

Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report



Reporting Date:

May 22, 2014

Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango

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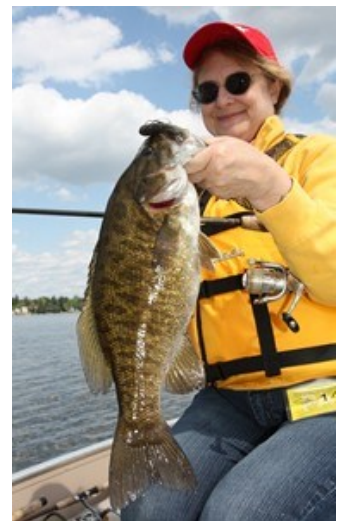
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The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties – covering all species and all waters open to the public. The fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers, compiled and published twice a month. The NW PA Fishing Report is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information sources are considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. If you would like to share your fishing experiences or photos from any waterway in the four counties, please email to Darl Black at darlblack@windstream.net. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

The Landing Net

Well, our unseasonably cold, wet and stormy spring continues to play havoc with expected fishing patterns for almost every species. High, muddy water has impacted trout streams, French Creek and the Allegheny River. All lake levels are high, including even Conneaut Lake which rarely fluctuates. But if you can find a window of opportunity, you can catch fish. After spending last week hosting the PA Crappie Camp media event, Marilyn and I squeezed in an afternoon of smallmouth bass fishing on Conneaut. As usual, she out-fished me; my excuse is that I'm always controlling the boat with the electric motor in the wind to put her in good position and cannot concentrate fully on fishing. I guess that is why she never offers to run the boat!

by Darl Black



Special to the NW PA FISHING REPORT: **PA CRAPPIE CAMP 2014**

For the third consecutive spring, Crawford County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Visit Mercer County PA, and Pymatuning State Park hosted the PA CRAPPIE CAMP in order to showcase to outdoor media the outstanding crappie fishing in the region. Selected outdoor writers/photographers from regional and national publications were joined by representatives of the tackle industry for several days of fishing on Pymatuning Lake, Conneaut Lake and Shenango River Lake. Headquarters for their stay was the Pymatuning State Park Cabins. Tackle industry sponsors included TTI-Blakemore; B'nM Fishing; Bobby Garland Crappie Baits; Gamma Fishing Line; Garmin Electronics; Driftmaster Rod Holders; and Stubby Steve's Baits.



The weather forecast for the week made it appear this was going to be very wet event...but Mother Nature granted us a reprieve. For three days, it rained at night and was dry and sunny during the day. And we caught crappies...lots of crappies, plus other species. However, some rain must fall, and so it did on Thursday.

Festivities concluded Thursday evening with a public crappie fishing techniques seminar at Pymatuning Environmental Classroom with a list of experts that include Garmin's Mark McQuown on the latest in sonar; Driftmaster's David Baynard on crappie rod holder systems for spider rigging; B'nM Fishing's Russ Bailey on single pole jigging in cover; and Bobby Garland's Dan Dannenmueller on spider rigging. These experts spoke to a very attentive full house.



During four days of fishing on three area lakes, here's what our guests discovered:

1. Black crappies at Pymatuning were entering the spawn up North, and just beginning to move into spawn in the southern part of the lake. The Stump Fields in 4 to 8 feet of water was the hotspot up North. Deadfalls, stickups, weedy points, rocky points, stump-filled bays and emerging lily pad beds were the hotspots for crappies in the South. There is an extremely healthy population of big black crappies in the lake.

2. Shenango River Lake had an incredible number of black crappies just moving into the shallows; the majority of these crappies were smaller than smallmouth bass and wall-impressive.



3. Very few white crappies were caught at either lake, although white crappies typically spawn later than black crappies so they should be

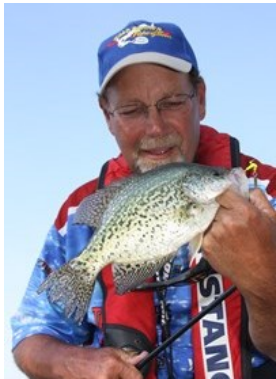
showing up soon.

