

The River News

The Official Newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association

Vol. 35, No. 4

July - August 2023

Gregg Southrey Solidifies AOTY Lead With Strong Catfish Performances

After passing the halfway mark – five of nine tournaments completed – the 2023 Angler of the Year competition is starting to shape up into a series of groups.

Leading the way in the top tier of three anglers weighing fish in four tournaments is Gregg Southrey, who has placed well in both Catfish Tournaments and missed only in the Shad Tournament. Only two other anglers – Ron Soto and Bryan Malkiewicz – are close to keeping pace with Gregg at four fish apiece.

Six additional anglers are grouped one fish back and can easily slip into the top tier with solid performances in the next four tournaments. (See complete standings on Page 6.)

With only the top six tournament scores counting in the final tally, fourteen anglers in all still have a reasonable chance to compete for the top three prizes.

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President's Message

Well gentlemen, it is the middle of the summer and the heat is on. The fish should be out on the main-river grass beds. The mid-summer bass bite is usually a little tougher this time of year. There has been a lot of rain as of late, so be mindful of the water levels and floating debris.

All that being said, there is still plenty of time left in the run for the Angler-of-the-Year award. It could come down to catching one or two good fish in the next couple of tournaments. It is still anybody's game. You never know, you could wind up in the top spot.

All in all, be safe on the water and stay hydrated and look forward to the cooler fall weather in month or so.

Bob Jack

Help Needed For Youth Fishing Events

There are three youth fishing activities coming up in the next two months where DRFA members can have an impact on the early fishing experiences of the next generation of anglers. Attend the July meeting to learn more about the details and how you can help.

The first event is the return of our annual DRFA Youth Fishing

Derby, scheduled for Saturday, July 29 at the Pennsylvania Yacht Club. Five young anglers have indicated interest and Rick Mawson has posted an entry form on the DRFA website. Ask Chick Bay how you might help make this event a success.

A second opportunity is available every Thursday between now and

Important Dates

Wednesday, July 26, 7 pm.
Monthly Meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. No guest speaker is yet scheduled.

Saturday, July 29, 8 am.
DRFA Youth Fishing Derby at Pennsylvania Yacht Club.

Saturday, August 12, 6 am.
Club Bass Tournament at Gloucester City Marina.

Tuesday, August 15.
Proposed date for Annual Raft Fishing Trip to Matamoras, PA. (See separate article.)

Wednesday, August 30, 7 pm. Monthly Meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. No guest speaker is yet scheduled.

Saturday, September 9, 6 am. Club Catfish Tournament at Neshaminy Marina.

the end of the Spring Lake Nature Center (SLNC) summer camp on August 25. Both morning sessions (11:00 am – 12:30 pm) and afternoon sessions (2:00 pm – 3:30 pm) are available. Adults are needed to help the campers learn how to bait hooks, cast, and deal with snags and landed fish. All service hours go toward helping to defray the rental costs for our meeting space in the SLNC building. Contact SLNC Summer Camp Director, Trisha, at 267-880-5022 to learn more.

Finally, the major SLNC fishing event of the year – the Family Fishing Day – will be held on Saturday October 14 from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm. This event is our major source of service hours that help defray the cost of our meeting space. Learn more at an upcoming DRFA monthly meeting and sign up to help.

Minutes Of The May Meeting

Following a presentation by PFBC Fisheries Biologist Tyler Grabowski, the May business meeting of the DRFA was called to order by President Bob Jack.

Treasury Report: Treasurer Eileen Kicinski read the financial report, which showed a balance of \$8,527.72 as of May 31. By comparison, the end-of-May balance in 2022 was \$8,745.74 – a difference of only \$218.02.

Membership: Membership Secretary Rick Mawson reported that Club membership for the year is now up to 53 members. That includes six new individual memberships and four new family memberships for the 2023 calendar year.

Tournaments: The weighmaster for the June 17 Bass Tournament is Rick Mawson. A new weighmaster is needed for the

July 15 Catfish Tournament because the originally scheduled weighmaster, John Pedrick, will be out of town.

Youth Activities: Discussion was held regarding a reschedule date for DRFA support of the SLNC Family Fishing Day. Rick Mawson was going to propose two dates – October 8 or 14, for SLNC to choose.

