

Fluorocarbon Field Test by ABQ Sportfishing



Introduction: Fishing lines of today have become more complex than ever with fluorocarbon lines at the top of the list and generating the most debate. “Is fluorocarbon really better?” “What situations will it excel?” “When do I need fluorocarbon?” “What knot is best?” “Can fish really see it?” “Does it stretch less?” We are not even going to try and attempt to answer all or even a few of these questions, but we will try and give an unbiased opinion based on our on-the-water experiences.

Where to begin: With so many new lines on the market and many of them quite expensive...it is hard to know where to begin. This past year we had sworn of fluorocarbon as the properties that make it popular can also make it unpopular in certain circumstances.

- Kinks after a backlash can be a lost opportunity waiting to unfold.
- Knots that are waiting for that first good hookset to show their weakness under pressure.
- A price tag that makes re-spooling frequently a painful expenditure.

We have tried more than the lines we will be commenting on here...as none of them have been worth mentioning with the exception of Sunline FC. The Sunline had excellent all around characteristics but we are leaving it out of our field tests as it is not readily available and at the top of the cost spectrum. There will be links at the end of our results taking you to much more extensive testing on the popular fluorocarbons on the market.

Field tests: We decided to take another run at fluorocarbon late this year when

Berkley introduced the new 100% Pure Fluorocarbon and Stren 100% Fluoro. Our first purchase was the 8# Berkley Pure Fluorocarbon which we tried on both casting (Abu Garcia Morrum on a 7" St. Croix Legend Elite MF) and spinning (Shimano Stradic 2500 MgF on a 6'10" Loomis DSR820S med-fast) outfits. The line spooled up nicely on both with the casting outfit being admittedly easier. It was tough to figure out which side to lay the spool when adding to the spinning rod so we kept flipping it which never really helped. While purchasing the 8# Berkley we noticed an extraordinary find on Gamma Edge at Charlie's Sporting Goods in Albuquerque...they had the Gamma on sale for \$10.95, normally \$22.95. We purchased 6 and 8 pound spools of the Gamma for testing as we had heard extremely good feedback on the line but the \$23 price tag was a little steep. Although it hadn't hit the shelves yet we were fortunate enough to be offered a spool of the Stren 100% Fluoro in 6# from a rep kit. Both the Gamma 6# and the Stren 6# were spooled on similar spinning outfits. The Gamma 6# was spooled on a Team Daiwa Light & Tough Bass series TL-701-3 Finesse Spinning with Shimano Symetre 2500 and the Stren 100% Fluoro 6# was spooled on a Fenwick Elite Tech Dropshot Stik with Daiwa Tierra 1500 (this is our new favorite combo for finesse spinning). The 8# Gamma Edge made its way onto a Shimano Calcutta and Shimano Crucial 6'10" medium fast casting combo and a Loomis GL3 Mag Bass 6'6" with Shimano 2500 Stradic spinning outfit.

Casting: The 8# fluorocarbon regardless of brand performed poorly all around on the spinning outfits. Bunnies, Shimano knot, whatever you call them...you all know the loops we are referring to...especially if you don't close the bail with your hand. As for the casting outfits, it performed well, had good knot strength (Palomar, improved clinch and Trilene) and no noticeable difference over our preferred mono, Sufix Elite. If the Fluorocarbon will get that extra bite because of it being more invisible under water or help us achieve greater depth with those deep diving crankbaits then maybe it will be worth the extra coin at the register...but for now the jury is still out in those arenas. Diameter was similar to the same rated line in mono so we are not sure what people are referring to when they say fluorocarbon line will get you extra depth. The Berkley on the casting outfits did very well in terms of handling, slightly better than the Gamma, it seemed limper but they were very close. For the cost, we have to lean toward the Berkley in the casting and handling department...much more manageable than previous fluorocarbon from Berkley...the name escapes me...or has "vanished" from my memory.

As for the 6# contenders...it was totally different on the spinning rods. Hands down the Stren 6# Fluoro was the best handling, least susceptible to the Shimano knot phenomena...in fact we had zero occurrences. The Stren 6# 100% Fluoro will be the line on all our drop shot finesse outfits this year. Handling of all the 6# was better but the Gamma would still loop and not cast quite as well as the Stren.

Knot strength: Here again there is much debate surrounding the “best knot” for fluorocarbon as independent testing has shown that no knot is particularly good with fluorocarbon...another strike against it. Although not as strong as mono knots, all the knots we tied performed equally with the Gamma consistently being harder to snug down with the improved clinch or Trilene knot...regardless of the amount of “wetting” that was applied. Even under water the Gamma did not take to a Trilene knot well. Our best knot was the improved clinch for either weight and we still preferred a Palomar for the drop shot rigs...just be sure to watch the loops when you are snugging it down to your hook.

Overall performance: There is no question that we have bought into the notion that fluorocarbon is “better” if you have clear water or that you want a lower stretch line. As the intellectual side of our brain is still having a hard time determining if that is reality or not, or that the insecurity of not having fluorocarbon is just too big, it doesn’t really matter. At this point, we have retracted our previous abandonment of fluorocarbon, especially in the 6# range for drop shotting or split shotting. The Gamma was a slight winner in overall strength over the Stren, but the Stren decisively took the lead for spooling, manageability and knot tying. The fact that both lines exhibited much higher strength than what one would anticipate from a 6# line was impressive, or not if you believe a line should break at its rated weighting. Neither line seemed to be particularly stiff compared to our Sufix in the same test, although the Gamma took on discoloration from the water where the Stren did not. We can only assume the Gamma was absorbing more water.

We are including a couple links to two of the best tests we have seen on fluorocarbon which also address some of the myths or suppositions we referred to above. At the end of the day, (if) fluorocarbon will get that extra bite or help you feel that extra bite, (if) it is worth it, then there are some lines that will help you meet those goals. Out of all the fluorocarbon lines we have fished, the Stren 6# 100% Fluoro is by far the most impressive and has earned a spot on the spooling station next to the Sufix.

<http://www.tackletour.com/reviewfluorocarbontest.html>

<http://www.tackletour.com/reviewfluorocarbon2.html>