the buzz on the flyfishing biz

Angling TRADE

INSIDE THE “20 GREAT THINGS” ISSUE
20 Reasons to Believe/
The Bundle Business (Lines and Reels)/
Santella on Books/Q&A with AFFTA’s Jim Klug/
More on Pro Plans/Ditch the Bobber?
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IF YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MAYFLY AND A JUNEBUG... 

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RIO. BECAUSE YOUR FLY LINE MATTERS.
Joe Cermele
Joe Cermele is the fishing editor for Field&Stream magazine, the world's leading outdoors publication. He is also a regular contributor to Angling Trade. He lives in New Jersey.

Bob Mallard
Bob Mallard reported on Pro Plans in the last issue of Angling Trade... a story that provoked more responses from readers than any in the past several editions. He is a professional outdoor writer, who also happens to own Kennebec River Outfitters in Madison, Maine.

Mike Mercer
Mike Mercer is a writer, photographer, world-traveler, and one of the most noted fly pattern innovators in the United States. He works for The Fly Shop out of Redding, California.

Ben Romans
Ben Romans has written in the fly fishing world for many years. He is a contributing editor for Angling Trade, the newly-appointed editor of The Flyfish Journal, and his book Montana's Best Fly Fishing was just released last fall. He lives in Idaho.

Chris Santella
Chris Santella is the author of nine books, including the "Fifty Places" series from Stewart, Tabori, & Chang. A regular contributor to the New York Times, his work has also appeared in The New Yorker, Travel & Leisure, Golf, and elsewhere. He lives in Oregon.

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Avid Fly lines, the new perFormAnce enhAncing series by rio.

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RIO's brand new Avid Fly Line series was designed for the evolving angler in mind. Featuring our specialized tapers, various densities and packed with technology, Avid lines are available for a wide variety of freshwater and saltwater angling strategies.

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between a mayF ly and a junebug…
Many of us—retailers, manufacturers… even the media—now cling to the notion that the key to long-term salvation of fly fishing lies in simplifying this sport, and making it more accessible (and therefore appealing) to the masses.

Goodness knows I’ve been on that bandwagon for a long, long time. Part of that is because I also write for Field & Stream, and there, we’re all about reaching a large audience as best we can. And when I co-wrote The Little Red Book of Fly Fishing with the late Charlie Meyers, the mission was to tear down the learning curve.

Charlie once said to me: “Too many people have made too much damn money (in fly fishing) by over-complicating this sport to sell books, or magazine stories… all based on the premise that ‘I know something you don’t know,’ and that’s plain wrong.”

Charlie was right.

And yet, there is also something to be said for the inherent technical nature of fly fishing. That is, after all, what separates the pretenders from the contenders, and the dabbler from the true aficionados.

I received an interesting E-mail from an industry colleague not long ago that reinforced that point. (I’ll leave him anonymous for now… he can take credit later if he wants to.) But his point was, if we really want to build a new, sustainable base, we must embrace the complexity of fly fishing… that is, after all, the catalyst that drives people to tie their own bugs, and buy rods that help them cast farther, and much more.

He made a really good point.

To wit, how simple and stupid is dragging nymph flies through a run under a strike indicator (bobber)? We can talk about how “sophisticated” fly fishing is all day… and how “bubba” bass fishing is, with the Banjo Minnows and soft plastic worms on a Carolina rig, and all that… but I’ve fished Carolina rigs and Banjo Minnows, and I can tell you that’s way more exciting than playing “bobber ball” with flies under an indicator on a trout river.

And yet, for most people who go on a fly fishing guide trip (often their first exposure to this sport), that’s exactly what they do. Watch yarn (or foam or plastic) float down the river, 90% of the day. And we scratch our heads and wonder why more don’t latch on.

No doubt, success breeds interest, and high-stick nymphing is effective. But what if fly guides dedicated at least part of the day to dry fly fishing, no matter what? What if some of our rivers where trout get the snot pounded out of them, day after day, by the double-nymph rig crowd, were made “dry fly only” or “streamer fly only?”

Just a thought. Not meant to criticize what is… just meant to inspire conversation about what can be. Maybe the real challenge we face, as an industry, is figuring out that perfect balance between accessibility and opportunity… success and ambition… simplicity and complexity…

Because the thing is, no matter how you slice it, fly fishing is indeed inherently beautiful… for its simplicity, and its complexity. There really is something for everyone.

And as such, we’ve decided to base this issue of Angling Trade around the “Great Things Happening in Fly Fishing, Right Now.”

We all feel the challenges. We all know the issues at hand. From the trade show, to the retailer-manufacturer dynamic, from “big box” pressures, to margins, turns, and everything in-between. Oh, we’ll dabble in all that in this issue of the magazine, as always.

But I made an executive decision that it’s time for all of us to take a deep breath, accentuate the positive, and appreciate why we’re all in this, together.

And so, as the “spine” of this issue of Angling Trade, we’re going to look at examples of great things happening in the fly fishing industry right now. Maybe you’ll find examples of things that will help your business (we hope so). Maybe the content in these pages will trigger new ideas (we hope that happens also).

We’ll still touch some nerves in this issue of Angling Trade (that’s how we roll). But we’re going to take stock in the great things happening, and why we all can (and should) be proud to be part of this great tradition… complexities and all.

I hope you find it helpful, and I look forward to your feedback.

Kirk Deeter
Editor
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News and Issues

Hackle Sales... Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow?

If you wake up one morning and notice all your fly-tying hackles are gone, check with the Mrs., or perhaps your daughter. Seems that one of the newest and hottest style trends involves using saddle hackle as women’s hair extensions.

The idea took off in and around Boulder, Colorado, but has since spread to California and elsewhere. In fact, we heard from Bob Marriott’s shop in Fullerton, California, that they’ve sold thousands of dollars in hackle... one day alone, they were approached by a woman who wanted to place a $10,000 order (but alas, they didn’t have the inventory/ability to fill it).

Now, at first blush, that might sound like a boom opportunity for fly retailers... a sales “twist” they never expected. But it also raises some serious questions, because it seems there are only so many chickens to go around, and the hairdo craze is putting a serious crimp on inventory that might otherwise go to fly tiers. And rumor has it that some hackle companies might be wholesaling direct to the fashionistas. Is that fair or... well, fowl? And what happens when the fad goes away?

Check the next issue of Angling Trade for a feature story, and www.anglingtrade.com for updates as they happen.

Theft Suspects Still on the Loose

In early February, we reported at anglingtrade.com on a string of thefts affecting Colorado Fly Shops. The perps were apparently two couples, looking quite upscale... one couple distracted the shop workers as the other lifted high end gear like Spey Rods, and so forth. Since the report and posting a photo of the suspects on our website (which spiked anglingtrade.com traffic through the roof, and prompted comments from many shops around the country that had been similarly hit), we have not heard of additional thefts, nor have we heard that the suspects have been apprehended.

Stay alert!

Carry Your Own Brand?

If you take a careful look at The Fly Shop’s iconic annual catalog, you’ll notice a full compliment of private label “The Fly Shop” rods, reels and waders. In other words, Mike Michalak is making his own stuff to sell in concert with the major manufacturer brands. Is this a phenomenon that will soon involve other fly shops... and where will we be seeing other “house brands” popping up? We’ll have the latest... also at anglingtrade.com.

Retailers Are Realizing the Power of Social Media

The Egyptian revolution is being coined, “The Facebook Revolution.” Although there is truth in this statement, it is important to distinguish social media as a powerful tool for communication and organizing, but not as the main reason for this revolution. In the media frenzy, social media has overshadowed the truly impressive act of collaboration of human hearts. After 30 years under a corrupt government, social media provided a forum to spur important debate along and to empower people who had little

“...also at anglingtrade.com.”

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Grey’s Looking For Columnist

The following note is from Jim Babb:

“I’m retiring as angling columnist at Gray’s Sporting Journal at the end of this year. After 16 years, the editor (meaning me) thinks it’s time to find someone younger and hungrier than the current occupant (also meaning me), so I’m holding auditions for my replacement.

“Basically, aspirants will need to write two Gray’s-worthy (and previously unpublished) angling columns between 1450 and 1485 words, one on some aspect of fly fishing and one on whatever fires those personal rockets (which could also be fly fishing), and email them to me at editorgsj@gmail.com before June 1, 2011.

“There’s no bonus for sending submissions early, but stuffing them in the last week might say more about an applicant than he might want said. Anything arriving on June 2 might as well not have arrived at all.

“This is a good opportunity for a writer who fishes, though it’s probably not the right gig for a fisherman who kind of writes. And note that the ‘man’ is hung on the end of ‘fisher’ not to indicate any kind of gender specificity. We don’t care which of the several genders writers identify with.

“I’ll be staying on as editor of Gray’s, and plan to spend all the time once devoted to writing fish columns to writing books, and to fishing just to be a-fishing, and not because I need something new to write about.”

Check the next issue of Angling Trade for a feature story, and www.anglingtrade.com for updates as they happen.
THE RENE HARROP CUSTOM SHOP 4 PLUS

FEATURING A COMPLETELY NEW FRAME AND SPOOL DESIGN
The reels are protected with a Type II grey nickel anodize finish with silver accents. Each reel is sequentially numbered and engraved with Rene’s signature, the TroutHunter osprey, and the House of Harrop icon logo. They come packaged in an embossed leather pouch and rich cedar box.

THERE WILL ONLY BE 99 OF THESE LIMITED EDITION REELS MADE. THE FIRST 50 SOLD OUT IN LESS THAN ONE MONTH. THE SECOND 49 ARE SET TO BE RELEASED ON MAY 1ST, 2011. CONTACT US TODAY TO SECURE YOURS! WE CAN BE REACHED AT (877) 634-4343 OR EMAIL US AT INFO@HATCHOUTDOORS.COM.

Visit hatchoutdoors.com to learn more about the history of the project and see additional photos. Retail price: $1000
to no hope. This empowerment of people coming together is older than the knights templar. Collaboration is an extremely valuable tool and, as a business leader, one that you should be seeking.

Two months ago, Angling Trade set up a fly fishing business group on LinkedIn, a popular business related social media provider. It is similar to Facebook but with a strong professional business framework.

Here are just a few topics that you can find in the Angling Trade group:

Should Manufacturers sell direct to the public?

Sounding-boards... A very important part of growing your business

Is it time to resuscitate that demo program?

Ditch the discounts

How does a fly shop start an angling mentorship program?

We also have started a specialty fly shop only sub-group where shop owners and managers can discuss issues about running their business more successfully. Here are just a few topics started by fly shops for fly shops:

The impact of new SKU’s on revenue

Thinking about hiring my first full time employee..

Head Guides... are they really necessary?

Compensation for teaching classes...

Health insurance, is it a viable benefit for fly shops and employees alike?

Is E-commerce a good thing? Or something else?

Fly fishing is a time-honored tradition and I am proud to be a part of it. Our industry is small and very diverse, yet there are lessons that can be shared. Collaborating with one another can help mature our industry and can improve the way each one of us does business.

We need your contribution! Join the conversation and sign up today.

David Leinweber
Angler’s Covey

A Wrap on “The Fly Fishing Show”

By Joe Cermele

When the wind is gusting 20 miles per hour, there are 10 inches of snow and ice on the ground, and the temperature is hovering around 17, who is willing to stand outside and test a fly rod?

I had to pause at the entrance to the Fly Fishing Show in Somerset, New Jersey, and grin this January, watching dedicated enthusiasts shivering for the sake of a Spey rod test. It told me that anglers were here to buy, and gauging the number of folks on the floor chatting with outfitters in far-flung locales, I’m willing to say it looks like they’re at least thinking about traveling again, too.

