



September 2015
Edition

President's Message

Domingo Rodriquez

David's Line

**September
Conservation**

**Volunteer
Opportunities**

Let's Go Fishing

Sustaining Donors

RMF Quick Links



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From our President



Wil Huett, Rocky Mountain Flycasters
President and Lifetime Member of TU

As always, there is good news and there is bad news.

The good news is, it's September and some of the best fishing lies in the days ahead. Browns and brookies with spawning on their minds get aggressive and even more beautiful than the autumn colors that surround their streams.

The bad news is, it's September and we're probably all rueing the fact we didn't get enough fishing in during the hot and humid days just past. Maybe

we missed out on a good hatch on the stream or missed the bass and bluegill topwater action.

Which camp are you in? Good news or bad news?

I have to confess I fall into both. If that makes me a likely candidate for that obsolete political party the Mugwumps (their "mug" on one side of the fence and their "wump" on the other), so be it. But I can promise I won't be missing all the fall action. I have already committed to leading a work party on at least one of our "North Fork of the Thompson Streambed Cleanup Days".

That little stream was one of my favorites, and one week before the flood we are working to repair, I pulled an 18" brown out of the hole below one of the culverts. I want to help put that stream back together so it again becomes one of my go to spots when time is short but the fishing fever is irresistible. You'll find more info in Phil Wright's column below. Hope you will be on one of my work crews. We'll work half a day and then go searching for that 18 inch.

RMF members are also going to be working on revegetation projects along the Thompson's North Fork, and there are projects at the junction of the Poudre and Skin Gulch, on Sheep Creek and more. Check them all out in announcements prepared by Dave Piske and

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Phil Wright in **Conservation Notes** below, and **Give A Day Back To The Fish**.

Another topic of strong regional interest has been the Army Corps of Engineers Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (**SEIS**) for the Northern Integrated Supply Project (**NISP**). Your Board of Trustees held extra meetings to gather information and appointed a special committee to work with Colorado TU to draft and submit joint comments. Thanks to Dave Piske, Dick Jefferies, and CTU's David Nickum for doing some heavy lifting on this weighty subject. The

comments have been filed and you can find them on the **RMF web site**. In essence, our comments say the science is too thin and more work needs to be done before decisions can be made.

I'll miss the September 16th meeting due to previous travel commitments but Past President **Dick Jefferies** will run the show. You won't want to miss out on learning more about a new dry fly floatant and check out Dave Mosnik tying fly patterns for lake fishing and giving tips on fishing the Red Feather Lakes area. Enjoy, and I'll see you in October.

Wil Huett, President
Rocky Mountain Flycasters

Chapter Event Calendar

From Our Program Chair



Domingo Rodriguez, RMF Program Chair

Welcome to the Rocky Mountain Flycasters 2015-2016 series of monthly meetings! We begin the season on September 16 with an important talk on the city's Water Efficiency Plan by Travis Paige.

Travis is Fort Collins Utilities Community Engagement Manager. A graduate of Washburn University,

he worked at Weststar Energy in Kansas as an accounts and planning manager for 9 years, then a rate analyst for the City of Longmont. He currently manages a team that facilitates participation in the internal and external programs and services offered by Utilities through partnerships and education.

Travis will provide us with an update on the efficiency plan that will be submitted to the State of Colorado in 2017. Water efficiency, and the plan, involve:

- fostering a conservation ethic and eliminating waste
- demonstrating a commitment to sustainability
- providing water for multiple beneficial purposes
- reducing costs for the Utility and customer and
- preparing for forecasted climate change

The General Meeting is free and open to the public. Social hour (and fly tying demo) begins at 6:30 pm September 16 at the Fort Collins Senior Center, and the program follows at 7:00 pm. We will have local fly tyers at the meeting and an equipment raffle. The Fort Collins Senior Center is located at 1200 Raintree Drive off Shields Avenue between Prospect and Drake.

