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By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

Help stock local streams! Volunteers needed for Monroe County trout stocking days

Alec DeLong wants *you* — to stock trout.

In fact, you, your son, daughter, grandchild, or whoever can carry a bucket, can help stock local streams.

Pennsylvania's trout season opens on Saturday, April 2, and 17 sites around Monroe County await stocked fish.

DeLong is a waterways conservation officer (WCO) with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

"We actually rely really extremely heavily on the public" to stock fish, he said.

WCOs ensure that stocked fish reach the water and enter it safely, but the areas commonly stocked are more urban, so WCOs do traffic control, too.

"We need volunteers from the public to carry buckets and put the fish out," DeLong said.

Hatchery workers drive tank trucks to a stocking site. WCOs help park the stocking truck and guide helpers' vehicles to park safely along often-busy roads. Then the truck drivers net fish from the tank into buckets.

The commission stocks brook, brown, rainbow and trophy golden rainbow trout annually, tapping residents from school children to senior citizens to transport the buckets and pour the fish quickly into area streams.

"We love having kids out," DeLong said.

Helping to stock fish is a great way to get outdoors along area streams and get a bead on where there might be good fishing. It's also a way to learn more about the Poconos' heritage as a trout-fishing mecca and to understand the importance of protecting this legacy, which in wild trout streams relies on clean, cold water.

Mostly, though, it's fun.

"Wear old clothes and boots," DeLong said, "and prepare to get wet."

To find local stocking sites and dates and learn how to help, visit www.fishandboat.com and tap on the menu item "fish" in the top right corner of the home page.