



PFBC
STRATEGIC
PLAN
SUMMARY

At the October 1998 meeting, the Commission adopted its strategic plan, entitled Enhancing Fishing and Boating in Pennsylvania: Strategies for the 21st Century.

The Commission embarked on a concerted strategic planning process in the early 1990s. An earlier version of the plan was developed and printed in 1995. The current document has evolved considerably over the last few years through substantial efforts to gather public input. In 1996 and 1997, the Commission held a series of nine roundtable meetings with the Commonwealth's anglers and boaters. Public surveys were used to make statistically valid assessments of angler and boater opinions and identify priority program areas. The Commission also used several issue-oriented workgroups to gather opinions and guide policy development on specific topics.

The new version of the plan succinctly outlines the challenges and opportunities the Commission faces in the coming century. Copies of the last draft are available electronically through the Commission's web site at www.fish.state.pa.us. The entire plan, printed in final form, may be obtained by written request to: Aquatic Resource Planning Coordinator - Strategic Plan, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

Here are the guiding policies and selected strategies for achieving Commission objectives.



Conserving Pennsylvania's Aquatic Resources

Aquatic Stewardship

Recognizing the Commonwealth's water resources as the basis for the conservation of all aquatic organisms, the Commission will actively work to protect, conserve and enhance them. The Commission will commit staff resources to be involved in water resource issues and projects in cooperation with state, federal and local entities with similar goals. Emphasis will be placed on sustaining and improving the quality of the Commonwealth's waters.

The Commission's independent status and current mandates enable the agency to work to protect the resource. The input of anglers and boaters is an important element in these efforts, and indeed, user input is consistent with the resource-based approach followed by the Commission. In a 1996 survey, more than 95 percent of anglers surveyed indicated that restoring and improving habitat and managing and conserving endangered fish, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic organisms are important Commission functions. In addition, the Commission received an overall approval rating of nearly 80 percent. The Commission is fortunate to have such

overwhelming support from the customer base. Anglers and boaters strongly support the Commission's broad conservation mission as well as the programs that directly benefit them.

One of the most effective strategies the Commission uses to protect the aquatic resources of the state is to provide input to the Department of Environmental Protection to help it fulfill its much broader mandate as a trustee for Pennsylvania's water resources. However, the Commission has neither the funding nor the statutory mandate to become the Commonwealth's primary water quality protection and enforcement agency. The Commission is effective as an advocate for the proper water quality designation of streams. Appropriate designation under the Commonwealth's antidegradation program provides recognition and enhanced protection for the State's water resources.

Proactive Commission involvement in reviewing and commenting on permit applications also plays an important role in ensuring the protection of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. Several other focal points have also been identified for improving the Commission's resource conservation efforts:

- Promoting watershed-based resource protection.
- Sustaining Pennsylvania's nongame aquatic resources.
- Ensuring migratory fish species restoration.

Watershed-based resource protection

The Commonwealth's water quality is intrinsically linked to the health and well-being of the state's watersheds. The number one source of pollution of Pennsylvania's waterways is nonpoint source pollution. The Commission recognizes, supports, and will promote watershed-based protection and enhancement efforts as a way of protecting Pennsylvania's aquatic resources. The Commission will use resources to implement watershed-based protection and enhancement strategies in cooperation with other federal, state and local organizations and entities.

Watersheds are a focal point for many national, state and local protection and enhancement efforts. Funding and management attention at all levels of government are increasingly focused on this basis.

Strategies for promoting watershed-based resource protection

- Establish partnerships with organizations and entities that have a stake or interest in the watersheds of the Commonwealth.
- Enhance existing partnerships with federal, state and local entities including sportsmen's clubs and conservation organizations.
- Continue active enforcement of laws and regulations designed to protect the aquatic resources.
- Communicate and work with the organizations and entities that have an effect on Pennsylvania anglers, boaters and the aquatic environment which the Commission is entrusted to protect and manage.
- Develop and implement a more comprehensive Adopt-a-Water program.
- Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote watershed-based efforts.

Sustaining Pennsylvania's nongame aquatic resources

The Commission recognizes that nongame aquatic resources are important parts of Pennsylvania's ecology that warrant attention and protection. The Commission will encourage efforts to maintain and restore biological diversity and will give due consideration to this diversity in all resource management decisions. The Commission will work with conservation entities to obtain adequate and sustainable funding to preserve, protect and manage all species and organisms which the Commission has a mandate to protect.

Strategies for sustaining Pennsylvania's nongame aquatic resources

- Devote appropriate resources to ensure the conservation of aquatic species, reptiles and amphibians through effective management and enforcement efforts.
- Actively pursue adequate and sustainable funding for the management of nongame species.
- Assess the feasibility of imposing a fee on permit reviews for impacts to species under Commission management jurisdiction.
- Undertake proactive management strategies for nongame species and their habitats to avoid species loss or expensive last-minute intervention to prevent loss.

- Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote the conservation of nongame species.

- Promote nonconsumptive recreational use of the Commonwealth's nongame species under the Commission's management purview by participating in the establishment of watchable wildlife sites.

