



Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing PROGRAM GUIDE

How Groups Can Get Involved
In the Physical and Emotional Rehabilitation
of Disabled Active Duty Military Personnel and Veterans
Through Fly Fishing and Fly Tying Education and Outings.

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PROJECT HEALING WATERS FLY FISHING

PROGRAM GUIDE

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Welcome to Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.

Since Project Healing Waters was established in 2005 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington DC, we have received numerous inquiries from around the country as to how individuals or groups can get involved in our project. It is our hope that the following information will help to answer many questions.

In January 2007 Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. (PHWFFI) was incorporated in Maryland as a subsidiary corporation to the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) and is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. PHWFFI is supported by tax-deductible donations, grants, and fundraising activities by the national organization and the local clubs conducting programs. PHWFFI is benefiting from the collaboration and assistance of the FFF and Trout Unlimited (TU), recognized leaders in fly fishing oriented strategies for environmental conservation, public awareness and education.

Mission

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active duty personnel and veterans through fly fishing and fly tying education and outings.

In the fulfillment of this mission, PHWFFI works with active duty personnel and veterans in military, Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals, and Warrior Transition Units (WTU's) nationwide. Our activities are closely coordinated with military and hospital staff, and all services are provided without cost.

PHWFF programs include active duty, reservist, guard and veterans of all conflicts, and disabilities of all types. PHWFF lets appropriate staff determine who can participate in our programs.

PHWFFI Website

Visit our website at projecthealingwaters.org to learn more. News, events, sponsors and other information are available, as well as contact information for Regional Coordinators. Improvements to the website are continuous, reflecting our desire to better communicate within and without our organization.

PHWFFI Staff

PHWFFI is administered by a Board of Trustees, Officers, and two employees. Eight Regional Coordinators oversee PHWFFI programs nationwide.

Regional Coordinator Responsibilities

The Regional Coordinators for a specific area will respond to inquiries about starting programs, identifying new program opportunities and local fundraising efforts. The Regional Coordinators can be particularly helpful during the start-up phase by providing advice and support.

Quarterly, Regional Coordinators are expected to submit reports to the national office summarizing

the activities conducted by each of the programs, contact information for all the programs, and information about the status of potential start-ups. Due every three months beginning January 1, the coordinators will contact the program leads in order to obtain this information.

Annually, Regional Coordinators are responsible for submitting operating budget requirements for their programs for the next fiscal year (beginning January 1). In addition, Regional Coordinators must collect and report in-kind donations for the preceding fiscal year to demonstrate the true value of our efforts and services. This includes volunteer hours, donated equipment and materials, donated services of any kind (guide services, food preparation, lodging, transportation, consultation, legal services, etc.). Receipts are not required.

Regional Coordinators are likely to be involved in media publicity and community affairs, to coordinate matching offers of donations to in-need programs, facilitate procurement of the necessary equipment and materials, and to provide advice and information as required.

Program Considerations

This document will outline the criteria and protocols that will provide the necessary guidance for groups contemplating a local PHWFF program. We have developed a business model for establishing a local program that can be managed and led by volunteers and organizations wherever there is a desire and need.

We have focused primarily on TU chapters and FFF clubs, utilizing the already existing network of concerned and committed fly fishers who populate those organizations. With the number of wounded servicemen and women returned from Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to eligible disabled veterans from prior conflicts who reside in and/or utilize Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals and outpatient clinics in their home states, PHWFF programs established for their benefit would satisfy the desires of volunteers to help and provide real benefits for discharged veterans in their own home states. Although fewer in number than the hundreds of VA hospitals that exist across the country, there are also other military medical centers providing treatment for active duty service personnel. Additionally, the Army has established over 30 WTU's at Army posts nationwide to assist soldiers in transitioning back into civilian life or returning to active duty, and offer an opportunity for establishing our programs in their respective locations. In all of these facilities, there will be eligible participants with a variety of injuries or disabilities, both physical and psychiatric. The latter may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), drug and alcohol abuse and many other disorders.

Establishing a PHWFF program requires group, rather than an individual, commitment. We say this because our program is based on long-term, collective commitment with participating hospital staff and veterans. We engage in teaching the elements of fly casting, fly tying, fly fishing basics and, ultimately, provide fishing opportunities or outings. One person cannot do this alone. An individual who is interested really needs to be aligned with or connected to TU chapters, FFF clubs, or other fly fishing clubs, so that the necessary volunteer force is available.

We emphasize that the basis for PHWFF's success at WRAMC and all our other present programs has been our continuing commitment to the physical, occupational and recreational therapy staffs, working in concert with their efforts toward the physical and emotional rehabilitation

of the recovering injured and wounded or otherwise disabled personnel.

