
SECTION 6 – COMMISSION AUTHORITY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

6.1 BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is an independent administrative agency of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, mandated by law "... to protect, propagate, manage and preserve the game or wildlife of this Commonwealth ...". The Pennsylvania Game Commission's mission is to manage all wild birds and mammals and their habitats for present and future generations. Together with its sister agency, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), the PGC strives to provide and support fiscally responsible programs that conserve, enhance and protect Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife resources and the habitats upon which they depend.

The Game Commission is self-supporting, receiving no General Fund revenues for its operation. The PGC receives more than 50 percent of its operating revenue from the sale of hunting and fur-taker licenses. Other sources of revenue include the sale of timber, minerals and other products from State Game Lands, Federal Aid reimbursements, fines from Game and Wildlife Code violations, the sale of publications and wildlife art prints, interest in securities and deposits, and other miscellaneous revenue sources. The Fish and Boat Commission also uses a mixture of funding mechanisms to generate operating revenues independent of General Fund appropriations.

Yet, even with this approach to funding, Pennsylvania's Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission, like their counterparts in most other states, are facing a grim reality: there is not enough funding to carry out their missions to conserve all of the fish and wildlife species that inhabit the Commonwealth, or pass through it on annual migrations.

A recent national report, "State Wildlife Diversity Program Funding: a 1998 Survey," found that program funding for species not hunted or fished totaled \$134.9 million nationwide in 1998, far short of the \$1 billion needed. An estimated 2,000 species, or 90 percent of our nation's fish and wildlife, fall into this 'non-hunted' category.

The nationwide consequences of inadequate funding are striking – more than 1,000 species are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act with hundreds more in the pipeline. Pennsylvania's waters and woodlands are home to more than 500 species of fish, reptiles and amphibians, breeding birds, and mammals. In addition, there are 200+ non-breeding birds and thousands of species of invertebrates found in the Commonwealth. Altogether, "nongame" species, those that are not traditionally pursued for sport, make up more than 75 percent of the fish and wildlife in the Commonwealth. In the current fiscal environment, the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission lack sufficient data and understanding to proactively manage the majority of these nongame species. At the same time, roughly 25

percent of these species are considered imperiled. Currently, there are more than 180 vertebrate species of special concern, and an estimated 300 invertebrate species in need of immediate management attention. Turning around declining populations of wildlife is an expensive and long-term endeavor.

Today, the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission struggle to conserve a diverse array of wildlife, and provide related recreation and education, on very limited budgets. While user fees paid by sportsmen and sportswomen have primarily financed our agencies for more than 60 years, these funds are used mostly for conservation of game species and are insufficient to address the needs of all species. At the same time, the agencies believe strongly that relying solely upon user fees from hunters and anglers to conserve fish and wildlife for all Pennsylvanians is not a fair or comprehensive way to manage our wild resources.

While license-based revenues were an effective way to fund the state's early wild resource management efforts, the funding format hasn't evolved to accommodate the mandated and growing responsibilities the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission have to all Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania's slowly declining population of hunters, anglers and trappers are being burdened with disproportionate responsibility (in the form of higher license fees) to finance programs that benefit all Pennsylvanians. Adequate funding for fish and wildlife management is championed by the Pennsylvania Constitution and likely supported by a majority of Pennsylvanians. Nonetheless, funding shortfalls continue to inhibit the abilities of the state's resource agencies to progressively manage fish and wildlife populations.

For several years, the States have asked the U.S. Congress to provide adequate and reliable funding to help reverse this trend and prevent species from becoming endangered. Congress responded by providing one-time state funding in the form of the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program in FFY01, and again with appropriations in FFY02-FFY04 to the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program.

This short-term funding has provided an opportunity for the PGC and PFBC to lay the groundwork for proactively managing our species of greatest conservation concern. By completing a "Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy" for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the PGC and PFBC have the opportunity to fulfill their missions, incorporate the management of all species into existing programs, build valuable partnerships, identify conservation threats and opportunities that will affect our wildlife management efforts, and perhaps gain more secure, long-term funding for the important job of conserving our precious wildlife heritage.

