

## “Resource First” Contest

Fifteen years ago, in 1987, the Fish & Boat Commission approved “Resource First” as the Commission’s motto. The adoption of the “Resource First” motto culminated more than a decade in which the Commonwealth’s fisheries management programs focused on the resource to guide policies in areas such as trout allocation and stocking, and wild trout management.

Commissioners and staff alike are very proud of the agency’s commitment to “Resource First.” Like many mottos or slogans that try to summarize a complex subject in just a few words, “Resource First” has been subject to various interpretations. The three words “Protect, Conserve, Enhance,” taken from the 1981 Statement of Policy, appear on the “Resource First” logo and are an integral part of the “Resource First” approach.

To mark the fifteenth anniversary of the “Resource First” motto, Commission staff and volunteers were given the opportunity to write a few words about what “Resource First” means to Pennsylvania. The finalist entries follow. The opinions expressed are the individual views of the employees and volunteers who submitted them.

*E&I Specialist Michael H. Skurecki.* Our “Resource First” principle is the solid foundation upon which the PA Fish & Boat Commission’s employees and volunteers provide leadership by their dedication and commitment to protect, conserve and enhance the natural aquatic resources of Pennsylvania, while also providing angling and boating opportunities. Supported by educational programs, law enforcement, and management’s commitment to excellence and integrity, the “Resource First” principle is a model for other states to follow in ensuring the viability of natural aquatic resources for present and future generations to enjoy.

*WCO Brooke R. Tolbert, Southern Luzerne, Southern Columbia Counties.* The land we call Pennsylvania was once bountiful with resources. Our waterways once supported large populations of trout and eels, shad and sturgeon, mink and otters, and eagles and ospreys. Pennsylvania’s waterways provided their inhabitants with a diverse resource wealth and a means of travel for commerce and exploration.

A common society of farmers, merchants and craftsmen colonized Pennsylvania, creating a Commonwealth. Yet, fortune-seekers ransacked our resources for hundreds of years. Now, as a modern society of farmers, merchants and craftsmen, we must embrace conservation to protect our resources and enhance our environment.

*Mrs. Beth Sheckler, Fishing Skills Instructor.* The resource has to be there for people to use, and the Fish & Boat Commission makes sure that the aquatic resources of Pennsylvania are protected and conserved so that more people can use and observe them.

As a Fishing Skills Instructor, I believe that this is very important because if the resources were not there, no one in Pennsylvania could fish and boat anywhere.

The course of the SMART Angler Program discusses the resource before actually showing the fishing techniques. I have seen waterways that have been destroyed because of overuse, acid rain and so forth. I am glad there is someone who takes an interest in protecting the aquatic resources that are left.

*George Geisler, Assistant to the Director, Bureau of Law Enforcement.* While several large, seemingly powerful and certainly well-funded state and federal agencies are entrusted with protecting the natural resources of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission consistently takes the lead in setting standards for conserving and protecting our natural resources as well as public safety on, upon and along waters of this Commonwealth.

Though small in size compared to many other conservation agencies, the Commission’s consistent mission of protecting, conserving and enhancing all related aquatic resources far outpaces its counterparts, both in terms of commitment and results. While some agencies give considerable dialogue to “natural resource conservation,” the Commission is always in the forefront of taking action proactively to serve the anglers, boaters and other Commonwealth residents who care about our aquatic resources.

Despite limitations in funding, the Commission responds to nearly every reasonable request for service, from award-winning, entertaining publications like *PA Angler & Boater* magazine to a web site overflowing with an abundance of useful and helpful information. Agency employees and volunteers alike graciously share their many talents with children and adults at boating safety classes, envirothons, sportsmen’s club events like youth field days, fishing seminars and much more.

It has been said that “A hundred years from now, it won’t matter how much was in the bank account, how big your house was or what kind of car you drove; it will matter what you did for future generations.” The results of the hard work of all the dedicated employees and volunteers of the PA Fish & Boat Commission will leave a legacy that, without corporate and individual efforts, could only be a dream instead of a reality. ☐

