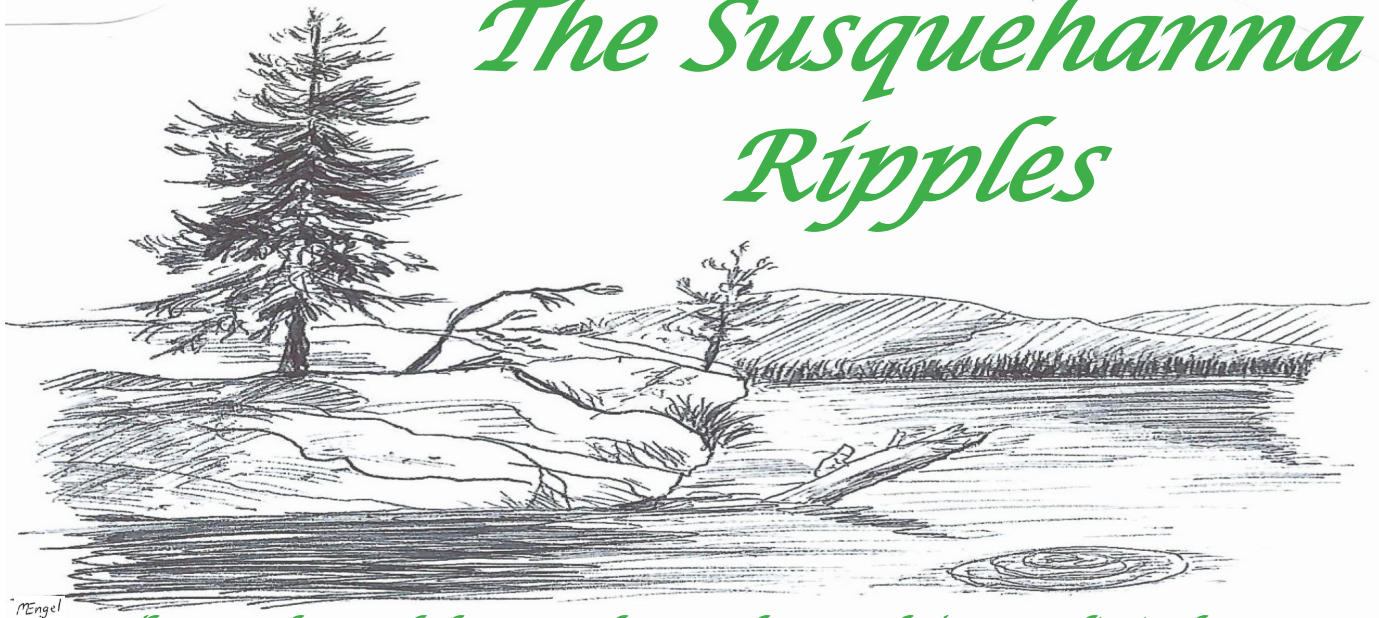


# *The Susquehanna Ripples*



*The Newsletter of the Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited #044*

## **PA Fish & Boat Commission to be Featured at Trout Unlimited Susquehanna Chapter Meeting**

The public is invited to a meeting of the Trout Unlimited Susquehanna Chapter featuring PA Fish & Boat Commission representatives. In attendance will be Waterways Conservation Officers representing Clinton and Lycoming counties. Also in attendance will be PA Fish & Boat Commissioner Eric Hussar, who represents the 5<sup>th</sup> District of PA, which includes Tioga, Lycoming, Bradford, Sullivan, Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties. Topics of discussion will include news and updates regarding fishing regulations, approved trout waters, special regulation fishing areas, stream access and fish stocking. Other news and updates at the State and District level will be offered, along with opportunity to ask questions.

The meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Covenant Central Presbyterian Church, 807 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, in Williamsport.** Parking and entrance to the Church is at the rear of the building with access off of Campbell Street.

For more information, please see our website at <https://susquehannatu.com>.

## **Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited 2025 Veterans and First Responders Ser- vice Partnership Raffle**

The chapter will be conducting a raffle to raise money for the Veterans and First Responders Partnership program. The raffle will take place through the months of February and March. The drawing will be held at 5:00 PM on the

day of our fishing sale March 22 or March 29, 2025, if inclement weather causes us to postpone. Raffle tickets will be available starting at the February 12 meeting and be distributed by mail to the membership afterward. Tickets will be \$10.00 each or 3 for \$25.00. Prizes are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Prize – 4 night – 3 day stay at Moosehorn Lodge, Greenville Junction, ME (Compliments of Jeanne and Charlie Knowlden) OR \$500 Cash

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Orvis 4-piece Clearwater Rod Outfit (Compliments of Slate Run Tackle Shop)

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Custom Built Graphite Fly Rod

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Prizes - \$50 gift cards (Compliments of TCO Fly Shop)

