

# Maintaining Momentum: Digital Strategies to Retain Anglers Beyond 2020



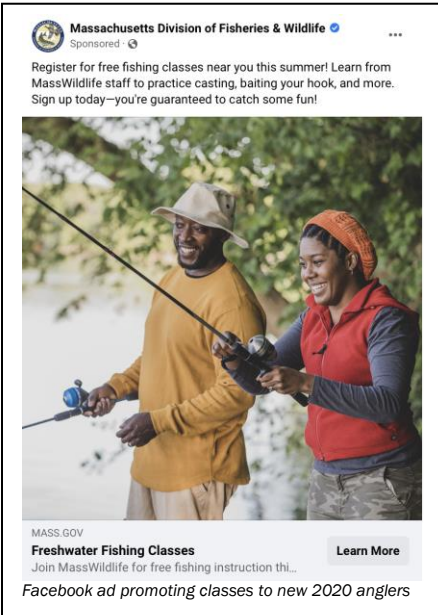
RECREATIONAL  
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MASSWILDLIFE



## OVERVIEW

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) launched a digital marketing campaign in the spring and summer of 2021 specifically focused on the retention of anglers who fished during 2020. This project addressed the grant's focus areas by employing digital marketing strategies for retention, and marketing local fishing opportunities close to home to support new and returning anglers and foster their ongoing participation. MassWildlife utilized emails, social media (Facebook and Instagram), Google search, Google display, and YouTube ads to target those anglers who fished in 2020 and encourage them to continue participating in 2021 and beyond.

## RESULTS

This effort resulted in \$791,251 in license sales (\$745,560 from Google search ads; \$6,024 from paid social media ads; \$1,133 from Google and YouTube display ads; and \$38,534 from targeted emails).<sup>\*</sup> In addition to driving sales, the ads increased interest in fishing. Social media ads resulted in 3.5M impressions, reached 674K people, and generated 59K website clicks. Google search resulted in 168K impressions and 72K website clicks. Google display and YouTube ads resulted in 2.1M impressions and 13K website clicks. MassWildlife adjusted their fishing education course offerings this summer by selecting locations with high license sales growth in 2020, including urban areas like Lowell, Springfield, Pittsfield, and Worcester. Learn-to-fish courses were advertised to anglers who were new in 2020 and Becoming an Outdoors Woman fishing classes were promoted to female anglers who were new in 2020 through targeted email and social media. These advertisements were an effective way to attract participants in their target audience for retention. MassWildlife used a new trailer from RBFF's First Catch Center program to improve the experience at these classes and help students build their skills. This was the first year they used online registration with email collection for these classes, which allows them to stay engaged with these participants over time.

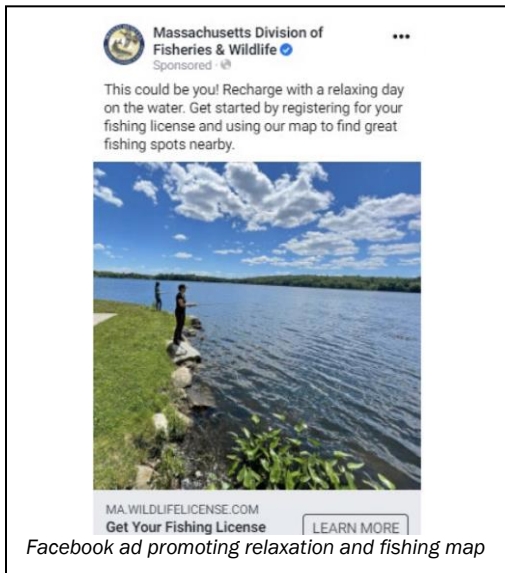
*\*Note: A lift analysis was not performed as part of this project, so this total represents all sales tracked from campaigns through the point of purchase using UTM codes and Google Analytics E-commerce. Apple's new opt-out privacy option impacted their ability to track conversions this year. While MassWildlife usually evaluates conversions over a 7- or 28- day window after ad engagement, they are only reporting direct conversions this year (clicked on ad and immediately went on to purchase). This means the reported results are likely conservative, as it only includes those who took an immediate action to purchase, and not those who took time to think after engaging with an ad before purchasing.*

## PARTNERS

- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF)
- Tomo360, Inc.

