

Responsive Management™



UNDERSTANDING FIRST-TIME FISHING LICENSE BUYERS

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Conducted for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

by Responsive Management

2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) to better understand the motivations, interests, and expectations of first-time fishing license buyers. Specifically, the research examined first-time buyers' expectations regarding fishing when they bought a license, opinions on their subsequent fishing experiences, and their attitudes toward the license buying process. The qualitative findings discussed in this report are part of a broader market research study to understand why individuals who try fishing either lapse or continue with the activity. This phase of the study consisted of two focus groups with first-time fishing license buyers in Richmond, Virginia, and Denver, Colorado.

Each group consisted of 10-12 people and lasted approximately two hours. The focus group recruiting criteria called for individuals who had purchased a fishing license in 2012 but not during the previous 4 years. The focus groups were conducted using a discussion guide that allowed for consistency in the data collection, and were recorded for later analysis and transcription. Each group was led by one of Responsive Management's trained moderators.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, Responsive Management used databases of fishing license holders from each state that were queried to identify individuals who had purchased a fishing license only once in the past 5 years. Potential participants were contacted by Responsive Management recruiters by telephone. Those interested in participating in the focus groups were given a brief summary of the focus group topic, screened using a screener questionnaire, and, if qualified, confirmed for attendance. The screener ensured that potential participants met the license purchasing criteria established for the groups. Additionally, the screener eliminated individuals who had been fishing at all in the previous 5 years (with or without a license) or who were exempt from needing to purchase a license. To encourage participation, Responsive Management provided a monetary incentive to focus group attendees.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Fishing holds different appeals for different anglers, and motivations frequently shift with age (younger anglers may be particularly interested in catching fish, while older anglers may be more open to social and nature-based aspects of fishing). In terms of dissatisfactions with the sport, first-time license buyers named environmental factors such as litter and mosquitoes as constraints, and overcrowding in certain areas also impacts satisfaction. Invitations to go fishing are extremely important: very few individuals purchase a license and go fishing on their own initiative; rather, the overwhelming majority obtain a license because of an invitation from a friend or family member. Most first-time license buyers do not report problems or confusion with the license purchasing process, although the lack of expertise among sales associates at stores like Walmart may frustrate newer or novice anglers. Many first-time license buyers have only a vague understanding that license fees are used for conservation management, and very few are aware that states receive matching Federal Aid funds for fishing licenses sold. In terms of messaging, fishing as a way to relax and as a connection to nature (or as a way to temporarily disconnect from busy, technologically-driven modern life) tend to be more appealing to first-time license buyers than reminders that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation.

Appeals of Fishing

I like being on the water, just the quiet, and the competition. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It can be just as exciting as it is relaxing, the more fish you catch. If there's a group of people, you want to catch just as many as they are. —Richmond first-time license buyer

When you're with people, the time you spend reminiscing and catching up with everyone. I enjoy that part the most. —Denver first-time license buyer

I do a lot of catch and release but it's about the joy of catching something. Catching your own food. Fish are a good source of protein, if it's big enough. —Denver first-time license buyer

For me, it's the solitude; hearing the water, the wildlife. The relaxation. —Denver first-time license buyer

Comments from participants in both locations illustrated the variety of different reasons anglers take part in fishing. While prior research has indicated that novice anglers tend to be more often motivated by the social aspects of fishing than by the sport/recreation and utilitarian aspects (e.g., catching fish to eat), the focus groups suggest that first-time license buyers are a heterogeneous group, rather diverse in their opinions on the various appeals of the sport.

Unlike many other activities, fishing has numerous dimensions of enjoyment and can be appreciated from different perspectives. It has a strong social appeal: for many individuals, fishing is simply the backdrop or setting in which people can reminisce and socialize. Fishing has a sporting aspect that appeals strongly to individuals who are interested in developing the skills needed to hook and land a fish, or becoming proficient at different types of fishing. Fishing has a strong nature-based appeal: for many people, it is simply an activity that provides a reason to experience the outdoors. Similarly, there is also the appeal of relaxing in solitude by water, a concept mentioned by numerous participants in the groups. In general, the focus groups reinforce the fact that onetime, casual, and less avid anglers choose to participate in the activity for different reasons.

Interactions during the group discussions often helped participants to consider the appeals of fishing in different ways, and an effective marketing approach may be to point out some of the various ways of enjoying fishing, rather than singling out one specific aspect. As many participants in the groups suggested, fishing can be as relaxed or as exciting as the angler desires, depending on the person's goals and expectations.

Motivations for Fishing

I think when I was a kid it was more about catching the fish and taking the fish home and showing everyone what I caught. But as I got older I started to catch and release everything and now that I'm 45, it's really irrelevant if I catch anything at all. I just like spending time with the person I'm with. That's the key part of it now, the relaxation, more than the catching the fish. Just being outside on the water. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I don't know [if I'll buy a license again]. It depends if my kids are interested. They're teenagers now, so they're kind of into catching [fish]—if we're not catching something, they'll want to go home. —Denver first-time license buyer

In addition to recognizing that fishing can be enjoyed in a number of ways, an important concept to keep in mind when marketing fishing is that motivations for fishing often shift with age. A number of participants in the two groups mentioned how their own preferences or expectations for the sport had changed over the years. One common theme from the groups (supported by much previous research) was for younger anglers to be especially interested in catching fish, particularly as this type of experience provides some action and represents the opposite of quiet, slower-paced outings in which the main appeal is relaxation. By contrast, many older anglers said they were content simply to spend time with others, experience nature, or enjoy solitude. Further evidence of this tendency for motivations to shift with age emerged in the comments addressing reactions to fishing trips during which no fish were caught: parents of younger anglers as well as younger anglers themselves were more likely to communicate frustration, while many older individuals were less likely to indicate that the failure to catch a fish had impacted the trip in a negative way (the quotations above exemplify this tendency).

Dissatisfactions With Fishing

Mosquitoes. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Coming back empty-handed is a little disappointing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If you're shore pier fishing, you can be in a spot, get a couple of good hits, and everybody on the pier is going to run to that same spot, in a little area like the fish are going to wait there. Then you've got about 10 tangled lines. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Finding garbage in the lakes. People that litter make my skin crawl. —Denver first-time license buyer

I hate seeing all the extra fishing line everywhere. You have line hanging off every tree around you on the lake. —Denver first-time license buyer

It sucks to go somewhere where the banks are full, or like when you get out there in a boat and every time you stop, someone else is set up 15 feet away from you. If you fish in the city, the one thing that's really hard is getting away from everyone else. —Denver first-time license buyer

Local lakes are crowded and you can't cast without crossing someone else's line, and then you have to argue with your next-door fisherman. —Denver first-time license buyer

First-time license buyers in the two groups were asked about dissatisfactions or things they enjoyed *least* about fishing, and many comments addressed environmental factors that impacted the setting of the fishing trip, such as litter or mosquitoes. A minority of participants specifically mentioned occasions during which they failed to catch any fish (this was more common in the Richmond group). One common theme across the two groups was the issue of overcrowding at popular fishing areas; comments addressing crowding were particularly common in the Denver group, especially when participants mentioned lakes within the city. The issue of tangled fishing line was also repeated fairly often and suggests scenarios in which banks or piers become overly

crowded with other anglers, thereby impacting the experience. Related to this is the fact that some people desire to fish but are constrained by time—casual and novice anglers, in particular, are less likely to commit substantial time and planning to longer trips that require them to travel greater distances. Unfortunately, according to some anglers in the groups, local fishing areas sometimes represent the most crowded opportunities.

Importance of Invitations

Who says no to going fishing? —Richmond first-time license buyer

In a world so over-stimulated, it's nice to have that connection with somebody. You know, if my dad said "Hey, let's go," I wouldn't say no. There's that element of excitement in fishing, but it's that moment of space where you connect and bond and create something. And that was the part that really drove the nostalgia reference that I had from a kid, that I wanted to give my kid, and that excitement on his face, that joy. That's a strictly human kind of experience that you don't get from watching TV or going to the movies. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My buddy was going fishing and invited me. I got addicted all over again. I fished a lot as a kid but I didn't do it for a while. Mainly it was about being invited. —Denver first-time license buyer

No matter who invited me, I would go. —Denver first-time license buyer

Comments from the two focus groups reinforce the importance of invitations from friends and family members in bolstering participation from novice or casual anglers (i.e., one-time license buyers). Few if any individuals in the groups decided to purchase a license and go fishing completely on their own initiative; rather, the overwhelming majority of participants obtained a license because of an invitation from a friend or family member (another important reason for a license purchase was having a child who asked to be taken fishing or wanting to expose a son or daughter to fishing). Specific reactions to the concept of being invited to go fishing are discussed in a later finding in this section, while some additional research conducted with new anglers provides greater support for the importance of invitations.