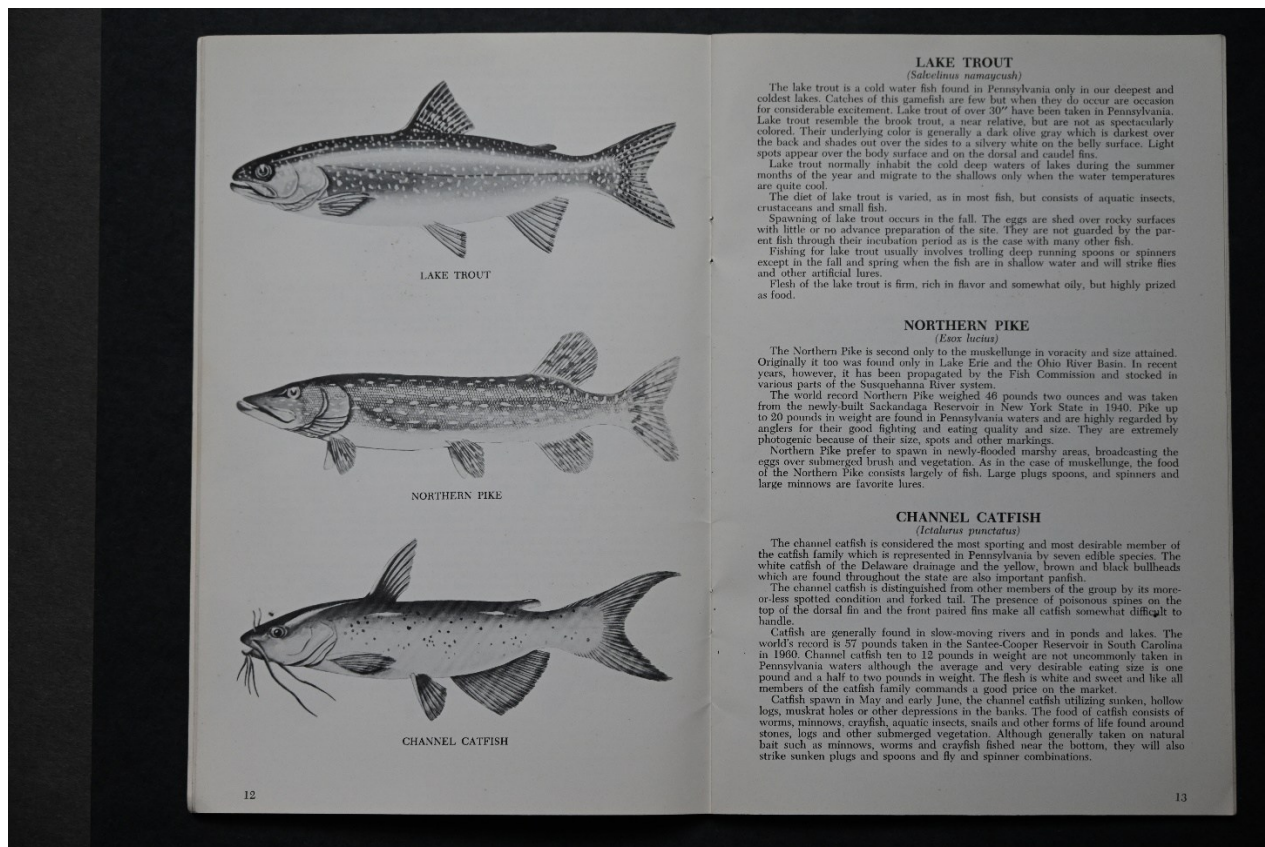
The first prize will include 3 days of fishing and/or sight-seeing in the Moosehead Lake area of Maine. A 3-day license is included. The winner will have the opportunity to fly fish in area ponds and rivers for native Brook Trout, or troll Moosehead Lake for Landlocked Salmon, or spin fish in the local put and take areas. Some of these are handicapped accessible. There are several museums in the area and a tour boat on the lake is available. There are also sea plane equipped outfitters to take you to more remote spots, if you are inclined, at your own expense. The dates for the trip will be mutually agreed upon by the donors and the recipient.

We realize that this is a short turnaround time for the raffle but we hope that the members will support our efforts to show our appreciation for the sacrifices that these people have made to make our community and country safer for all of us.

## Presidents Message...

Do you ever set fishing goals, develop a plan, then work that plan to the best of your ability to reach your goal? Maybe to fish a new body of water, a new State, or a new Country? Maybe to catch a new species of fish that you have never caught before? I do. I'm driven by goals. There is always something out there in front of me that I'm striving for. Always been that way.

