



## **Take Me Fishing™ in Idaho:**

### **An Evaluation of the IDFG's 2005 Angler Recruitment And Retention Program**

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# Executive Summary

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During the fall of 2004, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) partnered with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) to conduct a pilot “recruitment and retention” program directed at lapsed anglers in the Panhandle and Southwest regions. The program was designed to build on the RBFF’s *Take Me Fishing*<sup>™</sup> national advertising campaign directed at lapsed and occasional anglers. The objective of the Idaho pilot program was to increase 2005 resident license sales in both regions by at least three percent over 2004 levels.

## **Panhandle Region**

***Long-term Objective*** - Increase resident fishing license sales by 6,000 units over a five-year period.

***Short-term Objective*** - Increase 2005 resident license sales by 1,200 units over 2004 sales. During 2005, sell 41,298 fishing licenses.

## **Southwest Region**

***Long-term Objective*** – Increase resident fishing license sales by 15,000 units over a five-year period.

***Short-term Objective*** – Increase 2005 resident license sales by 3,000 units over 2004 sales. During 2005, sell 110,824 fishing licenses.

Three groups of lapsed anglers were targeted for the recruitment and retention effort. The first (Group A) consisted of males, aged 25-54, who bought a license in 2003 and 2001 and/or 2002, but not in 2004. The second group (Group B) was males, aged 25-54, who bought two licenses between 1998 and 2002, but not in 2004. The final group (Group C) was males; aged 25-54, who bought licenses in 2003 or 2004 and had a lapsed female angler in the household.

The outreach program employed a variety of activities ranging from direct mail and television programming to radio spot advertisements and department website enhancements. Elements of the program occurred during April, May and June in 2005 throughout each region.

Direct mail pieces, consisting of postcards with the RBFF *Take Me Fishing*<sup>™</sup> imagery and messages were sent to a target sample in each of the three groups. The remaining group members not receiving the direct mailings were used as a control to determine the effects of the direct mail on license sales in the two regions.

License sales in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions both increased from 2004 to 2005. Overall, 2005 resident license sales, through August, had increased by five percent in the Panhandle region and two percent in the Southwest region. The modest increases in resident license sales witnessed in 2005 was twice the rate of increase seen in 2004 and only the second increase since 1998.

The license sales increase in the Panhandle region was highest among all regions. The short-term Panhandle sales objective of 1,200 additional buyers in 2005 was substantially exceeded. The overall sales target of 41,298 was exceeded by 879 buyers.

In 2005, license sales in the populous Southwest Region increased 2% but fell 925 short of meeting the 110,824 resident license sales objective. The overall sales increase from 2004 to 2005 was fueled principally by New Recruits which increased by about 12 percent, a trend continued from 2003. Renewals from 2004 declined slightly from the previous year and sales to Lapsed Anglers netted only 34 more than in 2004.

The real success of the pilot project was the direct mail campaign. This campaign resulted in a much higher percentage of 2004 lapsed anglers buying a license in 2005 than similar groups of lapsed anglers not receiving the direct mail pieces. Differences between target and control groups were substantial and ranged from 6 to 10 percentage points, depending on the region. This aspect of the recruitment and retention program was very likely strengthened by the advertising program which reinforced messages in the direct mail campaign.

Lapsed anglers receiving the direct mailings showed higher renewal rates than those that did not receive them. Group A lapsed anglers renewed at a 27% rate compared with 19% for their control counterparts. Group B lapsed anglers receiving the direct mail renewed at a 19% rate while their controls renewed at an 11% rate. The lapsed women targeted in Group C had a 12% renewal rate compared to 9% for their control group. The overall impact of the direct mail campaign across all direct mail recipients in the two regions was a seven percentage point increase in renewal rates.

The recruitment and retention pilot program in the two regions was successful. The seven percentage point difference between direct mail target and control samples for both Group A and Group B members and the three percentage point differential for Group C resulted in an additional 1,651 licenses being sold. The revenue IDFG receives from a resident fishing license is \$22.00. In addition, every license sold goes into the formula for calculating federal Sport Fish Restoration apportionments allocated to the states. For Idaho, this amounts to \$12.63 per license. Thus, the marketing program generated an additional \$57,174 in license and Federal Aid revenue against costs of \$20,000.

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# **Take Me Fishing In Idaho:**

## **An Evaluation of the IDFG's 2005 Angler Recruitment And Retention Program**

### **Background**

The impetus for Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG) recruitment and retention program was driven by declining license sales and previous participation in one of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's (RBFF) marketing workshops. As part of the process, the IDFG conducted a "Test Recruitment and Retention Program" during the spring of 2003. The focus of this project was in the Southwest Region and targeted male anglers 25-64 years of age who had not purchased a 2003 license by May. These lapsed anglers also had to have purchased a license during any one of the previous three years. Control groups were established to assess the effects of the program to enhance the awareness of the campaign.

