

Improving the Quality of Life for Pennsylvanians through Reinvestment in Waterways, Fisheries & Recreation Infrastructure

PFBC Infrastructure Needs and Funding History

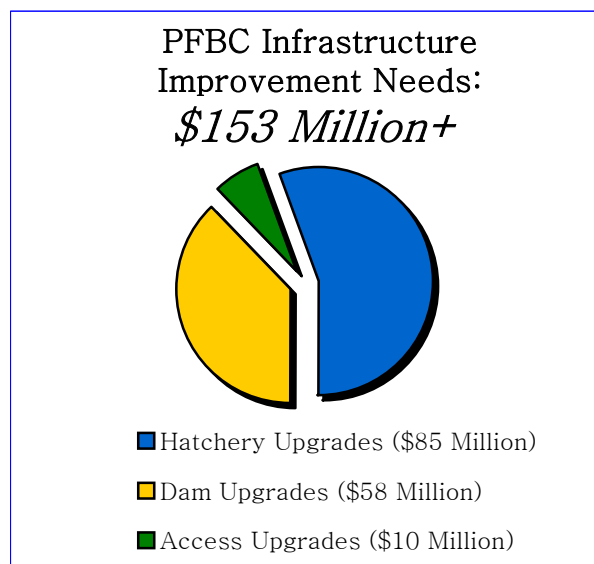
Statement of problem:

The Commission controls through state ownership, lease, or easements approximately 33,500 acres of land in the Commonwealth. These lands contain 14 hatcheries, 62 public lakes, administrative facilities and nearly 250 boating access areas. As specified in the Fish and Boat Code, these properties are owned by the "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for use of the Commission."

The Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) faces a total infrastructure improvement project need of more than \$150 million at the Commonwealth facilities it manages. These needs include \$85 million to upgrade the Commonwealth's fish hatchery infrastructure, \$58 million to address dam safety and dam repair needs and approximately \$10 million to address access improvement needs. These major upgrade projects cannot be adequately addressed using solely Fish Fund or Boat Fund operating monies, which are derived from user fees – fishing license and boat registration fees. However, anglers and boaters should and will share some of the burden of addressing these costs.

The PFBC's infrastructure needs are shown in the graph at right. Hatchery needs, which include critical water supply and effluent improvement needs, are the agency's top priority. The cost to address these needs is estimated to be about \$85 million system-wide. Included in this figure are numerous critical hatchery upgrade needs, some of which are mandated in settlement agreements with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

PFBC managed lakes and access areas are critical components of the Commonwealth's backbone of local recreation resources. These facilities serve as fish and wildlife habitat, open-space, and they accommodate a wide diversity of recreational, aesthetic and educational pursuits. Currently, 18 of the 44 dams on DEP's unsafe dam list are Commonwealth dams managed by the PFBC. Five of these dams have been identified as top priorities with an estimated repair cost of approximately \$25 million. To address dam safety concerns the PFBC has drawn down five dams, including Ingham (Bucks Co.), Leaser (Lehigh Co.), Colyer (Center Co.), Upper Hereford (Beaver Co.) and, in the wake of Hurricane Ivan, Dutch Fork Lake (Washington Co.).



Historic Infrastructure/Capital Funding:

The lands and facilities owned by the Commonwealth and managed by the Commission were acquired with a mix of state and federal funds. The Commission has existed since 1866, but it wasn't until the 1920s that a fishing license was instituted and a user fee-based funding stream came into existence. Early on, the Commonwealth facilities managed by the Commission were acquired, developed, and supported almost entirely with state appropriations. The table below shows the year that the Commonwealth hatcheries were initially built and the mix of funding used to construct and upgrade the hatchery system over the years.

Hatchery History
Year Built and Funding Sources Used

					Project 70	Project 500
		Date	General Fund	LWCF	Bond Funds	Bond Funds
1	Corry Fish Culture Station	1876	•			•
2	Pleasant Mount Fish Culture Station	1903	•	•		•
3	Pleasant Gap Fish Culture Station	1903	•			•
4	Union City Fish Culture Station	1905	•			•
5	Reynoldsdale Fish Culture Station	1925			•	•
6	Tionesta Fish Culture Station	1929				•
7	Huntsdale Fish Culture Station	1932		•	•	•
8	Bellefonte Fish Culture Station	1933		•		•
9	Linesville Fish Culture Station	1939				•
10	Benner Spring Fish Culture Station	1951		•		•
11	Oswayo Fish Culture Station	1968		•	•	•
12	Big Spring Fish Culture Station	1970			•	•
13	Fairview Fish Culture Station	1975				•
14	*Van Dyke Fish Culture Station	1976				
15	Tylersville Fish Culture Station	1983				•

Note: All PFBC hatcheries, except Van Dyke, were developed with NONPFBC Commonwealth Funding. In addition, some facilities have federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and most have Sportfish Restoration Fund's invested.

*Van Dyke Fish Culture Station was constructed in 1976 with public utility company mitigation funding.

Over the years, other funding sources became available including user fees generated by license sales and, much later on, by boat registration fees. The conservation bond initiatives of the 1960s (Project 70) and 1970s (Project 500) provided critical funding for the acquisition and development of new fishing and boating facilities and for rehabilitation and upgrades to existing facilities.

There was a Commonwealth investment of approximately \$5 million through Project 70 and \$25 million through Project 500. In the 1990s, the Keystone Program provided \$1.5 million in conservation bond proceeds for PFBC infrastructure projects. Federal funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Sportfish Restoration Program were used to augment these state funds. Annual operating fund expenditures on infrastructure include approximately \$500,000 to \$1 million in federal Sportfish Restoration Program funding. The Sportfish funding is created by an excise tax on fishing and boating equipment and a portion of the federal fuels tax receipts. These funds are allocated to the states on the basis of a formula. These funds are fully obligated.

Since the last major Commonwealth investments in the 60s and 70s, the Commission has been forced to fund most major capital improvement projects out of operating revenues. Trying to fund capital improvements out of operating funds has the effect of severely limiting the size and number of projects that the Commission can undertake in any one year. This method of funding is not appropriate or tenable for addressing the major infrastructure improvement projects the Commission now faces. It was observed by an official in the previous Administration that, "If PennDOT had to fund the building of roads the way the Commission has to fund capital improvements, there would be no new roads."

Quality of Life Benefits:

The PFBC works to protect, conserve and enhance fish, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic organisms and their habitats for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians. PFBC efforts ensure healthy fish and wildlife populations, conserve critical habitats and support \$2+ billion in annual fishing and boating related economic impact. The PFBC provides boating opportunities and protects public safety on our waterways. The quality of life of all Pennsylvanians, including the Commonwealth's anglers and boaters, is improved by the programs and services provided.