

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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Power, Efficiency, and Appreciation

Within a three-week span of time from March 10 until March 29, three major events stood out that reaffirmed for me the power of sportsmen and women, the efficiency of our time-tested system of independent natural resource agencies, and the importance of saying thank you. The first event was when the collective voices of anglers, boaters, hunters, and their fellow conservationists helped to influence the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to not take a scheduled vote on House Bill 1576 – the Endangered Species Coordination Act. All across the Commonwealth, anglers spoke out against this bill that would erode the science-based decision-making that is at the heart of natural resource

management here in Pennsylvania. It has been a long time since I saw such an outpouring of support for threatened and endangered species and wild trout streams, and I can tell you that elected officials in Harrisburg paid attention. As this and other debates continue to surface at the state capitol, it is great to know that those of you who are most familiar with our woods and waters are willing to speak up in their defense.

The second significant day was March 19, when I appeared before the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to comment on the release of the report conducted pursuant to HR 129 that studied the potential merger of the Fish & Boat and Game Commissions. We have joined the PFSC for generations in steadfast support of agency independence and the current system.

As I pointed out to the LBFC members, we believe that the financial analysis in the report supports the maintenance of Pennsylvania's time-tested structure of separate natural resource management agencies. On page S-2, the LBFC notes that, "compared to other states' expenditures per license we reviewed, the PFBC and PGC combined expenditure per license is lower than average, suggesting that significant savings in a merger may be limited."

This observation is expanded upon on page 55 with perhaps the most significant finding of the report: "We attempted to determine if a merged fish and wild-

life agency is more efficient than two separate, independent agencies. To do this, we calculated the revenues received and/or expenditures made per license issued . . . [and] of the states for which we have expenditure information, Pennsylvania's PFBC has the lowest expenditures per license (emphasis added)."

In ranking at the top nationally, the PFBC is a model for how to efficiently manage angler and boater dollars and the other funding we receive in pursuit of our mission. Simply put, we do a lot with a little compared to other agencies across the country, and our customers and the resources we are entrusted to protect, conserve, and enhance would be best served by retaining the existing agency structure.

Which brings me to the third – and certainly the most fun – part of the three weeks. On March 29, Fish and Boat Commission staff and I (after I presented our agency report at the spring PFSC meeting in Camp Hill) were out in force for the first day of trout season in Southeastern PA to thank anglers for supporting resource protection and fishing in Pennsylvania through their purchase of a fishing license. As a small token of our appreciation, we teamed with a number of businesses to provide anglers with a small gift. We also partnered with convenience stores to offer

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Left to Right: Kyle and Adam Fogelsanger, Frank Witherow, Andrew Fogelsanger of Newville enjoy the first date of trout season on Big Spring Creek, Cumberland County. Photo credit: Ted Walke



anglers a free hot drink in exchange for simply showing their fishing license.

The Angler Thank You Campaign is just one part of our commitment to follow the fundamental tenets of operating like a business. In this case, we simply wanted to give our customers the same courtesy they get from every other business and thank them for choosing our product – fishing – and giving us the resources to serve them and the aquatic resources of Pennsylvania.



Boaters Benefit by Reporting Fuel Purchase and Use

No one likes to pay taxes. That's a given. But, what if you could get that money back each year in goods and services? Boaters can get those kinds of benefits from their tax dollars, but only if they get involved.

When a boater buys fuel, taxes are paid on that fuel at the state level. The tax money ultimately goes back to PFBC and is used for maintaining boat access areas, printing the Pennsylvania Boating Handbook, and running boating safety classes and more. Over the past 10 years, the PFBC has received about \$1.5 million annually from

these taxes.

But reviews over the last two decades suggest PA lags behind the national average in taxes refunded to boating programs. Every two years, when boat owners renew their registrations, they're asked to estimate how many gallons of fuel they've used in that time. Those figures determine how much money the PFBC gets back, so accurate reporting is critical.

Not all boaters report how much gas they used, though, and some don't report anything at all, either leaving the spot blank or inserting "0." Report-

ing having used "0" gallons of fuel, as opposed to leaving that line on the form blank, is especially damaging.

If a boater leaves the line blank, the PFBC uses a formula to estimate how many gallons of gas the boat may have been expected to consume based on size. However, if boaters insert a "0," that means no taxes are refunded. This, in turn, has a negative impact every year by bringing the average down.

If a boater has any doubt whatsoever about how much fuel he used, it's better to leave that blank than report a zero.

Learn more at: <http://fishandboat.com/reportboatfuel.htm>



'Classic' Fishing License Buttons Return

What was old is new again! Anglers yearning for the nostalgic vintage fishing license buttons, first introduced by the PFBC in 1923, can now add to their collection. For the 2014 license year, the PFBC has reintroduced annual fishing license display buttons as an alternative to displaying the current paper licenses.

Anglers must first purchase an annual, multi-year or lifetime li-

cence before adding an optional display button, which will sell for \$5 and are expected to become available on March 11 through the PFBC's online Outdoor Shop at www.GoneFishingPa.com.

Each custom button will measure 1 3/4 inches with a high-quality, pin-back design and will feature the angler's customer identification number, the same number displayed on a paper license. As a result

of a recent regulation change, as long as the angler is carrying a valid paper license, a valid button is the only display requirement.

Buttons will be mailed directly to the requestor from a contracted vendor. License buttons were originally sold from 1923 until 1960. They were briefly produced again in 1974 and 1975.



2014 Adult Trout Stocking Schedules Available Online

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) 2014 adult trout stocking schedules are available online at www.fishandboat.com.