

# WCO Diary

by WCO Dave Kaneski, Northern Wayne County



All the lakes freezing and the ice-fishing season coming into full swing earlier than normal brought an important issue to light—safety. *The Wayne Independent* newspaper sent a reporter to brave the elements for an interview. The newspaper ran a terrific article addressing some safety concerns about venturing out on frozen water.

I received the preseason trout stocking schedule for review. I requested a few minor changes and then the list was ready for circulation. As usual, a short time later I reviewed the inseason trout stocking list and it, too, was then ready for distribution.

I met Fisheries Technician Joe Minnichbach at Lower Woods Pond. We then began to take water samples at several locations along the East and West branches of Dyberry Creek. We took pH and temperature readings, and conducted tests for continuity and dissolved oxygen levels. We tried to discover why preseason trout abandon these stream sections before opening day.

While on patrol, DWCO J.J. Dunsinger and I encountered two men ice-fishing. They had 11 tip-ups set out, and as we approached we noticed four largemouth bass lying on the ice that were well short of the 15-inch minimum. We then asked the men if they had fishing licenses. Neither had one. These men were the first two fishermen that we spoke to during the day (five citations were issued). On a neighboring lake, we met a man who obeyed the rules and was rewarded with four fine largemouth bass ranging from 18 inches to 20 inches. The largest exceeded 5 pounds. We talked only to a few more fishermen during the day. However, after sunset, a man operating a snowmobile found the need to break away from the crowd and use Commission property. He was stopped and cited for this action.

Upper Woods Pond again received the first preseason stocking. We released some 2,000 rainbow trout with the assistance of several diligent ice fishermen. Tammy Compton, a reporter with *The Wayne Independent*, arrived to cover the stocking. Six-year-old Stephanie Holloway of Equinunk provided everyone with an unexpected treat. Stephanie landed her first fish with the help of her grandfather. She received a First Fish



Award and her picture was in the newspaper a few days later.

We conducted an investigation for an individual applying to become a license-issuing agent. The investigation involved a visit to the premises to ensure that the applicant met the specific criteria required to provide this service to the fishing public.

WCO Walter Buckman and I spent a day together. First, we stood in front of a group of second-grade students explaining what we do and why clean water is important. Two dozen aquatic insects preserved in vials, a couple of mounted fish and a small live snapping turtle seemed to do the trick. The presentation worked for the fourth grade class, too. Next, we served two warrants on an individual who decided to ignore his citations. Finally, patrolling a few lakes resulted in our citing a man for abandoning his tip-ups.

On a Saturday afternoon, WCO Buckman, DWCO Osborne and I introduced a group of Scouts ranging in age from 7 to 12 to ice fishing. The conditions were perfect, and with some cooperation from the fish, it turned out to be a great day.

With the lakes starting to thaw and preseason trout stocking on the horizon, the annual Northeast regional deputy meeting was held at Genetti Manor in Dickson City. It's good to see all of the men and women who volunteer their time and make our jobs a lot easier. The rest of the year they are voices on the radio in our patrol vehicles. Stories of events from the past year accounted for most of the conversation. We distributed a few awards, and we received valuable information and training.

We spent hundreds of hours walking on frozen water speaking with anglers. Most of these people were abiding by the rules and glad to see us. Others were not happy to see us and would receive citations for the fishing laws that were violated. We closed more than 20 summary cases, served a dozen arrest warrants, seized five illegal bass, and gave a few programs. I also reviewed 37 additional special activity permits (all for fishing tournaments). The extended trout season closed, and the stocking began. □