

Covering the Drift

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**FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL**

Washington State Council

Council Offering Clubs Online Tying Help

June is Women's
Fishing Month, FFI
Women's Connect
Offering Several
Programs During
the Month

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Home Water

Tying Times

About 20 people attended the Washington Council's first online meeting for club presidents and officers in February and I hope it won't be the last. The purpose of the gathering was to introduce the services the council is offering to help clubs set up or expand their online fly tying groups. The effort was well received and most of the 21 affiliate clubs in the Washington Council had a representative at the meeting.

There are many ways to get involved with the tying effort and a separate story about the tying services on page 3 in this newsletter explains how.

The one-hour meeting generated conversation and questions about how online tying groups can benefit club members. Isolation during this pandemic is gradually fraying the social

Online tying groups can help knit a club together until we emerge from pandemic

fabric that holds FFI clubs together. Online tying groups can help knit a club together until we emerge from this. Seventeen of the clubs in the council are holding board meetings online over services such as Zoom. Most of those clubs hold monthly membership meetings online as well. Online every-

body can see one another, tell stories of solo fishing adventures and maybe raise a glass. But for those clubs that also have launched online tying groups – about 8 or 10 clubs—the social benefits are even greater. Sharing skills and comradery is what

happens at club meetings and outings. In today's online only world, fly tying is the closest thing a club can offer to that real world interaction.

The Wasilla Fly Fishing Club in Alaska has been holding an online tying group since early fall, said club

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Special points of interest

- FFI has asked each of its 17 Councils nationwide to name a representative to Women's Connect, the FFI women's group.
- The Washington Council is grateful Trisha Campbell has agreed to become the Washington Liaison to the group. She's not wasting any time and launching a series of events in June. See page 3 for details. Thanks for stepping up Trisha.

New Council Efforts to Support Clubs and Women Members

Tying Groups Can Engage Club Members; FFI Can Help

Washington FFI has created three programs to provide affiliated clubs in Washington and Alaska with help developing Zoom meetings focused on teaching and improving fly tying skills for their members. The program consists of three separate levels of engagement. Affiliated clubs are welcome to contact the online tying team to use part or all these programs.

First

For clubs that have already launched their own online fly tying group, the Washington Council can lend a hand by

providing a knowledgeable tier to demonstrate a specific fly or provide a step-by-step hands on fly tying instruction for club members. Clubs that have started online tying groups report members are grateful for the interaction, but the club has few members—or maybe only one—with the camera technology and ability to lead. Now you can call on FFI to provide an occasional tier to help. Clubs can request a specific type of fly or a particular fly to be demonstrated or taught. (i.e. classic feather wing, steelhead fly, dry flies, damsel fly etc.) For this program contact Sam Matalone at sam@matalone.us.



Second

The Washington Council can help any affiliated club develop or improve their own online tying groups. One of

our council members can walk a club through the entire process of creating and launching an internal club tying group or tying instruction class. It's best if the club has its own paid Zoom account. The Council will allow clubs to use its account to get started for a few months. Clubs need to purchase camera equipment and software for about \$100. It will take 10 to 20 hours for initial set up and testing. The Council can provide recommended



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Women's Connect Holding Several Women's Fishing Month Events in June

By Trisha Campbell

The Women's Connect branch of Fly Fishers International has declared June as Women in Fly Fishing month.

The goal is for Women's Connect is to develop at least one event for women in June.

As the Washington Council Liaison,

I'm planning a number of casting events and one Casting For Recovery Retreat during the month. Both will be on the eastern side of the state.

The Washington/Idaho Casting

for Recovery, which covers 11 counties in Washington and Idaho, will hold a retreat the weekend of June 11-13. This retreat will follow COVID safety protocol. Attendance will be limited to seven participants. The retreat will be held at N-Sid-Sen on Lake Coeur d'Alene in Harrison, Idaho. Applications are being taken through March at castingforrecovery.org.

Other events in June will be on Saturday afternoons. At the events, FFI will host basic casting classes for women, plus offering the bronze medal challenge course for women to test their skills. These casting events will be free of charge with a limited number of participants. Masks will be required and participants will be asked to practice social distancing. Participants will need to bring their own rod, reel and line. Event sites will be in the Pullman, WA. / Moscow, ID. area. Exact locations will be announced later. Registration will be during May by e-mailing me at

22seaotter@cableone.net



Bristol Bay

Isn't Safe Yet

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rejected the proposed Pebble Mine permit application because it was incompatible with the Clear Water Act.

