
Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : 'Resource first' for real now at PF&BC

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Personally, I like the sound of this! Clipped from the PA Outdoor News.

'Resource first' for real now at PF&BC

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By Jeff Mulhollem
Editor

Harrisburg - Adoption of a policy manual by Pennsylvania Fish & Boat commissioners could have been lost among the wide range of business the board handled at its quarterly meeting in mid-July, but some commissioners want to be sure it isn't.

The 47-page document is highlighted by a new mission statement that says in no uncertain terms that the agency's overriding goal is "resource first."

"Today was an historic day for the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission," said Commissioner Len Lichvar, of Somerset County. "We took a slogan and turned it into a mission."

"We mean business," agreed new Commissioner Bob Bachman, of Lancaster County, who was participating in his first public meeting for the agency. "We are not operating a playground or parks department. We want the public to know - and we want the agency's staff to know - that we are putting the resource first."

In the 1970s, the legendary then Fish Commission Executive Director Ralph Abele first coined the motto "Resource First." But some current commissioners believe the ethic was largely an unfulfilled promise that has been abandoned over the years in the commission's blind scramble to raise and stock more and more trout.

"Don't misunderstand," stressed Commissioner Bill Worobec, of Lycoming County. "We believe that trout-stocking serves a worthwhile purpose for the anglers of Pennsylvania and the Fish & Boat Commission. "But we spend a lot of money on raising millions of fish every year, and putting them places we shouldn't be.

"Stocking has become an end unto itself."

This was the first Fish & Boat Commission meeting in years that the board's 10-member complement was filled. One of the two latest appointees, Bachman, has no doubt about the commission's appropriate role.

"We must get back to our historical resource-first ethic," he said. "The Fish & Boat Commission is a

resource-management agency, and we have a legal mandate to protect, preserve and enhance the aquatic resources of the state.

“We cannot and will not manage our aquatic resources by consensus.”

In recent years, according to the agency's previous mission statement, providing fishing and boating opportunities came before the good of the state's aquatic resources. The actions taken at the recent meeting signal a significant shift in the board's philosophy, commissioners said.

Worobec explained that new commissioners intend to bring science back to the forefront of Fish & Boat Commission decision-making and empower the agency's scientific staff to do their jobs.

“Certainly it is our hope that this will allow the competent staff we have to go out and do their jobs without having them look over their shoulder,” he said. “We are telling them what we want and what we expect.”

In perhaps the first action spurred by the agency's new resource-first ethic, the commissioners directed staff at the meeting to undertake a complete a review of the commission's trout-stocking program.

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