

# Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**



*July/August 2025 \$5.00*

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Official Fishing and  
Boating Magazine*

*FishandBoat.com*





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Volume 94 Number 4

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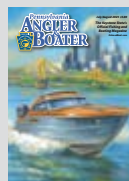


photo-Friends of the Riverfront

*Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* adheres to the American Fisheries Society's style guide and the *Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States, Canada and Mexico* in keeping with the capitalization of the English common names of fishes as well as singular and plural fish name usage. In addition, *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* recognizes the standards established by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

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## Covers



**Front cover:** The Three Rivers Water Trail offers more than 30 access points along the Allegheny, Ohio, Monongahela and Youghiogheny rivers, where boaters can launch powerboats, kayaks, canoes and paddleboards. *Artwork by Michael Kensinger*

**Back cover:** The Midland Painted Turtle, *Chrysemys picta marginata*, loves basking and sunning itself beside a slow-moving stream or river as well as shallow areas of lakes or ponds. Midland Painted Turtles are often seen by anglers and boaters. *Artwork by Michael Kensinger*



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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# SUMMER FISHING AND BOATING

by **Timothy D. Schaeffer**  
*Executive Director*

If you haven't already filled up your summer calendar with fun adventures, this edition is packed with great ideas. And, even if your calendar is almost full, I think you'll be enticed to find a way to squeeze in more summer fishing and boating.

Fishing and boating are perfect additions to any outing. Either one (or both) make a great start or end to your adventures. Around here, we have adopted the "keep going" philosophy when it comes to outdoor fun. If you're going for a hike, keep the adventure going and hike to a great fishing spot and cast a line. One of our staff (below) offers thoughts on summer species in Southwest PA, where you can add fishing to your paddle trip on the Three Rivers Water Trail.

Double the fun of a paddling or boating trip and add a night or two of camping.

And, while you're at it, take advantage of the opportunity to admire the amazing species of plants, birds, reptiles and amphibians that live in Pennsylvania. A staff member shares her love of the outdoors (page 11).

Summer months guarantee endless free community events and programs that pair nicely with a day on the water. Schedule the water adventures you love with other activities, like on Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County (page 12).

The fun of an adventure always hinges on being safe. Check out our tips for safe boat-towed watersports, making sure you have the right boat prop (page 18). Finally, each year, we participate in the national recognition of responsible powerboating through Operation Dry Water (July 4-6). The message is simple. Don't drink and operate a boat (page 5).

We'll take the longer days of summer to get out and safely enjoy everything Pennsylvania's waterways have to offer, and when you've had enough of one great adventure...Keep going. ☑

## PFBC ON THE JOB

**Gary Smith**  
*Area Fisheries Manager*

My career path was greatly influenced by the time I spend outdoors with my family. I have been a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Fisheries Biologist in Southwest PA for almost my entire career. This region offers anglers various aquatic habitat and fish species to enjoy from wild trout streams in the Laurel Highlands to the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers that contain Muskellunge, Sauger, Walleyes, bass and catfish.

One of the main aspects of my job is conducting fish surveys on waters to assess fish populations and habitat, then using management techniques to maintain or enhance the fisheries. Fisheries biologists manage the components of a fishery (fish, habitat and people) to achieve desired goals. Some common fisheries management techniques are regulations, stocking and habitat improvement efforts.

One of my favorite projects is the Three Rivers Blue Catfish Restoration project,



photo-courtesy of Gary Smith

which began in 2022 with initial stockings of young Blue Catfish. Blue Catfish were historically native to the lower Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers, but they were extirpated from the rivers in the early 1900s due to pollution. The goal is to re-establish a sustainable, naturally reproducing population of native Blue Catfish in the Three Rivers at a level sufficient to support a high-quality recreational fishery. This is a unique opportunity for the PFBC to restore a native species that is also a popular sportfish among anglers.

I enjoy communicating with anglers, whether it's getting their input on waters they fish or directing them to waters that have good fish populations. ☑

## Graphic Key

These icons represent specific topics.



Amphibians and Reptiles



Boating



Catch and Release



Conservation



Family Fishing



Fly Fishing



Ice Fishing



Lakes



Paddling



Rivers



State Parks



Streams



Tackle and Gear



# ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET.



Boating Safety:



photo: Stover Photography

**OPERATION  
DRY WATER**  
**July 4-6**

**By boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol,  
you're endangering your life and the life of others.**

**FishandBoat.com**





# PADDLE PITTSBURGH!

*photo-Jess Friss/Three Rivers Waterkeeper*



A photograph of a person in a yellow kayak on the Monongahela River. The person is wearing a yellow life vest and a white shirt. They are paddling away from the camera. In the background, there is a riverbank with green trees and some buildings, including a large red brick building. The sky is overcast.

*by Carl Haensel*

If you're looking to hit the water this summer, paddling Pittsburgh is an excellent option. Featuring both unique cityscapes and lush forested hills, area rivers offer something for everyone. Whether you're planning a casual day on the water, want to cover some miles or check out top-notch fishing, there are ample reasons to paddle Pittsburgh's renowned Three Rivers. The Three Rivers Water Trail highlights access on the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers, with more than 30 access points within 20 miles of downtown Pittsburgh. If you have your own boat, it's easy to launch and keep going. Excellent signage is located along the waterfront to help find launches and landings. Lots of free programs and rental options make it easy for a beginner to give paddling a shot.

A number of non-profit groups work hard to improve access, get paddlers on the water and keep the rivers clean. Friends of the Riverfront led the creation of the trail, which has been recognized as a National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of the Interior. A 2024 water trail management plan is taking paddling in Pittsburgh to the next level with better access and even more opportunities. Accessible launches help mobility impaired paddlers, with one in Springdale and a new one in Verona. Friends of the Riverfront offers free on-the-water stewardship events to help clean up trash in the area. On August 9 and September 6, 2025, paddlers who want to get comfortable exploring the greater river area can join lock through classes at local dams by a partnership between Friends of the Riverfront and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. For more opportunities, check out [friendsoftheriverfront.org](https://friendsoftheriverfront.org).

Venture Outdoors offers easy kayak rentals for those without a boat or looking to learn how to paddle. A new \$1.3 million kayak rental dock on the Allegheny River at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in the Central Business District offers even more opportunities for paddlers this season. The 100-foot long structure will be moored to dock pilings and float with the flow of the river. Venture Outdoors teaches kayak and paddling classes and has launched an American Canoe Association Pro Paddle School. Check out their website at [ventureoutdoors.org](https://ventureoutdoors.org).

Three Rivers Waterkeeper works alongside other area nonprofits to get people on the water

*Get a great view of the city of Pittsburgh when launching from Southside Riverfront Park on the Monongahela River, Allegheny County.*



and advocate for protecting local resources. Working as a watchdog for the rivers and training the public on how to spot pollution, they offer free kayaking opportunities in partnership with Venture Outdoors and Kayak Pittsburgh. Learn about water pollution and how you can play a role

in monitoring local waterways while paddling. They also partner with the Swim Guide ([theswimguide.org](http://theswimguide.org)) to keep paddlers and swimmers informed about river cleanliness. Discover more and plan out your adventures on their website at [threeriverswaterkeeper.org](http://threeriverswaterkeeper.org). ☐



*Help clean up Pittsburgh and have fun on the water this summer during free paddling programs from Friends of the Riverfront.*



*photos: Friends of the Riverfront*

*Paddling the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh is a great way to spend a summer afternoon on the water.*

## First Paddles with Friends of the Riverfront

With so many access points to choose from and three rivers to paddle, it's hard to choose where to start. For newer paddlers, Friends of the Riverfront recommends trying an easy option. The Sharpsburg to Downtown reach offers a good launch point, with no dams to navigate heading downstream. Five separate takeouts offer floats from 2.5 to 5.5 miles long, just enough to get your proverbial feet wet as you explore paddling Pittsburgh. Head to their website for the latest Three Rivers Water Trail Map to plan your trip.

### Friends of the Riverfront

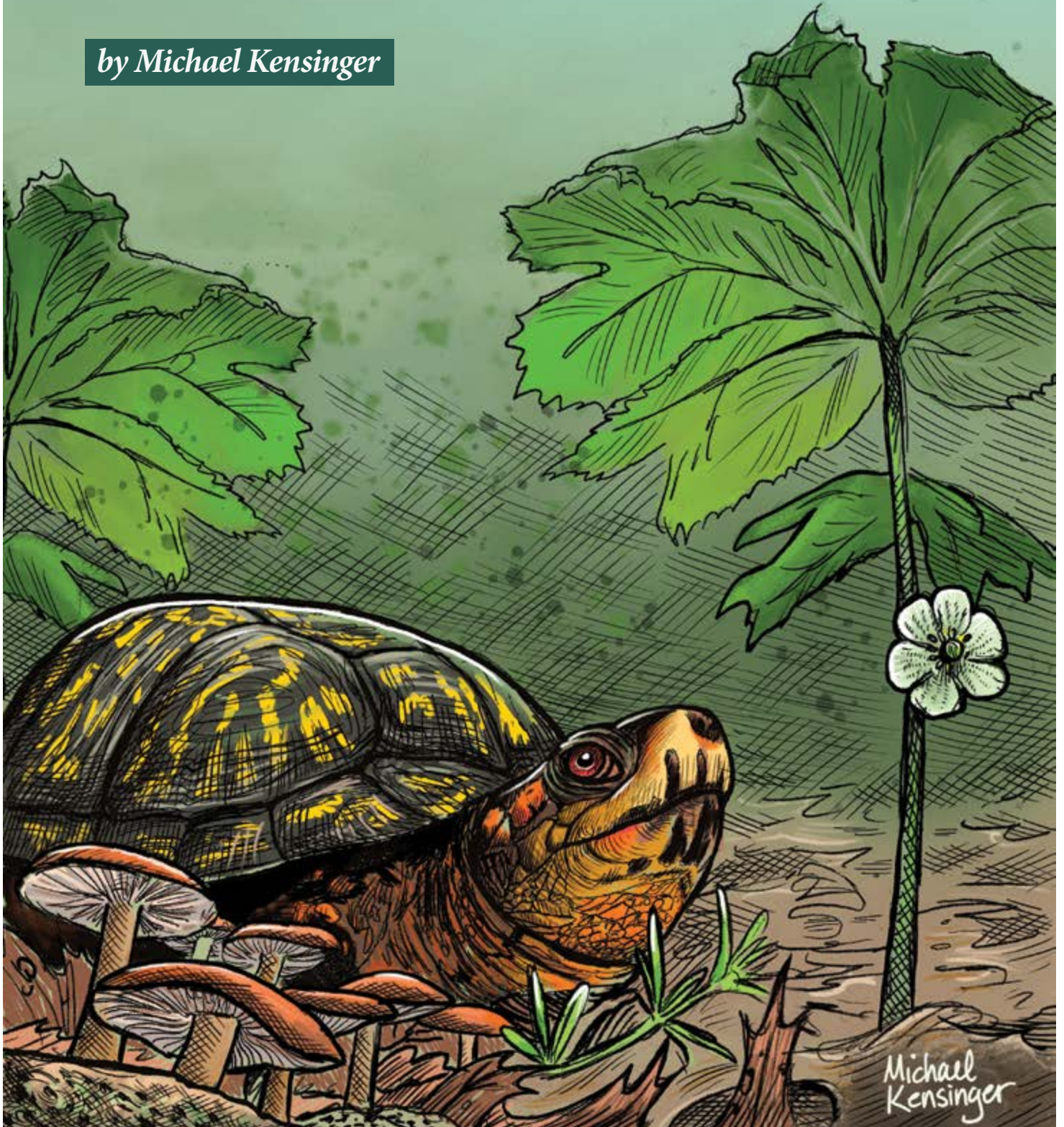






# Unboxing the Woodland Box Turtle

*by Michael Kensinger*





The Woodland Box Turtle is a creature of admiration for anyone lucky enough to cross its path. Adorned in nature's finest colors and most intricate patterns, every encounter with a box turtle invites a moment of reflection. As with all wildlife, though, admiring them from a safe distance—without causing harm or stress—is vital to their well-being. Keeping that in mind, let's continue to “unbox” the Woodland Box Turtle and explore the fascinating life of this remarkable reptile.

