



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: River Valley 8th Grade Students Release Trout

Indiana County Conservation District

CONTACT PERSON: Douglas M Beri Jr., (724) 471-4751 Ext. 4, or Rebecca Miloser, 724-464-3194

DATE: June 1, 2022

Over the winter, 8th Grade students from Rebecca Miloser's classes at River Valley School District were busy raising trout fingerlings in a classroom aquarium. This program is known as "Trout-in-the-Classroom," a statewide initiative of the PA Fish and Boat Commission and PA Council of Trout Unlimited.

In January, the school received a shipment of trout eggs from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. With support from the Ken-Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited (KSTU), students set up the aquarium so that conditions would be right for raising trout.

During the next few months, students learned while watching their trout hatch and grow. Watersheds, water resource conservation, and life cycles and adaptations of trout were among several topics covered during this time.

On May 19th and May 26th, the work and care for these fingerlings came to fruition as 83 students released their fish into Blackleggs Creek at the Blackleggs Creek Memorial Park, a trout-stocked fishery. This stream was formally severely degraded by abandoned mine drainage. However, as a result of decades of work by volunteer watershed organizations including the Blackleggs Creek Watershed Association (BCWA) and other agencies like the Department of Environmental Protection and Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR), this stream is now a critical community resource.

Indiana County Conservation District (ICCD) Educator, Monica Lee, stated that "providing meaningful educational experiences like these are the foundation for inspiring a conservation ethic in today's youth. These students then go on to live their lives with a better understanding and appreciation for the natural world, regardless of what career path they choose."

On each release day, students participated in educational activities including Fly Casting, macroinvertebrate (stream bugs) surveys, and birdwatching while also learning about riparian forest buffers and the history of mining in our region. Workshops were lead by representatives of the ICCD, KSTU, Indiana County Chapter of the PA Senior Environmental Corps, BCWA, and WPCAMR.

ICCD Executive Director, Douglas Beri stated that "although the District is proud to partner on this initiative, the success of the project is ultimately attributed to having a teacher in the school district that finds value in providing these experiences to their students."

More information about Trout-in-the-Classroom at patroutintheclasroom.org.

