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Report from Fletcher's Cove, March 16, 2008



The first full week of March saw the Potomac high and muddy, running at levels not far below what is considered "flood stage" at Little Falls. After last year's drought, much debris, both natural and man-made had accumulated along the banks of the river. The first Spring rise in the water usually delivers all that "stuff" to us at Fletcher's... C.O.D. We try not to take delivery, but often have to pay anyway. It was fortunate that our fleet of freshly worked-over rowboats was not in the water as they would have been battered and bruised by all that driftwood, merry-go-rounding in the current. As it was, many hours of hard labor went into moving the debris out of the way of operations. The dock has to be floated out of harm's way during high water, and it is ever more difficult to finesse things as Fletcher's Cove has become much more shallow with 40 years of unnatural siltation. By chance one night, a couple of the larger tree trunks parked themselves smack where our dock is usually positioned. With a bit of friendly help from the Great Falls C&O maintenance staff, those monster logs are now out of the way and waiting to continue their journey downriver with the next rush of high water. Thank you, guys!

The river level is now down to an average flow for this date and we are poised to launch the boats this week with fishing rentals to begin on or shortly after the 19th. District angling permits are on sale, bait is resting in the fridge, shad darts and basic tackle needs are there for purchase and last but not least, the encouragement and advice that so many seem to need these days is available free of charge. Just remember, we are trying to provide a service AND make a living here, so we can not always chew-the-fat when things are busy.

I want to mention a couple of our regular fishermen who epitomize dedication and the wisdom of an old saying, "the early bird gets the worm" (or fish, in this case). On Saturday morning the 8th while at The Cove to move some flood ropes, I encountered Bernard Cooper of Montgomery Village, MD. He was out in the cold to purchase a fishing license and wet a line. Not deterred by the roiled high water, if there was a hungry fish out there, he was going to find it. And on Friday, the 14th, Buster Braxton, an old timer we are always delighted to see, fished with a buddy down on the shoreline and pulled in the first batch of White Perch seen at The Cove this year. Just remember, when the daffodils are in full bloom, the White Perch are in the river. (Catching them is up to you!)

The water temperature is now in the low fifties. Schools of herring and hickory shad should be moving in any day. As Spring progresses, stripers and American Shad will appear in the eddies and riffles. Considering man's pressure on the environment, what nature delivers each year must be considered a gift. Last season, the gift of three phenomenal weeks of American Shad fishing unwrapped itself before our eyes. Partnering with Mother Nature in this natural blessing is Jim Cummins, an Interstate Commission on the Potomac River biologist, who spent years re-stocking the Potomac with baby shad. Many people and organizations helped Jim in this effort. He is now doing the same for other rivers in our region. Praise nature and pass the shad fry, please!





Dan

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