

How Fishing Licenses Help Catching—and Much More

Fund resource enhancement, stewardship.

It's like a license to, not steal, but catch. Get your ante up and be a player. Stand tall as a stakeholder, if you're not already a card-carrying fishing license holder.

Florida fishing (and hunting) licenses pay for a multitude of programs that make your life on the water and outdoors better, from catching more fish and enjoying the woods to utilizing up-to-date ramps and managing wildlife populations.

But wait, as they say, there's more. Because of your fee paid to the state, millions of additional dollars flow in from the federal cupboard. Consider it a whopping bonus to Floridians.

Now, we suggest it's time to grow both state and federal funds, knowing that every dollar will go strictly for fishing and conservation purposes.

Florida Sportsman is happy to partner in a campaign to spread the good word about license benefits and hopefully bring in many additional thousands of license holders.

"Here's a chance for residents and visitors alike to also join the partnership and feel good about helping themselves and others," said FS Publisher Blair Wickstrom. "It's known that some anglers fail to have licenses, for various reasons, so

Licenses bolster healthy sport fish populations, providing ecological, economic and social benefits for all.

let's bring them aboard for the good of the resource."

The license drive is spearheaded by the Wildlife Foundation of Florida which enlists a number of supporting partners.

Tim O'Neil, marketing director of the



License revenue and federal matching dollars help support programs such as artificial reef building, top, and fisheries surveys, right.



foundation, emphasized that "Florida is the number one recreational fishing destination in the country" and that licenses bolster "healthy sport fish populations to provide critical ecological, economic and social benefits for all."

No one knows, of course, just how many unlicensed folks are out there, but it may be well over any slot length.

One independent study estimated Florida has 3.1 million anglers. The official count of license holders is 1.3 million. So, even allowing for various exemptions it seems reasonable to set a campaign goal of 500,000 or more new buyers.

Some of the additional license holders will be youthful anglers under age 16, who want to be part of the user-pay user-benefit team even though the license is not legally required yet. When youths buy early, they pay just a one-time fee that runs to their 17th birthday.

At the other end of the age spectrum,

persons over the exempt age of 65 are encouraged to buy licenses as voluntary ways to support the outdoors habitat and values. "I'm licensed and proud of it," an older angler might say.

Still another group of license buyers may be outdoors enthusiasts who enjoy activities such as hiking, canoeing and wildlife viewing even though they are not legally required to be licensed. Everyone should pitch in, it's urged.

Licenses bought by persons in all these groups count toward our getting the added federal funds, which are allocated to the various states according to a formula involving the numbers of license holders and a state's geographic size.

Each paid state license on average triggers the equivalent of another \$8 in

Conservation Front

federal excise tax funds apportioned to Florida, according to Bob Wattendorf, marketing guru for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The more licenses sold, the more excise tax money comes our way. This is money

that would otherwise go to other states. It's not a new tax. The federal pie may be the same size, but our slice of it can be bigger.

Overall, license benefits include essential research, habitat enhancement, regu-

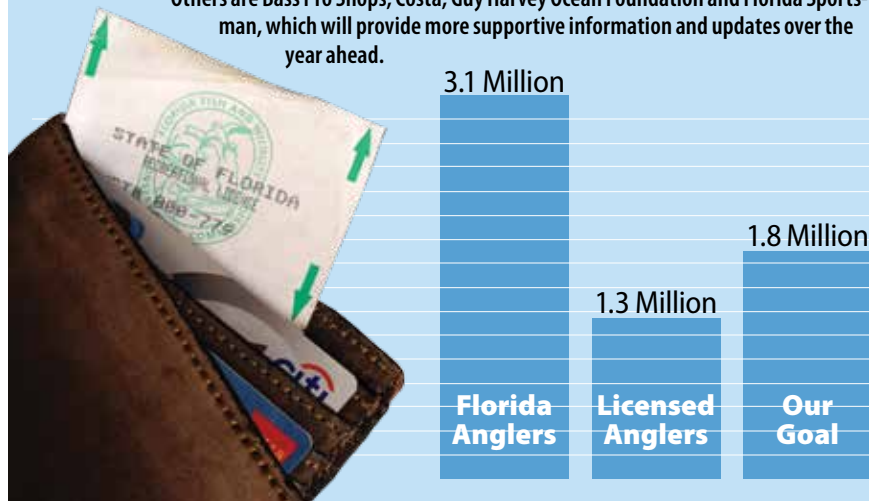


Many boat ramps are funded in part through license monies.

Growing the License Pool

Conservation partners behind the campaign to increase the number of licensed stakeholders (that means you) include the non-profit Wildlife Foundation of Florida as well as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Others are Bass Pro Shops, Costa, Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation and Florida Sportsman, which will provide more supportive information and updates over the year ahead.



lation management, fish stocking, artificial reefs, fishing piers, ramps, education and outreach.

"The economic benefit to Florida of recreational fishing exceeds \$8 billion and supports some 80,000 jobs," said Wattendorf. "So it is a great investment in the future."

You can get licensed up and proud of it at tax collectors' offices, tackle outlets, online or by calling toll free at 1 888 347-4356.

There are several dozen types of licenses, tags and permits available. You can read all about the costs, benefits and programs at MyFWC.com.

Sporting a valid wildlife license is a low-cost ticket to enjoyment of memorable experiences, and those of generations coming just around the bend.

—Karl Wickstrom, Editor-in-Chief **FS**

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