

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



photos-courtesy of Amanda Simpson and PFBC archives

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources, and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

FishandBoat.com



SPECIAL SECTION AND STATEWIDE INITIATIVES



Providing Fishing and Boating Opportunities

by *Timothy D. Schaeffer*

Executive Director

Those words make up the second part of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) mission to protect, conserve, and enhance aquatic resources, and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

During our recent strategic planning process, the Board of Commissioners and staff agreed that public access should remain one of the agency's strategic priorities. To that end, we landed on the following goal: maintain, improve, and connect people to public access locations and create new public access to ensure a diversity of sustainable recreational fishing and boating opportunities for all to enjoy.

Our staff and partners made incredible progress in pursuit of that goal in 2023, and the Special Section of this annual report highlights some accomplishments. Throughout the report, you will find other examples of how our employees and their networks of partnerships are improving the aquatic resources of Pennsylvania and safely connecting people to them.

The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation is currently promoting the theme "Find Your Best Self on the Water." It is part of a campaign to increase female participation in fishing and boating, but the message applies to everyone. To be your best self on the water, you need to be able to get to the water. And, that is what is happening all over Pennsylvania as individuals, businesses, community organizations, and local

governments realize the transformative power of building connections to local waterways that are welcoming to all.

If you enjoy the Commonwealth's waters from a boat this coming year, please wear your life jacket. The current 10-year average for recreational boating fatalities in Pennsylvania is at an all-time low since 1988 when these statistics began being recorded. The most impactful action to keep that momentum going in the right direction is for boaters to wear a life jacket. Here and across the country, about 80% of all boating fatalities were a result of the victim not wearing a life jacket. In some cases, the life jackets were on board the boat, but they did no good without being worn.

If you fish from a boat during Mentored Youth Trout Day on March 30 or the opening day of trout season on April 6, please remember you are required to wear a life jacket on boats less than 16 feet in length and on any canoe, kayak, or paddleboard. The coldwater life jacket requirement is saving lives and remains in effect from November 1 to April 30.

On a personal note, thank you to all of the partners depicted below during one of the most memorable days of the year along the Lackawaxen River. I still remember the day a few years ago when current Board of Commissioners President Bill Gibney told me about a group of citizens who had an idea for a new water trail as a way to connect people to the underutilized gem that flows through their community. Congratulations to those with the vision to see it through to completion, and thank you to the countless people across Pennsylvania who are doing the same to provide fishing and boating opportunities.



A ribbon cutting event was held at the White Mills River Access Park on the Lackawaxen River.

SPECIAL SECTION: PUBLIC ACCESS

For anglers and boaters, the memories made during a day on the water can last a lifetime. From reeling in a trophy fish from boat or shore to catching some air on a set of water skis or sharing a relaxing paddle with family and friends, the opportunities are endless.

While there is plenty of water for everyone to enjoy, safe and convenient public access to our rivers, streams, and lakes is crucial. This section highlights the PFBC’s commitment to an important part of our agency’s Strategic Plan and core mission—“To protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.”

Through a combination of local, state, and federal partnerships between the PFBC and other public and private organizations that understand the social and economic

benefits of providing fishing and boating access, there are now more places than ever before to make those cherished memories on the water.

Access Areas

The most recognizable form of free, public access along Pennsylvania waterways is the more than 300 PFBC-owned access areas, as well as more than 700 other boat ramps operated by state agencies, municipalities, and non-profit groups. In 2023, the PFBC’s Boating Facility Grant Program, federal grants, local fundraising, and the special release of state capital budget funds contributed to the construction, rehabilitation, or enhancement of dozens of physical boat ramp facilities, large and small, across the state. Here are a few examples:

Rivers

Representative Garth Everett Muncy Access, Lycoming County - In October 2023, the PFBC opened this new access named in memory of late Representative Garth Everett, who envisioned and secured state capital budget funding for the facility along the West Branch Susquehanna River. The \$365,000 project features a crushed stone access road, powered and unpowered boat ramps, and rehabilitated asphalt parking. The facility replaces the former Muncy Access, which closed in 2015 due to safety issues related to excessive sedimentation.



Muncy boat launch at Representative Garth Everett Muncy Access, Lycoming County.

Lakes

Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir, Centre County - Howard Borough was the recipient of a Boating Facility Grant in the amount of \$15,000 to help fund the construction of a low-freeboard dock for unpowered boats and other paddlesports. This facility, completed in June 2023, expands public boating access along the popular reservoir within surrounding Bald Eagle State Park.



The low-freeboard dock for unpowered boats and other paddlesports at Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir, Centre County.

Streams

Shaw’s Bridge Park, East Bradford Township, Chester County - In September 2023, the ribbon was cut on this new concrete boat launch to provide access along Brandywine Creek. The \$40,000 project funded in part by the PFBC’s Boating Facility Grant Program was used for an event to announce the availability of \$1,000,000 for additional projects within the Delaware River Watershed, to be awarded in 2024, through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund.



A ceremonial ribbon cutting on the new boat launch at Shaw’s Bridge Park, East Bradford Township, Chester County.

Shoreline and Streamside Access

The PFBC works in partnership with landowners, including municipalities, non-profit organizations, and private individuals to secure public fishing and boating access to the water, as well as access to conduct habitat and water quality improvement projects. Access is gained through land acquisition, conservation easements, and lease agreements through various funding sources, including the Erie Access Improvement Program and the United States Department of Agriculture's Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP).



Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy Floating Classroom Science Program.

Lake Erie

Walnut Creek and Twentymile Creek - In 2023, the PFBC continued to increase angler access to the tributaries of Lake Erie, which provide a unique, world-class steelhead fishery during the late fall and winter. Through property acquisitions and easements, anglers were able to access 1.87 additional miles (9,890 linear feet) of stream for the first time in 2023, including a .18-mile (930 linear feet) section of Walnut Creek, and 1.7-mile (9,890 linear feet) section of Twentymile Creek that was acquired in late 2022 and opened to public use in January 2023. To date, the PFBC has acquired 29.96 miles (158,189 linear feet) of stream access within the Lake Erie Watershed through the Erie Access Improvement Program.



Twentymile Creek, Erie County

Shoreline

Blue Marsh Lake, Berks County - As part of a large-scale habitat improvement project at this popular fishing and boating destination, PFBC staff installed large rock deflector structures to stabilize more than 1,500 linear feet of severely eroded shoreline. In addition to increasing shoreline fish habitat and improving water quality, anglers benefit from increased safe access to shoreline fishing. This multi-year project, which also included placement of 350 submerged lake habitat structures, was funded through a \$134,000 Bass Pro Shops United States Open National Fish Habitat Partnership grant.



Blue Marsh Lake, Berks County

Streamside

Fishing Creek, Clinton County - In partnership with the Clinton County Conservation District, the PFBC improved fish habitat and enhanced 2,600 feet of streamside public fishing access along this popular fishing spot in Mill Hall. This access is both a Class A wild Brown Trout stream and stocked trout fishery. The first phase of this project cost \$100,000 and was funded by a Countywide Action Plan grant and a Coldwater Heritage Partnership grant. Several wood and stone structures were installed to narrow the stream channel, stabilize streambank erosion, create overhead cover fish habitat, and provide safe and spacious fishing access for anglers.



Fishing Creek, Clinton County

Educational Experiences

The PFBC is ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to learn basic skills needed to find adventure on the water. Education staff in partnership with certified fishing and boating instructors, Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs), and community volunteers hosted free programs to reach new anglers and boaters in their communities across the Commonwealth.

R3 Education Grant Program - Recruitment, retention, and reactivation of anglers and boaters is collectively known as R3. In 2023, the PFBC awarded \$187,625 in grant funding to support 15 education projects in 11 counties and two statewide programs, aimed at increasing hands-on fishing and boating education opportunities and connecting or reconnecting people with the water. Funds awarded through this grant program are used to purchase equipment and educational resources, provide transportation, and cover costs of developing and delivering local education programs across the Commonwealth.

Pittsburgh First Catch Program - The PFBC and Venture Outdoors partnered for the second season to offer a series of free fishing and kayaking education opportunities funded by the Richard King Mellon Foundation and supported by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation. In 2023, the Pittsburgh First Catch program provided 121 fishing and kayaking programs to 1,508 young adults and urban audiences in Pittsburgh and surrounding communities.

Over the full grant cycle (April 2022 through December 2023),

a total of 234 fishing and kayaking programs reached 3,185 participants.