## SUPPORT

"Our challenge this year was to retain record numbers of anglers from 2020. We engaged these anglers with digital ads to keep fishing top of mind and encourage their continued participation with a mix of virtual resources and in-person classes. Working with RBFF allows us to continually test innovative marketing strategies to keep anglers on the water." -Mark S. Tisa, Director



## BENEFITS

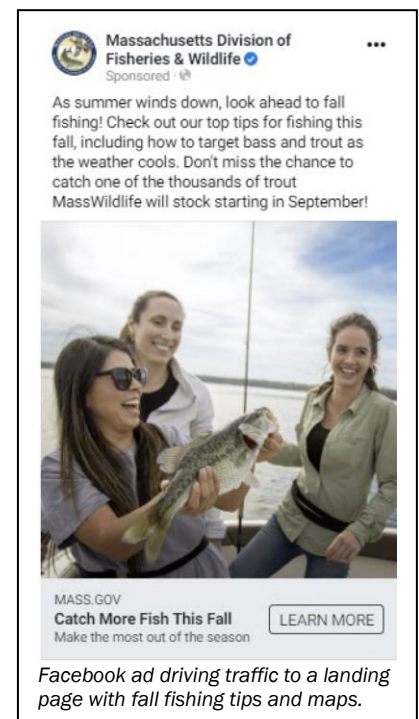
In 2021, MassWildlife continued to learn more about their customers and the types of content they engage with most, with particular focus on those anglers who participated in 2020. Part of the project this year involved the creation of new landing pages on their website to support their ads. For example, they ran spring trout stocking ads on social media which drove traffic to a special landing page featuring a trout stocking map which is updated daily, as well as tips on how to catch each of the 4 types of stocked trout. This has a long-term benefit that they now have some additional self-learning tools that can be used by anglers over time (including how to use digital maps to find local fishing spots and fall trout/bass fishing tips). MassWildlife also learned more about how they can best utilize display ads on Google and YouTube for retargeting. Based on this year's results, their marketing firm suggested they offer search and display ads in Spanish to expand reach in future campaigns, and expand focus on non-residents.

## METHODOLOGY

From April through August, MassWildlife utilized emails, social media (Facebook and Instagram), Google search, Google display, and YouTube ads to target anglers who fished in 2020 encouraging them to continue participating in 2021 and beyond. This "COVID" cohort angler group includes those who were new to fishing in 2020, those who reactivated in 2020, and those who simply renewed in 2020. Engagement with these groups included simple license reminders, invitations to participate in learn to fish classes virtually and in-person, and ads promoting the benefits of fishing for relaxation, connection with nature, conservation, and time with family and friends. They also promoted resources like how to find fishing locations near home with their new fishing maps, fishing tips for different times of year, and more.

## LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE PLANS

- High churn rates remain a primary concern in Massachusetts despite their ongoing commitment to R3. While overall sales will not be finalized until the end of the license year, initial evaluations suggest churn rates were higher in 2021 than in 2020 (44% v. 52%). However, 2021 fishing license sales were higher than the 2017-2019 average, indicating participation increased beyond pre-pandemic levels.
- Record license sales in 2020 are largely attributed to the pandemic. As more recreational opportunities re-opened in 2021, it was a challenge to maintain the same participation in 2020 but sales are still up compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- MassWildlife documented a 22% reduction in impression share for Google search volume this year compared to last year, indicating an overall drop in demand for fishing.
- The campaigns still generated interest in fishing and license sales, and helped keep people engaged in fishing by making them aware of local fishing opportunities, highlighting the benefits of fishing, and reminding them to renew their license.
- In 2021, MassWildlife continued to learn more about the content customers are most interested in and will build upon these learnings in future years by tweaking ads with the best engagement.
- They will be launching a new licensing system with a CRM in December 2021, enabling them to better promote events and resources to retain anglers in the future.



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