In other youth fishing news, further discussion was held relative to the prospects for a Youth Fishing Derby this year. Rick Mawson noted that DRFA members surveyed had indicated interest from five Youth Derby participants. The board was scheduled to discuss potential dates and arrangements for a small event this year.

Old Business: Bryan Malkiewicz reported on new opportunities for DRFA shirts and embroidered hats from a new supplier, Princeton Threads. Individual shirts could be ordered in available Club colors and styles (*short sleeve, long sleeve, T-shirt, sweatshirt, etc.*). But U.S.-made hats would need to be ordered in lots of 12. Items could be selected and ordered online and either brought to a meeting or tournament by Bryan or shipped directly to the Club member. The Club's commission on all sales would be sent to the Club Treasurer quarterly.

Bob Jack re-issued an appeal for a Show Coordinator to ensure the most efficient and economical new-member recruitment and any possible fundraising at upcoming winter outdoor shows. Other Club members will provide the support to man the booth during shows, but one individual is needed to coordinate timely registrations and details on booth setup.

New Business: No new business

was discussed. As of the May meeting, there was no guest speaker scheduled for the June meeting.

Environmental: There were no environmental reports.

Fishing Reports: Rick Mawson and Joe Newton fished Lake Luxembourg in Core Creek Park the day before the meeting and caught nine bass from 14" to 17.5", plus four crappie. Rick also fished there the previous Friday and had five bass including a 16", 14", and 13".

John Pedrick and Frank Beck fished a week before the meeting and caught 19 stripers – including one keeper and two 30" fish – plus four catfish.

The winner of \$33 in the 50/50 drawing was Rick Mawson. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes Of The June Meeting

President Bob Jack called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with 13 members in attendance.

In the absence of Recording Secretary Pete Antoniewicz, Bob Jack read the minutes of the May meeting.

Treasury Report: Treasurer Eileen Kicinski read the financial report, which showed a balance of \$8,483.08 as of June 28. By comparison, the end-of-June balance in 2022 was \$8,466.12 – \$16.96 less than it is this year.

Membership Report: Membership Secretary Rick Mawson stated that the membership remained the same as last month, at 53 members.

Tournament Report: Tournament Director Scott McDonough read the results of the June Bass Tournament and commented that we had a nice

turnout and that the catch rate was also quite good. He said that we needed a weighmaster for the July Catfish Tournament, since the original weighmaster John Pedrick would be out of town and could not be there.

Youth Activities: The date for the Youth Derby is July 29 and that date has been reserved at the Pennsylvania Yacht Club. Chick Bay will send an application to Rick Mawson to put on the website. We had interest from at least five members with children for this event.

Environmental Report: John Pedrick reported that the Supreme Court redefined the definition of wetlands in the case of Sackett vs. the EPA. SCOTUS defined wetlands as anywhere that water can continually flow into a outsource such as a stream or river.

Old Business: Bryan Malkiewicz reported on new opportunities for DRFA shirts and embroidered hats from a new supplier – Princeton Threads. Individual shirts could be ordered in available Club colors and styles (short sleeve, long sleeve, T-shirt, sweatshirt, etc.).

But U.S.-made hats would need to be ordered in lots of 12. Items could be selected and ordered online and either brought to a meeting or tournament by Bryan or shipped directly to the Club member. The Club’s commission on all sales would be sent to the Club Treasurer quarterly.

Bob Jack re-issued an appeal for a Show Coordinator to ensure more efficient and economical new-member recruitment and potential fundraising at upcoming winter outdoor shows. Other Club members will provide the support to man the booth during shows, but one individual is needed to

coordinate timely registrations and details on booth setup.

New Business: The family fishing event at Silver Lake Nature Center will be held on Saturday Oct 14 from 10 am until 2 pm and volunteers are needed for this event. Also, SLNC is holding Summer Camp fishing events again – from June 14 until August 25. Rick Mawson will contact Silver Lake to get dates and post them on the website for anyone who wishes to volunteer to help. Both of these volunteer efforts help to defer the cost of meeting room rental for DRFA monthly meetings.

This year’s SJBCA Bass Bowl will be held at Beltzville Reservoir on Sunday Oct 15, which is the day after the Family Fishing Day.

Fishing Reports: Scott McDonough fished out of

Neshaminy Marina the weekend before the meeting and did well on an early morning bite, including topwater poppers, and had five fish in his live well by 7 am. Harry Wirebach reported three small bass at Penn Warner the day of the meeting. Frank Beck and Joe Newton had three bass at Falls Township Lake that day and Rick and Joe had six average size bass scattered around the same lake fish on the Sunday before the meeting.

