

Fish Tales Newsletter

West Virginia's Aquaculture Newsletter is produced to help inform, educate, and update those interested in producing quality aquatic products, in a sustainable manner, for the recreational and food fish markets.

Native American?

By Rodney Kiser

“Speckled Trout,” “Native Trout,” and “Brookie” are just some of the names associated with the brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*). This is the only species of trout native to West Virginia; it was officially adopted as our state fish in 1973. The brook trout can be recognized easily by its dark green back with worm-like markings; scattered yellow and red spots; fins displaying various shades of red, yellow, and orange; brilliantly white bellies; and distinctive white stripes on the front edge of their pectoral, pelvic, and anal fins.

Native brook trout prefer clean, clear, cold streams to survive. With 500 miles of native trout streams in the Mountain State, many anglers pursue this relatively small trout (5- to 6-inch average, seldom greater than 10) known for being wary and elusive.

More often than not, most people are more familiar with the brook trout species currently being grown by the W.Va. Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) and trout farmers across the state. The trout being produced in an aquaculture setting have been selected for greater size and catchability. These aquacultured brook trout can average 10 to 12 inches and are known to eagerly take a hook. The state records for brook trout are 7.64 pounds and 23.5 inches.

WVDNR and farm-raised brook trout have been stocked in rivers, streams, lakes, dams, and ponds throughout the state. Stocking these waters has allowed many persons and anglers access to the splendor and beauty of the brook trout. The flavor and quality of brook trout flesh are highly regarded by those who consume it. Many individuals who have eaten brook trout prefer it to other freshwater fish as well as saltwater fish.

Brook trout are a good choice for stocking private ponds or streams that are known to have adequate habitat. Farm-raised brook trout are easier to catch than rainbows and browns, making them a great fit for children. Brook trout, under the right conditions, may actually reproduce in a pond.

Whether native to a mountain stream or stocked in a private pond, the brook trout is truly a superior fish in quality and appearance. The brook trout justly deserves its status as the state fish of West Virginia.

Farmer Profile: Teddy Miller



In 1971 when Ted was only 10 years old, he was interested in the critters in a creek, stream, or pond. By 1985, Ted started Birch Creek Fish Farm and made his first delivery using an old refrigerator turned on its side for transport. With a loan from family members in 1992, he succeeded in building a farm in central Pennsylvania, using water from a limestone quarry. Ted continually looks for ways to improve production, and last year his fish farm produced 150,000 pounds of brook, brown and golden trout.

The photo above shows Ted sitting between his new raceways in Raleigh County at Mountaineer Trout Co. LLC. He is planning to become the largest private trout producer in the state by selling rainbow trout to processing plants as well as the recreational market. Ted's partner is **Sonny Thompson**, a baseball teammate from Central Florida Community College.

2008 Aquaculture Forum Will be in Charleston on Jan. 19

The 2008 West Virginia Aquaculture Forum has been set for Saturday, Jan. 19, at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Charleston, W.Va.. This year's program will start with a general session in the morning and split into two sessions in the afternoon. The general session will open with the annual industry update, followed by a presentation of recent advances in aquaculture research at WVU.

The afternoon session for commercial growers will cover fish health, and a panel discussion on regulations. The afternoon session for pond owners will feature managing ponds, aquaponics, and the health benefits of eating fish. A field trip to WV Aqua, West Virginia's largest private fish production facility, is scheduled for Friday afternoon, Jan. 18, the day before the forum. Consult the WVU aquaculture Web site (www.wvu.edu/~agexten/aquaculture/) or contact WVU Extension (304 293-6131) for more information.

Dr. Jeff Silverstein becomes ARS Aquaculture Program Leader

On Oct. 1, 2007, **Dr. Jeff Silverstein** was officially promoted to the position of aquaculture program leader with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), which is a part of USDA. Jeff has been instrumental in improving commercial strains of rainbow trout with his team at the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture in Leetown, W.Va. He improved the strain of commercial catfish when he worked in Stoneville, Miss. Jeff's work with fish genetics is led to improvements in commercial strains, and we will miss his experience. Best wishes, Jeff!

"Trout School" Gets an A

by Rodney Kiser

Sept. 17 and 18, 2007, saw the first-ever "Trout School" offered by the WVU Extension Service. It was held at WVU's Reymann Memorial Farm in Wardensville, Hardy County. More than 25 people participated in the two-day educational opportunity that covered many aspects of design, management, and economics of flowing water trout systems. Trout School incorporated hands-on experiences in grading, handling, feeding, hauling, and stocking of trout. Trout production facility and greenhouse tours and trout processing demonstrations (see photo) were also held. The event also served as an inauguration of the new classroom at Reymann Memorial Farm.

