



# RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FISHING LICENSES

## ABSTRACT

From October to December of 2017, our project group has collected information from environmental government organizations and recreational fishermen to make recommendations to the staff in charge of the Puerto Rican recreational fishing license program.

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# Recommendation:

**Involve the public as much as possible with fisheries management since they are willing to financially support it.**



**“If you ask 50 fishermen what time it is, you will get 50 different answers.”**

– Interviews conducted in Nantucket

Based on our interviews with environmental government organizations, we suggest that the Puerto Rico DNER contact the larger fishermen associations in the area and discuss the needs for recreational fishing licenses fees to help support projects to enhance the island's fishery. Previously in Puerto Rico's history, fishermen associations have become lobbying agencies for the fishermen by serving their social, economic, and political interests. We suggest that the DNER inform the organizations of the benefits of fishing licenses and the harms that come with an ill managed fishery, they will be more understanding moving forward. Fishermen organization's support has previously allowed licensing organizations such as Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management to get license fees passed through legislature.

Our findings suggest that the DNER have the program's regulations complete for the fisherman organizations to view and make logical changes according to the organizations' views. It is important to consider their opinions. Having their views included in the program only increases the chances that the program will succeed. However, from talking with agencies, we have learned how difficult it can be please all stakeholders of recreational fishing. From our interviews at the Nantucket Shellfish Hatchery, they explained communicating with fishermen was difficult by inferring, "if you ask 50 fishermen what time it is, you will get 50 different answers."

# Recommendation:

Reserve space on website for information of where license prices go.

Licensing organizations such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources have had success posting documents and reports informing fishermen where the license funds are allocated on websites. The agency has experienced positive responses due to their level of transparency about license prices. Below is an example of a News Release they have on their website to explain “Where does my fishing license dollar go?”

The screenshot shows the website for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The header includes the DNR logo and name, a search bar, and navigation links for Recreation, Destinations, Nature, Education & Safety, Licenses, Permits & Regulations, Events Calendar, and About DNR. The main content area features a news release titled "Where does my fishing license dollar go?" dated May 9, 2011. The release explains that when an angler buys a Minnesota fishing license, the money goes to various sources: 50% from license fees (\$18 million), 32% from a federal tax on fishing gear, 12% from Minnesota State Lottery revenues, and 4% from other funds like clean water, water recreation, special revenue, and gift funds. A quote from Dirk Peterson, fisheries chief, states that the DNR wants anglers to know the source of their revenues and how they are used. The release concludes by noting that most of the DNR's work is funded by anglers, and the state's General Fund does not pay for fish management.

**m** DEPARTMENT OF  
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## News Release

### Where does my fishing license dollar go?

May 9, 2011

When an angler buys a Minnesota fishing license, it usually lands in a wallet, purse or tackle box. But where does the angler's money go? That's the \$18 million question.

"We're glad to answer it," said Dirk Peterson, fisheries chief for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "In fact, we want anglers to know the source of our revenues and how we put them to work."

According to Peterson, the DNR's fisheries section has a yearly operating budget of about \$35 million. About 50 percent of that amount – or \$18 million – comes from anglers who purchase a fishing license or stamps. About 32 percent of the budget is derived from a federal tax on fishing gear. Minnesota State Lottery revenues account for 12 percent. And four other funds – clean water, water recreation, special revenue, and gift – round out the remaining 4-plus percent of operating budget revenues.

"Most of what we do is funded by the anglers who buy licenses and stamps," said Peterson. "The state's General Fund does not pay for fish management. Legacy Amendment tax revenues have yet

