

Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**

The logo of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is a blue shield-shaped emblem. It features a yellow fish silhouette swimming within a circular frame that resembles a ship's steering wheel. The words "PENNSYLVANIA" and "FISH & BOAT COMMISSION" are written in white on the blue background of the shield.

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*The Keystone State's
Official Fishing and
Boating Magazine*

FishandBoat.com



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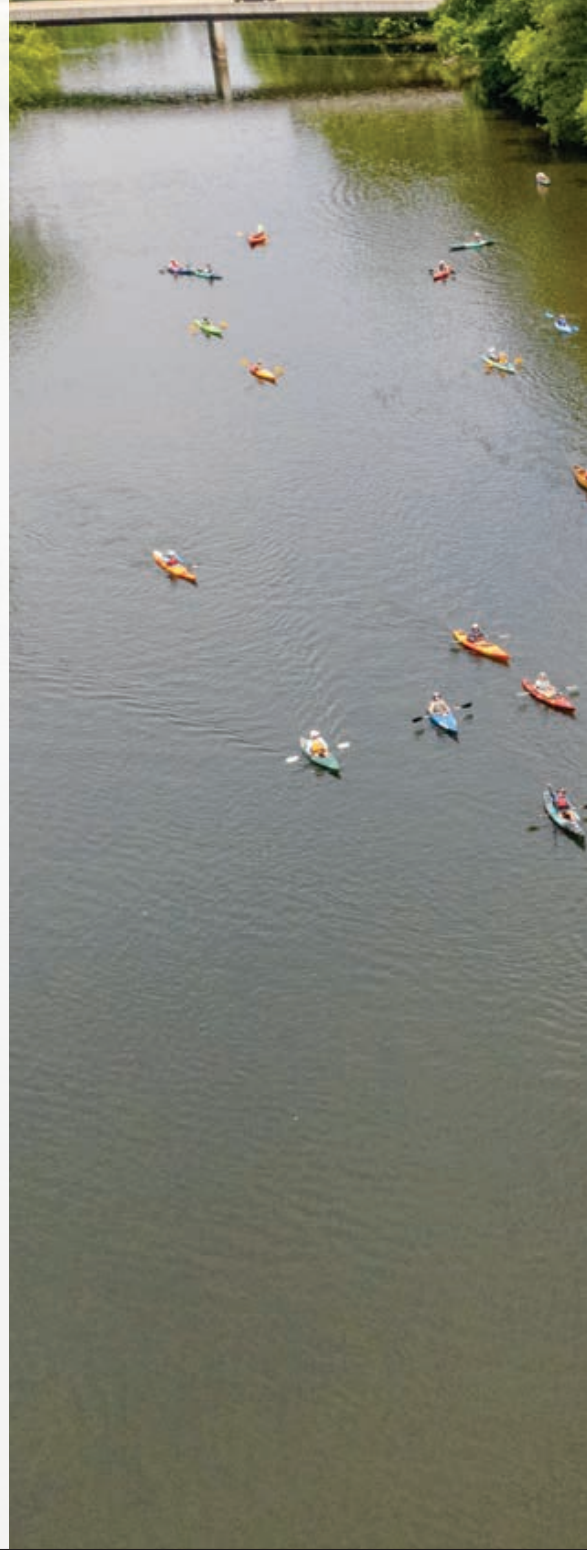
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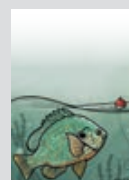


photo-courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)

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: A paddler enjoying the 2024 Schuylkill River Sojourn. This 112-mile guided trip begins in Schuylkill Haven, Schuylkill County, and ends at the iconic Boathouse Row in Philadelphia, Philadelphia County. *Photo courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)*

Back cover: The artist's favorite panfish, the Pumpkinseed, *Lepomis gibbosus*, is one of Pennsylvania's most common and frequently caught sunfish. *Artwork by Michael Kensinger*



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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES

by Timothy D. Schaeffer
Executive Director

Anglers and boaters enjoy the new opportunities each season brings for exploring what nature has to offer, especially summer's warm and sunny days, which can bring perfect conditions for time on the water. As you head out this summer, soak up the memories of your great adventures on Pennsylvania's streams, rivers and lakes. Then, extend your adventures by sharing them with someone else, maybe someone who has never experienced the fun of fishing or who can use a reminder of how great fishing can be. Our partners at the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation conducted research that shows personal testimonials are often what turns hesitant anglers into avid

ones. Plus, you never know when your story may be the catalyst for social interaction for someone who needs a friend and something to do.

While you're at it, share your stories, photos and videos with us, too. We love to hear about your adventures. And, you can help us remind everyone why there's no better place to fish and boat than Pennsylvania. ☐

Submit Your Adventure:



PFBC ON THE JOB

Mike Porta
Area Fisheries Manager

Like many kids, most of my early fishing adventures were in pursuit of Bluegills. This usually involved sitting on the bank of a lake, waiting for a fish to pull my bobber under the surface of the water. Even when the fish were not cooperating, my time was spent watching Bluegills swimming in the shallows of the lake or relentlessly protecting their nests during the spawn. Their vivid coloration, complex life history strategies and tremendous food quality make Bluegills (and other sunfishes) a desirable and challenging quarry. My fascination with Bluegills and other panfishes continues to this day as an angler and biologist. Because of this interest, one of my favorite waters in southeast Pennsylvania is Leaser Lake, Lehigh County.



photo-courtesy of Mike Porta

During my tenure as the Area 6 Fisheries Manager, I have conducted numerous surveys at Leaser Lake to track the development of the fishery following renovation of the lake. It has been exciting to observe high-quality panfish fishing opportunities. I look forward to taking my children to Leaser Lake when they're old enough to fish, so I can introduce them to experiences that were profoundly influential to me. I'm an angler and a biologist, because I enjoy experiencing the outdoors at places like Leaser Lake. ☐

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



National Safe Boating Week

May 17 – 23, 2025

National Safe Boating Week Programs and Events

Highlighted programs and events only. There's more!

Event	Date	Time	Location
Basic Boating Course	May 3	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Intermediate Unit 1 McMurray, Washington County
Boating and Water Safety Awareness Course	May 10	8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Prince Gallitzin State Park, Cambria County
Basic Boating Course	May 10	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Little Buffalo State Park, Perry County
Moonlight Mother's Day Paddle	May 11	8:15 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.	Little Buffalo State Park, Perry County
Wear It PA! Life Jackets Virtual Program	May 16	12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.	Virtual
Basic Boating Course	May 17	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center, Wayne County
Intro to Kayaking	May 17	9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Giving Pond Recreation Area, Delaware Canal State Park, Bucks County
Kayak Fishing	May 20	12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County
Kayaking Basics	May 22	5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.	Virtual
Intro to Kayak Fishing	May 23	5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.	Little Buffalo State Park, Perry County
Paddling Basics	May 23	6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Lily Lake, Luzerne County

Register for Programs and Events:



FishandBoat.com



Fishing and Boating Pennsylvania's Scenic Schuylkill River

by *Carl Haensel*

From the headwaters of the river high in the mountains around Frackville, Schuylkill County, to the tidal waters of Philadelphia, the Schuylkill River provides anglers and boaters opportunities to get outside throughout southeast Pennsylvania. It hosts a myriad of fish species, and it has ample paddling reaches that traverse some of our densest urban areas. Located within an hour's drive of over 7 million people, the river is an amazing green space available for all to explore and enjoy.

Schuylkill River Fishing

Fishing on the Schuylkill River can be divided into three primary reaches. In the headwaters of the river, trout fishing opportunities predominate, and both wild trout and stocked trout can be found in the mountain streams of Schuylkill County. Restoration efforts to rehabilitate streams damaged by acid mine drainage have paid dividends, and it's worth exploring the reaches of the Little Schuylkill River as a starting point. Numerous other trout streams are tributaries to the Schuylkill River including the well-known Tulpehocken Creek. Further downstream, after the river passes through Blue Mountain and past the town of Hamburg, warmwater fishing opportunities are king. Plenty of Channel Catfish, Smallmouth Bass and panfish can be found. Muskellunge are available as well for persistent anglers looking for a trophy. The opportunity to combine a day of floating the water in a canoe or kayak with a fishing rod offers the chance to see the river as it winds through Berks County. Through Reading, Pottstown and Phoenixville, numerous accesses and launches provide good fishing entry. Anglers often find willing bass just below riffles, rapids or along rocks and woody debris. At the bottom of the river, in Philadelphia, the river undergoes a last, significant change. At the historic dam at the Fairmount Water Works, the river becomes tidal. Fish ascending from the Atlantic Ocean become more commonplace, and while the entire river is freshwater, anglers can find Striped Bass, American Eels, American Shad and other migratory fish in the river along with bass and Channel Catfish.



photo-courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)

Schuylkill River Boating

The river boasts over 120 miles of paddleable water from north of Port Clinton downstream to its confluence with the Delaware River. Below the Kernsville Dam near Hamburg, much of the river downstream to near Phoenixville offers manageable options for paddlers looking to float the river. Boaters throughout the river need to be aware of hazards including Black Rock Dam, Norristown Dam, Flat Rock Dam, Fairmount Dam, other dams and historic structures. Rapids up to Class II are found in the river. Some reaches near Reading above Black Rock Dam can be used by power boaters, though changing water levels and submerged hazards in the river may make powerboating challenging.

The Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area covers roughly 2,000 square miles around the Schuylkill River and its watershed. Congressionally designated in 2000, Schuylkill River Greenways has worked to create recreational and educational opportunities along the river. These efforts include a variety of programming to get paddlers on the river throughout the watershed including the Schuylkill River Sojourn. For new and expert boaters alike, the Schuylkill River Sojourn is a guide-led paddling event exploring the river, whether for an entire week or just one day. The 27th annual event is held June 14-20, 2025. Toward the end of the river, additional opportunities abound. In



Paddlers enjoying the 2024 Schuylkill River Sojourn.

the city of Philadelphia on the tidal reach of the river, a kayak launch at the Walnut Street Dock helps get more paddlers in the river and is just 1 mile below the Fairmount Dam. Further access is also available downstream at Bartram's Garden.

To discover more about these opportunities, explore the interactive water trail map of the river at schuylkillriver.org. In Philadelphia, schuylkillbanks.org provides information on access for both anglers and boaters. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's online map highlights fishing opportunities and accesses on the river. ☐



photo-Carl Haensel

Smallmouth Bass are common in the middle reaches of the Schuylkill River.

photo-Matt Stan, Bad Adventures



Paddlers on the Schuylkill River near Birdsboro, Berks County.



photo-Carl Haensel

The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fairmount Water Works serve as a background to the Schuylkill River as it flows over the Fairmount Dam in Philadelphia.



Introducing TEENS to Fishing

by Jeff Woleslagle photos by the author

I just picked up a truckload of mulch on my way home from a busy day in the office, planning on spending the remainder of the day doing yard work. Just as I pulled into the driveway, I got a text from my teenage niece, “Uncle, do you think you would have time to take Thaddeus and I fishing this evening?” I knew immediately that the mulching could wait for another day. I texted back that I would load up the fishing gear and pick them up in 20 minutes. On our way to the lake, we stopped at a local bait shop and got Nina her fishing license (being under 16, Thaddeus didn’t require one yet) and a few things I figured we may need. There was a pond on the way to the lake, and I thought we would make it our first stop. I knew from experience that despite it being open to the public, the pond didn’t receive a lot of fishing pressure and held some nice Largemouth Bass and Bluegills. My niece and nephew are both quick learners and already had some experience with spinning rods. In no time, they were catching fish. For me, there is no greater joy than seeing the smile on someone’s face when they catch a fish. In addition to several large Bluegills, they each caught and released some beautiful bass before the bite at the pond slowed down, and we moved on to the lake.

