

Alpha Sigma Summer Enrichment Final Report

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Summer 2012

The Conservation and Wild of Western Fly Fishing



Table of Contents:

- I. Thank you
- II. Intro
- III. Mid Summer Report
- IV. Finances
- V. Fly fishing Conservation Culture
- VI. Water Crisis
- VII. Regulators in Colorado
- VIII. Whirling's disease
- IX. The Cutthroat Trout
- X. Pictures



I. Thank You

This summer and the enrichment activities I participated in have been nothing short of incredible. I never thought I would have the opportunity to follow my passion of fly fishing and learn so much. Thank you to the ASF summer enrichment committee for the opportunity.

II. Intro

I thought it would be helpful to lay out exactly what I did this summer and how it complimented my enrichment activities.

In mid May I drove across the country to Denver, Colorado to participate in an internship at fishpond USA. Fishpond is a fishing and outdoor lifestyle company with a passion for conservation of our wonderful outdoor resources. It was a bit of a shock to be in the company of great minds in the industry but it did not take long for me to start to learn from them.

On a day to day basis I did everything from sweep the floor, to market research, and advertising. It was amazing to see every side of a small business and learn from people who have started them. Practically speaking, I am incredibly thankful for this, and think it will serve me well in whatever endeavor I step into after my time at Carolina.

My enrichment activities came mostly on the weekends. I crisscrossed the state in pursuit of knowledgeable people and trout water. I split my time between fishing, talking to guides, owners of retail shops, and enthusiasts across the state.

The overall arching theme I got from my experience is simply to follow your passion. This seems a bit cliché, even elementary, at first glance but it became more profound to me throughout the summer. All of these people I met, everyone I worked with, and talked to throughout the state had one thing in common: they loved what they did. They “forsaked the throng” if you will. I have met very few groups of people who pursued what they loved despite naysayers. A great example of this was my boss for the summer, John Le Coq. John walked away from medical school to do what

he loved. He became a photographer, started the company Case Logic, and later started the company I worked for, Fishpond. His joy and passion was inescapable. He simply loved every moment of what he did.

This is a concept that I want to bring back to Alpha Sigma. I feel that so many students and brothers feel that to be successful in life they must become a lawyer or doctor. They feel they have to make money whether they love their profession or not. I hope I can show people to be passionate about what they love rather than what they feel they have to do. Fly fishing is a pretty niche activity. I want to show people that, like me, they can love their own unique things. I hope my experiences and story telling helps other brothers go and pursue their passions.

III. Below is a copy of the mid summer report I sent in mid July.

Hello,

I have just come back from my second major trip involved in my summer enrichment plans and honestly do not have many words to describe how well it has gone. I have several more small outings, but the bulk of my work is done. I would like to say first and foremost, thank you so much for this amazing opportunity. There may not be another time in the near future that I get to embrace what I love and take several weeks to simply be in the outdoors in order to soak up new information. I want to thank all of you for the wonderful opportunity this scholarship has given me.

Throughout the summer I have met with professional fly fishing guides, owners of fly fishing shops, and worked along side several people who have been in the industry for over two decades. I have learned so much about fly fishing conservation and the extreme passion so many have for both the fish and the environment.

So far I have circled most of the state of Colorado and have fished in Wyoming and Montana as well.

By far the largest obstacle I have faced is simply environmental ones. As national news agencies portrayed, Colorado has experienced extreme drought and wildfires. These changed my plans slightly. I was unable to fish at and visit several of my originally desired locations but made up for it by making a greater number of smaller trips. I have done research, visited local shops, and fished at the following famous rivers:

The Madison River (Montana)

Slough Creek (Yellowstone NP)

Cache La Poudre (Location of the High Park Fire, I fished it before the fire)

The South Platte

Cheesman Canyon

The "Dream Stream"

The middle fork of the south platte

Gore Creak

The Frying Pan river

Clear Creek

The Blue River

The Arkansas River

The Roaring Fork River

The Colorado River

Bear Creek

A huge concern throughout the state of Colorado is the lack of water. Several rivers I wished to fish were extremely low, putting the fish and agricultural business in dire straights. Ironically, when I arrived in Montana, I had the opposite problem. Many rivers there were far too high to fish when I visited. Despite this small hick up, I was able to adapt, talk to some amazing people, and still have a wonderful experience.

Finances were also a slight obstacle. Gas in Colorado spiked to almost \$.50 higher than the price in North Carolina and I drove over 3000 miles in my pursuit of fish and knowledgeable people. Due to the financial restraint I

was unable to take video during the trip but took several hundred pictures that I will soon compile into a slideshow for Alpha Sigma. I am also happy to report that I can quite happily survive while living in a tent and living mainly on a diet of macaroni and peanut butter.

Another highlight of the summer was that Rob Broadhurst (Sigma '12) was able to join me for four days of exploring and fishing. It was great to involve another brother and share my experience.

Going forward I primarily have work to do compiling my research and organizing my photos. I hope to also visit one or two more fishing locations on the east coast before I finish. I can not thank you all enough for this wonderful opportunity. I can't wait to share it in more detail with you and the rest of the Alpha.

IV. Finances

If there was a negative part about the summer, it was the financial part. High gas prices in the state of Colorado, combined with lots of driving, and low water levels forced me to drive greater distances. It did put a strain on the wallet. Over the summer I fished fourteen rivers and several lakes in Wyoming, Colorado, and Montana. The total driving to and from all of these places (not including my transportation from Chapel hill to Denver and back) was over 3500 miles.

