



Straight TALK

by *John A. Arway*

*Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

Customer Service

As a fisheries biologist growing up on the Resource First side of our agency, I continue to have a passion for making sure that our resources stay protected, are managed according to sound scientific principles and are regulated to ensure that they are carefully conserved. As Director, I also have to pay close attention to the business side of the agency since fishing and boating are “Big Business” in Pennsylvania and a tremendous economic driver in many parts of our Commonwealth. If you don’t believe me, just ask the restaurant, bait and tackle shop and hotel owners in rural Pennsylvania about their business activity in and around the opening day of trout season. Although angler interest peaks in April and May, after all we are a trout state with over 70 percent of our license customers buying a trout stamp; fishing is a sport that we can practice all year long. Pennsylvania’s waters supply recreational fishing opportunities by supporting a wide variety of fish species that are the target of our sport anglers. These include black bass, our second most popular sport fish, along with an assortment of fun and delicious panfish species including Bluegills, crappies and perch, a catfish fishery that we are still learning about and continues to grow in popularity and Common Carp, which attract common anglers and specialists who enjoy using traditional European fishing techniques along with our bow anglers and their tournaments. We also can’t forget about some local favorites including the stripers and American Shad in the Delaware River, Hickory Shad in the lower Susquehanna River and the monster Walleyes and steelhead in Lake Erie.

I must admit that I have fallen into the trap of measuring our agency’s success by monitoring sales and costs. I receive a weekly sales and marketing report that tracks fishing license sales. And, I receive a weekly financial statement that reviews our expenditures and revenues and compares them to the prior year. I know that most businesses track spending activity, so they can optimize sales as the opportunity arises. Some major sport store retailers track sales in four-hour time periods, so they

know when we enter their stores and how much we buy during a particular time of day.

The most recent estimate of fishing participation in Pennsylvania shows that 1.1 million anglers spent \$485 million as reported in the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. The 2006 national survey results showed that 994,000 anglers spent almost \$1.3 billion. So why did 106,000 less people spend \$815 million more in 2006 than they did in 2011? It appears to be an artifact of the survey methods since the sample size was too small to estimate special equipment (including boats) sales in 2011. These sales were reported out as \$705,829 in 2006. My personal concerns about the results of the 2011 survey caused me to volunteer as the Chair of the National Survey Technical Workgroup charged with improving the accuracy of the 2016 national survey. Stay tuned. It’s obvious, at least to me, that we need to better understand the spending and buying habits of you, our customer, in order to meet your needs and expectations with the goods and programs we provide. That is my definition of what a public service agency should do.

A friend of mine recently posted an article on the social media site LinkedIn. The article was entitled “Measuring the ROI of a Good Customer Experience” by Don Peppers and caught my attention since we were preparing to head into roundtable discussions with our fishing license sales agents. The intent was to open up a line of communication with our 900 plus agents, so we can better serve our license-buying customers. A novel idea for sure since we have never done that before at least in recent history. The article suggests “The overwhelming majority of businesses measure their financial success based on current sales and costs, while customers are focused on the customer experience they anticipate.” The author advises that the Return-On-Investment (ROI) associated with a “frictionless customer experience” isn’t necessarily reflected in current customer sales but should be measured by the customer’s current lifetime value. Therefore, my worrying

about the short-term data from our weekly and monthly financial reports would be better spent on finding out whether our customers (anglers and boaters) are satisfied with the goods and public services we are providing. Unless we develop measures like customer satisfaction scores and voice-of-customer metrics, we will continue down the path of “eating our customers, a little at a time” (Figure 1).

Our agency has been serving the anglers and boaters of our Commonwealth for almost 150 years. I believe we do it well since the complaints are few and far between, but I also believe that we can do it better. Therefore, we need to work more closely with our licensing agents and customers, so we can provide the best customer service possible. That’s what you should expect from us in the New Year.

Happy Holidays!

Your Director,
><(John{(>

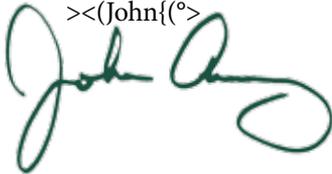
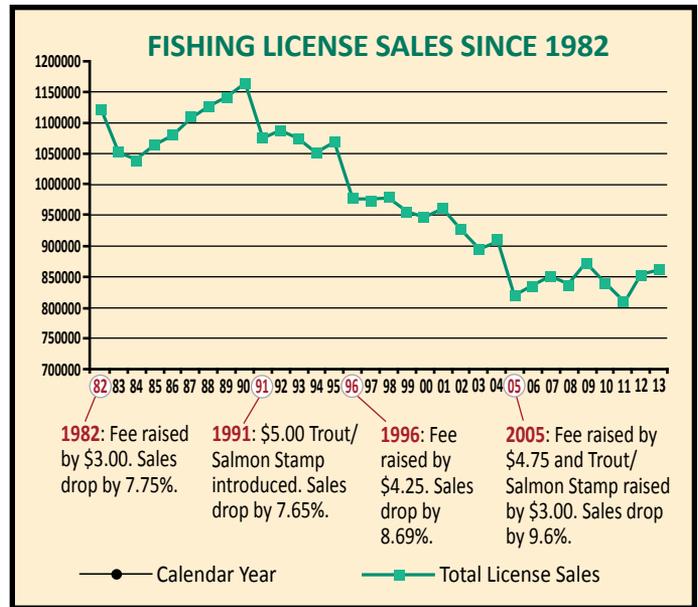



Figure 1

Deck the Halls with Discounts!

2015 Fishing Licenses and Gift Vouchers

Available December 1, 2014

- Prices will be reduced by **\$1** for annual resident, non-resident and senior resident fishing licenses and gift vouchers purchased throughout the license year.
- December 2014 only, save **\$3** on 3-year multi-year licenses and gift vouchers and **\$5** on 5-year multi-year licenses and gift vouchers.

(See page 4 for fishing license and permit pricing)

Purchase and redeem gift vouchers and all other licenses at more than 900 issuing agents or online through

The Outdoor Shop

www.GoneFishingPa.com




The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

Get questions answered.
Share your ideas.