6.1 STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCY AUTHORITY

Both the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have authority to develop and implement Pennsylvania’s Wildlife Action Plan (WAP). As such, the overall responsibility for the WAP rests with the PA Game Commission and the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Statutory provisions relating to wildlife conservation, wildlife-related recreation and education are detailed below for each agency.

Pennsylvania Game Commission

Section 103 of the Game and Wildlife Code states that the ownership, jurisdiction over and control of game or wildlife is vested in the commission as an independent agency of the Commonwealth in its sovereign capacity to be controlled, regulated and disposed of in accordance with this title.

Included in this responsibility is the authority to:

- Regulate, protect, propagate, manage and preserve game or wildlife and game or wildlife habitat.
- Regulate the importation, possession and/or release of wildlife in the Commonwealth.
- Add to or change the classification of any wild bird or wild animal.
- Manage and develop its lands and waters and other government or private lands and waters under agreement with the owners as it considers advisable and . . . enact and enforce regulations to insure the prudent and proper use of these lands.
- Collect, classify and preserve statistics, data and information.
- Enter into cooperative agreements with the Secretary of the Interior, any government agency, individual, corporation or educational or research institution to further the programs of the commission. The Commonwealth assents to the provisions of the Federal Wildlife Restoration Act.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Under 30 Pa.C.S.A., the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is vested with the authority to administer and enforce this title (30 Pa.C.S.A) and other laws of the Commonwealth relating to:

- 1) The encouragement, promotion and development of the fishery interests.
- 2) The protection, propagation and distribution of fish. Fish is defined in the statute as “all game fish, fish bait, bait fish, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic organisms.”
- 3) The management of boating and the operation of boats.
- 4) The encouragement, promotion and development of recreational boating.

Inclusive in this authority, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is vested with responsibility and authority to

- Promulgate rules and regulations concerning fishing to aid in the better protection, preservation and management of fish.
- Publish bulletins, literature, posters and other printing as may be appropriate to the work of the commission.
- Enter into cooperative agreements with federal, state and local agencies or any educational or research institution or any other person or entity to carry out or further the programs of the commission.
- Propagation, protection, management and distribution of fish and the stocking waters within the Commonwealth.
- Fieldwork, gathering spawn and transferring fish.
- Promote public interest in recreational fishing in the Commonwealth.
- The purchase of lands and waters and the impounding of waters to make them available for use by the citizens of the Commonwealth for fishing, boating and other recreational purposes.
- Promulgate regulations concerning the protection, preservation and management of fish and fish habitat, permitting and prohibiting fishing, the ways, manner, methods and means of fishing, and the health and safety of persons who fish or may be in the vicinity of such persons on, in or along the waters of the Commonwealth.
- Conduct and establish cooperative fish restoration projects.
- Comprehensive studies of the migratory habits of fish.
- Establish a Pennsylvania Threatened Species List and a Pennsylvania Endangered Species List.
- Promulgate rules and regulations governing the catching, taking, killing, importation, introduction, transportation, removal, possession, selling, offering for sale or purchasing of threatened and endangered species and, if deemed advisable, may issue permits for catching taking or possessing any of those species.

6.2 THE STRATEGIC PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

Both the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission have recently developed or revised their agency Strategic Plans to guide agency activities in coming years. Each agency worked with internal and external stakeholders to develop broad goals and strategies to guide fish and wildlife management in the Commonwealth:

Pennsylvania Game Commission Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1: Maintain and improve wildlife populations for consumptive and non-consumptive recreational value and their many public values.

Goal 2: Expand and improve communication, education and outreach for public awareness and understanding of wildlife resource management.

Goal 3: Protect and enhance our hunting and trapping heritage.

Goal 4: Acquire, protect, maintain and enhance an array of habitats on public and private lands.

Goal 5: Develop a sustainable funding structure that supports the agency's mission and identity.

Goal 6: Recruit, develop, and maintain an effective workforce.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Strategic Plan Goals

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

The overall goals of the agencies' strategic plans and the WAP are similar.