The 50/50 drawing for \$33.00 was won by Harry Wirebach. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

*Check the Tourney Hotline
267-934-2148 for potential
changes the day before
each DRFA Tournament.*

2023 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 lunker pool with a 100% payout to pool participants for the three heaviest pool fish – 60%, 30%, and 10% – at tournament’s end.

New members may register on the morning of any of these events before check-in 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.

Date	Event	Time	Location
Sat. 8/12.....	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Gloucester City Marina
Sat. 9/9	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sat. 9/30.....	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Bulls Island, NJ Ramp
Sat. 10/28....	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Byram, NJ Ramp

May Guest Speaker Provides Insights On Striped Bass And Smallmouth

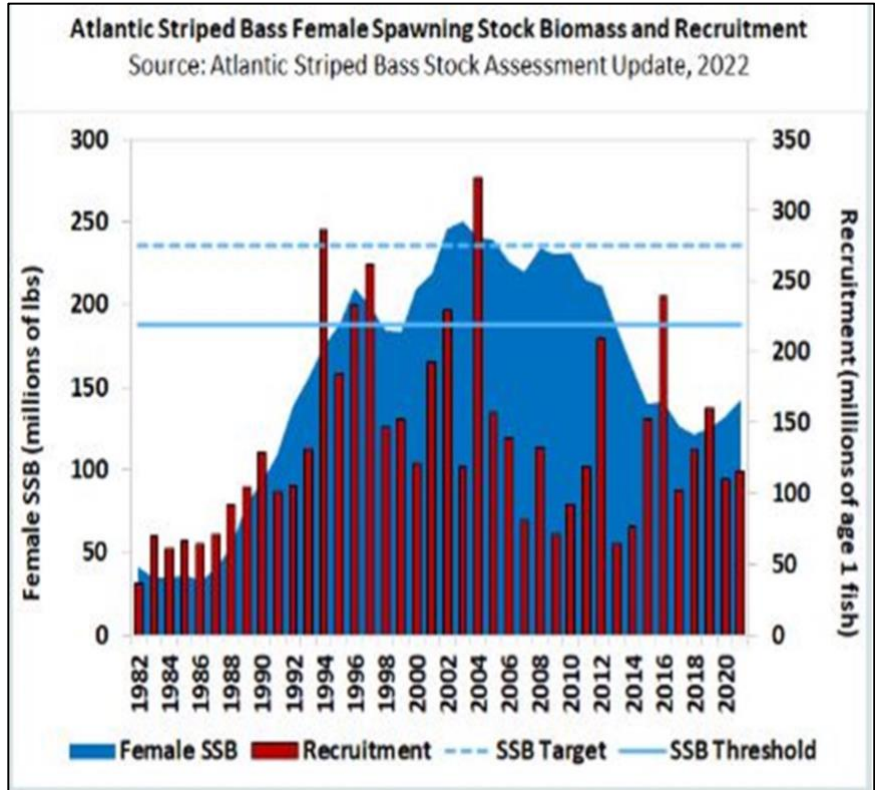
At the May meeting, PA Fisheries Biologist Tyler Grabowski spoke about the futures of striped bass and smallmouth bass fishing in the Delaware River relative to recent research.

On the striper side of the equation, he spoke about recruitment by year class and about the ability of striped bass reproductive cycles to keep pace with mortality rates.

Stripers are classified by year classes based on either annual markings on their scales or on counting the annual growth rings along the edge of its otolith – a small bone in its ear that helps with sensing vibrations in the water and with providing a sense of balance for navigating in the water.

Unfortunately, recent research shows that the current level of recruitment was not enough to keep pace with the impacts of mortality levels under the previous slot limit measurements (28" to less than 35").

