



River Helper Job Description

Role: Volunteer Instructor/Guide for a CfR participant for a half-day of catch-and-release fly-fishing on the third day of the retreat. Guided fishing may be on either moving or still water. *All River Helpers should complete a CfR volunteer application* which is located on the national website: www.castingforrecovery.org and should carefully review the job description and information provided by the River Helper Coordinator and retreat staff.

Qualifications – A CfR River Helper should:

- Be an experienced fly-fisher and be comfortable wading and assisting a beginning angler in moving water.
- Know how to safely catch and release a fish (***Barbless hooks only please.***)
- Be comfortable conversing with women who are breast cancer survivors (Orientation session provided prior to the fishing session.)

Time Commitment: The CfR River Helper Coordinator will provide meeting times and directions prior to the retreat. *Please arrive at the scheduled time and be sure to let the River Helper Coordinator know if you have an emergency or are delayed.* River Helpers are often invited to have breakfast and/or lunch with participants and retreat staff. Attendance at meals is not mandatory but the extra time together can be very beneficial.

Important Info:

- Please dress in full, appropriate fishing attire. River Helpers are frequently asked to pose in photographs or participate in media interviews so please take this into consideration.
- CfR provides equipment (see below) so you will not need a rod. *A landing net is highly recommended.* River Helpers *do not fish* unless they are demonstrating a cast.
- CfR volunteer policy *strictly prohibits self-promotion at retreats. Please do not use this opportunity to do business.* If a participant specifically asks for contact information it is appropriate to give her a business card.

Things to Bring: The following items may be helpful to bring along if you are willing to share/lend:

- Wading staff
- Assortment of flies that are specific to the area you will be fishing
- Catch-and-release net
- Spare polarized sunglasses and rain jacket
- Portable folding chair

Equipment provided at the retreat:

- Participants are equipped with a rod, reel, breathable waders, wading boots, and a vest that contains a leader, tippet, nippers, floatant and strike indicators. Sometimes the women have received a small gift assortment of flies for use on the water.
- Some participants have learned fly tying and have a few of their own flies with them. Even if her fly doesn't look productive, *it's very important to give it a try.*

Instruction Provided to the Participants:

Most of the participants in the CfR program are beginners with very little casting/fishing experience. Participants receive the following instruction on the second day of the retreat:

- Casting Practice – Two 20-minute sessions – basic pick-up and put-down, line control, and some have practiced shooting line.
- Roll Cast - possibly.
- Hook set and landing a fish.
- Knots - Surgeons and Clinch.
- What Fish Eat – basic stream entomology
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A quick review of the previous day's instruction may be helpful before starting to fish.

Fishing Day Logistics:

- You will be paired with one participant for the fishing session. If your participant has any special needs you will be informed of those in the orientation session. In some instances there may be a CfR staff member assigned to accompany you and provide additional assistance for a participant.
- The CfR Medical Facilitator will be stationed at a central location. You will be given instructions on how to reach her. ***If any injury occurs (participant falls down, bee sting, hook stick) inform the Medical Facilitator immediately.***
- Please get your participant off the water at the scheduled time.
- Please do not leave the area you are assigned to fish without informing someone.

Tips to Remember:

- **Don't touch without asking.**
- Give only positive feedback. Keep it light... use humor.
- Catching a fish is NOT the goal for this time on the water.
- ***Pinch down the barbs on all flies.***
- Encourage your participant to do as much as possible. Offer assistance but resist casting/fishing for her unless she has made numerous unsuccessful efforts.
- Allow your participant some "space." Peaceful, quiet moments on the water can be very restorative. Don't feel the need to always fill the silence with talking.
- **SHARE:** If you've found the "honey hole" and your participant has landed several fish while others haven't, offer to switch spots with others... and pass the word about what flies are working.

Please read "***Teaching Breast Cancer Survivors to Fly Fish***" for more information.



Teaching Breast Cancer Survivors to Fly Fish

Important information for all staff—especially fly-fishing instructors and river helpers.

Philosophy: Retreats are about the participants. Your job is to be supportive, helpful, friendly and always positive. Ask questions, provide interesting information about the stream insects and the fish and refrain from sharing too much personal information unless specifically asked.

Focus on having fun and on giving only positive feedback. Research is clear that people learning a new skill learn best when given only positive feedback.

- CfR welcomes women of all ages, in all stages of recovery. Some will require much more assistance than others.
- Some women may be fearful of the water and some may have problems with balance. Encourage the participant assigned to you to do as much as possible on her own while being constantly by her side, offering your arm for support if needed on land and while wading.
- **Please remember to ask before touching.** Some women may have had recent surgeries and some may just prefer not to be touched.
- Some women will be wearing a "sleeve" which is worn to prevent lymphedema, a condition that can result in dangerous swelling. Reminders to switch arms and take breaks from casting are very useful.
- **Any injury: insect stings or bites, hook sticks, bruises, etc. should be reported immediately to the CfR Medical Facilitator. Never attempt treatment yourself except in an emergency situation.**
- Some women may be experiencing "chemo brain," a condition which occurs after chemotherapy. This condition can make it difficult for women to remember details so it's fine to repeat information several times.
- "Stream Amnesia": Participants receive basic casting instruction and many of them become competent at casting on the second day of the retreat. Oftentimes the skills learned on land do not translate when a beginning angler steps into the river. Participants may remember some terminology like "roll cast" but it's fine to review and repeat the casting instruction as many times as needed.
- **Please remember to be a good listener:** If a woman is sad or angry then it's important to reflect that back to her rather than trying to fix anything. **Example:** A participant says "I'm really sad that I have put my children through this ordeal." An appropriate response might be "I guess it does feel sad to see your children getting scared or upset about what's happening to you."
- **IT'S NOT ABOUT CATCHING A FISH:** Many retreats offer several opportunities to fish including the final day one-on-one on the water. Be sure to keep the atmosphere light and don't get too serious and focused on catching that fish. Instead, give positive comments about the cast and anything else you can find to be enthusiastic about.
- **BARBS SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM ALL HOOKS.** Many women have expressed concern about damaging fish. And it's much more damaging to try to remove a barbed hook from a fish or from a human. Remember that women who have had extensive surgery are at risk for lymphedema and **a wound from a hook stick can be the beginning of lymphedema.** So don't take chances: NO BARBS PLEASE.
- **River helpers should not take their own rods on the river.** River helpers should not fish except when specifically asked to demonstrate by the participant. If the fishing day is almost over and the participant has not hooked or landed a fish, it is fine to ask to take the rod and try to hook a fish, of course handing the rod back to give her the experience of playing and landing a fish.