



**Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Annual Report to the Game and Fisheries Committee
Pennsylvania Senate
Timothy D. Schaeffer, Executive Director
March 17, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Rothman, Chair Malone, and committee members. On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, Boating Advisory Board, and staff, I am pleased to highlight the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's initiatives and accomplishments in our 2025 Annual Report. An electronic copy of the report is also available on our website at fishandboat.com.

The Commission is a comparatively small state agency; however, our efforts and impact reach every part of the Commonwealth. Last year, our staff produced remarkable results for Pennsylvania's anglers, boaters, and aquatic resources. In every season, we diligently strive to fulfill our mission to protect, conserve, and enhance aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.

Before discussing the details in the report, please note an important point as we are nearing the opening day of trout season on April 4. I say it every time I am here and will say it again today – please wear your life jacket. As a reminder, Pennsylvania has a cold-water life jacket wear requirement from November 1 - April 30 on all canoes, kayaks, and boats under 16 feet. While the number of accidents during the cold weather months have remained steady over the past ten years, fatalities have been cut in half. The regulation is saving lives and is a poignant reminder that life jackets work, especially as the water is still dangerously cold despite rising air temperatures.

The theme of this year's Annual Report is "Resource Restoration." Since the Commission was established 160 years ago, restoring aquatic resources across Pennsylvania has been an integral part of our identity. Notably, one of the reasons the Commission was created was to help restore American Shad runs, an effort that is ongoing. We have come a long way since 1866, but the goal of restoring species and their habitats has remained the same. Whether it be conserving freshwater mussels in streams throughout the state or opening an aquatic organism passage to benefit wild trout and other species, maintaining the rich biodiversity of Pennsylvania's aquatic resources enhances recreational opportunities like fishing and boating. Likewise, enhancing riparian buffers along streams or strategically placing habitat structures during lake refill projects improves angler opportunities and enriches ecosystems our aquatic resources depend on. As a crucial state in restoring the Chesapeake Bay, we are proud of our own efforts and those of our partners throughout Pennsylvania that are directly and positively impacting and improving water quality, species diversity, and recreational value.

One of the best parts of this job is introducing legislators and other partners to our team members who are delivering on the investments made possible by the purchase of fishing licenses, unpowered launch permits, boat registrations, fishing and boating equipment, and motorboat fuel. As always, you have an open invitation to join us in the field to help stock fish; accompany our biologists on a stream, river, or lake survey; install fish habitat structures; or ride along with a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) to hear firsthand what it is like to be on the front lines of conservation law enforcement and public safety. Thank you for the opportunity to present our Annual Report and highlight some of the great work we completed last year!

Upcoming Dates

- Trout Stocking – Ongoing
- Mentored Youth Trout Day – March 28
- Opening Day of Trout Season – April 4
- National Safe Boating Week – May 16-22
- Fish for Free Days – May 24 and July 4
- Operation Dry Water – July 3-5

Summary of Notable 2025 Topics

2025 Fishing and Boating Participation

- Fishing
 - Over 815,000 Actively Licensed Anglers
 - Relatively steady since 2019 (pre-Covid baseline); decreased by less than 1% since 2019
 - Over 437,000 Trout Permits
 - Relatively steady since 2019
- Boating
 - More than 216,000 Unpowered Launch Permits
 - Increased by 6 % since 2019
 - Slightly more than 270,000 Boat Registrations
 - Decreased by slightly more than 10% since 2019

Legislative “Thank You”

- BAB Reconfiguration (Act 15)
- Disabled Veterans License Improvements (Act 21)
- Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (Act 28)
- Fish and Boat Fund Flexibility/Fiscal Code (Act 45)

Resource Restoration Special Section

- Variety of species across different habitats benefit from agency efforts
- NEW: QR codes provide additional information and videos on restoration efforts

Examples from Commissioner Districts

- Habitat Projects & Access Areas
- Fisheries Management and Aquatic Resource Restoration
- Educational Programs
- Grants
 - Boating Facilities Grant Program
 - Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Education Program
 - Cooperative Nurseries

Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Recruitment

- 26th Class graduated on July 18, 2025
- 27th Class began training in August 2025