## Long-lived Survivor

Box turtles are among the longest living reptiles in North America, with lifespans that reach up to 120 years. Fossils of box turtles date back as far as 15 million years, and, their basic form has remained remarkably unchanged, even as the world around them has transformed. This resilience is part of why conservationists must work even harder to ensure that they continue to thrive in today's rapidly changing environment.

## Cultural Significance and Symbolism

For centuries, Woodland Box Turtles have held deep cultural and spiritual significance, especially among Native American tribes in the eastern United States. The Iroquois, Huron and Ojibwe tribes associated the turtle with their “Turtle Clan,” viewing it as a symbol of longevity, wisdom and protection. They believed the turtle's shell represented the shield of “the Creator” or “the universe,” offering shelter and safety. In the rich tradition of Native American storytelling, the turtle often plays the role of a “trickster,” using its wit and resilience to outsmart other creatures.

When you observe the unique features of a box turtle's shell, it's easy to see how the symbolism emerged. The hinged shell allows the turtle to close itself off from potential threats, outsmarting predators and reinforcing its cultural representation of protection and wisdom.

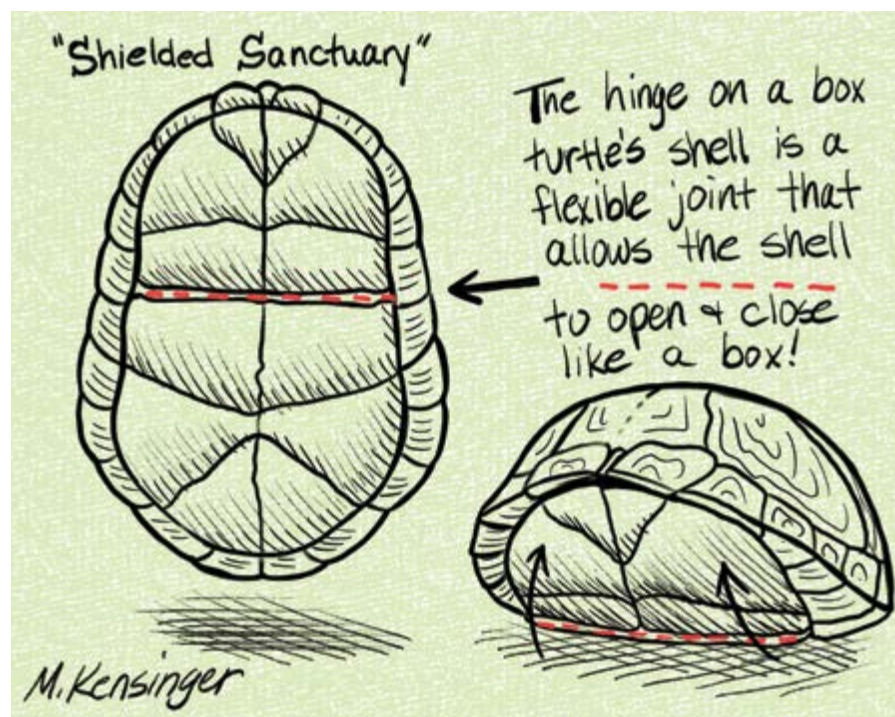
## Challenges

Unlike their more aquatic relatives, Woodland Box Turtles are primarily terrestrial creatures. In Pennsylvania, they inhabit the state's forests and grasslands, although their numbers are dwindling. The Woodland Box Turtle is a species of special concern due to habitat loss, road mortality and illegal pet trade. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission protects Woodland Box Turtles, and it's illegal to collect or disturb them in the wild.

Remember, turtles are not trophies for people to collect. When removed from their habitats, Woodland Box Turtles often suffer stress including severe disorientation, difficulty finding food and increased vulnerability to predation.

## Diet

The Woodland Box Turtle has a highly adaptable diet. As omnivores, these turtles are opportunistic feeders, eating whatever is available to them. In the spring and summer, their diet includes a wide variety of foods—from earthworms and beetles to berries, nuts and wildflowers. As fall approaches, their diet shifts to more hearty and nutritious offerings such as fallen fruit and mushrooms.



*The Woodland Box Turtle has a highly adaptable diet. As omnivores, these turtles are opportunistic feeders, eating whatever is available to them.*



## Protection

Despite challenges, there's still hope for the Woodland Box Turtle. With ongoing conservation efforts, increased public awareness and stronger legal protections, we can work toward ensuring these turtles

continue to thrive. The future of the Woodland Box Turtle is in our hands, and we must respect their role in our ecosystems, making sure that future generations will be able to admire this ancient, wise reptile. ☐



photo: PFBC archives

*Unlike their more aquatic relatives, Woodland Box Turtles are primarily terrestrial creatures.*

## Author's Field Notes

As a mushroom hunter, I have shared the joy of one of my morel mushroom patches with not one but two Woodland Box Turtles. Over the years, I've encountered these two turtles, almost like clockwork, during my foraging expeditions. This connection has reinforced my commitment to sustainable foraging—leaving mushrooms behind for the turtles to enjoy. Interestingly, when a mushroom has a slug or bug on it, people typically ignore it, but the Woodland Box Turtle relishes the extra nutrients, making them an unintentional partner in responsible mushroom harvesting.



## PFBC ON THE JOB

### Kathy Gipe

*Herpetologist and Nongame Biologist*

**M**y family spent time in the outdoors camping, hiking and boating, but it was a summer camp experience I had with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation that solidified my passion for combining my love of nature with wildlife and habitat conservation efforts. Even today, two of my favorite places to be are either hiking trails in Rothrock State Forest or kayaking in the Juniata watershed. Both of these activities give me the ability to be a naturalist—identifying plants, birds and, of course, reptiles and amphibians, which make the outing that much more interesting to me.

During my time as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's herpetologist and nongame biologist, I still can't wait for an opportunity to get out of the office



photo: courtesy of Kathy Gipe

and spend time outdoors looking for and working with the species I love. It's also been rewarding to share my enjoyment of the crawly critters with my kids, colleagues and others. ☐





photo-Marilyn Black

# Summertime Delights at Pymatuning

by Marilyn Black

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, Pymatuning Reservoir on the Pennsylvania/Ohio border is teeming with outdoor activities and facilities geared to outdoor enthusiasts on the water and on land. It's no wonder that Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County, is Pennsylvania's second-most visited state park.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) campgrounds, private campgrounds/cottages and small motels offer seasonal lodging in communities around the 20-mile long, 17,088-acre lake. Pymatuning State Park facilities include three campgrounds, three public marinas, additional motorboat ramps, kayak launches and free public beaches. Watching birds including bald eagles, osprey, great blue herons, green herons, kingfishers and loons is popular. Within the Jamestown Day Use Area at the south end of Pymatuning Reservoir, there's even a free '18-pole-hole' disc golf course and an electric vehicle charging station.

Pymatuning State Park's campgrounds offer tent and trailer sites. Cabins are available at Jamestown and Linesville

campgrounds. Educational and participatory interpretive programs for campers and the public are conducted each Friday evening at Jamestown and Tuttle Point campgrounds. Park staff also provide guided hikes, nature programs and paddle tours. Beaches are open daily; swim at your own risk. All Pymatuning State Park campsites and cabins utilize the PA DCNR statewide reservation system. Visit [pennsylvaniastateparks.reserveamerica.com](http://pennsylvaniastateparks.reserveamerica.com).

Amenities at the campgrounds include fish cleaning stations, boat launches, modern restrooms with warm showers, beaches, pet-friendly sites and coin-operated laundry facilities. In addition, Jamestown Campground has a camp store, playground and an amphitheater. A fishing pier and amphitheater are found at Tuttle Point Campground.

Maximum boat motor rating allowed on Pymatuning Reservoir is 20 horsepower. Sailboats and kayaks share the lake with motorized watercraft. From May through Labor Day, boat rentals and boat fuel are available every day of the week at the marina livery at Jamestown Day Use Area (south end), Espyville Marina (east end of the causeway mid-lake) and Linesville Marina (north end). In addition, Carried Away Outfitters offers bicycles, kayaks





and canoe rentals from their location on East Lake Road, Jamestown. For more information, call 724-343-1313.

Pymatuning Reservoir is popular among anglers pursuing Black Crappies, Bluegills, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Pumpkinseeds, Smallmouth Bass, Walleyes, White Crappies, Yellow Perch and White Bass. Ohio and Pennsylvania agencies coordinate their regulations on this boundary water. Licensed anglers from either state may fish and harvest from a boat anywhere on the main lake. Shoreline anglers must possess the appropriate state fishing license.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission operates Linesville State Fish Hatchery on Hartstown Road, just south of Linesville. This large warmwater hatchery includes a Visitor Center with informative exhibits and a fascinating two-story 10,000-gallon viewing tank.

During visits to Pymatuning State Park, don't overlook a stop at the Pymatuning Spillway along Hartstown Road at a location known since the 1930s as where "the ducks walk on the fish." People pitch bread or fish pellets to thousands of carp and dozens of noisy ducks and gulls. Feeding fish at the Pymatuning State Park spillway is the only exception to the "No Feeding Wildlife" policy in any Pennsylvania state park.

Paved trail sections are gradually being added to the 3.25-mile Spillway Trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. In 2022, this multiple-use trail was extended to the tip of South Chestnut Street on Linesville's east side, with the relocation of the Messerall Bridge (an 1876 metal truss bridge)

that now crosses Linesville Creek.