4. Conneaut Lake smallmouth bass were fired up on Thursday during the rain, hitting a variety of lures in the shallows. Bass to five pounds were caught and released.
5. The hottest crappie lure for the week was the new Bobby Garland 2.25" Baby Shad Swim'R in Glacier or Monkey Milk color, fished on a 1/16-ounce Road Runner head.
6. Shenango Lake crappies like bigger baits, perhaps because of the stained water.
7. B'nM Poles makes a fishing rod for every crappie fishing technique including slow-trolling, vertical jigging shallow cover, casting small jigs, shooting shallow cover and side-pulling. Locally

the line of B'nM Poles can be found at Hill's Country Store in Williamsfield, OH and Espyville Outdoors in Espyville, PA.

Comments from some of our guests:

Jim Gronaw, In-Fisherman panfish writer, Maryland: "Thanks for the tremendous effort in putting together the 2014 Crappie Camp...great people, great times, and great fishing. My son and I are already thinking about a father & son gig at Pymie next spring or perhaps in the early fall."



TJ Stallings of TTI-Blakemore Company, Alabama: "Pymatuning Lake's forage base creates a strong crappie population. While spider-rigging is effective, the month of May offers a special opportunity for one-pole jigging. Crappies were stacked up in lily pads and every fallen tree. I found the Russ Bailey Jigging Pole from B'nM perfect for this vertical jigging technique."

David Baynard of Driftmaster Rod Holders, South Carolina: "I had the privilege of spending a few days at Pymatuning and Shenango last week. I was impressed by the variety of species. The natural beauty of the undisturbed shoreline along with fine fishing makes this a great place to visit."

Dale Black of Gamma Line, Oil City, PA: "I love fishing Pymie for those big slabs and lots of them. Shenango Lake can wear you out with all the fish that can be caught there."



Tim Huffman, Editor CrappieNow.com magazine, Missouri: "It was a pleasure traveling from southeast Missouri to NW Pennsylvania to enjoy some excellent crappie fishing last week. I got to tangle with a lot of 10- to 14-inch black crappies in 2 to 6 feet of water. I enjoyed the lakes, pretty countryside and the people, but y'all talk funny up there!"

NW PA Fishing Report: May 22, 2014

Brought to you by [PA Great Lakes Region tourism](#)

What's biting in the counties of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango?

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

French Creek has been running extremely muddy and over the bank full for the past week. No one has reported fishing success on the creek. Conditions should improve by the coming holiday weekend. Expect a good smallmouth and walleye bite as the creek clears. There was one report from a bow angler who shot a rather large carp in the muddy water. It turned out to be a grass carp – a non-native species we do not want to see in French Creek. Apparently the fish was cruising with several other large common carp in the muddy water and the archer didn't realize that it was a grass



carp until they retrieved the line. I was told they weighed the fish on a 65-pound max scale...the fish pinned the scale at 65 pounds! See accompanying head shot of the fish.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave @ *Richter's Tackle Shop*; filed 5/21: "Fishing is good as long as the weather is good – just not having enough good weather! Walleye have been hitting on crawlers; mainly smaller 'eye but a few nice ones, too. Crappie fishing was great a week ago, but then cold snap end of last week gave them lockjaw. Expect fishing to pick up during approaching warming trend in time for Memorial Day weekend."

Chris @ *Espyville Outdoors*; filed 5/20: "Reports from anglers are mixed. The anglers who know how to fish after a cold front are reporting decent success. There are reports of crappies holding tight to structure, or staging outside of spawning areas...but with tight lips. Early in day, crappies want minnows; when it warms later in day, they transition to jigs. I talked to some guys over the weekend that said channel catfish have started to bite; that is good, because Pymatuning is quietly becoming a catfish destination. I also had an angler report a bowfin caught at the causeway. (See accompanying photo); it was reported between 25 and 30 inches long. Hooker and I fished the Northeast Panfish League Tournament on Sunday, and had to work for every fish we caught. We used a myriad of techniques, and caught some fish on everything. We picked up most of our fish in or around cover – and when I say *in* I mean *in* cover. We stuck our rod tips in deadfalls and dropped a float with a minnow. We also threw **Road Runner jigs** tipped with **Bobby Garland soft plastics**. Monkey Milk and Glacier were the most productive colors. We were both using **B'nM Sam Heaton Super Sensitive rods** – and they are AWESOME!! We finished 3rd in the tourney. By the way, I'll be getting B'nM rods in the store."

Hooker @ *Hills*; filed 5/20: "Great time with everyone at Crappie Camp. For anyone interested, I've got a selection of B'nM rods in stock and will order any Driftmaster Rod Holder set-up you desire."

