



photo-Dick Gammister

Straight TALK

by John A. Arway

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Thank You

More than a century ago, hunters, anglers and trappers were among America's first conservationists who realized that our country's natural resources were in peril and could not sustain unregulated harvest and habitat destruction. Our forefathers took it upon themselves to create laws that stopped the overharvest of fish and wildlife and established fish and game agencies to protect fish and wildlife and their habitats. The Fish Commission was established as part of this national trend in 1866 and was given water pollution enforcement authority in 1909. Sportsmen also supported the user pay/user benefit model that all states continue to use to fund programs to protect, conserve and enhance aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating recreation, which is still the Resource First mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC). However, our predecessors quickly learned that license fees alone were insufficient to restore the resources, which had been damaged by indiscriminant logging of our mountains and the mining of coal. They also fought the battle in Washington D.C. to create an excise tax on various hunting, fishing and boating equipment to raise additional funds to support the states with our important fish and wildlife programs.

The program is known as the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, which began 75 years ago when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act into law in 1937. The Federal Aid in

PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway with his grandson, Xander.

Sportfish Restoration Act followed 13 years later in 1950. The combined revenue from both of these programs has exceeded \$13 billion since 1939, which was the first year these funds were distributed to the states. This program has provided more funding for fish and wildlife conservation than any other single conservation effort in American history. This funding continues to be allocated to the states by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proportional to how many fishing and hunting licenses we sell or how much gasoline our boaters use. These funds currently provide the PFBC with 25 percent of our annual budget, and we continue to depend upon them to fulfill our mission. We truly appreciate your support by continuing to pay this tax since our anglers and boaters spend over \$3.4 billion a year fishing and boating in our Commonwealth. We also have the continued support of our industry partners—the manufacturers of fishing tackle, electric trolling motors, marine electronics and motorboat fuel—who also support the tax. This is a reinvestment in our sport that has resulted



in the most successful model of fish and wildlife management in the world, restoring populations and improving habitats not just in Pennsylvania but all across our nation.

This North American Model of Fish and Wildlife was based upon a user pay/user benefit concept; however, I suggest that the direct benefits are much greater than those provided to just anglers and hunters. For example, the thousands of acres of wetlands we have created for waterfowl, bog turtles and other wetland-dependent birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles also serve much broader public benefits. They have flood control benefits by storing water and gradually releasing it to

minimize downstream flooding, and they filter pollutants out of the water so that public water supply companies downstream pay less to treat the water that they deliver to their customers. The fish habitat devices our habitat managers design and the sportsmen help install not only provide great structure for fish, they also protect stream banks for local landowners and minimize damage to downstream bridges and culverts. The bottom line is the work that we do to protect fish and improve habitat provides far-reaching benefits to society as a whole.

My grandson, Xander, and I along with the entire PFBC staff and Board of Commissioners would like to thank all of you for recognizing the importance of conservation and recreation funding. Your fishing and boating dollars are put to good use for our programs, where we get a \$21.57 benefit for every \$1 we spend. However, the true benefit of buying your fishing license or registering your boat is much more than a permit to enjoy a privilege. It is an investment in clean water, great habitat and some of the best fishing and boating opportunities in this nation. So, please get outdoors and enjoy the fruits of our labor. You deserve it.

Your Director
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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.