



## Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Strategic Plan

July 2010 -- June 2015

Adopted July 13, 2010

Amended January 31, 2012

### **Mission**

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's mission is ***to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.*** The mission reflects our statutory responsibilities in section 321 of the Fish and Boat Code, 30 Pa. C.S. §321, relating to:

- The encouragement, promotion and development of fishery interests.
- The protection, propagation and distribution of fish.
- The management of boating and the operation of boats.
- The encouragement, promotion and development of recreational boating.

### **Vision**

By 2015, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will continue to expand its knowledge and expertise, protect and improve the quality of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources, expand and enhance fishing and safe boating opportunities, and improve recruitment and retention of individuals, families, and children as anglers, boaters, and stewards of our resource.

### **Values**

The Commission's values are our guiding principles. These statements outline the behaviors that are expected of all employees, Commissioners, Boating Advisory Board members, and our volunteers. Evident in our daily decision making, our values impact every aspect of our organization.

- Be stewards of our aquatic resources.

- Provide high quality public service.
- Ensure the safety of our staff, anglers and boaters.
- Strive for excellence.
- Measure and deliver results.
- Demonstrate teamwork.
- Communicate openly and effectively.
- Demonstrate integrity.
- Be truthful, courteous, tolerant, fair and ethical.
- Treat others with respect.
- Empower and develop employees.
- Embrace positive change.

### **The Planning Process**

The Commission began the effort to update our strategic plan in the fall of 2008 with informational meetings and the collection of input from staff and stakeholders. Commissioners provided high-level guidance, input and validation throughout the process and staff from throughout the agency refined the identified issues, strategies and goals. Staff completed a budgetary and personnel analysis of each goal statement to align our strategic plan with our budgeting processes and the state fiscal year. This strategic plan is for the time period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2015.

### **Strategic Planning Steering Team**

Special thanks go to this cross-section of Commission staff who assisted with the planning process by contributing much thought and deliberation.

Brian Barner	Jackie Kramer	Andy Shiels
Mike Bialousz	Dan Martin	John Sinclair
Scott Brallier	Brian Niewinski	Jim Smith
Corey Britcher	Craig Pugh	Miranda Smith
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### **Director's Message**

Plan: A Four-Letter Word!

Our agency has just completed a lengthy strategic planning process which has resulted in a plan. I have been previously involved in five or six planning processes for the PFBC or other groups of which I'm associated and they all seem to be written to either justify what we already do or written in such a way to support a wide range of activities so that one could never fail. They ended up on a

shelf or in a file drawer only to be referred to when someone asked if we had a plan. When I interviewed for the Director position I told our Board of Commissioners that my view was the Board would set the destination for the agency and I, as the Director with the help of the staff, would chart the course and direction for how we would get there. I recognized that there would be obstacles in the way and we would have to change our route from time to time to navigate around the obstacles but I was, and still am, confident that we can maneuver the PFBC ship to get to the Board's desired destination.

There are some of us who prefer to be dropped into the middle of a wilderness without a map or compass and enjoy the challenge of finding our way home by ourselves. I must admit that I am one of those risk takers which is the reason for the title of this message; however, the safer approach is what we do when we plan a family vacation. We usually plan the trip to insure that we know which are the safest roads to travel, where the fuel and pit stops are along the way, how long the trip will take and how much time we can spend relaxing at our vacation destination. That is exactly how I see our strategic plan working. Strategic means tactical, deliberate and calculated which is why I asked staff and the Board to place our draft plan on hold for three months so that I could get comfortable with it and understand it. Given that we are developing a plan for the next five years, I want to be sure that it includes all of the necessary elements to challenge us so that we will improve our programs to better serve the public and our aquatic resources. After all, our performance over the next five years will be judged by the success of the plan. I want to be sure that it is right.

The plan we have developed uses our mission as our foundation which is simply stated as "Resource First". It has a vision that includes improving our fishing, boating, and conservation programs. It discusses our core values such as being stewards of our Commonwealth's aquatic resources and working together as a team to effect positive changes as public servants. The majority of the plan involves the issues that we have identified and the strategies and goals that we will be working on over the next five years. We have developed measurable objectives and a tracking system to ensure accountability. I invite you to check out our plan and let me know what you think by submitting your comments through "The Fishing Hole" on the Commission's website ([www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)).

I'd like to thank Laurel Anders, Tim Schaeffer and Commissioner Worobec for championing this effort and the entire agency Strategic Planning Steering Team and Board of Commissioners for their input. I think we got it right and I am looking forward to the future.

See you on the water!

