

# The River News

The Official Newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association

Vol. 36, No. 1

January-February 2024

## Outdoor Shows, Tackle Bag Raffle, Guest Speakers Are Early Focus Of 2024 Season

While we await the start of the competitive fishing season, there are still a number of things we can do to support (and grow) our Club and to improve our chances for success once we finally do kick off our tournament season.

With one outdoor show already in the books and another one (possibly two) still to go, the sale of tickets for our Tackle Bag Raffle takes center stage. This is our major fundraising event of the year and we depend on our members to sell tickets to their fishing buddies and co-workers as well as at the outdoor shows.

This year, in addition to a bag full of lures and a \$50 cash bonus, the prize includes a custom-built fishing rod courtesy of Club member Tim Lang. The 7-foot fiberglass/carbon-fiber spinning rod is a heavy power/moderate-fast action model featuring Fuji guides and tip and rated for casting lures up to 1.5-oz.

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**Keep your pipeline to valuable fishing info open!**  
Renew your 2024 dues to maintain access to the DRFA newsletter and website.

Download a 2024 membership form from the [DRFA website](#) today!

If everyone could sell just \$20 in raffle tickets, we could earn a tidy sum to help fund our Club and the youth events we support (e.g., our Youth Fishing Derby and Silver Lake Family Fishing Days).

If you have not yet picked up your tickets for sale, they can be obtained at both our January and February meetings and at the Palmyra Fishing Flea Market on February 11. If you are unable to attend any of those events, you can also request tickets from any of the Club officers listed on the last page of this newsletter.

All tickets and proceeds must be returned by the March meeting when the winning ticket will be drawn at the end of the night after a shad-fishing presentation by our guest speaker, Kevin Ingram.

### Outdoor Show Opportunities

The DRFA has reserved a booth at the Palmyra Fire Department's [26<sup>th</sup> Annual Fisherman's Flea](#)

[Market](#) being held at the Charles Street School in Palmyra on Sunday February 11<sup>th</sup>.

At this point, we are also investigating possible attendance (TBD) at a fisherman's flea market targeted to be held around the Sergeantsville, NJ area in mid-March. Check the DRFA website for updated information once it is finalized.

If you are able to help at either of these shows, please contact Joe Newton or one of the Club officers listed on the back page of this newsletter.

### Important Dates

**Wednesday, January 31, 7 pm.** Monthly meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. Guest speaker WCO Mike Blair addresses PFBC regs.

**Sunday, February 11, 8 am to 2 pm.** Palmyra Fire Company's [26<sup>th</sup> Annual Fisherman's Flea Market](#).

**Wednesday, February 28, 7 pm.** Monthly meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. Guest speaker TBD.

**Wednesday, March 27, 7 pm.** Monthly meeting and Tackle Bag Raffle drawing at Silver Lake Nature Center. Kevin Ingram will give a new shad fishing presentation.

## President's Message

While we have no President to write a timely message for this edition of *The River News*, we do still have a need for someone to serve as a central point of contact for Club activities.

If you appreciate the value of filling that role or filling the role of an existing officer to free them to assume that role, please speak up at a coming meeting or contact an existing Club Officer.

## Minutes From November Meeting

President Bob Jack called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm with 18 members in attendance. The minutes from the October meeting were read and approved.

**Treasury Report:** The Treasurer's report was read and accepted. The report showed a balance of \$7,608.00 as of November 29. By comparison, last year's end-of-November balance was \$8,016.05 – making this year's total \$408.05 less than in November 2022.

**Membership Report:** Membership Secretary Rick Mawson stated that the count remained at 56 paid members. Rick will post a new membership application for 2024 on the website with the same dues as 2023.

**Tournament Report:** Tournament Director Scott McDonough reported the results of the October Bass Tournament. He also read a list of proposed tournaments for the 2024 season – a mix of Saturday and Sunday events. One notable change was a move of the September Catfish Tournament to the Byram Access Ramp in the non-tidal river.

**Youth Activities:** There was no Youth Fishing activity reported

other than the Silver Lake Nature Center event postponed to the Spring of 2024.

**Old Business:** Scott McDonough announced that a booth has been reserved at the Delaware Valley Surf Anglers Fishing Flea Market to be held on January 20. Rick Mawson was still waiting for information to come back from the Palmyra Fire Department's Fisherman's Flea Market.

