

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

Feb 2026 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

“Potomac Riverkeeper” Guest Speaker – Brent Walls

Feb 18th, 2026

We are pleased to welcome Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls as our February speaker. Shortly after joining Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc. (PRK) in 2009, Brent became Upper Potomac Riverkeeper and is responsible for defending the public trust of the rivers and streams in the Upper Potomac by advocating for clean water and ensuring the virtues of the Clean Water Act are enforced.

Brent has been an advocate for clean water for well over a decade. With an Environmental Science background in freshwater ecology, Brent provided a valuable scientific perspective to PRK. His experience in water quality sampling has ensured defensible enforcement actions and has been a unique advising asset with local watershed groups. Brent’s love of maps and proficiency with Geographical Information Systems inspired the development of Water Trail maps in the Upper Potomac and has provided PRK with valuable interactive web maps and the creation of a mobile application to report water pollution.



– *Scott Cernich*

Feb 18th Chapter Meeting

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department
7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday of the month except June, July, August and December

[Chapter Meeting Zoom Link](#)

Visit our website: PPTU.org

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Patuxent: Jay Sheppard

Mid Atlantic Council Delegates:

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Bob Bokulic
Tom Bronson
Bob Dietz
Randy Dwyer: Council Chair
Bob O'Donnell
Craig Vanderkolk
Nick Weber

Contact Us:

mail@pptu.org

Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



The New Year has brought cold snowy conditions in Maryland making it difficult to fish and the cancellation of the Big Hunting Creek. However, I can try to warm you up by giving you a report of fishing for Tarpon in Campeche Mexico. Temps were 70° nighttime and 84°- 90° in the daytime. Tarpon Town owner Raul Castaneda was our host in his family home in downtown Campeche. We had breakfast there in the morning and sampled Mayan cuisine in local restaurants in the evening. The fishing was OK. A cold front had gone through just before we arrived and that cooled the water, shifted winds and made for slow fishing. I'm searching for the person who is bad luck for our trips, last year it was a hurricane bearing down on us. Unfortunately, it might be me since I pick the dates. We all saw many cruising tarpon and laid up tarpon in singles, double and groups of 10-12. We all had numerous shots and each caught 5-7 fish. Overall great place to go, but probably a little later in the year would be better.

If the weather clears, we have a great fishing outing to the Yellow Breeches February 21, 2026. If you've never fished it, you should take this opportunity to join the group. It's a hybrid stream which originates as a freestone along its upper levels, then it is influenced by springs in the valley and at Boiling Springs. It frequently stocked and has quite a few access points. Also we continue to have Social Outings, the next one is fly tying. This is the first Tuesday of most months (February 3) at the Green Turtle in Brookville. It's a great time to learn about flies and fly fishing, even if you don't tie flies. Finally, check out PPTU Facebook page. Chris Newkumet has put together some really great original content reels with interviews of two of our own Fly Fishing Masters. They're professional and insightful.

With the passing of Charlie Gelso on October 7, 2025, we lost an educator, conservationist, writer and tireless advocate for Maryland anglers. By occupation, Charlie was a teacher and researcher as a Professor in Psychology at the University of Maryland. With this background Charlie applied his talents to the world of fishing. He researched all the major trout streams, both in regards to the fishing, but also the hatches and habitat of these fisheries.

This culminated with publication of his book (with co-author Larry Coburn) “Guide to Maryland Trout Fishing” Originally published in 2000 (going on to a second and third edition -2014) it has become the Bible for trout fishing knowledge and advice for anglers throughout the state of Maryland and beyond.

Charlie was a long-term member of Potomac Patuxent Trout Unlimited Chapter-PPTU. He and Larry cherished the Middle Patuxent working to open it up to fly fishing in 1999. He was the chairman of the Middle Patuxent Watershed committee at PPTU in early 2000. The President of PPTU, Jim Keil wrote the May 2001 Conservationist that “in a few short years Charlie and Larry have transformed the Middle Patuxent into a terrific fishery whose best days are yet to come”. In 2024, Charlie was awarded the “Order of the Patuxent Special” by PPTU for his lifelong achievements on behalf of trout and trout fisherman.

In 2020 during the Covid outbreak, I fished the Middle Patuxent almost daily. It was an escape from the stresses and uncertainty of the times. I relied on Charlie’s book for learning about this fishery. Charlie was the consummate researcher, teacher and conservationist. He will be dearly missed by everyone who crossed path with him and his works.