The 2003 recruitment and retention program targeted approximately 25,000 lapsed anglers with a direct mail piece comprised of a "Catch a Memory – Fish Idaho" postcard and a Family Fishing Waters Brochure. This group also received two reminder postcards. Additionally, some radio, television and billboard advertising supported the program. Results of the program generated between 600 and 1,300 additional license sales over what would have been expected based on which control group was used for comparison. Agency license sales benefits ranged from \$19,000 to \$41,000. These encouraging results began a planning process to explore the benefits of expanding the recruitment and retention program.

During the Fall of 2004, the IDFG partnered with the RBFF to develop and implement an integrated marketing and grassroots education plan to increase fishing participation and aquatic stewardship. A planning team was established to identify the goals and objectives of the program; develop strategies for accomplishing each objective; and determine the target area for implementing a pilot program. The 2005 planning process culminated in a spring and summer program of activities directed at increasing license sales among lapsed anglers.

### **Historic License Sales**

The IDFG has a rich electronic database of license sales from 1998 to present. This database is populated by license sales transactions from their point-of-sale system and Internet sales. It allows for detailed analyses of license buying patterns among a wide cross-section of buying segments. These segments can involve combinations of gender, residence location, age, license type, location and date of purchase, licenses purchased over time, and other variables. An examination of historical license sales in general, and discrete segments specifically, provide the backdrop for the 2005 recruitment and retention program. Understanding license buying patterns can provide insights into purchasing behavior that can help focus and guide recruitment and retention efforts. The following discussion is intended to provide examples of the types of information and understandings that are available from a license database. The focus is illustrative rather than exhaustive and is framed within the context of the IDFG recruitment and retention plan.

Table 1: Number of individuals buying resident fishing licenses and percent change by year and region

License Year	Panhandle	Clearwater	Southwest	Magic Valley	Southeast	Upper Snake	Salmon	TOTAL
1998	38,515	22,619	105,342	35,398	24,120	39,952	4,177	270,123
1999	41,530	24,813	111,903	38,720	25,810	42,390	4,563	289,729
2000	41,372	24,797	112,913	38,821	25,278	41,775	4,484	289,440
2001	39,187	24,661	111,695	36,182	23,083	40,026	4,445	279,279
2002	39,192	24,085	109,201	35,294	22,483	39,363	4,369	273,987
2003	39,440	23,687	105,377	35,375	21,323	38,195	4,274	267,671
2004	40,098	23,973	107,824	36,080	21,583	37,902	4,370	271,830
Years	Change							
1998-1999	7.8%	9.7%	6.2%	9.4%	7.0%	6.1%	9.2%	7.3%
1999-2000	-0.4%	-0.1%	0.9%	0.3%	-2.1%	-1.5%	-1.7%	-0.1%
2000-2001	-5.3%	-0.5%	-1.1%	-6.8%	-8.7%	-4.2%	-0.9%	-3.5%
2001-2002	0.0%	-2.3%	-2.2%	-2.5%	-2.6%	-1.7%	-1.7%	-1.9%
2002-2003	0.6%	-1.7%	-3.5%	0.2%	-5.2%	-3.0%	-2.2%	-2.3%
2003-2004	1.7%	1.2%	2.3%	2.0%	1.2%	-0.8%	2.2%	1.6%

Historical resident fishing license sales grew steadily from 1990 to a peak in 1999 and 2000. However, the turn of the century did not bode well for resident fishing license sales in Idaho. As seen in Table 1, the increase statewide and in all regions from 1998 to 1999 quickly gave way to sustained declines for the next four years. An upturn in sales to resident license buyers occurred in 2004 across all regions with the exception of the Upper Snake Region, which continued with a slight decline.

There are three components to license sales in any given year. First are the renewals of license buyers from the previous year; i.e., 2004 buyers renewing in 2005. The second component is lapsed buyers. These buyers may have purchased a license in one or several previous years, but not during the immediate past year. For example a lapsed buyer may have purchased a license in 2002 and 2003, but not 2004. This lapsed 2004 buyer may or may not buy again in 2005. Many state fish and wildlife agency recruitment and retention programs are directed at one or several segments of this lapsed group. The final component consists of new recruits. These buyers may have purchased a license during one or more years prior to the establishment of the database (1998), but within the database when they appear for the first time they should be considered as a new recruit because of a lack of information proving otherwise. Surveying these “first-timers” would answer some of the questions about buying history pre-dating the database. In IDFG’s case, anyone buying a license prior to 1998 but showing up in the database for the first time would be considered a new recruit. Examining the buying characteristics of these three component groups provides some very interesting results.

For Idaho, these component groups of resident license buyers are shown in Table 2. About two-thirds of the license buyers in 2004 consisted of renewals from 2003. Purchases by lapsed anglers added another 15% during 2004, while new recruits contributed 18% to resident 2004 license sales. The proportions of these three component license sales groups across selected sub- regions

Table 2: License sales component groups for 2004 by selected regions

Component Group	2004 License Buyers					
	Statewide		Panhandle Region		Southwest Region	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2003 Renewals	182,159	67.0%	26,520	66.1%	70,676	65.6%
1998-2002 Lapsed	41,322	15.2%	5,879	14.7%	17,266	16.0%
2004 New Recruits	48,349	17.8%	7,699	19.2%	19,882	18.4%
Total	271,830	100.0%	40,098	100.0%	107,824	100.0%

of the state are relatively consistent. However, while renewals comprise two-thirds of the sales in any given year, there is considerable diversity in renewal rates within this group based on previous purchasing history.

