

**PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION**



**SUSQUEHANNA RIVER**

**SMALLMOUTH BASS**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**REPORT**

**June 2010**

**Bureau of Fisheries**  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

C&R.....Catch and Release  
DEP.....Department of Environmental Protection  
PFBC.....Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
Q&A.....Question and Answer  
SMB.....Smallmouth Bass  
YOY.....Young of the Year

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2005, high spring flows following smallmouth bass spawning (2006 and 2009) and disease outbreaks (2005, 2007, and 2008) have led to five consecutive smallmouth bass year classes with below average reproductive success in the middle and lower Susquehanna River and to a lesser extent on the West Branch Susquehanna and upper Susquehanna rivers. These conditions have had varying effects on the different reaches of the West Branch Susquehanna and Susquehanna rivers.

As a result, there have been a range of views with respect to the status of the existing smallmouth bass fisheries within these reaches. For example: in the middle and lower Susquehanna River there has been wide-spread concern regarding the status of the fishery and the greatest angler support for regulatory change. However, there is little agreement among anglers on the regulation changes that should occur. In the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River (North Branch), the smallmouth bass populations have remained strong yet there is concern over the low numbers of quality sized fish in the population. In the West Branch Susquehanna River continued improvements in water quality has anglers seeing marked increases in the smallmouth bass population and anglers want to take measures to protect and enhance the smallmouth bass population.

In June of 2010, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) conducted three regional public meetings (Williamsport, Harrisburg, and Wilkes-Barre) to obtain feedback from local anglers on issues affecting the smallmouth bass population, and to gather suggestions on how to positively impact the population whether it be through regulation changes or other means. Participants included tournament anglers, tour guides, tackle shop owners, and recreational anglers. Seven questions were presented to approximately 100 participants that attended. Participants were divided into small groups and asked to discuss and respond to each question. Each session had five to six groups with five to eight participants in each group. Individuals that could not attend the sessions provided their input via e-mail.

Overall, anglers agreed that the Susquehanna River water quality is the biggest threat to the smallmouth bass population in the river. While the anglers understood that PFBC does not have control of this issue, they did believe that PFBC must work closely with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to address the issue. The second biggest threat identified was over-harvesting.

In most cases, participants felt that tournament angling (catch and release only) did not have a negative impact on the population if done properly. Most felt that tournament fishing had a positive impact on the sport because it promotes catch and release and gives anglers an opportunity to educate

others. Tournament anglers also provide PFBC with valuable data on the condition of the fishery, and assist in patrolling the waters. Tournament angling has a positive impact on the community by stimulating the economy (gas, hotel, food, tackle, etc.). Discussions around paper tournaments, inspecting live wells, and tagging were heard; however participants did not all agree that these were solutions that would have a significant impact.

In addition, many anglers believed that the status of the smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna is better than it has ever been; but there is room for improvement. The quality of the fish (large fish) is there, but the quantity has diminished. This status has not affected the anglers' fishing frequency, as compared to five years ago. The reasons for this varied greatly and were more targeted toward personal changes in life rather than changes in the river condition or the smallmouth bass population.

When asked what actions the PFBC should take to have a positive impact on the smallmouth bass fishery in the Susquehanna River, anglers had many different ideas. Some suggestions mentioned more than once include: create more educational opportunities for everyone, continue to conduct research on the conditions that affect the fish, increase communication (public meetings), and enforce regulations.

When asked what actions the anglers should take to have a positive impact on the smallmouth bass fishery in the Susquehanna River, anglers also had many diverse responses. Some responses mentioned more than once include: educate others, practice catch and release, support water quality issues (be proactive, report concerns), and increase enforcement.

The discussion around regulation changes was beneficial to both the PFBC and the anglers. It provided an opportunity for everyone to realize the difficulty involved in setting regulations based on stakeholder input. While it is important to gain an understanding of the stakeholder's experience and knowledge; that is only a part of the formula needed to set policy. Anglers agreed that data should be the dominant factor in deciding regulation changes. Anglers were asked to review a list of potential regulation changes and prioritize it based on what they would support most/least.

While not every angler provided their priorities, the most supported regulation change was to decrease the current creel limit from six to four. The second most supported regulation change was to extend the catch-and-release only season to earlier in the year. The example PFBC provided was February 1 – June 15. Most anglers did not provide other dates and believed these dates were sufficient. The third highest supported regulation change was actually no change in regulation at all. Data indicated that any of these proposed changes will not make a significant impact on the current situation and anglers believed a regulation change was not necessary.

The following table lists all the regulation options provided by PFBC, along with each group's priority rank by location (five to six groups per location), and the overall rank of each option. The overall rank is based on the following weighted scale.

- Priority 1 = 3 points
- Priority 2 = 2 points
- Priority 3 = 1 point

Only the top three priorities were included in the table. Note: Not every group provided a priority rank. Some groups simply stated whether they would support the regulation change or not.

<b>Regulation Change</b>	<b>Williamsport Priorities</b>	<b>Harrisburg Priorities</b>	<b>Wilkes-Barre Priorities</b>	<b>Points received</b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>
<b>Decrease creel limit</b>	<b>2,2,3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,1,2,3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Extend catch-and-release only season to earlier in year</b>	<b>1,2</b>	<b>1,1,3</b>	<b>3,2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>No change to current regulations</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1,1,3</b>	<b>2,2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
No angling from mid-April through mid-June (spawning season)	1,3	1,2,3	0	10	4 <sup>th</sup>
Regulation change periodically based on smallmouth bass reproduction	3	2,2	1	8	5 <sup>th</sup>
Year round, catch and release only	1	2,3	0	6	6 <sup>th</sup>
Increase minimum length limit	2	0	1,3	6	6 <sup>th</sup>
Slot limit (i.e., harvest fish between 12" and 14" only)	0	0	1,1	6	6 <sup>th</sup>

The following matrix represents the summary responses to the remaining six questions by location.

All questions are in response to Smallmouth bass fishing in the West Branch Susquehanna River.

