



Inseason trout stocking

I am writing to you with a question about inseason trout stocking. Several other states require 24 hours to pass before you are allowed to fish in waters that have been stocked. Why can't Pennsylvania adopt this law?

It is quite a sight to see the hatchery truck going down the highway heading for a stream or a lake to be stocked, with a convoy of cars following it. I just think that if the trout had a chance to swim around for 24 hours, this would give the average sportsman and his family a better chance at catching some fish.—*Robert I. Johnson, Philadelphia.*

The idea of a short-term closure after stocking has been considered by staff on many occasions. However, because of the extensiveness of the Commission's inseason trout stocking program involving over two million trout, some 4,000-plus miles of streams and over 100 lakes and impoundments, the logistics would be a nightmare. Waters would have to be posted to facilitate effective law enforcement and successful prosecution. In addition, changes brought about by inclement weather and road conditions, not to mention unusually high/low flows, could also greatly affect vacations and trips planned by anglers who might arrive to find their favorite streams closed, or open but not stocked. The Commission is blessed with many miles of streams under some type of public ownership, but private landowners may not appreciate having their properties closed and reopened several times for more than one "opening day scene."

There is no easy answer to this situation. Fortunately, in many streams even with considerable fishing pressure shortly after stocking, substantial numbers of stocked trout persist for enjoyable angling for days to come. But a lot of anglers feel inclined to quit fishing under the impression that all the trout are gone by the end of the day of stocking. Except for smaller streams and lakes, that simply isn't the case.

I suggest you try fishing a Delayed-Harvest special-regulations area if you would like to fish over freshly stocked trout where harvest is prohibited. These areas are intended to provide a dense population of hatchery trout so a high catch rate might be possible but where recycling of those catches is mandatory until mid-June when three fish per day are permitted. To achieve a high rate of recycling of these trout, tackle restrictions apply. Even though several of these waters are open to fly fishing only, the majority have an artificial-lures-only restriction, so even younger anglers can use a spinner or spoon. Delayed-Harvest areas are also stocked in the fall to provide opportunity for no-kill angling during the fall and winter.

Another approach the Commission has taken to provide access to freshly stocked trout is with announced Saturday stocking of select lakes and reservoirs. This gives more anglers the opportunity to see and participate in a stocking on a day when more anglers are likely to be off from work.

As I mentioned, there is no easy solution. But the Commission is pursuing different means to make the stocked trout program more enjoyable.—*Richard A. Snyder, Chief, Division of Fisheries Management.*

Treating acidic waters

In the January/February 1999 *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*, there is an article by Robert Petri on acidic waters and their treatment ("Reclaiming Schuylkill County Streams"). For decades, I have been led to understand from a number of sources that placement of limestone

rocks in the flow of an acidic stream will not work after some time. The acidic water carries many dissolved materials, such as iron. As these precipitate out with the increased pH, they coat the surfaces of the limestone rocks. Algae and other material also coat the rocks. Unless there is some physical agitation, the rock surfaces become less and less able to buffer the acidic waters. Isn't this true? Are there some new techniques that avoid these problems that do not appear in this article?

—*Jay Sheppard, President, Potomac-Patuxent Chapter, TU, Silver Spring, MD.*

Historical information on the placement of limestone in stream channels and acid mine drainage discharges has documented the coating problems you mentioned. This coating of the limestone material reduces or eliminates the reactivity, thus reducing any improvements in the stream's water quality and aquatic life.

Recent studies conducted by mining research agencies have shown that although algae or metal coating of the limestone occurs, a small percentage (20 percent) of the limestone material continues to react. The key factors that appear to influence longer-term treatment are to construct high-gradient, over-sized channels. The high-gradient channels ensure increased water velocities, which in turn should continually scour the limestone, while the over-sized channels expose water to more surface area of limestone. The use of these limestone channels must be approached carefully with a full understanding of what level of treatment is sought. The purpose of these channels is simply to reduce the pollution load on an aquatic system using a relatively low-cost, low-maintenance system.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Commission's Environmental Services Division at (814) 359-5247.—*Steven R. Kepler, Fisheries Biologist.*

Effect of outdoor experiences

I have been reading the winning entries from the “Fishing & Boating Memories Last a Lifetime” contest. I am reminded how we take for granted the impact outdoor experiences have on novices, and especially children. This point became very vivid to me when my son as a freshman in college wrote me these recollections about his first trout fishing experiences as a young boy:

The morning sun broke the horizon as the two headed down the road for the bridge. The teacher had been here many a time but his companion was a novice. They approached a break in the budding bushes as the frost crunched beneath their feet.

