

Intro to PA Steelhead Fishing

Quick Reference Guide



Table of contents (CLICK on the topic you want to go to)

Topic

[Basic, suggested gear](#)

[Knots to know](#)

[Erie tributary information](#)

[Steelhead resources & Stores](#)

[PFBC PLAY Newsletter - Steelhead](#)

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Basic Gear

FLY FISHING SET-UP	
Equipment	Details
Fly rod	9ft. 7Wt. (Medium action)
Fly reel	match wt. of the rod
Fly line	Weight Forward (WF), match wt. of rod
Leader	Tapered leader, length of your fly rod
Tippet	2x – 5 x fluorocarbon

FLIES	
Time of Season	Flies
Early September to Early November	Wooly Buggers, Zonkers, Egg Sucking Leeches, Pheasant Tails, Hares Ear, Prince Nymphs, Copper John's, Black Stone Flies
Mid- November to Early March	Same as above + Glo-Bugs, Sucker Spawn, Crystal Spawn, Nuke Eggs, Blood Dots
Early March to Mid-May	Same as above + San Juan Worms, Squirmy Wormies, Ants, Beetles, Mop flies

SPIN FISHING SET-UP	
Equipment	Details
Noodle rod	8-foot 6-inch to 10-foot two piece (Medium light or light action)
Spinning reel	2500 series or larger reel with a good drag system
Monofilament line	8-pound test
Fluorocarbon leader	4- or 6-pound test (Dependent upon water conditions)

BAIT/OTHER ITEMS USED FOR SPIN FISHING FOR STEELHEAD	
Fathead Minnows or Emerald Shiners (if available)	Egg sacks, single egg, or skein
Nightcrawlers	Wooly Bugger, sucker spawn, crystal spawn, blood dots, etc.
Maggots/Mealworms/waxworms	Pastebait - natural for clear water; bright colors for stained water

TERMINAL TACKLE (Used for fly fishing or spin fishing)
Strike indicators – polystyrene(foam) in various sizes (1/4” to 3/4”)/Round and Teardrop
Split shot - micro sizes, B, BB, 3/0
Micro swivels/Tippet rings

