

Policy Manual

For

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Prepared and Approved by:
The Board of Commissioners

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Fish and Boat Commission

Policy Statement

Board Accountability

The Board's mission is to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities. It will strive to fulfill this mission by developing, adopting, and enforcing policies that are proactive, aggressive, and focused on the long-term health, protection, and development of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.

These policies will be directed toward maintaining a balance between the critical factors that influence fishing and boating opportunities and the health and natural function of the Commonwealth's various watersheds. Those factors include the species we are charged with protecting within those watersheds, the habitat that supports that life, the people who enjoy and utilize the resources, and the long-term viability of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC).

In addition, the Board will develop and promulgate regulations that are consistent with enforcing this mission.

1. The Board represents and owns this mission. It recognizes that its moral responsibility begins and ends with the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the resources that are essential to fulfilling this mission. It also acknowledges that accomplishing this mission requires a critical analysis of the intersection that occurs between the resource, the people, and the life within the resource.
2. The Board will educate itself regarding the resource and the people it represents. The Board's education will be facilitated by:
 - A. Reviewing reports, presentations, and other materials prepared by PFBC staff and any external sources it deems appropriate.
 - B. Studying issues and concerns of resource users and key experts.
 - C. Discussions with elected officials, consumers, and service providers.
 - D. Monitoring the demand and utilization of services and programs.

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Governing Style

The Board acknowledges that its central role is to govern and formulate policies to fulfill its role. It will do so by focusing on strategic leadership rather than administrative detail. Therefore, its role will be:

1. Proactive rather than reactive.
2. Strategic rather than administrative.
3. Distinct from that of the Executive Director and the staff.
 - A. The Board, and only the Board, will establish policy. While the Executive Director is encouraged to express his thoughts relative to those policies, he is expected to execute them and will be evaluated relative to the quality and timeliness of that execution.

To that end, the Board will:

1. Deliberate in many voices but govern in one.
2. Be responsible for excellence in governing. It will initiate policy and resist efforts on the part of others to impose policy directives without formal consideration and adoption by the Board.
3. Direct, control, and inspire the organization through the careful establishment of written Board policies that reflect the Board's values and perspectives. Such policies will focus on short-term consequences and long-term impacts. They will reflect a firm commitment to managing and understanding the needs of the Commonwealth's watersheds and its people. They will seek to avoid operating, administrative, and programmatic means of achieving those ends unless the Commissioners believe such action is necessary to the accomplishment of its policies.
4. Recognize that its first priority is to that of the Commonwealth as a whole.
5. Use individual areas of expertise to enhance its ability as a governing body to fulfill its mission rather than substituting individual judgments for Board values and policies.
6. Solicit information from whatever sources it deems appropriate.
7. Be prepared for meetings.

8. Ensure the orientation of new members in its governance process to maintain continuity of governance capabilities.
9. Be self-monitoring. It will review its processes and performance regularly to assure that its activities and disciplines are consistent with its governing role.
10. Develop its agenda in consultation with, but not under the exclusive direction of, the Executive Director. Board members are encouraged to provide timely input into the development of the agenda. The President and Executive Director are expected to work collaboratively toward the development of a final agenda for Board meetings.
11. Promulgate regulations in an open and deliberate manner that incorporates such input as the Board deems appropriate and is required by law. Input should represent the most current research and information available. Recognizing the importance of maintaining suitable regulations and the potential for unproductive complexity and unintended consequences, the Board should assure that ample time for its considered debate and evaluation is allowed. The Board must assure that regulations are precise, understandable to the public, and consistent with its policies. In addition, the Board will, at all times, seek to simplify regulations.
12. Constantly strive to improve upon its ability to envision and articulate the future and its relationship to its mission.
13. Insist that all of its activities and those of its Executive Director be prudent, ethical, and legal.
14. Elect its officers annually at its regularly scheduled July meeting.
15. Encourage and support the Executive Director in efforts to ensure that the agency possesses and develops the necessary core competencies, skills, talents, and managerial capabilities to fulfill its mission and sustain its long-term viability.

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Committee Policy

The Board may, from time to time, establish committees to assist it in fulfilling its responsibilities. Committees will be used sparingly so as to avoid interference with the wholeness of the Board's job.

Committees should have a well-developed, written charge that defines their respective roles, their membership, suggested staff contacts, specific objectives, and targeted accomplishments. Committee assignments and committee chairs should be announced by the President prior to the fall meeting each year.

