

# MD English/Spanish Digital Advertising Campaign

## RBFF State R3 Program Grants



RECREATIONAL  
BOATING & FISHING  
FOUNDATION



TAKEMEFISHING.org



MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

### Overview

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) created this project with the primary goal to drive fishing license purchases and learn the most cost-effective digital marketing methods for both English and Spanish speaking audiences.

Specific objectives included:

1. Increase sales to targeted audiences.
2. Compare the effectiveness of different digital marketing advertisements and ad sites.
3. Evaluate effectiveness of targeting ads to the Hispanic demographic.
4. Use results to provide recommendations for tracking improvements to the license sales system for future campaigns.

Secondary project goals were to:

1. Improve department reach and visibility.
2. Direct Google search customers to the "official" Department of Natural Resources license site and not a misleading competitor.

The program featured English and Spanish language ad campaigns, with four advertising delivery methods:

- Facebook
- Boosted Facebook Ads
- Instagram
- Google AdWords

### Results

Boosted Facebook posts resulted in better engagement than Facebook ads for both the English and Spanish speaking audiences.

- The return on investment (ROI) for MD DNR's Spanish ads was less than their English ads. While the Spanish ads resulted in a higher click through rate, the amount of money spent on those clicks was significantly more.
- MD DNR had limited success with Google Ad campaigns due to issues with Google's new policy for government documents and official services. Their ads were flagged and taken down as violating the policy. After numerous appeals, they were able to run three ads. Top keywords were fishing Chesapeake Bay, fishing Ocean City, and where to fish near me.
- Based on licensing system survey data results, most people that made a purchase reached the site through a Google search.
- Digital advertising was successful in driving the audience to their landing page. Total landing page views during the dates the English ads ran in 2020 exceeded 2019 page views by 122 percent. Total landing page views during the dates Spanish ads ran in 2020 exceeded 2019 page views by 258 percent.

### Partners

Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF)

### Support

"Encouraging diverse participation in fisheries and inspiring the next generation of anglers is important to our department and our management mission. This initiative advances those goals by helping us connect with our customers and expand our reach through digital platforms. Digital marketing is, and will continue to be, an essential outreach tool for our department."

**Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio**  
Maryland Secretary of Natural Resources

### Sample English ad image and text:



*Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, mountain lakes and streams... Your Maryland fishing license is your ticket to an angler's adventure*

## Benefits

- Greatly increased department visibility and landing page views. The increased engagement contributed to the increase in fishing license sales.
- The Google Ads analytics team helped to connect the license sales system to their Google analytics. While there are limits to what can be tracked, they are now able to assess how many sales are completed and the source (website) from which the customer came. MD DNR can see the main channels bringing people to the licensing site for purchases. In the future, they can expand upon those relationships with the other websites to bring more customers.
- For the first time, MD DNR now has a license system in Spanish. They used state matching funds to pay for translation of the fishing licensing sales system so Spanish ads could link Spanish speaking customers to a sales system they could read and use. This led their agency to establish a new Spanish customer service process and related support framework for customers. Now a Spanish speaking customer can purchase a license in a Spanish sales platform, and the department can handle license questions and requests in Spanish. This is a significant step forward in MD DNR's effort to engage, communicate with, and better serve their Spanish speaking customers.
- This grant provided an opportunity to try many digital marketing platforms with two distinct audiences. They now have the information needed to develop and implement refined and cost-effective marketing campaigns in the future.

## Methodology

In lieu of hiring a marketing firm, MD DNR created an interdisciplinary departmental team for this project. The program featured English and Spanish language ad campaigns, with four advertising delivery methods: Facebook, Boosted Facebook ads, Instagram, and Google AdWords.

The target audience was MD, PA, and VA anglers ages 25-54. From June 15-November 8 MD DNR ran 14 different ad campaigns, with each campaign running an average of two weeks. They implemented eight ad campaigns in English and six ad campaigns in Spanish. State matching funds were used to pay for licensing system changes that included translation of the account creation, login pages and sportfishing products in their system so the Spanish ad campaigns could link Spanish-speaking customers to a sales system they could read and use.

The ad campaigns were staggered with English ads running first. Spanish ads began in August and ran through Hispanic Heritage month (October) and the launch of the new Spanish sales system module.

English and Spanish landing pages were created and all ads linked to one of those pages so they could track page views. Since their license system cannot track a customer from an ad to purchase, they added a customer survey to poll customers during their purchase. It asks if the customer was influenced in their decision to make the purchase by any digital marketing efforts.

## Sample Spanish Ad Image and Text:



*Sabemos que pasar tiempo con la familia es importante. Con su licencia de pesca de Maryland, haga que cada momento cuente! Tiempo de pesca es tiempo de familia.*

*(English translation: We know that spending time with family is important. With your Maryland fishing license, make every moment count! Fishing time is family time)*

## Future Plans/Lessons Learned

- Boosted Facebook ads were more effective for engagement with both English and Spanish-speaking audiences. Instagram was not an effective platform for either audience.
- MD DNR's Facebook audience does not mirror the market. The number of Spanish-speakers who follow them on Facebook is disproportionately less than that which is represented in the state's population. There are a large number of Hispanic anglers, but MD DNR is not serving them online. In hindsight, instead of trying Google AdWords and Instagram, they would have been better served to try to increase the number of Spanish speakers that follow their Facebook page, and then consider boosts specific to those followers.
- Google AdWords were not as cost effective as their other digital marketing efforts. The department already dominates the most effective search keywords without spending money on AdWords. A more effective marketing tool would be to try having Google submit actual ads on other websites visited by people that have visited their website pages but not made a purchase (retargeting).
- Incorporating pixel technology into future licensing systems is recommended, as that would allow MD DNR to track a customer from an advertisement to purchase.

**Eric Wilson | 443-569-1381 | [ericg.wilson@maryland.gov](mailto:ericg.wilson@maryland.gov)**



This grant program was conducted in 2020 and partially funded by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) through a USFWS financial assistance award (#F18AC00145). For more information on RBFF's State R3 Program Grants, please visit [www.takemefishing.org/r3](http://www.takemefishing.org/r3).



## ADDITIONAL AD EXAMPLES



*Pitch a tent and cast a line: let your fishing license take you on a camping adventure. Learn more about fishing in Maryland and explore the journeys in store for you with a Maryland Fishing License.*



*Sigue celebrando el Mes de la Herencia Hispana -- ¡compra una licencia y disfruta de la pesca en otoño con tu familia!*



*Disfrute de todos los beneficios que la pesca en Maryland tiene para ofrecer. Con su licencia de pesca de Maryland, haga que cada momento cuente!*



*Enjoy Maryland's natural bounty at your dinner table. Purchase a Maryland fishing license to take your meal planning to a new level. It doesn't get any fresher!*



*This spring, experience fishing - the benefits are endless. Learn more about the benefits of Maryland fishing and how to purchase your Maryland Fishing License [here](#).*



*Pase más tiempo con su familia y disfrute de todos los beneficios que la pesca en Maryland tiene para ofrecer. Su licencia de pesca de Maryland: diversión para toda la familia.*

**You may use ad language from the above ads, but not full ad artwork without requesting permission from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.**