

Rebirth of a Trout Stream

by Waterways Conservation Officer Christopher D. McDvitt



With every discarded bait container and empty can, our waterways die a slow, painful death. More miles of stream are posted each year because of littering than for all other reasons combined. But on one stretch of creek in northern Cambria County, sportsmen struck back and breathed new life into the Delayed-Harvest section of Chest Creek.

The final totals from the Chest Creek/River Road cleanup are: 50.22 tons of trash, six dump truck loads of scrap metal and appliances, and nearly 500 tires. More than 50 years of dumping and neglect were wiped clean by a massive two-day effort that brought everyone together, from the Girl Scouts to the National Guard, to help the environment.

The story began simply. A few sportsmen who were fed up with the trash along an otherwise beautiful stretch of trout water turned into an army of men, women and children working for a common cause. Nearly 50 students from Cambria Heights and Penn Cambria High schools worked for hours in a driving rain last April, bagging trash and hauling tires up the steep banks. The next morning, sportsmen from seven different clubs, with heavy equipment from Patton Borough, Elder Township and PennDOT, as well as dump trucks from the 876th Engineer Battalion of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, went to work removing furniture, appliances, scrap metal and trash. Dump trucks ran continuously all day, but at day's end, nine full loads still remained in one large pile, a reminder of the neglect the stream had suffered. Trucks from the Fish and Boat Commission and the Game Commission removed the last nine loads. The stream was reborn just in time for opening day.

This event was coordinated by the Fish and Boat Commission in conjunction with the Cambria County Conservation District and PA Cleanways. PA Cleanways is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization with county chapters. The chapters work with communities to fight illegal dumping and littering. **Contact PA Cleanways at 105 West Fourth Street, Greensburg, PA 15601-2981; phone: 724-836-4121; e-mail: paclean@westol.com.**

I would like to thank everyone who participated to make the cleanup possible: Rob Cronauer, who adopted River Road through PA Cleanways; Cambria Heights High School; Penn Cambria High School; Patton Borough; Elder Township; GPU Energy; 876th Engineers of the PA National Guard; Patton Ambulance Service; Carrolltown Fire Company; Ray Vezza & the Patton Park; Air Products; the Girl Scouts of Troop 753; Laurel Insurance Management; PennDOT; Elias' Scrap Metal; Laurel Highlands Landfill; Pennsylvania Game Commission; Patton Bass Club; Patton Cooperative Trout Nursery; Rembrandt Club; Carrolltown Rod & Gun Club; Jamestown Rod & Gun Club; Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited; Emiegh Sportsmen; Representative Gary Haluska; and many individual volunteers who came out to help.

Having thanked those who helped, the challenge is now to maintain what we have accomplished. I ask all those who venture out on fishing trips to respect the efforts of this group, and all the groups who clean up our waterways and highways. So when you fish, feel free to take your limit, but take your trash as well. And as a public service announcement, the fine for littering in Pennsylvania is \$300. ☐