# Recommendation:

**Include the vendor fee in the original price of the license.**

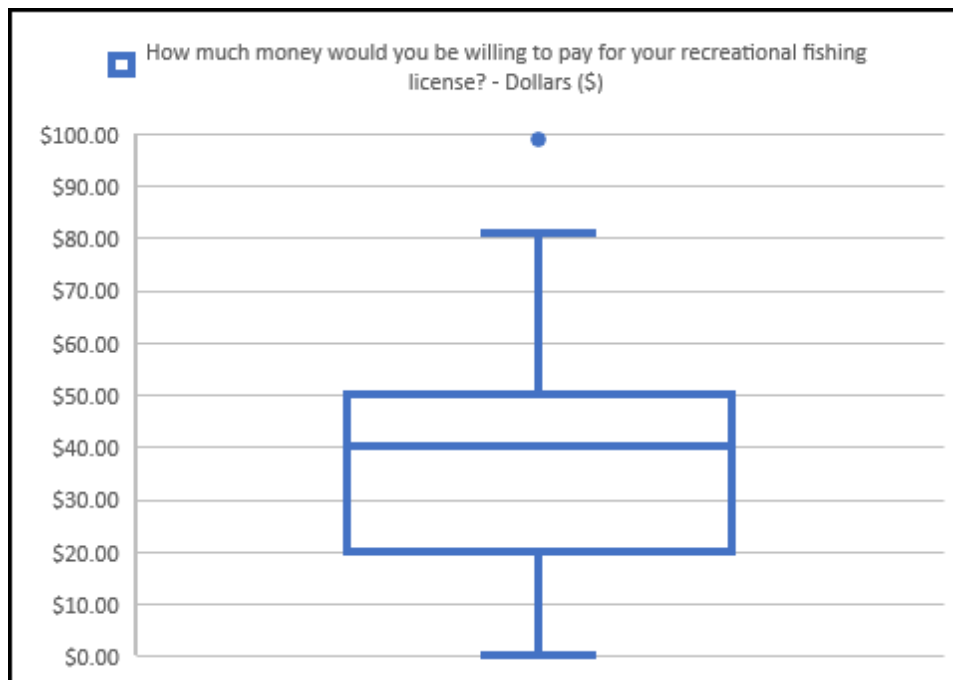


A vendor fee is the additional money the agency pays to outside businesses like online distributors or sporting goods stores to distribute licenses to the public. Of course, to use these companies for distribution purposes, it costs money. To cover these costs, environmental governmental organizations use two different methods. For example, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management originally includes a vendor fee in the license price. So when a fisherman goes to purchase a \$7 annual license, the total cost \$7. In contrast, The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries includes the vendor fee at the “checkout point” of the license purchase. So when a fisherman goes to purchase a \$10 annual license, it costs more than \$10. We suggest since the Puerto Rico DNER has had trouble gaining

# Recommendation:

**Provide an additional option for customers purchasing a recreational fishing license where they can donate more money towards the department.**

From our survey, we discovered that recreational fishermen are willing to pay \$39 for a license, which is above the average license price for most states. We believe that the addition of a donation option when purchasing a license can provide customers with the option if they so wish, and it can allow for an increasing profit margin for the department to further improve and better manage fisheries. In addition, a donation option can incentivize customers to pay more since the extra payment could be classified as tax deductible.



# Recommendation:

**Do further studies into whether the Puerto Rico DNER should use a GDP deflator or a constant year to year price for the license fee structure.**

Our group did not come to the decision of whether the Puerto Rico DNER should use a GDP Deflator or a consistent year to year license price. Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Arkansas have not seen issues with their consistent license pricing techniques, but New Hampshire has.

