



Preseason trout stocking began in March. The first stocking occurred in miserable conditions on Long Pond. Slush and water on top of 12 inches of ice made for an interesting day. The hole we cut in the ice disappeared as fast as we could clear it. Nevertheless, everything worked out well and all the trout eventually made it into the lake.

Most of our time was spent patrolling, and introducing brook, brown and rainbow trout into the waters of northern Wayne County. The plan was to concentrate patrols on these waters in the late afternoon and early evening hours. The plan proved to be effective. With the assistance of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the diligent patrols of DWCOs, we apprehended 14 preseason poachers. We also seized dozens of illegal trout. My evidence freezer was more than half full before opening day.

In the midst of catching poachers and stocking thousands of trout, we received several complaints. These complaints included everything from fish kills to water pollution. Spending several days in a courtroom accounted for the remainder of the time. Hundreds of bass and pickerel were the victims of a "spring kill" on a local pond. In another incident, a man was charged with illegally crossing a stream and polluting a stream during a timber harvesting operation. The remainder of the court time resulted in a man receiving ARD (accelerated rehabilitation disposition) for illegally digging in a stream.

The late-afternoon patrols continued. While on patrol with Game Commission DWCO Mark Kellam, we encountered some suspicious individuals. The information we gathered led to the prosecution of four individuals for disorderly conduct on a Game Commission rifle range.

The day before opening day, we patrolled well into the evening, ensuring that the tens of thousands of stocked trout would still be in the lakes and streams for 8 am the following day.

The 8 o'clock opener finally arrived. All the rods were cast, and only seconds later the first trout was landed. I spoke with hundreds of fishermen. I met some who weren't compliant with the fishing and boating regulations and who received citations. Most, however, had a very enjoyable day. While patrolling Dyberry Creek, I learned that three cousins (all under 8 years old) had landed their first fish. These proud and excited young anglers all received a "first fish" certificate.

Then I patrolled Upper Woods Pond. Upon arrival, I noticed a boat that was about to be pulled into the launch area. The first passenger who left the boat was a 5-year-old boy named Aaron, who had landed his very first fish. With his hat pulled down over his ears, he proudly paraded a rainbow trout on a chain stringer around the access area with a grin that stretched from Upper Woods Pond to Phila-



delphia. I'll remember that for many, many years. I think everyone who was fishing saw Aaron's fish firsthand, and drew a smile. That was the fourth certificate I had issued for a first fish. The day also brought the total number of citations issued equal to the number of first fish certificates issued. What a day!

The opening weekend was far from over. At 5:30 am on the second day, I had already seized eight trout and one illegal bait container. By mid-afternoon, the fishing pressure had lessened considerably, and everyone seemed to comply with our laws and regulations.

Shortly thereafter, we were into inseason trout stocking. The dedication of the stocking help was amazing. We stocked trout in every condition from blue skies to severe thunderstorms. PA Game Commission WCO Frank Dooley showed up with a 300-pound black bear. This bruin was released at one of our stocking points, and everyone received an unexpected treat.

Accounting for northern Wayne County March and April activities, we stocked more than 35,000 trout, issued 22 citations and four "first fish" certificates, made three criminal arrests and had three days of training and two days in court, and one 300-pound black bear was released. ☐