



Executive Director Colangelo invited Del Graff to provide this issue's "Protect, Conserve, Enhance" column. Mr. Graff is retiring as director of the Commission Bureau of Fisheries after more than 38 years of service.

Recently I read a review of what was new in fly rods for 2002, an impressive array of models made of high-tech, space-age materials with unconditional lifetime guarantees in the event of breakage. The price tags were also "space age" with many exceeding \$500. Looking at the state of the art in fly rods gave me pause to consider how much things have changed since I first got involved in fly fishing back in the mid-1950s. Imagine, "high tech" meant fiberglass rods with the top of the line costing about \$35. Impressive as the advances in fishing tackle have been, I believe that during my 37 years as a fisheries biologist I've seen equally remarkable advances in fisheries management in Pennsylvania.

Coming to the end of a career in fisheries inevitably leads to nostalgic reflection on the issues, events and people that shaped that career. I believe I came naturally to a career with the Fish & Boat Commission. I caught my first trout when I was about six years old. It was a wild trout, a brook trout. I've heard it said that there are some people who are addicted to alcohol after their first drink or to cigarettes after their first attempt at smoking. Maybe that's what happened to me with fishing. Fishing is hardly in a category with those kinds of negative and destructive addictions, but from the very first, I was "hooked" on trout, and I can't imagine a life that doesn't involve trout fishing.

Like so many other fisheries biologists, in Pennsylvania and across the country, it was a love of fishing that led me to seek a career in fisheries. I have been very fortunate since being part of the Commission staff. It allowed me the pleasure and privilege of playing a small part in some significant changes in how we manage fisheries in Pennsylvania. The positive effect of those changes will benefit fish and fishing long after I've faded from the scene. Along the way to achieving some of these changes, I was blessed with the opportunity to meet and work with some exceptional people.

Looking back to compare where we were in trout management when my career started with where we are now, I take great satisfaction. It's my view that resource-based management of trout, including, for the first time, management of wild trout, is the Commission's single most significant achievement during my time with the agency. This was a long and difficult struggle and brought me into contact with some extraordinary conservationists who supported staff and fought long and hard to see resource-based management become a reality.

In retrospect, what a privilege to work for Ralph Abele and to have the support, assistance and encouragement of Ken Sink and Bob McCollough of PA Trout Unlimited, Len Green of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen, Inky Moore, who was involved in both the Federation and TU groups, and, then a member of the PA Fish Commission, Robert L. Martin. Sadly, of all those stalwarts for wild trout and resource-based management, only Bob McCollough and Bob Martin are still with us. It was a great coalition of special people working with the Commission and the result was today's trout management plan for Pennsylvania. I have a lot of great memories from the Commission but none better than working with those great men and Commission staff for better trout management as part of an adventure we called "Operation Future."

The Commission faces new challenges today and it's a tough time to leave, but I have confidence in the leadership and staff of the agency. I look forward to seeing the next generation of conservation leaders put aside differences and personal agendas and join the Commission in a coalition to overcome those challenges—a cooperative effort not unlike "Operation Future." The Fish & Boat Commission is filled with wonderfully dedicated and skilled people. It's one of the finest conservation organizations in the nation.

Not everything we've done in the past 30 some years has been correct, and not everything has been done as well as we would have liked, but those are the exceptions. Pennsylvania anglers are extremely fortunate to have an agency with such dedicated and competent staff in every part of the agency. If I could leave anglers one message, it would be that the Commission has done a great job overall. It de-

serves your support, including paying a few bucks more for a license.

In 1964 when I walked into the Benner Spring Fish Research Station for my first day on the job, it was a dream come true. I knew that just had to be the greatest job in the world. In January 2002 when I walk out of the Pleasant Gap

headquarters for my first day of retirement, I'll know that I truly had the greatest job in the world.

To all the anglers and to my co-workers, it was great to work for you and with you. Just consider me "Gone Fishing!"

Commission Update

Co-Winners of 2001 Abele Award Announced

Two ardent conservationists, an environmental lawyer from Confluence and a watershed leader from Pottersdale, are co-winners of the Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award for 2001.

Raymond Savel, Pottersdale, Clearfield County, has a well-deserved reputation as the "Keeper of Mosquito Creek." For more than 20 years, Ray "Sappy" Savel pursued a singular mission to restore and protect the Mosquito Creek watershed.

