

MI Department of Natural Resources



AFWA Multi-State Conservation Grant



Overview

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MI DNR), Fisheries Division implemented a digital marketing campaign to recruit new anglers, retain current anglers and reactive former anglers by encouraging them to purchase a Michigan fishing license.

The campaign was originally set for 2020 but due to the pandemic it was pushed to launch in 2021. In 2020, Michiganders were directed by the Governor to not travel until later in the year, nonresident marketing was halted and even motorboat usage was not allowed for a period of time.

MI DNR used display, paid search, Facebook and Instagram to reach consumers from May to September 2021.

MI DNR utilized Brogan & Partners Marketing Agency to assist with implanting their campaign. MI DNR currently has a contract with the agency and, therefore, per the State of Michigan procurement, this firm was awarded the bid for MI DNR’s marketing campaign and was their sole vendor on this effort.

Results

During the campaign, MI DNR spent just over \$47,000 on ads and they saw a total revenue of **\$843,794.25!**

Unfortunately, MI DNR experienced some tracking issues and couldn’t attribute revenue to each tactic. Other results include:

Tactic	Ad Spend	Impressions	Visits to Landing Page	Visits to E-license Page
Display	\$35,000	4,692,395	11,971	7,102
Paid Search	\$7,206.55	206,433	92,220	82,569
Facebook	\$3,000	1,312,765	5,490	78
Instagram	\$1,950	302,017	831	-
TOTAL	\$47,156.55	6,513,610	110,512	92,749

Due to the large increase in license sales in 2020 with more outdoor recreation in response to the pandemic, they compared their 2021 sales to 2019 sales for a more realistic benchmark. Comparing the two years they saw the following:

- New customers- 8.3% increase
- Repeat customers- 5.7% increase
- One-to-three-day license holders- 5.3% increase
- Non-resident customers- 11.7% increase
- Female customers- 11.4% increase

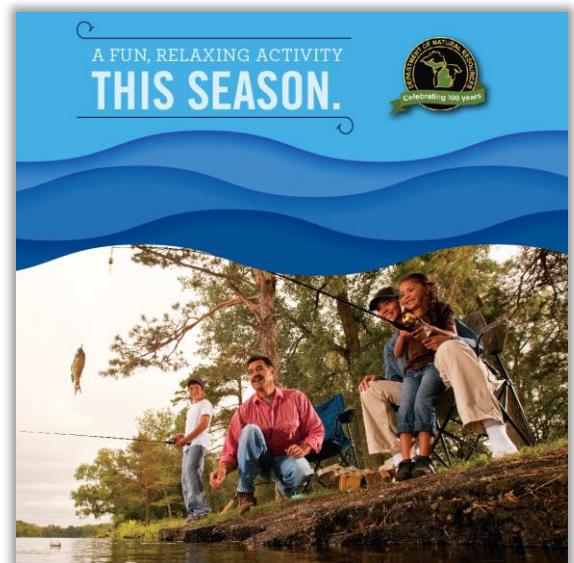
Partners

- Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation
- Association for Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- Brogan & Partners Marketing Agency

Support

“With the help of RBFF, we were able to fund a digital marketing campaign that increased our 2021 license sales compared to 2019 data. As we continue to focus our efforts in R3, we will utilize the RBFF resources and case studies to incorporate successful tactics in our future marketing campaigns.”

-Jim Dexter, Fisheries Division Chief



Social Media Post

Ad Text: Whether you’re a seasoned angler or a first-timer, fishing is a fun, relaxing and family-friendly outdoor activity.

Benefits

The funds from the Association for Fish & Wildlife Agencies Multi-State Conservation Grant and RBFF provided MI DNR with a huge opportunity to implement a digital marketing campaign.

Given that fishing license sales were increased significantly in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, the MI DNR appreciated they could execute this campaign in 2021 versus 2020.

MI DNR's main goal was to increase license sales, which was achieved as 2021 sales were above 2019 license sales numbers.

The MI DNR has a healthy following on social media platforms which helped expand their reach for this campaign.

Overall, the MI DNR views the campaign as a success but are also continuously working to improve all efforts. They will continue to use some of the creative and digital marketing methods used in this campaign to continue marketing efforts with their future campaigns.

Methodology

Digital display, paid search, Facebook and Instagram were selected as tactics to promote the campaign as these platforms are predominately used by MI DNR's target audience. The campaign ran from May to September 2021.

The minimum age of their target audience was selected due to the age requirement for a fishing license (17) and the maximum age was selected as the average age of a license holder in Michigan.

To increase tourism, the county Convention and Visitors' Bureaus (CVB), funded a digital marketing campaign at the same time the MI DNR ran their fishing license campaign. The same marketing agency was spearheading the CVB campaign and was having some concerns with the two campaigns competing against each other. MI DNR removed some key words from their targeted audiences (camping and boating) to overcome this to minimize duplication of efforts.

MI DNR experienced issues with access to their data to properly track consumers. Consumers were sent to a landing page first (on Michigan.gov) and then to the E-License page (on a separate website). They were able to track how many people went to the landing page from the different sources and how many license sales came from the landing page. However, the tracking code wouldn't follow someone through the Michigan.gov site over to the E-License page.



Digital Ad Example

Future Plans/Lessons Learned

MI DNR is interested in running a campaign on their own in the future using social media ads. However, they would like to use different creative materials and better tracking parameters. They are currently working to gain approval for using tracking pixels to implement better tracking in the future.

MI DNR plan to target a more diverse population and more female anglers, with the possibility of adding in target audiences of campers and boaters as well as those interested in general outdoor recreation activities.

MI DNR had to spend time providing a lot of direction to their marketing agency which ultimately resulted delaying the campaign launch. They suggest having detailed discussions about data tracking expectations and limitations with the marketing agency when planning the campaign.

They also suggest that state agencies communicate with their marketing agencies to determine if there are other competing campaigns occurring during the same time frame as their campaign to avoid competition between campaigns. This was a challenge that they did not expect and will work to avoid moving forward.

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This grant program was conducted in 2021 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.