

# PFBC Activity Report – Highlights of Third Quarter, 2005

## Executive Office:

**House Game & Fisheries Committee hearing:** The House Game & Fisheries Committee held a public hearing in Philadelphia on September 20 to spotlight outdoor recreational development in the region. The PFBC was one of three invited presenters. The Executive Director provided an overview of the Commission's efforts to improve and increase public fishing and boating access in Philadelphia and surrounding counties. In addition, the director provided a general information update to committee members the following morning at a breakfast briefing.

**Ingham Spring Public Meeting:** Executive Office staff and the Solebury Township, Bucks County, Board of Supervisors held a meeting to gather public input on a proposed transfer of Ingham Spring property to the municipality. The August 30 meeting was held at the Solebury Township Municipal Building and drew over 100 participants. The township and the PFBC have been jointly working on an agreement to transfer ownership of two parcels of land totaling 48 acres – including a 15-acre lake – from the Commission to the municipality. The transfer would keep the property in public ownership and facilitate recreational improvements at the site. The agreement includes conservation easements that will ensure permanent protection for the large spring on the grounds and ensure the property will not be sold for private development. Public input at the meeting has been summarized and will be provided to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which has final approval authority over the proposed transfer.

**2006 Trout/Salmon Stamp:** A painting by the late Pennsylvania wildlife artist Ned Smith has been selected to appear on the 2006 Pennsylvania Trout/Salmon Stamp. The painting "Sting of the Hook," was created for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the then Pennsylvania Fish Commission's *Pennsylvania Angler* magazine in 1981. The painting will also again grace the cover of the magazine when the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue is published in the fall of 2006. The PFBC has teamed with the non-profit Ned Smith Center for Nature & Art for this endeavor. As part of the partnership, the center is offering a six-month gallery showing of the complete Trout/Salmon Stamp artwork dating from the program's inception in 1991. Trout/Salmon Stamp prints, patches and related merchandise is available through Wilderness Editions.

**Bassmasters Classic.** The Executive Office coordinated the agency's interaction with the local organizing committee and BASS in preparation for the Bassmasters Classic and associated events in July. Involvement in the event extended across many areas of the agency, most notably the bureaus of Law Enforcement, Boating & Education and Fisheries. The Pittsburgh region and the Three Rivers' fishery received extremely positive national exposure as a result of the event. Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society founder Ray Scott issued a letter after the event lauding Pennsylvania as a host and commending the transformation of Pittsburgh "from a dirty, industrial landscape with polluted rivers to a beautiful and vital city with clean, fishable waters."

**Fall Fishing Promotional Efforts:** As part of increased efforts to promote fishing and boating opportunities through the commonwealth, the PFBC is actively promoting fall fishing opportunities. In addition to working with the Pennsylvania Tourism Office to leverage its autumn advertising efforts, the Commission has also coordinated with 13 Tourist Promotion Agencies/Convention and Visitor's Bureaus representing 31 counties on a web-based promotion. Points of emphasis in the promotion include seasonal fisheries such as Lake Erie steelhead, fall trout stocking, family fishing programs and the availability of the newly created One-Day Tourist Fishing License.

**Little Juniata case:** The Office of Chief Counsel continues to work with counsel from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources with regard to litigation

currently pending before the Court of Common Pleas of Huntingdon County regarding the status of the Little Juniata River. The trial judge has scheduled a pre-trial conference among counsel for November 28, 2005.

**Familiarization Tours:** The Policy and Planning Office provided familiarization tours to the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership and the Governor's Policy Office to highlight watershed enhancement efforts in Stony Creek, Dauphin County and Susquehanna River Trail development, respectively.

**Athos:** The Office of Chief Counsel and other PFBC staff continue to work with the Athos Trustee Council to address the trustees' respective natural resource damages stemming from the Athos oil spill. The Trustee Council met on August 5, 2005.

### **Bureau of Administration**

**Fishing License Point-of-Sale (POS):** of Administration staff continue working with PA Game Commission (PGC) staff to develop the automated license system, also know as the POS. CAI was selected as the Commissions' project management consultant and is presently working to define the business rules for issuing licenses. Once these are compiled and analyzed, CAI will help with the preparation of the required state purchasing documents for the selection of prime vendor. The target date for implementation of the POS system is December 2006 for the 2007 fishing license year. The project is on schedule and within budget.

**Computerized Vessel Registration:** Administration and legal staff continue to negotiate with a potential vendor to allow boat dealers and other agents to conduct certain boat registration and titling functions at the agent location. If successful, the proposed concept would allow agents of the Commission to process certain transactions locally at little or no charge to the Commission. This would drastically increase the speed at which our boat registration customers receive registration documents and it will reduce the manual processing of applications by Commission employees. Target date for implantation or pilot phase is no later than January 2006.

