



*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Executive Director John A. Arway explains the basic mechanics of fly fishing to Governor Tom Corbett.*

# Straight TALK

*by John A. Arway*

*Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

## Coaching

Coaching is “the practice of guiding an individual through a process” ([Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org), 2012). We have all done it. Whether it is teaching someone how to drive a car, kick a soccer ball, shoot a basketball or speak Spanish. It also applies to teaching others about how to fish, boat and understand the importance of conservation. Over the past year, I have been fortunate to join the Governor and members of his staff on kayak trips down a few of our streams and rivers. We floated several reaches of the Susquehanna River in 2011 and did the Allegheny, Conemaugh and Delaware rivers in 2012. It is great to see the Governor connect to our great outdoors and his genuine interest in the sport of kayaking. Kayaking is great exercise,

and the peace and quiet of floating down a river is good therapy for everyone. I have had the chance to practice some coaching of my own on several subjects. I explained the importance of mussel communities, including the endangered northern riffleshell and clubshell on the upper Allegheny River, and their ability to filter and remove nutrient pollution from the water and transfer it to energy, which fuels the food chain. I also caught a couple of smallmouth bass on these trips to show that it was working.

I discussed the importance of fishing and boating to the Commonwealth’s economy since anglers and boaters spend \$3.4 billion dollars every year fishing and boating in our state. Hunters spend \$3.7 billion, which I mention because the 2010 Pennsylvania census shows that our state’s number one industry is agriculture, which generates \$3.4 billion from crops including fruits and vegetables and \$3.7 billion from livestock and poultry products. However, our general fund doesn’t subsidize fishing and boating.

We ended this year’s trip on the Delaware River where my staff had the chance to brief the Governor and others about the threat of aquatic invasive species. On the trip, we had the chance to see didymo up close and personal, talk about the importance of the anadromous fisheries of the river including the American shad and discuss the negotiations we are involved in to better manage the flows of the upper river for people and fish.

Now, that brings me back to the subject of this article. I had the personal opportunity to give the Governor a lesson



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in fly casting. Although I don't consider myself an expert fly caster, I have learned how to present a fly—wet, dry, streamer or nymph— in the proper way to fool a fish or two. After explaining the basic mechanics of what fly casting is all about—casting a line to carry an object which imitates some form of food that a fish wants to eat and allowing gravity and river currents to do the rest—the Governor tried his hand at casting and remarked that he may be interested in giving it a try one day. As we all know, once he feels the tug at the end the line, he will be hooked on fishing too.

I consider coaching fishing, boating and conservation science as one of my primary job duties since that is the very mission of our agency. We need to protect, conserve and enhance the aquatic resources we have so we and future generations can enjoy them. We know that fishing and boating are fun sports, which we can all do with our families

and friends at minimal cost. We sell slightly over 800,000 fishing licenses to people 16 and older, and we have sold over 400,000 lifetime senior resident licenses. However, we have over 12.7 million people in our state, which means that roughly 10 percent of our population buys a fishing license. Based on 2010 census factors, we have 6.2 million males and 6.5 million females, 78 percent of our population is older than 18 with a median age of 40 years, 74 percent of us were born in Pennsylvania and 15 percent of our population is age 65 or older, which is the fourth highest in the United States. We plan to use these census data and other demographic data to begin marketing fishing and boating to those who don't buy a license. However, we need your help. Think about becoming a coach like me, and talk to your neighbor, friend or family member about joining our ranks. If you're looking for something new for a New Year's resolution, take the Angler Legacy pledge at [www.fishandboat.com/anglerslegacy.htm](http://www.fishandboat.com/anglerslegacy.htm). Both you and your students will be rewarded for your effort.

Happy Holidays.

Your Director,  
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*Anglers' Legacy*

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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.*