

Straight TALK

by John A. Arway

Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

A Historic Event

On September 30, 2011, I had the privilege and distinction of joining Mr. Carl Roe, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission; Ms. Marirosa Lamas, Superintendent of the State Correctional Institute at Rockview; Dr. Bruce McPherson, Dean of Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences; Mr. John Elnitski Jr., Chairman of the Benner Township Board of Supervisors; and the Honorable State Representatives Kerry Benninghoff and Michael Hanna at the dedication ceremony of the Spring Creek Canyon Cooperative Management Area in Centre County.

It was truly a day for celebration and thanks. Those not familiar with the canyon's rich history should visit www.springcreekcanyon.com to learn more about the significance of this event to not only you, our anglers and boaters, but also to many others who can now enjoy an additional 1,829 acres of public land to pursue a variety of recreational opportunities. The ceremony was the final step in a process that began in 2005. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provided a grant to Benner Township to study the feasibility of managing the land, water and natural resources of the canyon in the best interests of the people who use it. I participated as a Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) staffer in the planning process as a member of the steering committee. We were responsible for hiring and guiding a consulting firm, Environmental Planning and Design, which received public input from public and

technical advisory committees to ultimately create the master plan, which would be used by the new landowners to responsibly manage the land, water and natural resources into the future.



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Executive Director John A. Arway addresses the crowd at the dedication ceremony of the Spring Creek Canyon Cooperative Management Area in Centre County.

While this planning process was in progress, Senator Jake Corman and Representatives Benninghoff and Hanna were working hard in Harrisburg to get legislative support to transfer the land from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (141.3 acres), Pennsylvania Game Commission (1,211.2 acres), The Pennsylvania State University (451.9 acres) and Benner Township (24.9 acres). They successfully accomplished this challenge when House Bill 1890 was signed into law on July 9, 2010. This authorized the Pennsylvania Department of General Services to proceed with the land transfer and allowed the agencies to enter into a cooperative agreement to ensure that the lands and waters would be protected and managed while providing both active and passive recreation consistent with the goals of the master plan.

PFBC has had an active role in Spring Creek Canyon since the 1930s with the development of the Bellefonte State Fish Hatchery on land we purchased and the development of the Benner Springs State Fish Hatchery and fisheries research center on lands leased from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) since the early 1950s. PFBC and DOC have jointly borrowed water from Benner Spring for fish production and as a water supply for the State Correctional Institution at Rockview for over 50 years. We have been good neighbors and partners for a long time, and we all sincerely appreciate their support of this land transfer.

We manage Spring Creek as a world-renowned wild brown trout fishery. We have permitted fishing on sections of the creek open to public fishing for many years. I can honestly say that I have never fished the waters that have been closed to public fishing and hopefully you can too.



As part of the dedication ceremony, a Spring Creek Canyon Cooperative Management Area sign was unveiled.

Our agency has provided protection to the stream and stream corridor by employing best fish culture management practices within our hatchery operations, which includes state-of-the-art treatment technology for the waters leaving our facilities, and we developed and installed, with the help of our partners, fish habitat improvement structures in the stream. During the 1930s and 1940s, we operated Fisherman’s Paradise, a section of the stream that attracted anglers from all over the world and provided them with the opportunity to catch trophy trout.

With the opening of these lands, anglers will be able to fish the entire section of the creek, and boaters, hikers, birders and others will be able to experience the scenic beauty of the canyon. I have to admit that there was also a personal incentive for me to get this done since I enjoy fly fishing during the renowned sulfur hatches in the spring and early summer and hunting for waterfowl at the canyon on their migratory path south.

Resource First—“Protect, Conserve and Enhance,” now in its 25th year, is the very mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, and we take pride in our conservation ethic. We look forward to continuing to work with all of our partners as good stewards of the canyon for our children, grandchildren and generations yet to come.

I would like to thank and acknowledge PFBC staff who worked to make the opening of the Spring Creek Canyon possible. Brian Barner; Laurie Shepler; Ted Walke; Austin Bard; Chris Ramish and our hatchery staff; Mark Mitchell; John Sinclair and our property maintenance staff; and Captain Jerry Barton and our Centre County waterways conservation officers and deputy waterways conservation officers. Special thanks to Gary Moore and Colonel Thomas Kamerzel who played critical roles throughout the entire process. Finally, I would like to thank Bill Capouillez from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Bill’s training as an Army Ranger and his bulldog style was the motivation we all needed to get this job accomplished.

This was truly a historic event that will be remembered by many of us as our contribution to add an additional piece to Paradise.

Hope to see you on Spring Creek one day.

Your Director

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The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.