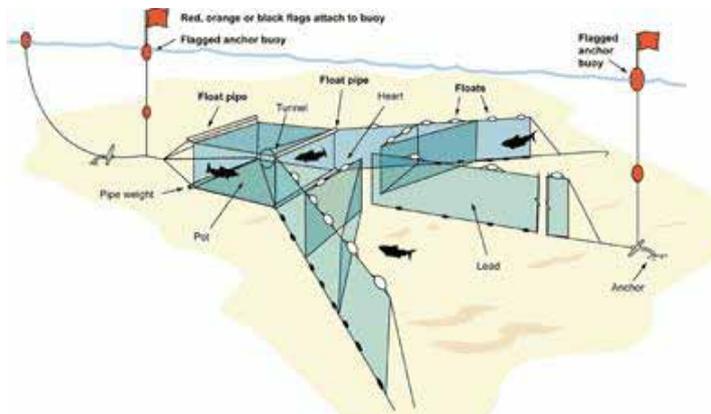




Fish Trapping

Since this edition of On Target is about hunter and trapper education, I thought I would discuss fish trapping techniques that our fisheries biologists and others use to collect fish from our lakes, reservoirs and rivers. PFBC staff typically use a device called the Pennsylvania Trap Net, which is a funnel net with long leads that direct the fish into a trap where they can't get out (See Diagram below). They are very effective in sampling certain species of fish in larger bodies of water and are often used repeatedly, year after year, in the same place to get data on year class strength of certain populations of fish that don't fear the net.



Source: <http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/nets/largetrap.html>

In 58 Pa Code § 69.33 we define the appropriate use of trap nets by licensed commercial anglers as follows:

(f) Description of trap net.

(1) In the most general sense, a trap net is a compartmentalized trap, consisting of a lead, heart, tunnel and crib with wings and funnels. Fish are entrapped in the crib by swimming along a lead which

directs the animal progressively through the heart, tunnel and into the crib. The netting and webbing which make up the crib shall be a single sheet external panel, subject to mesh size regulation to allow small, young fish a means of escape.

(2) A trap net fishing device is designed to catch fish by impoundment, as opposed to catching fish by entanglement, which is the action by which gill nets capture fish. Fish caught by impoundment remain alive and swimming for an extended period while confined within the trap net crib. Fish caught by entanglement are unable to free themselves of the net, cannot swim freely and cannot be expected to live

while entangled in the gear. The elements of netting, webbing and twine (thread) size (diameter) used in the construction of a trap net shall be of design and dimension that will discourage, prohibit and preclude the enmeshing and

entanglement of fish in the netting of any part of the trap net device. The netting of the crib shall be constructed as a single panel or sheet of webbing. Lawful trap nets may not have liners or covers which would make the external crib webbing two or more sheets in thickness.

(3) As used in this chapter, the term "trap net" includes hoop nets and fyke nets.

Although we only have one remaining licensed commercial angler using trap nets in Pennsylvania on Lake Erie, many of you may also trap fish in a similar way when you collect minnows for bait. Minnow traps have been around for a long time but the act of trapping fish was first described by the Greek author Oppian between 177 and 180 who wrote the Halieutica, a poem about fishing.

He described various means of fishing including the use of nets cast from boats, scoop nets held open by a hoop, and various traps "which work while their masters sleep".

Here is Oppian's description of fishing with a "motionless" net:

The fishers set up very light nets of buoyant flax and wheel in a circle round about while they violently strike the surface of the sea with their oars and make a din with sweeping blow of poles. At the flashing of the swift oars and the noise the fish bound in terror and rush into the bosom of the net which stands at rest, thinking it to be a shelter: foolish fishes which, frightened by a noise, enter the gates of doom. Then the fishers on either side hasten with the ropes to draw the net ashore (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishing_net#History)

So you see that although most of us think trapping only applies to muskrats, raccoons, and other mammals regulated by the Game Commission, you can also trap fish. However, make sure you consult our rules and regulations before you try it!

Your Director, John

PFBC