



## Maryland Fly Fishing Trail: A Prospectus



### Maryland's Fly Fishing Trail

Envision a virtual trail which will lead fly fishers of all ages and levels of experience on a journey across all of Maryland's counties, (re) discovering "America in Miniature" for themselves. Along with leading to a diversity of fishing opportunities for catching many different species of fish, Maryland's Fly Fishing Trail would introduce participants to nearby public access points, support numerous local, small businesses including hotel and lodging, restaurants, and fishing tackle shops, and increase visitation to nearby state parks and historic sites of interest.

### First in the Nation

Although fly fishing trails exist for individual counties<sup>1</sup>, none exist on a state-wide basis. Maryland would be the first state in the nation to establish a statewide fly fishing trail connecting all of its counties. This would go even further towards putting Maryland on the map as a desired fly fishing destination for the estimated 7 million fly fishers across the United States.<sup>2</sup> Few states can provide fly fishers with the opportunity to catch so many different species, for example, wild brook trout, largemouth bass, striped bass and sailfish, all within a few hours' drive.

### Multitude of Benefits

Here are some of the benefits anticipated from the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail:

- Putting Maryland on the map as an amazing fly fishing destination where within a few hours you can catch billfish or brook trout—and so many other species—on a fishing fly for the more than 7 million fly fishers across the country.
- Introducing more women, more younger anglers, and anglers of color and varied economic status to what makes fly fishing so special.
- Helping recruit and retain Maryland anglers and ensure they renew their fishing license so they can explore even more waters across Maryland.
- Expose anglers to new places to fish and find new public access points from which to cast from shore, wade, kayak, canoe, boat or charter and the opportunity to catch an incredible array of different fish species.

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<sup>1</sup> Brochures for fly fishing trails in Jackson County(NC), Garrett County (MD), and the Laurel Highlands in PA have been published.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/315900/number-of-fly-fishing-participants-us/>

- Help anglers get access to local fishing knowledge and gear at fly fishing shops and fishing tackle stores as well as making arrangements for personal guides and charter boat opportunities.
- And beyond fishing, expose anglers and their families and friends to what else Maryland has to offer in terms of state parks, county parks, historic sites, great places to eat, unique places to stay overnight (or all week long) and more...across all 23 counties and Baltimore City.



### **A Virtual Trail Leading to More Fishing Experiences**

Available both on-line and in the form of map pamphlet, the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail would be self-guided and direct participants to fishing locations in each of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City where they can experience catching a multitude of different fish species. Information provided would include the available public access points, which fish species can be

caught during what seasons of the year, recommended fishing flies, fly fishing equipment and techniques, locations of nearby fishing tackle and fly shops and services they have to offer, and state and county parks in the area and the amenities they provide.

### **More About Maryland's Fly Fishing Trail**

The Trail would include coldwater and warmwater as well as tidal and non-tidal fish species.

This is to be a true statewide trail, so in addition to well-known trout streams, ponds like Unicorn on the upper eastern shore, tidal rivers like the Blackwater, tidal marshes like Janes Island near Crisfield, the non-tidal upper Potomac River, reservoirs and more could be destinations of the trail.

Tidal fly fishing on Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries and embayments is rapidly growing in popularity. The Fly Fishing Trail could help continue that growth and share knowledge about where to fish for what, when and how as well as increase awareness of what the surrounding local communities have to offer participants to enrich their fishing experiences.

Fish such as bluegills, large & smallmouth bass, yellow & white perch, chain pickerel, striped bass, weakfish, bluefish, snakeheads, blue & channel catfish, muskie, pike, walleye, brown, rainbow and brook trout, and more could all be targeted as species to be caught on the Trail.

There could be an awards component, simply being added to the existing Fish Maryland Awards Program, which would recognize the number of trail sites visited as well as the number of species caught, recorded and released.

It would be a 12 month trail, encouraging anglers to fish year around by directing them to waters and fish species in those waters available through the different seasons, thereby,

maximizing their outdoor experiences and exposing them to different parts of Maryland all year round.

The Trail would be designed to directly supplement Maryland DNR's R3 program, encouraging license sales, and more to the point, keeping license holders licensed year after year.

The Fly Fishing Trail would be inclusive, targeting youth, persons of color and women anglers for outreach and connecting them to various regional angling organizations who can enhance their fly fishing experiences. An outcome would be expanding Maryland's population of anglers by sharing the unique characteristics of fly fishing.



A link would need to be added to the Maryland DNR Fisheries website and perhaps a QR on fishing licenses which, when scanned, will provide mobile device-based information on the Fly Fishing Trail (including slot and catch limits on different fish species).

Any concerns that a trail might create too much pressure on the popular fishing destinations are unfounded. If anything, the Fly Fishing Trail would be designed to encourage fly fishers to target less well known waters across Maryland's counties and Baltimore City, exposing participants to different parts of the state they would not otherwise travel to and experience firsthand.