This Strategy is designed to complement these broader strategic plans, while providing more focus on issues affecting species of greatest conservation need and their associated habitats.

6.3 PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE WAP

The Game Commission's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 outlines goals and strategies relating to wildlife stewardship that are particularly relevant to the WAP, including:

- maintaining and improving wildlife populations for consumptive and non-consumptive use;
- expanding and improving public communication, education, outreach and awareness of wildlife management issues;
- acquiring, protecting, maintaining and enhancing habitats; and
- developing sustainable funding

PGC Strategic Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5 are especially pertinent to the wildlife resource conservation needs presented within the WAP. Beyond the goal statements, however, several issues identified in the PGC Strategic Plan are particularly relevant to the WAP and are highlighted below:

Wildlife. There are more white-tailed deer in Pennsylvania today than there were at the beginning of the twentieth century. The wild turkey, once in danger of disappearing from the state, now thrives in most of the state's 67 counties. Bears are more prevalent today than they have been in more than 100 years. Many nongame wildlife populations that were threatened or endangered – bald eagles, ospreys and river otters, for example – were brought back through intensive restoration projects. This plan will continue to build on those

successes. At the same time, human encroachment into what was historically wildlife habitat brings increasing conflict between people and wild resources. These conflicts translate into more responsibility for the agency. Social and biological considerations are key to successful species management.

Strategic objectives for maintaining and improving wildlife populations:

- Safeguard and facilitate sustainable wildlife populations and their use
- Develop and enforce laws and regulations to protect wildlife populations and habitat
- Minimize the impact of disease on wildlife populations through prevention and control
- Educate stakeholders on the intrinsic value of wildlife
- Promote a league of partnerships to achieve mutual goals for wildlife and habitat

Communication. The agency must continue to build on its information and education programs. A well-informed public is essential for good policy development. Our hunter-trapper education program is being updated through both curriculum revisions and instructor training. The conservation education program is central to introducing the public, and particularly young Pennsylvanians, to the state's magnificent outdoor heritage. Continued development of the agency's website will expand efforts to educate people about the Commonwealth's wildlife and agency programs, as will continued coverage of important and innovative wildlife research in news releases and Pennsylvania Game news.

Strategic objectives for expanding and improving communication, education and outreach:

- Develop and implement a wildlife management communications plan
- Promote the safe and responsible behavior of hunters and trappers
- Expand the availability of news and conservation information
- Increase the number of people reached by PGC wildlife conservation education programs
- Continue to use a stakeholder participation process in Commission programs
- Promote wildlife viewing opportunities throughout the Commonwealth

Habitat. More than any other factor, habitat determines both the future of wildlife and the future of recreation Pennsylvanians derive from wildlife. The demands for space and resources created by the state's ever-expanding human population dictate that outdoor recreationists will be enjoying their activities on a decreasing land base. As development swallows up open spaces, more people will be competing for what's left. The Game Commission land holdings now exceed 1.4 million acres. The commission manages these lands for wildlife and people, and it is a task that requires considerable planning and resources. Our land management programs are designed to improve habitat not only on game lands, but on other public lands as well as private lands. Game lands are not just public

hunting grounds; they are used extensively by many others who enjoy the outdoors for wildlife-dependent activities.

Strategic objectives for maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat:

- Increase the public's understanding of the habitat needs of wildlife
- Promote hunting access to wildlife habitat on private lands
- Increase game lands acreage with an emphasis on access, indentures, in-holdings and critical or unique habitats
- Promote habitat management on non-PGC public lands
- Develop a heightened awareness of user responsibility and respect for private and public lands and landowners
- Manage habitat to ensure diverse levels of game and wildlife
- Inspect, maintain, repair and construct infrastructure to support wildlife habitat management and hunting access

Funding. The critical element in all programs [in the PGC's Strategic Plan] is the availability of resources. But when revenue is tied directly to license sales to a customer base that is declining, the potential for insufficient funding looms large. Pennsylvania has historically maintained relatively inexpensive hunting and fishing license fees, because its large numbers of hunters and anglers defused the need for high-priced licenses. That's changing quickly, because of expanding agency responsibilities, inflation and declines in the numbers of hunters and anglers buying licenses. We must continue to look at alternative ways to fund the Game Commission in the future. This plan highlights several ways can be use to acquire additional resources to fulfill the agency's requirements to its stakeholders and the public.

