

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Report

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NETWORKING

The subject of this article is not about computer networks and how we use them as tools to exchange information. However, who would have thought 30 years ago that computers and information technology would be so important in our everyday lives?

On-line banking, news reports by the minute, unlimited research about any imaginable topic—Google it!, blogs, tweets, people upset about who is, or more importantly, who isn't included on their Face Book favorites list, and instant weather radar anywhere on earth.

Life is changing quickly and we have to change with it if we expect to survive in today's world. The information revolution is no different than other revolutions we have been through as a society—our world wars and conflicts, the industrial revolutions of our parent's day with timber, coal and steel, what about the music revolution of the 1960's, and now, perhaps for us in Pennsylvania, the natural gas revolution!

We have to adapt and take advantage of the technology by adjusting the way we live—like it or not.

The same is true for social networking. I still remember sitting in my grandmother's kitchen huddled around the telephone receiver listening in on our neighbor's conversations on the party line that

we all shared. Everyone knew that phone conversations were open public discussions and were actually part of the local news network at the time.

Our landline phones are gradually being replaced with cell phones and most likely satellite phones where we can talk to anyone, anytime, anywhere. An email we send can span the globe in a millisecond.

So how can we take advantage of the improved communications we have to facilitate our interest in protecting, managing and conserving our fish and aquatic resources to provide recreational fishing and boating opportunities?

Well, first of all we need to agree to work together on issues of mutual concern.

Most of us are involved in conservation because of our love for our natural resources. We are also hu-

man and humans have a tendency to disagree from time to time about how things should be done with issues that we are passionate about.

However, should it matter that we disagree about deer management when we are talking about protecting headwater brook trout streams from Marcellus Shale development?

Do our differences on climate change have any bearing on our need to collectively work together to get compensation for the water that industry is stealing from our streams and rivers?

I am a firm believer that if we can't agree on a subject, then we should agree to disagree and move on.

We can't let our disagreements affect our relationship in areas where we must work together. There are too few of us and we are too fragmented by singular issues. We must begin to talk to each other and work together for the common cause on the issues where we agree.

We have enormous challenges before us and our ranks are diminishing. We were 1.2 million strong in licensed anglers in the early 1990's and are down to 850,000 today.

Just think what we could do if we joined ranks and spoke with one voice on the issues we can agree on.

As I write this column, our Congress is trying to reach



Walleye Fishing on Lake Erie
Photo by Retired WCO Barry Mechling

agreement on resolving our country's debt crisis and I have confidence that they will be able to work across party lines and get it done. It is time that we sportsmen set aside our differences and work together on our problems too.

Let's develop and use the social network we have to work together on the issues we support. The sportsmen's voice is still strong in our Commonwealth but we have to speak with one voice if we expect to be heard. The fish are counting on it.

Your Director, John (>

PFBC



Fish & Boat Commission Changes Lake Erie Regulations, Elects New Officers at Quarterly Business Meeting

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) approved several changes to Lake Erie regulations, moved four lakes to the list of approved trout waters open to year-round fishing, and established an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect American shad eggs from the Potomac River at their July meeting. Also, Commissioners elected Robert Bachman, Ph.D., as the new board president and Steve Ketterer as vice president.

As part of the Lake Erie changes, Commissioners approved a proposal to allow for adaptive creel limits for walleye and yellow perch based on the annual quotas established each spring by the Lake Erie Committee, which consists of fisheries managers from Pa., Ohio, N.Y., Michigan and Ontario, Canada. Under the new rules, the PFBC will set daily limits by April 15 of each year, before the onset of each fishing season. The change will allow the PFBC to apply regulations in a timely manner, synchronized with the condition of fish stocks.

Also, Commissioners approved a recommendation to establish a Lake Erie cast net permit for sport anglers who want to harvest emerald shiners and spottail shiners, which are popular baitfish. The \$10 permit allows anglers to take a combined species daily limit of 200. In addition, Commissioners approved a recommendation to increase the number of commercial seine licens-

es for Lake Erie from 10 to 40. If adopted on final rulemaking, both amendments will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2012, or upon publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, which ever occurs later.

In other action, Commissioners voted to approve:

- A recommendation to change the designation of four lakes from approved trout waters to approved trout waters open to year-round fishing. The four lakes include Lake Luxembourg in Bucks County, Laurel Lake in Cumberland County, Muddy Run Recreation Lake in Lancaster County, and Sweet Arrow Lake in Schuylkill County. The change will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2012.

- A five-year agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect American shad eggs from the Potomac River during the spring spawning runs of 2012 through 2016. The eggs will be used by the PFBC as part of its effort to restore American shad to the Susquehanna, Lehigh and Schuylkill rivers.

- A recommendation to allow anglers to fish Lehigh County's Leaser Lake once the dam is rebuilt and the lake refills. PFBC staff had originally recommended closing the lake to all fishing until June 18, 2016, but now believes a catch and release policy will provide recreational angling opportunities while still developing a high quality fishery. The catch and release regulations will apply to all species except trout,

which will be stocked in the lake beginning in 2014.

- A final rulemaking order imposing a closed season on river herring in the Delaware River and Delaware Estuary; the Lehigh and Schuylkill rivers and their tributaries; and the Conowingo Reservoir on the Susquehanna River. The changes are being made in cooperation with N.J., N.Y. and Delaware as part of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's interstate management plan for shad and river herring, which states that the river herring population remains at a depressed level. The changes will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2012.

- A change to the section limits on Spring Creek in the Borough of Bellefonte, Centre County, which will open up approximately 350 meters (1/5 mile) to public angling from the High Street Bridge to the Lamb Street Bridge. The change will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2012.

An amendment to the regulation for the National Saltwater Angler Registry required by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to clarify that an angler is compliant if he meets the registration requirements of another state, such as N.J. NOAA requires the registration from anglers who target shad, striped bass and river herring from the Delaware River below Trenton Falls or in the Delaware Estuary.

Complete details at www.fishandboat.com/minutes.htm. PFBC