This trail would be an economic development tool, promoting tourism, hospitality at restaurants and hotels, and most especially, expanded business activity at Maryland's fly fishing shops, fishing tackle stores and local fishing guide services. Just look at how Maryland's DNR's work in the North Branch of the Potomac River is still creating jobs at area hotels and restaurants and for fishing guides leading float trips as more anglers, particularly fly fishers, are hearing about the great fishing experiences on the river.

The Fly Fishing Trail would be designed to encourage residents and visitors to visit and experience Maryland's state parks. Many of the state parks have access to fishing destinations which would be recognized on the Trail.

A unique feature of this program could be a section on a trail brochure with room for "passport stamps" for fishing different waters in Maryland, encouraging fishermen to go into local retail tackle shops. Stamps would be provided to fishing tackle and fly shops whereby the shop owners would stamp the brochure map where the angler fished. Again, a further opportunity for business development.

## Endorsements

To date, the concept of a Maryland Fly Fishing Trail has been endorsed by the following organizations:

- Chesapeake Women Anglers
- Free State Fly Fishers
- National Capital Trout Unlimited Chapter
- Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited Chapter
- Potomac Patuxent Trout Unlimited Chapter
- Seneca Valley Trout Unlimited Chapter
- Tidal Potomac Fly Rodders



The following is the growing list of organizations being asked to endorse the concept of a Maryland Fly Fishing Trail:

- Casting for Recovery
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Chesapeake Council - Fly Fishers International
- Chesapeake Water Keeper
- Coastal Conservation Association Maryland
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
- Fish Talk Magazine
- Fly Fishers International
- Heroes on the Water
- Maryland BASS Nation
- Mayfly Project
- Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited
- MORE Commission
- Project Healing Waters
- Trout Unlimited Mid-Atlantic Council

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## **Maryland Fly Fishing Trail: Questions and Answers**

### **Q: What is the overall objective of the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail?**

A: Taking fly fishers of all ages and levels of experience on a journey across all of Maryland's counties, discovering "America in Miniature" for themselves. Along the way, introduce the trail participants to nearby public access points, support numerous local, small businesses including hotels and lodging, restaurants, fly fishing shops and fishing tackle stores, and increase visitation to nearby state and county parks and historic sites of interest.

### **Q: What are other objectives of the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail?**

A: Putting Maryland on the map as an amazing fly fishing destination where within a few hours you can catch billfish or brook trout—and so many other species—on a fishing fly for the more than 7 million fly fishers across the country. Introducing more women, more younger anglers, and anglers of color and varied economic status to what makes fly fishing so special. Helping recruit and retain Maryland anglers and ensure they renew their fishing license so they can explore even more waters across Maryland. Expose anglers to new places to fish and find new public access points from which to cast from shore, wade, kayak, canoe, boat or charter and the opportunity to catch an incredible array of different fish species. Help anglers get access to local fishing knowledge and gear at fly fishing shops and fishing tackle stores as well as making arrangements for personal guides and charter boat opportunities. And beyond fishing, expose anglers and their families and friends to what else Maryland has to offer in terms of state parks, county parks, historic sites, great places to eat, unique places to stay overnight (or all week long) and more...across all 23 counties and Baltimore city.

### **Q: What are you asking from Maryland state agencies?**

A: From the Maryland Department of Commerce, we are asking for access to the Fish and Hunt Maryland web site and the ability to work with the web site manager to incorporate the content for the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail. We would also like to work with the Department on developing and publishing a hard copy map pamphlet illustrating the trail and what it has to offer for distribution to the public through establish travel visitor centers.

From the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, we are only asking for web manager assistance in making links to Maryland state parks, natural resources areas, fisheries regulations and other information on DNR's website to the Department of Commerce's Fish and Hunt Maryland website.

### **Q: What are the benefits to the Maryland Department of Commerce and Office of Tourism?**

A: Establishing Maryland as an amazing fly fishing destination, drawing even more of the 7 million fly fishers across the country to fish all across our state. Bringing even more users to the Fish and Hunt Maryland website. A unique way of introducing more Marylanders to what each our 23 counties and Baltimore city have to offer in terms of fishing opportunities and much, much more. Directing even more willing customers to Maryland's fly shops, fishing tackle stores, and charter boat services. Advertising that fishing in Maryland is a year round activity where anglers and their families and friends can also enjoy what each county and Baltimore City have to offer every month of the year. The

opportunity to lay claim to the first in nation statewide fly fishing trail and seek nationwide coverage through articles in national magazines read by fly fishers across the country (e.g., Fly Fisherman, American Fly Fishing, Trout).