When I was a kid, my abilities and resources were limited when it came to setting fishing goals, but I sure loved to dream. I had an old paperback book published by the PA Fish Commission in the late 1950's or early 1960's called *Pennsylvania Fishes*. Inside was a black & white sketched picture of all the native fishes of PA, along with a written profile of each one, describing its habits, habitat, preferred foods and some other interesting facts. I would read and read and re-read that book until I practically had it memorized. And believe it or not, I still have that book. I would look at the pictures, read the profiles and dream of catching each one.



When I was finally old enough to accompany my dad or my uncle Joe out onto a stream, each outing was a significant adventure that was burned into my memory. The sights, the sounds, the smells...all of it. Initially, my gear consisted of a white fiberglass rod about 5 feet in length, with a black Zebco spin casting reel attached. If I was actually lucky enough to catch a fish, I would examine it intently, measure it, and when I got home, log the catch in a small, paperback notebook. When you are only catching a couple of fish per year, it's not much of a chore to keep detailed records of each catch! Although that notebook has been lost to time, I can still remember with sharp detail many of my first catches. My very first was a nine-and-a-half-inch Smallmouth Bass, caught late one Summer evening in a riffle on Lycoming Creek, just upstream of the Third Street bridge, using a size one, silver Swiss Swing spinner. How's that for detailed recollection! My second was a seven-inch Rock Bass caught on a redworm one April afternoon along the rocky shoreline of Lycoming Creek just upstream of the Memorial Avenue bridge. And my first Trout? A ten-and-a-half-inch stocked Rainbow caught after a May thunderstorm on Kettle Creek at Ole Bull State Park. My bait? An orange, Mike's Cheese Bait Salmon Egg. They say that you never forget those things and experiences that are most important to you.

*Presidents message continued on next page*



### *Presidents message continued*

It's no surprise that I grew up to become an avid fisherman and continued to pile up many wonderful experiences and memories. Over the years, my catches grew both in number of fish and number of species, to the point that there are very few PA fishes that I have not caught. One in particular that has eluded me, was always one of my favorite fish, all the way back to when most of my fishing was but dreaming with my *Pennsylvania Fishes* book...the Northern Pike. There are very few opportunities to catch a northern Pike in Northcentral PA and I have never traveled specifically to fish for them. So, my fishing goal for 2025 is to finally, at age 66, catch a Northern Pike! My initial focus will be Yellow Creek State Park in Indiana County, which has a good population of Northern Pike. It's also convenient that my son lives in Indiana, PA and may be able to share the experience with me.

So, what fishing goal have you yet to achieve? There's got to be at least one and if not, then come up with one. Keep striving, expand your horizons, don't give up! This is going to be my year...I can feel it. I'll keep you posted...

Steve Martin

President – Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited

### **The Cure for cabin fever February 21, 2016 by The Amateur Angler**



Well, this winter has not been the greatest for ice fishing. With the unseasonably warm temperatures lasting for extended periods of time, I have felt unsafe about going out on the ice. Others have felt fine about it and I have seen people out on the ice fishing, but I can only do what I feel

is safe for me and I don't gamble with my life. There has been a few stories in the news this year about people, cars and snowmobiles going through the ice and there has even been a couple of deaths.

All of this has led me to suspend my fishing activities for the winter. Let me tell you, cabin fever has set in and everyday I watch the ice hoping to see open water. I WANT TO GO FISHING! I have found a few ways to deal with my fever though. Here is what I do to help with the wait as I countdown the days until I can get out on the water.

I watch a lot, and I mean a lot, of fishing videos on Youtube. If you love the excitement of seeing top-water strikes I suggest going to the Youtube channel for BamaBass. They have a lot of videos with compilations of Bass attacking frogs and other top-water baits. You want to learn a new technique or about the different equipment? Then check out BassResource and FlukeMaster. Interested in gear? Go to Bass Pro Shops, Tackle warehouse and Tackle Direct. Want to keep up on the pros? Then check out the channels for BassMaster and

Major League Fishing. There are so many fishing videos available and on every different subject of fishing on Youtube that I have been able to live vicariously through them.

I read a lot online about fishing. I have a lot of blogs that I read as you can tell from the "Blogs I Read" section of my site. I also do a lot of research about gear and tackle I might be interested in. Here's a hint about reviews though. I always search for reviews that are not linked to the sites selling the equipment. I find that the reviews on most sites that are selling the equipment are always slanted in the positive and that tends to make me question the validity. Go check out the reviews on independent sites for the gear you want and you are more likely to get unbiased reviews.

I go to fishing stores and look at the gear and talk with other anglers. Many amateur anglers are unaware of the fact that a lot of information can be found at the smaller tackle shops. Many tackle shops are happy to give you information about bodies of water around them. They can tell you what is biting and what is working for almost any species you are looking for in the nearby waters. For most amateurs, going to Wal-mart or K-mart or Target or any other chain store is their fishing destination for gear. Unfortunately, while you can get some good prices on gear, you won't get knowledgeable employees who can give you accurate information about the fishing gear they sell.

