

# The Slate Drake

## CHAD LAUER SETTLES IN AS TIOGA WCO

Article by John Pastorek; Photo Submitted



WCO Chad Lauer displays an illegally speared walleye taken from Pine Creek last year.

Last July, Chad Lauer was assigned to the Tioga district by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission as a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO). In addition to his duties there, Officer Lauer assumed temporary responsibilities for the portion of Lycoming County that includes Slate Run and parts of Pine Creek, including the popular 2.8 mile Catch & Release, All-Tackle project that begins at the mouth of Slate Run.

The combined patrol area encompasses more than 1,500 square miles, at least seven watersheds

and three Pennsylvania State Parks.

As a youngster growing up in Jersey Shore, Officer Lauer remembers always being in love with the outdoors. He took advantage of every opportunity to be around water. He fished, observed the stream's creatures, and enjoyed reading and studying about the biology of the living things that he encountered in his outdoor forays. Today, his love of the outdoors continues. When not working, Officer Lauer enjoys bow hunting, orienteering and is an avid angler, targeting trout with flies, as well as walleye and other warm water fish with bait and spinning gear.

After graduation from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in fisheries biology, Officer Lauer was hired as a fisheries biologist aide with the PFBC. From there, his career took a natural progression into law enforcement. He reasoned that the job as a WCO would enable him to continue his interest in fisheries biology, but also allow him the opportunity to have an even greater impact by helping to protect the Commonwealth's waterways. In preparation to become a WCO, Officer Lauer completed 21 weeks of police training at the Pennsylvania

### President's Letter

Preservation of our forests and waterways requires adherence to laws, an accepted understanding of a code of ethics and ongoing conservation education.

In this issue of *The Slate Drake*, you'll read about some of the Slate Run Sportsmen's ongoing preservation efforts.

The newsletter's cover story provides an introduction to Tioga District Waterways Conservation Officer, Chad Lauer. WCO Lauer assumed responsibility for the Tioga District of the PFBC last year. His many responsibilities include enforcement the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, implementation of PFBC policies and education of the public.

An article on page three details the action taken in Harrisburg by the SRS to address the problem of anglers fishing over Pine Creek's distressed trout during periods of extreme draught and unusually high water temperatures.

In the calendar of events box on page four, you'll notice that SRS Stream Warden Joe Cramer has a March 18th stream cleanup hike planned for Slate Run.

As always, attendance at SRS meetings are great ways for people of all ages to learn about our conservation efforts, water and hatch conditions on Slate and Pine and other information about the surrounding region.

--- Joe Lemmon



## SRS SEPTEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

By Dan Helm

**Call to Order** – President Joe Lemmon called the meeting to order at the Brown Township Fire Company, with 19 members and guests in attendance.

**In-Memory** – Joe Lemmon announced that Pat Eroh passed away last week. Pat, along with her late husband Gene, life-long members of Slate Run Sportsmen, were loved by all and will be dearly missed. Joe also announced that Bob Drexel had passed away.

**Treasurer's Report** – Stan Kiec reported that the balance in the checking account is \$16,772. He announced that this will be his last meeting as Treasurer. Donations to the North Central Conservancy (\$200); the Pine Creek Headwaters Association (\$200); the Black Forest Fire Company (\$100); and the Brown Township Fire Company (\$100) were approved. *(Editor's Note: At the November 12 Board of Directors meeting, Dan Blouch was appointed Treasurer.)*

**Government Affairs** – Karen Fry reported that SB1166, SB1168, HB1011 and HB 1896 are currently back in committee. The fall 2016 newsletter explains the bills.

**Website** – Karen Fry reported that a new member from Williamsport had gone online for information, but was unable to find an SRS website or a Facebook page. He explained that he had set up a website for his TU chapter, and offered to do the same for the SRS. This will be a passed on to John Pastorek and Steve Morgan.

