

The River News

The Official Newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association

Vol. 35, No. 1

January - February 2023

Renew Your Dues For 2023 And Join Our Final Push For Raffle Ticket Sales

Before we get into the full swing of our 2023 tournament season, there are still a few offseason details to wrap up this winter.

First, if you have not already done so, please renew your membership dues to ensure continued receipt of every bi-monthly newsletter plus full access to the Member Services section of the DRFA website.

Second, remember that this year's drawing for the tackle-bag fund raiser will take place at 4 pm on Sunday, February 19 at the Expo Center at Oaks. ***If you cannot return your raffle ticket stubs and money at the January 25 meeting, please drop them off early during that show event or make sure you get them to a member who can.*** We already had a good headstart to our first fundraising effort in three years at the Surf Angler's Fisherman's Flea Market in Warminster. Let's do our best to boost the treasury for funding our guest speakers and fishing activities.

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President's Message

It's a new year. Time for a new calendar and a new outlook on the upcoming fishing season. Time for the Boat and Outdoor Shows. This is the time of year when we can catch a warm day or two, so keep an eye on the weather. If you're out on the water, be safe.

I'd like to give a big thanks to everyone that helped at the Surf Angler flea market. Also, don't forget about the upcoming Outdoor Show at Oaks. We will need volunteers for our table. Every little bit helps.

Spring is right around the corner so let's start preparing our boats and gearing up for a great season.

Bob Jack

Learn Rod Care/Repair From January Meeting Guest Speaker

The offseason is always a good time to take stock of our fishing tackle in preparation for the upcoming season. Join us on January 25 at the Silver Lake Nature Center to learn about rod care, maintenance, and building from an experienced rod builder. Our guest speaker for that evening will be Tim Lang who generously donated two spinning rods for our youth fishing event in 2022.

Outdoor Show Help Still Needed!

January's meeting will be used to finalize scheduling of volunteers for booth setup, support, and breakdown during the [Philadelphia Fishing Show](#) to be held at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, PA from February 17th through the 19th. Hours are from noon until 7 pm

Important Dates

Wednesday, January 25, 7 pm. Monthly Meeting: Silver Lake Nature Center. Guest speaker Tim Lang will discuss rod building, maintenance, and repair.

Saturday, February 12: [Palmyra NJ Fire Department](#) Fisherman's Flea Market.

Friday-Sunday, February 17-19: [Booth #326](#) at the Philadelphia Outdoor Show at the Oaks Expo Center.

Wednesday, February 22, 7 pm. Monthly Meeting: Silver Lake Nature Center. PFBC Officer Mike Blair will be the guest speaker.

Saturday, March 25, 7 am. Bass Tournament: The 2023 AOTY Competition starts at Curtin's Marina in Burlington, NJ.

on Friday, 10 am until 6 pm on Saturday, and 10 am until 5 pm on Sunday. The drawing for our Tackle Bag Raffle will be held at 4 pm on the last day of the show. We can still use a few more hard-bodied lures or bass tackle items to make the tackle bag as attractive as possible for the Oaks Show. If you have not already done so, consider donating a new item of your favorite bass tackle toward the bag. Bring it to the January meeting, get it to Pete Marcolina before the Oaks Show, or drop it off at our booth (#326) as close to the beginning of the show as practical.

Members who have not already purchased tickets or received tickets for sale are encouraged to pick up raffle tickets in person at the January meeting to save on postage costs. Members who can't do that can still request that tickets be mailed to them.



Bob Jack and Pete Marcolina display the tackle bag of lures and fishing gear being raffled off at the end of the Philadelphia Fishing Show on February 19.

Minutes Of The November Meeting

President Bob Jack opened the meeting at 7:04 pm with 15 members in attendance. The minutes from the October meeting were read and approved.

Treasury Report: Eileen Kicinski reported a balance of \$8,016.05 as of October 30. By comparison, the end-of-October balance in 2021 was \$8,931.21, a difference of \$915.16.

Membership: The Club roster remained at 53 members. Members were notified that membership applications for 2023 are already available and were reminded to renew their dues by the end of January in order to maintain continuity of website and newsletter access.

Tournaments: Scott McDonough introduced his proposed schedule for the 2023 tournament season. *(The seasonal schedule is available for review on page 3 of every newsletter.)*

New Business: Pete Antoniewicz raised the topic of club members sharing their “lessons learned” as part of a regular feature in the newsletter. Members are encouraged to contact him with their insights learned from years of fishing experience so we can spread them out over the remaining issues of this year’s newsletters.

Bob Jack reported that the South Jersey Bass Club Association might be moving its traditional flea market date or location. Stay tuned for updated information.

Environmental: John Pedrick reported no major news from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council. Studies on herring and menhaden are still in the process, with no new progress to report.