However, travel- and destination-related seminars weren’t quite as bustling as the show floor, though Saturday’s seminar attendance spiked, according to a few presenters. Regardless, rods, reels, lines, and flies were moving and spirits were up, even more so than last year when despite a tougher economic climate, vendors seemed content with their show business.

I got the chance to talk with Tim Kirkpatrick, owner of Colorado’s Steamboat Flyfisher. This was his third year attending the New Jersey Show, and I was curious about what made the east coast trek so appealing for a small operation.

“It still amazes me how many people come into the shop and say they saw us at Somerset,” Kirkpatrick said. “We’re primarily here to tell people to come to Colorado and it seems to work. It also gives us a chance to push products people don’t buy around here. Pushing western-made rods, for example, at the New Jersey show works well. At the Denver show, we push our east coast manufacturers.”

Even though show attendance was even better Saturday than the Friday I visited, there always seemed to be a wait to cast at the indoor pool when I passed by. What rod seemed to garner the highest number of test casts? G.Loomis’ NRX. I saw a fair amount of bamboo getting waved as well. Certainly this doesn’t mean each high-end rod tested was purchased, but it was refreshing to see people at least exploring the possibility of buying top-shelf gear again. But for those who are still watching their bottom line, there is nary a shortage of budget-friendly gear being produced, which I believe steps up in quality year by year. The industry bounce-back may not be complete. It just seems to be bouncing a little higher each season.

“I know that most of the vendors I spoke with at Somerset were extremely happy with the number of people and more importantly, buyers that attended the show,” said John Frazier, Editor of Fly Fishing in Salt Waters. “The past couple of years have been trying, so hopefully this is a sign of good things to come. Let’s all keep our fingers crossed!”
Winter Weather and Post-Holiday Sales Boost Outdoor Product Sales in January

Fiscal 2010 Outdoor Product Sales Approach $11 Billion

Winter storms blanketing much of the U.S., combined with tempting late-season promotions lessened seasonal inventories and boosted sales across the broad U.S. retail market in the retail month of January. According to retail point-of-sale data compiled by SportScanInfo for OIA VantagePoint, the market wrapped up a stronger-than-expected fiscal year with total outdoor product sales ringing up over $715 million in retail sales for the four-week month ending January 29, 2011, a 2.3 percent increase over January 2010 levels. The full 2010 fiscal year (ending January 29, 2011) saw sales of outdoor products increase 4.0 percent to $10.85 billion over the 2009 fiscal total. Outdoor specialty channels grew 7.3 percent to $2.95 billion for the twelve-month fiscal period.

Access is a Problem that Affects 1 in 5 Anglers

Access to areas to enjoy their sport has long been considered a challenge faced largely by hunters, but results of a recent survey reveal that anglers also face some of these same obstacles. When asked by AnglerSurvey.com if, in the past year, they had to cancel a trip or stop fishing a particular area because they could no longer access it, 19.5 percent of those anglers interviewed said they had. Those numbers remained largely consistent with results to the same question the previous year.

Most of those concerns (81.5 percent) in the 2010 survey, which measured angler experiences from 2009, involved freshwater fishing locations where low water levels due to drought or lake draw downs, pollution generated from excess runoff as a result of storms, boat ramp closures and limited public right of entry points can all contribute to limited angler access. Interestingly, only 19.7 percent of access concerns affected saltwater anglers that year, but in the January 2011 survey (which measured angler experiences from 2010), that number jumped to 24.8 percent, an increase of more than five percent.

While the survey did not examine causes for limits on access, 2010 witnessed several issues impacting saltwater fishing. Chief among these were the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which closed down much of the gulf to fishing through much of last summer, bottom fishing closures in the Southeast, and additional permanent sportfishing closures along the California coast. These may have led to the jump in saltwater access issues.

“These closures impact not only anglers, but businesses and families along the coast that depend on sportfishing. When people want to fish, but have to cancel because they are unable to access decent fishing spots, we see a greater deterioration of jobs, tax revenues and commerce in general. Anglers need to stay in touch with fisheries agencies and sportfishing groups to minimize any future problems,” said Rob Southwick, president of Southwick Associates, which designs and conducts the surveys at HunterSurvey.com, ShooterSurvey.com and AnglerSurvey.com.

Colorado Trout Unlimited Makes Splash with “Surface Film”

In February, Colorado Trout Unlimited helped organize a gallery photo exhibit and reception in Denver. The event was hosted by the Colorado Trout Unlimited and featured the works of photographer Jeff Shipley. The exhibit, titled “Surface Film,” showcased Shipley’s unique photography of fly-fishing techniques and tools.

People

Colorado Trout Unlimited Makes Splash with “Surface Film”

In February, Colorado Trout Unlimited helped organize a gallery photo exhibit and reception in Denver. The event was hosted by the
“Greenbacks,” a group of young and passionate anglers that are hoping to make conservation fun and engaging while promoting and protecting native trout in Colorado. The Greenbacks seek to promote native Colorado fish and their habitat through the engagement and recruitment of the next generation of Trout Unlimited members.

The show was a smash success, involving…
24 photographers
30 prints
200 + attendees (on a really cruddy weather night)
13 framed prints were sold as of press time - $5500 raised for CTU and river restoration
13 unframed prints were sold as of press time - $1300 raised for photographers

Said CTU president Sinjin Eberle: “The Greenbacks is by far one of the coolest and most unique things that has happened to TU in Colorado in a long time. Their energy and direction, not to mention the involvement of a whole new group of people (members or non-members) and focus on native trout in Colorado is really encouraging.”

Artist Bob White Returns to Alaska Next Guide Season
Our friend Bob White announced that, after a 10-year hiatus, he’ll be returning to Alaska to guide, full time, at Bristol Bay Lodge. Said White: “The general manager, Steve Laurent, is an old friend of mine. We grew up together in the business, Steve doing at Bristol Bay Lodge, what I did at Tikchik Narrows Lodge. Lisa and I stepped down after the summer of 2000 so I could paint and write full time, but Steve stayed the course and now runs the show.

“Steve and I have collaborated to create something I’ve dreamt of for a very long time... a blending of the arts and fly fishing; an artist-in-residence program at a world-class Alaskan lodge. We plan to grow this program and add a poet, sculptor and videographer next summer, with perhaps fly tyers and rod builders in the future.” Do check out this year’s unique program and lineup at bristolbaylodge.com.

New Orleans Guided Fishing Options: Book Now!
Captain Gregg Arnold has a posse of guides ready and waiting for when the IFTD trade show comes to the Big Easy August 18-20. He is holding days the week before and after the show. If you are a manufacturer, and you want to host a special event… or if you just plan on attending and might just sneak away for a morning or a day… contact Gregg at garnold3@cox.net as soon as possible, because slots will surely fill fast.

The cost of trips will be $600 per boat (2 anglers) for full-days, and $450 for half-days. On half-day trips (including during the show itself), the guides will have you back in town by noon. Full-day trips from Hopedale or Venice, half-days from Myrtle Grove or Delacroix. Gregg Arnold’s phone number: 504-237-6742

Product Skinny

Insta-Set Wins BOTB
Field & Stream magazine announced that Insta-Set Indicators, developed by Greg Vinci and manufactured by Colorado Angler Supply, have been selected as the best new fly tackle accessory for 2011. Insta-Set Indicators do more than just suspend flies/weight or detect strikes. They can be easily adjusted to different positions on the leader as water depths change, they can be rigged either for straight line nymphing or in a 90-degree hinge configuration that is very beneficial when fish hold at a distance from the fisherman. The 90-degree hinge is preferable for still water nymphing too. Best of all, the indicator lets the fisherman know when the fly/weight have achieved dead drift. Insta-Set Indicators are distributed by Umpqua Feather Merchants (303)567-6696. Complete information and video about Insta-Set Indicators can be found at www.california-flyfishing.com/instaset.htm

Also check out…

The Caney Fork wading sock as a companion for Chota’s wading boots. Seen here matched with Chota’s Caney Fork boots, these breathable, knee-high socks are 100% waterproof.

The Skin-out neoprene gasket coupled with a nylon cinch strap keeps the top in place just below the knee and rejects flooding. Featuring a built-in gravel guard, the Caney Fork wading socks are suitable for fishing high mountain...
BUILT BY EXTREME FANATICS, FOR EXTREME FANATICS.

17 years of obsession in one unbelievable rod. gloomis.com
streams, getting in and out of a drift boat, pond and pocket water fishing, or any other time that a knee-high, waterproof boot would be handy.

**AquaFade from Blue Ribbon Nets**

The “AquaFade” ultralight rubber net is PVC free and weighs about 45% less than other lightweight rubber nets on the market (according to the company). Available only since January 1, 2011, these nets are completely made in Montana. Even the “AquaFade” net is injected here and not overseas. It is available in four models; lg. Oval, med. Catch & Release, lg. Teardrop and the “Jacklin Madison.” See www.blueribbonnets.net.

**The Boa Closure System**

Boa achieves a micro-adjustable, glove-like fit via three key components: a knob, spool, and lace. Turning the high-grip exterior knob activates the internal spool which then pulls the ultra-durable Boa lace with remarkable closure force. The combination of the low-friction lace and lace guides creates a uniform closure that is free from pressure points and automatically conforms to the demands of your feet, activity, and terrain. Constructed from aircraft grade, stainless steel, the Boa lace is gram-for-gram stronger than tank armor and easily sheds water, mud, ice, or any kind of river muck. Finally, the Boa Closure System is secure: once you set the dial to your desired tension, you’re off and don’t have to worry about the laces coming untied all day. (See boatechnology.com). *Boa is guaranteed for life and available on the following brands:

1.) **Korkers Metalhead**

High performance wading boot with the perfect blend of traditional styling and innovative technology.

- Boa speed lacing system for quick on/off and custom fit; significantly faster than previous system
- OmniTrax 3.0 Interchangeable Sole System adapts your traction to meet the performance needs of each river system
- Waterproof materials reduce water absorption, thereby reducing overall weight, and dry faster helping to prevent the spread of invasive species
- Strategies placed seams reduce fatigue and the possibility of seam failure
- True Fit sizing

Price: $149.99
www.korkers.com

2.) **Korkers Chrome**

Constructed with sleek yet tough whitewater-raft-type material and seamless toe guards.

- Low-profile Boa speed lacing system for quick on/off and custom fit; significantly faster than previous system
- OmniTrax 3.0 Interchangeable Sole System adapts your traction to meet the performance needs of each river system
- Waterproof materials (including sleek synthetic material similar to whitewater rafts) reduce water absorption, thereby reducing overall weight, and dry faster to help prevent the spread of invasive species
- The reduction of stitched seams improves durability and eliminates potential failure points
- Re grind rubber toe cap provides an added layer of durability without adding weight
- Integrated midsole drainage ports allow water to drain quickly keeping boots lighter
- True Fit sizing
- 2 lbs 13 oz

Price: $179.00 or $149.99 for Fixed Kling-On Version

3.) **Simms RiverTek Boa**

One of the most dependable and proven boots on the market, now with Boa.

