



Presidents Corner

Well the last two years I have been the main planner of the One Fly outing and the wind has blown like a Cat. Five hurricane. Next year someone else can do the planning, just tell me when and where and I will be there. Despite the wind we had a good turnout and the food was excellent thanks to Eric Tetter. I hope everyone has had an opportunity to get out and fish during the month of July with the weather as cool as

it has been. I have bass fished with my Dad a couple of times once at Belcher Branch. We caught several fish in 15 to 17 inch range with the biggest going 4 pounds. I also fished in a benefit tournament with my Dad this last Sunday at Smithville. That lake is tough one if you don't fish it very often. We caught four fish with only one keeper. I had hopes of making it to Bennett Springs this summer but I have

not planned very well. The Southern Federation Conclave is coming up the first weekend in October start making your plans to attend now. Till next time.

Steve Bridger



The Norfork, A River In Crisis By: John Berry

For the past twenty five years, I have had a love affair with the Norfork River. This is the place that I want to fish when I have a day off from guiding. This is where I want my ashes

scattered, when my time comes. When I first moved here several years ago, this is where I went with Lori and my yellow Lab Ellie or with clients when I wanted

to catch trophy trout. Two decades ago it produced the then World Record Brown Trout, thirty eight pounds seven ounces. It was world renown and considered Arkansas'

Officers:

President	Steve Bridger	steve8056@hotmail.com
Vice-President	Randy Vroom	rvroom@kc.rr.com
Treasurer	Jim Wood	jswood1@kc.rr.com
Secretary:	Lowell Swank	lswank@kc.rr.com

Special points of interest:

* Remember bring a fly

- Meetings are the 2nd Monday of the month
- August 8 at 7:00 p.m. Meeting
- September 11 at 7:00 p.m. Meeting
- October 1 Southern Council Conclave Mt. Home Arkansas
- October 12 at 7:00 p.m. Meeting

The Norfolk, A River In Crisis

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true Blue Ribbon Trout Stream.

I fear that my great love is in a steep decline. She is beset with problems that are accumulating at an alarming rate. First it was the debacle at Norfolk Overlook Estates, where an irresponsible developer stripped a hillside of all vegetation and dumped tons of silt into the river every time it rained. Sure he paid thousand of dollars in fines and replanted the hillside but great harm was done. Then we had a hundred year flood where the Corps of Engineers had to open the flood gates seriously scouring the river bottom in the process. Couple that with an unsustainable level of trout harvest and a horrendous level of poaching. Every August brings dangerously low levels of oxygen, which result in significant annual fish kills. If this were not enough, the Norfolk receives more angling pressure per river mile than any other river in Arkansas.

As a result of all of these problems, the quality of fishing on the Norfolk is in a tailspin, from which, we do not know if it can recover. I and other serious guides have been avoiding the Norfolk because it is not currently producing the quality fish for which it was once known. We are instead concentrating our efforts on the White River.

For the last few years, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AG&FC) has been developing a Trout Management Plan for each of the trout streams in the state. Two years ago it was time to look at the White and Norfolk River. The idea was to determine what the public wanted for each stream, apply the science applicable to the situation and fine tune the regulations to achieve these goals. The AG&FC

brought in a consultant from Dynamic Solutions Group, LLC to conduct the process to remove any politics. The promise was they would do what was best for the fishery and there would be no back room political deals. A management advisory committee of affected stake holders was formed to review any recommendations and make comments. I was a member and represented the interests of working guides and avid anglers. Other interested parties such as landowners and commercial dock operators were included.

The White River went smoothly but it was decided to wait a year for some scientific studies on trout feeding and movement in Catch and Release areas performed by a PhD from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville before we tackled the Norfolk River.

After we received the data, held a public meeting and there was a consensus of those present (60 of 65) that the Norfolk should be treated as a special trophy trout area. Based on the desires of the attendees (open to the public) and scientific research the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission developed a proposal that the Norfolk Catch and Release section would be increased from one mile to two and seven tenths miles and lures with treble hooks would be allowed in Catch and Release areas. The science pointed out that the Catch and Release section was too small to properly protect the trout. In addition managing this large a Catch and Release section would mitigate some of the heavy pressure on the stream. At the time, there were no objections to increasing the size of the Catch and Release area.

Subsequent to this, some commercial operators that did not participate in the process went directly to the AG&FC and complained that the proposal would impact their business. When the White River was off color due to flooding on the Buffalo and Crooked Creek they wanted to fish the lower end of the Catch and Release section and harvest fish. To accomplish this they wanted to eliminate or severely modify the proposal to limit the increase in the size of the Catch and Release section. This action is not in the best interest of the fishery and is not supported by the scientific research. Since these operators did not participate in the Trout Management Plan and are petitioning the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission directly, they are turning the process into another back-room political deal.

I think these decisions should be subject to public scrutiny and based on science. We need to do what is right for the fishery. We have a chance to mitigate some of the problems on the Norfolk and give it a chance to recover some of its former glory. If you have any views on this situation, please contact our local representative on the AG&FC (Ronald Pierce, ronpierce@suddenlink.net or (870) 430-5203) and Mike Armstrong AG&FC, Chief of Fisheries marmstrong@agfc.state.ar.us or 501-223-6439. Tell him what you think. I know that I will!
