

# Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

## Report

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### Running Out of Gas?

I have been traveling around the State quite a bit lately to attend meetings that we have organized with our commissioners and legislators in their home districts. The purpose of the meetings is to explain the history of the agency and the various roles that the Fish and Boat Commission staff play in protecting, conserving and enhancing our Commonwealth's aquatic resources in order to provide quality fishing and boating recreation.

We personalized the programs with regional issues but our focus was on the future. What happens when the red and black lines cross again in four or five years when inflation catches up with us and we need additional revenue to sustain our programs? I explained that I do not want to ask the legislature to raise fishing license fees which is what we have traditionally done to increase revenues. Instead, I would like to work with them to come up with alternative sources of funding so that we can delay or hopefully prevent the need to ever increase license fees again.

If you have been following my Straight Talk articles in our Angler and Boater magazine, you will see some of the options that I suggest, but I am always open to other ideas. One topic that is also of interest at every meeting is Marcellus Shale Natural Gas. I suppose you think that this is what this article is all

about based upon the title. Well far from it. We are just at the beginning of the Marcellus gas rush and there is no chance that we are going to run out of it in our lifetimes if the predictions hold true.

The gas I am talking about is gasoline, since when I was on my way home from our southeast legislative meeting, I literally ran out of gas for the first time since high school. While I waited on the side of the road for AAA to bring me my 1.5 gallons to get me to the next filling station, I remembered a Straight Talk article Ralph Abele had written in April 1974 which applauded the PFSC for an historic accomplishment. At the time, the Federation's Board voted to set up an office and hire a full-time Executive Director.

Ralph explained that some believed the Federation had "surrendered its leadership role to "new-comers" on the environmental

scene resulting in a "slipping" in effectiveness." Sound familiar? I can't remember at any other time in my 30+ year career in conservation in this Commonwealth when the conservation movement was more fragmented than it is today.

We have more splinter groups and more special interests that divide rather than unite us in discussion.

Many of us remember how powerful the sportsmen's voice used to be when our legislators knew that we represented a large portion of our population (aka votes).

In the near future, I will be asking the leaders of our major conservation groups that represent a variety of interests to come together to discuss ways to secure a future for our conservation programs. We need to set aside our differences of the past and work together for a common goal—to insure that we sustain and improve the natural resources left to us by our parents so that our children's grandchildren can enjoy the outdoor recreation that we have come to enjoy.

Mr. Abele went on to say that "The Fish Commission recognizes the PFSC as THE organization that represents most of our "stockholders" and, as such, needs a full-time Executive Director to keep their officers and directors informed and prepared to head off the surrender to the polluters' lobbies".

I agree, and I only hope we are not running out of gas.