After I have bought some new gear, I spend hours fiddling with it and dreaming about how many fish I am going to catch with it. In my mind I can see how I am going to cast a lure, the technique I am going to use, I can see the strike of the fish, the fight and the landing. Of course, it's usually when I get to the point of playing with all of my gear and getting everything ready for the time when ice is out that I am hit with cabin fever again and the cycle begins all over.

Tight lines, the Amateur Angler

<https://amateuranglers.wordpress.com/2016/02/21/the-cure-for-cabin-fever/>

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Joe Radley (2025)  
Bill Worobec (2026)  
Bob Baker (2026)  
John Kolb (2027)  
Rick March (2027)

### Director Emeritus and Chapter Adviser

Dave Craig

### Chapter Advisor

Steve Szoke

### Past President / Financial Reviewer

Walt Nicholson

### Conservation/Legislative Affairs Chair

Dave Walters

### Membership

Bob Baker

### Service Partnership Coordinator

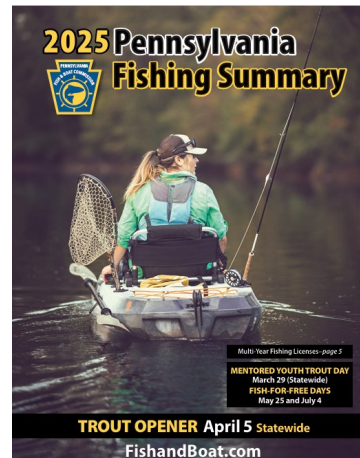
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### Newsletter Editor/Webmaster

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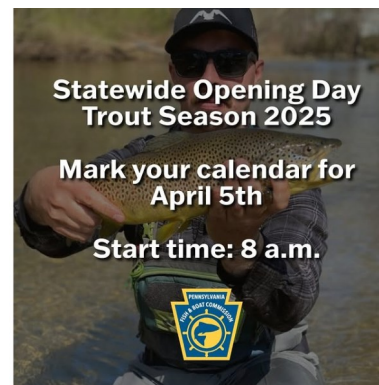


If reading online, click on the image above to get your pdf copy of the 2025 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary Book. Alternatively, you can go to <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/fishandboat/documents/fishing/regulations/summarybook.pdf>

## 2025 FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS!

May 25 and July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on either of these days. It's a great way to introduce someone to the world of fishing. Check the Commission's website for more information. Remember that all other regulations apply.



### Our Official Newsletter

The **Susquehanna Ripples** is the official newsletter of the Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited. It is published 8 times a year: January, February, March, April, June/July, September, October, and November. Please consider submitting something of interest to our readers; a story, stream report, recipe, photograph, gear review, etc. Submissions received will be placed in the next available issue. All submissions can be sent to [susquehannatu@gmail.com](mailto:susquehannatu@gmail.com) / [boblaker@comcast.net](mailto:boblaker@comcast.net).

**Chapter meetings** are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (unless otherwise noted) and are always free and open to the public and begin at 7:00 pm. Meetings are held at the **Covenant Central Presbyterian Church, 807 W 4th St, Williamsport, PA 17701**, in the Fellowship Hall (unless otherwise noted). Parking is at the rear of the Church and enter off of Campbell Street.

No meetings are held in May, June, July, August or December



**Susquehanna Chapter Trout Unlimited (SCTU)**  
**January 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes**  
**Covenant Central Presbyterian Church**  
**807 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St, Williamsport, PA**

Attendees: 50+ (see sign in sheet)

President Steve Martin opened the well-attended meeting at 7:00 PM.

He stated that the Chapter will hold a Beginners Fly Tying Course from Jan. 21-Feb 25 (once a week on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:30 PM) at Covenant Central Church, to be led by Dave Rothrock and Rick Kintzer. A sign up sheet is available at the meeting or register by email or contact Walt Nicholson.

**Program**

Walt Nicholson introduced the speaker, Dr. Benjamin R. Hayes, Director of the Watershed Sciences and Engineering Program at Bucknell University. Dr. Hayes has also served as a river guide on the Penobscot River in Maine. He gave an important and comprehensive presentation on how the legacy impacts of the “Lumber Era” and catastrophic floods in north-central PA have initiated substantial landform changes and stream destabilization in our major stream floodplains, with significant implications for watershed management and planning. A Program Summary is attached.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM, followed by refreshments and discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin McJunkin, Secretary

Program Summary

Dr. Hayes gave an overview of the dynamic response of streams to flooding as they seek to establish equilibrium. In gravel bed streams such as Loyalsock, Muncy, Lycoming, and Fishing Creeks, the fluvial (stream flow) response to Sept. 2011 flooding caused by Tropical Storm Lee was characterized by:

- Large-scale new channel creation and old channel abandonment with chute development on the insides of bend meanders,
- Extensive erosion of gravel from channel margins and transport downstream in large pulses,
- Headwater landslides and alluvial fan activation,
- Major floodplain erosion and deposition, and
- Breaching of human-made berms and reconnection of the main channel to prehistoric floodplain side-channel branching.

