July - September 2015 Quarterly Report  
Strategic Plan Implementation

The following updates include the major activities or accomplishments during the quarter that further the July 2014 – June 2017 PFBC Strategic Plan. The bulleted list does not include every detail about what is being done on a particular goal, just the highlights that help to track implementation.

If there is nothing listed for a particular goal, either there was nothing major to report during the quarter, or work has yet to commence on the goal.

Overall, please also note that it is intended to be a tracking tool for the strategic plan rather than an auditing tool.

**Funding**

**Goal 1A: Implement a Spending Reallocation Plan within which the Commission does not spend more than it generates in revenue each fiscal year and maintains agency administrative and support services necessary to deliver programs and services.**

A. Through June 2017, implement, review, and update the Spending Reallocation Plan (SRP) to reflect evolving fiscal realities.
B. By July 2015, present updated SRP to the Board of Commissioners.
C. Through June 2017, work with PFBC staff and partners to identify and implement projects using restricted revenue account funds to address settlement agreement conditions and PFBC priorities.

**Goal 1B: Increase revenues.**

A. Through June 2017, implement operational decisions to increase revenues.
   1. Continue to grow Natural Gas and Water Access programs.
   2. By June 2017, develop, implement, and evaluate annual marketing campaign plans designed to increase license sales (and corresponding federal reimbursements) by 10% through the end of license year 2017.
      o Marketing/advertising activities to promote the “Catch the Value” campaign for 2015 were undertaken in an attempt to drive sales in advance of the mentored youth opportunities for Labor Day, and fall fishing opportunities throughout the Commonwealth.
      o Entries to the “Catch The Value” Kayak Package Giveaway were collected online during July and August, and during the Windows 10 400 weekend at Pocono Raceway from July 31 to August 2. More than 4,500 entries were collected and the giveaway winner will be announced shortly.
   3. By July 2015, secure dedicated funding to support the water rescue program.
B. Through June 2017, advocate for legislative solutions to maintain and increase revenues.
   1. Identify, develop, and advocate for state legislative opportunities to maintain and increase agency revenues.
      o Staff worked with Senator Brewster on a proposal for the first fishing license fee increase since 2005, which features an initial increase followed by five incremental steps to keep up with inflation. Senator Brewster circulated a memorandum seeking co-sponsors for the bill, and staff have begun meeting with legislators, legislative staff, and stakeholders to build support for the proposal, with the goal of having the bill pass the senate this fall.
   2. In cooperation with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), advocate for federal legislation to maintain and increase agency revenues.

C. Through June 2017, promulgate regulatory changes to increase revenues.
   1. By January 2015, require senior resident lifetime license holders to purchase a trout/salmon permit annually to fish for trout.
**Conservation**

**Goal 2: Protect, conserve, and enhance aquatic resources and habitats.**

A. By January 2015 complete a revision to the *Strategic Plan for Management of Trout Fisheries in Pennsylvania* to include the following:
   1. Through June 2017, continue efforts to improve Pennsylvania’s tailwater trout fisheries.
   2. Immediately begin implementation of recommendations from the stocked trout efficiency study.
   3. By December 2015, design an angler survey to provide a statewide assessment of angler use, angler catch, angler opinions, and an economic contribution of trout angling on trout stocked lakes in order to make informed decisions regarding future trout stocking allocations in lakes.
   4. By December 2015, complete evaluations of all current fingerling stocking efforts and provide recommendations for future implementation of the program.
      o *A draft revision of the state trout plan has been prepared. A meeting was held of the Trout Workgroup on Aug 15 to review the plan. The Trout Workgroup is comprised of representatives of various sportsmen’s groups as well as unaffiliated anglers interested in trout fishing. The next step will be release of the draft plan on the PFBC website for public comment.*
      o *Staff conducted a re-inventory of Big Spring Creek (07B), Sections 01 and 02, to evaluate the response of the fishery to large scale habitat enhancement projects constructed during 2010 and 2013. Reach-wide, preliminary results indicate continued increased abundance of Brook Trout while Rainbow Trout abundance remained steady or continued to decline following an initial proliferation of that species in 2011. Two years following the completion of the 2013 project, site-specific Brook Trout biomass has increased from approximately 2 kg/ha to 32 kg/ha, and based on 2015 estimates, reach-wide Brook Trout account for greater than 50 percent of the total salmonid biomass for the first time post-completion of the projects.*