Fishing Reports: Rick Mawson reported a successful trip to the Susquehanna and Juniata Rivers to fish with Chris Gorsuch a few weeks before the meeting. He and his grandson landed 27 nice smallmouth bass despite high and muddy water conditions.

Frank Beck reported on a trip up to the Reigelsville area of the river with Pete Antoniewicz the day before the meeting where they caught eight smallies up to 18.5” and one brown trout also at 18.5”. Swimbaits accounted for eight of the fish taken in slower eddies, while one was taken on a suspending jerkbait along the inside of a current edge formed by a shoreline pushout.

Scott and Casey McDonough were out the prior weekend catching one pickerel, some yellow perch, a big crappie, and a small bass in Tullytown Cove. But Scott also reported on some phenomenal tournament entries when the river temps were still in the low 60s before they dropped quickly into the low 40s. Winning entries of 20-lb. and 18-lb. bag limits (5 fish) were reported in the Gloucester City area. Rick Mawson confirmed some of that hot fishing activity in the same time-period as he and Joe Newton enjoyed 20-fish days in Tullytown Cove and Dredge Harbor.

Scott also reported that marina operators at the Neshaminy Marina were locking the ramp access gate from the main State Park parking lot as of the end of October. The Neshaminy State Park office claimed that the ramp should be open from 7 am until 5 pm.

The winner of \$35 in the 50/50 drawing was Eileen Kicinski. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Recap Of The December Meeting

An abbreviated December meeting led by President Bob Jack took place during the Holiday Party at Georgine’s Restaurant. 30 members and guests were in attendance.

The primary activity of the meeting was to distribute the Angler of the Year awards for the top three finishers in the 2022 competition. Vice President/ Tournament Coordinator, Scott McDonough, announced the third place and second-place finishers.

Rich Hoffman tied with his brother George at 585 points for their top six tournament finishes. But Rich’s total weight for the year (36.74 lbs.) earned him the tiebreaker to claim the third-place prize vs. George (27.88 lbs.). Rich will receive his \$75 check and a small plaque at an upcoming meeting or tournament.

Second-place finisher Casey McDonough, who at 586 points finished just one point ahead of Rich, was awarded the \$100 runner-up prize and a small plaque.

President Bob Jack presented the winner’s large plaque to Scott McDonough who ran away from the field with 596 points by taking first or second place in each of the six tournaments where he weighed in a legal fish.



2022 Angler of the Year Scott McDonough (left) received his \$150 check and personal plaque from President Bob Jack at the December 14 DRFA Holiday Party.

Scott noted that he skunked in the shad tournament and in one of the catfish tournaments but made it over the hump by landing a 7.77-lb. channel cat in the August catfish tournament where both he and Casey took until late in the day to land a single catfish. (Casey actually took first place that day with a 10.07-lb. catfish.) Scott said it was their last-minute perseverance that made the difference that enabled both of them to capture the top two prizes in the AOTY competition instead of finishing completely out of the money.

Inside Tips From The 2022 DRFA Angler Of The Year

If you have ever attended a DRFA meeting, or even a Club tournament weigh-in, you have probably listened to Scott McDonough share some of his experiences on fishing in general or specifically on the Delaware River. He is one of the most approachable and informative anglers in the Club. On the occasion of Scott’s second Angler of the Year award, *The River News* sat with him to discuss the most recent fishing season.

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 lunger 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 an event before check-in time (except for the Shad Tournament). 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 water or weather conditions.

Date	Event	Time	Location
Sat. 3/25	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Curtin’s Marina, Burlington
Sat. 4/15	Shad	2 pm weigh-in	Yardley Park & Ride Lot
Sat. 5/13	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
Sat. 6/17	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sat. 7/15	Catfish	6 am - 12pm	Neshaminy Marina
Sat. 8/12	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
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

Scott fished in eight of the nine DRFA Club Tournaments for 2022 but only weighed in fish at six of those tournaments after getting skunked in the shad tournament and the July catfish tournament. He cites the details of that experience as a strong point of consideration for aspiring AOTY competitors.

While Scott's usual fishing partner – his son Casey – is more interested in bass fishing than catfishing, it was Scott's persistence in the last catfish tournament of the year that set the stage for Scott to come on strong at the end of the season to vault into first place after the last tournament of the year.

As Scott tells it, they started out with having a lot of small perch pecking away at their chicken liver and garlic-soaked chicken chunk baits at the first half dozen spots they tried. By 10:30 am, Casey was ready to go bass fishing, but Scott convinced him to try one more spot in the last hour and a half of the tournament. Scott picked a location with a bait-holding structure he had discovered from bass fishing. Long story short, Scott soon landed a 7.77-lb. catfish and Casey followed a brief time later with a 10.07-lb. catfish that enabled the two of them to run away with first and second place in that day's event.

