

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director's Report
April 1, 2026, to June 30, 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 April 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026.

WORKFORCE

Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Class

The 27th Waterways Conservation Officer Trainee class participated in their first field training session from March 28 to April 24. This session encompassed Mentored Youth Day, Opening Day of trout season and in-season trout stockings. The focus of this field training session was to provide the cadets with enforcement experience during trout season. Upon their return to the H.R. Stackhouse Training School, the class received training in venomous snake handling, threatened and endangered species, aquatic invasive species (AIS), fish kills and pollution events, Boating Under the Influence and Field Sobriety Tests, boat handling and boat incident investigations. The second field training session began on June 13 and ended on July 10. The focus of this session was boat law enforcement.

Patrol Boat Acquisition

The Commission was awarded a Port Security Grant in 2024 for two patrol boats. Lake Assault Boats was awarded the bid to build the boats, and in May 2026, they delivered a 21' patrol boat, which will be used along the lower Delaware River in the Philadelphia area. The second boat, a 27' enclosed cabin patrol boat to be used on Lake Erie, is scheduled for delivery later this summer. In addition, a 21' Boston Whaler Guardian patrol boat is designated for Raystown Lake, a 19' G3 patrol boat will go to the Allegheny River in Armstrong County and a 20' jet boat will be acquired for use along the Susquehanna River in Northumberland and Montour counties.

Board of Commissioners and Boating Advisory Board

The Senate Rules & Executive Nominations Committee met on June 10 and unanimously confirmed William Brock and Robert "BJ" Small to continue their roles representing the third and sixth districts, respectively, on the Board of Commissioners. They also moved Boating Advisory Board (BAB) Vice Chair, Steven Ketterer, to serve on the Board of Commissioners as a Boating-At-Large member to fill the vacancy following Commissioner Richard Lewis's retirement. Michael Hills was appointed to serve on the BAB in the position formerly held by Steven Ketterer. The Board of Commissioners and BAB are at full complement.

Northeast Conservation Leadership Program (NECLP)

The Commission nominated two staff who were accepted to join the 2026 cohort of the NECLP. NECLP is a prestigious leadership program offered through the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) that provides conservation professionals with the opportunity to expand their leadership skills.

Swiftwater Rescue Team Credentialing

The Commission completed inspections to issue Swiftwater Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition (VRSR) credentials to the following emergency response organizations:

- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Montgomery County
- Bristol Township Fire Department, Bucks County
- Young Men's Volunteer Fire Company, Union County
- City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety Bureau of Emergency Management Services (EMS), Allegheny County

ACCESS

Boating Facility Grant (BFG) Program

Staff drafted cooperative agreements for 13 projects that were awarded grant funds for 2026. Eight BFG projects, \$100,000 and under, were approved for grant funding by Executive Director Schaeffer. Five BFG projects, over \$100,000, were approved for funding by the Board of Commissioners at the April 27 meeting. Previously awarded projects continued to be monitored by staff to ensure they meet the needs of anglers and boaters.

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:

- **West Hickory Access, Forest County:** Commission staff provided construction oversight of improvements that included the addition of a gravel parking area and path to the river for paddlers and the sealcoating and line painting of the existing parking area at West Hickory Access located along the Allegheny River.
- **Wysox Access, Bradford County:** Commission staff oversaw grading and drainage improvements at the Wysox Access Area. This access provides boating access to the Susquehanna River.
- **Lake Pleasant Access, Erie County:** Commission staff managed construction improvements to a primitive launch and grading repairs to the existing parking area at Lake Pleasant.
- **Apple Tree Access, Wyoming County:** Commission staff provided construction oversight and quality control for the re-paving of the existing asphalt parking lot. This access provides boating access to the North Branch of the Susquehanna River.
- **Mahoning Lake, Sportsmans Access, Armstrong County:** Commission construction staff began construction to replace storm water piping and roadway surfacing to improve the access roadway to the Sportsmans Access Area on Mahoning Lake.

ENGAGEMENT

Linesville Open House

The Commission successfully hosted the annual Linesville State Fish Hatchery (SFH) Open House on April 11. The event was well attended with over 1,800 visitors participating in

several learning stations and activities, including amphibian and reptile displays, Walleye spawning, fish filleting, cooking demonstrations and T-shirt fish printing.

