

**Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director's Report  
January 1, 2026, to March 31, 2026**

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (Commission) strategic plan contains priorities involving workforce, access, engagement, non-game species and habitat, infrastructure, and sport fish and habitat. This quarterly report provides examples of the Commission's progress toward those priorities from January 1, 2026, through March 31, 2026.

**WORKFORCE**

**Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Class**

The 27th Waterways Conservation Officer Trainee class successfully completed training in the following areas: firearm proficiency, ice rescue, and defensive tactics. They were also presented with interactive mock scenarios to prepare them for their upcoming field training assignments. The cadets began their first session of field training on March 28, where they participated in numerous trout stockings and Mentored Youth Day. The field training session will continue through the Opening Day of Trout Season and end on April 24.

**Hiring Process Improvements**

The Commission provided internal training on hiring processes and developed a new Request to Post form to ensure completeness, enhance efficiency and document approvals for all requests to post vacant positions.

**Abandoned, Derelict and At-Risk Vessels (ADVs)**

Act 28 of 2025, which addresses ADVs, went into effect in January 2026. The new law increases penalties for owners that abandon their boats and empowers local municipalities and law enforcement agencies by giving them the tools to address ADVs located on public property or public waters in their jurisdictions. Bureaus from across the agency collaborated to implement and promote the new law. Outreach occurred with municipalities and legislative staff in the Cities of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Erie areas to ensure they were aware of the new tools at their disposal. Additionally, in February, the Commission hosted an informational hearing with the Pennsylvania House Game and Fisheries Committee at its Harrisburg headquarters on the implementation of Act 28. Further outreach and education opportunities will be occurring this spring and summer with municipalities throughout the state.

**Boating Safety Education**

Staff worked with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to recertify Pennsylvania's Basic Boating Education Course for compliance with national standards. Staff attended the annual NASBLA Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) workshop and committee workgroups. These work committees standardize and improved operations across the country in each of following areas: education and outreach, vessel identification, registration and titling, finance and grants, engineering, reporting and analysis, and law enforcement.

### **Fish Culturist Interstate Training**

Hatchery staff joined state fish and wildlife scientists from Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey and Delaware for a fish culture workshop that covered topics ranging from pathology, feed projections and fish culture in recirculating systems. The event was hosted by Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department at the Ed Weed Fish Culture Station located in Grand Isle, Vermont. Workshops and accommodations were provided free of charge to all participating states in the northeast.

### **Water Rescue Program**

The Commission's Water Rescue Program coordinated and trained the following:

- 11 new volunteer instructors during the *Instructor Level Ice Rescue & Emergency Response* Course on March 1, 2026, at Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County.
- 12 new volunteer instructors during the *Instructor Level Emergency Boat Operations & Rescue* Course on March 11-12, 2026, at Commission Headquarters, Dauphin County.
- 25 Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) officer cadets in *Ice Rescue & Emergency Response* on January 14, 2026, at Black Moshannon State Park, Centre County.
- 28 Pennsylvania National Guard members in *Ice Safety & Basic Survival* on February 21, 2026, at Boyds Park in Susquehanna Township, Dauphin County.
- 9 Commission educators in *Water Rescue for the First Responder* and *Ice Safety & Basic Survival* courses at the Commission's Central Region Office, Centre County.
- 9 Commission officer cadets in *Ice Rescue & Emergency Response* (National Fire Protection Associated 2500 Technician Level) and *Water Rescue for the First Responder* (National Fire Protection Associated 2500 Awareness Level) on January 27-29, 2026, at H.R. Stackhouse Training facility, Centre County.
- 9 Commission officer cadets in *Water Rescue & Emergency Response* (National Fire Protection Associated 2500 Operations), *Emergency Boat Operations & Rescue* (National Fire Protection Associated 2500 Technician Level) and *Advanced Line Systems Rescue* (National Fire Protection Associated 2500 Technician Level) on March 16-20, 2026, at H.R. Stackhouse Training facility, Centre County.

### **ACCESS**

#### **Angler and Boater Access Improvement Projects**

The following angler and boater access projects were completed by Commission staff and the Department of General Services (DGS) Job Order Contracting (JOC) program:

- **Linden Access, Lycoming County** - Commission engineering staff prepared plans and submitted permit drawings to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the construction of improvements to the Linden Access Area. This access provides boating access to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.
- **Lake Pleasant Access, Erie County** - Commission engineering staff prepared plans for the improvement of a primitive launch site and grading repairs to the existing parking area at Lake Pleasant.