We found the fish at the state park lake equally willing to bite on this warm, early summer evening, and they each caught several crappies, Bluegills and Yellow Perch before the fading light meant it was time to go. When I suggested we should stop for some ice cream on the way home, they both enthusiastically agreed, and we capped off a great time on the water with sundaes and milkshakes.


My niece and nephew are both great anglers now and have accompanied me on many memorable occasions. As with introducing anyone to fishing, having a solid plan often leads to success in making another lifelong angler. It’s important, though, to make the shared time about fun and not necessarily about catching fish. Of course, if you’re successful, celebrate it. You can set them up for success by targeting smaller fish like Bluegills and Yellow Perch and using live bait until they master some of the basics. Earthworms, waxworms and live minnows fished on small hooks under floats are an ideal way to introduce others to the sport. Focus solely on their fishing success in the beginning. On our first several trips together, I rarely wet a line myself. Remember, for young people of any age, fishing can help develop confidence, patience and an appreciation for nature. It can also help them focus and immerse themselves in the present moment. All too soon they will enter the world of adult responsibilities, limiting their free time and making it increasingly difficult to create shared memories along the water. I like to keep it simple and lighthearted, and I always find that they are eager to learn. Only on rare occasions, now, do they ask for my help with a line tangle or unhooking a fish. And, they each know the proper knots to use and how to tie them. These days, they use some artificial baits like inline spinners, small jigs and soft plastics. With each trip, they get increasingly proficient. I still feel incredibly fortunate when I get a text out of the blue asking if we can go fishing. Yard work can always wait for another day. ☐



The author’s niece, Nina, releasing a Largemouth Bass.



Panfish, like this Yellow Perch, can be an ideal species to target when introducing teens to fishing.



The journey doesn't stop
when you have a fishing license
or launch permit.

Keep going.

The water looks gorgeous from the trail, but you want to experience more this beautiful spring or summer day by fishing or paddling it. Some days you never want to end, so stay outdoors. Buy your fishing license or launch permit at HuntFish.PA.gov.

ExplorePAWaters.com



photo-PFBC archives



Ohiopyle State Park, Fayette County, is a beautiful place to hike to some waterfalls.



Paddling with friends can be fun and relaxing. Always wear your life jacket, and gear up for a summer adventure.

photo-PFBC archives

photo-courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)



There are great group paddleboarding opportunities in the summer including ones on the Schuylkill River.



NOTES *from the Streams*

Mistaken Identity

During a patrol, a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) will often see and observe nature at its best. Whether it's observing the aquatic life or wildlife, it's always amazing what one sees and learns by spending time outdoors.

One day, while WCO Zachary M. Rudd and I were on boat patrol on the Delaware River within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the river was flowing much lower than usual and a substantial amount of aquatic vegetation was floating on the surface. WCO Rudd was navigating the jet-powered patrol boat, and due to the conditions of the river, he was operating the boat at slower than normal speed while avoiding the vegetation from being sucked into the boat's jet unit. As we were heading upriver, I pointed out areas to avoid to successfully navigate the river.

I observed a stick partially protruding out of the river at an approximately 45-degree angle with a ball of something brownish-colored attached to it. WCO Rudd thought it was a beaver. Not realizing that he was operating the patrol boat much slower than the river's current, he also believed the "beaver" was swimming faster than the patrol boat was moving.

After WCO Rudd increased the speed of the boat patrol and navigated around what he thought was a beaver, he realized it was not a beaver but a ball of vegetation attached to a protruding stick.

Some things aren't always as they appear. But, nevertheless, we both got a good laugh about the so-called beaver as we continued our patrol.—*Sergeant Scott J. Christman, Northeast Region.*

What's the Buzz?

I received a call regarding baby rattlesnakes buzzing in a rock pile near a home. When I arrived on the scene, the landowner pointed towards the rock pile. While flipping rocks, I started to hear a faint buzzing sound. I stopped and asked if he heard the buzz as well? He replied, "Yes, that's what I heard earlier." After removing a few more rocks, I found a baseball-sized ball of grass. I said, I think I found the rattlesnakes. After carefully breaking the grass ball apart, a huge bumblebee came flying out, confusing us both.—*WCO Travis D. Miller, Lehigh County.*



PFBC ON THE JOB



photo-courtesy of WCO Zachary M. Rudd



Zachary M. Rudd Waterways Conservation Officer

Home County: Oswego County, NY
Current District: Northampton County
Years as a WCO: 9 years

Who or what influenced you to become a WCO?

"I grew up in New York state and was aware of conservation officers there—I thought it was a cool job. I enjoy being outside, walking by the streams and hiking in forests. I realized it could be a career path. After college and moving to Pennsylvania, I thought the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission would be a good fit."

Where is your favorite place to fish in your district?

"Bushkill Creek, Northampton County—I enjoy the small stream setting surrounded by forest. Although I recognize the fun of some of the larger streams, I enjoy the challenge of finding fish in small stream pockets."

What is the funniest thing you've seen while on patrol?

"Some people don't realize how well sound travels over a calm lake. I've heard many conversations—some about me as I'm coming to check them and their last minute collaboration of fish stories. It's also funny to see couples load up their boats at the end of the day. Someone backs the tow vehicle while the other person powers the boat onto the trailer. Both are critical of each other in their respective tasks, and I wonder why they didn't just switch roles."

What is your favorite pastime?

"I enjoy taking trips with my family, woodworking, bicycling, hiking and gardening."

What would you tell someone who is interested in becoming a WCO?

"It's very rewarding preserving resources and enforcing laws, but you must have a desire to do the job. There is a lot of autonomy in the job, and as an individual, you need to want to do the work."

GROCERY SHOPPING FOR BAIT

by Marilyn Black

Bread, cheese, meat, vegetables and dessert—it sounds like a shopping list for dinner. But, it's also a list of options for fishing bait anytime you can't readily access a tackle and bait shop.

Bread balls work well for carp, catfish and panfish. Wet a piece of bread, so it's doughy and knead it into a ball around a hook. Sizes of hook and bread ball depend on the fish species. For panfish, use a #8 hook and an extremely small ball. For carp, go with a #4 hook and quarter-size ball. Mix in a tad of peanut butter for flavor and longevity on the hook.

Canned whole kernel corn is arguably the best all-around grocery bait. Corn will catch a wide variety of fish. Use a single kernel on a #8 hook for all species of panfish (including crappies) and trout. Multiple kernels of corn on #4 hook suits catfish, suckers and especially carp. A quarter-size chunk of potato on a #4 hook is another spur-of-the-moment choice for carp.

Offering color and flavor, small pieces of soft cheese formed around the hook works for carp, catfish, panfish and trout. Colby or mozzarella cheese sticks have the correct texture for this purpose.

Canned pork has long been a food used for camping adventures, as well as yummy bait for Bowfin, catfish and even panfish. Not into canned pork? Campfire hot dogs work even better—grilled hot dogs last longer on the hook than raw hot dogs.

For dessert, try miniature fruit-flavored marshmallows. Trimmed to bite-size, mini-marshmallows are the perfect floating egg-imitator for trout.

Another must-have item for pursuing Bowfin is shrimp. A 12-ounce bag of small frozen shrimp (45-60 count) for about \$5 at a discount grocery store is more economical than a dozen shiners at the bait and tackle shop for \$8. 🐟

Supermarket Baits:



Recursos en español



Photo-Marilyn Black

A Bluegill caught at Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County, on a jig tipped with a corn kernel.

Photo-Darl Black



For catfish and Bowfins, on #4 hooks, top row (left to right): hot dog chunk, frozen shrimp, cheese and meat. For carp, middle row (left to right): corn kernels on a #6 hook, bread ball on a #4 hook, potato slice on a #4 hook. For panfish and trout, most on a #4 hook, bottom row (left to right): a single corn kernel, tiny piece of beef stick, a small bread ball and a mini marshmallow on a #6 hook.



Transporting YOUR KAYAK

by **Tyler Frantz**

photos by the author

There's nothing more relaxing than paddling a serene lake or floating a favorite stretch of river, but getting kayaks from storage locations to the water takes a little planning and effort. Transport options range from inexpensive to extravagant, so choosing the right method to safely haul your watercraft is worth careful consideration.

Truck Beds

If you're a pickup truck owner, hauling a kayak in the bed of the truck is a practical choice. Position the watercraft diagonally and secure it with straps and padding to prevent shifting when the vehicle is in motion. A truck bed extender that inserts into a hitch receiver can accommodate longer kayaks, offering additional support for tie-downs.

Foam Blocks

If you own a smaller vehicle without roof racks, an affordable option is to purchase a foam block tie-down set.

These kits, typically priced at less than \$40, are specifically designed for hauling kayaks. They include cushioned blocks to place directly on your roof and straps that run over the kayak that cinch tightly inside your vehicle with the doors closing on top of them. It's decent for occasional use but can be noisy in transit and not quite as secure as other options.

Roof Racks

One of the most common and reliable methods of transport is a kayak roof rack. Both J-cradles, which I prefer, and saddles connect to your roof rack crossbars and safely secure the kayak to the vehicle. Crossbars and roof racks can be installed for a couple hundred dollars and are well worth the expense for more frequent use. J-hooks offer the luxury of holding kayaks at an angle, which is perfect for hauling two kayaks at the same time or for additional gear storage. A saddle is more suitable for wider watercrafts.

Secure kayaks with multiple straps, and occasionally stop to check that nothing has shifted or loosened while heading to your favorite waterway. ☐

Kayak roof racks are common and reliable ways to safely haul a kayak if they are secured well with quality straps and checked occasionally while traveling.



TIC SPOTLIGHT

SE
PA!

by Christian A. Shane

This month's "TIC (Trout In the Classroom) Spotlight" includes schools located in the southeast region of Pennsylvania, and the interview highlights their unique approach, successes and impact on students, communities and watersheds.

- **Berks County:** Mifflin Park Elementary School, Paige Adams, 1st Grade Teacher
- **Berks County:** Owatin Creek Elementary School, Kristen McBride, 3rd Grade Teacher
- **Chester County:** Conestoga High School, Amy Hawkins, 10th-12th Grade AP Environmental Science, 9th Grade Biology Teacher
- **Lancaster County:** Solanco High School, Sam Shumaker, 10th Grade Western Civilizations Teacher
- **Lancaster County:** Conestoga Valley High School, James Hovan, 9th-12th Grade Biology, Ecology, AP Environmental Science and Scientific Research Teacher
- **Montgomery County:** Cheltenham Elementary School, Kris Hovis, 4th Grade Teacher

Christian: What inspired you to begin raising trout in your classroom?

Sam: I enjoy trout fishing, and I'm interested in improving stream habitat in Pennsylvania. I also have a sizable number of students who are interested in fishing. I thought TIC would be an effective way to engage and educate kids about the importance of clean waterways and the fun that fishing can bring.

Kris: I am an avid angler and hunter. I teach in an urban setting, so getting my students involved in the great outdoors is a must for me.

C: Tell us about your watershed and what connects your school to this place?

Paige: The release sight is Wyomissing Creek, Berks County, located at a playground many children visit with their families. A lot of children have memories there connected to family and friends, and now one with school.

James: We release our trout into Hammer Creek, Lancaster and Lebanon counties, which is a tributary of the Conestoga River. The Conestoga River is one of the main waterways in our county and forms some of the borders of our school district. It's also the waterway that my students are most likely to know by name.

Amy: Our trout will be released into the Valley Creek Watershed, Chester County. Valley



photo-Paige Adams

Creek is designated as an “Exceptional Value” Watershed, which qualifies it for the highest level of protection by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Stormwater management is an issue within our immediate area and directly impacts the water quality and quantity of the Valley Creek Watershed and subsequently the trout. By connecting in-class learning opportunities to real world applications, I am hopeful that we can bring a higher level of awareness to the issues facing Valley Creek and its trout population.

