

A Brief History
Of The
Florida Fly-Rod Club

At a time when bass fishing clubs were springing up all over the South, Charlie Harris, the outdoors editor of the Orlando Sentinel-Star suggested that there might be sufficient interest in a fishing club exclusively for fly-fishing. On February 6, 1973, the first meeting of the Florida Fly-Rod Club was held at the first Federal Building on S.R. 436, in Altamonte Springs. The initial officers of the club were:

- Claude Beach, President
- Jim Baker, Vice-President
- Robert E. Perry, Secretary
- Roy Thomas, Treasurer

All were residents of Longwood. Under their leadership the club incorporated as a Florida Non-Profit corporation on July 31, 1973. The purpose of the corporation as stated in the Articles of Incorporation is:

"... to bring together those people interested in fly rod fishing and conservation; to focus public attention on the sport of fly rod fishing; and to stimulate public interest and attention in conservation of our lakes and streams and the wildlife therein. ... to lead in the development of conservation programs designed to protect and develop the fish life in the lakes and streams of the State of Florida."

The first club tournament was held at Johns Lake between Orlando and Clermont on April 14, 1973, with Jim Baker weighing 7 lbs. 12 oz. of bass for first place. The club only fished for bass for the first two tournaments and thereafter commenced the practice of weighing panfish as well as bass. With very few exceptions, the club has hosted at least one tournament per month since April, 1973. Sprinkled among the fresh water tournaments have been a few salt water tournaments with one or two scheduled during each of the last few years. Additionally, the club has sponsored one or two youth tournaments each year.

After the first year, the club moved its meetings to the old San Juan Hotel in downtown Orlando. Later the meetings were held at the First Federal Savings & Loan building on Curry Ford Road, Orlando, and eventually the monthly meetings were moved to the Neptune Restaurant, Rockledge. Since the Neptune Restaurant has closed, the club is currently meeting at the Villa Roma Restaurant in Rockledge on the first Tuesday on each month.

Since its founding, the club has supported the Florida Wildlife Federation. It also participates in various conservation causes directly by submitting position resolutions to appropriate political persons or bodies. The Florida Fly-Rod Club has conducted several educational seminars in Orange and Brevard Counties and has included in its meeting agendas the sharing of fishing information and tips.

It was said in 1973 that "Fly fishing is fun" and the Florida Fly-Rod Club should help spread the word. Fly fishing is still fun in 2002, and the club is still spreading the word.