



MEMORANDUM

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

To: Commissioners

From: Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Division Administrator

Date: April 23, 2021

Subject: Retaining 2020 Anglers and Hunters

In the months after COVID-19 first appeared in Oregon, public interest in outdoor recreation increased significantly. Land management agencies saw visitation levels comparable to summer weekends. Retailers reported high demand for bicycles, hiking and camping supplies, fishing gear and other outdoor recreation equipment. At ODFW, interest in the outdoors translated into increased fishing, hunting and shellfish license sales. The initial assumption was that hunters and anglers were purchasing licenses earlier than usual. However, as sales continued to increase over the next few months in Oregon and other states, it became clear that people were turning to outdoor activities like fishing and hunting during the pandemic.

Staff immediately began building on this newfound interest in the outdoors. A new monthly electronic newsletter was launched and emailed to more than 600,000 new and returning license buyers. The Messenger features articles on fishing, shellfish and hunting opportunities, resources for new and experienced hunters and anglers, fish and wildlife management and conservation and includes embedded links to the Electronic Licensing System.

Staff also set out to learn more about these new participants. Economists Allen Molina and Camilla Kennedy from the Management Resources Division and Outreach and Engagement Coordinator Amanda Solla from the Information and Education Division did an extensive analysis of license sales data. The goal was to identify any trends in purchasing patterns and differences in demographics between new and retained/returning customers.

In addition, 50,000 license buyers, including 10,000 first time purchasers, were surveyed. New participants were asked why they started fishing and hunting during the pandemic, about any previous fishing/hunting experience, other outdoor activities, and, most importantly, what ODFW could do to help them continue fishing and hunting. The information is detailed in the attached report (*Retaining 2020 Hunters and Anglers – An Analysis of Fishing and Hunting Participation During the Pandemic.*) Some of the findings of this comprehensive analysis include:

- Resident angling license sales increased by 17% over 2019. Most of these new anglers likely targeted trout and warmwater fish rather than salmon and steelhead.
- Resident hunting license sales increased by 7%. Tag sales for deer, elk, and bear increased significantly. Bird hunting also increased with nearly 40,000 additional resident tags, stamps and validations sold. Some increase in resident hunting may be due to Oregon hunters cancelling out-of-state trips.

- All youth related license and tags sales increased while all senior licenses sales decreased.
- Wildlife area parking permit sales doubled. Parking permit buyers may not be hunters or anglers, so this is an opportunity to engage new audiences.
- 163,000 new customers bought licenses in 2020. 71% were residents. New non-resident customers primarily bought fishing licenses with some non-residents likely purchasing Oregon licenses while Washington was closed to fishing early in the pandemic.
- Fishing was more popular than hunting with new customers.
- New customers tend to be younger. This, along with more participation by youth and women, suggests more families were fishing together in 2020.
- New customers tend to be more diverse. Participation by women was greater (34% - new / 23% retained). 17% of new customers self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, or Asian/Pacific Islander compared to 11% for retained customers.
- New customers are active outdoors. A Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) survey says fishing was not the primary purpose for trips. It was just one of several activities pursued while outdoors.
- New customers felt hunting and/or angling was a healthy recreational option and they had time to do it. Stress relief was a top reason for going fishing or hunting.
- Most new customers had fishing experience earlier in life. Few had any experience hunting.
- One-third of new customers do not have a mentor available to help them learn more.
- New customers want more information on where to go and how to improve their skills.

When asked if they will continue to participate in wildlife-based recreation after the pandemic, 86% of new hunters and anglers said they are extremely or very likely to continue. This may not necessarily lead to buying a license. According to RBFF, the attrition rate for new anglers is extremely high. And, as the pandemic subsides, these new customers may return to their previous activities. Our goal is to keep these newcomers fishing and hunting even after other recreational activities become available. Some of the strategies include:

- Continued distribution of the Messenger. 200,000 recipients opened the most recent edition.
- Email campaigns with information and resources for new hunters and anglers. The most recent email went to 275,000 anglers. One-third opened the email and 2,500 clicked on the link to buy a license.
- Advertising campaigns highlighting fishing and hunting opportunities.
- Workshops to teach basic and advanced fishing and hunting skills. Zoom sessions are held after a workshop so participants can ask follow up questions of instructors, share successes and challenges, and reconnect with other workshop participants.
- Pop up fishing events at popular recreation areas with fishing gear and volunteers available to answer questions and demonstrate techniques.
- Build connections with diverse and underserved communities.
- Developing and updating “Where to Go” resources like places to fish near [Portland](#), [Bend](#), [Roseburg](#), [Medford](#), or [Lane County](#) and the [Weekly Recreation Report](#).
- Online resources on getting started [fishing](#), [crabbing](#), [clamming](#), or hunting [big game](#), [game birds](#), [wild turkey](#), and how to [buy clam](#), [fish for trout](#), [clean and keep your catch](#) and read the regulations.
- Stressing the convenience of buying a license through ELS. In 2020, 53% of gross revenues occurred through online sales, compared to 39% the previous year.