



NOTES *from the Streams*

Surprise

One of my favorite things about patrolling as a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) is finding challenging walk-in fishing locations. These places require at least a 30 minute hike. People may go to these spots to avoid other anglers or a WCO.

I recently hiked to a fishing location where I suspected anglers were fishing at a posted section of a lake that was off limits to fishing. On this sunny day, the temperature was perfect and fishing was likely good. About an hour into my hike, I found two anglers. I approached the anglers to check their creel and licenses. They looked surprised to see a WCO and knew they weren't supposed to be fishing at this spot. One of the anglers didn't have a fishing license and was issued a citation for this offense.—*WCO David Raulfs Jr., Wyoming and Southwestern Susquehanna counties.*

A stream of consciousness

It was shortly after opening day of trout season. I was patrolling a small, stocked trout stream in my district and noticed an angler. I parked my patrol vehicle close to the fishing hole in a small pull-off along the roadway and exited my truck to check the angler. As I exited my vehicle, I noticed the man walking up from the stream towards me. He appeared a bit nervous, and he was fumbling around with his wallet. I stood at my patrol truck as I greeted him and asked how the fish were biting.

Still fumbling with his wallet, he replied, "Well, I got one or two on a stringer by the creek." I asked him if he had a current fishing license and trout stamp to which he replied he did, but he was nervous, because he couldn't find his license. I simply stated, "If you can just turn your head to the right, I can check your license." We both laughed—he didn't realize his license was pinned to his hat. I checked the license and the

fish he had on the stringer and told him to have a good afternoon and enjoy the fishing. He laughed again and thanked me.

The angler told me before I left that the reason he approached me to show me his license and fish was because he wasn't always "on the right side of the law," but he was now on the right path in life. I thanked him for his honesty and told him I was proud to hear of that change. I reminded him before I left that his license was on his hat and not in his wallet. We both had another laugh.—*WCO Frank J. Mehalko III, Blair and Huntingdon counties.*

Lost sunglasses

I was working a boat patrol detail in Pittsburgh with a couple of other officers. As we made our way down the Allegheny River near PNC Park, I noticed a man on a personal watercraft flagging us down. I was pretty sure he was going to ask what time the fireworks started—a common question in Pittsburgh this time of the year. We stopped our patrol boat and hailed him over to us. He approached our boat in a t-bone manner going too fast. I reached down over the transom to stop him from crashing into our boat. From leaning down and the impact of stopping his watercraft, my sunglasses slid off my face into the

Allegheny River, slowly sinking to the bottom. After telling him what time the fireworks started, we reminded him that boats don't have brakes.—*WCO Jeremiah D. Allen, Beaver County.*

Catch of the summer

On a warm summer day in August, I was patrolling the West Branch Susquehanna River in Williamsport. I walked to Hepburn Street Dam to check for anglers. It's a popular fishing location for Smallmouth Bass and other species. The summer fishing at the dam was slow for weeks with little angler success.

As I walked down to the river, I encountered a few kids fishing along the dam and decided to chat with them. I explained that most anglers weren't having much success recently due to drought conditions. While in the middle of talking to one young angler, he suddenly got a bite and caught a nice 17½-inch Smallmouth Bass that made his face and mine light up with excitement. We were both in shock as it was a slow day fishing the river.

I told the young angler to be proud of it, because it was a trophy bass. After carefully releasing the bass into the river, we wrapped up a great time. This catch made my day. The young angler told me that catching the bass with a WCO was his best catch of the summer.

I always enjoy spending an extra few minutes getting to know young anglers while I am patrolling and seeing them have success. It's one of my favorite parts of being a WCO.—*WCO Charles H. Shoemaker, Lycoming County.*



artwork—Andrea Feeney