

# COMMISSION AWARDS

## Education Grants

Sportfishing, boating and aquatic resource education programs for today's youth received a boost this spring with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's awarding educational grants totaling more than \$50,000.

Ten organizations will receive Sportfishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants from the Fish & Boat Commission to develop or expand programs that teach fishing and boating skills or educate participants about waterways and the organisms that live in them. The Commission received 18 applications in this grant cycle from sportsmen's clubs, school districts, community groups and county agencies, with funding requests exceeding \$90,000.

"The Sportfishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants Program expands on the Commission's long-standing commitment to youth education," says Commission Executive Director Dr. Doug Austen. "I'm excited to see some of the outcomes of these grass roots projects, as research shows that well-structured education programs such as these lead to kids increasing their interest in fishing and boating, improving their skills, and helping them build a greater sense of aquatic stewardship and outdoor ethics."

The volume and quality of applications the Fish & Boat Commission received in three rounds of grant applications exhibit a clear demand for even more of this type of programming in Pennsylvania. Since June 2006, the Commission received 125 applications for grants requesting more than \$419,000. With the grants announced recently, more than 40 organizations have received more than \$150,000 in funding through the Education Grant Program.

"The challenge is to provide the resources necessary to re-engage youth in outdoor activities," Austen says. "Succeeding in this effort is critical to the future of sportfishing and building a more environmentally connected citizenry."

Increased funding for grassroots initiatives such as this grant program is one of the cornerstones of a Fish & Boat Commission initiative to expand youth-oriented programming using revenue from a youth fishing license. House Bill 1436, sponsored by Representatives Marc J. Gergely (Allegheny Co.) and Michael P. McGeehan (Philadelphia Co.) proposes a low-cost fishing license for anglers 12 to 15 years of age, with the revenue used to fund programs such as the education grants. This approach will let the grant program grow not only in dollars distributed, but



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*Some grant funds are used to promote safe watercraft use.*

also in the number of youth and adults benefiting from new and expanding programs.

### Sport Fishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants 2008-2009 Cycle

**1. Yough Outdoors Club "BEARCATS Program."** Estimate of audience to be reached: 190. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. This program will provide unique educational and recreational opportunities that promote safe watercraft use, environmental stewardship and effective fishing experiences to those who otherwise would not have access to such opportunities. It will introduce participants to the many recreational and educational activities that Pennsylvania's aquatic resources have to offer by providing the means and opportunity to explore the waterways.

**2. Mount Lebanon School District, "Fishing, It's a LOCK (Lifetime Outdoor Connection for Kids)" Program.** Estimate of audience to be reached: 130. Recommended grant amount: \$ 5,000. Mount Lebanon School District will use grant funds to introduce students to fly-fishing. They will encourage the students to make a life-long commitment to enjoying the outdoors. The students will participate in hands-on lessons and streamside field experience to connect them with fishing and the outdoors. The elementary school's program will serve as a springboard to individuals seeking a license to fish, opportunities to mentor and share the sport, and connections with outreach organizations.

**3. Forest Hills School District, “Project R.I.O. – Rangers in the Outdoors.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 340. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. Project R.I.O. will provide the youth of Forest Hills School District the opportunity to become physically active through non-traditional sporting activity. It will provide opportunities for students to learn and improve fishing skills, give them a better understanding of fish habitat and water composition, and allow the students to experience several types of fishing and decide which is best for them.

**4. Perseus House Charter School of Excellence, “Fishes and Aquatic Science Teaching (FAST).”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 125. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. Building on the knowledge and interest gained during previous fishing programs, this project will increase student awareness of fisheries and aquatic science of the Great Lakes.

**5. Conneaut School District, “Conneaut Valley Environmental Class and Club Project.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 340. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. This program is intended to offer students lifelong skills related to fishing and boating. Students who enjoy these activities offered through science and physical education classes will become better outdoor stewards and pass along the information and skills to family and friends throughout their lives.

**6. Centre Regional Recreation Authority, “Warmwater Fly-Fishing Camp for Youth.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 12. Recommended grant amount: \$4,500. The goals and objectives of this program are for students to learn warmwater fly-tying and how to select appropriate flies for various warmwater venues. They will learn basic fly-casting and have mentored practice time. They will learn basic warmwater ecology plus identification of fish and other organisms and their habitats. The intended outcome is for students to gain a strong foundation in the sport and skills necessary to enable them to continue learning and enjoying fly-fishing, and share this skill with family or friends.

**7. Trout Unlimited Forbes Trail Chapter, “FTTU Youth Conservation and Fly-Fishing Program.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 20. Recommended grant amount: \$1,950. The Forbes Trail Chapter of Trout Unlimited intends to get kids involved in and make them knowledgeable about coldwater conservation and environmental issues

so that they will be future stewards and role models for such activities.

**8. Trout Unlimited Tiadaghton Chapter, “Women on the Water.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 36. Recommended grant amount: \$4,500. This program is intended to bring women into the sport of fishing as educated, responsible and safe anglers. The influx of female anglers will bolster the interest of sportfishing in this sector of Pennsylvania.

**9. The School District of the City of Erie, “CHAMPS (Creating Healthy Active Members Planning to Succeed).”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 260. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. The main goal of this program is to teach students basic fishing skills, water safety and principles of aquatic resource management. The fishing program will also serve to motivate students in the areas of science and language arts, improving their literacy skills. The pilot program has already led to an unprecedented level of parent/family interest and involvement, on which this program hopes to expand.

**10. Pennsylvania Trout, Inc. (PA Council of Trout Unlimited), “Trout in the Classroom.”** Estimate of audience to be reached: 350. Recommended grant amount: \$5,000. By providing students with a general understanding of stream ecology and coldwater conservation, students will learn about the life cycle of fish and the water quality requirements to sustain fish. In addition, since students will be rearing fish from eggs to fry and then releasing them into a stream, students will take a general interest in keeping the fishery healthy. By creating a general awareness about fishing opportunities, developing an interest in it by providing a better understanding of stream ecology, and giving the students the skills and knowledge about coldwater species will help them continue their interest in coldwater conservation and angling.

View the list of organizations receiving Sportfishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants, the amounts awarded and program descriptions on the Commission’s web site, [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us). Visit the Commission’s web site for more information on House Bill 1436 and Commission efforts to expand youth education. Click on “Keep PA Fishing: Investing in Our Future.” Later this fall, the Commission will announce when applications will be accepted for the 2009-2010 grant cycle. ☐



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*Grant funding is used to develop or expand programs that teach fishing and boating skills or educate participants about waterways.*