A recent Responsive Management study examining the motivations of one-time anglers in Iowa found that this group was highly dependent on going with family and friends—like many of the Richmond and Denver participants, these people had been invited to go and likely would not have gone without such accompaniment. A survey question measuring the reasons they first bought an Iowa license reinforced the importance of family and invitations: Iowa one-time anglers were more likely to have first purchased a fishing license to take a child or grandchild, because of an invitation from a friend, or because of a request from a family member, thereby mirroring tendencies in the Richmond and Denver focus groups.

Experiences Purchasing Fishing Licenses

Purchasing online was easy. I know people go to bait shops to buy them and it takes them forever to hand write everything and print the stuff out. I did it right online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It [purchasing a fishing license] was a non-event. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well, my friend just said to go buy it at Sportsman's Warehouse or Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

It was just horrible at Walmart. The lady just didn't know what was going on. I just know that in the future, I need to prepare myself for that. I need to know it might be a process. My kids and I were waiting there and they were so irritated by the time we got up to the counter, and the salesperson was a little flustered and my kids were agitated and I kept telling them to be calm. At least I know next time the possibility of that happening. I can expect that. —Denver first-time license buyer

The focus groups suggest that most first-time license buyers were able to navigate the license purchasing process fairly easily and unremarkably, particularly those individuals who purchased their license online (other individuals reported generally positive experiences purchasing a license at a retailer such as Bass Pro Shops or at a local bait and tackle store). The major exceptions were individuals who purchased a fishing license at Walmart, with several participants in the Denver group discussing negative experiences they had at the store. The most common issue appeared to be unknowledgeable or unhelpful sales associates or long wait times at the sporting goods counter; these issues were compounded when the purchaser was unfamiliar with licensing requirements or was seeking information about license or stamp requirements for a specific lake or area.

Despite these negative anecdotes, many individuals (particularly in the Denver group) were able to look past the initial obstacle of a difficult or confusing purchasing process. Indeed, the fourth quotation above illustrates the fact that many novice anglers are willing to put up with some momentary frustration in order to fulfill their end goal of obtaining a license to go fishing. In the quotation above, the purchaser had every reason to leave the store, but instead stayed and ended up purchasing the license because she and her husband were adamant about going fishing. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that not all first-time license buyers will be as patient, and a frustrating license purchasing experience at a big-box retailer like Walmart has the potential to discourage those who wish to try fishing. For this reason, it may be worth recommending the purchase of a license online as often as possible.

Sources of Information on Fishing and Licenses

Someone told me [I needed a fishing license]. Just someone that I knew who went fishing. And I had no idea I needed a license until I was told. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The wildlife organization for the state [is where I would get information about fishing and licenses]. Because if I'm looking for the purposes of not running afoul of the authorities, I would want to know precisely [what the requirements are]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I always go to the DOW: Department of Wildlife. —Denver first-time license buyer

Probably any retailer of fishing equipment [would be able to provide information about fishing and licenses]. —Denver first-time license buyer

My dad told me at a certain age that it was time to buy one [a fishing license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

When asked who they went to for information about fishing and licenses, a small number of people in each group specifically mentioned a state fish and wildlife agency or organization. However, there was a much greater tendency for casual anglers to mention retailers such as Cabela's and Bass Pro Shops, as well as stores like Walmart. As mentioned in the previous finding, one shortcoming of major general-purpose retailers (Walmart in particular) is that employees are ill-equipped to answer questions from new anglers about various types of fishing equipment and licenses or stamps needed for specific lakes and water bodies. Novice anglers desire simple, clear information on these subjects, and they may become intimidated or confused more easily than experienced individuals when they fail to receive clear information at a store.

A recent Responsive Management study that looked at casual and novice anglers in Washington State found that newer anglers' dependence on friends and family as fishing partners tended to influence their sources of information about fishing: newer anglers were less likely to find information from the primary source—the state fish and wildlife agency—and more likely to obtain the information from friends and relatives. Similarly, in addition to acquiring information about fishing and licenses from retailers and sporting goods stores, many first-time license buyers in the Richmond and Denver groups mirrored the tendency of Washington novice anglers to look to friends and family members for guidance or information.

Attitudes Toward Conservation Funding and Federal Aid

I think it goes for a good cause, to help keep the programs going. I didn't know it was dollar for dollar matching, for the government. I figured there was something like that, but not all. So at least I'm kind of helping the state maybe get more funding to help our parks. It doesn't make me more likely [to buy a license]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I hate to say it, but people are always on the lookout for the government to swallow their money or for their money to go to an organization that's not doing something for them. If I had not done research on the national parks, I would never have known that the cost goes back to the park. I think if they gave that information when people are asking about park licenses and fishing licenses, it might improve people's willingness to buy the pass and go [fishing or hiking in parks] more often. —Denver first-time license buyer

The focus groups explored whether participants were more likely to purchase a license and go fishing if they knew that license fees were used to manage and conserve wildlife and natural resources in their state. Participants were initially asked whether they knew how fishing license fees were used, and were then read a brief explanation of the Federal Aid process through which states receive matching funds for licenses sold.

In general, less than half of the participants in each group were able to articulate that the fees are used for conservation management, and few if any participants across the two groups were aware that states receive matching Federal Aid funds for fishing licenses sold. In the Richmond group, very few participants suggested that knowing license fees are used to support state conservation efforts made them more likely to buy a license or fish; one exception was a female participant who, in discussing how she always purchased a fishing license for a small and little used Maine lake where she and her husband vacationed, mentioned specifically that she thought of the license fee as a contribution to conservation efforts. By contrast, most other participants in the

Richmond group said that, while they were happy to learn that license fees are used for conservation funding, simply knowing this was unlikely to change their future license purchasing behavior (not that these participants would purchase licenses any *less* frequently).

Denver participants reacted favorably when informed that states receive matching federal funds for licenses sold. A few people specifically approved of the fact that license fees are used to support state resources, while one or two people indicated that someone who was unsure whether to buy a license might decide to do so after learning that the fee would support wildlife in his/her state. Others in the group suggested that a license basically amounts to a user fee (i.e., the purchase is necessary to participate legally); these participants generally did not view the Federal Aid concept as being particularly persuasive or important in terms of their future license purchases.

Reactions to Various Forms of Encouragement

Focus group participants were asked for their reactions to several specific forms of encouragement or reminders about license purchasing and fishing; their reactions to each item are summarized below:

Having someone to fish with:

It's usually more fun to have people to go with. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, it's half and half because sometimes I would prefer to go by myself. —Denver first-time license buyer

The large majority of the Richmond group considered this an important form of encouragement, and most participants in the Denver group appeared to agree. While a few people in the Denver group commented that they sometimes preferred to fish alone specifically for the solitude, most in the group viewed fishing companions as a positive concept.

An invitation from a friend or family member to go fishing:

[Being invited] makes it easier for someone like me because I don't have any equipment. So if you invited me, I'd go! I'll pack the food because I don't have any equipment. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The fact that someone else initiates it—it wasn't you that came up with the idea—makes it more of a priority. Sometimes peer pressure is a good thing. —Denver first-time license buyer

As suggested elsewhere, this is one of the most important facilitators in encouraging fishing participation among both casual and novice anglers as well as more avid and committed anglers. Interestingly, participants in the Richmond group saw different benefits to this form of encouragement: some people emphasized that an invitation from a friend or family member would mean being able to go with a more experienced angler who could provide instruction or access to equipment. Others were interested in the social benefits of being able to connect with the person through shared time—these participants generally pointed out that fishing, as an activity, allows for relaxed interaction conducive to conversation (unlike basketball or other, more active activities). In the Denver group, a few people mentioned that they were more likely

to go on a fishing trip if invited by someone, due to the excursion being initiated by someone else (in this way, the trip would feel more like a special outing).

If a child asked to be taken:

I would. If you think about it, you know how you feel when you catch a fish, imagine how a three year old feels when they catch a fish. It's exciting when they catch it to see the smile on their face. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I'm not going to take a kid who says 30 minutes into it that they're done; no, we're here and we're going to do the half-day or full day or whatever it is. That's why I like all the other things you can do at a lake; if there's no fishing or you're not catching anything, there are other things to do. —Denver first-time license buyer

In both groups, a few individuals stated that it would “depend on the kid.” At the same time, a substantial number of people across the two groups indicated that they would gladly take a child fishing, if approached for that reason. One person in the Richmond group stated that she would also gladly take older people fishing as well as children. In the Denver group, one or two people said that they would want to make sure the child was interested in fishing for at least several hours or most of a day before committing to an involved trip to a lake.