- Durable BOA lacing system provides easy one-handed adjustment with secure hold
- BOA’s M3 lacing system features aircraft-grade stainless wire lace system
- Rubber toe cap for durable protection against rocks & debris
- Dual-density, compression-molded EVA midsole with lower-density heel core for extra cushioning
- Minimum exposed stitching for increased durability and less opportunity for “hitchhikers”
- TPU heel clip for added stability.
- Synthetic construction
- Offered in men’s whole sizes: 7-14 EEE
- Features CleanStream technology along with our StreamTread traction sole with Vibram Idrogrip 360 traction lug sole. Price: $169.95, see simmsfishing.com
Fish’Sposal - The Fisherman’s Little Keeper

Tom Loder, owner of Panhandle Outfitters Inc., and a seasoned outfitter and guide in Idaho and Montana has applied his experience and client feedback to invent a new “green” environmental fishing tool he calls a Fish’Sposal -The Fisherman’s Litter Keeper (fishposal.com). This product has been field tested for a year and endorsed by numerous well known outfitters and guides whose testimonials you will see on his website.

Said Loder: “I have just started marketing and got the product into a few local fly shops and it is selling well. The Fly Shop in California is going to pick it up as well as Silver Creek Outfitters in Sun Valley, Idaho.

“I am confident that this “green” environmental fishing tool is needed and will be a good for anglers and good for shop and stores. Fishermen want to protect the water and lands they cherish. Using Fish’Sposal prevents fluorocarbon leader clippings, spent shot, broken hooks and other fishing debris that are not biodegradable from ending up in the environment.” Wholesale is $8.50; suggested Retail is $15.

Companies/Jobs

GreenFish, the first lifestyle brand completely dedicated to promoting sustainable fishing, recently announced a formal sales expansion initiative across the United States. The company has launched a line of apparel for the freshwater, saltwater and fly fishing communities, which is currently only available through the company’s website. Due to strong interest at the consumer and retail level, however, GreenFish is kicking off a formal effort to expand its sales reach to the retail channel for the Spring 2011 season.

GreenFish founder Bryan Godber explains, “We are thrilled to see the rapid growth of our brand which proves that all angling communities support and believe in the sustainable angling lifestyle that GreenFish represents. Over the next few months, we will be looking for highly qualified sales representatives for the freshwater, saltwater and fly fishing markets to help grow our brand nationally and internationally.”

To contact GreenFish about representing their brand, contact GreenFish at sales@greenfishmovement.com.

Quotable… Is That for Real?

“Our next issue will contain 24 pages of ads. NO ARTICLES, NO EDITORIAL, JUST ADS. This is why our magazine is the most cost effective magazine going. No need to waste all that extra money to pay for articles, salaries, big overhead etc., when you can pay for just what you get; AD SPACE!”

From an E-mail pitch by “Tackle Box of Savings” (which also claimed TBOS as the only trade magazine for the fishing industry).
lands administration being advanced by the House of Representatives. The House is debating and voting on H.R. 1, a bill that would fund federal government activities for the remainder of fiscal year 2011.

“While hunters and anglers recognize the urgent need to address budget challenges, we are extremely disappointed by Congress’s cavalier approach to reducing spending by gutting vital conservation programs,” said Whit Fosburgh, TRCP president and CEO. “These proposed cuts don’t simply trim excess fat; they eviscerate programs that sportsmen have supported and benefited from for generations.

“If this misguided bill becomes law, decades of conservation gains will be undermined,” Fosburgh continued, “and sportsmen’s efforts to leave a legacy of quality hunting and fishing opportunities for future generations of hunters and anglers will be destroyed.”

Crucial conservation programs targeted by the House bill include the following:

- North American Wetlands Conservation Act: The House bill provides no funding for NAWCA, equating to a cut of $47 million dollars in wetlands habitat work.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund: Funds to the LWCF, which has acquired and conserved some of the nation’s most popular public-lands hunting and angling destinations, could be reduced by 90 percent.
- Wetlands Reserve Program: The WRP, a critical program for protecting and enhancing wetland habitat, would be capped at 202,218 acres in fiscal year 2011, permanently reduced by 47,782 acres.
- Natural Resources Adaptation: The Department of the Interior’s natural resources adaptation programs, which are critical to fish and wildlife management efforts in the face of climate change, would be cut by more than 30 percent.
- State and Tribal Wildlife Grants: These grants provide federal money to every state and territory for efforts aimed at preventing fish and wildlife from becoming endangered; funding, currently at $90 million, would be completely eliminated.
- Environmental Protection Agency: The EPA would be prevented from dedicating funds to the revision of regulations addressing the management of America’s waters—regulations that have been challenged by two recent Supreme Court cases that jeopardize the EPA’s ability to responsibly administer 20 million acres of wetlands, small streams and other waters important to fish, wildlife and sportsmen.
- Wild Lands: H.R. 1 would prevent the Department of the Interior from carrying out Secretarial Order 3310, which enables evaluation of BLM lands to achieve management objectives designed to conserve high-quality backcountry fish and wildlife habitat.

These and other proposed cuts could significantly affect the nation’s public- and private-lands conservation efforts.

**The Conservation Alliance, OIA Voice Support for BLM Wild Lands Policy**

Citing the need for balance in federal land management and the role public and wild lands play in supporting jobs across the American economy, The Conservation Alliance (Alliance), Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) and companies they represent sent a letter to members of the House Natural Resources Committee supporting the Bureau of Land Management’s new wild lands policy.

“Proper management of wilderness-quality lands and congressionally-designated Wilderness signals our national commitment to conservation of our public lands, clean waters, healthy wildlife, and cultural and historical landscapes,” the industry said in backing the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Secretarial Order 3310.

“The outdoor industry depends on a full spectrum of public lands and waters to provide places for our customers to use the products we make and sell. Outdoor recreation contributes $730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, and supports nearly 6.5 million jobs across our country. Ensuring that some of our BLM lands are preserved for recreation and habitat is an investment in our economic future and the quality of life in communities,” stated the letter signed by the Alliance, OIA and 19 leading outdoor companies.

“Secretary Salazar’s order ensures Western communities have the opportunity to choose a balanced economic approach. Active outdoor recreation generates $289 billion in annual retail sales and supports sustainable, domestic jobs in every American community – rural and urban,” said Frank Hugelmeyer, president of OIA. “Jobs vs. conservation is yesterday’s logic. The recreation economy balances boom and bust cycles of extractive industries,” Hugelmeyer said.

“Conservation is an investment in the future of the outdoor industry,” said John Sterling, executive director of The Conservation Alliance. “Secretary Salazar’s order requires that the BLM preserve the wilderness characteristics on some of its lands; the same lands where outdoor customers recreate using the products our members make and sell.”
BANK ROBBER LINKED TO SEX DUNGEON:
IF IT WASN'T FLY FISHING, IT'D BE SCANDALOUS.

THE BANK ROBBER: GAME-CHANGING TECHNOLOGY AND A HELPING HAND FROM KELLY GALLOUP MAKE THESE THE FINEST STREAMER RODS OFFERED TODAY.

To all those who thought there was no place in fly fishing for irony—we introduce our new Bank Robber rods. Insanely advanced fly rods conceived with the express purpose of chucking the sport's biggest, gnarliest flies. Designed with the help of streamer guru Kelly Galloup, the bank-pounding creator of the Sex Dungeon, Zoo Cougar and Barely Legal, the list of technological advances incorporated in these two rods will set your super-high-modulus, high-strain SC6 graphite mind racing. Throw the exciting new 3M™ Matrix Resin into the mix combined with St. Croix’s proprietary ART™ and IPC® technologies—and you’re looking at performance so advanced it is, quite frankly, scandalous.

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THE NEW BANK ROBBER™ RODS ARE BUILT WITH 3M™ MATRIX RESIN. ST. CROIX REFERS TO IT AS NSI (NANO SILICA) AND IT’S THE BEST FISHING ROD RESIN ON EARTH. NSI INCORPORATES NANO-SIZED (ULTRA-MICROSCOPIC) SPHERES OF SILICA IN THE EPOXY RESIN TO BETTER BOND THE THOUSANDS OF CARBON FIBERS THAT COMPOSE THE BLANK. AND BETTER BONDING, MY FRIEND, INCREASES STRENGTH BY 30% WITHOUT ADDING WEIGHT. VERY COOL.

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Op Ed: More on the Pro Plans Issue... Solving the Problem

My last article in Angling Trade on Pro Plans garnered more feedback than anything I have had published in almost a decade of writing...

That this article resulted in more feedback than writing about C&R or land preservation in hook-and-bullet publications with a clear wise-use lean speaks volumes. That this occurred in a publication that is not only fly fishing centric, but also industry centric says even more.

No doubt my article hit a nerve... Calls and emails came in from guides, shops, reps, and even manufacturers. Folks had complaints, concerns, and ideas. Many asked what we could collectively do to rethink the current paradigm regarding pro plans. All expressed concern that this was hurting the small shops. All agree that if we lose these shops, we lose the sport as we now know it.

As such, I’m now offering some possible solutions in this piece. Some ideas are mine, and some are from people who contacted me.

As a reminder, the term “pro plans” is intended to include “key employee” plans. While less of a problem than true pro plans because they are managed by the people most affected by abuses—the retailers—they are an issue.

The small guy is already at a disadvantage, and making it tougher for real pros to get tackle will only make matters worse. For this to work we need a level playing field, and will need the industry leaders to lead the way.

First and foremost, we should redefine the term “pro.” A pro is someone who is among the best at what they do... someone with influence... someone people look up to... someone who makes their living participating in or promoting a specific sport or industry...

Manufacturers, guides, writers, editors, website administrators, celebrities, and reps are all potential pros. But this assumes that it is more than just a hobby; or a part-time or seasonal job to them. You are not directly and intimately involved with fly fishing on a full-time basis you are not a fly fishing pro...

Hunting guides are not fly fishing pros—Ruger does not give me a discount! The author of a cooking column in an outdoor publication is not a fly fishing pro... Part-time administrators of online fishing forums are not fly fishing pros... Truck drivers or electricians who guide on the weekend are not fly fishing pros...

Next we redefine the term “key employee.” Employees of the men’s department of a big box store are not fly fishing key employees... The cousin of an employee of the fly fishing department of a big box store is not a fly fishing key employee...

Now assuming you fit the basic definition of a pro, should there be any more requirements? If you agree that the local dealer comes first, then yes—a decent working relationship with that dealer should be a requirement. Why would we subsidize someone who is working against us? Even staunchly independent guides should be able to work with their local shop to some degree...

The approval process should involve manufacturers, reps and dealers where appropriate. Writers and celebrities with national exposure, manufacturers and reps should be approved by the manufacturer. Regional writers and celebrities should be approved by the reps. Guides should be approved by the dealers—and by that I mean the dealer closest to them.

Guide licenses, business cards, websites, etc., should all be scrutinized to ensure that the requestor is what they say. References should get checked. No longer would a guide license, website or brochure in and of itself be enough to warrant a discount—at least not a full one. One article does not make one a writer. One TV appearance does not make one a celebrity.

If a given dealer does not want to get involved in pro deal administration, fine—use the next closest. If a guide does not want to work with their local shop, fine—
either try to fix the relationship or use another brand of tackle...

Reps would get involved at the guide level when someone feels they are being unfairly treated by a given dealer. The rep would then act as a mediator. This would be a great way to help try to get everyone on the same page... It would also prevent turf wars, jealousy, paranoia and personality conflicts from getting in the way of business.

Once someone has been approved, orders would go through the closest dealer. The dealer and rep would get a reduced margin--but at least something. Manufacturers would drop their margin where necessary to make it all work.

Dealers would be responsible for keeping a profile of each pro that includes their industry status, sizes, discount rate and purchasing history. This would help spot fraud and prevent abuse. Dealers would be responsible for keeping the information current as well—it would be to all of our benefit to do so.

Try to buy a medium wader when your profile says you take an extra-large and no deal... Come in for your second $400 rain jacket in three months and you will have to explain where the last one went...

