



**PROTECT  
CONSERVE  
ENHANCE**

## A Vision for the Future



I am using this, my first column in *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* magazine, as an opportunity to introduce myself as the

Fish & Boat Commission's ninth executive director and to begin a dialog with Pennsylvania's anglers and boaters. It is certainly fitting that the first words in every issue of this magazine are written under the "Resource First" logo with the words "Protect, Conserve and Enhance." These words mean a lot to me and to all who fish and boat in Pennsylvania. I humbly and with the greatest respect accept the responsibility of serving as your executive director, and it will be my great honor to keep alive the conservation heritage of this fine agency.

Going back to 1866 when James Worrall was named Pennsylvania's first Commissioner of Fisheries, through the 1991 designation as the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, to today, the traditions and accomplishments of the Fish & Boat Commission are without equal. The staff and programs of the Commission are highly respected nationally and I am excited about being a part of this team.

I would like to address what "Resource First" means to me. Obviously, I didn't know Executive Director Ralph W. Abele, but from reading his "Straight Talk" columns covering 15 years, it was obvious that he lived out the Resource First motto and philosophy. He did so by being a leader in resource management and an active and uncompromising advocate for fisheries and broader environmental issues as they affect the resources of the state and the nation. His "Straight Talk" columns covered topics as wide-ranging as acid rain, fishing ethics, water quality laws, surface mining, comments on Interior secretaries, and human population growth. He was steadfast in his thinking, always looking out for the resource, and he was

revered because of those qualities. Many of the issues that he wrote about 20 and 30 years ago are still relevant today—some even more so. He is<sup>©</sup> an icon against which all other directors will always be measured.

How do we translate that philosophy into the 21st century? How do we position the Fish & Boat Commission to be the best possible agency and to address the issues facing the aquatic resources of the state? How do we take a staff that is already recognized as one of the best and continue or expand support that addresses their changing needs? These are the challenges that I gladly will face.

To answer these questions, we need to look at the stresses facing the resource and develop an agenda that is proactive, timely and exciting. This agenda must also look to the future to prepare us for a dynamic world. In a sense, we need to develop a fisheries and aquatic resources agenda for this still-new millennium.

First, it is apparent that we have a changing public and therefore a changing constituency. This is reflected in how people spend their time, how they value time, the basis for their ethics, and how they approach life. We have a generation that is considered "post modern." They have different perspectives and expectations, often a different framework for the development of values, and a different viewpoint on the natural world. Do they want to have a quality environment? The answer is definitely yes, possibly even more so than previous generations. Do they have the same opportunities to experience the environment as many of you did growing up? Definitely not. We need to understand this changing human landscape better and build programs that embrace it and offer experiences that fill a void that their existence may not offer. Fishing, boating, floating in a canoe or simply



enjoying water can fill this void, and we need to provide that opportunity and lead people to it in ways that will allow them to connect with the environment.

Second, we cannot manage the aquatic resource without looking at the landscape that affects it. Good boating and fishing depends on good water quality and proper habitat. Water quality and habitat are part of a larger landscape system. Looking at aquatic systems from a broader perspective will position us to be key players in creating solutions that will result in quality fishing and boating experiences. We all know that the landscape of Pennsylvania is undergoing dramatic change. The National Resource Inventory showed that the state is losing over 100,000 acres of rural land per year. This is the same rate as California, a comparison that is not all that flattering.

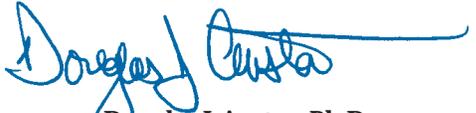
As a result of these types of changes and many others, we are already seeing an important part of the future of

natural resource management and fisheries management in Pennsylvania and in many other places. This glimpse into the future reveals dynamic teams of people working on watersheds and landscapes, and engaging the public in the management of our streams and lakes in ways that will lead to substantial and permanent improvement. Fish & Boat Commission staff will be an integral part of this process because they have expertise, knowledge and technical skill that is, and will be, sought after and valued by many. The challenge will be to balance this work with the important traditional fisheries activities.

Finally, how do we make this happen? Partnerships have been and will continue to be critical to this success. No single agency, no matter how large or well-funded, can solve environmental problems alone. No single agency has the expertise, resources, authority, or energy to be successful by itself.

Where one agency is weak, another is strong. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is an exceptional agency, and we will best address the future by maintaining and expanding that expertise as an independent body but also through expanded partnerships with our colleagues in the many other conservation groups statewide. I know that already there are some fantastic and effective partnerships built, and I hope to continue to support those while building new and productive relationships for the future.

I am a person who likes to get things done. I know that the people of the Fish & Boat Commission are the same. I want to see positive effects on the resource. That is why I got into this profession, that is why I am here, and that is what we will do.



**Douglas J. Austen, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Director**

## Dr. Douglas J. Austen Sworn in as Ninth Commission Executive Director

Dr. Douglas J. Austen has been officially sworn in as the new executive director of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Dr. Austen took the oath of office as part of the agency's winter quarterly meeting, last January in Harrisburg.

Dr. Austen brings to the Commission more than 25 years of fisheries and natural resource management experience in a variety of top-level positions. Before his hiring, he served as head of the Technical Support Section of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Natural Resources and



**Dr. Douglas J. Austen (right) takes the executive director's oath of office, administered by Commission Deputy Executive Director Dennis T. Guise. With Dr. Austen is his spouse, Lezli. The swearing in took place during the Commission's quarterly meeting, last January in Harrisburg.**

Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois.

He earned a Ph.D. in 1992 from the Department of Animal Ecology at Iowa State University. In addition, he holds a master of science degree with an emphasis in fisheries science from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a bachelor of science degree in wildlife and fisheries science from South Dakota State University. He is a Certified Fisheries Professional by the American Fisheries Society.

Dr. Austen is an avid outdoorsman. He and his wife, Lezli, have four-year-old twins who love to fish.

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