That is important, but not final. It clearly states that as proposed the plan presented by the Pebble Partners was not compatible. It leaves open the possibility that Pebble or another mining consortium could come back with another permit application and another approach to the conditions of the Clean Water Act.

Removing the headwaters and all of Bristol Bay from the possibility of hard rock mining is the long term solution. TU has launched a new campaign aimed at that goal. Go to www.savebristolbay.org/take-action to join the effort.

There you will find a letter you can send to your senators and congressmen that asks for permanent long-term protections for the most prolific sockeye fishery on the planet and the thousands of native lives and commercial and sport fishers who rely on it.

The final victory is security for the habitat and the people who love and rely on it for their livelihood. We can do this. Join now.

Conservation

A Team Put a Halt to the Pebble Mine; Here's How

In 1987 a little know mineral exploration company called Cominco Alaska discovered a copper and gold deposit in the headwaters of Bristol Bay Alaska.

It immediately staked a claim and began quietly drilling in a wider circle until it accumulated mineral rights on 186 square miles of Alaska state land. Cominco broke its silence in 1997 announcing it had found a deposit holding more than 500 million tons of copper, perhaps the largest undeveloped resource of its kind in the world. From there, the claims wound through various ownerships generating an expanding library of resource estimates and mine feasibility studies until the mineral rights were accumulated by Pebble Mines Corp., a newly

form partnership of powerful mining interests in Canada and England. The fact that Bristol Bay is home to one of the largest salmon nurseries in the world wasn't a factor in their planning. When the Pebble Partners bought those claims there was no value attributed to the fishery.

The Pebble partners moved slowly on engineering studies, cultivating political connections, wooing elected officials with promises of jobs and prosperity. Then without fanfare in 2017 Pebble asked the

Army Corps of Engineers for permits to begin work. The Army Corps responded with a plan for rapid review and approval aimed at a decision by December 2020, the end of the term for a newly elected, pro-development President of the United States.

"That was our 'Oh Dang' moment," said Meghan Barker of Trout Unlimited Alaska. "It was so obviously political. Once we saw that Army Corps timeline, we knew right away it was time for TU to dial up the organizing. If a permit were granted there would be a hole in the ground in 3 to 5 years," Barker said during a February phone interview from Anchorage.



Meghan Barker

At nearly the same time when the Pebble Partners stepped onto the scene in the early 2000s, concern began growing among the 8,000 native residents of Bristol Bay. Along with them were hundreds of commercial fishermen whose catch employed another 14,000 in processing and transport, plus nearly 1,000 sport fishing guides and lodge owners. Together they were a committed and large coalition of people who relied on the abundant fishery of

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TU and FFI are Now Partnering on Conservation Issues

Bristol Bay and they were organized and ready for the fight.

In addition, there was a community of fishermen and women in the Lower 48 that had come to appreciate Bristol Bay on frequent trips to its lodges and rivers. Lake Iliamna, about 15 miles from the center of the proposed mine, was a destination for many. River names like the Newhalen, Koktuli and Nushagak were familiar to thousands who had cast lines there for early season trout, then all manner of salmon in summer and fall. Fly fishermen especially knew the value of that habitat because similar salmon nurseries were destroyed elsewhere on the Pacific Coast of the US.

There was a committed and well-informed local coalition in Bristol Bay that was largely rural. On the other hand, there was a larger, not-so-informed coalition of sport fishers in the Lower 48 that was largely urban.

Trout Unlimited put the two together.

A team of five TU staffers in Anchorage backed by two others in TU's Washington D.C. office began a strategic and aggressive information campaign. TU members were the first focus of the campaign. Then inboxes of fishermen who had visited Bristol Bay lodges began to fill with regular messages about the impact of a mine. The issue began to appear on the agenda of fishing clubs everywhere. It wasn't only TU Chapters. The Anchorage team targeted any group that appreciated the value of an abundant fishery. Most messages had email links to reach out to lawmakers and public officials. Monthly messages soon became weekly, then almost daily as December 2020 approached. The campaign was starting to work. Lawmakers were beginning to speak in opposition. Still the Army Corps plodded on so the TU team in Anchorage went for broke. They launched a campaign urging sport fishers nationwide to write President Donald Trump in opposition to the Pebble Mine.

"We got laughed at," Barker said recalling the re-

sponse of other conservation groups. The TU team wasn't deterred, she said. "There's science and then there's public opinion and we used both every way we could think of."