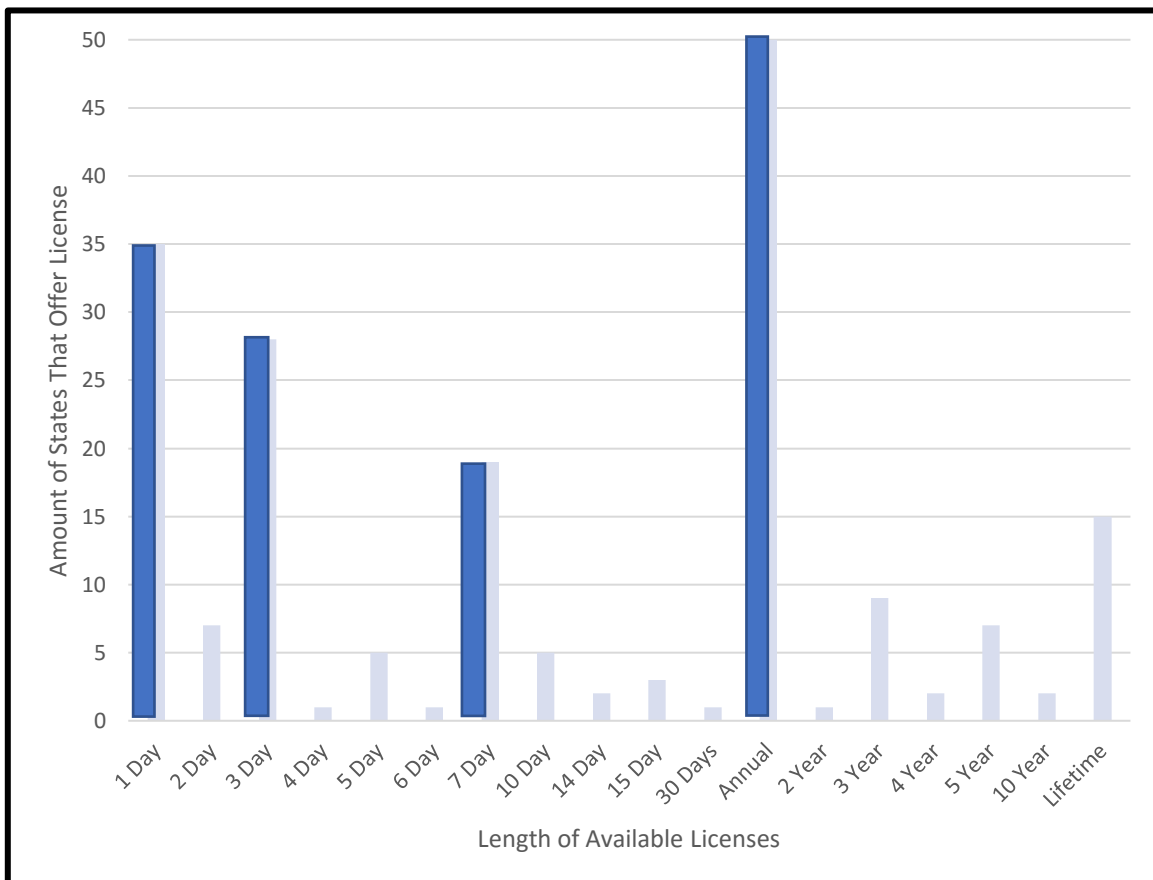
If the DNER decides a GDP Deflator is necessary, we recommend the department to hear and to address the fishermen's concerns about increasing license prices and come up with a plan to fully explain the choice to the fishermen. If a constant year to year price is suggested, we advise that the idea of a possible need to increase the license price in the future is known to the public.



# Recommendation:

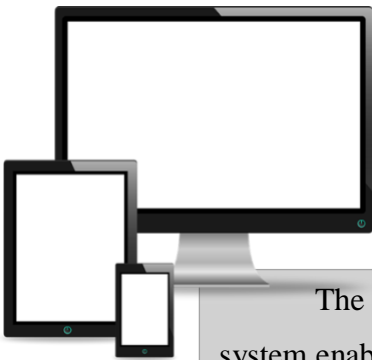
**Keep the length of the multiday licenses simple.**

None of the state agencies that were interviewed had concrete evidence to justify why they chose certain lengths for multiday licenses. The most popular lengths of short-term licenses were 1,3, and 7 days. These lengths allow visiting fishermen to fish for a day, a long weekend, or a week, all of which are typical vacation lengths. We suggest that the department begin with 1, 3, and 7 day licenses and listen to input provided by recreational fishermen.



# Recommendation:

**Use the Active Outdoors Network as your online vendor.**



The Active Outdoors Network Software's automated licensing sales system enables agencies to issue and deliver licenses, permits, stamps, tags and other privileges for outdoor activity in real-time. This is currently the only software specialized for outdoor license sales. The system reduces the time and complications associated with issuing licenses manually, allowing agencies to concentrate on conservation management.

The software also allows agencies to sell and distribute retail and informational materials such as apparel, supplies, books, and maps. Educational PDFs about safe fishing practices or how the fishing license money is used can be included with the purchase of the license.

