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McGeehan: Dam-busting on Delaware is good for Phila.

Planned Sunday release of shad fry will be evidence

HARRISBURG, April 27 – State Rep. Mike McGeehan, D-Phila., traveled upstream on the Pennypack Creek on April 22, for an Earth Day appearance in Montgomery County with acting U.S. Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett for the announcement of a federal project to improve the creek's contribution to sport fishing, both within its banks and downstream on the Delaware River.

At the Huntingdon Pike Dam in Abington Township, Scarlett said the Interior Department has launched a program in Pennsylvania and 25 other states to reopen streams where man-made obstacles impede fish migration and reproduction.

The Pennsylvania work will include breaching of several dams along the 22-mile-long Pennypack Creek, a number of which have already been opened up to Roosevelt Boulevard in Philadelphia. Where dams must remain, wooden fish ladders will be installed to help migrating fish move upstream. The work is being done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Philadelphia's Fairmont Park Commission.

“Reopening Pennypack to migratory fish upstream will certainly be a boon to us downstream where the 22 miles of creek meets the Delaware River,” said McGeehan, the only legislator from southeastern Pennsylvania on the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

“In addition to the 2 million hickory shad larvae already placed by the Fish Commission, once the dams are out of the way, several more species of fish will be introduced in large numbers – sport fish like the king of sport fish in our area, striped bass, and smaller species sport fish can feed on.”

Other fry expected to benefit from the dam breaching along the Pennypack include American eel, American shad, Blue Back Herring and Alewife.

McGeehan has long been a champion for cleaning up local waterways and riverbanks and turning Pennypack Creek and the Delaware River into major sites for fishing, boating and other recreational activities. As the water quality has improved, sport fish such as striped bass have begun returning to the river in large numbers.

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Shad fry release on Sunday

On Sunday at 1 p.m., McGeehan will join Fish Commission staff for the release of another 700,000 hickory shad larvae into the Pennypack. The tiny larvae will be released in mid-stream of the creek channel at Solly and Frankford avenues, just below the first dam. McGeehan will be commenting on the value of the dam breaching program and how it helps migratory fish to return upstream to reproduce.

Large numbers of shad larvae must be introduced because many fall prey to predators before returning for their spawning run, the first of which on the Pennypack is expected to occur next year.

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