



photo: Russ Gattig



The lack of early ice fishing this year allowed time to catch up with everyday duties, including writing and filing reports, and processing citations and warrants, although we still apprehended some fishing and boating law violators. Reports are vital at times and may be accompanied by filing criminal charges against a violator. Once these charges are filed, there is a large "paper trail" until the case is completely closed, either by a guilty plea or verdict, or occasionally a not-guilty verdict or dismissal of the charges. The paperwork is critical in tracking and recording the status of any case. Most cases are usually over in a week or so, but some cases can stay in the "pending" file for years.

This is also the time when I review dozens of special-activity permit applications for the next year.

We also conducted a short program for the Honesdale High School hunting and fishing club. I showed the students some of the equipment we use during the normal course of the season. The program also included an explanation of all the items on my duty belt (firearm, handcuffs, ASP baton, OC pepper spray and extra magazines). Then I discussed the use of binoculars, and the ability we have to see for hundreds of yards with a spotting scope. During night operations, a flashlight is a must, and when we want to remain hidden, we use a night-vision scope.

We then discussed some of the more unique items we use. I drew a smile from just about everyone when I asked them to imagine getting paid to wear hip boots, don a fishing vest and carry a fishing pole. Regularly we also use detailed maps, plastic sample jars, cameras and even a video recorder. I explained the use of all the items and when and why we use them.

We also became involved in a few interesting and unusual incidents. First, I received a telephone call from New York State Department of Environmental Conserva-

tion (DEC) officers Jim Milewski and Rick Warner concerning illegal transportation of hard clams through Pennsylvania and New York state. Through a coordinated interstate effort, we addressed more than two dozen violations.

Fishing and boating activity slowed and hunting activity increased. We spent several days assisting my Game Commission counterpart, Wildlife Conservation Officer Frank Dooley. These patrols were diverse, including night patrols to deter "jack-lighters." These patrols frequently lasted into the early morning hours and were concentrated in an area where evidence of night hunting has been found or from reports from concerned sportsmen.

We also received a report concerning the illegal draining (draw-down) of a pond, causing a sediment pollution. Unfortunately, we received the report nearly a week after the incident allegedly occurred, and we were unable to prosecute because of a lack of evidence.

We planned an ice safety program with Don Jacobs of the TV show *PA Outdoor Life*. National Park Service Ranger Larry Neal assisted. We cut a hole into a frozen lake, and Don got a firsthand look at what a person who has fallen through the ice experiences. We demonstrated the proper procedures for prevention and survival, as well as providing a look at the effects of hypothermia and how they vary from person to person. Most importantly, we emphasized the idea that wearing a life jacket while on the ice may save your life. The show was broadcast in a viewing area encompassing all of northeast and central Pennsylvania.



WCO Dave Kaneski

*Editor's note: This "WCO Diary" is WCO Dave Kaneski's last contribution to this column. Special thanks to WCO Dave Kaneski for his two years of writing these articles. In the January/February 2003 issue, WCO Clyde Warner will begin writing "WCO Diary."*