1. Standing committees can be established by the Board for specific purposes.
 - A. Committees may be comprised of Board members only. However, committees may access PFBC staff, resource users, interested groups, and outside experts when they believe their opinions and expertise can lend value to its deliberations.
 - B. Committee Chairmen will report on their respective committee activities at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
2. From time to time, the Board may establish, in its sole discretion, special committees to address specific areas of concern.
3. Both standing and special Board committees are to help the Board in developing policy and regulation alternatives for consideration.
4. Board committees may also advise the Executive Director. However, the Board will assure that committees do not conflict with the authority or direction it has delegated to the Executive Director.
5. Board committees may be formed to monitor and evaluate organizational performance in specific areas.
6. Committee roles and responsibilities may not be changed without the consent of the Commission president and the committee chair. If the two are unable to agree, the Commission president or committee chair may present the proposed changes to the Board of Commissioners for final resolution.
7. It is recognized that committee meetings at which a quorum of the committee members are present, with the exception of informational sessions, are considered public meetings (unless specifically exempted from the Sunshine Act) and must be held in an open, public forum.

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Board Relationship with the Executive Director

The Board's authority to staff will be delegated through the Executive Director. Therefore, all authority and accountability of staff are considered to be authority and accountability of the Executive Director.

Such delegation will be consistent with the Board's Human Resources Policy and section 302 of the Fish and Boat Code. Such section reads as follows: "The Commission shall appoint to serve at its pleasure, and with the approval of the Governor, fix the compensation of an Executive Director who shall be the chief executive officer of the Commission and attend to its administrative work and have charge of all activities under the jurisdiction of the Commission. The Executive Director shall be the chief waterways conservation officer of the Commission and shall have charge of, direct, supervise, and control all waterways conservation officers, deputy waterways conservation officers, and employees of the Commission."

1. The Board will direct the Executive Director to achieve certain, specific results through the establishment of policies. The Board will also limit the latitude the Executive Director may use to achieve those results (See Executive Director Limitations). The Executive Director is accountable for the entire agency's meeting expectations and will be evaluated accordingly.
2. The Board will measure and evaluate the annual progress its Executive Director is making toward achieving its policies and directions. The Board considers this task as being essential to accomplishing its mission. The Board will require information to complete its evaluation. Therefore, the Executive Director will:
 - A. Present an Annual Plan of Work for the upcoming calendar year to each Board Member. This plan will be delivered in written form by whatever means is most convenient by December 15 of each year. The plan will include the following:
 - 1) A listing and description of proposed activities for the upcoming year
 - 2) The expected results to be achieved during the upcoming year
 - 3) Anticipated longer-term results
 - 4) The expected timing of the results
 - 5) Fiscal and personnel implications of each activity
 - B. The Annual Plan of Work will be voted on for approval by the Commission at the January Commission meeting.
 - C. Present a written list of accomplishments for the prior year to each Board Member no later than the end of the first full week of the new calendar year.
 - D. The President of the Board of Commissioners will, annually, direct an evaluation of the Executive Director. This evaluation will include input from all Commissioners and will utilize the information as described above and any other information it deems

appropriate to provide an annual, written evaluation of the Executive Director's job performance relative to its policies and the Executive Director's achievements for the preceding year. The performance evaluation will be presented to the Executive Director at its January meeting. All materials, other than the final composite report, will be destroyed at the completion of each annual evaluation.

4. The Board expects the Executive Director to interpret its policies reasonably. To that end, the Executive Director may make all decisions, take all actions, establish all practices, and develop all activities necessary to achieve the Board's policies while remaining within the limits of latitude described in #1 above.
5. The Board may change its policies at any time. By doing so, the Board could alter the specific results to be achieved and/or the boundaries within which the Executive Director must function. However, so long as a particular policy and delegation are in place, the Board will respect and support the Executive Director's choices.
6. Only decisions of the Board acting as a body are binding on the Executive Director. The only exception may occur in those rare circumstances when the Board specifically authorizes such authority as a group or through its president.
7. If board members or committees request information or assistance without Board authorization, the Executive Director may refuse to provide such information if in his/her judgment such a request would require inordinate use of staff time, imprudent commitment of agency resources, or loss of focus on Board policies.
8. The Board expects that the Executive Director will keep it informed in a timely manner of major personnel changes at Bureau Director or higher such as retirements, new hires, disciplinary activities and replacement plans.
9. The Executive Director will assure that all actions of the PFBC and its staff comply with existing laws and regulations.
10. The Executive Director will assure that all staff reports made to the Board are complete, objective, accurate, honest, and compiled in accordance with the best ethical, professional, scientific, and operating practices. In addition, such reports will be presented in a manner that is understandable to the Commissioners.
11. The Board expects the Executive Director to hire and promote the most qualified individuals possible. Therefore, the Executive Director will be free to hire and promote from within or outside the PFBC.
12. The Executive Director will be proactive regarding the formation and enhancement of relationships and partnerships with public and private corporations, governmental agencies, non-governmental stakeholder groups, and other organizations whose interests and activities are considered beneficial to achieving the Board's mission and fulfilling its policies.