Noah Heck @ *Kayak Anglers of Western PA*; filed 5/20: "At our Sunday kayak tournament on Pymatuning, the real big bass seemed to have their mouths closed due to the front, but we still had a good showing overall. There were a total of 34 kayak anglers participating. Our events use a catch-photo-release format. The LIVE leaderboard is turning out to be an awesome feature for our group. Anglers submit their fish right from the water using their smartphone and results are updated immediately. The winner was Bill DeJoseph of Wampum. The big bass was 17.5 inches taken by Mark Vansickle. (See Livewell photo) Our next outing is on June 28 on Lake Wilhelm." For more information, contact Noah at noahheck@yahoo.com.



Noah Heck photo

Ed Phillips (New Castle); filed 5/19: "We fished at Linesville area on Sunday the 18th. There was a slight wind which allowed for drifting. We drifted with minnows and worms attached to a leadhead spinner. I also tried casting a **Hot-n-Tot** with hopes of connecting with a walleye. By day's end we caught a nice batch of very large crappies, the biggest being slightly over 13 inches, with a few bluegills mixed in for good measure. However, I never did get a bite from an interested walleye; maybe they have not moved into the stumps yet". (See Livewell photo)

Saturday, May 17: *Pymatuning Lake Association Walleye Tournament* was won by the team of Enock Miller and Kenny Fisher, both of Orwell, OH. They had 10 lbs. 7.3 oz. There were 122 teams participating, with 42 teams weighing in.



Bob Nypaver; filed 5/14: "I finally was able to fish again yesterday after a week in Texas for my son's wedding. I only fished about two hours but the crappie bite was really on! I caught about two dozen but kept only a dozen of the biggest ones. I was wading in the shallows, casting a bare chartreuse 1/8-oz jig tipped with a small minnow." (See accompanying photo)

Jim McClave (Mercer); filed 5/14: "It's almost 1 am and I'm tired from cleaning fish. We have been fishing the northern end of the lake pretty hard. We are hitting crappies off and on in the bays in 4 to 5 feet of water. But it's also walleye time. I got my limit today. Biggest one was 19 inches and the smallest one about 15 inches. We are getting them in about 5 feet of water, fishing around the mouths of the bays."

John Wilpula (Conneaut Lake); filed 5/13: "We were walleye fishing the humps on the North end of the lake when I caught a big musky. It was taken on a 3/32-oz jig and half a crawler on 6-pound **Gamma line** – hooked inside the mouth. That Gamma line is amazing! I had to call Todd Foister to run down the lake and help me corral the monster and get it in the boat. A quick pic and she was released! The walleye fishing was fantastic as long as the wind was blowing. Todd caught 30-plus walleye in a short period of time. I on the other hand, missed the bite by an hour or two on both days I fished, arriving just as the wind died down. The perch bite is more consistent." (See Livewell photo)

Ken Smith (Sharon): filed 5/10: "I fished the Linesville Stumps today and did pretty good. Lots of big black crappies, plus perch and gills. Drifted jigs with **Berkley Crappie Nibbles** in 5 to 9 feet of water above the brush." (See accompanying photo)



Canadohta Lake

Jerry @ *Timberland Bait*; filed 5/21: "Some of my customers have been picking up minnows and heading to Pymatuning for the crappies. One customer brought back a big cooler of crappies for me! Anglers are catching some crappies at Canadohta in the shallows, but the cold fronts are playing havoc with the bite. My customers are getting some nice crappies at Lake LeBoeuf and a lot of pike in French Creek at the Union City Dam outflow. My dad says this is the worst trout season in a long time due to all the rain causing streams to be high and muddy."

Conneaut Lake

Destin DeMarion (Grove City) filed 5/12: "I took my Mom fishing to Conneaut Lake. I heard there was a good spring bite on this lake. We caught fish all day including largemouth and smallmouth bass, pike, and some real nice crappies. **Rattle Traps** and jerkbaits accounted for most of my fish, but got the biggest smallmouth on a drop-shot rig."

Bill Decoteau (Massachusetts); filed 5/15: "On the final day of PA Crappie Camp, I fished Conneaut Lake with Mark McQuown to do a story on the lake for one of the magazines I write for. The smallmouth bass were on! We caught smallies to five pounds, plus largemouth bass, pike and rock bass on a variety of baits. This is an awesome fishery!"

Trout Streams

Harvey @ *Harvey's Hook, Line, Sinker*; filed 5/20: "Customers have been fishing Woodcock Creek for trout when the water level drops; they have been using waxies and mealworms to catch trout."