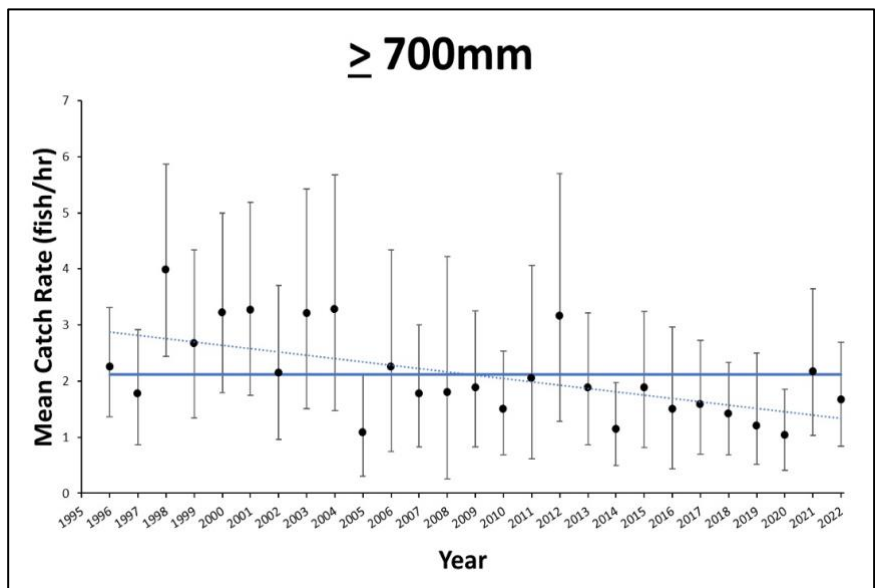
Since 1995, annual sampling has been done at 20 long-term index sites ranging from the Rancocas Creek to the Commodore Barry Bridge. Measured factors that go into proposed new regulations include fish length, sex, age, catch rates, and tagging information. Recent results show that the mean catch rate of striped bass greater than or equal to 28" has been trending downward over the past decade. Only one sampling year (2021) yielded fish above the long term mean in recent years.



These two graphics underscore the story presented to Club members at the May monthly meeting.

The upper chart shows the Female Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) as the dark blue area and the threshold for overfishing as the solid blue line and the recruitment of one-year-old fish in red.

The lower chart represents the mean catch rate of striped bass greater than 28" collected during Pennsylvania's annual spawning stock assessment in the Delaware Estuary. Except for the 2021 season, that rate has shown a steady decline in recent years.



(Graphics courtesy of PA Fisheries Biologist Tyler Grabowski.)

While there have been a few individual good recruitment years in the past two decades, the striped bass female spawning stock biomass has largely been in decline over the past decade and is no longer considered strong enough to replace the biomass lost to mortality.

Heavy fishing pressure and mortality from the 2021 recreational fishing season put such a strain on the resource that it was determined that the biomass would be unable to sustain targeted stock levels. For these reasons, the slot limit has had to be reduced to a narrower slot range – from 28” to less than 31”. The 31” figure is the mean size of fish in the strong 2015 spawning class.

Recent New Jersey young-of-the-year seining for stripers conducted from Trenton down to the Delaware Bay have shown that with few exceptions the numbers for recruitment of one-year-old fish have been drastically low.

On the smallmouth bass side of the equation, Tyler sees brighter hopes on the horizon.

While sedimentation – from resources such as agriculture and development – seems to be a major cause of poor habitat quality that has been hampering catch rates in the lower areas of the non-tidal river, the smallies have seemed to migrate upstream toward more favorable rock and gravel habitats, so adjusting fishing locations northward can have an impact on better fishing success. Fortunately, some larger fish do occasionally get re-distributed downstream as a result of high-water-flow events.

On the recruitment side, low water levels during recent spawning season have helped to

produce good young-of-year classes. And last year’s favorable winter set the stage for a good recruitment rate for one-year-old fish in that year class. Those strong year classes bode well for better catches of legal-size fish in three or four years down the road.

Tyler also briefly referenced the shad fishery in the Delaware River, noting that a 2020 survey showed that sampled females were at levels that were considered unsustainable. Ironically, even though adult population levels during last year’s spawn were considered poor, young-of-the-year surveys showed encouraging results.

Closing comments about new sampling efforts to quantify the degree of flathead catfish influx in the non-tidal, also lead Tyler to comment about blue catfish traveling through the C&D Canal from the upper Chesapeake Bay. They have been caught in the Delaware ranging from the Commodore Barry Bridge up to Trenton. He says that the highly predatory blues pose a potentially greater threat than the flathead catfish.