As shown in Table 3, there were some drop-outs even among the most avid anglers. About 81% of avid buyers will renew for a fourth consecutive year. Individuals purchasing licenses in three consecutive years (2001, 2002 and 2003) are about 33% more likely to renew their license in 2004 than those buying licenses in 2002 and 2003 only (81% versus 60%, respectively). Moreover, skipping a year between purchases (buying in 2001 and 2003) further reduces the probability of a renewal. Buying a license only in 2003 drops the renewal percentage well below 50 percent.

Looking at the lapsed anglers in Table 3 begins to illuminate the challenge recruitment and retention programs face when trying to re-activate these individuals. Even though some buyers purchased licenses two years in a row (2001 and 2002), skipping 2003 resulted in only 30% buying a license in 2004. Further, renewals in 2004 by lapsed buyers purchasing only in 2001 or 2002 drops the percentage below 20 percent. Again, these renewal percentages are consistent across regions of the state. Supplemental analyses, not shown in this report, have shown these renewal rates to be consistent year to year. It is the purpose of the recruitment and retention program to improve these renewal rates in order to maintain or improve license sales.

Table 3: 2004 license renewals by previous license purchase history

Years of Purchase	Statewide		Panhandle Region		Southwest Region	
	Total Number	Percent Buying	Total Number	Percent Buying	Total Number	Percent Buying
2001, 2002, 2003	154,452	81.0%	21,514	80.8%	59,277	80.6%
2002, 2003	36,502	60.0%	5,765	61.2%	14,793	58.9%
2001, 2003	20,556	50.8%	3,034	51.4%	8,557	51.0%
2003	56,161	43.9%	9,127	44.5%	22,750	43.3%
2001, 2002	41,496	30.0%	5,673	30.6%	17,414	31.0%
2002	41,537	19.9%	6,240	19.1%	17,717	19.8%
2001	62,775	14.3%	8,966	13.9%	26,477	14.1%
Total	413,479	48.7%	60,319	50.9%	166,955	49.0%

## **Target Audience**

The 2005 recruitment and retention program evaluation was centered on fishing license sales. Three groups were identified and targeted for the pilot project. These groups were:

- Group A – men, aged 25-54, bought a license in 2003 and 2001 and/or 2002, but not 2004.
- Group B – men, aged 25-54, bought two licenses between 1998-2002, but not 2004.
- Group C – men, aged 25-54, who bought a license in 2003 or 2004 and had a 2004 lapsed female angler in household.

License buyers in each of the three groups were identified in IDFG's Panhandle (Region 1) and Southwest (Region 3) regions using the IDFG's electronic license database. A sample of buyers from each group was randomly selected and assigned to a Target Group that received direct mail pieces. The remaining group members were assigned to a Control Group to aid in determining the effect of the mailing. These control groups were exposed to the local advertising program, but did not receive the direct mail pieces. Sample sizes for Target and Control Groups were as follows:

Panhandle Region Group A – 3,100 Target, 9,743 Control  
Panhandle Region Group B – 1,400 Target, 15,277 Control  
Panhandle Region Group C – 2,600 Target, 3,536 Control

Southwest Region Group A – 8,700 Target, 25,958 Control  
Southwest Region Group B – 3,900 Target, 45,778 Control  
Southwest Region Group C – 6,050 Target, 10,147 Control

Each of the Target Group members in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions were sent two direct mail pieces as noted in the next section.

License buyers in two adjoining regions were used as additional control groups to assess the effects of the overall recruitment and retention program. Three groups within the Clearwater (Region 2) and Magic Valley (Region 4) regions, with characteristics identical to Groups A, B and C above, were identified for comparison to their Target and Control Group counterparts in the adjacent Panhandle and Southwest Regions. Sample sizes for these out-region control groups were as follows:

Clearwater Region Group A – 6,549 Control  
Clearwater Region Group B – 8,574 Control  
Clearwater Region Group C – 4,308 Control

Magic Valley Region Group A – 10,903 Control  
Magic Valley Region Group B – 13,881 Control  
Magic Valley Region Group C – 6,233 Control

License buyers in these two control regions were not subject to any of the direct mail or local advertising activities. They were exposed to the general *Take Me Fishing*<sup>™</sup> advertising through the IDFG mass media news releases and other statewide outlets such as television, radio, website, and other activities. However, these regions were deemed non-treatment areas for analysis of the local advertising and direct mail activities.

To test for the effects of the recruitment and retention program, 2005 license purchase rates were compared among the Target and Control Groups in each region. Differences between Target and Control Groups within a region should show the general effect of direct mail since the entire region was exposed to the media advertising. Comparisons between regional Control Groups (e.g., Panhandle and Clearwater) should provide some validation of renewal rates.