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

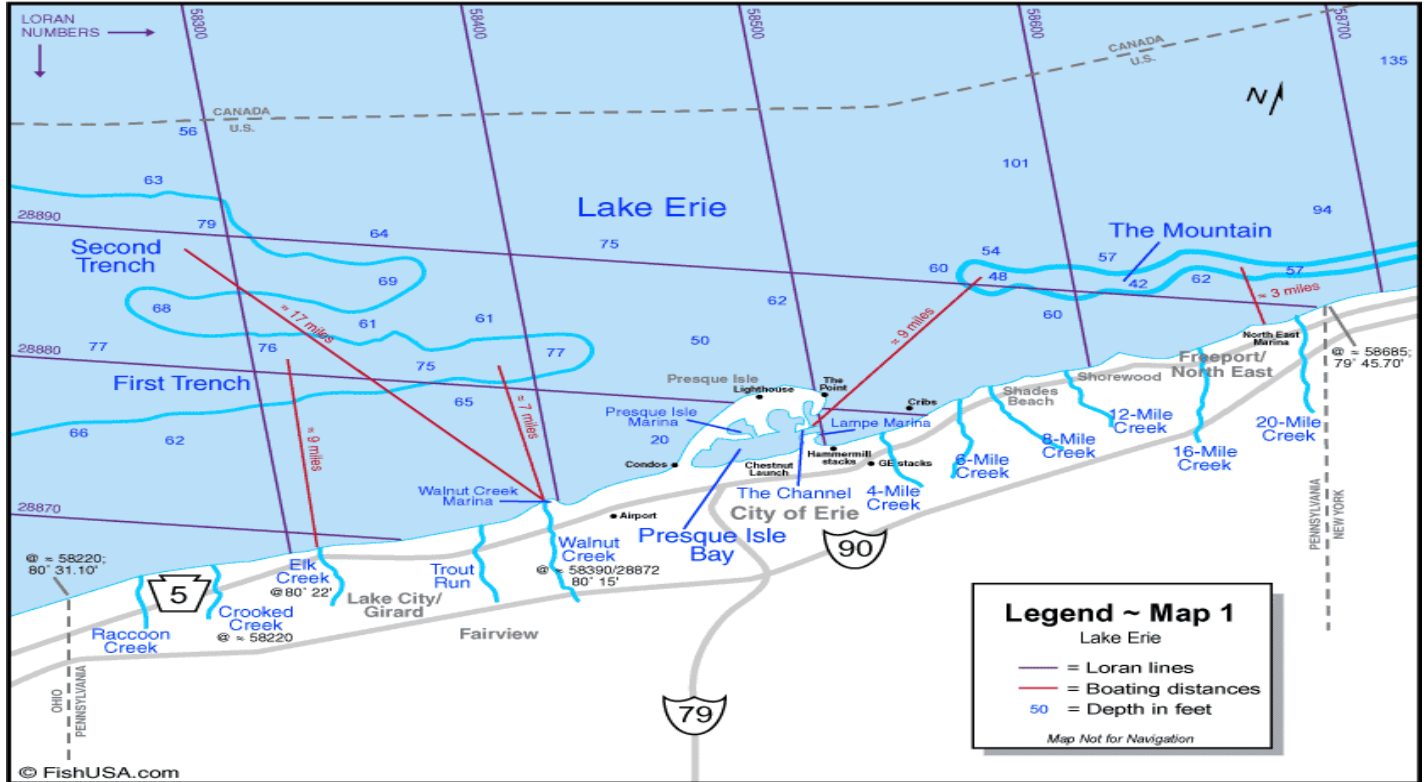
Knots to Know

Knots to Know		
Type of knot	When to use	Learn how to Tie
Improved Clinch	Connect hook, lure, or fly to line	Improved Clinch
Double Surgeons Knot	Adding more tippet to your leader	Double Surgeons Knot
Blood knot	Adding more tippet to your leader	Blood Knot
Nail knot	Attaching fly line to leader	Nail Knot
	Nail knot using the "Nail Knot Tool"	Nail Knot with Nail Knot tool
Loop to loop	Attaching fly line with loop to leader with a loop	Loop to Loop



[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Erie Tributaries



STREAM SIZE & ESTIMATE for FISHABLE LEVELS AFTER RAIN EVENTS		
Small (Run-off Rate: 1 day or less)	Medium (Run-off Rate: 1-2 days)	Large (Run-off Rate: 2-4 days)
Turkey Creek	Crooked Creek	Elk Creek
Racoon Creek	Walnut Creek	Conneaut Creek
Cascade Creek	20 Mile Creek	
4, 6 Mile Creeks		
7,8 Mile Creeks		
12, 16 Mile Creeks		

What does (LOW; MIDDLE; & HIGH) mean when talking about where Steelhead are found, in Lake Erie tributaries?

	Small	Med./Large
LOW	Mouth of the stream to Rt. 5	Mouth of the stream to Rt. 5
MIDDLE	Rt. 5 to Rt. 20	Rt. 5 to I 90
HIGH	Rt. 20 to I-90	Above I 90

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

WEB RESOURCES – Check before you go!	
Angler Map Apps FishBoatPA App Fish Erie Maps	Water Flow US Geological Service - www.usgs.gov
PA Fish and Boat Commission’s Steelhead feature page	
Learn more about Steelhead through a collection of links & magazine articles	PA Steelhead Feature Page
Fishing reports – FaceBook Groups	
Erie PA Steelhead Fishing reports	
Erie Tribs Fly Fishing for Steelhead	
Fishing in Erie, PA	
PA Steelhead Fishing	
Steelhead Alley Tributary Anglers	

