



Presented by Fly Fishers International - Gulf Coast Council

2026 Gulf Coast Classic

May 1-2, 2026

Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, AL

www.ffigulfcoastclassic.com

The Gulf Coast Council (GCC) of Fly Fishers International (FFI) is proud to present our 4th annual **Gulf Coast Classic** fly fishing festival, to be held Friday-Saturday, May 1-2, 2026, at the Learning Campus of Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama.

The Classic is a two-day event celebrating the sport of fly fishing through seminars, fly-tying and casting workshops, a multi-species fishing tournament, and conservation programs. The festival features a wide range of activities for all skill levels, from beginner instruction to advanced casting clinics, along with exhibitor booths, fly tyers row, raffles, and auctions. Highlights include the "Mixed Bag Classic" tournament, a showing of the Fly Fishing Film Tour, and opportunities to connect with expert anglers, vendors, and fellow enthusiasts in a community-driven setting.

Location / Facilities:

The Classic will again be hosted on the Learning Campus of Gulf State Park. The site offers ample space for the event with activity focused on the Campus's large Conservation Hall as it plays host to our exhibitors/vendors, 501c3 collaborators and fly tyers row! Additional free-standing classrooms provide space for a series of seminars as well as paid tying workshops hosted by expert tyers from across the nation. Outdoor spaces throughout the campus and along the banks of Lake Shelby play host to a series of casting clinics hosted by FFI Certified and Master Casting Instructors. An on-site bunk house provides a close and affordable lodging option for exhibitors, tyers and guests.

For updated event information, visit www.ffigulfcoastclassic.com.

Additional Activities:

In addition to the Classic, Gulf State Park and local venues provide activities for the entire family. The 6,000-acre park has three-and-a-half miles of beach for swimming, collecting shells, or sunbathing. The backcountry trail has 28 miles of paved trail to hike or bike. Visitors can explore using the bike share program, which is free for the first 3 hours. With over 50 bikes available. Or bring your own. There's kayaking on Lake Shelby, the closest freshwater lake to the Gulf of Mexico. There's also the park's Interpretive Center. A short 38 minute drive from the park is Pensacola with many more things to see and do. One that should be on everyone's list is the Naval Air Museum.

Growth and Expansion

The inaugural Classic in May 2023 with very limited promotion attracted nearly 100 attendees, and has grown each year to nearly 300 in 2025. The Fly Fishing Film Tour - with a capacity of 200 attendees - has sold out in 2024 and 2025.

The Classic's "Tyers Row" features 25 to 20 demonstration tiers from across the region, and the country. Some of the nation's top tiers are regulars including Allen Rupp, Jeff Rowley, Joe Jackson, Steve Maldonado, Mack Bryson, Matt Bennett, Fred Hannie, and more.

Over the past three years, the Classic has collaborated with more than 30 brands including regional fly fishing shops, gear manufacturers, fly tying material providers, artists, industry publications, and more. Exhibitors have reported positive sales each year. A list of these sponsors and exhibitors can be provided on request for confirmation.

Conservation Organizations and other NPO Partners:

Beyond collaboration with our sponsors and exhibitors, the Classic also hosts & promotes a variety of Not-for-Profit entities promoting conservation and fly fishing education across the region. These include: The Mayfly Project, Casting for Recovery, Project Healing Waters, ASGA & Mobile Baykeeper. Additionally, The Classic has hosted a Conservation Keynote Speaker as part of our past two events. In 2024, we hosted Tony Friedrich of ASGA as our inaugural speaker. In 2025, we welcomed William Strickland of Mobile Baykeeper as our Keynote Speaker.

For volunteers, presenters, fly tyers, vendors and exhibitors, the Gulf Coast Council has procured the on-campus dormitories for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. This extraordinary facility comes complete with linens, wi-fi, and more.

Registration for these beds will begin March 1st – for those who have accepted our invitation as a volunteer, presenter, fly tyer, etc. Cost will be \$50 per night, a bargain compared to hotel rates in the area. On April 1st, any open beds will be extended to any attendees who have registered for the event (first-come, first-serve).

Great opportunities exist for Gulf Coast Classic Sponsors and Donors, Demonstration Fly Tyers, and Volunteers. We hope you will participate through one or more of these opportunities. For more details, download the **2026 Classic Sponsor Exhibitor Form**.

*** NOTE: smoking is not allowed anywhere in the state park, either indoors or outdoors. We can suggest walking-distance places to smoke if the need arises ***