David's Lines: A Flypaper Column



David Cunningham, *The FlyPaper* Columnist

“I am an Englishman who is very happy to live in Colorado. I am semi-retired from the business world and have renewed my interest in writing. Some of my pieces will relate to actual events, others will be fiction. (My friends tell me I have trouble knowing the difference.) The “David's Line” column will feature the mysteries of our sport, restoration, and the pleasures of good company. Let me know whether or not these stories are worth reading. Life is short—go fishing first.”

—David Cunningham.

In his initial Flypaper column last month (**July**) David described the experience of being excited by our sport while simultaneously encountering fear, and then describing to a partner or spouse “how the day went” for us. In his August column below, “Finding a River”, David reflects on fishing the

Wild and Scenic Poudre and soon forgetting how this magnificent outdoors gem is not far from a busy road.

A Lodge Owner's Bad Dream — Me!

A few years ago I had worked hard to have a good year in business and my wife agreed that I deserved a treat. My choice was a week at one of the best fly fishing lodges in the world, The Northern Lights Lodge, in Likely, British Columbia. I had met one of the owners who lived in Denver in the winter. He described their practice of entertaining just a dozen guests, every second week, so the staff were as fresh as the flowers. He talked about large rainbows that had never seen a tied fly, and rivers where you saw more bears than fishermen. I was hooked.

Likely is 340 miles North of Vancouver and the trip included a flight in a puddle jumper to Williams Lake where we were picked up by the lodge's van. At the time of my visit, Likely had a population of about 250 and it was a working town, without any tourist flavor. The buildings were early 20th century and the park held reminders of the town's mining history, including the Cariboo gold rush of 1859. Mining and logging were the prime industries, but guiding had added new vitality to the economy. I smiled a dozen times as we drove through the town center.

The Northern Lights Lodge consists of a solid log main building and a set of basic cabins, all situated at the back of a couple of acres of rolling lawn that led down to the massive Quesnel Lake. The fittings and fixtures in the lodge were first class without being opulent, and our hosts, Skeed and Sharon Borowski were instant friends. Half of the other guests seemed to be returning for a second or third fishing experience.

The Quesnel is one of the largest fresh water bodies in the world. One arm of the lake is nearly 70 miles long and 1,500 feet deep. I guessed that we would not be doing any deep nymphing on the lake. The actual fishing plan was to use a jet boat to access the tributary Quesnel River or the feeder Horsefly River. Like the Green River in Utah, there was a high expectation that we would be dry fly fishing. The program called for four days on the rivers and one day on some prolific ponds, with the option to tour a gold mine.

The night we arrived I checked my 5 wt. rod and speculated which of my flies would be killers on the big streams. At 8 am the next day four of us powered off on a bumpy twenty minute ride to the Horsefly where we transferred to a pair of pontoon boats to begin the day's drift at about 9 am. Our guide, Paul, checked our gear and rigged his local flies. My anticipation jumped as he tied on a size 4 sofa pillow and talked about how to fish a salmonfly hatch. The weather was good, with small gusts of wind that shook the bank-lining trees and, we hoped, the bugs that were hanging out there. My companion, Don, and I found an easy casting rhythm and were soon dropping the flies up tight to the bank, or into eddies and feeding lanes. The rainbows were also out early and big rolling rises began to appear. Occasionally we could see the monsters holding in the shelter of a rock or scooting over to find a new lane. Excitement caused both of us to cast too fast and Paul grumbled "Take it easy guys."

Don hooked the first fish with a whoop and proceeded to fight and land an 18 inch bow. He made the second hook-up, and the third, fourth and fifth. The last fish he caught before lunch took his fly as it got into an eddy and spun past my fly, separated by six inches. I had to jerk my line clear for fear of snagging the fish's tail.

Before lunch we wade fished for a while and Paul spent time close to me, assisting when I needed to wade beyond my comfort level to get to a sand bar and cast into a nice bend in the stream. He changed my fly a few times as fish rose but ignored my offering. He had to leave when Don started shouting about how to get his latest 20 inch rainbow across a fast riffle.

