

# PROTECT • CONSERVE • ENHANCE



## The Clock Ticks

As we near the end of a decade, a century and a millennium, people everywhere have an increased awareness of time. As times change, the Fish & Boat Commission will continue to face the challenge of providing fishing and boating opportunities and protecting and managing our aquatic resources in the best possible manner in an era of funding and resource constraints. The year 2000 will witness some big changes in fishing and boating regulations, as well as marking some major milestones for the Fish & Boat Commission.

Next year, the regular season trout creel limit on inland waters will be changed for the first time since 1952. The limit will go from eight trout per day to five trout per day. Effective January 1, 2000, bass regulations will be restructured with adjustments in seasons, size and creel limits for both flowing and standing waters, as well as Big Bass waters. For example, on January 1, the daily creel limit on bass in most waters will change from six to four fish per day, and the size limit will change from 12 inches to 15 inches. Bass seasons, size and creel limits change throughout the year, so anglers need to pay careful attention to the new requirements.

The changes to fishing regulations that will go into effect next year were the result of a major effort to involve the angling public in providing input. We had workgroups and public meetings and hearings. We solicited comments using new media, such as the World Wide Web and electronic mail, and we tried to get input both from anglers who participate in sportsmen and fishing organizations, as well as the average "angler on the stream" (sort of like the "man on the street").

Even as we move forward with new regulations designed to address angler expectations, we continue to be concerned with the decline in the number of licensed anglers. The decade of the 1990s witnessed a substantial reduction in the number of licensed anglers in Pennsylvania. As the decade draws to a close, there are about 100,000 fewer license buyers overall, and about 150,000 fewer holders of resident licenses.

Where have all the anglers gone? Much of the decline in resident license sales is simply the result of the ticking of the clock and demographics. During the 1990s, about 132,000 Pennsylvanians bought senior lifetime fishing licenses and continued to enjoy the wonders of fishing in Pennsylvania without buying an annual resident license.

When we ask license buyers and ex-license buyers to identify the greatest barrier to their fishing, the number-one answer is "lack of time." We know that license sales are price-sensitive since there is always a decline in license buyers after any increase in license fees, no matter how modest the cost. What's been different about the 1990s is that, unlike the past, the number of license buyers did not bounce back as quickly or completely after an increase. Here's where the lack of time plays a significant role. After dropping out of fishing for a year or so, many people think they lack the time to get back in. In our fast-paced society, with many competing recreational and work-related

activities, many people find it hard to take the time to go fishing, even though they know it will be a relaxing and refreshing break from their other activities.

Readers of *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* are among our most avid and interested anglers and boaters. Each of you knows someone or several people who have stopped fishing in recent years, and I'll bet the reason has been "lack of time" more than anything else. We need your help to get people back on the water! We need your help in trying to get people to take time for themselves to go fishing and boating and enjoy the wonders of Pennsylvania outdoors. Encourage your friends and neighbors to take time to go fishing.

The clock is ticking on Pennsylvania boaters, too. Starting with the year 2000 boating season, operators of personal watercraft (such as Jet Skis®, etc.) will be required to have a boating safety certificate before they operate their personal watercraft (PWC) on Pennsylvania waters. As of October, we've issued about 25,000 boating safety certificates in 1999, the most ever in a single year. But we estimate there are 60,000 or more PWC operators in Pennsylvania and fewer than half of them currently have boating safety certificates. Our Commissioners have made it clear that the deadline for this requirement will not be extended. So if you operate a PWC or know someone who does, NOW is the time for them to sign up for a boating course or equivalent examination.

The year 2000 will mark the accomplishment of several major milestones. The new fish passage facility at York Haven Dam will go into operation, removing the last blockage to passage of shad and other migratory fishes at hydrodams on the lower Susquehanna River. The Fish & Boat Commission was established in 1866 with a mission to restore migratory fishes to the waters of the Commonwealth. Since the late 1970s, the Commission has been involved in a cooperative partnership with the utilities that operate the hydropower dams and other agencies as part of the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Committee. Decades of hard work are now bearing fruit as the restoration program moves forward into a new century.

Finally, the year 2000 will mark the first time that the Commission has been housed in its own state office building. Construction of our new headquarters on Elmerton Avenue is on schedule, and we plan to move into this new building in May or June 2000. From this new Fish & Boat Commission state office building, we will be able to serve the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania for decades to come.

The clock ticks, times change and we move forward to face the challenges of a new millennium. We need your help, and we appreciate your support.

**Peter A. Colangelo**  
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