### **2005 Recruitment and Retention Program**

The IDFG's 2005 Recruitment and Retention Program built on the learning from the 2003 program and again focused on anglers buying licenses during the 2001-2003 time period but not during 2004. Long-term and short-term objectives were identified for both the Panhandle and Southwest Regions. Since there was very limited previous information concerning the possible effects of a recruitment and retention program, the following objectives were set as targets to be evaluated during the 2005 program and readjusted for 2006, if necessary.

#### **Panhandle Region Objectives**

*Long-term Objective* - Increase resident fishing license sales by 6,000 units over a five-year period.

*Short-term Objective* - Increase 2005 resident license sales by 1,200 units over 2004 sales. During 2005, sell 41,298 fishing licenses.

#### **Southwest Region Objectives**

*Long-term Objective* – Increase resident fishing license sales by 15,000 units over a five-year period.

*Short-term Objective* – Increase 2005 resident license sales by 3,000 units over 2004 sales. During 2005, sell 110,824 fishing licenses.

#### **The Program**

Built upon the *Take Me Fishing*<sup>™</sup> national advertising campaign three groups of lapsed anglers were selected to test the effects of a combination of direct mail, television programming and advertising, radio advertisements, print media stories and advertising, department website enhancements, and improved signage on license sales. The following schedule outlines the sequence and types of activities implemented during the program.

**April 15:** Advertisement in Idaho Statesman fishing edition of Idaho Outdoors (Boise)

**Late April / Early May:** Bass fishing television series produced by Idaho Fish and Game broadcast on southern Idaho television stations, including Boise. All stories included anchor tag directing viewers to IDFG website for additional information.

**Mid-May:** Take Me Fishing images put on hatchery trucks in Southwest Region.

**May 15-June 10:** Two banners, including “Ashley” Take Me Fishing image hung on two major roads into Sandpoint. Banners were later moved to the foyer of IDFG regional office in Coeur d’Alene and Wildlife Building on Bonner County Fairgrounds and were visible during hunter education classes, field trips and other use of building.

**May 18:** Take Me Fishing images incorporated into window decals and signs for distribution to license vendors in Southwest and Panhandle Region. Signs and decals distributed periodically (with most effort made in August and September).

**May 19:** Postcard mailed to lapsed anglers in Southwest and Panhandle Regions. “Ashley” Take Me Fishing image postcard was sent to Groups A and B. Postcard message was “Take me fishing. I’m growing up too fast.” A separate Take Me Fishing postcard was sent to Group C. The message was: “Take me fishing. Remember how fun it was. Make me feel 16 again.” Approximately 18,000 postcards were sent to lapsed anglers in the Southwest Region and 7,000 were sent to lapsed anglers in the Panhandle Region. Text on both postcards directed people to IDFG website for more information on where to go fishing and where to buy a license.

**May 23 – June 10:** 112 radio spots broadcast on Country-Western (80 spots) and News/Talk/Oldies stations (32 spots) in Panhandle Region.

**May 23 – May 29:** 212 television spots broadcast on cable television networks in Panhandle Region. Advertisements ran on:

ABC Family	36 spots	ESPN	36 spots
TBS	32 spots	History	24 spots
Discovery	24 spots	A&E	24 spots
TNT	24 spots	ESPN2	12 spots

**May 25:** *Idaho Fish and Game News* distributed to license vendors statewide. The publication included several articles promoting fishing and a display ad using Take Me Fishing image. (IDFG prints and distributes 50,000 copies of *Idaho Fish and Game News*.)

**May 30 – June 5:** 138 radio spots broadcast in Southwest Region. Advertisements ran on:

Country-Western	36 spots	Classic Rock	32 spots
Adult Contemporary	28 spots	News-Talk	22 spots
Sports-Talk	20 spots		

**June 11:** Free Fishing Day. 45 events held statewide, including 13 in Southwest Region and 10 in Panhandle. Pre-event publicity included news releases, columns and other outreach efforts.

**June 17:** Second postcard mailed to lapsed anglers contacted in May.

**August:** Take Me Fishing television series distributed to Idaho television stations. Five stories were produced and distributed:

- Steven Huffaker (Quick Get Away) – The Director of IDFG takes a morning off to go fishing with his grandson and personally experiences the benefits of his Department’s Family Fishing Waters program.
- Red Top Pond – Conservation officers turned in their badges for a day to teach an entire grade school how to fish.
- It’s All About Access – Idaho can boast of 325 fishing and boating access sites around the state. These are the sportsmen access spots that allow the public to reach and use many of Idaho’s waters. Every year, IDFG spends \$1.6 million, which is a combination of federal assistance dollars and state license dollars, to keep them clean, improve them and create new ones.
- Fish Camp – When some kids write their annual essay on what they did this summer, their stories will be all about fishing. The Boise Parks and Recreation partnered with IDFG to hold their first Fish Camp this summer. This pilot program received a thumbs up from the kids and will likely return in future summer offerings.
- Ponds and Trout Streams – North Idaho has many first class trout streams, but these aren’t exactly what you need to introduce a young person to fishing. Along the North Fork of the Coeur d’Alene River, IDFG is working with private landowners to develop fishing ponds that offer something for every type of angler.

