

# Overlining Your Single Handed Fly Rod!?

*By John Hogg*

First, let me forewarn you that this discussion is restricted to single handed rods, typically of the 9 foot length. Choosing a line for a spey rod is a make or break decision. There is a truism in the spey casting world – “there are no bad spey rods, just bad spey lines!” And also, we are discussing floating lines here – not weighted sinking lines.

Have you ever had someone recommend that you buy a line one weight heavier than your rod? “Put a 6 weight line on that 5 weight rod!” goes the recommendation, or even, “I put a 9 weight line on my 7 weight rod, and now it casts a lot better!” What’s going on here? Shouldn’t we just match a rod to a line of the same weight?

To find an answer, (in less than 500 words), let’s first look at the construction of a fly line. First of all, weight: Fly line manufacturers adhere to standard weight in grains, (480 grains to the ounce) for the first 30 feet of the line. The “AFTMA” standard for a 5 weight rod is 140 grains, give or take 5 or 6 grains. For a six weight, it is 160, and for a 7 weight, 185.

But watch out now, don’t jump to that obvious conclusion: “A heavier line will put more load on my rod, so it will cast farther!”

Let’s look a little more into line construction. All tapered fly lines have a configuration consisting of 5 parts: the level tip (about 12 inches), the front taper, the belly, the rear taper, and the running line. The first 4 elements comprise the ‘head’ of the line, and, these elements are endlessly modified by line manufacturers to get different performance. Want to turn over a bass bug? That would call for a short heavy head – with extremely short front and back tapers and a heavy belly – lots of mass! You can turn over a big fly, but all of that mass isn’t going to cast very far. So, how about a long distance cast? A long, long head so that maximum line can be extended beyond the rod tip, and maximum line speed applied via a double haul, all coupled with the line’s smooth dissipation of energy that all add up to a long cast. The drawback – the caster’s form has to be perfect.

So over lining is one change that may or may not improve a rod’s performance. But almost without exception, the better way is change to a line with a different taper construction that is selected according to the desired performance change. How to get that information? There’s lots of information on manufacturers’ websites. But the best way, is to borrow every line you can get your hands on, and throw it with your rod.

And maybe none of them will help with that particular rod.... Now you’ve got a good case to convince the spouse that you need a new rod!