Here is a breakdown of my expenses

Gas at 20mpg.....	\$525
Colorado License.....	\$70
Montana.....	\$30
Yellowstone NP.....	\$50
Food.....	\$150
Campgrounds.....	\$50

As you can see, I went over budget this summer. Even though this was a slight source of unrest, I am still so glad I had this opportunity. The enrichment scholarship made it possible for me to go and again, I can not

thank Alpha Sigma enough for helping me.

V. Fly Fishing Conservation Culture

Probably the biggest thing I learned about is simply the catch and release culture of fly fishing. All summer, in 14 different rivers, I never saw a fly fisherman kill a fish. There is a huge respect for the fish, great care is taken in handling them, and efforts taken to release them safely. All of this adds up to more secure and healthy fisheries. Almost everyone I met would rather see someone catch the same trout at a later date than see the beautiful creature on the wall or on a dinner plate. Though only about half of the water I fished was officially “catch and release” water by law, almost all fly fisherman abide by the rule that everything they catch returns to swim another day. I gained so much respect for the sport after talking to guides and shop owners about this. People truly care about protecting the sport and wilderness for the future. Over the last twenty years or so, conservation groups, such as Trout Unlimited, have worked tirelessly to develop this catch and release culture. This has served to preserve the wilderness for future generations.

The second issue I learned through my work and outside research, was the conservation of Bristol Bay Alaska. A proposed pebble mine seriously threatens the Bristol Bay area. The mine would make the largest salmon spawning ground in the world almost non existent. Not only are fly fishing professionals passionate about this issue, but thousands of fisherman online, in person, and through letters, voice their dismay about the proposed mine. What struck me the most was the protest that came from people who have never even been to the area. Fly shop owners in Denver spoke with passion at how much this meant to them. Everyone I talked to so passionately wanted to protect Alaska, and its wilderness. Many people use the bellow sticker to show their support for the movement.



VI. Water Crisis

One of the biggest problems I had this summer was the serious drought in Colorado. The shortage of water left me with two serious problems. The first was simply the low water levels in rivers and the second was wildfires.

The summertime water in Colorado rivers is primarily from snowmelt. Unfortunately the front range of the Rockies received its lowest snowfall numbers in recorded history this last winter. Rivers that should have been flowing at thousands of cubic feet per second were only a trickle. This makes water temperatures rise, oxygen levels low, and trout susceptible to disease and death.

These low water levels forced the closure of several famous fisheries and unfortunately increased the fishing pressure on more healthy rivers. Much of my love for fly fishing stems from my love of serenity and isolation. I had to learn to deal with crowds this summer. Weekend fishing often turned into what many guides refer to as "combat fishing."

If there was a positive aspect of the water crisis, it was that it started discourse regarding water conservation and use. I can only hope that the state of Colorado emerges with only mildly damaged fisheries, and new policies to protect them in case of further drought.

The wildfires were also a huge problem that interfered with my summer. Several fires burned very close to where I was fishing and I ended up having to flee the Poudre Canyon during a wild fire. I was only several miles away when the High Park Fire was ignited by lightning and made worse by extremely dry conditions. I was evacuated from the canyon and luckily not in much danger. That fire continues to burn right now and my thoughts and prayers are with those still affected by it. It was quite a humbling experience to see first hand what damage it did.

VII. Conservation personnel

Although this is a very small part of my summer, I thought I would include it. I was incredibly impressed throughout my entire time in Colorado at the professionalism of the forest service, national park service, and other personnel charged with maintaining Colorado's natural. I saw several instances where officers made arrests and gave tickets for poaching. I also received help and direction from several officers that were incredibly helpful. These people love their jobs and do a wonderful service to the states. It was a pleasant surprise and made me extremely thankful that there were so many people doing their best to conserve the wild resources of the west.

Viii. Whirling's Disease

Whirlings disease is a disease that attacks primarily rainbow trout. Whirlings is a parasite, carried by foreign mud snails. It attacks the central nervous system of a trout, causing it to swim in circles and die. Huge efforts have been taken by Trout Unlimited to help stop its spread. The disease is largely spread through the felt soles in fisherman's boots. Both sign postings and online education have contributed to greater awareness. I was able to talk to Tucker Land, The owner of a fly shop in Denver, about the

disease. He told me how the disease had decimated the Cache La Poudre River and negatively affected trout populations. He later reassured me of how much conservation groups are doing to prevent the disease. He shared that populations of trout have greatly improved in the last 15 years due to greater education.

IX. The cutthroat trout

I had the amazing experience of fishing for cutthroat trout in Yellowstone National Park. These trout were all native specimens (not stocked). Not only are they gorgeous, but they are also fairly rare. They are highly susceptible to environmental changes and pollution while existing primarily in pristine water. Below is a picture of one. Notice the very vibrant colors on the fins and tail. It was an honor to catch and handle such amazing fish. These fish exist only because of large conservation efforts from the government and a huge culture of catch and release fishing.



x. Pictures

Below is a collection of pictures from throughout the entire summer. I spent a lot of time and energy taking these pictures. I hope that it can convey my passion and the wonderful places I visited this summer.

Some of these pictures were taken on 35mm film. I hope my passion for photography and fishing offers a glimpse into my summer. Thank you again for the wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,

Andrew Hove
Sigma '13