More specific tips about how to, where to, and when to fish:

It's more about the person who's going to teach you. Most people don't pick up a book like “Fishing for Dummies.” You learn from people. —Denver first-time license buyer

Reactions in the Richmond group were fairly positive, although participants were not effusive when discussing this form of encouragement. Similarly, participants in the Denver group commented that while such materials certainly could not hurt, they should be free of charge. It was pointed out that individuals generally learn how to fish from other people, not books or instructional manuals.

Educational “how to” videos:

I were going to go fishing and I wanted to learn how to fish for steelhead or whatever, I would much rather go with someone who regularly goes steelhead fishing, and have him show me how to do it, and show me what bait is really effective, than to read an instruction manual or a book or a DVD, because that's what I'm trying to get away from. I just spent all day researching or writing at work. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You can find everything on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Similar to the previous item, most people in the Richmond group indicated that they would be fairly unlikely to watch instructional videos of any considerable length, preferring instead to receive advice and guidance from other individuals (including employees or customers at bait shops). In the Denver group, participants pointed out that any number of instructional fishing videos can already be found on YouTube, for those who are interested.

An educational event or class hosted by your state fish and wildlife agency:

It would help me fish, but I don't have time for that. I don't have much time off, I wouldn't want to take a Saturday. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well, the downside to that is the location: where is it, where do you have to go? In today's age, everything is broadcast or televised or put on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Reactions to this were again fairly similar to the previous two items, with participants in both groups pointing out limitations associated with available free time and suitable locations for such classes or events (YouTube was again brought up as a helpful resource for those unwilling or unable to travel considerable distances to a class/event). At the same time, some in the Denver group suggested that they would be open to participating in such events if they happened to encounter them at area parks or lakes at which they were already visiting or planning to visit.

Receiving information on local fishing opportunities (including preferences related to delivery methods, such as phone calls, letters, e-mails, or free smartphone apps):

Depending on where you are, are you going to be able to have a signal to even get the app? I like the brochure best. You can lay in bed in read it, you can take it on a boat, you have access to it. It's easier, old fashioned. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If you're going to go fishing, you could just look to see if this is a good weather day on your app, is this a good lake, are the fish biting, and then you're like, "Okay, it's definitely not coming in the boat, it's going to stay in the car," if you're not into technology on the boat. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Maybe if that was included in the purchase of a license. I know stuff is available but just having it handed to you, you're more willing and likely to look at it than if you searched on your own. Just the simple fact that it's handed to you makes you more likely to use it. —Denver first-time license buyer

One person in the Denver group stated that information on local fishing opportunities would be most valuable if it were distributed in hard copy at the time of a fishing license purchase (this person commented that “the simple fact that it's handed to you makes you more likely to use it”). Regarding preferences in delivery methods, there was little consensus over the best ways to distribute this information: in the Richmond group, different participants preferred mail, e-mail, TV commercials, Twitter messages, and hard copy pamphlets and brochures (such as those provided at rest stops).

Additionally, there was a fairly lengthy digression on the pros and cons of a free fishing app: in short, the group was divided on the merits of an app, with some people emphasizing the convenience of smartphone integration and others pointing out that an app could be confusing, would require constant updates, or would simply lead to little-known fishing spots becoming overcrowded as they were advertised through the app. A few Richmond participants said they would trust local bait and tackle shop employees/customers over an app. Debate in the Denver group over the various delivery methods essentially mirrored the discussions from the Richmond group, albeit on a smaller scale: participants debated the various pros and cons in much the same way but spent less time on the subject as a whole (a few people in the Denver group liked the idea of an app, while others appeared to view it as unnecessary).

Receiving a reminder to renew a license:

I may need a reminder, just to embed it in the back of my mind. A reminder might embed it back in your brain like that, like, "I need to go fishing, back out to the water." That's just me. —Richmond first-time license buyer

What would really be cool is if you pay with your credit card, you could sign up for auto-renewal, where you would just automatically have your license renewed. An option to auto-new your license, like Netflix. I think it would probably encourage more people to buy. —Denver first-time license buyer

Most people in the Richmond group viewed the idea of a reminder favorably. In the Denver group, responses were fairly similar (despite a few people suggesting that a simple reminder would be unlikely to persuade someone to buy a license if they were not already planning on doing so). Additional discussion in the Denver group concerned the convenience and ease of renewing a license, with some people stating their preference for renewal over the Internet (one person suggested an auto-renewal process similar to Netflix). Finally, one Denver participant recommended that short-term fishing licenses be sold on location at lakes, specifically at booths that rent equipment or provide information.

If the license purchasing or renewal process was easier:

It's not difficult, but again if you dropped the barrier of entry, if you're already renewing your driver's license, why not? —Richmond first-time license buyer

On this topic, several comments in the Richmond group suggested that the process for purchasing and/or renewing a fishing license is already fairly easy. At the same time, a few participants discussed the possibility of allowing residents to renew a fishing license at the same time a driver's license is renewed (presumably for a longer period similar to the valid term of a driver's license, as opposed to a single-year fishing license period).

Reactions to Various Messaging Concepts

Focus group participants were asked for their reactions to several messaging concepts designed to encourage license purchasing and fishing; their reactions to each concept are summarized below:

Being reminded that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation:

No, I think it's compassion fatigue. To a certain extent you can get bombarded with the politically correct [messaging]. I would find it more offensive than incentive. —Richmond first-time license buyer

From a department's perspective, you drive interest in preserving the environment from a bottom up perspective. Hypothetically, we all love fishing, so we're all going to make sure we don't throw our beer cans over the boat. And bottles in the water, because we're going to know the fish aren't going to be around long if you're doing that. I think we're all tired of like, messages being forced upon us by organizations that all have a message to penetrate; I think people are just worn out by that. People go fishing to get away from that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Many participants in the Richmond group appeared openly resistant to messaging that emphasized that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation. These individuals appeared to interpret the message as being overly prescriptive or authoritarian; such participants recommended that, rather than attempting to convert anglers or potential anglers into conservationists via messaging, agencies should simply let the fishing experience itself create “stakeholders” of the environment (i.e., individuals are likely to become dedicated to conservation as they become more experienced as anglers, but messaging to this effect will have little value).

Being reminded that fishing helps connect people with nature:

I see a slightly different commercial. Not so much connecting with nature, but disconnecting from the rest of it. There's this dome over a boat and my son's sitting there, and there's this white noise bombarding it, so there's this safe zone over it. The picture I get in my head is not plugging in [to nature], but disconnecting from the rest of it [outside of nature]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's the relaxation, but it's the blocking of that time. It's almost a forceful [way of deciding that] from here to here, the rest of it doesn't exist. It makes space to relax. —Richmond first-time license buyer

People sit in their cubicles and get that email [with the fishing and connection to nature message] and say, “Oh—I'd rather be there than here.” It's a reminder. —Denver first-time license buyer

While a handful of Richmond participants found this concept to be obvious, most in the group appeared to view the message itself as valuable. One person in the group suggested that a more powerful message would emphasize that fishing lets people “*disconnect* from the rest of the world outside of nature,” rather than allowing them to connect with nature. Similarly, the message received mixed reactions in the Denver group: a few people felt that it was too obvious, while others viewed it as a useful reminder to disengage and go outside.

Being reminded that fishing helps people relax:

The thing that everyone keeps talking about is the relaxation factor, and I would absolutely agree with that. Very peaceful. I strive toward simplicity in life, and trying to keep it the least complicated, and fishing is the same. Fishing is simplicity. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think people get tired of inching along the highways in their metal coffins, bumper to bumper, with idiots who can't drive—I think it's appealing for people to think about getting away from it. —Denver first-time license buyer

A number of people in the Richmond group said that they were more likely to be motivated by messaging that emphasized the competitive or exciting aspects of fishing, as opposed to the relaxation aspects. On the other hand, a few others reacted quite positively to this message, saying that it mentioned one of their most preferred aspects of fishing. Participants in the Denver group generally regarded this message quite positively, with comments addressing the value in reminders to relax.

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This study was conducted for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) to better understand the motivations, interests, and expectations of first-time fishing license buyers. Specifically, the research examined first-time buyers' expectations regarding fishing when they bought a license, opinions on their subsequent fishing experiences, and their attitudes toward the license buying process. The qualitative findings discussed in this report are part of a broader market research study to understand why individuals who try fishing either lapse or continue with the activity. This phase of the study consisted of two focus groups with first-time fishing license buyers in Richmond, Virginia, and Denver, Colorado. Specific aspects of the research methodology are discussed below.

Focus Group Overview

The focus groups entailed in-depth, structured discussions with small groups of first-time fishing license buyers (generally between 10-12 individuals) about their fishing experiences. The use of focus groups is an accepted research technique for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, and behaviors. Focus groups provide researchers with new insights, hypotheses, and understanding through the process of interaction.

