

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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www.fishandboat.com



Popular Mentored Youth Fishing Days Expanded Across State

Kids have a natural knack for making people smile. Whether they're goofing around with their siblings, enjoying a game with friends, or just playing outside in the snow, they often bring a smile to the faces of parents and grandparents. In fact, I find myself smiling every time I just think of my grandkids.

When we launched our Mentored Youth Trout Day pilot program in spring 2013, our goal was to create a fun opportunity, one that would provide excitement for kids and in turn bring a smile to the faces of the adult mentors. We didn't know what to expect, so we piloted it on 12 waters in SE PA.

Well, it was immediately popular with adult anglers and the kids in their lives. More than 3,700 adult anglers

registered 5,110 kids for the fishing events.

In 2014 we took it a step further, expanding the program to 40 waters across the state. It was originally scheduled for two days, but Mother Nature kept the lakes frozen and we ended up rescheduling it into one statewide day on May 10. Despite the change in date, the program was again a success but not quite as popular as the 2013 day.

Now, on the eve of the 2015 fishing season, we've decided to expand the program once again, providing even more fishing opportunities for kids and their mentors. We also changed it from a series of events to a broader range of opportunities.

During the PFBC's quarterly business meeting held in Harrisburg Jan. 21-22, we announced that we would be widely expanding the program to include all trout waters stocked by the PFBC and managed under Commonwealth inland regulations. One of the complaints we heard from anglers was that not enough waters were part of the program. In reality, these really weren't complaints – they were anglers who just wanted to participate like others who lived closer to waters selected for the program!

From the day I became director, one of my goals has been to get more kids involved in fishing and to keep them engaged. It didn't take long to realize that one of the best ways to do that

is to make the experience as easy as possible for parents and mentors. By expanding the mentored youth program to include all Commission stocked trout waters, we are substantially increasing the number of waters open to the program and are bringing fishing as close as we can to anglers.

The first Mentored Youth Trout Day will be held on March 28, the Saturday before the regional opening day of trout season in 18 southcentral and southeast counties. The second one will be held on April 11, the Saturday before the statewide opening day of trout season. Mentors and children can each keep two trout, which must measure at least seven inches.

Every year, the PFBC stocks approximately 3.2 million adult trout in about 530 streams and 120 lakes across the Commonwealth. They average 11 inches in length and weigh about one-half pound each.

The PFBC expects to stock a majority of the trout waters in advance of the mentored youth days. But some of the waters may not be stocked in time due to weather, water conditions and scheduling logistics. Also, special regulation areas, like Catch and Release Fly-Fishing Only or Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only, are not included in the mentored youth program.

It's important for anglers to visit the PFBC stocking page for an updated list so they know exactly what waters are being stocked. We don't want mentors and kids inadvertently showing up at waters which have not been stocked. Waters that receive a stocking before the mentored youth days will be highlighted on this list to assist



John with his grandson Zander

anglers with their fishing plans.

We're excited that so many mentors and kids have chosen to participate in the first two years of the program. It is designed to encourage adults to take kids fishing, to show them that fishing is fun, and to promote active, outdoor recreation. Without a doubt, the program has been a success and we want to continue the momentum we have created the last two years.

By expanding the program to all stocked waters, and taking into account the \$1 decrease in the price of a 2015 adult fishing license, I'm certain we will see an even greater level of participation this year.

You may remember that we announced last fall that prices of resident,

non-resident and senior resident annual licenses were being reduced by \$1 for the entire 2015 season. The discount is part of a marketing campaign to highlight the sport's affordability to families and younger audiences and to persuade lapsed anglers to return. It's being promoted under the slogan "Catch the Value!"

Remember, to participate, adult anglers (16 years or older) must have a valid fishing license and trout/salmon permit and be accompanied by a youth. Youth anglers must obtain a free PFBC-issued permit or a voluntary youth fishing license (only \$2.70 including all fees). Both are available at www.GoneFishingPA.com or at any of the more than 900 licensing agents across the

state.

For every voluntary youth license sold, the PFBC will receive approximately \$5 in federal revenue from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sport Fish Restoration Act program, which provides funds to states based on a formula that includes the number of licenses a state sells. All revenues earned from a voluntary youth fishing license will be dedicated to youth fishing programs.

More information about the Mentored Youth Fishing Days program is available at www.GoneFishingPa.com.

We hope you, your family and friends join us this year to Catch the Value!

Your Director, ><(John{(°>

Access Remains Top Concern for Many Anglers

FERNANDINA BEACH, Fla. — Although fishing remains a popular activity shared by many sportsmen and their families, the sport is not without challenges that limit even broader participation from many who would love to take part in this grand tradition. In exploring what threats to fishing are of the greatest concern or have impacted today's anglers the most, AnglerSurvey.com posed the question in one of its bi-monthly surveys.

When asked, "What is the biggest problem facing fishing today?" 20 percent of respondents cited access to water as being the top concern.

"With increasing regularity, federal

agencies and uninformed politicians unnecessarily close access to our public waters. But recreational anglers are conservation stewards, and our nation's waterways can be conserved while we, our friends and families continue to fish," says Liz Ogilvie, director of Keep America Fishing with the American Sportfishing Association.

Keep America Fishing serves as the unified voice of the American angler and works to keep the nation's public water resources open, clean and abundant with fish.

After access, water quality was the second biggest concern among sportsmen with nearly 16 percent citing that as the major problem. Additional concerns included:



- 15 percent cited invasive fish or marine species
- 14 percent said there were too many disruptive and competing activities on the water
- 9 percent blamed over regulation
- 8 percent said there are not enough fish
- 8 percent cited the cost to fish
- 8 percent weren't sure, and
- 4 percent cited too many anglers.

Keep America Fishing is organized by the American Sportfishing Association. For more information on Keep America Fishing, visit its website at keepamericafishing.org.

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.

