A Civics Lesson

On July 14, 2014, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PBFC) presented the Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award to former Senator Franklin Kury, to recognize Mr. Kury’s lasting conservation impact as the author and champion of Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, also known as the Environmental Rights Amendment.

Arguably, this addition to the Pennsylvania Constitution stands as one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation ever passed in the state. The incredible legacy of Article 1, Section 27 places Mr. Kury among Pennsylvania’s most notable conservation leaders.

The Abele Award is the highest recognition the PFBC provides to persons who distinguish themselves in the cause of conservation.

The PFBC established the award to recognize citizens of Pennsylvania who have made outstanding contributions to the protection, conservation, and enhancement of the aquatic resources of the Commonwealth.

Following the award presentation to Mr. Kury, we aired a taped interview with Professor John Dernbach, Distinguished Professor of Law and Co-director of the Environmental Law Center at Widener University. Professor Dernbach’s work featured prominently in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court’s recent Robinson Township decision that gave renewed relevance to Article 1, Section 27.

The evening also featured a panel discussion on the significance of Article I, Section 27. It was moderated by someone familiar to many of us – Pete Duncan, former Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

I was honored to join Mr. Kury and Terry Bossert, former Chief Counsel for the Department of Environmental Protection and currently with Range Resources, on the panel.

WITF television taped the evening as part of an ongoing project to document important people and events in Pennsylvania’s rich conservation history. The entire program may be viewed on our website at http://fishandboat.com/videos.htm

When planning my talk for the evening, I remembered a video clip I once saw of the famous statesman and comedian, Red Skelton, telling the story about one of his teachers explaining, to him as a young schoolboy, the words and meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance. He later wrote down and then recorded his own version. I used this approach to open the panel discussion on July 14, and it also seemed like a good way to explain Article 1, Section 27 to the readers of On Target.

The people: A plurality of persons considered as a whole, which includes all 12 million of us who are citizens of our great Commonwealth.

Have a right: In accordance with what is good or proper. In conformity with fact, reason, truth or some standard or principle. The recent Supreme Court opinion clarified that our environmental rights are just as important as our political and other civil rights. Chief Justice Castille in his plurality

John, with a 19” smallmouth bass caught on the Susquhanna River. Photo by Andy Shiels
National Hunting and Fishing Day to Take Place
September 27, 2014

Each year, outdoorsmen and women celebrate efforts taken to conserve our heritage. National Hunting and Fishing Day is important to each. Conserving wildlife and the lands that house what we all enjoy are of the utmost importance.

National Hunting and Fishing Day is a day set aside to celebrate all that sportsmen do to support those efforts whether it be building habitat for dwindling quail populations or funding conservation projects. Their support has forged new pathways for hunters, fishermen and outdoorsmen for the past 43 years to enjoy public waterways and lands without worry of diminishing access or natural resources.

Country music star, award-winning TV host and former soldier Craig Morgan is slated to serve as the honorary chairman for National Hunting and Fishing Day.