C: Share a short story about what your students have gained from this experience.

Kristen: My class partners as “pen pals” with another 3rd Grade class in our district (from a different school). We share our TIC experience with our pen pals all year long and then invite them to join us for the trout release. We have partnered with our local Trout Unlimited group, and they assist with the release. They teach about our waterways, fly fishing and fly tying.

James: All my students enjoy the arrival, hatching and development of our trout. They also like connecting their story to the larger story of freshwater ecosystems—especially ones that are local. My ecology and AP Environmental Science students get to release the trout each spring, and this is also a special experience. One of the most rewarding things for me over the years is to see a few students each year take a special interest in raising and caring for the trout and to be inspired to continue to nurture this love in the natural world after they graduate by majoring in wildlife biology, fisheries science, ecology, environmental science or a similar field.

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

Amy: The TIC project has both informal and formal teaching applications. Just the presence of the tank in the classroom has piqued students’ curiosity about the program and has led to various conversations about native versus non-native trout, the impacts of stormwater on the Valley Creek Watershed, the niche the trout occupy in their ecosystem and the conditions necessary for the trout to survive both in the classroom tank and in the environment in which they will be released.

Sam: The TIC program is primarily integrated into our fishing club, which meets once a week. Much of our time from January to March is spent monitoring water quality, troubleshooting mortality incidents and learning a lot about trout behavior and health concerns.

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

Kris: My students use the trout life cycle as a comparison with other aquatic animals. I also teach macroinvertebrates and water quality. I tie my lesson into erosion and weathering and the effects on streambanks and restoration projects.

Paige: We do a non-fiction story about trout in January, just before the trout arrive. I have past students come back to help my students “research” and produce ideas to add to the story. ☐

photo-Paige Adams



By connecting in-class learning opportunities to real world applications, Mifflin Park Elementary School, Berks County, hopes to bring a higher level of awareness to the issues facing its trout population.

photo-Amy Hawkins



Conestoga High School releases their trout into the Valley Creek Watershed, Chester County.

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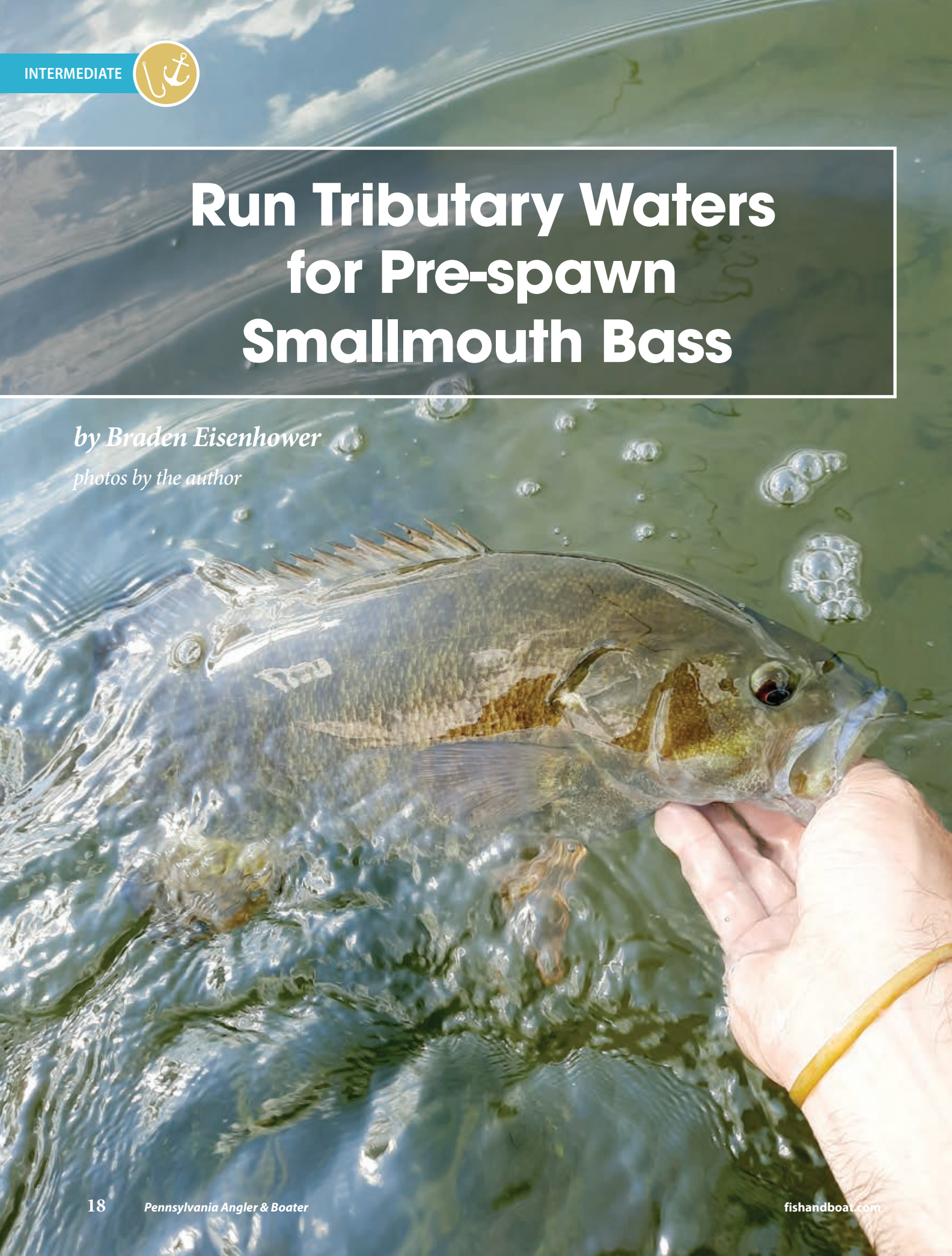




Run Tributary Waters for Pre-spawn Smallmouth Bass

by Braden Eisenhower

photos by the author



It's no secret that Pennsylvania's major river systems boast excellent Smallmouth Bass fishing. During the pre-spawn period, anglers may enjoy a day's catch in both size and quantity. There's one minor hiccup—I can't fish these rivers as often as I'd like.

It isn't because of timing or scheduling conflicts—it's the fact that these rivers are often inaccessible in the spring due to unsafe river levels and strong currents caused by winter's snow melt and seasonal rains. And, lest we forget, these rivers are generally unnavigable to anglers who don't possess specialized crafts capable of safely gliding over their shallow, rocky substrates.

When the lower Susquehanna River is running full, I seek refuge in one of its tributaries. Although flash floods pose a threat, tributary waters are often safe to navigate with canoes, kayaks and smaller boats equipped with trolling motors.

Popular tributaries of the lower Susquehanna River include the Juniata River, Conestoga River, Conodoguinet Creek and Swatara Creek. While not every feeder waterway offers Smallmouth Bass fishing opportunities, many of them do. The same holds true for the other river systems throughout Pennsylvania and their tributaries.

Smallmouth Bass fishing in tributaries can be feast or famine. When water temperatures hold steadily in the 50-degree F range, expect Smallmouth Bass to migrate from the main river upstream into the tributaries until they reach their will-be spawning areas. Arrive too early and there may only be small numbers of males or resident fish. By the time waters breach the 60-degree F mark, the spawn is in full swing and the bite slows.

Tributaries are prime for target fishing, though I fear many anglers overlook the number of spots that truly exist. Some target spots protrude from the water, as is the case with bridge pilings, log jams and downed trees. Each of these examples feature slack

water and current seams that Smallmouth Bass use to hide and feed.

Other places to investigate include steep drop-offs (usually present on the outside bend of a creek), isolated boulders (identified with a boil on the surface or with polarized sunglasses) and deep holes (located in areas with slow-moving current, downstream of current obstructions). Take note to the topography above the water, as it likely continues below water. And, look for hidden clues. A vacant rope swing in a tree is a telltale sign of a deep hole that exists in summertime when the rest of the tributary is low.

Fish at a leisurely pace and enjoy the outing. Anchoring above the spot and drifting downstream prevents startling fish in the narrow waterway. It also allows thorough coverage with several casts at varying angles.

An assortment of hard baits should include shallow-running crankbaits, suspending jerkbaits and slow-moving topwater lures like poppers or walking baits. Soft plastics like tubes, Ned rigs, stickbaits, swimbaits and grubs also produce well in the spring.

Plastics lend themselves to this fishing style. The caveat is that they are prone to snags, and their retrieval is more cumbersome when in a jonboat or unpowered watercraft. Plus, the recovery efforts blow out the spot, at least for a time.

If the catch in the tributary is known to be smaller, it may pay to downsize offerings. However, on the tributaries I frequent, it's common to encounter Smallmouth Bass up to 18-inches, especially in the spring.

The lure styles pair well with medium-power spinning rods and reels spooled with 6-pound monofilament line.

Big river systems are the real deal, and their tributaries are far from second-rate. Take a float where bronze trophies abound. ☐

OPENING DAY OF BASS

June 14, 2025



A myriad of lure styles will draw the attention of pre-spawn Smallmouth Bass. Lures between 2- and 4-inches that mimic natural forage like shad and crayfish are great options. Don't hesitate to throw moving lures in gaudy color schemes to draw reaction strikes. This works well in stained and clear water.

The Schuylkill Fishing Company— *The World's Oldest Fishing Club*



photo-retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021670188/>.

by Brady J. Crytzer

In May of 1732, a collection of Philadelphia's most prominent businessmen, politicians and public figures gathered on the banks of the Schuylkill River to establish a fishing club. Nearly 300 years later, "The Schuylkill Fishing Company" (sometimes called "The State in Schuylkill") remains, and claims to be the oldest fishing club in the world. Over the centuries, this exclusive organization hosted some of the most famous figures in history including the Marquis de Lafayette, Ulysses S. Grant and George Washington.

Among its earliest members were Governor James Logan, business titan James Wharton and future Governor Thomas Mifflin. Calling themselves "The Colony in Schuylkill," these giants used their meetings to discuss important matters of business and politics but shared a common bond—the love of fishing.

The secretive social club was first established in today's Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, and a monument

still stands to mark the site. As a group, they stood along the riverbank and fished for shad, trout, Striped Bass and White Catfish. In their early years, the members built a home near the Schuylkill River called "The Castle," and they gathered every other Thursday from May to October.

"The Castle" was a simple wooden structure but splendidly adorned. Its roof had a tall, church-like spire with a bell—at the top rested a weather vane in the shape of a fish. Its members were from the highest ranks of Philadelphia society, and the British flag flew proudly on-site.

That all changed in 1776.

At the outset of the American Revolution, the membership of the Schuylkill Fishing Company agreed to join the Patriot cause. They flew an American flag and formally voted to change their moniker from "The Colony of Schuylkill" to "The State in Schuylkill." Many of its members rose to prominence in the Continental Army including Samuel Howell, William Bradford and future Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin. The club was so prominent that its elected



painting James Peale, CO, via Wikimedia Commons

General George Washington by artist James Peale, 1782

⬆ A glimpse of “The Castle” along the Schuylkill River. Swett, Moses, Artist. The Castle of the State in Schuylkill. *United States of America Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1830. Philadelphia: Pendleton, Kearny & Childs.*

leader Samuel Morris was chosen to command the famed “Philadelphia Light Horse” unit.

After America’s founding, George Washington was invited to attend meetings at the Schuylkill Fishing Company, and he was extremely fond of it. He dined, drank and celebrated with his former soldiers, and he spoke highly of his time there. “Though composed of gentlemen of fortune, they have shown a noble example of discipline and subordination, and in several actions, have shown a spirit of bravery, which will ever do honor to them, and will ever be greatly remembered by me,” the future President wrote.

