

Straight TALK

by **John A. Arway**

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Opportunities

In my last column, I discussed the fiscal challenges that lie ahead of us once payment comes due in four years for employee pension costs (\$5.5 million), health care and other benefits (\$920 thousand) and salaries and wages (\$2.0 million). Add another \$1 million, give or take, for basic infrastructure costs, and the simple math shows that we need to find over \$9 million in the next four years to balance the impact these increased costs will have to our operations and your fishing and boating activities. That is why I call our dilemma our fiscal slope, since we have time to work on solutions or better stated—opportunities.

Although many in state government cannot or perhaps will not look ahead to plan for these extra costs, Governor Corbett recognizes that “Pennsylvania has to take action now to address its growing pension crisis. If we don’t, the severely escalating costs of the system will engulf more and more of our state budget.” These costs are being passed down to individual agencies, and we must prepare for them by either cutting costs or reallocating spending or increasing revenues. I discussed the impact the spending cuts would have on our programs and would now like to turn your attention to the revenue opportunities that could be created to either partially or completely take care of these additional costs.

I always hear that it is never a good time to try to find new revenue, no matter if times are good or bad. In good times, agencies grow and prosper like other parts of government did throughout the 1990s, but the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) has always

Pictured are (left to right) Commissioner William J. Sabatose; Mark Adams, Staff Representative for Senator Joseph Scarnati; Representative Matt Gabler; Representative Martin Causer; PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway and Xander Arway-McClusik.



Photo-Rhonda Race

lived within our means, and we continue to not spend more than we earn. We take pride in how we manage angler and boater dollars and are committed to dealing with these new challenges by not advocating a general license increase and losing participation but by finding alternative funding sources to offset the increased costs that we are facing.

So, how can we get creative and pay for these additional costs while providing the same goods and services that our resources and our resource users, our anglers, boaters and conservationists, have come to expect? On the opposite page is a list of ideas with revenue estimates for some of our options.

This table represents the ideas with the greatest potential for generating new funding to offset the costs now being passed on to our agency. We have consistently used the user pay/user benefit model and have traditionally raised user fees to generate revenues to pay our bills. This model should not be used today since you, the anglers and boaters, and the agency had no vote in how these costs were created. They were created by others who used the funding for other things. Since PFBC does not receive any general fund money, the proposed costs are disproportionate to any benefits we may have received through Growing Greener, H2O PA and other general fund programs.

You will find that most of the funding opportunities in this table will require legislative action and the Governor’s approval. Our Board of Commissioners, staff and I truly see this as an opportunity to show how we can work together to minimize the impact of these costs to a multi-billion dollar fishing and boating enterprise in our Commonwealth. We will continue to work with the current administration and our legislative partners on the opportunities that they will support. I recently met with some members and their staff at a legislative luncheon in Emporium and introduced them to my



A water use and degradation fee is being considered as an alternative funding source.



photo-Spring Centhart

Action	Revenue Estimate
Operational	
Property Asset Management and Staff Realignment	\$1.5 million
Regulatory	
Annual Senior Trout Stamp Requirement	\$375 thousand
Replace Trout Stamp/Lake Erie Permits for Seniors with a 10-year permit	\$466 thousand
Voluntary Youth Fishing Permit or License	\$500 thousand
Legislative	
Unpowered Boat Licensing/Registration	\$59 to \$663 thousand
Senior License Options	\$74 thousand to \$1.1 million
Transportation (Liquid Fuel Tax and Oil Company Franchise Tax Share)	\$1.5 to \$6.4 million
Infrastructure—State Bond Actions (i.e.: GG2, H2O PA, Transportation Bill)	\$3 million
Title 30 Fines, Fees, Permits Updates	\$121 thousand
Reimbursement for PFBC Services to Industry	\$350 thousand
Statewide Bottle Tax for Conservation	Unknown at this time
Portion of the General Sales Tax based upon Angler and Boater Contributions	Unknown at this time
Water Use and Degradation Fee	Unknown at this time

Unless we have both the political and public will to find funding opportunities, we will see less stocked trout, less protection of our streams, less public access to our waters and fewer services.

Grandson Xander, now my right-hand adviser, since he is the motivation for my passion to get this problem fixed. This is not about the present but about the future. Unless we have both the political and public will to find ways to pay these costs, we will see less stocked trout, less protection of our streams, less public access to our waters and a smaller PFBC that provides fewer services. Help me tell the story by contacting your local legislative members who can make a difference.

Hope to see you on the water.

Your Director,
>>(John{(>



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.