

Dedicated to the Memory of Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore Jr.

PLAY

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

WINTER 2004

Caring for You and Your Catch

**The people have a right
to clean air, pure water,
and to the preservation
of the natural, scenic and
esthetic values of the
environment.**

**Pennsylvania's public
natural resources are
the common property of
all the people, including
generations yet to come.**

**As trustee for these
resources, the
Commonwealth shall
conserve and maintain
them for the benefit of
all the people.**

**Article 1, Section 27,
Pennsylvania
Constitution**

Pennsylvania is blessed with abundant natural resources. These resources are so important that this section was added to Pennsylvania's State Constitution in 1971. The state constitution is the "law of the land." This means that the law helps define how our state government runs. The addition of the natural resources amendment to the constitution ensures that the Commonwealth's government will conserve these resources.

There are several state government agencies given the responsibility to conserve and maintain the state's natural resources. The Fish & Boat Commission is one of those agencies. This issue is dedicated to showing you the way the Commission does that job and a few other jobs related to laws and regulations.

Learning this information may not make you a better angler or boater. But it may help you appreciate all that is accomplished to provide you with a pleasing, safe fishing and boating experience. But you have some responsibility here, too! Like all anglers and boaters, you are a good citizen when you abide by laws and regulations. You can also help by being a watchdog and reporting violations, and doing your share to conserve water.

When you are done with this issue of PLAY, pass it on. Remember that subscriptions to the PLAY newsletter are free to kids ages 8 to 12. Teachers and youth group leaders can also get PLAY newsletters. Contact the Fish & Boat Commission for more details on this program. Don't forget to check out the Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us. The site is loaded with information on reptiles, amphibians, fish, fishing, boating and water safety.



Follow the path
step by step
to learn all about

Laws and

Everyone who buys a fishing license or registers a boat gets a booklet that summarizes current fishing and boating regulations and laws. Do you know the difference between a law and a regulation? Do you know how a law becomes a law, or how regulations get passed? After playing this game, you will. Visit the PA Fish & Boat Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us, to view the current summaries of fishing and boating regulations and laws.

Laws are made by the state legislature when the governor signs them. One example of a law that affects anglers is the law that sets fishing license costs. Fishing license fees increase about every five years. Pennsylvania law gives the Fish & Boat Commission the authority to pass rules called regulations to protect and manage resources and keep boaters safe. One example of a regulation is the creel limit.

Creel limit for trout

4.

4. The Commission later considers the comments and additional input from staff. When the Commission considers adopting a proposed regulation, it's called final rulemaking. Sometimes minor changes must be made before final adoption.

Regulations

Note to teachers and parents: This issue includes information to help you teach material in the PA Department of Education's Ecology and Environment Standard 4.9.4 (Environmental Laws and Regulations) and Civics and Government 5.3.3 and 5.3.6 standards.

... signs approval to a bill.
... says how much a fishing
... years.
... authority to make regulations,
... ns that the Commission can
... sources, and keep anglers and
... mit for trout.



1.

1. Regulations often set when, how and where we can fish and boat. Ideas for regulations or changes to current regulations come from Commission staff or anglers and boaters.

2.

The 10-member board of commissioners reviews the information about the idea. If they accept it at this step, it becomes proposed rulemaking, the first formal step in the process.

3.

3. Public comment. The public is given a chance to provide comments on the proposed regulation. People are invited to send letters or email their comments to the Commission. Sometimes the Commission conducts public meetings to obtain public input.

5.

5. New regulations in place. Anglers and boaters see the effects of the new regulation as they fish and boat. They must do their part and abide by that regulation. In our example, the creel limit for trout is changed to five a day. So when this regulation took effect, anglers could keep only five trout legally.

Protecting the Places Where Our Critters Live

It's all about habitat. Habitat is the place where an organism lives. Habitat provides the things it needs to live—food, water, space and shelter. These things must be in the right amount and in the right arrangement. Do you know what happens when those things aren't there or when they're not available in the right amount? Sometimes the organism is no longer found in that location.

How can you as an angler go fishing for something that isn't there? Of course, you can't. For this reason, the Fish & Boat Commission makes sure the habitat is healthy for the fish we all like to catch. Cooperating with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Commission works to protect the habitats of fish and other aquatic organisms.

DEP issues permits for activities that might affect aquatic habitats. Activities that require permits include

highway construction, coal mining, building housing developments and logging. The Commission reviews permits to ensure that the activity doesn't change critical habitat and the critters it supports.

Even activities far from water can still have a damaging effect. Steps must be taken, as part of the permit, to prevent pollution from occurring. In this way, Commission biologists and law enforcement officers try to prevent pollution before it happens. The Commission staff reviews more than 1,000 permit applications each year.

Sometimes pollution happens. When it does, Commission waterways conservation officers (WCOs) get involved. Sometimes they investigate and gather evidence to prove fault. Offenders pay fines for the damage they cause.

WCOs investigated nearly 400 reported pollution cases in 2002. They investigated or reviewed nearly twice that many permits.



Where Did All the Fish Go?

It may seem as if all the fish must be gone when you haven't caught anything or had a bite. The Commission can't make sure the fish bite every time you go fishing. But we can do our best to make sure fish are there for you to catch. One way is with fishing regulations such as minimum sizes, seasons and creel limits.

Minimum Sizes

Can you name any fish that have minimum sizes? That is, they must be a certain length before you can keep them. Do you know how these regulations work to provide good fishing?

Minimum sizes work in several ways. The length of a species might be set to protect it until it has spawned at least once. In some waters, it's important to make sure there are enough young fish to replace the older, bigger fish anglers are keeping. The more adults that spawn, the more likely it is that there will be young fish.