**New Staff for Federal Grants Administration:** Bureau staff are evaluating options for the recruitment of a two qualified grants administration professionals to assume the duties and responsibilities of the Commission's Federal Program Manager and State Wildlife Grants Coordinator positions. We anticipate that the selected candidate will be on board by the end of the year.

**FEMA/PEMA/Insurance Funds for Ivan Flooding Incident:** Bureau of Administration staff continue to work on issues from last year's flooding incidents that caused major damage to many of our facilities. Administration staff is currently pursuing reimbursement for costs to repair many of these facilities. Many of the facilities are eligible for federal disaster relief funds, while others are covered under the state's insurance fund. Dutch Fork Lake Dam is the largest dollar value project (\$3.2 to \$4.0 million) being presented to FEMA for disaster assistance recovery funds. Bureau of Administration and Executive Office staff are preparing the necessary documents in an attempt to secure adequate funds to restore/upgrade the facility to meet present day dam safety codes.

**Headquarters Building - Bond Refinancing:** On September 28, 2005, the Commission, Dauphin County Industrial Development Authority (DCIDA) and PNC Capital will meet for the official closing for our recently approved and transacted "refinancing" bond issuance for the Commission Headquarters building. The Commission moved to finalize the process on September 8, 2005 after interest rates took a favorable turn. The bond refinancing effort will result in a direct savings of approximately \$103,000.

**Charter Boat/Fishing Guide Permits:** Administrative functions of this new program are 99% complete and are ready for a January 1, 2006 implementation. Permit stock and official recognition decals are designed and ordered. Notice of the new program requirements will be mailed to our existing volunteer program guides mid to

late October. The program requires final Commission approval – request to be made during September 2005 meeting.

**Continuity of Government:** The Governor’s Office of Administration is spearheading the Continuity of Government (COG) initiative to aid all Commonwealth agencies in the development of an emergency preparedness, response, and action plan. Bureau of Administration staff are coordinating the information gathering and plan preparation processes for the Commission. The COG plan will focus on disaster recovery steps to be taken by the Commission in the event of a natural or manmade disaster, which might impact Commission facilities and operations. The initial phase of the plan is to identify core/essential business functions and develop strategies to ensure that these essential functions are returned to service as quickly and efficiently as possible in the event of a disaster.

**Scientific Collectors Permitting System:** Bureau of Administration staff in the Pleasant Gap Data center are working with Bureau of Fisheries Staff to develop a system to capture information collected by permitted scientific collectors. Currently the Commission issues collectors permits to individuals who have provided valid justification to pursue scientific collections of aquatic and herpetological specimens. Current reporting requirements for these individuals will be revamped. An application is being developed to provide input and retrieval methodologies in a consistent geo-referenced database of these collections. Development is proceeding using web based technologies via the Commonwealth Enterprise Server Farm into a Commission housed SQL database. Full implementation is scheduled for the 2007 collection year.

**Purchasing Card Training:** Bureau staff conducted some much needed training for existing and new users on the use of the Commonwealth’s VISA Purchasing Card. This was conducted during multiple sessions in the Pleasant Gap area and Harrisburg headquarters building. Training focused on VISA card transaction processing, the new system used to help automate invoice payment/reconciliation and the Commonwealth’s purchasing rules.

**Pennsylvania Turnpike EZ-Pass Implementation:** Bureau staff are working with DGS and PA Turnpike personnel on the conversion of the current credit card based Turnpike payment system to the Turnpike’s EZ-Pass program. By Early November, the EZ-Pass migration should be completed. This will impact all PFBC personnel and vehicles using the PA Turnpike.

**Harrisburg Headquarters Enhancements:** Bureau staff coordinated the installation of two new picnic patios and the Commission monument located in the greenway next to the flagpoles. These items were designed and installed by Bureau of Engineering and Development (BEAD) staff under the general guidance of Bureau of Administration staff. Materials for the patio were obtained at no cost from another state agency and installed by BEAD staff. BEAD staff constructed the picnic tables and built the Commissioner monument from the ground up.

**Fiscal Year 2006-07 Budget Preparation and Submission:** Bureau staff are working on the preparation and submission of the Commission’s fiscal year 2006-07 budget. The Commission’s official budget request must be submitted to the Governor’s Budget Office no later than October 13, 2005. Details of submission will be shared with the Commission during the September 2005 meeting.