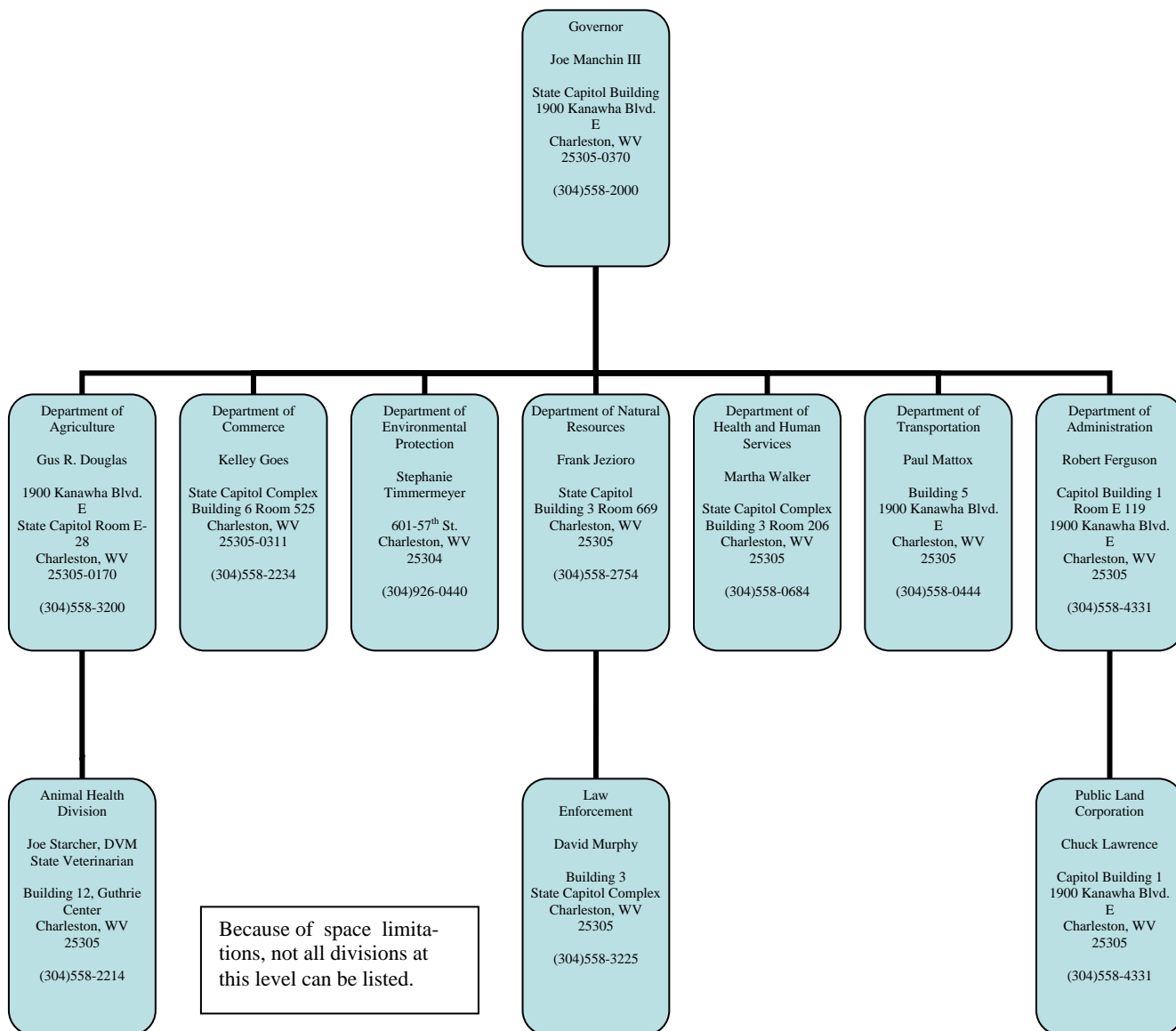
Trout School was a great way for trout farmers, industry reps, Extension personnel, and those just interested in trout production to come together to broaden their knowledge and share ideas. The highlight of the event may have been the picnic on Monday evening. Grilled trout, garden fare (corn on the cob, watermelon, tomatoes), and some of the best homemade coleslaw you ever tasted, combined with good friends and fellowship, made for a memorable evening. The success of the event has proven the need for opportunities such as this, and it is our hope that we can hold more trout schools and other educational events to aid the aquaculture industry in West Virginia.



Rodney Kiser (in apron) teaching the art of butterfly filleting trout

Fishing for Solutions... by Sara Lee Brown

Fish farmers in West Virginia raise fish for food and recreation. They process fish and sell them for human consumption, import and export live fish across state lines, discharge waste, and operate a business. Various state agencies and our legislators have promulgated statutes, regulations, and policies, all of which impact these activities. If you are growing or moving fish in West Virginia, it is no secret that this legal framework for the oversight of aquaculture is complex and, at times, may not make much sense. To understand what is necessary to produce and transport fish in compliance with the law, one must understand the responsibilities of various regulatory agencies as well as how the statutes, regulations, and policies are proposed, implemented, and enforced.



Above is an organizational chart showing various state agencies that implement and enforce laws and policies related to aquaculture. Listed are the directors of each agency and their contact information. If you are interested in learning more about the statutes, regulations, and policies and the agencies that govern the aquaculture industry in West Virginia, watch for future articles that will illustrate and address individual agencies and their policies. Investigators at West Virginia University are currently reviewing the West Virginia Code and the West Virginia Code of State Regulations to determine how the code can be changed to do a better job of accommodating the needs of the aquaculture industry.

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Fred Hays 304-548-7117, a W.Va. Farmer

We encourage story contributions to Fishtales newsletter by W.Va. residents. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Dan Miller at dmille31@wvu.edu or call 304-293-4832, ext. 4465. The deadline for the next issue of Fishtales is Feb. 1, 2008.

This publication is available, in a printable format, on the Web at:
www.wvu.edu/~agexten/aquaculture/newsletter.htm

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