Next, we should train those to whom we provide discounted tackle. Annual product and sales training provided by the dealers and/or reps would go a long way toward making these programs do what they were intended to do—sell tackle! As the person looking for a discount, you—not the rep or dealer—would have to go out of your way a bit to get to the required training.

Boat/truck decals, patches, and logo hats and shirts would not only be made available—there use will be required as part of the deal. In some cases, brand exclusivity at the guide level is the only way it works—at least within tackle categories such as waders, rods, reels. Where applicable, this too would be part of the deal.

Pro and key employee tackle would be clearly marked to prevent/discourage resale. Rods and reels would be registered by the manufacturer. Warranties would be extended to the original owners only—no exceptions. If tackle purchased through a pro or key employee plan shows up where it shouldn’t you lose your discount...

Lastly we need a way to recycle used pro and key employee tackle without flooding our own market with discounted gear. While branding may be the single most important thing to a manufacturer, it is in everyone’s best interest to keep our pros and key employee’s inventory current. It does very little good to have a guide client use a rod that can no longer be purchased.

Buybacks, trade-ins, and charitable donations all have some level of merit and feasibility in regard to recycling obsolete tackle. This would also provide some incentive and financial relief to help pros keep their inventory current. Most working guides and retail help are in no position to throw away a rod they paid $300 for—no matter how good a deal it was.

So, there you have it. Is this a lot to swallow? Sure... Is it an end-all to our woes? Clearly not... Is it a good place to start? I hope the discussion continues.

The system now is not working for anyone but those getting discounted tackle. Those who make the tackle are not getting what they should be getting out of it. Those of us in between aren’t either...

Bob Mallard
Kennebec River Outfitters
Madison, Maine
Travel Tips

In our first segment, we described a great way to break into selling international fishing trips by hosting groups of clients to various destinations. This not only allows you to travel and fish, but it can also add substantial income to your business in the form of corresponding tackle sales. In part two, Bill Marts concentrated on the crucial importance of servicing the travel sale, once it has been made. As a third element, we thought it would be important to cover a point that is often overlooked—acquiring great images for the destinations you sell into.

While it is a wonderful perk to accompany a group of friends and clients to an exotic fly fishing lodge a time or two a year, the hoped-for end result of that trip will be more clients booking through you in the future to the same destination, and/or traveling on their own. You typically don’t want to limit your number of travel sales to only hosted expeditions; your loyal customers would rather do business with you than someone they don’t know, even when you won’t be accompanying them. But while talking with these prospective clients face to face (or over the phone or via email) is your single greatest sales tactic, you will greatly increase your odds of pushing them “over the edge” into a sale if your words are accompanied by some beautiful photographic images.

So where do you get these pictures? Well, you can ask the lodge owners for their images, or pay what is often significant coin to purchase existing, generic shots from professional photographers. But the best place is often from your own camera, taken during your initial trip to the lodge. Yet this isn’t as easy as it may sound. To get images that really “sell” takes preparation, and diligence. You can’t approach this task casually. Before the trip, you must think through the selling points of the destination, and then plan exactly how you are going to distill those sometimes intangible features into specific photos. Of course, you need a quality digital camera, to begin with (remember to shoot the highest resolution capability for your particular model, in either jpeg or RAW mode). This will usually dramatically reduce the number of images a memory card will store, so you may want to upgrade to a higher capacity card.

Make yourself a written “shot list” prior to departing, and make it as exhaustive as possible... you will have just one chance to be successful at this, in the short run, and you don’t want to waste any opportunities. Think outside the box of “grip-and-grin” fish photos; while these are certainly useful, they tell only a very small part of what will attract people to the lodge. Just as useful are well-lighted indoor shots of people enjoying a dinner together in the evening, anglers casting in beautiful surroundings, or a great panoramic of the lodge facility itself. Try to catch people in candid moments—not staged—and be creative in the angles you shoot from. Often, climbing a ladder and shooting down on a scene will give a much more interesting look than a horizontal shot, as an example. One of our favorite tricks to liven up a fish picture is to crouch down and shoot the angler and fish from water level (and always, ALWAYS remind the fisher to remove their sunglasses first, and give a big, toothy smile!). Know what you want from each image you shoot, and don’t be afraid to include a bit more “edges” than you think necessary—you can always crop the photos later, but it’s tough to add in what isn’t there. Remember, lighting is key. Make good use of early morning and late afternoon ambient light, when almost anything you shoot outside will look better than it does in harsh midday glare. Be willing to give up personal fishing time during these time spans to capture a few great images. Finally, be aggressive in the use of a good flash unit, even in conditions you wouldn’t normally think to; the classic use while shooting an angler and fish in bright sunlight is to eliminate the deep shadow caused by the bill of a ball cap. Remember, you don’t have to be a great photographer, just a thoughtful, disciplined one.

Returning home, send or E-mail out some well-written overviews of your trip to prospective future clients, and salt the writing with some photos that really tell the story of your adventure. The writing is important, but it’ll be the images that make people stop, imagine themselves in the picture, and then read.
This could easily be you.
High performance fly fishing is no longer out of reach.
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orvis.com/access
Are free fly line giveaways hurting shop sales more than they’re helping?

Written by Ben Romans

I buy retail. Though working in the industry has granted me access to pro programs and discounts, I participate in few. In fact, I believe a pair of Simms waders is the only pro program purchase I’ve made in the last five years. I have noble intentions, but I’m not trying to be a martyr. I opt to return the income generated from my work back to the business. Whether near home water or on the road, I patronize fly shops, and admittedly, also some big-box outdoor stores. I feel like I’m driving things full circle and supporting an industry that supports me.

But that doesn’t mean I don’t want to make my pennies count. I’m more apt to purchase hard goods during a closeout sale or if coupled with another discounted product, and lately,
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Smith’s proprietary Techlite Polarized Glass lenses are created through a finishing process with controls maintaining a 1/2000th of a millimeter tolerance and optically corrected using Tapered Lens Technology. Honed to provide a 20% weight reduction over standard glass lenses, our Techlite Glass lenses are 12x more scratch resistant than premium plastic lenses. Add Polychromatic Tints to adjust to varying light conditions, Anti-Reflective Coatings to cut bounce back light, and Hydrophobic Coatings to repel water and oils. Simply put...IT IS THE BEST LENS ON THE MARKET.
The debate over whether giving away free fly lines is good for business is growing as customers now come to expect it. For now, the ones footing the bill are the fly shops.

“Up until a little over two years ago, we didn’t give away free fly lines. We just didn’t do it. In our opinion, that was discounting and dealers need their margin in order to make it,” Gorge Fly Shop owner Travis Duddles said. “Well, around that time, we were watching our business very closely and while other arenas fared well, our reel and rod sales slipped. That’s when we noticed our competing stores had become super-aggressive with free fly lines.”

Wanting to know how much free fly line giveaways were helping or hurting his business, Duddles organized a spreadsheet.

“We found we gave away roughly 1,000 fly lines at my cost of $30 a piece. That starts to add up to a big chunk of change. I’m afraid that dealers really don’t know what they’re losing unless they take a hard look at their numbers,” he said. “Our company continued to grow the last five years because of Internet sales. Despite that, we sell fewer fly lines than we did then, but we buy more fly lines than we ever have. People think, ‘Oh, I’m just giving this line away and still making money because I’m selling a reel.’ But they don’t realize how bad it affects their numbers.”

Duddles started presenting the problem to vendors with the idea that if pressure came from the top, it might help quash the free fly line trend. With enforceable pricing policies in place, dealers would be less prone to arrange giveaways or package-price products for fear of losing their authority to sell an entire product lineup.

“We’ve contacted several of our vendors and reps and said ‘Look, is anybody going to start putting a stop to this?’ In the end, nobody really seemed to care, and when they did care, they just pointed the finger and shifted blame to other vendors,” Duddles said.

“We’ve talked to dozens of dealers over the years about this issue, so I recognize this sentiment exists in a large portion of our industry,” Sage vice president of sales & marketing Marc Bale said. “Running a fly shop is not an easy financial proposition, so anytime we can support and not detract from pricing [within legalities], we really want to do so. That’s why we created, and spend a lot of money updating and upholding, our pricing policy. We’ve changed some things over the years when things like eBay gained popularity, but most of the tweaks stem from changes in the market. About two years ago, online retailers started promoting free fly lines, so when 2010 came around, we reaffirmed the verbiage in the pricing policy stating the sale of Sage product with free product is prohibited. As with most things, drawing a line in the sand is going to make some people happy and some unhappy, but generally, I think our policy makes most people happy.”

Nonetheless, a pricing policy is only good if you’re going to enforce it, something Bale claimed Sage does with great efficacy, but he also reiterated that they’re in the sales business, and not the pricing police. In the end, it would take the concerted effort of fly fishing manufacturers with a policy similar to Sage’s to make a dent in the issue. Instead, to many retailers, it seems more efficient to look the other way in the name of overall sales—especially in a soft economy.
But are we approaching a point of no return? At this point, one setback with trying to turn the tide down the road is consumers now come to expect a bargain. They’re going to go from shop to shop to see how much managers negotiate on product, or see how far their dollars stretch at big-box stores, before making a purchase, and when they do, there’s a solid chance they’ll opt for the least expensive goods, because after all, they’ve sufficed in the past.

“We’re certainly mindful that the competitive landscape is not following our lead and consumers are in tune with getting more out of a deal than they’ve ever gotten before,” Bale said. “Philosophically, where is this going to go? Who knows, it’s mostly circular—when the economy gets tough, it’s more of a problem, and when things are good, you don’t hear about it. Right now, we’re in an atmosphere where every nickel matters, so it’s painful for anyone to give away margin on fly lines. I promise you, that in the years when the doors were busting with retail sales, we didn’t hear a peep about issues like this.”

Some people I talked with think free fly line giveaways indicate we’ve become an industry that’s scared to lose a possible sale—so scared that many of the smaller outfits forced to compete with their competitor’s giveaways and package pricing are actually losing money trying to make money. For example, a high-volume retailer might get a 50 percent break from manufacturers on inventory purchases where a smaller outfit only gets 40 percent. If both are giving away lines, the small outfit loses more money and has a harder time recovering the loss. It’s deceiving to think you’ve sold a $250 fly reel and only sacrificed a fly line. Compounded, that small loss from the fly line cost shrinks margins considerably.

“I don’t care who you are, or how big or small you are in this business, by no stretch of the imagination is there so much product being sold out there that any of it can afford to be given away or discounted,” Bale said. “Fundamentally, in a broad sense, we want dealers competing on service, not price.”

Nevertheless, before the U.S. economy tanked and the fly fishing market turned cutthroat, customers walking into a fly shop never asked for a discount. It just wasn’t negotiable, you pay what the price says. Today, that’s certainly not the case, and in some respects, some shops have become so worried about losing a patron who wants to ‘talk with his wife’ before buying a $700 rod, that someone throws a $200 rod in their face and assures them it’s just as good, if not better. In that moment, a salesperson essentially convinces a customer there’s no point in spending more money, just to save the day on a sale where the shop makes $50 instead of $350. The worst part is that customer has a new mentality when it comes to gear pricing and may no longer be a candidate for future high-end purchases. The only ones smiling are the line manufacturers. They make the same amount of money whether a shop sells a line or gives it away.

That’s one reason I viewed Scientific Anglers’ (SA) recent marketing campaign with in-

continued on next page...
trigue. With the recent acquisition of Ross Reels, SA is in a unique position to leverage either brand in marketing campaigns—the latest is an offer for a free SA fly line (via a mail-in coupon program) with the purchase of a Ross Vexsis Reel. (SA parent company 3M acquired Ross in 2010.)