Pennsylvania Envirothon

Commission educators and WCOs facilitated the aquatic ecology station at the Pennsylvania Envirothon competition at Camp Mount Luther in Mifflinburg, Union County. Over 320 participants from 63 counties across the Commonwealth completed tests on aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife and current issues. Penncrest High School, Delaware County won the overall event and had the highest score at the aquatic ecology station. Penncrest will move on to compete at the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon in Mississippi this July.

Riverfront North Partnership (RNP) Fish Fest

Staff partnered with RNP and other community organizations to offer the RNP Fish Fest at the Frankford Boat Ramp property along the Delaware River in Philadelphia, Philadelphia County on Saturday, May 30. Over 300 participants fished, kayaked, biked, and engaged in various outdoor activities.

Good Habitat = Good Fishing

The Commission teamed up with Penn State University's (PSU) Joe Humphreys School of Fly Fishing to offer five Good Habitat = Good Fishing programs at Colyer Lake in Centre County for 97 PSU students. Staff also delivered the same program at Bald Eagle State Park to 49 students from Renovo High School Environmental Science Club and Central Mountain High School shop/construction classes. Topics included the importance of lake habitat, construction of porcupine structures and fishing.

Annual Women's Retreat

The Commission partnered with the PA Council of Trout Unlimited (TU) Women's Committee to host a successful 7th Annual Women's Mentor Retreat in May for 41 participants from across the state. Highlights of the weekend included informational presentations on trip planning, fly tying, riparian buffer planting and tips and tricks for mentors. Multiple hands-on workshops were offered along with guided fishing trips and fireside networking.

Fishing Skills Instructor Training

Education staff delivered four Fishing Skills Instructor trainings to 76 participants and two Flyfishing Skills Instructor trainings to 29 participants from several different partner organizations. Two days of training was provided in mid-June to 20 new State Park Environmental Educators from across the Commonwealth, including one day of Fishing Skills Instructor training and one day of Boating and Water Safety Awareness and paddling skills training, culminating with educators receiving their PA Boating Safety Education Certificates.

Statewide Specialized Programming

Education staff planned statewide initiatives to offer Catfish Fishing and Women's Educational Programs. The 19 Women's programs started in May and will continue through October on a variety of topics including fishing, hike-in fishing, flyfishing, kayak fishing, and kayaking. The series of Catfish Fishing programs started in June and will continue through August. All public events are posted to the [Events Calendar](#), located on the homepage of the [Commission's website](#).

Great Lakes Commission (GLC)

Commission staff presented the implementation of Act 28, Pennsylvania's Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) law, to the GLC. The GLC was created in 1955 via the Great Lakes Basin Compact. The eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces are represented on the nonpartisan GLC by a delegation of government-appointed commissioners. The GLC recommends policies and practices to balance the use, development, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes and brings the region together to work on issues that no single community, state, province, or nation can tackle alone.

Interagency Connectivity Collaboration

The Commission participated in interagency work group discussions, meetings, and conferences to present ongoing research and advance the development of wildlife corridors and crossings through coordinated agency efforts. Commission staff participated in the Annual PA Aquatic Connectivity Team meeting and the Aquatic Restoration Conference sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In addition to DEP, other Commonwealth agencies involved in the Connectivity Work Group include the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

NON-GAME SPECIES AND HABITAT

Regional Effort for Amphibians and Reptile Conservation

Commission staff are coordinating with the State of Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation on Commonwealth Amphibian and Reptile Survey augmentation projects for coastal plain herptile species.

Aquatic Species Restoration

The Commission continued its work to propagate, conserve and restore non-game and rare species throughout the Commonwealth. This included the propagation and stocking of 2.1 million American Shad into the Juniata River, and the collection of federally endangered Clubshell mussel brood to be used for propagation research.

Invasive Species Newsletter

Staff wrote an educational article for the PA iMapInvasives newsletter about inter-basin transfers of aquatic invasive species native to parts of Pennsylvania and considered invasive in other parts of the Commonwealth. In addition, Commission staff co-authored an educational

article for the Angler & Boater May/June Magazine with PA Sea Grant about aquarium pet releases.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP)

The Commission finalized a cooperative agreement with the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP) to begin a research project in June of 2026 as a pilot sportfish cleaning project at Walnut Creek Marina's public fish cleaning station. GSGP sponsors a 100% fish and fish waste utilization initiative. The 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.