Migratory fish species restoration

Recognizing the biological and economic importance of migratory fish species, the restoration of these fish to Commonwealth waters is a top Commission priority. The Commission will work in concert with others committed to the restoration effort to ensure the success of these programs.

Strategies for restoring migratory fish

- Ensure the restoration of anadromous species through the use of adequate Commission resources and through active participation in restoration partnerships.
- Promote migratory fish restoration efforts to ensure long-term support for their protection and management.
- Remove barriers to migratory fish runs and implement fish passage when removal is not feasible.
- Restrict harvest of migratory fish during the restoration process.
- Actively enforce management regulations designed to protect restoration efforts.
- Artificially propagate shad and other migratory fish until wild stocks achieve self-sustaining levels.
- Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote public awareness and the restoration of migratory fish runs.

Promoting Recreational Fishing and Boating

The water resources of Pennsylvania enhance the quality of life for its citizens and provide both active and passive recreational opportunities. The Commission will encourage the wise and safe enjoyment of the resource. Recreation on the Commonwealth's waterways is largely dependent upon the provision of adequate access. The Commission will use partnerships to provide and enhance access to the Commonwealth's waters.

Priorities

- Enhance fishing and boating access partnerships.
- Enhance public outreach efforts targeted at resource education and connecting people to the resource.

Enhancing fishing and boating access

The Commission recognizes that the provision of adequate access to the waterways is crucial to the enjoyment of these resources. The Commission also recognizes that there are many federal, state and local government agencies, as well as private landowners, involved in providing access to the resource. The Commission will work with others to enhance existing and develop new access to the Commonwealth's water resources.

Strategies for enhancing fishing and boating access

- Develop an access grants program that results in more cooperatively funded development projects and maintenance agreements with other government entities and private interests.
- Inventory access needs and develop a prioritized development and major maintenance plan for access facilities that accounts for user and agency management needs.
- Establish avenues to expand the use of public waters.
- Enhance Commission landowner relations and easement programs.
- Conduct surveys at current facilities to determine the suitability of the site for current and projected use.
- Ensure that access facilities are accessible to all users.
- Improve liability protection for persons who provide free access to their lands and waters.
- Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote public awareness and utilization of access to the Commonwealth's waters.

Enhancing public outreach efforts

Commonwealth aquatic resource users and those who care about the resource desire opportunities to be involved with the management of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. The Commission will actively solicit and take input from customers when making resource management decisions. The Commission will actively encourage the use of the resource and

build public support for the Commission's role in protecting it.

Strategies for enhancing public outreach

- Actively solicit customer input in the decision-making process.
- Work with members of the General Assembly and officials of other government agencies to obtain and consider public input.
- Identify management issues where public outreach efforts/education will help and develop effective strategies to address them.
- Implement effective strategies to retain existing anglers and boaters and recruit new ones.
- Promote knowledge of the resource, resource use opportunities and the role of the Commission in providing them.
- Provide resource information including location, capabilities and management options to interested parties.
- Enhance angler awareness of fish consumption advisories through cooperative efforts with the departments of Health and Environmental Protection.
- Encourage more partnerships that enhance the resource, the appreciation/knowledge of the resource and opportunities to enjoy them.
- Provide programs that enhance awareness of the aquatic resources and fishing and boating opportunities.

Managing Recreational Fishing and Boating

Boaters and anglers seek and enjoy a variety of aquatic recreation experiences in the Commonwealth. While motivations and activities differ and may even conflict, the safety of all users is crucial. The Commission will tailor management and education programs to optimize boating and fishing opportunities while protecting the resource user.

Strategies for managing recreational fishing and boating

- Develop and enforce boating laws and regulations that enhance boating safety and the opportunity for all boaters to safely enjoy Pennsylvania's boating opportunities.
- Target high-use sites for increased boating safety outreach efforts and specialized enforcement details. Increase public information efforts regarding water safety issues.

● Promote boating and water safety and compliance with boating laws through education, information and law enforcement efforts.

- Promote fishing and compliance with fish laws and regulations through education, information and law enforcement efforts.
- Increase fines for noncompliance with fishing and boating laws and develop and implement effective enforcement strategies.
- Continue to recognize that warnings are an effective law enforcement tool.
- Increase emphasis on boater ethics and courtesy.
- Measure boater knowledge and tailor safety training and information to meet boater needs.
- Deliver and measure the effectiveness of education and information efforts designed to address known safety problems.
- Support mandatory boating education legislation.
- Provide for mandatory boating safety education for operators of personal watercraft.

Addressing the Expectations of Resource Users

Recognizing that a variety of aquatic recreation experiences are sought in Pennsylvania and that motivations of various anglers and boaters differ, the Commission will provide cost-effective programs that address a wide spectrum of demands. The Commission will strive to tailor management programs to optimize fishing and boating opportunities and meet user expectations. In instances where user demands jeopardize resource sustainability, the Commission will be a steadfast advocate for conservation.

Fishing and boating enhancement initiatives: Optimizing fishing opportunities

The Commission recognizes that it faces many management issues in regard to providing for specific fishing opportunities. In working to address these issues, the Commission holds as its broad goal providing optimum recreational fishing opportunities while protecting the fisheries resource.

