

# Straight TALK

by **John A. Arway**

*Executive Director  
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## Do Your Duty and Fear No One

I thought that the title of this column was fitting since it will be the last one I write as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC). In case you have not heard, I will be retiring on November 2, 2018, after a 38-year career to spend time enjoying Penns waters, woods and beyond with family and friends. I have had an amazing career and the personal privilege to work with some incredible people.

I began my career in 1980 as a semi-skilled laborer doing habitat improvement projects on waters across Pennsylvania. I still have my first time and activity report, which I framed and have on my bookshelf in my office. My first day was spent working 9 hours “laying out” a habitat project on Bobs Creek, Bedford County, at Blue Knob State Park. I earned an hourly wage of \$4.62. I was promoted to a fisheries biologist a few years later, hired Dave Spotts and Steve Kepler and was empowered by PFBC Executive Director Ralph W. Abele to do what was necessary to protect our aquatic resources. That was all the direction some rookie biologists needed to change the world.

I spent most of my career reviewing permit applications for a variety of industries to assure protection, conservation and enhancement of our Commonwealth’s aquatic resources. I partnered with many other scientists, lawyers and conservationists along the way who were interested in the same thing—protecting the Commonwealth’s natural resources, improving them for use by future generations and punishing the polluters who took advantage of them for personal profit. I am proud to be part of a generation that can rightfully say that we have more waters to fish today than when we were children. I have learned many lessons throughout the years from those much wiser than me or from personal experience by winning or losing battles. Looking back, I would not change one



*PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway with his 2018 birthday bass, which keeps the streak alive—38 years in a row catching a fish on his birthday.*

second of time and hope that my children and grandchildren feel the same way about their accomplishments when they retire from their careers. I would like to thank everyone who I have had the honor to work with over the years. Thanks to those who voted for me to lead charges as President of the Pennsylvania Chapter and Northeast Division of the American Fisheries Society, President of the Northeastern Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Chairman of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency’s Executive Committee and member of various technical committees, and Board member of the American Sportfishing Association and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. Also, a personal thanks to Paul Swanson who was the motivation for me to rise to the challenge as PFBC Executive Director. Additionally, thanks go out to past and present Commissioners Huhn, Keir, Martin, Moore, Stidd, Shetterly, Sabatose, Worobec, Bachman, Hussar, Gavlick, Lichvar, Small, Lewis and Kauffman for their support through calm waters and heavy seas. And, a special thanks to everyone who helped fight back Senate Bill 935. Your confidence in me instilled confidence in myself. Thank you all.

*photo-Bob Zehmer; former Director of Missouri Department of Conservation and currently Bass Pro Shops Senior Director of Conservation*

I have crossed paths with many people over the years with a common interest in conservation. Many of the people I have met have become personal friends. Some temporary acquaintances and others more permanent. I truly value those lasting friendships immeasurably and look forward to spending time enjoying the fruits of our collective labor in retirement. As the old saying goes, things happen for a reason, so my career ends with the passing of the torch to a new generation of PFBC staff and Pennsylvania anglers. I am strongly encouraged by the great work being done by the Wildlife Leadership Academy, Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Rivers Conservation & Fly Fishing Youth Camp, PFBC's partnership with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's Gaun First Catch Centers, and many other youth initiatives. These combined with the addition of a new generation of PFBC staff should give us all hope for the future. Best of luck Mike and Julie, Chad, Amidea and Bob along with all the other new PFBC employees and Executive Director. Chart a course for the destination set by the Board and stick to your plan for there will be many obstacles along the way. But dare to have the courage and resolve to do the right things for the right reasons for not only the current generation of Pennsylvania anglers and boaters but for generations yet to come. Just remember time passes in the blink of an eye, so start making a difference today.

I did my best to get a revenue plan across the finish line. I used every play in my playbook and got us to the goal line several times. But, now it is time for me to turn the team over to a new coach and a competent Board with new ideas and a vision to move the agency forward into the future. I remain confident that the agency is poised to cross the funding goal line and get back on the track of Resource First—conservation science and recreation.

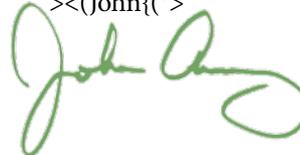
I designed my e-mail signature line many years ago using a favorite saying adopted by former PFBC Executive Director Ralph W. Abele from his favorite book *Life with Father* by Clarence Day. I felt that it also accurately reflected my philosophy of leadership. I also did my duty by stepping up and leading one of the finest conservation agencies in the nation. Although the second part of the saying—fear no one—is somewhat daunting, I finally

realized the true meaning when I had the opportunity to hear Commander Kirk S. Lippold of the USS Cole speak about his experiences on October 12, 2000 when his ship was attacked and bombed by Al-Qaeda terrorists during a refueling stop in the Yemeni port of Aden, killing 17 United States sailors. He was in a time of crisis and everyone around him was advising him about what to do. He quickly concluded that he was in the best position to make decisions because of his training and position as Commanding Officer. He made his decisions without fear of the consequences of his actions. So, my final advice for those who follow me is to Do Your Duty—gather the facts, trust your judgment, check in with your advisors from time to time and Fear No One. Don't be afraid of the consequences of your decisions, and never look back.

Hope to see you on the water!

Your Director,

><(John{(>



*Do Your Duty and Fear No One...R. W. Abele*

*"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly...who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat." Theodore Roosevelt, (1910).*

P.S. You are invited to join me and PFBC staff at Bobs Creek, Bedford County (near Blue Knob State Park), from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Friday, November 2, 2018. We will be completing a habitat improvement project to bring my 38-year career full circle. Details to follow.



*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.*

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