Date: Fri, 7 Feb 2003 13:07:46 -0400
From: "Bruce Dickson" <bdickson@datastore.ca>
To: PABIODIV@webmail.upb.pitt.edu
Subject: PABIODIV: Longwall Mining

Regarding the article in Rod and Reel and the other comments on longwall mining: DEP funded a research effort on Robinson Fork (trib to Enlow) during the summer of 2001 to determine the effects of long wall mining on streams in southwest PA.. The results are available from PA DEP and are rather ambiguous at best.

I led the investigation of the physical and biological impacts on Robinson Fork and our investigation made it VERY obvious that more research should be done on the area of subsidence and the physical changes to streams and biological communities. Our research was severely restricted by DEPs limited budget, time frame, small sample size, and poor experimental design. However, it was obvious that there were major modifications to channel units (characteristics and distribution) and changes in fish productivity in subsided and unsubsided pools. I would like to conduct further research in this area utilizing a more robust experimental design if anyone out there is interested in funding such an effort. Until an independent examination is conducted there will be ongoing arguments that we don't know enough about the effects of long wall mining on streams which is an excuse for basically doing nothing to protect streams that have not been undermined. In addition, as long as there is no clear evidence regarding subsidence effects then the development of strategies to restore subsided stream reaches will never be adequately developed.

Bruce C. Dickson, Ph.D.

****