SUGGESTED STEELHEAD BOOKS & MAGAZINE RESOURCES	
Book Title	Author
Great Lakes Steelhead Salon & Trout: Essential Techniques for Fly Fishing the Tributaries	Karl Weixlmann
Steelhead Guide: Fly Fishing Techniques and Strategies for Lake Erie Steelhead	John Nagy
Steelhead Dreams: The Theory, Method, Science, and Madness of Steelhead Fly Fishing	Matt Supinski
Magazine Title	
Great Lakes Angler	
Pennsylvania Angler & Boater	
Salmon, Trout, Steelheader	

LOCAL SHOPS – All shops are also on FaceBook			
Fly Shop	Address	Phone	Website
East End Angler	4702 East Lake Rd. Erie, PA 16511	814-898-3474	www.eastendangler.com
Elk Creek Sports Shop	10543 Old Lake Rd. Lake City, PA 16423	814-774-8755	
FishUSA	6960 West Ridge Rd. Fairview, PA 16415	814-459-7800	www.fishusa.com
Folly’s End Campground	8600 Avonia Rd. Rt. 98 Girard, PA 16417	814-474-5730	www.follysend.com
Poor Richard’s Bait and Tackle	6821 West Lake Rd. Fairview, PA 16415	814-474-5623	www.poorrichardseriepa.com
Sportsman Warehouse	2075 Interchange Rd. Erie, PA 16506	814-806-1997	www.sportsman.com
Tudor Hook -N- Nook	10079 Cross Station Ext., Girard, PA, 16417	814-323-5886	

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Dedicated to the Memory of Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore

PLAY

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

by Amidea Daniel and Chad Foster

The Lure of Pennsylvania's Silver Shadows

Labeled as "silver shadows," "chromers" or "silver bullets," Pennsylvania's steelhead are some of the most respected and hard-to-find fish you will ever chase. Known for their strength, acrobatics and survival, these fish provide an experience like no other. Steelhead fishing is an experience all anglers should place on their list of things to do.



During October through April, about 100,000 anglers journey far and wide to fish Lake Erie's tributary streams for steelhead. Anglers travel to these cold waters to get the feel of the season's "first strike." This hooks many for life and sends reels screaming, hearts racing and trout dancing across the water, luring anglers time and time again.

This issue shares information on Pennsylvania's steelhead such as appropriate stream manners, tackle and techniques and where to fish for a chance at a 30-inch "silver bullet."

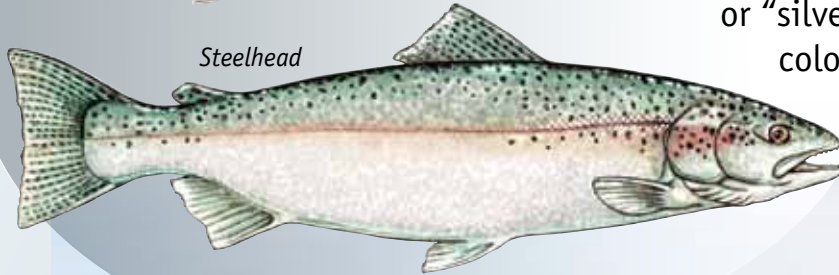
www.fishandboat.com

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Profiling Erie's "Silver Bullet"



