

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 9-30-2011

October might just be my favorite month of the year to be a Florida fly fisherman. October means the mullet run is in full swing attracting a diverse and plentiful supply of game fish, more pleasant temperatures to fish inshore or on Florida rivers, lakes and ponds. And of course October means the annual Fly Fishing Expo in Kissimmee.

The FFF Florida Council sponsors the Expo on the Friday and Saturday of the third weekend in October every year. The dates for 2011 are Friday, October 21st, and Saturday the 22nd. The Expo is the best of the water event of the year for fly fisherman in Florida and attracts hundreds of us who love to fish with the fly. It's our annual Gathering of the Clan. (Anyone know how to play the Bagpipes?)

Please let me share some details of our upcoming Expo. I would also like to share a little about about FFF's work and our mission. And I'll give you an update on things happening within FFF today that I learned at the national meeting in West Yellowstone. And last but not least, I have a little fishing report from my time in Montana. Let's start with the Expo.

This year's Expo will be another great value event. Yes, we will have the Expo Show with fly shops, manufacturers, publishers and other fly fishing related products. Yes, we will have fly tying demonstrations where we can learn new patterns and techniques. Yes, there will be seminars on destinations, techniques and skills including casting instruction, games and competitions. Yes, there will be Celebrity anglers will be at the show to teach, share and chat. That covers most of the questions about the Expo that I am frequently asked. And, the whole shebang is only 10 bucks for both days! Heck, you can't hardly go to a motion picture show for that anymore and they only last a couple hours. The Expo is a great value, a terrific bang for the buck.

And there is an optional Banquet and Auction Saturday night featuring a program by the living fly fishing legend Dave Whitlock. For all of us who enjoy flicking a fly attached to the long rod, the Expo is a great venue for immersing ourselves in and sharing the camaraderie of our sport.

The Expo is an opportunity to become better anglers and can help us turn our fishing time into catching time. We meet old friends and make new friends. Fly fishers who have attended in the past make it an annual ritual and are quick to share how much they enjoy their days at the Expo. Ask someone who's been to one of the Expos if it's worth it, and you'll get an absolutely positive response. If you have never been, please don't continue to miss out. I have enjoyed each Expo and have always built lifelong memories while enjoying the company and fraternity of my fellow fly fishers.

The Venue for the event has changed this year. The old Ramada resort is closed. Our new venue is a little over 3 miles west of the old location. The Worldgate Resort on Route 192 three miles west of I-4 will be our host this year. The entrance to the show is easier to find at Worldgate than at the old Ramada. You'll be able to park in front of the convention center at Worldgate Resort and walk right into the lobby at the show. Just turn right into the resort driveway, and then turn left and follow the pavement and parking lots to the Northwest corner of the building where you will find the Convention Center doors. No more mouse maze of buildings and trekking around the property just to get to the Expo.

We will have two casting ponds in the parking lot in front of the show for seminars and for individual use. Looking for a new fly rod? Come to the show and try some out. Our vendors will supply rods, reels and line so you can try some rods and see what feels and works best for your casting needs and style.

There will be some big winners at the show again this year. The council auction will feature an experience auctioneer and will be a lot more fun. And fishing legend Dave Whitlock will be the featured speaker at this year's banquet. To attend the banquet and auction make sure you reserve a seat as soon as possible. With Dave speaking we have over a 100 early registrations for the banquet, more than double the attendance last year. Space is limited so please act quickly. Clubs can purchase a table at a reduced rate, so get your buddies together for dinner and ask your clubs to buy a table.

During the show we will have both silent auctions and bucket raffles. This year the silent auctions will all close before the banquet. So if for any reason you cannot attend the banquet, rest assured, you will be in the bidding right up to closing the silent auction on each item. And, for the first time, we will be able to

accept credit and debit cards. So when you find that must have bargain it will be easier to acquire than in the past.

By the way, your admission includes the free pizza party Friday night. The council will order pizza from the UNO PIZZARIA located inside Worldgate Resort and we will gather around one of their pools for dinner. The pizza party has always been a popular and fun event. Don't forget to bring your favorite beverage to wash down the tomato pie!

