



Established 1994

“A DAWNING”

THE EARLY HISTORY OF OUR FLY FISHING CLUB

This informational brochure is primarily for new members but is available to any member who would like to learn more of how Southern Oregon Fly Fishers came into being

The Sunrise Flight



FOUNDING MEMBERS

**John Edwards Bob Roberts Jon Ahlroth
Dan Benson Jack Kost**

INAUGURAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**John Edwards Steve Bonner Bob Roberts
Loren Black John White Rusty Randall
Patty Bonner Tim Sakraida David Bremer**

INAUGURAL OFFICERS

**John Edwards - President Loren Black - Vice
President David Bremer - Secretary Patty Bonner
Treasurer**

PAST PRESIDENTS

1994

John Edwards

2003-2004

Jim Tehan

1995-1996

Bob Roberts

2005-2006

Jay Prouty

1997-1998-1999-2001

Tony Brauner

2007-2008

Teresa Kasza

2000

Bob Graham

2009-10 20

Dave Grosjacques

2002

Carey Williams



1995 Oregon Council Club of the Year Award
1997 Oregon Council Club of The Year Award
2002 McKenzie Cup Award depicting the National
Club of The Year by the International Federation
of Fly Fishers

Reprinted from the Oregon Council of the
Federation of Fly Fishers newsletter,
"The Oregon Fly Fisher", Summer of 1996

Probably the most accurate summation for the success of the Southern Oregon Fly Fishers would be to say, "It was a club just waiting to happen". It was born out of a desire of the five founding members to have a club based in Grants Pass on the banks of the world famous Rogue River.

Beginning in August of 1993 inquiries were presented through newspaper and radio ads for public interest. Instantly it was very clear that enough people were willing to carry the idea forward. An informational meeting was scheduled and a questionnaire was distributed to about 30 attendees. From the results of the survey the basic foundation for the club began to take shape. The leaders of the group started to materialize and the paper chase began.

During the organizational process we decided to hold clinics, classes and informational meetings during the next few months to keep interest alive until the first general meeting. A newsletter was circulated to inform prospective members of upcoming events and the progress made. It was a wise decision as our numbers began to increase week by week.

The founding board of directors were elected in November followed in December by the election of officers. They were faced with the challenge of molding and shaping the club into a viable organized fly fishing club. We were encouraged with the response, yet, apprehensive about the outlook knowing the first meeting would reveal the answer.

Membership in the club was offered to anyone desiring to participate and the deadline for becoming a charter member set for the first general meeting. Dues began to come in almost daily and by December 16th a total of 65 had joined. Memberships kept pouring in each week and on the day of the meeting our numbers totaled an unbelievable 125, far exceeding our wildest expectations.

On the night of January 20, 1994 the Southern Oregon Fly Fishers held its inaugural meeting. Some 200 were in attendance including members, guests and visitors. A veritable packed house. At the meeting another 50 people paid their dues and we were then 175 strong. None would have believed this number attainable by years end and certainly not, 179 charter members. In just 5 short months SOFF had become a viable fly fishing organization.

Over the next several months many hours were expended in determining guidelines which would solidify our club and satisfy the desires of the members. Information derived from surveys indicated that interest prevailed in the form of outings, classes and meetings free of political leanings. Quality guest speakers rated high on the interest list and still do. We continued with club activities on schedule and participation remained at a high level. Fortunately we were able to obtain guest speakers without cost throughout the year which allowed budgeting most of the membership revenues for club necessities.

By late summer the club treasury began to dwindle resulting in a self imposed frugal attitude on further spending until after the results of our first fund raising effort in the fall. Preparation for the fund raising auction became our main interest for the next two months and donations were sought on a broad scale.

We set a budget for what we felt was needed from the auction at \$4,000. This amount would provide funding to purchase club equipment for teaching classes and seminars and supplies to carry on the club business needs.

Donations began to trickle in, and as the auction kept getting closer, a feeling of trepidation began entering our thoughts. During the next two weeks items were arriving almost daily, and we became somewhat more hopeful of the outcome. Our fears proved unfounded on the big night as our members were very generous and opened their purse strings and wallets to the tune of \$13,000 at the final tally. Through the generosity of our members, businesses, manufacturers, supply houses and individual donations our club became financially secure for the coming year at the very least.

SOFF was established to promote the skills of fly fishing and to

encourage conservation of our natural resources through the inherent ethic and stewardship that fly fishing evokes. : Our goals are:

- To provide public education in the arts of fly casting , fly tying and fly fishing tactics.
- To assist our governmental agencies with fishery related research and habitat enhancement projects.
- To promote the sport of fly fishing as a means of conservation of our natural resources by fostering a greater appreciation of our natural environment.