### **Boating Facility Grant (BFG)**

Staff completed the review of 2026 Boating Facility Grant (BFG) applications. Out of the 16 applications received, eight BFG projects, \$100,000 and under were approved for grant funding by the Executive Director. Five BFG projects, over \$100,000, will be presented at the April 27 Commission meeting for funding consideration.

The Commission celebrated the completion and opening of the following BFG projects:

- **West Fairmont Park along the Schuylkill River, Philadelphia County** - The Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department installed an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible dock at the Dragon Boat Dock located in West Fairmont Park. The current dock is used by 14 dragon boat clubs, and many members of the public use the dock for access to the river for fishing and other water recreation.
- **Marlborough Township, Montgomery County** - The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy constructed a new nonmotorized access in Marlborough Township along Perkiomen Creek near Green Lane. Marlborough Township fully supports the project and has agreed to take over the maintenance of the facility. This boat launch is now the uppermost access point for the Perkiomen Creek Water Trail.
- **City of Warren, Warren County** - The City of Warren completed a design and engineering plan to construct a new boat launch facility along the Allegheny River in downtown Warren. The City's plan includes a single lane concrete boat launch ramp, a dock and gangway to provide access for motorized and nonmotorized boats, an access road and parking area, concrete sidewalks, landscaping, and signage.
- **Plains Township, Luzerne County** - Plains Township rehabilitated the existing boat launch facility at the Plainsville Flats Ray Condo Memorial Park.
- **Frankford Arsenal Boat Launch Facility, Philadelphia County** - The Riverfront North Partnership completed a Master Site Development Plan for the Frankford Arsenal boat launch facility. The Frankford Arsenal access is the largest on the Delaware River in Philadelphia and it has a dedicated stakeholder group that is invested in the site's success.
- **Schuylkill River, Philadelphia County** - The Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), conducted a feasibility study to improve a boat dock that serves motorized and nonmotorized boats as well as create another boating facility for nonmotorized boats on the tidal Schuylkill River.
- **Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (POWR)** - POWR administered a focused mini grant program (\$30,000 or less) to improve public access and recreation on rivers and streams throughout the Commonwealth. The mini grant program will be available to local government entities and non-profit groups for the construction of new or improvement of existing non-motorized public boating facilities. POWR the mini grant program will compliment and be modeled after the Commission's BFG Program and the PA Water Trails mini grant program.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

### **Show and Expo Engagement**

Commission staff from across the agency engaged with customers and provided educational resources to more than 17,000 people at nine statewide and regional shows and expos including the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Great American Outdoor Show, Philadelphia Fishing Show, Early Bird Expo, Western PA Muskie Max, Shenango Lake Eagle Fest, Penns Woods West Trout Unlimited (TU) Cabin Fever, Erie Boat and Fishing and the Lancaster Fly-Fishing Show.

### **Trout in the Classroom (TIC)**

With the assistance of volunteers, the Commission successfully packed and shipped 1,300 bags of trout eggs and supplies to 442 TIC participants. In addition, the Commission provided TIC training to 280 participants at the Penns Creek Annual Banquet. To keep up with the popularity of the program, new statewide partnerships were developed to better serve TIC teachers and classrooms. Partners include Asbury Woods, Wildlife Leadership Academy, DEP, and Pennsylvania's Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). Planned improvements include a regional mentor hub to support teachers, development of an updated curriculum and an on-demand, online workshop.

### **Virtual and In-Person Programming**

Education staff instructed 17 virtual and in-person angler, aquatic resource and basic boating education programs reaching around 1,000 participants. Angler programs included Virtual Ice Fishing, In-Person Ice Fishing, Ice Fishing Demos (RB Winter and Lackawanna State Parks), Casting Chat: Catfish Tactics, Fly Tying, Fly-fishing Basics, Women's Steelhead, Fly Tying, Trout Tune-up, Trout Spinner Fishing, and Fly-fishing. In addition, regional educators conducted two Fishing Skills Instructor (FSI) trainings to expand the Commission's capacity to provide educational programming across the Commonwealth.