The pattern for the day continued in the afternoon and by the end of the day Don had eleven notches on his stick and I had none. I am a good sport and I enjoyed seeing these fish and watching the action. Twice I netted the catch for him and did the release. We shook hands and grinned.

The second and the third day were a mirror image of the first. I am not a great fly caster, but we were drift boat fishing and the targets are often only fifteen feet away. I do not have Olympic reflexes but my eyesight is sharp and these were naïve, hungry rainbows, whose strikes were hard enough to set the hook even if you dropped your rod. I concluded that a force field had been created around my hooks as one fish after another declined the fly or missed their take. I was so angry with them. Eating flies was what they did for a living! How could they be so bad at it?

Paul now spent so much time with me that I had to ask him to leave me alone when we wade fished. At the end of the day he was painfully apologetic for my lack of success. Back at the lodge, Skeed asked me if I wanted to switch guides. I spent all evening letting everybody know that I was having a great time, this was a wonderful experience, and I was a happy man.

On the fourth day Gordy was our guide for some salmon fishing. He and four of us took the jet boat over to the Quesnel River outlet. The mouth of the Quesnel is a hundred feet across, six feet deep, and moving at 3 or 4 knots, by my estimate. Gordy gunned the boat across some really fast rapids and set each of us off at 50 yard intervals to wade fish. I was kitted out with a 10 ft, 9 wt and a box of large streamers. My spot was perfect, with a sand spit that gave me access to a river bend and the eddy pool at its apex. I cast across the flow, a little upstream, then stripped back through the current. This was hard work as I moved frequently, changed the weights, changed the flies, and changed the rate of my retrieves.

By the end of the day I was tired and quite pleased to see the boat come back to pick me up. Gordy greeted me with a wave yelling "What d'you get?" As I stepped into the boat I told him, "A workout and an education!" Gordy winced as he gave me a hand with the rod. We bounced up stream to pick up the other fishermen. With the arrivals came the grins and the stories of competitive anglers. One guest had fared worse than me as he was both skunked and wet.

What followed is an aside from the story, until now, known to only seven individuals. When the wet guest clambered into the boat, Gordy asked me to move to the back so the wet guy could shelter in the cuddy cabin when we hit speed on the lake. As I stepped over the interlaced feet of two men the boat was facing upstream, idling in an eddy current. There was some shuffling for me to get past them but in a few moments I turned to lower my butt on to the stern seat. Everybody looked upstream at the rapids we would need to summit. At that moment the boat nosed into the current and Gordy gunned the engine. Unseen, I toppled backwards. My arms flailed as I headed for the river.

My brain flashed on what would happen next and recalled that I wore a pfd but I had loosened the waist strap of my waders. A millisecond later my outstretched left hand hit the horizontal bar of the rod rack above my head. The brief contact with the bar broke my river-bound momentum. My rear end caught the top edge of the transom and my right hand clamped onto the gunnel. For a second I

hung in the balance as the boat accelerated but she hit a wave and I slid forward into my seat. The roar of the waterjet drowned out (bad pun) my, “Holy F***!”

I could think of nothing to say or do. My heart was pounding but I was strangely calm and analytical. “Would anybody, in a boat hammering up a major rapid, have heard the splash as I hit the water? How long would it have taken before somebody turned to ask David how he fared with the sockeye? How would I have fared in with the sockeye?

The evening was quite awkward. I was still shaken enough that I was almost speechless when asked about my day. It seemed so lame to say, “OK until my pinky finger was all that kept me in the jet boat.” All the guests knew that I had had four days without a fish. Skeed and the guides spent time with me, agonizing over what had gone wrong, fortunately managing to avoid the chestnut, “That’s why they call it fishing not catching.” Skeed was unduly anxious and I was sure that he had been worrying about me all week. Lodge owners do lie awake worrying about skunked clients.

The subject damped everybody’s fun and I withdrew as soon as was polite.

