

# Here's Currier's triple-threat fly rod approach

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Jeff Currier's precise rigging, casting and manipulating of streamer flies in a trout river is like a combination of Ted Williams hitting a baseball, Jascha Heifetz playing the violin and Michael Jordan taking over a basketball game.

In reality Currier, 49, is a full-fledged naturalist trained in taxidermy and a self-taught artist now prospering from his intimate fish-portrait commission projects on mediums from framed canvases to T-shirts, coffee mugs and fly boxes.

He also is a tireless blogger at [JeffCurrier.com](http://JeffCurrier.com), an author, a photographer, a fly program presenter and a trip host for Yellow Dog FlyFishing Travel.

When not working Jeff is either fishing or planning another international expedition to any place still daring to issue travel visas to Yanks.

Especially on the more dangerous trips involving skirmishes with African bandits, too-close-for comfort tiger encounters or peeved mother rhinos interrupting his elephant ride, he insists on dragging along his nimble wife, Yvonne, aka Granny.

A month-ago column, "Intermediate lines key to underwater success," promised expert information on using these slow-sinking lines. Currier's antics quickly convert doubters into intermediate-line believers.

Jeff trains religiously by hiking nearby mountain trails surrounding his Victor, Idaho, home. That way he can deliver smoking casts from dawn to dusk with any outfit — from a dry trout fly to Boilermaker poppers for sharks and barracuda — better than anyone I've ever watched.

Efficiently casting and retrieving one streamer fly from a moving boat isn't done well by most fishermen. Jeff relishes simultaneously fishing three streamers. He was introduced to the effectiveness of long multidropper leaders (15-20 feet) by the best lake anglers in England and Australia. His on-river technique covers vast areas of water and discovers up-to-the-minute fly sizes and colors on trout menus.

A veteran of international fly rod world championships, Currier remains a minimalist, often arriving, as he did last Friday, with one rod and a fly box.

## Rigging starts early

Rigging begins before he comes to the stream. His weaponry includes a medium-fast 9-foot, 6-weight Winston Boron III X rod with a Ross or Abel reel and a Scientific Anglers Mastery Stillwater WF 60-weight intermediate line. Jeff casts this slow-sinking specialty line designed for lakes with consistent accuracy on rivers. Acute vision lets him follow that clear line in the air. A tinted or colored intermediate

line better suits those who are less experienced.

Currier develops his own single-diameter fluorocarbon streamer leaders.

“Traditional large-diameter butt sections interrupt the turnover of a three-fly leader during casting and also don’t allow the fly-line-to-leader transition underwater to track as straight,” he said.

His leader system uses straight 0X (12.9-pound) Scientific Anglers fluorocarbon, measuring at least 15 feet in length to allow generous 5-foot separations between flies. A cement-coated back-to-back nail knot firmly connects the leader to the slippery mono fly line.

A Currier three-streamer 0X leader is roughly divided into three 5-foot sections. Triple surgeon’s knots are used to connect the sections. After trimming, Jeff leaves a single, 8-inch surgeon’s knot tag end overhang for attaching the top and middle droppers.

Streamer sizes and weights are important as the flies are attached to the leader. The first or top dropper fly (closest to the line tip) is called “the bob” and is usually unweighted, smaller and very detectable. A Muddler-style Flash Fly is a favorite because of its visibility and ease of popping to the surface and being skated with the rod tip up. This trick may bring frighteningly explosive albeit unexpected strikes.

The second dropper, tied 10 feet down the leader from the tip, is larger and can have some weight. This can be a medium-size Woolly Bugger or Zonker/rabbit fur/marabou-style pattern.

Jeff’s point (bottom) fly is usually a hefty, weighted creation modeled after a saltwater striper fly called the Streaker. All three flies are fastened with standard five-turn clinch knots so that they may be quickly changed. A firm thumbnail tug opens the knot.

A 5-foot fly separation exposes patterns to more water on every cast.

“Almost everyone I watch when fishing a dropper has their flies too close together,” Jeff said. “Not only does this not increase area coverage, it often serves to confuse the fish.”

### **Casting and fishing**

Currier makes lobbing his gaucho bolo-like leader look easy. He incorporates powerful but compact rod strokes and minimal (no) false casting to reduce potential tangles.

Snarls multiply whenever you cast a leader decorated with multiple wind-resistant flies. When adding power in an attempt at distance, most casters drive their rod tips down too far on the forward cast, thereby strangling extra length. Jeff consistently throws more open, but still aerodynamic, loops by stopping his rod tip higher as he releases a cast. His leader turns over gracefully, and the casts carry impressive distances.

Jeff’s backcast is equally precise, mechanically aided by leaving enough line out so the heavier leader creates a water haul. After a momentary backcast pause to let all his gear straighten behind him, a single

forward cast has the flies fishing quickly. Jeff is the only person I've watched who doesn't squander yards of water by making an unnecessary wad of false casts.

Sensible line control further heightens Currier's streamer efficiency. Extra running line stays on the reel, not left around waiting to catch feet and boat. Running line slides through his hand until he stops the cast so his flies are swimming immediately upon landing. He avoids the common mistakes of overcasting and losing the handle on his line. No time is wasted grabbing for and then stripping lots of slack line before even moving the flies.

Jeff recommends that dropper experiments begin with two flies, separated by at least 5 feet to maximize their exposure. He mixes large and small and light and dark patterns, adjusting as fish dictate. When switching from river to often clearer lake conditions he'll consider downsizing the fluorocarbon uni-leader from 0X to 2X diameter but otherwise remains with the same 6-weight intermediate equipment.

Jeff hauls intermediate fly lines on every globe-trotting expedition, preferring their easy casting and reliable streamer compatibility in fresh and saltwater.

He always checks area fishing regulations. Idaho, for instance, allows up to five flies or "hooks," while Wyoming regulations permit only three. Droppers aren't allowed in many Canadian provinces.

### **Final notes**

Jeff strips his streamers quickly and may vary the cadence within a cast. Nobody on the river moves flies as fast as he does, which allows fish less time to refuse an offering.

He's a model of efficiency, landing fish quickly by controlling the head direction out of the current. He keeps anything but a giant in the water for releasing. Fish spinning uncontrollably demolish leaders.

Currier fly changes, knot replacements and machine gun casting are splendid to watch. Perhaps that's why he's still the only American adult to medal in international fly-fishing competition (bronze, Spain, 2003).

### **Drift boats at drive-in**

"DamNation" and "How the Kids Saved the Parks" start at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Victor, Idaho's Spud Drive-In for "Drift Boats at the Drive-In," an event sponsored by Teton Valley Trout Unlimited and Friends of the Teton River. Raffles, guide rates and prizes for best drift boat decoration plus snack bar and beer.

Tickets are available at the door. For information call 208-354-3871.