



Expanding Youth Education Programs

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) is proposing the creation of a new license category—the junior fishing license—to support new angler education programs specifically targeted at youth. This concept is not new. A \$2 junior fishing license category was part of the original House Bill 2155, introduced in November 2003, but the category was amended out by the time the bill was signed into law in December 2004. In May 1977, Commission Executive Director Ralph Abele proposed a \$3 youth license, and a \$2 youth license in 1973. The Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation has taken a strong stance in support of the current junior fishing license concept.

Reaching out to youth

Revenue from a junior license would be dedicated to new and expanding youth programs and initiatives, for example:

- o Grants to clubs and organizations using best practices in youth programs.
- o Training workshops to teach skills and best practices to youth leaders.
- o Purchase of equipment and materials for youth angling education programs.
- o Development of materials for youth club use and support for implementation.
- o Special youth-oriented events.

Key points

1. Revenue from the junior fishing license must be dedicated to youth programs and initiatives.
2. Revenue from the junior fishing license will be used for new programs, not current PFBC programs or activities.
3. Law enforcement will treat encounters between officers and youth as an opportunity to inform instead of punish.
4. Administration of the license must allow for license sales in quantity to clubs, organizations and others who are interested in sponsoring youth.
5. The junior fishing license should be inexpensive and for older anglers (that is, ages 12 to 15—and age and fee to be evaluated).

Do more with less?

Here's the dilemma: Should the Commission divert resources from current programs to provide even more support to youth education, or should we look for other ways to provide funding to keep our youth involved?

Scenario

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, an estimated 272,000 PA youth (ages 12 to 15) fished in 2000. Current discussions suggest a \$5 junior license fee. The PFBC receives Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) funds based in part on the number of licenses sold in the state.

Estimated revenue from a youth license

<i>272,000 youth ages 12-15 X \$5 suggested license fee =</i>	<i>\$1,360,000</i>
<i>272,000 licenses sold X approx. \$3 SFR funds =</i>	<i>\$ 816,000</i>
<i>Potential revenue</i>	<i>\$2,176,000</i>

This amount is nearly four times the amount the Commission currently spends on youth education.

The PFBC will work to include the opportunity for clubs and organizations to 'sponsor' or make bulk purchases of these licenses. This will enable others to purchase licenses for youth.

Will the cost keep kids from fishing?

We don't think it will. Compare the proposed fee to the costs for entertainment youth this age currently pay:

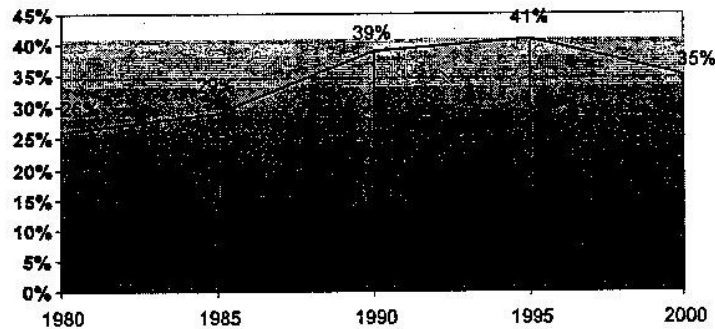
New music CD: \$13	Fast food value meal: \$6
DVD/video game rental: \$6	Video or computer game: \$39
Subscription to a teen magazine: \$20	Movie ticket: \$6.50
Daily admission to amusement park: \$15-\$42+	

Kids aren't fishing like they used to!

The Fish and Boat Commission hears this statement from many anglers. Statistics from the National Survey of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Recreation conducted every five years show just how much. In 1980, 26% of the Pennsylvania kids aged 6-15 fished. In 1995, that number climbed to 41%, but dropped to 35% in 2000. Concerns about declining participation have caused many of us to step up our efforts to reach out to youth. Clearly, even with all the attention paid, the number of young people that fish is declining.

Hundreds of organizations are reaching out to thousands of youngsters each year with a fishing message. They offer everything from weeklong camps to youth field days and derbies, and family oriented fishing events. But as we know, and the data suggest, it's not enough. Do you agree that we need to do more to reach out to youth—to keep them fishing?

Percent of Pennsylvania youth, aged 6 to 15, that fished, 1980-2000



Just the facts

Thirteen states require fishing licenses for their youth anglers (various age requirements). The average cost of a junior fishing license nationwide is \$12.16 (license only, no other permits included).

The cost of a fishing license is rarely a negative value for active or inactive anglers. License fee increases may explain short-term decreases in fishing participation, but they do not appear to affect long-term trends (Responsive Management, 1995).

More than one-third of hunters, anglers and boaters did not know that hunting and fishing licenses were a source of revenue for fish and wildlife management programs and the enhancement of hunting and fishing opportunities (Responsive Management, 1991).

Most commonly, youth overall said that they don't fish or that they don't fish more often because of time constraints (Responsive Management, 2003).

As early teens, young people become aware of the world around them and their relationship to it. The most appropriate time to foster ethical concern for animals and an understanding of ecology appears to be between 8th grade and 11th grade (approx. 13 to 18 years old) (Kellert, 1984).

Enforcement efforts

Commission would direct WCOs to use the encounter with unlicensed youth as an opportunity to inform instead of punish. As part of this process, they will make the parent and youth aware of the benefits of the license purchase, provide information on how to obtain one, and explain that this license revenue is used solely for youth programs. Officers could direct parents to those organizations sponsoring licenses, should that provision be included. However, provisions would also be in place to ensure that chronic violators don't abuse this process.

For more information: visit www.fish.state.pa.us