Women's Education Programs - Historically, women are less prevalent in the fishing and boating industry, representing an important emerging audience. Statewide, the PFBC offered 25 women's specific programs, reaching 453 participants, who learned hands-on skills in either fly fishing, ice fishing, kayak fishing, or steelhead fishing. Commission staff co-chair the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (TU) Women, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee and organized the 4th Annual Women's Leadership Retreat. A total of 34 female leaders from 20 different counties participated in the retreat, taking this training and content back to implement in their communities.



Women's Intro to Steelhead Fishing Program



Pittsburgh First Catch Program

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

Trout Season Success

On Saturday, April 1, hundreds of thousands of anglers enjoyed the Statewide Opening Day of Trout Season in all 67 counties. A Statewide Mentored Youth Trout Day was also held on Saturday, March 25. In 2023, 59% of all anglers ages 16 and over who purchased a fishing license also purchased a trout permit. Combined with youth angler participation, the opening day of trout season and the weeks that follow continue to be a cherished Pennsylvania tradition.

Important 2024 Trout Fishing Dates:

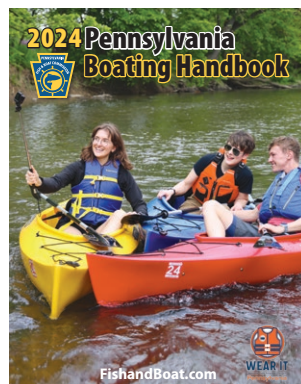
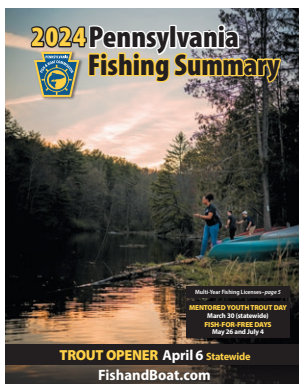
- Saturday, March 30, 2024 - Statewide Mentored Youth Trout Day
- Saturday, April 6, 2024 - Statewide Opening Day of Trout Season



Mentored Youth Trout Day 2023

Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook

For fishing license year 2024, beginning December 1, 2023, the PFBC created the new *2024 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* and *2024 Pennsylvania Boating Handbook*. The book is available free of charge at nearly 700 license issuing agents, can be viewed using the FishBoatPa mobile app, or downloaded at fishandboat.com. It includes fishing regulations and information for powered and unpowered boat operators including basic navigation rules, safety information, boating-under-the-influence (BUI), and how to help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).



Limited Edition Fishing License Button

In 2023, 7,684 anglers purchased a collectible fishing license button. The collectible button for 2024 features a navy blue background with a golden yellow keystone design. The 2024 fishing license buttons are a limited edition offering of 10,000 buttons, which will be numbered between 00001-10000.



Fish-for-Free Days

The annual Fish-for-Free Days were offered again in 2023 on May 28 and July 4. The Fish and Boat Code permits the PFBC to offer two free fishing days a year. The 2023 dates were picked to coincide with the Memorial Day and Independence Day weekends. Fish-for-Free Days allow anyone—residents and non-residents—to legally fish in Pennsylvania without a fishing license. From 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on both days, no fishing license is needed to fish in Pennsylvania's waterways. All other fishing regulations apply.

Eastern Hellbender License Plate

In October, the PFBC joined the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and others, to celebrate the issuance of a new specialized license plate featuring Pennsylvania's State Amphibian, the Eastern Hellbender. In addition to raising awareness about hellbenders, proceeds from the purchase of the license plate support the Wild Resource Conservation Fund which, among other things, aids in the conservation of the Commonwealth's flora and non-game fauna.



Preventing the Spread of AIS

At their July meeting, the PFBC Board of Commissioners voted in favor of landmark efforts to combat the spread of AIS. Effective on January 1, 2024, as part of an updated section of the Pennsylvania Code (Title 58, Chapter 71a) that deals with the propagation, introduction, and transportation of fish in Commonwealth waters, every angler who moves live fish from one water to another is now required to submit a Notice of Stocking (NOS). Previously, Pennsylvania had been among a handful of states, and the only state in the northeastern United States, that had no method of tracking most stocked fish, which left waters increasingly vulnerable to the spread of AIS and pathogens. In addition, NOS information will improve fisheries management plans that benefit fish and anglers alike. Other changes to regulations include a requirement for boaters to drain water and clean vegetation from their boats before moving from one body of water to another.

Cooperative Nursery Grant Program

The PFBC partners with more than 160 cooperative nurseries (co-ops) statewide operated by sportsmen's groups, schools, and other volunteer organizations. These organizations receive fingerling-size trout from the PFBC, which are raised to adult size at co-op facilities. Collectively, co-ops contribute approximately one million trout that are stocked into public waterways in addition to the 3.2 million trout raised at PFBC hatcheries. To address the ongoing needs and challenges faced by co-ops, the PFBC recently expanded the dollar amount limit for the grant program to support more projects. In 2023, the PFBC received 28 grant applications requesting approximately \$123,000 to support various co-op needs.

Hatchery Capital Project

In 2022, the PFBC was granted \$76 million in capital funding, along with matching PFBC funds, for renovation projects at its 13 state fish hatcheries. This funding is dedicated to improving hatchery infrastructure, providing protection from AIS, renovating fish culture operations, and ensuring hatcheries continue to provide fish for angling opportunities and species restoration. Some specific major projects include increasing hatch house production and modernization at Bellefonte State Fish Hatchery, Centre County, and Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery, Cumberland County. Other projects include raceway upgrades at Oswayo State Fish Hatchery, Potter County, and a new Muskellunge rearing unit at Linesville State Fish Hatchery, Crawford County.

During 2023, the PFBC, working with the Pennsylvania Department of General Services, initiated the projects by hiring an engineering firm that specializes in hatchery projects to work on the designs for six of the hatcheries, which will be followed by construction. The remaining hatcheries will have an engineering firm on board in 2024. These projects are scheduled to be completed in 2026-2027.

Identifying and Protecting Wild Trout Streams

During 2023, PFBC biologists and Unassessed Waters Initiative partners continued to survey streams to identify, classify, and protect naturally reproducing populations of trout. Surveyed waters that support natural reproduction of wild trout qualify to be added to the listing of wild trout streams and/or listing of Class A wild trout streams. In 2023, the PFBC added 106 new waters to the list of wild trout streams and extended the length of six waters that were already listed, increasing the protection on 196 miles of streams. The PFBC added 46 new

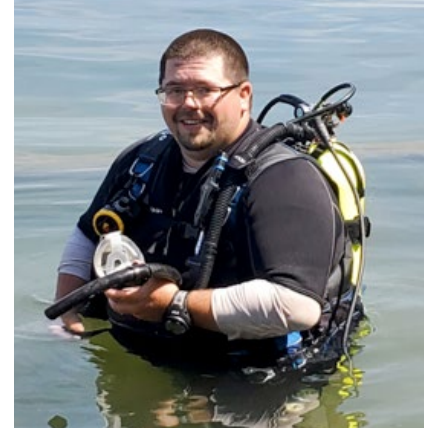
stream sections to the Class A wild trout streams list, increasing the protection on 148 miles of streams.



Wild Brook Trout

Scuba Diving Program Established

The PFBC created this new program in 2023 as a new tool for conducting accurate sampling of various underwater projects. Through scientific diving, PFBC biologists can observe which and how many species of fish and aquatic organisms are using habitat structures at the bottom of lakes, especially in deep water. Diving can also be used to monitor freshwater mussel populations associated with rehabilitation projects in places like the Ohio River, Allegheny River, and Dunkard Creek, Greene County. To become a scientific diver, staff must complete a rigorous training program to demonstrate their ability to safely complete this type of work.



The Commission created a Scuba Diving Program in 2023.

Improving Aquatic Organism Passage

The PFBC's Bureau of Fisheries continued to work with PennDOT, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), and other partners to improve aquatic organism passage under bridges through improved design and installation practices of box culverts. Since 2009, improvements to these structures have been successful in providing better aquatic connectivity by creating a more natural transition from the culvert to the stream that mimics the natural stream channel. In 2023, the PFBC continued to expand partnerships with other agencies, including PA DCNR, and colleges, and universities to identify road-stream crossings that impede aquatic organism passage and provide valuable in-field, educational opportunities for students studying careers in natural resource management.



Box culvert

Law Enforcement Awards

Each year, the PFBC's Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE) honors its Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) with a variety of awards that recognize outstanding service and excellence. In 2023, awards were presented in the following categories:

- **Top Gun Award:** WCO Kyle Robinson (Mifflin and Northern Huntingdon counties) for his BUI enforcement.
- **Gerald L. Greiner Environmental Protection Award:** WCO Erin Czech (Philadelphia) for her environmental work.
- **2022 Officer of the Year Award:** WCO Erin Czech (Philadelphia)
- **National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Boating Law Officer of the Year (PA):** WCO Kyle Robinson (Mifflin and Northern Huntingdon counties)

Water Rescue Training

The PFBC provided more than 6,800 hours of training in 2023 and certified 4,546 students through the Water Rescue Program. Numerous boating, water, and ice rescue courses were conducted in partnership with state partners including PGC, PA DCNR, and PA DEP. Since 1983, the PFBC has trained more than 84,000 students in water rescue operations and is the largest non-profit, public water and ice rescue training program in the country.