All stories included the following messages:

- Be sure to buy a license
- IDFG makes it easy to go fishing
- Fishing is a great family activity
- Don’t let drought stop you from fishing

**Additional efforts:**

**IDFG website:** Family Fishing Waters information available on the website. New fishing-related information was also made available throughout the test period.

**Email updates:** Between January 1 and September 20, 2005, 87,675 fishing related bulletins were sent to 15,037 subscribers to the IDFG email update service.

Table 4: Number of individuals buying resident fishing licenses and percent change by region: 1998-2005

License Year	Panhandle	Clearwater	Southwest	Magic Valley	Southeast	Upper Snake	Salmon	TOTAL
1998	38,515	22,619	105,342	35,398	24,120	39,952	4,177	270,123
1999	41,530	24,813	111,903	38,720	25,810	42,390	4,563	289,729
2000	41,372	24,797	112,913	38,821	25,278	41,775	4,484	289,440
2001	39,187	24,661	111,695	36,182	23,083	40,026	4,445	279,279
2002	39,192	24,085	109,201	35,294	22,483	39,363	4,369	273,987
2003	39,440	23,687	105,377	35,375	21,323	38,195	4,274	267,671
2004	40,098	23,973	107,824	36,080	21,583	37,902	4,370	271,830
2005*	42,177	25,209	109,899	37,040	22,268	39,492	4,364	280,449
Years	Percent Change							
1998-1999	7.8%	9.7%	6.2%	9.4%	7.0%	6.1%	9.2%	7.3%
1999-2000	-0.4%	-0.1%	0.9%	0.3%	-2.1%	-1.5%	-1.7%	-0.1%
2000-2001	-5.3%	-0.5%	-1.1%	-6.8%	-8.7%	-4.2%	-0.9%	-3.5%
2001-2002	0.0%	-2.3%	-2.2%	-2.5%	-2.6%	-1.7%	-1.7%	-1.9%
2002-2003	0.6%	-1.7%	-3.5%	0.2%	-5.2%	-3.0%	-2.2%	-2.3%
2003-2004	1.7%	1.2%	2.3%	2.0%	1.2%	-0.8%	2.2%	1.6%
2004-2005*	5.2%	5.2%	1.9%	2.7%	3.2%	4.2%	-0.1%	3.2%

\*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

## **Results**

### **2005 License Sales Results**

Statewide license sales to resident buyers through August of 2005 showed a 3.2% increase over 2004 with four months remaining in the license year (Table 4). At the time of analysis, license sales through August were available, which historically accounts for 96% of yearly sales. Increases were observed in six of the seven regions of the state as well. The greatest percentage increase was in the Panhandle and Clearwater Regions (5.2%). Overall sales in the Southwest Region grew by 1.9% from 2004 to 2005.

Table 5 shows the 2005 purchase rates for 2004 buyers (Renewals), 1998-2003 Lapsed buyers, and New Recruits. Renewal rates among the three license component groups were very similar among the statewide and two regional areas. The number of “eligible” individuals was used as the base for the calculations. There were 271,830 resident license buyers in 2004. Of these eligible buyers, 67.1% renewed their license in 2005. Similarly, there were 349,789 individuals buying resident fishing licenses during the 1998-2003 period who did not buy a license in 2004. Only 12.4% of these Lapsed anglers, as a group, bought a license in 2005.

Sales of 2005 licenses to 2004 Renewal and 1998-2003 Lapsed groups in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions followed the same pattern as was found statewide (Table 5). About two-thirds of the 2004 buyers renewed their licenses in 2005. Slightly more than 12% of the lapsed group in each region bought a license in 2005. Purchase rates among lapsed anglers with different historical buying patterns varied widely and are discussed below in further detail.

Table 5: 2005 license purchases\* for component groups by selected regions

Region/ Group	Total Eligible	2005 Sales	Purchase Rate
<b>Statewide</b>			
2004 Renewals	271,830	182,460	67.1%
1998-2003 Lapsed	349,789	43,394	12.4%
New Recruits	54,595	54,595	100.0%
Total	678,654	280,449	41.3%
<b>Panhandle Region</b>			
2004 Renewals	40,098	26,738	66.7%
1998-2003 Lapsed	51,294	6,560	12.8%
New Recruits	8,879	8,879	100.0%
Total	100,271	42,177	42.1%
<b>Southwest Region</b>			
2004 Renewals	107,824	70,440	65.3%
1998-2003 Lapsed	139,661	17,260	12.4%
New Recruits	22,199	22,199	100.0%
Total	269,684	109,899	40.8%

\*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

When examining the license purchasing patterns of anglers buying resident fishing licenses between 2002 and 2004, there is a clear difference among the buying groups (Table 6). Among anglers buying licenses in 2005, the most loyal buyers (2002, 2003 and 2004) had a renewal rate of 79% while those buying only in 2004 renewed at a 46% rate. Renewal rates among recent lapsed anglers (buying in 2002 and/or 2003, but not 2004) were considerably lower than the “2004 only” buyers with anglers buying only in 2002 having the lowest rate of all groups.