**DCNR Report** – DCNR's Tom Casilio reported on several area projects. The Cedar Run narrows

project is almost complete. When it's finished PENNDOT will make necessary repairs to the rail trail where cars have been detoured during the project. The Slate Run Road resurfacing project is complete. Manor Fork Road is currently being repaired using the leftover stone from the Slate Run Road project. The DCNR has received \$249,000 to pave the section of Slate Run Road from the Pine Creek Bridge to the Porcupine Camp. This two-to-four week project will be done after the July 4, 2017 Holiday.

In response to a question about the cause of the browning of white pines in the Forest, Tom indicated that there is no definitive answer, but that there is some indication that the trees may be going through a dormant state.

**Stream Map** – Karen Fry reported that the stream map of Slate Run is available for purchase.

**Membership** – Joe Lemmon reminded all members to actively promote the SRS to potential new members.

**Concern for Stressed Trout** – Dan Helm reported that hot weather and low water conditions this summer have resulted in a considerable amount of unethical and sometimes illegal angler activity at the mouths of Pine Creek's feeder streams. Several people have approached the anglers and attempted to educate them that the fish are stressed by the conditions and would likely die when hooked and handled. Dan noted that in the October/November/December issue of the *Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide*, there is an article about DCNR and the PFBC cooperating to establish areas of "thermal protection" for trout stressed trout on Penn's Creek due to low, oxygen-depleted water.

Helm suggests that a similar measure could help trout in Pine Creek and other streams with similar problems across the state.

In an effort to make the PFBC aware of these issues, Dan phoned PFBC Executive Director, John Arway's office. After listening to Dan's concerns, Arway's secretary encouraged Dan to attend the January 2017 Commissioners meeting to explain what is happening on Pine Creek.

### (WCO LAUER From Page 1)

State Police Academy in Meadville, learning all aspects of law enforcement. He then completed the 31-week conservation officer training at the PFBC's H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation & Watercraft Safety, where Officer Lauer earned a firearms training award.

Officer Lauer's work as a WCO is demanding. "A large part of the job is law enforcement," Officer Lauer explained, "but it also includes education and outreach. I attend sportsmen's club meetings and community events, visit schools and try to put a human face to the PFBC. However, the toughest part of the job is in trying to be everywhere that everyone wants you to be."

One of the highlights of Officer Lauer's tenure to date was the chance to assist in last year's electro-shock survey of Slate Run. The survey was conducted on more than 300-meters on Slate Run, at Two Mile Run and Morris Run. According to Officer Lauer, "Overall, Slate Run has a good population mixture of wild brown



**(WCO LAUER From Page 2)**

and native brook trout, easily surpassing the 40-kilogram per hectare threshold necessary for Class A designation. We measured brown trout in the 17-inch range and brook trout in the 12-inch range." Lauer added, "Of particularly good news was that we saw evidence of a very strong class of yearling trout coming up."

While Officer Lauer finds most anglers and boaters respectful of the law and the environment, he sees his share of offenses. "For example," he stated, "a lot of people try to improve fish habitat by digging channels to help colder tributary water reach Pine Creek faster. I also see people building rock dams on smaller streams to deepen pools, etc. All of which are against the law and can bring serious misdemeanor charges." Lauer continued, "Another common misunderstanding that can result in a citation includes 'culling fish.' Culling occurs when an angler stores live fish on a stringer or in a bucket, then releases smaller fish as bigger ones are caught. If you catch ten trout and eventually release the two smallest, you are in violation of the daily limit maximum of eight trout. Unless you immediately release a fish once caught, that is considered part of your limit for the day."

Officer Lauer sees every contact with an angler or boater as an educational opportunity for either himself or the person recreating. "You have to take every situation for what it is. It's not about making people fear or despise the PFBC, but about mutual respect and working together to preserve Pennsylvania's wonderful natural resources!"