Craig VanderKolk
President, PPTU



PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

PPTU provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. all on nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC)** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact us by e-mail: mentor@pptu.org

Upcoming Events and Outings - PPTU

February 18th – Chapter Meeting

February 21st – Outing to Yellow Breeches
Boiling Springs, PA

March 14th, 15th – The Fly Fishing Show
Lancaster, PA

March 21st – Maryland Fly Fishing Show
Towson, MD

Winter Fly Fishing - Bob O'Donnell

Winter fly fishing doesn't have to be slow or miserable— this winter key in on the main items to catching more trout in winter:

When to Fish

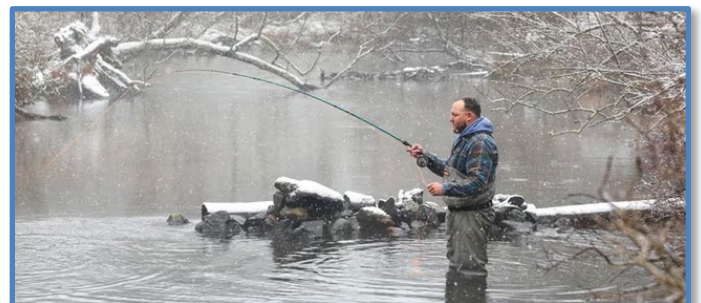
No need to wake up early. Fish between 10 AM and 3 PM when water temperatures rise slightly. Target days with warming trends after a cold snap to find more active feeding fish. This slight warming increases insect activity, especially midges and occasional winter Blue Winged Olives. Fish when trout are most likely to move and eat.

Finding Fish

Don't fish the same fast water you've been fishing in the Spring/Summer. In winter fish will hold in deeper, slower water to conserve energy. Focus on fishing deeper pools, and slow runs near structure. You'll also have better luck fishing Spring Creeks and Tailwaters. These offer stable, warmer-than-average temperatures year-round, making them prime winter spots.

Fly Choice

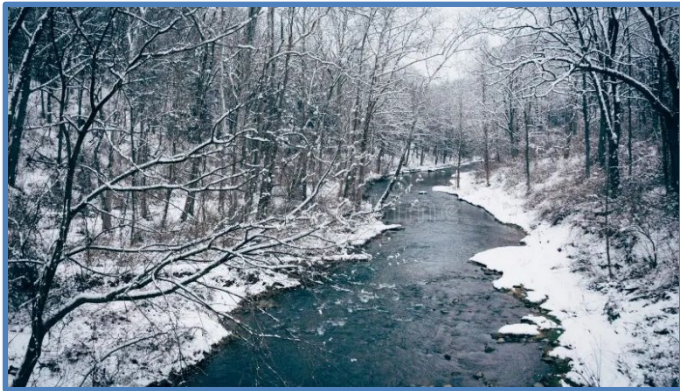
Match the main winter food source of Midges, Scuds & Sow Bugs, Winter Stone Flies; Eggs also work. Sometimes it can pay to use larger flies than the naturals. Trout may find it hard to pass up that one big meal.



Back Cast – Old Conservationist Articles - Pete Yarrington

From the regular Conservationist column Trouting Notes and News, by Charlie Gelso, November/December 1987:

Ever fish the Gunpowder River, above Baltimore? It has a spotty history. Although visually beautiful, and very trouty looking, some have described it as a virtual biological wasteland (i.e., no insect life for trout to feed on). Based on a report from Susana Ruark in Hatch and Match, the Maryland TU chapter newsletter, things are looking up at the Gunpowder. Due to the continuing cold water release from the dam, the trout habitat has improved markedly. Electroshocking the river near Parkton in mid-September revealed an excellent supply of browns, as well as some brook trout and rainbows. Bravo to the Maryland Chapter of TU as well as to the DNR for their efforts on the Gunpowder! Maybe we'll have another prime catch and release section.



There's a New Group in Town! - Kevin Haney

The beginning of the new year will usher in a new member of our community of fly fishing organizations, the Central Maryland Fly Fishing Council. You may remember that for the last few years, PVFF participated in interorganizational group that was known as the Big Hunting Creek Working Group. That group focused their efforts on Big Hunting Creek and the other Catocin trout streams. Last year, the members of that group decided to expand their area of concern to the entire central Maryland region and reform as the Central Maryland Fly Fishing Council.



The new geographical area of concern is Washington D.C. north to the Pennsylvania state line, east to Baltimore and west to Hagerstown.

The Council, which was officially constituted in November, is composed of representatives from any fly fishing-related group or government organization within the central Maryland area that desires to join. Currently we have 13 members consisting of private fly fishing groups, non-profits, and state and federal government agencies.

The Council exists to further the following four goals:

1. Communication - The Council will provide a forum for communication between all its constituent groups and the public on matters of common interest to the fly fishing community.

2. Conservation - The Council will provide a focal point for conservation and other projects that could benefit from the participation of more than one group.

3. Education – The Council will promote educational opportunities in the areas of fly fishing and conservation.

4. Advocacy - The Council will provide an amplified voice to respond to legislative issues and other regulatory issues of concern to fly fisherman and conservationists.

The Council does not intend to duplicate the efforts of other groups. Instead, it will focus on things that no one else is doing, like intergroup coordination of conservation projects and events and communication between the groups, and it will provide information and other resources to help its member groups fulfill their missions.

Meetings will be held every three months, the first being in February. Kevin Haney is the President and Pete D'Adamo is the primary representative for PVFF. You can check out the Council web site at cmffc.org. If you look at the About page, you can read the group charter and see the current list of member organizations. You will be hearing more from this group during the coming year, so stay tuned!