The early Republic was a time of social clubs and “secret” societies, and the Schuylkill Fishing Company played along. Like all exclusive clubs, they

developed a unique set of “mysterious” practices and traditions. They cooked a fish dinner over an open fire using equipment from the eighteenth century, and according to lore, the dinner could only be eaten when the cook was able to flip the fish and catch it perfectly in midair. They even developed a special cocktail known as “the Fish House Punch.” Although the exact recipe for the drink is closely guarded, all members agree that George Washington loved the cocktail and imbibed often. In the 1800s, the Revolutionary War hero the Marquis de Lafayette and Civil War general Ulysses S. Grant would meet with the group as well.

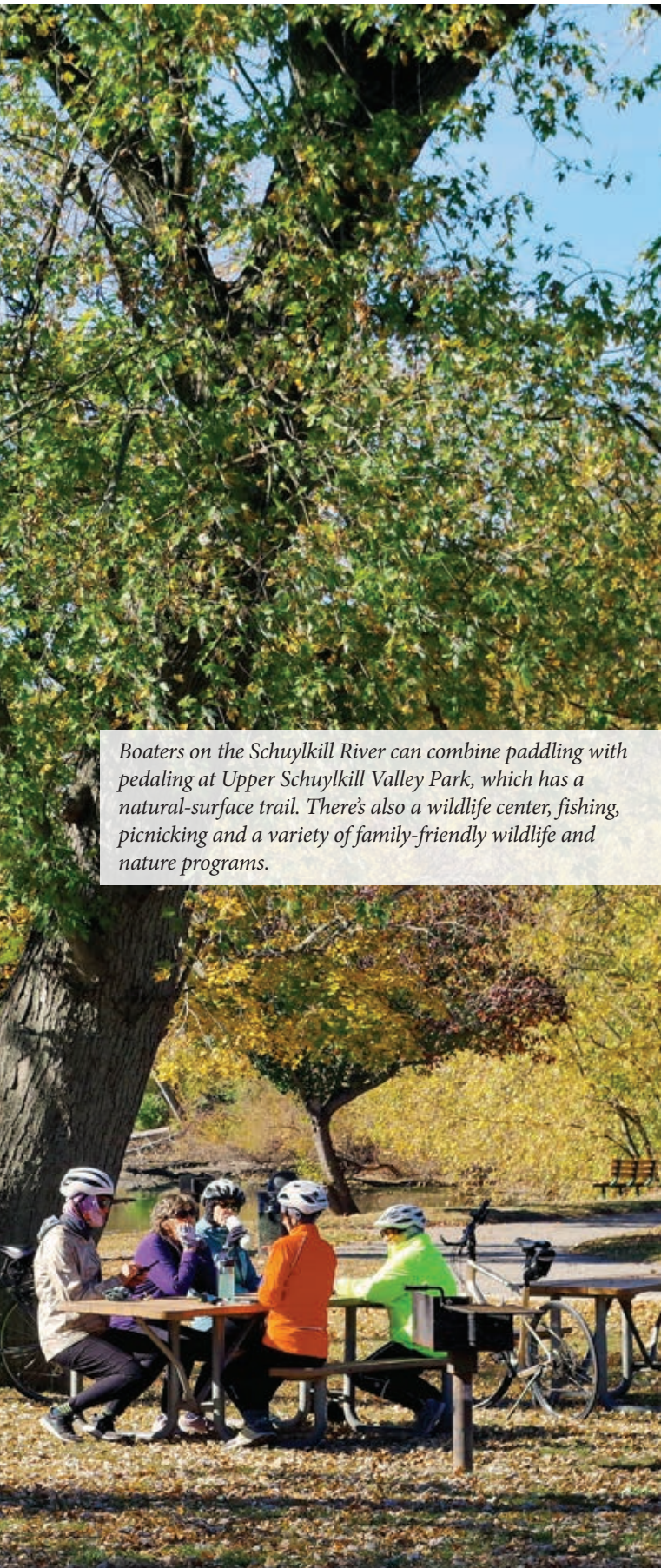
After nearly three centuries, the club still exists today. Membership roll remains a secret, but the Schuylkill Fishing Company links us to the past in an important and interesting way. ☐

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.

Schuylkill River *Water Trail*

SE
PA!





Boaters on the Schuylkill River can combine paddling with pedaling at Upper Schuylkill Valley Park, which has a natural-surface trail. There's also a wildlife center, fishing, picnicking and a variety of family-friendly wildlife and nature programs.

by Bob Frye

Whoever first described rivers as arteries came up with an accurate comparison.

They—like the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood through our bodies, keeping them humming—carry water, sediments and nutrients across the planet, from headwaters to oceans. In doing so, they sustain a rich and diverse web of life. Likewise, especially in the days before planes, trains and automobiles, rivers moved raw materials and finished goods upstream and down, supporting people and economies.

But, as any cardiologist knows, arteries neglected and abused can clog, with dangerous consequences. That, too, is true of rivers. And, there's perhaps no better—or maybe worse—example than the Schuylkill River.

Stretching about 135 miles from Schuylkill County to Philadelphia, the river's doom was seemingly set with the discovery of anthracite coal in 1790. It helped spawn the Industrial Revolution but at a tremendous environmental cost. In the coming decades, mines, iron works, mills, blast furnaces, railroads, oil refineries, company towns and cities sprung up along the Schuylkill River's banks. All used it as a dumping ground.

According to "The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia," as early as 1866, the city's Bureau of Engineers said the river had a "dark, dirty, milky appearance" and was so filthy it was perhaps already unfit as a drinking water source. Sixty years later, the United States Army Corps of Engineers estimated the river was polluted with 38 million tons of coal waste.

Not surprisingly, long stretches of the Schuylkill River were dead, unable to support aquatic life.

That shaped how people viewed the river.

Noah Phillips is the Executive Director of Take It Outdoors Adventures. This non-profit paddling and river advocacy group is a sister agency to Schuylkill River Greenways, which manages the Schuylkill River Water Trail. Together, the organizations work "on connecting people to the Schuylkill River." That often starts with getting them to forget what they think they know.

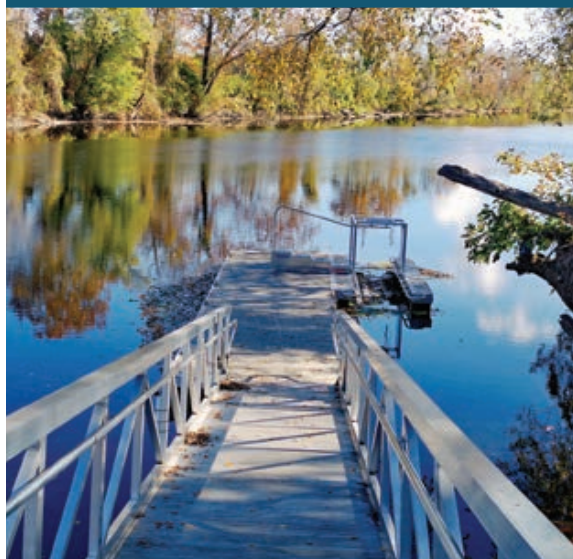
"The Schuylkill River has had a bad reputation, because it used to be disgustingly polluted," said Phillips. "For a long time, people jokingly said the water was too thick to drown but not thin enough to drink."

Cooperative state and federal cleanup efforts—some among the first and largest of their kind—started to change that in the 1940s. They were successful enough that Pennsylvania designated the Schuylkill River its first Scenic River in 1978.

Today, more than any time in the last 250 years, the river is worthy of that title.

"The Schuylkill River is now really beautiful for paddling, fishing and enjoying nature," said Rosemary

photo-Bob Frye



photos: Bob Frye

The Hanover Street Access on the Schuylkill River has a handicapped-accessible boat launch for paddlers. The adaptive launch sits at the end of a metal ramp.

Keane, Communications Director for Schuylkill River Greenways. “We’re so happy and excited to see people talking about it. It really is a great vehicle for exploring the outdoors and some of our local history.”

Phillips, whose organization works to “get butts in boats and out on the Schuylkill River,” said about half of the growing number of paddlers using the river are locals. The rest come from elsewhere including New York City. Three years ago, his organization was guiding about 3,000 people a year. Two years ago, that was 3,500. Last year, it was 4,000. Many more paddle on their own.

Some paddle for an afternoon. Others do a multi-day trip including all or part of the Schuylkill River Sojourn, an annual week-long paddle in June, covering 112 river miles from Schuylkill Haven to Philadelphia (schuylkillriver.org/programs-projects/schuylkill-river-sojourn).

Whatever paddlers plan, the Schuylkill River Greenways has an interactive online map (schuylkillriver.org/trailpress/schuylkill-river) to make things easy. It shows the location of “landings”—boat access points—and amenities, from parking and gas stations to restaurants and lodging. The Schuylkill River Greenways also has a printed river guide, updated in 2022, available for purchase to carry on the water.

“Just about anyone can handle the Schuylkill River, as it’s very beginner friendly,” said Phillips.

“It’s kind of a unique river,” said Phillips. “With all the remnants of the canal systems and dams, moving water features are few and far between. You might have a class 1 feature, but then you have 10 miles of perfectly flat water,” said Phillips.

A few old dams remain and must be portaged around, according to the map. Others have been partially or even completely washed away, though, and are runnable in a kayak or canoe outlined on the map.

What paddlers expect to see on the Schuylkill River depends on which sections they hit. Its upper reaches,

north of Pottstown—roughly the mid-point of the water trail—are more remote.

“Up near Auburn or Hamburg, you might not see a house for 10 miles. You don’t see a bridge for a long time. You feel like you’re out there,” said Phillips. “Then, as you come down, it just gradually gets a little more developed.”

The trade-off, if there’s one, is that the upper section has fewer launch points. It’s also smaller and shallower. The part from about 20 miles north of Pottstown upstream is best paddled before July. The river downstream of Pottstown can be a reliable run all year.

There’s history to see, too. One particularly special place to paddle is the Lock 60 Loop (schuylkillriver.org/trailpress_itin/lock-60-loop-2 or schuylkillcanal.org/page-326460). Located in Schuylkill Canal Park, Montgomery County, it’s a restored, fully functional 1820s-era canal originally built as part of the Schuylkill Navigation System. Paddlers can float 2.5 miles downstream on the river, then turn around and paddle the flat water in the canal back to their starting point.

“That is the busiest section of the Schuylkill River, because it’s such a unique feature,” said Phillips.

There and elsewhere, proof of the river’s ongoing return to health is also found in the quality of the fishing.

“It’s true that acid mine drainage continues to impact some sections of the river, mainly through its tributary streams,” said Mike Porta, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat

Schuylkill River Greenways:

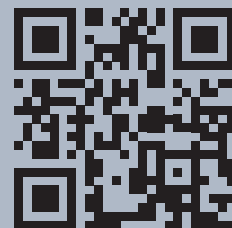




photo-Bob Frye

A young angler fishes from the boat launch along the Schuylkill River at Upper Schuylkill Valley Park, Montgomery County.

Commission's (PFBC's) Area Fisheries Manager with responsibility for the Schuylkill River. But, the once-dead river again holds fish.

Smallmouth Bass are the most common, with the "typical" Schuylkill Smallmouth Bass averaging 9- to 12-inches. But, PFBC biologists have seen them in the 15- to 17-inch range, and there are likely larger fish in the population in deeper pools and more complex habitats.

One stretch of river particularly worth fishing is from Hamburg downstream to near Lower Felix Dam Park in Reading, Berks County.

"This section supports good habitat consisting of island complexes, riffles, bridge pilings and tributary mouths," said Porta. "These habitats create areas with deep water that hold larger fish."

The river also holds Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish, especially in the middle and lower reaches. Walleyes congregate below some of the river's remaining dams in spring, while Muskellunge draw anglers to the river between Reading to Norristown.

All that would have been unthinkable once. The Schuylkill River, witness to all sorts of American history—George Washington and his army camped along it at Valley Forge—was ravaged and foul. That's true no more.

