

The **KEYSTONE SELECT** **STOCKED TROUT WATERS PROGRAM**

New fishing opportunities in 2016

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In 2016, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) will launch a new and exciting stocked trout program. The Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program is a concept that originated as the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan for Management of Trout Fisheries in Pennsylvania was implemented. However, the concept had been under consideration by staff several years before development of that plan.

This new program will reallocate our excess brood fish, which are older (2½ to 3½ years old vs 18 months for most of our catchable trout) and larger (14 to 20 or more inches compared to just over 11 inches) than the majority of our stocked trout. Each year, we stock approximately 30,000 of these larger fish statewide at a stocking rate of about 5 to 6 fish per mile of stream. This new concept takes about 3,200 of these fish and allocates them to eight waters distributed throughout Pennsylvania at a much higher stocking rate of approximately 250 fish per mile. Doing the math, the chance for someone to catch one of these fish will increase by a factor of at least 40. The density of fish of this relatively large size is similar to that in some of our best wild trout waters, such as Penns Creek, Centre County.

We will stock the remaining 90 percent of the brood fish statewide. The result will be a slight reduction in the statewide stocking rate of these fish to 4 to 5 per mile, which we believe will not likely be noticeable to anglers. Because this new program depends on a reallocation of the fish we already raise each year, it will provide an exciting new option for anglers at no additional cost to PFBC. All of the waters selected are managed with Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only regulations. These waters, which are open to fishing year-round, were selected to assure the availability of fish longer in the year since no harvest is permitted prior to June 15, and the use of artificial lures reduces the risk of injury to fish compared to the use of bait.



Brown Trout

Public input had a significant role in development of the new program in several ways. First, a statewide telephone survey conducted in 2008 included the following question: “Would you support or oppose the creation of a limited number of “Premium Stocked Trout Areas” on sections of streams or small lakes where an angler could fish for a high density of stocked trout larger than the current 11-inch average trout size?” In response, 70 percent of those interviewed replied that they would support such a program. Secondly, a similar concept has already been implemented by private groups who stock relatively large fish in areas open to public fishing. Two examples are Pine Creek, Lycoming County, and the Lehigh River in eastern Pennsylvania. These efforts have proved popular with anglers, so the concept has in a sense been “tested” publicly.

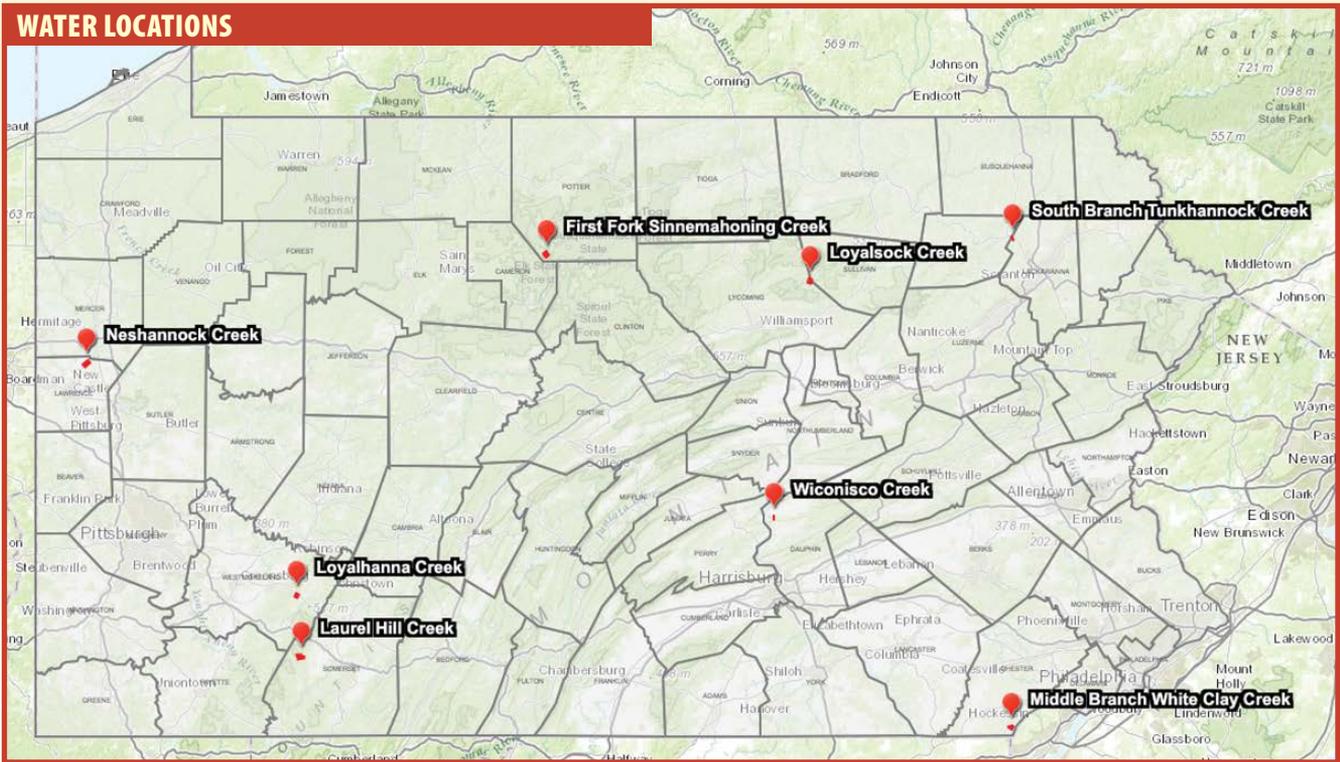
Since PFBC staff were not sold on “Premium Stocked Trout Areas” as a name for the program, staff decided to let the public choose the name. This was done through a survey on PFBC’s website. There were 1,561 responses to the survey and 144 unique names were provided. This list was later narrowed to 19 by a committee of PFBC staff, and then to one, the “Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters” program. This name links the program uniquely to Pennsylvania with the “Keystone” name, and “Select” highlights the special nature of these waters. We appreciate the great recommendations that were provided in response to the survey.