The next step in establishing a local PHWFF program is to determine whether there is a VA hospital, military medical center or WTU in the vicinity that has the patient population that could support a PHW program.

Concurrent with the previous item, appropriate staff needs to be contacted, the PHWFF program presented and, hopefully, positive reception given towards establishing a program at their facility. In the past, this has usually been a two-step process, i.e. the first step is contacting and briefing the PHWFF program to appropriate staff personnel, and second is arranging a “kick-off” meeting, wherein staff, patients, vets and volunteers come together to present, discuss and demonstrate the merits of the program. This meeting may include fly tying demos, casting demos, video presentations, discussion of opportunities for fishing outings, determination of equipment needs, etc. Depending on the results of this meeting and the interest generated, teaching schedules will be developed with the agreement of all participants. Officers from PHWFFI will be available as needed during the start-up process. Support would include personally contacting staff personnel, presenting briefings as time and distance allow, and any other outreach efforts required for the establishment of the PHWFF program.

Your kick-off meeting is your first public event and will leave a lasting impression. Rehearse the event with your volunteers, or at least talk them through the event. Don’t forget professional touches such as name tags, banners, handouts, refreshments. These are little things but create a positive first impression. Don’t wait for a potential student to ask – hand him a fly rod or seat him at a fly tying bench. Have sign-up sheets for students.

At this point, PHWFFI and the organization that will conduct and manage the program locally will enter into a written agreement called a Memorandum of Agreement that will formalize the relationship between PHWFFI and the local program. The local Program Lead and his or her volunteers will then run the program.

The final thing to be considered is the availability of places to fish in the vicinity that would be appropriate and could accommodate the unique needs of the veterans and servicemen and women. In this regard, close coordination with hospital staff is essential. Above all, we must ensure that the outings are provided with the knowledge, agreement, and concurrence of the hospital staff and are conducted with the safety and well-being of the wounded and disabled paramount. Many states have created special places on streams or lakes that are outfitted with ramps or platforms that accommodate disabled participants. We have also had great success fishing from drift boats.

Memorandum of Agreement

The Memorandum of Agreement, or MOA, is an agreement between Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., and a local fishing club that outlines the cooperative relationship between the two groups. The club and PHWFFI are entering into a relationship that needs defining so that each party recognizes and agrees to the important considerations attendant to success. Individuals involved in the local PHWFF program can change as time moves along, but the MOA remains a touchstone for all. This MOA has been approved by the attorneys for both TU and the FFF.

Some of the key points are:

- The local club retains discretion regarding the coordination, planning and execution of the program within its area.
- PHWFF programs must be approved and coordinated with the appropriate VA, military hospital or WTU officials.
- The safety and well-being of the participants must be given the highest priority.
- When using professional outfitters or guides for fishing trips, they must be licensed and insured in accordance with federal, state and local regulations for their respective areas.
- Any personal watercraft used on a fishing trip and its operators must be properly licensed and insured.
- A Program Lead is appointed by the club's board, and will supervise the local PHW program.
- All funds raised for a PHWFF program and all donated equipment and material must be used for that program; should the local program be terminated, monies and equipment so donated should be forwarded to PHWFFI.
- Volunteers and participants who participate in fishing outings must sign a Hold Harmless Agreement provided by PHWFFI.
- Clubs participating in PHWFF programs should ensure that they carry appropriate insurance.

Following the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement, and after an operating budget has been established and approved at the national level, the local club will be eligible for funding allocations from PHWFFI for program and administrative expenses within certain parameters. Additional information on the budget and funding processes is available in other administrative and financial documents that will be provided as necessary.

Program Lead Responsibilities

Duties of the Program Lead include the following:

- Recruiting volunteers for teaching and fishing.
- Coordinating classes and outings with the therapeutic staff.
- Procuring and maintaining all equipment and materials.
- Keeping PHWFFI informed as to the program status. This includes a quarterly status report and an annual report of in-kind donations and volunteer hours.

Working with a VA

You can locate a Veterans Affairs facility in your area by logging on to their website at www.va.gov. In some areas, the closest may be a major medical center, while in others it may be a smaller outpatient facility or vet center. Anyone who is an active participant in a VA hospital and is recommended by appropriate staff is eligible to participate in a PHWFF program.

It is recommended that your first contact be the Chief of Voluntary Services (VS). The Regional Coordinator for your area or the national office can give you the name and phone number of this individual at your local facility. The Chief of VS will then help you identify existing groups of veterans who might be interested, or put you in contact with other staff who may be working with potential participants. This is not uniformly the case, and occasionally

your primary contact may be a recreational therapist. The Director of Public Affairs or Public Affairs Officers should be asked to approve posters to advertise your program. Your volunteers may be asked to register as Unpaid Employees, a simple process which provides you as individuals with liability protection while carrying out PHWFF programs within their system. Some VA facilities require this registration process, while others do not.