Location	Top 3 threats to the SMB fishing	Do you believe that tournament angling has a positive, negative, or no effect on SMB populations	Top 3 actions that the PFBC could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery	Top 3 actions that the anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery	Do you fish more, less, about the same as you did 5 years ago?	What is your opinion of the status of the SMB fishing?
<b>Williamsport</b>	Water quality and over harvesting	Overall participants felt that tournament angling has a positive effect on the SMB fishery.	Educate, conduct research, communicate, enforce, continue public meetings.	Educate others and become better educated, practice catch and release are the two major actions anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery.	Responses vary in general, due to many personal factors that are not under the control of PFBC.	Overall status is good.
<b>Harrisburg</b>	Pollution/water quality and the Cormorants	The majority of the individuals believe it has a positive effect or no effect at all. Less than 5 individuals believe it has a negative effect and some of those individuals believe it is slight. It is recommended however to conduct a post release mortality study.	Address water quality issues, continue studies and use science and data for regulation changes, control Cormorant and address the invasive species.	Support water quality, educate and become educated, inform PFBC of issues.	Responses vary.	Responses vary, however they agree that the fish are larger, but there are fewer of them.
<b>Wilkes-Barre</b>	Water quality and over harvesting	Most believe it is positive only if done correctly and it is catch and release. Studies would be beneficial to support this belief. Some feel it does have a negative impact on the population, but not the sport or the community.	Education, enforcement (stiffer fines and penalties), stocking the river, treat the river in sections rather than the whole.	Catch and release, report violations and concerns, educate others, be proactive on pollution and other evasive species, and diseases.	Responses vary.	Most believe it is better, but some believe it is worse.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **MEETING AGENDA AND MEETING QUESTIONS**



**Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
Susquehanna River Smallmouth Bass Public Meeting**

**DISPLAY**

**Begin**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome – David Miko (PFBC)
- Purpose
- Agenda And Process – Franca D’Agostino (Facilitator, Office Of Strategic Srvs)
- Roles And Ground Rules

**II. GETTING UP TO SPEED**

- Educational / Information Sharing
- Questions For Clarification

**III. ANGLER INPUT**

- Question Review
- Small Group Activity
- Full Group Report Out

**IV. CONCLUSION**

- Summary of Results
- Next Steps
- Closing Remarks

**Adjourn**

## **Susquehanna River Smallmouth Bass Public Meeting Questions**

1. What do you think are the top 3 threats to the smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna River?
  
2. Would you be supportive of a regulation change that would include (include all that you support and rank). Why do you support these changes? What would you expect to happen to the fishery as a result?:
  - a. year-round, catch-and-release only
  - b. increase minimum length limit
  - c. slot limit (i.e., can harvest fish between 12" and 14" only)
  - d. decreased creel limit
  - e. no angling from mid-April through mid-June (spawning period)
  - f. extend catch-and-release only season to earlier in the year (i.e., February 1 – June 15)
  - g. no change to current regulations
  - h. a regulation change that would periodically change based on smallmouth bass reproduction? \*For instance, if there are 3 consecutive years of below average SMB reproduction the creel limit would be reduced from 4 fish/day to 2 fish/day. Then, upon 3 consecutive years of average or above average SMB reproduction the creel limit would return to 4 fish/day.
  
3. Do you believe that tournament angling has a positive, negative, or no effect on smallmouth bass populations in the Susquehanna River? Explain your answer.
  
4. What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Susquehanna River?
  
5. What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Susquehanna River?
  
6. Do you fish more, less, about the same as you did 5 years ago. Explain the reason for your answer?
  
7. What is your opinion of the status of the smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna River?

# **APPENDIX B**

## **WILLIAMSPORT MEETING NOTES**

**JUNE 2, 2010**

**Note: Meeting notes are taken directly from the participants' written responses. They have not been altered.**

**WILLIAMSPORT MEETING  
JUNE 2, 2010**

**Question 1: What do you think are the top 3 threats to the smallmouth bass fishing in the West Branch Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

1. Water Quality – temperature, pollution, water level (flow), invasive species
2. Overuse – access, higher number of boaters
3. Natural occurrences – flood control

**Group 2**

1. Water quality
2. Over harvesting of big fish
3. Educate on catch and release

**Group 3**

1. Water quality – Marcellus shale, landfills, ag, gender benders,
2. Over harvesting – big bass are harvested as soon as they reach limit size
3. Low water/high water temp, water withdrawals

**Group 4**

1. Pre spawn over harvest pressure/reduction of their numbers esp. fall and spring (taking for bait)
2. Bird predation (cormorants)
3. Water quality – Do, temp, plastics, Nitrogen Phosphorus, fungi, pesticides, endocrine disruptions

**Group 5:**

1. Water quality – pollution
2. Unethical anglers – keeping fish out of season
3. Water draw down – dams, oil draw, increased population, ag draw

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Water quality and over harvesting are the two biggest threats to the smallmouth bass fishing.**

**Question 2: Would you be supportive of a regulation change that would include (include all that you support and rank). Why do you support these changes? What would you expect to happen to the fishery as a result?**

<b>a</b>	<b>Year round catch-and-release only</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	1st priority for 3	For 3 people
	Group 2	8th /last priority	
	Group 3	yes	
	Group 4		No
	Group 5	7 <sup>th</sup> priority	
<b>b</b>	<b>Increase minimum length limit</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		
	Group 2	7 <sup>th</sup> priority	
	Group 3	Yes	
	Group 4		no
	Group 5	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
<b>c</b>	<b>Slot limit (i.e., can harvest fish between 12" and 14" only)</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		
	Group 2	4 <sup>th</sup> priority	
	Group 3	Yes	
	Group 4		no
	Group 5	4 <sup>th</sup> priority	
<b>d</b>	<b>Decrease creel</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		
	Group 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
	Group 3	Yes	
	Group 4	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
	Group 5	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
<b>e</b>	<b>No angling from mid-April through mid-June (spawning season)</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		
	Group 2	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
	Group 3	Yes	
	Group 4		no
	Group 5	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	

**f**                      **Extend catch-and-release only season to earlier in year (i.e., February 1-June 15)**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
Group 2	6 <sup>th</sup> priority	
Group 3	Yes	
Group 4	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	
Group 5	5 <sup>th</sup> priority	