WCO Class

On June 23, 2023, 13 members of the 25th Class of WCOs graduated during a ceremony at the Capitol. During their conservation law enforcement careers, the officers will patrol streams, rivers, and lakes; assist with investigations; participate in public outreach events; and stock waterways with fish.



25th Class of WCOs

Law Enforcement Training and Recruitment

In an effort to enhance skills and offset the impact of vacancies created in the Bureau of Law Enforcement through retirement and attrition, the PFBC created a new Training

and Recruitment (T&R) section. As part of this effort, WCOs have participated in a variety of special trainings including the NASBLA Tactical Boat Operator's Course in Delaware and the NASBLA Boat Accident Investigation Course (Level 2) in Florida. In August, the PFBC hosted the NASBLA Boat Accident Investigation Course (level 1) in Harrisburg, with 18 WCOs and other marine law enforcement officers from across the country in attendance. In September and October, experienced officer training sessions were held at the H.R. Stackhouse School of Fisheries Conservation and Watercraft Safety in Centre County, where all commissioned officers received updated training in the areas of medical marijuana, transient criminals, local conservation agencies, PFBC policies and regulations, and control tactics. Planning and recruitment is currently underway for the 26th WCO Trainee Class, which is anticipated to commence in summer 2024, with training to be conducted at both Mansfield Commonwealth University and the H.R. Stackhouse School of Fisheries Conservation and Watercraft Safety.



A NASBLA instructor leads a boat accident investigation training at PFBC Headquarters, Harrisburg.

Trout In the Classroom (TIC)

This program continued to expand in 2023, providing educational experiences for students and teachers who raise Rainbow Trout from eggs to fingerling-size fish in aquariums as part of their curriculum. For the 2022-2023 school year, 400 classrooms completed 8,714 hours of TIC-related education, reaching 49,587 students—a 20% increase over the previous year. Schools in 61 counties participated in the program, representing 44% of Pennsylvania school districts. The TIC program is made possible through the partnership between the PFBC, Pennsylvania Council of TU, local TU chapters, Pennsylvania Department of Education, participating schools, and volunteers. Over 3,500 hours were donated to the project by program partners and community organizations.

Award-Winning Hospitality

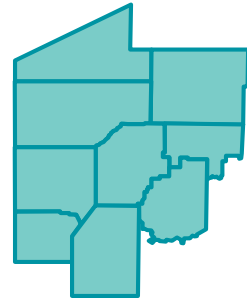
At the 107th Pennsylvania Farm Show, held January 7-14, 2023, in Harrisburg, the PFBC was honored with the Commercial Exhibitor Award for Best Hospitality. Judges with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture selected the PFBC booth based on its welcoming appearance and approachable, friendly staff.



At the 107th Pennsylvania Farm Show, the PFBC was honored with the Commercial Exhibitor Award for Best Hospitality.

FIRST DISTRICT

Commissioner Daniel J. Pastore



Commissioner Daniel J. Pastore, Fairview, Erie County, represents the First District of the PFBC. He was appointed in June 2019 and was reappointed in October 2023.

The First District includes **Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren counties.**



FIRST DISTRICT

Steelhead Spawning Improvements

Along with improving angler access to the tributaries of Lake Erie through the Erie Access Improvement Grant Program as described in the Special Section of this report (pages 4-6), the PFBC made positive changes to its steelhead spawning program. To enhance biosecurity ahead of 2023-2024 spawning operations, staff installed a temporary structure near the Trout Run nursery water at Avonia Beach Park in Fairview Township. This building, along with portable aerated tanks, enable staff



Positive changes were made to PFBC's steelhead spawning program to enhance biosecurity.

to perform all aspects of adult steelhead collection, egg and milt collection, and safe release onsite, greatly eliminating the threat of transporting diseases or pathogens to PFBC hatchery facilities. These new procedures had no impact on volunteer participation in steelhead collection, which offers an incredible educational opportunity to school students and other community groups.

Linesville State Fish Hatchery Open House

On April 8, 2023, the PFBC welcomed several thousand guests to an open house held annually at this hatchery, featuring educational and entertaining activities and exhibits. Visitors enjoyed a Walleye spawning demonstration, live reptile and amphibian displays, fish cooking demonstrations, and fly tying instruction.

Lake Erie Sportfishing Update

The Walleye fishery in Lake Erie was exceptional for the seventh consecutive year, and 2023 was the eighth consecutive year with above average Walleye angler catch rates. It also boasted the second highest numbers of fish caught per trip, 15.25, in the 20-year time series as well as the second highest harvest per trip at 8.7 fish. The average age of Walleyes harvested in 2023 was 5.85 years old with the oldest fish being 20 years old. Spawning success and juvenile survival of Walleyes in Lake Erie has been outstanding since 2015, resulting in a high-quality fishery that will provide excellent fishing for years to come.

The steelhead tributary fishery continues to perform above expectations. The PFBC partnered with the PA Steelhead Association for a new tributary angler survey, which compiled 475 interviews from 162 anglers and documented a 0.7 fish per hour catch rate, which is considered excellent for steelhead. The year 2023 marks 10 years (2013) since the PFBC increased the quality and size of stocked juvenile steelhead to improve survival while maintaining the annual agency stocking objective of one million smolts per year, resulting in one of the premier steelhead fishing destinations in the nation.

Women's Intro to Steelhead Fishing

During the first weekend in November, the PFBC partnered with the PA Steelhead Association, Fly Fishers International,

Penn's Woods West TU, Muddy Creek TU, and Cornplanter TU to implement three Women's Intro to Steelhead Fishing Programs. This two-part program builds the skill sets of participants by progressing their R3 journey to the next stage. Requirements for this program include the prerequisite of attending a previous PFBC fishing introduction class and a fishing license. During this series of classes, 37 participants attended virtual education sessions followed by hands-on fishing on Lake Erie tributaries.

Walnut Creek Marina Camera

The S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie, Inc. received an Erie Access Improvement Grant to install a web camera at this popular public marina. The camera mounted to the PFBC's administration building can provide a real time view of weather, wind, wave, and fishing conditions for anglers and boaters, allowing them to make educated decisions on the usability of the resource.

Pymatuning Habitat Improvements

The PFBC partnered with PA DCNR staff at Pymatuning State Park, Pymatuning Lake Association (PLA), and Crawford County Conservation District to stabilize 1,700 feet of erosion along three sections of shoreline. The PLA was awarded a \$109,000 grant from Bass Pro Shops United States Open and the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The PFBC guided a contracted construction crew to place stone structures to enhance fish habitat, improve water quality, and increase shoreline angler access.



Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County

Cussewago Dam Removal

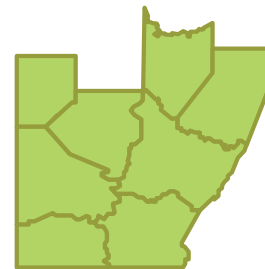
In fall 2023, this low-head dam was removed along Cussewago Creek, Crawford County. In partnerships with PA DEP, French Creek Valley Conservancy, American Rivers, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the PFBC contributed to the project to ensure minimal impact to sensitive aquatic species. To assess the effectiveness of the dam removal, fish and mussel surveys were conducted upstream and downstream of the dam to document the current status of the aquatic community. These surveys allow biologists to determine how long it takes for different fish and mussel species to recolonize portions of the watershed that were previously inaccessible. PFBC staff and volunteers also led multiple mussel salvage efforts in this stream from 2021-2023, resulting in the safe relocation of more than 3,000 mussels representing 19 species including state and federal protected species.

National Safe Boating Week

In May, the PFBC joined Venango County commissioners to host an event at Two Mile Run Reservoir (Justus Lake), Venango County, to share a safe boating checklist ahead of the busy Memorial Day weekend.

SECOND DISTRICT

Commissioner John Mahn Jr.



Commissioner John Mahn Jr., Charleroi, Washington County, represents the Second District of the PFBC. He was appointed in December 2021.

The Second District includes **Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland** counties.



SECOND DISTRICT

Pittsburgh First Catch Program

As described in the Special Section of this report (pages 4-6), the PFBC provided more than 120 fishing and kayaking programs to urban audiences in Pittsburgh.

