



## *The April 2022 NEWSLETTER*

**Northern Arizona Flycasters**  
**An active member club of the World Wide organization**  
**“Fly Fishers International”**  
**“Conservation, Restoration, and Education through Fly Fishing”**  
<http://nazflycasters.com>

**We support active involvement in cold water fisheries conservation. We work to insure that Arizona’s habitat is not degraded and in the development and maintenance of fly fishing opportunities.**

**We support the practice of “catch and release”, the use of barbless hooks, and quick and harmless release practices. Fish should never be kept out of the water for over 60 seconds.**

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Northern Arizona Flycasters meets the first Wednesday of the month at the Arizona Game and Fish Regional office at 3500 S. Lake Mary Road, Flagstaff. Meetings start at 7 PM with a board meeting at 6:00 PM. The meetings are free and the public is invited.

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### **PRESIDENT’S DRIFT :**

Hello Garry, I hope your trip to the San Juan went well. For this month's drift:  
Can you talk about your San Juan Trip. Nothing fancy just an update.  
This Month's Program-Scott Rogers, AZGF. Regional water status and Lee's Ferry update.  
Casey

From the President-

This Month's Program-Scott Rogers, AZGF. Regional water status and Lee's Ferry update.

Spring fishing:

1. Prepare for wind.
2. Wait for a lull in the wind gusts.

3. Minimize the false casting (a good idea in all conditions). Heavier tippet reduces the chances of wind knots.
4. Use the wind to your advantage-roll casting eliminates a back cast and you can gain some good distance by casting with the wind.
5. Winds break up the surface of the water and hinders the sight of fish. A good thing for us.
6. On lakes, your fly can drift with the wind.
7. Look for leeward (protected from wind) areas to simplify casting.
8. Look for areas where debris and bugs collect. Generally, a downwind area, eddy, or small inlet.
9. Use heavier fly line and cast tight loops.
10. Bring a back-up spin rod, book, or fly-tying kit. Sometimes it is just too windy to fly fish.

To help our membership, please remember to renew for the year 2022. Membership fees help with mandatory insurance, travel expenses for guest speakers, raffle items, and minor club expenses.

Remember to check your Arizona fishing license renewal date for 2022!

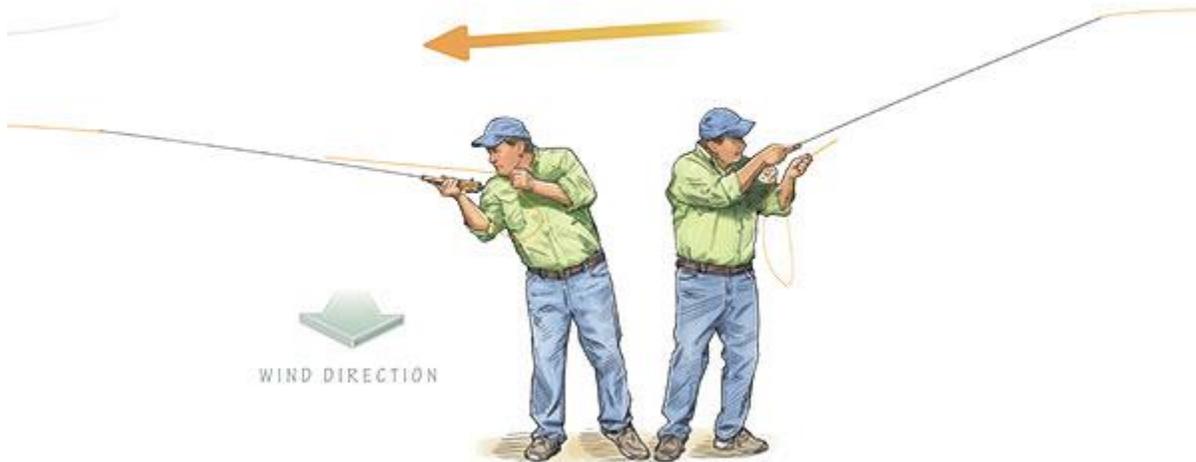
Information on Northern Arizona Fly Casters events, instruction, and fish stories can be found at several locations:

Facebook search under Northern Arizona Fly Casters.