Unpaved trails within Pymatuning State Park provide easy hiking, such as the 1.9-mile Ackerman Trail and 1.1-mile Sugar Run Trail. ☐



photo-Darl Black

*Looking into the 10,000-gallon tank at Linesville State Fish Hatchery, Crawford County.*



photo-Marilyn Black

*A sailboat glides across Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County.*

## Free Summer 2025 Events

Event	Date
Fireworks at Pymatuning	July 5, 2025
Onion Festival, Linesville Beach	July 12, 2025
Kids Free Fishing Derby, Espyville Boat Launch	August 2-3, 2025
Star-Viewing Party, Tuttle Beach	August 16, 2025

For event updates, e-mail [pymatuningsp@pa.gov](mailto:pymatuningsp@pa.gov) or connect with Pymatuning State Park on Facebook.



photo-Marilyn Black

*Kayaks are available for rental at the south end of Pymatuning Reservoir and on-the-water liveries at state park marinas.*



# STRUCTURAL STABILITY

by Tyler Frantz

photos by the author

As an elementary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teacher by trade, I spend a lot of time teaching my students about structural stability. Strong foundations lead to better results in the design process. In a way, the same can be said for bass fishing, as having a solid understanding of how fish gravitate to structure can help stabilize your fishing experience.

This is especially true when waters warm under the midsummer sun, sending bass to shaded cover, most often in the form of overhead or underwater structure. Let's examine some common aquatic structures to discover how targeting these areas can bring stability to your catch rates.

## Vegetative Cover

Aquatic vegetation can be emergent, floating or submerged, and bass love all three types.

Emergent edge cover, as well as terrestrial plants like trees and shrubs, cast shadows over the water's surface, offering protection from aerial predators, while attracting a host of insects and baitfish. This means food and security for Smallmouth Bass cruising the edges of a flowing creek or river looking for an easy meal. Run a jerkbait or swimbait along the edge of this cover to entice a strike.

Floating lake vegetation, like water lilies, attracts frogs, dragonflies and other food sources that are enticing to Largemouth Bass. While tangled stems can make fishing difficult, threading the needle with finesse presentations rigged weedless can be effective.

The same goes for submerged vegetation that harbors crustaceans and smaller forage fish that comprise a significant portion of a bass's voracious diet. Ticking a vertically dropped Ned Rig or Wacky Rig through this cover often yields positive results.

## Fallen Timber

Another hot draw for bass is fallen timber partially submerged in the water. This large, woody structure adds



underwater complexity that often boosts richness and abundance of aquatic insects, while offering sanctuary for fish. Bass can be found suspended beneath these shaded areas, especially on cloudless days.

Probe any gaps or edges free of obstructing branches with soft plastics and crankbaits to lure bass out of their secluded lairs.

## Rocks and Boulders

Prime underwater structures to target in riverine systems are rocks and boulders. Any large shelves, rocky pockets or even rock walls built for streambank stabilization will attract Rock Bass and Smallmouth Bass.

If the water is low, fish will seek fresh oxygenation provided by broken seams, so it can be fun to run topwater lures just behind protruding boulders on overcast days. In deeper water, adjust your strategy to focus on the bottom, but stay ready, as fish





*Bridges offer shade and structure, making them worth a few casts.*

suspended mid-column will often hit weighted offerings on the drop.

## Man-made Habitat

Don't overlook man-made structures such as bridge columns, wood pilings, sunken cribs, docks and even turtle sunning platforms, as each provides excellent habitat for multiple fish species, bass included. Try a variety of lures as the water depth and casting access dictates, placing your cast as close to the structure as possible.

Any structure that offers shade, security or underwater complexity is worth at least a few casts, as it's likely to promote food sources bass love, while providing shelter they prefer. Structural stability is as integral to successful bass fishing as it is to elementary STEM projects. Assess the most promising approach, reflect on your progress and make necessary adjustments as you learn. Do that, and you'll make the grade every time. ☐



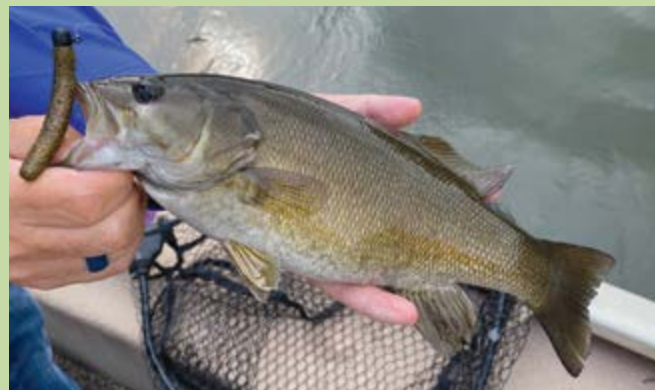
*Artificial habitat, such as wood pilings, attracts baitfish and predatory bass.*



*This angler caught a Smallmouth Bass that was holding near edge cover on the North Branch Susquehanna River.*



*Submerged timber is like a magnet for insects and fish.*



*A Ned Rig offers a quick vertical drop with plenty of action, which makes it a great option to negotiate the tricky cover bass love.*





photo-Christian A. Shane

## by Christian A. Shane

This month's "TIC (Trout In the Classroom) Spotlight" includes two of the longest running TIC schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions. Between David and I, we have over 40 years of classroom aquariums, trout fry and students who have experienced the TIC project.

- **Butler County:** Butler Area School District, Mr. David Andrews, K-12th Grade Science Teacher
- **Allegheny County:** North Allegheny School District, Ingomar Middle School, Mr. Christian Shane, 7th Grade Life Science Teacher

*What inspired you to begin raising trout in your classroom?*

David: I have always strived to bring environmental experiences for my students into the classroom. Before I started TIC at Butler Area School District, a fellow teacher and I started a fishing club for 7th and 8th grade students at the then Butler Junior High School. Students in the

club participated in stream cleanups, trout stockings and took a fishing field trip to the Allegheny National Forest. I was reading up on TIC in other states and hoped someday it would come to Pennsylvania. In 2008, we started operating our first TIC tank. Since that time, we have expanded our program into a district-wide Fisheries Science program, with students in grades K-12th grade raising trout, catfish and Bluegills in schools across the district, led by a team of eight teachers in four buildings.

Christian: Twenty years ago, I caught word that local Trout Unlimited (TU) groups were funding teachers to raise trout in their classrooms in Pennsylvania, and PA TU offered training at Fisherman's Paradise on Spring Creek, Centre County. I couldn't pass up the opportunity to see the hatchery, learn more about raising trout and even seek a few fishing evenings on Spring Creek in the summer. My local TU chapter, Penn's Woods West TU, helped fund the tank, chiller and filter, and they have been integral to support



current TIC projects and establish new ones around the Pittsburgh area and beyond.

*Share a short story about what your students have gained from this experience?*

David: I always enjoy the release days, where students get to be outside, get in the water and say goodbye to the fish they looked forward to seeing every day. At our release days, we always kick net for aquatic macroinvertebrates, and students love looking for the little “squiggles” in the debris at the bottom of the net.

Christian: The students really enjoy observing all the stages of the trout life cycle. From the hatching eyed eggs to the alevins ‘buttoning’ up their bellies to the first feeding of the fry, the kids witness something amazing happening in our classroom tank daily. I hope it’s something they take with them through their educational career and beyond as stewards and advocates of our Pennsylvania waterways and resources.

*How do you integrate the TIC project into the classroom? Do you have a particular lesson that you enjoy teaching to incorporate the trout?*

David: A favorite lesson of mine is the Design a Trout Stream project. In class, students research the needs of trout in the wild and design an imaginary stream where their trout live. The trout have to live their entire life in this stretch of stream, so there needs to be spawning habitat, cover, feeding areas and thermal refuge during the summer. Students find the importance of the different parts of a stream (run, riffle, pool) to the life of a fish. Once they design their stream, groups present their stream to the class and answer questions from fellow students. The Art Club even paints a large mural of a stream outside of my classroom in the hallway.

*What has been the biggest challenge or obstacle of the TIC project?*

David: Dealing with living organisms in a classroom is always a challenge. Sometimes, no matter what you do, some of your fish die. It’s a lesson that is hard on some students but can also be a great teaching moment. TIC is a commitment—coming in over breaks to change water and feed, making sure you have everything ready in case there’s a power outage or school cancellation and daily care of the tank and fish. But, the rewards far outweigh the challenges.

*Do you do anything in conjunction with your TIC project that’s related to fishing, watersheds, conservation or aquatic education?*

Christian: For more than 25 years, I’ve taught various grades and students the basics of fly tying and fly fishing through the “Tying Tigers,” a school club named after the North Allegheny mascot, which meets during the school day or after school. In grades 6-8, students learn techniques and fly fishing patterns that they tie in school. From Woolly Buggers to Hare’s Ear Nymphs, they take their fully-stocked fly boxes to the waterways and fish for trout, bass, Bluegills and more. ☐

photo-Christian A. Shane



North Allegheny School District students on release day.

photo-David Andrews



Butler Area School District students enjoying release day.

## BECOME A FISHING MENTOR







# PICKING THE RIGHT BOAT PROP

by **Ross Robertson** photo by the author

Selecting the right boat prop will ensure you get the best performance and fuel economy possible. The best prop is dependent upon boat use and what is most important to you. A prop designed for the best hole shot (the time it takes to go from dead stop to on-plane) typically won't give you the best top end speed. Here are three factors to consider before selecting your next outboard motor prop.

## Type

Props are usually constructed of aluminum or stainless steel. Aluminum props are typically used on lower horsepower (hp) motors. On motors 115 hp and more, stainless steel props don't flex as much as aluminum props and often get the best performance. In scenarios where the prop may be prone to being damaged, aluminum is preferred, because stainless steel props are considerably more expensive.

## Blades

The number of blades on your prop significantly changes how your prop will perform. Bass boats that are generally lighter in weight and desire a faster top end speed typically use a three-bladed prop. On deeper V-hull boats or for boaters who want a better hole shot and grip (handling in rough water), consider four- or five-blade props.

## Pitch

Prop pitch is the distance the prop moves forward in the water with one rotation. For example, a 21-pitch prop will move 21 inches forward with one revolution of the prop; however, other factors such as drag, torque, weight and prop slip come into play when selecting the best pitch.

A respected dealer who sells your boat model as well as online prop calculators from prop manufacturers are great resources to understand the right pitch before a purchase. ☐

## Stay Safe, Stay Smart on the Water

Boat-towed watersports—like waterskiing, wake surfing, kneeboarding and tubing—are thrilling, but safety is key. Here's what you need to know before you ride the wake:

- **Wear Your Life Jacket:** All participants must wear a USCG-approved life jacket. Inflatable ones are not allowed for these types of active watersports.
- **Bring a Spotter:** A competent observer must be on board to watch and assist the person being towed. A minimum of three people are needed: the operator, observer and skier.
- **Turn the Engine Off:** Always turn off the engine before picking up someone from the water to prevent propeller injuries.
- **Be Aware of the Time:** Towing is **prohibited between sunset and sunrise**—daylight only!
- **Know Your Boat Capacity:** Towed participants count toward your total passenger limit—don't overload.
- **Don't Allow Teak Surfing:** It's illegal to tow anyone hanging from platforms or ladders while the boat is in motion.
- **Heed Tow Rope Rules:** Tow ropes must be **longer than 20 feet and no more than 80 feet** (except wake surfing, kite skiing and parasailing).
- **Obey the Wake Surfing Zone:** Slow, no-wake speed within 200 feet of shorelines, docks and people in the water.