Pete Marcolina presented tickets for the Tackle Bag Raffle and showed off the custom-built spinning rod donated by Club member Tim Lang. Tickets are \$2 each or five for \$5. Members were asked to pick up tickets that night and at the next few DRFA gatherings to sell them in time for the drawing at the March meeting. If you cannot attend a meeting in person, you can contact Pete or a Club officer to arrange for them to be sent. Members voted to add \$50 in cash as part of the Raffle Bag prize.

**New Business:** Members were reminded that we might be required to double up on our 2024 service hours for the Silver Lake Nature Center because the Family Fishing Day scheduled for last October was postponed until this Spring. The Club might try to arrange a specific service day for members as a group (*in addition to supporting the Family Fishing Day in April*), but individual members can also show up for the regularly scheduled service days on the first Saturday of every month. Be sure to register as a member of the DRFA to ensure that we get credit for all service hours worked.

Members were asked about recommended potential guest speakers but none were currently scheduled. John Pedrick did mention that PFBC Waterways

Conservation Officer Mike Blair wanted to address the Club.

**Environmental Report:** John Pedrick reported on spot dredging between the Burlington-Bristol Bridge and the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, which he attributed to cleaning up channel edges. Scott McDonough referenced some new activity in the area of the river opposite the Trenton Marine Terminal near the entrance to the pond on Biles Island. He thought it was related to a new warehouse being constructed on the Morrisville side of the river.

John also reported that it looks like striped bass regulations will be updated once again, probably in January, as a result of recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meetings.

**Fishing Reports:** Scott McDonough reported fishing in a tournament the Sunday before the and weighing in a five-fish limit of more than 14 lbs.

Pete Antoniewicz reported good numbers of dinks but only six keeper bass along with 11 perch and one pickerel two weeks before the meeting. Water temps started at a season low of 43 degrees on the river at Bordentown but rose into the upper 40s in Tullytown Cove by the end of the day. A week before the meeting, he and a friend fished the Liverpool Ledges on the Susquehanna River's Main Stem catching 20 smallmouth, with the majority of them between 14" and 17.5" – including six over 16" – on mostly Ned Rigs and swimbaits in 42-degree to 45-degree water.

The 50/50 drawing for \$40.00 was won by Tim Lang and Bryan Malkiewicz who donated their winnings toward the Tackle Bag Raffle prize. The meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

## Minutes Of The December Meeting

The DRFA Holiday party at Georgine’s Restaurant on December 6, 2023 was attended by more than 30 members and guests. The primary focus of a short business meeting held during that event focused on awarding the top three Angler of the Year prizes for the year.

The presentations were made by Vice President and Tournament Coordinator Scott McDonough. First place honors went to Gregg Southrey who did not win any individual tournament but weighed in fish in all eight tournaments in which he fished – earning 590 out of a possible 600 points. Gregg received the \$150 top prize and a personal AOTY plaque. Second place went to Pete Antoniewicz who took home the \$100 check with his total of 583 points. Third place honors and \$75 went to George Hoffman for his total of 578 points.

Scott also provided a recap of the finalized 2024 tournament schedule and thanked outgoing Club President Bob Jack for his service during 2023.

The 50/50 drawing worth \$68.00 was won by Ken Reitz.

## Will New Construction Impact Spawning Fish And Fishing Activity This Spring?

As it was mentioned by Scott at the November meeting, the new construction of a warehouse on the Delaware waterfront, opposite the Trenton Marine Terminal, is well underway and is scheduled to run into the Spring fishing season in that area.

This [December post](#) from *The Average Angler* blog series offers

a bit of explanation, including photos, and raises some questions about construction activities in the river and around the shoreline of that site.

## Blue Cats, Snakeheads, Low Oxygen Levels: The Delaware River Faces Many Challenges

A recent posting on the DRFA website features an article by Andrew Lewis as it appeared on the [NJ Spotlight News webpage](#), charting the spread of blue catfish in the Delaware River and the potential threat they pose to the

river’s ecosystem. That same article also refers to a similar intrusion of Northern snakeheads in the Delaware River and its tributaries.

And while you are on that website, check out their coverage of [dissolved oxygen standards](#) in the Delaware River and the precarious situation for the Delaware River’s [Atlantic Sturgeon population](#).

On the topic of blue catfish, Bryan Malkiewicz also provided a link to another story on the [their voracious appetite](#), as published on the Bay Journal website.

