

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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A Blizzard of Legislative Proposals

Of all the sportsmen and conservation groups in Pennsylvania, none have as long and as rich a history as the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. You have been a steady presence at the capitol for decades, and your voice still matters to the legislature.

Given that experience, I think you can agree that the legislative funding proposals announced during a seven-day span in mid-January were an even bigger deal than the historic snowstorm that gripped most of Pennsylvania just a few days later.

On January 13, Senator Jim Brewster formally introduced Senate Bill 1103, which would increase fishing li-

cense and permit fees for the first time since 2005. In addition to the traditional approach of an across-the-board increase that is now necessary because of the time since the last license increase, Senator Brewster and his co-sponsors Senators Blake, Alloway, Wiley, Haywood, and Fontana included an innovative element in the bill that calls for five years of annual, incremental 3% increases to keep up with rising costs and inflation.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) thanks Senator Brewster and his colleagues for taking the initiative to introduce SB 1103 as a vehicle for generating revenues to serve Pennsylvania's anglers, boaters, and aquatic resources as we have for the past 150 years. This comprehensive, six-year proposal is projected to initially generate \$5.4 million in new revenue for the PFBC, with an additional \$2.3 million per year by 2022 as a result of the incremental increases – for a total of nearly \$7.8 million in new annual revenue.

As you know, I have been a long-time proponent of trying to think about new funding models. The discussion about license fees kicked off by Senate Bill 1103 may have the result of a long-term strategy for a license and permit fee structure that, while still based



on the user pays/user benefits model of fish and wildlife conservation, affords the PFBC the ability to establish a fee structure that helps us meet our financial obligations while minimizing the effects on the angling public.

The following text is from a memorandum circulated by Senators John Eichelberger and John Wozniak on January 19 asking for co-sponsors to a bill they intend to introduce:

“In the near future, we plan to introduce legislation authorizing the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) to establish the fees charged by the agency.

Currently, the PFBC's fees are established by legislation. As an independent administrative agency that is not supported by General Fund revenues and relies on user fees to pay for almost everything it does, the PFBC has a vested business interest in setting a fee structure that generates sufficient revenues to sustain its work on behalf of anglers, boaters, and aquatic resources while having the least possible negative impact on participation and sales.

The Fish and Boat Code (Title 30) directs the PFBC to submit an annual report to the House and Senate Game and Fisheries and Appropriations Committees each year, and also requires the Legis-



John enjoying some ice fishing on FJ Sayers Reservoir, Bald Eagle State Park, Centre Co.



lative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a performance audit of the PFBC every three years. Further, members of the Commission are subject to Senate confirmation. We believe that these checks and balances provide the legislature with ample opportunity to ensure the responsible implementation of this authority.

It should be noted that the PFBC has consistently demonstrated a commitment to fiscal discipline and was applauded by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee in 2014 for hav-

ing the lowest expenditures per license among states surveyed across the country. This proposal builds on that track record of accountability.”

We appreciate Senators Eichelberger’s and Wozniak’s willingness to join Senator Brewster in the search for solutions to what is a growing fiscal challenge for our agency as we face sharp cost increases driven by health care,

retirement, and other obligations faced by any business. We support SB 1103 as a way to bring us out of our current financial crisis, and we are excited about the proposal to allow the PFBC to establish a sustainable, long-term fee structure.

PFBC



Trout anglers who want an experience targeting bigger fish will have the opportunity to catch 14”-20” trout in eight Keystone

Select Stocked Trout Waters, a new program launching this year.

Under the program, approximately 3,200 large trout will be distributed among the eight waters, one in each commissioner district. The trout will be stocked at a rate of up to 250 trout per mile, which is comparable to the numbers of fish of this size in Pennsylvania’s best wild trout waters.

The eight waters include:

- Chester County, Middle Branch White Clay Creek, Section 3 (1.67

miles)

- Dauphin County, Wiconisco Creek, Section 3 (0.74 miles)
- Lackawanna/Wyoming Counties, South Branch Tunkhannock Creek, Section 4 (0.99 miles)
- Lawrence County, Neshannock Creek, Section 3 (2.67 miles)
- Lycoming County, Loyalsock Creek, Section 5 (1.49 miles)
- Potter County, First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, Section 4 (1.67 miles)
- Somerset County, Laurel Hill Creek, Section 3 (2.33 miles)
- Westmoreland County, Loyalhanna Creek, Section 3 (1.67 miles)

“We wanted to add an element of excitement to trout fishing and at the same time remind anglers that the trout season can extend into the summer,” said PFBC Executive Director John Arway.

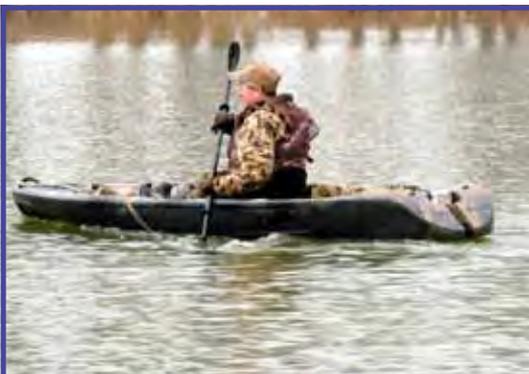
Keystone Select Waters Unveiled

“These are the biggest stocked trout we raise, so anglers will definitely enjoy catching them.”

PFBC

Reauthorization of Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund

On December 4, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which included a provision reauthorizing the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (Trust Fund) through 2020. Reauthorizing the Trust Fund was a priority for the nation's boating and angling communities, and many bipartisan Members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus worked to ensure the inclusion of the Trust Fund's reauthorization in the bill.



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.