

## **Adopted April 22, 2008**

### **Resource First Policy**

“Resource First” is a philosophy that describes the first priority of the commission’s mission and that of the Fish and Boat Code as well as the commission’s fundamental role in fulfilling and supporting the provisions of Article 1, Section 27 (Natural Resources and Public Estate) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

It represents:

1. The commissioners’ belief that the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources are the valuable collateral that secures all fishing and boating activities.
2. The notion that protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources is the agency’s first management priority.
3. The commissioners’ expectation that the agency’s activities, regulations, and methods of work will be evaluated and practiced within the context of this priority.

It is not a wild-fish-only policy and should not be interpreted as such. Nor does it represent a commitment to eliminate hatcheries or fish stocking.

The commissioners expect this philosophy to:

1. Provide the basis for scientifically managing and protecting the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and maximizing fishing and boating opportunities.
2. Lead to different ways of allocating the agency’s limited financial resources.
3. Support new, scientifically-based approaches to distributing and raising expensive, stocked fish.
4. Provide the basis for protecting and enhancing viable wild fisheries and other resources under the agency’s jurisdiction.

The “Resource First” philosophy further establishes the ethical principle that the agency’s primary role is that of a conservation organization. Accordingly, its responsibility extends beyond merely providing fishing and boating opportunities to the public. Rather, it establishes a commitment to optimizing those opportunities through the application of good science throughout the Commonwealth.

It also establishes the firm expectation that the agency will:

1. Not engage in or support activities or regulations that may bring undue harm to its aquatic resources.
2. Constantly strive to develop and improve upon its ability to make scientifically-informed decisions on the impact of various regulations and practices on the aquatic resources and boating interests it is charged to protect.

Should doubt or confusion arise regarding this priority, the agency will:

1. Opt for the more conservative position of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the water, the habitat within its attendant watershed, and the life within it.
2. Develop all of its activities in a scientifically supportable manner that is consistent with this philosophy and the most currently available research.
3. Implement changes, whenever feasible, in its regulations and practices to eliminate such doubt or confusion.

Example:

A Resource First management strategy demands continual assessment of the resource, an ongoing evaluation of the impact of angling pressure on that resource, and a commitment to making changes as conditions dictate. Such changes will be directed toward insuring that the diverse fisheries of the Commonwealth become and remain the best attainable consistent with the social and environmental stresses placed upon them.

If a change in regulation or stocking results in a substantial improvement in the standing crop and proportion of quality-sized wild fish, it may be considered a success even if a decrease in angling hours is associated with such a change. In the final analysis, both the impact on the resource (fish population) and the angling opportunity it affords will be taken into account with the primary goal being that of restoring and maintaining fish populations to the highest possible, sustainable levels. This approach recognizes that it is impossible to set specific numerical objectives for all the varied fisheries in the Commonwealth. It therefore mandates the application of sound fisheries management techniques and professional judgment by the fisheries manager. Such techniques and judgments will emphasize the maintenance of high standing stocks of naturally-sustaining populations of sport fish while also providing good fishing opportunities.