AZ Daily Sun, web edition, under Events.

Website:<https://nazflycasters.com>

**EDUCATION – Casting in the wind**



[SEE PHOTO GALLERY](#)

### By Joe Mahler

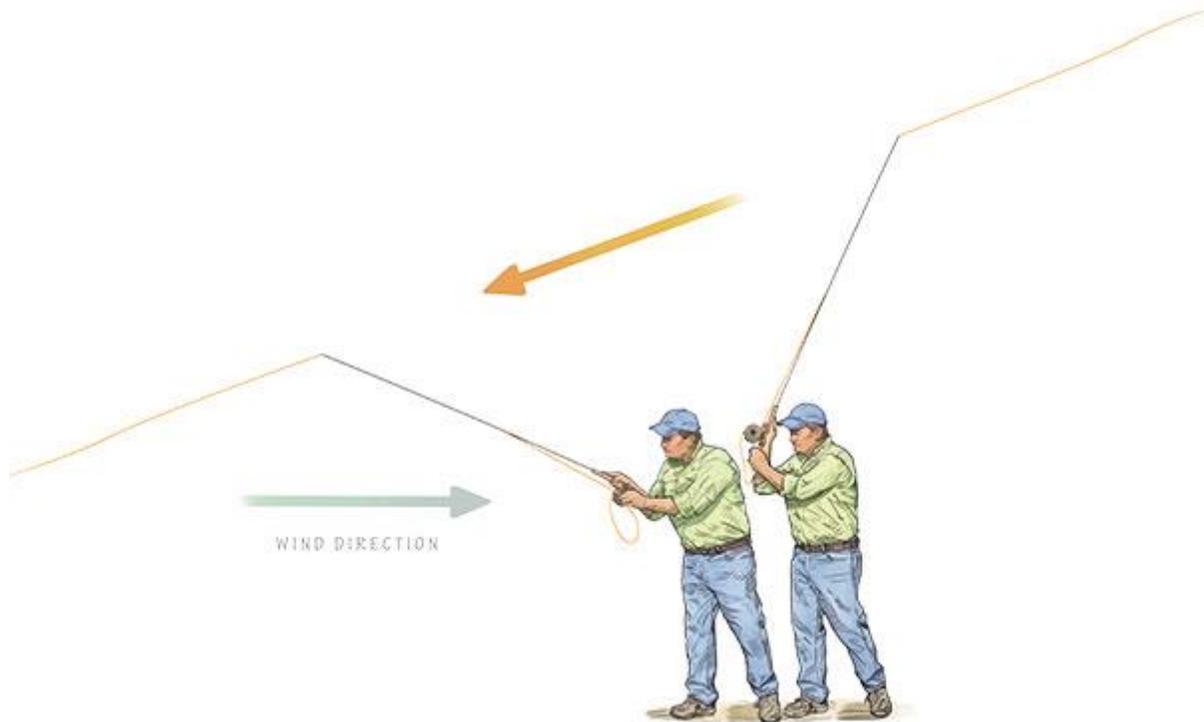
I don't sail, but I have always admired those who do it well. Using the wind to their advantage, good sailors deal with any wind direction and make sailing look effortless. It may surprise you, but some of the same principles apply to fly casting in windy conditions.

In many great fishing destinations, wind is always a factor. While it can make casting a challenge, the wind also has its advantages, such as being able to get closer to the fish without spooking them and letting the wind "drift" your fly on stillwaters. Here in southwest Florida, coastal winds are nearly always present and visitors often find the conditions overwhelming. With a few adjustments (in both technique and attitude) I can usually ease their frustrations and get them casting with confidence — even in a stiff breeze.

## Headwind

The headwind (or wind in your face) is the most dreaded of all wind directions, but many of my friends and students are surprised to find that this is the wind direction I usually prefer. If your casting accuracy is good, chances are that the same skills that you use for nailing your target also help you conquer a stiff headwind. The overhead cast is my choice for this kind of driving accuracy. I use the wind direction to quickly add energy to my backcast which gives me more time (a longer pause) to keep the backcast in the air, much like a kite.

