

PLAY



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Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

Why Fish Need Trees

Trees do their job quietly. But their job is important. Each fall they remind us that they are there with a blaze of color. But if they weren't, fishing in Pennsylvania would be very different.



Trout have very specific habitat needs. They can't live in places that don't meet those needs. This is true for all fish. That is why it is important to understand the importance of habitat.

"Habitat" is the places where fish live. Trees play an important role in trout stream habitat. Really, streamside trees do several jobs. This issue of the PLAY Newsletter focuses on the importance of streamside trees to trout and other fish.

Biologists call the area along the edge of a stream or river the **riparian zone**. Streamside trees live in this riparian zone. Trees and other plants in the riparian zone do three very important jobs. These plants help to hold the stream banks together. If they weren't there,



high water would wash soil away from the banks. Biologists say that these plants **stabilize** the stream banks. That soil can smother places where trout eggs incubate.

Riparian trees and plants also offer **shelter** for trout. Trout and other fish hide from predators under roots and branches of streamside plants. Fish can even hide in the shadows of leaves. The shade from riparian plants

also shields the water from the sun. This helps keep the water cooler in summer.

Streamside plants are important to stream **food webs**. Insects feed on leaves and other parts of plants when these plants fall in the water. Trout and other fish feed on these insects.

Streamside trees are important to all aquatic critters, not just trout. Read on and learn more about the important job of streamside trees.

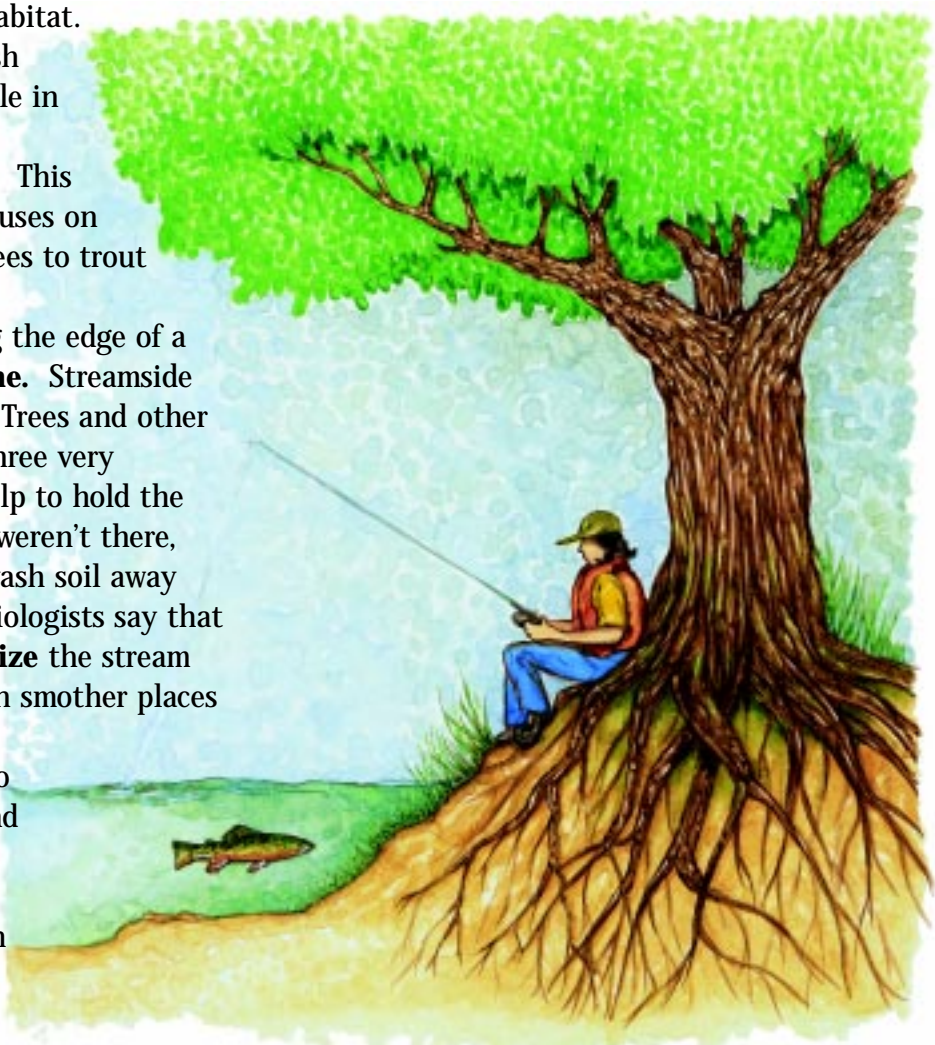


illustration: Ted Walke