I had no grounds for complaint with any of the services offered, from the guides’ skills and encouragement, to the food and accommodations. But I would be a liar if I did not admit to a deep angst that this dream trip was ending and I would not get to experience the joy in the cast, strike, set, play, and net, that it takes to land a really large rainbow.

The fifth day was the day assigned to the pond fishing or the gold mine tour. A couple of the guests chatted with me about how big the pond fish were, and how much fun it was going to be in a kick boat. Their kind efforts left me as chilled as the morning squall that lashed the lake.

And then. Skeed called us together after breakfast to talk about the arrangements for the day and casually mentioned that, if anybody wanted more river exposure, Paul and Gordy were ready to take the drift boats back onto the Horsefly for a half day. My hand shot up before the words reached anybody else’s ears.

The Friday was the worst weather we had encountered and the guides had set a shorter day to get us back in time for the special end-of-stay dinner at the lodge. We rowed past the first section of the river that I recalled had yielded most of the big fish in the first three passes on the Horsefly. I took the rear seat that offered a little shelter from the wind gusts and cast my sofa pillow at the bank. It was not a brilliant cast, certainly no better than the first five hundred that I had performed in the week, but it was the best. A bow slashed at the fly with a splat that I will never forget. My drag was correct, my line was straight, my tip was low, and my strike was perfect. The hook set and the fish dived for the bottom. My rod bowed and twenty yards of line peeled off my reel. Paul yelled, “Yeah! Fish-on!” and backed us up to ease the strain. The rainbow made a few runs and one leap with a vicious head shake. I was too nervous about losing him to apply much pressure, so it took a few minutes before Paul scooped the 18 inch fish into the net. The lip hook was easy to extract and I took the opportunity to kiss the fish before holding him into the flow, until he flipped his tail and swam off.

The mood in the boat was like three lottery ticket winners in a bar. Don almost fell in trying to shake my hand. And it continued that way for the next three hours. Don had a good day but I had a party. I was hitting my spots and fish came from nowhere to demolish my flies.

Near midday, a half mile from the pullout, Paul took us ashore for a quick snack while he did some wade fishing. I ate for three minutes before I noticed some movement immediately downstream from him. I picked up my rod and slipped into the water without Paul seeing me. I waded out to stand directly behind him and cast a few feet in front of his left hip. The strike came instantly and the set was right on his hip pocket. Paul nearly came out of his waders!

When you can do no wrong the world is a magic place. A quarter mile from the pull-out I hooked a fish that almost jerked me out of the boat. He ran off thirty yards of line before making three successive leaps that left holes in the river. His head shakes were spectacular. Then, still on the line, he got in the current and ripped line off into my backing. I yelled to Paul that I was out of line. My rod was a semicircle above my head. Paul beached the boat, and before it came to a stop I jumped out, stumbling on the rocks, literally running to the fish with the rod high above my head, frantically reeling line in. The fight took fifteen minutes before I could get him into a pool and Paul was able to slip the net under his belly. It was a 25 inch rainbow jack with a fat belly and a big protruding jaw. The hook was in the back of his lip and took a while to extract. The fish was easy to handle and Paul took a quick picture. The release took a long time. Paul showed us how attentive you have to be to give a big fish time to recover after a long fight. Finally, his body wriggled and his tail flicked. Paul held him until he urgently thrashed his tail and slid off into the river.

My eight fish were all 18"+ and the last was the biggest fish of the week. Paul had radioed ahead that, "David had caught fish", and at the lodge we were greeted like Roman conquerors. The end-of-stay dinner was a party to remember and the next day as we departed everybody committed to meeting in Mongolia, or was it Monrovia? Hey - it was a real party; who knows countries?

The happiest camper was our host Skeed, who admitted that the week would have been a sour recollection if I had gone five days skunked. I had been his nightmare for a week. I told him I was never in doubt that the tide would turn and reminded him how much I was looking forward to framing the picture of me and my fish.

They never could find the picture!

