

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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Senate Bill 1168 Establishing a Sustainable Future for Fishing and Boating in Pennsylvania

On April 7, I was very happy to be asked to testify at a special hearing of the House Game and Fisheries Committee regarding Senate Bill 1168. As I told the attendees at the PFSC's last statewide meeting, the model being proposed in the bill for allowing us to establish the fees charged to anglers and boaters is among the most exciting and important things I can ever remember happening to our agency.

We appreciate the PFSC's support for the idea as we collectively explain its value to the long-term future of fishing and boating in Pennsylvania.

Given the significance of the hearing, I thought it would be beneficial to share excerpts from my formal submitted testimony for this month's On Target article. If, after reading the excerpts, you agree with the proposal, please consider contacting your local state legislator to ask them to pass SB 1168 this session.

As you know, the General Assembly and Governor currently establish the categories and set the fees for fishing licenses and permits and boat registrations and other related fees.

The current system of establishing the PFBC's fees by legislation after long intervals of time results in large increases that drive angler participation down due to the size of the increases necessary to offset rising costs.

Act 66 of 2012 authorized our agency to sell multi-year fishing licenses and to experiment with pricing and packaging options for less than the costs established by law. The multi-year licenses have been extremely successful as a convenient, cost-effective

way to retain and even reactivate anglers...Under Senate Bill 1168, the PFBC would still be able to offer the popular multi-year fishing licenses and permits.

Multi-year licenses have helped some by reducing the churn, but a new way of setting fees is necessary to best serve Pennsylvania's anglers and boaters as effectively as possible and also minimize the impact large fee increases have on general license sales...

Until we peaked at 1.2 million license sales in 1991, we always rebounded after a decline in sales following a license increase. Unfortunately, we have been unable to recover from the 8-10% decreases in license sales following the last three increases.

Ideally, we would like to get away from this boom-and-bust cycle that has steadily contributed to fewer and fewer license sales over time. Senate Bill 1168 would give us the tools to do just that...

In their co-sponsor memo that attracted 20 other bipartisan Senators to sign on to the bill, Senators John Eichelberger and John Wozniak stated the following: "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."

That comment is a great summary of both what we need to do and what



Mark Nale Photo

we intend to do with the authority from Senate Bill 1168. We are not a for-profit business; but as a government business, we need to use the revenue we receive from customer sales to provide the goods and services that our anglers and boaters expect. No more...No less!...

Senate Bill 1168 authorizes the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) to establish fees charged to anglers and boaters, namely fishing licenses and permits and boat registrations and titles.

We have consistently demonstrated a commitment to fiscal discipline, and we were recognized by the LBFC in their most recent triennial audit for having the lowest expenditures per license among states surveyed nationwide.

Senate Bill 1168 would take the next step of allowing us to apply the same disciplined approach to the fees we charge our customers.

Senate Bill 1168 also authorizes the PFBC to change other outdated fees; broadens the use of proceeds from the Lake Erie permit for projects that benefit public fishing; removes the word "salmon" from the trout/salmon permit since the agency no



longer stocks salmon; and makes minor technical amendments to ensure consistency throughout Title 30.

Our Board of Commissioners and I are committed to using a deliberate, business approach to setting fees that accounts for inflation since the last license increase in 2005; anticipates changing demographics; recognizes sales data patterns; and anticipates modest, incremental increases to keep up with rising costs – all while attempt-

ing to minimize the long-term impacts to our customers...

Our Commissioners were delighted to welcome Senator Eichelberger himself to make a few comments about the bill at their quarterly meeting last week. It is very rare for a State Senator to personally come to one of our meetings to explain a bill he is introducing on behalf of our agency and its customers, and it was great to be able to publicly thank Senator Eichelberger for his

leadership...

Thank you again to the PFSC for your leadership in Harrisburg and across Pennsylvania for the Commonwealth's sportsmen. Your voice on Senate Bill 1168 helps to reinforce that it is an idea whose time has come, and you have my word that we will use the authority wisely and deliberately in the best interests of Pennsylvania's anglers and boaters.

PFBC

Top Fishing Equipment Brands for 2015



FERNANDINA BEACH, FL. - Southwick Associates' has announced 2015 top brands for many angling product categories. This list has been compiled from the internet-based surveys completed in 2015 by AnglerSurvey.com panelists.

In 2015, sportfishing's most frequently purchased brands included:

- Top rod brand: Shakespeare (Ugly Stik, Sturdy Stik, etc.)
- Top reel brand: Shimano
- Top combo brand: Shakespeare
- Top fishing line brand: PowerPro
- Top hard bait brand: Rapala
- Top spinner bait brand: Strike King

- Top jig brand: Strike King
- Top sinker brand: Lindys
- Top swivel brand: Eagle Claw
- Top leader brand: Suffix
- Top fly line brand: Rio
- Top fly leader brand: Rio
- Top tippets brand: Rio
- Top wader brand: Simms
- Top clothing brand: Columbia
- Top raingear brand: Frogg Toggs
- Top landing net brand: Frabill
- Top bait bucket/aerator brand: Frabill
- Top fishing knife brand: Rapala
- Top fish scale brand: Berkley

- Top trolling motor brand: Minn Kota

The list above is only a fraction of all fishing categories tracked by Southwick Associates. Along with many other product categories, Southwick Associates also tracks the percentage of sales occurring across different retail channels, total spending per category, average prices, and demographics for anglers buying specific products. Additional information tracked includes total days spent fishing, type of fishing (fresh, salt and more), preferred species and where they fish.

In Passing.....

Paul J. Mahon of Clarks Green died at the Gino J. Merli Veterans Center on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, following a courageous battle with Multiple Sclerosis. His wife is the former Josephine "Jo" Costanzo.

Paul was appointed by Governor Robert Casey to serve as a Commissioner of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. He served from July 11, 1991 to August 2, 2006. All who knew Paul understood his passion for the Commission. Paul proudly served as a Commissioner for 16 years.

Inspired by his own disability, Paul made a commitment early on to ensure access to the waterways of the Commonwealth for all individuals. Paul's unwavering commitment to Pennsylvania anglers inspired him to oversee the construction of 17 handicapped accessible fishing piers throughout Pennsylvania.

Our condolences to Paul's family.

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Richard W. "Dick" Gross of Matamoras, PA, and a longtime resident of the area, died Sunday, March 27, 2016 at St. Joseph's Place, Port Jervis. He was 88. He was born November 15, 1927 in Chicago, IL, the son of the late Adolf Emil Gross and the late Pearl Lillian McMaster Gross.

Richard married Kathleen O'Donnell 42 years ago on December 22, 1973 in Walker Valley, NY.

He proudly served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps and was a Past Commander and Life Member of the American Legion Post #139, Milford, PA.

He worked as a Marine Biologist for the U.S. Dept. Of Interior where he served on Lady Bird Johnson's Conservation Committee and the Alaska National Lands Bill Task Force. He worked on projects such as the St. Johns and Virgin Islands Underwater Study, Cornell University New York State SeaGrant Program. Dick has held positions in the Oregon Game Commission, North Carolina Fish & Wildlife, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife and U.S. Dept. of Interior Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. He also served in the land acquisition section of the Land and Water Conservation Fund at the federal level.

Dick continued to be active in retirement as a volunteer in wildlife and land management conservation policy development and educational efforts. He was active with the Pike County Scenic Rural Character Preservation Program where he served as a board member, Pike County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Delegate, Pike County Youth Conservation School, Ducks Unlimited and the Matamoras Rod & Gun Club. He was also a past member of the Pike County Conservation District and the Pike County Planning Commission. He was the Director for the New Jersey Fish & Game.

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