Recognizing and Reporting POLLUTION or DISTURBANCE of Waterways

POLLUTION or DISTURBANCE of any waterway or watershed is a serious violation of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Code that must be recognized and reported to a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission region law enforcement office. The law provides for criminal penalties for violations or disturbances.

POLLUTION is an introduction into any waterway of anything that "might" harm or kill fish. Examples of "pollutants" are: Electricity, explosives, sediment runoff, sewage, insecticides, poisons, high volumes of extremely hot water, liquid concrete or cement, paint, chemicals, petroleum products like gasoline or oil, brine runoff from gas or water wells drilling, and manufacturing waste. Common pollution indicators are: Dead fish including crayfish, frogs, and any other types of aquatic life; strange odors like manure, sewage, or chemicals; muddy, cloudy, or discolored water; shiny, oily sheen on water's surface; foamy material floating on the surface; and extremely muddy water.

DISTURBANCE of waterways or watersheds includes any alteration of a waterway, its banks, bed, or fish habitat that "might" cause damage to or kill fish. Common disturbance indicators are: Removal of gravel from stream beds; earth-moving in or along a waterway; dragging logs across stream banks and through stream beds; installing pipes or culverts; building or installing bridges; making roadways through or along a stream; draining a waterway, wetland, or watershed; or changing the channel flow of a waterway. Various types of permits are required for any such work.

If you see anything suspected to be a pollution or disturbance of any waterway, regardless of how seemingly insignificant, report it immediately by calling the local Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission region law enforcement office listed on page 3 of this publication or the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at 1-800-541-2050 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).