B. Through June 2017, continue implementation of river management plans for the Delaware, Susquehanna, and Three Rivers systems.
   1. Efforts specific to all three river systems will include:
      b. Sampling requirements specific to meeting objectives outlined in the species-specific warmwater management plans for Muskellunge, Walleye, and Catfish.
   2. Efforts specific to the Susquehanna River will include:
      a. Continued participation on interagency technical committees assessing water quality of the Susquehanna River and the impacts to the Smallmouth Bass population.
o Staff reviewed the first draft of the CADDIS report and met with DEP to discuss. Revisions were made and a second draft was circulated to the PFBC and numerous peer reviewers.

b. With partners, implement a fish community sampling procedure to more broadly track the condition of the fishery.
   o Staff prepared a report on the first ever census of catfish populations in the North Branch Susquehanna River during the summer of 2014. Hoop nets were set at 32 locations in the river for a distance of 87 miles and captured 4,488 Channel Catfish and 19 Flathead Catfish. Length, weight and otolith samples were collected for continued evaluation of the catfish population in the North Branch Susquehanna River.

c. By June 2017, identify a method and criteria to determine the impairment status of the river.

3. Efforts specific to the Three Rivers will include cooperation with Ohio River states to expand our knowledge regarding the expansion of Asian carp in the Ohio River system and reduce or eliminate the threat to the river’s ecology.

4. Efforts specific to Delaware River will include:
   a. Annual monitoring of American Shad populations at historic stations.
   b. American Shad spawning activities to support restoration efforts.

C. By January 2015, complete the 2nd edition of the Lehigh River Fisheries Management Plan.

D. Through June 2017, implement gamefish management plans for Muskellunge, Walleye, and Catfish.

E. By June 2017, complete the development of a strategic plan for the management of black bass in Pennsylvania.

F. By June 2017, facilitate or complete population inventories and home range assessments for Timber Rattlesnake, Blanding’s Turtle, Eastern Massasauga, Bog Turtle, Eastern Mud Salamander, Rough Green Snake, Broadhead Skink, New Jersey Chorus Frog, Southern Leopard Frog, Kirtland’s Snake, Northern Cricket Frog, Eastern Redbelly Turtle, Eastern Pearlshell, Dwarf Wedgemussel, Bluebreast Darter, Tippecanoe Darter, Gilt Darter, Iowa Darter, Eastern Sand Darter, Spotted Darter, Black Bullhead, Bowfin, and Horneyhead Chub.
   o The delisting of the Bluebreast Darter, Tippecanoe Darter, Gilt Darter, and Spotted Darter went into effect on July 18, 2015, when the final rulemaking was published in the PA Bulletin.
   o The background research, data compilation, status assessment, and documentation forms were completed for status changes of the Horneyhead Chub, Ohio Lamprey, Mountain Brook Lamprey, Bowfin, and Timber Rattlesnake in the previous quarter. PABS Fishes Technical Committee and Amphibian and Reptile Technical Committees reviewed and approved the status changes. Agenda items were developed and commentaries for proposed rulemakings were drafted and reviewed for the September 28-29, 2015 Commission meeting.

G. Through June 2017, continue implementation of statewide action plans for the following species: Eastern Pearlshell Mussel, Bog Turtle, Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, and Timber Rattlesnake.
Surveys for the Eastern Pearlshell are continuing, and new occurrences of the mussels at two locations in Schuylkill County have been documented.

Contractors continue to write management plans and conduct habitat restoration on private lands, make contact with private landowners regarding bog turtle conservation, and compile bog turtle data for a regional database. Two management plans were finalized and sent to USFWS.

The USFWS National Competitive State Wildlife Grant Program awarded the grant titled “Multistate Recovery Actions for the Bog Turtle and Associated Headwater Wetland Species of Greatest Conservation Need” to Pennsylvania and its partners in June. This is a regional grant that includes five northeast state fish and wildlife resource agencies and five non-government partner organizations. The project covers a variety of conservation actions for the bog turtle, including regional database development, eDNA testing, habitat restoration work, species surveys, and population monitoring in five of the northeastern states that fall within the range of the northern population of the bog turtle. Implementation is expected to begin in the fall of 2015. The first organizational conference call for the cooperating states was hosted by PFBC in August. Project partners are going through the process of activating the federal grant and developing contracts with project partners and contractors.

The Timber Rattlesnake monitoring strategy project (contract) with East Stroudsburg University was finalized and the project has started.

By December 2014, research and finalize statewide action plans for the Salamander Mussel and Chesapeake Logperch. Through June 2017, implement these plans.

Annual workplans have been developed for the Salamander Mussel and Chesapeake Logperch Species Action Plans.

By June 2015, work with other members of the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Partnership to complete the upgrade to the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory environmental review tool.

