Public Fishing Easements

Information Request Form

Yes, I'd like to find out more about public fishing easements.

Name________________________________________
Address ______________________________________
City__________________________ State__________
Zip_____________ Email ______________________
Phone Number(s) ______________________________
Home________________________________________
Other________________________________________

Property Information

I own land along the banks of____________________
With an address of ____________________________
____________________________________________
in the township of____________________________
in the county of______________________________
Property tax code if known______________________

Mail completed form to:
Access Coordinator
PA Fish & Boat Commission
P.O. Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

Landowner Rights and Protections

Entering into a public fishing easement preserves landowner rights and provides additional benefits. Landowners may still use the property for farming, grazing, water supply, fishing and other activities. They may also cut trees or otherwise improve the property. Easements do not require that landowners allow access for activities such as hunting, trapping, camping or hiking. The property may be posted against these activities. Landowners retain the right to have anyone acting unlawfully removed from the property. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will mark the easement corridor boundaries with signs that ask anglers to respect the landowner’s rights and not trespass outside of the easement corridor boundary. Waterways Conservation Officers will conduct periodic patrols through the area and will respond to landowner complaints regarding illegal fishing on easements.

Pennsylvania's Recreation Use of Land and Water Act provides liability protection for landowners allowing free recreational use of their land and waters. To learn more, type in “Recreation Use of Land and Water” in the search area at www.fishandboat.com.
Fishing is an important tourism industry throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Fishing trips generate $1.35 billion in economic activity. Local communities benefit from this activity in the form of jobs and tax revenues.

One challenge is addressing the increased recreational demands placed on public and private lands open for public fishing. The Commission wants to improve fishing and boating access in a way that respects the rights and gains the support of private landowners. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is taking the lead by developing a Pennsylvania Access Improvement Program.

Benefits for All

The development of a public fishing access program benefits landowners and anglers. The program includes working with landowners to grant a public fishing easement. The easement provides opportunities for formal fisheries management, improving fishing opportunities. The Commission is able to direct anglers to areas open for fishing, spreading out fishing pressure.

This cooperative approach guarantees that generations of residents and visitors will be able to reap the economic and recreational benefits of a trophy fishery.

What is an Easement?

A public fishing easement is a voluntary and permanent legal contract between the landowner and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. An easement provides a corridor along a stream that allows the public to wade in and walk along the stream bank for the purpose of fishing. The size and shape of the easement varies, but generally encompass 35 feet of land from the stream bank on either side of the stream. If the course of the stream changes, the easement corridor will move with the stream as long as it remains within the boundaries of the property. Easements put an encumbrance on the property title that stays on the land, even if it is sold or deeded to an heir. Easements under this program provide only fishing and non-motorized boating access to the public. The landowner continues to own and control the land.

Granting a Public Fishing Access Easement

Landowners may donate an easement to the Commission to ensure that fishing will continue on their property in perpetuity. In some cases, landowners receive payment for granting an easement based on stream length and value of the fishery. Footpaths for crossing the landowner’s property to get to the water at a specific location may also be acquired as well as parking areas.

Help us provide more access.

If you think you may be interested in entering into a public fishing easement or want more information, please complete the Information Request Form in this brochure or call 717-705-7845 or 717-346-8196.

Great partnerships create great public access.

The Commission works with local organizations to improve fishing and boating access. Land trusts, watershed and river associations, municipalities and local angler groups have all helped improve access. Recreational opportunities are expanded for anglers and boaters through collaboration with other state agencies. This cooperative approach will result in miles of connected open stretches of waterways.