### **R3 (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) Education Grant Program**

The Commission selected 16 projects from 14 counties for the R3 Education Grant Program that will foster interest in fishing and boating in the Commonwealth. Projects will run from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

### **Online Boating Safety Education**

The Commission's online boating education opportunities are expanding by establishing Recademics as an online boating course provider. This provider offers interactive learning as well as discounts for first responders, police, veterans and military personnel. Past learners will benefit from the new provider's offer to engage in free boating safety refreshers before they hit the water.

### **Technical and Community Advisory Teams for Dock Street Dam**

Staff coordinated with American Rivers in the development of a Technical Advisory Team and Community Advisory Team. These teams are potential lists of candidates to provide local perspectives and facilitate the study at the Dock Street Dam on the Susquehanna River, Dauphin County.

## **National Conference Attendance**

Staff from multiple bureaus attended regional and national conferences to build stronger partnerships, improve knowledge in their subject areas, and present on Commission initiatives in the Commonwealth. The following conferences were attended by Commission representatives:

- Staff participated in the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Partners Engagement Workgroup (formerly the Environmental Management and Advisory Committee or EMAC). The Commission reviewed and provided comments on their guidance for working within aquatic buffers.
- Staff presented the initial results of the West Branch Susquehanna River Mussel Restoration project to the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative Technical Committee.
- Staff participated in a joint meeting with PGC and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) PA Field Office staff to discuss common issues and coordinate continued collaboration.
- Staff attend the annual Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.) Conservation Summit in Knoxville, TN.
- The Commission hosted five regional seminars for cooperative nursery sponsor organizations. Topics covered during the seminars included Cooperative Nursery Program updates, Cooperative Nursery Program policy revision update, trout rearing in various environmental conditions, and other discussion topics as initiated by sponsor organizations. Longevity awards were also presented to sponsor organizations for their involvement in the Cooperative Nursery Program.

## **NON-GAME SPECIES AND HABITAT**

### **Mudpuppies**

Commission biologists trapped mudpuppies from the Ohio River Basin for augmentation into Dunkard Creek, Greene County as part of the Dunkard Creek Restoration project. A small number of collected mudpuppies were provided for Salamander Mussel glochidia infestations at the Union City Aquatic Conservation Center, Erie County.

### **PA Wildlife Action Plan (Plan)**

Significant progress has been made towards completing the draft PA Wildlife Action Plan (Plan). Plan objectives and strategies were distributed to the Plan Advisory Committee for comment. Supportive and constructive feedback was received and has been incorporated into the draft. Next steps include continued development of several case studies and special focus sections on invasive species, fish and wildlife health, and fire management. Development of a shared Plan webpage, and a cover design, are in progress. The Plan Conservation Opportunity Area Tool and Conservation Action Tracker were launched as the re-branded Plan Wildlife Action Map ([Home | Wildlife Action Map](#)). Together, these tools provide users with features supporting conservation planning and implementation.

### **Preserving Freshwater Mussel Records**

The Commission is organizing freshwater mussel survey data for transfer to partners at the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP). To date, over five hundred freshwater mussel species records for listed species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) have been added because of Commission surveys from 2018-2024. In addition, staff provided freshwater mussel specimens to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History for inclusion into their collection. Specimens are donated to the museum whenever their collection is significant to mussel conservation (e.g., range expansion, rediscovery of historic species). Specimens held in the museum collections act as a time stamp, allowing future biologists a reference point for understanding trends in colonization or extirpation, and for comparing shell materials across time.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Huntsdale Property Expansion**

The Commission acquired a 7.3 acre parcel adjacent to the Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery in Carlisle, Cumberland County. The parcel contains a portion of Irishtown Run. Acquisition of this parcel is an important addition to the Huntsdale parcel and will provide room for new projects in future years.

#### **Adaptive Boat Launches**

The Commission ordered and received three ADA adaptable boat launches. These systems were received at our Centre Region Office and will be installed by engineering staff at Lower Woods Pond and Belmont Lake in Wayne County and Kaercher Creek in Berks County. These launches were 50% funded with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) monies.