To make the headwind overhead cast, start the pickup especially low, and stop the rod in a vertical position, sending the backcast in an upward trajectory. Allow the line to fully unroll and then drive it slightly downward with a solid stop.



[SEE PHOTO GALLERY](#)

If you're an accurate caster, you probably also have the skills to deal with a headwind. Change the angle of your cast so your backcast unrolls in an upward trajectory, and drive your forward cast straight toward the target at a slight downward angle. Joe Mahler Illustration

The temptation when casting into the wind is to bring the rod tip too far forward, but the rod movement should be precisely the same as your windless cast — just tilted slightly downward so the fly doesn't have the time to get blown off course after the leader unrolls. The leader should unroll just above the surface, and ideally, the fly should hit the water before the line and leader. If the leader doesn't unroll or if the line slaps the water, try a sharper and higher stop on your forward stroke.

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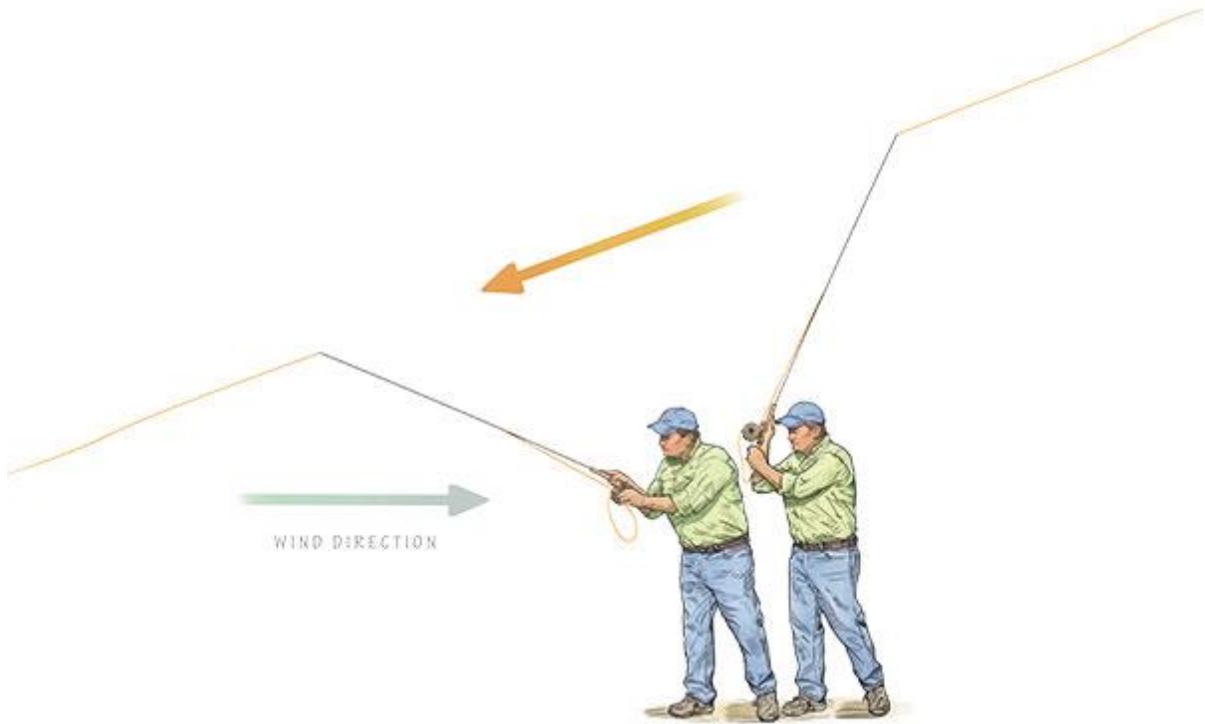
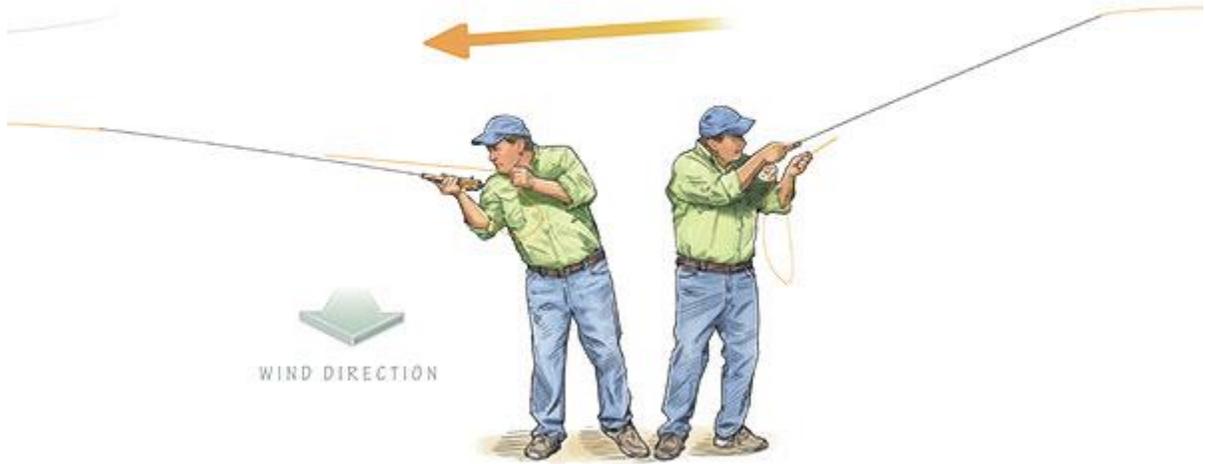
Some people drop the rod and use a sidearm cast in a headwind, and while that tactic does help to keep the line lower and possibly out of the wind, it also requires that you cast faster, as your line is closer to the surface. This isn't usually a problem if you are standing on the deck of a flats boat, but it can be if you're standing waist-deep in the river or sitting in a kayak. With either technique, shoot more line on your backcast and less (if at all) on the forward cast.