### 2024 DRFA Tournament Schedule

*All DRFA Club tournaments are free and open to dues-paying DRFA members, with Club-funded payouts of \$50, \$30, and \$20 awarded to the top three places. Participants also accrue points for the Angler of the Year competition based on their top six finishes among the nine regular Club events. (There are no tournament entry fees, however, ramp, launch, and/or parking fees may apply.)*

*Except for the Shad Tournament, there is also a voluntary \$10.00 lunger pool with a 100% payout to pool participants for the three heaviest pool fish – 60%, 30%, and 10% – at tournament’s end.*

*Except for the Shad Tournament, new members may register on the morning of an event before check-in time. All participants should check in at least 10 minutes before scheduled starting time. Weigh-in is at the time specified. Late entries will not count.*

*Always check the DRFA website or the Tournament Hotline (267-934-2148) the night before the event to learn about potential rescheduling or relocation due to weather or water conditions.*

Day	Date	Event	Time	Location
Sun....	4/7	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sat....	4/20	Shad	2 pm weigh-in	Yardley Park & Ride Lot
Sun....	5/19	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
Sat....	6/29	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sat....	7/20	Catfish	6 am - 12pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sun....	8/18	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
Sat....	9/7	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Byram, NJ Ramp
Sat....	9/28	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Byram, NJ Ramp
Sat....	10/26	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Bulls Island, NJ Ramp



2023 Angler of the Year, Gregg Southrey (center), with his personal plaque and \$150 award check is flanked by presenter Scott McDonough (left) and Club President Bob Jack at the December Holiday Party.

## 2023 Angler Of The Year Advocates For The Love Of Fishing

Our traditional beginning-of-the-year interview with the reigning Angler of the Year from the prior season typically addresses that individual's introduction to fishing, their history, their approach or techniques, and some specifics of their award-winning efforts. But no matter what the question, the underlying theme of this year's interview with reigning 2023 AOTY champion Gregg Southrey comes back to the idea of 'having fun.'

According to Gregg, he didn't spend a lot of time fishing as a youth, and what fishing he did in his late teens and early 20s was limited to his family trips to the saltwater coast and bays around Ocean City, NJ. Only after he acquired his first boat around 30 did he expand his excursions to South Jersey ponds and electric-only lakes for bass and pickerel.

Gregg's introduction to the Delaware River came around the time he acquired his new Tracker boat a little over 15 years ago. But he still visits many of his

South Jersey inland haunts where he fishes 9 or 10 tournaments a year as a member of the South Jersey Rod Benders Fishing Club, another member club in the South Jersey Bass Club Association.

Why so many tournaments? That all points back to Gregg's early focus on non-competitive bass and pickerel fishing in smaller South Jersey waters – fun. But that experience has also helped him evolve his focus on finesse fishing that has served him well in DRFA Tournaments. "I just can't throw a jerkbait or spinnerbait all day," he says, "my shoulders would fall off if I tried that." So, while Gregg will throw those heavier baits occasionally, once the exertion becomes too much he'll revert to a soft-plastic bait like a Senko or Ned Rig. His earlier go-to bait was a Berkley 4" Power Finesse Worm well-suited for weedy South Jersey lakes, but he eventually evolved into Senkos (*mostly Texas-rigged but wacky-rigged if the fish insist*) and now into Ned Rigs.

He did some but not a lot of catfishing before joining the DRFA and he readily admits he was just throwing things in the water at the start. But as he has fished more tournaments, he has identified three or four spots near each tournament launch ramp that typically hold fish, although he admits that those "spots aren't forever." If one spot is producing, he'll stay there the entire tournament as he did one day last year where he landed three catfish over 10 lbs. from the same hole (*yet still only finished in second place*). As for his favored baits, he is pretty satisfied with plain chicken livers or garlic chicken, although he does relate that "I did pretty well with an old freezer-burned pork chop one time (*garlic scented*), and I once got

second place on a hot dog as well."

For bass fishing, however, Gregg is likely to move more depending on the time of the year. For example, in the Spring or Fall he is more likely to focus on multiple spots within a major cove or backwater location. In the summer he might hit four, five, or more main river spots in sequence – focusing mostly on locations with grass, and ideally where some hard structure might be associated with the grass as well. "But the grass seems to be the key to me," he notes.

"Of course, I am not an expert," he adds. "I fish because I enjoy fishing. I like the tournaments, but I like when everybody catches fish because that means everybody's having a good time and they're likely to come back. I enjoy the tournaments more when there's a bunch of people. It's more fun."

Another reason that Gregg cites are the opportunities to learn new ideas in the post-tournament discussions. "Everybody has their own little things," Greg says, "and there's always new stuff to learn and try. I always listen to what people are doing and ask questions."