Streams in this region appear to be in a phase of disequilibrium largely in response to major shifts in sediment delivery from their watersheds caused by historic logging practices and a series of floods over the past 100 years. Streams were used commercially to transport 19<sup>th</sup> century timber harvests. Channels were dredged, straightened, and widened.

The presentation emphasized the important influences of drainage basin physical characteristics and historic land-use changes and stream flows in understanding current channel dynamics and basin response to historical land-use changes continues. In this disequilibrium phase, significant rainfall events will likely trigger additional readjustment and channel change. The findings have major implications for watershed management and planning.

Fluvial geomorphology is a relative new science, developed over the last 40-50 years. Early Rosgen stream stabilization projects have sometimes failed, in part, because they were designed based on streams in equilibrium. These structures need to be evaluated in light of more recent research.

Like many other states, Pennsylvania finds itself in an unending and escalating cycle of spending millions of dollars to maintain its stream and river channels, repair and rebuild flood damaged roads and bridges, and protect adjacent

*Meeting minutes continued on next page*

### *Meeting minutes continued*

land uses from destruction by erosion or flooding, only to see these river management investments fail during the next flood, or result in increased damages from downstream flooding, increased bank erosion upstream, and increased gravel bar formations. At the same time, stream erosion is increasingly cited as one of the most significant statewide water resource concerns.

A more sustainable approach is to allow the stream to reconnect with its natural floodplain. Historic stream meander corridors have been mapped using LIDAR imagery. We need to expand or create wooded riparian corridors. Streams can be allowed to passively reconnect with their floodplain by ceasing or limiting channelization and construction of stream projects to allow the stream to work toward a state of dynamic equilibrium; or berms, splash dams and other barriers to the floodplain can be actively removed or modified within historic stream meander corridors to speed up the process.

Woody debris should be left in place or replenished. Dr. Hayes stated that his studies have shown that properly anchored woody debris will stay in place during flood events and helps the river connect to its floodplain. This will result in dramatically increased floodwater storage to reduce the peak runoff of stormwater flows and more groundwater recharge, making the stream more resistant to drought as well as improving aquatic habitat.

Rivers and streams need to be managed as a watershed system. Runoff from the denuded mountains of the “logging era” resulted in severe flooding, landslides, and gravel deposition. Our forested watersheds are more resistant to flooding. Stormwater runoff from roads and development needs to be properly managed.

Dr. Hayes stated that more intense rains and droughts due to climate shifts increase the need for sustainable floodplain management.

Dr. Hayes has provided a White Paper\* about post flood cleanup alternatives to public officials, who have responded with interest. He stated that the most recent “clean streaming” bill has been deferred. He feels that appreciation of streams and rivers is politically neutral and that we should be able to find bipartisan solutions, although stream management is as much a cultural issue as it is a scientific one e.g. due to the high cost of housing many family cabins in flood hazard areas are being occupied year round.

A question and answer session followed. An educator commented that sustainable floodplain management principles should be incorporated into school environmental literacy education programs. Dr. Hayes requested that the attendees help get the word out to affected property owners and stakeholders.

Dr. Hayes concluded his outstanding presentation with a quote from Van Cleeve (1885) about stream management, including many principles that are still relevant today.

Refreshments and discussion followed.

\*(available online – Google “post flood cleanup alternatives Bucknell” and download the PDF)

<https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=technical-reports>



A large crowd attended our monthly meeting to hear Dr. Ben Hayes. Photo by Walt Nicholson



## **Native trout prized by anglers is getting nearly \$4M in habitat help in N.J., Pa. and N.Y.**

Published: Jan. 12, 2025, 7:00 a.m.



Millions of dollars are coming to New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York waterways to improve habitat for the native Eastern brook trout.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection announced Wednesday it will lead the multi-state partnership to help restore the fish to waterways in parts of all three states.

The grant for \$3.5 million was announced by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as part of nearly \$122.5 million awarded through the America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative: America the Beautiful Challenge. This is a competitive grant program funded by President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, other federal conservation programs and private sources.

Recipients agreed to at least \$8.7 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$131.1 million spread among 61 grants supporting landscape-scale conservation projects across 42 states, 19 Tribal Nations, and 3 U.S. territories. The match for the Eastern brook trout grant is \$389,200, for a total project amount of \$3,889,200.

Eastern brook trout, known as brookies, are the official state fish species for New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York — and considered an indicator of good water quality, the N.J. DEP said in a news release. Prized by anglers, it's the Garden State's only native trout species.