Play hard, but boat smart. Your safety depends on it.



# **NOTES** *from the Streams*

## Mistaken Identity

While working in the Southeast Region Law Enforcement office, I received a phone call from a frightened woman about a snake in her backyard. Snake reports are extremely common when the weather starts to warm up, so I didn't initially think much of it. The woman said her doorbell camera caught what she believed to be a snake crawling across her yard, and she was afraid to go outside. I told her we generally only remove snakes from residences if it's a venomous snake, but I would attempt to identify the snake if she sent me the video. After a few minutes, I received the video and began to laugh. As I zoomed in on the screen, I could clearly identify a groundhog pulling a long piece of black plastic behind it as it crawled under her shed. I called the woman to let her know it was safe to go outside. She was embarrassed but relieved that it wasn't a snake. — *Sergeant Richard D. Daniels, Jr., Southeast Region.*



## River Monsters

I've been getting a lot of questions from anglers in my district who fish the North Branch Susquehanna River, Wyoming County, about whether Flathead Catfish are being caught. Flathead Catfish are relatively new to this section of the river, and they are being caught

by many anglers, creating some new excitement. I recently saw the first large Flathead Catfish (25 pounds) caught. The large fish gave the angler quite a fight and was something different to witness. Interestingly, the fish was originally spotted chasing a bass that the angler was reeling in from the depths of the river. After releasing the small bass, the angler casted a jig and immediately hooked into the Flathead Catfish. — *WCO David Raulfs Jr., Wyoming and Southwest Susquehanna counties.*

## A First Catch

While on routine fish patrol in Montgomery County, I conducted angler checks at Loch Alsh Reservoir, Upper Dublin Township, one of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) stocked trout waters. The lake had a small group of anglers. As I made my way around the reservoir, the last individual I contacted stood out. He was new to trout fishing and had a fishing license and a valid trout permit.

During our interaction, I asked how his day was going. He shared that he just caught his first trout. We talked a bit longer, and I took the opportunity to share some background on the PFBC and our mission. I mentioned that we would be stocking the reservoir the following day and encouraged him to return, letting him know there would be more trout to catch.

It was a simple but memorable encounter, highlighting the positive impact of our work and the joy it can bring to new anglers. — *WCO Abigail G. Luteri, Southwest Montgomery and Western Philadelphia counties.*

## PFBC ON THE JOB



*photo-courtesy of WCO Daniel Wilson*

## Daniel Wilson

*Waterways Conservation Officer*

**Home County:** Allegheny County

**Current District:** Southern Westmoreland and Northern Fayette counties

**Years as a WCO:** 10 years

### What is the best aspect of being a WCO?

"Getting to spend most of my days outdoors and the freedom of most workdays to do my job as I see fit. I enjoy the investigative part of the job. It's always fun to put together big fishing or dumping cases. I also enjoy the diversity of law enforcement, as we patrol dark and secluded areas, we encounter many different things including criminal investigations."

### What is the toughest aspect of being a WCO?

"Summers and trout season are particularly busy. Keeping up with the demanding schedule and not being around on weekends in daily life is challenging. However, it's part of the job. Our role is very diverse, and you have to be competent on topics including teaching classes, being a legislative contact, running school programs, investigating boat accidents, having interviewing skills, prosecuting cases, acting in a police role in criminal events, and you must have good people and interpersonal communication skills."

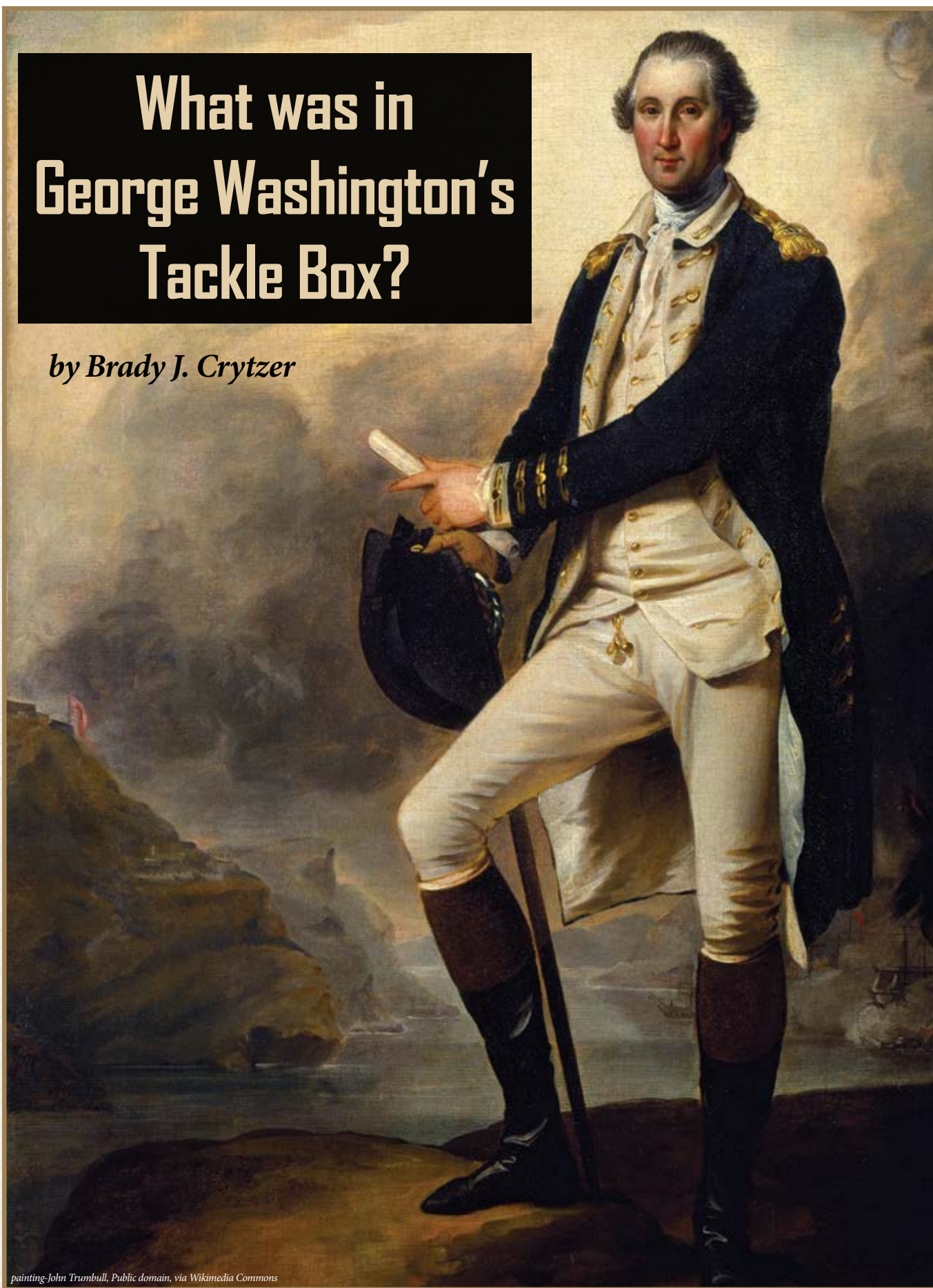
### What is your favorite thing to do when you are not working?

"I enjoy spending time with family and friends. I enjoy hunting, whether it be in Pennsylvania, Ohio or the time I spend in western states chasing mule deer, elk or pronghorns with some of my best friends and family. Fishing in Alaska certainly tops the list as well."



# What was in George Washington's Tackle Box?

*by Brady J. Crytzer*



painting-John Trumbull, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Long before he was America's first President, George Washington was an avid angler. Since his boyhood, the Virginian relaxed by fishing the Potomac River near his home estate at Mount Vernon. Washington carried the fate of a nation on his shoulders, but he still found time to bait a hook.

In his youth, Washington often spent his summers fishing with his brothers and remembered that their home waters were “well supplied with various

kinds of fish at all seasons of the year; and in the Spring with the greatest profusion of Shad, Herring, Bass, Carp, Perch, Sturgeon &c.” As he grew into manhood, his fishing adventures only continued.

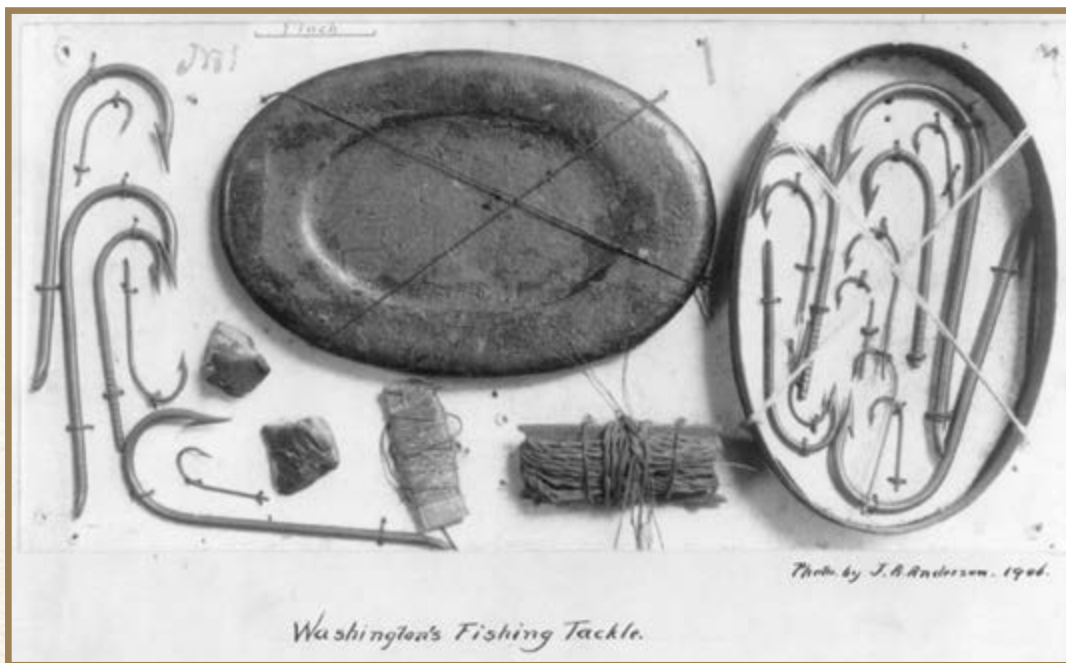
In September 1751, the 19-year-old Washington joined his older brother Lawrence on a voyage to the Caribbean Island of Barbados. En route, he received a practical education on the excitement of deep sea fishing. During their journey south, Washington wrote that his crewmates tangled with dolphinfish, sharks, “tigerfish” (barracudas) and pilot fish. Though his experience was mostly as an onlooker, the young Virginian was forever “hooked.”

During his twenties, Washington fought for the British Crown in the dense wilderness of the Ohio River Valley. As he traipsed through the forests of western Pennsylvania, he noted the abundance of lakes, streams and rivers. When the war against France ended in 1763, he returned to the Ohio River to do some fishing. “We threw out some lines at night,” he wrote, “and found a catfish of the size of our largest river cats hooked to it in the morning...”