Your Director,

><{John}{°}>

John A. Arway  
Executive Director

## **Strategic Plan**

### **Issue 1: Escalating costs of traditional services and increasing demands for activities require the development of alternative funding sources and methods.**

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission relies almost entirely on fishing license sales, boat registrations, and federal funding tied to fishing and boating to support our full range of activities. The Commission is being asked to play ever-increasing roles to protect game and non-game species that benefit all Pennsylvanians. At the same time, the costs of delivering traditional services continue to rise while the national trend of declining numbers of license buyers and boat registrants plays out in Pennsylvania.

Quite simply, we are being asked to do more with less, and we do not currently have the ability to add new sources of revenue. Compounding the challenge, if history holds true to form, the next relatively large increase in the cost of a fishing license will likely speed up the pace at which we lose our traditional license buying customers.

Just like a family or business diversifies its investment portfolio to achieve financial stability and further its goals, we must diversify our funding streams if we are going to meet the growing expectations being placed on the Commission as we implement our mission on behalf of all Pennsylvanians, visiting anglers and boaters, and our fragile natural resources.

### **Strategy 1: Develop alternative funding sources and methods to offset escalating costs of traditional services and better accommodate increasing demands for activities.**

### **Goal 1: Actively pursue innovative, as well as traditional, funding sources, compensation for services provided to all Pennsylvanians, and funding for the completion of priority infrastructure projects.**

- A. Advocate for passage by July 2011 of alternative, secure, long-term funding (e.g., special fees or permits, General Fund, sales tax revenues, Renew Growing Greener) to compensate the Commission for services provided to all Pennsylvanians and the Commonwealth in general for lost natural resource values.
- B. Advocate for a Marcellus Shale severance tax that includes dedicated conservation funding, including support for functions performed by the Commission, until such a tax is enacted.
- C. Advocate for passage by December 2014 of sales and marketing flexibility, including, but not limited to, multi-year licenses and group or family licenses.
- D. ~~Advocate for passage by December 2014 of funding to increase youth education programs and participation in fishing and boating based upon successful results of pilot programs in test areas.~~  
**Deleted via Amendment 1**
- E. Advocate for and seek capital funding to make Commission-owned high-hazard dams safe, complete state fish hatchery upgrades, and other priorities identified in the Commission's Infrastructure Plan.
- F. Advocate for passage of existing and new federal legislation to protect and expand funds available to the Commission to support our mission.

**Issue 2: Current and increasing threats to our aquatic resources demand the Commission provide better resource management and protection.**

Pennsylvania's fish, reptiles, amphibians, and other aquatic resources face a number of threats, including, but not limited to, power generation and associated fossil fuel extraction and transmission line construction; municipal and industrial surface and ground water withdrawals; point and non-point discharges; road construction and other encroachments; the introduction and proliferation of invasive species; and climate change. Decisions and actions to deal with these threats require valid and reliable data. Equipped with that data the Commission will take deliberate, proactive steps on behalf of our trust species to protect and improve the habitats upon which they rely, and enforce and improve the regulations designed to protect and manage them.

Good fishing requires healthy, functioning ecosystems comprised of diverse aquatic communities. The following priority actions build on past successes to protect, conserve, and enhance both game and non-game species and their habitats in support of our Resource First philosophy.

**Strategy 2: Provide better resource management and protection to reduce the impacts of current and increasing threats to our aquatic resources.**

**Goal 2: Improve protection, conservation and enhancement of aquatic resources and habitats.**

- A. By July 2010, continue implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Management of Trout Fisheries in Pennsylvania*.
- B. By December 2010, begin implementation of large river management plans for the Delaware, Susquehanna, and Three Rivers systems.
- C. By December 2010, begin implementation of statewide action plans for the following species: Eastern pearlshell mussel, bog turtle, Eastern spadefoot toad, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, and timber rattlesnake.
- D. By July 2011 and annually thereafter, facilitate or complete population inventories and home-range assessments for 10% of the state-listed endangered, threatened or candidate species identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan.
- E. By December 2012, develop a PFBC sampling protocol manual to ensure consistent data collection techniques for waterways.
  - 1. By September 2010, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for wadeable streams.
  - 2. By July 2012, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for large rivers.
  - 3. By December 2012, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for lakes.
- F. By January 2013, complete the evaluation of the inclusion of additional water quality protection criteria for special protection classes of Warm Water Fishes in 25 Pa. Code Chapter 93 in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

