

## **Division of Environmental Services**

### ***Program Activities that Contribute To the Protection, Conservation, and Management of our Commonwealth's Coldwater Resources***

#### **Water Quality Protection Program**

- Liaison with the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on water quality protection programs. Review water quality standard changes (water quality protection criteria and water use designations) and provide comments to DEP.
  - Staff refer information from PFBC biological surveys to DEP staff for review and consideration for protecting water quality consistent with the regulatory provisions of 25 PA Code Chapter 93. Specific PFBC designations including Wilderness Trout Stream and Class A Wild Trout Stream designations effect special water quality protection provisions in Chapter 93.
  - PFBC is a voting member of the Environmental Quality Board which reviews and promulgates environmental rulemaking for the Commonwealth.

#### **Fish Consumption Advisory Program**

- Participate on the Commonwealth's Joint Agency Fish Consumption Advisory Technical Workgroup which determines the annual sampling plan for testing fish collected from Commonwealth waters for contaminant analyses. The Workgroup then makes recommendations for issuing public health protection advisories based upon existing science. There are currently public health advisories for trout on eleven specific Commonwealth waters and Lake Erie tributary streams and a one-meal-a-week advisory on all fish caught in Commonwealth waters including stocked trout.

#### **Permit Application Review Programs**

- *Water Obstruction and Encroachment Permit Application Reviews*  
Staff provide agency comments to the state and federal regulatory agencies on stream and wetland encroachment permit applications to encourage the avoidance, minimization, and compensation of impacts to coldwater resources consistent with Federal and Commonwealth laws and regulations. Construction time windows are included in both general and individual permits to protect stocked (no work from March 1 to June 15) and wild (no work from October 1 to December 31) trout unless a waiver is granted by the PFBC.
- *Transportation Project Reviews*  
Staff review projects for proposed highway construction, highway maintenance, airport development, and mass-transit projects to protect and enhance our coldwater resources. Staff are also engaged in the oversight of the PA Dirt & Gravel Road Program which prevents sediment from reaching coldwater streams through the proper planning, design and maintenance of unimproved roads.

- *Solid Waste Application Reviews*  
Staff conduct aquatic biological investigations of proposed areas for municipal, residual, or hazardous waste facilities near coldwater streams.
- *Agricultural Projects*  
Attend meetings and provide agency comments on federally-funded programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP), and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP). Work with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services' Partners for Fish & Wildlife program on habitat projects to benefit coldwater streams.
- *Acid Deposition Projects*  
Review liming project proposals on headwater streams and coldwater lakes, stay current with the scientific literature, and respond to inquiries concerning the impacts acid deposition on our coldwater resources.
- *Aquatic Herbicide Permits*  
Review and act on 1200 applications per year. These reviews are evaluated in cooperation with DEP for intended treatment function, dose, and timing of aquatic herbicide treatments for aquatic plant control. Permitting prevents negative impacts to the fish living in the treated water body and downstream areas.
- *Triploid Grass Carp Permits*  
Triploid grass carp permitted (225 per year) as a biological alternative to using chemicals to control aquatic vegetation. Biological control is used in lieu of chemicals, particularly copper which that may kill trout.
- *Instream Flow Program*  
Proactively promote policies and methods that preserve flows for instream uses. Review water allocation permit requests to insure adequate passby flows to protect aquatic uses of coldwater streams. Work with partner agencies to optimize flows for trout on the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers.
- *Impingement/Entrainment (316a) and Thermal Discharge (316b) programs*  
Evaluate studies, intakes and discharges and make recommendations to minimize impacts of major water intakes and thermal discharges under Sections 316 (a) and (b) of the Clean Water Act.
- *Hydropower Review Program*  
Evaluate FERC licensing requests with regard to fishery needs. Improved temperature regimes, operation and release procedures and improved angler access are examples of past accomplishments. Projects on coldwater streams include the Youghiogheny Dam hydro plant and tailwater fishery, PP&L Wallenpaupack license and Lackawaxen River temperature enhancement program.
- *Drawdown Permit Program*  
Drawdown review program recommendations are influenced by utilizing time restrictions in areas managed by stocked trout and also wild trout streams for

- spawning. Additionally, spring, fall and winter lake stocking schedules (either the drawdown or stocking) may be adjusted.
- *Mining Permit Application Review Program*  
Seasonal restrictions for stream encroachments in both wild and stocked trout streams are recommended as well as riparian zone protection by 100-foot buffer zones. Special conditions are recommended for wild trout which include oversize E&S ponds, manual dewatering and limitations on disturbed areas. Stream surveys conducted during the application process have documented streams containing natural trout reproduction in streams which have previously not been surveyed. These are then included on the PFBC's wild trout list. Advisor to DEP's Bureau of Mining and Reclamation, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation and watershed groups and lead evaluator of streams that may be impacted by coal or non-coal mining activities. Also evaluate the effectiveness of mine drainage abatement activities in protecting or restoring trout populations.

### **Damage Assessment Programs**

- *Contaminated Sites Program (Superfund, HSCA, and Oil Spills)*  
Work with the lead regulatory agency (DEP or EPA) to support proper cleanup and restoration/remediation of damaged natural resources.
  - Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Phase - After release of oil or other hazardous substance, injuries to fisheries and the services they provide are documented/calculated and compensation is sought to restore what was lost. Reevaluation and reclassification of trout streams have resulted from activities.
- *Valley Creek Restoration Program*  
Plan restoration and administer grants to protect and enhance the wild trout fishery of Valley Creek, Chester Co. following a settlement for PCB contamination from the Paoli Railyard Superfund Site.
- *Biomonitoring support for State Fish Hatchery system*  
Provide biomonitoring services required by NPDES permits to evaluate hatchery discharges. Conduct special studies at various hatcheries. Examples include invertebrate biomonitoring at Benner Spring, Bellefonte, Pleasant Gap, Tylersville and Union City SFHs and white sucker tissue analysis and semi-permeable membrane device (SPMDs) PCB studies at the Huntsdale SFH.
- *Pollution Case Assistance to Law Enforcement*  
Provide biological assistance to Law Enforcement to document impacts to fishing, fish and aquatic life in pollution events. Provide estimates of injury and monetary values for fishing and boating recreation and aquatic life lost due to pollution. Recent examples include the Norfolk Southern train derailment, McKean and Cameron Counties (wild and stocked trout) and Merck cyanide release to Wissahickon Creek (stocked trout) and mining sediment pollution on Bell Run, Clearfield Co. (wild trout).