Sometimes anglers want fish of a certain length. The size on Trophy Trout water is set at 14 inches. The water can grow big fish, so the size is set high enough to increase anglers' chances of hooking a trophy.

Minimum sizes can also keep anglers from taking too many fish. For example, an imaginary lake has a population of fish—let's say it's 100. Of course, we know that there are likely more than 100 fish in the water, but the arithmetic is easier with this example. Suppose only 10 fish are 15 inches or longer. If the minimum size is set at 15 inches, it limits the number of fish anglers can take home, leaving the other 90 to grow and reproduce. So while the creel limit could be set high, the minimum size would limit the number of fish anglers could take.

Seasons

Seasons identify when fish can be kept. Seasons are often closed when species are spawning. The length of the season can also limit the number of fish kept and caught. Sometimes the creel limit changes during the season. From the opening day of trout season until Labor Day, the creel limit for trout is five. From Labor Day until the end of February, the limit is three.

The Commission considers many factors before creating a regulation or making changes to current ones. Information about the fish and its population are analyzed. Angler opinion is also important.

Make sure you know the regulations for the waterway you are fishing. Following the regulations is one way that anglers help to protect good fishing!

Fish Season

Creel Limits

A creel limit sets the number of fish you can keep each day. Creel limits are often established to ensure that a waterway doesn't get overfished. But often, minimum sizes are more effective at limiting harvest (see "Minimum Sizes," left).

Word Search Puzzle

1. Clean air, clean water and wildlife are examples of natural **(resources)**.
2. The PFBC has to **(conserve)** and maintain the state's natural resources.
3. When the governor signs a **(bill)**, it becomes a **(law)**.
4. Seasons, sizes and creel limits are all examples of **(regulations)**.
5. The 10 members of the board of **(Commissioners)** review ideas for changes to regulations.
6. The Commission works to **(protect)** habitats of fish and other aquatic organisms.
7. PFBC staff reviews **(permits)** for highway construction, mining and logging.
8. Permits are designed to help prevent **(pollution)**.
9. WCOs **(investigate)** pollution cases and gather evidence.
10. Anglers must follow **(creel)** limits to help protect fish populations.
11. Many boating regulations help to keep us **(safe)**.
12. Minimum **(size)** regulations help to provide good fishing for days to come.
13. Anglers may keep only fish that are in **(season)**.
14. A law determines how much a fishing **(license)** costs.
15. Public meetings are held for the Commission to get **(input)** on proposed regulations.
16. Once a proposed regulation is passed by the Commissioners, it becomes final **(rulemaking)**.

Look at the puzzle carefully, can you find all 17 hidden words?



Answers on next page.

Keeping All of Us Safe

All boats must have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved wearable personal flotation device (PFD—life jacket) on board for each person.

It is illegal to operate a watercraft in a reckless manner.

It is illegal to operate a watercraft within 100 feet of anyone towed behind another boat.

The life jacket also has to fit and be easily reached.

Children 12 years of age and younger must wear a life jacket while underway on a boat 20 feet or less and on all kayaks and canoes.

These are examples of boating rules and regulations in Pennsylvania. These rules and regulations are intended to keep us safe when we boat. For example, life jackets are designed to keep you floating—even if you can't swim. Not wearing one (or having one to wear) can mean the difference between life and death!

The Commission, with the help of the Boating Advisory Board, passes regulations designed to keep people safe on the water. Many regulations result from someone seeing something unsafe or from investigating the causes of a serious boating accident.

Boating Advisory Board

The Boating Advisory Board consists of five citizens appointed by the governor, as well as the Commission executive director, the director of the Commission Bureau of Boating & Education, and a representative of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Boating Advisory Board reviews and considers all regulations relating to boats and boating.

Word search answers from previous page.

e	k	x	j	v	u	f	l	w	p	r	o	t	e	c	t	v	o
a	c	y	w	k	n	q	w	l	g	e	i	z	e	l	g	k	s
d	o	k	s	i	b	e	b	k	j	r	u	b	i	a	f	t	e
c	n	k	c	f	q	z	t	i	c	e	n	s	e	w	s	m	a
p	s	r	e	g	u	l	a	t	i	o	n	e	q	x	a	z	s
v	e	p	n	b	b	w	b	u	c	h	l	z	q	b	f	m	o
z	r	j	i	n	v	e	s	t	i	g	a	t	e	r	e	c	n
r	v	s	p	z	g	x	j	q	j	b	i	l	t	e	n	e	g
r	e	u	m	r	u	l	e	m	a	k	i	n	g	e	v	b	x
z	p	e	r	m	i	t	s	g	f	w	e	u	x	l	f	x	b
i	k	v	a	r	c	o	m	m	i	s	s	i	o	n	e	r	s
y	p	o	l	l	u	t	i	o	n	p	t	e	p	w	g	u	l
p	u	h	r	e	s	o	u	r	c	e	s	w	z	f	e	w	z
t	k	h	z	c	i	n	p	u	t	e	b	e	u	w	z	s	x

Touchdown Test



The easiest way to find out if a life jacket fits is to do the "touchdown test." Put on the vest, pull the adjusting straps tight, and buckle and zip it up. Now raise your arms as if you were a football referee signaling a touchdown. Then have a grownup pull on the vest just above your shoulders. If the PFD is too big, it will easily come up over your face! If it's sized correctly, it will stay put.

The Commission also trains people in water rescue techniques. This is just in case you or another boater has a bad day on the water. Commission-trained water rescue professionals also assist when floodwaters endanger people.