The campaign to influence the president began in summer 2020. Then in early fall Donald Trump Jr., a hunter and the President's eldest son, announced his opposition to the mine. It was a welcome surprise, but hard to know if it meant something more, said Barker. Then on Nov. 25, the Army Corps formally denied the Pebble mining permit. Who is to know if the presidential petition campaign made a difference. What is clear is that at least one Trump was paying attention.

Native tribes, conservationists, commercial fishers, fly fishers, gear fishers, guides and lodge owners won.

"That is the beauty of this issue," said Barker. "It was natural to bring together this community to fight this, especially the fly fishing community that comes here," she said. "What I loved about this campaign is that we were able to build good relationships with people who wanted to take action, who wanted to develop a culture of advocacy. They were ready, plugged in and prepared to take action."

It's also important that Meghan Barker and four TU colleagues in Anchorage helped build those good relationships. They are the ones who plugged fly fishers in the Lower 48 into the Bristol Bay coalition in Alaska to amplify all our voices.

The next challenge for Barker and the Anchorage TU team is to persuade congress to permanently remove Bristol Bay from risk of mine development. Work has already begun to do just that and once again the TU team is in the lead.

The outcome of the Pebble Mine campaign is even more noteworthy now that Fly Fishers International has partnered with TU nationwide to work together on conservation issues. With partners like Meghan Barker and her co-workers at TU, the future looks bright. Teamwork got results for everyone who cares about Bristol Bay Alaska and the TU crew in Anchorage was the "work" at the center of that team. Thank you.



PRESIDENT TRUMP:

The Bristol Bay region is treasured by millions of Americans who love the outdoors and is no place to put at risk by a foreign-owned mine. You have the opportunity to safeguard thousands of American jobs, a booming fishing industry, and one of the wildest places in our country.

HELP MAKE HISTORY FOR AN ICONIC NATIONAL TREASURE. STOP THE PEBBLE MINE.



The full page add that appeared in the Wall Street Journal announcing the petition to the President to stop the Pebble Mine.

Home Water

member Gary Eichhorn in a recent phone call. From regular tying, the program has expanded to include tying competitions. FFI members from clubs in Anchorage and Fairbanks also are joining for the fun of it. The Washington Fly Fishing Club in Seattle has been hosting a tying group since fall. Clark-Skamania Flyfishers got their online tying going about the same time. Officers of both clubs report the events are enjoying consistent attendance and interest.

In this pandemic world consistent attendance and interest is just what FFI clubs hope for. That's why the Washington

Council is offering three specific services to help clubs do just that. Credit for the effort goes to Sam Matalone, a director and Webmaster for the Washington Council, and Neal Hoffberg, a member of the Washington Fly Fishing Club.

The two have put their heads together and created ways to lend a hand. They've thought through the steps from picking the right camera, to set up, to creating step-by-step instruction. For clubs that have already started tying online, the council has organized a group of guest tiers who can join your meetings to expand the instruction. From bass flies to a size 22 parachute Adams, the Washington Council has a tier that can assist your club. The council also is considering creating a regular statewide tying theater that would feature accomplished tiers from around Washington and Alaska.

This pandemic will end sometime. An online tying group can help clubs rebuild healthy interaction until then.



Sam Matalone



Neal Hoffberg

Tying Groups Can Engage Club Members

meeting formats and other details as well. For this program contact Neal Hoffberg at nealhoffberg@gmail.com.

Third

The Washington Council has the ability to host scheduled Zoom Fly Tying mini-shows if members are



interested in attending. The frequency and scope of the program would depend on interest.

The shows would feature a few flies and tiers that would demonstrate a fly beginning to end, but the programs wouldn't be classes. Of course, tiers would take questions and they will pause to discuss key details, but they will not provide step-by-step instruction. For this program contact Sam at sam@matalone.us or Steve Jones at president@wscffi.org.

Thanks to Sam and Neal for creating these programs. Sam is a Council Director and the Council's long-time Webmaster. Neal is a member of the Washington Fly Fishing Club and leader of its online tying group. Both are savvy with online tying technology including cameras, lighting and perspective. And both are accomplished fly tiers that have taught online, so they understand the process and the pitfalls.

Finally

FFI members are serious fly fishers who every year travel Washington, Alaska and the globe with their fly boxes filled with some of the most well crafted and innovative fly designs made today. Whether its trout on Rocky Ford or tarpon in the Yucatan these creations help them succeed at the sport. By creating an online tying group you can contribute to their success and your clubs success at the same time.