



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission ANNUAL REPORT

PFBC 2003 Annual Report Executive Summary

Founded in 1866, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is one of America's oldest and most effective conservation agencies. The Commission is an independent agency with responsibilities for protecting and managing Pennsylvania's fishery resources and regulating recreational fishing and boating on Pennsylvania waters. The agency's mission is to "provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources."

Commissioners are appointed by the governor to eight-year terms with the advice and consent of the Pennsylvania Senate. Eight commissioners represent districts; two at-large (statewide) commissioners represent boating interests.

The Commission has four agency-wide goals:

- To protect, conserve and enhance all aquatic resources.
- To provide for the protection of aquatic resource users.
- To address the expectations of anglers and boaters.
- To advocate the wise, safe use of Pennsylvania's aquatic resources.

To accomplish these goals, the Commission is organized as an Executive Office that coordinates the agency's policy and programmatic direction as established by the commissioners and five specialized bureaus. This report highlights Commission activity during 2003.

Law enforcement

During 2003, conservation officers issued 4,198 citations and 17,727 warnings for violations of fishing laws and regulations. Officers

also issued 3,184 citations and 14,829 warnings for violations of the boating laws and regulations. Our officers boarded a total of 26,926 boats in 2003.

Improved training and tools for our waterways conservation officers resulted in a record number of 82 boating-under-the-influence (BUI) cases instituted last year.

During 2003, waterways conservation officers and other staff briefed more than 15,000 individuals who attended meetings across Pennsylvania. They worked exhibits at sport shows, participated in youth field days, helped stock fish and did much more. They did all this while devoting about 90 percent of their time to core law enforcement functions.

Boating and education

There were 11 recreational boating accident fatalities in Pennsylvania in 2003. The average for the last 10 years is 11.6 fatalities per year. However, 2003 was unusual because 10 of the 11 fatalities occurred in unpowered boats. Surprisingly, there were no fatalities between July 26 and December 23.

In 2003, the Commission issued Boating Safety Education Certificates to about 14,000 students who successfully completed a boating course. Most people completing courses took them online through the Commission's web site. In addition, the Commission certified 1,253 students through 93 courses in the Water Rescue Program in 2003, the best year ever for this valuable program.

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Public outreach

Our publications range from fishing regulations summaries and boating handbooks to fishing and boating regional guides and *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* magazine, now in its 73rd year. Exhibits, books, patches, pamphlets, posters and other products were also produced and contributed to the Commission's outreach.

Our online efforts have yielded tremendous results. Last year, visitation to the Commission's web site broke all past records. We had more than 44 million hits and 5 million page views. Use in all categories increased by more than 50 percent. Our new regional fishing and boating reports proved particularly popular.

Administration

Resident license sales were down by about 30,000 (3.7 percent), and the sale of trout stamps was down by another 29,000 (or 4.3 percent). All other license categories also showed decreases. Notably, the Three-Day Tourist category showed its first decrease since its inception in 1996. Although it's always difficult to draw conclusions about the cause, it is notable that in 2003, high water and wet weather plagued Pennsylvania during most of the busy spring fishing period.

In 2003, the Commission sold more than 16,000 licenses and about 11,000 trout stamps online, an increase of about 60 percent from the previous year.

In 2003, Pennsylvania had 355,265 actively registered boats. This was a decrease of .6 percent from 2002's 357,434, and 1.4 percent fewer than 2000's all-time high of 360,361. In 2003, the Commission also sold 4,401 Non-Powered Boat Use Permits for a total of \$53,426.

Engineering and development

Access-area development work occurred at 20 Mile Creek, Erie County; Elk Creek, Erie County; Canoe Creek State Park, Blair County; Frankford Arsenal Access, Philadelphia County; and East Fredericktown Access, Fayette County.



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Maintenance and repairs included work at the Tylersville State Fish Hatchery, Clinton County; Tionesta Hatchery, Forest County; Reynoldsdale Hatchery, Bedford County; Huntsdale Hatchery, Cumberland County; Pleasant Gap Hatchery, Centre County; and the Mission property, Erie County.

Engineers conducted 40 dam safety inspections as part of the state's dam safety program. Currently there are 17 Commission dams on the DEP unsafe dam list. Three of these dams have been drawn down for repairs. The technical breach analysis and inundation mapping is complete on all high-hazard dams. Currently there are seven emergency action plans complete with all approvals, and the remaining plans are in the draft approval process.

Maintenance and repair crews completed work at Walnut Creek Marina and North East Marina, both in Erie County.

Fisheries

Trout stocking resumed in 74 stream sections and three lakes that had been removed from the program in 2002 because of reduced production.

More than 94.5 million fry, fingerling and adult fish comprised of 23 species were stocked in 2003.

Research Division staff continues to provide valuable in-house technical expertise in water quality, fish culture research and fish health. The Lake Erie Unit and the Anadromous Fish Restoration Unit provided technical guidance to other agencies and the public and conducted large-scale fisheries management and restoration activities.

Some 3.98 million legal-size trout weighing 1.78 million pounds with an average size of 10 inches as well as 1.43 million fingerling trout weighing 22,000 pounds at an average size of 3.3 inches were produced and stocked in Commonwealth waters. The Cooperative Nursery Program reported stocking 1.15 million legal trout into Commonwealth public waters.

For more details on Commission activities and to view the complete annual report, visit the Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us. ☐

photo-Art Michaels