Focus groups allow for extensive open-ended responses to questions; probing; follow-up questions; group discussion; and observation of emotional responses to topics—aspects that cannot be measured in a quantitative survey. Qualitative research sacrifices reliability for increased validity. This means that, although focus group findings cannot be replicated statistically as can a survey (high reliability), they provide researchers with a more valid understanding of the topics or issues of concern in the study (high validity).

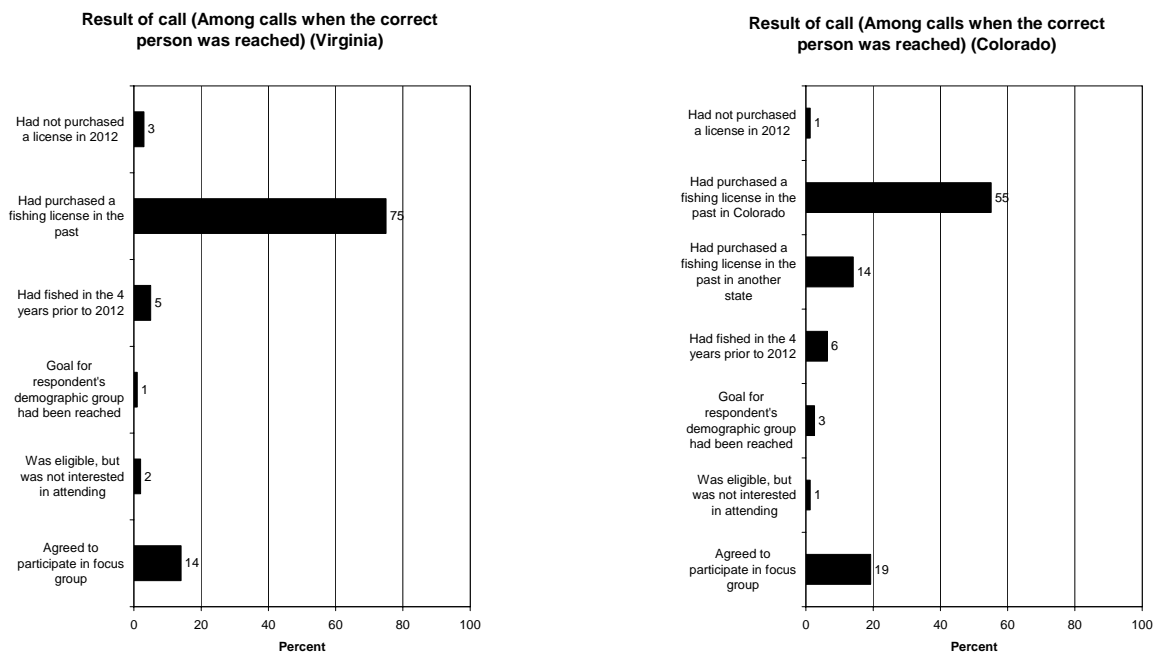
The focus groups were moderated by one of Responsive Management's trained moderators. The moderator, through the use of the discussion guide, kept the discussions within design parameters without exerting a strong influence on the discussion content. In this sense, the focus groups were non-directive group discussions that exposed the spontaneous attitudes, insights, and perceptions of first-time license buyers regarding their fishing experiences and their interest in continuing further with the activity. All focus group discussions were recorded for further analysis. At the end of the focus groups, any questions that participants had regarding the study were answered.

Participants and Locations

As previously mentioned, the focus groups were conducted with first-time fishing license buyers. For the purposes of the study, these were defined as individuals who had purchased a fishing license in 2012 but not during the previous 4 years. The focus groups were conducted in October and November 2013 at professional focus group facilities in Richmond and Denver. Host facilities and reservations were coordinated by Responsive Management. The moderator ensured that each focus group room was set up appropriately, including seating, recording equipment, and food arrangements. Refreshments were provided to focus group participants, and each group lasted approximately two hours.

Recruiting

To recruit participants for the focus groups, Responsive Management used databases of fishing license holders from each state that were queried to identify individuals who had purchased a fishing license only once in the past 5 years. Potential participants were contacted by Responsive Management recruiters by telephone. Those interested in participating in the focus groups were given a brief summary of the focus group topic, screened using a screener questionnaire, and, if qualified, confirmed for attendance. The screener ensured that potential participants met the license purchasing criteria established for the groups. Additionally, the screener asked whether the participant had been fishing at all in the previous 5 years (with or without a license) and whether they were exempt from needing to purchase a license. Of note is the high percentage of individuals in each database who had purchased a license before at some point; as shown in the graphs below, 75% of individuals in the Virginia database and 55% of individuals in the Colorado database had purchased a state fishing license in the past.



Confirmed participants were e-mailed or mailed (by personal preference) a confirmation that included the date, time, and location of the focus group, as well as a map and directions to the focus group facility. Each participant was offered a reminder call the day before the focus group and provided a telephone number for directions or last minute questions. To encourage participation, a monetary incentive was given to participants. During the recruiting process, the recruiting manager maintained a progress table for each focus group that included participant name, address, contact telephone number, and essential participant characteristics. Each focus group's target was approximately 10-12 people. The recruiting manager ensured that all confirmation e-mails or letters were sent promptly to participants and that reminder telephone calls were made, as necessary, the day before the focus group. Reminder calls and interaction with potential participants helped ensure their attendance, resulting in quality participation.

Discussion Guide and Analysis

Each focus group was conducted using a discussion guide that allowed for consistency in the data collection (the guide is included in the appendix). The discussion guide included top-of-mind questions pertaining to license buyers' fishing experiences, their motivations, and their interest in future license purchases, among other topics. Responsive Management conducted qualitative analyses of the focus groups through direct observation of the discussions by the moderator as well as through later observation and analysis of the recordings by other researchers. The organization and development of findings entails a third review of the focus groups as part of the qualitative analyses. Throughout the report, direct quotations from participants are shown in the relevant sections.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

FISHING PARTICIPATION

- The groups began with participants discussing the type of fishing license they had purchased and the number of times they had used the license to go fishing. In each group, a majority of individuals had purchased an annual license, as opposed to a smaller number of individuals who had purchased a short-term license. (This tendency mirrors a finding from a Southwick Associates analysis of first-time fishing license buyers that determined that about 80% of first-time buyers in 2012 purchased an annual license.) Most individuals who purchased an annual license said they had gone fishing at least a handful of times (generally between 3 and 5 outings, although some anglers were considerably more avid); those who had purchased a shorter-term license, such as a five-day license, usually had gone fishing just once or twice during the valid license period.
 - Two common reasons for the purchase of the fishing license included invitations from family or friends (both spontaneous and planned events) and occasions in which the participant had taken a younger child fishing (generally the person's son or daughter).
 - A number of participants across the two groups said they had fished during their childhood years but had then lapsed out of the activity due to changing interests or priorities as they grew older; for many of these individuals, the most recent license purchase had been the occasion for their reentry into the sport.
 - Participants were generally divided between going fishing with either family or friends; by comparison, a small number of individuals in each group said they usually fished alone.
 - First-time license buyers rarely indicated being the person who led their fishing group or made decisions about the fishing outing; instead, they usually stated that decisions such as where to go and what species to fish for were made by the most avid angler in their group (commonly a father or experienced friend) or the person with "the boat" or "the most equipment." One exception to this tendency appeared to be groups that consisted mostly or entirely of novice anglers, such as family fishing excursions. In these instances, decisions were typically made as a group.

**What type of fishing license did you last buy (i.e., an annual or a short-term license)?
How often did you go fishing?**

I bought an annual license, mainly because my husband is a fisherman. I went about 5 or 6 times.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

I bought an annual license. I moved back to the US from the UK after 20 years and came with a Brit so I thought we'll do the hunting, fishing routine. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I purchased [an annual license] because as a kid I'd gone fishing and I have a kid who's coming of age and really wanted to go. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got an annual license and I've gone about 4 or 5 times. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I have an annual license, I've been about 3 or 4 times. I did it so I wouldn't get fined. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got a 5-day license. I went for those 2 days on my boss' open boat, but I've never been back after that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got an annual license. What prompted me to get one is my father-in-law said, "Let's go rockfishing," and I love rockfish. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got an annual license. For me it's about relaxation. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I bought a two-year license. I have a son, I have a bunch of buddies who fish. I've used it twice, maybe three times, I haven't caught anything yet. I've had friends get a small ticket for not having a license in places they never would have expected it, so I figured I'd buy it, throw it in my tackle box, be ready to roll whenever. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I bought an annual [license], I've been fishing about 25-30 times this year, plus I have a license for my boat, so anyone with me can fish. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got [an annual license] because my dad loves to fish and is always taking my daughters, and we were going with him for Father's Day as a family. I've been about 4 to 5 times since. —Richmond first-time license buyer