Rainbow Trout

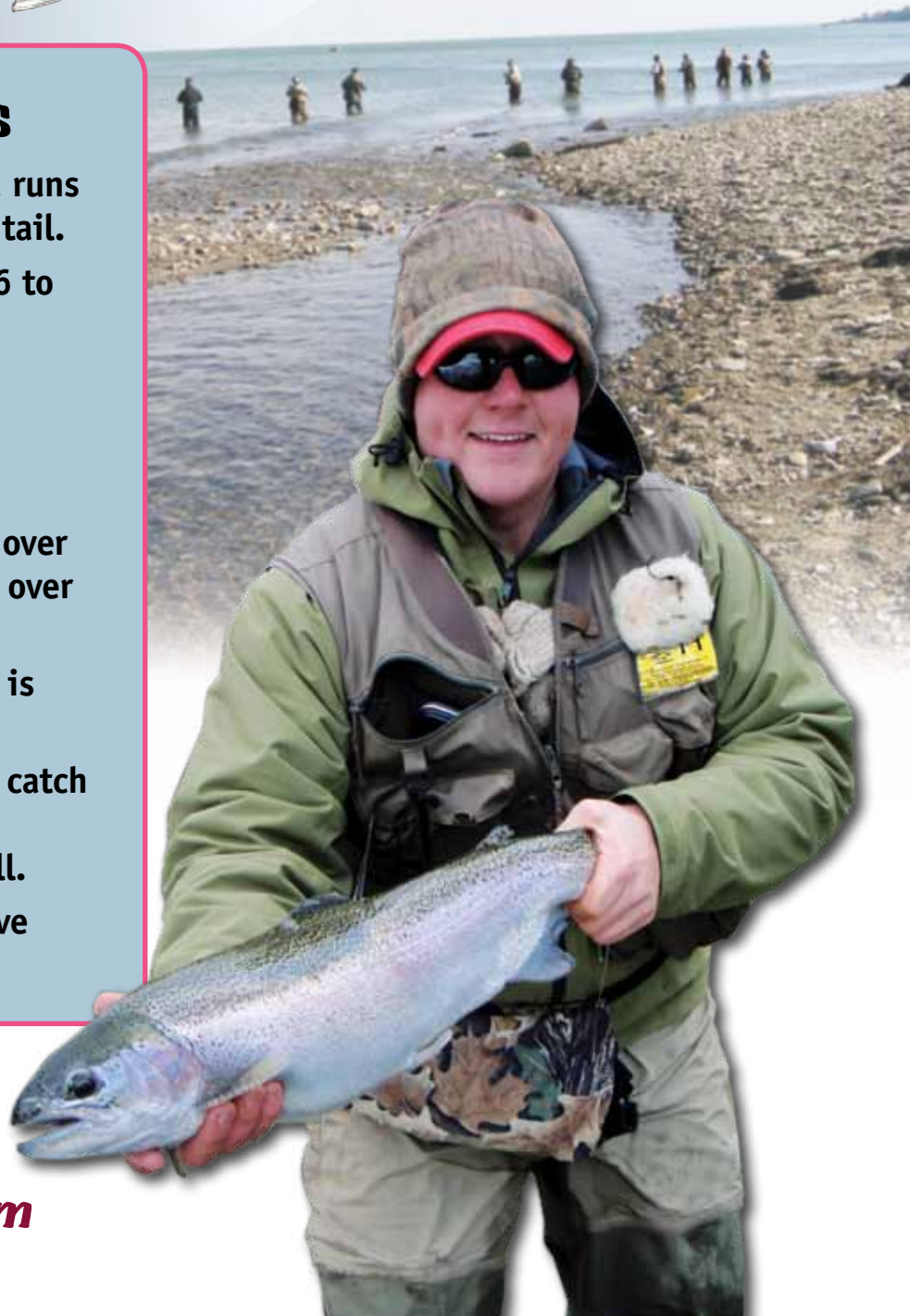


Steelhead

Steelhead are rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). They look similar to rainbow trout, but they are larger, live longer and are more silver in color. They are nicknamed "chromers" or "silver bullets" because of their color. Steelhead travel from the depths of Lake Erie to spawn in nearby tributary streams.

Steelhead Facts

- ✓ A faint pink or red band runs from their gills to their tail.
- ✓ Average adult weight is 6 to 11 pounds.
- ✓ Average adult length is 24 inches long.
- ✓ Life span is 8 years.
- ✓ Trophy steelhead weigh over 10 pounds and measure over 30 inches long.
- ✓ The current state record is 20 pounds.
- ✓ The best opportunity to catch a steelhead is when the stream waters rise or fall.
- ✓ Steelhead are more active near dawn and dusk.



Stream Manners

Remember the **SMART** angler philosophy:

Safety first.