The boating and angling community have been very appreciative of Officer Lauer's presence in the region. Perhaps Tom Finkbiner summed Officer Lauer's value to the area best: "Chad is very enthusiastic about his job and truly believes in the future of recreational angling and boating in the Pine Creek Valley. Although never hesitant to enforce the laws and regulations, he is committed to angler and boating education, conservation and safety as well!"

## SRS ADDRESS PFBC MEETING

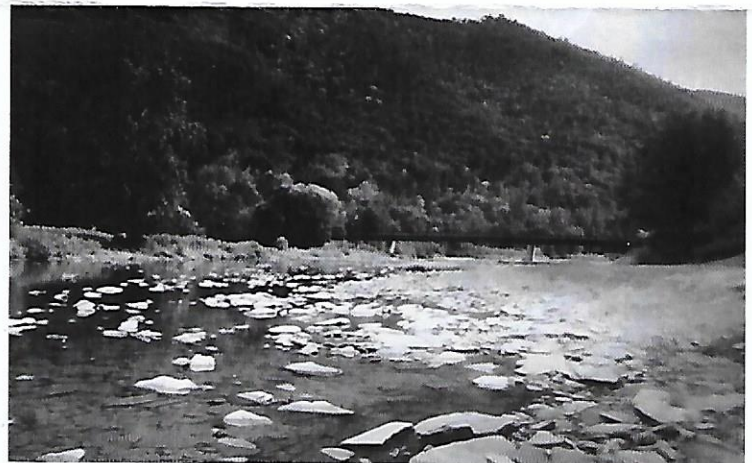
By Dan Helm and John Pastorek

Perhaps nothing stirs emotions on Pine Creek more than anglers who target distressed trout during periods of extended drought and high water temperatures. Although there are no regulations against doing so, many anglers feel that trout fishing should be suspended during periods of extreme water conditions. SRS Acting Secretary Dan Helm led a contingent of members to the Quarterly PFBC Board of Commissioners meeting in Harrisburg on January 24 to apprise the Commissioners of the situation on Pine.

Joining Helm were longtime SRS members Dale Blouch, Jed Grove and Dutch Feterer.

Dan Helm, the group's spokesperson, shared his observations of last summer when hundreds of trout were lined up "fighting for their very lives" at the mouth of Slate Run where cooler water flowed into Pine Creek. He related numerous occasions where he and others witnessed anglers hooking and mishandling the trout. Helm encouraged the Commissioners to enact a temporary restriction on angling in trout waters across the state when weather and water conditions cause undue stress on trout populations. Such restrictions were placed at the mouths of Panther Run and Swift Run where they enter Penns Creek in Center County this past summer.

Although no action was taken at the meeting, Helm also related his concerns to District 5 Commissioner Eric Hussar and other officials and will continue to encourage action.



This photo provided by Julie Szur shows the extremely low waterflow at Schoolhouse Riffle on Pine last summer.



## - Trout Tales - FORTUNATELY SKUNKED

By John Pastorek

Jake and Jim are habitual poachers. Their modus operandi is to camp near remote streams with special regulations, then fish illegally with bait. They always fish early or late in the day when they feel safer from chance encounters with other anglers or conservation officers.

Although their camp coolers are always stocked with hot dogs, bacon, eggs, and other camp fare, their goal is to augment their menu with freshly caught trout, and to enjoy the thrill of getting over on "those elitist fly-anglers."

The pair prefer stream sections near where unregulated tributaries enter the main stream. Should a warden happen by, they would quickly reel in their worm baited lines, cut off the hooks, and claim that they were simply walking towards the tributary to fish.

Not particularly good anglers, Jake and Jim sometimes get skunked, and on their most recent poaching excursion, coming back to camp fishless was fortunate for them.

After setting up camp late in the day, the poachers hiked downstream to just below where a brookie-filled tributary entered. As they baited their spinning outfits with worms, a pair of fly anglers rounded the bend downstream, surprising Jake and Jim. Seeing the baited spinning gear, the fly anglers politely informed the poachers of the fly fishing regulations, then quickly moved upstream.