Table 6: 2005 license renewals\* by previous license purchase history

Years of Purchase	Statewide		Panhandle Region		Southwest Region	
	Total Number	Percent Buying	Total Number	Percent Buying	Total Number	Percent Buying
<b>2004 Renewals</b>						
2002, 2003, 2004	144,096	79.4%	20,630	79.4%	56,525	79.0%
2003, 2004	34,622	61.0%	5,560	61.9%	14,182	59.7%
2002, 2004	20,801	52.0%	2,902	52.5%	8,876	51.5%
2004	68,004	46.8%	10,579	46.9%	28,319	45.3%
<b>Lapsed</b>						
2002, 2003	43,651	26.6%	6,324	26.9%	17,593	26.9%
2003	41,451	18.1%	6,519	18.6%	17,065	17.7%
2002	61,838	14.6%	8,966	14.8%	26,236	14.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>414,453</b>	<b>49.8%</b>	<b>61,480</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>168,796</b>	<b>48.6%</b>

\*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

The recruit component of license sales appears to be where the greatest sales gains were made thus far into 2005 (Table 7). New Recruits accounted for 19.5% of all license buyers in the state during 2005. The percentage of recruits in Panhandle and Southwest Regions were slightly higher than 20%.

Statewide, the number of recruits in 2005 was up by 12.9% over 2004 (Table 8). Recruits in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions during the same time period were up 15.3% and 11.7%, respectively. The consistent annual increase in the number of recruits since 2003 is an encouraging sign for future growth in license sales.

Table 8 shows the number of buyers in each of the three component groups for 2004 and 2005. On an aggregate level, there was virtually no growth in the number of anglers renewing their license in 2004 and 2005. This was the case in both regions as well as statewide.

Lapsed anglers buying license in the Panhandle Region increased substantially from 2004 to 2005. The growth rate was double that for the state as a whole. Growth of Lapsed anglers in the Southwest Region was nonexistent. Nearly identical numbers of Lapsed anglers bought licenses in 2004 and 2005.

Much of the growth in license sales Statewide came from New Recruits. Both regions and the state experienced a marked influx of New Recruits. The Panhandle

Region benefited the most with a 15% growth over 2004 recruits. While New Recruit growth in the Southwest Region was substantial, it was slightly less than that experienced Statewide. Overall, the Panhandle Region benefited from growth in Lapsed and New Recruit components of license buyers while the Southwest Region saw growth only in New Recruits.

Area	Total Sales	New Recruits	% Recruits
<b>Statewide</b>			
2002	273,987	43,169	15.8%
2003	267,671	39,288	14.7%
2004	271,830	48,349	17.8%
2005*	280,449	54,595	19.5%
<b>Panhandle Region</b>			
2002	39,192	6,701	17.1%
2003	39,440	6,481	16.4%
2004	40,098	7,699	19.2%
2005*	42,177	8,879	21.1%
<b>Southwest Region</b>			
2002	109,201	18,434	16.9%
2003	105,377	16,085	15.3%
2004	107,824	19,822	18.4%
2005*	109,889	22,199	20.2%

\*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

	2004 Buyers	2005 Buyers	Percent Change
<b>Renewals</b>			
Panhandle Region	26,520	26,738	0.8%
Southwest Region	70,676	70,440	-0.3%
Statewide	182,159	182,460	0.2%
<b>Lapsed</b>			
Panhandle Region	5,879	6,560	11.6%
Southwest Region	17,226	17,260	0.2%
Statewide	41,322	43,394	5.0%
<b>New Recruits</b>			
Panhandle Region	7,699	8,879	15.3%
Southwest Region	19,882	22,199	11.7%
Statewide	48,349	54,595	12.9%

## **Recruitment and Retention Activity Results**

Comparing license sales between Target and Control Groups within each pilot test region yields an estimate of the effect of the direct mail component of the 2005 Recruitment and Retention Program. As shown in Table 9, the renewal rates between Target and Control for each lapsed group (A, B, C) in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions were higher for the Target Group. Anglers in the Panhandle Target Group A bought licenses at a rate 8.2 percentage points higher than their comparable Control Group. Likewise, Panhandle Target Group B had the highest renewal percentage and a 10.2 percentage differential over their Control Group. The Panhandle Group C response to the direct mail was 4.2 percentage points greater or about half that for Groups A and B.

The direct mail campaign results in the Southwest Region were similar to those in the Panhandle. However, Southwest Target Group A had the best response with an 8.5 point increase over the Control Group. The response by Target Group B was slightly lower with a 7.3 percentage point advantage over the Control Group. Response to the direct mail by Southwest Group C anglers was minimal as only a 2.1 point differential was seen.

All other factors being equal, the direct mail in conjunction with the broader advertising campaign had a positive effect on lapsed anglers. Overall, renewal rates for the Target Group were seven percentage points higher than their corresponding Control Groups.