#### **100% Fish Waste Utilization Initiative**

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP) sponsor a 100% fish and fish waste utilization initiative. The project's goal is to demonstrate how 100% of the fish caught from the Great Lakes can be used for different purposes beyond just food. A 100% Great Lakes fish strategy holds tremendous promise for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region to more completely utilize caught fish and the fish waste, drive greater economic returns, create jobs and help develop rural economies. The Commission signed this initiative on March 23 at the Walnut Creek Marina in Erie County. Commission staff also continue to work on a cooperative agreement to begin a research project in collaboration with GSGP in the summer of 2026 as a pilot sportfish cleaning project at Walnut Creek Marina's public fish cleaning station.

#### **Quarterly Dam Inspections**

Engineers completed quarterly dam inspections at all 33 Commission operated high-hazard dams as required by the PA Code, Title 25, Chapter 105 regulatory requirements.

#### **Legislative Updates**

Senate Bill 1213 was introduced and referred to the Pennsylvania Senate Game and Fisheries Committee in March and proposes an increased snagging penalty (to an S1).

### **Sweet Valley Regional Office, Luzerne County**

The Northeast Region Office is currently under construction. The project includes the development of a new 6,200-square-foot office building and a 2,200-square-foot maintenance shop, following the demolition of the existing fisheries and law enforcement facilities. Once complete, the office building will provide modern workspace for Law Enforcement, Fisheries, Education and Outreach, and Construction and Maintenance staff. Key features include 10 offices, two storage rooms, a small laboratory, and two conference rooms that can be combined into a larger meeting space as needed. The new maintenance shop is designed to offer sufficient capacity for staff to service and support critical maintenance equipment, improving operational efficiency for the region. The project is currently 58% complete and remains on schedule for its targeted completion date of June 14, 2026. Contractors are actively engaged on-site with ongoing activities that include site drywall and interior rough ins of plumbing, electrical, and HVAC.

### **SPORT FISH AND HABITAT**

#### **Shoreline Fish Habitat Project**

In partnership with DCNR Prince Gallitzin State Park and the DCNR Resource Section, the Commission completed a shoreline fish habitat project at Glendale Lake, Cambria County, in February of 2026. The Lake Habitat Section worked to stabilize 1,300 feet of eroded shoreline. The crew used heavy machinery and hundreds of tons of stone to build stone deflectors and 50 rock rubble humps. These new shoreline fish habitat structures will help improve the fishing in this area by providing rock habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates. The project also provides increased angler access and better water quality by stabilizing the eroded banks at Glendale Lake. Plans to enhance the riparian buffer are scheduled for later this year.

#### **2026 Delaware River Creel Survey**

The Commission, in cooperation with the Delaware River Basin Commission and other state agencies, commenced the 2026 Delaware River Creel Survey on March 1 that will run through July 6. Survey locations span from the Delaware Memorial Bridge near Wilmington, DE upstream to and including the East and West Branches of the Delaware Rivers near Hancock, NY. Surveys will also be conducted on the Brandywine River, Schuylkill River, and Lehigh River. These interviews will occur randomly to provide an unbiased assessment of the anglers who utilize these resources. Angler participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, with questions focused on anglers' targeted species, number of fish caught and harvested, and overall satisfaction with fishing in the Delaware River Basin. Furthermore, if permitted by an angler, creel survey staff will collect select biological data from harvested fish.

#### **Pennsylvania Aquatic Connectivity Team Meeting**

The Commission hosted the annual Pennsylvania Aquatic Connectivity Team meeting at the Centre Region Office on March 17. Over 60 partners attended the meeting which included many other state agencies such as PGC, DCNR, Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission (SCC), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and DEP.

**Trout Stocking**

Commission hatcheries distributed approximately 1,538,350 adult Brook, Brown, Rainbow, and Golden Rainbow Trout as part of the pre-season trout stocking efforts from February through March 2026. Throughout the Commonwealth, these adult trout were stocked into roughly 603 streams and 123 lakes prior to Mentored Youth Day. Approximately 285,000 of over 300,000 Brown Trout that averaged 7 - 8 inches were stocked into Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay, and the tributaries. Additionally, about 394,000 Steelhead smolts were stocked into Lake Erie and the tributaries. In a collaborative effort across the Commission and with the help of volunteers, over 1.6 million Steelhead eggs were collected during the steelhead spawn.