

Cast Away

The Three Rivers Water Trail's Great Fall Fishing



by Art Michaels

“There’s going to be some great fishing this fall in the Pittsburgh vicinity. The Three Rivers Water Trail, a 30-mile stretch of the Allegheny River from Freeport to Pittsburgh, will be primed for action from the ‘Big Three’ game fish species of the Three Rivers system: Smallmouth bass, sauger and walleye,” says Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson. “Each of these species reproduces naturally and provides consistently good fishing, but this fall could prove to be exceptional.”

Along with several good year classes, Lorson says, a remarkably strong 1995 year class should be providing action. “The average sizes for this strong year class this fall should be about 14 inches for walleye, 12 inches for sauger, and 8 inches for smallmouth bass,” Lorson says. “Although most fish of the three species mentioned from the 2005 year class will still be below the legal length, the catch-and-release



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angling should be favorable,” Lorson says. “Jig-and-minnow combos tend to be the preferred offering.”

Another fish species that should show up strong, again from the 2005 year class, is the white bass, Lorson adds. This species also reproduces naturally. “The white bass really has boom-and-bust cycles on the river, but this should be a boom year,” says Lorson. “The best area for white bass is in the lowermost pool from the Point in Pittsburgh to Sharpsburg.”

Lorson says that other possible related action in this stretch could be for hybrid striped bass. The Commission manages this section with supplemental stocking of hybrid striped bass, he notes. “Several year classes of stocked hybrids should be available to anglers this fall. Lures mimicking small gizzard shad work well,” Lorson says.

The Harmarville and Tarentum pools are known to provide some very good flathead catfish opportunities. Lorson says that recent fish sampling on the Allegheny River uncovered many 30-pound-plus flatheads. Lorson also revealed that channel catfish, cousins of flatheads, are also available

in ample numbers in this area, and that they will still be active this time of year. These two catfish species reproduce naturally in the river. The experts use large, live river baitfish to catch flatheads.

“Other species we supplementally stock are muskies and tiger muskies,” says Lorson. “Our stocking effort has intensified over the last few years, and we seem to be getting more reports of catches of these toothy predators. We manage muskies from Harmarville to Freeport. This management was refined in 2006 now to include only purebred musky stocking,” Lorson says. Large lures and plugs over 8 inches long tend to take more of these fish.

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Accesses, amenities

Visit the Commission’s web site, www.fish.state.pa.us, to view, download and print resources on accesses and their amenities. On the left side of the web site’s main page, hold your cursor over “Fish,” and in the drop-down menu, click on “Fishing Near You.” Click on “County Guides,” and navigate to the Allegheny County map and information.

Consider also the Commission web site’s species pages. Hold your cursor over “Fish” and in the drop-down menu click on “Pennsylvania Fishes.” Then navigate to “Species Feature Pages.”