DCNR and contractors have continued to update and involve PFBC staff in ongoing development of the PNDI tool upgrade. Beta version of the upgraded PNDI tool was demonstrated to the Division of Environmental Services staff in July. Several staff are actively reviewing and testing the new tool and providing feedback to the developers. Natural Diversity Section staff have drafted updates to the decision matrix that drives the PNDI tool for fish, mussels, herps, and aquatic invertebrates.

By June 2017, assist the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and other governmental agencies with the development of policies and reservoir operation procedures that limit alteration of natural flow regimes to levels that maintain critical species, habitats, and ecological conditions.

In August 2015, staff worked with PA DEP and NY DEC Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources on an Upper Delaware Thermal relief request to maintain the tailwater trout fishery. The request was not approved, but PA DEP requested development of a thermal release protocol that will be coordinated with New York State.

By September 30, 2015, together with partners, complete a new State Wildlife Action Plan.

As a step toward a completed 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan, from August 12-September 11 a draft plan was provided for public comment (a USFWS requirement). A completed plan is expected to be submitted to the USFWS by September 30, 2015.
L. Through June 2017, continue to conduct the following permit reviews: Species Impact; Scientific Collector; Threatened and Endangered Species; Nongame Special; Venomous Snake; Amphibian and Reptile Organized Hunt; Commercial Snapping Turtle; Water Obstruction and Encroachment; Triploid Grass Carp; Mining; Drawdown; Water Allocation; FERC Hydropower; 316(a) Clean Water Act Thermal Variance; 316(b) Clean Water Act Impingement and Entrainment; and select Algicide, Herbicide or Fish Control Chemical in Waters of the Commonwealth.

M. By June 2017, sample at least 2,000 prioritized, un-inventoried streams that have been identified by Commission staff as most at risk from the effects of human activities, and continue to forge partnerships to augment Commission sampling efforts.

- Based on results from the unassessed waters effort, 102 waters will be proposed for addition to the Wild Trout list, and 40 waters will be proposed for the Class A Wild Trout streams list at the September 28-29 Commission meeting.

N. Through June 2017, continue the development of a PFBC sampling protocol manual to ensure consistent data collection techniques for waterways.

1. By December 2014, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for large rivers.
2. By December 2015, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for lakes.
3. By December 2016, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for herptiles.

O. Through June 2017, annually address the following habitat improvement goals:

1. Refine the stream and lake prioritization approaches to guide habitat improvement work. Work with partners to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize cooperation to address common goals.
2. Develop and implement lake habitat improvement plans into all PFBC high-hazard dam rehabilitation efforts.
   - Staff worked with Lancaster County Bassmasters and the Save Speedwell group on the Speedwell Forge Lake Habitat Project which involves 245 rock and wood habitat structures being placed in September. More than $20,000 was raised by the partner organizations for materials and machine rental for the project.
   - Staff worked with Glade Run Lake Conservancy which received a $20,000 grant from Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership for 250 rock and wood habitat structures habitat structures to be constructed in September.
3. Develop a plan to prioritize dam removals and culvert passage objectives statewide and facilitate fish passage through the removal of 25 dams, improved culvert installations, or the installation of fishways.

P. By January 2016, simplify fishing regulations.
Recreation

**Goal 3A:** Engage in targeted education and outreach activities that address the five key elements of fishing and boating participation and engage partners to enhance the Commission’s efforts through the multiplier effect at the local level.

A. Through June 2017, develop and implement annual plans for delivering training and instructional resources to sportsmen’s clubs, conservation organizations, and outdoor recreation providers for Family Fishing, SMART Angler, women’s, and other effective programs at the local level.
   - Commission staff and trained instructors scheduled 45 Family Fishing Programs during the quarter with an estimated 750 participants.

B. Through June 2017, maintain Fishing Tackle Loaner Program to make equipment accessible for group or individual loan.
   - At the end of the quarter, there were 75 active Fishing Tackle Loaner Program sites.

C. Through June 2017, develop and implement annual plans to present fishing opportunities in appealing and convenient “packages” such as PA’s Best Fishing Waters, Family Fishing Festivals, and mentored youth opportunities.

D. Through June 2017, develop and implement annual plans for mentoring programs, with focused opportunities (e.g., different species or seasons) and increased outside partnership engagement.
   1. Increase lead-in and follow-up contacts for mentored fishing opportunities (such as promotions, partnerships, surveys, newsletters).
      - Established Mentored Youth fishing opportunities for panfish and trout on Labor Day and a week-long Mentored Youth Photo Contest. Implemented a corresponding communication and outreach plan that included distribution of nearly 1,000 promotional fliers at events and electronic distribution to more than 300 teachers.
      - Created a web landing page for Mentored Youth and Labor Day fishing promotions. Established rules and web navigation for Mentored Youth Photo Contest.
      - Distributed more than 500 vouchers for Voluntary Youth Fishing Licenses in the month preceding the Labor Day fishing opportunities.
   2. Incorporate recruitment and retention elements into mentoring program promotions and partnerships.
   3. By July 2016, assess the overall effectiveness of the Mentored Youth Fishing Day program.

