

WDFW Biennium Retention Plan: A Response to COVID-19 and the New Customer Cohort



RECREATIONAL
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WDFW wants to hear about your fishing experience in 2020



Dear Valued Customer,

Washington and much of the country saw a high number of new hunters and anglers this year as other forms of recreation closed and social distancing measures went into effect due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the start of the new license year, WDFW surveyed new anglers via email to learn more about their fishing and hunting pursuits.

OVERVIEW

The unique circumstances of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic caused an above average number of new fishing participants in Washington and across the country. This is due to the large-scale closure of other forms of recreation and the ability to socially distance while participating in fishing activities.

In previous years, the number of new anglers in Washington hovered around 210,000 each year. **License year 2020, however, saw over 254,000 new anglers participate in a fishing opportunity.** The sole purpose of the campaign is to retain this large cohort of new anglers in the coming years, utilizing them to drive further recruitment and reactivation.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is nearing the end of the first year of this two-year retention plan. While objectives may be altered or expanded after this first year of campaign results are analyzed, the current goals remain:

- Retain at least 29% of license year 2020 (LY20) new fishing customers by the end of LY21
- Retain at least 16% of LY20 new fishing customers by the end of LY22`

PARTNERS

- Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation

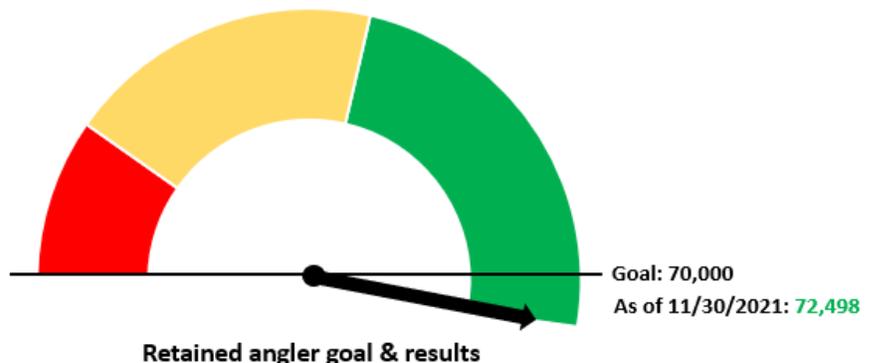
SUPPORT

“I believe nothing is more important than doing everything we can do to retain the new hunters and anglers who participated during the Covid-19 pandemic, to broaden the support for conservation.”

Peter Vernie, WDFW Licensing Division Manager

RESULTS

Of **254,201** new anglers in LY2020, **72,498** purchased again in LY2021 which represents **29% retention** of new LY2020 anglers, exceeding their goal of 70,000.



Example of your image ad at 300x250



An example of Google ads that targeted new and reactivated anglers. Bass Week is an annual promotion gaining in popularity.

BENEFITS

Covid-19 presented the world with enormous, unpredictable challenges. As states struggled to gain control of the spread, people suddenly found themselves stripped of their normal lives and thrust into finding new ways to pass time safely. Luckily, the outdoors provided much relief. This retention plan and the methodology we used are easily duplicated with new participant cohorts. The benefits of implementing a similar plan are many, notably:

- It provides an opportunity to engage with new, unbiased audiences to learn more about what they need and want from your agency
- The survey component is flexible and can be used to gain insights about how customers feel about their experiences in the field. This qualitative data can help inform new content, products, and offerings
- Tracking email engagement with new audiences is valuable, especially considering these recipients are potentially very new to the activity

METHODOLOGY

STRATEGIES

- Survey new anglers to determine what they fished for, if they were successful, what the experience was like, what would inspire them to go again, and what other species and/or other activities of interest
- Use custom audience targeting on social media and Google to market to new anglers
- Implement a personalized email campaign targeting the COVID-19 cohort of new and reactivated anglers

LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE PLANS

Lessons learned

- Where digital ads are placed, and when, is just as important as how those ads are crafted (voice & tone, image selection, keywords).
- Facebook has proven to be a difficult vendor to work with for advertising R3/outdoor recreation, often censoring ads and causing delays, etc.

Future plans

- WDFW plans to continue surveying new anglers going forward to gain insights that will inform their content marketing strategy
- WDFW is undergoing significant organizational changes as part of their 25-year Strategic Plan. One primary objective of the plan is to engage communities through recreation and stewardship. R3 fits within the scope of this objective, and they plan to continue engaging new 2020 license buyers to keep them interested and informed going forward.



An example of Facebook ads that used custom audience targeting to reach new and reactivated anglers.

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