"Once people went out of their way to avoid anything to do with the Schuylkill River, but more and more people today see it as a resource—a recreational asset. That's a great turnaround," said Phillips. ☐



photo-courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)

Kayakers during the annual Schuylkill River Sojourn.

photo-courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways Association (Kara Foran)



The annual Schuylkill River Sojourn offers beautiful views of the Schuylkill River.

Discover More

Want to make your Schuylkill River trip into a pedal-and-paddle experience? Look to the Schuylkill River Trail.

It's not finished yet. Another project of Schuylkill River Greenways, it will eventually stretch 120 miles from Frackville, Schuylkill County, to Philadelphia, Philadelphia County. But, 75 miles are ready to ride, mostly on abandoned railroad lines.

Click the "Schuylkill River Trail" tab at schuylkillriver.org to view an interactive map and get additional information. The Schuylkill River Greenways also offers guided pedal-and-paddle trips. Find these trails on the website, too.

Meanwhile, if you fish the Schuylkill River, watch for Freshwater Drum and Blue Catfish. Neither are native to the Delaware River Basin, so PFBC biologists are asking for the public's help in monitoring their presence. Anglers who see or catch either species are asked to photograph them and report it to pa.gov/en/services/fishandboat/report-ais.html.



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Check Out Pennsylvania's River Towns— Fishing, Boating, History and Fun Times

by *Linda Stager*

photos by the author

Look no further for a great water-based vacation spot than the quaint sister towns of Columbia, Marietta and Wrightsville, connected by the iconic Veterans Memorial Bridge/Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge. It spans the Susquehanna River between Lancaster and York counties.

Covering both shores of the Susquehanna River, these three towns share a common bond—the call of the majestic river and the historic bridge that connects them. They are joined in legacy at this historic river crossing, dating back to the 1700s. Once a key shipping and trading hub, these towns now serve as home bases for a variety of family activities.

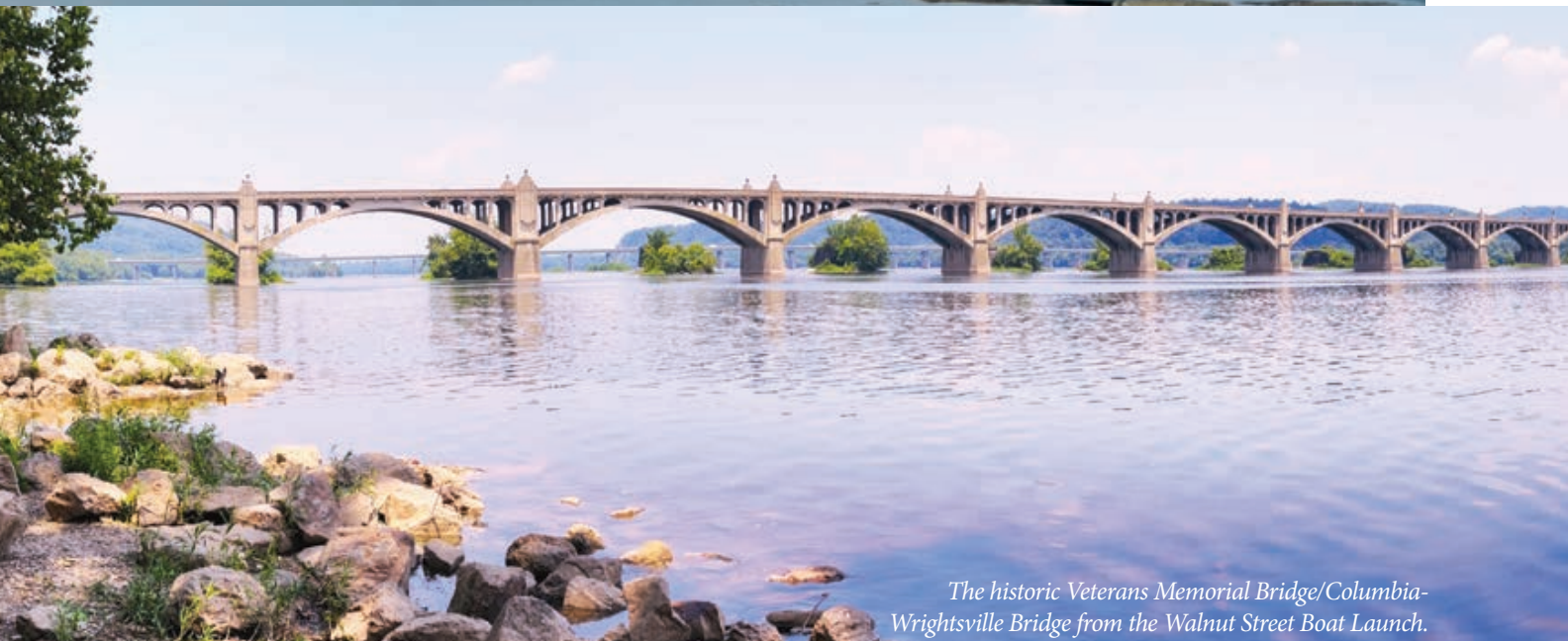
Load up the boat trailer, bring along your bicycles and come for a visit. The almost mile-wide Susquehanna River

is the main draw for anglers and boaters alike. Whether you are powerboating or paddling, there is a stretch of water for you. Bring your personal watercraft (like a jet ski), too. A launch here gets everyone into the water.

This area also hosts some popular, family-friendly bicycle trails. Bicyclists use this area as the southern trailhead for the Northwest Lancaster County River Trail, a 14-mile paved multi-purpose path that follows the eastern shore of the Susquehanna River. It's a scenic way to see the river. Start by riding under the massive Veterans Memorial Bridge, the world's longest concrete multiple-arch bridge. Check out the base of Chickies Rock, the largest exposed anticline on the East Coast. Ride past the ruins of the bustling iron industry of the mid-1800s and stop in at Marietta, where nearly half of the buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places. Watch for the white cliffs of Conoy, nonhazardous waste left over from a quarry that makes for a stirring landmark before the trail ends near Conewago Falls near Falmouth.



Jet skiing on the Susquehanna River.



The historic Veterans Memorial Bridge/Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge from the Walnut Street Boat Launch.



The view from Chickies Rock, Lancaster County.



Columbia Crossing River Trails Center along the Susquehanna River in Columbia, Lancaster County. Its river-facing full façade porch is a great place to relax and watch river activities.

For a similar experience, head south on the 29-mile Enola Low Grade Trail. Enter the trail near the Turkey Hill Nature Preserve and ride over the majestic Safe Harbor Trestle, with its glass viewing panels over the Conestoga River's confluence, for another fabulous view of the Susquehanna River.

The hub for outdoor activities is the Columbia Crossing River Trails Center on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Columbia. This big, beautiful visitors center has ample parking and serves as a place to ask questions and understand the area's history. Its river-facing full façade porch is a great place to relax and watch river activities. Inside, it's part museum, with interactive exhibits, educational programs and helpful staff.

At this location, the river is an angler and boater paradise. The Columbia Crossing River Trails Center makes launching your powerboat or paddlecraft easy. Fishing is superb, with bass, catfish, panfish

and Walleyes topping the list of sought-after species. In the summer, the mayfly hatch is something to watch and celebrates the river's conservation status as a clean, healthy river.

For paddlers, there are many launch sites along the river. The 10-mile stretch between Marietta to Wrightsville is an easy lake-like environment for paddling. Below the visitors center, the Susquehanna River opens into what is known as Lake Clarke. Paddle amidst the protected birding area islands of the Conejohela Flats, and bring your binoculars and camera.

Remember to explore the neighboring areas. Lancaster County is home to an Amish population that is interesting to discover.

Not only are the "River towns," Columbia, Marietta and Wrightsville, the centerpieces of a beautiful river-themed area, the towns are also quaint and historic.

Stop by and see how special it is here. ☐



The Safe Harbor Trestle overlooking the Susquehanna River.

Spanish-Language Materials Encourage Time Spent Outdoors

by *Jessica Aiello*

More than 1.1 million Pennsylvanians, or nearly 9% of the state's population, speak a language other than English at home. About 800,000 people, or 6.5%, speak Spanish, according to United States Census Bureau data. By offering educational resources in Spanish, recreation and conservation organizations can better connect Spanish-speaking residents and visitors to outdoor recreational opportunities that improve physical, mental and emotional health, and support Pennsylvania's economy through increased tourism revenue.

Outdoor recreation is vital to both human health and overall economic health. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation annually contributes \$17 billion to Pennsylvania's economy, supporting 164,000 jobs and accounting for 2% of its gross domestic product.

Knowing the benefits of outdoor recreation inspires organizations to focus on inviting people of all languages into outdoor spaces.

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) recently developed a video on Leave No Trace principles that was created using donations to PPFF and financial assistance from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR).

"The outdoors is for everyone," said Marci Mowery, PPFF President. "The principles of Leave No Trace help people engage with outdoor spaces by developing knowledge that helps them plan for an experience."

In fall 2024, PA DCNR unveiled its first-ever Spanish language recreation guide. It lists activities available at each of Pennsylvania's 124 state parks including a full-size map featuring state parks, state forests, state game lands and state fish hatcheries.

PPFF also worked with Natural Lands and William Penn State Forest, located in southeastern Pennsylvania, to create a Spanish language public use map and recreation guide specific to that state forest. There are also "Explore Near" and "Insider's View" guides available in Spanish on the PPFF publications page.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) also recognizes the importance of engaging with Latinx Pennsylvanians to encourage safe and enjoyable fishing and boating. Some of PFBC's Spanish materials include regional fishing and boating articles, "Knotes" on Knots, Supermarket Baits and more. As Tim Schaeffer, PFBC's Executive Director, wrote in a 2024 Director's Message, "As our agency tries to create a more welcoming environment for everyone to fish and boat, we are letting everyone know that the water is open to them."

George Fernandez, CEO of the Latino Connection and PPFF advisory board member, concurs. "I encourage every member of our Latino community to embrace the beauty of Pennsylvania's parks and state forests. These spaces are not just places to admire from afar; they are meant to be explored and are vital for our health and well-being."

Share this information to expand participation in outdoor recreation and conservation activities. ☐

Leave No Trace Video:



Recreation Guide:



"Explore Near" and "Insider's View":



PFBC Spanish Resources:



photo: PFBC archives





DELAWARE RIVER

Pennsylvania's River of the Year!

June is National Rivers Month!

ExplorePAWaters.com

photo: Carl Hansen

Explore More:



The Delaware River from Delaware Water Gap, looking south across Arrow Island.



Kayak Care



by Jerry Bush

photo by the author

Plastic and composite materials used to manufacture modern kayaks offer many advantages over materials of old, when animal skins were stretched over frames of wood or whalebones. Today's kayaks are practically indestructible.

Storage methods are important. Keeping a kayak indoors will protect the material from too much sunlight exposure. Ultraviolet (UV) rays weaken plastics and can cause some materials to become brittle. Kayaks are made for outdoor use, but too much heat and sunlight can deform the materials. If the vessel must be stored outdoors, consider building a rack in a shaded area or investing in a cover.

Don't lay kayaks in the upside-down position for long periods, especially if they are exposed to sunlight. Kayak hulls have been known to warp due to this mistake. Sunlight also fades colors, potentially ruining the aesthetics of the boat.

It's advisable to lay a kayak on its side for storage. Consider the strength of various arches. The hull of a kayak is a wide, long-sweeping arch, which can allow sagging. If it droops, it will settle into that configuration and never return to its manufactured alignment. The

sides of the vessel are sharply curved. A sharply curved arch is strong and more likely to maintain its form.

