

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Strategic Plan

July 2014 – June 2017

Mission

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's mission is *to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities*. The mission reflects our statutory responsibilities in section 321 of the Fish and Boat Code, 30 Pa. C.S. §321, relating to:

- The encouragement, promotion and development of fishery interests.
- The protection, propagation and distribution of fish.
- The management of boating and the operation of boats.
- The encouragement, promotion and development of recreational boating.

Vision

By 2017, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will provide high quality services to insure essential resource management and protection and improved fishing and boating recreation; engage targeted audiences in safe fishing and boating; and maintain and improve the agency's workforce and physical infrastructure.

Values

The Commission's values are our guiding principles. These statements outline the behaviors that are expected of all employees, Commissioners, Boating Advisory Board members, and volunteers. Evident in our daily decision making, our values impact every aspect of our organization.

- We are committed to prudently managing the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.
- We are committed to providing high quality public service.
- We are committed to being wise stewards of the assets entrusted to us.
- We are committed to creating a positive and cooperative work environment where staff are given the opportunity to develop their expertise and ideas are openly exchanged, acknowledged, and respected.

Preamble

This strategic plan will guide agency operations from July 2014 through June 2017. The previous strategic plan was adopted in July 2010, amended slightly in January 2012, and intended to last from July 2010 until June 2015. Due to significant fiscal constraints driven largely by impending increases in health care and retirement costs that the agency is required to bear, the Board of Commissioners determined that the plan needed to be revised to reflect the new fiscal realities.

Mandatory personnel costs beyond the agency's control are expected to be over \$9 million annually by fiscal year 2016-17 and constitute about 20% of annual spending. Just before the strategic planning process started in earnest, the agency began developing an internal Spending Reallocation Plan (SRP) that shifted spending to accommodate the ballooning health care and retirement costs. Absent an influx of revenue to meet the rising personnel costs, this new strategic plan is constrained by more austere fiscal realities than the past plan. In the words of the Executive Director, the agency will be doing "less for less." The SRP limits the levels of services the agency will be able to deliver, and activities will ultimately be scaled according to available staff and financial resources.

This plan follows the SMART goal format that characterized the previous plan and that has become a fundamental part of how the agency operates. Adherence to the SMART approach means that each goal needs to meet the following five criteria:

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable
- A – Action-oriented
- R – Realistic
- T – Time-bound

Unlike the previous strategic plan that focused mainly on new initiatives, this plan is intended to capture the universe of activities that the agency will focus on from July 2014 – June 2017. To pursue the goals laid out in this plan, the agency acknowledges the need to maintain core support functions such as administration; human resources; fisheries and hatcheries; law enforcement; information technology (IT); legal; legislative and public relations; and engineering, maintenance, and other support services to operate agency facilities.

Fulfilling its mission and implementing this plan requires the agency to rededicate itself to working with partner organizations. In addition to working with others to achieve programmatic goals, the Commission will look to partners to help offer fishing and boating infrastructure since providing fishing and boating opportunities does not mean that the agency has to own or manage an area.

Waterways Conservation Officers

One of the primary core functions of the agency is law enforcement. A Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) is a specialized conservation police officer employed by the Commission's Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE). After successful completion of a stringent training program, WCOs may be assigned to a law enforcement district anywhere within the Commonwealth, where they are required to perform specialized law enforcement work in fisheries conservation and watercraft safety. Typical duties include patrolling by foot, vehicle, or boat to detect, pursue, and apprehend violators. WCOs issue citations or warnings, file criminal complaints, serve warrants, present evidence at hearings and court proceedings, investigate water pollution and encroachment incidents, investigate boat accidents, and stock fish. WCOs make public appearances to conduct educational classes or provide information to the

public. Additionally, WCOs coordinate the work of a corps of Deputy Waterways Conservation Officers at the district level.

WCO duties are critical to and interwoven with the conservation and recreation goals outlined below. Therefore, through 2017, the Commission will continue to maintain a vigilant corps of WCOs to enforce fishing, boating, and environmental laws and regulations; assist the Commission in meeting recreation goals; and promote public safety.

Funding

Issue 1: Revenues are insufficient to support the Commission's current levels of programs and services and meet increasing fixed, variable, and mandatory personnel costs.

As outlined in the preamble, the Commission is required to meet mounting health care, retirement, and other personnel obligations beyond its control while also dealing with the increasing costs of doing business that face any agency or company. To meet its obligations and maintain agency operations, the agency is reallocating spending while living within its means. Concurrent with narrowing the scope of its activities, the agency needs to maximize the funding generated from the traditional revenue streams of fishing license sales and boat registrations while also pursuing new sources of revenue to support the work it performs on behalf of aquatic resources, anglers and boaters, and individuals and businesses throughout Pennsylvania.

