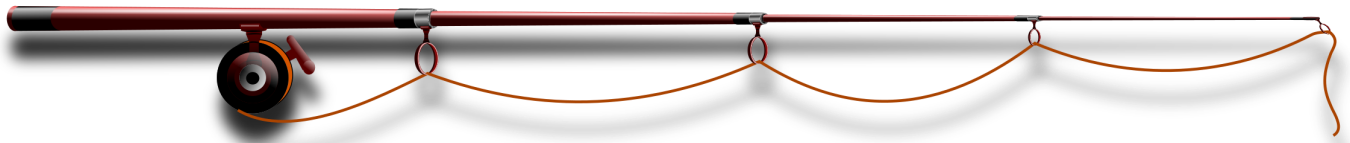


The Flyline



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President's Message

by Randy Buchanan

Last night was the next to the last banquet meeting to prepare for the upcoming banquet. I know that by the time you read this newsletter the banquet may have passed. I write this thinking about the preparation and the planning that has gone into providing you, the attendees, a quality program. Gary Cooper, who is the chairman of the banquet committee, does a great job of overseeing that the banquet goes smoothly.

During the year there are many projects that are planned for Trout in the Classroom, stream improvement, the newsletter, stream cleanups, fly tying classes, and public awareness programs, but these are not all of the events that the

chapter members have planned. In this newsletter, as well as on our webpage or Facebook page, there are many events that could use a little more help. Not all the projects involve or require physical strength. At times, all that is required of you is to attend a meeting, write letters or just talk to people to promote Trout Unlimited's efforts of protecting our cold water resources. So please feel free to check out our upcoming projects and events and come out to lend a hand and find out that a TU membership is more than a sticker on your car.

Catch One!

Randy



Pittsburgh artist, Ryan Keene, was NatureWorks' featured artist this year. His colorful works, like the image to the left, and well-written stories that accompany them are on display at the BottleWorks in Johnstown until April 8. Read about NatureWorks on page 5.

Dispute over stocking trout in streams roils agency

The following article was written by Justine McDaniel with The Philadelphia Inquirer, published on March 13, 2018, and reprinted here per Len Lichvar's request.

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Of all the sources of discord in Harrisburg, trout usually isn't one of them.

But a proposal to increase fishing-license fees has turned into a dispute that has lawmakers hoping to oust the head of the Fish and Boat Commission.

Without the long-sought fee increase, Commission Director John Arway said last fall, some state hatcheries would have to close - meaning 240,000 fewer fish in state-stocked streams and lakes next year. But some lawmakers perceived the cost-cutting announcement as a threat to leave their hometown waters empty of stocked trout.

Now, lawmakers want Arway out and say they won't pass the bill allowing the commission to raise prices until he's gone.

"Even if the cure for cancer was within that licensing bill, I don't think there would be the motivation for the members of the committee or the House to pass it," said House Game and Fisheries Chair Keith Gillespie (R., York).

He and his counterpart in the Senate both said they will pass the fishing bill only if they can pass a bill to oust Arway first. Thus, what seemed to be a quest for a simple fee increase - \$6 the first year and 3 percent annually over the next four years - has fallen prey to Harrisburg dysfunction.

"We're going to have to wait for a different political climate," said Senate Game and Fisheries Chair Patrick Stefano (R., Fayette). "(Arway) is, right now, the major impediment of anything moving in our committees."

The conflict provides a glimpse into the world of Harrisburg negotiations involving smaller state agencies and decision-making that affects thousands of Pennsylvanians. The Fish and Boat Commission, like most state fishing agencies, relies almost exclusively on fishing-license fees and federal tax money to operate and receives no money from the general fund. It stocks trout, cares for public waters, and keeps up hatcheries, dams, and other infrastructure.

"Anybody who cares about access to the beauty of nature, clean water, any of those types of issues should support people who fish and boat because that's where the

dollars are generated from," said Frank Peterson, CEO of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, an organization formed by the federal government to promote fishing.

