

## **MEMBER RETENTION CAMPAIGN**

**2017 Winner:** Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation

**Entry Title:** New Angler Retention Pilot Program

### **Project Overview/Elevator Pitch:**

The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) works to grow the number of anglers and boaters by working in collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies to develop, implement and evaluate innovative recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) programs/efforts. Retaining anglers, especially first-time license buyers, is vital to increasing overall participation in fishing.

RBFF has done previous research specific to first-time anglers. Studies have found that new anglers are two times more likely to lapse (license purchase) than repeat anglers, with renewal rates of 31% and 68% respectively. The same study found that, on average, repeat anglers spend 47% more than new anglers on fishing licenses, tags and permits. Additionally, research has shown that first-time anglers are increasing over the years. With more people trying the sport for the first time, more has to be done to retain these new anglers.

RBFF partnered with the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division to implement the New Angler Retention Pilot Program targeting first-time fishing license buyers to increase fishing license renewal rates.

RBFF implemented and evaluated this pilot program in 2016 to demonstrate successful email communications to new anglers will help retain them and keep them coming back to the sport. Upon success of the program, a toolkit was created as a resource for other state government agencies which includes direct mail and email templates, and steps to implementation.

### **Project Goals/Objectives:**

RBFF's consumer marketing campaign and website is geared towards recruiting new anglers and boaters. Most state fish and wildlife agencies do not send email communications or license renewal reminders. This program was set up to demonstrate that email notifications help with retention of customers. It is vital states communicate with these new anglers to properly retain them however, not much was being implemented at the state level. As such, RBFF created a program to show state agencies that simple email communications can help in retaining their new boaters and anglers.

Our main objective was to achieve higher renewal rates from first-time anglers, compared to a control group which would not receive any additional communications or reminders.

Upon completion of the New Angler Retention Pilot Program, we created a toolkit of resources to help other state agencies replicate the program and retain more anglers.

Our reasoning was: if one state can retain first-time anglers, then other states can too. Having the ability for other state agencies to easily replicate the program was a very important component.

**Strategy:**

Our initial challenge was finding a state to efficiently and easily participate in the New Angler Retention Pilot Program, as the majority of states keep license data extremely confidential and access to the database by an external organization is not easy. We found a good partner in Georgia Wildlife Resources Division.

All new anglers with valid email addresses were selected as the target audience for this retention effort. First-time license buyers were defined as those who:

- Purchased a resident annual fishing license AND
- Did not purchase any privilege in the four prior years

All anglers received an automated Thank You email message upon purchase. They were divided into 5 groups based on communications received:

- Group 1 – Control Group – no communications except for the initial Thank You email
- Group 2 – Reminder emails
- Group 3 – Reminder emails with a discount promotion
- Group 4 – Newsletters and reminder emails
- Group 5 – Newsletters and reminder emails with a discount promotion

First-time license buyers were sent the above communications at certain times based around their license expiration date (Georgia's license year is 365 days from date of purchase). Newsletters contained tips and information on where and how to fish – resources new anglers would appreciate. If a license was not renewed, the angler received reminder emails to renew their license at various intervals.

Once all five groups in the study received their appropriate communications, the program was evaluated.

**Success Metrics:**

All four of the test groups that received communications had significant increases in renewal rates compared to the control group!

Overall, the email communication to the four treatment groups generated a 4.7% increase in the license renewal rate compared to the control group. The program led to an additional 1,448 licenses being sold in Georgia, which earned them more than \$18,000 in additional state revenue.

Furthermore, anglers in the four treatment groups renewed their licenses more quickly than those in the Control group (#1). On average, members of the control group took 30.5 days to renew their license while members of all four treatment groups averaged just 18.8 days.

The treatment groups overall generated more than \$92,000 in revenue for the agency. There was no cost to implement the program; just the investment of staff time to distribute the emails. And when considering the lifetime value of an angler and their economic impact, the intangible contribution to the agency, state and industry is much, much greater.

Because of these positive results, the “First-Time Buyers Retention Email Campaign Toolkit” was officially created and released as a successful, easy resource for all state partners in December 2016. With the toolkit contents, we are confident other state agencies will be successful in retaining anglers, thereby contributing positively to their local waterways, and the industry as a whole.

**Learn More:**

[Retention email campaign toolkit](#)

**Association website**

[www.takemefishing.org/corporate](http://www.takemefishing.org/corporate)