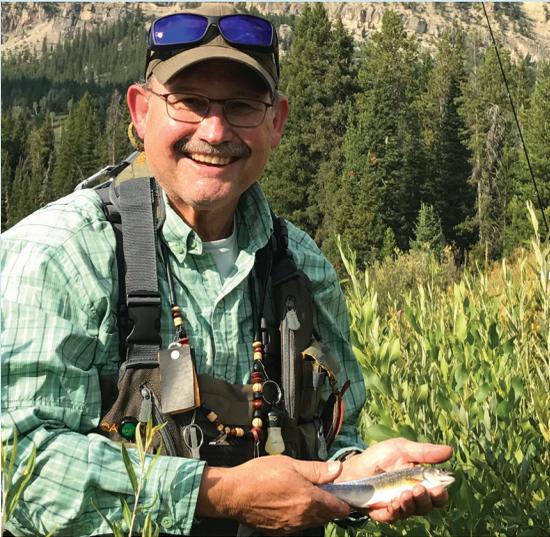


REFLECTIONS

from JOHN ARWAY
Executive Director, PA Fish and Boat Commission

Throughout most of my career, I have had to deal with the political process as I worked my way through the ranks from fisheries biologist to Executive Director. Most legislation involving conservation or recreation moves through the Pennsylvania General Assembly at a snail's pace. That is because it competes with other "more important" issues for the legislature's time and attention. When sportsmen were united and would speak in one voice, that voice would be heard by most legislators and it influenced their priorities for action. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania sportsmen have dissected the issues into specialized areas of interest which has diluted the power of the sportsmen's voice. On the fisheries side of politics, disparate rallying cries for wild trout, stocked trout, bass,

muskies, American shad, rare species, clean water, and healthy habitats polarize the debates and fragment our voices. It's even worse on the wildlife side with white-tailed deer, pheasants, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, black bear, neo-tropical migrant birds, waterfowl, and forests all having their own organizations representing species-specific interests. Rather than using our energies to work together for common interests, we compete by fighting individual battles for special interests. Maybe it is time we took a lesson from Mother Nature. Perhaps we should join ranks much like the species we enjoy which share watersheds and landscapes without worry of political boundaries. Sharing food and living space force the species we care about to co-exist in communities and if they can't, they go extinct.



Wild Brook Trout near Snake River, Wyoming



Teaching the next generation

That may be the only way to regain the full power of our sportsmen's voice.

As I sit here writing this article, the legislature is busy acting on Senate Bill 935. If you are not familiar with the Bill, it amends Title 30 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes (Fish and Boat Code) §302. Executive director to simply say "(2) No individual may serve as the executive director for more than eight years." The bill was specifically written to apply a term limit to me and those who follow me. I have spent the past 38 years as a dedicated public servant working for our Commonwealth, 30 years as a PFBC fisheries biologist and the past 8 years as Executive Director. The time has passed in the "blink of an eye" and it has been the ride of a lifetime. I have been told that SB 935 is not a reflection of my performance and doing my duty in fulfilling the mission of the PFBC—to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities. However, the turmoil causing the Bill to be fast tracked may be more related to the rest of my signature line—fear no one.

I was mentored early in my career by a former PFBC Executive Director Ralph W. Abele who taught me to practice good science, use it to do the right things for the resource to further the agency mission and, above all, to tell the truth. Three principles of leadership I never forgot. Mr. Abele's advice guided me through courtroom battles with polluters, legislative testimony defending clean water and healthy habitats, public debates about stocked trout and wild trout, and finally practicing fiscal responsibility in times when the agency can't afford to do everything that everyone wants. My only remaining challenge is to find someone to accept the proverbial torch. Someone with the necessary vigor, passion and guts to carry on with the philosophy of Resource First so that future generations can enjoy the beauty and bounty provided by Penn's woods and waters.

Do Your Duty and Fear No One —R. W. ABELE