E. Through June 2017, use increased understanding of customer demographics, current research, and customer trends to enhance recruitment and retention of anglers and boaters by identifying targeted segments for outreach and education.
   - Commission staff and guest speakers conducted two 4-hour Kayak Fishing Programs that provided hands-on training and experience in fishing from a kayak. Program participants rated the program as highly informative and effective in preparing them for this quickly growing segment of angling/boating.
Goal 3B: Conduct outreach and informational efforts designed to reduce boating-related casualties, maintain water rescue program to provide necessary training for emergency response personnel to safely and effectively respond to water-related emergencies, and pursue new public access as resources allow.

A. Through June 2017, annually identify and implement specific strategies to reduce casualties of targeted user groups.
   o Conducted a meeting of the Boating Advisory Board and identified three regulatory amendments to advance to the Commission as proposed rulemaking at the September 2015 quarterly Commission meeting.
   o Prepared eight regulatory amendments as final rulemaking for the September 2015 quarterly Commission meeting.

B. By January 2015, use point-of-sale messaging to increase awareness of minimum boating safety legal requirements.

C. Through June 2017, continue to play a leadership role in the Pennsylvania Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (PA-HART) program.
   o PA-HART continues to train monthly and took part in Operation Iron Response which was a joint training mission with several other entities including the BLE SWERT team to prepare for the World Meeting of the Families in Philadelphia to be held the last weekend in September.
   o Staff met with PEMA and other key players in the emergency response field to further the PA-HART/SWERT recognition/role.

D. By July 2015, establish BLE swiftwater strike team as a certified Type 1 response team.
   o The SWERT team has completed training and successfully completed the Pro-Board qualifications for EMAC requests.

E. Through June 2017, annually conduct Operation Dry Water, a statewide boating safety and boating under the influence saturation detail.
   o 2015 was the third year of participation in Operation Dry Water.

F. Through June 2017, administer the Floating Structure and Aids to Navigation program.
   o Approximately 1,000 ATON reviews have been conducted and permits issued in 2015.

G. Through June 2017, administer Lake Erie Access Program and, as resources allow, pursue other public access opportunities consistent with Pennsylvania’s Fishing and Boating Access Strategy.
   o Received Commission approval to enter into a 25-year lease for Somerset Lake to remain open for fishing and boating free of charge, ensure fishing and boating will take precedence over other recreational activities, and allow Somerset County to provide expanded opportunities for public recreation at the site.

Goal 3C: Ensure that fish production levels are met annually to optimize fishing opportunities.

A. Through at least July 2015, continue to operate all 13 state fish hatcheries.
   1. Trout Culture: Annually produce and stock up to 3.2 million adult trout or 1.9 million pounds to stock in the Commonwealth.
From July 1 to September 20, 2015, the Commission stocked a total of 3,600 adult trout and 147,255 fingerling trout produced by eight PFBC hatcheries.

a. By July 2015, evaluate the public demand and expectations for stocked trout and provide a recommendation on how many trout should be raised.

2. Warm/Cool Water Culture: Annually produce warm/cool water species through in-house production or acquisition to meet requests to stock species requested by Fisheries Management.

From July 1 to September 30, 2015, the Commission produced and stocked 2,770 Northern Pike fingerlings; 1,800 Largemouth Bass fingerlings; 3,000 Black Crappie fingerlings; 14,500 Tiger Muskellunge fingerlings; and 57,200 Striped Bass fingerlings.

3. Cooperative Nurseries: Annually produce fish and eggs to supply the needs of the cooperative nurseries throughout the Commonwealth.

Fish were delivered to cooperative nurseries on schedule.

B. Through June 2017, ensure the safe and efficient maintenance and operation of state fish hatcheries while remaining in compliance with environmental regulations and fish health guidelines.

1. Annually utilize available funding for maintenance and operation of hatcheries and identify budget shortfalls which may lead to fish production decreases.

A chemical containment station and peristaltic pump were installed at the Tionesta State Fish Hatchery to reduce the handling of chemicals.

66 tons of 2RC stone was applied to the Tionesta State Fish Hatchery roads around pond embankments and hatchery raceways.