Washing a kayak is environmentally sound to prevent accidentally transferring harmful, aquatic invasive species from one body of water to another, but there are selfish benefits to keeping a kayak shipshape. A clean hull efficiently glides through the water. Cleaning the deck (top shell) keeps the boat appealing. Don't use harsh chemicals to cut grime buildup. Clean with mild detergents or products recommended by the manufacturer.

A pressure washer works well, but a caveat of caution is noteworthy. If the wand is held too close to the kayak, a narrow, highly pressurized stream of water can cut through many plastics. Novice users should begin with the wand set to a wide spray and held about 5 feet from the vessel. Move closer as you develop a feeling for the process. Most people learn to use a pressure washer properly in a matter of minutes.

Some marine-grade protectants enhance colors, offer protection from UV rays and ease cleaning tasks. Marine dealers and kayak shops can recommend good products.

Many people fail to keep the cockpit of sit-in kayaks clean and orderly. Bees, hornets, spiders and other creepy crawlers are attracted to even a small amount of debris lying inside a kayak. Use a wet/dry shop vacuum to rid the interior of damp items. Nobody wants to paddle in an infested vessel.

Plastic and composite kayaks hold up well to abrasions, but that doesn't mean paddlers should be reckless. Steer around obstacles whenever possible. Avoid dragging vessels across driveways, parking lots or concrete launches. Purchase a kayak cart if the vessel is too heavy to lift and carry.

If substantial damage is observed, contact the manufacturer. They can offer advice, and repair materials are often available for purchase.

Inspect accessories as well. Loose fasteners holding an external rod holder, for example, can cause a favorite fishing rod and reel to fall into the water. Deck bungees should be inspected and replaced if cuts and frays are observed or if they lack the elasticity to secure gear.

Drip rings are made of rubber and are placed on paddle shafts to keep water away from the paddler's hands. Over time, drip rings can become brittle, especially when the paddle is exposed to sunlight for extensive amounts of time. Like socks in a clothes dryer, I have twice found drip rings missing and needed replaced.

Every paddler has valuables that should be stored in a dry bag while on the water. A dependable dry bag also traps air, which keeps protected items floating in the event of capsizing. Filling a dry bag with water is the most efficient way to ensure there are no leaks and cleans the bag's interior. Turning it inside-out after this process speeds up drying. Dust, dirt and sand can be as destructive as water to sensitive, electronic equipment.

With proper care, a kayak can provide a lifetime of enjoyment. ☐



DOING YOUR PART— Being Responsible with Live Bait

by Sean Hartzell

Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Using live bait, such as minnows or aquatic invertebrates, is an excellent way to catch sport fish and have a great day on the water. But, live bait can introduce harmful aquatic invasive species into the waters we love. Studies show that anglers admit to releasing unused live bait like minnows and crayfish into the water at the end of a fishing trip. Biologists have documented many cases in Pennsylvania where small fish or crayfish were likely released as live bait and are causing problems in Pennsylvania's waters as aquatic invasive species.

Bucket releases have spread invasive crayfish species such as the Rusty Crayfish, Virile Crayfish, Red Swamp Crayfish and White River Crayfish. Invasive crayfish are larger, faster-growing and can lay more eggs than native crayfish. Invasive crayfish often eliminate native crayfish and become overabundant, preying heavily on small fish, aquatic insects, snails and mussels. Scientific studies have shown invasive crayfish stunt the growth and reduce the abundance of sport fish like Bluegills, Largemouth Bass and Walleyes by food chain disruption, and they are also better at avoiding hungry sport fish than native crayfish.

The Round Goby, a small invasive baitfish, native to Eurasia, was introduced into the Great Lakes years ago in

photo-PFBC archives



photo-West Liberty University

RUSTY CRAYFISH

The large red spots on its sides are helpful for identification, although Rusty Crayfish may not always have these spots.

the ballast water of cargo ships. Round Gobies are now abundant in Lake Erie. They have also been introduced into Lake LeBoeuf, Erie County, and French Creek in northwestern Pennsylvania by illegal bait bucket releases. Round Gobies can be aggressive and compete for food and resources with small native fish. They also consume fish eggs and baby mussels, especially concerning in French Creek, where several rare native species of freshwater mussels live. While sport fish like Smallmouth Bass eat Round Gobies, this invasive fish can also harm bass, sneaking into bass nests to eat their eggs. Round Gobies can consume over 4,000 bass eggs in just 15 minutes.

Many species of baitfish and some species of crayfish that are native to some parts of Pennsylvania can cause problems, too, when they're introduced where they don't belong. Allegheny Crayfish, Fallfish and Greenside Darters collected by anglers in one part of Pennsylvania and transported for use as bait where they don't belong impact native fish and crayfish and may harm threatened or endangered native species. Additionally, the release of any unused live baitfish or crayfish may transport illnesses or parasites, even if the live bait looks healthy.

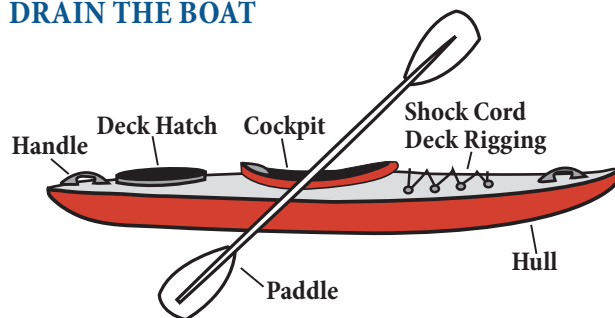
Anglers can help by not releasing any unused live bait or transporting any live bait. Take unused live bait home, freeze, and then, dispose of it properly in the trash. Anglers using live bait must also follow Pennsylvania regulations related to baitfish and crayfish. It's unlawful to transport any live crayfish for use as bait in Pennsylvania, and anglers wishing to transport and use crayfish as bait must remove the head above the eyes unless the crayfish are used in the water where they were found. Fish species like Round Gobies, Tubenose Gobies, European Rudds and Ruffes are unlawful to possess and use as bait. Additionally, new regulations make it unlawful to release any unused baitfish into Commonwealth waters. Baitfish may only be released if baited on a hook for fishing purposes. Also, do not collect live bait and transport it to another water body, especially in another drainage basin. Consult the

current *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook* for more information.

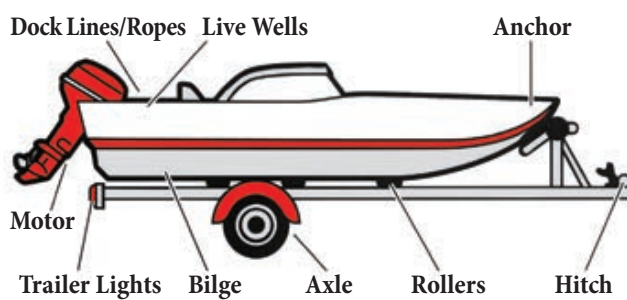
Do your part. Stop the spread of aquatic invasive species, and preserve our waters. Just like always wearing your life jacket or packing trash out, add responsible bait use and disposal to your must-do list. ☐

Inspect Your Watercraft

DRAIN THE BOAT



REMOVE THE PLUG



FishandBoat.com



photo-PFBC archives

ROUND GOBY

The invasive Round Goby has a black spot on the dorsal (top) fin, which helps identify it.



photo-Sean Hartzell

VIRILE CRAYFISH

Invasive Virile Crayfish may be more difficult to identify than Rusty Crayfish, but these crayfish are also a major invasive crayfish in Pennsylvania.



photos-courtesy of Bobby Dodge

Penn State Fly Fishing Taught Me to Be a Lifelong Learner

by Bobby Dodge

My name is Bobby Dodge, and I'm a junior studying Data Sciences at Penn State University Park. This year, I have taken two classes through the Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing Program at Penn State, taught by George Daniel. Learning the fundamentals and techniques of fly fishing has been one of my favorite experiences during my time in college.

One of the things that makes Penn State so cool is that as a land-grant institution, there's a powerful contingency of experts in niche subjects as it relates to wildlife and fisheries science, environmental science and the outdoors in general. The Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing Program is, in my opinion, an example of that land-grant impact. This expertise, led by the university, but aided by the vibrant fly fishing community in central Pennsylvania, creates the perfect learning environment for a beginner fly angler like me.

The old saying, "it's not what you know, it's who you know," resonates with me, because during my time in George Daniel's classes, the "who you know" has been what's helped me create the best learning experience. The most important life lesson from this experience is my appreciation for the power of relationships, surrounding yourself with people knowledgeable and generous in sharing their expertise.

Finding these mentors was relatively easy for me by virtue of the program. So, if you're new to fly fishing, you may need to work a little harder. However, it's not impossible. Spend time on or along the water, asking fellow anglers about their rigs or picking their brains in general. In my experience, the outdoor community is extremely enthusiastic about ensuring everyone's success, particularly if you're inquiring as a younger angler or beginner. George Daniel, known by some as "The Professor," also has a YouTube channel that I recommend, whether you're interested in learning about technique, fly tying or simply getting excited about your upcoming fishing trip.

A second valuable resource is having a guide to offer one-on-one instruction. Through the Penn State Fly Fishing Program, daylong field trips were offered to destinations like Penns Creek and Little Juniata River, where I was paired with excellent guides such as George Costa of TCO Fly Shop. A couple of the takeaways I learned from these guided trips was how body position can have an impact on fly drift, as well as more simple tips like how to apply a tippet ring to my leader (huge eureka moment). By the time these field trips ended, and I was taking off my waders, I recognized how much I learned and improved in just one outing. If you are a beginner fly angler, I strongly recommend seeking one-on-one experiences to accelerate your learning. Use this opportunity to internalize what your guide is teaching, and actively look for ways to apply learning, whether it be your comfortability and stealth in the stream, which holes or sections of water you target or how you go about landing your fish. If you have been fly fishing for longer and are still looking for ways to get better, a guided trip can point out smaller details and fine-tune your strategy.

Lastly, simply show up, and the rest is all effort and patience. For me, learning from George Daniel was fun in and of itself



A trout caught by the author while fly fishing.

even though I wasn't guaranteed a fish every time I went to Spring Creek, Centre County. If you're feeling discouraged, try to appreciate the smaller, more fundamental things of your fishing trip. Take time to recognize the beauty of Pennsylvania's waters and the mountains that your local stream may meander through. Remember, fly fishing was never meant to be easy. The rewards lie in delicacy, technique and attention to detail. Most importantly, keep your head in the game, proceed as if success is inevitable, and always be ready to set your hook fast. ☐



SPEND THE DAY WITH US!

Penn State's Ag Progress Days

August 12 - 14

J.D. Harrington Building - Booth J200



JERSEY RIGGS



by Alex Zidock Jr.

photos by the author

Between casts to a submerged log that he imagined held fish, Jeff Cammerino, anxious to carry a lunker back to the regional bass tournament scale, watched a caterpillar fall from a tree into the water. The larva pulsed and jackknifed as it sank, then disappeared into the mouth of a fish. That action, nearly 40 years ago, struck a chord that would resonate throughout the fishing community and develop into a following for the Jersey rig style of fishing.

When Creme Lure sent the first 6-inch rubber worms to retailers in the early 1950s, the package of five came with a three-hook harness to emulate the straight-line way anglers presented live nightcrawlers to their favorite fish. In the early 1990s, anglers in Texas began hooking a Mann's 6-inch Jelly Worm through the middle and calling it the "wacky style" of fishing. However, 6 years earlier, Cammerino's Jersey rig style of fishing was born, and while it's the same principle, "wacky" stuck as the popular term for rigging a worm through the middle.

Jeff Cammerino is a former professional musician who, during his career, played guitar on many television commercials and, at one time, even toured with the Four Seasons band for 2 years. He played music at night

and spent as much time fishing as possible during the days. Several years ago, he was also a Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer in the Northeast Region.