Strategies for optimizing fishing opportunities

- Allocate appropriate staff and fiscal resources to enhance management

efforts for both coldwater and warm/coolwater species and habitats.

- Develop formal statewide management plans for major species of gamefish to include use of special regulations, recognition of directed management for significant populations supported by natural reproduction, more effective and efficient use of hatchery-produced fish and extension of angling seasons without adverse impact on the resource.

- Develop special management plans to protect and enhance native species that are threatened or endangered and develop restoration plans for extirpated species where possible.

- Develop a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of water quality associated with influent and effluent of fish culture stations and produce a plan that will assure installation of best practical technology and best available operational techniques.

Fishing and boating enhancement initiatives: Promoting boating opportunities

Recreational boating is enjoyed by an increasing number of Pennsylvanians. The Commission will actively promote the various boating opportunities available in the Commonwealth. In promoting boating, the Commission is mindful of user group conflicts and will strive to eliminate them. The Commission will use its regulatory powers to safely govern existing opportunities while actively pursuing new avenues for use.

Strategies for optimizing boating opportunities

- Increase information on the availability of boating opportunities.

- Increase information on how to boat safely, responsibly, courteously and ethically.

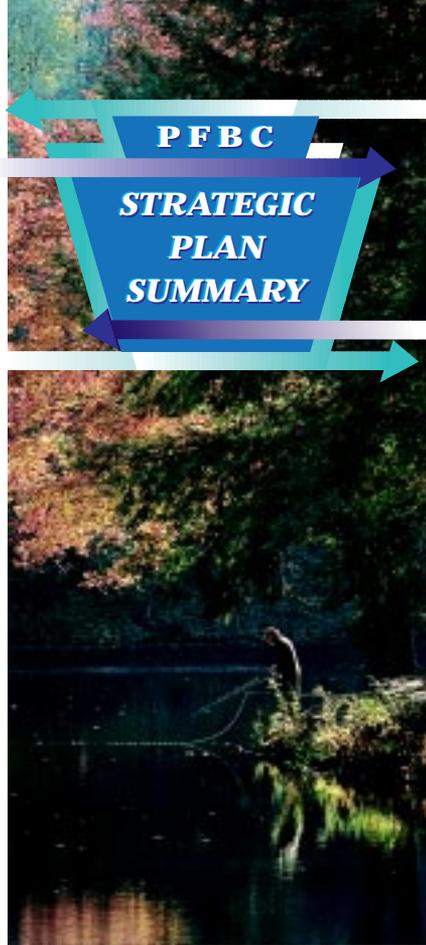
- Coordinate zoning, access, regulation, education and awareness programs with other entities to benefit resource users.

- Work with Commission partners to provide adequate public access.

- Promote waterway use opportunities while preserving traditional recreational activities.

- Provide effective enforcement of waterway use regulations to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.

- Deploy appropriate resources to effectively address user conflicts.



- Consider differential regulatory approaches to boating issues based on the size of the waters being regulated.

Investing in the Future

Achievement of the objectives outlined in this document is essential to protect the future of the state's aquatic resources, the resource users, and the long and proud heritage of fishing and boating in Pennsylvania. The strategies and initiatives proposed are far-ranging and ambitious. In looking toward the future, stakeholders should not overlook the significant challenges along the way. The most daunting obstacle is fiscal limitations. Meeting the broad goals the Commission has established will require significant expenditures. Visions are free; realizing them comes at a price.

Although the issue of funding falls outside the direct scope of the agency-wide goals, it is a closely related topic. Ultimately, the ability to achieve mission objectives depends on adequate funding. As such, funding and setting priorities for expending funds remain important policy issues.

Funding

As measured in constant dollars, the amount of money available for Com-

mission programs will remain relatively stable for the foreseeable future. This means that the Commission will have to focus its operating and personnel expenditures on its core programs and may have to reduce expenditures for other programs that are popular with some anglers and boaters.

As Commission capital improvement needs grow and the customer base shrinks, the Commission must actively work to expand the funding sources available to it. The Commission cannot continue to fund its infrastructure improvement needs out of operating revenues without adversely affecting other core programs. The Commission must seek to maintain the facilities and the level of service provided at current levels before allocating additional resources to expand capacity or create new infrastructure that must also be maintained. Projects needed to improve compliance with environmental laws and those that relate to resource and user protection will be top priorities.

Strategies for addressing fiscal concerns

- Pursue an amendment to the Key 93 Act to provide the Commission with long-term stable funding through this state conservation and recreation program.

- Support new conservation and recreation funding initiatives.

- Seek to fund capital improvement projects in innovative ways using bond money or other means to spread costs over several years.

- Seek fees on consumptive use of water and/or discharge of treated wastewater.

- Tie license and other fees to increases in inflation.

- Seek legislation to provide for realistic levels of liquid fuels tax reimbursements to the Boat Fund.

- Expand voluntary contribution programs.

- Obtain permanent, dedicated funding for non-game species conservation.

- Adopt fee structure for use of some Commission facilities and services.

- Forge partnerships to seek a percentage of the sales tax that is accrued from expenditures on outdoor recreation products. □