**g**                      **No change to current regulations**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1		
Group 2	1st priority	
Group 3		no
Group 4		no
Group 5		

**h**                      **Periodic regulation change based on reproduction**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
Group 2	5 <sup>th</sup> priority	
Group 3		no
Group 4		no
Group 5	6 <sup>th</sup> priority	

**Top Ranking Responses**

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>
Yr. rd C&R	No change		Extend C&R	Close season
Extend C&R	Decrease creel		Decrease creel	Increase min.
Reproduction	Close season			Decrease creel

*Note: Group 3 did not rank, but indicated if they would support or not.*

**Question 3: Do you believe that tournament angling has a positive, negative, or no effect on smallmouth bass populations in the West Branch Susquehanna River? Explain your answer.**

#### **Group 1**

- Positive
  - Policing the fisheries as an angler
  - Source of information
- Negative
  - Fishing pressure

#### **Group 2**

- Positives
  - Provides PFBC an idea of the quality and health of fishery
  - Promotes catch and release
  - Promotes kids to join junior clubs
  - Stimulates economy
  - Promotes responsibility of fishery

#### **Group 3**

- Minimal effect
- Negative effect (minority opinion)
  - Regulate number of tournaments
  - No back to back tournaments

#### **Group 4**

- No effect
  - Most (if not all) tournament fisherman catch and release
  - Lots of rumor on moving fish, but they do not know if there is data before or after tournaments
- Positive
  - Tournament events promote education
  - How to handle fish,
  - Get youth involved

#### **Group 5**

- Positive effect
  - Educates and encourages safe release
  - Stimulates interest in conservation of the fish
  - Aids in research about fish populations

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Overall participants felt that tournament angling has a positive effect on the SMB fishery.**

**Question 4: What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the West Branch Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

- Conduct public meetings
- Continue data collection - Surveys
- Increase communication – inform the angler of current events

**Group 2**

- Work with other agencies to enforce and regulate water quality
- Reduce creel limit
- More education and interest toward getting youth involved with fishing.

**Group 3**

- Act on recommendations – listen to public input and ACT. Do not just go through the motions
- Find out why the fish are dying
- Find out why intersex is occurring
- Conduct more public meetings

**Group 4**

- Figure out what is the problem – is it water quality or ?
- Permits to reduce cormorants
- Regulation change to protect pre spawn (symbol)
- Use of jet boats gives more habitat accesses and more fishing pressure – control their use – this should be studied

**Group 5**

- Continued enforcement of regulations
- More education re: local conditions and fish populations
- Continue surveys and studies of fish populations and the conditions that affect them.

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Educate, conduct research, communicate, enforce, continue public meetings**

**Question 5: What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the West Branch Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

1. Participation in public meetings
2. Policing on our own
3. Implementing PFBC regulations – PFBC recommendations
4. Communicating to the other anglers and to children

**Group 2**

1. Practice catch and release
2. Be more involved with water quality issues
3. Educate and take someone that's never fished

**Group 3**

1. More catch and release
2. Stop fishing during the spawn
3. Educate themselves: - how to handle fish, tournament actions – live well, keep fish alive

**Group 4**

1. Shoot more cormorants
2. Catch release
3. Become educated about local water quality – where/what are sewage outfalls or other sources of water quality issues. Atrazine? Endocrine disruptions
4. Once educated help local watershed groups push for change

**Group 5**

1. Follow the regulations
2. Don't waste the fish
3. Educate the next generation of fisherpersons

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Educate others and become better educated, practice catch and release are the two major actions anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery.**

**Question 6: Do you fish more, less, about the same as you did 5 years ago. Explain the reason for your answer?**

**Group 1**

- Less – financial reasons, limited space

**Group 2**

- 4 about the same – limited time
- 1 fishing more – interest is peaked through tournament

**Group 3**

- 4 more
- 1 less due to his age.

*{Accessibility – bad “improved” ramp at Chillisquaque (4 out of 4 votes)}*

**Group 4**

- Individuals vary but they all still enjoy fishing.

**Group 5**

- More - retirement helps, greater availability of fishing opportunities

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Responses vary in general, due to many personal factors that are not under the control of PFBC.**

**Question 7: What is your opinion of the status of the smallmouth bass fishing in the West Branch Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

- Excellent – quality, not quantity

**Group 2**

- It's better than it's ever been

**Group 3**

- Better than North Br.
- More big fish, fewer numbers
- Poor – compared to 10 years ago
- Good for big fish, but not for numbers

**Group 4**

- West branch numbers seem down but health of fish is good – seeing more fish greater than 15". Above Williamsport – see more # than below but size is smaller
- Juniata (Huntingdon co and Mifflin) best in 40 years good numbers of bass, good representation of year classes. Aug size most years 11-14 inches, Good number of fish 15-17 inches.

**Group 5**

- The fishing is currently good, but there is cause for concern due to lack of juvenile populations.

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Overall status is good**

## Lessons Learned

Since this was the first of three sessions, we asked the group for feedback so that improvements could be made moving forward.

- Small groups worked well
- PFBC should advertise these events more/better – more people would come if they knew
- The educational material should be handed out as opposed to up on the walls. This information could be distributed by the fishermen to others in their community.
- PFBC should inform this group of what PFBC is doing. For example, a short power point presentation in the beginning of the session to let them know what you've done, and what you're planning on doing.
- Many of the attendees are tournament fishermen – consider obtaining feedback from other types of anglers
- The percentage of people who fish for food is small – March/April
- Suggestions - Have a web site to post outing success.