“This has always been a good spot for me,” said the senior angler, as the novice became nauseous with anticipation. “Now stand to the left so that you have room to cast.” The novice responded and cautiously entered the water. “Don’t stand in the water if you don’t have to. What, are you trying out your hip boots?” The young boy retreated.

After two or three minutes, the novice finally had the minnow rigged and was ready to go. “Now cast at a 45-degree angle upstream and retrieve slowly.” The first cast went two feet and fell in the shallows at his own feet. “Try again.” The next cast was more accurate and he started to retrieve quickly. “Not so fast—reel and twitch, reel and twitch. That’s it—good.”

The budding sportsman looked back inquisitively, “Now what?”

“Try again.”

The youth started to think, “What am I doing here. It’s freezing, six o’clock in the morning, my hands are cold, the rod tip is icing. I could have stayed in bed.”

The next cast was perfect. “That’s it—you’re going to get something this time.” The pessimist thought, “Yeah, sure, that’s what you said the last time.” Then he forgot about

the cold, the time, and his hands. “I got one,” echoed down the stream.

“That a boy! Set the hook, keep your rod tip up, don’t horse him,” the coaching continued throughout the fight.

As an onlooker, one might wonder who was more excited. It was hard to tell. As the prize was brought to the bank, the older partner said, “Boy, that’s a nice one, one of the biggest I’ve seen around here.”

“Really, Dad, is it really?” He hugged his father and slipped his trophy into his creel.

It was all over then—he was hooked. The excitement, anticipation and pride was just too much. That magical, mysterious place where his father went on Saturday mornings was no longer a question, but a shared joy and treasure. As the years passed, he’d have his moments of glory, and while he was the center of attention, whether stated or not, they both knew where the credit belonged.

He’ll never lose the respect in his father’s ability and knowledge, nor will he forget the time and patience it took to mold a sportsman from a small boy.

Thanks Dad!—*Robert A. Runk, Sanborn, NY.*

Pymatuning and Lake Arthur

As someone who has spent nine years living next to and fishing Pymatuning Reservoir, I say “here here” to Tom Callaghan’s letter in the January/February 1999 *PA&B* (“Pymatuning Concerns”). I’ve spent countless hours fishing this lake. I’ve seen it go from dead in the early 1980s to half decent by the end of the decade. I’m surprised more people don’t complain. I totally agree with Mr. Callaghan that this is a good place to spend a day, but it could be so much better. If you go out on this lake on a nice Saturday in May and just count the boats in view and the people in them, and realize everyone is allowed to kill six walleyes each, it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see this is killing the lake. I release 99.9 percent of my fish.

Pymatuning is a wonderful place to spend a day or even a vacation, but

with a little common sense it could be so much better. Why don’t you make it an 18-inch or 20-inch size limit and a daily limit of three? This lake has the potential to be a tremendous fishery if we can get it away from the “meat man mentality” of the past. It’s time to update this lake to handle the fishing pressure it now receives.

I have since moved to Butler County, but I still get up to Pymatuning several times a year. Also, any chance of Lake Arthur returning to conservation status?—*Mike Beaumont, Prospect.*

First, Lake Arthur. This lake was managed under the Conservation Regulation package for several years. The fish populations did not respond well to the restrictive regulations. The only fish that indicated a benefit from these regulations was the largemouth bass. From this response the “Big Bass” program was born. Most of the lakes in the state under the Conservation Regulations showed a similar response and for that reason it is doubtful we will see a return to that program.

I’m encouraged to hear that the fishing in Pymatuning has improved. I’ve heard several anglers give a similar account of their fishing experience on the lake. Can it be improved? Yes. Presently we are involved in a long-term tagging study to determine the population structure, how angler harvest impacts the fishery, seasonal harvest patterns, and growth of walleyes. Even though we are not completely finished with the study, preliminary results indicate that anglers do severely alter the structure of this fishery and most of the annual harvest takes place from the end of March until the end of June. It is not out of the question that a seasonal size and creel limit would greatly benefit this fishery. This study, when completed, should be able to outline alternative management strategies. They can be applied to Pymatuning Lake, if the managing agencies and the public approve.—*Craig W. Billingsley, Area Fisheries Manager.*