13. The Executive Director will continually explore and seek to implement methods designed to increase agency revenues.
14. The Executive Director will control agency expenses and perform ongoing evaluations of the usefulness of all agency assets. These assets will include real property, programs, equipment, and people. If such assets are no longer needed, the Executive Director will promptly dispose of them in a manner that is consistent with Board policies and current regulations and laws.
15. Board members may consult directly with staff for the purpose of asking questions and gaining information. However, Board members will not place demands upon the staff that involve inordinate time commitments, expenses, or diversions from previously defined policy directions.
16. Board members will not provide direction to the staff.
17. The Board believes that the agency must be positively engaged in the professional development of its staff. Such development represents an essential component of the agency's future success. Staff must remain current with advances and changes in their various areas of responsibility. Staff members may represent a pool of potential management candidates. Therefore, the Executive Director will support, and encourage the further development and education of the staff for the long-term benefit of the agency. To that end, the Executive Director's plans for professional staff and personal development will become a permanent part of the annual plan of work. The Executive Director will report to the Board on progress with this regard at its regularly scheduled July meeting.

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Executive Director Limitations

The Executive Director will not:

1. Cause or allow any Commission practice that is illegal, imprudent, unethical, or in violation of commonly accepted business or scientific practices.
2. Cause or allow the Board to receive staff information with significant gaps in timeliness, accuracy, completeness, or objectivity.
3. Cause or allow information to be withheld from the Board that may assist it in evaluating or formulating its policies.
4. Jeopardize Commission assets through inadequate maintenance, unnecessary exposure to risk, or failure to comply with regulatory requirements. It is understood that budgetary limitations may force the Executive Director to prioritize maintenance programs with the result that some items may suffer.
5. Cause Commission staff or volunteers to be exposed or subjected to unfair, undignified, or unsafe treatment or conditions.
6. Unnecessarily expose the Commission, staff, or board members to claims of liability.
7. Receive, process, or disburse funds with controls insufficient to meet the standards of the Commonwealth's audit policies and those of the applicable federal programs.
8. Fail to pay Commission expenses and settle debts in a timely manner.
9. Expose the Commission to undue financial risk or cause the Commission to incur indebtedness without prior Board approval.
10. Discourage appropriate open communication between Commissioners and staff.
11. Tolerate deterioration in Commission finances that might jeopardize programmatic needs and Commission policies.

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Human Resources

This Human Resources Policy is promulgated pursuant to section 304 of the Fish and Boat Code, 30 Pa. C.S. §304. To the extent that there is an inconsistency between this policy and the applicable provisions of the Civil Service Act, other Commonwealth and federal laws, regulations, policies and labor agreements, those authorities will govern.

Appointment of Executive Director

The Commissioners will appoint an Executive Director to serve at their pleasure and, with the approval of the Governor, will fix the Executive Director's compensation.

Role of Executive Director

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Commission and attends to its administrative work and has charge of all activities under the Commission's jurisdiction. The Executive Director is the chief waterways conservation officer of the Commission and has charge of, directs, supervises and controls all waterways conservation officers, deputy waterways conservation officers and employees of the Commission. The Fish and Boat Code has vested authority in the Executive Director, subject to the provisions of this policy and Commonwealth law, to appoint and fix the compensation of waterways conservation officers and other Commission employees as the Executive Director deems necessary to enforce and carry out the provisions of the Fish and Boat Code and to perform the functions and work of the agency.

Establishment of the Complement

The Executive Director or designee will manage the complement up to the approved and authorized level to meet the needs of the Commission. The Commissioners will review and approve all requests to increase the established full-time salaried complement level recommended by the Executive Director.

Furlough

The Commissioners will review and approve all requests to sanction furlough actions due to lack of work or lack of funds before official notice is provided to the Governor's Office of Administration, the affected union and employees.

