



NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENTS COLUMN – October 2025

Here we are going into October, rain is expected and hopefully snow is not far behind to help restore our water levels.

Our Summer / Winter transition folks are in the process of relocating back down to lower levels for the winter. We wish them safe travels in their journey. Your BOD is looking forward to planning a 2025 Christmas Dinner get together in December, a Fly-Fishing Expo and Banquet in 2026.

Our 2025 Banquet at Hon-Dah was a successful venture and very well attended. Thanks to all who donated, assisted with set-up and participated in the event. We could not have had a successful outcome without all your efforts.

Several of our members made it to Silver Creek for the October 1 opening. I hope to hear some success stories at the October meeting. Unfortunately, I have had some difficult family issues and was unable to make it to Silver Creek as I had hoped, but there is still time.

We will have sign-up sheets at the October & November meetings for a rod building class and fly-tying class, with dates to be announced in November. Also, if you would like to assist in either class, your participation would be appreciated.

“Tight Lines” Mike Whitney – Your President

October 15, 2025

Held at White Mountain Nature Center

425 S. Woodland Rd. Lakeside

5:30 Raffle and chatting

Program: Rocky Mountain Fly Highway

Continuing Raffle—Fundraiser—Rod and Reel

TUESDAY AFTER THE OPENER



by Robert McKeon

Kirby had just eaten the peanut butter and jelly sandwich looking sheepishly in another direction as I approached my pickup. I had just finished talking with Rob, head wrangler for the state fish and game department. Rob reminded me about the new regulations on the river and asked if I had seen any bait fishermen in the new “Flies Only” section. Rob and I had known each other for over 20 years. He knew I’d be here in my favorite spot, Tuesday after the Opener. Tuesday’s I had this stretch all to myself. The river was always less crowded. This was my first chance to fish- cabin fever was now past tense. And, as Rob explained, because of rain last weekend he had his fill with rescuing two fishermen because of high waters. Luck would be on my side today as he deliberated- the river’s wade able; the sun’s warming; the insects would be teasing hungry trout and “...what’s Kirby eating?”

My obedient dog, my companion of hunting and fishing expeditions was at it again. Kirby, an aged Golden retriever, was still trying to look innocent, without much success, as I approached my pick-up. The fly-fishing vest was crumpled and next to my waders, the torn empty plastic bag the sandwich was in tumbled slowly across the pickup bed as the breezes enthused it. There was dog slobber on my vest near the back zipper. Nothing else seemed out of place. My bamboo rod was still in place across the tailgate as I left it, along with the opened fly box I was searching before Rob pulled up.

Kirby knew he could get away with it, his educated nose, hunting instincts and anything yummy never let him down. I couldn’t get mad, but so much for the treat after I fished today. It was always sort of a ritual after fishing this stretch just to sit on the tailgate, talk to Kirby, sharing a PB&J sandwich before heading back home. I could only sit in silence rolling my eyes back with disappointment. I needed to get in my waders to start of my early season trek.

Kirby and I shared up-land birds, fly fishing trips and plenty of talks on the back of this old pickup for a better than 9 years. Kirby hadn’t been out of my sight since I hunted up near Pierre, South Dakota below Harmon’s small spread. Harmon’s Golden retriever, Cindy, had a small litter. Harmon’s wife, Joey, insisted I take one of the pups. Harmon always treated me as part of the family when I hunted his land, and, fished his home waters, the Benton River, located in the northeastern tip of Walton County, an hour or so from my front door. The drive up here is always easy. By the time I get here I’ve unwound from the hectic city life. It’s a short enough trip to where you can’t have a bad day.

The last two years I realized many wonderful joys each time I came this way to fish. I learned to fish slower, look at the scenery attentively since my by-pass surgery. I could smell the air with new kindness of being put on earth, a second rebirth each time I’d follow a path to the river’s edge to fish.

Grabbing my fly rod and helping Kirby from the pick-up we headed on the path to one of my favorite spots. The sun was glistening among the pines bouncing off the river’s gentle currents, the ripples seeking colors of the coming spring. Wrinkled green reflections on the river’s surface were present even though the foliage floor rested in drab browns. A leftover blanket of snow still remained in small patches. A breath of winter still hugged the shadows far sides.

My gait was quick and steady with confidence. It was nice to finally be on the river after the isolation during the winter months. There was even a noticed prance in Kirby as he bounded ahead to investigate our return.

One of the first things I noticed was a fallen tree, a skeletal pine partially dipping into the edges of the river, scraggly branches providing new currents for hatches to collect in feeding lanes for a hungry brown. The pine tree lay at an angle extending some 40 feet into the water, a picturesque reminder beckoning a Winslow Homer painting. A peaceful old friend of nature now laid at rest.

