

Successful Musky Stockings

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Pennsylvania Angler & Boater readers have been seeing a lot about Pennsylvania's evolving and increasingly successful musky program throughout issues of the magazine this year. From "Managing Pennsylvania's Muskellunge" in the July/August issue to "Burning Muskellunge" and "Voluntary Permits—New Investments in Aquatic Resources" in this issue as well as articles slated for November/December, long-time musky anglers and those looking to start pursuing this top predator fish for the first time have plenty of reading material to get them excited.

The 2012 Muskellunge Management Plan set the stage for a new approach by changing the goal from catching an occasional trophy fish to high-quality fisheries where anglers have a reasonable chance of catching specifically targeted muskies. The moniker "fish of 10,000 casts" has been around for a long time, and we are trying to break that mold and increase the odds.

One of the key ingredients in this new approach is stocking larger fish that have a greater chance of survival. On a recent trip to a fish habitat installation at a state park, someone recalled years ago seeing a Largemouth Bass take a fingerling musky almost as soon as it hit the water. That can certainly happen, and one of the goals of stocking larger fish is to make fish less susceptible to predation.

When people think about fish stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), they invariably think about the 3.2 million trout we raise and spread across the Commonwealth each year for anglers to enjoy. The trout stocking schedules on our website (www.fishandboat.com) receive more visits each year than any other topic, and more and more people are also turning to the FishBoatPA mobile app to access this information.

We encourage anglers and other interested individuals and groups to join us in the field to get the fish into the



Muskellunge fingerlings



photos-PFBC archives

Pennsylvania State Representative David Maloney and Pennsylvania State Representative Mark Gillen stocking Muskellunge.

water. In fact, we could not accomplish the stocking without the help of volunteers, many of whom come year-after-year as a rite of spring.

This year, we made a concerted effort to invite legislators to join us in the field for trout stocking to learn more about what we do, interact with constituents who come out to help regardless of the weather and experience the satisfaction of putting fish one step closer to waiting anglers. Starting in June, we applied the same transparent approach to stocking the larger musky yearlings and had a great time with everyone who joined us.

So far this year, at least 40 local, state and federal officials have joined us for trout and musky stockings, gaining a better appreciation than ever about the significant role that our hatchery system plays in Pennsylvania's \$29.1 billion outdoor recreation economy.

This year, we will stock more than 27,000 muskies and 6,000 tiger muskies into public lakes and rivers. Beginning next year, we expect to increase that number to approximately 34,000 muskies and 6,000 tiger muskies. We now alternate stocking locations every other year, annually hitting approximately 30 locations.

The beautiful year-old fish measuring 12-14 inches in length that our partners helped us stock were raised at the Linesville State Fish Hatchery (muskies), Crawford County, and Pleasant Mount State Fish Hatchery (tiger muskies), Wayne County. While it is still months away, please consider attending the annual Linesville State Fish Hatchery Open House that will take place on a Saturday in April, at which you can come face-to-face with muskies, Walleyes and other fish species.

Thank you to the PFBC staff who have assisted in advancing the musky program and securing Pennsylvania as a leader in yet another area of fisheries management. And, thank you to the legislators and other guests who helped take the muskies on the next leg of the journey, resulting in fish on the end of fishing lines.