We bought a day fishing pass last year and unfortunately got skunked, but I've always been an avid fan of fishing and have fond memories of going fishing with my dad as a child. —Denver first-time license buyer

I bought a day license over Memorial Day weekend. I grew up fishing. It was a weekend thing for me, but I never purchased a license. I kind of grew up hating fishing because we did it all the time, every weekend. But then my kids kind of wanted to go, so I purchased a license. —Denver first-time license buyer

I bought an annual fishing license—my husband got hurt, so fishing was one of the only things we could do. It's something we used to do as kids. We would always go camping and stuff like that. I knew it was something we both liked and could do as a family. —Denver first-time license buyer

**What type of fishing license did you last buy (i.e., an annual or a short-term license)?
How often did you go fishing?**

I bought an annual license. I learned how to fly fish as a kid and didn't do it for a long time. Last year I started up again; I'd go on the weekends, twice a week. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'm a student and I bought an annual license, but I didn't use it for the whole year. I went with my parents and we grew up fishing, so I enjoyed it. —Denver first-time license buyer

I also bought an annual pass that I only used once. My dad used to take me as a kid. It was just far enough and just close enough; back then, traffic wasn't as bad as it is now. —Denver first-time license buyer

I bought an annual pass. I'm now a fishing addict, especially fly fishing. I probably used the annual pass four or five dozen times; I went almost every day after work. —Denver first-time license buyer

I got an ice fishing license and annual license. Obviously I enjoy ice fishing and I also enjoy catching catfish. I enjoy fishing, always have. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think I bought a day pass and the only reason I got it is because all my friends were going fishing and they wanted me to come along. In order for me to go, I had to have a license, so I got the license. We were out there all day but didn't catch anything. Every time we would cast, a goose would swoop in and catch the fish. It was more interesting watching the goose fish. I haven't been back since, not because I don't know how, but because I haven't found the sweet spot yet. —Denver first-time license buyer

I bought an annual license and a small game license. I've been going fishing with my dad basically since I was able to crawl out of a car seat. I've loved it and enjoyed it my whole life. I enjoy camping and being outdoors and doing all sorts of activities. I'm kind of an outdoorsman, in a way. I just love fishing and the all-around experience. —Denver first-time license buyer

Growing up, we always did fishing. I actually didn't even know you had to have a license until I was an adult. We were always fishing and my favorite fishing was in a pond in Missouri. The girls would go out and ignore the boys and chat, and I was down until it came to killing the fish, which I couldn't stomach. I bought a day pass. My husband is really big into being outdoors and I would fish a lot as a kid. So we got the pass and sat and drank beer and watched the fish steal our bait all day. Not much happened, but I'm pretty sure we'll do it again. He wants to hunt now, so I'll probably be sitting in the cabin—I can eat things but I can't gut it. I can't kill it. —Denver first-time license buyer

Who did you typically go fishing with? Family, friends, or by yourself?

Friends. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Wife. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Husband. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My dad, my kids. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Family members. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Friends. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Most of the time by myself. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I usually went by myself. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd usually go with my stepdad or friends. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd go with my dad and two small brothers, and we'd bring cousins. —Denver first-time license buyer

Usually my mom, my dad, my brother. Usually I'm with them. —Denver first-time license buyer

Growing up, it was usually uncle or aunt. Now, with the day pass, we went with friends, and then my husband and I went by ourselves later that day. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd take my children. —Denver first-time license buyer

When going fishing with others, who was typically the leader or the one who made decisions about fishing, such as when and where you went? Was it you or someone else?

The one with the boat. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Whoever has the car. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Whoever has the equipment. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If I pick where we go one time, we swap off. One of the places we tend to like the best, we'll go a lot.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

The area I live in has a wealth of opportunities and [where we went] was convenient. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The most avid [person] out of the group, usually. There's always one of us who knows more about the type of fishing you're fishing for, the environment you're fishing in, the surroundings. There's always someone who knows more. It's more about help, with everyone trying to catch fish. —Denver first-time license buyer

A lot of times it's in conjunction with a camping trip, so everyone will bring an old fishing pole they have in their garage. Frankly, I've forgotten how to tie a hook, so you can either Google it or you can just have someone show you. Usually it's a friend. —Denver first-time license buyer

I don't know how I ended up tying the knots, because I have a slight visual impairment. Where we fish is usually a toss-up between the two big-mouths, which are my husband and his best friend. We just usually go along with it. —Denver first-time license buyer

Back to what you were referring to, you kind of do go along with the one who knows the most, because you trust them and trust that they'll take you to a place where you're not going to completely waste your time, and you'll enjoy it. For me, it was always my dad. He knows a ton about fishing. We kind of follow him. —Denver first-time license buyer

My husband would pick a spot and we'd sit there all day and not catch anything, so maybe the next time I would pick the spot. It just depended on how that worked out. —Denver first-time license buyer

Sometimes when we're camping I'll take off from my group to get some peace and quiet. I'll go hiking off on my own. Our favorite place to fish is Green Mountain Lake and I'll go off and find my own spot to fish for a while. —Denver first-time license buyer

REASONS FOR FISHING AND PURCHASING A LICENSE

- In discussing their reasons for purchasing a fishing license, a number of participants in the Richmond group suggested that the license was simply a means to an end: these individuals had become interested in fishing or were curious to try it and, having an occasion to accompany someone or being invited by a friend or family member, simply obtained the license as a necessary step to the outing. Several people framed the purchase of a fishing license as an obvious step to avoid a ticket from a game warden or conservation officer. One or two others talked about times in which they had fished from a boat and had not obtained a license, but had then taken part in a fishing trip to a public area, necessitating the purchase of a license.
 - One female participant indicated that the primary reason she had obtained a fishing license was so that her husband would be able to keep more fish (in other words, he could effectively double the overall catch limit for the boat, thanks to the presence of a second angler).
 - One Richmond participant mentioned being discouraged upon arriving at Sherando Lake and learning that he needed an additional license or stamp in order to fish there. One or two other participants in the group agreed with this frustration and contended that “one license should be enough.”
 - One participant mentioned buying an additional license for his son, despite the child being young enough not to need a license.

- In the Denver group, participants appeared somewhat more likely to mention the threat of a fine or ticket as a reason for purchasing a fishing license: one person specifically mentioned that he had previously received a ticket for fishing without a license, and a few others noted that they had purchased a license because their fishing trips had taken place in “high-tourist” or particularly popular areas. Once again, the decision to obtain a fishing license frequently touched on two common themes: needing a license because of an invitation to go fishing from a friend, and needing a license because of a desire to take children who had expressed an interest in fishing. In both cases, many participants had gone fishing when young but had fallen out of the sport in later years.
 - General motivations for fishing in the Denver group ranged from a desire to become self-sufficient in catching one’s own food to wanting to experience solitude in nature to an interest in teaching children how to fish or simply exposing them to the pastime. Several participants mentioned an interest in getting away from the city, and a small number of Denver participants mentioned the thrill of catching something or in competing with friends or family members to see who could catch the biggest or most fish.
 - One female participant in the Denver group mentioned that she had grown to dislike fishing as a child, simply because her family had engaged in the activity so frequently. Nonetheless, she had purchased a license in order to take her children fishing.

- While some participants said they wished they had caught more fish, virtually all participants in the two groups agreed that their fishing experiences met their expectations.

Why did you first decide to buy a license? What did you hope to experience or get out of fishing? Did anyone influence your decision to first go fishing?

I was standing in Dick's Sporting Goods with my husband and he thought it'd be something else to do. He'd been thinking about it but he was like, "Well, let's just get the license and do it," so that's how we did it. I've been just a few times since then, always with him. I'd never go by myself.