Transfer of Functions

The Commissioners will review and approve all requests to transfer functions to or from other Commonwealth agencies before an application is submitted to the Executive Board.

Classification and Compensation

The Commission will utilize class specifications and pay plan established by the Executive Board. The Executive Director or designee will allocate and compensate positions to appropriate classes in accordance with generally accepted classification principles and established Commonwealth policies and procedures. All classification and pay processes will be free of bias and non-merit factors.

Appointment, Promotion, Transfer, Demotion and Termination

The Executive Director or designee will make all appointments, promotions, transfers, demotions and terminations in accordance with applicable provisions of the Civil Service Act and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, labor agreements, applicable state and federal laws, and Commonwealth policies and procedures. All employment actions will be free of all non-merit factors.

Reorganizations

Reorganizations involving changes to the Bureau level or higher will require the approval of the Commissioners prior to submission to the Executive Board. Establishment or closure of field offices identified on the official, published Commission organization chart also will require the prior approval of the Commissioners before submitting the request to the Executive Board. Reorganizations involving substantive changes to organizations at the Division level, its equivalent or lower shall require the approval of the Executive Director or designee.

General and Standards of Conduct

The Commission shall follow the Commonwealth's Management Directives with regard to Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Drug Free Workplace, Workplace Violence Prevention and other Human Resource programs.

Definitions:

Executive Board: The Executive Board was established in section 204 of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L. 177, No. 175) known as the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §64. The Executive Board consists of the Governor, who shall be chair thereof, and six other heads of administrative departments to be designated from time to time by the Governor. The Secretary of Administration always functions as the Secretary of the Board. Current Executive Board members include Secretaries of Agriculture, Banking, Conservation and Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, Public Welfare, and Revenue.

Under various provisions contained in the Administrative Code, the Executive Board is required and has the authority to approve or disapprove a variety of administrative actions to ensure the efficient operation of state government. Two specific examples include reorganizations and changes to the pay plan. The pay plan includes all class specifications and salary plans.

Bureau: (taken from Governor's Management Directive 260.1, Organization Requests, dated 5/30/01). The organizational unit immediately below an office, or executive office when offices are not used, and immediately above two or more divisions. Bureaus are usually established for either or both of the following reasons:

1. When there is an intra-agency need for the coordination and comprehensive management of a group of logically related functions.
2. When a basic function is of sufficient importance to deserve visibility, as a point of contact, to the public or other agencies.

This policy supercedes the Personnel Policies adopted on October 21, 1991, and as subsequently amended.

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Personnel Management

As Commissioners, we need to take a careful and measured approach in our official interaction with employees. We all appreciate and applaud the hard work and dedication of the Commission staff and nearly all of our interactions with employees are positive. It is important for us, as Commissioners, to work with the staff, to get to know our local and regional employees, and to foster a spirit of cooperation and open communication.

In general, the main role of the Commissioners is to set the overall policy and direction of the Commission. We convey such policy and direction to the staff through the Executive Director. Further, we hold the Executive Director accountable for accomplishing our policy objectives. The Fish and Boat Code assigns administration of staff to the Executive Director. Section 302 states:

The Commission shall appoint to serve at its pleasure and, with the approval of the Governor, fix the compensation of an executive director who shall be the chief executive officer of the Commission and attend to its administrative work and have charge of all activities under the jurisdiction of the Commission. The executive director shall be the chief waterways conservation officer of the Commission and shall have charge of, direct, supervise, and control all waterways conservation officers, deputy waterway conservation officers and employees of the Commission.

Commissioners should be mindful at all times that, although the Executive Director serves at the pleasure of the Commissioners, the majority of Commission staff are covered by civil service protections and statewide labor agreements. Therefore, although open communications and working with staff is encouraged, Commissioners shall not attempt to supervise or manage individual or departmental staff directly. This is not meant to preclude Commissioners from requesting information or other matters from staff. Wherever possible such requests should be made to the various Bureau and Department heads so as to not disrupt staff from their normal work routines. If a Bureau or Department head feels that any such request is beyond their ability or authority, they should direct the Commissioners to the Executive Director. Each Commissioner shall honor such direction in a courteous manner without complaint or argument. Should a Commissioner have any grievance or complaint regarding any Commission staff member, other than the Executive Director, it shall be kept confidential and forwarded to the Executive Director or appropriate staff designated by the Executive Director for any appropriate action that may be required. No Commissioner shall attempt to address any grievance or complaint with a staff member directly. Any complaint or grievance against the Executive Director shall be brought before the board of Commissioners in executive session for discussion and any appropriate action that the board deems appropriate.