**Financial Summary & Budget :** As of August 31, 2005, Commission revenues and expenditures are consistent with expectations and within the approved budget. Two months into the fiscal year, more than 82% of the Fish Fund and over 87% of the Boat Fund budgeted amounts are still available for expenditure. Overall revenues for both the Fish and Boat Funds are up due to Act 159 of 2004, early receipt of federal funds and a higher rate of return on PFBC funds managed by Treasury.

**One-Day Tourist and National Guard/Reservist Fishing Licenses:** Recently, the Governor signed Acts 21 and 54 of 2005 into law. Act 21 provides for the creation of the *Pennsylvania Resident National Guard and Armed Forces Reserve* fishing license, while Act 54 of 2005 introduces the new *One-day Tourist License* and provides for an important modification to the existing *One-day Resident* fishing license. Bureau staff designed, procured, developed processes to administer, and shipped both new licenses classes to issuing agents on September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The new *One-day Tourist* license is also available online through the Outdoor shop.

**Fishing Licenses, Permits and Forms for 2006:** Bureau staff is busy reviewing and updating the various license certificates, stamps and forms used to administer and sell fishing licenses through our network of 1,000 issuing agents. All licenses and forms must be designed, developed, reviewed, procured and packaged for shipment by early November. 2006 licenses and permits are scheduled for shipment to agents around the Thanksgiving holiday. This will place them in the issuing agents' hands and ready for sale by December 1, 2005.

**Fishing License Sales & Revenues:** As of August 31, the reported 2005 year-to-date fishing license sales are down by 84,882 units or 10%, and Trout/Salmon permit sales are down by 14%. However, revenues from the decline in license sales were offset by the new fee structure and have resulted in an overall increase in license revenues of about \$4.5 million. Of this increase, \$922,052 was generated by sales of the two new Lake Erie permits, of which \$471,782 was deposited into a restricted revenue account for purposes outlined in Act 159 of 2004. An additional \$714,903 of the license revenues has been set aside to fund the automated license system (POS) development and implementation project.

**Boat Registrations:** Through August, for the 2005 Boating Season, we have processed a total of 193,914 registration and titling transactions. This compares with 194,925 transactions completed through the same period last year. Processing activity is up-to-date; most renewals are being "turned around" within 48 hours after being received, and applications for registration and/or titles are being processed well ahead of their temporary registration expiration date.

<b>Year-to-date Boat Registration Statistics, as of August 31, 2005</b>		
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Transaction Type</b>		
Duplicate Registrations	3,664	3,391
Duplicate Titles	604	596
Inactive Registrations	1,403	1,777
New Registrations	19,907	20,057
New Title	13,779	14,293
Registration Corrections	189	209
Registration Transfer	10,552	11,480
Renewals	135,575	135,397
Title Corrections	562	636
Title Transfers	7,679	7,089
<b>Total Transactions</b>	<b>193,914</b>	<b>194,925</b>

### **Bureau of Boating and Education**

**Boating Safety:** Over 12,000 Boating Safety Education Certificates have been issued so far this year (8,650 or 72% took internet or correspondence courses). This is a very slight increase over 2004, but is not statistically significant.

There have been eight fatal recreational boating accidents with ten fatalities to date. Over the last ten years, 90% of all fatalities have occurred prior to October 1, and we averaged 11.2 fatalities per year (i.e., 2005 is an average year to date).

**Water Trails:** New water trail efforts are in the works for the Juniata River, Pine Creek, Yellow Breeches Creek, and the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. The American Canoe Association recently selected two water trails in Pennsylvania as ACA-Recommended Water Trails for 2005. The two trails selected are the Susquehanna Water Trail and the Schuylkill River Water Trail. They also named the Commission as a Champion of Water Trails for 2005. They stated in their award notice that Pennsylvania's commitment to developing and supporting water trails is without equal anywhere in the U.S.

**Resource Education Section:** All seven of our seasonal education technician spots were filled during the summer months. The seasonal Environmental Education Specialist position was filled in late June. This position is located at the Linesville Fish Hatchery and is primarily involved in tours and programs at the hatchery. The other six seasonal staff is involved in day to day programming, such as youth field days, conservation camps, and fishing and boating programming for the public. Seasonal education staff is nearing the end of their employment terms. The majority of our seasonal staff is college students, often using their employment with us to satisfy their internship requirements. The Commission was lucky to have a good cohort of seasonal employees this year. Many have indicated a willingness to return to the Bureau in 2006.