Return to **TOP**

August Conservation Notes



Dave Piske, Conservation Chair

We have an urgent need in September for volunteers on two local projects. In the first I describe the Sheep Creek Reconnect Project and in the second Phil Wright provides details about the North Fork Big Thompson Restoration Project.

1) Volunteers Urgently Needed for Sheep Creek Reconnect Project

Dear all who love cutthroats,

The urgent schedule for this high-country project is squeezed between a contractor's late completion date (done) and whatever comes next:

Mother Nature's unknown date for the first snowfall at 10,000 feet; or the opening of elk season. We are trying to get this project done in September if at all possible.

This Sheep Creek, one of several with that popular name in Larimer County, is a tributary of the Poudre River that enters the river near Sleeping Elephant Mountain along Highway 14. We won't disturb the elephant's sleep because our work sites are about 2,000 feet higher in elevation than Sheep Creek's confluence with the Poudre. The two work sites are where the East Fork and West Fork of Sheep Creek flow under the Forest Service's Crown Point Road in Arapaho - Roosevelt National Forest.

The reconnect project is a U. S. Forest Service initiative to eliminate two small-diameter pipe-culverts that prevented cutthroat trout from migrating further upstream to reach desirable spawning waters. The new culverts have semi-circular cross-sections, with a base width of 12 feet, a height of 6 feet, and each are 50-some feet long, buried under Crown Point Road. A contractor utilizing heavy equipment has completed the culvert replacement. What remains to be accomplished is re-vegetation of small areas at the inlets and outlets of the culverts and also on former construction-staging areas.

Our work will involve scuffing bare soil with rakes to create a seedbed; scattering a mix of native grass and forb seeds on the seedbed; and then covering the seeded area with a coarse mulch of small tree branches we will cut from nearby dead felled lodgepole pine, fir, and spruce trees. Additionally, there will be some re-shaping of the stream banks and the creek channel upstream of the culverts. This will involve re-locating numerous medium-sized rocks the contractor deposited near the culvert inlets. The finished rockwork will consist of several terraces to prevent erosion of steep creek banks near entries to the culverts.

These are drive-up work sites about a 2-hour drive from Fort Collins, with no hiking involved. The gorgeous forest setting is a dense mix of tall lodgepole pine, spruce, and fir trees with creek-side meadows currently lush with wildflowers.

A group of 10 to 12 volunteers may complete all the work in one day. And that day will be whichever of these Saturdays has the most volunteers:

September 12 September 26 October 3

If you can volunteer to help on this project, please email **Dave Piske** and tell him which days you can join the volunteer crew, and include all of those days you able to participate.

Additional information on what to bring will be sent to all who volunteer for the selected date. And many thanks for your attention to this request.

2) North Fork Big Thompson Restoration Project

Chris Carroll, Fisheries Biologist with the Arapahoe Roosevelt Nation Forest has notified me that we can begin to schedule volunteer days on the North Fork. To express your interest and date availability simply click on this link <http://doodle.com/>. This link will open in your browser and you can simply check off the days you are available to volunteer. Chris Carroll and the Co-Leaders will use this information to organize volunteer days according to your and their availability and you will be contacted by email with further details. If you have questions about this process contact **Phil Wright** and I will be happy to assist.



Photo Source: Phil Wright

Thanks to all those who participated on August 18 in Co-Leaders' training for the North Fork Big Thompson Restoration Project. The trained Co-Leaders (photo below) are Wil Huett, Frank Bub, Clara Moulson, Mickey McGuire and yours truly. Thanks again for your interest, leadership and participation.

If you would still like to volunteer as a Co-Leader simply plan to volunteer on a given North Fork Project volunteer day and mention to the Co-Leader that day that you would like to receive mentoring on the project so that you can Co-Lead future projects. The mentoring Co-Leader will then notify me that you are trained and I will add your name to the Co-Leader distribution list. It's just that easy.