### Tailwind

The wind at your back poses the biggest threat for physical harm. Tailwinds add unwanted speed to the forward cast, especially when using heavy flies and weighted lines, making you more likely to whack yourself in the back of the head. The upside of the tailwind cast is that you can cast farther. To take full advantage of a tailwind, use a Belgian or elliptical cast. The Belgian cast keeps continuous tension between the rod and fly, making for a smooth presentation.

## *Photo Gallery*

[See all Photos](#)



Start with the rod tip at the surface and make a sidearm backcast in a slight upward path (think of casting up at 45-degree ramp). After the line unrolls, make a slightly upward forward stroke, allowing the wind to take your fly up and away. The path that the line travels should be under the rod tip on the backcast and over the rod tip on the forward cast. After the line straightens in front, allow the rod tip to lower slowly so that the fly, leader, line, and rod tip land on the water at the same time.

[For an illustration showing the Belgian or elliptical cast, see "Smooth Operators" by Lefty Kreh and Ed Jaworowski in the Feb.-Mar. 2016 issue. The Editor.] The important concept to remember is that whenever you have a tailwind, keep the line on your backcast short, and shoot more line on the forward cast.

#### Sidewind (Opposite Side)

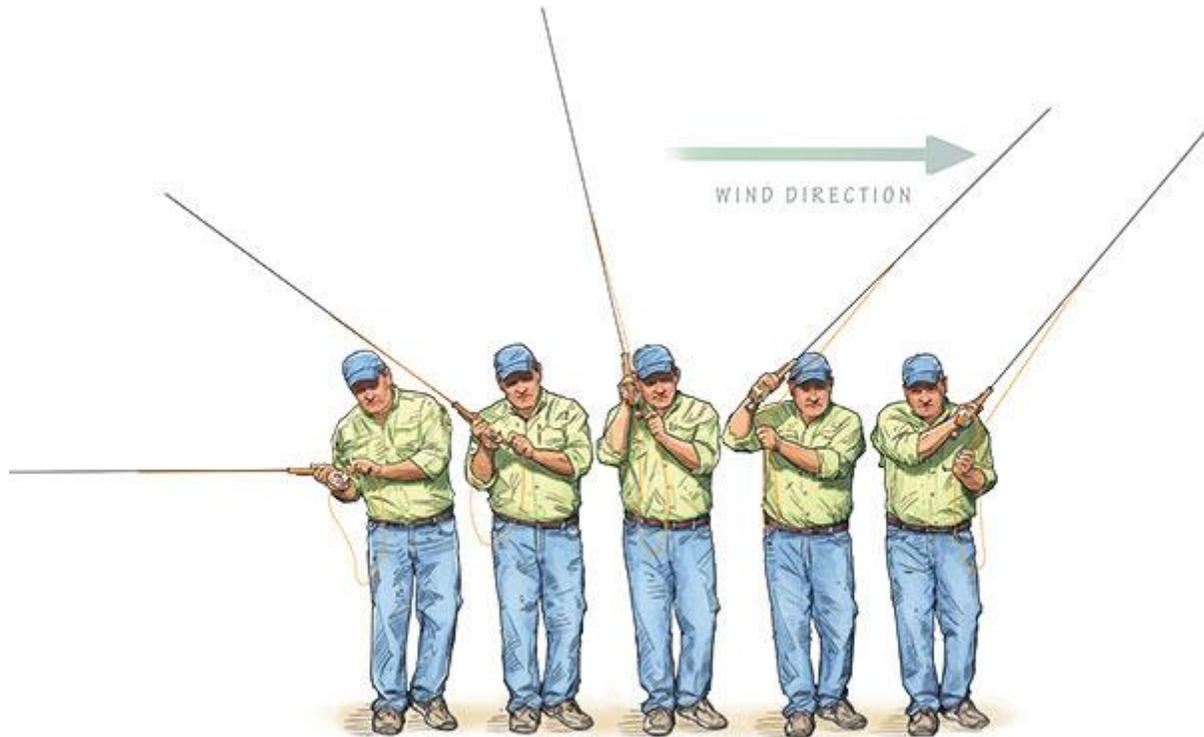
If space allows, you can use this wind by simply lowering your rod tip slightly to the downwind side for a relaxed cast. The wind will help keep the line suspended in the air, and allow you to slow down your cast for some easy and enjoyable fishing. While a sidewind onto your noncasting side doesn't usually cause problems for you, it can definitely take its toll on your fishing buddy. This wind is most often a problem if you're sharing a boat, and your partner is standing or sitting in your "safe" casting area. In this case, keep your cast upright, and rely on crisp fundamentals and shorter casts to protect your future fishing relationships.