**Fall Fishing Programs:** ARPS and their seasonal staff were busy scheduling and holding Family Fishing Programs. Thirty-six of these programs are to be held during 2005. This program is in a pilot phase, and is designed to attract families with children, where both adult and child can learn to fish. Public response to these programs has varied, from programs in the SE and NE turning people away, to the NW and NC having little or no participation. This year is being used to test program formats and materials. A formal pilot will be conducted in 2006, including a program evaluation.

**Youth Bass Angler Conservation School:** Carl Haensel and many others from the Commission were involved in the Youth Bass Angler Conservation School (YBACS) in July. This year, 22 youths participated in the camp. Carl and ARPS Laurel Garlicki are working together to evaluate this year's camp. A presentation will be made on these results of this evaluation at a Commission meeting in early 2006.

**Boating Facility Grant Program:** Staff is currently working on completing the contracts for the grants that were awarded under the Boating Facilities Grant Program in fiscal year 2005. Thirteen of the contracts have been signed and returned by the recipients. The Executive Director and the Legal Department have approved eight of the contracts. The Attorney General has approved and returned five contracts, and three of the contracts have been approved by the Comptrollers office. For the next round of grants (fiscal year 2006), staff is currently working with seventeen possible applicants.

**Educational Media Services:** A "call for entries" for the 2006 Fishing Summary was extended to PFBC management earlier this year. The requested return for submissions, revisions, and updates for this annual publication was August. A production run of 1.3 million books is scheduled for delivery by December 1. Advertising revenue is ahead and should subsidize printing of the book by \$75,000.

Concurrent with the production of the Summary book, staff has produced the July/August and September/October issues of the *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* magazine. Issue planning for 2006 (the magazine's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary) includes many article reprints from the 1930s to present.

The Media Services Section has processed over 300 work orders so far this year. Over 50 percent of the orders request "on-demand" duplication and related bindery services. The balance of work orders request offset

printing that is the primary fulfillment of over 150 pamphlet and education titles maintained in inventory for Commission distribution.

### **Bureau of Engineering & Development**

**Opossum Lake:** The draining of Opossum Lake, a popular 59-acre fishing and boating impoundment near Carlisle, Cumberland County, began the week of September 19. A routine assessment of the earthen embankment by maintenance staff revealed small seeps in the dam's spillway. The seeps were piping a clayish material, an early indication of erosion that could potentially weaken the dam if not addressed. After consultation with dam safety officials at the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the decision was made to begin a controlled drawdown of the lake in the interest of public safety

**.Agreements:** Bureau staff have been busy with approximately dozen agreements and leases around the Commonwealth, including a renewal of the agreement with Rockview Correctional Facility. We continues to work with Rockview to negotiate and draft a new agreement to extend the existing term, expand our control and enlarge our agreement area at Benner Springs. The proposed agreement is currently under review by the Secretary of Corrections in Harrisburg. This includes preparing a sub-agreement for use by Benner Twp to pull in grant money.

**Construction Update:** The upgrades for the Tylersville State Fish Hatchery will be bid by the Department of General Services in October. DGS intends to solicit bids for Pleasant Gap in November.

**Walnut Creek deflectors:** Bureau staff traveled to Erie for the construction of deflectors in Walnut Creek to increase scour on of the steelhead holding holes.

**Dredging:** Staff began dredging operations at Walnut Creek, Erie County the afternoon of Monday, September 19. The dredging operation will remove the build-up of rocks and sand that has formed at the mouth of the creek where it flows into Lake Erie. The work will clear the channel for boaters using the PFBC's Walnut Creek Access Area.

### **Bureau of Fisheries**

**Smallmouth Bass Young of Year (YOY) index:** Fisheries management completed a smallmouth bass YOY index sampling and initiated coordination with Department of Environmental Protection and Susquehanna River Basin Commission staff to investigate possible causes of significant mortalities this year; the cause is attributed to high water temperatures/low flows/ and low dissolved oxygen levels that caused stress and a secondary infection of Columnaris.

The Pathology Unit provided diagnosis and culture of YOY smallmouth bass tissue samples during Susquehanna and Juniata River mortality investigation.

**Lake Drawdowns:** Environmental Services personnel conducted a field view of the dam at Little Pine State Park, Lycoming County after removal of debris in the dam and before removal of sediment from the stilling basin below the dam to assess the project and recommend minimum flow limits. Staff also responded to a drawdown of Duke Lake, Ryerson Station State Park. The lake was drained quickly due to increased leakage and imminent threat of failure. The lakebed has been hydro-seeded, sediment to be dredging.

**Presentation:** Dave Spotts presented "Culvert Designs for Fish Passage in Pennsylvania" at the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Public Works Association Symposium, at Grantville.