Two decades later while the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia, he still managed to fish. In the sweltering heat of the summer in 1787, Washington decompressed by fishing for perch and trout while the other delegates negotiated the document that would become America's first framework of government.

Fishing was a different experience in the 18th century, but the tools of the trade are recognizable to any modern angler. Most of the equipment was made by hand and stressed function over form, and they were composed of natural materials. What was in George Washington's tackle box?

In 1762, Washington placed an order to a London merchant for “A Fishing Case for the Pocket—properly



George Washington's fishing tackle.

furnished with Line &ca.” Today, this item remains in the collection of George Washington's Mount Vernon estate and museum. The small case measures 4½ inches across and is ¾ inches tall—the perfect size to slip into one's pocket. Unlike today's clunky, jangling tackle boxes, Washington's was small and easily hidden, ideal for a man on the move.

Inside the box were two styles of braided line. The first was made of coarse, black horse hair that was tightly woven. The dark color disguised it in the murky waters of the Potomac River, and the dense horse hair ensured it would be strong enough to wrangle whatever feisty game awaited it.

A second line stored inside the tackle box was made of fine silk. It was also strong but thin enough to be virtually invisible when in the water. These lines would be tied together in the style of a modern leader and tippet configuration and waterproofed with a small chunk of beeswax.

Including several eyeless hooks, the tiny tackle box was everything that an 18th century angler needed to land the big one. No fishing pole? No problem. Like many anglers of his day, Washington simply snagged a nearby piece of river cane to complete his rig. Although fly fishing was popular in his time, there's little evidence to suggest that Washington used anything but live bait.

George Washington found fishing to be the perfect stress reliever. Even with the weight of the world (or a nation) on his shoulders. □

Brady J. Crytzer teaches history at Robert Morris University. The author of seven books studying the early history of Pennsylvania, he lives and fishes outside of Pittsburgh.



# Three Rivers *Water Trail*

SW  
PA!



photo-courtesy of Friends of the Riverfront





*A view of downtown Pittsburgh's skyline from a kayak.*

*by Bob Frye*

Depending on which one of the rivers you choose to forge in your kayak or canoe, the Three Rivers Water Trail surrounding Pittsburgh offers opportunities to see American historical sites, vast natural beauty and outstanding fishing waters. The trail is comprised of portions of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio, plus a bit of the Youghiogheny rivers, covering a combined 75 miles. The trail has been around since the early 1990s and was awarded "National Recreation Trail" status by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2010 for being "locally or regionally significant, open to the public for at least 10 years and practicing proper management and maintenance." Even so, it's still a bit of an unknown, even among some river users.

"We're definitely seeing more and more people understanding that the water trail is a wonderful amenity," said Katie Craig, Trail Development Coordinator for Pittsburgh's Friends of the Riverfront, the nonprofit organization that sponsors the water trail. "But, overall, I would say there is probably a pretty decent number of people who don't know it exists."

"That's something that we're really working on, increasing awareness," said Craig.

"The rivers draw crowds," said Courtney Mahronich Vita, Director of Trail Development and Government Relations for the Friends of the Riverfront. Allegheny County is a "water" county, with 73 municipalities located along one river or another, and there are 31 paddler-friendly launches among them where people can get on the water. Look for the red paddle-shaped signs.

But, that's taken some time to develop, given Pittsburgh's past relationship with its waterways. It was, often and for long periods of time, abusive, with pollution one constant.

"The one thing with Pittsburgh, historically, is that since it's been so industrial and so built up along our rivers, people used to think that, yeah, the river's back there, but it's dangerous. It's dirty; don't go back there," said Mahronich Vita. "Now, that perception is drastically shifting. In a lot of our communities, the water trail access points serve more than just boating. They've become really popular fishing destinations, and they're popular with people who just want to go down there and sit, maybe read a book, just enjoy the riverfront."

"We're seeing a generational shift to people looking at the rivers as community assets that they should enjoy."

There's been a noticeable increase in outfitters putting people on the water in the past 10 years.

And, there's plenty of potential for more use of the rivers and the water trail, especially in



communities that have traditionally been disconnected or underserved. The Friends of the Riverfront recently developed a 10-year plan for improvements, ranging from creating additional and more accessible launches to continuing to educate people about the cleanliness and safety of the rivers.

The plan also identifies existing strengths of the water trail upon which to build like its diversity of experiences and its historical significance.

“For example, paddlers can explore Allegheny Islands State Park. Organized groups can even get a permit to spend the night on the Allegheny River. It offers hiking and fishing and is just a nice place to stop,” said Craig. Paddlers can also float down the Monongahela River past Carrie Blast Furnaces, a National Historic Landmark, known for its extremely rare examples of pre-World War II iron-making technology, visible in the form of 92-foot-tall stacks with walls made of 2½-inch-thick steel plate. Or, paddlers can visit the “Point,” officially known as Point State Park, the area where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers meet to form the Ohio River. From here, paddlers can check out Pittsburgh’s skyline and even land long enough to explore the city on foot.

There are numerous locations to temporarily tie up a powerboat and venture ashore to explore the city and its sports stadiums.

The water trail also offers access to great fishing, another benefit of the rivers becoming cleaner over times.

“You can target anything from Walleyes and Sauger to muskies and Smallmouth Bass,” said Michael Depew, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission fisheries biologist, in the Somerset office, which has responsibility for the rivers. “And, of course, there are plenty of Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish to catch as well.”

Smallmouth Bass numbers are best on the Allegheny River, but they’re good on the other rivers, too. The fish are a bit more concentrated around the locks and dams on the Monongahela River. All the bridges—Pittsburgh has 446 within its limits, more than any other city in the world—hold Smallmouth Bass.

“I’ve seen quite a few fish come off the bridges in Pittsburgh,” said Depew. “I know anglers who have sat on bridge piers and just pulled fish after fish off of them. Fish just seem to stack up around the woody and rocky debris.”

“But, you find them, too, on mooring structures, at creek mouths, on rock piles, along rocky banks or ones with boulders or concrete, all through downtown Pittsburgh.”

“All of the rivers are likewise good for Walleyes. Fish exceeding 10 pounds aren’t uncommon either,” said



*photo-courtesy of Friends of the Riverfront*

*The Three Rivers Water Trail offers vast opportunities for paddlers.*

Depew. The Walleyes grow fast on the abundant forage base made up of shad, small shiners and suckers.

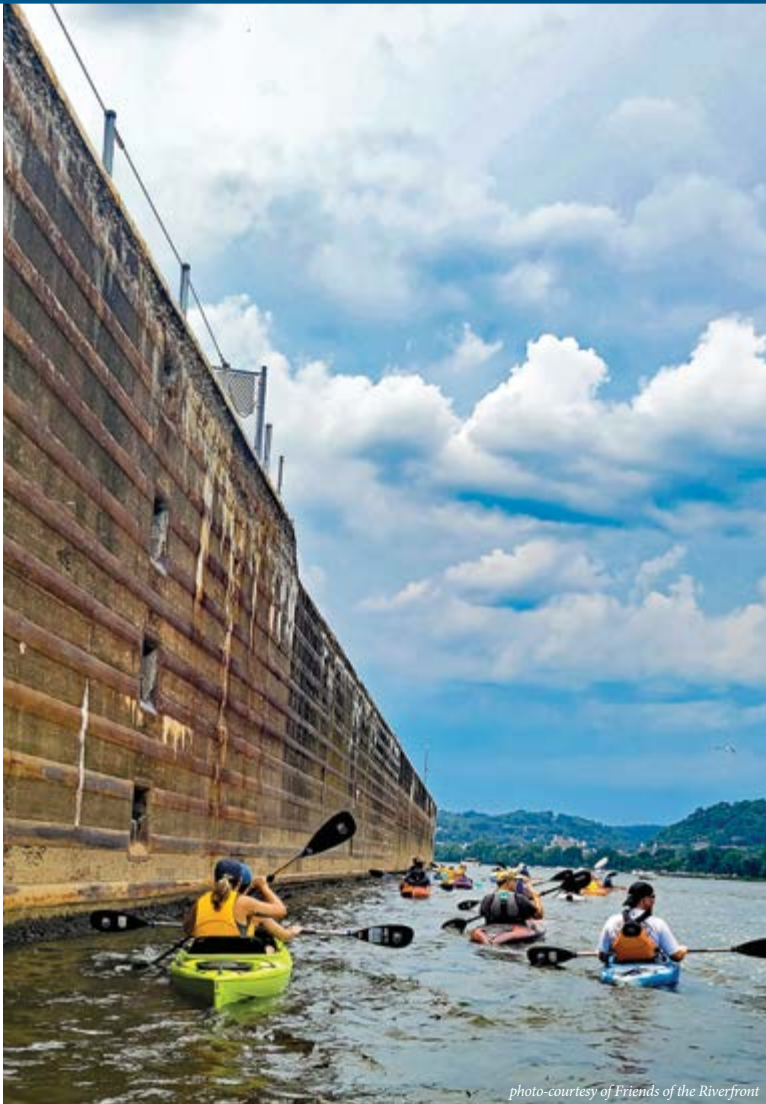
“Then, there are muskies to catch—up to 50 inches long, based on what biologists have seen in surveys—especially around the Allegheny’s islands and anywhere creeks enter the river, sometimes creating back channels,” said Depew. And, no talk of fishing Pittsburgh’s rivers would be complete without talking about catfish. The rivers hold loads of Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish, some of which exceed 60 pounds.

Paddlers can get into those fish even within the city’s limits. The “Pittsburgh pool,” the area from

## Friends of the Riverfront:







*Paddlers need to know how to navigate the rivers. Friends of the Riverfront offer on-the-water events to educate people.*

Emsworth to the Point on the Ohio River, Braddock to the Point on the Monongahela River, and Highland Park to the Point on the Allegheny River, is more of a fishing hotspot than many pleasure boaters realize.

“There are quite a few nice fish there,” said Depew.

Getting to them, though—or to lots of other places on the water trail—can entail one of its more unique features.

The Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers have a big commercial element to them. It’s especially noticeable on the Ohio River, with the Monongahela River not too far behind. Industrial barge traffic is common. To keep the rivers navigable for it, the United States Army Corps of Engineers maintains a number of locks and dams on the rivers.

Paddlers need to know about them, which is why Friends of the Riverfront emphasizes putting educational signage, often with QR codes, at paddling launch points. Safety on the rivers is a huge point of emphasis, one reason the group also suggests paddlers

only take to the water between April and September. It’s too cold, and the water during fall and winter is often too high to explore when there are other much larger vessels in play.

“But, more than just knowing the locks exist, paddlers need to know how to navigate their way through them when the timing is right,” said Mahronich Vita. So, Friends of the Riverfront hosts on-the-water events each year—educating paddlers on the locks.

“We take people out to actually lock through,” said Mahronich Vita. “We teach them how to do it including how to call up to the lockmaster. They’re always some of our most popular and sold-out classes each summer.”

