



November 2003

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, November 19

Salmon, Brookies, Albies, Blues, Stripers All this and the Gunpowder, too

We are privileged to have Theaux Le Gardeur as our guest speaker for the November 19, 2003 Potomac Patuxent Chapter meeting.

Theaux is the knowledgeable owner and operator of Backwater Angler, a full-service fly shop located near the Gunpowder River in Monkton, MD. Prior to his involvement with the shop, Theaux traveled 28 states selling fly-fishing equipment. He is a Federation of Fly Fishers Certified Casting Instructor, a Maryland State Licensed Guide, and believes that wild fish don't read the same books we do.

Theaux will be talking about fly fishing for wild Atlantic Salmon and sea-run Brookies on the Matapedia River in Quebec and chasing False Albacore, Blues and Stripers at Orient Point, NY, just off the North Fork of Long Island Sound.

Chapter members getting ready for a cold winter should look forward to this great presentation with much anticipation. While you are waiting, however, don't hesitate to test the waters of the Gunpowder, and stop by Theaux's shop, The Backwater Angler, located on Monkton Road, just a couple of minutes from the water. There you will find a full line of flies, tackle, tying materials and clothes along with all the local insight Rocky Cox and Theaux can provide.

Reminder

The next issue of the *Conservationist* will be in early January. There is no December issue or a December monthly meeting.

There will be a Board of Directors meeting on Monday, December 1.

Have a safe and Happy Holiday!

Final Notice

Member's Assessment Now Payable

The annual assessment (see back page) is now payable. Check your label—if we have stamped it in red with "FINAL NOTICE . . .," you must send your \$15 now or pay at the November meeting in order not to miss the January and the rest of next year's issues. Some members have already paid this year, so they show "PP-0904." Make checks payable to "POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER - TU" and mail to our chapter mail box. (P.O. Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915)

Full time students are waived the assessment, but you must send us your graduation date.

The assessment covers only the newsletter and related administrative expenses; all donations at our raffles, etc., go to the resource and not to support our members with free newsletters, maps, etc.

This is the final mailing for those having "PP-0903" or no "PP-" date on their label. **There will be NO separate mailings to remind current members of this obligation.**

Please take note and action today! Thank you.

Meetings

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

Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

Directions: From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First right onto Forest Glen Road. Pass Holy Cross Hospital and go across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

The Conservationist

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Past-President:	Dave Piske	703-751-0208
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	Robert Simpson	410-461-8180
	Val Walters	301-949-7882
	Dave Piske	703-751-0208
Editor:	John Colburn	202-545-8776
Program:	Sebastian Okelly	301-593-7432
Publicity:	Jim Greene	301-652-3848
Membership Secretary:	Jack Dawson	301-980-4417
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Contributions in the form of articles, letters, fishing news, tying tips, book reviews, and even poetry about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain MS-DOS (ASCII) text or Microsoft Word attachments to e-mail messages containing brief descriptions of the attachments. Attachments received without a description will be deleted without opening.

The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

EDITOR: John Colburn
(Phone: 202-545-8776)
(johnwcolburn@juno.com)

President's Column

Indicated in earlier newsletter columns and at membership meetings that we will begin this year to systematically examine many of the Chapter's ongoing activities. In doing so, we will attempt to clarify just what our specific goals are and identify ways to improve our contributions in any given area.

The initial thrust will center on cold water fisheries conservation programs. Are we doing the right things? Are we doing enough? Are there readily identifiable projects we should consider doing in the chapter or in conjunction with other chapters or organizations?

The following paragraphs, excerpted from the National TU web site, are offered for context in this examination of our conservation activities:

Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. TU accomplishes this mission on local, state and national levels with an extensive and dedicated volunteer network. TU's national office, based just outside of Washington, D.C., and its regional offices employ professionals who testify before Congress, publish a quarterly magazine, intervene in federal legal proceedings, and work with the organization's 125,000 volunteers in 500 chapters nationwide to keep them active and involved in conservation issues.

