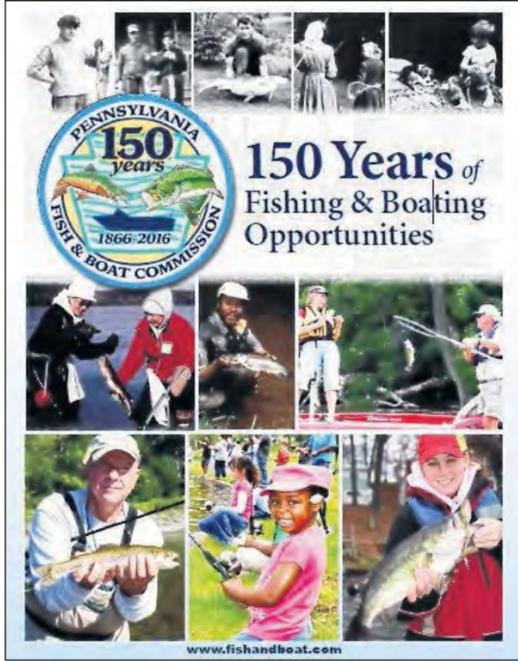


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PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

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PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

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PFBC celebrates 150th anniversary

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

On March 30, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. And it has lots to celebrate for the work it has done on Lake Erie and its tributaries (see today's article) and across the state.

Over the last 150 years, the Commission has evolved from a one man operation funded solely by the general fund to an agency with a complement of 432 staff funded by anglers and boaters through license and registration fees and the federal excise taxes on fishing and boating equipment.

In 1866, a Harrisburg convention investigated pollution in mountain lakes and streams and the interference with spring shad runs caused by dams. The law that resulted created Pennsylvania's first Commissioner of Fisheries. Today, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission uses the full force of the law to protect commonwealth waterways from pollution. This independent state agency is comprised of 10 commissioners appointed by the governor and approved by the Legislature. John Arway, a biologist and 30-year veteran of the PFBC, is the current executive director that oversees day-to-day operations.

The PFBC mission and first management priority continues to focus on protecting, conserving and enhancing the state's aquatic resources and providing fishing and boating opportunities. According to Arway, substantial progress has been made over the

last generation. "We can now say that we have more waters to fish today than when we were children." However, Arway cautions "yesterday's challenges were simple compared to the environmental and natural resource challenges that we face in the future."

Arway goes on to say, "New challenges will require much different solutions at the watershed, regional, national and even global scales. We will have to work across disciplines and use the appropriate science to diagnose the problems, apply the engineering skills to develop the solutions and have the political will to create the laws and provide the funding for the solutions. It won't be easy, but I am confident that our next generation will have the knowledge, skills, abilities and the guts to get it done right. Perhaps, we will finally come to recognize that a healthy economy and a healthy environment must co-exist and the adoption of a land ethic will no longer be optional."

For a chronology of the PFBC and more from John Arway go to: <http://fishandboat.com/promo/150anniv/150yrAnniversary.pdf>.

For more information about the PFBC's role across the state visit: www.fishandboat.com/ or www.facebook.com/PaFishandBoat/ or <http://twitter.com/fishandboat>.

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JOHN HAYES/Post-Gazette

A restocking program with the catch-and-release preference of most anglers is helping the native lake trout make a comeback in Lake Erie. On May 11, 2015, Justin Paolino, of Kittanning, released this 12-pound, 10-ounce, 30-inch.

What a catch

Lake management restores fish population

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

By 1965 native lake trout were wiped out in Lake Erie. Their demise was caused by the invasive sea lamprey, over fishing and pollution related habitat changes.

The troubles that doomed lake trout also affected other native species including whitefish, herring and the extinct blue pike. Even today these problems continue to threaten other species. Because plummeting fish populations negatively affect the entire food web and sport and commercial fisheries, managing waterways and their wildlife is vital. In addition a collaborative approach is necessary because Lake Erie has shoreline in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and the province of Ontario.

Since 1955 when the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) was established by treaty between the United States and Canada, it has helped to coordinate these five political entities. (For more information on the commission, visit www.glfc.org.) In 1965 the GLFC formed lake committees to provide a place for information sharing among agencies for each lake. From 1981 the committees have developed shared fish community objectives, established appropriate stocking levels and harvest targets, set law enforcement priorities and formulated management plans for each lake.

The Lake Erie Committee (LEC) is a group of senior fisheries managers from the: Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources. By pooling their resources to monitor and manage the Lake Erie fishery, these members are helping to ensure a healthy ecosystem, strong fish populations and equitable distribution.

Current management on



KATIE RAUSCH/The Blade

Mark Haffley of the PFBC, center, works with Matt Smith, left, and Pat O'Neill, both of the Michigan DNR, during a fish survey that will help to estimate fish populations.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/Anna McCartney

PFBC fish culturists Scott Fedei, left, and Craig Lucas look at fertilized steelhead eggs, which will be used for stocking the prized fish in Lake Erie waters.



FILE PHOTO JACK HANRAHAN/Erie Times-News

Larry Lipinski, of the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie, helps members of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stock brown trout at Presque Isle State Park.

Lake Erie includes lamprey control, restoring native lake trout and providing recreational angling opportunities by stocking steelhead rainbow trout and brown trout. Each year this group also determines the status of Lake Erie fish stocks, including walleye and yellow perch.

They then set the annual total allowable catch (TAC), which is the estimated number of fish that can be taken from the lake. The numbers are based on what officials believe will maintain, if not rebuild, the region's fish populations. Then each state is allotted a share of the TAC,

determined by a formula based on surface area within each jurisdiction. Ohio and Ontario receive the highest quotas because their waters encompass the highest percentage of the lake.

The LEC's work is paying off. The Lake trout restoration efforts initiated by the PFBC in 1969 were expanded in 1982 into a multi-state, provincial and federal effort that stocks yearling lake trout annually. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now coordinates the program. Together with the catch-and-release preference of most anglers it is helping lake trout make a comeback.

In Pennsylvania the PFBC Bureau of Fisheries typically exceeds more than half of the total steelhead trout stockings in Lake Erie by all other state or provincial agencies combined. PFBC stocks over one million steelhead smolts annually to sustain this popular fishery. This effort is supplemented with stocking of additional catchable-size brown trout (> 9") in Crooked Creek, Elk Creek, Cascade Creek and Twentymile Creek prior to the annual opening day of trout season.

The PFBC also supplies the local sportsman's cooperative nurseries with eggs and/or juvenile steelhead and brown trout for their hatchery programs. They also provide technical guidance and support, including disease monitoring and control in accordance with the recommendations of the Great Lakes Fish Health Committee.

On average, the amount of fish harvested from Lake Erie equals or exceeds all other Great Lakes combined. Therefore maintaining this important fishery will require continued cooperation from all jurisdictions and from the anglers and people that rely on this important resource.

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Pennsylvania has a very strong fishing heritage. Year-round fishing plays a huge role for the local and state economy. How often do articles appear in the sports section about fishing in this region? Check out the websites for more information.

Share your thoughts about fishing and why the work of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is important for maintaining a healthy fishery. Send them to axm40@psu.edu for possible publication in the weekly "your space" feature.

