

Straight TALK

by John A. Arway

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Fishing Rx

We have all filled prescriptions at our local pharmacy designed to treat various illnesses for ourselves and other family members. We commonly rely upon our family doctor to diagnose our illness and determine what treatment is necessary to make us well again.

This story began on a trip that I took to Annapolis, Maryland, where I attended the 72nd Annual Northeast Fish & Wildlife Conference. On April 2, I left Harrisburg on a cold but sunny morning and headed south on Interstate 83. This was also the Regional Opening Day of Trout season in southeastern Pennsylvania and coincided with our annual Angler Thank You Campaign. As a reminder, the Angler Thank You Campaign is a day when our management staff and I meet and greet anglers and thank them for buying a fishing license. We are also readied with bags containing special gifts and offers for fishing products and equipment from various industry partners who also appreciate business from anglers.

My plan was to exit the highway somewhere along my route and find a stocked trout stream where I could surprise a few anglers who were taking advantage of our early opening day. After exiting the highway, I pulled off to the side of the road and started my FishBoatPA app on my smartphone and found out that Fishing Creek, York County, was only 2.1 miles to my northwest. I used the navigation feature of the app to guide me to the stocked trout section, where I found Nate and



photo: J. Sygler

his dad Ted fishing at a bridge crossing. I asked them if they had any luck. They hadn't but told me that a family just left with a stringer full of fish. I could see a lot of trout swimming in the clear waters of Fishing Creek, but Nate and Ted couldn't get them to bite. I gave each of them a bag that contained, among other things, a jar of paste bait. They were overjoyed, because the family that just left was using a similar bait. Although I didn't wait around to see if it worked, I'm sure they did their best to fool those stocked trout using everything in their tackle box.

I walked back to my truck and checked the FishBoatPA app trying to determine where to go next when a truck pulled up next to me and the driver said, "I know who you are." The driver was Mike Kauffman from the Northern York County Game & Fish Association. Mike and I chatted for a while about the importance of youth fishing programs, and he pointed me in the direction of a Children's Area that his cooperative nursery and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission stocks specifically for kids. I found hungry trout and plenty of kids and mentors who were having fun catching them. I had the privilege of meeting Emma and Autumn, Madeline and Marilyn, and Taylor who was on her first fishing trip. After a delightful couple of hours, I headed back to Interstate 83 and south to Annapolis.

Director's time at most of our regional meetings is typically spent in a small group discussion among state and federal directors who comprise the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA). However, we have been taking some time recently to attend technical sessions where our staff present research on various topics including fisheries, information and education, law enforcement, and fish and wildlife habitats. This also includes this year's plenary session that was titled *Thinking Outside: Taking Risks for Better Conservation* and included four excellent presentations.

photo-PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway



Fishing Creek, York County

photos-PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway



Children's Area on Fishing Creek, York County (Marilyn)

One plenary presentation in particular caught my attention. It was a talk by Mr. Justin Bogardus, an award-winning independent filmmaker/producer/director/editor. He showed us a video clip called Nature Rx and told us a story about something we all know but sometimes forget (www.nature-rx.org). "Research shows that more time in nature not only greatly improves your overall health, cognitive functioning and sense of well-being but importantly leads to making better environmental decisions." So, his Nature Rx team created a new campaign of humorous videos that remind people about how enjoyable and vital nature really is. Nature Rx suggests just giving it a try: spend more time in nature today, a little bit more when you can and see what happens. They pointed out that if you really want to change something for the better, you have to care about it and experience its value directly.

Recently, I was reading the *Parade* magazine insert in our local Sunday newspaper, which included an article by Lisa Mulcahy called "13 Ways to Detox Your Life." She noted that "when you take a walk outside, nature acts as a kind of multivitamin, enhancing the body's immune function, shoring up cell function and relaxing your entire system to better prepare it to fight disease."

Since fishing and boating are parts of the nature experience, the logic associated with experiencing nature also applies to fishing and boating activities.

Don't take my word for it. Ask your doctor if fishing is right for you. However, just be careful, because your Rx for fishing could become addictive and your time outdoors could become contagious. This could lead to similar infections of family and friends who will also need their own prescriptions. Who knows? It may lead to a pandemic that spreads through human populations across large regions and multiple continents, or even worldwide. We should all be so lucky! Right?

"In the future, doctors may tell you take two 'doses of nature' and call in the morning."
—The Washington Post

Your Director,
>>(John{°>



Children's Area on Fishing Creek, York County (Emma and family)



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.

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Share your ideas.