The Friends of the Riverfront holds other events as well. A one-day, sojourn-like event is in the plans for 2025, with possibly a longer, multi-day event in the future. Its water trail map offers suggested paddling trips, as well.

It’s about making people—even some locals—aware of a resource that was once polluted and dirty but now is a collective gem. The rivers, and the Three Rivers Water Trail, are a gateway to the region’s outdoors and history.

Even if it’s hiding in plain sight.

“Our water presents a diverse set of offerings for people, from the industrial vibe to some more natural highlights as well,” said Craig. “It really is the best of both worlds. People should come out and see that for themselves.”

## Three Rivers Heritage Trail

If you paddle the Three Rivers Water Trail, you may also want to pedal the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. It’s a 35-mile, nonlinear trail with segments on both banks of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers, offering access to neighborhoods, businesses and local attractions. Classed as a “National Recreation Trail” and a regional “Heritage Trail,” its 1.3 million annual visitors generate \$26.5 million in regional economic impact each year, according to a Friends of the Riverfront study.

For more information and a trail map, go to [friendsoftheriverfront.org](http://friendsoftheriverfront.org), “Trails” and “Three Rivers Heritage Trail.”





The adventure doesn't stop  
with a launch permit, registration  
or fishing license.

*Keep going.*





The summer breeze is beckoning you from the shore, so go with the flow, and enjoy a paddling adventure. The outdoors are calling. Buy your launch permit, registration or fishing license today at [HuntFish.PA.gov](https://www.huntfish.pa.gov).

**[ExplorePAWaters.com](https://www.explorePAwaters.com)**

*photo-PEBC archives*





*Adventure awaits. Try summer rafting on Pine Creek. Always wear your life jacket.*





*A summer day at 535-acre Marsh Creek State Park, Chester County, can lead to great fishing opportunities with friends.*

*photo-PFBC archives*



*photo-Linda Stager*



*Take time to relax and enjoy your time in the sun.*

*photo-PFBC archives*





# Lazy River Smallmouth Bass

*by Braden Eisenhower*

*Eelgrass is a sign of a silt bottom in areas with light current.*



photo: Braden Eisenhower



*Conserving energy is a priority for warmwater Smallmouth Bass. Big, easy to obtain presentations, like oversized plastic lures, are worth pursuing.*



photo: courtesy of Nate Myers

*Nate Myers caught this Susquehanna River Smallmouth Bass in mild current.*

Find a river that boasts a population of Smallmouth Bass, and a catch is almost guaranteed. Smallmouth Bass are aggressive and agreeable, thereby susceptible to a variety of presentation styles with hook and line.

That sentiment changes for oversized bass, particularly during the warm water period.

Smallmouth Bass hangouts are predictable each spring prior to the spawn. When rivers run full, look near shorelines or islands for any type of cover or structure that breaks the current. Revisit those spots in the summertime—scraping the hull on the way—and expect to find dry land. The current slows, the water clears and Smallmouth Bass scatter.

Even in low water situations, current flows vary throughout a river system. Currents are impacted by water features like riffles, pools and runs.

Riffles are shallow areas with fast current. If the depth is sufficient, Smallmouth Bass may be present. When wading, the current often makes it difficult to maintain solid footing. Smallmouth Bass utilizing riffles will seek out boulders, which break the current and provide a feeding lie. Boils on the water's surface are a telltale sign.

During the summer, the Smallmouth Bass I find in riffles rarely exceed 14-inches. Perhaps, it requires youth and nimbleness to thrive in fast current. Big fish will sporadically slide into these areas. I encounter them almost exclusively at first or last light.

Immediately downstream of a riffle is a run. The water deepens and the current slows. Smallmouth Bass poised to feed will set up close to the riffle, while passive feeders will linger downstream. Much like a riffle, expect to find large Smallmouth Bass in runs during peak feeding windows. Pools are small. And, while the current is mild, I suspect it's still stronger than they prefer when not intending to feed.

The long stretch of deep, slow-moving water below a run constitutes a pool, where I consistently find my largest Smallmouth Bass each summer.

To the untrained eye, pools appear stagnant and lacking in structure and cover. Trust me, those features still exist.

One may also guess that pool-dwelling Smallmouth Bass are lethargic and not interested in feeding. Rather, a run is a stable environment where bass can freely move while expending minimal energy. So, they are more likely to bite outside of peak windows.

When Smallmouth Bass activate their “energy-saving mode,” their meals must be substantial and easy to obtain. Set aside reactionary techniques in favor of bulky, bottom-oriented presentations like a jig, tube or soft plastic worm or crayfish imitation. In snag-prone areas, consider weedless jigs or Texas Rigs.

On a semi-taut line, the lure should rest on the bottom. But, the rig should be light enough to drift downstream with a simple lift of the rod tip on a tight line. In shallow waters with minimal current, this takes little weight. I will often forgo the weight altogether.

Casting targets are isolated. The prominent feature is a channel notched through the run. The channel's depth and current changes may be subtle, but the current seams separating the faster channel current and the slack water on either side are often distinct.

Eelgrass is common in silted waters. Underwater vegetation supplies the area with oxygen and supports an ecosystem of invertebrates necessary for a food chain reaction. Smallmouth Bass utilize eelgrass as current break, canopy from the sunlight and an ambush point for prey.

Although slow-moving current may not appeal to the angler, it's a sanctuary to Smallmouth Bass during the summer. □

photo: Braden Eisenhower





## A WOMEN'S WEEKEND AT MILL COVE— *Teaching Survival Skills and Conservation*

*by Linda Stager*

*photos by the author*

Nestled in the off-the-beaten-path of the Mill Cove Environmental Center, Tioga County, a unique annual weekend adventure awaits women and girls looking to learn more about survival skills—and about themselves.

Under the guidance of a team of seasoned experts from “This is My Quest” (TIMQ), attendees explore essential survival techniques, from foraging for food and cooking over a fire to water skills, including fishing and kayaking. It’s an immersive experience that fosters a profound sense of self-reliance and creates an appreciation for conservation.

The camp is a straightforward experience to feel more than to see, and it happens because of the TIMQ promise to engage and teach.

This year’s multi-cultural, multi-generational Women’s Outdoor Culture Camp is July 18-20, 2025. It’s a unique

back-to-basics experience designed for participants that “emphasizes a primitive and simplistic approach to outdoor living.” It’s not for the faint of heart. The approach lets the participants experience the outdoors in its rawest state.

Participants are greeted with a welcome bag containing a mess kit, a water bottle, sunscreen, lip balm and a bar of tallow soap. After setting up camp, there are clinics and practice time after the daily morning assembly and safety meetings. It’s a laid-back weekend with wild game meats cooking on the campfire and minimal comforts.

Yet, up to 100 women participate each year in the weekend activities. In part, because of the charisma and skills of Rose Anna Moore, TIMQ’s founder and CEO. Moore was a contestant on the History Channel television show “Alone.” She survived for weeks in grizzly bear country as both Wellsboro, Tioga County, residents and the television audience cheered her on.

After the television show, Moore returned to Wellsboro. She created TIMQ, a 501(c)(3) organization that focuses on providing outdoor experiences to select populations—children, women, veterans, seniors, handicapped and





*Rose Anna Moore (left), This is My Quest founder and CEO, teaching participants fishing skills.*

anyone who has barriers to fully engaging with nature. It provides hunting trips, retreats, conservation education and ease-of-access activities.

At the women's weekend, lessons followed by in-the-field practice allow participants to learn. One group heads to the open waters at Mill Cove to learn and practice kayaking. Another group goes fishing, while another works on the campfire. There are orienteering, hiking and fishing classes. Participants even get a lesson on rattlesnake safety.

It's a "field- or stream-to-table" philosophy. For instance, fishing lessons are followed by fishing opportunities, which are followed by cooking the catch over the campfire. Each lesson becomes a survival skill. Each survival skill builds on a sense of empowerment.

"When I'm in the woods, I'm the most okay. It's harder to build a fire, prepare and cook your food and clean up afterward. It's more work, but it's simpler. It's natural. Being there and being safe is healing," said Moore.

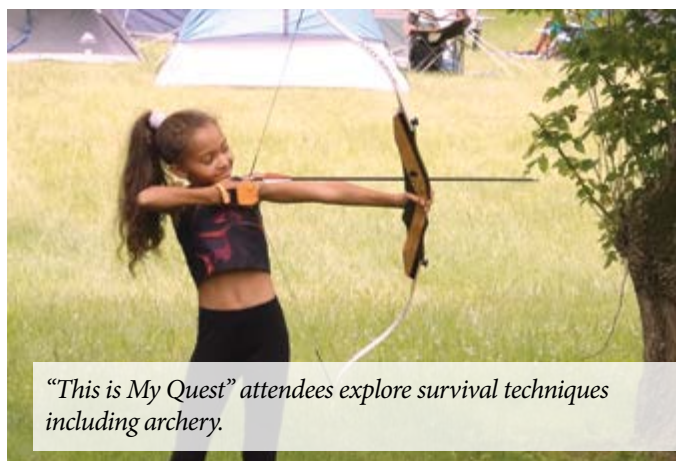
That's the TIMQ approach. For the women's weekend participants, this is not just a weekend away. It's a journey of resilience, confidence building and sisterhood. ☐



*Fishing lessons are followed by fishing opportunities, which are followed by cooking the catch over the campfire.*



*Participants learn how to fillet fish after fishing lessons and fishing opportunities.*



*"This is My Quest" attendees explore survival techniques including archery.*



*This is My Quest staff help a participant take her first kayak trip.*





# TAMARACK LAKE TODAY

*by Jeff Knapp*

Six years after being refilled, Crawford County's Tamarack Lake's fish populations have been restored to the point where Catch and Release regulations have been lifted.

Following several years of sitting empty while repairs to the lake's two dams and associated funding and permitting were accomplished, the lake was refilled. In 2018, after being refilled, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission restocked the lake with warmwater gamefish and panfish species as well as forage fish. The lake reopened to fishing, with Catch and Release regulations. Surveys by the agency last year revealed excellent numbers of bass, crappies and Walleyes. As such, starting this year, Catch and Release regulations have been lifted. The lake is now being managed under Big Bass and Panfish Enhancement regulations.

According to Area Fisheries Manager Tim Wilson, 2024 trap net and electrofishing efforts revealed self-sustaining levels of Bluegills, Largemouth Bass and crappies. Walleyes, which rely on stocking to maintain numbers in nearly all Pennsylvania lakes, were collected in excellent numbers. Muskellunge, which are a slower developing fishery due to their size and growth rate, also showed up.

## Largemouth Bass

Nighttime electrofishing measured the Largemouth Bass population. Bass were collected at a rate of more than 150 per hour indicating a thriving fishery with high numbers of fish 12 to 15 inches. Having fished Tamarack Lake several times last year, I can attest to the density of the bass fishery as early summer outings produced hard fighting Largemouth Bass, including many quality-sized ones.