" Most anglers, especially tyros, false cast too often. Three false casts should be sufficient for any throw and two is better. One is perfect."

~ Joe Brooks

PPTU Outings Schedule for 2026 - Ron Kerrick

Details for the PPTU Outings will be posted online before each date. This is what we're looking at for 2026.



- Feb 21: Yellow Breeches, PA
- Mar 28: Conawego Creek, PA
- Apr 25-26: Casselman, MD
- May 15-17: Spring Creek, PA
- Jun 13: Gunpowder One Fly, MD
- Jul: No Outing Scheduled Yet
- Aug TDB: Yellow Breeches White Fly, PA
- Sep 12: Monocacy Smallmouth, MD
- Oct 9-12: Savage River Camp Out, MD
- Nov TBD: Steelhead, PA
- Dec: No Outing Scheduled Yet

Note: If any PPTU members have any comments or suggestions for outings, please let the Outings Coordinator(s) know, at outings@pptu.org



If you spot poaching please call or text:

Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers
At 443-433-4112



Add this number to your cell phone contact list!



FFC Shad Night 2026: You are invited! - Mark Binsted

The local fishing community is cordially invited to [Shad Night 2026](#), to be held in person for the first time since 2020. FFC is partnering with Orvis Tysons Corner to offer a fun and informative evening, just weeks before the return of shad to area rivers. Admission is free – [please register here](#) to help our planning.

Sunday February 22, 2026 from 4:00 to 8:00 pm

Orvis Tysons Corner

Make plans to arrive early to meet friends, get advice from shad fishing experts, watch fly tying demonstrations by Tidal Potomac Fly Rodders, or chat with Fletcher's Boathouse staff and fellow river rats. Leaders from FFC will be on hand to greet you, as will our newest sponsor, John Lipetz, of fishandexplore.com. Representatives from Maryland DNR and DC Fisheries will talk to you about their work on the Potomac. Orvis staff will be happy to take your purchases until the store closing time.



Cold Winter Day - Wild Brook Trout - Dead Drift Outdoors

A cold winter day on a small wild brook trout stream on state land. Doesn't get any more fun than this — no crowds, no noise, just cold fingers, clear water, and a few wild fish holding on through winter.

Keep an eye on how John from Dead Drift Outdoors approaches each pool.

[Watch Here](#) or you can find it easily by searching Dead Drift Outdoors from your browser.



MD Outdoors Has New Features! - Dead Drift Outdoors

Six months ago, MD Outdoors revolutionized online licensing for fishing, hunting, and other outdoor activities in Maryland. If you haven't visited MD Outdoors to update your account, here's your New Year's reminder about all the benefits.

MD Outdoors introduces new features such as auto-renewal for licenses, a mobile app, and customizable hard cards with your license information on it.

By keeping your Maryland licenses up to date you'll have access to the unique and diverse adventures our state offers: Exciting fishing action for trout, rockfish, blue crabs, invasive blue catfish and Chesapeake Channa; hunting North America's only population of sika deer; and of course spending

time in Maryland's outdoors, "America in Miniature."

MD Outdoors Mobile App features maps and directions to Maryland State Parks, trails, Wildlife Management Areas, boat launches and water access sites plus a bunch of additional features for the outdoor enthusiast. You can find the app on the App Store or on Google Play.



Next PPTU Outing – Yellow Breeches - Ron Kerrick

Sorry for canceling the January Outing to Big Hunting Creek but it was probably for the best. I just checked the temperature in Thurmont and it was 4 degrees with a wind chill of -5. That's a little cold for me in my old age.

Our next chapter outing for February will be at the **Yellow Breeches** in Boiling Springs, PA. It is a one-day outing scheduled for **Saturday, February 21st**.

Meeting Area: We will meet at the Boiling Springs Iron Furnace Trailhead Parking Lot (near 109 Bucher Hill Road, Boiling Springs) at 10:00 AM.

For lunch, we will meet at Café Bruges (16 North Pitt Street, Carlisle) at 1:00. It's a small Belgian Café. After lunch you can either head back to the Yellow Breeches to fish again, or head over with some of us to the PA Fly Fishing Museum (101 Shady Lane, Carlisle), open Saturday - 9am to 6 pm. The Museum is about 10 minutes from the Café.

If you have any questions, please contact me for more information. Outings@pptu.org

**Members Catch
- Bob O'Donnell**

Fisherman, educator, author, fly tyer, professor and special friend to PPTU – photo below of Charlie Gelso with a nice catch on our home waters he cherished. You'll be missed Charlie!



Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email or as an MS Word.doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

Editor: Bob O'Donnell

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Email: TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com



Winter Fly Assortment

No single fly pattern this month. More of a focus on what you should be taking to the stream to increase your chance of catching a winter trout.

This video follows up on the earlier newsletter article “Winter Fly Fishing”. Great video to remind you what flies to carry during the winter. One other tip.... there's no reason to take ALL your fly boxes to the river. Lighten your vest and only take a pre-selected box of flies with you.

[Watch Video Here](#)



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