From the beginning, TU was guided by the principle that if we "take care of the fish, then the fishing will take care of itself." And that principle was grounded in science. "One of our most important objectives is to develop programs and recommendations based on the very best information and thinking available," said TU's first president, Dr. Casey E. Westell Jr. "In all matters of trout management, we want to know that we are substantially correct, both morally and biologically."

You wonder "why this—now"?

For some time, we have heard rumblings that the chapter isn't doing enough in the conservation area. Limited discussions at Board meeting's exposed a lot of pent up frustrations from some members and the suggestions that a broader spectrum of the chapter membership feels the same way.

For those who have labored for years and years to sustain a number of chapter activities which were

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President's Column

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felt to be achievable and practicable this may seem to be an affront to their efforts. It isn't. I take it as an opportunity to refresh the Chapters' outlook on its activities and to get some 'new eyes' looking at our programs and to take advantage of participation by members who would normally not feel comfortable in a Board position. It can be an exciting, satisfying and reassuring experience for all of us.

The re-examination is not something that can be accomplished overnight and need not be. It is also not something the present Board membership can undertake alone. I think that a separate committee (not too large) should be established to examine our activities and suggest redirections, modifications or new activities for all of us to consider.

I plan to ask a former Chapter President to serve as a resource person to the committee and provide guidance and historical perspective. Present Board members can participate, but this is a good opportunity for some of our less active but very experienced fishermen/women to get involved. In coming Board meetings I will formalize this activity and lay out a skeletal plan to help launch the committee's activities.

In the mean time, we need to hear your thoughts on this matter and in particular learn who amongst us would like to help out and be involved. Our chapter listserve is a great place to share your thoughts.

In my continuing effort to highlight the significant contributions of a number of our committee and project leaders and get them some help I call your attention to Jim Greene. Jim is our Chapter Treasurer, a significant responsibility and contribution to the health of the Chapter. He is also our Publicity Chair and head of the Chapter's Trout in the Classroom program. Jim is a natural leader and so efficient that it seems he can do everything- and he can. But, as Jim says, he is under-fished this year!

I think it only fair that someone of us offer to help Jim out. We have been successful in getting Jim help in the TIC program. We could use some assistance in the publicity area. You need not feel that you have to have experience in this field; Jim has a well structured program and is a capable mentor for any who would like to help. Last month I highlighted the chapter efforts of Jack Dawson and called for some assistance in chapter's library program. The offer is still on the table. Jack is also a great mentor and can gently guide a newcomer along.

Lou Boezi

Outings Report

Lies, Damn Lies and Releases

Tim Wagenaar and Mike Goeser joined me on the Big Gunpowder Falls River on Saturday, September 27th. The flows at 04:30 that morning were 141 cfs. As a result, wading posed no problems. Stream temperature at noon was 59 degrees at York Road. The rain held off and it ended up being a nice day.

We fished the York Road, Masemore and Blue Mount sections of the river. Mike caught four browns between five and eight inches with a combination of Patuxent Specials, Green Weenies and a beadhead tan San Juan Worm downstream of the bridge at York Road.

I caught two browns that were about nine inches each with a #16 beadhead Pheasant Tail upstream of the bridge at Masemore. Tim caught two including one fourteen inch brown in a hole below the confluence of the Gunpowder and Little Falls at Blue Mount with a yellow nymph dropped behind a black Woolly Bugger of his own design.

Joshua Forster

Join Us at the Fly Fishing Show

In just two months, the 12th annual Fly Fishing Show will take place on January 10th and 11th at the Reckord Armory at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD. Daily admission is just \$12 or \$20 for both days and children under 12 admitted for \$2 each day.

This year's show will have everything you have loved in the past as well more great door prizes. A Grand Door Prize is being awarded after all the sponsor's shows are complete. The drawing is March 15th with entries from the registration forms gathered at all the shows. The prize is a fishing trip for two to Chile at the Yan Kee Way Lodge.

For more information on the show and the Grand Prize visit <http://www.flyfishingshow.com>. For information on fishing at the Yan Kee Way Lodge visit <http://www.southernchilexp.com>.