- G. By January 2014, sample at least 2,500 prioritized, un-inventoried streams with the potential to support wild trout identified by PFBC staff as most at risk from the effects of human activities and pursue partnerships and funding to augment Commission sampling efforts.
- H. By July 2014, evaluate and improve gamefish management programs for muskellunge, walleye, channel catfish and striped bass/hybrid bass.
- I. By June 2015, minimize the impacts of aquatic invasive species and disease on aquatic resources.
  - 1. By July 2010, begin implementation of an education and outreach program targeted at anglers and boaters as identified in the Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan and in cooperation with partners on the Governor's Invasive Species Council of Pennsylvania.
  - 2. By July 2010, begin implementation of action plans, as necessary, for Didymo, Asian carp, water chestnut and golden algae as identified in the Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan and in cooperation with partners on the Governor's Invasive Species Council of Pennsylvania.
  - 3. By December 2010, begin implementation of an action plan, as necessary, for viral hemorrhagic septicemia as identified in the Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan and in cooperation with partners on the Governor's Invasive Species Council of Pennsylvania.
  - 4. By April 2013, amend the Commission's regulations concerning introduction, propagation and transportation of fish in Pennsylvania's waters to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species and disease.
- J. By June 2015, improve fish passage efforts on the Susquehanna and Lehigh Rivers and small streams.
  - 1. By September 2014, collaborate with other natural resource agencies in the FERC relicensing of the four Lower Susquehanna River hydroelectric projects to ensure incorporation of provisions for timely and effective upstream and downstream fish passage consistent with American shad, river herring and American eel restoration goals and resident fish needs.
  - 2. By June 2015, investigate the feasibility of fish passage improvements on the Lehigh River in collaboration with state and local partners.
  - 3. By June 2015, facilitate or complete at least 40 small dam removals in collaboration with state and local partners.

**Issue 3: The Commission needs to better understand recent generations' disconnectedness from the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and respond to anglers' and boaters' desires for excellent recreational fishing and boating opportunities.**

Just as we rely upon scientific data to guide our resource management decisions, we must also collect and use information about anglers, boaters, and other participants to improve the services, programs, and recreational fishing and boating opportunities we offer to Pennsylvania residents and visitors. By learning more about the opinions, practices, and motivating factors among current and lapsed anglers and boaters and our program participants, we will be in a better position to meet their needs and advance statewide and regional goals.

This is an important step in a long-term commitment to collect, analyze, and use social data as part of regular program development and improvement. People and their behaviors are fundamental elements of natural resource and recreation management, and this more rigorous approach to collecting and using social science data will put us in a much better position to manage that side of the equation.

**Strategy 3: Increase the Commission's knowledge and understanding of its users to enhance recreational fishing and safe boating opportunities.**

**Goal 3: Improve the Commission's knowledge of its users in order to better direct Commission programs and services.**

- A. By March 2013, conduct the first bi-annual, statewide survey of active and lapsed anglers and boaters to supplement the Commission's use of the 5-year *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*.
- B. By June 2015, increase youth and family participation in fishing, boating and aquatic resource education programs.
  - 1. By July 2010, continue collecting participant data for analysis of the behaviors, motivations and demographics of the users of the Commission's educational programs.
  - 2. By July 2013, utilize information captured from participants in the Commission's educational programs to direct future fishing and safe boating programs.
- C. By July 2010, continue efforts to amend the Commission's boating safety regulations and/or education requirements and, as needed, pursue corresponding legislative changes to further reduce the number of recreational boating accidents and fatalities.

**Issue 4: The public continues to identify a need for access to the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources.**

Pennsylvania’s lakes, reservoirs, ponds, rivers, and streams provide exceptional recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Designated fishing and boating access sites help to maintain open green space in communities and provide opportunities for people to connect with the outdoors and our aquatic resources. The Commission owns or controls nearly 300 fishing and boating access sites – roughly half of the state’s access that is open to the public. Nevertheless, public access to waterways is at risk due to land development, landowner posting, changes in ownership, privatization, and limited funding for acquisition.

In 2008, the Commission began a two-year process to gauge the angling and boating public’s satisfaction with and the need for access. As a result, our partners (e.g., local angling and boating clubs and municipalities) helped us identify more than 600 specific sites or stretches of streams for access development or improvement that form the foundation of *Pennsylvania’s Fishing and Boating Access Strategy*. This strategy provides the Commission and our partners with the tools necessary to make better decisions about fishing and boating access planning, development, and funding now and into the future.

**Strategy 4: Increase public access to the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources.**

**Goal 4: Retain and add new access to fishing and boating opportunities.**

- A. By June 2015, review existing and create new boating and fishing access programs to reflect the priorities of the Commission and its customers.
- B. By June 2015, complete two watershed access plans per year delineated in the PFBC Access Strategy priority list.
- C. By December 2014, improve public access to at least five lakes, ten Class A streams, ten Class B, C and D streams, and ten stocked streams with no wild trout reproduction.