Strategic objectives for developing sustainable funding:

- Establish a Foundation
- Increase the PGC's access to grants, mitigation, reimbursements and foundations
- Seek general fund augmentation
- Create a Friends of Game and Wildlife Program
- Review license program for efficiencies and economics
- Use an inflation index to make adjustments to license fees

6.4 PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Strategic Plan outlines issues, needs and strategies relating to aquatic stewardship, public outreach, and funding which are particularly relevant to the WAP, including: Promoting Watershed-based Aquatic Resource Protection, Sustaining Pennsylvania's Nongame Aquatic Resources, Ensuring Migratory Fish Species Restoration, Enhancing Public Outreach Efforts, and Addressing Fiscal Concerns. Sections of the PFBC Strategic Plan that are especially pertinent to the aquatic resource conservation needs presented within the WAP are summarized below.

Aquatic Stewardship

Recognizing the Commonwealth's water resources as the basis for the conservation of all aquatic organisms, the Commission will actively work to protect, conserve and enhance them. The Commission will commit staff resources to be involved in water resource issues and projects in cooperation with state, federal and local entities with similar goals. Emphasis will be placed on sustaining and improving the water quality of the Commonwealth's waters.

The PFBC is the only state agency with a singular focus on the aquatic resource and the organisms that depend on it. As an independent agency, the Commission has functioned in a unique and valuable role, serving as a voice for and advocate of protection and enhancement of the aquatic resources and recreational interests under its jurisdiction.

The Fish and Boat Commission has a philosophy of "Resource First." This motto recognizes that the Commission cannot fulfill its mission unless it puts the resource first. The protection and management of aquatic resources are the means the Commission uses in providing fishing and boating opportunities. The Resource First philosophy does not diminish the importance of providing fishing and boating opportunities for recreation. The motto simply recognizes that the resource is the basis of these opportunities.

The Commission's independent status and current mandates enable the agency to work to protect the resource. The input of anglers and boaters is an important element in these efforts, and indeed, user input is consistent with the resource-based approach followed by the Commission. In a 1996 survey, more than 95 percent of anglers surveyed indicated that restoring and improving habitat and managing and conserving endangered fish, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic organisms are important PFBC functions. In addition, the Commission received an overall approval rating of nearly 80 percent. The Commission is fortunate to have such overwhelming support from its customer base. Anglers and boaters strongly support the Commission's broad conservation mission as well as the programs that directly benefit them.

The Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Water Quality Assessment report to the US EPA (305(b) Report) the quality of the Commonwealth's 83,161 miles of rivers and streams has been gradually improving over the past 15 years. It is difficult to evaluate these changes through time since we are only now to the point where we have assessed more than half of our total number of stream miles. However, it is clear that the water quality of our major streams and rivers, which have been monitored over time, do show substantial improvement in the quality of water they provide which translates into healthier biological communities. Presently, the overall health of 30,272 miles of those waters has not yet been fully assessed (2002 DEP 305(b) Report). Of the 53,618 miles that have been assessed, there are 8,385 miles of Commonwealth waters that are currently impaired and not achieving the federal Clean Water Act's "fishable/swimmable" goal. Abandoned mine drainage and agriculture combine to impair 6,245 stream miles or over 54 percent of the total number of impaired stream miles reported in 2002.

The needs for resource protection and management are increasing. With a field force of more than 100 conservation officers and biologists, the Commission is proactively involved in many water quality and fisheries management issues. Despite efforts on their part, new information shows that many aquatic organisms are now rare or should be classified as extirpated from Pennsylvania.

One of the most effective strategies the Commission employs to protect the aquatic resources of the state is to provide input to the Department of Environmental Protection to help in fulfilling the Commonwealth's mandate as a trustee for Pennsylvania's water resources. The Commission is effective as an advocate for the proper water-quality designation of streams and has adopted a policy statement that ensures streams be designated at the highest use supported by the science. Appropriate designation under the Commonwealth's anti-degradation program provides recognition and enhanced protection for the State's water resources and the aquatic communities they support.