In addition to having hospitalized inpatients, VA centers have many more outpatients. Coordinating a time that is convenient for groups of them to get together takes some planning. For example, at the Long Beach Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), the local program has worked with outpatients with psychiatric disorders who go to the Day Treatment Center five days a week for scheduled activities. They have also worked with a group from the California Paralyzed Veterans that meets at the VA, as well as a third group of outpatients who are able to work part time and are fairly active. For two of these groups, daytime classes are necessary, whereas, for the third, evening classes are preferable.

In a VA setting, you must be sensitive to the fact that you are working with patients. Their photographs may not be taken without permission and may not be used publicly without permission. Use of the PHWFFI Media Release Form is recommended. Participants also have a right to privacy about their medical information. Don't ask what their disabilities are; if they want to tell you, listen. Sometimes it is very apparent, but most often you just have to be sensitive, flexible and adapt to their needs and limitations. There is no one formula that fits each of these groups.

Working with a Military Medical Facility or WTU

Chances are very good that you already know where the closest military base is located. They are normally very large and many of the locals work on base or do business with it in one form or another. Chances are also very good that a large number of military personnel are living in those same local communities. The base has a Public Affairs Office which can get you started. They typically produce a weekly base paper that can be used to get the word out. You can also find information about the base in the local fly fishing clubs. Many of these clubs have members who are retired military and are a great source of volunteer support.

Last but not least, the medical facility will have a Red Cross Volunteer Office that can be very helpful in getting you into the facility and talking to the right individuals. Be prepared to go through their orientation course, to brief them on the healing benefits of PHWFF and, if at all possible, offer a presentation to the clinic and branch sections within the hospital. If you get a chance to meet the hospital Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, or Senior Enlisted Advisor, they can be a big help in getting you established. These medical facilities have a well defined chain-of-command that can be very effective for you.

Warrior Transition Units (WTU's) are not part of the medical facility. They take care of military personnel who are recovering from wounds, pending disposition of their medical issues, medical or standard discharge, or could be waiting to rejoin their deployed unit. They are different from the VA in that they have active, reserve, and National Guard personnel all in the same unit, all having served in the current conflict. Each unit can be different in size and composition, so it is important that you are prepared to brief as required to find out what their needs are. Like the military medical facility, they will have a Commanding Officer, Executive Officer,

Senior Enlisted Advisor, and Activities Coordinator, and all can be helpful in getting in and established. If you can brief the entire staff during one of their weekly staff meetings, you can reach more of the key leadership at one time. Chances are also very good that their barracks and work spaces are either in the same building or in close proximity. This can be very good for you in that you can maximize visibility for your program and have a space to store your equipment in between gatherings. Consider that many of the participants will be transient in the WTU; their assignment could be weeks, months, or, in some cases, up to a year. Your student population will be in a constant state of change.

There are two last items that pertain to both the medical facility and the WTU's. First, they do use a military chain-of-command; when they get behind you, be prepared to get your program going. They really want to help their patients and service personnel and you don't want to let them down. Second, just like in a VA setting, you must be sensitive to the fact that you are working with patients and active military personnel. Their photographs may not be taken without permission and may not be used publicly without permission. Use of the PHWFFI Media Release Form is recommended. Participants also have a right to privacy about their medical information. Don't ask what their disabilities are; if they want to tell you, listen. Sometimes it is very apparent, but most often you just have to be sensitive, flexible and adapt to their needs and limitations. There is no one formula that fits each of these groups.

You should ensure that the individuals participating in PHW from a WTU meet our eligibility requirements. As previously stated, there are a number of individuals in WTU's who have suffered no injuries, wounds or other debilitations and are, therefore, ineligible to participate in our programs. If you are uncertain on how to determine eligibility, contact Senior Staff at the WTU for guidance.

Liability

A prudent fishing club will have liability insurance to protect the club and its assets from liability exposure in the course of normal club activities. If your club already has insurance coverage, make sure your carrier knows that you are participating in PHWFF. If you don't have an existing policy, you can get insurance referrals from the FFF or TU, or other fishing clubs in your area. Some carriers have much more experience than others with fishing-related activities.

As PHWFF volunteers in a VA facility, if you register as Unpaid Employees, you as individuals (but not your club) will have liability protection through the VA. Additionally, the federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides that no volunteer of a nonprofit organization will be liable for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer on behalf of the organization if the volunteer was acting within the scope of his responsibilities in the nonprofit organization and if the harm was not caused by willful misconduct, etc.

