GUIDELINES AND IDEAS FOR STARTING AN FFI CLUB

Fly Fishers International has prepared this information to help you start your own fly fishing club. FFI stands ready to advise and assist you in any way possible in your efforts to get started.

GETTING STARTED

Often fly fishing clubs are not started - they just seem to grow from a casual association of angling companions. But there is a difference between a casual association and an active club that has made a conscious decision to seek more members and work to accomplish specific goals. The goals of a club may take many forms, but experience has shown that some set of objectives is necessary if a club is to survive and grow. One of the advantages of starting an FFI Club is that the club has a basic set of goals and objectives that mirror those of FFI and its Councils.

A. To provide members with a forum for education and resource stewardship through the sport of fly fishing;

B. To promote fly fishing through education as the most enjoyable and sporting method of fishing, and the method most consistent with the preservation of conservation - wise use - of our fishing waters and game fish;

C. To provide assistance, advice, and suggestions to other angling groups to help them become more important and effective in their areas;

D. To publicize the best practices and techniques of fly fishing, fly tying, casting, and other related subjects;

E. To be the local voice for organized fly fishers as part of the Organization, maintaining liaison with other conservation and sporting organizations, and with the governmental agencies involved in so many aspects of our sport.

F. To carry out the objectives and purposes of the Organization in their respective localities.

IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

In addition to promoting the goals of FFI, many Clubs have founded for specific reasons such as working to have a local stream set aside exclusively for fly fishing and have gone on from there. Some clubs exist for the purpose of teaching fly-casting, fly tying, or both. Others were formed to work on conservation problems involving angling resources. Larger clubs often have all these objectives.
The important thing is that members must have a sense of participation in something worthwhile to themselves and the community. Clubs that meet just to have a good time usually don’t last long; successful clubs work on beneficial projects and have a good time too. So first of all, decided what it is you want you club to do and stick with it.

MEMBERS

If you are a single individual or a small group trying to start a club, you will want to seek out other persons with similar interests as prospective members. There are various ways in which this may be done.

Once you have decided what it is you want your group to do, plan an organizational meeting. You should set a time and place and, to stimulate attendance, it may be helpful to invite a speaker of some prominence or arrange for a program of interest to local anglers.

When these arrangements have been completed, try to put the word out. This may be done through advertisements or news briefs in local newspapers, radio programs, television stations or social media. It helps to spread the word in as many places as possible, such as community bulletin boards, church bulletins, other sports clubs, or sporting goods stores.

This meeting will give you an idea of the initial interest in your area. Have a sign-up sheet, phone, address, email for further meeting notice. If you do not have an initial core group of approximately five individuals to hold an organizational meeting, you can ask for a few volunteers from this group.

ORGANIZATION

Schedule an organizational meeting (over dinner, lunch, burgers, etc.) with a small core group. Organize the Club with this group. Once the Club is organized, others can then join.

At organizational meeting decide:

- Where to meet
- When to meet, how often and length of meetings
- Where to bank
- Club address: (recommend a P.O. Box as it is a permanent address)
- Dues, how much funds are needed to operate club
- Name the club
- You can start with the Club with standard Constitution and Bylaws
- Discuss size of board (five to seven is recommended for a small club) and any other organizational matters
- Select interim officers
If your club covers a large geographical area, make sure you have an adequate number of directors that can meet a quorum and are willing to come to meetings. Hold them near good fishing at the right time of year. An odd number of directors is desirable.

Officers: President, Secretary and Treasurer are required. Other possibilities for officers or chairpersons are:

- VP Communication (newsletter)
- VP Conservation
- VP Development (fund-raising and community support, relations)
- VP Membership

FINANCES

The dues of members usually are the primary source of income for the club. Projected operating expenses should be estimated and the dues schedule adopted so that the per capita dues will provide sufficient income to meet those expenses.

Major club expenditures usually include publication and mailing of a club newsletter, dues in other organizations, contributions, and expenditures for awards, equipment and fees for speakers. Many clubs now email newsletters in order to save time and money.