...continued Tuesday after the Opener

My favorite spot on the river was a gravel bar fishermen know as "Woody's Point." Preordained by the locales or guides frequenting the river- someone years ago named them over a few drinks or a campfire. In fact some of the designated names date back to logging.

The only way one could reach Woody's Point was to get off the main path descending the small embankment hanging on to various branches among the trees. Kirby was out ahead of me. He knew the river as well as I did. As always, there he was sitting by the group of boulders waiting for me. The gravel floor and sandy beach showed no sign of footprints. A good omen knowing I would be the only one to wade here. Trout always waited for my return. Woody's Point was a place to survey my pursuit of solitude too.

The little gravel island gave me a chance to get my bearings, where I could see a good portion of the river. This was part of the Tucker Wilderness tract, an 85-acre parcel bequeathed to the state by an automobile magnate in the early 1950's. Its two track veins reaching various parts of the river united the heart of the county road some 1 1/2 miles back. The thick setting of pines, oaks, and alders had grown over the years. The occasional birch tree stood at attention with its barren branches outstretched beckoning the first spring bird to return.

Today the waters were somewhat darker than usual with debris whirling in the current. A few small sticks floated lazily by. I spotted a rise just out and downstream that gave credence to my immediate mission wondering if the trout might accept one of my newly tied flies. Anxiously I eased near the edge of the gravel bar to cast my rod. The sipping trout was within my range.

Kirby was looking upstream unaware of my concentrated efforts to fish the dimpled rise. His tail indicated he was happy with his territory here with me as he pawed the gravel now next to me. It was in my disgust, after some foolish casts that I should change flies. And, while I had my head buried in one of my fly boxes Kirby gave off with a quick muffled "woof," almost playful in nature. I commented without looking up that he wasn't to go in swimming and to stay near me even though I didn't have a PB&J sandwich waiting for him. Kirby kicked up more gravel as he pranced gently brushing against me then pawing at my leg. He got my attention as I folded my fly box and petted his hindquarters to settle him down. Kirby was anxious to share something upstream as he frolicked a little more feverishly. I grabbed at his collar, stroked his ears looked him in the eye reminding him he was a good dog, settle down, I loved him very much and to let me alone so I could fish. His perseverance was overwhelming as if he needed to tell me something- something right now! I knelt down next to him at eye level turned and followed his line of sight up stream. I grabbed his ear playfully and kissed him telling him it was only some debris from the high waters. He was now to let me alone so I could fish. He licked at my face playfully. I could smell the PB&J

Kirby straightened up, arched his back, cocking his head as his ears perked with excitement. He darted to the waters edge coming to a point as he steadied himself before barking again. The debris he had his eye on got my attention this time. It was a cluster of twigs about the size of a basketball. It was just a small clump of undergrowth floating towards us.

I let Kirby know what it was and not to worry reaffirming him of the good job he did spotting it. I intended to keep fishing wishing he'd settle down as long as he'd come out here on the point with me. The small brush pile floated close by as it swirled into a stronger current just beyond us. Kirby was not going to let this opportunity go by any longer as he closely followed it to the farthest section of Woody's Point. Kirby barked again while taking on a challenged position with his rump and tail set skyward. He was almost in the river at this point. He hesitated when I called at him reminding him he was not to go after the small junkie looking brush pile. Kirby came to a halt as I then gave him a sharp yell. He stood his ground as we both watched the dark brush pile slowly float beyond us.

I praised him again as I walked over and bent down to scratch him behind the collar. He sat down and looked up at me then looked out at the brush pile floating from our view towards the new fallen pine. All was good for about 30 seconds when he suddenly sprang up and leaped into the water to follow his brush pile. My obedient Kirby, never a dull moment, his inquisitive moments like this were never explained total confusion on his part as to what command had just registered or even if he tried to remember this I suddenly

WMFFC MISSION STATEMENT:

The Mission Statement of the White Mountain Fly Fishing Club is: "To assist in the development and maintenance of fly fishing opportunities and to promote and participate in fly fishing in its many forms."

We support the practice of "Catch and Release." We support the use of barbless hooks and harmless netting-and-release practices. Fish should never be held out of water for longer than you can hold your breath.

October Outing—Silver Creek Meet at parking lot at 7 a.m.

...continued Tuesday after the Opener

realized moments like this I suddenly realized what stress was. When I finished with today's fishing experience and coaxing Kirby from the water I was hoping the Bud beer truck would be parked right next to me in the parking lot.