Be sure to stop by the Fly Rod & Reel magazine to register to win a customized Ford Expedition and a fishing trip.

Jack Dawson

Outings

Chapter Outings Schedule

The new outings' schedule for the year is posted below. The next outing will be to Big Hunting Creek, Maryland and is scheduled for Sunday, November 23rd. If you are interested in this outing, please see me at the November 19th Chapter meeting.

*Joshua Forster
Outings Chair*

Proposed 2003-2004 Outings

Big Hunting Creek, MD	Sunday, Nov. 23, 2003
Big Gunpowder Falls River, MD	Jan. 2004
Morgan Run, MD	Feb. 2004
South Central Pennsylvania	Mar. 2004
Rapidan River, VA	Apr. 2004
Western MD	Memorial Day Weekend, May 2004

For details about these outings, visit the PPTU web site www.pptu.org or see Joshua Forster at the Chapter meetings.

Patuxent Report

The only real problem with fishing this stream at this time of the year is that much of the upper Patuxent Special Trout Area is a public hunting zone. Call the Park office at (301) 924-2127 or stop by their Clopper Road office in Gaithersburg (Seneca Creek State Park is responsible for Patuxent State Park) to obtain maps of hunting zones within Patuxent. Some of the local sport shops may also have this information.

The firearm season for deer is about to start, but other firearm hunting (e.g., squirrels, woodcock), as well as archery and black powder seasons for deer will be running now through early February. Suggest weekdays or Sundays OR a **blaze orange hat** on Saturdays, in particular. (Sunday hunting is not allowed on public lands.) The most hunted area is between Hipsley Mill and Howard Chapel Roads.

There should still be a fair number of holdover browns and rainbows in the larger pools as winter sets into this area. I have in the past seen some of the largest browns of the year at this time. It takes some patience and stealth to find and catch them.

Wild browns have been found throughout this special trout management area, particularly above the Rt. 94 bridge. Some 250 rainbows of excellent size were stocked at the Rt 94 and Hipsley Mill bridges in early-October. They should be providing some good sport now, too.

Jay Sheppard

Mend Your Ways

Years ago, about four months after discovering fly fishing, my wife, Pam, and I went to Montana for our first adventure in big water fly fishing for trout from a drift boat. Both of us caught a few fish, but considering the beautiful water we fished, our catch rate was abominable.

Both of us had practiced casting in the park across the street from our home and on the smaller streams we routinely fish in our local area. None of this had given us the essential skills an angler needs to catch fish from a drift boat.

Years later, after learning a few hard lessons about how to fish big water from a drift boat, I spent an evening tying flies on the porch of our cabin which overlooked a long flat pool on the West Branch of the Delaware. Pam and I were getting ready for an all day drift boat trip starting bright and early the next morning, so I was frantically tying Hendrickson emergers to replace the box I had left at home.

Fish began to rise in the pool in front of us, and four or five anglers who lined the bank for several hundred yards began to work the rising fish. I saw a lot of casting, but only one angler, a wizened older gentleman who walked with a cane, consistently caught fish. I studied him from a distance and soon realized that on each of his casts, he tossed a neat little reach mend into the line before it hit the water.

Many good trout fishers take a trip to the Missouri, the Big Hole, the Madison, or on our coast, the Delaware system and expect to do well just like they do at home. Unfortunately, this bigger water with wilder fish and stronger currents requires a much different set of skills than those possessed by the average small stream trout fisher.

Believe me, if you have recently returned from your first drift boat trip, and you are thinking the guide didn't work hard enough to get you close to the fish, or he gave you the wrong fly to fish, or it was too windy, or the fish were too educated, you may be overlooking the real reason you didn't do too well.

What skills do we need to catch fish from a drift boat in larger waters? On our smaller water streams like the Gunpowder, Hunting Creek, the Patuxent, etc., a twenty-five foot cast is usually considered to be a long cast. On a river like the Delaware, a fifty foot cast is considered normal and sixty to seventy feet will catch you a lot more

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Mend Your Ways

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Pam and Jim Greco with a 23" Delaware Double caught with reach mended casts

fish. Many pods of fish are so attuned to vibrations from the drift boats that if you sneak to within sixty feet of them, they will stay put, but that is as close as you can get. If you move the boat five feet closer, the fish move five feet farther away.