Explore PA Outdoors

The PFBC partnered with the PGC and PA DCNR's Point State Park staff to pilot this new education program. PFBC staff and Fishing Skills Instructors from Penn's Woods West TU provided Introduction to Fishing, Introduction to Fly Fishing, and Amphibian and Reptile Encounters sessions in the Explore PA Waters track of the event.

Dunkard Creek Mussel Restoration

Staff from the PFBC's Union City Aquatic Conservation Center (ACC) led efforts to stock over 10,000 freshwater mussels in Dunkard Creek, Greene County, which is part of the long-term effort to restore aquatic life following a 2009 fish kill event. With help from over 30 PFBC staff, partners, and volunteers, the mussels were carefully tagged with individual identification markings prior to stocking. These identification tags help monitor their survival success when follow-up stream surveys occur. In 2023, the ACC produced the largest number of mussels since the freshwater mussel propagation program began in 2020. To continue to recover Dunkard Creek fauna, the ACC plans to raise new freshwater mussel species for future stocking efforts.



Freshwater mussels were stocked into Dunkard Creek, Greene County.

Mill Creek Habitat Improvement

In partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Loyalhanna Watershed Association, improvements were made to 650 feet of Mill Creek, Westmoreland County. The headwaters of Mill Creek support natural reproduction of trout, while the lower end is a stocked trout fishery. The project included the placement of 40 habitat enhancement structures to create runs, pools, and stabilize eroding stream banks. The project was funded through a PA DEP's Growing Greener Grant.

Kilbuck Access

In April, the PFBC rehabilitated the expansive paved parking lot at this popular access along the Ohio River in Allegheny County. The \$199,733 project included the removal of 4,800 square yards of deteriorated pavement, which was resurfaced with new asphalt. The resulting smooth, safe parking lot can accommodate 11 passenger vehicles and 26 vehicles with boat trailers.

Chartiers Creek Fish Surveys

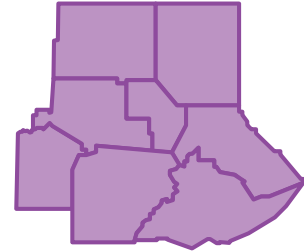
A comprehensive electrofishing survey was conducted on 12 sections of Chartiers Creek, a 49-mile stream in Allegheny and Washington counties that has been heavily impacted in the past by pollution from abandoned mine drainage, development, agriculture, and wastewater. Cooperative efforts between the PFBC, PA DEP, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Allegheny County Conservation District, Washington County Conservation District, Chartiers Creek Watershed Association, and other volunteers documented 30 fish species, which were netted, measured, and released. Gamefish documented included Bluegills, Channel Catfish, Freshwater Drums, Green Sunfish, Largemouth Bass, Rock Bass, and Smallmouth Bass. The Smallmouth Bass population in portions of Chartiers Creek is exceptional, with more than 500 bass ranging in size from 2 to 18 inches long.



Electrofishing in Chartiers Creek, Allegheny and Washington counties.

THIRD DISTRICT

Commissioner William C. Brock



Commissioner William C. Brock, St. Marys, Elk County, represents the Third District of the PFBC. He was appointed in July 2017 and was reappointed in January 2022.

The Third District includes **Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties.**

THIRD DISTRICT

Wild Trout Survey on “the Narrows”

From March to September, an angler use, opinion, and economic survey was conducted on a 5-mile section of Fishing Creek, Clinton County. This section, known as “the Narrows,” is among the most prized wild trout fisheries in the Commonwealth and managed under Catch and Release Artificial Lures Only and Trophy Trout Artificial Lures Only special regulations. Results of this survey will help guide future management of the stream as well as estimate economic value. Additionally, trout population surveys were conducted during June 2023 on this section to evaluate population size structure and to estimate wild trout abundance and biomass. Results from the surveys are expected to be available in 2024.



Wild trout survey on “the Narrows,” Clinton County.

Freshwater Mussel Restoration

The PFBC and partners were awarded a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to restore freshwater mussels to the West Branch Susquehanna River. Historically, the West Branch Susquehanna River was home to a thriving mussel community before being plagued by poor water quality from coal mining and logging. Improved water quality in portions of the watershed now supports recreational fishing for fish species including Channel Catfish, Smallmouth Bass, and Walleyes, which was unheard of as little as 40 years ago. Beginning in 2024, grant partners will focus on mussel restoration upstream of the low-head dam in Lock Haven, Clinton County, where mussels are absent. For this project, the team will collect mussels from below the dam to serve as broodstock for hatchery operations using Maryland Department of Natural Resources’s mobile mussel propagation trailer.



Eastern Lampmussels

Cooperative Nursery Grant

In January, the PFBC Board of Commissioners approved a grant of \$65,500 to the Potter County Anglers Club for the purpose of securing and covering the spring that feeds their fish raceways. Prior to the project, the club discontinued stocking the Genesee River basin due to fish health concerns related to the nursery’s unprotected water source.

Improving Fish Passage

Two culverts on tributaries to West Branch Hicks Run that were barriers to aquatic organism passage were replaced with timber deck bridges. This stream, which flows through State Game Lands 14 and Elk State Forest in Cameron and Elk counties, contains Class A wild Brook Trout and Brown Trout populations. This project connects 2.5 miles of previously isolated headwaters to habitat in lower sections of these tributaries and was completed through a PFBC grant to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with major contributions of materials and in-house construction from the PGC.



West Branch Hicks Run, Cameron and Elk counties, prior to fish passage improvements.



West Branch Hicks Run with new timber deck bridge installed.

Students Get “Back to Nature”

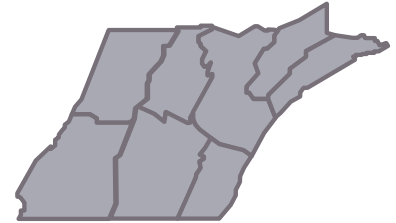
In cooperation with Bellefonte Area High School’s “Back to Nature” class and the Wildlife Leadership Academy, PFBC staff held four Introduction to Fly Fishing and Kayaking programs in 2023, reaching 177 youth.

National Hunting and Fishing Day

In September, to mark National Hunting and Fishing Day, the PFBC and Penn State Cooperative Extension hosted fishing and boating activities at Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County. Dozens of participants had the opportunity to go fishing on the lake, practice fly casting, and construct fish habitat structures. All equipment was provided, and no fishing license was required to participate.