# **APPENDIX C**

## **HARRISBURG MEETING NOTES**

**JUNE 5, 2010**

**Note: Meeting notes are taken directly from the participants' written responses. They have not been altered.**

**HARRISBURG MEETING NOTES  
JUNE 5, 2010**

**Question 1: What do you think are the top 3 threats to the smallmouth bass fishing in the Juniata and Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1:**

1. Wastewater CSO , agriculture – water quality
  2. Non- point source pollution
  3. Angler pressure
- Others: Black fly suppression, Population growth, Disease, Pharmaceuticals  
Stream flow – low and high, Temperature)

**Group 2:**

1. Water temps
  2. Cormorants
  3. Pollution
- Other: Predation from walleye and musky, Over harvest by anglers, Algae blooms, Inter sex bass – atrazine, Big bass regulations are hurting the fishery creating smaller adult size

**Group 3 :L**

1. Pollution
2. Birds of prey
3. Creel (keeping large breeding stock (slot limit)
4. YOY production

**Group 4:**

1. Water quality
  2. Silt/high flows
  3. Pollution
- Others: River fluctuations by dams, Mother nature

**Group 5:**

1. Cormorants
  2. Black fly program
  3. Lawn/ag chems
- Others: sewage treatment plants, Predating fish

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Pollution/water quality and the Cormorants are the two biggest threats to the smallmouth bass fishing.**

**Question 2: Would you be supportive of a regulation change that would include (include all that you support and rank). Why do you support these changes? What would you expect to happen to the fishery as a result?**

<b>a</b>	<b>Year round catch-and-release only</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	2nd highest priority	
	Group 2	2 people	6
	Group 3	priority #3 for 1 per	
	Group 4	0	5
	Group 5	2	4
<b>b</b>	<b>Increase minimum length limit</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	0	low priority
	Group 2	0	all
	Group 3	0	lowest priority
	Group 4	0	all
	Group 5	0	all
<b>c</b>	<b>Slot limit (i.e., can harvest fish between 12" and 14" only)</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	0	low priority
	Group 2	1	7
	Group 3	priority #1 for 2 people	low priority
	Group 4		
	Group 5	0	all low
<b>d</b>	<b>Decrease creel limit</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	0	low priority
	Group 2	2	5
	Group 3	0	low priority
	Group 4	4	1
	Group 5	0	all low
<b>e</b>	<b>No angling from mid-April through mid-June (spawning season)</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	3rd highest priority	
	Group 2	4	4
	Group 3	0	low
	Group 4	0	5
	Group 5	6	0

**f Extend catch-and-release only season to earlier in the year**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1	0	low priority
Group 2	7	1
Group 3	priority #3 for 6 people	1
Group 4	5	0
Group 5	0	6

**g No change to current regulations**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1	Priority #1	
Group 2	1	5
Group 3	Priority #1 for 5 people	
Group 4	0	5
Group 5	6	0

**h Periodic change based on reproduction**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1	4th highest priority	0
Group 2	1	7
Group 3	2nd high priority-all	0
Group 4	0	5
Group 5	6	0

**Top Ranking Responses**

**Group 1**  
no change  
yr round  
close season  
reproduction base

**Group 2**  
extend C/R  
close season  
year round  
limit creel

**Group 3**  
no change  
reproduction base  
extend C/R

**Group 4**  
extend C/R  
limit creel

**Group 5**  
close season  
reproduction base  
no change

**Question 3: Do you believe that tournament angling has a positive, negative, or no effect on smallmouth bass populations in the Susquehanna River? Explain your answer.**

**Group 1:**

- Negative – holding fish causes mortality. C&R causes some mortality.
- No effect – dissenting opinion

**Group 2**

- Positive – produces information and data that would not be available otherwise
- 5 no effect
- 1 negative – fish fry or harvest tournaments are a negative

**Group 3**

- 5 people support tournament fishing – believe it's a season issue, not a tournament issue
- 2 people think tournament fishing has a negative effect – believe putting fish in a live well is harming the population
- Post release mortality

**Group 4**

- Slight negative effect (minimal)

**Group 5**

- Tournament – positive as long as relocate
- Want delayed mortality study.

**QUESTION SUMMARY: The majority of the individuals believe it has a positive effect or no effect at all. Less than 5 individuals believe it has a negative effect and some of those individuals believe it is slight. It is recommended however to conduct a post release mortality study.**

**Question 4: What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Juniata and Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

- Make state agencies address water quality
- Minimize anger impact
- Manage on small areas and use data for regulation changes - Pro-active management

**Group 2**

- Manage each branch separately
- Fix water quality
- Get DEP involved because they have the money
- Decrease minimum size (big bass regulations)
- Season from mid June to mid October C&R there after

**Group 3**

- Using science to combat water quality issues. Algae/sewer treatment enforcement
- Greater angler education toward preserving smallmouth bass pop.
- Cormorant control
- Invasive species control (i.e. flathead catfish, rusty crayfish)

**Group 4**

- Protect existing populations
- Protect tributaries (i.e. same regulations as the river)
- Continue studies – promote to other agencies – gather use and share data.

**Group 5**

- No walleye
- Continued study (delayed mortality, tagging study)
- Watch black fly spray
- Kill cormorants
- Whitefly study

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Address water quality issues, continue studies and use science and data for regulation changes, control Cormorant and address the invasive species.**

**Question 5: What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Juniata and Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

- Walk the walk – reduce your own personal impact
- Go to paper tournaments
- Fish in non-impacted streams
- Catch and release
- Support water quality issues
- Support biologist recommendations
- No fishing during the spawn
- Encourage legislature to support research

**Group 2**

- Speak out and share positive information about the river all is not gloom and doom
- Get involved with water quality watershed organizations – municipal wastewater.

**Group 3**

- Contact the PFBC regarding pollution, dead fish, law breaking immediately
- Angler education such as fishing during the spawn, proper fish handling, etc. pamphlets/e-mails/classes
- Increase enforcement on the water

**Group 4**

- Educate
- participation – meetings, tagging program
- Education

**Group 5**

- Kill cormorants
- Ethical CNR
- Contribute information to PFBC
- More fields in SAP report form

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Support water quality, educate and become educated, inform PFBC of issues.**

**Question 6: Do you fish more, less, about the same as you did 5 years ago. Explain the reason for your answer?**

**Group 1**

- 5 less – not as rewarding (number of fish CPE), fishing in other states, fishing is better, stressed Susquehanna
- Same but not in Susquehanna
- 1 More – more time, quality fish are there, more cold-water fishing

**Group 2:**

- 2 more – fishing quality is better
- 1 less – because fish is poorer
- 5 same

**Group 3**

- 1 person is not fishing as much as 5 years ago due to the river health and frustration
- 6 people fishing as much or more than 5 years ago. We like to fish, regardless of the quality of the catch.