—Richmond first-time license buyer

I've been fishing with a friend on private land, and I think she's forgotten more about fishing than I will ever know. That was great fun and I loved it; then things changed and now I was looking to fish, but not on private land, and so off to Bass Pro Shops, and that was it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Fishing is one of those things that I'd always wanted to do. I love to spend time outdoors, and oddly I just hadn't been fishing. And a friend of mine is very keen, and we were discussing it and she said, "Well, come with me," and so I did and it was very enjoyable. And then I think I reached a point where my training goals were off, and I thought I could actually brave it on my own and actually do what you need to do with the gubbins [fishing scraps or refuse]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Since we were all going Father's Day for our first time, my dad told us that we would need to get a fishing license and that's why we got it, because he told us you can't be caught fishing without a license. He had been plenty of times, but it was our first time. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I went to Sherando Lake, I went there and I thought, "Oh this is cool, I got the license," and then when I got to wherever I was going to fish, there was a sign that said you need an additional license. Why? Isn't one license enough? I'd rather they hit you once and for all, charge you whatever they charge you, and just leave you alone. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That's how it is? Really? I think that's weird. It just seems excessive to me. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I just like being on the water, it's so relaxing. The first time I went it was awesome. I went with my uncle, my brother, my younger brother, and my dad and my mother. It felt awesome; it felt good. It was relieving just to get away. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like water anyway, I just never went fishing. [My uncle who has a boat] was like, "Come on, we have to go get the license," and we did all that and then I saw it firsthand. I was just fun, enjoyable. I wanted to go, and they asked me to go anyways. It was a win-win situation. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My husband is an avid fisherman, he has a boat, and the reason I got a license is so that he could keep more fish in the boat. I fish sometimes, mostly I just like being out on the water and just keeping him company, but that was why I got the license. He goes during striper season, and you can keep a certain amount in the boat per license, per fisherman. —Richmond first-time license buyer

We always lived on farms and always had a pond or stream nearby, and it was one of those things I always enjoyed. I kind of jumped the gun, my son's like 19 months right now. When I became a dad I was like, "Oh, I have to get my fishing license!" It's something I'll definitely do with him in the future though. One of my buddies has a boat, and obviously you're good when you're on the boat, but

Why did you first decide to buy a license? What did you hope to experience or get out of fishing? Did anyone influence your decision to first go fishing?

when we always come back around dusk you can always see them jumping in the James and I want to bring my rod and fish right there on the dock. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I've been invited where I didn't need a license—where I was on a boat or crabbing up in the northern neck. I've been on boats before, I didn't need it with a whole boat, everyone on there was fine. It was more for dock, riverside and pond type stuff. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I kind of aged into it, if you will. I did it as a kid with my dad, and there was a lot of nostalgia and memories that were involved with it, so I wanted to take my kid. I didn't want the ticket, so I bought one even though he didn't require one, it was really more for him. —Richmond first-time license buyer

[My husband continues to encourage me to go] mainly to help for the count, for the stripers, and just something to do together. Just like he said, it's just nice being on the water, you don't even have to talk—just chill. My husband really enjoys that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

For me, it was my great grandmother when I was a kid, and I think it's more memories that influence me now, [more so] than a person. —Richmond first-time license buyer

As I got old I got into sports more, so that took the time of basically everything. [The memories] of being on the water, being near the water [brought me back to it]. Fishing from the shore is kind of taxing; you know, you're battling the bugs, that's the only bad thing. Other than that, it's fun. Like I said, it's just relaxing. It's just you and your thoughts. If you run into some people fine, if you don't, fine. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got a ticket for not having a license. I live by a lot of lakes. My family is full of avid campers and fishers and hunters. I've fished the past five years. —Denver first-time license buyer

My husband wanted the outdoor wedding, on a rock, over a crowd—he had all this envisioned. He kept throwing in things: “We're going to do this, we're going to do that.” And one of the last things he said was, “We're going to go fishing.” So I said, “Okay, buy some rods.” I didn't realize you needed licenses. The fishing didn't happen at that point. His best friend said, “Hey, you can't just go fishing, you have to buy a license.” We got married, camped for two days, and later that summer his friend invited us to go fishing, and that's when we went and bought a license. We weren't sure we were going to like it, so we bought the one-day license. —Denver first-time license buyer

We were going to be outside of Breckenridge, a high-tourist area. We probably would've bought licenses anyway but we for-sure did because we were going to be in a more popular tourist area. —Denver first-time license buyer

My parents and their parents would go fishing religiously, every weekend. We would camp during the summertime for two or three months and then come back so that I could go to school. I did that until the age of 13, when I was able to stay home by myself, and I stopped going. But it used to be a ritual every weekend [camping trips and fishing], so I kind of hated it. When I moved here after high school, I didn't really know where to go fishing. My sister was saying you could go in town, so we would go but I wouldn't fish. I would take the kids and sit with them. My sister took us to the Adams County Regional Park and I took my kids and they caught some fish and really enjoyed it. We

Why did you first decide to buy a license? What did you hope to experience or get out of fishing? Did anyone influence your decision to first go fishing?

purchased a license. Just recently, since my kids have been interested in it, I've started taking them. I don't know if I really like it [fishing] yet, but it's a good time just to go and spend the day with my kids. Take a lunch and hang out for a few hours. —Denver first-time license buyer

My buddy was going fishing and invited me up—this was in April of last year. I got addicted all over again. I fished a lot as a kid but I didn't do it for a while. I finally got my own rod. Mainly it was about being invited. We were fishing for trout, mostly. —Denver first-time license buyer

The city park had stocked a pond for the kids and let the kids fish. That's when my son got into it. It was nice that they had it all stocked, because pretty much all the kids caught fish. It got us out of town, or even in town, it was a nature park. —Denver first-time license buyer

I liked fishing when I was younger, but we always went to a lake far away. When I think about it, I'd like to ice fish or fly fish, just to try then, but it's about having time—time to go that far. It's got to be local, and sometimes local isn't as much fun because there's 50 other people. And last year the water was low, so it wasn't as enticing. —Denver first-time license buyer

My earliest memories are [as a kid] when we went out back and used the hose to soak the lawn and bring up night-crawlers. That was when the ritual began, when we would hunt night-crawlers and get our bait ready for the weekend. It became a thing between my dad, myself, and my uncle. It was tough driving far to the lake but I always enjoyed it and have a lot of great memories. I was hoping [with this recent license purchase] to start something with my nephew so that he eventually has good memories. —Denver first-time license buyer

I do a lot of catch and release but it's about the joy of catching something. Catching your own food. Fish are a good source of protein, if it's big enough. —Denver first-time license buyer

[In terms of my diet], I only eat fish but I still don't want to catch it. My husband caught one fish the whole day and I just about lost my cookies when he ate it. It's exciting to catch something. I wanted to just get outside and have a good time. My days are focused around school and work and house things—did the kids do their homework, did I do my homework, did the internship go well? To be able to get outside and do something not involving all those things—fun, relationships, having a good time: those were all expectations [for our fishing trip]. —Denver first-time license buyer

For me it's the solitude; hearing the water, the wildlife. The relaxation. —Denver first-time license buyer

I would say the same. We went fishing as a family and everyone was fishing and I just took my book and went off to the side and read. For me, it was just about getting away from the city and seeing new scenery. It was about getting away. That's a big thing for me. I didn't want to go on the trip but I decided to take the opportunity to get away from the city, more so than fishing itself. —Denver first-time license buyer

I totally agree. It's like a spiritual experience. —Denver first-time license buyer

My sponsor recommended it [fishing] to me. I quit drinking and needed something to get me out of my head, and this works pretty well. It did meet my expectations. —Denver first-time license buyer

Why did you first decide to buy a license? What did you hope to experience or get out of fishing? Did anyone influence your decision to first go fishing?

For me, it was imparting that experience on my kids. Teaching them about fishing, helping them learn all the mechanics of what it takes to be a fisherman. Imparting that knowledge was something I expected, as well as taking that moment to spend time together away from the busy-ness. Just enjoying the outdoors. —Denver first-time license buyer

My dad has been fishing ever since he was a child. Ever since I was in a car-seat, he was taking me out there while he was fishing. He would watch me as he fished. He got me interested, taught me how to fish, and throughout my life it kept me out of trouble. —Denver first-time license buyer

My husband got me back into fishing, even though he sucks at it. He just wants to do things he's never done. He loves trying those huge outdoor things, and I'm down for them as long as I don't have to get anything. —Denver first-time license buyer

For me, it was my dad. He's the one that had us go camping, taught me how to fish. He was always fishing when we were camping. —Denver first-time license buyer

One of my favorite films of all time is *Jeremiah Johnson*, a Robert Redford movie. He's basically an outcast, a loner, and he lived off the land. It doesn't matter what's going on in the world, there's always going to be fish in the water. The whole point is, when I go fishing, it's basically to keep my skills tuned. You never know. When I got here to Denver, I didn't know you had to have a license—back in the good old days, we'd just jump in the car and cast off and go wherever. I like fishing, not so much because I have to do it, but because it does relax me. It lets me put things in perspective. —Denver first-time license buyer

My husband and his friends keep saying they're going to put this boat together and we're going to go fishing on it. Because when they invited us to go fishing, they rented a boat. But they just need to get the stupid boat put together. I don't know that it's just the boat [preventing us from going]—that's just their excuse. —Denver first-time license buyer

It didn't take much persuading from my friends to make me go fishing. They said, "We're going to the lake, do you want to come? Got to get a license, do you have one?" That was it. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think there's kind of a competition edge for my husband and his friends: "I'll catch more than you, and mine will be bigger!" And now they're planning hunting: "Oh, I'm going to catch the biggest elk!" They won't get anything. —Denver first-time license buyer

The ones who encouraged me [to go fishing] are no longer in the area. I'm not as avid now as I'd like to be, because I'm juggling moving to a different part of town. At the moment, fishing isn't a real priority. Now, I don't know why but I also video fish—I got a bunch of fishing videogames. I figure if I can't go out to the water, I turn on the TV. And there, when I catch the fish, I don't have to scale them. —Denver first-time license buyer

Did your fishing experiences meet your expectations? Did your experiences satisfy the reasons for which you first bought a license?