Fishing and boating bring in \$1.2 billion to the Pennsylvania economy each year, Arway said. Following a national movement, officials here have been working to recruit new, younger, and more diverse anglers. Now, more than a million Pennsylvanians fish.

"If you talk to any rural community, they'll tell you the importance of hunting and fishing in their neighborhoods," Arway said. "We enforce pollution laws that a lot of people don't understand, and make sure those wetlands along those streams are protected. We do a lot of different things that really benefit all commonwealth (residents)."

The \$21 cost of an annual resident fishing license hasn't gone up since 2005. Meanwhile, the commission has made cuts including the loss of 66 jobs. Arway has sought the power for the commission to set its own fees, which the bills sitting in the House and Senate would grant.

"We just can't cut anymore without sacrificing programs," Arway said, citing a \$110 million repair backlog. "(We have) major infrastructure needs that we can't afford to fix unless we get a fee increase."

The measure to allow the Fish and Boat Commission to change its fees first stalled last year because lawmakers tied its passage to a similar bill for the Game Commission, which seeks to raise its hunting-license fees for the first time in nearly two decades. Leaders believed it would be unfair to give one agency an increase before the other, but controversy about the Game Commission halted progress, creating "an immediate logjam" for the fish bill, said Rep. Jeff C. Wheeland (R., Lycoming).

In September, the Fish and Boat Commission said that without the increases, \$2 million in cuts would need to be made. Arway drew up a list of three hatcheries that would have to close: one each in Potter, Erie, and Juniata Counties. He also released a map illustrating stocking cuts that would be made as a result - located in the districts of lawmakers on the other side of the debate.

Dispute continued

"The idea of the targeting was (to) not punish legislators that supported us," said Arway, who said he took down the map and told legislators he would meet with them to work out a solution, but never got a response. "But that shifted the cuts to other districts, and they saw that as something that was not fair."

It "blew up" negotiations, according to lawmakers. The Senate responded by passing a bill - sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Joseph Scarnati (R., Jefferson), who was one of the legislators "targeted" in the map - to limit the executive director's term to eight years. Arway's eight-year anniversary was on Friday.

"It really made for just a real mess," Gillespie said. "The well got poisoned by the actions of that announcement."

Now, Gillespie and Stefano plan to bring up the term-limit bill after legislators return to session March 19. If that goes through, they will try to take up the license bills for both commissions - but the game bill still needs amendments before either can pass, Gillespie said. He acknowledged that both fish and game commissions were "in dire need of the increases."

If the fishing-license measure isn't passed, the process to close hatcheries and decide which waters would get fewer fish would start after July and affect the 2019 fishing season, said Fish and Boat spokesman Eric Levis.

Why not pass the fishing bill first to get the needed funding change in place and then deal with politics?

"Because there's a lot of very upset House members," Stefano said. "I'm sure (Arway) has his side, but you can't undo what has been done."

Removing the executive director is up to the fish and boat commissioners, not the Legislature. But because the commissioners are "unwilling" to fire Arway, Stefano said, the lawmakers offended by him plan to change the law to effectively kick him out.

Wheeland, whose district includes a large fishing community, said he opposed the effort, saying the commissioners should decide who leads the agency.

"When you have a really, really good person and you term-limit them, what did you accomplish?" he said.

Gillespie acknowledged the move could raise questions but said it was necessary.

"This is just, I think, setting a bad precedent when you start introducing and passing legislation to do something that the commissioners themselves should be dealing with," Gillespie said. "But they have at this point elected not to do it."

Arway will retire if the bill passes, he said. For now, he's scheduled to deliver annual reports to both committees in March. He said removing him won't solve the funding problem.

"One of my objectives was to put the agency on a secure financial platform before I left and I've been working my hardest to do that over eight years," he said. "This would be the final thing that I would like to do."

The Fish and Boat Commission is on a statewide tour to talk about the financial situation and ask fishers and boaters to contact their legislators.

"It's going to take a grassroots movement amongst the fishermen," Wheeland said. "They're just going to have to put pressure on their legislators to fish or cut bait."