Gregg has been no stranger to the Angler of the Year competition, finishing as high as second place in 2018 and typically finishing in the top 10 anglers in other recent years. When asked to recap his approach to this award-winning season, Gregg says his goal was to weigh in a fish at every tournament he attended, which he did while competing in every tournament except the April Shad Tournament. He didn't even realize that he was in the AOTY lead until the August Bass Tournament and then it became a matter of concentrating on a

strong finish. Performing better than he did in previous years during 2023's end-of-season, non-tidal-river tournaments made the difference for Gregg as he held onto and eventually expanded his lead by eliminating some of his lower scores from earlier in the year. That exemplifies of how much consistent competition and perseverance counts under the updated 'top-six-finish' tournament rules.

As for strategies, Gregg says he first concentrates on getting as many bites as possible and culling the largest fish from that pool. That being said, he will try upsizing his lure in search of a bigger bass if all he is catching are barely legal fish. Two of his most successful baits this year were a Junebug Z-man TRD Ticklerz on a skirted punch weight in the tidal river and a Green Pumpkin TRD in the non-tidal river.

For the most part, the 2023 DRFA tournament season was mostly uneventful for Gregg and his fishing partner Chick Bay. But the two did have a bit of an adventure during one of their Rod Benders Club Tournaments when they made the long ride from the Gloucester City ramp north to Tullytown Cove. Fortunately, their winning five-fish limit compensated for a rough return trip against 20-mph winds.

Despite different fishing styles – him preferring more finesse presentations and Chick favoring somewhat larger baits – Gregg says their more than 30 years of experience fishing together works well whether throwing different baits to the same spots or hitting spots the lead angler leaves untouched for the back-deck angler.

“We like to win,” Gregg says, “but I like to just fish, so I don’t go out there with the idea that I have to win this tournament or else. I like to see people do well, and I like when everybody catches fish. It makes for a more interesting weigh-in.”

“It’s not as much fun when there’s just four boats at a tournament,” Gregg explains. “It seems like people get out of the running and they stop fishing. What the heck’s the difference? It’s still fun. Even if I’m not in the running, I’ll still show up for the tournaments because I enjoy fishing in them.”

“Even if you don’t catch a fish,” Gregg advises, “you should definitely go to the weigh-in and listen to the banter because you can always pick up something. That’s how you figure out stuff. Fishermen like to tell stories, so you gotta listen and that helps.”



*AOTY second-place finisher Pete Antoniewicz (center) was congratulated for his \$100 prize by Tournament Coordinator Scott McDonough (left) and President Bob Jack (right). Third place finisher George Hoffman was not in attendance and will receive his prize at a later date.*

## Attention Tidal River Anglers: Changes Are In Store For NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program

*A press release from New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife*

*(Anglers 16 years and older, who recreationally fish in the marine and fresh tidal waters of the State of New Jersey must register for the National Saltwater Angler Registry or for FREE with the [NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program](#). See FAQs [here](#).)*

Beginning December 15, New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registrations for 2024 are available on the [NJDEP Fish & Wildlife licensing webpage](#) (enter last name and date of birth), where all other NJFW licenses and permits can be purchased.

Registering is still FREE. When added to your online cart, there will be zero cost. Migrating the Registry to the licensing system enables ‘one-stop shopping’, allowing you to register along with purchasing your shellfish, crabbing or freshwater fishing licenses/permits. Unlike other NJFW licenses and permits, Saltwater Registrations are ONLY available online and not at license agents or NJFW offices.

Registration certificates will not be mailed and will need to be printed from the licensing page. Registration certificates can be saved to a computer and/or accessed by logging into your customer profile, where you can reprint as many times as needed.

- If you already have a customer profile with NJFW, you will simply login using your last name and DOB and then click the Saltwater Registry button to ‘purchase’ a FREE Saltwater

Registration (*individual or for-hire*).

- If you are new to the NJFW licensing system, you will need to fill out your contact information and then proceed to ‘purchase’ your FREE Saltwater Registration and/or any other licenses you may need. After signing up, you will be able to access your customer profile by logging in using your last name and DOB.
- Anyone over the age of 18 will need to provide the online system with their Driver’s License Number or their State Issued ID Card number.

Questions: Contact Marine Fisheries staff via the [contact form](#) on the webpage, email [saltwaterregistry@dep.nj.gov](mailto:saltwaterregistry@dep.nj.gov), or call NJFW Marine Fisheries at 609-748-2020.

## Updated Striped Bass Regulations Still Pending

As John Pedrick had mentioned at the November meeting, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was reviewing data in preparation for formulating a new Addendum II to Amendment 7 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass.