Proactive Commission involvement in reviewing and commenting on permit applications also plays an important role in ensuring the protection of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. A number of additional focal points have also been identified for improving the Commission's resource conservation efforts. These include:

- X Promoting Watershed Based Resource Protection
- X Sustaining Pennsylvania's Nongame Aquatic Resources
- X Ensuring Migratory Fish Species Restoration

Watershed Based Resource Protection

The Commonwealth's water quality is intrinsically linked to the health and well being of the state's watersheds. The number one source of pollution of Pennsylvania's waterways is nonpoint source pollution. The Commission recognizes, supports, and will promote watershed-based protection and enhancement efforts as a way of protecting Pennsylvania's aquatic resources. The PFBC will employ resources to implement watershed-based protection and enhancement strategies in cooperation with other federal, state and local organizations and entities.

Watersheds are a focal point for many national, state and local protection and enhancement efforts. Funding and management attention at all levels of government are increasingly focused on this basis.

Involvement of the various levels of the Commission with watershed organizations and other entities that are working to restore and enhance the resource are crucial components of the agency's future direction. Demands for resource information, fisheries management expertise, and habitat enhancement and protection are all increasing. These demands present the Commission with a tremendous opportunity to be involved with and promote local watershed efforts and the conservation of aquatic resources. Recognizing that no one entity or organization can accomplish this on its own, the Commission will promote and carry out a meaningful involvement in these efforts consistent with its jurisdiction and its resources. The grassroots nature of many of these efforts ensures long-term local support for the protection of the resource.

Strategies for Promoting Watershed Based Resource Protection:

- X Enhance existing partnerships with federal, state and local entities including sportsmen's clubs and conservation organizations.
- X Continue active enforcement of laws and regulations designed to protect the aquatic resources.
- X Establish partnerships with organizations and entities that have a stake or interest in the watersheds of the Commonwealth.
- X Communicate and work with the organizations and entities that have an impact on Pennsylvania anglers, boaters and the aquatic environment, which the Commission is entrusted to protect and manage.
- X Develop and implement a more comprehensive Adopt-A-Water program.
- X Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote watershed-based efforts.

Sustaining Pennsylvania's Nongame Aquatic Resources

The Commission recognizes that nongame aquatic resources are important parts of Pennsylvania's ecology that warrant attention and protection. The Commission will encourage efforts to maintain and restore biological diversity and will give due consideration to this diversity in all resource management decisions. The Commission will work with conservation entities to obtain adequate and sustainable funding to preserve, protect and manage all species and organisms, which the Commission has a mandate to protect.

The large and diverse resource the Commission is charged with managing and protecting includes the Commonwealth's nongame fish, aquatic macro invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians. The PFBC is mandated to protect and manage these species, which play important ecological functions in Commonwealth waters. Due to habitat loss and degradation, however, some of these species may be at risk.

The Commission currently has management jurisdiction over 79 species of concern (endangered, threatened or candidates) including 61 species of fish, 8 species of reptiles, 4 species of amphibians, and 2 species of freshwater mussels. For some species, such as the bog turtle, coastal plain leopard frog, New Jersey chorus frog, northern riffleshell and clubshell mussels and massasauga rattlesnake, the need for increased management attention cannot be overemphasized. Sixty-one species represent 40 percent of the total fish species that exist in Pennsylvania.

Historically, the Fish & Boat Commission has relied on angling-related revenues to support species management and habitat protection activities. With anglers as the direct paying constituents, the Commission has focused management efforts primarily on sport fish. Less than 1 percent of the Commission's budget is dedicated for nongame species purposes. When species become listed as federally endangered or threatened, additional but limited resources may become available. Wild Resource Conservation Funds have augmented Commission expenditures in the past, but these funds are currently very limited. At the same time, public interest and demand for wildlife-associated education, comprehensive management efforts, wildlife protection, and additional wildlife recreation opportunities is extremely high.