Strategy 1A: Reduce expenses and reallocate spending.

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.

Strategy 1B: Increase traditional revenue sources and secure alternative funding to deliver core programs and services to benefit anglers, boaters, and trust species; deliver select discretionary programs and services to benefit all Pennsylvanians; and meet mandatory personnel costs.

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.
 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.
 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

Issue 2: Current and increasing threats to our aquatic resources demand the Commission provide high quality services to insure essential resource management and protection and improved fishing.

High quality fishing opportunities require healthy, functioning ecosystems comprised of diverse aquatic communities. Pennsylvania's fish, amphibians, reptiles, and other aquatic resources face a number of threats, including power generation and associated fossil fuel extraction and transmission line construction; municipal and industrial surface and ground water withdrawals; point and non-point discharges; road construction and other encroachments; and the introduction and proliferation of invasive species. Continued assessment of the quality of our Commonwealth's aquatic resources and prudent implementation of fisheries management programs assures high quality angling in the waters of the Commonwealth. The following priority actions build on past successes to protect, conserve, and enhance both game and non-game species and their habitats in support of the Commission's Resource First philosophy.

Strategy 2: Provide high quality resource management and protection to reduce the impacts of current and increasing threats to aquatic resources.

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.
- 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:
 - a. Maintenance of long-term adult and young-of-year Smallmouth Bass data sets.
 - 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.
 - b. With partners, implement a fish community sampling procedure to more broadly track the condition of the fishery.
 - 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.
- 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.
- H. By December 2014, research and finalize statewide action plans for the Salamander Mussel and Chesapeake Logperch. Through June 2017, implement these plans.
- I. 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.
- J. 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.
- K. By September 30, 2015, together with partners, complete a new State Wildlife Action Plan.
- 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.
- 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.
 - 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

Issue 3: Other leisure and recreational activities are competing with fishing and boating for people's time.

A large body of research exists that suggests strategies likely to engage and retain people to fish and boat by promoting it as fun, relaxing, convenient, easy, and safe. One of the most practical strategies for creating new anglers is simply for a friend or family member to take them fishing. Maintaining the most efficient use of stocked fish also continues to be a core element of providing recreational fishing opportunities.

At the same time, the Commission needs to learn more about and use customer demographics, needs, and desires to increase participation in fishing and boating. The Commission should continue to rely on national research and best practices as a foundation for its recruitment and retention goals and focus its efforts on enhancing and using basic knowledge of its customers.

Strategy 3A: Successfully involve youth and other target audiences in fishing and boating by addressing the following five key elements in outreach programs, with an emphasis on social support:

- **Providing introductory experiences**
- **Providing access to equipment**
- **Providing instruction (skills)**
- **Providing access (real and perceived)**
- **Encouraging social support (apprenticeship/mentoring ensures adoption)**

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.
- B. Through June 2017, maintain Fishing Tackle Loaner Program to make equipment accessible for group or individual loan.
- 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).
 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.

Strategy 3B: Provide for safe and enjoyable participation in 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.
- 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.
- D. By July 2015, establish BLE swiftwater strike team as a certified Type 1 response team.
- E. Through June 2017, annually conduct Operation Dry Water, a statewide boating safety and boating under the influence saturation detail.
- F. Through June 2017, administer the Floating Structure and Aids to Navigation program.
- G. Through June 2017, administer Lake Erie Access Program and, as resources allow, pursue other public access opportunities consistent and Pennsylvania's Fishing and Boating Access Strategy.

Strategy 3C: Create put-and-take fisheries by stocking legal size fish and enhance fisheries by stocking fry and fingerling size fish which supplement natural populations to support sustainable fisheries.

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

- 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.
 - 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.
- 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.
 - 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

Issue 4: The Commission must consistently make investments in itself to maintain its infrastructure, staff, and programs and their respective relevance.

The Commission's employees are its largest investment and most important resource. More than just people, the Commission's infrastructure includes a vast network of facilities and properties. To deliver its programs and services, the Commission needs to sustain strategic investments in employee development and training, information technology, and physical infrastructure and properties, which include an enormous backlog of capital improvement requirements and an extensive list of long-term maintenance needs that require a coordinated and deliberate approach for planning, funding, and implementation.

Strategy 4: Strengthen performance and secure operations by continuing to efficiently and effectively manage limited financial and human resources and agency infrastructure.

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.
2. By June 2016, complete the training of a new class of WCOs.

- 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.