However, the single most important skill most anglers don't possess is the reach mend. Complicating this scenario is the problem that in any larger river or stream, there are a myriad of currents traveling at different velocities between you and the fish. The reach mend will turn an average fifty foot cast with one foot of drag free float into a beautiful presentation which will give you four or five feet of drag free float. If you multiply this factor times the number of casts you make on your trip you can readily see why a good reach mend will increase your catch rate.

The basic reach mend is accomplished by simply reaching up stream with your rod while the line is still in the air, but falling. The mend should take line from your line control hand rather than from the tip end of the line and place it upstream of your fly. The reach mend is not hard to do. Practice it until it becomes second nature to you. Any good book on fly casting should cover it, and Lefty's books cover it well.

I would like to tell you that once you have mastered fifty to seventy foot casts and reach mend in your sleep, all of your guides will be experts, the weather will always be great, and all of the trout you cast to will be naïve enough to take—but then it wouldn't be fishing.

Jim Greco

Tackle & Tactic Tips

The Holidays are just around the corner. Here are a few suggestions for helping those considering a new fly rod and related tackle.

Some simple basics: fly rods cast the fly line not the lure or fly, lighter lines are for shorter distances and more delicate presentations, and heavy lines are for distance and windier conditions. One does not select a rod without selecting the line size first.

Unless you like to collect rods (we have several members who do), fly fishers want to have rods that do decidedly different tasks. One would not take a #10 rod to go after panfish or small trout any more than taking a #3 rod to go for salmon or bonefish. The former would be the same as taking a cue stick to land small fish, and the latter would be snapped in two on the first run of the very large fish—if one could even cast the large fly to the quarry.

If you already have one fly rod, consider the next rod being 2 line sizes smaller or larger than the current rod. If you have a #5 rod, then think about a #3 or a #7 rod to expand your fishing opportunities, for example.

Since I am a strong proponent of long rods, I would not suggest for most fishers to consider getting a much shorter rod. I would suggest a longer rod, if your current one is 7 feet or less. A rod of 8½ or 9 feet can roll cast and mend or manipulate the line once it is on the water much better than a short rod. The short rod is at a disadvantage if you are belly deep in the water or sitting in a canoe, etc. About the only place a very short rod seems to be at an advantage is on a tiny brook trout stream with lots of over hanging vegetation.

Here are some estimates of the capabilities of several different line sizes using about the same length rods and a nominal leader. One can extrapolate for intermediate sizes.

A #4 can cast flies as small as you can find them up to about #8 about 40 feet with some accuracy, with most casts in the range of 20–30 feet; if one has no obstructions, the largest fish might be about 7 lbs.

A #6 outfit can cast fairly small flies and those up to #4 or #2 about 50 feet with accuracy, most casts being 30–40 feet; fish to about 15 lbs can be landed if one has plenty of room to fight them.

The #8 rod can regularly cast flies up to #2/0 to

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Tackle & Tactic Tips

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distances of about 70 feet, with most in the range of 40–50 feet; this outfit can land fish up to about 35 lbs, while any tiny fish might go undetected during the fight!

The lighter #4 outfit will have difficulty casting a bushy #8 fly or popper for any distance or into the wind. The #8 line would be making a lot of sound as it lands on a quiet pool with a #18 fly on the end of the leader.

So there are a lot of advantages for one rod system over another. All are tools designed for a small range of optimum fishing conditions. All are adaptable to wider ranges of uses but are not recommended for those more extreme situations.

Do not forget to consider a travel rod of 4 or 5 pieces. Select a rod for the fishing conditions you expect that trip and not for its beauty or workmanship.

Fishing should be fun and not work. Pick the right tool for the job.

Jay Sheppard

Questions and Answers

Fluorocarbon

Once in a while a question is asked on the PPTU list server for which many people would like to have an answer. This is one that was submitted by Tim, and my answer prompted more than one other person to suggest we publish it in *The Conservationist* so the rest of our members could see it and add their two cents worth.

