

Sport Fish Restoration Funding

Revised March 2025

In 1950, the Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson Act), was enacted to provide federal funding to state fish and wildlife agencies for the restoration, conservation, management, and enhancement of sport fishing opportunities. The Act was expanded in 1984 with the Wallop-Breaux Amendment to provide further funding to the Sport Fish Restoration Program (Program) by including excise taxes on a wider range of fishing tackle and equipment, motorboat fuel, and duties on imported boats and fishing tackle. This amendment provided funding for increased boating access development and aquatic resource education programs.



The Program is a good example of a “user pays, user benefits” model with federal excise taxes on sport fishing equipment and motorboat fuel providing funding for fisheries conservation. Abundant, sustainable fish populations and safe, accessible boating facilities provide wide-ranging opportunities. Anglers and boaters respond by purchasing equipment manufactured by the companies that pay the excise tax. Simply put, anglers and boaters pay for and receive direct benefits.

To a large degree, the Program is broadly beneficial: fish populations and aquatic resources gain ongoing and improved management; anglers and boaters have continued and enhanced opportunities; and related industries reap sustained and often increased sales. These relationships are frequently so direct that excise monies paid by industry can be viewed not as taxes, but as purposeful business investments which generate measurable returns.

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) apportioned \$381,827,198 in grants under the Sport Fish Restoration Act for state sport fish programs.

- The USFWS Sport Fish Restoration Program’s North Atlantic-Appalachian Region received \$62,573,512 for distribution to states including: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.
 - Pennsylvania’s FFY2024 apportionment was \$9,320,492 (\$7,922,418 freshwater fish and \$1,398,074 boating access).
 - Pennsylvania received the highest FFY2024 apportionment issued within the Region.

Federal funding represents a considerable and important portion of the PFBC's budget, roughly 25% when all sources are tallied. Pennsylvania utilizes its federal apportionment through a variety of programs and projects, including but not limited to:

- **Fisheries Management:** Provides fisheries management based on knowledge of the resource and its users. Project studies assess the impact of various management techniques (stocking, wild fish, habitat modification, regulations) on the respective fishery and needed adjustments to accomplish individual plans or program objectives.
 - CY2023 program outlays: \$10,999,450
 - Federal share: \$8,000,000
 - State share: \$2,999,450
- **Aquatic Resource Education:** Provides aquatic resource education and outreach activities to target audiences, including the development and delivery of materials and training to aid in angler recruitment, reactivation and retention.
 - CY2023 program outlays: \$608,478
 - Federal share: \$456,359
 - State share: \$152,119
- **Maintenance of Public Access Facilities:** Maintenance for approximately 250 PFBC-owned and managed facilities, acquired or developed with both federal and non-federal funds, to serve the intended purpose of providing fishing and boating opportunities.
 - Calendar Year (CY) 2023 program outlays: \$1,757,074
 - Federal share: \$1,199,503
 - State share: \$557,571
- **Boating Access:** Assists with developing new accesses and refurbishing existing public facilities. This funding supports the [PFBC's Boating Facility Grant Program](#) that provides grants to eligible entities for the construction and improvement of boat access facilities that are open and available for public use.
 - States must use 15% of Dingell-Johnson funding on Recreational Boating Access
- **Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG):** Provides funding for tie-up and support facilities for transient, non-trailerable vessels 26 feet or more in length. These facilities provide access to recreational, cultural, historic, scenic and natural resources for larger cruising boats, resulting in a positive economic impact on waterfront communities. [Examples of projects in Pennsylvania](#) include transient tie-up and docking facilities on large rivers in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.
 - Discretionary (competitive) funding approved by the USFWS
- **Clean Vessel Act:** Provides funding for the construction, renovation, operation and maintenance of pump-out stations and waste reception facilities to meet the needs of recreational boaters. Projects in Pennsylvania have been implemented at public marinas and boat accesses operated by local governments and others.
 - Discretionary (competitive) funding approved by the USFWS
- **Recreational Boating Safety:** Funds the development and delivery of effective public boating education programs, implementation of strategies to reduce boating incidents and fatalities, enforcement of boating laws and regulations, liaising with other boating organizations and agencies, administering a boat registration and titling system, and providing recreational boaters with access to fishing and boating opportunities and high-quality boating facilities.
 - FFY 2024 program outlays: \$11,395,722
 - Federal share: \$2,939,099
 - State share: \$8,456,623