ERIE COUNTY

Editor's Note: The film "Mysteries of the Great Lakes" is currently showing at the Tom Ridge Center. Contact the Center for more information. This is an absolutely fantastic film. If you have not seen, be sure to check it out this time around. This would be a great film to see this coming weekend if you get blown off PIB or Lake Erie – big parking lot to park rigs!

Presque Isle Bay

Al @ *B.A.C. Bait*; filed 5/20: "All species in the Bay are behind schedule with the mid-spring bite – except the smallmouth bass that have finally moved into the Bay. No gills or crappies to speak of, and perch catches are spotty. Some perch are being taken on the East and North Piers. I would say we are two weeks behind where things should be. But with the warming this week, fishing could take an upswing by Memorial Day weekend."

Paul Stewart (Butler); filed 5/19: "We fished PIB this past Saturday. Fishing was very slow in the morning due to the cold front the previous day, but action picked up after lunch when some rain passed through. We landed a dozen nice perch, two smallies and 1 largemouth. Yes, I think the spring fishing season is running 2 weeks behind."



Paul Stewart—17 " smb

Destin DeMarion (Grove City) Erie Diary:

- 5/9: "Took my new Skeeter ZX200 on its maiden voyage. Got out at 10:30 and fished until my girlfriend and I were chased off by a storm. Fishing was different since there was no grass in the Bay, but we managed a few largemouths, smallmouth and a steelhead on drop shot, jerkbait, an umbrella rig and **Whip Em Baits Big Kahuna** Swimbait.
- 5/11: "Not too often the wind on Erie is less than 5 mph so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to fish. I hit the water with my buddy Alex Merkley. The first bite was a 4 lb. smallie on a tube lathered in **Goby Oil** – a new scent. The bite was slow but we got into them on a **Whip Em Baits Spinnerbait**, including one in the 5- to 6-pound range. It was tough day, but we had fun, including a huge walleye later weighed at home that pushed 15 pounds."
- 5/18: "I was greeted with ice on my boat cover on the morning of the 18th. I hit the Bay with my buddy Justin Lochar (Founder of the Slippery Rock University Bass Team). Air temp was barely 60 degrees when I got to the Bay and it was windy, but the smallies were biting. We caught around 30 bass on a variety of moving baits and drop-shot rigs lathered in **Goby Oil**."

Rich Conlon (Butler); filed 5/15: "We fished Erie on the 14th. It was overcast and very foggy for most of the day. Low winds made the lake fishable – thank goodness we had GPS with mapping since many times we had no idea where we were in the fog. We caught several largemouth bass around Misery Bay on **Chatterbaits** and **Rattle Traps**. We made the decision to run out on lake, fishing from the Bay to past Shade's Beach. Fish were few and far between. Most were caught on jerkbaits in 8 feet of water. We fished out to 20 feet but no deeper. Ran back into Bay for evening and caught our better smallmouth on the Bay humps."

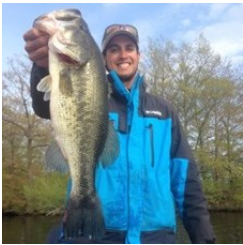
The name drawn as winner of the VIP Field Test Lure Pack is Bob Nypaver; email me to claim prize!

Erie Tributaries

Jeff @ *Poor Richards*; filed 5/20: "Water temp in the main lake is 54 degrees. This week a boat of trollers off Walnut Creek mouth caught 8 walleyes on plugs. Anglers casting from shore at dusk are catching a few 'eye on **#18 and #13 Rapala Minnows**. Some days it is bright colors with chartreuse in the pattern; other days it is Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout patterns that are working. Some anglers are catching perch in 25 feet off the Clay Banks and Trout Run. Smallmouth bass are still in the creeks."

Dan @ *Elk Creek Sports*; filed 5/20: "Heck of a spring with cold and rain. They are catching fish when the weather is nice. Lots of smallmouth in Elk Creek north of Rt. 20; they are also catching white bass and sheepshead in the creek. Steelhead are pretty much gone. They are getting perch in 35 feet in the lake. Anglers are also catching walleye from shore at creek mouths when conditions are good – meaning light offshore breeze."

Andy @ *Trout Run Bait*; filed 5/20: "Best thing going are the smallmouth in the tribs. An occasional steelhead caught on way back out. Walleyes caught in the evenings along the shoreline on **#18 Rapala in Rainbow Trout**. Some perch at 30 to 40 feet out of Walnut. Word is channel cats are starting to show up in Elk, too."



