



Anglers and Recreational Boaters Fund Conservation throughout the U.S.

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Angling is a hobby enjoyed by millions of Americans, often with family and friends. However, it also has a critical role in conservation of our waterways and fisheries—both the dollars and cents of it and the people working to conserve our country's natural resources.

Combating decades of decline

At the turn of the 20th century, uncontrolled discharges of industrial waste and raw sewage, unrestricted logging and mining, and soil erosion caused by poor land use threatened to destroy the nation's most productive waterways. Once-flourishing fisheries and their aquatic habitat were severely degraded during America's rush into the industrial age.

The problem was much broader as fishing for commercial purposes became a major conservation issue. Much like market hunting of wildlife, fishing for profit was unregulated and without catch limits. In many freshwater locations, fish populations were decimated.

In response, anglers and hunters alike led efforts to

establish state agencies tasked with restoring fish and wildlife, managing these resources based on sound science and conserving lands and waters that provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife.

Along with regulations to improve and protect habitat and manage fish populations, anglers devised a “user pay” system through which taxes, licenses and other fees paid by sportsmen would fund conservation. Their investments over many decades have revived fish populations and at the same time have helped to improve water quality across the country.

Anglers provide critical conservation funding

It is no secret that sportsmen provide the majority of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. In fact, anglers, recreational boaters, hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts fund up to 75 percent of state agency budgets. These investments provide incredible benefits to all Americans. The most significant sources of fisheries conservation funding come in several categories.

Excise taxes: Anglers and recreational boaters contribute to conservation of aquatic resources by funding the Sport Fish Restoration Program. This federal program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provides funds for fishery projects, boating access and aquatic education.

In 1950, anglers and groups like the Izaak Walton League helped to pass the Sport Fish Restoration Act, also called the Dingell-Johnson Act. This law provides for dedicated funding to state fish and wildlife agencies for fishery conservation and restoration of sport fish species and their habitats.

Initially, revenue came from excise taxes on fishing tackle and equipment like rods, reels and creels. However, in 1984, the Sport Fish Restoration Act was modified, via the Wallop-Breaux Amendment, to direct a portion of gasoline taxes assessed on small-engine and motorboat fuel to the program, to tax previously untaxed fishing equipment and to impose import duties on tackle and boats.

Over the past 70 years, taxes on fishing tackle, trolling motors, fish finders and boats—including jet skis, yachts and wake sporting boats—and motorboat fuel have generated over \$11.7 billion. Those funds help to restore many species of fish, provide boating access (by funding public boat ramps, for example) and improve water quality (for instance, by supporting installation of facilities for disposal of wastewater from larger boats).

Fishing licenses: In general, anglers are required to purchase one or more licenses each year, depending on what species and where they wish to fish (i.e., fresh, salt or brackish tidal water). Some states may require a general fishing license and another for trout.

Nationwide, the sale of fishing licenses and related tags, permits and stamps to 32 million license holders exceeds \$903 million.



Conservation investments provide benefits for all Americans

Aquatic habitat that is conserved and managed through funding generated by anglers and recreational boaters directly supports and benefits all life found in our waterways—not just species that are fished. Imperiled native and forage fish species

benefit, amphibians and turtles thrive in wetlands and public lands with healthy waterways provide migratory corridors for a variety of wildlife.

Also, a fair amount of the projects funded by the Sport Fish Restoration Program are not connected to fisheries conservation. Projects increase boating access, promote boating safety and recruit anglers and recreational boating participants.

Lands and waters purchased by state and federal governments are generally open to the public—and these purchases are made possible in part by taxes and fees paid by sportsmen. Waterways that support thriving fisheries also provide sources of drinking water for nearby communities. All of these conservation efforts benefit Americans across the country—whether or not they fish or own a motorboat.

Get involved

Americans who enjoy fishing and boating fund critical conservation efforts that simply could not be accomplished without the taxes and fees they pay at the local, state and national levels. The Izaak Walton League and our members proudly support these programs and encourage everyone to enjoy outdoor America and get involved in conserving it for future generations.