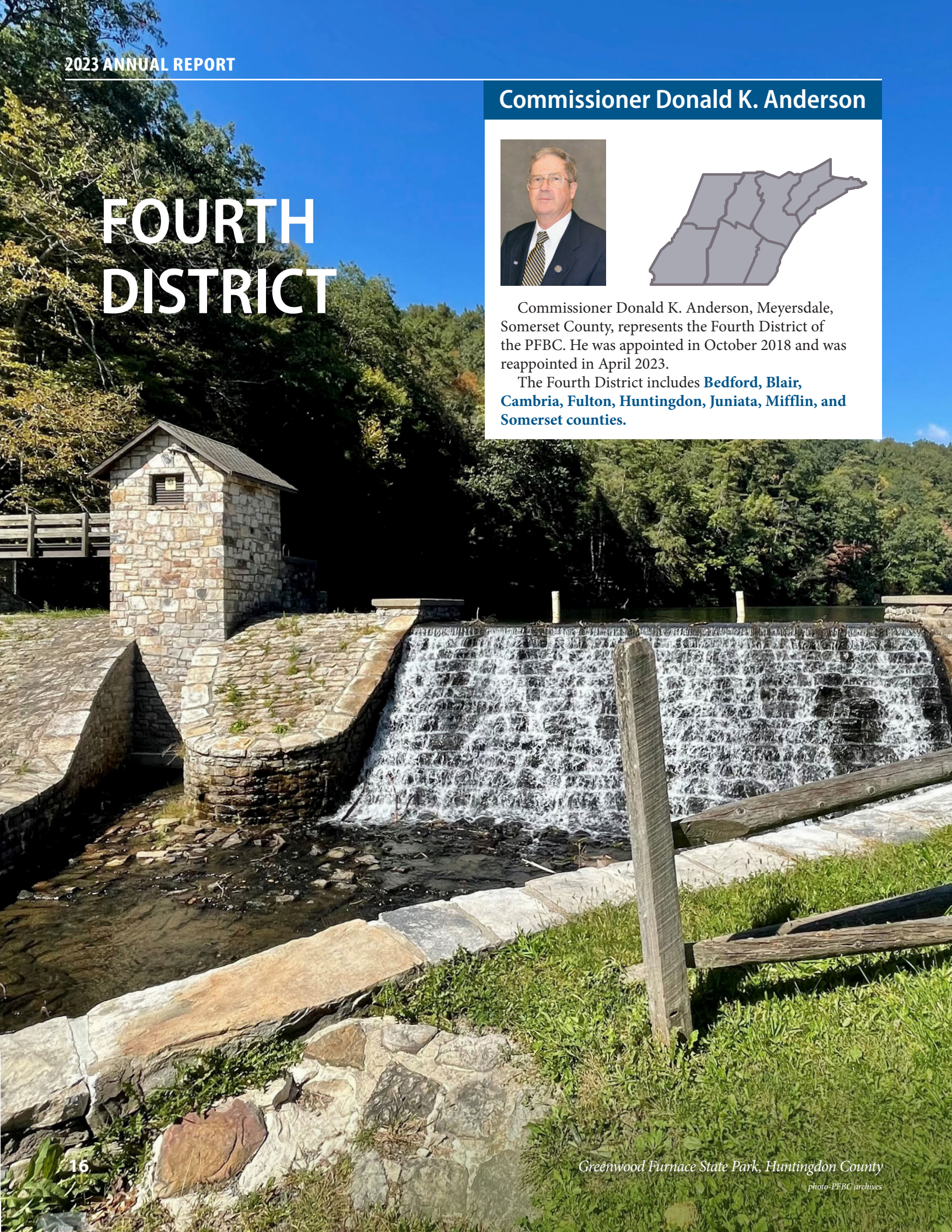
FOURTH DISTRICT

Commissioner Donald K. Anderson



Commissioner Donald K. Anderson, Meyersdale, Somerset County, represents the Fourth District of the PFBC. He was appointed in October 2018 and was reappointed in April 2023.

The Fourth District includes **Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, and Somerset counties.**



FOURTH DISTRICT

Lessons Learned at Somerset Lake

In May, the PFBC and local partners hosted hundreds of high school students from Berlin Brothersvalley, Meyersdale Area, Rockwood, Salisbury-Elk Lick, Shanksville-Stonycreek, and Turkeyfoot Valley Area school districts for two days of educational activities at Somerset Lake. Many of the students have assisted in raising Channel Catfish and constructing lake habitat structures as part of their school curriculums. In addition to stocking hundreds of catfish and deploying habitat structures into the lake, students spent time canoeing and taking walking tours of the new dam, which was completed in 2022 as part of a \$7.6 million rehabilitation project.



Students constructing habitat structures at Somerset Lake, Somerset County.

Shoreline Stabilization

The PFBC joined with the Loyalhanna Watershed Association to complete a 600-foot shoreline stabilization project at Donegal Lake, Westmoreland County. The project was funded through a \$24,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Lake Management Society.



Donegal Lake, Westmoreland County

Raystown Lake Muskellunge Survey

Biologists conducted an early spring trap net survey at Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, to assess annual stockings of purebred Muskellunge and tiger muskellunge. Six adult muskies, consisting of four Muskellunge and two tiger muskellunge, were collected to assess age and implant Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags to track mortality and growth rates. Muskies collected ranged from 29 to 47 inches with the largest weighing 37 pounds. Results of this survey qualifies Raystown Lake for continued management in the stocking program as outlined in the PFBC's Muskellunge Management Plan.



Muskellunge

Boating Officer of the Year

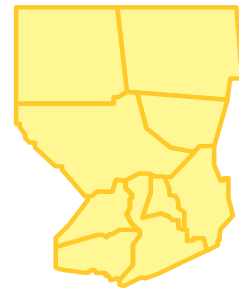
WCO Kyle Robinson (Mifflin and Northern Huntingdon) was recognized as Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for Pennsylvania, as awarded by NASBLA. Robinson, whose district includes the Juniata River and Raystown Lake, logged 704 hours of recreational boating law enforcement, initiated 787 vessel boardings resulting in 103 criminal summary citations and 505 warnings, and arrested 8 impaired operators for BUI during Operation Dry Water enhanced BUI enforcement operations.

Education Programs

- Introduction to Kayaking programs were held at Somerset Lake and Quemahoning Reservoir, both in Somerset County. Participants learned about legal requirements, proper life jacket wear, water hazards, and basic paddling skills.
- PFBC staff provided fishing education to participants at a Family Field Day event at Laurel Hill State Park, Somerset County, held in partnership with Mountain Watershed Association and Laurel Hill State Park.
- PFBC partnered with Prince Gallitzin State Park to host an Introduction to Fishing Program for Head Start students and their families at Lake Rowena, Cambria County.

FIFTH DISTRICT

Commissioner Eric C. Hussar



Commissioner Eric C. Hussar, Lewisburg, Union County, represents the Fifth District of the PFBC. He was appointed in October 2014 and was reappointed in June 2019 and October 2023.

The Fifth District includes **Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, and Union counties.**

FIFTH DISTRICT

Winfield Access Dedication

In May, the PFBC celebrated National Safe Boating Week with a ceremonial ribbon cutting at the newly acquired Winfield Access along the West Branch Susquehanna River, Union County. This new boating access was built in partnership with PennDOT as a way to offset environmental and recreational impacts to the river during construction of the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway. The location provides convenient public access to the West Branch Susquehanna River, a designated Pennsylvania Water Trail, for powered and unpowered boats and includes a large parking lot for vehicles and boat trailers.

Turtle Creek Habitat Project

Together with the Union County Conservation District, East Buffalo Township, and Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, the PFBC constructed instream habitat improvement structures on Turtle Creek, Union County. Turtle Creek is on the PA DEP's list of sediment-impaired streams, however, following a decade of habitat improvements, water quality monitoring reports are showing significant improvements. Projects completed in 2023 included installing wood and stone structures that stabilized 300 feet of eroded streambank and restored natural stream flow. In addition, the site is being transformed into a natural park that includes removal of invasive species, installing walking trails, and buffer plantings of trees and native meadows species. Funding for the \$46,993 project was provided by PA DEP's Growing Greener Grant.



Turtle Creek, Union County

Bodines Paddlecraft Launch

Using funds from the PFBC's Boating Facility Grant Program, Lewis Township, Lycoming County, added a new canoe and kayak access along Lycoming Creek. The facility consists of a GeoCell™ canoe and kayak ramp, gravel parking area and access road, landscaping, and signage.

Trout Stocking on Fishing Creek

In February, the PFBC held a pre-season trout stocking along Fishing Creek, Columbia County. PFBC staff was assisted by community volunteers to help spread the trout over several miles of stream in advance of spring trout season.



Volunteers stock trout on Fishing Creek, Columbia County.

Susquehanna River Adult Smallmouth Bass Surveys

In September, PFBC biologists conducted adult Smallmouth Bass surveys within the Middle Susquehanna River (Sunbury to York Haven). These surveys are part of annual monitoring to document current population levels, fish size structure, age-and-growth statistics, and other population parameters to manage the fishery. Electrofishing catch rates of adult (age 1 and older) and large (15 inches and longer) Smallmouth Bass were approximately double the long-term historic catch rates for this reach. The presence

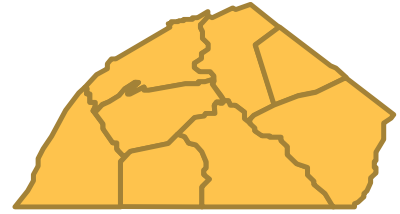
of strong, back-to-back year classes in 2021 and 2022 suggests anglers can anticipate high abundance of younger fish recruiting into the catchable portion of the population in coming years.



Smallmouth Bass

SIXTH DISTRICT

Commissioner Robert B.J. Small



Commissioner Robert B.J. Small, Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, represents the Sixth District of the PFBC. He was appointed in July 2017 and was reappointed in January 2022.

The Sixth District includes **Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties.**

SIXTH DISTRICT

National Safe Boating Week Kickoff

In May, the PFBC held the statewide kickoff to National Safe Boating Week at the Fort Hunter Access, located along the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg. This event, held just ahead of Memorial Day weekend, is used to encourage boaters to follow a basic boating safety checklist, including always wearing a life jacket.



A media appearance during National Safe Boating Week.

Keystone Select Trout Stocking

In March, before the opening day of trout season, anglers lined up to enjoy early fishing opportunities along the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters section of Wiconisco Creek near Millersburg, Dauphin County. Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters are stocked with above average-sized trout and managed under Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only Special Regulations and Miscellaneous Special Regulations.



Volunteers stock the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters section of Wiconisco Creek, Dauphin County.

