions limited the fishable locations on the day he had reserved. Hiring a guide in Turks and Caicos is not a cheap proposition, but if you want to fish for bonefish there, then expect to pay about twice as much as it would cost you in Belize or eastern Mexico. Roy finished the evening with some slides of his catches of chain pickerel during the November Club pickerel fishing contest.



Shawn Rakes with another exotic FL freshwater fish, a guapote

### **SFAOD Meeting January 13, 2021**

The meeting was called to order shortly after 7 PM. In addition to seven members of the Board of Directors, there were another 53 attending the Zoom meeting. We all wish fellow Club member Bill Licata a speedy recovery from his recent medical procedure. Walt Clark said that thus far the Saturday morning fly tying sessions on Zoom have been well received. This coming Saturday Loretta Smith will be tying one of her favorite flies, the twisted sister, on Saturday morning. Walt Clark and Bill O'Connor said that membership dues renewals are starting to come in now with about 20 renewing thus far. Jim DiDonato said that we need additional guest speakers for 2021 meetings after April, so if anyone knows someone who might be willing to give a talk over Zoom, contact Jim. Jim also added that he has caught two bluegill thus far as his first entries in the Species Journal for 2021. Ed O'Donnell has been catch rainbow trout and fallfish on the Middle Branch of White Clay Creek. That was about it for fishing reports recently.

Without much further ado, our speaker for the evening, Bob Clouser, was introduced by Jim DiDonato. Bob almost needs no introduction to this group as many of us have followed his career as a Central PA fly shop owner, smallmouth bass guide, and author for many years. Bob presently lives in FL now that he has largely retired from full-time guiding. This has given him access to some of the best saltwater fishing to be had in this country. Bob started by saying that the choice of what leader to use is one of the most important things in saltwater fly fishing. He generally likes a tippet strength of 15-20 lbs. or even lighter if he is fishing the FL Canals. He stressed the importance of having modest breaking strength somewhere in the leader in order to avoid being pulled out of the boat if your line becomes entangled around your ankle. Since moving to FL he said he has caught 200 or more tarpon up to 30 inches long using 6-8 weight rods and a bite tippet of 30-40 lb. test. For snook he likes a Clouser sea urchin of 4-6 inches in olive, tan, or black. Bob says that he is helping design an affordable rod for Temple Fork especially made for weighted flies. He prefers using Scientific Angler lines: floating in a bass bug taper, full sinking Type III lines, and full intermediate lines (Sonic Titan). He likes the Amplitude lines for long casts. Generally his leader for intermediate and full sinking lines is 4-5 ft. long. He still uses twist-ons to add weight to his rig. Like Lefty, he prefers the non-slip loop knot for connecting to the fly.

For tarpon on top, Bob likes his floating minnow fly. He is partial to Steve Ferrar flash blend materials and even uses it on Clouser minnow-type patterns. For those who need guidance on what size of weights to use as dumbbell eyes, check his website at [clouserflyshop.com](http://clouserflyshop.com). When fishing on the Susquehanna he likes to use what he calls a Susquehanna strip to move his streamer patterns. On the Susquehanna he favors Clouser crayfish or Foxy minnows, especially for smallmouths and carp.

When fishing for snook, he uses a 30 lb. bite tippet (Maxima material), especially if there are big ones around. When asked whether he would recommend a trip from our location to the Susquehanna for smallmouth bass and whether the fishery had recovered from the problems that had plagued it in recent years, he suggested fishing the river upstream from Marysville, PA, but not so much further downstream. We thanked Bob for sharing his wisdom and experience with our Club.

### **SFAOD Meeting February 10, 2021**

The Zoom meeting was convened shortly after 7 PM by President Ed Barry. All Board of Directors members were in attendance, as were 24 others. Walt Clark said that we finished the previous year with \$3705 in our treasury. To date 29 members have paid to re-join. Anyone who would like to see a treasurer's report can do so just by emailing Walt. Bill O'Conner said he received five more membership renewals today. Bill will send out reminders by regular mail later this month. Jim DiDonato said he ran into a flyfisherman/artist in FL who is willing to give our Club a Zoom presentation on his art. The meeting attendees encouraged Jim to line his friend up for a presentation later this year. Jim allowed that the fly tying Zoom sessions that the Club has been hosting on Sat. mornings since early January this year have been fun. Jim reminded everyone of the Grand Raffle and picnic scheduled for May in Cape Henlopen State Park, provided pandemic restrictions are lifted by then.

**Fishing Reports** – John Popelas, Walt Clark's grandson, and Ethan Rakes caught some nice pickerel on Concord Pond recently. Ron Smith also took a nice pickerel on the Upper Nanticoke River. Roy Miller said that the State of DE needs two nominees to fill vacancies on the Bluefish Advisory Committee to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. These volunteer slots are needed to provide the Commission with advice from fishermen in the management plan process. There are typically 1-2 meetings per year, if that many, and this year they will be virtual. Anyone interested in volunteering should notify Roy and he will pass their name on to DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife.