Maintenance and Improvement Projects

The following infrastructure projects were completed by Commission staff and DGS Job Order Contracting (JOC) program:

- **Walnut Creek Marina, Erie County:** Commission staff provided construction oversight and quality control for the replacement of marina basin lighting. The project included the construction of new concrete bases, power supply lines and light poles and fixtures. Commission carpenters completed a roof renovation project that included the installation of new asphalt shingle roof of the Walnut Creek Marina maintenance building. Commission construction and maintenance staff also completed annual dredging of the Walnut Creek channel for the safe passage of boats from the marina to Lake Erie. The project included the removal of approximately 13,000 yards of sand from the marina channel.
- **Reynoldsdale State Fish Hatchery, Bedford County:** The Reynoldsdale Capital Infrastructure Project to install raceway overhead covers began construction on March 2, 2026, and is scheduled to be completed on time by October 25, 2026.

Run-of-the-River Dams and Aids to Navigation (ATON)

Staff continued to work with DEP to solidify the run-of-the-river (ROR) dam list. This greatly enhances the Commission's ability to effectively coordinate inspection and ensure compliance with dam marking requirements contained in Title 30. Letters addressing ROR dam awareness were sent to all owners/permittees from the list maintained by DEP to check all signs and buoys for compliance. In addition, the Commission continued to have ATON discussions with DCNR and DEP to improve safety awareness options on new dams that have been added to the ROR dam list by DEP. Commission staff processed 595 Permits to Install Floating Structures and Private ATON this year.

Habitat Improvement Project Highlights

The following habitat improvement projects were conducted in partnership with local and regional organizations:

- **Conneaut Lake, Crawford County:** Commission staff partnered with the DCNR, the Crawford County Conservation District, local Master Watershed Stewards and 32 students from Conneaut Area Middle School to plant 25 trees, 50 shrubs and spread wildflower seeds to supplement the shoreline stabilization work completed at the Commission's boat launch at Conneaut Lake.
- **Big Spring Creek, Cumberland County:** Commission staff partnered with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Cumberland County Conservation District to improve fish habitat on 1,650 feet of Big Spring Creek located on Commission-owned property outside of Newville. The project included installation of 222 habitat enhancement structures that stabilized streambanks and support existing wetlands. The structures will increase the amount of available overhead cover and create better riffles, runs and pools.

SPORT FISH AND HABITAT

Fish Surveys

Staff evaluated warm-water and cool-water fisheries in numerous rivers and impoundments during the quarter. Highlights included the following two surveys:

- **Frances Slocum Lake, Luzerne County** - A trap net survey targeting Muskellunge, was conducted and resulted in the capture of 13 Muskellunge. This lake has been part of a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tagging study where 70 Muskellunge have been implanted with PIT tags since 2013. Of the 13 caught in 2026, seven were previously captured. The remainder of the untagged Muskellunge were implanted with a PIT tag. The largest Muskellunge was 39.8 inches long and weighed 19.7 pounds.
- **Annual Delaware Estuary Striped Bass Spawning Stock Survey** - A total of 196 Striped Bass were collected across the 38 index sites, with an additional 47 fish collected during exploratory and supplemental tagging runs. These fish ranged in length from 9 inches to 46 inches and while the total number of fish collected this year was higher than in recent years, it will still likely be below long-term average once the dataset is analyzed. Additionally, in coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, anchor tags were deployed in 216 Striped Bass greater than 16 inches to monitor movement and disposition of these fish along the coast. However, for the third straight year, the abnormally hot, dry spring precluded staff from sampling Trenton Falls for additional supplemental tagging purposes. Finally, the abundance of invasive Freshwater Drum appears to be increasing rapidly, as a total of 15 individuals were collected (which is more than the previous 5 years combined; 12 total fish), with numerous others observed during the survey.

Hatchery Stocking

The Commission's trout hatcheries distributed 1,494,316 adult Brook, Brown, and Rainbow Trout to 891 stream sections and 117 lakes from April through June 2026. During the same time frame, staff stocked 7,327 Golden Rainbow Trout and hatchery staff distributed approximately 1,000,000 fingerling Brown and Rainbow Trout as part of the Put, Grow, and Take program. In addition, the Commission's warm/cool water hatcheries distributed approximately 12,875,000 Walleye fry, 812,149 Walleye fingerlings, and 5,020 yearling Muskellunge so far this spring.