

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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The Cost of a Fishing License

We have a daily ritual at camp in Forest County where we get together in the mornings for breakfast and conversation on my friend and neighbor George's porch. George's porch is a gathering place for those that visit the peaceful town of Lynch, and we have often joked about how we should live broadcast those discussions on a radio network since there is no topic that is safe from being included in the conversation.

Politics, the economy, human rights, electrical and mechanical repairs, health care, surgical procedures, prescription drugs and of course all sports but most importantly hunting and fishing. That sets the stage for this article since we all seem to have an opinion about whether or not the cost of a fishing license is a bargain or too expensive.

Most of us on the porch are in the category of devoted anglers, and we use our licenses frequently throughout the year. My calculations tell me that I used to spend about \$0.38/

day when I fished 100 days or so a year. That may not quite be the case now that I am Director, but I still get excellent value from my license dollar.

While many of us are in that avid angler category, some believe that we should be able to fish for free because fishing is a right and not a privilege. However, many of us don't realize that the goods and services provided by the PFBC are no different than any other goods and services that we pay for every day.

The 3.2 million trout along with the millions of warm and cool water fish are expensive to raise, stock and protect. We all know that the price of milk and bread continue to rise based upon the rate of inflation and the increased costs of the ingredients and processes used to make those goods.

A member of my staff recently loaned me a copy of a Field and Stream magazine from May 1938 which contained a summary of every state's fishing license costs. In

Pennsylvania, a resident license cost \$1.60 and a non-resident license cost \$2.60.

I remembered that I had previously created a graph called "The Purchasing Power of a Fishing License Dollar" to show how inflation deflates the value of a dollar over time. Figure 1 updates that original graph to today's dollar and shows that our first \$1.00 license that we sold in 1923 is close to the same value as our current license including the combo stamp which sells for \$38.40.

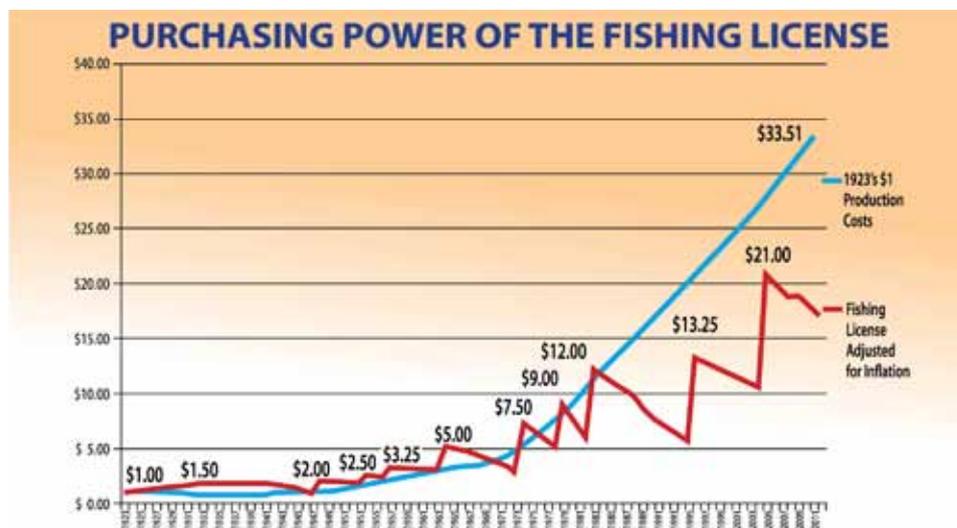
As inflation continues to rise, the costs for milk and bread also rise and unfortunately the slope of the graph shows that it is exponential and not linear growth.

We have to deal with the same inflation factors at the PFBC, and we recently found out that the pension and health care costs that others have created for us are being passed along to us for payment in four years. We are expected to absorb these extra expenses as part of our general operating budget.

Therefore, we are at a crossroads and the only solutions are to reduce spending and reallocate funds to pay the new bills or increase revenues.

Most of you know my position on increasing license fees. I believe that it is a bad idea since we drive 8 to 10 % of the anglers away from the sport whenever we increase fees (Figure2).

Although we increase total revenue, despite the grumbling of those of us on George's porch, avid anglers will continue to buy our licenses even at greater cost because it is still a bargain for those of us



that can fish 100 days a year.

However, only 10% of our anglers (80,000 +) buy a fishing license every year and most of you are casual anglers and make quick decisions about whether or not you are going to fish. What's the weather forecast going to be like for the opening day of trout season? If it is cold, rainy or the streams are flooding, many anglers choose not to buy a license and this is a period of our peak license sales.

These instant decisions affect license sales and because of this "churn" rate, it is difficult to truly predict how many licensable anglers we have in our state. Combine this factor with other factors like an aging population and more of us entering the senior citizen ranks, more of us having less time to do leisure activities like fishing and boating because of family and job demands, competition for that time with kid's soccer practice, ballet lessons or just spending time on smart phones,

computers or watching TV.

We all know that our time is more valuable today than it has ever been in most of our lifetimes. Therefore, we are more careful about what activities we choose to do in our spare time. That is why we have to remind those casual anglers that make up 90% of our ranks, that fishing and boating are fun, simple to do and are a bargain for the cost.

As a PFSC member, you would most likely enjoy the discussions

on George's porch, so help me find other porches throughout our Commonwealth too, so that our casual anglers can not only see the fun that can be had in similar debates about a variety of societal issues, but can also understand the importance of finding the time to take a break and go fishing or boating. Thanks for listening.

Your Director,

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PFBC

Fishing License Sales Since 1982



DEP Secretary Krancer Provides Update on Susquehanna River, Waterways

Harrisburg – DEP Secretary Mike Krancer announced Jan. 28, 2013, that DEP has submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) its final 2012 Integrated Waters report, a biannual assessment of the state's rivers and streams required by the federal Clean Water Act. The report describes the health of various waterways in the state and, where needed, the state proposes listing waterways as impaired.

"Our final report is firmly grounded in sound science, and we expect that EPA will agree with it based on the science presented," DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. "Based on the science and law, we do not believe that the main stem of Susquehanna River should be proposed as impaired under the Clean Water Act. While we recognize that

the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and others had requested that DEP propose to impair a 98-mile stretch of the Susquehanna River, as we have pointed out on many occasions before, that view is based on very limited, piecemeal data and is not supported by the existing data or the law. But DEP takes the concerns expressed about the Susquehanna very seriously and we are doing something about it. We will be taking, separately, a comprehensive and strategic approach to ensure that the Susquehanna River is protected.

"My staff will be working with the Fish and Boat Commission, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the U.S. Geological Survey to ensure water quality and aquatic life are being protected in

the Susquehanna River. In particular, we recognize that there are issues facing smallmouth bass, such as what is called young-of-year die-offs; lesions on adult bass; and inter-sexing of the species," Krancer said. Inter-sexed fish are males with female characteristics, and young-of-year are recently hatched bass.

"The actual cause of these issues has not yet been determined or linked to any particular water quality issue, but DEP is dedicated to finding the answer through a disciplined scientific approach."

DEP's work in this area has been underway for some time. Last summer, agency staff spent 187 combined days on the river collecting hundreds of samples to characterize the water quality in the Susquehan-

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