Two shots of Walt Clark's grandson John with pickerel from Concord Pond



Ron Smith with a nice pickerel from the upper Nanticoke River  
Photo by Walt Clark

**Speaker** -Jim DiDonato introduced our speaker, Josh Hendry. Jim fished with Josh last year on a trip to FL. Josh fishes the area known as the Space Coast, particularly in the Banana River and North and South Indian River of East Central FL. This brackish water area is more river and lake-like than typical saltwater because there is no tidal fluctuation. Josh has been guiding in this area for 5 years now. Previously he started working in a fly shop when he was 19 and attended Sweetwater Guide School before moving to his present location in FL.

He said that the Banana/Indian River area averages about 3 feet of depth. The species he targets include tarpon, black drum, redfish, speckled trout, snook, triple tail, pompano, and others; although the area he fishes is best known for its redfish. He said that the reds spawn in the lagoon system and do not migrate out along the coast. The fishing for them is mostly shallow-water sight fishing using floating lines and 6-11 weight rods depending on the species targeted. He likes 10-13 ft. leaders for the open flats and 7-9 ft. around structure or mangroves. He generally uses a 20 lb. test tippet with a bite tippet of 25 lbs. for snook. From Dec.-Feb. the water is clearer and the fish like smaller and slower flies. He fishes for redfish, trout, and black drum in the northern part of his area and for snook, redfish, and trout in the southern region. In Mar.-Apr. he likes to target tarpon, particularly when the winds are calm, sometimes using bigger flies on the surface for tarpon and snook. May-Aug. is the best time

for tarpon, although it can get beastly hot in the afternoon, so Josh will target the pre-dawn hours under dock lights and then quit around 11 AM. In the fall (Sep.-Nov.) the water can get high and dirty because of frequent rains, but the tarpon fishing is still good. There is lots of bait around at that time of year, and Josh fishes bigger flies.

Some of the tips he gave us for specific species include leading redfish by 10-20 ft. so they will find the fly on the bottom. Black drum have been becoming more common in his area and they will not look up to take a fly. It must be on or very near the bottom, and rattle flies help trigger strikes. He likes a black crab fly for drum. Speckled sea trout are ambush predators and large ones can be as picky as permit. Cast 4-5 ft. in front of stationary fish. For tarpon he recommends binoculars to spot rolling fish. He will use larger flies for big fish but favors 2-3 inch flies for juveniles. He likes black flies for tarpon retrieved steadily.

When asked about wading opportunities in his area, Josh said watch out for muddy areas and sting rays. It is always smart to shuffle along when wading. As you can tell, Josh was a fount of local and practical fishing information.

- Here is Josh Hendry's contact information:
- [www.centralfloridaflyfishing.com](http://www.centralfloridaflyfishing.com)
- [captjoshhendry@gmail.com](mailto:captjoshhendry@gmail.com)
- 321-302-0263
- @capt.joshhendry

## **2021 Grand Raffle Prizes**

- 1. Orvis Recon 9 wt. rod with matching Hydros reel, backing and intermediate line.**
- 2. Orvis Clearwater 8 wt. rod.**
- 3. Lamson Guru 7+ reel.**
- 4. Lamson Guru 7+ reel.**
- 5. Orvis stripping basket.**
- 6. Bernie Stasko's treasure chest of 100 flies.**
- 7. Inshore 1/2 day fishing charter with Capt. Chuck Cook.**
- 8. Fishing trip for snakeheads in MD with Ted Morlock.**
- 9. Pair of polarized Guideline fishing sunglasses.**
- 10. Pair of polarized Guideline fishing sunglasses.**
- 11. \$50 gift certificate from Orvis.**
- 12. A grizzly cape from Whiting Farms.**
- 13. 3/8 inch x 100 ft. West Marine Anchor Rope with Thimble and Whipped Bitter End.**
- 14. Don Avondolio's book "Fly Fishing the Atlantic Coast".**
- 15. A SUB 714 Creek Co. belly boat w/ oars & air pump**



**Events scheduled for 2021. Most Club outings and fishing trips are yet to be scheduled. All outdoor events are subject to future COVID restrictions.**

Mar. 10 – Zoom meeting with guide Chris Karwacki

Apr. 10 – Pickerel Fly Fishing tournament

Apr. 14 – Zoom meeting.