"After that episode in the late 1970s when I saw that larva wiggle and jackknife, I began cutting and melting other people's products and forming my own worms," said Cammerino. "I knew I wanted a worm about the size of a cigarette shaped like the larva. After several years of trying to perfect my idea with limited resources, I met someone who financed my dream. With his backing, I had the opportunity to begin experimenting with molds and plastic formulas."

Cammerino built a home in Pike County in the late 1980s while he was developing his product. "Even though I mostly fished in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, I thought a lot about what to call my project. There is the Texas Rig, the Carolina Rig, and since I was born in New Jersey, I decided to call it the Jersey Riggs and even placed that phrase on the packaging," said Cammerino.

"In my mind, I was developing a method of fishing, not just making another plastic worm," said Cammerino. "To achieve the wiggle and jackknife effects and copy that larva, I needed a 3-inch plastic glitter worm with the proper buoyancy. I needed that worm to sink slowly on a slack line when combined with the weight of the 1/0 hook placed in the middle. The combination had to recreate the motion of the larva's jackknife reaction when the rod was lightly jerked on the worm's downfall."

While many styles and sizes of plastic worms are available today, the Jersey Riggs worms are different.



When he's not fishing, Jeff Cammerino, a retired professional musician, enjoys working with local musicians in his recording studio.

Cammerino's worms are 3-inches long and slightly segmented but not tapered. Instead, the ends are blunt and slightly rounded, and the worms do not have the "egg sack" in the middle. All worms are embedded with a sparkle material.

"One big difference with my worms is that you can catch many fish on one worm because of the consistency of the plastic and the sparkle ingredient," said Cammerino. "Think of the sparkle as the rebar in concrete. My flakes hold the worm together, fish after fish."

"Many years ago, I was delivering a fishing seminar, and in the audience was professional angler Lee Bailey Jr.," said Cammerino. "He was interested in my worms and took several packs. A week later, he won the Bassmaster Missouri Invitational tournament." Cammerino talked with Bailey afterward, who commented that the Jersey Riggs gold with gold-flaked worms played a big part in his winning.

"The term Jersey rig style of fishing didn't catch on, but fishing a plastic worm 'wacky style' is normal now," said Cammerino. "However, I continue to talk to many anglers out there, and I seem to have developed a cult following of anglers who find my Jersey rig style productive for bass and many other species," said Cammerino.

Recently, Cammerino teamed up with Signal 11 Lures, a hunting and fishing scents producer. "They make a product called Lip Glu that is not a glue but a sticky fish attractant that, combined with my Jersey Riggs, gives the angler an added advantage," said Cammerino. 🐟



The original idea of the Jersey rig style of fishing combined a specially designed plastic worm hooked in the center with a 1/0 hook.



All 15 colors of Jersey Riggs worms have flakes and include 20 worms per pack.



An avid angler, Jeff Cammerino enjoys participating in fishing tournaments.

More information

signal11lures.com

BE A MENTOR—

Take Someone New Fishing

by **Ralph Scherder** photo by the author

Some of us were lucky enough to start fishing at a young age, introduced to the sport by a parent, relative or close friend. But, not everyone has that opportunity. Now that I'm an older and more experienced angler, I've found joy in teaching others how to fish and being a mentor to those looking to improve their skills. In fact, it's one of the reasons I became a fly fishing guide.

Every year, I also make a point to take a handful of people new to fishing out for a day. Many of them don't have any gear or know where to start. It's an incredible feeling watching someone's excitement as they learn new skills and have success. Over the years, I've found there are three ways to feed their enthusiasm and ensure they'll continue on their fishing journey.

1. Focus on Fundamentals

One of the biggest mistakes new anglers make is feeling like they need expensive gear to be successful. When I take people new fishing, I hand them my most basic rod and reel setup and show them how to use it properly. I focus on the fundamentals of how to cast and a few techniques on how to present the lure or fly to the fish. Learning to cast from the beginning saves a lot of time and frustration later. Also, a good mentor teaches the basics of knot tying and how to properly rig a rod, so their mentee will be able to do these things on their own.

2. Teach Them Where and When to Fish

The role of a mentor isn't to just show someone how to fish but explain where and when to fish. Help new anglers understand the best locations to find fish, whether it's a local pond, lake or stream. Teach them how to read the water, recognize structure and understand fish behavior. Equipping them with this knowledge ensures they can make informed decisions when fishing alone.

3. Encourage Questions

When fishing with new anglers, encourage lots of questions, whether it's about how to tie a knot, which lure to use or where to cast. I encourage them to not just ask how but why. This creates a deeper understanding for what they're learning and increases the likelihood they'll remember even when they're out fishing on their own. And, I always offer to help them even after our day on

2025 FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS!

May 25 and July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on either of these days. Remember that all other regulations apply.

FishandBoat.com



Jillian Freeman with a trout landed on her first fly fishing trip.

the water and let them know they can always call or text if they have a question.

Being a mentor in fishing is about more than just teaching skills—it's about fostering a love for the sport that will last a lifetime. By starting simple, sharing knowledge about fish habits and encouraging questions, you can help a new angler develop confidence and continue fishing long after your first trip together. ☐

Fishing Gear:





PENNSYLVANIA WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN



photo-Brandon Ruhe

Eastern Spadefoot, Scaphiopus holbrookii

Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan— *Mapping a Course for At-risk Species Recovery*

by Diana Day

*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Division of Environmental Services*

Chris Urban

*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Division of Environmental Services*

Cathy Haffner

*Pennsylvania Game Commission
Wildlife Recovery Division*

Many of us have found ourselves needing a map to guide us along a trail, find our favorite fishing spot or other desired destination. Maps, whether displayed on our electronic devices or on tattered paper, offer a sense of place—our location relative to other landscape features. Similarly, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan serves as a “map” to recover our native imperiled fish and wildlife species and guide and maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations. Proactively avoiding diminished populations is more effective and less costly than

Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan:





photo-Rob Criswell

The Central Mudminnow, Umbra limi, was removed in 2019 from the Pennsylvania candidate species list, demonstrating a species' status can improve. Additional surveys were important for this determination.

recovering a depleted population, often expressed as to “keep common native species common”. Currently, some “at-risk” species may be in good condition, but threats encountered over an extended time may contribute to their decline. Yet, for some species, their populations are already diminished, and we need to chart a long-term path to recovery. For nearly 20 years, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan has been Pennsylvania’s most complete document on at-risk species. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) jointly oversee this plan for use by all Pennsylvanians who have an interest in conserving Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

Purpose of the Wildlife Action Plan

In the late 1990s, the United States Congress determined action was needed to keep species from becoming federally listed as threatened or endangered. After passage of the United States Endangered Species Act in 1973, the number of species on this list grew rapidly, indicating increasing imperilment for species and their habitats. State natural resource agencies are required to conserve and protect their fish and wildlife, which is critical to implementing on-the-ground conservation. In 2000, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program was enacted by Congress requiring all states and United States territories to develop a Wildlife Action Plan to avoid federal fish and wildlife species listings. A United States Fish and Wildlife

Service-approved Wildlife Action Plan provides states and United States territories with eligibility for federal funding to implement these plans.

At-risk Species Recovery

The road to species recovery is often not a direct, easy course; rather, such efforts typically require extensive time, technical knowledge and funding. Much like highly sought travel destinations, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan contains special features, referred to as the “Eight Required Elements”. These features provide essential information to guide species recovery including a list of at-risk fish and wildlife (with justification) referred to as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Required Elements also include the extent and quality of habitats used by the species, threats to the species and habitats, conservation actions to address the threats, monitoring activities for the species, plan implementation, a commitment by the state to comprehensively review and revise the plan every 10 years and partner and public participation in the plan.

The Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan is valuable for guiding species recovery and avoiding species endangerment. Since 2005, the PFBC has recovered, delisted or upgraded (i.e., reduced the threat status from state endangered to state threatened) 23 of its species of concern. Despite the great success, within this same period, surveys

have found the population status of 19 species has declined—becoming newly listed or downgraded (i.e., increasing imperilment from state threatened to state endangered). Such findings illustrate the need to focus attention on these species to regain healthy populations and the importance of frequently assessing species status.

Many factors (e.g., pollution, invasive species, illegal harvest) can impact fish and wildlife population health, and, in a changing environment, regularly reviewing the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan is important to accurately guide conservation efforts. To provide this updated information, the PFBC and PGC are working with partners to develop the third version of the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan.

Critical Support

Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan successes are not possible without active engagement and participation by partners and the public. Reflecting a team effort, numerous coordination initiatives with federal and state agencies, public engagement in community science projects and more, contribute to its success.

Public Input

An important role of partners and the public is to offer their ideas on the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan draft. We anticipate, in a few months, posting a full draft of the 2025-2035 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan for public comment. Visit PFBC's website or watch for a news release.

Get Involved

We encourage participation in activities that support implementation of the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan. All that's needed is interest in conserving Pennsylvania's Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats. Regardless of your experience or age, there are numerous paths for involvement. Examples are provided both in the current and the draft plan. We welcome and greatly appreciate your ideas for additional resources to support implementation of the new plan.

Pennsylvanians value fish and wildlife, and with the 2025-2035 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan, we can all chart a course to help secure and recover our most vulnerable species for future generations. ☐



photo-Bob Lorientas

The Bowfin, Amia calva, was removed in 2016 from the Pennsylvania candidate species list. Additional occurrences in the Ohio and Lake Erie drainage were sufficient for this determination.

2000 **Celebrating 20 Years!** 2020

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program
Pennsylvania

Preventing species endangerment
through voluntary, proactive conservation




In late 2000, the future of the nation's fish and wildlife became slightly brighter.

Congress created the **State Wildlife Grants Program**, later adding a tribal program, galvanizing the states' and tribes' ability to evaluate and conserve the range of species within our jurisdictions, not just those protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. This Program led to the development of State Wildlife Action Plans that aim to **prevent species from becoming endangered** while recovering species already on the brink.

Guided by our Wildlife Action Plan, Pennsylvania celebrates the 20th anniversary of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program with a retrospective of accomplishments and anticipation for the decades to come.



PENNSYLVANIA
WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

↑ **Cover
of the State
and Tribal
Wildlife Grants
Program
20-year
summary.**

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program Summary:





RECAP OF 2024 BOATING FATALITIES

by Ryan C. Walt

*Boating and Watercraft Safety Manager
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

**Life Jacket
Loaner Sites:**



The “Recap of 2024 Boating Fatalities” is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania that year. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and help improve boating safety.

1. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Dauphin County

2/16/24, 9:24 a.m., Friday

A 44-year-old male is deceased after he fell overboard from his 12-foot anchored kayak in cold water. The victim was reported to be an accomplished kayaker who was wearing a manual inflatable life jacket, which did not activate at the time of the incident. The victim was later recovered after several days of search and rescue efforts by first responders. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden cold water immersion may have been a factor.

2. 1 Fatality

Juniata River, Juniata County

3/15/24, 9:30 p.m., Friday

A 45-year-old male is deceased after he fell overboard from his 16-foot open motorboat in cold, fast water while attempting to anchor. The other three passengers also fell overboard but were rescued from the water. None of the individuals were wearing life jackets. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden cold water immersion, alcohol and drug use may have all been factors.

3. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Union County

4/20/24, 7:55 p.m., Saturday

A 37-year-old female is deceased after she fell overboard from a 13-foot open motorboat while approaching a boat access ramp. The other two passengers also fell overboard, but both were able to swim ashore. The individuals were wearing life jackets, but the victim's came off when she fell overboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden cold water immersion may have been a factor.

4. 1 Fatality

Schuylkill River, Montgomery County

4/30/24, 2:15 p.m., Tuesday

A 70-year-old male is deceased after he separated from his 10-foot kayak while fishing above Norristown Dam on the Schuylkill River. It's believed that the victim was wearing a life jacket but had no formal boating safety education.

