

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

NRCS and Partners Improve Trout Habitat in “Steelhead Alley”

Erie County, PA

September 5, 2012

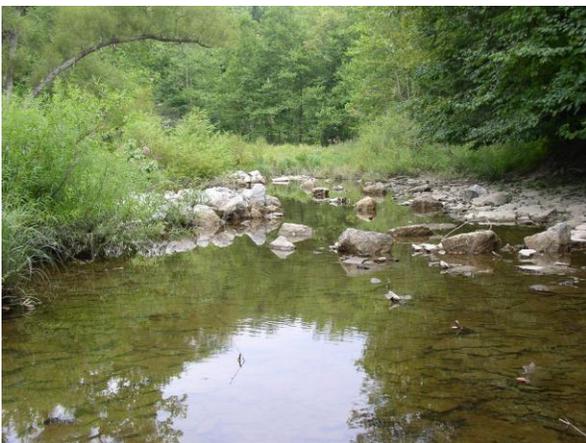
Erie County, Pennsylvania, is known throughout the country as “steelhead alley” because it has some of the best steelhead trout fishing in the world. As a result, thousands of anglers are attracted to Lake Erie streams. Unfortunately, there is limited habitat for the fish in the streams, causing concentrations of fish and fisherman in certain areas.

In 2011, David Vorse was among a number of local landowners who contacted the USDA [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) for assistance with improving fish habitat throughout the Lake Erie basin.

Mr. Vorse lives along a half mile section of the West Branch Conneaut stream. In this part of the stream, fish used two pools, which left the remaining stretch of the stream devoid of fish. With planning and design assistance from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission’s habitat crew and NRCS, five stone deflectors with J hooks were installed through NRCS’s Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Great Lakes Initiative. The stone deflectors and hooks provide current breaks, deeper holding water, and habitat for insects (to provide food for trout), and encourage them to inhabit other areas of the stream.

In 2012, after a full season, Dave said, “Last year I had one of my best seasons of fishing and caught fish where I never have before.” This project was such a success that both his sister and neighbor are interested in participating in WHIP.

WHIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides both technical and financial assistance to help landowners develop and improve fish and wildlife habitat on private agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. For more information about WHIP and other NRCS conservation programs, contact your local [USDA NRCS Service Center](#) or visit us on the web at www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov.



To encourage trout to inhabit more areas of the West Branch Conneaut stream in Erie, PA, five stone deflectors with J hooks were installed to provide current breaks, deeper holding water, and habitat for insects (to provide food for trout).



The stream access was also mulched and reseeded to prevent soil erosion.

Submitted by: Tom Lamont