Strategies for Sustaining Pennsylvania's Nongame Aquatic Resources:

- X Devote appropriate resources to ensure the conservation of aquatic species, reptiles and amphibians through effective management and enforcement efforts.
- X Actively pursue adequate and sustainable funding for the management of nongame species.
- X Assess the feasibility of imposing a fee on permit reviews for impacts to species under PFBC management jurisdiction.
- X Undertake proactive management strategies for nongame species and their habitats to avoid species loss or expensive last minute intervention to prevent loss.

- X Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote the conservation of nongame species.
- X Conduct specialized investigations into the illegal commercialization of nongame species.
- X Promote non-consumptive recreational use of the Commonwealth's nongame species under the Commission's management purview by participating in the establishment of watchable wildlife sites.

Migratory Fish Species Restoration

Recognizing the biological and economic importance of migratory fish species, the restoration of these fish to Commonwealth waters is a top Commission priority. The Commission will work in concert with others committed to the restoration effort to ensure the success of these programs.

The PFBC was formed in 1866 to restore the runs of shad to the Susquehanna Basin. The construction of four hydroelectric dams from 1904-1932 effectively closed the river for the few fish still trying to return to the Susquehanna drainage. The 1997 completion of modern fish passage devices by two dam owners has ensured that some migratory fish species can move up the Susquehanna River into Pennsylvania. The completion of fish passage facilities at York Haven in the year 2000 opened 444 additional miles of the river and tributaries to returning migratory fish. This restoration is expected to provide substantial economic, recreational and ecological gains. The long-term goals include an annual fishery of two million American shad and 12 million herring, attracting more than 500,000 angling trips. The annual economic impact of these angling trips is estimated at more than \$36 million. There are, however, other barriers to restoration to overcome in the Susquehanna and other Pennsylvania waterways.

In the year 2000, the obligation of the dam-owning utility companies to fund Susquehanna migratory fish restoration efforts ended. Substantial Commission resources and efforts are now needed to achieve the Susquehanna restoration goal. Other waterways also have migratory fish runs, which are hampered by blockages, poor water quality and a resulting lack of natural reproduction. The Commission must address these issues on all waterways with migratory fish runs.

Specific to the anadromous fish restoration efforts (shad, river herring, etc.), the Commission must continue artificial propagation until wild stocks are restored to self-sustaining levels. The estimated costs of the annual rearing, stocking, monitoring and coordination efforts on the Susquehanna alone are approximately \$500,000 - a significant investment, but one to which the Commission is fully committed.

Strategies for Restoring Migratory Fish:

- X Ensure the restoration of anadromous species through the use of adequate Commission resources and through active participation in restoration partnerships.
- X Promote migratory fish restoration efforts to ensure long-term support for their protection and management.
- X Remove barriers to migratory fish runs and implement fish passage when removal is not feasible.
- X Restrict coastal intercept and other harvest of migratory fish during the restoration process.
- X Actively enforce management regulations designed to protect restoration efforts.
- X Artificially propagate shad and other migratory fish until wild stocks achieve self-sustaining levels.
- X Develop effective outreach and education programs to promote public awareness and the restoration of migratory fish runs.

Enhancing Public Outreach Efforts

Commonwealth aquatic resource users and those who care about the resource desire opportunities to be involved with the management of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. The PFBC will actively solicit and consider input from customers when making resource management decisions. The Commission will actively encourage the use of the resource and build public support for the Commission's role in protecting it.

The PFBC relies heavily on public input in making management decisions that affect the resource and resource-use opportunities. The commission strives to provide quality products and services that are well thought out and in line with what our customers want. In addition, the Commission utilizes outreach efforts to develop and accomplish management objectives and communicate messages to the public.

Beginning in 1996, the Commission has undertaken a major initiative to improve its customer outreach capability. One of the more significant changes was the deployment of education and outreach coordinators to field offices. This enhanced capability will enable the Commission to facilitate communication on everything from boating safety and resource protection to setting reasonable expectations for anglers regarding fishery resources. The enhanced Commission outreach capability also will be fully deployed to recruit and retain anglers and provide aquatic resource education programs.