**Group 4**

- 4 more
- 2 less – but would more if they could
- 0 same

**Group 5**

- 3 fish less
- 4 fish more – seasonal better

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Responses vary.**

**Question 7: What is your opinion of the status of the smallmouth bass fishing in the Juniata and Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1**

- Critical and dying, poor and getting worse, peaked – heading down

**Group 2**

- 2 poor below HBG.
- Not as bad fishing fine overall
- Bigger but fewer
- More jet boats impact pressure
- Fair
- Better fishing farther north on river
- Awesome, but fewer smaller fish

Juniata – 1 poor, overall good, better than Susquehanna (2) good, upper Juniata (Huntingdon Mifflin) excellent number and size.

**Group 3**

- 4 People think that fishing is good, but they are concerned about the future
- 3 people think the fishing is poor and needs to be addressed immediately – big fish are available but numbers are down. Small fish are fewer.
- Past year classes will affect the future

**Group 4**

- Depends on time of year and location what is your criteria? Size/weight – phenomenal
- Numbers – way down
- Average angler is having difficulty catching smallmouth bass

**Group 5**

- 4 think it's in trouble
- 2 think it's fine
- larger, but fewer
- think problems in HBG area – better upstream

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Responses vary, however they agree that the fish are larger, but there are fewer of them.**

# **APPENDIX D**

## **WILKES BARRE MEETING NOTES**

**JUNE 9, 2010**

**Note: Meeting notes are taken directly from the participants' written responses. They have not been altered.**

**WILKES-BARRE MEETING NOTES  
JUNE 9, 2010**

**1. What do you think are the top 3 threats to the smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1:**

1. Pollution
2. Illegal harvest
3. Fish fry tournaments

**Group 2:**

1. Pollution and storm and farm run off
2. Size limits
3. River flow – high flow effects the spawn

**Group 3:**

1. Pollution
2. Over harvest
3. Poor handling of fish

**Group 4:**

1. Water quality
2. Over harvest of large fish 15" +
3. Fishing pressure

**Group 5:**

1. Gas drilling
2. Water consumption from drilling
3. Waste water
4. Disease

**Group 6:**

1. Pollution
2. Over harvest (out of season and more than limit, need to conserve total taken over given year – self responsible)
3. Fish disease

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Water quality and over harvesting are the two biggest threats to the smallmouth bass fishing.**

**Question 2: Would you be supportive of a regulation change that would include (include all that you support and rank). Why do you support these changes? What would you expect to happen to the fishery as a result?**

<b>a</b>	<b>Year round catch-and-release only</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		No
	Group 2		No
	Group 3		No
	Group 4		No
	Group 5		No
	Group 6		No
<b>b</b>	<b>Increase minimum length limit</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		No
	Group 2		No
	Group 3	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	
	Group 4		No
	Group 5	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
	Group 6	Yes	
<b>c</b>	<b>Slot limit (i.e., can harvest fish between 12" and 14" only)</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		No
	Group 2	1 <sup>st</sup> priority 10/1-4/15	
	Group 3		No
	Group 4	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	
	Group 5		No
	Group 6	Yes	
<b>d</b>	<b>Decrease creel limit</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1	1 <sup>st</sup> priority (6 to4)	
	Group 2		No
	Group 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
	Group 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
	Group 5	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	
	Group 6	Yes	
<b>e</b>	<b>No angling from mid-April through mid-June (spawning season)</b>		
		<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
	Group 1		No
	Group 2		No
	Group 3		No
	Group 4		No
	Group 5		No
	Group 6		No

**f**                      **Extend catch-and-release only season to earlier in the year (i.e., February 1-June 15)**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1		No
Group 2		No
Group 3	3 <sup>rd</sup> priority	
Group 4	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
Group 5		
Group 6		No

**g**                      **No change**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1		No
Group 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
Group 3	4 <sup>th</sup> priority	
Group 4		No
Group 5	2 <sup>nd</sup> priority	
Group 6		No

**h**                      **change based on reproduction**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Not</b>
Group 1		No
Group 2		No
Group 3		No
Group 4		No
Group 5		No
Group 6	1 <sup>st</sup> priority	

**Top Ranking Responses**

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>
Limit creel 6-4	Slot limit Enforce	Increase min. Decrease creel  C&R early in yr. Minor changes	Slot limit Extent C&R  Decrease creel	Decrease creel No change Increase min. length

*Notes:*

- *Group 1 only provided one priority*
- *Group 2 added “enforcement of current regulations” which was not an option*
- *Group 3 suggested minor regulation changes, but did not specify what change.*
- *Group 6 believed the periodic change based on the young of year will cover option 2, 3, and 4.*

**3. Do you believe that tournament angling has a positive, negative, or no effect on smallmouth bass populations in the Susquehanna River? Explain your answer.**

**Group 1:**

- Positive? - Removal of fish from home – do a study
- + more involvement
- Quicker reaction to problems
- Help enforce rules and regulations and try to educate others

**Group 2:**

- Positive – catch and release ONLY
- Limit
- Environmental impact
- Public awareness, education and enforcement

**Group 3:**

- Negative if run poorly
- Neutral or positive if run properly

**Group 4:**

- Negative impact on SMB pop, but positive for the sport – participation, awareness, etc.

**Group 5:**

- Positive ONLY if catch and release and if the frequency is limited

**Group 6:**

- Positive catch and release events/shows size and numbers of bass brings \$ to community (gas, tackle, hotel, food, etc.)

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Most believe it is positive only if done correctly and it is catch and release. Studies would be beneficial to support this belief. Some feel it does have a negative impact on the population, but not the sport or the community.**

**4. What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1:**

- More involvement – public meetings, on the water
- Quicker reaction to situations that are reported
- Results/efforts/answers – provide feedback to anglers that inform you of situations

**Group 2:**

- Regulation enforcement
- Treat river in sections rather than whole system
- Education – more Q&A meetings

**Group 3:**

- Check shape of river
- Fine or stop clubs that do poorly
- Alter regulations

**Group 4:**

- Protect older/larger fish – 15" and up
- More direct education from PFBC about the fishery
- More PFBC enforcement power with water quality issues

**Group 5:**

- Decrease creel limit
- Promote catch and release
- Stocking smallmouth bass

**Group 6:**

- Take samples and studies from bass at weigh ins at tournaments
- Stiffer fines and penalties against fish harvesting offenders
- Stocking program – breed SMB in protected environment then stock when SMB are X" long and can fight heavy currents of floods.

