

January 11, 2010

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To the members of the fly fishing trade community,

With 2009 fading into memory and only a few short months before the start of the traditional US trout fishing season I am writing to urge all participants in the fly fishing industry to support the new International Fly Tackle Dealer Show (IFTD) this coming September in Denver. Far Bank Enterprises and our businesses – Sage, Redington and RIO – will be there and between now and then we look forward to the opportunity to help craft a show that works for all stakeholders.

Since the news broke that Nielsen was no longer going to host FFR there has been considerable conversation and speculation about what to do about shows both within and outside our organization. By my count there have been four different shows (IFTD, OR, ICAST and FITS) recently competing to attract our little industry and in my view these competing shows will only further fracture an already wounded industry if we don't find some way to all coalesce around a single show. For our businesses the decision to support the IFTD show became straightforward once AFFTA and its board were able to present a well thought out plan. For full disclosure I was an AFFTA board member until this last September when I could no longer serve because of term limits rules. I remain a strong supporter of our trade association and the dedicated board members that volunteer their time and I remain convinced that for us to consider ourselves an industry we must have both a strong trade association and a strong trade show. With the fate of both these entities now intertwined, supporting the IFTD became imperative for our organization and I would argue for our industry.

As part of the debate around the various shows, I think I've heard most of, if not all, the reasons for not supporting an industry trade show: the show is at the wrong time, not enough retailers come, not enough manufacturers come, my reps do a great job and thus the show is irrelevant, it's too expensive, it's the heart of our season, I don't like Denver, and on and on. I won't try to contest all these arguments in this letter. Rather, I'd like to give you my pitch for why I think everyone should support the show: It is the only venue in the world where the fly fishing trade gets to come together in one place and at one time to work toward improving an industry and a sport that for most of us provides both our livelihoods and our lifestyles. I am convinced that without a strong show our industry stands little chance of effectively competing against the macro forces working against our businesses - things like kids not being exposed to the outdoors, the closing of public access to fishable waters, and aquatic nuisance species to name just a few.

For retailers the show is the best opportunity available to interact with the people that make the goods you sell. It is also an opportunity to get fantastic educational opportunities from both national experts in retail and your peer retailers. For manufacturers, it is the chance to interact with a segment of your customer base that is making a very visible commitment to improving their businesses. It is also the opportunity to see firsthand the products and people that will be driving the market in the coming years. If 2009 proved anything to me it is that we all have to get better at business if we are going to thrive again as an industry. The show provides a unique venue for adding your voice to the shared objective of improving our industry, our resources, and ultimately our businesses if we execute it correctly.

As one shop, or one manufacturer, or one sales rep, you may feel your attendance at the show is inconsequential to the show's success. It is not. There is strength in numbers -- higher attendance one year leads to higher attendance the next and the energy builds on itself. I urge you to make the decision this year to start building back the strength of our industry and support the trade show with your attendance and your ideas. The Far Bank businesses are committed to the fly fishing industry for the long term and we hope to see you at the show this fall in Denver.

Best wishes for a strong start to 2010.



Travis Campbell
President & CEO