**Issue 5: The Commission's existing data are not well-integrated and therefore not optimally used to proactively manage the aquatic resources under our jurisdiction.**

Information technology is integral to the Commission's operations. Nearly every aspect of the agency relies on up-to-date technology to collect, store, protect, access, analyze, and use valuable data for protection, conservation, and enhancement of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and management and development of recreational fishing and boating opportunities. The Commission must stay current with information technologies to help safeguard the integrity of our data and maintain and make available information for collaborative use, as appropriate.

**Strategy 5: Improve the Commission's utilization and integration of existing data to proactively manage the aquatic resources under its jurisdiction.**

**Goal 5: Optimize agency operations through integrated information systems management.**

- A. By December 2010, ensure integrity of agency data through the use of GIS.
- B. By December 31, 2013, complete migration of the IT supported access applications used by the Bureau of Fisheries to a new modernized platform.
- C. By January 2012, begin integration of priority agency information systems, including the current GIS environment, as identified in the *Modernization Plan for IT Infrastructure and Software Resources*.

**Issue 6: Limited financial and human resources require the Commission to more effectively manage our internal resources.**

The Commission prides itself in our dedicated and productive workforce. Our employees are the Commission's largest investment, comprising more than 60% of annual expenditures. Over the lifespan of the strategic plan, more than one-quarter of the Commission's employees will retire or become eligible for retirement. The Commission must continually reinvest in our people to maintain and improve programs and services and, at the same time, prepare for this potential high rate of retirements through a focused employee development program.

More than just people, the Commission's infrastructure includes a vast network of facilities and properties. We own, operate, and maintain 14 state fish hatcheries, more than 60 dams and levees, two marinas, nearly 300 fishing and boating access areas, and numerous buildings and properties across the Commonwealth. Accordingly, the Commission is faced with an enormous backlog of capital improvement requirements and an extensive list of long-term maintenance needs that require a coordinated and deliberate approach for planning, funding, and implementation.

**Strategy 6: Strengthen performance and operations by managing limited financial and human resources more effectively.**

**Goal 6: Optimize agency efficiency and ensure continuity of operations through infrastructure planning and employee development.**

- A. By August 2010, improve accessibility to on-going training opportunities for all staff and Commissioners.
  - 1. By July 2010, gain a better understanding of the climate of the Commission's workforce and implement strategies for improvement.
  - 2. By January 2012, continue agency-wide and bureau specific implementation of climate assessment improvement items.
- B. By July 2012, begin implementation of a succession planning and leadership development program.
- C. By January 2011, begin implementation of Supervisor Development Training.
- D. By September 2011, conduct a full review of State Fish Hatcheries to identify strategies for promoting cost savings with the least adverse effects on services to the angling public.
- E. By July 2012, begin implementation of a comprehensive multi-year Infrastructure Plan for the engineering, maintenance and development of the Commission's hatcheries, marinas, dams, accesses and administrative buildings to ensure continuity of critical operations.

**Issue 7: Due to the limitations of current communications systems, technologies and processes, the Commission must improve its internal and external communication methods and systems.**

As a resource agency with very visible activities and decisions, the Fish and Boat Commission is inherently in the public eye. The ways in which we communicate with the people we serve have a big impact on how our messages are received, and we must constantly strive to improve those communication methods and systems.

The same holds true for our staff, Commissioners, Boating Advisory Board members, and other volunteers who help us carry out our mission. We need to proactively provide more transparent, readily accessible information about the agency and our programs and services.

We will employ dynamic strategies and tools to communicate with both external and internal audiences. As technologies change with increasing frequency, we will evaluate and adapt our strategies to both maximize the available tools and respond to the evolving ways in which people expect and prefer to receive information.

**Strategy 7: Improve internal and external communications by strengthening the use of current communication technologies and processes.**

**Goal 7: Improve internal and external communications systems to develop an informed and engaged workforce and increase the public's access to and use of Commission information.**

- A. By July 2010, establish a direct line of internal and external communication with the Commission's Executive Director.
- B. ~~By July 2011, implement and regularly evaluate the use of emerging technologies to improve target audiences' access to key commission messages.~~  
**Deleted via Amendment 1**
- C. By July 2011, begin implementation of a business plan that makes the best use of the Commission's core publications and exhibits.
- D. By January 2012, annually evaluate, and modify as needed, employee communications strategies.
- E. By July 2014, complete the redesign of the Commission's website.