#### Sidewind (Casting Side)

If the wind is blowing against your casting side, it can be a bit tricky. The easiest fix, if space allows, is to make a sidearm cast to keep the line path a full rod length away from your body. Again, this requires that you cast faster to keep the line just above the water.

- If the wind is blowing against your casting arm, lower the rod into a sidearm position to keep the line a full rod length away from your body.

- If you're sharing a boat with a friend, or there are other obstructions preventing a sidearm cast, use a cross-body cast to keep the line on the downwind side.



[SEE PHOTO GALLERY](#)

### Joe Mahler Illustration

Most fly fishers have a better backcast than a forward cast, and you can use this attribute in the wind to deliver the fly with a backhand cast. Make your forward cast 180 degrees away from the target, and then on your backcast turn your head to look back at the target, stop your rod hand, and shoot the line to its destination. Joe Mahler Illustration

The method that I prefer for accuracy is to make my normal overhead cast, but cant my wrist so that the rod travels over my head and the line moves back and forth on my downwind side. Make sure that you don't cast in front of your face, but rather keep your arm in the normal overhead position with the wrist tilted inward. This "cross-body" method works best at shorter distances and with smaller flies. When throwing longer distances, the stroke tends to move the rod tip in a semicircle, creating an inefficient loop.

Changing up your gear for casting in wind can pay off for sure. Shorten your leader and opt for stiffer leader material to ensure that the fly turns over. I tie my own leaders so that I can adjust the formula according to conditions. My standard 8-foot leader for windy conditions is 50% butt section, 25% midsection, and 25% tippet, but I may shorten the tippet further depending on the wind speed, direction, and the shape/size of the fly.