Northern Snakehead Monitoring

During summer 2023, PFBC biologists and partners continued surveillance efforts for invasive Northern Snakehead in the lower Susquehanna River. Biologists captured multiple size classes of snakeheads in the Conowingo Pool, including the first documentation of juvenile fish, suggesting a growing population. In response, the PFBC issued a news release and posted signs to remind anglers of

the presence of this invasive species in the lower river and to encourage harvest and reporting captures to the agency.



Northern Snakehead

Fulling Mill Road Access, Dauphin County

In June, the PFBC celebrated the opening of a newly rehabilitated public boat launch along the Swatara Creek in Lower Swatara Township, Dauphin County. Funded partially through the Boating Facility Grant Program, the \$175,000 project provides a safe and convenient access point for unpowered boats and a new gravel parking lot for approximately 20 vehicles. This facility improves access to the Swatara Creek Water Trail, which extends approximately 42 miles from Jonestown, Lebanon County, to the PFBC's Middletown Access, Dauphin County.

Wild Trout Stream Surveys

Electrofishing surveys were conducted on several wild Brown Trout streams including the famed Letort Spring Run, Cumberland County, and Codorus Creek Section 04, York County. Sampling from Letort Spring Run yielded a catch of 654 Brown Trout ranging from 2 to 24 inches long, including 25 trout exceeding 20 inches long. The population continued to exceed the Class A minimum biomass standard.

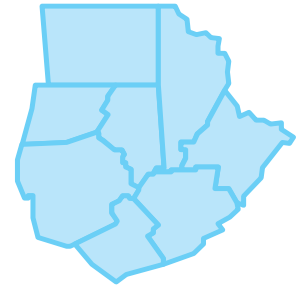
The survey of a previously sampled location on Codorus Creek Section 04 yielded a total of 964 wild Brown Trout ranging from 3 to 13 inches long, with a majority (98%) of fish captured measuring less than 12 inches. The estimated Brown Trout biomass continued to exceed the PFBC's Class A biomass guideline. In addition to the historical site, sampling was conducted at three new sites within the section. A total of 803 Brown Trout ranging from 3 to 17 inches long were captured across three sites. Size structure observed at these sites was similar to that observed at the historical site, although a few larger fish (14 to 17 inches) were encountered. The 2023 survey marks the first year of a long-term evaluation to determine the potential effects of the Artificial Lures Only Trout Slot Limit Special Regulation, which was implemented January 1, 2023.

Fishing Day at Italian Lake

The PFBC teamed up with the City of Harrisburg and the Civic Club of Harrisburg to offer this free day of fishing on Italian Lake, which is normally closed to fishing. Despite inclement weather, over 200 participants came out to fish for species including Bluegills and Bullhead Catfish. This urban fishing event featured skills instruction for newcomers at an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible location. No fishing license was required, and fishing gear and bait was provided to anglers. The PFBC provided demonstrations on how to clean and cook fish caught by participants at a fish fry sample station.

SEVENTH DISTRICT

Commissioner William J. Gibney



Commissioner William J. Gibney, Honesdale, Wayne County, represents the Seventh District of the PFBC. He was appointed in June 2019 and was reappointed in October 2023.

The Seventh District includes **Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.**

SEVENTH DISTRICT

Lackawaxen River Access Expansion

In October, the PFBC, PA DCNR, Wayne County Commissioners, Lackawaxen River Trail, and community partners celebrated the opening of the new White Mills River Access Park in Texas Township. The park, which features a concrete boat launch, parking lot with ADA parking spaces, walkway, and restroom, provides the first handicap accessible public access to the Lackawaxen River, Wayne County. Funding for the White Mills River Access Park project was provided to Wayne County through the PFBC's Boating Facility Grant Program (\$120,290) in partnership with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, PA DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program (\$158,000), and local fundraising (\$37,000). In addition, PFBC and PA DCNR funding will contribute to two other new access areas being developed along the Lackawaxen River in Honesdale and Indian Orchard. A fourth river access site is already open in Hawley.

River Access Improvements

Boaters and anglers who use the Union Access along the North Branch Susquehanna River, Luzerne County, are enjoying a rehabilitated parking area. The \$182,922 project included the removal of deteriorated asphalt and complete repaving to accommodate up to 16 passenger vehicles and 21 vehicles with trailers.

Education Programs

PFBC staff provided many educational programs throughout District 7 in 2023 including hosting more than 90 students from Lake Lehman School District to explore their local waterways during a trout themed field day. Students rotated through stations covering stream ecology, aquatic macroinvertebrates, fish identification, hands-on trout fishing skills, and Trout In the Classroom fingerling releases.

Trout Stocking at Frances Slocum Lake

In February, volunteers who assisted with a preseason trout stocking at Frances Slocum State Park had to watch their step on the snow-covered shoreline. Annually, the PFBC stocks more than 700,000 trout in approximately 70 state parks, including approximately 200,000 trout in state park lakes.



Trout stocking at Frances Slocum State Park, Luzerne County.

Lackawanna Lake Panfish Survey

In May, biologists surveyed Lackawanna Lake, Lackawanna County, to assess panfish populations. More than 840 Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds captured ranged from 2 to 9 inches long with 24% percent of these species exceeding 8 inches long. A total of 175 Black Crappie and White Crappies were collected and ranged from 9 to 15 inches long, with 36% percent of these species measuring at least 10 inches long.

Removal of Oakland Dam

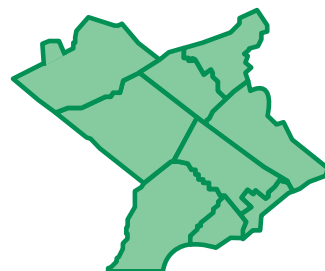
During summer 2023, the PFBC worked with multiple partners, including American Rivers, to facilitate the removal of the Oakland Dam on the North Branch Susquehanna River, Susquehanna County. The largest dam removal in Pennsylvania will reconnect more than 250 miles of aquatic habitat and provide safer passage for boaters.



The removal of Oakland Dam on the North Branch Susquehanna River, Susquehanna County.

EIGHTH DISTRICT

Commissioner Richard S. Kauffman



Commissioner Richard S. Kauffman, Leesport, Berks County, represents the Eighth District for the PFBC. He was appointed in July 2017 and was reappointed in June 2019 and October 2023.

The Eighth District includes **Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill** counties.



Delaware River, Philadelphia County

photo-PFBC archives

EIGHTH DISTRICT

Building a Better Blue Marsh Lake

In July, PFBC's Lake Habitat Section, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Berks County Conservation District, and community volunteers partnered to complete the final phase of a multi-year project to improve fish habitat, water quality, and fishing opportunities from both boat and shore. The project included adding more than 320 wooden short vertical plank and porcupine crib structures to various sections of the lake bottom. As described in the Special Section of this report (Pages 4-6), several large rock deflectors were added to stabilize more than 1,500 linear feet of shoreline at four different sites.



Blue Marsh Lake, Berks County

Blue Marsh Black Bass Survey

In 2023, while conducting Walleye population surveys, PFBC biologists also netted Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass when encountered. In 2023, a total of 253 Largemouth Bass and 89 Smallmouth Bass were captured. Largemouth Bass measured 5 to 21 inches long and weighed up to 4.5 pounds, while Smallmouth Bass ranged from 4 to 20 inches long and weighed up to 3.6 pounds. Catch rates for both species exceeded the Commission's Big Bass Program Special Regulations for all categories, except total catch of Smallmouth Bass.

Fishing Fridays

In partnership with PA DCNR, a Fishing Friday series was held at Tyler State Park, Bucks County, to provide free, hands-on fishing opportunities to parkgoers. Participants borrowed fishing equipment, learned fishing techniques, and spent a great summer day on the water.

Philly Fun Fishing Fest

PFBC partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, and Schuylkill Banks organization to host the Philly Fun Fishing Fest. This annual event reaches hundreds of participants in Philadelphia, highlighting the recreational fishing opportunities available in the city. No fishing licenses are required, and PFBC staff provide instruction and equipment for participants in the event.