Peter Frederixon, Scientific Anglers’ National Sales Manager, hears what shops are saying, and stated the company doesn’t endorse sacrificing high-end fly line inventory for giveaway promotions that cost dealers money. In fact, to help shops stay competitive, they’re creating new tools and programs like the new bulk fly line dealer program in 2011. For that, SA manufactured a limited number of entry-level fly lines as a replacement for cheap, imported lines so dealers have an inexpensive alternative when assembling outfits for customers shopping on price.

Frederixon also said one of the thoughts behind the Vexsis offer was to take some weight off dealers’ shoulders by giving the consumer a free line at the manufacturer’s cost. From his chair, the offer gets people into the shops at a traditionally slow time for sales, and he’s hoping shops take advantage of the opportunity. Though the idea alleviates some issues, some dealers didn’t like that it still propelled the free fly line concept and think that when the campaign ends, they’ll be back at square one.

“We created the free fly line deal for a few reasons. One, so people begin associating SA and Ross brands together. There was some PR strategy behind that aspect of the promotion,” Frederixon said. “Second, we want to help our dealers get people through the door and we saw this campaign as a unique way to do that. Once they’re there, don’t stop at selling them a reel. Sell them a rod. Sell them an extra spool. Sell them leader and tippet. I’m a big fan of up selling and in the end, it shouldn’t really matter what brings a customer through a retailer’s door, so long as the shop makes the visit count.”

On the flipside, some people I questioned said that in the absence of vendor sales policies, there’s going to be an ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’ attitude. Consumers smell blood in the water, so why not give them what they want—especially if so many dealers are willing to jump on the bandwagon to realize any level of profitability? Margins will go down, but is there really anything that can be done about it until the economy gets better?

“Something at some point has to be done, and vendors don’t have to go it alone. If there was some way as an industry we could agree to put a stop to it, on all levels, it would be a start. We can’t just leave it at fly lines—we have to make sure things like rod tubes, and fly boxes, etc. aren’t substituted because in the end, we’ll all just keep losing money. It starts with a free fly line, but where does it end?” Duddles said.

That’s where the debate remains. Part of the problem with reporting on an issue with so many facets is it raises as many questions as it answers. In the end, the debate is, and will continue to be, somewhat circular. However, if the practice continues relatively unchecked, chances are good that retailers will continue to lose money.

“If the giveaway trend continues, it may reach a point where dealers ask vendors for financial breaks in order to afford to keep giving stuff away. Does that mean vendors with reel and line product like Sage and SA will discount some lines for promotions? Probably not. Does that mean manufacturers will be willing to negotiate better price breaks for struggling shops? Probably not,” Duddles said. “But make no mistake, this whole thing will eventually hit vendors’ pockets too, and when it does, be ready for a big turning point in this industry.”

“As an industry, we need to band together and say ‘you know, let’s help the fly shops make money so we can have customers in the future,’” Nautilus Fly Reels owner Kristen Mustad said. “The industry needs to band together and put a stop to it. If a cease-fire requires major rod and reel manufacturers signing off on a pledge to not allow dealers to give away fly lines, then that’s what we have to do. And if you’re worried about stagnant line sales until the playing field is once again level, remember, discounting inventory at the end of the year is still better than giving it away.”
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The F2 Series is all about delivering top performance and maximum enjoyment to your small stream fishing.

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In an industry that faces a number of clear challenges, sometimes it’s important to take stock in the great things that are happening. Not so much to pat ourselves on our backs, rather to understand what might be emulated, appreciated, supported, and expanded going forward.

Written by Kirk Deeter

When me made a call for “great things” input, the response from readers was pretty overwhelming. Of course, there was no shortage of suggestions on how “my new product” is the greatest thing ever to happen in fly fishing. But cutting beyond that, we found a number of reasons to take heart in where we are, and were we are going as an industry… hundreds of great things, in fact.

Here are 20 of the best reasons to feel good about the industry:

1. **Orvis Fly Fishing 101**

I’ve heard it over and over: “I want to learn to fly fish; I just don’t know where to begin.” Orvis has taken the bull by the horns and implemented a nationwide program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. Local retailers are essential to the program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. Local retailers are essential to the program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. Local retailers are essential to the program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. Local retailers are essential to the program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. 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Local retailers are essential to the program, Fly Fishing 101, which gives basic instruction on casting and rigging to anyone who shows a glimmer of interest… for free. Local retailers are essential to the program, 10-year-old son went to a 101 course at the International Sportsmen’s Expo in Denver… un-named, and incognito. He was thrilled with the experience, and it lit a spark for him (he’s a casting machine now) I’ve been trying to light for months. (Thanks Tom Evenson.)

2. **The Fly Fishing Film Tour**

I’m going to admit that, before, I didn’t get the mission of “making movies of ourselves fishing, to show to ourselves when we’re not fishing.” But I see the light now. The Fly Fishing Film tour is a lot more than “playing to the base,” and a lot more than a reason for hundreds of guys in baseball caps to get together, drink beer, and go “oooooh” when a fish eats a fly or jumps on screen. The compelling reasons: Attendance for the tour was up last year by 43 percent. That includes aficionados, for sure, but also acquaintances. The Tour gave out over $150,000 worth of gear and trips at the shows (thanks to sponsors like Costa, Sage, Patagonia, Scientific Anglers, and The Outdoor Channel). The Tour raised and donated over $10,000 for Casting for a Cure, and let conservation groups use venues to spread the word about their missions and causes (at no cost). And the Tour sold the majority of tickets through local fly shops (shops had discounted tickets), which for some, drove serious traffic at a normally slow time of year.

3. **Trout Unlimited**

For its size (around 140,000 members), Trout Unlimited is clearly one of the most influential, respected and effective conservation organizations in the United States. Thank goodness, because trout rivers (an environmental foundation that supports the sport of fly fishing) are some of the most sensitive and fragile resources. What is heartening about Trout Unlimited is its ability to bridge political persuasions behind common objectives. Now, TU is focused on more progressive means for recruiting and involving younger members… and fly shops are critical to that effort. As issues like access and clean water are more central to the survival of fly shops, the relationship between retailers and TU, on both the national and local chapter level, will only grow.

4. **The Gulf Coast of Louisiana**

Many of us have experienced the beauty of the Louisiana marshes… there’s simply no denying that Louisiana has one of the most interesting, rewarding, and alluring fisheries—especially for fly fishing—in America. And a little less than one year ago, we were seriously afraid that it would all vanish… wiped out by the BP oil spill catastrophe. Well, while the long term impact of the spill is still to be deter-
minded, the fishing reports right now are incredible (a photo of a 38-pound redfish landed by AT contributor Chris Santella arrived via E-mail this morning). The area is resilient, to say the least. If you haven’t yet had a chance to fish the region, do it (whether or not you plan to attend the IFTD trade show in New Orleans in August). If you’ve been, go back, and appreciate one of the greatest things in fly fishing.

5. Consumer Shows
I had the opportunity to take part in the International Sportsmen’s Expo in Denver, and also travel to The Fly Fishing Show in Somerset, New Jersey. They’re both great, for different reasons. At ISE, it’s all about reaching a “crossover” audience of outdoorsy people. And yet, in Denver, fly fishing was literally the nucleus of that show. Watching the kids (and adults) lined up to take a casting lesson from Cathy Beck at the Sage booth, or from Angling University, or Orvis 101, was reason for pride. The Fly Fishing Show in Somerset was bustling… across all demographics… old, young, serious anglers, and people just sniffing around. I am still awed as I watch Lefty Kreh pack ‘em in around the casting pond to impart folksy wisdom the way only he can. Thing is, it isn’t one show versus the other… in this market, we need both, working in synergy. It’s all good… really.

6. Anglingtrade.com
You might expect me to blow our own horn a little, but forgive me if I insist that this isn’t simple self promotion. Angling Trade has completely revamped its website, making it more timely, with breaking news and discussions of key issues. In short, we’ve made this a real time resource for retailers, and manufacturers, at no cost to users (thanks to the generous ad support from manufacturers).

For example, a few weeks ago, we were able to break a story about a theft wave affecting fly shops… we even posted a photo of the suspects, and the feedback/dialogue that followed boosted traffic through the roof (and hopefully preempted more thefts). We’ve also started a LinkedIn forum specifically for retailers where topics range from the impact of new SKUs on revenue… selling direct… and E-commerce. On top of that, we’ve launched a monthly E-newsletter. All of this is meant to help retailers improve their businesses. Please, check it out if you haven’t yet.

7. The New Rod Revolution
I don’t think I’ve seen as complete a compendium of quality product, across all categories and price ranges, as what exists today. That’s perhaps most clear in the rod realm. From Orvis Helios to St. Croix Rio Santo… from the new Hardy Sintrix to the G.Loomis NRX, there is no denying that the R&D push is on. And that’s going to equate to two things… more pressures for all manufacturers to develop better product and better value, and more sales opportunity for retailers to reach new and established customers with products that open revenue opportunities. How all this plays out is, as always, TBD. But what we know is that the innovation dynamic is alive and well in fly fishing, and for the savvy, that means great things.

8. The Economy
Will consumers buy product? Well, that depends on the economic climate, and let’s not sugar coat-things; for the last few years the worldwide economy sucked. That’s not to suggest that things have completely turned around yet. But there are glimmers of hope. Stock markets are ticking in the right direction. Jobless claims are inching (sluggishly) in the right direction. Consumer attitudes are tilting, bit by bit, toward the bright side, which leads to spending. An informal AT survey of 20 fly shops has indicated that a majority (70%) are seeing some sales improvement. In other words, there’s reason for optimism, if only because we, as an industry, may have found a bottom, and the worm may turning. If you made it this far, you should feel good. And true, while the economy isn’t “great,” better may be good enough for right now.

9. Philanthropy in the Industry
There are hundreds (if not more) examples of manufacturers doing good things for various causes, from breast cancer research, to a multitude of environmental concerns. But it’s especially encouraging to realize just how much of this also happens at the grassroots (retailer) level. One shining example happened over the holidays, when Fishwest Shop in Sandy, Utah, made donations to multiple organizations in the Salt Lake City region. Fishwest donated approximately 1000 Shirts, 2500 pairs of socks, and some jackets and sweaters split between the SLC Mission and The Road Home. They also donated 200 pairs of youth-sized wading boots to The Boy Scouts of America. The total donation valued around $55,000 dollars. With all that’s going on in Utah, via a vis the battle over stream access (HB141) and so forth, it’s hard to imagine that the seeds of goodwill planted by the fly fishing community will not make a lasting, if subtle, impact in the region.

continued on next page...
10. Fly Blogs
With the blog boom came a lot of paranoid old school magazine and newspaper writers who felt the guy tapping out fly prophecies from a laptop spelled the end of mainstream media. It didn’t. In fact, it made it better. There’s something to be said for easy accessibility of information… for forums where commentary (good and bad) can be exchanged and argued… and for the mindset shift that makes the computer keyboard less of a pulpit, and more of a megaphone. I check in often with Michael Gracie, and Buster Wants to Fish, and Fishing Jones, and others, not only as a magazine editor (I want to know the pulse of the market), but as an angler (I want to be entertained and informed). If anything, the magazine guy is now more entertained and informed. If anything, the magazine guy is now more entertained and informed. It didn’t. In fact, it made it better. There’s something to be said for easy accessibility of information… for forums where commentary (good and bad) can be exchanged and argued… and for the mindset shift that makes the computer keyboard less of a pulpit, and more of a megaphone. I check in often with Michael Gracie, and Buster Wants to Fish, and Fishing Jones, and others, not only as a magazine editor (I want to know the pulse of the market), but as an angler (I want to be entertained and informed). If anything, the magazine guy is now more entertained and informed.

