

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Report

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Yaking with Governor Corbett

Last winter I had the opportunity to tour the Eastern Sports and Outdoor Show in Harrisburg with our Governor Tom Corbett. I have met Governor Corbett several times throughout my career with the Fish and Boat Commission.

I remember working with him and his staff on the Ashland Oil Spill investigation in 1987 when he was U.S. Attorney in Pittsburgh. I was a PFC staff biologist at the time and was responsible for evaluating the spill to support a claim for damages to the fish that lived in the Monongahela River. We ended up settling that case, together with DER, for \$1.5M which was then spent on mapping the fish habitats in the river and the recreational access points to the river.

The next time Mr. Corbett and I crossed paths was at the Federation of Sportsmens Club's annual meeting in Harrisburg several years ago. He attended these meetings

several times as Attorney General and recognized the importance of the sportsmen's vote. We had a nice discussion over dinner and although he admitted that he wasn't much of an angler, he agreed to try his hand at fishing someday when time permitted.

A couple of years passed and we both got promoted to new positions in state government and our paths would cross again at the Harrisburg Sport Show. Our tour began when we stopped by the PFBC booth and he purchased his 2011 Pennsylvania fishing license and combo stamp.

We walked through the fishing hall and stopped by the Cumberland Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited's booth along with some other stops to chat with outfitters and guides about the importance of fishing as a business. He was surprised when I told him that anglers and boaters spend about \$3.2 billion dollars a year in Pennsylvania and \$122 million goes into state or local tax funds.

As we continued to walk through the various halls and speak to others at the Farm Show building, it became obvious to both of us that anglers, boaters, hunters, trappers and other outdoors sports enthusiasts are not only pas-

sionate about our sports, but invest in equipment, travel and other supporting goods and services that help fuel Pennsylvania's economy.

Since this was the Governor's first public appearance since his election, we ended with a Press Conference at the outside steps of the Farm Show Building, which convinced me that I wouldn't want to be Governor even for a day!

Well things got pretty busy for both him, with the budget negotiations, and me with statewide legislative district meetings explaining the PFBC staff roles in conservation and recreation. I continued to stress our needs and the increasing workload from Marcellus natural gas development. However, we both finished those duties and he and the legislature passed the budget, although it didn't include any funding from the gas industry.

Then came a call from his staff alerting us to the Governor's interest in some R&R. They asked if our staff could help coordinate a river kayak trip and if I could join him.

I immediately agreed since I rarely (perhaps never is a better term) pass up invitations for fishing or boating trips, especially with the Governor.

Our staff did an exceptional job working with the Governor's staff and the State Police security detail assigned to the trip. My thanks go out to Walt Dietz and his staff for their work on the 3 day North Branch of the Susquehanna trip and Spring Younkin for the one day trip on the middle river. Ted Walke, Austin Bard and our Regional Law Enforcement staff were invaluable to the success of these trips.

It was obvious to me that Governor Corbett genuinely enjoys the outdoors and beauty of Penns



*Governor Corbett & John Arway Kayaking on the North Branch of the Susquehanna
Photo by Commonwealth Media Services*

Woods and Waters. We all know how our own personal connection to the outdoors influences our outlook on life and the priorities we set for ourselves and families.

We were able to sit side by side in our kayaks on the river and enjoy the beauty of a bald eagle that watched us float by within 50 yards of where it was perched on a dead

tree limb. I was able to catch a few smallmouth bass on the trip, which I hope also had some influence on the Governor's view of the river since we talked about the problems with the down river fishery. I advised him of the smallmouth's scientific name (*Micropterus dolomieu*) in case he wanted to impress someone at a cocktail party someday.

I understand that the Governor would like to see more of our rivers and am hopeful that we can repeat the trip on other waters that have their own stories to tell. Who knows, he might even take me up on my offer to go fishing someday—that is if we can both find the time!

PFBC

PENNSYLVANIA



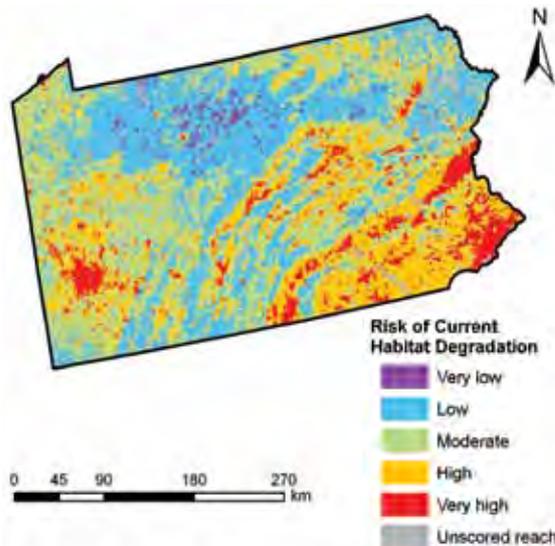
Pennsylvania's recreational and commercial fishing industries, which generate almost \$1.3 billion annually, depend on fish habitats that are, on average, at moderate and high risk of current habitat degradation.

Pennsylvania's fish habitats range from estuarine habitats along the Delaware River to small lakes, streams, and the open waters of Lake Erie. Pennsylvania's marine and freshwater recreational anglers spent more than \$1.2 billion on fishing related activities in 2006, and commercial landings in the state totaled about \$136,000 in 2009.

More than one third (34%) of Pennsylvania's rivers and stream miles are at high or very high risk of current habitat degradation.

In the rural, north central part of Pennsylvania fish habitat is in relatively good condition compared to the rest of the state. However, many streams in the area are degraded by excess acidity and sediments that result from acid precipitation, as well as past and present mining activities, which have not been fully analyzed in this assessment. In addition, stream habitats in this region of the state, as well as the west and northeast sections are threatened by the recent rapid development of Marcellus shale gas well drilling.

Water consumption, wetland impacts, and sedimentation related to well development, road construction and pipeline construction can adversely impact streams.

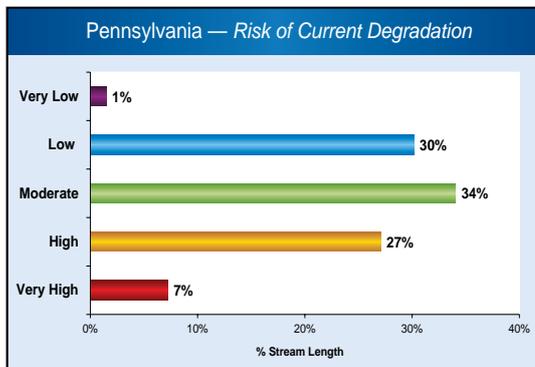


Did You Know?

Almost 7,000 of Pennsylvania's rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and bays are considered impaired and in need of restoration.

The main stem of the Delaware River is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi, providing unobstructed migratory fish habitat for 330 miles.

Anglers spend an average of \$1.6 million during the nine week shad season on the Delaware River. For the Susquehanna and Lower Juniata Rivers, sport fishing contributes an estimated \$3.35 million dollars to the economy.



Surface water has been polluted as the result of mixing with water high in concentrations of total dissolved solids and other chemicals associated with the well drilling process.

In southeast Pennsylvania, row crops and pasture are responsible for areas with very high risk of current habitat degradation. These intensive agricultural practices often lead to nutrient loading and excess sedimentation.

Streams in heavily urbanized and suburban areas around cities like Pittsburgh and Philadelphia contain artificial barriers such as road crossings and dams, which fragment habitat and put fish at risk.