Manners are important.

Appreciate clean water.

Release some of your catch.

Teach others to be SMART anglers.



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



(Above) Round Goby



(Left) Zebra Mussels

Stop aquatic hitchhikers such as round gobies and zebra mussels from entering all waterways.

- Check your equipment for mud and aquatic animals and plants.
- Drain coolers and bait buckets used to hold fish and bait. Properly discard any leftover bait.
- Clean mud from your boots and equipment.
- Dry your equipment and clothing until its dry to the touch. Then, allow it to dry for two more days.

Safety

- Never fish alone. Always let someone else know where you plan to fish.
- Watch water levels, because they can rise quickly.
- When wading, use boots with metal cleats or studs and a wading staff.

Be Respectful of

- Private property—Ask for permission, and stay in the stream.
- Fishing areas—Be courteous of other anglers on the stream.

Practice "Leave No Trace"

- "Pack out what you pack in."
- If you see trash along the stream, pick it up.
- Bring a litterbag.



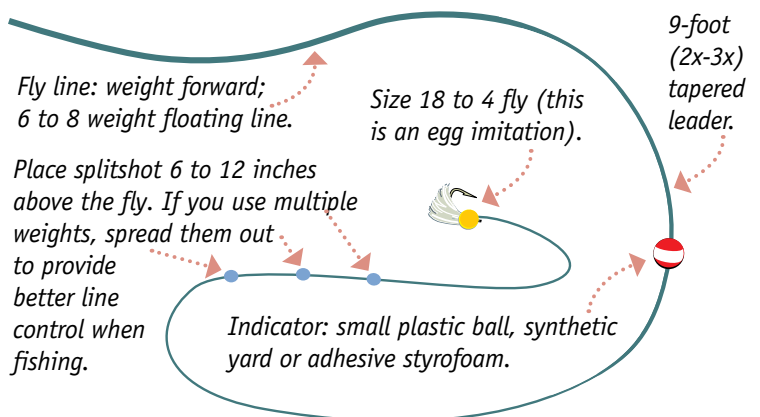
Equipment Used to Target Steelhead

Steelhead are large, aggressive fish. You need fishing gear and techniques that can endure their fight. Water conditions determine the types of equipment, bait and flies used for steelhead fishing.



Woolly Buggers, egg imitations, Bunny Leeches, stoneflies and wet flies can make a colorful and lively tackle box.

	Bait Fishing	Fly Fishing
Rod	8 foot or longer; medium-light action noodle rod. Longer rods allow lighter line to be used	9 foot or longer; 6- to 8-weight rod
Reel	Large reel with a lot of line capacity and a good sealed drag system	Large reel with a lot of line capacity and a good sealed drag system
Line	4- to 8-pound fluorocarbon line	Weight Forward Fly Line (6 to 8 weight); 9 foot, 2 to 3x tapered leader; 100 yards of backing
Hooks	Sizes 18 up to 4 (smaller number=larger hook)	Sizes 18 up to 4
Weights	Select splitshots that are small, black or dull in color	Select splitshots that are small, black or dull in color
Bait, lures and flies	Minnows, meal worms, red worms, egg sacs, Sucker Spawn, paste baits, spoons and spinners	Woolly Buggers, egg imitations, Bunny Leeches, stoneflies and wet flies





Catching Lake Erie Steelhead

Steelhead group together, so fishing waters with a mix of good cover and water depth is an effective fishing technique. Overhead cover is also important. Deep water, riffles, rocks or timber are ideal holding locations to fish.