11. Project Permit
To address data shortcomings specific to the permit species, the Bonefish Tarpon Trust (BTT) and Costa Sunglasses are initiating a multi-year Permit Research Program in Florida. BTT plans to work with sponsors, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, anglers and guides on this multi-year effort. In coordination with the BTT, Costa has dedicated four years of funding to support a state-wide tagging program for permit. In 2010, Costa made available 6,000 tags for the Permit Tagging Project. The Permit Tagging Project is a statewide effort encouraging anglers and guides to tag permit. The catch and recapture data will finally inform permit movements in Florida waters, and provide managers with new data that might be applied to management zones. For example: Are the permit that spawn on artificial reefs off southwest Florida the same permit that inhabit the Florida Keys, or do they come from elsewhere; are the permit of Florida a single large population, or are permit populations regional? BTT and Costa plan for this project to be just the beginning of a major, sustained effort.

12. Sili Legs, Z-lon, and Foam
Even if you’re a fur and feather fly tying purist, there’s no denying that the advent of synthetic materials have triggered a fly innovation boom. Bugs that float higher, ride cleaner, last longer, and add just enough shimmer or sparkle now comprise a good percentage of what most anglers carry in their fly boxes. I am continuously amazed by the sales power a comprehensive section of a fly shop, dedicated to the latest and greatest in fly tying materials, can offer. Moreover, ingenuity is never a bad thing when stacked neatly in the fly bins. Now… the issue of keeping hackle feathers in stock, with the new fashion craze of saddle hackle hair extensions… well that’s another story altogether (check the Currents section of this issue and look for a feature in June).

13. Redington’s Reach
Far Bank’s Redington brand is making a concerted effort to not only introduce people to the sport through their product line (kids’ fly fishing outfits, affordable gear for all ages, apparel that works as crossover pieces for multiple activities), but it is also focused on marketing to people outside the fly fishing industry space. A study done within the outdoor industry showed that 88% of outdoor enthusiasts are interested in finding a new outdoor activity to engage in, and Redington believes that fly fishing can be and should be that activity. As such, Redington’s just-revamped website (redington.com) introduced a section dedicated to the new fly angler to make the sport more approachable, fun and easy. The company’s kids’ outfits come with everything needed to get on the water including games and targets on the box to practice at home. And Redington also launched an array of affordable women’s apparel that emphasizes functionality for fishing and beyond.

14. Patagonia’s Conservation Support
The numbers speak volumes: Patagonia has been giving environmental grants to non-profit grassroots organizations since 1985, and to date has given out $38 million in grants and in-kind donations to environmental causes. Within the water, fish and marine-related realm, Patagonia has given over $5 million to 332 varied groups working to protect the species and places it designs fly fishing product for. Additional support for fish-related advocacy efforts lies in Patagonia’s backing of the World Trout Initiative. World Trout was spawned by Patagonia founder/owner Yvon Chouinard and activist James Prosek in 2005. World Trout gave $155,000 this past year ($420,760 since its inception) to 13 varied groups working worldwide on behalf of native fish.

15. The Campaign to Stop Pebble Mine (And the Sportsman’s Alliance for Alaska)
As most AT readers know, the Bristol Bay region of Alaska (the world’s most prolific wild salmon fishery) faces the threat of a potential gold and copper pit mine operation—The Pebble Mine—in the headwaters of this highly sensitive
watershed. The fly fishing industry, along with hunting interests, native American tribes, and other conservation organizations have spearheaded an effort to protect the region from the mine. The fact that fly fishing interests have come together, and played a leading role in the effort to protect Bristol Bay is great news, in and of itself. But in early February, the coalition received more encouraging news... the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is planning an assessment of the Bristol Bay watershed to better understand how future large-scale development projects may affect water quality and Bristol Bay’s salmon fishery. Great news indeed.

16. The Center for Aquatic Nuisance Species/Clean Angling Coalition
This organization has helped create a standard message that the fly fishing industry and community can stand behind, and ultimately helps protect the industry and our fishing. The group is supported by various entities, from manufacturers to the Federation of Fly Fishers, to individuals. In the context of whirling disease, take stock in how far we’ve collectively come since the mid-1990s. As reported on Midcurrent.com February 17, “While the disease dramatically changed fish populations in some Western waters, about half of all infected trout populations remained disease-free -- enough to ensure survival.” That’s great news, but in the context of mud snails, didymo, and a number of other threats, the fight is far from over. See stopans.org to learn more and get involved.

17. Simms Ice Out/Orvis Guide Rendezvous
I have long been on record for saying this, and I will always believe it: “The sun rises and sets on the fly fishing industry in North America where the working fly guides say it does.” Guides are the pulse of the industry. The gatekeepers and opinion shapers on everything from new product to new techniques for catching fish. The industry, as whole, must do more to ensure standards for guides, and then do as much as possible to help those guides be successful. The Simms Ice-Out event I attended last year, and the Orvis Guide Rendezvous I have also been part of in years past, do an awful lot to enhance the camaraderie among working guides, and give them the latest on gear, etc., which ultimately helps them on the river. The more guides talk with each other, that’s indeed a great thing.

18. Midcurrent.com
If you haven’t noticed, Marshall Cutchin’s Midcurrent.com is methodically carving out a niche as the indispensable nerve center for fly fishing information. Looking for a light human interest piece on a person or place from a small weekly newspaper? You’ll find it there. Looking for a comprehensive, fair gear review? You’ll find it in the annual Midcurrent Fly Fishing Gear guide. How to? Check. Ask questions? Got it. Much to my chagrin, I even get scooped from time to time on breaking business news by Marshall (and it really pisses me off). But I can’t argue, because everything at Midcurrent is free. Moreover, I think it’s good, no great, for fly fishing.

19. Embrace-A-Stream
Embrace-A-Stream (EAS) is a matching grant program administered by the national office of Trout Unlimited (TU) that awards funds to TU chapters and councils for coldwater fisheries conservation. Since its inception in 1975, EAS has funded over 962 individual projects for a total of more than $3.8 million in direct cash grants. Local TU Chapters and Councils contributed an additional $12.5 million in cash and in-kind services to EAS funded projects for a total investment of more than $16 million. Partners include the national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Costa del Mar Sunglasses, and the FishAmerica Foundation. In 2010, the average grant award was $5,200. Projects were located in 16 states and included many worthy projects such as native fish passage in Wyoming and Idaho and brook trout restoration in Tennessee and New York.

20. Untamed Angling
Based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Untamed Angling has created several small South American fly fishing lodges that cater to anglers willing to go a step beyond the norm. I had an opportunity to explore the Bolivian jungle with Untamed before they established the now wildly popular Tsimane lodge, which features arguably the best golden dorado fishing experience in the world. I can tell you that the boys from Untamed Angling are far from finished with their mission... now expanding the Bolivian operation, even exploring new options in northern Patagonia and southern Brazil. The thing about fishing in South America is that it either blows your mind with something completely unfamiliar to the average gringo (dorado), or it shows you a glimpse of how pure a fly fishing theater can be (northern Patagonia). Stay tuned to rumblings you hear from Untamed Angling and the travel companies they work with... they’re opening doors on adventure in a way that nobody else is.
In other words, it’s about the market first, and product sales follow in a well-educated and motivated market. In fly fishing, I would argue that nobody embraces this mantra as well (or has for as long) as The Orvis Company. Teach people to fish, and the rods, reels, lines and waders sales will all follow.

The proof is in my library. Probably yours too. “The Orvis Guide to…” (something) sits on most of our bookshelves. I joke (not really) that Tom Rosenbauer was my first fly fishing instructor (though he’s not much older than I am).

Well, now Orvis has continued this tradition and landed on another credible author, and produced a gem of a final book product in the form of The Orvis Guide to Beginning Saltwater Fly Fishing, by Conway Bowman.

Now… before we get into it, a note of honesty… Conway and I have been friends for years, and I wrote the foreword to this book.

But I wrote the foreword, because I was so enthusiastically amped that Orvis tapped Bowman for this job in the first place. You see, while Conway is best known for his crazy “ragged edge” fly fishing adventures in search of mako sharks off the coast of his native San Diego, California, truth is, Conway is very much a tactician and problem solver at heart. It doesn’t matter to Bowman if he’s chasing his beloved makos, or sea bass… or redfish in the Louisiana marsh… or tarpon in Florida or Belize… or even trout in the Rocky Mountains. He is, among all the friends I have, probably the most purely dedicated to the art of angling, and saltwater angling in particular.

More than that, Conway is a realist, and a populist. He doesn’t believe in secret tricks… he isn’t a student of casting mechanics… he fishes from the gut, and he’s an open book with his tips and tricks. The consummate teacher, Bowman is all about making things easy, and understood for anyone, anywhere.

That, right there, is the essence of his book, and it’s why this is one of the best collections of tips on saltwater fishing to be found anywhere. If you’ve noticed… there’s a trend in fly fishing publishing these days to “tear down the wall” as it relates to a learning curve. At no time (as the industry struggles to recruit new participants and retain others) has that been more important. And I would suggest to you,
that saltwater fishing needs that bent as much as anything.

Bowman delivers in *The Orvis Guide to Beginning Saltwater Fly Fishing*, in spades.

Examples: In three short paragraphs, he eloquently explains “What makes a good saltwater fly reel?” (Chapter 5). He also tells readers how to set the drag, select the right lines for different conditions, and rig the reel itself. In terms of casting, he delivers the best, short (five paragraphs) explanation of the double haul, I’ve read anywhere (Chapter 29). I’m particularly fond of the fact that in the next chapter (30) he implores readers to “Develop a Good Backcast.”

But there are also simple, slap-your-forehead nuggets that give the book an honest, “been there, done that” appeal: Use gaffers tape so your fingers don’t get cut, and “How to Safely Release a Shark.”

Bonefish, tarpon, tuna, stripers... they’re all here. The book contains 101 tips, neatly organized in color-coded sections, as well as a number of beautiful photographs by Conway’s lovely wife Michelle (and others), as well as classic illustrations by Bob White.

In the end, the book is an artifact. Kudos to Bowman, for sure... but also to Orvis, Skyhorse editor Jay Cassell, and the entire production team that made this one happen.

You should sell many. Your customers will appreciate the wisdom, and the package it comes in.
Now Read This...

There is a future for angling books... but what it is remains slightly hazy.

Written by Chris Santella

I like fly fishing books. Reading them. Writing them. Cashing royalty checks that occasionally materialize as a result of them. Given this, you can imagine that the incessant screed from publishing pundits for the last year – “Kindle has killed the book, iPad has killed the book, books are dead!” – has been the cause for some concern.

Fly fishing titles have never been a significant part of the mix for most publishers; hell, for most publishers they’re not any part of the mix! Nor
are they a significant element of the average fly shop’s inventory. “I would say that books make up less than five percent of our sales,” said Mark Bachmann, owner of The Fly Shop in Welches, Oregon. “We probably do four turns of our book inventory each year. It’s worth doing books, but it’s not a high volume deal for us.”