Destin DeMarion

Edinboro Lake

Destin DeMarion (Grove City); filed 5/21: "Rain was forecasted the day we headed to Edinboro Lake. Light winds increased during the day. The action started quickly as my buddy boated a giant largemouth from shallow water – his new personal best at 21-3/4 inches. We probably caught 50 fish throughout the day. I caught my fish on **Whip Em Bait Kahuna Swimbaits**, Spinnerbaits and 4" tube." (See Livewell)

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

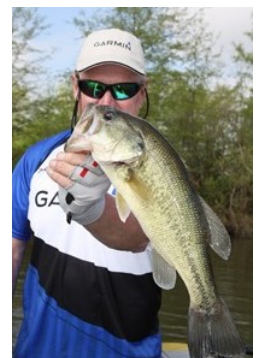
Jon @ *CDS*; filed 5/21: "Jerry Hanna and Jeff Barkley fished Wilhelm for bass a week ago and did OK. They caught and released a dozen up to about 3 pounds but no really big ones. We are selling a number of large **Rapala Minnow Baits** for walleye and a new glide swimbait for bass from **Savage Gear**; it is available in some pretty exciting colors. Stop in and check it out. Many of my customers are going to Pymatuning for crappies – seems to be the hotspot for crappies, but they are not hitting the walleye."

Bob @ *Fergies Bait*; filed 5/20: "They are catching a lot of crappies at Wilhelm but not a lot of big ones. Crappies seem to be everywhere. One angler stopped by with an 8 lb. 27 inch walleye from Wilhelm taken on an orange blade worm harness. No word on bluegill."

Editor's Note: The Kayak Anglers of Western PA will have a kayak bass tournament on Wilhelm on June 28. For more information contact Noah Heck at noahheck@yahoo.com.

Shenango Lake

Mark McQuown (Huntingdon); filed 5/14: "I fished Shenango for only my second time on May 14. Last spring was my first time. I was here for Crappie Camp this past week, but I may come back to go bass fishing. I live on Raystown Lake, one of the toughest



Mark McQuown

lakes in the state to catch fish; I have not caught a legal bass from Raystown so far this year – strange spring for sure. But at Shenango – an unfamiliar lake for me, my boat partners and I caught a slew of black crappies, a keeper walleye, a hybrid strip-er, largemouth bass and a ½ dozen smallmouth bass up to 3 pounds – simply by running the shoreline and casting various lures. This is an interesting lake!”



Mark McQuown

VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Mike @ *Jigger Tackle*; filed 5/21: “Not much fishing activity. Trout streams are high and muddy. River is blown out. Crappies at Wilhelm is all I have to report on. Hope for better weather by this holiday weekend. Best bets for Memorial Day weekend should be Wilhelm and Justus Lake.”

Gene Winger (Oil City); filed 5/19: I fished the Allegheny River almost every day during the week of May 5th with good success, averaging 15 to 25 bass each outing. Early in the week most smallies were stacked in predictable fast water pockets and backwater eddies. But as the river level dropped and the temp increased into the low 69s, bass began to spread out, moving shallower. I had good success with **Winco 3.75” Predator Craws** and **Tasty Tube Supremes** in deeper water, and **Winco 3.75” River Darters** in the shallows. On May 12th the river was rising following storms but I was able to boat 5 nice smallies by fishing transition between turbid and cleaner water using Winco tubes. By noon the entire river turned to chocolate and I had to hang it up. Looks like fishing is out of the question for a week or so.” (See Livewell)



Pete Cartwright (Pittsburgh) filed 5/12: “We fished the river around Tionesta on the 10th by wading from 8 am until dark. The bite for most of the day was on soft plastic; we landed 74 smallies. The biggest was 20 inches. Most fish were on current breaks. On Sunday the 11th, we caught 27 smallies and a 22 inch walleye. All fishing was done with barbless hooks.” (See Livewell)

Trout Streams

Mike @ *Oil Creek Outfitters*; filed 5/20: “With the terrible stream conditions for fly fishing, I’m thinking about taking up golf. Turn off the rain, bring out the sun!”

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 5/18: “Aside from taking 11 year old Aaron Burkhardt trout fishing, I didn’t have time to fish. On the night he caught one on a crawler, I then switched him to live minnows; he quickly hammered rainbows and browns one after another.” (See Livewell photo)

Bill @ *Griffin Bait & Tackle*; filed 5/19: “With turkey season in and all the rain the past week plus near freezing temps at night, Sugar Creek catches have slowed. The Creek is starting to look better and should be good for Memorial Day weekend if we don’t get more rain. I’ve had reports of crappies at Sugar Lake, some nice trout at Justus Lake. A couple of my friends attended the Crappie Seminar at Pymatuning, stating it was very informative.”