Under all circumstances, we, as Commonwealth officials, should treat all employees in a respectful manner that does not embarrass them or demean their dignity. As a board of Commissioners, it is our obligation to regulate ourselves and to make sure that all members of the Commission conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Questions about the proper role of Commissioners in dealing with supervision, management and control of employees should be directed to the Executive Director.

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Political Activities

The Commissioners of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have the general role of formulating policy and promulgating rules for fishing, boating, and related activities. This role is guided by the agency mission, “to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities,” and various documents, such as the strategic plan. Frequently, the attainment of the mission and goals requires political involvement by the Commissioners and staff in order to develop and work towards passage of legislation, acquire funds, or other products. It is further recognized that Commissioners contribute valuable skills and resources in the political environment. The effective and appropriate political advocacy and actions of the Commissioners have always been vital to the success of the Fish and Boat Commission. Commissioners are subject to state statutes, regulations, and policies with regard to many actions. These include the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act, the Governor’s Code of Conduct, and others. These set a legal standard within which we all must operate. However, in order to further ensure that the Commissioners and staff work effectively and appropriately, the Board of Commissioners has established the following guidelines.

The Commissioners and PFBC staff will develop a Legislative Agenda that guides Commission and staff work for a two-year period concurrent with the legislative calendar. The Legislative Agenda will be developed jointly by the Executive Director and Board of Commissioners and approved by the Commissioners. The Agenda will serve as the guiding document, similar to the PFBC strategic plan, in determining legislative priorities and direction. However, it needs to be recognized that the political landscape is dynamic and often immediate responses on legislation outside of the approved legislative agenda are warranted. In such situations, the Executive Director is authorized to act on behalf of the Commission. However, the actions of the Executive Director should be in conjunction with appropriate notification, input, and guidance from the President or the Executive Committee of the Board of Commissioners (President, Past-president, and Vice-president).

Throughout the legislative advocacy process the Commissioners should be careful to not make any commitments for actions of the Fish and Boat Commission without approval of the Executive Director or the Board of Commissioners.

We all recognize that open and timely communication during the entire legislative process is fundamental to our success. Information and knowledge about the issues that concern legislators, their support, lack of support, or questions about PFBC legislative issues, is critical. We need to ensure that as much information as possible on legislative matters is conveyed to the Legislative Liaison or the Executive Director. It is the duty of the Legislative Liaison to work closely with the House and Senate members, their staff, and the Governor’s office and to inform

the Commissioners of the status of legislative efforts. This will be accomplished through monthly briefings, reports at Commission meetings, or through other means as needed and appropriate.

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Partnering and Outreach

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's independent status is critical to fulfilling its unique mission. Its independence provides the flexibility to act upon the substantial challenges and opportunities it faces. The agency must recognize its challenges and opportunities and capitalize on its uniqueness by aggressively partnering and reaching out to external organizations that can assist it in fulfilling its mission.

The Commission also operates in a highly competitive environment. That competition may assume many forms. Some, but not all, of which include:

1. The various demands and uses imposed upon our natural resources.
2. Public access concerns.
3. The Commission's ability to attract, equip, and retain qualified employees.
4. The need to execute tasks competitively.
5. The numerous recreational alternatives available to end users.
6. Competition from other agencies for funding, regulatory jurisdiction, and program administration.
7. Access to funding sources.

These factors represent significant, ongoing concerns. They must be met with new and creative approaches. A broad appreciation for the importance of leveraging and optimizing the allocation of the agency's assets is required to augment, enhance, and supplement its efforts.

To that end, the Commission will continuously evaluate the advisability of partnering and reaching out to diverse public and private entities while recognizing that all decisions with this regard will be conducted in accordance with applicable rules, contracts, and regulations.