Even your choice of strike indicator can make a casting difference. Choose a smaller "fluffy-style" indicator over a bobber type, or better yet, tie a section of sighter monofilament into your leader instead of a standard indicator.

**Lines.** Sinking lines of all varieties are denser than floating lines and cut through the wind with greater speed. When there are waves, sinking lines cut through the wave contour and keep you better connected to the fly. Short, aggressive-head lines such as Scientific Anglers Sharkwave Siege (or similar) make casting easier — particularly when fishing larger flies.

A similar effect can be achieved by overlining, or using a line weight that is heavier than the rod calls for. The heavier line delivers large flies easier at short to moderate distances, and helps reduce the effect of wind. The danger here is that a heavier line causes the rod to flex more and form a more open loop.

**Rods.** Tighter loops and higher rod speeds are always most desirable when you're dealing with wind, so fast-action rods are the usual choices. Because these rods flex more at the tip, the loops tend to be tighter and more aerodynamic. Keep in mind that different lines will make the same rod behave differently. A "fast" rod becomes a slow one if the line is too heavy. Experiment to find the right line/rod combination for you.

### **Winning in the Wind**

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**Shape your loop.** Loop shape is never more important than it is when dealing with the wind. A tight, narrow loop slices through the wind more easily, and a wide open loop is more vulnerable. I like to use the comparison of blimps and jet planes. Going into the wind, a jet plane (tight loop) is much more aerodynamic and cuts through the wind easily, while a blimp (open loop) is more susceptible to the wind.

**Backhand cast.** This is another great option for dealing with a variety of wind directions. Start by turning sideways and making your forward cast 180 degrees away from your target. As the line unrolls, turn your head toward the target and make a smooth backcast with a solid stop, allowing the fly to land softly. Most fly fishers don't realize it, but their backcasts are often much better than their forward casts.



[SEE PHOTO GALLERY](#)

Most fly fishers have a better backcast than a forward cast, and you can use this attribute in the wind to deliver the fly with a backhand cast. Make your forward cast 180 degrees away from the target, and then on your backcast turn your head to look back at the target, stop your rod hand, and shoot the line to its destination. Joe Mahler Illustration

**Lower the tip.** The rod tip, when not casting, should be in or very near the water. Holding the rod in a raised position allows the wind to add unwanted slack in your line, making the cast and stripping less efficient.

**Take a reading.** Analyze the wind and think through each cast. The wind often changes direction. Plan your shot before moving the rod.

**Keep false casting to a minimum.** The more time the line is in the air, the more likely it will be blown off course. If you do false cast, pick up the tempo. The water haul is a better choice than false casting in most instances. To water haul, make a single cast and let it land on the water. Before the fly and line settle, make a pick-up using the surface tension to help load the rod.

**Adjust your hauls.** Think of each direction individually. Generally thought of as a "power booster," a haul in either direction can help you sculpt your loop. Sharpen your haul on the stroke going into the wind and ease up on the stroke going with the wind. Going with the wind, the jet may have too much speed, while the blimp allows the wind to help it gently unroll. Practice by adjusting your loop shape from backcast to forward cast and vice versa. Try applying the haul later in the stroke for an even tighter loop.

**Attitude adjustment.** Perhaps the most important tip is to relax. Casting in wind is tough, and getting frustrated doesn't help. Take a breath between casts and think it through. Of course, there will be a point where the wind is just too strong to enjoy fishing, but with a little practice, that point may be farther away than you think. Joe Mahler ([joemahler.com](http://joemahler.com)) is an author, illustrator, and fly-casting instructor. He currently guides in the fresh waters of Southwest Florida.

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## **NAF EVENTS SCHEDULE**

### **Under discussion by board**

Fishing outings to local lakes

Fly casting sessions on a regular basis.

Work project with game and fish

**The Board welcomes suggestions from members.**

**NAF CLUB OFFICERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

President	Charles Simpson
Vice-President	Tom Hudnall
Secretary	Mac McIlwaine
Treasurer	Denise Dean

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