

Report Highlights

A Performance Audit of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Act 2004-159 amended the Fish and Boat Code to implement a new license fee structure and requires the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) to conduct a performance audit of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) every three years. In this third cyclical report we found:

- **Total Fish Fund and Boat Fund revenues have increased by 7.8 percent over the last three years** – In FY 2011-12, PFBC revenues totaled \$55 million, including \$38.8 million (70.5 percent) deposited in the Fish Fund and \$16.2 million (29.5 percent) deposited in the Boat Fund. Licenses and fees accounted for 68 percent of all Fish Fund revenues and 46 percent of all Boat Fund revenues.
- **The PFBC has made efforts to contain the growth in spending** – Although total combined spending increased by 16.9 percent from FY 2009-10 through FY 2011-12, the efforts to contain costs are apparent when examining expenditures in FY 2011-12 and comparing them to the two previous fiscal years. Combined personnel spending increased only 0.7 percent from FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12 and operations costs rose 3.8 percent. In contrast, personnel costs were up 11.5 percent and operation costs were up 14.2 percent from FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11.
- **The Boat Fund reserve balance is projected to become insufficient to meet cash flow needs by FY 2016-17** – Projections show that the Fish Fund balance is adequate to support operations at least through FY 2017-18.
- **The PFBC implemented many of the objectives of its *Strategic Plan July 2012 – June 2015* but, due to funding issues, is developing a new plan for adoption in 2014** – The PFBC has made significant progress in implementing the goals and activities of its strategic plan. We consider 26 of the 49 activities to be “fully or largely” achieved, 15 partially achieved, and only 5 of the activities “not achieved or largely not achieved.” Several of those activities were not completed due to staffing issues or were dependent on outside participants.
- **The PFBC has largely implemented our recommendations from the 2010 report** – The PFBC has: (1) identified and secured sustainable revenue streams by advocating for funds to assist with the permit reviews for unconventional deep oil and gas shale wells, establishing natural gas and water access programs, and continuing to pursue a consumptive use and degradation of water fee; (2) completed their hatcheries cost savings review, reporting \$157,000 in savings to date based on its implementation; and (3) evaluated its marketing outcomes and has recently contracted with a marketing consultant to promote its new multi-year licenses as well as its annual licenses.
- **The PFBC implemented a reorganization in 2012 to address identified needs** – An agency climate survey identified the following: (1) need to reduce the size of the division of fish production; (2) need for a field operations unit to balance the agency since many of its activities occur outside of the main headquarters; and (3) need for Human Resources to have better communication with the Executive Director. Although PFBC staff indicate that the new organization has been successful, it is too early to evaluate if it addresses those needs.
- **Fishing license sales decreased in 2010 and 2011 but have increased by 5.5 percent for resident licenses sold in 2012.** – The PFBC attributes part of this increase to their marketing efforts of multi-year licenses that they began offering in December 2012. Although sales increased in 2012, the PFBC sold 67,255 fewer resident licenses than were sold in 2002.

Recommendations:

- The PFBC should (a) proceed with its efforts to streamline its strategic plan to focus on core functions and (b) conduct a review of its new organizational structure at the end of FY 2013-14 to determine whether the goals identified for change have been achieved.
- The General Assembly should consider amending the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA) to clarify and broaden the scope of legal protection for landowners who make their property (i.e., land and water areas) available for public recreational purposes.