In making these decisions, the agency should consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

1. The scale needed to economically justify performing certain tasks in house.

2. The business risk associated with internalizing certain operations and assuming the fixed costs that accompany such a decision. Partnering may result in greater budgetary flexibility through converting fixed costs to variable costs.
3. Agency operating flexibility. The merits of internalizing programs and operations relative to the cost of change should be evaluated. Such cost considerations may include the potential for operational inertia and the agency's willingness to remain current with new technologies and approaches.
4. Long term, strategic flexibility. The potential that new initiatives and policies may be difficult to embrace in the face of high fixed costs and entrenched programs should be reviewed.
5. Capital investment requirements. The benefits of utilizing someone else's capital investment and preserving the Commission's assets should always be considered. Internalization may require significant investment and reduce the flexibility with which the agency allocates its finite resources.
6. The need for ongoing investment. It is important to guard against departments and programs becoming self-perpetuating and be mindful that substantial additional investments may be necessary to preserve the value of the original investment.
7. The importance of nurturing and maintaining access to external research, know-how, and education. The Commission should avoid the risk of foreclosing on outside expertise because it has put itself in competition with external suppliers.
8. The need to maintain operational balance. The agency will weigh the possibility that decisions to produce something in house might compromise other initiatives and thwart the agency's ability to proactively pursue its mission.
9. The requirement to maintain internal vigor. Vertical integration frequently means that services are delivered through a captive relationship. Such arrangements may dull the agency's willingness to change. Incentives to change and compete vigorously must be pursued and encouraged. Activities that compromise such initiatives should be avoided.
10. Timeliness. Timely execution is regarded as an essential component of the proactive pursuit of the agency's mission. The agency must avoid the possibility of unreasonable response times and lost opportunities in its competitive world by promoting the prompt and effective execution of all board policies. Comparing the time and risk associated with training, developing, and equipping the proper people versus developing partnerships and reaching out should be an ongoing aspect of this analysis.

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Resource First

“Resource First” is a philosophy that describes the first priority of the commission’s mission and that of the Fish and Boat Code as well as the commission’s fundamental role in fulfilling and supporting the provisions of Article 1, Section 27 (Natural Resources and Public Estate) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

It represents:

1. The commissioners’ belief that the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources are the valuable collateral that secures all fishing and boating activities.
2. The notion that protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources is the agency’s first management priority.
3. The commissioners’ expectation that the agency’s activities, regulations, and methods of work will be evaluated and practiced within the context of this priority.

It is not a wild-fish-only policy and should not be interpreted as such. Nor does it represent a commitment to eliminate hatcheries or fish stocking.

The commissioners expect this philosophy to:

1. Provide the basis for scientifically managing and protecting the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and maximizing fishing and boating opportunities.
2. Lead to different ways of allocating the agency’s limited financial resources.
3. Support new, scientifically-based approaches to distributing and raising expensive, stocked fish.
4. Provide the basis for protecting and enhancing viable wild fisheries and other resources under the agency’s jurisdiction.

The “Resource First” philosophy further establishes the ethical principle that the agency’s primary role is that of a conservation organization. Accordingly, its responsibility extends beyond merely providing fishing and boating opportunities to the public. Rather, it establishes a commitment to optimizing those opportunities through the application of good science throughout the Commonwealth.

It also establishes the firm expectation that the agency will:

1. Not engage in or support activities or regulations that may bring undue harm to its aquatic resources.
2. Constantly strive to develop and improve upon its ability to make scientifically-informed decisions on the impact of various regulations and practices on the aquatic resources it is charged to protect.

Should doubt or confusion arise regarding this priority, the agency will:

1. Opt for the more conservative position of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the water, the habitat within its attendant watershed, and the life within it.
2. Develop all of its activities in a scientifically supportable manner that is consistent with this philosophy and the most currently available research.
3. Implement changes, whenever feasible, in its regulations and practices to eliminate such doubt or confusion.

Example:

A Resource First management strategy demands continual assessment of the resource, an ongoing evaluation of the impact of angling pressure on that resource, and a commitment to making changes as conditions dictate. Such changes will be directed toward insuring that the diverse fisheries of the Commonwealth become and remain the best attainable consistent with the social and environmental stresses placed upon them.

If a change in regulation or stocking results in a substantial improvement in the standing crop and proportion of quality-sized wild fish, it may be considered a success even if a decrease in angling hours is associated with such a change. In the final analysis, both the impact on the resource (fish population) and the angling opportunity it affords will be taken into account with the primary goal being that of restoring and maintaining fish populations to the highest possible, sustainable levels. This approach recognizes that it is impossible to set specific numerical objectives for all the varied fisheries in the Commonwealth. It therefore mandates the application of sound fisheries management techniques and professional judgment by the fisheries manager. Such techniques and judgments will emphasize the maintenance of high standing stocks of naturally-sustaining populations of sport fish while also providing good fishing opportunities.