So, how were these waters selected? PFBC Area Fisheries Managers collaborated on this task. Criteria selected were as follows:

1. The waters would be widely distributed so one water was selected in each of eight Commissioner districts.
2. The water had to be 100 percent open to the public.
3. The regulations would be conducive to catch and release for at least a part of the year, to allow the availability of the fish to extend to many anglers, which led to selection of waters in the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only program.
4. The waters would exhibit temperatures conducive to trout survival through at least mid-June
5. The waters would be at least 45 feet wide.
6. There would be no wild trout present.

Using these criteria, the waters shown in the following chart and map were selected. We would note that one of the waters, Middle Branch White Clay Creek, Chester County, was a little less than 45 feet in width, but it otherwise met all the other criteria.

WATER LOCATIONS



WATER DESCRIPTIONS

CHESTER COUNTY

Middle Branch White Clay Creek

1.67 miles; from SR 3009 (Good Hope Road) downstream to the confluence with the East Branch

DAUPHIN COUNTY

Wiconisco Creek

0.74 miles; from the western edge of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art Walking Bridge downstream to the power line crossing located 1.7 miles upstream from the mouth

LACKAWANNA/WYOMING COUNTIES

South Branch Tunkhannock Creek

0.99 miles; from SR 6 downstream through Keystone College campus

LAWRENCE COUNTY

Neshannock Creek

2.67 miles; from the base of the Mill Dam in Volant downstream to the covered bridge on T-476

LYCOMING COUNTY

Loyalsock Creek

1.49 miles; from the Lycoming - Sullivan County line downstream to Sandy Bottom

POTTER COUNTY

First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek

1.67 miles; from mouth of Bailey Run downstream to a bend above Berge Run Bridge

SOMERSET COUNTY

Laurel Hill Creek

2.33 miles; from 200 yards downstream of the T-364 (Countryman Bridge) downstream to the T-364 Bridge upstream of Laurel Hill Lake

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

Loyalhanna Creek

1.67 miles; from SR 711 downstream to SR 2045

For an interactive online map of the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters, visit www.fishandboat.com/keystoneselect.htm.

PFBC biologists will be evaluating both angler use and angler satisfaction on these waters this year. We will also attempt to get some idea of the effect of the program on the local economies where they occur. This information, as well as comments we may receive from anglers, will allow us to determine if the program should continue and whether any changes are needed for 2017. We are excited about this new program, and we believe Pennsylvania's anglers will be as well.

We would encourage you to try out these new fishing opportunities, and let us know about your experience.

Comments can be directed to the PFBC website at www.fishandboat.com/fishstory.htm. We want to learn as much as we can this year as we work to make this program the best it can be. ☐



Wiconisco Creek, Dauphin County

photo: Spring Geunhart