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Education, enforcement (stiffer fines and penalties), stocking the river, treat the river in sections rather than the whole.**

**5. What do you believe are the top 3 actions that the anglers could take that would have the greatest positive impact on the SMB fishery of the Susquehanna River?**

**Group 1:**

- Catch and release
- Report violations
- Report concerns

**Group 2:**

- Encourage catch and release
- Anonymous tip line
- Friends of the community association

**Group 3:**

- Limit how many you take
- Handle properly
- Promote the sport

**Group 4:**

- Release larger fish
- Educate other anglers
- More proactive on pollution

**Group 5:**

- Catch and release

**Group 6:**

- Clean up after oneself – develop an adopt a river program for stretches of the river
- Clean boats and trailers after fishing other waters to help avoid transporting evasive species, diseases, aquatic vegetation, etc.
- Work in unison with organizations such as DEP, PFBC, and other agencies to report pollution activities etc, and express concerns.

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Catch and release, report violations and concerns, educate others, be proactive on pollution and other evasive species, and diseases.**

**6. Do you fish more, less, about the same as you did 5 years ago. Explain the reason for your answer?**

**Group 1:**

- 2 less due to other commitments
- 2 more because bought a boat – hanging with a different crowd, easy access
- 2 same – diehards

**Group 2**

- More due to retirement

**Group 3:**

- Some more
- Some less

**Group 4:**

- 3 fish less because of time
- 3 fish more because of better equipment and better fishing

**Group 5:**

- More because they are seeing larger fish

**Group 6:**

- More = changes in life, loss of job, met spouse and both enjoy fishing, closure of other waters to fishing closer to home (economy)
- Less = changes in life, moved due to job change, \$ economy, need to work more hours, family time needed (kids)

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Responses vary.**

## 7. What is your opinion of the status of the smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna River?

### Group 1:

- Stayed consistent or slightly improved

### Group 2:

- Better than ever – improving water conditions

### Group 3:

- Some say better
- Some say worse

### Group 4:

- Very good, but could be improved

### Group 5:

- Great! Better than it's been.

### Group 6:

- Better than in past years
- More #s of bass
- Healthier looking fish
- Size increase
- Habitat is good
- Feed is abundant

**QUESTION SUMMARY: Most believe it is better, but some believe it is worse.**

## Additional notes

These notes were captured from participants either after the meeting or via e-mail.

- Tournament vs, non tournament compromise: could catch/live well release be regionalized as catch and release with a research study to determine delayed mortality?
- Tournament fishing has a positive impact on the economy and promotes fishing and the growth of fishing
- Do not take a page out of the game commission playbook. Make regulation changes based on solid science, not emotion and the vocal opinions of the bar stool biologists. Do not be afraid to tell the complainers they are wrong. For example catch and release during spawn does not impact the fishery. Stand up and make the angling public understand that.
- Suggestion – open season – no creel limit on crayfish for human consumption - Size limit/min. length maybe 3 or 4 inches from head to toe
- Live well system on the boat should be inspected and be good.
- Learn from DC and VA – model them for protection purposes
- Do a study on the birds – how much are they really affecting this?
- Pilot something (small area of the river) and do some research to PROVE to us that the biologists are correct.
- This is more of a water quality issue than a regulation issue.
- Change the size to 12-15 instead of 15-18
- Consider paper tournaments
- post catch n release mortality study
- Tag, but not the thing that gets infected.
- Identify the exact water quality problem
- Rely on the biologist
- Have the commissioners heed the advice of the biologist

- I have read the new releases about public meetings to gather information about smallmouth management on the Susquehanna River. I understand the Fish Commission is having these important meetings at three locations around the state. Since most of the damage to the smallmouth population in the Susquehanna has been from Sunbury to Maryland and especially in the Harrisburg to Maryland border region, I am curious why you are having a meeting in Williamsport and Wilkes Barre and only one in the Harrisburg area. If you wanted anglers, especially in the Lancaster area, to actively participate, why not have several meetings in other convenient locations so more anglers can respond. Better yet, you could collect information from anglers by an online survey. The Fish Commission should want as many anglers to participate as possible in helping to solve this problem, not just the few that are available on Saturday morning June 5th. I have read the smallmouth management information on the Fish Commission website and am cautiously encouraged that after ten years of a decreasing population of the smallmouth bass in the lower Susquehanna the Fish Commission will begin to\ apply some corrective action to save this natural resource.
- Require all bait and tackle shops to use bio degradable containers for bait (Worms, mealworms, etc.),

### **Additional responses received from individuals in the Harrisburg Area**

In general I applaud the efforts of PFBC and appreciate the meetings and thought they were publicized just fine. I unfortunately could not attend the June 5 meeting because of school graduation events but would like to give my input which is below. Not sure what specific questions were at the meetings but I think my input will be relevant nonetheless.

To me there are 3 questions and to those I give my answers

1. Is there is a problem?

Answer: Yes of course and I think it is obvious to PFBC and most anglers but I fear some folks still mistakenly think maybe there is not a problem. And of course the problem is lack of young fish in Lower Susquehanna...and may be important to note is not affecting other rivers or even tributaries to Lower Susquehanna, in fact some of the southern tribs have very high numbers of small bass. The key is anglers who fish in spring and fall may not realize the problem since they will catch many adult fish then but go fish in summer when little fish are active but not big fish and will see few fish.