I yelled and gave Kirby a command whistle. No response. He was gaining on the brush pile with each splash of his wake. I decided that I'd better hightail it down river, and catch up with both the brush pile and Kirby at the new fallen pine. Kirby seemed spirited as he churned after his prey. What a great hunting dog. What a great fishing companion. What a wet dog!

Another loud command reverberated in the trees from my concerned, stressed out voice. Kirby acknowledged his intent with a good-natured bark, as he looked over my way reassuring me that he knew what he was doing. It was up to me to keep up with him. I was out of breath by the time I reached the fallen tree and dashed into the water giving Kirby another command shout. This time he eased up a bit and waded over to me as the brush pile lodged itself against the fallen tree coming to a halt. Kirby circled around by my left side standing at attention in chest-deep water staring at the brush pile. About the time I had something to say in this matter, Kirby barked loudly at the brush pile as if to tell it off in some form of dog gibberish. It was then I glimpsed a small flash of water just behind the brush pile. Kirby saw it too as he cautiously inched forward, as he cocked his head with excited anticipation. We both saw the water flash a second time as Kirby jumped about looking up at me. There, again, a splash, not more than 5 feet in front of us. It was a nice 13-inch brown that was attached to the brush pile. We both moved in as I grabbed for my net, scooping up the tangled trout. Kirby had his nose in the net making it tricky to lift the net towards me. Kirby froze in place as I reached to cradle the trout still in the net. The trout had been caught dangling on a bait hook with three feet of monofilament line tangled in the brush pile. No doubt a captured moment left from the weekend. I took the hook out of its jaw and checked the trout over for any other markings. It looked a little exhausted, but healthy. I held it near Kirby's nose so he could sniff it as he wagged his tail glancing up at me with warm tones of a happy approval to his demeanor.

We released the trout. It was Kirby's first trout. We later shared the back of the pickup one more time. I dried him off as best I could with an old towel I kept in the cab. There was no PB&J sandwich waiting, nor a Bud beer truck. We talked about our fly fishing experience for the day and decided that because of our local involvement with the river all these years, we'd appropriately name the fallen tree, "Homer's Tree," the one just downstream from Woody's Point. Kirby slept peacefully next to me as we drove home.

SIDE NOTE: *This story remains a favorite of mine and only came to light once again while I was sharing some moments of correspondence with an old fishing buddy from my Michigan days. The story originated back some 50 years ago while I was fishing alone and was surprised with this small brush pile floating down stream off to my right side. And, sure enough a trout was tangled among the twigs on a broken fly line. Through the years, with this small floating discovery, a few broken pencils, some wadded up scribbled papers from an old note book along with the additional unused lumber I had stored up in the attic of my mind, you now have the story of Kirby on the "Tuesday After The Opener." Hope you enjoyed it.*

Robert McKeon
Desert Fly Casters News Letter Editor- Chandler, AZ
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Reflections from Your Editor

As I prepare this newsletter for our 52 WMFF members and guests, I'm reminded of the camaraderie that makes our club special. Recently, Gerry and I attended a Desert Fly Casters meeting, and I found myself envious of their members' enthusiasm—sharing stories and photos from outings in Utah, the San Juan, and local canals. Young and old alike stepped up to host trips, proving that participation is what truly matters.

Thinking back on our own adventures—Christmas Tree Lake potlucks, group trips to Sunrise, Reservation, and Drift Fence—I realize it's always been more about friendship than the number of fish caught. New members are eager to learn casting and fly tying, and it's up to us, the veterans, to welcome and guide them.

This year's fishing has been challenging, but as John Rohmer reminded me, if you want to fish, you'll find a way. Gerry and I had a great time at Silver Creek's opening day, catching big fish and meeting folks from Arizona Veteran's Fly Fishing and Trout Unlimited. Their generosity and spirit were inspiring.

Age isn't the issue—it's attitude. Some members missed out on supporting our club at the banquet, yet those who attended made it a huge success. It took just a few dedicated people to make it happen.

Looking ahead, I encourage everyone to contribute—a photo for the newsletter, an article, or hosting an outing. We even have someone ready to bring the trailer for a potluck. Let's rely on each other to keep building our club. Can we count on you?

Let's remember: the strength of our club lies in the spirit of its members. Every effort, big or small, helps us grow and thrive together. Step up, get involved, and let's make the coming year our best yet. The future of WMFF is in our hands—let's cast it forward with enthusiasm and pride!

2024-25 WMFFC Board Members

President:	Mike Whitney	(541) 390-5389
Past President:	Barry Curseaden	(623) 398-5242
Vice President:	Gary Hall	(480) 510-6362
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Board Member at Large:	Gary Miller	(602) 478-0883
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