

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Report

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www.fishandboat.com



Fishing and Boating Are Fun But..... They Are Also Big Business in PA!

Fishing and boating are big business in Pennsylvania and bring in approximately \$3.4 billion in revenue to the state every year. Fishing in Pennsylvania supports almost 18,000 jobs and generates \$120 million in state and local tax revenues. The state tax revenue generated from those sales is income to the Commonwealth's General Fund and not to my agency's Fish or Boat Funds.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission does not receive any general fund monies, but we continue to promote fishing and boating opportunities, since that is one of the duties that the General Assembly assigned us to do. Section 321 of Title 30 of the Fish and Boat Code states that "the Commission shall administer and enforce this title and other laws of this commonwealth relating to:

- (1) The encouragement, promotion and development of the fishery interests.
- (2) The protection, propagation and distribution of fish.
- (3) The management of boating and the operation of boats.
- (4) The encouragement, promotion and development of recreational boating."

Fairly simple charges but currently, as you should know, all of our funding comes from fishing license fees, boat registration fees and the

federal funds that are allocated to Pennsylvania primarily based on how many licenses we sell. Therefore the incentive is to sell more and not less licenses since we generate additional revenues that we can put back into promoting and improving our programs. In fact a recent report by Southwick Associates which can be found at <http://www.southwick-associates.com/excisetaxROI> reports that the average annual return-on-investment from fishing tackle excise taxes from 1955 to 2006 is 2,157%. That means for every federal dollar the states have invested in fishing programs we see a return of \$21.57 dollars to our economy.

What other business can report those kinds of returns? We are all watching the federal budget debate and see that no programs are sacred in these times of tight federal budgets -- even ones as successful as the federal excise tax programs.

This spring and summer, we will be reaching out to all members of the Pennsylvania Congressional delegation and inviting them to see the local benefits of our investments in boating infrastructure.

If you would like to help us deliver that message at our sites, please drop me a line at [The Fishing Hole at www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com). Testimonials from you and your fellow sportsmen and women will help us show the need for states to continue

to receive these federal funds.

However, history shows that when we increase license fees there is a corresponding decrease in license sales. If we don't do anything now, we will have to increase fees in 3 to 4 years to keep up with inflation if we are expected to continue the same level of services we are now providing.

We actually peaked in fishing license sales at 1.2 million licenses sold in 1990. In 2010, we sold approximately 840,000 licenses, a 30% decrease in 20 years. I am not sure that any private business could withstand that kind of decline, so I would like to work with the sportsmen, the legislature and others to ensure that our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy fishing and boating in the Commonwealth if they choose to.

Mark Damian Duda of the firm Responsive Management recently published a book titled *The Sportsman's Voice—Hunting and Fishing in America*. I have also provided copies of the book to Governor Corbett, Lt. Governor Cawley and the majority and minority chairs of the House and Senate Game and Fisheries Committees. I have also had the opportunity to personally discuss this information with them. If you



are interested in what is happening with fishing, boating and hunting not only in Pennsylvania but across the nation, I encourage you get a copy of the book. You will find that the book contains a wealth of information about the history of our sport and the change in public attitudes toward it.

There are contacts for most, if not all, of the government agencies and conservation organizations across the country that are involved in conservation and recreation. But I want to call your special attention to the issues of how we currently fund our programs and the economic significance of our business.

This discussion puts our state in perspective with other states across the country, and you will find that Pennsylvania is not unique. In fact, most states are experiencing the same declining trends as we are.

However, you will see that only about 10% of our total population age 16 and older fish. Compare this to 28% for Alaska and Minnesota or 21% for West Virginia. You can even find out how many Republicans or Democrats hunt or fish!

The book also presents some ideas that others have tried to boost trends in fishing and boating but it is obvious that there is no magic formula, at least not yet.

The book ends by discussing the ultimate future of our sport, and the outlook is not good unless we start trying some non-traditional techniques to boost recruitment and retention.

We invited Mr. Duda to be a guest speaker at our January 2011 commission meeting, and he gave a great presentation about the findings in his book. However, he reserved his conclusion because there

isn't one.

That's where I see us coming into play. I would like to work with you and your member clubs on ideas that we could pursue here in Pennsylvania to provide supplemental revenues to fund fishing and boating programs at existing levels so that we can reduce the cost of a fishing license. This would allow us to test the hypothesis that if we reduce fees, will we see the opposite trend that we see when we increase fees?

That result would be more people fishing and boating in the Commonwealth, more money being spent in local economies by anglers and boaters and more sale tax revenues for the General Fund. I hope you agree that this would be one experiment worth trying!



Posted Land Limits Angler Access

FERNANDINA BEACH, Fla. — Nearly 16 percent of United States anglers found one of their fishing spots closed to their use last year, and of that group, the single leading reason cited for that closure was that the area was posted as “no trespassing.” The findings were part of a monthly survey of recreational fisherman conducted by AnglerSurvey.com.

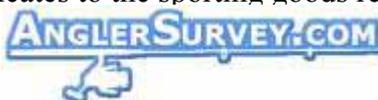
Just over 32 percent of survey respondents said the water they fished or the land they used to access a particular body of water had been posted preventing them from fishing that location. The government no longer allows fishing at the location was the second most cited reason, claimed by 23.8 percent of survey respondents. That cause of closure was followed by development of the area by 15.7 percent and then pollution by 7.2 percent. An assortment of lesser or “other” reasons was collectively cited by 32.8 percent. Respondents could provide more than one answer to the question as some anglers may have lost access to more than one fishing location last year.

“These findings should sound an alarm that lost access to the waters they fish is a very real problem for a number of our nation’s anglers,” said Rob Southwick, president of Southwick Associates, which designs and conducts the surveys at HunterSurvey.com, ShooterSurvey.com and AnglerSurvey.com. “New lands posted as no trespassing are the top reason, but government closures of boat ramps or waterways due to lack of funds or environmental reasons and development along shorelines also greatly factor into limiting angler access. Once these areas are lost to fishing, it’s usually permanent.”

Those who hunt, fish and target shoot are invited to participate in the surveys conducted on HunterSurvey.com, ShooterSurvey.com and AnglerSurvey.com. Each month, participants who complete the survey are entered into a drawing for one of five \$100 gift certificates to the sporting goods retailer of their choice.



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