"We were literally 5 to 10 minutes away from throwing in the towel and going bass fishing," Scott recalls. "But hanging in for those extra few minutes was what really got me the win for the Angler of the Year."

Scott notes how important it is to score in the catfish tournaments because the typically greater weight and length of a catfish will yield a better tiebreaker between

two anglers tied in the point standings. He says he will definitely put greater focus on catfishing this year. Part of his strategy is to include current-breaking obstructions and bait-holding structures as well as changes in depth as part of his catfish spot selection.

Scott also related his typical approach to bass tournament fishing, which relies not only on scouting fish-holding structures in a given area, but also on how quickly he cycles through a number of those spots within a short period of time – at a maximum of 15 to 20 minutes per spot. He applies the same strategy in both the tidal river as well as the non-tidal river. Of course, in the tidal river he also sets his route to account for being in those target locations at the right phase of a falling tide, moving upstream spot by spot to get repeated chances at the same level of bottoming-out tide over miles of water.

Scott's time on the water for practice fishing and other tournament fish has taught him a wide variety of fish-holding structures. His favorite targets in the non-tidal river include rock or wood structures and eddy lines. In the tidal river, he also focuses on eel grass – particularly in areas where there is appreciably deeper water adjacent to the eel grass (*i.e., water that remains six to nine feet deep at low tide*). At low tide he'll fish the main-river side of the eel-grass bed while at high tide he'll fish above the eel grass or on the shoreline side of the eel grass with a popper or spinnerbait. He also explores hard-structure spots and walls at the higher tides while the weed beds are still submerged.

When asked about his strategy in a one-fish tournament vs. a five-

fish tournament, Scott says they are both similar – get as many casts as possible in as many locations as possible to catch as many fish as you can, regardless of size. His theory is that the more fish you catch the better your chances of catching a larger fish. He says he'll typically go through 7 to 10 fish to bring his largest one to the scale.

Scott's preferred lures vary by season. For shad, he dead sticks a flutter spoon weighted with enough split shot to get it down to just above the level that causes it to snag on the bottom.

For catfish, he uses fresh chicken livers (*preferably Perdue*) as well as cut chicken steeped in garlic for a few days before the tournament. He typically rigs his catfish baits with a sliding fish-finder rig that allows the fish to pull the line through the weighted rig easily enough to activate the clicker on his free-spooled baitcasting reel.

For bass fishing, he focuses on crankbaits or the Big TRD (4") Ned Rig plastics fished on a BulletZ jig in the Springtime. Yoga pants and green pumpkin are his primary colors. During the warmer months he trends toward a popper and spinnerbait fished above submerged weedbeds at higher tides or he probes the grass edges and pockets with his Ned Rig worm at lower tides. He also targets walls and other hard structures at higher tides. In the Fall, he reverts to his crankbait and Ned Rig pattern. But Scott admits that he will also expand his offerings based on what is working for his fishing partner.

Scott appreciates learning from DRFA guest speakers but says he particularly benefits from fishing with new people to see what they do under certain conditions.

Fishing Season Isn't Over Quite Yet!

The calendar might have turned over but the winter doldrums have not yet terminated the fishing season as some hearty anglers have continued to hit the waters before the first winter ice of 2023 sets in with a vengeance.

On January 5, Joe Newton landed a respectable muskie while fishing out of the Byram Ramp with Frank Beck. Frank later added an 18" smallmouth to their take for the day. Pete Antoniewicz and Bryan Malkiewicz also got lucky by landing a 37" muskie and a 16" smallie respectively while fishing the same day in the same areas.

Water temperatures were in the 42-degree range that day, after a 10-degree rise over a 9-day period. The flow rate was 22,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) with a slight stain and visibility of about two feet.

Rick Mawson also reported some hot mid-January yellow-perch fishing with Joe Newton in Tullytown Cove.



Joe Newton landed this healthy 38" muskie mid-morning on a Ned Rig fished during an early-January trip with other DRFA members.



Joe's fishing partner that day, Frank Beck, countered with this 18" smallmouth bass taken with a pepper-shrimp tube tossed near structure.



Pete Antoniewicz, fishing just south of Frank and Joe, added this 37" muskie after it took a green-pumpkin junebug-tail tube in a backwater eddy.



Spurred on by photos texted to him earlier in the day, Bryan Malkiewicz cut his workday short and joined Pete on his boat just in time to land this chunky 16" smallie on a swimbait he tossed into a shoreline pocket.