The Expo is open to the public as well. So bring your fishing buddies. Naturally we would like them to join us as so called "Federators" and I believe it's very important that fly fisherman organize and stick together. I have often said and written that many hands make lighter work. And FFF has a lot of projects and programs that benefit each of us and our sport.

Why join the FFF? Even if you don't choose to volunteer, please let me take a moment to share my views and the reason's I hear from other members as to why every fly fisherman should be a member of FFF.

We need organization to have a voice. The FFF, the Florida Council, and clubs and councils throughout the country are involved in many environmental and conservation issue at home and in 16 foreign countries. You may not have known that FFF is an international organization, but we are. When intervening into issue affecting water quality, habitat, development, fishing access and the impact on our fisheries and fishing opportunities, we need to carry the clout of a larger membership.

Sharing the secrets of our success as fly fisherman is also a very important reason to join FFF, and we all gain from this mission. FFF is the world's leading fly fishing organization which teaches and improves the skills of individual anglers who fly fish. We teach casting, fly tying, knots, techniques and approaches, fly patterns and their uses, and everything else a fly fisher needs to learn and master to turn their fishing time into catching time while fishing with a fly.

FFF also teaches kids to love and respect the sport and the environment. It's a well known fact that sportsmen are the leading watchdogs of the environment. Sportsmen are the best stewards of the earth we will leave to our children. All sportsmen know this, regardless of their passion, and band together. Organizations like Trout Unlimited, The Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, Snook Foundation, Ducks Unlimited and The Wild Turkey Federation all come to mind when I think of others who have organized to protect the environment, deal with loss and degradation of habitat issues, and help protect the wild outdoors we all use and share in pursuit of our passion.

But look around. Who will replace us? Not the couch potato kids playing video games. FFF and groups like FFF are a vital key to passing a love of wild places and environmental stewardship on to the next generation. This alone should motivate fly fishers to join us. FFF helps to ensure someone will care about and stand for the environmental health of our Earth when we are all long gone.

We also share and teach fly fishing with disabled veterans helping them overcome their physical and emotional wounds. Our American Heroes become empowered in their recovery and discover that there is life after wounding. We work with Project Healing Waters on this effort to help Veterans. Disabled vets bond with fellow survivors, develop a new zest for life, and make lifelong friends who share their newfound love for our sport.

We also introduce breast cancer survivors to fly fishing trough our work with Casting for Recovery. Fly casting is the perfect physical activity to help rebuild surgically weakened upper body muscles. And the companionship and relationships the ladies forge during their retreats, along with the discovery of the pleasure of transcending with nature through fly fishing, heals both the body and mind. No other organization does all this wonderful work. The ethics and programs of the FFF deserve the support and membership of everyone who fishes with a fly.

FFF has organized regional councils to bring the work of FFF close to its members. The Expo is a result of this philosophy. And FFF brings all it has to offer to your back yard through local clubs. What's interesting about FFF is this. Most organizations were organized from top to bottom. But FFF is bottom up. FFF was formed by anglers and clubs who recognized the need for organization. Lee Wulff, Lefty Kreh and Stu Apte were involved in the early days of FFF. And Lefty and Stu continue their support to this day.

The individual members and local clubs very much guide our efforts. The bottom line is this. When someone asks me about the FFF, I tell them this. I am the FFF. Each of us are the FFF. Together we are all the FFF. When I travel and meet like minded anglers around the country, we are like frat brothers and share a special bond through fly fishing and the FFF. I like to call us the Fraternity of Fly Fishers. If you're not a member, or know a fly fisherman who is not a member, please join us today, and ask your friends to join. It's important we all pull together.

I'd like to share something I was told long ago by my father, a Commander and Navy Nuke. As a seaman, Dad was on the original crew of the USS Nautilus, (SSN-571). Because he wanted the idea of nuclear power for ship to succeed, the crew was handpicked by Admiral Rickover, the father of the nuclear navy. Dad was one of the smartest men I knew and Rickover was smarter. After all, he picked my Dad to be one of the original Navy Nukes. As you can see my pride runs deep. (No submarine pun intended.)