## 2. What is causing the problem?

Answer: I don't know but suspect there is no "smoking gun" and it is a combination of factors. What makes it difficult to assess is that other rivers and tributaries do not have similar problems and some of them (especially tributaries) suffer as much or more pollutants as the main river. No doubt pollutants are ONE problem but cannot account for all the lack of small bass especially since other places with small bass are polluted AND there really has not been a sudden and dramatic increase in pollutants in 10 years when the decline of little bass seems rather dramatic and sudden. I suggest weather, runoff and temperature have combined with pollutants to cause a stress overload whereas other rivers and tribs run a tad bit cooler and high flows do not stick around as long (ever since October 2002 the flows in main river have been higher than normal...I used to wade fish often in 90's but ever since 2002 rarely do so since water always seems high...USGS can no doubt verify this)

## 3 What can be done?

Answers: Hard to say since the causes are not known exactly. However it is reasonable to say the long term solutions are beyond the reach of PFBC and the angling community. To control pollutants, temperature, and runoff requires multi-agency effort and a lot of change in general public perception and education for example not having chemical lawns, not mowing river banks like law, eating organic, etc. However that does not mean PFBC cannot influence some short term remedies which will not cure the problem but can help mitigate the effects. To that end I propose PFBC initiate the following 3 solutions (A-B-C) in order of priority

### A. stock smallmouth fingerlings in Lower Susquehanna

This seems obvious since it is not controversial, the public will love it, will show PFBC is taking action and it seems easy since PFBC already is quite adept at undertaking stocking programs. Not sure what the cost is but see "B" below to see how it can be cost neutral. This does not cure the underlying problems but will help stem a decrease in smallmouth and keep people angling for the future.

### B. Reduce stocking of musky and walleye in Lower Susquehanna

This couples with "A" above so can save some cost and put into smallmouth stocking instead. Further, I think walleye and musky compete with young smallmouth so it should help boost smallmouth populations. I believe PFBC has already changed musky stocking to stock less places but increase the numbers at the places left so I suggest more of that, for example go stock more musky in Little Buffalo Lake instead of the Lower Susquehanna. I do not see this as being controversial since is not a regulation change and musky stocking will take place just not as much in Lower Susky

### C. Change regulations for Lower Susquehanna so that Fall is 0 kill

Regulation changes are controversial so need to be careful to pick the right one. I do not see changing the spring catch & release or summer big bass regs as being the answer. But I do see changing Fall regs as being useful. Very few people catch a lot of big bass in summer so changing regs in summer is of little use. Spring is already no kill so

could only make it no fishing allowed which many people (including me) do not favor. Fall is the time when it is easy to catch a lot of big fish and someone could put a serious dent in the adult population. I don't know how many people actually keep fish in fall but I do know some who do and it is the easiest time to catch big fish. Change Fall to be catch and release and I think will go over well with public, will show PFBC is willing to take a stance and will protect the adult fish that are so vulnerable then. Again it does not cure the problem but will be a nice short term help to ensure the future.

That is my input but would like to say something about determining what the problems might be. I think some "control" study areas are needed. I propose something like 2 areas where in 1 area you dump ice in the river to cool it in early summer and then see if young bass survive better in that area than upstream areas to see what effect temperature has. In 2<sup>nd</sup> area pump ground water in and again see if young survive better cause ground water will be free of most pollutants (and will also be cooler) so in effect can compare a cool and pollutant free area with normal river to see how young bass fare. Get a private donor to help pay for the ice and pumping costs. Could get anglers to volunteer to do the labor and surveys.

10151-01

241 North 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
Camp Hill, PA 17011

May 26, 2010

Office of Executive Director  
MAY 28 2010  
June 11  
Coo: L. Young  
Sec:  
Asst:  
Rec'd for Dir. Signature  
Date:  
Checked/Status:  
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John Arway  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
1601 Elmerton Avenue  
P.O. Box 67000  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

Dear Mr. Arway,

I read in the Sunday Patriot News that the Fish and Boat Commission will soon hold a series of public meetings concerning the state of the Susquehanna River as a fishery. I attended the last meeting at the Harrisburg River Rescue, but I probably won't be able to make the one on June 5. I would, however, like to share with you and the other relevant members of the commission some of my observations about fishing the Susquehanna in the Harrisburg area.

1. I've fished the Susquehanna since moving to the area in 1981. I don't own a boat, so my fishing is done from the bank or more often, by wading, on the west shore of the river at a variety of spots ranging from Perdix in the north to the New Market access to the south. In the winter I often fish at the warm water discharge on Brunner Island.
2. The Susquehanna was truly a great fishery from the early 1980's until the mid-to late 1990's. There were plenty of fish, and quite a variety of species. It was a great recreational opportunity that was enjoyed by a lot of people. I can remember times when it was actually got a bit crowded below the Dock Street Dam, and August evenings during the "white fly" hatch when one could easily count a dozen or more fishermen on the water at the New Cumberland Boat Club.
3. Decline was underway by the late 1990's, and it has continued since then. Today, I would have to say that except for brief periods in the spring and fall when the remaining bass tend to congregate at certain points, the Susquehanna in the Harrisburg area is pretty much a "dead zone." The numbers of bass are but a very small fraction of what they were formerly. Equally, or perhaps even more alarming, the rock bass, red-breasted sunfish and crappies that once populated this stretch of the river appear to have vanished completely. It's been many years since I caught any of these species in the river around Harrisburg. I no longer see carp crashing the surface the way I once did, and catfish have become rare. The

only species that seems to be holding its own is the walleye. Unfortunately, walleyes provide but limited opportunities for an angler without a boat.

4. The decline in the number of fish has been matched or exceeded by a decline in the number of fishermen. I still see a fair number of boats on the water, but it is now extremely rare for me to see anyone fishing from shore or wading. There are doubtless other economic and social factors at work, but certainly the absence of anglers is linked to the poor quality of the fishing these days. With no improvement in the fishing in sight, it appears that the days of going down to wade fish in the river in shorts and tennis shoes on a hot summer evening will soon be just a memory of a bygone era.
5. Considering the relative speed of the Susquehanna's decline and its very magnitude, I find it hard to believe that regulations have played a significant factor. The only regulations that I seriously question are the absence of a closed season in the spring and the apparently free rein given to guide services. The spawning season is apparently stressful enough for fish without having a flotilla of boats hovering overhead, and there's no doubt that the guides are good – so good and so often on the water with multiple clients that even with catch and release, one begins to wonder what sort of toll they are taking on the fish. If I had my druthers, all fishing in the Susquehanna would be catch and release, preferably with artificial lures and barbless hooks, and all fishermen would be encouraged to develop a "limit your catch" ethic, but that's doubtless unrealistic and probably wouldn't make much of a difference in the final analysis.
6. I assume that pollution is the crux of the lower Susquehanna's problems, and I'm afraid that significant pollution abatement can only come through the political process. Thus information-gathering and public education are about all the commission will be able to do about the river's decline as a fishery.