Bait Fishing

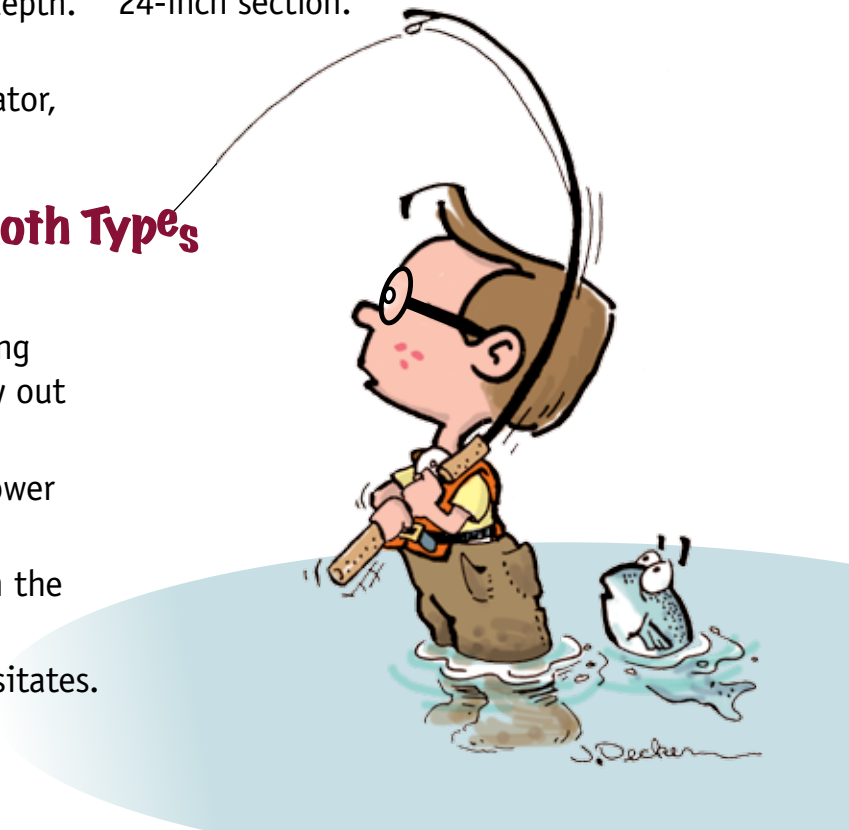
- Place your bait of choice onto the hook.
- Choose your splitshot based on water conditions and type of bait.
- Slow-moving water requires less weight than fast-moving water or heavier baits.
- Place the weight about 6 to 12 inches above your bait.
- Attach the hook to the line.

Fly Fishing with Egg Patterns

- Tie the hook with the egg pattern to the end of your leader.
- Place the indicator on your leader a few inches or two feet down from your fly line. Placement depends on water speed and depth.
- Choose a splitshot size based on water conditions, type of fly and size of indicator, if you do not have a weighted nymph.
- Place the weight about 6 to 12 inches above the fly.
- Do not place the weight all in one location. Spread them out within a 24-inch section.

Fishing Techniques Used for Both Types of Fishing

- Cast the bait or fly upstream into holding water. Cast close at first. Work your way out to the middle of the stream.
- Lead the line with your rod tip at or slower than water current.
- Continue to lead the bait or fly through the drift when the line passes you.
- Set the hook if the bait or indicator hesitates.



Fighting and Releasing Steelhead

Most large fish are lost due to poorly tied knots, slack line, weak hooks or incorrect rod handling.

- Set your drag to handle steelhead and make sure you have strong knots.
- After setting the hook, maintain a tight line between your rod hand and the steelhead.
 1. Reel in slack line as the steelhead swims toward you.
 2. Allow the steelhead to take line off the reel when it “runs.”
 3. Don’t grab the line with your fingers.



- Angle your rod to the side and at waist height, using the butt end (back section) of the rod to play the fish. The rod should bend at the butt end, not at the tip.
- Keep your rod angled low and apply pressure in the opposite direction that the fish is swimming.
- Net your trophy. Bring the tip of the fish’s head out of the water and slide the net under its body. Have a friend help net your fish.



Releasing Your Catch

- Use a net to land your fish and pliers to remove the hook.
- Wet hands before handling.
- Keep the trout in the water when removing the hook and taking photos.
- Allow the fish to revive in the water before releasing it.