Your Budget

In some cases, a club may already have sufficient tying and casting equipment for the local PHWFF program, which would make start-up costs minimal. If not, you can try soliciting donations from your club members, community or local fishing shops. You also need to contact your Regional Coordinator to identify your requirements since a budget may have been prepared for your start-up.

You will need tying vises, tools and materials. You will also need rods, reels, lines, tippet and fishing equipment appropriate for your area. Many companies sell inexpensive starter kits which are more than sufficient to get going. If you need to purchase these items, please contact the national PHWFFI Program Manager. We have established special relationships with a number of fly fishing equipment manufacturers and can facilitate the purchase and shipment to your respective locations. Your Regional Coordinator can also help. These discounts are intended for students in our programs. They are not intended for PHWFF volunteers or staff to use for their personal equipment. The national office has a supply of donated fishing equipment and materials, particularly tying materials. Check their current inventory before purchasing.

After you meet with staff of your VA or military facility, you should have some idea as to the number of students who will need supplies, and what programs are appropriate for them. That should help you arrive at a budget for equipment. You may also want to budget for fishing licenses if they are not free to disabled vets in your state, or travel and accommodations for fishing outings. It has been our experience that, in most cases, the local VA facility will provide transportation and a staff therapist for all fishing outings. It is recommended that you investigate if your state offers waivers or discounts for fishing licenses for veterans participating in our program. Many states do.

PHWFFI Headquarters is able to provide financial assistance for your program within certain parameters. Only active programs with signed MOA's are eligible to receive funding allocations. Each fall, your Regional Coordinator will request that you provide your "wish list" requirements for the coming year. All regional budget submissions will be evaluated by the PHWFFI Headquarters and ultimately incorporated in the corporate budget for the following year. The annual budget call will provide greater detail regarding these submissions.

Managing Donations and Contributions at the Local Level

If your club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, you may receive funds or contributions directly from contributors, and the funds or contributions are tax deductible for the donor. These funds may be retained at the club level in a restricted account for PHWFF use only. The MOA specifies reporting protocols. If you are not a non-profit, you must have contributors make out checks directly to PHWFFI. When received at PHWFFI Headquarters, these funds will be placed in a restricted account for your local club's use only.

In accordance with IRS regulations, individual contributions received and held at the local level for \$250 or more must be acknowledged with an appropriate receipt. This letter should state that PHWFFI did not provide the donor with any goods or services in consideration of the donation. A thank you letter for all donations would be a nice touch.

Donations of equipment or materials should be acknowledged with a letter listing the items, stating that they are either new or used in good condition. Do not include a value for items donated.

Donations come from a variety of sources. Friends and neighbors, as well as fishing acquaintances and shops may contribute. Following publicity in your local newspaper, you may get calls from those wanting to donate a former fisherman's collection or surplus equipment.

Media and News

PHWFFI has been fortunate in the amount of media attention we have received. This publicity has been helpful in terms of fundraising, volunteer recruitment and public awareness. Expect it to continue.

Be aware of the regulations regarding taking photographs of or interviewing patients (they must give their permission and must be told how the photographs and interviews will be used), as well as the regulations regarding photography of active duty personnel in uniform. You must use the local military base or post Public Affairs Officer to seek approval for publication. Failure to coordinate with a Public Affairs Officer could result in your program being dismissed from the military base or post.

Try to develop a personal relationship with the VA or military Public Affairs Officers. Provide them with draft releases, stories and photos. Ask if they can publish the materials for you. In many cases, they will be thrilled to help tell our story. Ask them to arrange for media advisories to invite the local media to fly tying or fly casting sessions. Make personal contact with local outdoor writers and invite them to your sessions. They can help us tell the story of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing.

Our website often has recent articles and other items of newsworthiness. Check it regularly to see what is happening in your area or elsewhere in the country.

Veterans Service Organizations

Generally, the American Legion, VFW, DAV and many other similar organizations are all interested in new and dynamic programs to help veterans. Visit their local executive boards to ask for monies to help with your program. Invite their leadership to attend your sessions to see the difference you are making on a one-on-one basis. Contact the state level organizations and seek grant applications to help with more substantial funding.

Final Advice

Our job is to help you launch and remain successful. We have a vast network of leaders and volunteers that can help mentor you and your leadership team as you explore start-up possibilities.

Don't assume that you can walk in the door with a written schedule and stick to it without wavering. There is no one PHWFF program that fits all groups. Monitor your program as it progresses. Be sensitive to the needs, limitations and abilities of each of your groups and each of your students, and adapt. Protect their medical privacy. Be creative to work through their difficulties. Keep it fun. The smiles make it all worthwhile.