Like the lake trout, it's part of the genus *Salvelinus*, different from other trout species familiar to local anglers. Rainbow trout are in the genus *Oncorhynchus*, while brown trout are in the genus *Salmo*, though all three genera are part of the subfamily Salmoninae in the family Salmonidae.

The grant will fund cold-water conservation projects in priority watersheds over the next four years, including removing barriers such as dams and culverts, enhancing in-stream habitat, restoring floodplain habitat and mitigating upstream stressors that can lead to higher water temperature, according to the release. It is focused on safeguarding the biodiversity of the Appalachian Corridor highlands and streams within the three states, according to the N.J. DEP's release.

"New Jersey is proud to be part of this effort," stated New Jersey Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette. "This species holds a special place for anglers and anyone who cares about the health of our cold-water streams and lakes.

"We thank the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for this opportunity and look forward to working with our partner states in developing projects that will enhance habitat not only for Eastern brook trout, but for other cold-water fish species as well."

Amy Wolfe, director of Trout Unlimited's northeast coldwater habitat program, told the public radio station WHYY the tri-state initiative is the first of its kind in the region: "Our goal in this will be to focus on projects that can reconnect fragmented habitat and reduce pollution from sediment runoff and from other land use impacts in these areas."

Biden launched the America the Beautiful Challenge grant program in 2021, setting the nation's first-ever goal to conserve at least 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030, according to the N.J. DEP release.

*Native trout prized continued on next page*

*Native trout prized continued*

The program being administered by N.J. DEP Fish & Wildlife is a collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Trout Unlimited, the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Wildlife Management Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“This initiative is fundamentally about aligning implementation resources with identified projects to help conserve a priority species for all three states and our partners,” stated Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Tim Schaeffer. “In so doing, we are affirming a commitment to landscape-level conservation that capitalizes on unprecedented partnerships here in the Northeast.”

Steve Hurst, chief of fisheries for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, says in the release: “The work that will be accomplished under the America the Beautiful Challenge grant marks a new phase for the already successful joint venture, as states will now use the knowledge compiled over the past 20 years to collectively improve upon the habitat brook trout depend upon in the Delaware watershed.”

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## **Environmental Quality Board Invites Comments On 96 Stream Water Quality Redesignations In 29 Counties; Virtual Hearing March 13**

The Environmental Quality Board published notice in the February 1 PA Bulletin inviting comments on 96 stream water quality redesignations in 29 counties.

The proposed stream redesignations included in the regulatory package approved by the Board are the result of data submitted by the Fish and Boat Commission and stream evaluations conducted by DEP.

There are 96 streams or stream segments included from Berks, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Dauphin, Elk, Forest, Franklin, Indiana, Jefferson, Lehigh, Luzerne, McKean, Mifflin, Monroe, Northampton, Perry, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Tioga, Venango and York counties.

[Click Here](#) for EQB background documents on this rulemaking (September 2024 meeting).

The EQB will hold a virtual hearing on the redesignations March 13 starting at 2:00 p.m.

Persons wishing to present testimony at a hearing are requested to contact the Environmental Quality Board, P.O. Box 8477, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477, (717) 783-8727, or [RA-EPEQB@pa.gov](mailto:RA-EPEQB@pa.gov), at least 1 week in advance of the hearing to reserve a time to present testimony.

Members of the public wishing to observe a virtual public hearing without providing testimony are also directed to access the Board's webpage.

Read the entire PA Bulletin notice for more information and instructions on how to submit comments.

(<http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/default.asp?NewsletterArticleID=62369&SubjectID=>)



## 2025 Trout Stocking Schedules Now Available!

"Anticipation is already beginning to build for the many spring fishing opportunities just around the corner here in Pennsylvania, and every angler can benefit from knowing when their favorite stream or lake will be stocked with trout, starting in just a few weeks," said Brian Niewinski, Director of the PFBC's Bureau of Hatcheries. "Whether you're looking to volunteer to help stock trout, or you just want to plan ahead for statewide Mentored Youth Trout Day, Opening Day, or some early trout fishing along a special regulation water, reviewing the stocking schedule in advance will help set you up for a successful trip."

The trout stocking schedule is searchable by county, lists the waterways in alphabetical order, and indicates stocking dates, meeting locations for volunteers, and the species of trout that are planned to be stocked at each location. In 2025, Pennsylvania's statewide Opening Day of Trout Season will be held on Saturday, April 5. A single, statewide Mentored Youth Trout Day will take place on Saturday, March 29.

To prepare for the start of the season, stocking operations are set to begin during the week of February 17. Anglers should note that fishing is not permitted on lakes and streams designated as Stocked Trout Waters from February 17 to 8 a.m. on the opening day of trout season (April 5), with the exception of the Mentored Youth Trout Fishing Day (March 29), unless waters are included in the Stocked Trout Waters Open to Year-Round Fishing program.

