

Historical Notes On Fish Management In West Virginia 1863-1963

(Part Two of Three Parts)

The Beginning of The Long Road Back

By Dr. Edward C. Kinney

In the first part of this series, appearing in the April issue of West Virginia Conservation magazine, Dr. Kinney covered the years 1863-1923.—Editor.

1923-1933:

In 1923, the Game and Fish Commission stated that "The purification of rivers and smaller streams is recognized as a work of first importance". Commercial fishing was prohibited in the Ohio and Potomac Rivers.

By 1925, over 230 streams were closed to all fishing for three or more years.

In 1926, J. T. Travers, Columbus, Ohio, was hired as pollution control engineer. Mr. N. W. Chapman, an engineer for the Carbon Fuel Company, volunteered to assist Travers. Mr. J. Paul Rusk of Charleston met with the commission and requested that pollution be controlled on the Gauley River. Surveys were made for locations of bass hatcheries. A Parkersburg club began raising bass for stocking. Trout propagation was started at Alexander.

In 1927, Theodore C. Fearnow, a native of Berkeley Springs, was hired

as the state's first fish culturist. "Ted" is now assistant regional forester and chief of the Division of Education and Information for Region 7 of the U. S. Forest Service.

Fearnow's primary job was to establish hatcheries. The Ridge and Edray Hatcheries were constructed during his tenure. Bass rearing ponds were constructed in cooperation with local sportsman's clubs throughout the state. Kanawha County, alone, had three sets of ponds—one at St. Albans, one at Dunbar and one on Witchers Creek. Much of Fearnow's time was spent making pollution investigations and attempting to curb pollution. Sportsmen - administration relations reached an all-time high during Fearnow's term.

The Leetown National Hatchery began operation in 1931. A fish disease laboratory was established at Leetown the following year. In addition to the fish provided for stocking, valuable as-



"Surveys were made for locations of bass hatcheries."

sistance was and is provided by the laboratory. Dr. H. S. Davis assisted us in solving some of our early disease problems. Later, Eugene Surber and Dr. Robert Lennon conducted stream and pollution investigations on eastern panhandle streams.

In 1933, the West Virginia Conservation Commission was established.

During the next eleven years a young fishery biologist from Iaeger made a study of the fishes of the Kanawha River system. This was the most comprehensive fish study ever undertaken in the state. When Dr. John Addaid offered a copy of his 225 page study to the commission, he was told by the Director that they had no use for such a publication.

In 1933, the 36 clubs of the West Virginia Sportsmen's Association met and recommended that the sportsmen's

dollar be used exclusively for game and fish propagation and protection.

1934-1942:

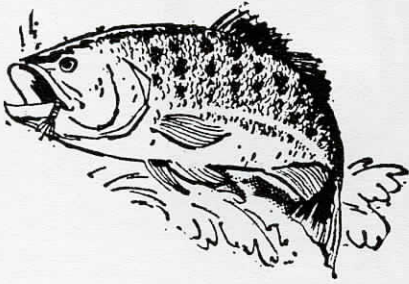
In 1934, Governor Kump attended one of the commission meetings and made the statement that, "There isn't any room for politics in the Conservation Commission. . ."

By 1935, the Edray, Petersburg and Ridge hatcheries were in operation.

In February, 1935, the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries published a report on "A Stream Survey of the Waters of the Monongahela National Forest". This study was made in cooperation with the Forest Service, the Conservation Commission and the Randolph County Rod and Gun Club. Alfred M. McGavock was in charge of the survey party and H. S. Davis was in charge of agricultural investigations. Biologists

included Charlie S. MacIntire, Edwin L. Green and J. S. Heslen. Ranger Ralph Smoot, U. S. Forest Service; assisted in the survey.

Also, during 1935, the Commissioners made several contributions to the fish management program.



They decided that only public waters should be stocked. Commissioner Robert G. Kelley suggested that a complete stream survey be made of bass streams and that a scientist be engaged so that bass propagation and restoration could be approached in an intelligent manner.

At the request of sportsmen, year round open seasons were established for the Ohio and Main Kanawha Rivers. Although credit for liberalized fishing regulations is usually given to work done by TVA biologists at Norris Reservoir in 1944 and by Ohio biologists in 1945, West Virginia waters became more stringent.

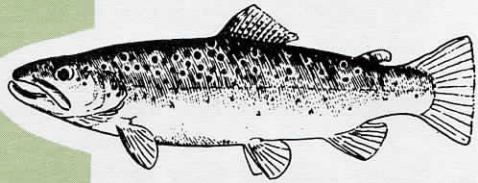
During the period of 1936 to 1941, hatcheries were improved and some 50 miles of streams were improved on the Monongahela National Forest. Most of the labor for these improvements were provided by the W.P.A. and the C.C.C.

The Palestine Hatchery was completed in 1938. The hatchery was

managed by E. B. Ballard of the U. S. Fish Commission.

In 1938, Mr. John W. Heslen, Jr., now Dr. Heslen, team physician for the West Virginia University "Gold and Blue", was appointed as Fish Technician. Heslen possessed a degree from West Virginia University where he majored in zoology and chemistry. He was previously employed by the U. S. Forest Service where he was in charge of stream improvement. Heslen stated that "the primary objective of fish management is to build up and maintain good fishing conditions". He warned that the installation of stream improvement devices was not a cure-all. He stated that pollution abatement was more important. Streams were surveyed for pollution, fish populations, food organisms, spawning and shelter areas.

During 1939, 709 abandoned coal mines were sealed. It was stated that the acid discharge was reduced by 71 per cent.



