

# ENFORCING PROPERTY REGULATIONS

by WCO Dave Kaneski  
Northern Wayne County

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission owns or maintains some 200 properties across the Commonwealth. These areas are paid for and maintained for lawful fishing, boating and hunting where permissible. Although a special permit can be issued for other activities, these requests are the exception instead of the rule.

In northern Wayne County, the Commission maintains 14 properties. Once a year or so a request crosses my desk to use one of our access areas for a special event, like a wedding or a historical rafting demonstration, or simply for parking for an offsite event. These areas are usually remote and out of the way, aspects that attract other types of people—those who have no interest in fishing, boating or hunting. These are the people who leave the remnants of their nightlife. We have found everything from abandoned vehicles, vandalism (anything from severe damage to graffiti), used syringes, household garbage, and dozens of empty cans and bottles for the anglers and boaters to tend to. Ultimately, the lawful users wind up footing the bill to have these areas cleaned up.

Some of these areas seem to be frequented more than others. An example of this is Belmont Lake, which no longer has any portable sanitary facilities because of the persistent vandalism. After some extreme measures were taken to secure the portable sanitary facility in one location, vandals simply burned it to the ground.

This year we had several incidents of vandalism. One incident occurred at the Commission's Long Pond Access. During the early morning hours, three men from New Jersey apparently decided to visit the access on all-terrain vehicles. This activity, illegal in itself, was topped when they decided to destroy the sanitary facility with their off-road machines. With a diligent effort on the part of DWCO J.J. Dunsinger, and after a short investigation, the three men were charged with misdemeanor criminal mischief. All three pleaded guilty to the criminal charges and paid nearly \$4,000 in fines and restitution.

A few other night patrols also produced many violations. One such patrol was on a Thursday evening, while working with WCO Curt Tereschak (Southern Wallenpaupack District). We decided to cover the eastern end of my district and patrol the access areas along the upper Delaware River. This patrol resulted in 10 summary violations and two criminal arrests for possession of illegal narcotics.

Our officers observed and kept reporting the signs of the nocturnal activity in this area, so WCO Tereschak and I decided to patrol again in the same areas. The night started slowly, but at 11 o'clock, activity picked up.



photo: Art Michaels

Shortly after midnight we found ourselves in the middle of an underage drinking party at our Narrowsburg Access. During that night, we issued or filed 65 citations. We charged nearly 30 people, and the total amount of the costs and fines was just over \$4,000.

This would not be the end. Over the Labor Day weekend, two young men from New York state decided to bring their drugs and paraphernalia with them to our Damascus Access. This, of course, resulted in criminal charges.

The total prosecutions from these events on Commission property were 88 summary offenses, 15 criminal charges and more than \$10,000 in penalties. Not a single not-guilty plea was received for any of these charges. The interesting part of this aspect of my job is that none of these violations was a result of illegal fishing or boating. ☐

## Commission Property Regulations

The *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* includes a synopsis of Commission regulations for general property use, fishing, boating and other activities. In addition, Commission dog regulations, also outlined in the *Summary*, apply to the use of Commission property. Be sure to view bulletin boards at Commission properties for additional restrictions and exceptions that may apply. The 2004 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* is available wherever licenses are sold and from Commission offices. The *Summary* also appears online at the Commission's web site, [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).