While hardly the foundation of fly shop fortunes, books are not quite dead. For Mark Koenig of Anglers Book Supply, a leading outdoor book distributor in Eugene, Oregon, they’re not even on life support. In fact, the category provides shops with a good profit center. “If my sales are any indication, books and DVDs are moving very well right now,” he said. “Any retailer that’s not taking advantage of the category is leaving money on the table. Many people in the publishing industry are worried that eBooks will change everything, and some of that concern has spread to retailers. Frankly, I don’t even think people in the highest levels of publishing in New York know how things will pan out. Fly fishing books are lifestyle books, and it’s hard to show off a lifestyle on your Kindle. And as for fly-tying books, people want them at their bench. It’s part of the aesthetic. I know that publishers are concerned that print runs may diminish, but I don’t think there will be extreme erosion of the printed product in this category. I do believe there will be fewer inexpensive paperbacks, and more high quality hardcovers. This favors just the types of books that fly fishers love to buy and display in their homes.”

Judith Schnell, publisher at Stackpole Books (and until recently, in charge of the house’s fly fishing book acquisitions) is also sanguine about the future of books. “We have a dozen or so new fly fishing books on the spring and fall list for 2011, and roughly 200 fishing titles on our backlist,” she said. “We’re going full-bore into making books available however people want them – in hard copy or electronically. We’ll sell books however we can.”

According to Schnell, Stackpole has been working for four years on migrating print titles to a variety of electronic formats compatible with

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What books do sell in the current market? Not surprisingly, beginner’s books and survey-style guides are the bread and butter for many retailers. “Fly Fishing Basics (by Dave Hughes) is our best seller,” Mark Bachmann said. “I imagine we make 15 turns a year on that one title.” “How to cast books and titles like Fly Fisher’s Guide to Oregon make up 30 to 50 percent of our book sales each year,” Koenig continued. “The other 30 to 50 percent come from whatever happens to be hot at the moment. We work hard to identify those trends, but we also stock small titles – like The Hardy Book of the Reel by David Stanley. As a niche provider, I feel I need to provide complete coverage. I’m not going to make decisions on what consumers want.” Anglers Book Supply currently stocks some 5,000 fishing-oriented titles.

Mark Koenig understands the challenges fly shops face in selling books and DVDs. “I think there’s a perception among some retailers that books are a category they can’t make money on,” he said, “that online merchants will undercut them every time. It's dispiriting when some cheapo comes into the shop and says ‘I can find that ISBN number for 35% less on Amazon.’ Online retailers will sell cheaper most of the time, but you have to remember that not everyone buys solely on price. I’ve heard some retailers express the sentiment that if they can’t have all the sales at full margin, they don't want any. If someone’s heading down that path, it’s hard to convince them that books have any value. But I believe they do bring something to the mix. Books and DVDs are affordable to stock and affordable for customers to buy, and they have good margins. They’re great impulse items. People don’t come into the shop to buy Eastern Rises, but if it’s there, they’ll but it. Books are one of the few product categories that sell other product categories. A book on two-handed casting or destination travel might sell a Spey rod or some flats booties. Books and DVDs can inspire consumers to explore other aspects of the sport. Another benefit that retailers often overlook—books and DVDs can keep non-fishing people occupied while their friend or spouse is looking at gear.”

What advice would Koenig offer retailers to get more bang from their book stock? “First, have the best and most current selection,” he said. “At many shops, once something comes in, it never leaves, and the shelves accumulate everything that won’t sell. To keep things fresh, you need an inventory system in place that makes it easy to bring in new titles and get rid of those that aren’t performing, so you don’t have an ever-growing surplus. New and interesting items in the store are your best promotion, and that extends to books and DVDs. I'd like to see more cross-merchandising – knot books by the tippet display, tying books by the fly tying materials. Finally, I'd like to see a dedicated book/DVD section, organized with some sort of logic, where new stuff and perennial good sellers can be highlighted.

“In my lifetime, I don’t think we’ll be able to download a Coleman Stove,” Koenig added. “But there are lots of changes transpiring in how things move from manufacturer to customer, and books are on the leading edge of how distribution is evolving. If you’re a brick and mortar operation, you need multiple reasons for people to find value in doing business with you. If your shop’s business plan is to only offer products that can only be found in your store, at full margin, I am not sure that you can survive.”

“The changes we’re seeing in book distribution could be an opportunity for retailers,” Schnell said. “If a retailer has an expertise in a subject area and can point customers in the right direction, customers will trust those retailers.”

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EXPERIENCE OUTDOOR RETAILER
Summer Market 2011 Trade Show and Open Air Demo

SAMPLING OF RETAILERS

ALASKA WILDERNESS LODGES
BACKCOUNTRY.COM
BACKWOODS
BASS PRO SHOPS
BILL JACKSON
BUD LILLY’S TROUT SHOP
CABELA’S
ELKO FLY SHOP
FIN & FEATHER
GREAT OUTDOOR PROVISION CO
GOLDEN RIVER SPORTS
JACK DENNIS
JOE’S SPORTING GOODS
L.L.BEAN
NORTH COVE OUTFITTERS
ORVIS
ROBINSON’S OUTDOOR STORE
SILVER CREEK OUTFITTERS
SPORTSMAN’S WAREHOUSE
WESTERN RIVERS FLYFISHER
WHOLE EARTH PROVISION CO

SAMPLING OF BRANDS

ANGLING TRADE MAGAZINE
BIMINI BAY OUTFITTERS
BLACK DIAMOND
CLOUDVEIL
COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR
CONFLUENCE
EXOFFICIO
FILSON
FISHPOND
FEEDER HAWK
FROGG TOGGS
HOBIE FISHING
KAYAK ANGLER MAGAZINE
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A Feather in The Salt Guide’s Cap

Here’s why gear guys should carry a fly rod anyway.

Written by Joe Cermele

I had been fishing with my friend Chris Foster since high school, and every time we got into this situation, he ended up pissed off. “Do we really have to do this?” he asked with scowl.

“Yes,” I said, not taking my eyes off the water.
“Why?”

“Because.”

Chris huffed, then jammed down the throttle of my boat, trying to get us in front of a fast-moving school of false albacore. I stripped line onto the deck like a mad man, watching peanut bunker shower into the air 100 yards away, glinting like a thousand diamonds in the sun. “Just throw some metal from here,” Chris pleaded over the engine’s high-pitched hum. “No,” I roared. “Get me within 70 feet, dammit! Get me in fly range.”

Chris was right; a Hopkins metal rigged on a spinning outfit goes the distance, even in hurricane-force wind. No backcasting, no stripping, no wrapping line around your feet. No frustration. We had already landed a half-dozen albies on metal that morning before I decided I wanted one on the fly. In the time it took me to line up the shot, make a good cast, and finally connect, those metals could have landed a few more. But I wasn’t looking for a fly hook-up because I’m a fly snob who loathes spinning gear. Quite the opposite. I just saw an opportunity to use a fly and took advantage. I wanted a little change. If those albies hadn’t shown up, my ten-weight would have probably never left its case that day.

I often perceive an air about saltwater flyfishing, particularly in the Northeast, that success is only gained through undivided attention to the practice. You can’t be a casual fly guy. In my mind a fly rod is nothing more than another gun in the cabinet, not a reason to shun other forms of pursuit. My boat never breaks the inlet without a fly rod, but it also never breaks the inlet with nothing.
Opinion editorial

lures available today I can’t think of one saltwater bait species that can be matched by fly only. From worms to glass minnows, flies may mimic them more accurately, but a small red Slug-Go soft-plastic, or small Deadly Dick metal, will get the job done, too.

No, I’d like to see more conventional guides carry a fly rod because catching a saltwater fish on fly gear is a special experience, and not one that needs to be earned despite popular belief. Dropping clients off at the dock with bragging rights to say they caught a striped or dolphin on the fly, even though they didn’t expect to, can’t be bad for business.

A few summers ago I set out on a shark trip. It was a hot, muggy day and brown sharks weighing up to 200 pounds were swarming my chum slick. The friends I was fishing had no shark experience, and were simply elated that in two hours we caught and released 10 of them. It was during our lunch break that my buddy Sean casually asked, “does anyone ever fly fish for sharks?”

I grinned. “Do you want to catch one on a fly rod?”

“Seriously?” His eyes widened.

Ten minutes later, after rigging up chicken feather streamer and giving him a basic casting lesson, he was tied into a 150-pound brown shark and backing was melting away. I’m not sure Sean has picked up a fly rod since, but he can say he used one to catch a shark. That same achievement is equally potent in my mind for an angler who spent a day trolling stripers or jigging bluefin, but managed just one on a fly. As a guide, you have just helped a client put one more feather in their cap, and given the notion that flyfishing for such species is difficult, that’s a pretty big feather. It doesn’t mean conventional guides should seek out fly-appropriate situations. It just means they should be prepared when they arise. The aim is not to convert usual clients into devout fly anglers, but boost confidence in their abilities by shaking up a routine day. Rest assured, when recounting the trip the fly-caught fish will get mentioned, even if they weren’t the biggest or most plentiful of the day.

Any time I fish with a guide, walking away having learned something means more to me than the fish we caught. To that end, having a client hook a fish on the fly is an instant learning experience. Even a bluefish, of which they may have caught thousands on spinning gear, feels different on a fly rod. The pulse of their runs doesn’t transmit the same. A conventional outfit cannot match that deep throb of an arced 10-foot fly rod. You can apply pressure differently and experience a seemingly familiar species in a whole new way.

I’ve actually asked a few close guide friends why they don’t consider carrying a fly rod. One answer I get is that their clients just want to catch fish and don’t care how they do it. It’s the meat-fishing mentality that, personally, I have no problem with. Perhaps a guide with such clients would never use that fly rod. But there may come a day when the coolers are filled and the action is still hot and one of those anglers is looking for a twist.

Guides have also told me that they don’t want to waste time teaching people who are indifferent to flyfishing how to punch a Clouser 80 feet into a headwind. My answer to that is, “Don’t. You’re not a fly guide.” When it’s ripping windy, tie on a metal lure and keep your anglers connected. Then on that day when the ocean is greasy-slick and the stripers are pushing bait a short-stroke away, show them something new. Give them a new story to take home.

Joe Cermele is the new fishing editor at Field & Stream magazine. His perspective should open eyes, and make the fly crowd grateful that the fishing editor of the world’s leading outdoors title understands and respects fly fishing... for what it is, and what it can be.
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Q&A
with AFFTA Chairman
Jim Klug (Yellow Dog Fly Fishing Adventures)

Angling Trade posed 10 questions to Jim Klug, chairman of the American Fly Fishing Trade Association, looking for his take on the state of the industry, the health of the trade organization, and the forecast for AFFTA’s 2011 International Fly Tackle Dealer trade show next August in New Orleans. Here’s what he had to say:

AT: You’ve been chairman for a little more than 6 months... what do you think the biggest accomplishment/positive change has been with AFFTA in your short tenure?

Klug: While I don’t think that the infrastructure or the mission of AFFTA has changed dramatically over the past six months, I do believe that the overall “attitude” seems to have changed. I think that the attitude of the AFFTA board itself has changed, and I think that the industry’s attitude about AFFTA and the overall perception of AFFTA has changed. Membership is up substantially, more people are engaged (both on an individual and a business level) in AFFTA, and the industry is definitely more united than it was a year ago.

Within the board itself, you definitely see an overall desire to think differently, to try new things, and to shake up the status quo on numerous levels. We very much understand that our job is to market more effectively and promote not just the sport of fly fishing, but the fly fishing industry specifically. However, while AFFTA’s mission has not changed, it was obvious that major changes were necessary with implementing its agenda to bring better value, direction and results to the membership and the industry at large. Starting with taking on the industry show (a show that is now run by the industry and for the industry), progressive thinking and practical application of programs and events to improve the health of the fly fishing industry will continue to be introduced in the coming months. These are exciting times.