The same year, the Director received the authority to prescribe the fishing regulations. A meeting was held with members of the Executive Committee of the Affiliated Sportsmen Association to discuss regulations. Some of the club members present were, Paul Rusk, Dr. Fred Allen, Rev. Stanifind, W. E. Keyser, Ed Buck and

Col. Reuben Smith. The regulations added the New and Guyandotte Rivers to the list of year round fishing waters. Walleye, trout and frog seasons were shortened. Over a hundred areas were established as spawning refuges.

In 1940, Benjamin F. Schley, now staff specialist with the Branch of Fish Hatcheries, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, was employed as Superintendent of the Ridge Hatchery. Schley was later employed as a field biolo-

gist. A native of Shepherdstown, Schley now works in Washington, D. C.

By 1942, maximum fishing regulations were established. Size limits and seasons were established for most species including catfish, suckers, rock-bass and other small sunfish. No protection, however, was given to the lowly carp which was introduced in 1879 when seven, one-inch fish were brought into the state.

(Continued Next Month)

May-June Centennial Events Concerning Conservation

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| May 15 - 17 | Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage—Blackwater Falls State Park |
| May 18 | Trout Festival—Petersburg |
| May 31 - June 1 | Wood Festival—Grantsville |
| June 22 - 23 | Centennial Open Archery Shoot—Point Pleasant |
| June 22 - September 1 | Honey In The Rock (Historical Drama), Centennial Year Performance—Grandview State Park |

Centennial Tagged Fish Contest—Throughout Fishing Season



Jacky Goodall with 13-pound, four-ounce Walleye caught from the Greenbrier River in February. Goodall caught the fish using a minnow for bait and had to break river ice to land the big fish.



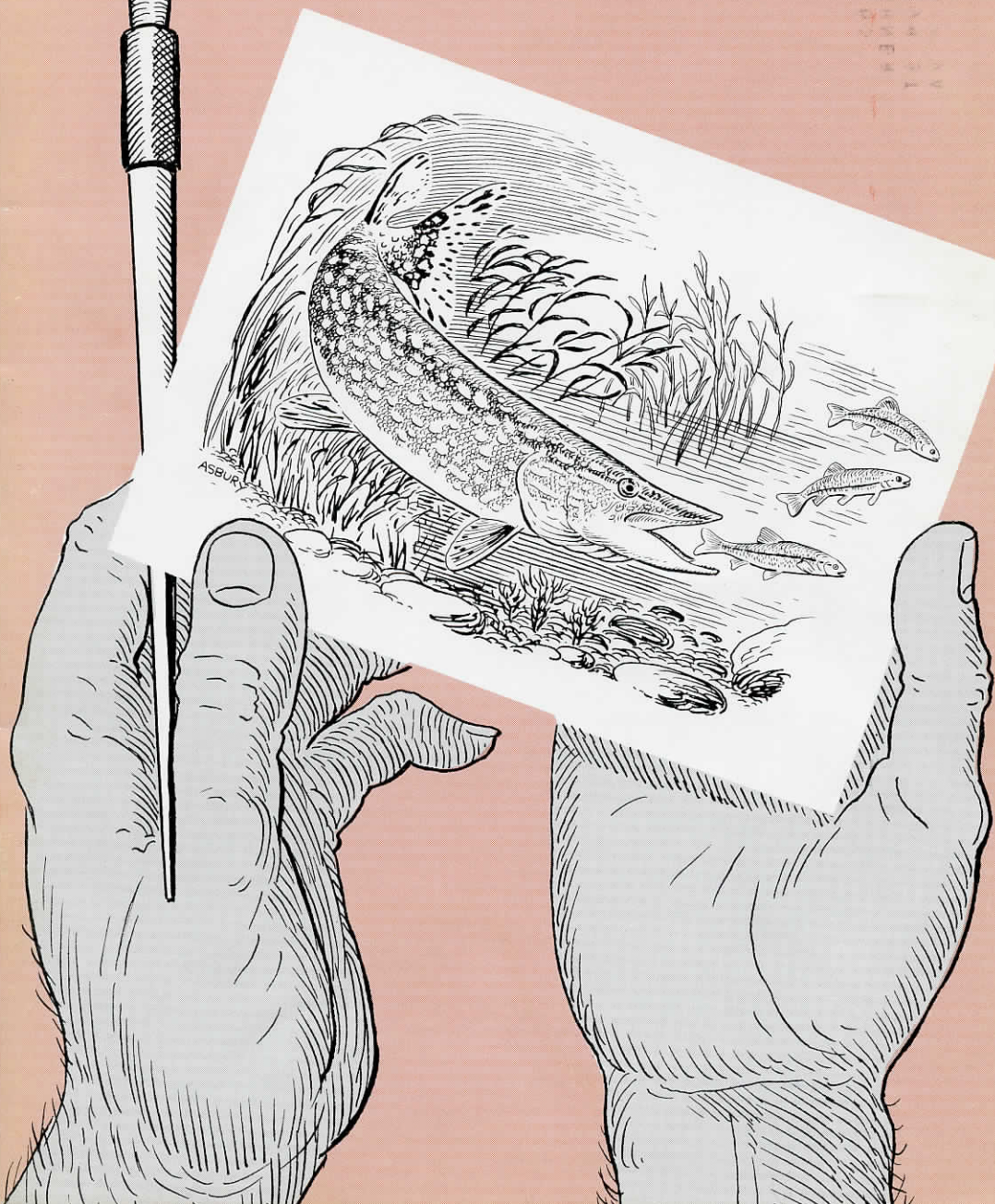
Dorothy Shrewsbury of the Department of Natural Resources' Parks and Recreation Division pins a badge denoting wood utilization on Gov. W. W. Barron. Miss Shrewsbury pinned the wooden badge on Gov. Barron after the Governor's presentation at a wood utilization conference.

WEST VIRGINIA

MAY, 1963

CONSERVATION

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