

# WATCHING THE STEELHEAD RUN IS GOOD FAMILY FUN



*by Linda Stager*

*photos by the author*

**W**ho wants to go on a great day trip—an outdoor adventure you can take the whole family on that doesn't necessarily involve fishing but sure does involve magnificent fish?

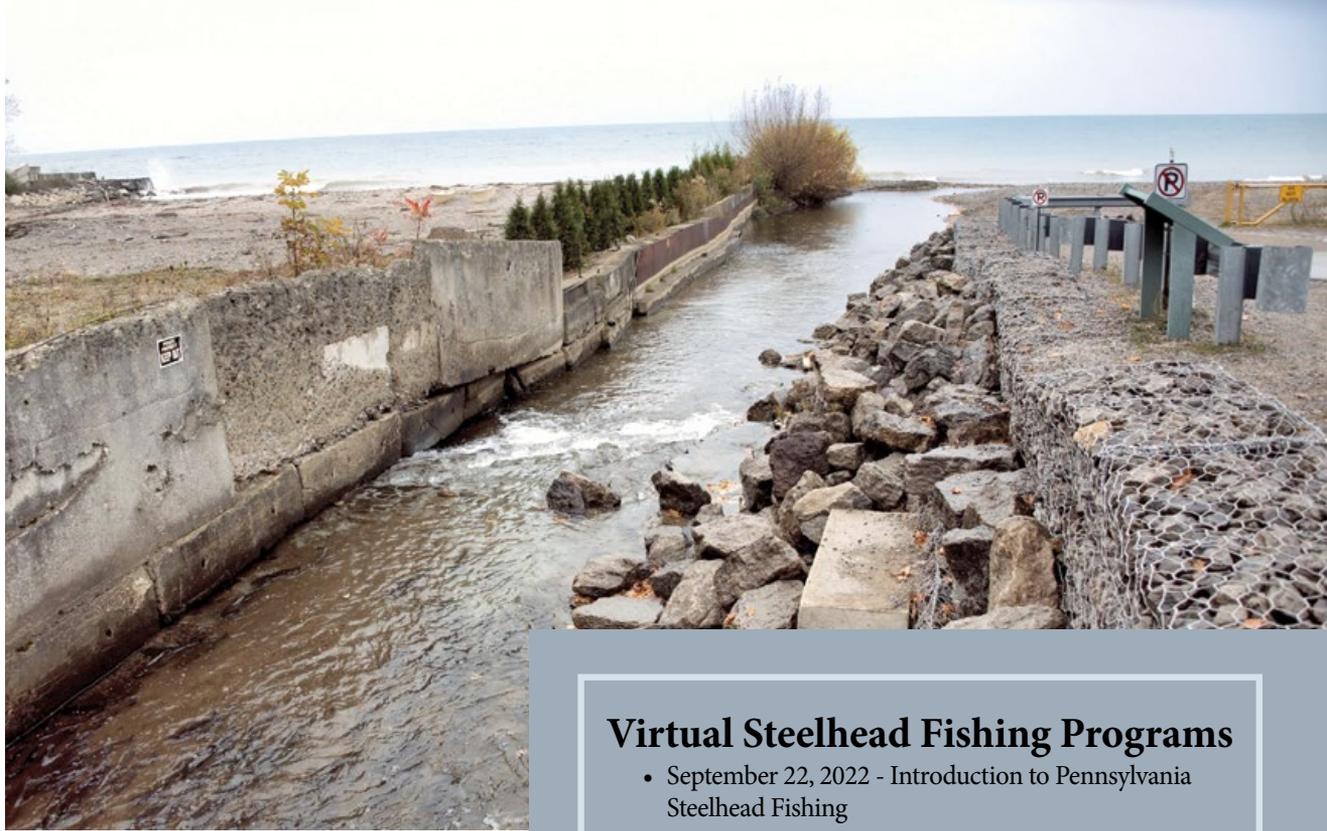
Nestled along the southern shore of Lake Erie is Avonia Beach Park in Fairview, Erie County. It is a beautiful 3.6-acre park that was purchased to allow public access to lakeshore fishing through a set of cooperative agreements.

It is also a nice place to picnic, walk the beach, and of course, fish. Special fishing regulations apply. And, the sunsets are some of the best in Pennsylvania.

In the fall, this little gem of a park becomes a popular place for outdoor enthusiasts to visit. Along the western side of the park, Trout Run, a high-quality trout stream, empties into Lake Erie. Trout Run is nursery waters, so there is no fishing allowed.

During October and November, Trout Run showcases the annual steelhead run.

Steelhead, the anadromous strain of Rainbow Trout, spend most of their time in the ocean and great lakes. But, once a year, they return to tributary streams to spawn. They are big and boldly beautiful fish.



*The walls at the bottom of Trout Run create a long narrow trough that ends with a gate several hundred feet upstream as it empties into the lake.*

Thanks to the foresight of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), a highly successful and popular steelhead stocking program was started 60 years ago. Since then, over a million fingerlings a year are stocked in Lake Erie and its tributaries.

The walls at the bottom of Trout Run create a long narrow trough that ends with a gate several hundred feet upstream as it empties into the lake. The gate keeps the steelhead from swimming further upstream to spawn, and it also makes it easy for fish to be collected.

Like clockwork, in the fall, the steelhead arrive in Lake Erie at the bottom of Trout Run and start their journey to the gate at the top of the stream trough. They arrive by the thousands. One by one, they work their way up to the gate.

In the fall and winter, PFBC staff and volunteers meet for a series of fish collection days. They use nets to scoop up the fish, separate them by sex, and transport them to a nearby hatchery, where the eggs are removed. The adult brood fish collected at Trout Run are later released. The eggs are hatched, the fry are raised in nearby cooperative nurseries, and released about 18 months later as part of the stocking program.

The hustle and bustle of collecting the fish is good entertainment for those interested in seeing steelhead close. But, when the stream water depth is adequate, most fall days are great days to visit and watch the show. This is a trip the whole family will enjoy. ☑

## Virtual Steelhead Fishing Programs

- September 22, 2022 - Introduction to Pennsylvania Steelhead Fishing
- October 6, 2022 - Introduction to Pennsylvania Steelhead Fishing

Register at [register-ed.com](https://register-ed.com). Go to Sport Fishing and click on "View upcoming events."

## While You Are Here

Take a short road trip to Corry State Fish Hatchery, Erie County, or Linesville State Fish Hatchery, Crawford County. Venture to French Creek, the 2022 River of the Year, Crawford, Mercer, and Venango counties, to experience the beauty of fall by kayak or canoe. Or, experience the Upper Shenango River Water Trail. It runs from Pymatuning State Park's Pymatuning Reservoir dam, Crawford County, downstream to Shenango River Lake, Mercer County.



*Steelhead*

For a real time view of Trout Run, visit [www.fishusa.com/avonia-webcam](https://www.fishusa.com/avonia-webcam).