



# NONRESIDENT ANGLER RETENTION AND REACTIVATION

## RBFF STATE R3 PROGRAM GRANTS

### OVERVIEW

In 2018 the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) developed a Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Strategic Plan with the goal of increasing the number of certified anglers by 5%. This goal of increased angler participation was intended to align with Indiana's 60 in 60 goal of increasing license sales by 24,370 anglers per year. Based on an analysis of fishing license sales from 2013-2017, on average 49% of people who purchased a license one year did not purchase a license the following year. This is know the angler "churn rate". As a result of Indiana's high angler churn rate, efforts to retain anglers have been identified as high priority.

Following the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) models for email promotions in the direct mail & email marketing toolkit, Indiana DFW worked with the Division's Education and Outreach staff and the Communications Division to create a campaign promoting the purchase of nonresident fishing licenses. This effort was intended to determine if a marketing campaign would reduce the churn rate of Indiana's nonresident anglers, reactivate lapsed nonresident anglers, and help Indiana reach its 60 in 60 goal of increasing sales by 24,370 anglers per year.

Between May and September of 2019 the Indiana DFW distributed email and postcard reminders to 17,344 nonresidents to renew their fishing licenses. A total of 1,384 anglers renewed their fishing licenses, for a cumulative reactivation rate of 7.97%. However, the cumulative reactivation rate of nonresident anglers in the control group that received no communication was 7.17%, indicating that the license renewal reminders only had a reactivation rate of 0.80%. The most cost effective method of encouraging the reactivation of nonresident anglers was by utilizing email reminders.

### PARTNERS

Recreational Boating & Fishing  
Foundation

Indiana Department of Natural  
Resources, Division of Fish and  
Wildlife: Education and  
Outreach

Indiana Department of Natural  
Resources, Division of  
Communications

### SUPPORT

RBFF's support allowed the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife the opportunity to better understand the most effective methods of retaining and reactivating anglers. The lessons learned during this study will markedly improve Indiana's ability to communicate with larger groups of lapsed anglers in the future.

#### Angela Haywood

Indiana Division of Fish and  
Wildlife, Assistant Director,  
Planning & Public Engagement

### CONTACT INFO

#### Matthew D. Linn

Fisheries Research Biologist  
Indiana Department of Natural  
Resources

1353 South Governors Drive  
Columbia City, IN 46725

Phone: (260) 244-6805

Email: [mlinn@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mlinn@dnr.in.gov)

## RESULTS

Overall, a slight lift in sales was exhibited over the control group by the email only and the email & postcard groups. During each separate mailing campaign the largest lift in sales over the control group was observed in the email only group. There was no lift observed in the postcard only group (-0.01%). Similar to the three separate shorter evaluation periods, the email only group experienced the most lift (1.69%) followed by the email & postcard group (0.59%). The results of this study suggest that the most cost effective method of encouraging the reactivation of nonresident anglers is by utilizing email reminders.

## METHODOLOGY

The audience for this marketing campaign was comprised of nonresident anglers who had purchased an annual nonresident fishing license at least once in the last three years, but not every year. This group of anglers was divided into four treatment groups:

Group 1: Receive only emails

Group 2: Received only postcards

Group 3: Received both emails and postcards

Group 4: Was the control group and receive no communication

Both the email and postcard messages encouraged anglers to renew or reactivate their nonresident fishing license using messaging recommended in the RBFF email reactivation toolkit. The marketing campaign took advantage of several holiday periods between May and September. It was anticipated that many nonresident anglers fish in Indiana when traveling to the state during these holiday periods. Email and postcard mailing were sent prior to Memorial Day weekend, Fourth of July weekend, and Labor Day weekend.

Indiana DFW evaluated the success of the marketing campaign via A-B testing of treatment and control groups. The lift, or change in license purchasing between the treatment groups and the control group was used to evaluate success and make recommendations for future marketing campaigns.



Figure 1. August 23<sup>rd</sup> postcard cover mailed to the postcard only and postcard/email groups.



Figure 2. August 23<sup>rd</sup> postcard message mailed to the postcard only and postcard/email groups.



Figure 3. May 22<sup>nd</sup> email message mailed to the email only and postcard/email groups

## BENEFITS

This study has provided the Indiana DFW with an improved understanding of the impact email and postcard fishing license reminders have on nonresident angler reactivation rates. While the number of nonresident anglers reactivated as a result of receiving email and postcard reminders was negligible, the Indiana DFW now can focus future reactivation efforts on demographics and communication techniques that provide a greater return on investment.

The reactivation rate of nonresident anglers from the email and postcard campaign was lower than that of prior email campaigns to Indiana residents, indicating that targeting nonresident anglers may not be as effective as targeting lapsed Indiana residents. The utilization of postcard license reminders also appears to be less effective than email reminders, especially considering the additional expense of printing and postage.

Future efforts by the Indiana DFW to reactivate anglers can now focus on targeting high return demographics and utilizing forms of communication that are the most cost-effective.

## LESSONS LEARNED/FUTURE PLANS

The results of the email and postcard marketing campaign by the Indiana DFW to lapsed nonresident anglers suggests that the use of emails are a more cost effective method of reactivating anglers than postcards. Despite the treatment group receiving emails having the highest rate of reactivation over the control group (1.69%), future email campaigns to lapsed nonresident anglers are unlikely to substantially improve Indiana's ability to achieve its 60 in 60 goal of increasing sales by 24,370 anglers per year.

For example, an estimated 16,814 nonresident anglers lapsed in purchasing a license after purchasing one in 2016. Reactivating 1.69% of these anglers each year would only reactivate 284 angler annually, which is represents 1.16% of Indiana's annual goal of 24,370 anglers.

Therefore, future Indiana fishing license reminder campaigns should focus on contacting both resident and nonresident lapsed anglers via email to maximize return on investment.