**Paddlefish:** An interim report on State Wildlife Grant project "Current status of paddlefish in Pennsylvania" by Drs. Kimmel and Argent at California University of Pennsylvania indicates; two paddlefish were collected, one below Dashields Lock & Dam on the Ohio River and one below Lock & Dam 3, Allegheny River.

**Co-operative Nursery Services:** Co-op Nursery staff made 79 emergency inspections for low flows and high water temperatures. A total of 401,250 trout fingerlings have been provided to cooperative nurseries.

**Fish Production:** Southern Regional hatcheries stocked 15,300 adult trout and 56,000 fingerling trout during the quarter and. A total of 106,038 stripped bass where reared and stocked by Tylersville in cooperative with the Lamar National Fish Hatchery.

Stocking has kept the Northern Hatcheries busy this quarter, with fingerling channel catfish, purebred and tiger Muskellunge, bluegill, paddlefish, golden shiners, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and white crappie, as well as 60,000 put-grow and take trout fingerlings being produced.

**Hatchery maintenance and upgrades:** Work included:

- construction of sludge storage tank at Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery. Also at Huntsdale, a French drain line was added, the clarifier sludge pump was re-plumbed and two raceway retaining walls were formed and poured.
- instillation of a5000 gallon per minute pump at Bellefonte State Fish Hatchery
- repair of flood damage at Pleasant Mount State Fish Hatchery
- cleaning of settling pond at Fairview State Fish Hatchery
- instillation of Dri-vit on Oswayo hatch house exterior
- hooking up a new well at Corry State Fish Hatchery
- repairing filters at Union City State Fish Hatchery

### **Bureau of Law Enforcement**

**WCO Graduation:** The 17<sup>th</sup> Waterways Conservation Officer Class graduated on September 7, 2005. The six members of the class were assigned to the following locations.

Patrick W. Ferko	Southern York District
Jeffrey B. Giardina	Western Mercer District
Gregory A. Pochron	Clarion District
James A. Smolko	Eastern Erie District
Edward K. Stuart	Central Erie District
Lewis W. Sweigart Jr.	Delaware District

Seven law enforcement districts continue to remain vacant.

**WCO Recruitment:** The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in conjunction with the Civil Service Commission has accepted applications for the Waterways Conservation Officers positions up until August 19, 2005. The agency is planning on hiring fourteen individuals for these positions. Six hundred and sixty individuals have applied for this position and are currently completing the written exam. The tentative hiring and training schedule for the 18<sup>th</sup> Waterways Conservation Officer Class is as follows.

November 2005

Receipt of eligible candidates list from Civil Service Commission

December 2005	Provide availability notices to top 100 to 150 candidates on Civil Service hiring list
January 2006	Conduct structured interviews in Harrisburg for those individuals available for the position
February/March 2006	Conduct background investigations on top candidates
May 2006	Administer medical, psychological and physical evaluations to top fourteen candidates
Early July 2006	Convene 18 <sup>th</sup> Waterways Conservation Officer Class at Stackhouse Training Facility
July/December 2006	Act 120 Training component at PSP Northwest Training Center
February/August 2007	Fish and Boat Commission Training component at Stackhouse Training Facility which includes 11 weeks of field training assignments
August 29, 2007	Graduation of the 18 <sup>th</sup> Class

**Katrina response:** The Commission was prepared to send 14 officers along with boats and vehicles to Louisiana in order to assist with search and rescue operations and security. This was in response to a nationwide request from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fish that we received through the Pennsylvania Management Agency. The deployment was cancelled by PEMA due to improving conditions in New Orleans.

**BUI Enforcement:** Officers to date have apprehended 47 individuals operating watercraft under the influence.

**Bassmasters:** Region officers participated in providing security and control of recreational boating activities on the Three Rivers during the Bassmaster Classic.

**Great Lakes Law Enforcement Committee:** The Northwest Region hosted the Great Lakes Law Enforcement Committee meeting which was held in Erie during early September.

**Steelhead enforcement:** The Northwest Region has initiated the planning for an enhanced fall steelhead enforcement detail. Officers from other regions will be provided with an opportunity to spend a week in Erie and assist in the law enforcement operations. The implementation date of the detail will be dependent upon the arrival of the fish in the tributaries.

**Experienced Officer Training:** The Bureau conducted experienced officer training for the fulltime officers during September at the Stackhouse Training Facility.

**Fatality:** The South-central Region conducted an extensive investigation involving a high profile fatal boat accident (three individuals killed) on Raystown Lake.

**Investigation:** The Southeast Region in conjunction with the State Police conducted an investigation of a marine dealer involving registration and titling violations that resulted in the issuance of Fish and Boat Code citations totaling in excess of \$5,400.