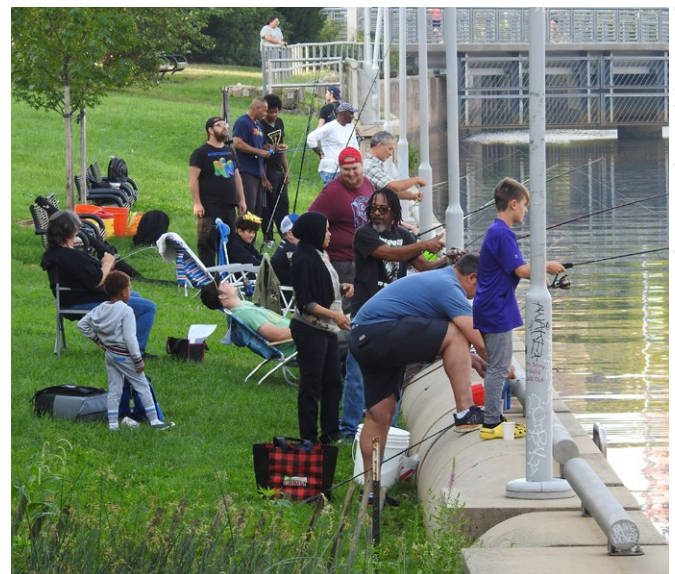


photo courtesy of Philadelphia Water Department

Philly Fun Fishing Fest, Philadelphia County

American Shad in the Delaware River

American Shad support a highly desirable fishery in the Delaware River during their spring spawning run. This fishery is collaboratively managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Delaware River Basin Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative (Co-op), which PFBC is a member of both entities. A suite of management benchmarks, traditionally focused on relative abundance and commercial exploitation, has been identified by Co-op members and outlined within the 2022 American Shad Sustainable Fishery Management Plan. Recent findings in the ASMFC 2021 stock assessment, however, demonstrated total mortality is unsustainable within the Delaware River Basin. In response, Co-op members implemented restrictions to reduce harvest by 33% for both commercial and recreational fisheries beginning in the 2023 season. Assessment of the American Shad population for the 2023 season revealed a sustainable adult spawning run, but juvenile production, while near the time-series median, was just below the management threshold value. Co-op members will reconvene to discuss appropriate next steps for addressing American Shad management.

BOATING- AT-LARGE

Boating-At-Large Commissioners

Two members of the Commission serve at-large and are experienced in boating and water safety education.



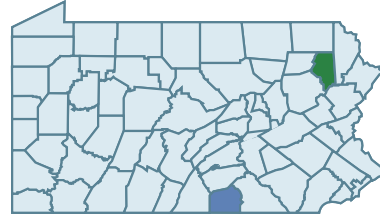
Charles J. Charlesworth

Commissioner Charles J. Charlesworth, Clarks Summit, Lackawanna County, was appointed as an at-large boating commissioner in June 2019 and was reappointed in October 2023.



Richard Lewis

Commissioner Richard Lewis, Gettysburg, Adams County, was appointed as an at-large boating commissioner in July 2017 and was reappointed in January 2022.



Boating Advisory Board

The Boating Advisory Board (BAB) advises the Commission regarding matters relating to boating including recommendations with respect to proposed boating rules and regulations. The BAB's advice assists the Commission with establishing a boating program that ensures the safe and enjoyable operation of boats.

BAB Members:

- Scott Ballantyne, *Chairperson*
Fleetwood
- Rocco Ali, *Vice Chairperson*
North Apollo
- Steven Ketterer
Harrisburg
- Loren Lustig
Biglerville
- Elizabeth Winand
Wrightsville

Operation Dry Water Kickoff

In July, the PFBC, in partnership with the NASBLA, hosted the nationwide kickoff event for Operation Dry Water at historic Point State Park in Pittsburgh. The event featured additional partners including the United States Coast Guard, Pennsylvania State Police, and PA DCNR. Operation Dry Water events were also held in Delaware, Huntingdon, and Lycoming counties.



Operation Dry Water, Point State Park, Allegheny County

National Safe Boating Week

From May 20-26, 2023, the PFBC joined the National Safe Boating Council and other partners to celebrate National Safe Boating Week. A variety of events included a statewide kickoff with legislators at Fort Hunter Access, Dauphin County; a bilingual press event in Philadelphia; media events in Union and Venango counties; in-person boating safety courses; paddling instructional programs; social media posts; and e-newsletter communications. The PFBC produced videos for 28 state legislators to promote a safe boating safety checklist for constituents in their districts.



A National Safe Boating Week event in Winfield, Union County.

Cold Weather Life Jacket Wear

The PFBC continued to spread the word about this important safety message for boaters during the late fall, winter, and early spring months. From November 1 to April 30, everyone on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe, kayak, or paddleboard is required to wear a life jacket. In 2023, the public awareness campaign surrounding this message was bigger than ever, featuring social media posts, e-mail blasts, media appearances by PFBC staff, and video PSAs produced for 19 state legislators to share with their constituents.

Gear Up for Adventure!

REMEMBER TO WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET DURING COLD WATER BOATING.

Boaters are required to wear a life jacket on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe, kayak, or paddleboard from November 1 to April 30.



Boating Facility Grant Program

In 2023, the PFBC awarded grants that will support 19 projects involving the planning, acquisition, development, expansion, and rehabilitation of public boating facilities located on the waters of the Commonwealth. Throughout the year, eight projects that were awarded in previous grant rounds were completed.

In September, the PFBC announced that it was the recipient of a \$1,000,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation under the auspices of the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act. Because of this additional funding, special consideration will be given to prospective boating facility projects within the Delaware River Watershed in 2024. Funds for the Boating Facility Grant Program are derived primarily from boat registration fees, state motorboat fuels tax, and restricted revenue accounts. In certain instances, federal funding is also used.

NASBLA Training

From August 7-11, 2023, the PFBC and NASBLA hosted law enforcement professionals from across the country in Harrisburg for a Boat Accident Investigation Course (level 1) training. More than 36 officers from state conservation law enforcement agencies and the United States Coast Guard from Pennsylvania, Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia participated. Training focused on investigative techniques related to boating incidents including collisions, fires, explosions, carbon monoxide exposure, and electric shock drowning.

Statewide Statistics

Non-game Permits
Species Impact/PNDI Reviews – 2,572
Scientific Collector Permits/Amendments – 426
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Permits – 64
Biological Opinions/T&E Take Permits – 9
Non-game Special Permits – 40
Organized Reptile and Amphibian Hunt Permits – 6
Venomous Snake Permits – 2,143
Commercial Snapping Turtle Permits – 20

Bureau of Law Enforcement
Citations – 2,406
Crimes Codes – 66
Warnings for Violations – 19,154
Total Boats Boarded – 19,178
Boating Safety Education Certificates Issued – 17,441
Special Activities – 2,408
Water Rescue Certificates – 4,546
Pollutions Investigated – 138
Boating Under the Influence – 39
Lake Erie Commercial Permits – 9

Boating Accidents
In 2023, there were 7 recreational boating accidents that resulted in 8 fatalities. Only 1 of the 8 victims were wearing life jackets at the time of the accidents. Alcohol or drugs were believed to have been a factor in 3 of the fatal accidents.

Program Type	Count	Participants
Trout In the Classroom	383	49,587
Aquatic Resource Education Programs	60	5,165
Paddling and Boating Programs	14	301
Instructor Training Courses	21	273
Shows and Events	28	35,020 (*Direct Contacts)
Sport Fishing	182	6,153
Total	688	96,499

*Direct Contacts are interactions with the public at the agency show and expo booth. This typically involves providing publications and answering questions.



2023 Fishing License Types	
December 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023	Licenses Issued
1-Day Resident	3,921
Resident	619,235
3-Year Resident	13,143
5-Year Resident	4,625
10-Year Resident	870
Senior Resident	30,208
3-Year Senior Resident	1,592
5-Year Senior Resident	290
Senior Lifetime	16,029
Total Resident Fishing Licenses	689,913
1-Day Tourist	5,225
3-Day Tourist	23,643
7-Day Tourist	7,880
Non-Resident	52,468
Non-Resident PA Student	1,223
3-Year Non-Resident	547
5-Year Non-Resident	106
10-year Non-Resident	17
Total Tourist and Non-Resident Fishing Licenses	91,109
POW Resident Annual	0
POW Resident Lifetime	0
Reduced Disabled Veteran	594
PA Resident National Guard/Reserve	122
Voluntary Youth	8,368
Total Other Fishing Licenses	9,084
Total Licenses	790,106
2023 Fishing Permit Types	
December 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023	Permits Sold
Trout Permit	446,291
3-Year Trout Permit	12,596
5-Year Trout Permit	5,035
10-Year Trout Permit	1,191
Total Trout Permits	465,113
Lake Erie Permit	23,003
3-Year Lake Erie Permit	232
5-Year Lake Erie Permit	63
10-Year Lake Erie Permit	13
Total Lake Erie Permits	23,311
Combination Lake Erie and Trout Permit	74,771
3-Year Combination Lake Erie and Trout Permit	2,254
5-Year Combination Lake Erie and Trout Permit	964
10-Year Combination Lake Erie and Trout Permit	233
Total Combination Lake Erie and Trout Permit	78,222
Total Permits	566,646

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Report

(unaudited)

EXPENDITURES

Fish Fund

Personnel	\$29,339,102
Operating	\$13,278,922
Fixed Assets	\$1,480,311
Grants	\$1,213,191
Fish Fund Total	\$45,311,526