Chuck Sari (Oil City); filed 5/2: “I caught this 21 inch brown trout on April 24 in upper Big Sandy on a **Brown Trout colored Rapala**.” (See Livewell)

The Livewell

Brought to you by:

Shenango River Lake fishing will be hot for Memorial Day.



Dan Dannemueller & David Baynard on Shenango



Boat of the Month: Rigged PolarKraft with 20 hp—perfect boat for Wilhelm and Pymie.



Ken Smith on Shenango



Destin DeMarion photo of 21-3/4" LMB taken by friend.

Area trout success...



Chuck Sari



Aaron Burkhardt



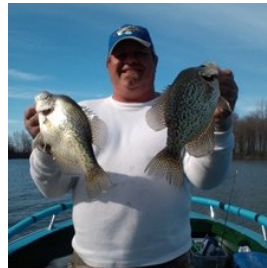
Fishing at Pymatuning Lake remains strong through the spring...



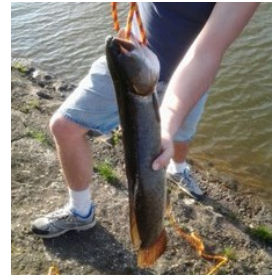
Adam Leytrick



Ed Phillips photo

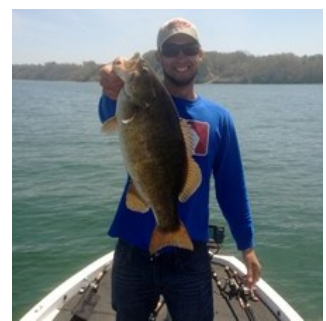
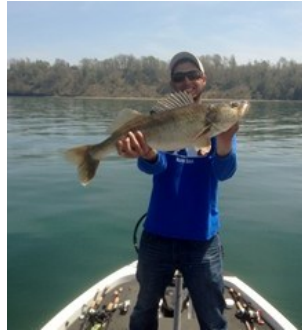


Hooker from Hills

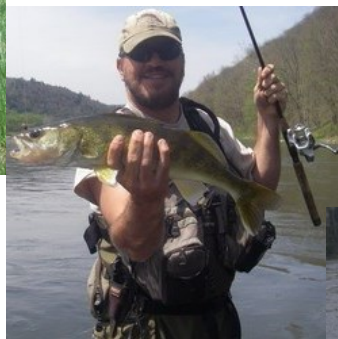


Pymie Bowfin

Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay is coming on strong as Destin DeMarion shows...



The Allegheny River continues to produce smallies for Pete Cartwright and friends



Mike LeDonne in PIB



PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Fishing Tip



John Wilpula took this musky on 6 lb. Gamma line while fishing for walleyes at Pymatuning. Dale says the photo speaks for itself - Gamma is Great Line!

Find the spool of Gamma Line you need at the following NW PA Tackle Shops:

Consumer Direct Sports: www.cdssports.com

Hill's County Store: www.facebook.com/hillscs

Winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of Fishing Report is **Jim McClave** of Mercer. Notify Darl by email that you saw your name and include your shipping address; Gamma will send you a spool of the type and pound test line you desire.

Lures for the Fishing Report **VIP Field Test Prize Pack** supplied by: Bobby Garland; Gene Larew; Get Bit Baits; Lake Fork Tackle; Lindy; Rapala; Road Runner; Scum Frog; Thill; Tru-Turn Hooks; Uncle Josh; Venom; Yum. Read the Report to see you are a winner. **Look for the name of the Prize Pack winner** within the body of Fishing Report, then email Darl with you shipping address.

In this issue of the Fishing Report, Pennsylvania-based HC Baits, makers of Hubs Chub surface lure, offered a Hubs Chub to the angler who caught the biggest LMB and SMB by length; you had to submit a photo and the length of the fish. This month's winners are **Paul Stewart** for a 17" smallmouth and **Destin DeMarion** for submitted a 21-3/4" largemouth from Edinboro. Send me your shipping address and HC Baits will send out the lure to you.

Follow Darl as he fishes with angling experts around the country at www.darblack.blogspot.com

Darl is on Facebook

Obtain the PGLR fishing brochure "Reel It In!" at www.pagreatlakes.com