

Straight TALK

by **John A. Arway**

*Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

Tail Water Trout

Hopefully, the photos associated with this article caught your attention since they certainly did mine when I created them. As your Director, I get the opportunity to travel the Commonwealth quite a bit. In my travels, I try to sample the waters that I visit. When I was a biologist, I usually did this with an electrofisher, which was probably more effective in catching fish than the sampling sticks (fly, spinning and bait casting rods) that I use now to evaluate fish populations. I tell our Board and my staff that I have to periodically “check the pulse of the fish” that we are entrusted to protect and manage. As you can see from the photos, the fish are doing pretty well in some of the waters that I have personally sampled. However, my greater motivation is to work with others on changes that will allow these tail waters to achieve their greatest potential based upon factors that we can control.

In 2012, our Commissioners created a Tail Water Workgroup to “evaluate the possibilities for enhancement of coldwater tail water fisheries throughout Pennsylvania.” Staff compiled data on all of our tail water trout fisheries and prioritized them based on the potential to effect some change that would create improvement. The focus of our efforts continues to be on the following reservoirs:

- **Quemahoning Reservoir, Somerset County**

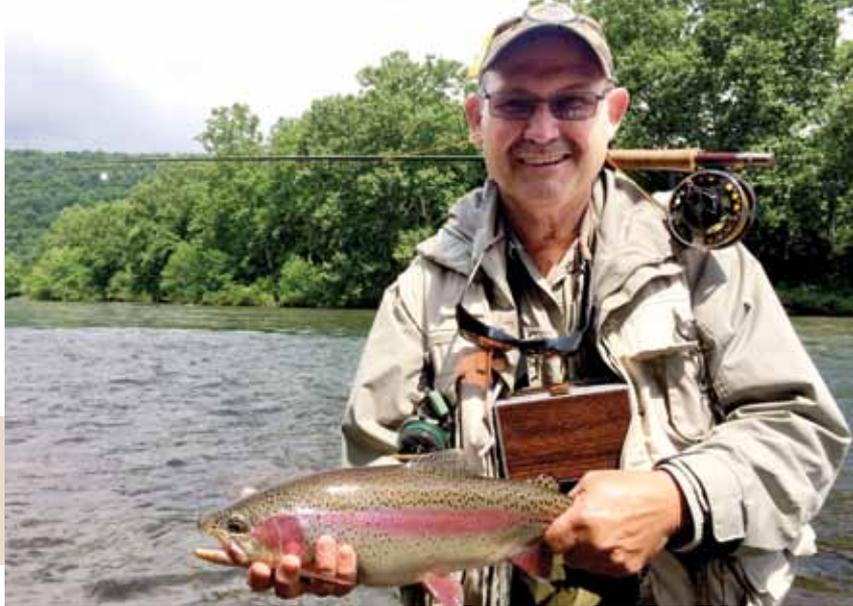
Owner: Public

Size: 845 acres

Tail Water Management: Fingerling trout beginning 2013

Distance of Cold Water Influence: 1.3 miles

Current Activity: Water temperatures are suitable for trout. Habitat is a major limiting factor. The conservation district is leading the way on habitat improvement below the reservoir. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) stocked Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout fingerlings in 2013.



Youghiogheny River tail water

photo-Mike Steiner

- **Francis E. Walter Reservoir, Luzerne County**

Owner: United States Army Corps of Engineers

Size: 80/482 acres

Tail Water Management: Catchable and fingerling trout

Distance of Cold Water Influence: 7.5 miles

Current Activity: Working with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and other stakeholder groups on the implementation of a flow management plan.

- **Lake Wallenpaupack, Wayne and Pike counties**

Owner: PPL

Size: 5,698 acres

Tail Water Management: Catchable and fingerling trout

Distance of Cold Water Influence: 6 miles

Current Activity: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicense through 2045 requires PPL to maintain coldwater release. Fine-tuning of the system continues with assistance from PFBC.

- **Cannonsville Reservoir, New York**

Owner: New York City

Size: 4,703 acres

Tail Water Management: Wild trout

Distance of Cold Water Influence: West Branch of the Delaware River, 18 miles; Mainstem, 15 miles

Current Activity: The PFBC continues to work with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and decree parties from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City and New Jersey to negotiate fisheries management objectives and improve releases from New York City reservoirs.

- **Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County**

Owner: United States Army Corps of Engineers

Size: 8,297 acres

Tail Water Management: Catchable trout and warmwater/coolwater species

Distance of Cold Water Influence: None

Current Activity: The PFBC continues to advocate to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for cold water releases from the lake.



photo-Andrew L. Shields

East Branch Clarion River tail water

• **Beltzville Lake, Carbon County**

Owner: United States Army Corps of Engineers
Size: 946 acres

Tail Water Management: Catchable and fingerling trout

Distance of Cold Water Influence: 7 miles

Current Activity: Outflow temperatures currently required meet Chapter 93- HQ-CWF parameters. Staff members are working with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to determine if a flow model is required to maximize use of cold water resources in the reservoir.

We continue to recognize that many sport fish populations are impacted by factors outside of our Commission's direct control. Primary factors influencing the carrying capacity (how many fish a stream or river can support) include the floods and droughts that Mother Nature creates, which regulate how many fish our rivers and streams can naturally support. However, there are certain places where we can intervene and actually improve upon what Mother Nature created. These places are our tail water fisheries, which provide opportunities to expand wild trout populations through careful manipulation of cold water releases from man-made reservoirs.

The Board has directed PFBC staff to “actively seek to maximize the opportunities available to protect, conserve and enhance, wherever possible, wild trout populations in tail waters below existing reservoirs within the Commonwealth.” Consistent with that direction, you will find certain elements of our revised Strategic Plan to include:

1. Through June 2017, continue efforts to improve Pennsylvania's tail water trout fisheries.
2. By June 2017, assist other state and federal regulatory agencies with the development of policies and reservoir operation procedures that limit alteration of natural flow regimes to levels that maintain critical species, habitats and ecological conditions.

I would like to personally thank Commissioner William R. Worobec for his interest, persistence and leadership throughout his tenure as Commissioner on the Board. He was truly the motivation for this initiative, and our Commonwealth fisheries will be better because of it. I better get busy with those sampling sticks to make sure that our staff are making progress towards meeting the goals of our Strategic Plan.

Hope to see you on the water.



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.

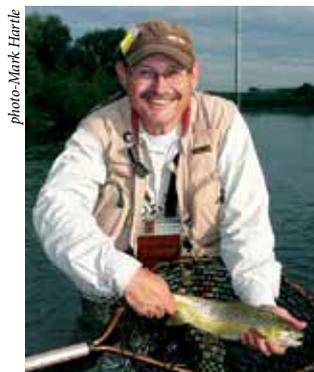


photo-Mark Harite

Lehigh River tail water

Your Director,
 <<(John{(>

*Get questions answered.
 Share your ideas.*

