

# A Fishing License Decrease?

by John Arway

Executive Director  
PA Fish & Boat Commission



Photo: Bob Frigo

If the title of this article didn't get your attention, you must have thought it was a misprint. No, it isn't a mistake. In fact, as I promised you in my first article, I would tell you about some of my priorities as your new Director. It has become obvious to me that inflation is catching up with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), much like it catches up with all of us in our personal lives. The cost of personnel services, fish feed for our hatchery programs, gasoline for our vehicles, electricity due to deregulation, a

looming pension plan deficit and all of the other costs of survival in the 21st century continue to rise. Therefore, if we are expected to provide the same level of service, we must find additional revenue or cut programs. In my interview with our Board of Commissioners for this position, I explained the need to diversify our funding portfolio much like we are personally advised to diversify our investment portfolio. It makes sound fiscal sense not to put all of your eggs in one basket, which makes one less vulnerable to impact if something happens to your funding. In our agency's case, we have always depended upon fishing license sales and boat registration fees and the federal funds that go along with them to sustain our agency. These sources of revenue have always been the core funding for our programs and the reason why we have stayed an independent agency. We don't receive general fund (tax) money contrary to the popular belief of many. However, there are other ways to fund our agency's programs and that involves acquiring alternative funding revenue—something other than fees from fishing licenses and boat registrations.

We need to get serious about looking at other revenue sources and that's where I need your help. We know that most anglers, boaters and conservationists are not part of organized groups that we traditionally ask for help to support our cause. We are getting close to pricing ourselves out of the market and continue to hear complaints about the rising costs of licenses and registrations. For many of us, the cost of a license or registration is a bargain. However, there are a lot of us that don't use our privileges quite as much for a variety of reasons, which is why our license sales drop every time we raise license fees. Therefore, I suggest that we look at ways to generate funds by other non-traditional means.

Unfortunately, most of us are apathetic when we are happy with the way things are going. It is good that anglers and boaters are happy with our programs, which is a sign that we continue to do good things for you. However, I am concerned about the future, and you should be too. My staff and I are working on innovative funding ideas that will support our agency programs, but all of these options will require action by our General Assembly. As I write this article, we are finishing a revenue calculator that will project how various amounts of funding from alternative revenue sources will carry us into the future without the need to increase fishing license or boat registration fees and possibly reduce them. We need to start thinking outside that proverbial box. The time for action is now before it's too late for our children, our grandchildren and us. Visit your legislators. Let them know that you support the idea of alternative revenues for the PFBC. Tell them to give me a call, and I will discuss my ideas with them. Together, we may be able to put together a plan that will allow us to lower the cost of your license. See you on the water.

Your Director  
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Arway".

# Straight TALK

