



# Payson Flycasters & TU Chapter 530 Newsletter



*Expanding and Improving  
Arizona's Native and Wild  
Trout Fisheries*

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Next Meeting is May 27: San Juan River Report—combined commentary from 6 plus members. Come to Tiny's for the meeting at 9 or earlier for conversation and breakfast. [Reminder-- Dan Howell's memorial is at Messenger's Funeral Home, 901 S Westerly Rd, Payson, AZ 85541, on Thursday, May 25 at 10:00 am.](#)

## **JRE and RCMS After School Fly Fishing Programs**

**Article and Photos by Jim Stroger**

Year 7 of the After School Fly Fishing Program in Payson Schools has produced several more kids who have an appreciation for the joys of fly fishing and have learned and demonstrated skills to catch fish on a fly rod.



Here's two examples of smiley faces from successful Fly Fishing Program graduates.

[FYI—Jim Stroger does not teach how to streeeeetchhhh the truth to these fisher persons. Come to the Saturday meeting and you'll hear an amazing TRUE story one of the kids shared as proof.] These students have also contributed to the fishing community by building and deploying fish structures in Green Valley Lakes to benefit all anglers for years to come.

PFC/GTTU support has remained vital to the success of this program for these kids. Over the years, members have contributed their time to help with: flies for each kid to take home after the last session, lanyard building, helping prep fish structures for kids to build, casting instruction/practice, and coaching new fly fishers at the lake. In addition, PFC/GTTU has purchased fly fishing and fly tying supplies and materials to use in the program, and tricked out the lanyards with equipment that the kids are thrilled to get to keep each year.

While the middle school numbers this year were lower than usual, the kids that ended up fishing were very enthused and caught quite a few fish! The elementary group has remained strong each year and they also caught a lot of fish. In fact, there is a bit of a competition going on with an 8th grader and her brother in JRE.

Ric will be pleased with the latest development related to that competition. He has been working for several weeks on another aspect of the fly fishing education for the students. So far, as hard as he has tried, he has been unable to get them to exaggerate about their catch.

Last week, the JRE student caught 15 fish to the RCMS student's 6. This week, she fished with me, so I can confirm that she caught 17. Here is the part that Ric will appreciate; when I saw her brother during the fish structure deployment the morning after I fished with her, he said that she told him that she caught 19. I intend to fish with him on Thursday to provide verification in this friendly battle. I am sure he will be shooting for 18 or more. There will be one more week to decide who takes home the Family Title!

Keep in mind that all of these kids are catching 5-20 crappies, bluegills, trout, and even an occasional bass in about 1.25 hours of actual fishing time. They certainly are enjoying the extra pull on a fly rod too. They have gotten really good at rod set-up and take-down. Knots and tangles still need some work, but that can be said of all of us I think.

### **GVL Fish Structure Building and Installation**

There are a lot of lake improvements going into GVL 2 and 3 this spring that these kids have helped with.

Here are students building and transporting the fish structures.





Although there is not a HS component to the program, the high school construction class is building 2-3 wooden structures for Lake 2 that should be dropped in the lake in a week or so. The JRE and RCMS after school kids built 11 Mossback Safe Haven structures for Lake 3 that they put the finishing touches on Tuesday morning before the Water Department deployed them. These structures are now on the bottom and are about 20 feet from the bubblers at additional areas to the 15 that the kids built in 2019. Some are by the north wall bubbler, and others are along the west side bubblers. There are no buoys to note their locations this time around.

The kids learned from AZGFD that fish love structures and that the placement in proximity to the

bubblers gives them easy access if dissolved oxygen levels start to plummet. The students know that they can't reach the structures with their casts from shore but are happy to do a project that benefits the fish. They also know that if the fish do well on the structures, that more of them will head into the shallows to spawn where the kids get to fish for them each spring, or at the dock in the fall.

There is a new dock structure hanging from the front of the little dock built and installed (with help from the Water Department) by the kids. That structure went in at 9am, and I gave it a try at 3pm. In ten minutes I caught a bluegill, a crappie, and two trout. I hadn't caught a fish off of that dock in months prior; just saying.

AZGFD donated six additional small Mossbacks to our effort. The kids hauled them from the truck to the boat for deployment in Lake 2. These structures are in a line on the deep side connecting the three bubblers.



*Jagrav Patel helping once again!*

And a word about a high school student who remains very involved in the program. Jagrav Patel, as a middle school student, was key to the success of the Trout in the Classroom program at RCMS. He checked the water conditions every day during his lunchtime and adjusted the water when needed. He provided instruction to the teacher and special education class where the tank was located. He was also part of the RCMS fly fishing after school program back then too. He was awarded the AZGFD Commission Youth Conservation Award in 2020. As a high school sophomore, Jagrav continues to attend the RCMS classes and helps provide instruction from a kid's perspective as we tie flies, learn knots, identify aquatic insects,

cast, and fish. He has been accepted to the TU Youth Leadership Camp in Montana for a week this summer. He is the latest of several kids in the JRE/RCMS program that have continued with it for multiple years, which has made me particularly proud.

Thank you PFC/GTTU members who have contributed to the after-school fly fisher program. Over the years, I would say that number has included twenty or more PFC/GTTU members! You are making a difference for kids, securing the future of fly fishing, and providing guidance and example to protect our waters well into the future through the kids that you have helped.

[If anyone mentions the fish structure story to the Emperor, he will give you a raffle ticket.]



Wildlife Fair—Larry teaching fly tying and Jim Strogon and Richard & Yoko Vanderpool talking with some visitors. Thanks to all who participated.