Well, now every time [my dad] goes, we want to go. We want him to tell us, unless he's getting up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning and wants to go on his own. If he's going at 7:00 or 8:00, we're trying to pack lunch, get together, try to make it on time to go with him because he likes to go early. But yeah, it's very soothing and relaxing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I wish I'd caught a little more. Just some trout, and stuff like that. Hopefully striper season we can catch some more, so we can eat it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I remember it being a lot easier when I was a kid. It just seemed like you could have a bamboo cane poll and catch a huge small mouth bass in a little pond. I'm not having great success right now. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I didn't catch a thing. It was bizarre. Like you, you could whistle and they jump in your pocket, but [for me] it's been dire. It didn't really adversely affect my experience at all. Like everyone, I just like being on the water. —Richmond first-time license buyer

For me, my son is autistic, and he likes the water, but he has a hard time, as any little boy, sitting still. So that dry spell was very difficult because it was a disincentive to go back the second time, but in a way there was that lesson in that you keep having to go back at it and try, and the sheer joy you see in your kid's face when he catches that first fish—then you're hooked and he'll be a customer forever. Talk about incentive: "Daddy can we go, daddy can we go, daddy can we go?" —Richmond first-time license buyer

That's the other thing about it. As I've gotten older, my uncle is an avid fisherman, you begin to learn there's a science to it. You begin to learn what fish is running when, what their habits are, what their habitats are like, where you're going to find them. A lot of people think it's just going out there and casting in the water. You're going to be out there all day, into next week without even a nibble. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Some people won't tell you where they like to go fishing, because it's where they catch the best fish. They don't want you in your spot. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Oh yeah, definitely [my expectations were satisfied]. —Denver first-time license buyer

When you're sitting out there on the water—if you're just sitting there with a pole and everyone's staring at the lake—that is boring. You might as well be sitting in the city, staring down at the pavement, doing nothing. You have to have conversation. You have to engage each other. I don't have any teens but the friends we went with had a teen who was really nasty about it. But you have to engage each other, otherwise you're just staring at the water. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think that's a beautiful thing. I love the peace and mind and not dealing with people. —Denver first-time license buyer

If I wasn't catching anything, I would say, "Forget it" and mope around. But you learn to accept that you're there and you might as well enjoy it. When you're there, take advantage and enjoy it. Even if you don't initially catch something. You'll find your reason for being there. —Denver first-time

Did your fishing experiences meet your expectations? Did your experiences satisfy the reasons for which you first bought a license?

license buyer

There is no better teacher of patience than fishing. —Denver first-time license buyer

I like that there's not just a certain type of fishing you can do; you can go anywhere with water and fish in it. —Denver first-time license buyer

I agree, it's about the excitement of the adventure. It sounds weirdly exciting to sit in a shack and ice fish. I'm not a fan of cold but I'd like to try it, at least once. —Denver first-time license buyer

I prefer the annual over the short-term because I know my family always gets together in big groups and camps and fishes—I wanted to be a part of that and I didn't want to get in trouble for sitting out there with my pole. I decided to get the annual license so I can go continuously throughout the year. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, the annual is worth it—it's like \$5 or \$10 more than the day pass, depending on what kind of day pass you get. —Denver first-time license buyer

Also, for me, I honestly didn't think I was going to want to go all that often, but you may as well pay the few dollars more to get the whole year pass in case you want to go. Maybe you'll want to go later [other than the one day], but then you'll have to go buy another day pass. —Denver first-time license buyer

It's a trade-off, getting the one-day pass or the whole-year pass, but it's like they say: better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. —Denver first-time license buyer

OPINIONS ON FISHING

- Participants were asked what they enjoyed *most* about fishing, and comments in the discussion addressed aspects ranging from excitement and action to peace and tranquility. In terms of the more active aspects of fishing, participants mentioned competition with fishing companions (e.g., who can catch the most or biggest fish), the challenge and excitement associated with hooking a fish and reeling it in, and skills-related aspects (e.g., casting, learning how to fish for certain species, or learning a specific type of fishing, like fly fishing). On the other hand, some participants emphasized the quiet and serenity of nature, relaxation associated with being outdoors, appreciation of scenery from the shore or a boat, and viewing of birds or other animals while fishing. Another major area of enjoyment concerned the social aspects of fishing, such as spending time with companions and children.

- In discussing what they enjoyed *least* about fishing, many participants' comments centered on environmental factors such as weather and mosquitoes. A small number of individuals mentioned squeamishness over baiting hooks with worms or cleaning fish, while one or two people in the Richmond group also mentioned boat-related duties such as cleaning and storage (one participant called these boat-related routines "a whole production"). Tangled fishing lines were also mentioned as a source of frustration. Finally, a common theme in the Denver group concerned garbage and other pollution in fishing areas, with several participants expressing disgust at this.
 - In discussing any disadvantages, complications, or hassles associated with fishing, a few participants in the Richmond group mentioned the tendency for fishing piers and other popular areas to become overcrowded with other anglers.
 - Denver participants echoed some of the same concerns, with a few people mentioning the time needed to identify good fishing locations outside of the city that are not too crowded with other anglers. In discussing areas crowded with anglers, participants mentioned frustrations over crossed or tangled fishing lines. Additionally, a small number of participants in the Denver group mentioned being discouraged or confused by fishing regulations: a male participant suggested that some fishing regulations were implemented simply to "augment their coffers because they're losing tax revenues"; meanwhile, a female in the group talked about a lake that was divided into two areas, one in which anglers could keep caught fish and another that was designated as catch and release-only—this participant mentioned being confused by the division.

- In discussing other activities in which they preferred to participate instead of fishing, several people in the Richmond group suggested that fishing was simply one of many different activities they enjoyed. It was pointed out that fishing trips often require some planning and travel time, and therefore cannot always be spontaneous or easily accomplished. A few people were interested in fishing year-round or in short-term manner (i.e., with a 5-day license). In the Denver group, a number of participants said they enjoyed taking part in other outdoor activities somewhat related to fishing; these included hiking, camping, swimming, snowboarding and biking in the mountains, or various forms of recreation in or around lakes (e.g., tossing a football, playing cards, or reading while at a lake or campsite).

What do you enjoy *most* about fishing?

Well, we have a competition, me and my friend, to see who can catch the biggest fish. Or the biggest eel; that's all we've caught the past two times. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like being on the water, just the quiet, and the competition. —Richmond first-time license buyer

He's from the city so he never went fishing as a child. So we go for the first time fishing on the bank. A lot of his friends go fishing. He'd never been, so this is part of his bucket list; he was like, "I want to go fishing," so we bought the license. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It can be just as exciting as it is relaxing, the more fish you catch. If there's a group of people, you want to catch just as many as they are. So it can be just as exciting. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think when I was a kid it was more about catching the fish and taking the fish home and showing everyone what I caught. But as I got older I started to catch and release everything and now that I'm 45, it's really irrelevant if I catch anything at all. I just like spending time with the person I'm with. And just relaxing, smoking a cigar. It's fun to catch the fish, especially fish you're going to eat like rockfish, but now it's more about just relaxing. So that's the key part of it now, the relaxation, more than the catching the fish. Just being outside on the water. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's the relaxation, but it's the blocking of that time. It's almost a forceful [way of deciding that] from here to here, the rest of it doesn't exist. It makes space to relax. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like seeing different parts of the state. I was born and raised here, but now I go see different places you can go fish, and what it looks like from the banks, from the boat, and just to go around and explore different areas like in the mountains where you go trout fishing. So I think it helps you appreciate the scenery somewhat more, and help you see what's around. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I love the casting. I love that. When I cast I'll start to almost create a target in my head where you want to drop the hook. It's this game I play with myself but just to see how accurate I can. I need to try fly fishing. I think that would be fun, to learn to tie your own flies. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The person I went fishing with initially regards herself as a bit of a purist, and we were fishing for large mouth bass. She'll only use artificial [bait], as regards to live bait. I was cheating, if you will. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like eating the fish. I don't clean it or anything, I leave that to my mom, she's from the country, she already knows how to clean them. I like eating them. That's my main thing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like the surprises, too. Every time I go out I never expect to do anything but fish, and then I'll be on the boat and be like, "Oh my gosh, there's a bald eagle, I can't believe there's a bird that big, right there." So it's those things that you don't expect that are kind of fun. I don't think about that when I go out, but those are the kind of surprises that kind of surface when you're doing it. That's a part of it too. —Richmond first-time license buyer

What do you enjoy *most* about fishing?