A voltage regulator and circuit transfer switch were replaced on the back-up generator at Oswayo State Fish Hatchery.

Two 5-horsepower 6-inch vertical shaft pumps have been removed and are currently being serviced due to pumping failure at the Oswayo State Fish Hatchery.

Corry State Fish Hatchery staff are currently enclosing A and B raceways lines to isolate the Lake Erie Brown Trout production from other production raceways that have recirculated water to reduce the threat of IPN.

Renovations at Reynoldsdale State Fish Hatchery are approximately 75% complete.

2. Consistently maintain and update hatchery permits and perform water quality analysis according to permits.

3. Annually perform fish health inspections, provide diagnostic services, and maintain fish transfer records.

During the quarter, staff performed 14 full or partial fish health inspections, conducted 50 diagnostic cases and reviewed 22 fish transfers.

C. Through July 2017, maintain and promote existing cooperative nurseries.

1. Through July 2017, increase the presence of cooperative nursery information in the Pennsylvania Angler and Boater magazine and the PFBC website.

Articles for the magazine’s “Currents” feature are regularly submitted.

2. By December 2016, perform an analysis of existing cooperative nurseries and recommended production levels.
3. By July 2016, evaluate and recommend improvements to the cooperative nursery application process.
Internal Resources

Goal 4: Optimize agency efficiency through continuation of investments in information technology, employee training and development, and infrastructure planning and implementation.

A. Information Technology
   2. By June 2016, redesign the Commission’s website to simplify and enhance ease of navigation.
   3. By June 2017, continue to plan for and support IT updates, enhancements, and maintenance of critical business applications to meet the needs and requirements of program areas.
      a. By September 2014, identify and prioritize essential application enhancements for key business areas.
      b. By July 2015, develop and implement annual plans for prioritized and funded application enhancements.
   4. Through June 2017, continue to convert business applications to the new .NET/SQL application standard platform as necessary.
   5. By July 2015, identify and begin utilizing available partnerships, infrastructure, software, data, and training to provide meaningful and useful information for managers and executive leadership to make critical programmatic, marketing, and business decisions.
   6. By June 2017, develop the capability of a GIS layer containing Commission properties.
      a. By June 2016, validate existing data, through general referencing, on Commission property holdings.
      b. By June 2017, develop GIS layer for Commission properties.

B. Training and Development
   1. Through June 2017, continue to re-invest in employee development opportunities.
      o In keeping with Executive Director Arway’s desire to explore opportunities to further advance the PFBC’s marketing efforts and develop new revenue sources, the Human Resource Office created a reorganization packet and received interim approval for the plan from the Office of Administration. Work is ongoing with the ultimate goal being Executive Board approval and finalization of the reorganization plan.
      o The Commission recruited and hired 20 Waterways Conservation Officer Cadets. Training for the new officers is currently underway.
      o A firearms instructor workshop was held and defensive tactics instructors completed updated training and certification in a Krav Maga LE Instructors course.
   2. By June 2016, complete the training of a new class of WCOs.
      o The 20 Cadets making up the 21st WCO Class continue with their ACT 120 training at the PSP Northwest Training Center and are due to complete that stage of training on December 4, 2015.
C. Through June 2017, continue to implement a comprehensive multi-year Infrastructure Plan for the engineering, maintenance, and development of the Commission’s dams, access areas, administrative buildings, hatcheries, marinas, and bridges.

1. Through June 2017, leverage funding sources to complete high-hazard dam repairs.
2. By March 2015, prioritize access areas that the Commission manages on behalf of the Commonwealth and begin implementing repairs on an established cycle.
3. By December 2014, complete plan for where and how to house the Commission’s Centre County-based staff.
4. By June 2016, complete plans to optimize Commission field staff into as few locations as possible to meet identified business needs.
5. By December 2014, complete return on investment analysis of marinas managed by the Commission.
6. By January 2015, prioritize bridges that the Commission manages on behalf of the Commonwealth and begin implementing repairs on an established cycle.
7. By June 2017, complete a Commission-wide energy savings analysis.
   a. By December 2015, complete an energy savings analysis for state fish hatcheries.
      o A listing of each hatchery’s energy savings accomplishments and ongoing changes have been completed and incorporated into an Energy Savings Report. Future projects will be completed as budgeting and manpower allow.
      o Hatchery energy report findings from PennTAP (Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program) are complete.
      o A presentation on solar energy is scheduled at the Oswayo State Fish Hatchery for September 10th to see if it may be an option for use at one or more Commission facilities.
      o A final report listing the findings by the workgroup is near completion and is scheduled to be finished by the end of 2015.