

Enhancing Fishing Education Programs

This Info Sheet gives a brief overview of the wealth of helpful information you can find in *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education (Workbook)*. See the back for details.

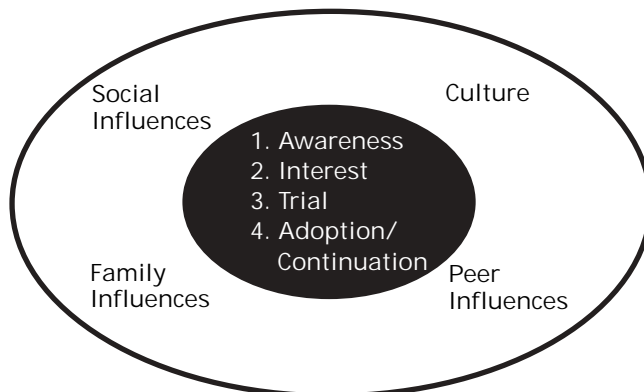
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Fishing is a wonderful, wholesome, almost magical activity that benefits individuals, the resource, and society as a whole. Families and friends who fish together spend quality time and develop special bonds. Fishing can introduce people to an awareness of and appreciation for the need to protect and conserve natural resources.

Fishing participation also provides huge benefits to fish and wildlife agency funding and fisheries management, regional economies, and public advocacy for the protection of aquatic resources.

► Best Practices in Fishing Education

What We Know — How an individual becomes interested in and ultimately identifies him or herself as an angler is a complex process that is influenced by many variables. Research shows that anglers often pass through a four-phase process while continually being affected by the culture and people around them (the lines between these stages may be quite blurred).



Four-phase process of fishing adoption

1. Awareness Phase: Individuals must become aware of the opportunity to participate in fishing. This can involve promotional campaigns and activities that will help them understand the benefits of participating (e.g., fishing is fun, easy, convenient, provides quality time with friends and family) and that fishing is available close to home.

2. Interest Phase: Initial interest is developed when an individual has an opportunity to directly participate in fishing or a related activity like casting. Programs can enable participants to have access to the fishing experience through fishing clinics, casting instructions, *Passport to Fishing and Boating* programs, and camp, school, and other youth activities. These provide a threshold experience which may, with proper social support, lead to the trial phase.

Be careful not to fall into the “field days - feel good” trap. Great effort often is expended and large numbers of participants may be reached in these one-day fishing activities. Short-term evaluations generally reflect positive outcomes and event organizers are proud of their accomplishments. However, without efforts to move participants further along the continuum toward trial and adoption, simply generating interest does little more than make event organizers feel good.

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3. Trial Phase: The trial phase occurs as an individual participates in fishing to see how well it “fits.” The individual invests time, energy, and resources in an effort to learn. To help individuals through the trial phase, programs need to offer opportunities for repeated fishing opportunities with a focus on eliminating or minimizing barriers. Some barriers to consider are:

- **Skills**—Participants need opportunities to learn how and where to fish, time to practice, feedback and reinforcement from an instructor/mentor, and instruction on how to build on that skill.
- **Knowledge**—Newcomers need knowledge about fishing regulations, how to fish for different species, how to be a good steward, and how to access information on their own so they can continue to learn.
- **Equipment**—A couple of strategies to help overcome equipment barriers are fishing tackle loaner sites and education on the type of equipment to purchase.
- **Fishing Access**—Newcomers need to know what waters are available to them, how to get there, and how to find accessible fishing spots.
- **Social Support**—Programs can assist by encouraging participants to bring friends and family.

4. Adoption/continuation Phase: The choice to adopt fishing is based on individual satisfactions and benefits as well as the elimination of barriers. Participants in this phase begin to identify themselves as anglers. Because social factors play the most important role in this phase, programs need to build and reinforce social support. Also, providing

opportunities for individuals to receive advanced training can enhance retention.

Understanding the Audience
Different audiences require different combinations of recruitment and retention strategies. All groups (women, men, children, Hispanics, African-Americans, etc.) have different motivations and constraints regarding participation.

Partnerships

The success of recruitment and retention of anglers requires more than a single agency response. Partnerships with other agencies, organizations, businesses, schools and community infrastructures are essential ingredients. Consider the benefits of fishing to expand your partnerships.

Safety

Effective programs assure the safety of all participants and instructors. Fishing can and should be a safe activity. However, it is not risk-free. There are many safety considerations such as water depth and current, bank conditions, hooks, weather, dehydration, handling fish (teeth and sharp fins), cleaning/preparing fish (use of knives/hot grease), health advisories, and fishing from boats.

Program Foundation

Every successful program is built on a solid plan that is relevant to and supported by its sponsoring organization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

This information sheet is just the tip of the iceberg. MUCH more information on planning, developing, and evaluating education programs can be found in the *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Stewardship Education*. The more Best Practices you can incorporate into your program, the greater the chance that your program will achieve the goals you set for it.

To review and/or order copies of this and other Information Sheets, the *Workbook*, or other Best Practice tools and materials, go to: www.RBFF.org/educational/bestpractices.cfm or contact RBFF at: 601 N. Fairfax St. • Ste. 140 Alexandria, VA 22314-2054 • 703 519 0013