Feelings among anglers vary. John Pedrick, president of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association and a former

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Tick Alert

By Dave Wright

Ticks are already bad this year. When you are outdoors take precautions, wear repellent with at least 20 % DEET and pre-treat your clothing with permethrin. Avoid the brush, if you can, and walk in the center of the paths. When you get home, bathe or shower as soon as you can and do a complete body inspection. Also check your gear, put your clothes in a dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes. If you do get bit by a tick, remove it as soon as possible with a pair of tweezers. If a rash or target develops, get treatment.

Why are we always trying to get more of our members to join us at our chapter workdays? Here at Mountain Laurel, we are fortunate. We have a dedicated core that shows up at both workdays and meetings. Many of you have never attended a meeting or been to a workday. If that is the case, maybe it is because you do not understand the organization you belong to. Many people think that Trout Unlimited is an organization for fly fishermen and ladies. While it is true that many of our

members do fly fish, some are bait and spinner fishermen, and some don't fish at all.

Here is where some explanation is needed. Trout and all creatures, including humans, need cold, clean water to survive. We can already see that fresh water will be a critical problem in the future. When we work to preserve and enhance cold watersheds, we are working to preserve ourselves (and trout too). If we had an abundance of clean, cold watersheds, we

would have trout unlimited (Just a side benefit).

So why do we want you to join us in our work on the streams? We would like our children and grandchildren to have the water they will need to both carry on our work and to survive. Yes, we fish for trout; Yes, we love our sport. Trout Unlimited is all about clean water. You should be too!

"All creatures...need...clean water to survive."

Continued from page 3

waterways conservation officer for the commission, said he was not in favor of the increase because he preferred an alternative solution. But he summed up the dispute this way:

"Politics," he said, "are getting in the way of recreation."

Cheesy Jokes

Q: Where does Captain Hook go to get a new hook?

A: The secondhand store!

Q: Why did the fish cross the road?

A: Because it was hooked!

Q: Why are fish so gullible?

A: They fall for things hook, line and sinker!



Seven volunteers from MLTU participated in the “NatureWorks” program held at the BottleWorks on March 3, 2018. Dave Wright, Rick Buchanan, and Randy Hillegas arrived early to set up our tables and to help other groups set up theirs. Once the event got going around 10:00 a.m., a nice crowd of parents, but especially children, arrived to learn at the various tables. There were many things to experience, such as furs of wild animals from the Game Commission, videos at the NWTf table, and hands-on experiences at lots of other tables.

Our booth contained

storyboards and handouts about the aquatic environment. Three fly tiers taught kids how to tie flies and then gave each child their own fly. Most kids loved the live exhibit of aquatic insects, which chapter member, Andy Fresch, had seined out of a local stream that very morning. Fly tiers explained to the children that those live insects are some of what fish eat and are also what the flies being tied imitated. Kylie Hogan manned the table next to our booth and represented the Five Rivers Club from UPJ. She also enjoyed working with the children.

“NatureWorks” gives children and adults the

chance to explore the world of nature, to see how important nature is in our lives, and to participate in hands-on activities, which lead to a lifelong appreciation of natural things.

“NatureWorks” was coordinated by Sue Konvolinka and MLTU Member, Melissa Reckner, who staffed the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team table during “NatureWorks” with MLTU Member, Steve Grodis, making animal track prints from rubber replicas.

At least 500 people attended “NatureWorks.” Next year’s event will be held March 2, 2019!



Left to right: Dave Wright, Andy Fresch, Randy Hillegas, and Kylie Hogan teach children of all ages how to tie a fly at NatureWorks. Photos by Melissa Reckner.

Important Dates – Clip-and-save



There are so many activities happening this spring that they wouldn't all fit on the back page! MLTU and its partners need your help with these projects. Please plan to volunteer at one or two of them, if not more! With many of the TIC Release Days, volunteers are needed to help with the workshops, particularly with the fly casting that MLTU leads. For details on any of the TIC Days, please contact Melissa Reckner at 814-444-2669 or at mreckner@kcstreamteam.org. For a complete listing of trout stockings, go to <http://www.fishandboat.com>, and for a complete listing of cleanups, go to <http://www.keppabeautiful.org> and view the Calendar of Events. Stream Habitat Projects will be announced when permits are obtained. Contact Randy Buchanan at 814-467-4034 for updates. Thank you!