Dad told me that to have power, a reactor core needs a critical mass. The bigger the mass, the more power. But he used the term critical mass later in life when he was involved in civilian projects and organizations too. Now, I have never served the military, but I have made a career and sales and marketing. What Daddy called critical mass, I call "The Mall Effect."

When we look at the retail industry today, we all know the marketing energy and benefit a shopping mall brings to each individual tenant. 50 years ago you would not see J C Penny and Sears in the same building. They were competitors. But they learned that more is better. They all gathered in one place creating a critical mass and together they succeeded more than they did apart. In my view, this is the Mall Effect. It means more success. FFF will do more and do better with more members. Join the mall. We all win.

FFF needs a bigger critical mass. It will increase our voice and allow us to do more with conservation and our education mission. It will give us clout when dealing with the issues that affect the wild places we love that are so necessary for the enjoyment of our sport. If you never attend a meeting, work a project, or volunteer that's okay with me. But, we need you to be a members. It's simply the right thing to do if you love and care for wild places, the outdoors, and fly fishing. I'll get off my soapbox now and share some things happening within FFF.

On September 4th I spent my birthday traveling home from the FFF annual meetings, starting my day with an over 300 mile drive to the airport in Salt Lake City, Utah. The meetings were held at the National Fly Fishing Fair in West Yellowstone, Montana. I must say, if you have never been to the National event you are really missing something. Not only is it held in great venues around the country with terrific fishing opportunities, but it's also one of the premier fly fishing show in the country with a large exhibit area and numerous classes and seminars including fly tying, casting, bamboo rod building and on the water instruction in some of the most beautiful places on earth. The national fly fishing show is a great excuse for a vacation spent fly fishing in beautiful places. Next year's show will be in Spokane, Washington. (Can you spell Summer Steelhead!) I hope to see more of you there next year.

The FFF is making a huge effort to build our critical mass. If everyone of us got one fishing friend to join FFF in the next 12 months, the mall effect would allow us to do so much more. Again, I hope you will join if you're not a member. And if you are, please ask your friends. There is a reward in it for all of us as a whole mall, and an individual reward too. Any member who sponsors two members will get their membership free for one year. It's a 1 for2 special voted into effect by the FFF board during their meeting in West Yellowstone.

Another big change is that we will actually be telling people about FFF and what we stand for. We have never done this since our founding in 1965. FFF has pretty much grown only by word of mouth. It's been a big secret society who loves fly fishing. I have made it my mission to change that.

I bought an idea to the President's Council meetings last October and we have discussed the proposal at each meeting ever since. The president's voted in West Yellowstone to adopt the idea that we form a marketing committee and fund their efforts using money donated by the councils and earmarked for the marketing campaign. FFF does not have enough membership to fund a campaign with its budget. So the presidents recognized the need and will fund a campaign. It will be a catalyst for new membership and will allow us to do more and fund more at the national level in the future.

I know I shared earlier that I never served in the military. But perhaps if I had I would have known better as the Council Presidents requested that I volunteer to chair the committee. When I agreed, the motion was carried by unanimous vote.

The new committee held its first meeting in September and I will have more to report as we move forward with our plans. But part of our plan is this. We have asked people like Stu Apte, Flip Pallot, Chico Fernandez, Andy Mill and Dave Whitlock why they think FFF membership is important for everyone who loves fly fishing. You will see their images and words in the very near future. I hope they convince you to join us. And I hope they help you convince your friends too.

At the President's Committee meeting on August 30th, we were given a demonstration of our new web site which will be launched in the first quarter of 2012. The new site will have vastly more content. One of the best features will be our ability to use FFF as a sort of Fly Fishing Encyclopedia. Councils, clubs and other members will have access to a sort of Wiki or blog where we can post, edit and share fly fishing information.

