

Reel Recovery at Otter Creek

By **Charlie Logsdon**

"I never had a problem that going fishing couldn't help."

I can still remember my dad saying this to me after I was out on my own. Unfortunately, I picture him telling me this as he sat on a river bank smoking, which would eventually give him terminal lung cancer.

However, the words ring true, and Reel Recovery is an organization that is helping men suffering or recovering from cancer to find peace, support, and healing through fly fishing.

Reel Recovery was founded in 2003 by fly fishermen who recognized the positive impact fly fishing had on their friend suffering from brain cancer. The organization provides fly fishing retreats for men impacted by cancer.

Here the men learn to fly fish, have the opportunity to share their stories, and to find support in their time of recovery and treatment. More information about Reel Recovery can be found at their website, reelrecovery.org.

For the last three years the Derby City Fly Fishers, a fly fishing club in the Louisville/Southern Indiana area, has had a fund raising tournament for Reel Recovery at the Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area operated by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

This event, the Mystery Fly Tournament for Cancer Reel Recovery IND/KY, is to raise money to fund one of these retreats for men in the region.

The tournament is strictly "for fun" with the winning team receiving nothing but "bragging rights" and donated plaques.

The rules are simple: teams consist of two people that are randomly selected at the beginning of the day. The fly to be used is unknown until the start of the tournament (each person receives one fly, but



Fly fishers on Otter Creek during Mystery Fly Tournament 2015



The drawing of teams

"mulligan" flies can be purchased). Each person records his partner's catch in keeping with honesty and fairness.

Starting points on the stream are selected during the team member selection, but teams are not limited to staying in one area on the stream, and all teams start and end fishing at the same time (9am – 1pm).

Upon completion of fishing, all teams return to the starting point and have lunch, provided by the Derby City Fly Fishers, while the totals are counted.

This year's tournament was held on November 21 with a jig hare's ear nymph being the mystery fly. On Friday night the Derby City Fly Fishers rented four cabins in the Otter Creek campground.

A sumptuous meal was provided by club members and campfires ran long into the night.

Water conditions were far from perfect (two inches of rain on the Wednesday before) with high flow and still off color, but the important thing for all involved was to support Reel Recovery.

At the start of the day, 80 fly fishermen had registered to compete. A few that had registered early decided not to come due to the water conditions, but donated their entry fee anyway (would we expect anything else from sportspersons).

Trout were hard to come by, but at the end of the day the winning team had a catch of

three trout. The event raised more than \$9,000, enough to completely sponsor one of the retreats.

This is just another example of sportspersons stepping up to make a supportive, caring community.



2015 Mystery Fly Tournament Winners