Putting The 'Good Old Days' In The Rearview Mirror

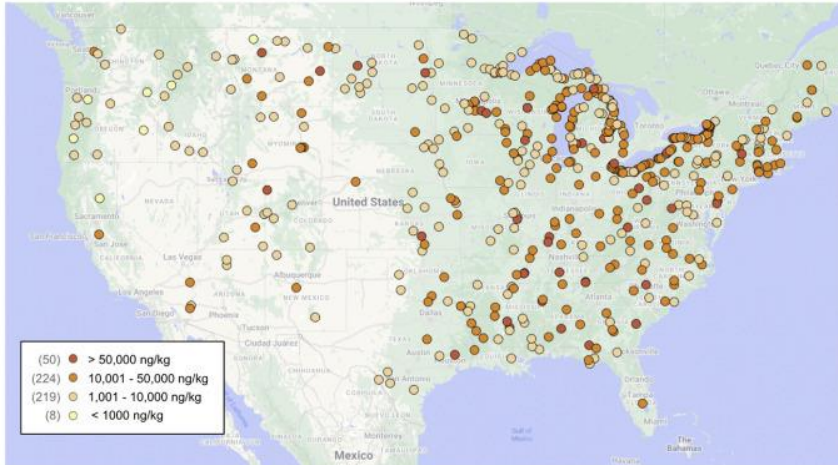
While we often get nostalgic for the way things used to be, the Delaware River is one area where the present is much better than the past.

The year 2022 was the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, a milestone in the environmental protection movement. This WHYY feature article – [How The Clean Water Act Saved The Delaware River](#) – shows the positive impact that legislation had on our beloved waterway, leading to the fishing experiences we can now enjoy.

That article is one in a series of informative WHYY articles on the theme of [reviving the river](#). Several DRFA members were instrumental in the development of an early article in that series – [The death of the Delaware River](#).

A Scary New Take On Fish Consumption Advisories

If you choose to harvest an occasional fish for the frying pan, you might want to think twice. Club member John Pedrick recently forwarded an [article link](#) relating to a study that suggests U.S. freshwater fish are highly contaminated with PFAS 'forever chemicals.' That article was published in *The Hill*, a popular media source for government and political news. This unsettling news goes a long way beyond localized consumption warnings related to site-specific industrial pollution sources such as lead or mercury. (Additional specifics are available from this [detailed writeup of the study](#).)



This map of surveyed locations shows high concentrations of PFAS contamination in fish fillet samples from the Eastern and Midwest areas of the United States.

Map Credit: Map of contamination levels taken from research report by Nadia Barbo, Tasha Stoiber, Olga V. Naidenko, David Q. Andrews, [“Locally caught freshwater fish across the United States are likely a significant source of exposure to PFOS and other perfluorinated compounds”](#), as published in *Environmental Research*, Volume 220, 2023, 115165, ISSN 0013-9351

The most shocking revelation is that in many areas, just one serving of freshwater fish per year would be the equivalent of drinking water heavily polluted with the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) forever chemicals – 2,400 times the recommended Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) drinking water health advisory.

The complete study is available from the Environmental Research website. Sampling for the study included more than 500 fish fillets collected across all 48 continental states – including 150 sampling sites in the five Great Lakes area (*approximately 30 sites per lake*). The most frequently studied species included channel catfish, largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, and yellow perch.

In Memoriam, Phil Kamieniecki

Longtime DRFA member, Phil “Philsey” Kamieniecki passed away on January 14 in Philadelphia. He was an outspoken DRFA member who often brought environmental topics to the attention of other club members at our meetings.

A self-professed jokester, Phil was often the focal point of our Annual Raft Trip to Matamoras, PA – for better or worse. But he didn’t care, he enjoyed the heck out of those trips. Future trips won’t be quite the same without him.

From A to Z:

Try A Little Give And Take For Better 2023 Fishing Success; Swap Your Lessons Learned With Others

No matter how long you have been fishing, every so often you come across new insights from your own experience or shared from another angler. That gave me an idea for an information-sharing opportunity for future newsletter content. I call it “Lessons Learned” and I am hoping that we can make it a regular feature in our monthly newsletters.

We discussed this potential topic at the November meeting and Scott McDonough offered the example of his experiences with ultra-high tides during launching and retrieval in the tidal section of the river. Just because water levels on the upstream non-tidal river are low does not mean that you can’t be surprised by a flooded ramp or parking lot at high tide during an extreme moon phase. I offered my experience of how I learned to check the upstream gages instead of just the downstream gages to calculate safe running pathways during low-water periods.

So, what’s your story? Share your lessons learned from years of fishing (*even anonymously if you prefer not to be associated with a particularly embarrassing story*). Contact me at petea2z@mac.com or 609-751-7545 – or at a meeting or tournament – to contribute your own insights in exchange for the insights of others. With any luck, we’ll be able to keep this feature going as a regular part of our newsletter coverage all throughout the year.



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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Rusty Balls Tackle & Guide Service • 2440 W Columbia St, Allentown, PA 18104 • @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.