### 3.2 Million Trout

In 2025, the PFBC will stock approximately 3.2 million adult trout in 691 streams and 130 lakes open to public angling. These figures, which are consistent with the number of trout stocked over the past decade, include approximately 2.4 million Rainbow Trout; 693,000 Brown Trout; and 125,000 Brook Trout. As with past practice, the average size of the trout produced for stocking is 11 inches in length with an average weight of .58 pounds.

Once again, this year, anglers will have an excellent chance to catch large, trophy-sized trout. During 2025, the PFBC will stock approximately 72,000 trophy-sized brood fish, which are 2 ½ year-old and 3 ½ year-old hatchery-raised Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, and Brook Trout measuring 14-20 inches. Roughly 70% of these large fish will be stocked into streams and lakes during the preseason prior to opening day of trout season, and 30% will be stocked during in-season replenishment stockings.

In 2025, the PFBC will stock approximately 14,000

golden Rainbow Trout. In addition to being stocked during the preseason period before opening day, these highly prized fish featuring vibrant golden-orange pigmentation and weighing an average of 1.5 pounds will be stocked during in-season replenishment stockings. Approximately 75% of golden Rainbow Trout will be stocked during the preseason, and approximately 25% will be stocked in-season.

In addition to trout raised at state fish hatcheries, PFBC cooperative nurseries operated by sportsmen's clubs and other groups across the state will add another 1.2 million trout to waters open to public angling throughout the year.

Anglers looking for stocked trout fishing opportunities ahead of the opening day should explore Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters, a program where sections of 24 streams across the state are stocked with large trout measuring 14-20 inches and managed under Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only or Miscellaneous Special regulations. Under the program, approximately 10,000 large trout will be distributed among the streams. The trout will be stocked at a rate of 175 to 225 per mile of stream, which is comparable to the numbers of similarly sized fish in Pennsylvania's best wild trout waters.

### Volunteers

The PFBC will be welcoming volunteers to help distribute approximately 3.2 million hatchery-raised adult trout to hundreds of waterways statewide throughout the 2025 season. The PFBC is proud to partner with conservation groups, schools, and walk-up volunteers to help spread out the trout in local waterways. Volunteers are asked to keep the safety of PFBC staff and other volunteers in mind and obey traffic laws while following stocking vehicles. Individuals or small groups of volunteers (1-4 people) do not need to register to help stock trout, but larger groups should coordinate stocking plans in advance by contacting their regional PFBC law enforcement office to ensure they can be accommodated.





February 1 - 9, 2025 The Great American Outdoor Show at the PA Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg

February 12, 2025 Chapter Meeting

February 14 - 16, 2025 Philadelphia Fishing Show at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center

February 15, 2025 Hughesville High School Fly fishing Club Community Ties 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

March 5, 2025 Virtual Intro to Crappie Fishing by PFBC (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/218591>)

March 11, 2025 Fishing Skills Instructor by PFBC at Little Buffalo State Park (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/219564>)

March 12, 2025 Virtual Intro to Bass Fishing by PFBC (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/218587>)

March 12, 2025 Chapter Meeting

March 14, 2025 The Chapter Celebrates its 61st birthday / received Charter from Trout Unlimited in 1964

March 15, 2025 Hughesville High School Fly fishing Club Community Ties 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

March 15 - 16, 2025 The Fly fishing Show in Lancaster, PA

March 20, 2025 Fishing Skills Instructor by PFBC at Cordorus State Park (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/219565>)

March 25, 2025 Virtual Intro to Crappie Fishing by PFBC (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/218592>)

April 1, 2025 Virtual Intro to Bass Fishing by PFBC (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/218589>)

April 5, 2025 Statewide Opening Day for Trout

April 12, 2025 Hughesville High School Fly fishing Club Community Ties 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

April 16, 2025 Chapter Meeting

May 3, 2025 Statewide opening day of Walleye / sauger

May 3, 2025 Family Fishing Program and Lunch at Rose Valley Lake (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/219354>)

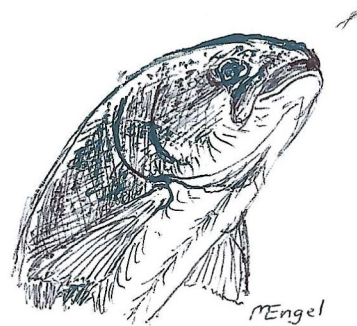
May 10, 2025 Hughesville High School Fly fishing Club Community Ties 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

May 21, 2024 Intro to Kayak Fishing by PFBC at Bald Eagle State Park (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/220409>)

June 14, 2025 Statewide opening day of Bass

September 2, 2025 Extended Trout Season begins

September 28, 2024 National Hunting and Fishing Day at Bald Eagle State Park by PFC (<https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/219286>)



## **FISHING FOR ANSWERS: Study analyzes blotchy bass syndrome in Commonwealth and its cause**

During the Tuesday, Jan. 7 public meeting with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission on Tuesday, Jan. 7, the prevalence of blotchy bass syndrome within smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers was brought up.

