

Outdoor Sporting Library

by Jeremiah Wood, Ashland, ME



Some folks say you meet your closest lifelong friends in college. And why not? It's a place where kids, on the verge of adulthood, from all parts of the country, come together to pursue common interests at a critical time in their lives. Most friendships forged in college fade away over time, but there's nothing like an annual fishing trip to keep a tight knit group coming together each year for decades.

"The Confluence: Fly-fishing & Friendship in the Dartmouth College Grant" tells the stories of one group of Dartmouth College alumni whose annual fishing trip has helped define its members and kept them close since the early

1990s. There are seven in the group: David, Phil, Norm, Bob, Ed, Dave and Bill. They come from diverse backgrounds, live in locales scattered across the Northeast and beyond, and

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work in a variety of fields. Most hardly even fished prior to the annual trip, but Dartmouth, The Grant, and fly fishing in one of the best places for wild brook trout can make for pretty strong ties.

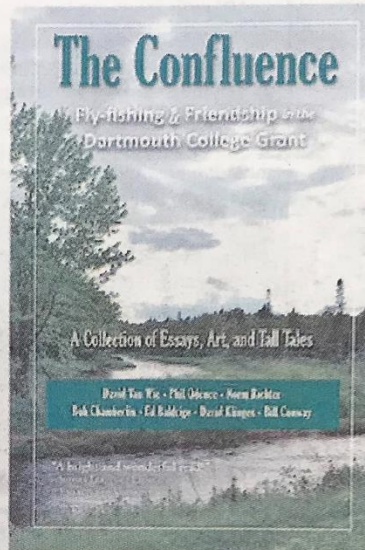
The Grant is a tract of

30,000 acres of land granted to Dartmouth College by the State of New Hampshire in the early 1800s to help fund the college and provide scholarships for New Hampshire students. It just so happens to be situated along the Maine-New Hampshire border and includes the mountainous regions drained by the Swift Diamond and Dead Diamond rivers, wild

mountain streams with healthy numbers of brook trout.

A perk to being a Dartmouth alum, as 'The Boys' from the class of 1979 are grateful for, is the use of remote cabins and access to dirt roads in The Grant. Non-motorized

The Confluence



two main rivers come together in The Grant, but it also describes how this group of friends comes together each June for their annual fishing trip. They also come together in writing the book. With David Van Wie as the driving force behind the project, each of "The Boys" writes part of the book. That's unique in several ways. First, it provides a view of the shared experience from a variety of different perspectives.

recreational day use is open to the public, but those associated with the college and their guests have the added privilege to gate access and cabin use.

"The Confluence" describes the place where the

Second, it keeps the stories interesting and unique. Finally, this is the only group I know that boasts high quality writing and story telling among each of its members.

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Confluence

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Though fly fishing brings them together, the group's members have a diverse set of interests, including photography, painting with water colors, poetry, good food, and the occasional foray into philosophy and politics. It's safe to say they are well educated and well rounded, with perhaps a different world view than one who grew up a lower middle class kid from rural northern Maine. That said, the approach to the book is open minded, reflective and interesting, and I think it appeals to a wide audience.

The stories that make up "The Confluence" touch on every aspect of the annual trip, are quick easy reads, and are quite entertaining. They range from the history of "The Grant" to trip logistics and food preparation, lost anglers and lost dogs to the catch and release ethic, wine tasting and Tenkara fishing. You won't be bored.

David Van Wie ends the book with the story "Standing in the River", in a unique style of writing that I really admired. It's one of the best fly fishing pieces I've read in a long time.

"The Confluence" was published in 2016 and can be found online or at most local book stores. Learn more at www.confluencebook.com.

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