

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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www.fishandboat.com



User Pays / User Benefits

In my last On Target article, I focused on the exciting news about our agency's historic decision to reduce the price of a fishing license to lure people back to the sport or to try it for the first time. As I write this article, we are hard at work getting ready for the December 1st launch of the discounted licenses under the promotional slogan of Catch the Value!

If you have not done so already, I encourage you to Catch the Value for yourself or someone else through the purchase of one of the specially priced licenses or a gift voucher (fancy word for a gift certificate).

We selected Catch the Value since it represents both the value of the fishing license and, even more importantly, the value of the tremendous fishing opportunities here in Pennsylvania. I often say that the fishing is better now (other than the ongoing woes with the Susquehanna's Smallmouth Bass) than at any point in my lifetime.

Through the hard work of volunteers, professional staff, and some help from Mother Nature, we offer unparalleled angling opportunities, which we are actively promoting through programs such as Pennsylvania's Best

Fishing Waters.

One of the greatest values out there is our stocked trout resource. Those of us who were raised fishing for stocked trout know that there can be no greater excitement for a kid (or adult) than the anticipation of opening day and that first tug of a trout on a cold spring morning.

Without stocked trout, there would still be fantastic wild trout fishing in Pennsylvania, but the recreational opportunities would not be as accessible and widespread as we can offer to resident and tourist anglers with a reliable supply of stocked trout.

Like many things, the costs of trout production continue to rise – unfortunately without a corresponding increase in fish production. For example, in the last decade the average cost of trout feed has increased from \$0.22/lb. to \$0.59/lb., and we have had to decrease production in some hatcheries to meet water quality effluent standards required by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

We are raising as many trout as we can at our facilities while complying with discharge permits.

For this fiscal year, we estimate

that \$8.2 million will be needed to produce approximately 3.2 million adult trout (1.9 million pounds), stock fingerlings, and supply approximately 1 million trout to cooperative nurseries statewide. In comparison, we expended \$6.3 million on trout hatcheries in 2005 to produce 4.6 million adult trout (2.3 million pounds) and \$5.8 million in 1991 to produce 5.3 million adult trout (2.4 million pounds).

In 2009, the total cost-to-creel of producing an 11-inch stocked trout was \$2.73. This captures all of our costs related to stocked trout, including hatcheries, fish management, law enforcement, and administration. Adjusted for inflation, this translates to \$2.96 per trout in 2013 dollars.

In 2013, we sold 498,069 trout/salmon permits and 88,629 combination trout/salmon and Lake Erie permits (combination permits), generating \$4.7 million. This amounts to 57% of the cost to run the trout hatchery program.

If you add the cost of producing 1 million steelhead per year, the revenue collected from permit sales covers 53% of the trout hatchery pro-



CATCH THE VALUE!
FISH PA!
REDUCED-FEE FISHING LICENSES NOW AVAILABLE!

gram.

Adhering to the user pays/user benefits model suggests that trout anglers should bear more of the true cost of the program.

As part of its formal action to reduce license fees, the Board of Commissioners also directed that we advocate for an increase in the fees charged for trout/salmon and combination permits.

This is consistent with the user pays/user benefits model that continues to be the backbone of fish and wildlife conservation across the country. I support this business model, which has those who benefit from a resource pay for it rather than passing an undue burden along to the 30% of anglers who do not fish for trout in PA.

Like other license and permit fees, the fees for the trout/salmon permit and combination permit are established by law. The current fees for the trout/salmon and combination permits are \$8 and \$14, respectively. Since it was introduced in 1991 for \$5, the fee for the trout/salmon permit has been increased only once, by \$3 in 2005.

The logical next question is, "What should the cost of the trout/salmon permit be?" We have run a number of scenarios to estimate how much revenue we would generate (and how many anglers we might lose) if the legislature were to raise the price of the permit by certain amounts.

2015 FISHING LICENSES

| LICENSE YEAR | Code | Type of Fishing License or Permit | Age | Cost* |
|---|------|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Annual licenses are valid from December 1, 2014, through December 31, 2015. WHILE FISHING, your license must be signed in ink and must be displayed on an outer garment. In addition, anglers must be prepared to furnish positive proof of identification. | 101 | Resident (Annual) | 16-64 | \$22.70 \$21.70 |
| | 104 | Senior Resident (Annual) | 65 & up | \$11.70 \$10.70 |
| | 105 | Senior Resident (Lifetime) | 65 & up | \$51.70 |
| | 108 | 1-Day Resident (not valid March 15-April 30) | 16 & up | \$11.70 |
| | 102 | Non-Resident (Annual) | 16 & up | \$52.70 \$51.70 |
| | 106 | 1-Day Tourist ** (not valid March 15-April 30) | 16 & up | \$26.70 |
| | 103 | 3-Day Tourist | 16 & up | \$26.70 |
| | 107 | 7-Day Tourist | 16 & up | \$34.70 |
| | 150 | Trout-Salmon Permit | 16 & up | \$ 9.70 |
| | 151 | Lake Erie Permit | 16 & up | \$ 9.70 |
| | 152 | Combination Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit | 16 & up | \$15.70 |
| | 135 | Alternate Display Annual Fishing License Button | Any age | \$ 5.00 |
| | 109 | Mentored Youth Permit | Less than 16 | \$ 0.00 |
| | 110 | Voluntary Youth Fishing License (Annual) | Less than 16 | \$ 2.70 |

*Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.70 electronic processing fee. **Includes Trout-Salmon and Lake Erie permits, not valid March 15-April 30.



www.GoneFishingPa.com



Ultimately, the size of any increase will be decided by the House, Senate, and Governor-elect Tom Wolf.

As we kick off that discussion for the 2015-16 legislative session, I ask that you do two things.

First, if you are a trout angler – as I know most of you are – think about how much you value stocked trout and, compared with other things you spend your money on, whether you get more than \$8 worth of value from the 3.2 million trout we stock each year. My hunch is that you will soon realize how much of a bargain the permit currently is.

Second, contact your state senator and representative and tell them how

much stocked trout mean to you. As the final decision-makers for setting permit fees, it is important for them to hear from those who benefit from the resource.

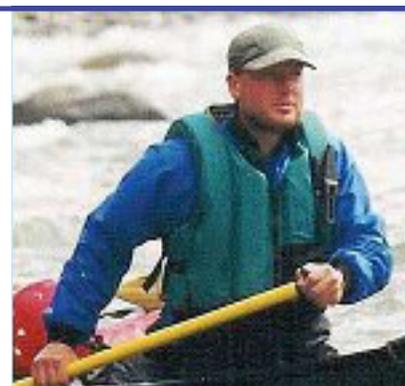
I remain confident that a business model that lowers the price of a general fishing license to increase participation and asks trout anglers to pay for more of the true cost of the fish they enjoy from the stocked trout program is the right direction for Pennsylvania.

It will result in more people fishing and ensure the continuation of the stocked trout resource that got me – and I expect many of you – hooked on fishing and brings us back to the stream each spring.



Life Jackets Save Lives Follow Safety Tips in Cold Weather

When sunny days tempt the boater in you, don't forget about your life jacket, especially if you are planning to use a canoe, kayak or similar small boat. Beginning Nov. 1 and lasting through April 30, individuals are required to wear a life jacket while underway or at anchor



on boats less than 16 feet in length or on any canoe or kayak. The requirement applies to all PA waters.

To learn more about life jackets and cold water survival, visit <http://fishandboat.com/safety.htm> and www.wearitpennsylvania.com.