Question: “Fluorocarbon tippet? Is there any advantage to using this over Orvis's Super Strength tippet material for nymphing? Interested in the pros and cons for those that use it. Any particular brand you would recommend? Wondering if I should invest in some for an Erie trip?”

Answer: “Hey Tim,
In my limited experience ...

For years I have resisted the temptation to use Fluorocarbon. It is not environmentally friendly in that even in full sun it takes decades to degrade where nylon will disintegrate in months. It is also exorbitantly expensive and the knot strength of most brands is really second rate.

That said, I have to tell you I have recently become a convert. My growing experience with the Delaware River system and several of the guides there

has been enlightening in this area.

There is at least one brand of fluorocarbon that many of the guides up there swear by. It is the Grand Max brand, and it does have good knot strength (make sure you wet it before you snug up the knot), and per diameter it is equal in tensile strength to Orvis Super Strong monofilament. Rumor has it that the new Orvis Mirage is just as good, but considering the miserable knot strength of their original Mirage Fluorocarbon, I won't swear to that.

The only advantage to using fluorocarbon for nymphing might be its increased abrasion resistance and lower visibility per diameter than nylon. However, in water that is the least bit off color, I wouldn't consider this as an advantage which warrants the added expense. For really large fish like salmon and steelhead, I might invest in a spool of Grand Max fluorocarbon. In that type of fishing, I usually need all the advantage I can get.

I fish for trout in several places where, at times, the only game in town is sipping fish in flat water and 7x or 8x tippet. Unfortunately (depending on how you look at it) in these places some fish are large enough to make the use of 7x or 8x tippet an exercise in futility.

Therefore, when I see big fish in water where I usually use 7x or 8x, now I will change my tippet to 5x or 6x, G Max fluorocarbon. If I can hook a 20 inch fish on 6x fluorocarbon instead of 7x Super Strong, I've gained a few ounces in line strength which helps me land the fish more quickly and stresses the fish less.

I'm always careful to stow scraps of fluorocarbon in my trash bag and take it out with me. In some cases you shouldn't use 6x Fluorocarbon to replace 7x nylon because the fly is so small 6x anything would make it drift unnaturally. For just about any other situation, I stick with the Super Strong.”

Jim Greco

[Editor's Note: *Re: Fluorocarbon knot strength: When joining fluorocarbon to nylon monofilament, instead of the usual barrel knot or double or triple surgeon's knot, use back-to-back uni-knots where the fluorocarbon is uni-knotted around the monofilament and the mono around the fluoro. When the two uni-knots are lubricated, set and pulled tight against each other, you have as close to a 100% knot as you can get with dissimilar materials.*]

[Thanks to Jim Greco for submitting this.]

John Colburn

Book Notes

Good, Solid, Practical Advice For Fly Fishers

Taking Trout; Good, Solid, Practical Advice for Fly Fishing Streams and Stillwaters by Dave Hughes (Mechanicsburg, PA; Stackpole Books; 2002; 210 pp; bibliography; index)

For several years I have been collecting trout fishing articles written by Dave Hughes and filing them for future reference. Now I can strip most of them from the file and put the pages in the recycle bin. *Taking Trout* has replaced most of that fairly thick file folder.

Taking Trout is a collection of Dave's articles that have appeared in *American Angler*, *Field & Stream*, *Fly Fisherman*, *Fly Rod & Reel*, and *Tight Loop* (Japan) over the years, expanded and updated. Based on his experiences fishing for trout in the small cutthroat streams of Oregon's coastal mountains, the brawling Deschutes, and trout waters throughout the United States, Argentina, and Chile, he shares his successes and failures while giving that "good, solid, practical advice" promised in the subtitle.

The thirty-five articles cover such widely varied subjects as reading the water, various presentations of flies, equipment selection, minimum tackle kits, spike camps, mountain biking, fly selection, insect identification, and many more—many of which haven't been covered by other authors. While much of his fishing has been in the West, the lessons are applicable here in the mid-Atlantic as well.