Boat Fund

Personnel	\$14,262,703
Operating	\$5,122,088
Fixed Assets	\$3,319,948
Grants	\$414,341
Boat Fund Total	\$23,119,080

Fish Fund and Boat Fund Total

Personnel	\$43,601,805
Operating	\$18,401,010
Fixed Assets	\$4,800,259
Grants	\$1,627,532
Fish Fund and Boat Fund Total	\$68,430,606

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Report

(unaudited)

REVENUE

Fish Fund

Licenses and Fees	\$29,603,458
Fines and Penalties	\$215,063
Miscellaneous	\$2,976,381
Federal and State Grants	\$11,054,106
Fish Fund Total	\$43,849,008

Boat Fund

Licenses and Fees	\$9,392,930
Fines and Penalties	\$156,889
Miscellaneous	\$9,435,379
Federal and State Grants	\$4,398,751
Boat Fund Total	\$23,383,949

Fish Fund and Boat Fund Total

Licenses and Fees	\$38,996,388
Fines and Penalties	\$371,952
Miscellaneous	\$12,411,760
Federal and State Grants	\$15,452,857
Fish Fund and Boat Fund Total	\$67,232,957

2023 Cooperative Nursery 50 Year Award Certificates

- Arnot Sportsman's Club
- Izaak Walton League of America York Chapter #67
- Salisbury-Elk Lick Hunting Club

Trout Stocked by PFBC

Trout Species	Lifestage	Amount
Brook Trout	Adult	88,425
	Fingerling	
Brown Trout	Adult	1,226,995
	Fingerling	240,000
Rainbow Trout	Adult	1,666,583
	Fingerling	304,400
Golden Rainbow Trout	Adult	14,525
Steelhead	Yearling	951,525
Total Trout Stocked by PFBC		4,492,453

Trout Distributed to Cooperative Nurseries

Trout Species	Lifestage	Amount
Brook Trout	Fingerling to Coops.	99,875
Brown Trout	Fingerling to Coops.	404,150
Rainbow Trout	Fingerling to Coops.	640,022
Golden Rainbow Trout	Fingerling to Coops.	11,029
Total Trout Distributed to Coops.		1,155,076

Total Trout Species (Stocked and Distributed) 5,647,529

Warmwater/Coolwater Fish Production and Stocking

Species	Lifestage	Amount
American Shad	Fry	1,078,275
Black Crappie	Fingerling	15,345
Blue Catfish	Fingerling	80,000
Bluegill	Fingerling	32,325
Brown Trout - Erie	Adult	1,000
Brown Trout - Erie	Yearling	63,752
Channel Catfish	Fingerling	148,450
Channel Catfish	Yearling	50,794
Fathead Minnow	Adult	183,000
Golden Shiner	Fingerling	21,282
Lake Trout	Fingerling	3,000
Lake Trout	Yearling	53,000
Largemouth Bass	Adv. Fingerling	3,600
Largemouth Bass	Fingerling	31,754
Muskellunge	Fingerling	6,000
Muskellunge	Yearling	42,132
Northern Pike	Fingerling	1,100
Rainbow Trout Steelhead	Yearling	951,525
Striped Bass	Phase 1 Fingerling	243,176
hybrid Striped Bass	Fingerling	36,000
Tiger Muskellunge	Yearling	5,429
Walleye	Fry	12,000,000
Walleye	Phase 1 Fingerling	1,207,875
White Crappie	Adult	10
Yellow Perch	Fingerling	78,950
Grand Total of all Species		16,337,774

Website Statistics

Top 10 Pages by Page View

1. Buy A Fishing License – 690,721
2. Homepage – 478,222
3. Register/Title A Boat – 118,169
4. Register/Title Unpowered Boats – 146,112
5. Stocking – 123,667
6. Fishing Regulations – 112,563
7. Trout Season Overview – 101,264
8. Launch Permit vs. Register – 67,275
9. Where to Fish – 60,983
10. Mentored Youth Fishing Program – 36,400

Total Sessions

2,185,627

Total Users

1,543,353

Web Page Visits by State

1. Pennsylvania – 772,826
2. New York – 153,753
3. Virginia – 135,392
4. Ohio – 77,917
5. Georgia – 58,588
6. Florida – 50,457
7. Michigan – 50,367
8. North Carolina – 48,119
9. Indiana – 39,405
10. Massachusetts – 19,355

Social Media 2023

(1/1/23 to 12/31/23)

Facebook

Followers	123,370
Posts	486
Impressions	4,753,120
Engagements	253,800
Engagement Rate	2.1%

Twitter

Followers	13,449
Posts	353
Impressions	501,761
Engagements	4,192
Engagement Rate	0.037%

Instagram

Followers	23,698
Posts	412
Impressions	2,281,564
Engagements	125,106
Engagement Rate	5.28%

YouTube

Followers	4,430
Posts	35
Impressions	1,500,000
Engagements	20,986
Engagement Rate	4.74%

LinkedIn

Followers	971
Posts	101
Impressions	53,109
Engagements	4,123
Engagement Rate	4.25%

For More Information:

Headquarters

1601 Elmerton Avenue
P.O. Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000
Phone: 717-705-7800
Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Boating Safety Education Courses

Phone: 888-723-4741

Centre Region Office

595 East Rolling Ridge Drive
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Lobby Phone: 814-359-5124
Fisheries Admin. Phone:
814-359-5110
Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Fishing Licenses:

Phone: 877-707-4085

Boat Registration/Titling:

Phone: 866-262-8734

Publications:

Phone: 717-705-7835



fishandboat.com/socialmedia

Region Offices: Law Enforcement/Education

Contact **Law Enforcement** for information about regulations and fishing and boating opportunities. Contact **Outreach and Education** for information about fishing and boating programs and boating safety education.

Northwest Region

11528 State Highway 98, Meadville, PA 16335
Law Enforcement: 814-337-0444
Outreach and Education: 814-336-2426
Fax 814-337-0579 Fax 814-337-0579

Counties: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren

Southwest Region

236 Lake Road, Somerset, PA 15501
Law Enforcement: 814-445-8974
Outreach and Education: 814-443-9841
Fax 814-445-3497 Fax 814-445-3497

Counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland

Northcentral Region

595 East Rolling Ridge Drive
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Law Enforcement: 814-359-5250
Outreach and Education: 814-359-5127
Fax 814-359-5254 Fax 814-359-5153

Counties: Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, Union

Office hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you see anything suspected to be a pollution, disturbance, or poaching on any waterway, regardless of how seemingly insignificant, report it immediately by calling the local PFBC Region Law Enforcement office listed above during business hours or call the PFBC toll-free hotline: 855-FISH-KIL to leave a message. A pollution or disturbance may also be reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at 1-800-541-2050 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Southcentral Region

1704 Pine Road, Newville, PA 17241
Law Enforcement: 717-486-7087
Outreach and Education: 717-705-7919
Fax 717-486-8227 Fax 717-705-7831

Counties: Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, York

Northeast Region

5566 Main Road, Sweet Valley, PA 18656
Law Enforcement: 570-477-5717
Outreach and Education: 570-477-2206
Fax 570-477-3221

Counties: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming

Southeast Region

P.O. Box 9, Elm, PA 17521
Law Enforcement: 717-626-0228
Outreach and Education: 215-968-3631
Fax 717-626-0486

Counties: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill

State Fish Hatcheries

•Bellefonte

1115 Spring Creek Road
Bellefonte, PA 16823
814-355-3371

•Corry

13365 Route 6
Corry, PA 16407
814-664-2122

•Fairview

2000 Lohrer Road
P.O. Box 531
Fairview, PA 16415
814-474-1514

•Benner Spring

1735 Shiloh Road
State College, PA 16801
814-355-4837

•Huntsdale*

195 Lebo Road
Carlisle, PA 17013
717-486-3419

•Linesville*

13300 Hartstown Road
Linesville, PA 16424
814-683-4451

•Oswayo

96 State Route 244 East
Coudersport, PA 16915
814-698-2102

•Pleasant Gap

450 Robinson Lane
Bellefonte, PA 16823
814-359-5132

•Pleasant Mount

229 Great Bend Turnpike
Pleasant Mount, PA 18453
570-448-2101

•Reynoldsdale*

162 Fish Hatchery Road
New Paris, PA 15554
814-839-2211

•Tionesta

172 Fish Hatchery Lane
Tionesta, PA 16353
814-755-3524

•Tylersville

43 Hatchery Lane
Loganton, PA 17747
570-725-3965

*Includes visitor center. Visitor centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily. Groups should make advance arrangements.

FishandBoat.com