



# PROTECT CONSERVE ENHANCE

## PA Talks About Trout Fishing



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Trout fishermen are like anyone else when talking about their favorite activity. The conversation quickly turns to best experiences and thoughts on the issues affecting the activity. Trout anglers talk about where to go; whether or not the fishing regulations are working; recent hatches; and the best bait, flies, and lures. They also discuss stocking, in particular how many or how few trout should be stocked. Everyone likes to believe he is an expert, and more than a few anglers are willing to put their opinion out for discussion.

I've been a part of many of these conversations at picnics, parties, after church services and just about anywhere else when people find out that I work for the Fish & Boat Commission. Being an avid trout angler myself (not a good trout fisherman, I might add, but I try hard), I have my own opinions and am also willing to share them.

Earlier this year, we ratcheted up these informal conversations and asked more than 1,500 anglers throughout Pennsylvania to share their thoughts and impressions about trout fishing. This conversation was conducted by Virginia-based Responsive Management—the nation's premiere company that does this work—and the findings are fascinating. See "Featured Topics" at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us) for the full report.

Prior to our July commission meeting, I had the privilege of spending an evening bass fishing with Responsive Management Executive Director Mark Duda on the Susquehanna River. For four hours while floating and dodging rain storms, we talked trout, bass and the people who fish for them.

What did the survey tell us? Plenty. In fact, there is too much to fully describe here, so you are encouraged to read the survey and develop your own opinions. Here are some of the key findings:

- Trout anglers in Pennsylvania are content with current fishing regulations (92% satisfied).
- They are split on the cost of their license and stamp (49% say it's the right amount, and 47% say it's too high).
- A majority believe we need to do more to restore and protect the habitat and water quality for wild trout. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being extremely important, 72% marked this program as a 9 or 10.
- Most have a positive opinion of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (74% rank us as excellent or good; 23% give us a rating in the lower half of the scale—fair or poor).



Results from the Responsive Management Pennsylvania Trout Fishing Survey show that Pennsylvania trout anglers are content with current fishing regulations.

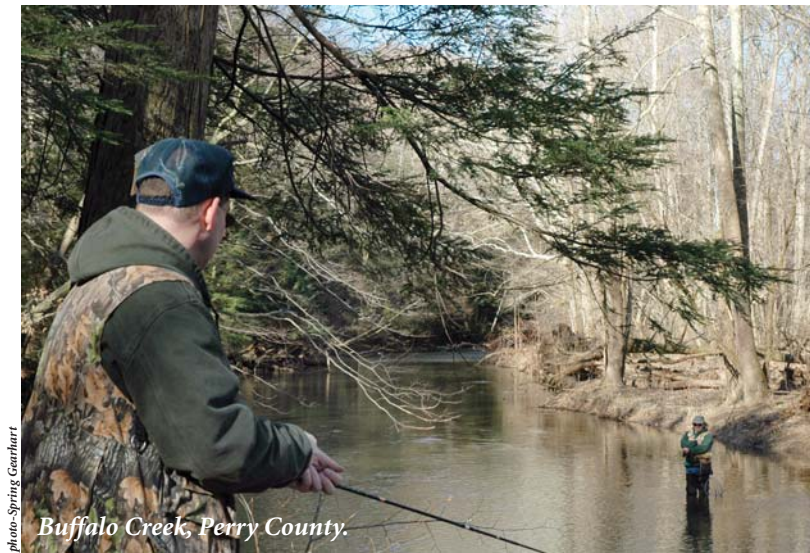


Photo-Spring Gearhart

Buffalo Creek, Perry County.

**A majority of trout anglers believe we need to do more to restore and protect the habitat and water quality for wild trout.**

- Most have mixed feelings about stocking hatchery trout on waters with a high abundance of wild trout (51% support doing so, while 41% oppose it).

The 167-page report is bursting with good information. It is great fun to read it and then compare yourself to the “typical” angler. Do you fish more or less than average? What is your preferred water? The Yellow Breeches Creek in Cumberland County is number one. How do you like to fish (with bait, lures, or flies)? The questions are almost endless, and we can continue to analyze the data in additional ways to glean more information.

In talking with Mark about how to interpret the results, it was clear that his extensive experience in doing similar surveys for many other states provides a unique perspective. For example, time and again, he finds that people express frustration with license prices, but, almost universally, the license expenditures make up only 2-3% of an angler’s total expenditure for fishing in any given year. Everything else is tackle, travel, bait, gas, food and other expenses. He also notes that most anglers still don’t understand that their licenses and the federal money that we get as part of the excise tax on many sporting items (tackle, guns, boat fuel) pay for the boat launches, habitat improvement, fishery surveys, stocking and other work that helps to create the fishing experience.

Mark also noted that his review of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission supports the anglers’ general impressions of the agency as a positive and proactive resource agency. The favorable rating of the Commission (74%) was on par with other well-regarded agencies nationwide and is far above some that are struggling with favorable ratings in the 20-30% range. Undoubtedly, we have plenty of areas that need continued attention (habitat, access and wild trout), but it is good to know that we’re at least moving in the right direction. This information will be used as part of the current efforts of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission to revise our strategic plan and develop a new trout management plan. Our Resource First philosophy will guide us in this effort to craft a management plan that utilizes the best available fisheries science in concert with our expanding understanding of the social and economic issues and challenges that surround trout fishing and our coldwater resources.

Please take the opportunity to talk with the Fish & Boat Commission and trout anglers about the results of the survey by going to [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us) and clicking on the “Chat with us” link.



Holman Lake, Little Buffalo State Park, Perry County.

Photo-Spring Gearhart

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