

Cast Away

Southcentral, Southeast
PA for the Early Opener



by Art Michaels

Fish & Boat Commission area fisheries managers Mike Kaufmann and Dave Miko have specific suggestions on where to fish the early opening day in 18 southeastern counties, and how to score.

“Big Spring Creek, Cumberland County, offers 2.3 miles of limestone spring creek waters for great fishing,” says Dave Miko. “Big Spring Creek gets muddy only after heavy rain, so it provides clear-water fishing when many other streams are muddy.” Drift live bait here.

Dave recommends Dauphin County’s Clark Creek, which is 24 miles long with a 2.4-mile Catch-and-Release, Fly-Fishing-Only section. “This stream offers the opportunity to catch brook and brown trout in the stocked section that runs through State Game Lands 211,” Dave says. “The stream offers productive fishing in low, clear water because the relatively fast currents force fish to make quick decisions about offerings. Live bait and spinners work well here.”

Dave thinks that Little Marsh Creek’s 7 miles in Adams County are also a good spot. He says this low-gradient stream offers good fishing in high, muddy water because flows won’t be so fast that they make fishing overly difficult. The stream is stocked with brook and brown trout. Try live bait, small crankbaits and paste baits.

Dave picks Cocolamus Creek, 10 miles long in Juniata County, as another good spot. “Stocked with brown and rainbow trout, this stream should offer anglers good opening day and early season catches,” Dave says. “This low-gradient stream provides ample opportunities for both high-water and clear-water conditions.”

Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann also offers excellent advice for the southeastern counties. “In muddy conditions or cold water conditions, fish with bait,” he says. “Particularly good in muddy water are corn, paste baits and worms.”

“In clearer water conditions, try Otter Creek, York County. It’s scenic with a long stocked section,” Mike says. “Ridley Creek, Delaware County, in Ridley Creek State Park, is scenic in portions of the park with some walk-in fishing, but it tends to be crowded.” Mike says it might be best to wait until late morning or early afternoon to begin fishing if crowds are expected in the case of good weather. Water temperature isn’t usually a problem in early spring.

Mike suggests the Little Schuylkill River, Schuylkill County. “There are many opportunities in several stocked sections here,” he says. Mike says that the Little Schuylkill River is good throughout the spring in all sections, with the Port Clinton section warming earlier than the rest. The Little Schuylkill tends to run cold in early

spring, so bait is a better choice outside of the special-regulation area.

“Try the Ontelaunee and Maiden creeks complex, Berks and Lehigh counties,” Mike says. “These streams are long and easily accessible from PA Route 143, which parallels both streams. They offer small to large water with good midday hatches in late March and early April, and the area is scenic farm country with room to fish.”

Leaser Lake, another suggestion, is close by if stream fishing isn’t good. Under low flow conditions, though, Mike says to avoid Maiden Creek.

Mike also suggests the White Clay Creek complex, southern Chester County, which includes White Clay Creek, Middle Branch White Clay Creek, and East Branch White Clay Creek. “As a group, these streams offer miles of fishing,” he says. “The water temperature is usually not a problem in early spring.”

Mike says that in cold water conditions, all of these streams may provide better fishing in midday and in the afternoon, and that an added bonus is that they’ll be less crowded than at 8 a.m.

Both Mike and Dave suggest heading out to one of the trout-stocked lakes or streams that are downstream of a lake if this spring is wet with very high flows. Review the list of trout-stocked lakes in the 2007 *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* or on the Commission’s web site, www.fish.state.pa.us. ☐



French Creek, Chester County

Photo—Art Michaels