With finances secure we approached the prospect of fulfilling most of those goals during 1995 in an elated state of mind. It was almost like a kid in a candy store with a pocket full of money. But cool heads reigned and we spent wisely in order to attain the goals set forth in our by-laws. During 1995, thanks to our successful auction, we were able to put in motion and achieve the projects outlined in our by-laws.

Some of our achievements during the year included: the creation of an official club logo, a membership application brochure, a yearly calendar of events for members and potential members with outings and guest speakers noted. We purchased 12 rods, reels and lines for teaching classes. We also established perpetual plaques for contributing members and recipients of the Member of the Year Award. A regularly scheduled monthly workshop was established and an annual 10 week beginners fly tying class. A yearly 2 day fly fishing class through the City Recreation Department that was open to the public. Within a couple of years the 10 week fly tying class was held through the City Recreation Department, also open to the public. The club taught a 3 week fly tying and casting class at Lincoln/Savage Middle School. We established an annual Women's casting class also.

SOFF set up two \$1,000 educational grants for fisheries students at Oregon State University. \$500 was donated to the Sea-Run Cutthroat Trout Symposium held at Reedsport, Oregon. Donated \$250 to Rural Outdoor Education program which teaches stewardship of our natural environment to students from area schools. In addition, we donated \$70 to maintain a port-a-potty at Medco ponds, a popular warm water fishing spot without permanent restroom facilities. We built a 10' by 80' portable casting pond which we used at the Family Fishing Day sponsored by the Grants Pass shopping center. We tutored both young and old as they tried their hand at casting a fly rod for the first time.

Throughout the year membership participation in all club events

remained at a high level. Public response to our club efforts materialized into yet another tremendous growth rate swelling our ranks to 304 members by years end. Once again the fund raising auction met with great success, even more so than the first one, with about \$16,000 being the final income to the treasury. This was almost unreal since the event is not open to the public, only the members and their guests are allowed to participate.

SOFF has been blessed, from its inception, in having a wonderful collection of leaders who have dedicated many hours of time and effort to assure the success we now enjoy. We are fortunate that within our membership are some very talented people including excellent fly tiers, fly casters, knowledgeable fly fishermen, professional guides and others who were always ready to lend a hand where needed. Yet, it is plainly visible that without the success of our fund raising we would only be a shadow compared to the bright light enveloping us today. The generosity and support from the members has been the deciding factor.

What lies in the future for SOFF? During the first six months of 1996 we have continued our programs in public education with an increase in the number of students, continued funding the educational grants at Oregon State University and increased donations to other natural resource awareness programs. We set the wheels in motion to begin a youth program within the club, established a conservation/habitat committee with 26 volunteers and affiliated with the *ODF&W' STEP* volunteer program. We embraced the *Oregon Adopt-A-River Organization*, the *Oregon Trout Riverkeeper Program* and joined with the *Oregon Rivers Museum*.

We were unsuccessful in creating a conservation/habitat program during the first two years so we are very pleased with the progress being made this year. Thus far our involvement has included tree plantings with the *Middle Rogue Watershed Health* group, *ODF&W's* stream shocking surveys, tree planting and a warm water enhancement project at *Applegate Lake*. We carried out our first *Adopt-A-River* cleanup along the Applegate river. With 100 man hours of labor we removed approximately 10 cubic yards of garbage, debris and junk from an area 100 yards wide and 1/3 of a mile in length.

Recently the club purchased video equipment to be used as a teaching tool in our classes and at the meetings to allow more people view the person tying demonstration flies onstage at our meetings. Other proposals being considered are: the purchase of a club computer capable of recording all club projects and producing the newsletter on a more timely basis; Purchase fly tying vices and establish an award program to honor deserving members. Hopefully at some point in the year we will hold a Fly Fishing Fair and open it to the public to encourage people to become aware of the plight of our fisheries and the inherent ethic and stewardship fly fishing evokes.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

General Meeting

Third Thursday of each month

Board of Directors Meeting

First Thursday of each Month

Club's Ten Week Fly Tying Class

Begins in January

Club Outings

Scheduled monthly, weather permitting

Annual Fly Tying Meeting

Third Thursday of April

Annual Club Picnic

Sunday following the club meeting in September

Annual Fund Raising Auction

Habitat/Conservation

Riparian tree planting, stream shocking surveys, tributaries Salmon toss and others as projects may arise

Some Activities May include Seminars On:

Fly casting, knot tying, taking care of equipment, how to read water, the importance of what rise forms can mean. These may take place at anytime during the year

This SOFF club history information was last published in the club news letter in February, March, and April of 2006. Originally compiled and written for the Oregon Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers by:

Bob Roberts



Annual Picnic



Chef's - Grilling Tri Tips



Wayne Liska Holding Court at the Auction



Dave G. / ODFW's Coho Project



Annual Fly Tying Class



Introduction To Fly Casting Class



Habitat Riparian Tree Planting



Fish On! - Lava Lakes Outing