The new web site will have the capacity for videos like how to tie a slim beauty knot, cure your tailing loop, or tie a Clouser minnow. The new web site will be a resource for those of us who love to fly fish. For many years members have phoned around the country looking for local info when they plan fly fishing expeditions and trip. The new web site will evolve into a knowledge base and resource at your fingertips.

With all the added value our web site will bring to the fly fishing community, there will be a change in its presentation. Right now, everything on the FFF web site is free and in the public domain on the World Wide Web. The new site will be so valuable that FFF will no longer give its content to non members. But members will have full access by using a sign in and password protocol. Over time contributions and content will grow and the site will be more and more valuable. I have lobbied for this for some time and many of the leaders in FFF have had the same idea. The FFF Board of Directors voted some time ago to fund this project and it all started with the upgrade to our computer systems over a year ago. FFF is changing by evolution. I'm very excited about our future.

Now for some of the fun part. While out west I got to do a little fly fishing. I flew in a few days early and spent time fishing the trico hatch on Poindexter Slough in Dillon, Montana and did very well. I also fished a stream called Grasshopper Creek outside of Dillon. Grasshopper flows through the ghost town called Bannack, which was once a gold rush town and the political center of Montana in the 19th century. Bannack is now a state park with public access to the stream. While Poindexter is a Brown and Rainbow trout fishery, Grasshopper has Browns, Rainbows and West Slope Cutthroat trout. I had never landed a West Slope and got my first one in Bannack State Park.

Driving to West Yellowstone from Dillon, I passed through Virginia City, Montana, the most intact western gold rush town in America. The timing was perfect for lunch. This was my fourth time in Virginia City. It's a really neat town, full of 19th century buildings, shops, cafes and even a theater company in the old brewery. By the way, if you need a stuffed Grizzly Bear or Mountain Lion for your decor I know where you can get one. Their hungry glass eyes stared me down while eating my buffalo cheeseburger at the Virginia City Cafe. When you see me at expo, please remember to ask about my waitress. I must say, there's a lot more to see in Virginia City than old buildings.

Between meetings and banquets at the National Fly Fishing Fair, I escaped to fish other Yellowstone waters in and around the park including the Gallatin, Madison, Firehole and a tributary to the Lamar River in the North East section of Yellowstone Park. I got quite a few fish, landing Brown trout, Rainbows, Yellowstone Cutts and Mountain Whitefish.

If you'd like to see some of my pictures from Yellowstone, please go to my page on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/wtgunnr>. If you're not on my friends list just send a request and I'll add you right away. On there you'll see my first West Slope Cutthroat, a beautiful and decreasingly rare fish. The fisheries departments in the west are working hard to restore them to the historic range. But the one I caught on Grasshopper was a native of the remnant population. A very rare fish in those waters indeed.

As usual, travel in Yellowstone was impeded by tourist stopping to see elk, bison, pronghorn, deer and wolves. I did not see any bears. But a Griz ate a hiker on Nez Pierce creek a week before I arrived so the creek was closed to fishing.

One day, a long wait and huge traffic jam was caused by a bison bull crossing the Madison river. Guess he did not want to get his hooves wet as he lumbered across the bridge straight as a sober preacher right down the yellow center line of the road. He stopped traffic in both directions and people were out of their cars to capture a Kodak moment. Some of them didn't read the brochure as they were definitely closer to that nickel back than the required 25 yards. But the old bull was focused on the grass being greener on the other side. Guess nobody told him it's not true!

All in all, the National Fly Fishing Fair was a great venue I enjoyed very much. I appreciate the opportunity to represent the FFF members, clubs and council in Florida as your President, and promise to continue to work for the good of the order. I thank you all for becoming the FFF, and thank in advance all of you who will become the FFF. And especially I would like to thank all the volunteers and leaders within the clubs and council that make our programs and project something we can all enjoy and take pride in doing, working and attending together. Together, we are the FFF.

In closing, I'm really looking forward to October. I'm planning to fish more in the cooling weather, attend the Expo, and will surely enjoy your company in Kissimmee. Please take time to stop and chat when you see me. We can swap some fish tales about the ones that got away.

Stay hooked,

Bill Gunn

President, FFF Florida Council