



# Straight TALK

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## Doing Less for Less

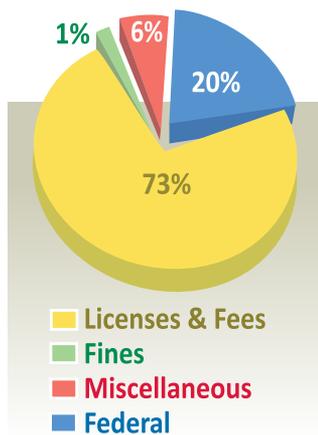
Most of us have heard the old adage that we should do more for less; however, we sometimes get to the point where we have to do less for less. I believe that we are at that point in time at the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Let me explain why. You can only continue to produce public goods and provide public services at a rate that is supported by the level of funding that supports your programs. Most fish and wildlife agencies across our country follow the user pay/user benefit model. This model is very similar to how we manage our personal finances. We cannot spend more than we earn. When our income declines, we must spend less, or borrow from our savings account to survive until we can find a way to generate more income. If you evaluate the way our agency has done business since we were created in 1866, you will find that we live off of three sources of revenue—fishing license sales, boat registration fees and the federal excise tax (Sport Fish Restoration Act) on fishing and boating equipment collected by the federal government and distributed to the states based on how many fishing licenses we sell (Figure 1).

In 1919, we sold our first fishing licenses to 50 non-resident anglers at a cost of \$5.00 each, and our resident licenses were first required in 1922 and cost \$1.00 each. As time passed, inflation and program growth would add costs, which would be offset by

increasing license fees. This model worked well through 1990, since the increase in income made up for the reduction in license sales and after a price increase, our anglers eventually returned to the sport. For example, it took six years to regain the 95,849 (7.75%) anglers we lost in response to a \$3.00 fee increase in 1982. We peaked in license sales at 1.2 million licensed anglers in 1990. Since then, we have had three fee increases: in

1991, 1996 and 2005. We immediately lost 7 to 10% of our licensed anglers each time we increased fees and continue on a slow rate of decline (Figure 2). Remember that the fewer licenses we sell, the less federal funding we receive. The same trend holds true for boat registrations, which have declined 7.23% in the last ten years (Figure 3).

FISH FUND REVENUE



BOAT FUND REVENUE

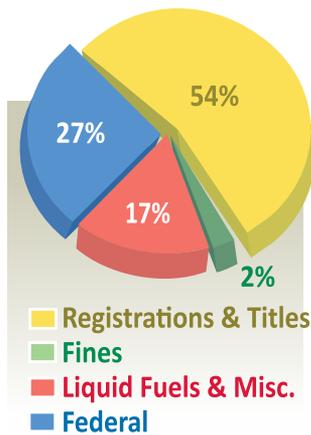


Figure 1



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

## FISHING LICENSE SALES SINCE 1982

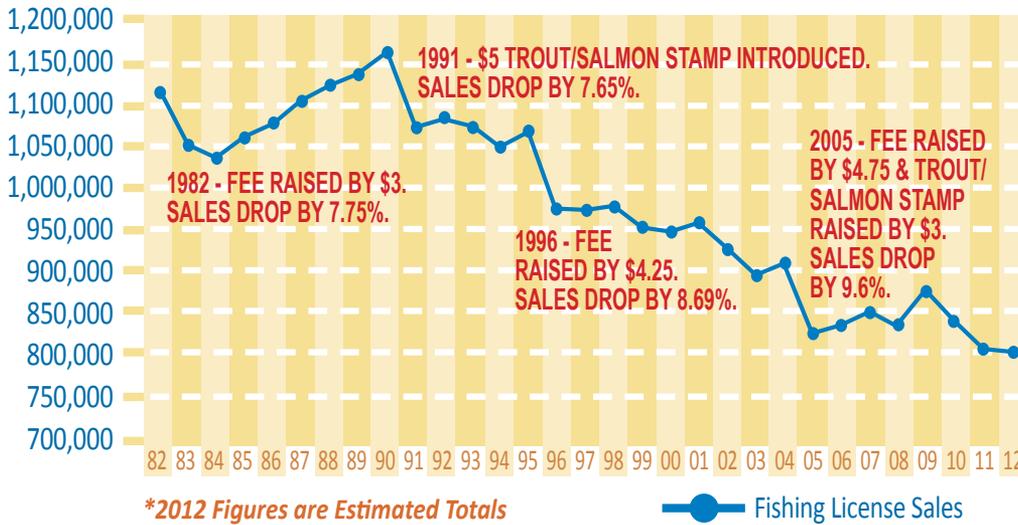


Figure 2

## ACTIVE BOAT REGISTRATIONS SINCE 2001



Figure 3

We are at a critical point in time for our agency programs. How can we continue to grow and stock more and larger trout for less anglers? Is it possible to continue to maintain, let alone increase, the number of boating access areas with less money? How do we get more people interested in fishing and boating in Pennsylvania? Can we continue to afford to police our lakes to ensure boater safety and our waters to keep our aquatic resources safe? Do we just abandon our high-hazard dams when they become too expensive to fix?

We do know that those of us who are avid boaters and anglers spend over \$3.2 billion in the Commonwealth every year and \$192 million (6%) goes back into the Commonwealth's general fund, from which we don't get a penny for our programs. We are thankful that the legislature and administration have included us in the Marcellus

my "Highway Robbery" article (January/February 2011), mandatory unpowered boat registration (remember the user pay/user benefit model) and multi-year licenses or other incentives associated with legislation like Senate Bill 1049. Most importantly, I need you to introduce someone new to fishing and boating since the future is really about us. In the meantime, you can expect us to be doing less for less until we can turn these trends around.

See you on the water.

Your Director

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Shale Impact Fee legislation, which means that we can focus on our duties and responsibilities for overseeing this growing industry. But, what about our basic programs: aquatic resource education, boating safety and water rescue, habitat management, stocked and wild trout, warm water fisheries, law enforcement and maintaining our own facilities that house our 432 staff and millions of fish?

These are challenging times, and I will continue to advocate for sources of alternative funding to diversify our funding portfolio; however, I need your help. Talk to your state representatives and senators about the importance of Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission programs to Pennsylvania's growing economy. I promised you that I would not seek a general fishing license increase, because we know that it will cause less people to fish. However, there are other opportunities such as the water and degradation fee idea I mentioned in