**Q: What are the benefits to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources?**

A: Introducing both Maryland and out-of-state anglers to the wonderful fishing opportunities provided by Maryland's state parks at the same time promoting everything else the parks have to offer families and friends. Helping recruit and retain Maryland anglers and ensure they renew their fishing license so they can explore even more waters across Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City. Educating anglers on Maryland's fishing regulations as they apply to specific waters listed on the trail and the species they could catch in those waters. Informing anglers that they can fish all across Maryland every month of the year, thus getting more Marylanders and out of state visitors outdoors all year round.

**Q: How will you select the specific places to fish included on the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail?**

A: We will reach out to a wide array of recognized local, regional and national fly fishers, guides and charter boat captains from across Maryland and ask them for their recommendations on places to fly fish with public access and opportunities to catch a diversity of different fish all year long. We will make the selections based on those places which provide the best public access, variety of fish species, year-round fishing opportunities, as well as best access to state and county parks, places to eat and stay, and local fly shops and fishing tackle stores.

**Q: What information will the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail provide to users?**

A: Through the Fish and Hunt Maryland website, users will be able to access the following information:

- Specific places to fly fish in each of the 23 counties and Baltimore City, with details on exactly where to publicly access the water and how (shoreline, wade, kayak, canoe, boat, charter);
- Which fish species can be caught on a fishing fly during each of the four seasons;
- Recommendations on fly fishing techniques and fishing flies tailored to each specific place to fish highlighted on the trail;
- Illustrations of how to best catch and release the species anglers are likely to catch in each specific place to fish;
- Lists and locations of fly fishing shops, fishing tackle shops, fishing guides and charter boats around each place to fish highlighted on the trail;
- Links to general Maryland fishing regulations and any special regulations which apply to each place to fish highlighted on the trail;
- Lists and locations of the state and county parks and historic sites close to each place to fish on the trail, with links to each park/site and what they have to offer the user and their families and friends; and
- Direct access to the array of places to eat and stay overnight close to each place to fish highlighted on the trail.

**Q: How will you provide help to those anglers who have never fly fished before?**

A: In Maryland, we are blessed with a number of clubs and organizations dedicated to fly fishing and conservation of fishing and fisheries which have active programs for providing mentoring opportunities,

hands-on clinics and classes for developing fly casting, fly fishing and fly tying skills at minimum to no costs. The Maryland Fly Fishing Trail will introduce users to these many clubs and organizations and how to connect in and take fully advantage of everything they have to offer to the new fly fisher.

**Q: How will you effectively reach out to and engage anglers of color?**

A: We are planning to build on the effective approaches being pioneered by other organizations who are being asked to endorse the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail—e.g., Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Conservancy, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and work to apply them through the Trail.

**Q: What else could the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail offer?**

A: We could encourage anglers following the Trail to print off passports which could be stamped at local fly fishing shops and fishing tackle stores for fishing at each place to fish featured on the Trail. This stamping could also include recognition of the variety of fish species caught by the angler at each place to fish along the Trail. We could use QR codes to provide a direct link to the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail from mobile phone and other devices so participants could ‘bring’ the Trail on the road with them.

**Q: What are your plans to sustain the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail over time, continuing to generate interest in the trail and what it has to offer?**

A: First and foremost, we intend to build widespread, in-depth and sustained support for the Trail throughout the wealth of fly fishing clubs (e.g., Free State Fly Fishers), conservation organizations focused on fisheries (e.g., Trout Unlimited, Coastal Conservation Association Maryland), conservation organizations with a mission to get the public outdoors (e.g., Chesapeake Conservancy) and provide educational opportunities (e.g., Chesapeake Bay Foundation) who have or are being asked to endorse the Trail. That supportive infrastructure will also include owners of fly fishing shops and fishing tackle stores, fishing guides and charter boat captains, who individually and collectively will bring extensive knowledge of fly fishing in Maryland to the users of the Trail. Finally, we will tap deep into the membership of these many clubs and organizations to take full advantage of the many talented fly fishers, book authors, magazine article writers, and photographers.

The Trail will be sustained through a commitment to continuing to bring fresh content to the Fish and Hunt Maryland website in the form of stories, how to articles, photos, and videos generated by the organizations and business who have endorsed the Trail and bought into its many objectives and resulting benefits.

Over time the exact locations of places to fish in each of the 23 counties and Baltimore City will evolve to lead Trail participants to new places to visit and explore all while providing new fly fishing experiences. There are just so many wonderful place to fish in Maryland, we want the Trail to lead participants to discover different parts of each county and Baltimore City over time.

**Q: What are the challenges we may face in developing and maintaining a Maryland Fly Fishing Trail?**

A: Actually, we don’t see any challenges. The infrastructure is in place with the Fish and Hunt Maryland website. The content will be provided by the engaged fly fishing clubs and conservation organizations described above and by tapping into the extensive existing content on visitmaryland.org and Maryland DNR websites.