The Commission's outreach efforts must include working with volunteers and forging partnerships. The Commission currently relies on partnerships to help protect the waterways/waterways users, provide educational outreach services, restore and enhance water quality and to produce and distribute trout, to name just a few. In the future, these partnerships will be even more crucial to the Commission's success. Recognizing the

importance of these partnerships, the Commission will continue to expand the scope and the capacity of such programs.

Strategies for Enhancing Public Outreach:

- Actively solicit customer input in the decision-making process
- Work with members of the General Assembly and officials of other government agencies to obtain and consider public input
- Identify management issues where public outreach efforts/education will help and develop effective strategies to address them
- Promote knowledge of the resource, resource-use opportunities, and the role of the Commission in providing them
- Provide resource information, including location, capabilities, and management options to interested parties
- Enhance efforts to provide information to customers through the Internet and other emerging technologies
- Expand the volunteer corps that assists in boating safety and resource enhancement efforts
- Maintain a well-trained and highly-motivated cadre of deputy waterways conservation officers to assist the PFBC in carrying out agency program activities
- Encourage more partnerships that enhance the resource, the appreciation/knowledge of the resource and opportunities to enjoy it
- Provide programs that enhance awareness of the aquatic resources and fishing and boating opportunities

Funding

As measured in constant dollars, the amount of money available for Commission programs will remain relatively stable for the foreseeable future. This means that the Commission will have to focus its operating and personnel expenditures on its core programs and may have to reduce expenditures for other programs that are popular with some anglers and boaters.

As Commission capital improvement needs grow and the customer base shrinks, the Commission must actively work to expand the funding sources available to it. The Commission cannot continue to fund its infrastructure improvement needs out of operating revenues without adversely affecting other core programs. The Commission must seek to maintain the facilities and the level of service provided at current levels before allocating additional resources to expand capacity or create new infrastructure that also must be maintained. Projects needed to improve compliance with environmental laws and those that relate to resource and user protection will be top priorities.

Even without undertaking new initiatives, current demand for Commission facilities and services continue to outpace the financial resources available to address them. In many ways, the commission is a victim of its own success: The proven track record of sound fiscal

management and the dedication of employees to go “above and beyond” the call of duty has created unrealistic expectations in some circles. The Commission cannot perpetually achieve more with less. The fact that the Commission has long prided itself on being able to routinely perform the improbable does not mean the agency can automatically accomplish the impossible.

The funding needs of the Commission are many and growing: Currently there is a backlog of more than \$60 million in capital improvement and resource conservation project needs. These projects cannot be funded from existing operating revenues.

The Commission needs about \$18.5 million for dam repairs; \$20 million for hatchery effluent treatment system repairs and other hatchery related projects; and \$12 million for support facility upgrades.

The Commission's mandates and obligations extend statewide. The Commission's work to protect, conserve and enhance the resource greatly benefits all residents of Pennsylvania. With a declining fishing license base, the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania alone cannot and should not be expected to shoulder the responsibility for management and protection of the state's aquatic resources. We are at a critical juncture in the history of resource protection in Pennsylvania. The Commission must actively seek the support of all who benefit from its work – that is to say all Pennsylvanians. Commonwealth citizens, other than anglers and boaters, have indicated strong support for the Commission's waterways protection efforts and have indicated a willingness to pay for these efforts. The Commission must work to capitalize on this broad base of support.

Strategies for addressing fiscal concerns:

- Pursue an amendment to the Key 93 Act and/or the Environmental Stewardship Fund to provide the PFBC with long-term stable funding to support state conservation and recreation programs.
- Seek to fund capital improvement projects in innovative ways using bond moneys and dedicated funding from a source outside of the fish and boat funds; for example, a portion of the realty transfer tax, a percentage of the tipping fee collected on garbage disposal or other workable source percentage of the sales tax collected on outdoor recreation equipment, a fee assessed on the consumptive use of water, etc..
- Support new conservation and recreation funding initiatives.
- Obtain permanent, dedicated funding for nongame species conservation.