However, there are some cautions about using the software. In 2016, the Idaho Active Outdoors Network page encountered a data breach. Personal information including name, age, address, and Social Security Number were potentially accessed and compromised. In addition, some interviewed state agencies expressed their displeasure for the time it took for the Active Outdoors Network Software customer support to respond. Often times, the agencies had to wait days or weeks for a response.

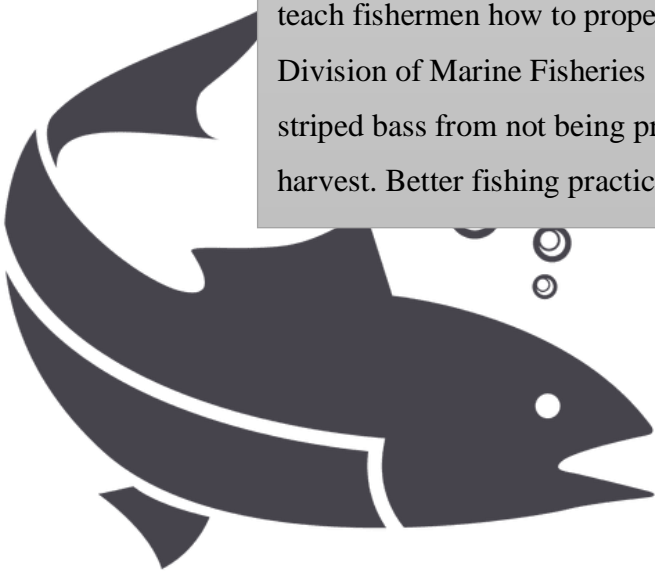


# Recommendation:

**Use license revenue to fund educational fishing programs for all ages.**

Based on all interviews with state departments, we recommend allocating a portion of license revenue to fund educational fishing programs for fishermen of all ages. Educational and outreach programs can benefit the DNER in two ways. One reason is that the programs can be used to increase the number of youth interested in fishing. In most states, residents over the age of 65 do not pay for fishing licenses. More younger fishermen are necessary to increase the population that will be purchasing the licenses in the future. The only way to maintain a constant amount of revenue generated from fishing licenses is to ensure that the amount of people entering the fishing match or exceed that of the amount of people that are exiting fishing.

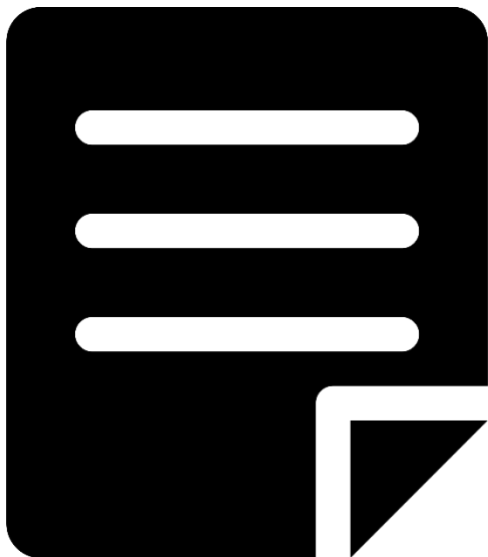
The second reason for educational and outreach programs is to teach fishermen how to properly and safely fish. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries said that there was a higher mortality rate of striped bass from not being properly hooked than there were from fish harvest. Better fishing practices can lead to healthier fish stocks.



# Recommendation:

**Have a separation of positions when possible seeing that it causes tensions in the fishing community.**

The Nantucket Shellfish Association warned against employing people as both biologists and as the law enforcement. Recreational fishermen see it as a conflict of interest, and this tension leads them to report biological incidents less frequently. While enforcement is a high priority, monitoring every single recreational fisherman is unrealistic. However, maintaining open relations between the department and the fishermen allows for the self-reporting of biological and legal incidents. We suggest the DNER specifically have a warden for fisheries law enforcement that is separate from the rest of the department to keep their positions and relationships with recreational fishermen positive.



# Recommendation:

**Provide differently priced license options for residents and non-residents.**

We suggest that the Puerto Rico DNER provide differently priced license options for both in state and out of state residents. From our survey, only 12% of the fishermen said they would reconsider an out of state fishing trip because of the price of the fishing license in that location. The non-resident licenses can cost more than the resident licenses.