April 5 – MLTU Meeting

April 7 – Paint Creek Cleanup, Little Paint Creek pull off between Elton and Windber, 8:30 AM

April 8 – Bens Creek Cleanup, Jim and Jimmies, 8:00 AM

April 9 – Shade Creek Fish Stocking at the Old Iron Bridge, 9:00 AM

April 10 – Fishing with Chuck Furimsky, Rizzo's Restaurant, Windber 6:00 PM (RSVP required)

April 13 – Quemahoning Creek stocking, Jenner Community Sportsmen's Club, 8:00 AM

April 20 – Bishop McCort TIC Release Day, Ferndale Sportsmen's Club

April 21 – Yellow Creek Cleanup, meet at New Frontier Restaurant at 8 AM for breakfast;

Work day starts at 9 AM at the same place. Bring boots and gloves.

April 24 – Bens Creek Fish Stocking at Becca House, 9:45 AM

April 26 – Blacklick Valley TIC Release Day, State Gamelands 79

April 27 – Shade-Central City TIC Release Day, Central City

April 27 – Fly Tyers Reunion, Seven Springs Sporting Clays Lodge, 6:00 PM

April 28 – Shade/Crum Road Cleanup, meet at New Ashtola, 9 AM. Bring boots and gloves.

May 3 – MLTU Meeting

May 7 – Forest Hills TIC Release Day, St. Michael

May 11 – Divine Mercy Catholic Academy TIC Release Day, Ferndale Sportsmen's Club

May 11 – Shade Creek Project Area Fish Stocking, 9:00 AM

May 14 – Conemaugh Township TIC Release Day, Ferndale Sportsmen's Club

May 15 – Bens Creek, Quemahoning Tailwater fingerling stocking, Forwardstown, 9:45 AM

June 5 – MLTU Meeting

June 10 – Knotweed cutting, Soap Hollow Run, Greenhouse Park, 9:00 AM

July 5 – MLTU Meeting

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Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited

If you would rather receive an electronic copy of this newsletter instead of a paper copy, please send your email address to Melissa Reckner (see page 6 for contact info).

Membership Application and Renewal

If you are already a Trout Unlimited member, thank you! When it is time for you to renew your membership, you will receive a notice in the mail. You may renew by check, credit card, or online at www.tu.org.

If you are not a member, please join us! Visit www.tu.org and click "JOIN." National TU handles new memberships and so MLTU does not have applications anymore.

Regular membership.....	\$35
Family membership.....	\$50
Stream Explorer membership (kids <12 yrs.).....	\$12
TU Teen membership (youth 13-18 yrs.).....	\$14
Additional membership types are listed on the TU website.	

MLTU meetings are held the first Thursday of every month. The board of directors meet at 6:30 PM and the general membership meets immediately after at 7:00 PM. Meetings are held at the Richland Township Municipal Building, located at 322 Schoolhouse Road. There are many activities in which you can become involved. Attend one of our meetings to learn more!

**Mountain Laurel
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www.mltu.org

Upcoming Events—See page 6!

State of the Kiski-Conemaugh River Watershed

By Melissa Reckner

Over the last few years, the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy's Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team has been working to update the *Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Conservation Plan* that was among the first such documents published in the state in 1999. This plan was heavily utilized with about 88% of its 120 recommendations implemented to some degree. The new State of the Kiski document provides the status of these recommendations, quantifies the chemical and biological changes in our rivers, and gives new recommendations as we move forward together to continue improving and protecting our resources.

To summarize the 500-page document would take more space than allotted here, so I encourage you to at least read the Executive Summary, which may be downloaded, along with the new State of the Kiski document, from CVC's website. Go to www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org, click "Initiatives" and then "Stream Team." Scroll to "Stream Team Documents." Of course, you may contact me for a copy too!