May 8 – Club picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park (tentative)

June 9 – Indoor Club meeting or Zoom meeting

Jul. 14 – Outdoor Club meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse parking lot

Aug. 11- Outdoor Club meeting at Rolling Meadows

Sep. 8 – Regular Club meeting

Oct. 13 – Regular Club meeting

Nov. 10 – Regular Club meeting

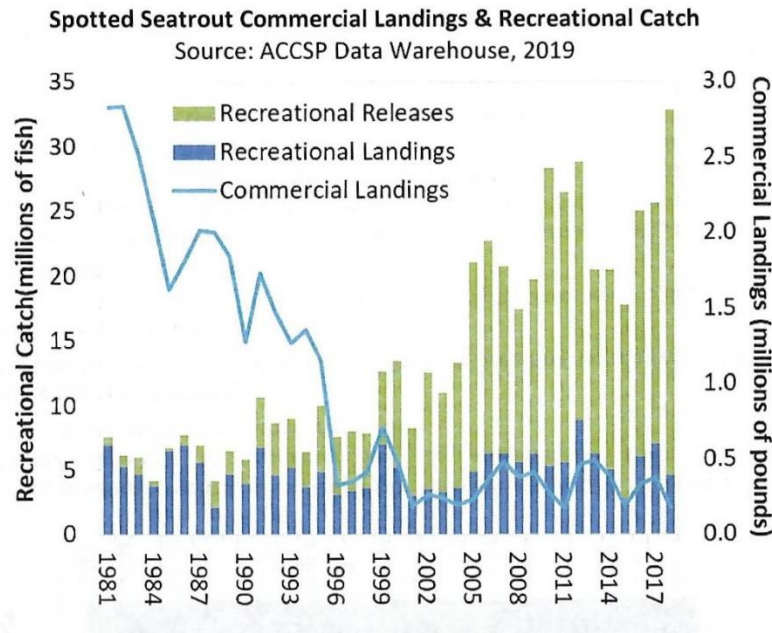
Dec. 8 – Regular Club meeting with Roy Miller as speaker



### **Biologist's Corner**

The spotted sea trout, *Cynoscion nebulosus*, also known as speckled trout or spec is closely related to our weakfish *Cynoscion regalis*. Both are members of the drum family. Spotted sea trout have been appearing in our catches more frequently in the past several years, probably in response to climate change. As a result of this increase in abundance, the State of DE recently was added to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Spotted Sea Trout species board. This recent range extension to the north has been exhibited by a number of more southern species. Spotted sea trout are subject to cold stunning however, so this range extension is constrained by the frequency and intensity of cold snaps. In the south, spotted sea trout are one of the more popular game species and the subject of intense fishing effort from VA south to FL and into the Gulf of Mexico. Their increased abundance locally may also be in part to continued depressed stocks of weakfish. Nature abhors a vacuum, so spotted sea trout may be filling a partially empty niche.

Spotted sea trout are a handsome fish that attain a maximum size of close to 18 lbs. (the world record is listed as 17 lbs. 7 oz. caught by Greg Carson of Orlando, FL). In general they are considered non-migratory and usually spend their entire lives within 5-10 miles of their natal estuary, although they appear more mobile near the northern part of their range. In the Chesapeake they are known to migrate south in the fall (to NC waters) and then north in the spring. Females spawn from April to September, usually around the mouths of estuaries. They frequent small tidal creeks and marshes when young. They mature at around 11 inches and live as long as 18 years of age, although any older than 5 are rare. Delaware's minimum size limit is 12 inches. Adults like to frequent grass beds, oyster beds, creek mouths, and structure such as pilings and jetties. They feed primarily on shrimp and fish. Commercial landings in recent years have been around 377,000 lbs. of which most were taken in NC. Recreational fishermen harvested 7 million lbs. in 2017 and 82% of those caught were released. Total recreational catch in 2017 exceeded 25 million fish.



Source of graph: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Stock Status Overview, July 2019.

Spotted sea trout will take a fly readily and Clousers and deceivers account for most caught in our area. They give a strong fight on a fly rod and make a tasty addition to the menu if taken home. It is no longer unusual to take one or more from the flats at Cape Henlopen, although it is always a treat when you do so. Our Club's Ass Whacker fishing contest last summer accounted for some specs as the colors (yellow and white) of the Ass Whacker fly seem to be to their liking. I have also had success with Clousers in chartreuse, pink, and white. Others seem to favor orange and yellow or red and white flies for specs. I have heard anecdotally that specs persisted on the NJ side of Delaware Bay and Cape May area late into the fall the past few years before disappearing during the coldest months.



The above 2020 pictures show a spotted sea trout taken from the Henlopen Flats by Bill O'Connor (picture by Roy Miller) on the left and two shots of one caught by Roy Miller (center and right) on Ron Smith's boat launched from Chrisfield, MD.

## PHWFF

Our local Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing liaison is Mike Nichols. His email is [mp-nich613@comcast.net](mailto:mp-nich613@comcast.net), and his cell is (302) 242-0238. Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is a Club-sponsored program and all club members are invited to help with this exciting and rewarding program. Normally the group meets the second and fourth

Tuesday of each month at the Masonic Lodge #9 Building, 125 Causey Avenue, in downtown Milford. However, because of COVID 19 concerns, recent meetings have been conducted via Zoom.

Please Stay Safe

## SFAOD SPONSORS

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- WHITING FARMS, INC.
- WRIGHT & MCGILL, CO.



This photo of the beach at Turks and Caicos was taken by Roy Miller in Feb. 2020 before the pandemic hit.