

Contributions at Work

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Much has been written about the dramatic increase in outdoor activities during 2020. Anglers and boaters have flocked to the water for fun, safe, convenient, and affordable recreation. As of this writing, fishing license sales are up nearly 20% for the year, and launch permits among those discovering and rediscovering the joys of unpowered boating have skyrocketed by nearly 40%. We are already looking forward to welcoming everyone back to the water in 2021.

These numbers are likely not a surprise to anyone who had an eye outside this year. Fishing rods, boats, and laughter on and along Pennsylvania water seemed to be everywhere you looked and listened.

When comparing figures to 2019, the one that saw the largest percentage increase may come as a surprise. Collectively, the four Voluntary Permits introduced in 2019 have seen an impressive 146% increase in sales, generating more than \$280,000 for projects dedicated specifically to four categories: Bass, Musky, Habitat/Waterways Conservation, and Wild Trout and Enhanced Waters.

To the over 17,700 of you who voluntarily contributed to this budding program that directly supports the long-term viability of aquatic resources in Pennsylvania, thank you!

We were not sure of the degree to which anglers would make contributions to such a voluntary program, and we have been pleased with the response and implicit faith that it reflects in our stewardship of the funds.

It is important to emphasize that this program is allowing us to do more for the species and habitats you care about than we normally would have been able to accomplish. We are not simply using the Voluntary Permit proceeds to supplant other funds. They are additive, allowing us to install more habitat, conduct more surveys, acquire better equipment, and make a significant difference for the resource.

By far, the most popular offering has been the Voluntary Bass Permit, with sales of 6,791 permits so far this year. That is nearly double the numbers for Habitat/Waterways Conservation (3,878 permits) and Wild Trout and Enhanced Waters (3,448 permits). The Voluntary Musky Permit has been supported by nearly 2,413 people so far this year.

We pledged to transparently invest these contributions, and we have been doing just that with your support. Despite the trying circumstances of a field season like no other, our staff have been hard at work across the Commonwealth investing the proceeds from the permits. If you are one of the generous donors to this program, here are some examples of how we are



photo-courtesy of PA State Representative Kate Klunk

The PFBC Lake Habitat Section Chief Ben Page (right) takes State Representative Kate Klunk on a tour of habitat improvements at Lake Marburg, York County.

implementing it on your behalf.

Lake Marburg, York County, is a 1,275-acre lake located in Codorus State Park and is a regional fishing destination.

With support from the Voluntary Bass Permit, we completed a large-scale habitat project that added fish habitat, improved angler access, and stabilized an eroding lakeshore. Habitat features included stone deflectors, rock rubble humps, and felled shoreline trees. I was happy to join our team

at the lake to see them in action, and, as always, it was great to be a part of the energy that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) staff bring to their jobs every day. From the biologists who design the projects to the crew who operate the heavy machinery, the PFBC staff are working for you.

Bass projects also included fish habitat improvements in Lake Arthur, Butler County; Woodcock Creek Lake, Crawford County; and Blue Marsh Reservoir, Berks County. Special thanks to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which manages the waters at Lake Marburg and Lake Arthur, and to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for their cooperation at Woodcock Creek Lake and Blue Marsh Reservoir. With support from the bass funds, we are also conducting an opinion survey of tournament bass anglers to help determine fisheries management decisions statewide.

Other 2020 projects include stream habitat improvements in the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters section of First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, Potter County; unassessed wild Brook Trout surveys in the Delaware and Lower Susquehanna Basins; deployment of Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags and arrays to assess wild Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout movement in the Upper Delaware River; removal of five culverts to restore connectivity to 4.3 miles of Ott Fork, Lycoming County; acquisition of portable power winches used in the placement of large wood debris statewide; and the purchase of minnows and an inline water heating system to assist efforts to raise larger muskies that have a greater chance of survival and, ultimately, of being there for anglers to enjoy.

All of these projects were supported by Voluntary Permits sold in 2019. With more than twice as much funding being generated in 2020, anglers should expect to hear about even more exciting and meaningful projects being implemented in 2021. We will be featuring more success stories in e-mail messages, social media posts, and other outlets. If you read about something you like, please share it with fellow fishing and boating enthusiasts who may like to learn more about what we are doing for them.

Thank you again for the trust and confidence that is reflected in every Voluntary Permit contribution. You are making a difference.