Fifteen minutes passed while the poachers let the waters calm.

Again, Jake and Jim rebaited their spinning outfits and began fishing, just as movement in the adjoining forest caught their attention. The pair was forced to reel lines in again, as a group of backpackers emerged from the nearby trail and began to set up camp.

Frustrated at their "bad luck", the poachers waded upstream, out of sight of the campers. They baited their lines for a third time, and as they cast, a pair of startled mergansers noisily propelled themselves across the pool, legs kicking and wings slapping the water. Jake and Jim knew that the commotion would send any trout scurrying for cover.

In the rapidly waning dusk, the pair moved upstream to the next pool only to find the pair of mergansers plying the water there. Acknowledging that they'd have to come back in the morning to try again, the poachers trudged back to camp fishless—skunked!

Alerted by the pair of fly anglers earlier, two Waterways Conservation Officers (WCO) staked out the poacher's campsite and waited for their return. As Jake and Jim approached, without warning, the officers flooded the campsite with spotlights. Naturally, since the poachers caught nothing, the WCO's search of creels and coolers turned up no sign of illegally kept trout. After a stern warning, the officers departed.

Shaken but undeterred, the poachers cursed the thought of the anglers who "ratted them out" and vowed to be and back another day to poach some of those elitist fly angler's wild trout.

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### Calendar

**March 18, 2017** – Slate Run Stream Cleanup. Volunteers to meet at the access area alongside the Pine Creek Bridge in Slate Run 9 a.m.

**April 1, 2017** – SRS membership meeting, 10:30 a.m., Hotel Manor. PFBC WCO Chad Lauer will discuss issues of interest to the SRS.

**April 15, 2017** – Statewide Opening Day of Trout.

**June 10, 2017** – Pat Eroh Summer Picnic & SRS membership meeting, 11 a.m., Brown Township Fire Co.

**September 16, 2017** – Fall SRS membership meeting, 11 a.m., Brown Township Fire Co.

### SLATE RUN SPORTSMEN

*"Working to maintain Slate Run as a conservation project stream, with regulations to provide for the continuation of Fly Fishing Only".*

#### OFFICERS

President: **Joe Lemmon**

Vice President: **Dale Houseknecht**

Acting Secretary: **Dan Helm**

Treasurer: **Dale Blouch**

Trustees: **Walt Franklin, Dale Blouch, Dan Helm**

Stream Warden: **Joe Cramer**

Membership: **Jeff Fry**

#### THE SLATE DRAKE

Editor: **John Pastorek**

Send article ideas and comments to [theslatedrake@yahoo.com](mailto:theslatedrake@yahoo.com)

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

For general information about Slate Run Sportsmen, contact [slaterunsportsmen@gmail.com](mailto:slaterunsportsmen@gmail.com)



## 2017 Membership Dues

Your membership cards for 2017 are enclosed. Please fill out the left side of the orange card, including your clearly printed email address (for SRS use only), cut on the dotted line, and return the card along with your check made out to Slate Run Sportsmen to:

**Dale Blouch, 622 Marian Lane, Mt Joy, PA 17552**

Individual Membership- \$10

Family Membership- \$20 (Includes all children in the household under the age of 21.) Please list the names of family members to be included on the back of the orange card.

## Spring Meeting and Lunch Reservation

We will be ordering lunch from the menu at the **Hotel Manor** following the **10:30 a.m. meeting on April 1, 2017**. Members will pay for meals the day of the meeting, but please return the reservation form below to Dale Blouch so he can let the hotel know how many members to expect.

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I/We would like to make \_\_\_\_\_ reservations for lunch following the Spring Meeting in the name of \_\_\_\_\_.

Reservations are due by March 25. Mail along with your membership card and dues to:

**Dale Blouch, 622 Marian Lane, Mount Joy, PA 17552**