## **Amendment 1 to Commission Strategic Plan for July 2010 – June 2015**

*(Represents formal action taken by the Commission on January 31, 2012)*

### Commentary:

In October 2011, staff commenced a strategic plan goal analysis exercise that took the FY 11-12 spending limitations and projected FY 12-13 spending limitations into consideration. Staff also identified other circumstances that had changed both inside and outside of the agency since July 2010 to make sure that we are still operating under a set of SMART (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-bound) subgoals. This is in keeping with the Board of Commissioner's vision that the strategic plan be a living document.

Staff reviewed the assumptions made for both FY 2011-12 and FY 2012-13 and evaluated our ability to continue to meet the strategic plan subgoals given spending limitations rather than budget constraints that were originally considered when the plan was adopted in July 2010. For FY 2011-12, the spending limitations are the lesser of approved budgets or 6.5% more in Fish Fund expenditures and 0% in Boat Fund expenditures over FY 2010-11 actual expenditures. Spending limitations for both Funds in FY 2012-13 are based on 0% growth from FY 2010-11.

This is a fundamental difference in how we have been approaching the strategic plan goal analysis. To date, we have focused on the budgetary, not spending, limitations when determining whether we felt a subgoal was realistic (the "R" in the SMART acronym).

Based upon this analysis, staff developed the following set of recommended amendments to the strategic plan, collectively referred to as "Amendment 1 to Commission Strategic Plan for July 2010 – June 2015." The term "Amendment 1" was selected to reflect that staff will commence a similar review of the plan no later than the spring of 2013, to be followed by potential additional amendments for the Board of Commissioners' consideration at the July 2013 Commission meeting.

- Goal 1C amended to read, "Advocate for passage by December 2014 of sales and marketing flexibility, including, but not limited to, multi-year licenses and group or family licenses." Amendment deletes advocacy for "regular annual increases" and a "dedicated fee for access and habitat."
- Goal 1D deleted, with youth programs moving to an amended Goal 3B (see below).
- Goal 2E2 amended to read, "By July 2012, complete documentation of PFBC-approved sampling protocols for large rivers." Amendment moves the completion date from December 2011 to July 2012.
- Goal 2F amended to read, "By January 2013, complete the evaluation of the inclusion of additional water quality protection criteria for special protection classes of Warm Water Fishes in 25 Pa. Code Chapter 93 in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection." Amendment is a refinement from the original version approved in July 2010.

- Goal 2G amended to read “By January 2014, sample at least 2,500 prioritized, un-inventoried streams with the potential to support wild trout identified by PFBC staff as most at risk from the effects of human activities and pursue partnerships and funding to augment Commission sampling efforts.” Amendment increases the goal from 200 to 2,500 as a result of the incredible success of the unassessed water initiative.
- Goal 3B amended to read, “By June 2015, increase youth and family participation in fishing, boating and aquatic resource education programs.” Former goal 3B becomes sub-goal 3B2, “By July 2013, utilize information captured from participants in the Commission’s educational programs to direct future fishing and safe boating programs.” Amendment emphasizes focus on strategies to increase participation.
- Goal 4A amended to read, “By June 2015, review existing and create new boating and fishing access programs to reflect the priorities of the Commission and its customers.” Amendment reflects new funding realities and priorities.
- Goal 4B amended to read, “By June 2015, complete two watershed access plans per year delineated in the PFBC Access Strategy priority list.” Amendment reduces number of access plans being completed each year from five to two due to reduced funding available for local partners.
- Goal 4C amended to read, “By December 2014, improve public access to at least five lakes, ten Class A streams, ten Class B, C and D streams, and ten stocked streams with no wild trout reproduction.” Amendment reduces the number of lake access projects from ten to five as a result of funding and staff limitations.
- Goal 5B amended to read, “By December 31, 2013, complete migration of the IT supported access applications used by the Bureau of Fisheries to a new modernized platform.” Amendment reflects the migration being 20 months ahead of schedule.
- Goal 6A2 added to read, “By January 2012, continue agency-wide and bureau specific implementation of climate assessment improvement items.” Amendment takes into account the on-going and planned activities related to the climate assessment.
- Goal 6B amended to read, “By July 2012, begin implementation of a succession planning and leadership development program.” Amendment retains the focus of the leadership development program and adds the succession planning focus.
- Goal 6E amended to read, “By July 2012, begin implementation of a comprehensive multi-year Infrastructure Plan for the engineering, maintenance and development of the Commission’s hatcheries, marinas, dams, accesses and administrative buildings to ensure continuity of critical operations.” Amendment changes the plan completion date from December 2011 to July 2012.
- Goal 7B deleted. This is no longer necessary since the use of emerging technologies has become standard business practice throughout the Commission.
- Goal 7E added to read, “By July 2014, complete the redesign of the Commission’s website.”