Table 9: 2005 license renewals by Target and Control Groups receiving direct mail

Group	Direct Mail Target Group			Direct Mail Control Group		
	Number	Sales*	Renewal Rate	Number	Sales*	Renewal Rate
Panhandle Group A	3,100	896	28.9%	9,743	2,018	20.7%
Panhandle Group B	1,400	306	21.9%	15,277	1,780	11.7%
Panhandle Group C	2,600	345	13.3%	3,536	321	9.1%
Panhandle Total	7,100	1,547	21.8%	28,556	4,119	14.4%
Southwest Group A	8,700	2,365	27.2%	25,958	4,865	18.7%
Southwest Group B	3,900	722	18.5%	45,778	5,146	11.2%
Southwest Group C	6,050	695	11.5%	10,147	953	9.4%
Southwest Total	18,650	3,782	20.3%	81,883	10,964	13.4%
Overall Total	25,750	5,329	20.7%	10,9739	15,083	13.7%

\*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

Renewal rates among the control out-region (Clearwater and Magic Valley) Group A, B and C's (Table 10) were very close to those of the Control Groups in the Panhandle and Southwest regions (Table 9). Group A Controls in both the Panhandle and Southwest Regions had renewal rates about three percentage points lower than those for the same group in the Clearwater and Magic Valley Regions. Otherwise, Group B and Group C control groups were essentially the same.

**Recruitment and Retention Program Benefits**

The license sales impact generated by the recruitment and retention program in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions can be estimated by multiplying the Control Group renewal percentages by their respective Target Group size and subtracting this from the Target Group Sales (Table 11). For example, to calculate the number of additional license sales generated by the recruitment and retention program for the Panhandle Group A Target, multiply the Target Group number (3,100) by the Control Group renewal percentage (20.7%). The result is the estimated sales among the Target Group (642). Subtracting expected sales from actual sales for the Target Group results in the net increase attributable to the recruitment and retention program (896 – 642 = 254) and is shown in the “Net Sales” column. The recruitment and retention program resulted in an additional 1,651 licenses being sold; 506 in the Panhandle and 1,145 in the Southwest.

Clearwater	Number	Sales*	Renewal Rate
Group A	6,549	1,557	23.8%
Group B	8,574	1,039	12.1%
Group C	4,308	435	10.1%
Total	19,431	3,031	15.6%
Magic Valley			
Group A	10,903	2,295	21.0%
Group B	13,881	1,623	11.7%
Group C	6,233	617	9.9%
Total	31,017	4,535	14.6%
*License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.			

The revenue IDFG receives from a resident fishing license is \$22.00. In addition, every license sold goes into the formula for calculating federal Sport Fish Restoration apportionments allocated to the states. For Idaho, this amounts to \$12.63 per license. Thus, the program generated an additional \$57,174 in license and Federal Aid revenue for the IDFG.

Table 11: Net impact on sales of recruitment and retention program.

Region/Group	Direct Mail Target Group			Direct Mail Control Group			Impact	
	Number	Sales*	Renewal Percent	Number	Sales*	Renewal Percent	Estimated Sales**	Net Sales***
Panhandle Group A	3,100	896	28.9%	9,743	2,018	20.7%	642	254
Panhandle Group B	1,400	306	21.9%	15,277	1,780	11.7%	163	143
Panhandle Group C	2,600	345	13.3%	3,536	321	9.1%	236	109
Total	7,100	1,547	21.8%	28,556	4,119	14.4%	1,041	506
Southwest Group A	8,700	2,365	27.2%	25,958	4,865	18.7%	1,631	734
Southwest Group B	3,900	722	18.5%	45,778	5,146	11.2%	438	284
Southwest Group C	6,050	695	11.5%	10,147	953	9.4%	568	127
Total	18,650	3,782	20.3%	81,883	10,964	13.4%	2,637	1,145
Total Program Impact	25,750	5,329	20.7%	110,439	15,083	13.7%	3,678	1,651

\* License sales through August 31, 2005 which historically represents about 96% of total sales.

\*\*Estimated Sales are calculated by multiplying the Target Group number by the Control Group percent

\*\*\*Net Increase is the difference between Target Group Sales and Expected Sales

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The purpose of the pilot project was to determine if a variety of recruitment and retention activities would increase resident fishing license sales of lapsed anglers in two IDFG regions. The modest increases in resident license sales witnessed in 2005 was twice the rate of increase seen in 2004 and only the second increase since 1998. License sales in the Panhandle and Southwest Regions both increased from 2004 to 2005.

The license sales increase in the Panhandle region was highest among all regions. The short-term Panhandle sales objective of 1,200 additional buyers in 2005 was substantially exceeded. The overall sales target of 41,298 was exceeded by 879 buyers.

License sales in the populous Southwest Region during 2005 fell 925 short of meeting the 110,824 resident license sales objective. The overall sales increase from 2004 to 2005 was fueled principally by New Recruits which increased by about 12 percent. Renewals from 2004 declined slightly from the previous year and sales to Lapsed Anglers netted only 34 more than in 2004.