AT: Are there things you find to be greater obstacles/frustrations than you expected going into this position?

Klug: One thing that a lot of people don’t realize is that the AFFTA board is an all-volunteer board made up of our peers and colleagues from throughout the industry. Sometimes I think that people envision the AFFTA board as a collection of stodgy old-timers wearing tweed suits, smoking pipes, and reminiscing about the good old days of swinging wet flies on private English chalk streams. The fact is that the current AFFTA board is a diverse, energetic group of 15 people who represent all aspects of our industry. Retailers, media, manufacturers, travel; all of these segments are currently represented on the board. The fact that we have a volunteer-based board, however, means that there is a ton of work and not enough full-time people to do it all. By far the greatest obstacles and frustrations that I have personally encountered is that this is an incredibly time-consuming and demanding position. I have come to realize that this position is far from the “few hours a week” that I initially expected this position to entail, that chairing the board could easily be a full-time position. I have gained a whole new level of respect for all who ever served on the AFFTA board and all those who have come before us! Two years ago, the bylaws of the association were changed to ensure that there was equal representation of all facets of our industry on the board; mandating that at least two members from each segment of the industry (manufacturer, retailer, guide/outfitter, media, etc.) filled the board seats. There is no hierarchy within the group and no one particular segment that makes up the leadership. Each board member is equally weighted, and each of these people volunteers their time without compensation and in fact spends well over a thousand dollars during each year of service to cover the expense of attending AFFTA board meetings. It really is a labor of love and respect for the fly fishing industry and its members.

AT: How is the IFTD show in New Orleans shaping up? Will dealers attend in numbers?

Klug: The show is coming along great. Randi Swisher, AFFTA’s president and show manager/coordinator, and AFFTA office manager Mischa Jones are both doing an unbelievable job with the planning and coordination for the August show. I am going

continued on next page...
to boldly make the prediction that New Orleans will be the largest, best-attended show that this industry has seen in the last decade. The footprint of the show will be larger, we will have more manufacturers and vendors participating than we have seen in many years, and the overall retailer, guide, and outfitter attendance is going to be great.

**AT:** Can you give me three good reasons why a dealer should attend IFTD in New Orleans? (I'm not talking about “have fun” or “support the industry,” I'm talking about compelling business reasons.)

**Klug:** Great question. Let me see if I can limit it to only three good reasons.

First off, the retailers that do attend can take advantage of numerous purchase incentives that are only available at the show. Free product, additional payment terms, free shipping, additional discounts – manufacturers are offering all sorts of “show-only” deals that when taken advantage of, collectively add up to big savings and additional profits for retailers. I talked to numerous independent retailers that attended the 2010 show who actively took full advantage of these show-only offers. They literally ended up with thousands of dollars in benefits, and all were adamantly that not only was attending the show worthwhile, but in fact, the overall savings they realized with purchases proved that they really could not afford to stay home! When you have a major percentage of exhibiting companies – both large and small – offering serious incentives ONLY TO SHOW ATTENDEES, then all of these things really add up. After all, if you’re a retailer, then these are companies that you’re working with and buying from anyway, so why wouldn’t you take advantage of additional profits and savings that are yours just for attending? In studying the success of retailers in today’s market, it is difficult to overlook the fact that many of the most successful retailers are the ones who consistently attend the industry show. These retailers are business savvy, and they realize that when it comes to the collective value of show-only specials and incentives, that they really cannot afford to miss IFTD.

The second reason that I would list is the “collective networking benefit” of attending the show. Think about this concept for one moment: This is the largest collective gathering of our industry under one single roof anywhere in the world. This creates more than a “great party.” It creates a situation where the entire industry can network, dialogue, and share ideas and news with their peers. This environment creates great opportunities for learning and for improving individual businesses. I can tell you that the business owner who scoffs at the value of this kind of environment is the one who would probably benefit from it the most.

The final reason that I can give is focused specifically on the retailer. Attending the IFTD show and taking advantage of all that this event has to offer will make a retailer better, smarter, and more profitable. Take advantage of the day-long seminar that retailer attendees last year called “incredibly valuable.” Spend some time in the social media lounge learning more about social networking and on-line marketing from some of the best in the business. Walk the small business section to discover new products that will sell well in your shop. Participate in and learn from the numerous contests, events, and classes. Come to New Orleans, absorb all that IFTD has to offer, and take it all home to improve your business and increase your profits.

**AT:** Last year, there was a rift over IFTD, with some major manufacturers (Simms, Patagonia, Costa del Mar, Loomis, St. Croix) sitting out the trade show in Denver. Has that rift been bridged? Is this industry unified?

**Klug:** I think that this “rift” has definitely been bridged with the majority of the companies that sat last year out. At this point in time, I fully expect that every one of those companies – with the possible exception of one lone rod manufacturer – will be in New Orleans. There were probably some legitimate reasons why certain manufacturers sat last year out, but that is history and will have nothing to do with our collective path moving forward. Rather than dwelling on who stayed home in 2010 and how IFTD can somehow “teach these companies a lesson,” we instead need to figure out how we can continue to unite the industry and create a show environment where every manufacturer (A) wants to attend IFTD, and (B) can legitimately benefit from attending. In my opinion, everyone who works in this business has always been united in the fact that we all want a healthy business climate and an industry that is strong, forward-thinking, innovative, and ultimately profitable. Today’s successful business owners – manufacturers, retailers, lodges, outfitters, and everyone else – realize that this industry will never be able to hit the rewind button that will take us back to the easier boom years of the mid-nineties. Instead, we all need to be looking ahead. A lot of things have changed over the past ten years, and the only way that we’re going to have an industry that is healthy and vibrant in the future is to remain unified.

**AT:** What are you doing in terms of working with the American Sportfishing Association?
**Klug:** We’ve had great communication over the past year with ASA, and we’ve had a number of sit-downs with their leadership since last year’s IFTD Show. We’re making a strong effort work more closely with ASA’s leadership, and specifically with their Government Affairs and Affiliates (GAA) Committee. ASA is a large, powerful group, and it can only benefit AFFTA and the fly fishing industry in general to work with their organization whenever possible. We may have different priorities on certain levels, but in the end, our common interests and goals are very similar.

**AT:** Where does “Discover Fly Fishing” and/or other efforts to promote the sport to new audiences stand?

**Klug:** This is a major focal point for the AFFTA board for the year ahead and one that we hope will deliver some very real results for the fly fishing industry in the near future. The “Discover Fly Fishing (DFF) Program” has been around for years, but if you ask most people working in this industry what exactly DFF is and does, they wouldn’t have a clue. It is a program that has existed for a long time, but one that has done very little and delivered even less. In the past, the goal of DFF was in many ways to “standardize” how we all should be teaching fly fishing to those new to the sport. The fact is, however, that successful retailers and shop owners – the ones who have been doing this for years and doing it well – don’t need or want to be told “how” to teach people to fish or how to engage the customers that walk into their store. Instead, they simply want help in bringing people through the front door. AFFTA’s focus with DFF needs to be (A) marketing what this sport has to offer, and (B) showcasing and promoting what makes this sport so attractive.

**Klug:** Definitely, but only when it benefits the AFFTA membership and the fly fishing industry. We are exploring and pursuing ideas with various organizations on how we can work collectively on issues that are important to all members of the outdoor industry, as it relates to fly fishing. This is especially relevant with Government Affairs and Conservation issues, where speaking as one large, united voice is always more effective than speaking out as a lone entity.

**AT:** It’s no secret that many have considered AFFTA a manufacturer-dominated trade organization in recent years. Is it?

**Klug:** In past years, that was completely true. However today, AFFTA is a very different, very diverse organization. With regards to the current AFFTA board, the make-up is truly reflective and representative of our entire industry. Current board members include retailers, sales reps, a number of manufacturers of all sizes, and representatives from the media, the travel segment, and non-profit entities. The organization’s by-laws were recently changed to ensure that in all future years, the board will be comprised of no less than two representatives of each segment of the fly fishing industry so every member of the industry is properly represented.

As for actual AFFTA membership, this has also changed and evolved from a largely manufacturer-based roster to one that includes businesses of every type. Presently, we’re seeing retailers, guides, outfitters, lodges, and media as some of the fastest-growing member categories for AFFTA. Manufacturers of all sizes will always be an incredibly important element for both AFFTA and for the industry in general. That said, increased membership diversity and participation of businesses and individuals from all aspects of fly fishing is something that bodes well for the future of the organization and the sport. Membership dues for guides, outfitter and retailers have been substantially reduced to make sure that everyone who makes a living in fly fishing can afford to be a member of the trade association and have a voice in the future of fly fishing.
This all struck me as sanguine, until I flipped to the comments jump and read this:

“This being the face of [those who] will inherit the sport? These are the caring individuals who will give of their time putting Vibert boxes in riffles, extolling the virtues of trout to their congressman, campaigning tirelessly on the behalf of soiled creeks and the last pod of salmonids?

“Rather, this is the face of uncaring SOB’s whose quest for personal glory will come at the expense of pals. Guys who haven’t put in the time to be much good at anything, yet feel deserved of our accolades and admiration.”

With all due respect, may I kindly suggest extracting your head from your Vibert box, sir? If you haven’t figured it out by now, there’s more to the Fly Fishing Film Tour, and fly fishing filmmaking in general, than glorified back-patting and fly fishing’s demise. To the contrary, inspired storytelling in the form of film is a good, actually great, thing for this sport.

Here’s why: For more than a decade we’ve lusted after the harebrained notion that a second coming of “The Movie” might miraculously return fly fishing to its early ’90s heyday. What many fail to recognize is that the next great fly fishing film is already upon us. And it isn’t a Robert Redford production, nor does it star Zach Gilford and Amber Heard. Instead, it’s a string of organic films by us, about us, being produced by camera-wielding talents such as Beattie Outdoor Productions, MOTIV Fishing, Finback Films, Felt Soul Media, and World Angling—to name a few. And it’s more than just addled fishheads taking notice.

It turns out compelling film—yes, even about fly fishing—has reach. And the fly fishing film genre is quickly becoming a vehicle for cross-pollination, with the potential to bulldoze some of the “barriers to entry” Deeter discusses in his opening column. These films are not about “how-to” fish. But they deliver the other essential element of why we fish. This why factor is a powerful incentive when it comes to swaying diverse audiences.

Felt Soul Media’s Eastern Rises, for example, recently snagged top honors at Banff Mountain Film, one of the most prestigious venues in the outdoors film festival circuit. Moreover, its Bristol Bay enviro-epic, Red Gold, is slated for a PBS Frontline Documentary run later this year. In addition to catching Felt Soul’s achievements, Finback Films’ Low & Clear is another must-see in the making—a richly layered documentary contrasting two of fly fishing’s most quirky characters delivered on screen to date.

Ultimately, these thought-provoking, cinematically dynamic films are well on their way to delivering new eyes and faces to the sport. And with the Fly Fishing Film Tour as a conduit, we’re on to great things—with or without A River Runs Through It sequel.

As for our friend and his Vibert box—who makes good points about preaching the virtues of trout and lobbying to maintain waterways for future generations of salmonids, and fly fishers—there is a give-back element to these feel-good ramblings. Film tour attendance was up 40 percent last year from the year prior. That number is poised to grow in 2011. The tour also gave out gear and trips at the shows, and raised money for Casting for a Cure, all the while providing conservation groups a free platform to express their missions and causes.

Go catch the Fly Fishing Film Tour this spring, and bring your non-fly-fishing friends along to pick up the popcorn tab. You—and they—will be glad you did.
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