Annual Raft Trip Targeted For August; Start the Weather Watch Now

With this year’s raft trip on the upper Delaware between Staircase Rapids and Matamoras, PA scheduled for early to mid-August, it’s time to start watching the river gages and weather reports for optimum conditions. The target gage level is typically between 2.8 and 3.2 feet on the Port Jervis gage (*with corresponding flow rates between 1,830 cfs and 2,800 cfs*) for optimum fishing comfort and safety.

This annual event typically involves anywhere from a half dozen to a dozen anglers coordinating carpools and renting rafts from Kittatinny Canoe Outfitters to float the river from Staircase Rapids in New York to the Kittatinny base camp in Matamoras, PA. Either a Pennsylvania fishing license or a temporary New York state license is required.

The actual dates will be determined by weather, water conditions, and group availability. Inquire about details at the meetings, contact Pete A2Z (609-751-7545) for more information, or [visit the DRFA Forum](#) to register your dates of availability. Then start following the DRFA forum to see the progress of weather and water conditions. We will roll the trip date forward as necessitated by those forecasts as we get closer to the anticipated date of the event.

From A to Z: Years In The Making, Another ‘Lesson Learned’ Necessitates A New Approach

Do you have a ‘lesson-learned’ story to help a fellow angler avoid trouble or have better fishing experiences? Contact *The River News* Editor Pete Antoniewicz at petea2z@mac.com to share it for the benefit of all in a future *From A to Z* column.

While most of my ‘lessons learned’ took place earlier in my fishing career, a new one just snuck up on me, proving that no matter how many trips you take or how many hours you fish you can never get complacent.

It involved deviating from my routine. And, as you might guess, that’s not a good idea now that

I've entered the "senior moment" phase of my life.

My routine is to constantly leave the plugs installed in my boat because I store it in a garage. For years, it has served me well, without incident. But after getting caught in several downpours on my drive home from the July catfish tournament, I decided to remove the plugs for the remainder of the trip to let the accumulated water drain out, particularly on the final uphill stretch leading to my storage garage. Unfortunately, by the time a week and a half had passed before my next trip to practice for the upcoming bass tournament, the deviation from my routine was no longer top-of-mind for me.

Fortunately, I was fishing solo that day so I had hand-launched my boat with a rope at the ramp and dragged it up the ramp instead of powering up and driving off to tie up to a dock. But that stroke of luck was completely overlooked when I returned from parking the truck only to see the back deck of my boat taking on water, sending me into full panic mode as I ran back to return the truck to the ramp.

When I returned with a hastily recruited volunteer to drive my truck after I could get the boat onto the trailer, I realized that the added water weight had already anchored the boat so firmly to the ramp that I would never get it on the trailer. Only then did I realize that I could calmly step into the boat and install the plugs over the transom with little more than my lower sleeve getting wet. The 10-minute bilge pump-out gave me time to reflect on how lucky I had been and how to be more even-keeled in terms of both prevention and reaction during future launching events. I also reflected on what I was told many

years ago, "it's not a matter of 'if', it's a matter of 'when'."

So now, even though I know that my DRFA friends will 'politely' remind me at the ramp, I need to add a new step to my checklist routine – disconnect lights, remove tie-downs, open gas-tank vent, attach kill-switch, and CHECK PLUGS!

Gregg Southrey Increases Lead In The 2023 AOTY Competition

Thanks to his second place finish in the July Catfish Tournament, Gregg Southrey stretched his lead in the 2023 Angler of the Year standings.

Only two other anglers have managed to weight in four fish across the five Club Tournaments held to date – Ron Soto (378 points) and Bryan Malkiewicz (373 points).

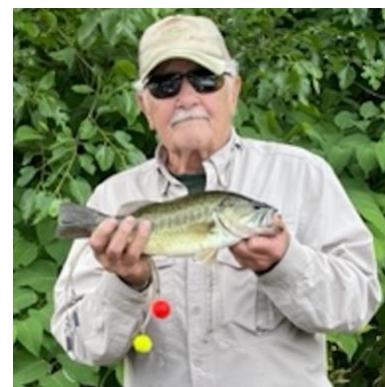
Another six anglers are one fish behind those leaders with point totals ranging from 280 to 290 points. With four tournaments left in the season, all of those anglers plus another five competitors with two fish weighed in still have a reasonable chance to finish in the money – based on their placement in remaining tournaments or on missed opportunities among the anglers above them in the standings.