The number of anglers renewing their licenses from 2004 to 2005, when compared to 2003 to 2004, was essentially the same for the two regions and statewide. However, in the Panhandle Region the number of Lapsed anglers buying in 2005 increased substantially over the number renewing in 2004 when compared to the Statewide rate. In the Southwest Region, the number of Lapsed anglers buying in 2005 was nearly identical to the number buying in 2004.

Across the state, recruitment of new anglers was up markedly over 2004 recruitment levels, a trend continuing from 2003. The recruitment and retention program may have yielded some unanticipated benefits by attracting new recruits in the Panhandle Region at a higher rate than elsewhere. The number of New Recruits in this region grew slightly faster than the Statewide and Southwest rates. Recruitment in the Southwest Region was slightly below the Statewide level.

The overall recruitment and retention program appears to have had a different effect in each region. This could be attributed to differences in the recruitment and retention program activities between regions, such as the television advertising in the Panhandle region. Response to the program in the Panhandle was much better than in the Southwest Region. Activities designed to appeal to lapsed anglers in the Panhandle were successful in generating new sales. However, lapsed anglers in the Southwest showed little response to the overall program.

The real success of the pilot project was the direct mail campaign. This campaign resulted in a much higher percentage of 2004 lapsed anglers buying a license in 2005 than similar groups of lapsed anglers not receiving the direct mail pieces. Differences between target and control groups were substantial and ranged from 6 to 10 percentage points, depending on the region. This aspect of the recruitment and retention program was very likely strengthened by the advertising program which reinforced messages in the direct mail campaign. Overall, renewal rates to the direct mail Target Groups were seven percentage points higher than their corresponding Control Groups. It is apparent that without the direct marketing campaign overall sales to Lapsed anglers would not have fared as well as they did in 2005 resulting in smaller overall growth in both regions.

Detecting an increase in sales due to the recruitment and retention program on the targeted groups when the overall resident license sales trend was positive is an important finding. The impact of the recruitment and retention program could very likely have been over-shadowed by the overall upturn in license sales. Among the direct mail Target Groups collectively, an average seven percentage point increase in sales over the Control Groups was seen. Group A and B Targets in both the Panhandle and Southwest Regions were the most responsive to the recruitment and retention program. That is, the difference between Target and Control Group renewal percentages, or “Lift”, for Groups A and B was the greatest. The lapsed females in Group C were not as economically beneficial because their differentials were smaller, about three percent overall.

It is obvious that some effort should be directed at retaining new recruits. While this was the major contributor to license growth in 2005, only 46% of the one-time buyers in 2004 renewed their licenses in 2005. Similarly, 43% of the new recruits from 2003 renewed their license in 2005. This level of attrition needs attention by understanding if demographic factors like age, gender or other factors affect the renewal rate. While the same argument could be made for the immediate past year renewal and lapsed component groups as well, retaining new recruits has not been the focus of recruitment and retention efforts in Idaho or other states to date. If 2003 buyers do not renew in 2004, then their probability of buying a license in 2005 or later years diminishes to 20% or less in succeeding years.

Similarly, the lack of growth in the number of Renewals from 2004 to 2005 should merit additional attention. Retention of existing anglers is equally important as the retention of new recruits because their renewal rates after lapsing only one year is greatly diminished.

The 2005 IDFG advertising and media campaign coupled with the direct mail campaign was successful in improving license sales over previous years. The recruitment and retention program generated an additional \$57,000 in license sales and Sport Fish Restoration apportionments over what would have been expected without the program. While seemingly modest, these benefits were generated by a limited pilot program costing less than \$20,000.

### **Recommendations and Next Steps**

As recruitment and retention efforts are continued in 2006, the following recommendations should be considered as next steps for the program are developed:

- ◆ The 2006 recruitment and retention program should, at least in part, include Group A and Group B Lapsed anglers. Because of the success of the direct mail campaign, it should be replicated to ensure that results are consistent across years.
- ◆ The media campaign should also be executed similar to 2005. The overall increase in license sales statewide may have masked the impact of these efforts.
- ◆ A survey of anglers in the target regions should also be undertaken to determine the recall rates of different advertising and direct mail pieces and more specifically define the impacts of each activity on license sales.

- ◆ Consideration should be given to initiating activities directed at retaining new recruits from 2005. Retention of these anglers is very important since it is very likely that half will not buy a license in 2006.
- ◆ It is apparent that retention of 2005 buyers should also receive attention since one-third of the 2004 group of buyers did not renew in 2005. The same should be expected in 2006.
- ◆ The somewhat better response to the recruitment and retention program of anglers in the Panhandle Region over the Southwest Region should be examined to determine if some of the activities unique to this region, such as the inclusion of television advertising, may have been more effective than those used in the Southwest Region.
- ◆ Any expansion of the recruitment and retention program to other regions within Idaho should include the Panhandle and Southwest regions. Replication of results is important during the early stages of long-term programs. Moving to other regions without including these two regions from 2005 would seriously hamper our ability to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of program activities.