

# WCO Diary *by WCO Dave Kaneski, Northern Wayne County*



May began with continuing April's activity—stocking trout. This was the end of the inseason trout stocking program. The stocking trucks made the journey to northern Wayne County six more times, delivering more than 15,000 adult brook, brown and rainbow trout. During one of these stockings a few individuals let temptation get the best of them. One man was cited for harvesting 10 trout, and another was apprehended for having eight trout in his possession. The evidence freezer was starting to get crowded.

The opening day for muskellunge, pickerel and walleyes occurred on the first Saturday of May. Although this was not quite the same as the opening day of trout season, it brought out many dedicated anglers in search of these large predators. It seemed this was not soon enough for a pair of anglers in the north country. Exactly one week before the opening day, they were both cited for fishing without a license. One of these men decided to harvest two large chain pickerel and received a second citation. I seized these two large fish and added them to the dozens of fish already in the evidence freezer.

I received an unusual call from the Wayne County Communications Center about a guide on the West Branch Delaware River encountering a man with more trout than the limit. It seemed that a shore fisherman had a pretty good day catching five trout. With special regulations limiting the daily limit to two trout, I was interested in this potential violation. After speaking to all the individuals involved, I cited one man for catching three trout over the daily limit (all five trout were seized). Other criminal charges were turned over to the Pennsylvania State Police in Honesdale.

I received information from the National Park Service on the Upper Delaware River about a contractor illegally using a Commission access during a bridge painting operation. An investigation revealed several violations of the Fish and Boat Code. An out-of-court settlement was reached in lieu of criminal prosecution for the violations.

I did find time to get out fishing for a few hours here and there. I gave fly fishing for bluegills a try. While using some generic poppers, I had some of the best panfishing of my life. I actually had a few bluegills break my line! Can you imagine a bluegill that can snap a line? I guess it was my fault, but who would think that a bluegill could break your line?

As the temperatures gradually increased, the boating season came into full swing on Memorial Day weekend. This was the first busy boating weekend of the season. It meant that I spent several very long days ensuring that everyone was safe. Hundreds of boaters and fishermen took to the many lakes of northern Wayne County. Some just fished, and others enjoyed waterskiing or riding their personal watercraft for the first time that year. The majority of these people complied with the laws and regulations, but some

folks didn't. I issued nearly two dozen citations over this four-day weekend. On one occasion, several men were fishing and boating together and I cited an operator of one of the boats for not having enough life jackets aboard his vessel. The rest of the group became involved in some good-natured ribbing of this individual. One of the men then commented on how nice of a largemouth bass one of the others had harvested. I thought this was just more of the ribbing—bass season was still two weeks away—but when I turned around

and observed a man (who was doing most of the ribbing) walking toward Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Bud Snyder and me with a trophy largemouth bass dangling from a chain stringer, I was shocked. All went quiet when we seized the fish and issued a second citation.

Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Jack Osborne accompanied me on a patrol of one of our busiest waterways. It seemed that on this particular day very few people cared about any laws relating to fishing and boating. We issued 15 citations in two hours. A few were for boating violations, but most were for fishing without a license. One man in particular tried to use a license that belonged to his fishing partner's girlfriend. I guess the price of a non-resident license (\$35) seemed reasonable to him after receiving three citations for more than \$300.

The opening day of bass season finally arrived. This meant that every species of gamefish in the Commonwealth was in season. The enforcement priority then shifted to boating safety.

The first half of the year ended with an investigation on a pollution of waters complaint. The complaint was justified and we reached another out-of-court settlement as we began the next very busy holiday weekend.

We issued or filed 56 citations, initiated five criminal investigations, spent two days in court, and added over a dozen fish to the evidence freezer. □



*With the opening of bass season, every species of gamefish in the Commonwealth was in season.*