Blotchy bass syndrome is hyper-pigmented melanistic skin lesions, which was first documented in the 1980s in the Hudson River in New York, and was first seen in Pennsylvania in 1986.

While it has been observed since 1986 in the Commonwealth, committee member Geoff Smith who gave the presentation regarding the syndrome noted that it was not something that came up locally until the 2010s.

*"It really came to prominence locally in 2012 and it kind of set off the media attention with young-of-year smallmouth bass mortality," Smith said. "We added it to our study of fish health analyses we did in the field and keeping track of it to better understand what was going on."*

At that time, contaminants to various issues was blamed for the cause, but a wide range of environmental and fish health analyses was already in place.

According to pathology, aggregation of melanocytes in the upper two layers of the skin was to blame. It was non-cancerous and didn't appear harmful, but it was unknown as to why.

*"When we requested funding, it didn't allow us to look specifically at this, so we linked it into other studies and used existing funding," Smith said.*

Water quality and temperature were issues that were brought up to a cause, and an experiment was conducted alongside Lock Haven University to take wild fish and move to a hatchery setting. It removed the water quality element. It helped to see whether that would make the blotches go away or not.

*"We had fish that lost color and*

*some that gained color. It was our first suggestion that the condition itself was transmissible. It was a disease, which was something we did not expect," Smith said.*

USGS started looking at affected and unaffected tissues, affected tissues had viral particles. Further analysis saw they were from a class known as adenoviruses, something that was relatively new in North America according to Smith during his presentation.

There was a slightly different virus in largemouth bass.

*"We focused primarily on the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers and our catch data from 2012-22, roughly 10 years of survey data was included in the analysis," Smith said. "We looked at the presence and absence of melanistic activity."*

Physical and environmental variables were assigned to each fish in the survey. Bayesian hierarchical logistical regression models were implemented as well. That included random effects on site and year and fixed effects such as temperature and the total length interaction.

In total, 16,220 fish in the analysis, roughly 1,500 fish per year. There were 130 surveys at 20 sites and the overall prevalence was just under 3% (2.9%), or 471 fish of the 16,220 fish. Susquehanna did have a higher prevalence, however, with 5.0% seen compared to Juniata's just 1.2%.

Sites for the Susquehanna River where fish were looked at and tested included Shady Nook, Port Trevorton, Liverpool, Clemson Island, Rockville, West Fairview, Dock Street, Turnpike, Goldsboro and Conowingo.

*"We evaluated the condition by year, years are highly variable," Smith said. "(There was) no clear trend, it was all over the place. In some years it's higher or lower, and that variability also changes."*

Factors found associated were water temperature and fish length with a higher rate among colder water temperatures and larger, or longer, fish. With colder water temperatures, they are unsure if its physiological or behavioral.

For instance, is there a replica-

tion rate of the virus at lower temperatures? Smith noted that's something they were unsure of at the current time.

*"Fish in the winter will congregate into small areas, can they transmit it more easier than at other times of the year. We're unsure of the mechanism, but these can all be related to it," Smith said.*

Most of the fish in the study were mature fish and started their spawning preparations for the coming spring.

The blotchy bass syndrome, however, was easily observed and the study can be used as a model for other conditions Smith noted. With those variables identified, they can focus on the mechanism.

*"We can track it without being invasive to the fish and use it as a model to see how other viruses and pathogens transmit throughout a system," Smith said. "We can focus more on the mechanism what's causing it since we know what to narrow down and what conditions to look at."*

Smith noted that two papers were published on the topic, including one just a few weeks ago. The larger scientific community is being brought into this, not just within Pennsylvania, Smith noted.

Smith said that they were going to keep an eye on blotchy bass syndrome, but did note that the fish population was doing well overall.

*"We continue to track reports that we get, it's been going on long enough that people are becoming desensitized to it, so we don't hear as much," Smith said.*

Regarding the Susquehanna River, there was a higher prevalence Smith noted in the North Branch.

*"West (Branch) is relatively low, but we don't see it as frequently there. North Branch is one of higher prevalence location, we've only seen at that more recently," Smith said. "But we do our seeings there with higher prevalence in certain places. Juniata is lower for whatever reason, not sure why, but we see relatively low prevalence there."*

JON GERARDI, Sports Editor

<https://www.sungazette.com/news/outdoors/2025/01/fishing-for-answers-study-analyzes-blotchy-bass-syndrome-in->





**Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited**  
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