

Fishing Notebook: Commission to take samples from creek

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By Deborah Weisberg

It will be years before Portage Creek in McKean and Cameron counties recovers from a recent train derailment and chemical spill that caused a major wild trout kill, according to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which will perform fish sampling on the creek this week.

John Arway, the agency's chief of environmental services, said the liquid sodium hydroxide -- an oxidizer used to treat acid mine drainage -- wiped out plants, insects and trout in the stream, part of which is designated "exceptional value," the highest quality rating in the state.

The spill also affected Driftwood Branch and Sinnemahoning Creek, downstream.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is advising the public to stay clear of the area because of possible elevated bacteria levels from dead fish and remaining pockets of caustic chemicals.