While the period for public comment has since closed, the following link to a copy of the [draft document](#) for that public comment period might provide some insight on the status of the striper population/biomass and the possible alternatives that might be instituted in early 2024 for their protection. *The River News* will publish a link to those new regulations as soon as they become available.

## Understanding the EPA’s New Dissolved Oxygen Standards For The Delaware River and Estuary

A new 38-minute presentation outlining the EPA’s [new standards for dissolved-oxygen \(DO\) content in the Delaware River](#) is now available for viewing on the Delaware Riverkeeper YouTube channel.

The topic of dissolved oxygen had been discussed at previous DRFA meetings. Historically, extremely low dissolved-oxygen levels in the industrialized area of the river around Philadelphia had hampered the survival of aquatic species particularly during the summer months when water temperatures soared.

Also, if you visit the [home page for that channel](#), you will be able to view other informative videos such as their [weekly Riverwatch videos](#).

### **From A to Z:**

## Share And Share Alike

One interesting feature in this month’s newsletter is the presence of multiple Delaware River-related environmental topics.

Those resources cited offer links to topics of direct concern for DRFA members, as well as access to additional resources available once you link to those topic webpages.

Also, the article recapping our interview with Angler of the Year Gregg Southrey ends with his emphasis on taking advantage of insights and perspectives gained from participating in DRFA Tournament weigh-ins.

On top of that, the reports and presentations made at our monthly meetings – by other Club members or outside speakers – offer additional opportunities to complement our personally acquired insights as a way of enhancing recreational fishing experiences and tournament success.

All of those shared resources, experiences, and knowledge only come together if we have our radar up for fishing and environmental topics and are willing to take the time to share those new insights with our fellow members. Any topics related to the Delaware River, fishing, or ecology are fair game. And you don’t need to do much more than lift a finger long enough to click your mouse on a URL link and forward it to me for inclusion in the next issue of *The River News*.

If you come across an interesting tidbit to share relative to environmental topics, ecological impacts, fishing rules/regulations, entertaining fishing stories, tips, or other insights, please drop a line to Pete Antoniewicz at 609-751-7545 or [petea2z@mac.com](mailto:petea2z@mac.com).

And as I have requested before, please share your ‘lessons-learned’ experiences for the benefit of other Club members as part of our regular *From A to Z* column. That could include anything from discovering new baits, new techniques, or new fishing strategies from other anglers to sharing how you learned the hard way to avoid boating or fishing pitfalls through college-of-hard-knocks experiences. If you want, we can even post those stories ‘anonymously’.



**The Delaware River Fishermen's Association**  
**PO Box 21145, Philadelphia, PA 19154**

**THE RIVER NEWS** is the bimonthly newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association. The DRFA typically meets the last Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Silver Lake Nature Center, 1306 Bath Road, Bristol, PA. All interested sportsmen and women are invited to attend our meetings and join the organization.

### **Don't Forget These Supporting Members Who Help To Keep Our Club Afloat**

Remember our supporting business members who provide added financial support, share their fishing knowledge with our Club members, or support our Club and youth fishing efforts with their facilities or products.

When we return that financial support by patronizing their businesses, be sure to make specific mention of our appreciation for them helping to fund our guest speakers and our tournament cash prizes. Without their support we would not be able to provide the same opportunities to our current members or to attract potential new members.

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**Silver Lake Nature Center** • 1306 Bath Road, Bristol, PA • 235 acres of woods, lakes, marshes & meadows, 4.5 miles of trails

We also recognize our Associate members – the [South Jersey Bass Club Association](#) and [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#) – who provide relevant information and additional fishing experiences for DRFA members.

**KEY CONTACTS:** **Tournament Hotline:** 267-934-2148 • **Email Address:** [DRFA\\_TheRiverNews@hotmail.com](mailto:DRFA_TheRiverNews@hotmail.com)  
• **President:** (vacant) • **Vice President/Tournament Director:** Scott McDonough, 215-989-0153 • **Treasurer:** Eileen Kicinski, 215-713-4951 • **Recording Secretary/Newsletter Editor:** Pete Antoniewicz, 609-751-7545 • **Membership Secretary/Webmaster:** Rick Mawson, 267-934-2148 • **Youth Activities Director:** Charles Bay, 609-744-8260 • **Tackle Bag Coordinator:** Pete Marcolina, 215-637-4555 • **Trustees:** Frank Beck, Harry Wirebach, John Pedrick, Gregg Southrey