5. 1 Fatality

Shermans Creek, Perry County

5/19/24, 8:00 a.m., Sunday

A 36-year-old male is deceased when he became entangled in the anchor line after a 14-foot canoe swamped on Sherman's Creek. The water was high and swift due to recent rainfall. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and had no formal boating safety education.

6. 1 Fatality

Schuylkill River, Berks County

7/06/24, 5:17 p.m., Saturday

A 41-year-old male is deceased after capsizing from his 10-foot sit-on-top kayak on the Schuylkill River. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and there was no life jacket onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Alcohol use may have been a factor.

7. 1 Fatality

Monongahela River, Washington County

7/13/2024, 10:13 a.m., Saturday

A 39-year-old male is deceased while barefoot water skiing from a 20-foot open motorboat. During a maneuver, the victim slid into a docked boat after letting go of the tow rope on the Monongahela River. The victim contacted the docked boat and was unresponsive. The occupants of the boat rendered aid to the unresponsive skier until first responders arrived. The victim did

have formal boating safety education and was wearing a water skiing wetsuit at the time of the incident.

8. 1 Fatality

Hammond Lake, Tioga County

7/27/24, 8:17 a.m., Saturday

A 16-year-old male is deceased after falling overboard from his 12-foot kayak while fishing. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, but there was one onboard.

9. 1 Fatality

Yellow Breeches Creek, Cumberland County

8/10/24, 4:53 p.m., Saturday

A 10-year-old male is deceased after capsizing from his kayak. There was a group of kayakers, three adults and four children. A downed tree was across the creek. As the group was trying to get out of the water above the log, the victim

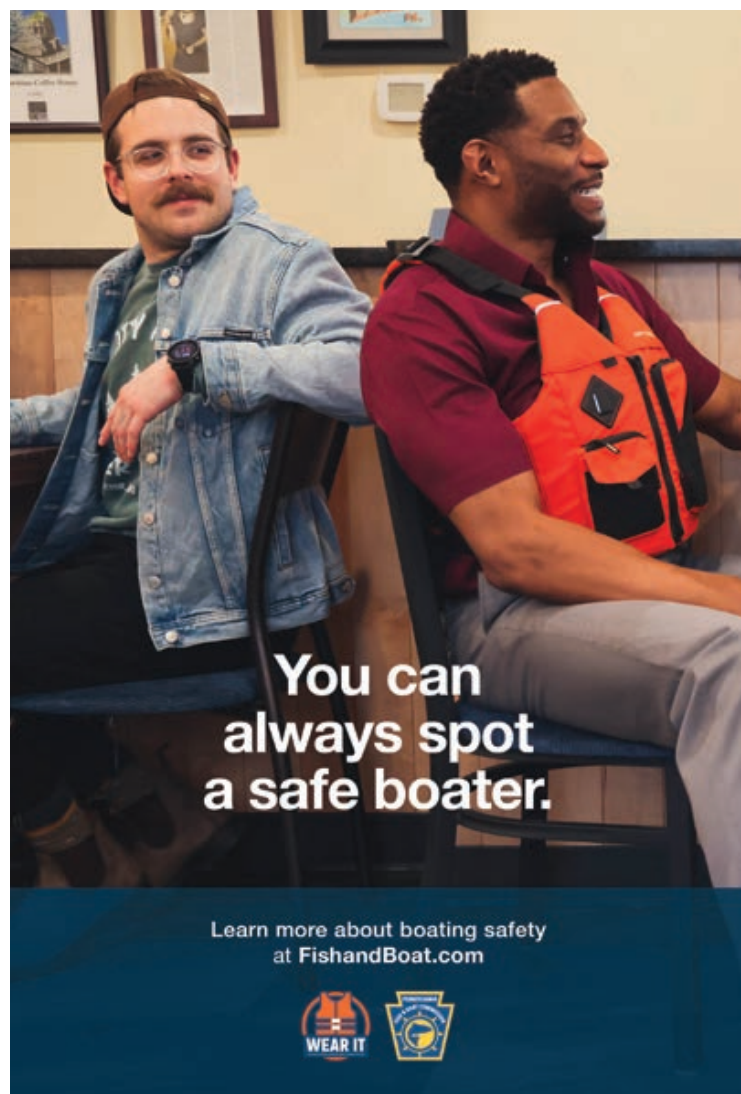
got caught against the log and capsized his kayak. He went underwater and never resurfaced. The water was high and swift due to recent rainfall. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and there were none onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education.

10. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Lancaster County

8/15/24, 10:36 p.m., Thursday

A 39-year-old male is deceased after leaving his 20-foot open motorboat that ran out of fuel and drifted aground on a rock shelf. The victim left the boat voluntarily to swim to shore and seek help. Witnesses watched him swim and then go underwater and not resurface. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and there were none onboard. The victim was an experienced boat operator and had formal boating safety education. ☐



When boating, remember to...

- Wear your life jacket. It floats, even if you don't. Wear it buckled and/or zipped.
- Never operate your boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Look around. Avoid a collision by keeping a proper lookout.
- Watch your wake. It's the wave behind your boat and can cause damage.
- Stay away from manmade and natural hazards like dams and strainers (trees in the water).
- Never overload your boat. Keep your weight and gear centered.
- Stop that prop. Turn off your engine before picking up a skier or swimmer.
- Never anchor from the stern (back) of your boat—always at the bow (front).
- Stay with your boat on the upstream side if you capsize.
- Carry onboard a wearable life jacket for each person on a boat.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Carry a whistle that is audible for 1/2-mile.



SW
PA!

STOCKING MUSSELS

by Sage Storm



photo-Derek Eberly

Did you know that Pennsylvania is home to a diverse array of native mussels? If not, you're not alone. Our state is home to a staggering 67 different species of native mussels.

◀ A Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation member holds freshwater mussels ready to be stocked in Dunkard Creek, Greene County. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) marked the mussels with green glitter by gluing it to their shells, making it easier to spot them in the future and identify if they were stocked and, if so, what year since every year has a unique color.

When the topic of freshwater mussels in Pennsylvania arises, invasive Zebra Mussels often steal the spotlight. These invaders, originally from Eastern Europe, have been a significant threat to our native mussels, out-competing them for food and space.

My name is Sage Storm, and I'm the president of the Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation. Our council, comprised of 20 high school students from across Pennsylvania, is dedicated to promoting environmental awareness and conservation efforts in Pennsylvania. We also have the unique opportunity to advise on hunting, fishing and conservation legislation.

The council was granted the opportunity to tour the Union City Aquatic Conservation Center, Erie County. Historically, it focused on game fish. Today, it focuses on nongame species including mussels, Blanding's Turtles and Chesapeake Logperch.

Propagating mussels is a fascinating journey and quite different from propagating fish like trout. Instead of hatching eggs like fish, the first step after collecting fertilized female mussels is to infest a host, usually a fish, with their parasitic larvae (glochidia). These larvae attach to the fish's gills or fins and grow until they detach. When they detach, they are about 300 microns, equivalent to 1/3 of a piece of table salt. Once the mussels have become large enough and the outdoor temperatures are suitable for further growth and development, the mussels are moved outside to

the ponds. The PFBC staff have found that mussels grow at an accelerated pace outside using the pond water.

The council assisted with two stockings, one on Dunkard Creek, Greene County, and one on the Kiskiminetas River. The first mussel stocking the council assisted with was held at Dunkard Creek. This creek experienced a large fish kill in 2009, eradicating the Pennsylvania part of the stream of roughly 6,447 mudpuppies, 15,382 mussels and 42,997 fish. After everyone at the stocking was briefed on how to stock mussels, bags of approximately 250 mussels were handed out to each person, requiring careful attention. Stocking mussels is more difficult than stocking fish. For each mussel, you have to find the correct substrate and then carefully push the thinner side of the mussel into the substrate until you have pressed the mussel roughly halfway into the stream bed. This process ensures the mussels have a stable environment to grow and thrive. The PFBC marked the mussels with green glitter by gluing it to their shells, making it easier to spot them in the future and identify if they were stocked and, if so, what year since every year has a unique color. We saw mussels from past stockings, which showed us some of the success at Dunkard Creek. Between Dunkard Creek and Kiskiminetas River, the council stocked more than 1,000 mussels.

Avid anglers may wonder how stocking mussels will impact them. First, mussels filter the water, which is crucial to increasing water quality. The solids they filter out of the water and do not use as food are deposited along the stream bottom, providing a food source for macroinvertebrates. The abundance of macros becomes a food source for forage fish that will become food for popular game fish like Smallmouth Bass and trout. ☐



photo-Sage Storm

Finding mussels from past stockings showed us success at Dunkard Creek, Greene County.

photo-Derek Eberly

The author stocks freshwater mussels in Dunkard Creek.



MISSION MONDAYS

PFBC's Mission in Action

Join the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to learn more about our mission to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources, and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

Mission Mondays Programs

Attend virtually from 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Topic	Date	Speaker
Get Ready for Motorboat Season	May 5	Adam Spangler, Boating Safety Education Specialist
Paddle Pennsylvania: Explore PA's Waters	May 12	Adam Spangler, Boating Safety Education Specialist

Register for Programs and Events:



FishandBoat.com



2025 WALLEYE STOCKING

**anticipated totals*



Map Legend

43 waters in 30 counties stocked with Walleye

12,875,000 Fry
Average size: less than 1 inch

1,762,000 Fingerlings
Average size: 1 to 2 inches

FishandBoat.com

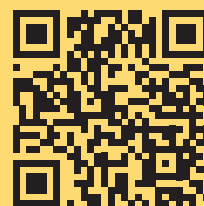
OPENING DAY OF WALLEYE/SAUGER
May 3, 2025



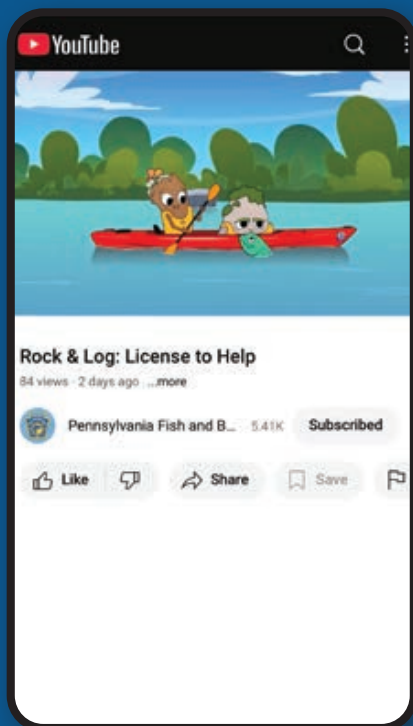
@PAFishandBoat #FishPA
#PAFishandBoat #WearIt

Join the Conversation!
Like, share and stay connected.

FishandBoat.com:

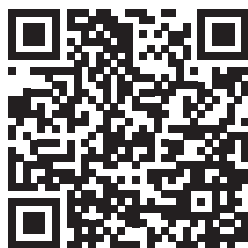


EXPLORE PA WATERS



Join the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's favorite animated friends, Rock and Log, as they venture the water and learn about how fishing licenses help protect, conserve and enhance Pennsylvania's waterways. From turtle basking platforms to helping keep the water clean to protecting the fish, your license dollars are put to good use.

**Rock & Log
License to Help:**



➔ **Weston**, age 3, assisted the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in stocking Brook Trout along Big Spring Creek, Cumberland County. He stocked many buckets of Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout and golden Rainbow Trout for anglers to enjoy.

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:



photo-courtesy of State Representative Parker Weirich

Jessica Rohrdanz, PFBC Northwest Region Outreach and Education Coordinator, was awarded Conservation Educator of the Year by the Crawford County Conservation District in February, 2025. Jessica teaches Pennsylvanians of all ages the best practices of fishing and boating, as well as the importance of conserving and protecting our waterways and the critters that inhabit them.

