



## PROTECT CONSERVE ENHANCE

### Issues Vital to Pennsylvanians



If you care about conservation and the future of our aquatic resources, the next two months are critically important to you—not because of the wonderful fall fishing opportunities or the hunting season that dominates the life of many Pennsylvanians. Instead, it is the fall political season and really does have an effect on the quality of your fishing and boating in the future. Please don't stop reading this now that you know what it is that I'll be writing about. Bear with me! I realize that many of you will initially not be interested in becoming a political animal. You'd rather digest an article about a fall fishing technique, a water trail or a new fly for fall steelhead. I also realize that many of you who read this article are also actively involved in your sportsmen's club or some other group that helps with stream restoration, youth fishing or any one of the many exciting programs run by volunteers throughout the state. But this fall you can have an effect that will be far-reaching and that will pay dividends not only for you but for your children and all of Pennsylvania. So what are the issues and what can you do?

### House Bill 2155

First, you are probably aware by now that many angler and boater groups and the Fish & Boat Commission are working hard to obtain critical funds to maintain our operations through a very reasonable increase in fishing license and boat registration fees. This is currently known as House Bill (HB) 2155 and is in the House Game and Fisheries Committee. Passage of HB 2155 is so important to the future of fishing and boating that we're providing you detailed information in the form of a special fact sheet wrapped around the cover of this issue. If you didn't already read the fact sheet, I urge you to do so. Likewise, I encourage you to talk with your House and Senate members to let them know that funding for fishing and boating programs is important to you

and needs to move forward quickly. Letter, phone calls and emails—whatever you are willing to do.

For my part, I am spending much time, as is our legislative liaison Gary Moore, visiting with senators and representatives to ensure that the legislative process moves forward on this bill, which has received nearly unanimous support from an amazing cross section of groups in the state. For more information on this bill, check our web site, [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us), and click on the HB 2155 link.

### Growing Greener 2

Anyone who fishes or boats in the Commonwealth, especially after the floods that we have recently seen, knows that our lakes and streams are the results of the watersheds above them. The rain, groundwater, acid mine drainage and effects of development for homes and businesses all affect the quality and quantity of water that we use for recreation and drinking. You cannot truly be an advocate of fishing and boating if you are not also an advocate of better management of the watersheds. The second major piece of legislation is Growing Greener 2 (GG2), and a substantial component of the funds in GG2 are for restoration and conservation activities that will improve our streams and lakes. Funds in GG2 will also provide the Fish & Boat Commission with much-needed revenue that will let us improve our fish hatcheries and dams that are in need of critical repair. Our web site also contains information on GG2 and will link you to others that describe the legislation in greater detail.

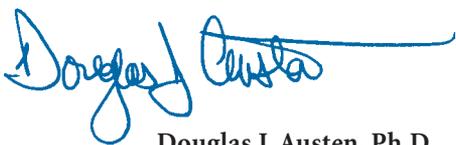
As with HB 2155, your personal contact with legislators is very important and much needed. There are many other positive pieces of legislation this fall that deal with alternative energy, rural water and sewers, and much more. Check out the web sites of groups such as the Pennsylvania Environmental Council ([www.pccpa.org](http://www.pccpa.org)) for more information.

## Surviving the flood

Many of you had your own experiences with water in the basement, or even worse, as a result of the remnants of Hurricane Ivan. Tragically, there were lives lost as a result of the storm, and my sympathies are with the families of those who have lost someone. There were also many stories of courage and assistance in the face of danger provided by many citizens and emergency personnel. Fish & Boat Commission staff were among those involved in rescues and in tremendous cleanup efforts that really showed the spirit and dedication of our staff. Many of our waterways conservation officers were personally involved in rescues, watching dams that were identified as having potential for being hazards, and in evacuations.

You also probably saw on the news many water rescues performed by firemen and emergency personnel but didn't realize that the Fish & Boat Commission staff and volunteer instructors have trained the vast majority of these experts (see the sidebar on this page).

On the cleanup side, flooding occurred in our Benner Spring State Fish Hatchery in Centre County. Water from Spring Creek entered the facility and rose about 7 feet high in two of our buildings' lower levels. In an amazing response, staff worked tirelessly starting Saturday afternoon and through the weekend to clean out the facilities and rescue hundreds of thousands of fish that were washed out of the raceways. Spring Creek received an unexpected and substantial stocking as a result of the storm, and anglers might be surprised at what they catch in future years, but the result was that staff got us back in operation quickly and professionally and deserve a great deal of credit for their efforts.



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

## Water Rescue Program Shows its Value in Wake of Ivan

As the floodwaters from Hurricane Ivan began to recede from large portions of Pennsylvania, a better picture of property damages emerged. Early projections placed losses at hundreds of millions of dollars. If there was any good news, it was what wasn't lost over the weekend—the lives of rescue and emergency-response personnel. That's in no small part a credit to the Fish & Boat Commission's Pennsylvania Water Rescue Program.

The Commission initiated the Pennsylvania Water Rescue Program in 1983 to provide water- and ice-rescue training for fire and rescue department personnel. The program focuses on training volunteer instructors in the major components of water rescue. Those instructors in turn provide hands-on training for rescue personnel. The program is now the largest non-profit, public water- and ice-rescue training program in the United States, with some 15,000 students having been trained in the most current techniques.

There's no telling how many rescues have been performed by those personnel over the years, or even in the course of Ivan's weekend. One Commission instructor alone reported participating in many rescues in western Pennsylvania during Ivan's flooding, saving a total of 22 people and seven pets. Those operations included saving three firefighters who, in responding to an emergency call, became victims themselves.

The Commission also provides water-rescue training to its corps of waterways conservation officers (WCOs). Even though WCOs are not normally first responders in search and rescue operations, in emergencies such as flooding they are often called on as "front line" personnel, where their training, boats and other equipment are invaluable.

Water-rescue courses are taught by Commission employees and by more than 100 certified volunteer instructors.

"The safety of our citizens is greatly enhanced by having these thousands of people trained in these rescue techniques," says Commission Executive Director Dr. Doug Austen. "This is a very important program by the Fish & Boat Commission and a service we are proud to provide. One of the many factors that makes this program unique is that although water-rescue training benefits all Pennsylvanians, no general state tax dollars are used to support it."

Instead, water-rescue training, like all Fish & Boat Commission programs, is paid for by the increasingly limited fees for boat registrations and fishing licenses. "Enhanced state funding so that we can continue and expand this important program should be one lesson learned from the floods of 2004," Director Austen says.

For information on the Pennsylvania Water Rescue Program, visit the Commission's web site, [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us), or navigate to [http://sites.state.pa.us/PA\\_Exec/Fish\\_Boat/boatcrs/fact\\_boatwr.htm](http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Fish_Boat/boatcrs/fact_boatwr.htm).