There is the option of not charging club dues. Operating funds can be raised by a variety of other options. Auctions are popular fund-raising events and items usually may be solicited from members and merchants. Many clubs have raffles or sweepstakes at meetings and this may also be a powerful attendance builder. Please check your state and local laws governing raffles as many states regulate this activity. Contact the FFI at clubs@flyfishersinternational.org for our Fundraising Manual. Many clubs also hold self-sustaining events such as outings in which the cost is divided equally among those who attend.

PROGRAMS

The success of your programs will go a long way toward determining the success of your club. Good programs keep members coming back and entice others to attend.

It’s a good idea to have a membership meeting once a month. This gives members something to look forward to and establishes a pattern.

One of the most successful and humorous features of a fly fishing club meeting are fishing reports, a designated time in which members relate their angling experiences. This often is the highlight of the meeting.

Sources of good programs are innumerable. State game agencies are usually able to
provide interesting speakers or videos. Videos are also available from many tackle manufacturers. Other government agencies or conservation groups are excellent program sources. Often a club will have within its own membership experts on a certain angling technique or a certain water, and these members can provide entertaining programs. Other clubs will offer the same opportunity. Once or twice a year, you may wish to pay expenses and bring in a big-name expert to speak to your group.

After the program, it’s time for any regular business that concerns the membership. If you have a raffle or auction, save it until later as it will keep the audience from leaving earlier.

Most clubs like to have at least one big meeting a year. This is the time when you pull out all the stops, put on a big feed, and invite everyone. It is also a good time to present the club’s major awards.

COMMITTEES

Committees consist of people who get things done. They are charged with working to accomplish the goals of the club under the direction of its officers. There’s no limit to their number or function, but a typical lineup in a large club looks something like this:

Membership: Encourage new membership by mailings and exhibiting at local sport shows. Keep records of membership including current names, addresses and dues.

Conservation: Represents the club’s position on conservation at meetings of local government and DNR agencies. Recommends conservation projects to the club. Sets up meetings and workdays for the approved conservation projects. Coordinates workdays with other clubs or government agencies. Keeps membership informed of current issues and policies from FFI and the Council.

Education: Responsible for the club’s education services, such as classes in fly tying, casting, or rod building. May put on public classes or work with young people to further interest in fly fishing. The FFI provides materials and sources for teaching many kinds of classes. FFI would be happy to mail your club a copy of this informational binder.

Programs: Plan and arrange club outings and programs for meetings.

NEWSLETTER

A club newsletter is a tremendous help. Often it serves as the glue that keeps the membership together. It may range from one or two photocopied pages to an elaborate production, but the important thing is that there be one. It is a good idea to have a monthly newsletter that comes out shortly before meetings. The newsletter then carries information about the forthcoming program and other club activities. An enterprising newsletter editor will also include fishing reports, maps,
anecdotes and news of general interest to the membership. To help your editor, FFI has articles available for monthly newsletters. It was developed to assist editors who may have trouble finding enough contributing writers with news items, humorous articles and interesting tidbits of information that may be reprinted. Please have your editor contact clubs@flyfishersinternational.org. Provide the name of your club, the editor’s name and e-mail address.

MISCELLANEOUS

There are many other things your club can do. Many clubs have established their own book and video libraries for members’ use over the years. Others have produced their own videos, for their own use or to aid in conservation projects. Some clubs have published magazines and books. There is literally no end to the number of ways clubs can provide service to their members and communities.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE FLY FISHERS INTERNATIONAL

The strength of the FFI is in its members and clubs, and it was founded to do those things on a national and international level, which has far more impact than individuals and clubs working by themselves. These include:

Publication of an international magazine, Flyfisher, with articles of interest to all fly fishers and news from other clubs and councils around the nation and the world.

FFI Web Site has a wealth of angling information. Our clubs are listed to assist in attracting new members. There are pages on casting, tying, education and conservation subjects. Also listed are Retail Shop/Outfitters and our Sustaining members. A calendar of events and everything you would need to know about becoming a FFI Certified Casting Instructor. Joining or renewing with FFI has been made easy though our website. Information on Councils and a link to their websites is also there. Take a look, you may be pleased at what you see at www.flyfishersinternational.org.

NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE?

Contact FFI HQ by calling 406-222-9369 or e-mail clubs@flyfishersinternational.org.