#	NAME	POINTS	WEIGHT	LENGTH
1	Gregg Southrey	387	21.67	83.50
2	Ron Soto	378	14.00	78.25
3	Bryan Malkiewicz	373	13.92	72.25
4	George Hoffman	290	16.15	65.75
5	Rich Hoffman	288	15.15	66.75
6	Pete Antoniewicz	288	12.88	62.75
7	Frank Beck	286	10.45	56.50
8	Dave Wermuth	281	9.04	55.75
9	Rick Mawson Sr	280	8.20	53.75
10	Dan Wermuth	200	18.00	51.35
11	Charles Bay	194	9.47	39.75
12	Anthony Scholl Sr	194	6.38	38.50
13	Joe Newton	192	6.79	38.50
14	Casey McDonough	192	4.10	34.50
15	Shane Seliga	99	2.79	18.00
16	Bob Kuntz	98	4.49	21.25
17	Scott McDonough	97	3.12	20.50
18	Patrick Baranowski	96	1.84	15.00
19	Devon Seliga	95	1.64	14.00
20	Anthony Scholl Jr	94	1.58	14.25
21	Matt Weinhardt	90	0.77	13.00

June Bass Tournament Results

The June Bass Tournament was competitive. The gap among the top five fish was only 0.20 lbs. and the size between the heaviest and the lightest fish was just 0.80 lbs. and 13” to 15.5”. In all, 11 of the 18 registered anglers brought a legal fish to the scales. Frank Beck took the top prize with a 1.92-lb., 15.00” fish. Joe Newton took second place at 1.87 lbs., 15.50”. And Anthony Scholl Sr. was in third place at 1.77 lbs. and 14.75”.

#	NAME	WEIGHT	LENGTH	POINTS
1	Frank Beck	1.92	15.00	100
2	Joe Newton	1.87	15.50	99
3	Anthony Scholl Sr	1.77	14.75	98
4	Rick Mawson Sr	1.75	15.00	97
5	Rich Hoffman	1.72	15.50	96
6	George Hoffman	1.69	15.00	95
7	Anthony Scholl Jr	1.58	14.25	94
8	Ron Soto	1.49	14.00	93
9	Dave Wermuth	1.32	13.75	92
10	Gregg Southrey	1.18	13.00	91
11	Bryan Malkiewicz	1.12	13.00	90



July Catfish Tournament Results

The July event saw 11 of 14 registered anglers bring a fish to the scales. Fishing partners Chick Bay and Gregg Southrey easily outpaced the rest of the field with fish that weighed 1.5 to 2 lbs. more than the next closest entry.

Chick's winning entry went 7.93 lbs. and 25.50" while Gregg's fish was close behind at 7.50 lbs. and 26". Third place went to Ron Soto at 5.94 lbs. and 24.25.

#	NAME	WEIGHT	LENGTH	POINTS
1	Charles Bay	7.93	25.50	100
2	Gregg Southrey	7.50	26.00	99
3	Ron Soto	5.94	24.25	98
4	George Hoffman	4.80	24.00	97
5	Anthony Scholl Sr	4.61	23.75	96
6	Rich Hoffman	4.49	24.00	95
7	Bryan Malkiewicz	4.25	21.50	94
8	Pete Antoniewicz	4.02	22.00	93
9	Frank Beck	3.35	19.50	92
10	Rick Mawson Sr	1.88	16.75	91
11	Matt Weinhardt	0.77	13.00	90





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.

Ed Scannapieco And Sons Plumbing, Inc. • Complete plumbing services • Feasterville, PA, • espinc2428@gmail.com • 215-333-3006

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Tow Boat US • 32 Kirkwood Circle, Brigantine, NJ 08203 • Delaware River Service Package Available • 609-517-2822

Rusty Balls Tackle & Guide Service • 2440 W Columbia St, Allentown, PA 18104 • [@rustyballsguideservice](https://www.instagram.com/rustyballsguideservice) • 484-239-4723

Pennsylvania Yacht Club • 2189 State Road, Bensalem, PA 19020, 215-245-9883

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 both provide relevant information and additional fishing experiences for DRFA members.

KEY CONTACTS: *Tournament Hotline:* 267-934-2148 • *Email Address:* DRFA_TheRiverNews@hotmail.com
• *President:* Bob Jack, 609-760-0281 • *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

Access additional timely info at www.drfishermen.com