## Panfish

During trap net surveys, Bluegills made up most of the panfish catch with 98 percent being of quality size, more than 6 inches long. Crappies, about half White Crappies and half Black Crappies, comprised 38 percent of the panfish catch. As with Bluegills, most of the crappies were nice sized, with the White Crappies measuring slightly longer. Surveys also collected small numbers of Green Sunfish, Pumpkinseeds and Yellow Perch. Quality-sized bullheads showed up as well.



photo-courtesy of Tim Wilson, Area Fisheries Manager



## Walleyes

Walleye stockings commenced in 2021 at the standard rate of 20 fingerlings per acre. Netting collected a total of 115 Walleyes from 15 to 21 inches, well above the benchmark used to measure the acceptable return from stockings.

## Muskellunge

Muskellunge stockings started in 2022. Trap nets collected two adult muskies last year. Wilson noted that most of the fish from the initial stocking would have been too young to have shown up in netting. The stocking of yearling muskies on an every-other-year basis will continue. He expects the musky fishery to develop into a good one, though not to the density prior to the lake's draining. When Tamarack Lake was drained and refilled during a previous dam restoration project, Largemouth Bass were not available for early restocking. Stocked muskies filled in the void, creating a dense—for muskies at least—population where anglers often caught multiple fish per outing. He expects the current fish population dynamics to provide a more balanced musky fishery.

## Lake Habitat

Anglers who fished Tamarack Lake prior to its latest draining and refilling will remember a lake sprinkled with stumps and submergent milfoil weeds. Perhaps, due to decay during the 6 years of sitting high and dry, the stumps are largely gone, so is the milfoil. The lake now takes on a heavy algae stain that limits weed growth. Some near shore shallows feature lily pad-types of floating weeds. Woody shrubs that sprouted prior to refilling presently line much of the shallows. The lake is experiencing the “new lake effect phenomenon” common to freshly created reservoirs, where elevated levels of nutrients support exceptional fish growth.

Tamarack Lake covers more than 500 acres and is shallow with a maximum depth of 13 feet, but most of the lake is much shallower. Boats are limited to electric motors only (and unpowered boats). Several ramps are available as well as a fishing pier near the southern end of the lake. Big Bass regulations call for a 4 (combined species) daily limit, 15-inch minimum length. Panfish Enhancement Special Regulations, as they apply to Tamarack Lake, call for a 9-inch minimum length for crappies, 7 inches for sunfish. The daily limit is 20 of each species group. □



*Reed Coulson, Fisheries Biologist Aide, with a Largemouth Bass.*



*Garrett Herigan, Fisheries Biologist, with some Bluegills.*





photo-Steve Shaffer





The Eastern Ratsnake, *Pantherophis alleghaniensis*, is referred to by many people as the “black snake.” It’s the largest of 21 species recognized as being native to Pennsylvania.

**Size:** 42 to 100 inches long

**Field Notes:** Eastern Ratsnakes occupy a variety of habitats. Anglers, hikers and farmers often see these large snakes in hardwood forests, wooded valleys and hillsides as well as fields, barns and farmland. The Eastern Ratsnake is plain, shiny black. The skin between its scales may be bluish white, yellow, red or orange. Its belly is an even shade of white or yellow with darker mottling of gray or brown. Young Eastern Ratsnakes are deeply patterned down their backs and onto their tails. The vivid dark-gray or brown blotches contrast at first with the paler gray body tones, but the pattern darkens as the snake grows.

**Did You Know?** This snake is an excellent climber. It uses small angles protruding from its belly scales to grip. Eastern Ratsnakes are constrictors, and it uses its strength to subdue small prey, typically rodents, by suffocation. Musk glands located in the vent emit a foul-smelling fluid—a defensive trait. The Eastern Ratsnake is often confused with the Northern Black Racer.



A young  
Eastern Ratsnake





# Don Jacobs's 'Life' in the Pennsylvania Outdoors

photo-PFBC archives

**by Mike Parker**

**Communications Director**

**Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**

**I**t's often said that you should never meet your heroes, but whoever coined that phrase never met Don Jacobs.

As a little kid growing up in Sunbury, Northumberland County in the 1980s, many Sunday evenings were spent sitting on the floor of my living room, with a dinner plate on my lap, tuned into WNEP-TV's "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life (POL)." While I was still in elementary school at the time, that weekly video magazine featuring local fishing and hunting adventures was must-see television for me, and I've got to believe the show

motivated countless other kids to pick up a rod and reel or go play around in the woods.

By the time I was a teenager in the mid 1990s, my family moved out of the POL viewing area, but I still caught an occasional episode while visiting my grandparents up in coal country. While the show was already well established and popular by then, there was a new face in the mix of hosts, and everybody just called him "Jake."

You could tell Jake had some hunting and fishing experience under his belt, but he didn't present himself as an expert who knew better than the rest of us. With his everyman appearance and friendly demeanor, Jake felt like one of us as he shared the stories of other sportsmen and women as they experienced the glory of success and occasional failure that we all relate to in the field and on the water. Whether he was covering opening day of trout





photo courtesy of Don Jacobs

*Don Jacobs at the North Branch Trout Derby, Wyoming County, in 2022.*

season, fishing for Channel Catfish and muskies on the Susquehanna River or tracking down deer and turkey in the woods of northeastern Pennsylvania and beyond, Jake got to do it all, and he took us along for the ride.

Eventually becoming the main host of the show, Don Jacobs (that's Jake if you haven't figured it out yet) was the driving force behind POL for 35 years of its 43-year run, which aired its final episode in March 2025.

"It was a great run, and the best part was that I never looked at it as a job," said Jacobs, 64. "I was a local guy who grew up here, enjoyed being outdoors and loved sharing that experience with others every week. I saw it as a chance to educate and entertain people, and it was a dream come true to be able to do that on TV for such a huge portion of my life."

Many of Jacobs's stories over the years featured the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), including tours of the state fish hatcheries, trout stockings and electrofishing surveys for Largemouth Bass and other species, to name a few. While many viewers relished seeing big fish on the show, Jacobs's favorite segments usually came from youth fishing derbies such as the ones held by the North Branch Trout Derby Association, Wyoming County, or the Mentored Youth Day at Sweet Arrow Lake, Schuylkill County.

"You would have hundreds of kids lined up on the stream or lake when that hatchery truck pulled up and started stocking trout, and their faces would just light up," said Jacobs. "Proud grandparents would be there to see a

grandchild catch their first fish, and they would become very emotional. That's pure joy to witness and even I would get choked up seeing that happen time and time again."

In recognition of Jacobs's contributions to anglers and boaters, the PFBC was proud to honor the long-time host and present him with a commemorative print at the July 2025 meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Jacobs has also received similar recognition from the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

"It has been extremely humbling to be recognized and realize how many people you have touched," said Jacobs. "To have a colleague, or especially someone you have never met, come up to you and say you entertained them or inspired them to get involved in fishing or hunting, that's very special to me."

Just because the POL era has come to an end, Jacobs doesn't intend to retire. While taking some time off during the spring to spend time with his fiancé, two daughters and five grandchildren, Jacobs says he hopes to be back soon, possibly sharing his outdoor adventures online through a partnership with local tourism officials in northcentral Pennsylvania.

Personally, as a colleague who started off as a fan and became a friend, I'd like to wish Don Jacobs the best of luck as he heads into his next chapter. I'm sure it will be great. And, from the little kid who spent Sunday evenings watching one of his heroes go fishing, please thank 'Jake' for the memories. ☐





# New State Parks Bring Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation and Understanding

*by Jessica Aiello*

In September 2022, the Pennsylvania state park system added three new state parks—Big Elk Creek State Park, Chester County, Susquehanna Riverlands State Park, York County, and Vosburg Neck State Park, Wyoming County. Since then, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) has been adding infrastructure and other improvements to provide great visitor experiences at each park.

“The new state parks...are all still works in progress,” said John Hallas, Director of the Bureau of State Parks. “It takes time to bring these important recreational amenities and facilities to the public to enjoy and use.”

There are many historical, ecological and recreational reasons to visit these parks. Each brings something unique to the experience.

## Big Elk Creek State Park

It's believed that the Lenape and Susquehannock tribes shared the 1,800 acres of land on which this park is located in southern Chester County. This area is known for its rich resources and navigable waters. Waterways, like Big Elk Creek, also served as routes along the Underground Railroad for enslaved people seeking emancipation. “We are still doing more research into any

confirmed crossings using the Big Elk Creek within what is now the state park,” said Robert Campion, Assistant Park Manager.

Ecologically and recreationally speaking, Big Elk Creek is a designated High-Quality Stream by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) for its excellent water quality, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocks the creek with trout. Limited fishing access is provided along the park's trails. While the creek is not typically deep enough for paddling or tubing, the park offers many opportunities for hiking, picnicking and wildlife viewing, with future improvements coming in the next few years to offer better, more dedicated access to the park's resources.

“This land has a unique and storied history and gives us the opportunity to highlight stories of Indigenous history,” said Campion. “The natural resources of this area are integral to that story. I am excited that this park offers so many different attractions—whether it is history, outdoor recreation or resource conservation—for folks to come out and enjoy.”

## Susquehanna Riverlands State Park

This 1,044-acre park is situated along the confluence of Codorus Creek and the main stem of the Susquehanna





Susquehanna Riverlands State Park, York County.

photos courtesy of Jessica Aiello



Vosburg Neck State Park, Wyoming County.

not currently owned by the park, but there are ongoing discussions about adding it in the future.

## Vosburg Neck State Park

This 667-acre state park in Wyoming County draws visitors for its access to the North Branch Susquehanna River. The park's boat launch and the River Trail offer river views. According to Nick Sulzer, Park Manager, another draw is the fishing on this section of the river, which is highly sought after by many anglers.

"Vosburg Neck is truly a gem in Wyoming County," said Sulzer. "When you travel down Vosburg Road, heading into the park, you get a deep sense of what makes the Endless Mountains so special. The park is very isolated from many of the distractions of normal day life, and its quiet feel is very

River. While there is no direct access to the river from within the park because of the steep topography, plans are underway to develop a trail that runs down to the river, allowing future fishing access. Visitors can also fish Codorus Creek at the end of River Farm Road.

Nathaniel Brown, Park Manager, notes that some visitors have also used that area to launch kayaks, although the site has not been developed for that use. The park is planning to develop a day use area along the creek, which will eventually provide better creek access and more parking. In the meantime, there are some magnificent views of the river from the park's cliffs, accessible from the Overlook Trail. This 1.4 mile round trip trail takes visitors to the main river overlook. "The views from the cliffs make this park unique," said Brown.

In addition to the outdoor recreation and scenic vista opportunities, part of the park sits on the Codorus Forge and Furnace Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. While not currently accessible to the public due to ongoing restoration work, the Codorus Iron Masters Mansion and summer kitchen are located within the park, and the Codorus Furnace is just down the road. The furnace, erected in 1765, was used to produce cannonballs and cannons for the American Revolutionary War. According to Brown, the furnace is

peaceful. Being Wyoming county's first state park, it provides the local community with easily accessible public land. Whether you are a local or traveling from afar, Vosburg Neck is a wonderful place to visit."