The general outline for the North Fork Project volunteer effort involves organizing small volunteer crews to work on specific reaches along the North Fork and perhaps combine a morning's volunteer work with a stream side lunch and an afternoon of fishing in the Estes Park area. Weekday as well as weekend volunteer dates are certainly possible. Another person suggested that this project would be a great family oriented volunteer opportunity for families with children, 12 years and older.

Again, please click on the doodle poll link <http://doodle.com/> or contact me soon if you would like to contribute to this effort as a Co-Leader or Volunteer. - Phil Wright

Return to **TOP**

Volunteer Opportunities

- September 26 **Big Thompson Lower North Fork Revegetation with WRV**
- September 27 **Phantom Canyon Trail Maintenance and Fishing**
- October 1 Colorado Stream Restoration Network Steam Restoration Workshops;
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/colorado-stream-restoration...>
- October 10 **Big Thompson Lower North Fork Revegetation with WRV**
- October 31 **Big Thompson Lower North Fork Revegetation with WRV**
- December 3 Colorado Stream Restoration Network Steam Restoration Workshops;
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/colorado-stream-restoration...>

Return to **TOP**

Let's Go Fishing

2015 RMF Trips



Mark Miller, Let's Go Fishing Coordinator

Listed below are our trips we plan to take September through November 2015. We hope you will join us for all the fishing fun! In addition, below the list of trips, Dennis Miller provides a preview of the forthcoming Yampa River River trip and a summary of the August trip to the headwaters of the Colorado River in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Any ideas or suggestions for next year's fishing destinations are welcome. Just email or call your ideas and/or questions to **Mark Miller** or call 744-8229 (cell).

Sep 18-20	Yampa River, Steamboat Springs (see below)	Host: Dennis Cook
Oct 2-4	Frying Pan River	Host: Ben Zomer
Nov ??	Poudre River (weather permitting)	Host: Mark Miller

Yampa River Fishing Trip September 18-20



The Yampa River runs through the town of Steamboat Springs, and together with associated tributaries and the tail water stretch below Stagecoach Reservoir it is something of a fly angler's paradise, noted for its large trout. Then there is also the Elk River just a half dozen miles North from town that offers additional mountain stream fishing.

Six members have registered to take this weekend trip...and there's still space for a few more. The basic plan is to depart Friday and return Sunday, though some may opt to stretch the trip on either or both ends. Specific details of carpools, departure/return times and lodging arrangements will be determined when we know who all is participating.

If you are interested to make this trip, contact Dennis Cook at rkymtnangler@Q.com or call (970) 372-9229 before September 10th.

Let's Go Fishing Trip Report: 2015 RMF Brookies Bash!



Rich Aldrich, David Cunningham, Dennis Cook, Ed McConnaughey, and Paul Wehr

RMF's annual "Brookies Bash" on the Colorado River headwaters in RMNP is history! So those of you now saying, "Aw shucks! I wanted to do that trip!" - will just have to wait until next August. That is, unless you opt to make a quick run up and across Trail Ridge Road for a Do-It-Yourself trip before season's end. Actually, that's not a bad idea, especially if you want to have as much fun as Rich Aldrich, David Cunningham, Dennis Cook, Ed McConnaughey and Paul Wehr (pictured above) did on August 29th.

Ten Reasons to do this "Brookies Bash!"

- Trail Ridge Road repairs are finally completed
- Beautiful, lush meadows and diverse wildlife
- Great laughs watching brookies dance on the end of your line
- Acknowledgement of just how small we are on this earth
- Wading in forceful water is no longer your thing
- 360 degrees of verdant, pine scented forest
- A peaceful getaway
- Spouse won't allow you to fish alone anymore
- Rejuvenation from a relaxing, wet-wade outing
- A flashback reminder of why you got into this fly fishing pastime



Ed McConnaughey Stalking Brookie

Ah, yes, and not to forget the companionship of a good old 'South of the Border' dinner and libation in Estes Park enroute home, swapping stories and watching the fish grow with every story retelling.

Return to **TOP**

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Paul Wehr
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2015-09-01