



Coastal Resources Management Program— *Protecting Pennsylvania's Coastlines*

photo-courtesy of PA DEP

by Tom Decker

PA DEP Northwest Region

Community Relations Coordinator

Steelhead season is in full swing. The sounds of anglers yelling, “Fish on!” can be heard along the streams in northwestern Pennsylvania. Thousands of anglers travel to the Erie area each year to try their hand at landing a steelhead. Whether you are fishing at one of the popular west-flowing streams such as Elk Creek or Walnut Creek, or venture to the east-flowing side to try your luck on one of the mile streams, one thing is certain—stream improvements are constantly being made to enhance fish habitat and angler access to their favorite fishing holes.

Many of these improvements are due in part to efforts between the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and the Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP), which is managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). Most anglers are familiar with the PFBC and the amazing work this agency completes. However, they may not be

aware of the CRMP, a program that is celebrating an important milestone this year.

For 40 years, the CRMP has been responsible for protecting and enhancing Pennsylvania’s two coastal areas comprised of 77 miles of shoreline along Lake Erie, Erie County, and 112 miles of coastline along the Delaware Estuary including portions of the Schuylkill River that flow through Philadelphia, Bucks, and Delaware counties.

The CRMP receives an annual grant award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This award provides a portion of the funds that are used for eligible projects that address one or more of the priority areas of the CRMP. The funds are distributed through sub-grant awards to state and local government agencies as well as nonprofit groups located in the Delaware Estuary or Lake Erie Coastal Zones.

Anglers fishing for steelhead on Fourmile Creek, Erie County, witnessed firsthand what may be accomplished when the monies from these grants are put to work. Often, this grant money acts like “seed money” for a portion of larger scale projects. Such was the case on Fourmile Creek, where two stream impediments halted the fish from making it further upstream, thus creating a log jam of fish. The initial phase of the project was to create a way for the fish to make it past a manmade dam on the Lawrence Park Golf Course.



The PFBC used grant money to build a 30-foot aluminum fish ladder.

The PFBC used the grant money to build a fish ladder. The 30-foot fish ladder, which is made of aluminum using an Alaska steep-path design, works perfectly. The grant money was also utilized to assist in the design of a waterfall bypass in the second phase of the project. A natural rock-cut bypass channel with concrete cast-in-entrance, concrete weirs, and precast exit chamber aided the fish in bypassing this area. As a result of the projects, steelhead are now able to swim as far as 5 miles

upstream, and the fishing opportunities on Fourmile Creek have increased.

Since its inception in 1980, the CRMP has provided funding opportunities toward countless projects that have created improvements in water quality, research, fisheries, boat launches, ramps, shoreline restoration, and bluff protection. Lardner's Point Park, a 4.5-acre park, Philadelphia, is a perfect example. The Fairmont Park Commission was awarded \$50,000 through a coastal grant to assist in one portion of the park's creation, which consisted of designing, planning, and constructing a new composting restroom in 2015. Lardner's

Point Park is a popular fishing pier. The addition of the new restroom was just the first step in the project phase, which cost \$150,000.

Since 1980, the PA DEP has completed over 850 coastal zone grant projects, and it is estimated that over \$50 million has been infused into both coast zones since then. While the CRMP celebrates 40 years of achievements, its focus is, and will always be, protecting Pennsylvania's coastlines. ☐



Lardner's Point Park, Philadelphia