"I encourage people to visit these three new gems of the Pennsylvania state park system," said Marci Mowery, Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation President, "but remember they are in the progress of development and may not have all of the amenities you expect. Visit again over time to watch the progress. Your visits are investments of time that positively affect mental and physical health, local economies and the natural world." ☐

## Proposed State Park Expansion

In February, Governor Josh Shapiro proposed an expansion of the Lehigh Gorge State Park to include Glen Onoko Falls and announced a 125th state park—and the first subterranean park—with the inclusion of Laurel Caverns. At this time, these projects have not been confirmed in the budgeting process, but keep an eye on the [PaParksAndForests.org](https://PaParksAndForests.org) website for information as it becomes available.





# MISSION IN ACTION—

*Good Habitat = Good Fishing Programs*

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*by Amidea Daniel*



photo-George Daniel



Many of Pennsylvania's 4,000 inland lakes are human-made (e.g. lack natural habitat). Key partnerships, grants and community support provide opportunities for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) Lake Habitat Section to design, build and place fish habitat into lakes.

In late spring 2025, PFBC staff teamed up with Bucktail High School (BHS) Environmental Science Club, Central Mountain High School (CMHS) construction/trades class and Penn State's Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing

(PSJHFF) classes to build fish habitat and go fishing.

CMHS students built 90 catfish spawning boxes for Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir, Centre County. Their experience culminated alongside BHS students placing the catfish boxes in the lake and fishing.

A total of 125 students, from five PSJHFF classes, ended their semester building and placing numerous porcupine cribs in Colyer Lake, Centre County, then finished their day fly fishing.

Find a habitat enhanced lake near you. ☐



*photo-Ardena Daniel*

*A Bucktail High School student with a Yellow Perch caught during the Good Habitat = Good Fishing program.*



*photo-George Daniel*

*Penn State students getting porcupine cribs onto the lake habitat boat to place into Colyer Lake, Centre County.*



*A Penn State student carrying boards for building porcupine cribs.*



# Fireworks Over the Point

**P**addle away from the construction and crowds around Point State Park, Allegheny County, during Pittsburgh's Fourth of July Fireworks. Launch a kayak from any of the Three Rivers, and make your way to the Point to watch the festivities from the water. You can also rent a kayak if you don't want to haul your watercraft into the city. For public launches and kayak outfitters, connect with [friendsoftheriverfront.org/three-rivers-water-trail](http://friendsoftheriverfront.org/three-rivers-water-trail). Respect the United States Coast Guard's safety zones around fireworks barges. And, use navigation lights at night. Go to [FishandBoat.com](http://FishandBoat.com) for more information on safe paddling. ☐

photo-Jessica Rohrdanz



# JULY/AUGUST Highlights

NW  
PA!

photo-Linda Stager



## FLIES AND TRAINS

Wake up early, grab your fly rod and head to Oil Creek before dawn. When the sun is overhead, get off the water, and go to Perry Street Station, Titusville, to buy a ticket for an open-air train car excursion along Oil Creek. It runs Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays in July. Be at the station by 10:30 a.m. Details at [octrr.org/regular-season](http://octrr.org/regular-season).

SW  
PA!

## PATH OF THE FLOOD TRAIL

Discover Pennsylvania's 2025 Trail of the Year, following the path of the 1889 Johnstown Flood. The trail features two National Park Service sites—Johnstown Flood National Memorial and Staple Bend Tunnel. Fish trout tributaries to the Little Conemaugh River and nearby Stonycreek River. Extend your adventure just beyond the trail's end to fish and paddle the Conemaugh River in downtown Johnstown and through the Conemaugh Gap.

photo-Linda Stager



NC  
PA!

## ADVENTURE IN PA WILDS

Begin your trip in the town of Wellsboro, Tioga County. Hike, pedal, paddle or take a covered wagon trip down PA's Grand Canyon. Camp along Pine Creek or at Hills Creek State Park. Bass fishing on Pine Creek or at Lake Nessmuk can be a blast this time of year. Conclude your adventure at one of the many restaurants or ice cream shops. Find out more at [pacanyon.com](http://pacanyon.com) and [pinecreekvalley.com/pine-creek-rail-trail](http://pinecreekvalley.com/pine-creek-rail-trail).

photo-Brad Erdinger



## NOSTALGIA ON THE JUNIATA

The Juniata River offers lasting summer memories beyond remarkable Smallmouth Bass fishing and relaxing paddling. Along the river journey, hike the historic Juniata Towpath Trail for a glimpse of nesting bald eagles, compete in a round of miniature golf at a riverside campground, enjoy a treat at a quaint eatery and get cozy at a drive-in movie theatre. Visit [jrvchamber.com](http://jrvchamber.com).

photo-Linda Stager



NE  
PA!

## RICKETTS GLEN STATE PARK

Ricketts Glen State Park is a nature lover's dream with a waterfall-filled hike and peaceful paddling on Lake Jean, a relaxing spot with mountain views and quiet coves. The Falls Trail leads you past 21 gorgeous waterfalls including the jaw-dropping, 94-foot Ganogo Falls. It's adventure and serenity all in one place.

SE  
PA!

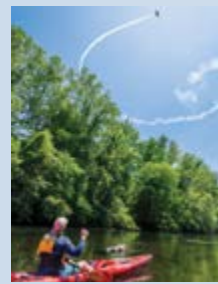


photo-Matt Sun, Red Adventures

## MOUNTAINS TO CITY

The Schuylkill River Water Trail has something for everyone. From its headwaters in coal country with rolling rapids to the tidal area in Philadelphia, the "Skook" has opportunities to float a kayak, wet a fishing line and explore river towns along the way. Discover more at [schuylkillriver.org/schuylkill-river-watertrail](http://schuylkillriver.org/schuylkill-river-watertrail).



## PENNSYLVANIA AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

### BOG TURTLE

*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*

The Bog Turtle is active from April through mid-October. It's a Pennsylvania Endangered Species, the first turtle placed on the list. A small turtle, not more than 3 or 4 inches long along its shell, it likes to bask in full sunlight or under tufts of sedges. Bog Turtles have light brown to mahogany upper shells with large scutes sometimes tinged with reddish marks in the center. Its head is black and marked with a yellow, orange or red blotch on each side.

photo-PFRC archives



### PICKEREL FROG

*Lithobates palustris*

Pickerel Frogs are active from March through November, late in the day as the sun sets, especially in July. Being nocturnal, they are difficult to observe. The Pickerel Frog secretes a substance from its skin that is often toxic to would-be predators. Pickerel Frogs are spotted and similar in appearance to Leopard Frogs. Spending more time out of the water than in the water, the Pickerel Frog makes its home in marshes, springs and the adjacent wet meadows.

photo-PFRC archives



### SPOTTED SALAMANDER

*Ambystoma maculatum*

During July and August, the Spotted Salamander is extremely active, though seldom seen as it spends most of its life underground. It lives in hardwood forests. The Spotted Salamander moves to vernal pools to breed in March and April, which is when most people see it. Spotted Salamanders are black or dark gray in color with two rows of large yellow spots on their backs.

photo-PFRC archives



JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG
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MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC



# 2024 Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Awards



## Statewide Deputy of the Year Program

Deputy Waterways Conservation Officers (DWCOs) assist Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) in the performance of specialized law enforcement duties to carry out the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's mission of protecting, conserving and enhancing the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.

Deputies work long hours, usually on weekends and holidays, and at times by themselves. As volunteers, they are an asset to their district WCO and the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

One DWCO is annually awarded the prestigious Statewide Deputy of the Year Award. Deputies are nominated by a WCO or other DWCOs in each law enforcement region. The Statewide Deputy of the Year is then selected from six nominees by a committee comprised of law enforcement and other supervisors at headquarters. The Deputy of the Year receives an engraved badge plaque to honor the achievement and is recognized at a yearly DWCO meeting.

The six region nominees are recognized at the region level.

DWCO Carl Freeman, the Southcentral Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee, received the 2024 Statewide Deputy of the Year Award.



Photo: Colonel Jeffrey R. Sabo

Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Carl Freeman (left) was selected as the Bureau of Law Enforcement's 2024 Statewide Deputy of the Year. Pictured with DWCO Freeman is WCO Sarah R. Bartle.

The Deputy of the Year Award Nominees were:  
DWCO Michael J. Eismont, Northwest Region  
DWCO Leroy V. Ammon, Southwest Region  
DWCO Richard A. Robatin, Northcentral Region  
DWCO Carl Freeman, Southcentral Region  
DWCO John D. Schaeffer, Northeast Region  
DWCO Richard A. Krebs Jr., Southeast Region



## 2025 CHANNEL CATFISH STOCKING

\*anticipated totals



### Map Legend

47 waters in 30 counties stocked with Channel Catfish

**93,575 Yearlings**  
Average size: 6 to 8 inches

**7,200 Fingerlings**  
Average size: 3 to 4 inches

FishandBoat.com

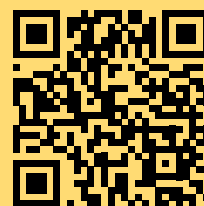




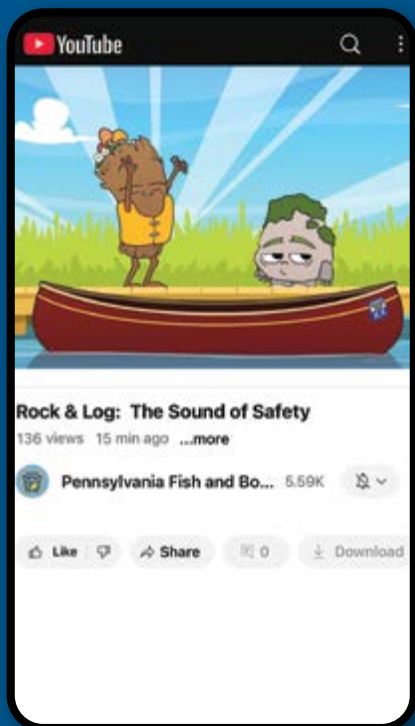
@PAFishandBoat #FishPA  
#PAFishandBoat #WearIt

Join the Conversation!  
Like, share and stay connected.

**FishandBoat.com:**



**EXPLORE PA WATERS**



On their next adventure, Rock & Log search for the best place to go fishing since Log has her new fishing license. When Rock forgets to put on his life jacket, Log pounces on the opportunity to grab a mic and turn up the volume for a boating safety reminder. Sing along to “The Sound of Safety”: a catchy jingle that will have us all remembering to practice boating safety before we head out on the water.

**The Sound of Safety:**



➔ **Keeva Keip**, age 8, and her mother, **Rochelle**, caught this **Rainbow Trout** while fishing **Locust Lake**, **Schuylkill County**, on **Mentored Youth Trout Day**.

**SE  
PA!**

## Explore PA Waters

Share photos of your fishing and boating adventures. Remember to wear a properly fitted life jacket if you're on the water. And, make sure it's fully zippered and buckled.

**Submit Your Adventure:**