Although I still enjoy being on the Susquehanna, the river's decline as a fishery has saddened me a great deal. I hope that information which I have provided will in some way contribute to the river's eventual recovery. If you know of any other way that I can contribute in a voluntary way to helping the Susquehanna recover, please let me know.

Thank you very much for your interest in my testimony.

Sincerely yours,



# **APPENDIX E**

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BREAKFAST MEETING NOTES**

# Susquehanna River smallmouth bass breakfast meetings

Perkins Family Restaurant (Williamsport)

4/30/2010

## Attendees

Steve McGill (Uncle Joe's Woodshed)  
Mike O'Brien (Guide, columnist)  
Harry Maiolo (Williamsport Bassmasters)  
Marty Friday (PADEP, NCRO)  
Ken Maurer (Southside Tackle, columnist)  
William Yingling, MD (avid angler)  
Dan Colley (St. Croix representative)  
John Arway (PFBC, Exec. Director)  
Dave Miko (PFBC, Chief, Fisheries Mgmt.)  
Geoff Smith (PFBC, Susquehanna River Bio.)

\*lengthy discussion about Marcellus Shale to start discussion

Has seen size drop in average smallmouth bass in last few years as pressure increased  
Upstream of Lock Haven would like to see more protection with catch and release only until recovery

Would like to see more fish movement information, fishway problems corrected  
Hears of anglers targeting launch areas following tournaments to target congregated released fish

Harvest is more of a problem than realized  
Not seeing the small component of the population (year classes missing)

Some have a problem with people releasing fish from a single location, would like to see mid-water release.

Significant harvest in lower portion of the West Branch  
People targeting fish in late winter as they are staging for the spawn and harvest large numbers  
Concerns over number of tournaments (specially at Lake Augusta – access problems)

Would like to see more people out fishing (more boots in the water)  
Proposed a marketing campaign to promote voluntary catch and release fishing and to further promote sport

Would like to see a closed season or no harvest/ catch and release regulations imposed until populations rebound

Believes that endocrine disruption is the culprit (identified Northumberland landfill)

\*lengthy conversation about endocrine disruption, fish health studies

# Susquehanna smallmouth bass breakfast meetings

Rise and Shine Restaurant (Mountain Top)

5/11/2010

## Attendees

Norm Gavlick (Suskie Bassmasters)

Greg Smith (North Branch Smallmouth Alliance/ Guide)

JR Holtmaster (PADEP, NERO)

John Arway (PFBC, Exec. Director)

Dave Miko (PFBC, Chief, Fisheries Mgmt.)

Geoff Smith (PFBC, Susquehanna River Bio.)

Perception is that people can't eat the fish so there could be a self-imposed catch and release in the lower section that is leading to more, larger fish.

Overall conditions are great, club members pleased, biggest fish they've ever seen and numbers have been good as well.

As you move upstream the harvest is higher

Common fish 8—14", would like to see more larger fish

Need to change the length to a slot limit, current regulation is forcing them to keep larger fish

- change to target smaller fish

- adjust the October to April size requirement

- extend CNR season to February (prefer January 1)

  - +feels that a lot of harvest during winter through ice in bays (targeting walleye) or immediately after ice out

- may want to focus management into smaller units (upper half catch and release or artificial only)

Concern over ice fishing tournaments

- seem to be replacing kill-tournaments

- like to see some consistency between tournament regulations

Have not heard much about the Wilkes-Barre to Berwick reach

Smallmouth bass fishing has been tremendous, getting larger fish

Echoed Norm's comment about river health

- study site in Wilkes-Barre near Riverfront Park

- WQN sites in Falls, Retreat

Would like to see some fish health work upstream of Sunbury

# Susquehanna smallmouth bass breakfast meeting

Summerdale Diner (Enola)

5/13/2010

## Attendees

Rod Bates (Guide)

Mike Burton (PA Bass Federation)

Fred Bohls (Coalition of Concerned PA Anglers)

Marcus Schneck (Harrisburg Patriot-News)

Josh Lookenbill (PADEP)

John Arway (PFBC, Exec. Director)

Dave Miko (PFBC, Chief, Fisheries Mgmt.)

Geoff Smith (PFBC, Susquehanna River Bio.)

What is your opinion on the status of smallmouth bass fishery?

Very small segment that feel that there isn't a problem (happy catching the large fish)

It is really hurting the average angler. Historically, all clients were out-of-state, now seeing a lot of locals too

The hard-core angler that fishes year round and not simply the harder times of the year isn't having as much of a problem

The guides disagree

- + would like to see stocking considered

- + to date, haven't shown public that we are doing anything

- +flow study results and stocking feasibility study results were discussed

Suggestion was made to stock smallmouth bass to keep a fishable or reproductive population

The question was asked what has PFBC done to protect the existing smallmouth population.

PFBC is working with DEP to address the problems we know are out there (DO, temperature)

DEP is currently looking at the current dissolved oxygen regulations

Studies so far have been more of a shotgun approach, looking at a wide number of variables

Tributaries-having a hard time finding legal fish for fish tissue

Current regulation scenario also makes people take the bigger fish.

- + why do we still allow 6 walleye creel

- + should start embracing flathead catfish, develop regulations
- + provide guides with a “boat license” to cover CNR-only anglers

Any chance of changing the catch and release only season?

Some discussion followed including a stop-light approach to regulations based on data

We're rock bass populations the “canary in the coal mine”?

PFBC does not have the data to tell

There is some data from mid 1990's but it is highly variable (2 years)

PFBC noticed a lot of YOY rock bass in 2009 so time will tell what happens with them.