In 1996, President Clinton, Governor Ridge and Congressman Bud Shuster recognized Savel's accomplishments. He was inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding efforts in the conservation and protection of Pennsylvania's aquatic resources.

Robert P. (Bob) Ging Jr., Confluence, Somerset County, has a long and distinguished record of harnessing his estimable legal talents and personal interests in support of the cause of conservation of Pennsylvania's aquatic resources. Ging has devoted countless hours to volunteer efforts to protect the Casselman River and Laurel Hill Creek, and in support of the Youghiogheny Riverwatch. His courage and conviction in becoming involved in addressing pollution cases affecting the Casselman earned statewide and national recognition.

Accordingly to Peter A. Colangelo, Executive Director of the Fish & Boat Commission, "The year 2001 is the tenth year that the Fish & Boat Commission has conferred the Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award, and this

is the first year that we have had co-winners. The hard work and dedicated service of Bob Ging and Raymond Savel are clearly consistent with the conservation heritage embodied in the life of Ralph Abele. The Fish & Boat Commission is delighted to welcome these two gentlemen to the ranks of Abele Award winners."

The Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award is the highest recognition the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission can confer on persons who distinguish themselves in the cause of conservation. The Commission established the Abele Award to recognize citizens of Pennsylvania who have made outstanding contributions to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the aquatic resources of the Commonwealth. The award serves as a memorial to Ralph Abele for his steadfast and courageous work in protecting and conserving our natural resources. Past Abele Award winners include notables such as Ken Sink, Dr. Maurice Goddard, Lenny Green, Dr. William Kodrich, Robert W. McCullough Jr., Peter Duncan, James L. Myers, Larry J. Schweiger and Enoch S. ("Inky") Moore.

Ralph W. Abele served as executive director of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission from 1972 until 1987. His goal was to protect Commonwealth waters, conserve our aquatic resources and enhance fishing and boating in Pennsylvania. He was quoted as proclaiming "If the fish can't survive in the water, there are serious problems for man." Ralph's "Resource First" philosophy continues to guide the Fish & Boat Commission today.

Smith Announces Plans to Refill Cloe Lake

House Majority Whip Sam Smith (R-66) announced last month that the Fish & Boat Commission closed the gates and began to refill Cloe Lake on Thursday, December 13.

“The refilling of the lake represents a major step forward in the Cloe Lake project,” Smith said. “It’s been a long process from the day the lake was drawn down and fish were salvaged in the summer of 1999—but well worth it. We pushed hard to secure the funding to rebuild the spillway. I’m pleased that our community is very close once again to utilizing the lake for a variety of recreational pursuits.”

According to the legislator, construction of the new spillway and associated facilities began in August 2000. “When the gates close, the lake should refill to about 6 feet below normal pool,” Smith said. “It will probably take eight to 12 weeks for the lake to reach this level. When some remaining work at the site is complete in January 2002, the lake will refill to normal pool level.”

In addition to the spillway, Smith noted that work is now complete at the boat launch and fishing pier and that trout will be stocked in the lake in the spring of 2002.

“I’m proud to announce that the labyrinth spillway at Cloe Lake is the largest spillway of this design in the Commonwealth,” Smith said. “This project could not have been completed without cooperation between the PA Fish & Boat Commission, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Jefferson County Commissioners and, most importantly, the Jefferson County Conservation District.”

Public Meeting/Hearing on Proposed Delayed-Harvest Regulations

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will hold a public meeting/hearing to discuss proposed changes to Delayed-Harvest trout regulations and to take additional public comment on this proposal. The meeting/hearing will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 8, 2002, in the auditorium of the Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology (formerly Centre County Vo-Tech School), Pleasant Gap, Pennsylvania. The meeting and hearing will conclude no later than 9 p.m. The changes can be viewed on the Commission’s web site, www.fish.state.pa.us.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about the proposed change in Delayed-Harvest special regulations to the Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Comments submitted by facsimile will not be accepted. Comments also may be submitted electronically to: ra-pfbcregs@state.pa.us. A subject heading referring to the delayed-harvest proposal and a return name and address must be included in each transmission. In addition, all electronic comments must be contained in the text of the transmission, not in an attachment. If an acknowledgment of electronic comments is not received by the sender within two working days, the comments should be retransmitted to ensure receipt.