Taking Trout is not a good book for the beginning fly fisher. For someone who has learned the basics of fly fishing equipment, casting, fly selection, and reading the water, it is a gold mine of valuable information—information that would take years of fly fishing in many waters to acquire. And for you experts out there, I'm willing to bet that any of you will pick up some tips and tricks for taking trout no matter where you fish.

While Dave has written nineteen other books on fly fishing and fly tying, all of them worthy of a place in a fly fisher's library, *Taking Trout* collects the short pieces that appeared in the magazines. It too deserves a place in that library.



John Colburn

The Last Word

Handicapped Access

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by federal, state and local governments and private businesses to provide means so the handicapped can have the same access to facilities and places as the "temporarily able." You've all seen the wheelchair ramps and curb cuts, wider doors, hand rails, and other means that provide access for the handicapped, and I'm willing to bet that most of you "temporarily able" folks have used them every once in a while.

The hitch is that not much is being done to help the disabled get to fishing places so they too can enjoy our sport. Given the budgetary problems of the state and local governments, and yes, the federal too, there probably not much that will be done in the foreseeable future. So, that leaves the private sector to do the job, but most businesses are under similar budget restraints, and that leaves it up to you and me.

What can you and I do about helping handicapped anglers have places to fish? As individuals, not a whole lot, but as members of a group, quite a bit.

Next time you're at a computer with Internet access, take a look at www.projectaccess.com and see what is being done on the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, and other Catskill rivers by Project Access—groups of individuals and fishing clubs working to provide handicapped access to some fine trout waters. Couldn't the same sort of projects be undertaken by PPTU, other TU chapters, FFF clubs, and similar groups here in Maryland and neighboring states?

Think about how you might be able to fish spots on the Patuxent, Savage, or Gunpowder if you suddenly left the ranks of the "temporarily able." Or would you be forced to do your fishing on ESPN2?

John Colburn

Address Changed? Missing an Issue?

If you have moved or see any error in your label on this newsletter, please advise both the TU national office and this chapter with separate notices. We maintain our mailing list apart from the national list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from national TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your newsletter and other mailings. Please help us help you. Thank you.

This past year we had several reports of members not receiving their newsletters. Make sure we have your correct address, including 9-digit ZIP, and that you have paid your dues. If you are missing a back issue, please contact us for a copy.

The **Conservationist**

The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Membership

THE POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER of Trout Unlimited has two membership categories: **Regular or Family** (\$15/year assessment) or **Student** (free). The Chapter operates on a September-to-September basis. The assessment is totally separate from Trout Unlimited dues. Send correspondence, change of address, or assessment payable to POTOMAC-PATUXENT TROUT UNLIMITED, PO Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915.

Chapter and national TU expiration dates are indicated in the mailing label as PP-0903 or NTU-0903.

First time visitors receive two free issues of this publication.

MEMBER'S ASSESSMENT NOW PAYABLE

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The Last Word

Handicapped Access

Have you ever been confined to a wheelchair or been on crutches because of a broken leg, back injury, or badly sprained ankle?

If you've been lucky so far, consider yourself as one of the "temporarily able." An auto accident, tripping on a throw rug, stepping on a stone unexpectedly, falling on the stairs—in a split second, any of these things can disable you, through no fault of your own, temporarily, if you're lucky, or permanently.

Now imagine yourself in a wheelchair or on crutches. How would you go fishing? Could you even get to the water's edge of your favorite trout stream? Or is your fishing going to be restricted to watching the hook 'em, yank 'em, toss 'em shows on ESPN2?

Now think about the waters you fish. Can someone in a wheelchair or on crutches enjoy them, even in just a few small places? Are the paths about three feet wide, reasonably level side to side and sloping only gently? Are they frequently muddy or clogged with leaves and weeds? Are there any level places where a person in a wheelchair could fish in reasonably good water where there's a chance to catch fish?

There is a law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, that says that reasonable efforts should be made

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Return Address:

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter TU

P.O. Box 2865

Wheaton, MD 20915

FIRST CLASS MAIL