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FISHING REPORT

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Report from Fletcher's Cove - February 22, 2010

Cross-country on the towpath, downhill from the bike shed to the dock, luge around the parking lot, ice dancing on the cove, moguls atop the bottoms-up rowboats... sounds like the Winter Olympics, eh? In reality, that's Fletcher's Cove, Winter 2009 - 2010. Like the rest of the region, Fletcher's is buried under snow that Vancouverites should be jealous of.

With the thick blanket of snow throughout the Potomac watershed, the threat of a major flood looms ominously over Fletcher's. Serious floods are always an ordeal along the river, but a "big one," in the cold of winter, is something we river-rats dread.



In January 1996, up to three feet of snow covered the mountains and valleys upstream from Washington. Then, the temperature popped-up and a heavy, warm rain fell. It was as if two drenching rains were falling at the same time, with no growing vegetation to soak up even a little of the water. Rapidly, the river rose to nearly 20 feet at Little Falls pumping station; a "normal" level there is around 4 feet.

An in-season flood means that we must expeditiously move the floating docks and boats at Fletcher's to a safe resting place in the upper cove. In January '96, all the boats were racked up for repair at parking lot level, a normally safe distance above the flow; but not that time. The river reached three feet deep in the parking lot, washing all fifty-some boats off their racks. Fortunately, we had seen this coming, flipped the boats, and secured them in long daisy chains tied to trees. In ironic metaphor, the memory of frozen ropes and ice covered boats is burned into my brain.

The slow thaw that the region is experiencing at the moment is just what the doctor ordered. But there is still LOTS of snow in the mountains and the ground is saturated underneath, so we'll stay on guard, watching old man river roll along. Without a long dry spell, some degree of high water is pretty much a given this Spring.

There are lots of flood stories down at Fletcher's Cove. So many, in fact, that sometimes we feel like it's "man against the river." I've just purchased 400 feet of heavy dock rope to replace the weathered old cordage as a little insurance. But in our hearts we know the river dictates, and we humbly follow her lead. I'll save other stories for future reports, while hoping there's no new story-line this year!



As the earth comes to life under the snow, we are now prepping for the fishing season. In just a few short weeks it is realistic to hope for the first white perch and hickory shad to make their appearance. The onset of severe winter weather stopped boat restoration at about two-thirds done; we have to get at that. There is tackle to order, store clean-up, dock repair and a multitude of other tasks to be tended to. Let's all hope that Mother Nature does not have another punch to throw!

We are looking forward to seeing you at Fletcher's.

Dan



"Downhill from the store"
(photo by Mark Binsted)

*A heads-up: **The National Capital Chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold its annual angling show on Saturday, March 13th at The Georgetown Preparatory School in North Bethesda, MD.***

Fletcher's Cove will have a booth at the show and we hope to sell D.C. fishing permits at that time. (Cash only for permits sold at the show!) Go to www.ncc-tu.org for complete information on the show.

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