I don't go out thinking, "Oh, I'm going to go out looking for bald eagles," but then I'm always reminded, like, "Wow, look at that osprey," and you'll see some animal right along the coast or something like that. It's kind of cool. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The sunset or the sunrise, depending on what time you go fishing is really neat to see. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Also the shoreline looks so different from a boat than when you're actually on the shore. You're just riding down the river and everything looks so much different and you're in for a surprise when you do see something. —Richmond first-time license buyer

When you're with people, the time you spend reminiscing and catching up with everyone. I enjoy that part the most. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd say catching the fish. For me, it's just catching it, not even taking it home. Last season we caught a ridiculous amount of fish. It was a little wasteful. It was too much. Our family doesn't eat a whole lot of fish. But just the satisfaction of catching the fish, completing your mission—the challenge. —Denver first-time license buyer

We went to Eleven Mile [Canyon Reservoir] and there was no fish there. So we started catching the crawdads, because they were nice and big. It was just the challenge. —Denver first-time license buyer

To get a little more specific about the challenge, it's that moment when you're sitting at the shore and you see your pole kind of move; and you kind of hold your breath and get over to your pole, it's just that moment of knowing it's on your line and you've got it. You get sucked into the strategy of it. —Denver first-time license buyer

What I enjoy the most is the fight with the fish to get it to the shore and out of the water. You don't know whether it's going to break free and run away or get it to shore and off the hook. —Denver first-time license buyer

I like water. I need to be able to fish and get in the water. If I can't get in the water—I mean, not to fish, but to be able to do both, because I just love the water. I like the relationships, I like the conversations. It's a little bit of a mixture: the relationships and conversations, combined with the catching, and the ability to get in the water. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, I agree. It's the whole thing: the entire experience, the strategy, rigging up your line, planning on when and where you're going to fish and why, what they like, what time of day it is, whether they're on the top or the bottom of the water. All the way to the plate. —Denver first-time license buyer

For the non-veteran fishermen, it's still a rush to feel the tension through the line, all the way to you—it's a rush to reel it in. Practicing your cast is fun for me, because with any sport, muscle memory is huge. Every time you get a little better at casting. You improve. —Denver first-time license buyer

What do you enjoy *least* about fishing?

Mosquitoes. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I'm not going to touch anything, no worms, I'm not cleaning it, I'm not putting the worm on the hook, I'm not taking the fish off the hook. I'm going fishing, I'll pull it up, but after that I'll give the rod to my dad. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The head and the sun. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Tangles [in fishing line]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Coming back empty-handed is a little disappointing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I don't have a boat, but I always go out with someone with a boat. Just the whole production, having a boat, pulling it and cleaning it and flushing out the engine, it's just a massive production. So when people say the best day of your life is when you buy a boat, and the best day of your life is when you get rid of the boat, I totally understand, because it is a big production. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I've been watching some people – they're not courteous when they're bringing the boats in. You know most of them wade in to bring their boats out, but I've seen people who just butt in front of people. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Cleaning the fish. —Denver first-time license buyer

When you've just caught a nice string of fish and you have them sitting there and a bird comes and takes it. The birds ruin everything. —Denver first-time license buyer

Finding garbage in the lakes. People that litter make my skin crawl. I want to punch somebody for that. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, my kid pulled in a beer can. Poor kid thought he had a fish and he pulled in a beer can. —Denver first-time license buyer

Tangles [in fishing line]. I hate that. —Denver first-time license buyer

I hate seeing all the extra fishing line everywhere. You have line hanging off every tree around you on the lake. —Denver first-time license buyer

Are there any disadvantages, complications, or hassles associated with fishing that make it less appealing than other activities?

There's a pier I've been to where there's some guy who gets there at 4 am and sets up four rods in a huge section, and it's threatening to go in between his lines, but he has half a pier to himself. I guess that's kind of a nuisance. I don't have a lot of time. Every pier I've ever been to it seems like there's somebody there that's been set up for half of a day. —Richmond first-time license buyer

One thing is especially if you're shore pier fishing, you can be in a spot, get a couple of good hits, and everybody on the pier is going to run to that same spot, in a little area like the fish are going to wait there. Then you've got about 10 tangled lines. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Yeah, there's really not enough piers for people to fish on. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think my least favorite part is the getting there. After that, it's not that bad. But it's like, do I have time, where are we going to go, do we have all the equipment? That kind of thing. —Denver first-time license buyer

See, that was the easiest for us. We just kept everything in the trunk and whenever we had a few hours, we'd go. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think getting away—trying to find a spot to get away. I mean, we never fished in the city or locally. To me, that's not the experience. You're supposed to go out and get away. Are we going to go somewhere far and enjoy it or just not go? For us, [fishing locally] was not what we would enjoy. I think going out to a lake is better quality. You have more space. So it's about finding the time to get out and go. —Denver first-time license buyer

That's true, because it sucks to go somewhere where the banks are full, or like when you get out there in a boat [on a lake or water body in the city] and every time you stop, someone else is set up 15 feet away from you. If you fish in the city, the one thing that's really hard is getting away from everyone else. —Denver first-time license buyer

That's another disadvantage: local lakes are crowded and you can't cast without crossing someone else's line, and then you have to argue with your next-door fisherman. —Denver first-time license buyer

Water levels can be a problem at times, too, due to not being able to populate the lake, stock it, feed it—you get less fish. —Denver first-time license buyer

Another thing is, they need to stop putting all these regulations in place, trying to augment their coffers because they're losing tax revenues. Create more jobs. That solves that problem. —Denver first-time license buyer

My husband's sister lives up by Granby and we were camping not too far from the lake and we were trying to fish. On the one side of the highway you could catch fish but on the other side it was catch and release, so it was hard to figure out. We had the little booklet that explained it but we still had trouble. —Denver first-time license buyer

What other activities do you prefer to participate in instead of fishing? Why do you prefer these activities? Why are they more appealing?

Fishing's fun, but for me there's lots of things I like to do. Fishing is just one thing. The thing that everyone keeps talking about is the relaxation factor, and I would absolutely agree with that. Very peaceful. I strive toward simplicity in life, and trying to keep it the least complicated, and fishing is the same. Fishing is simplicity. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think sometimes you pick other activities because usually when you go fishing it may require some travel time, depending on where you're going and traveling a distance back home. As you mentioned, the heat in the summertime. Those are my things, why I would maybe choose something else. No restrooms. —Richmond first-time license buyer

As a fishing person with limited fishing experience, I'm sure someone in here knows a lot more than I do, seasonally with fish – can you fish year round? Can you actually catch something year round? It seems to me to go in the spring or go in the fall. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I didn't know the 5-day [license] was an option. At the time, I wouldn't have anticipated wanting to go [fishing] again, but now I would. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Actually, my all-time favorite activity is probably fishing, because it comes with so many other sub-activities: you can hike while you're waiting to catch fish, you can read, you can swim, you have the option to get in. There's so many things you can do. —Denver first-time license buyer

I like camping. It includes all of those things. I haven't camped since I was young though. But you're just out in the wilderness, being crazy and having fun, there's no bedtimes. It's fun. You can do lots of different things camping. —Denver first-time license buyer

If you're by a lake and you choose not to fish, some of the activities we would do would be horseshoes, playing catch with a football, playing cards, or just reading. —Denver first-time license buyer

My sisters and I used to get air tubes and paddle out to the middle of McConaughy and freak each other out about the fish eating our toes! We would do that for half a day—just sit in the middle of the lake on inner tubes. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd take binoculars or a telescope and look at the stars. —Denver first-time license buyer

I love snowboarding and skateboarding: I grew up with the mountains 15 minutes away and the skate park 10 minutes away. Just growing up, I was always in sports in middle school and high school. They keep me entertained. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'm more of an adrenaline junkie: I like to go biking in mountains and the whole snowboarding thing, and I also enjoy jet skiing. I'm more about the rush, the excitement. —Denver first-time license buyer

The thing about Colorado is there's always something to do, no matter what season it is. —Denver first-time license buyer

LIKELIHOOD OF AND MOTIVATIONS FOR FUTURE FISHING PARTICIPATION

- In each group, the moderator asked participants whether they planned to buy a fishing license again next year. In general, most responses fell into one of two categories: the first category consisted of participants who indicated unreservedly that they planned to purchase another fishing license, based on how much they enjoyed fishing and their intention to continue participating (this group also included people who said they would buy a license simply to ensure that they had it if they ever desired to go fishing). The other group consisted of participants who qualified their plans to purchase another license with the guarantee that they would have reason or an opportunity to use it; with this latter group, invitations from friends/family and interest from children figured prominently in their expectations of whether they would purchase another license. Typically, many responses from these individuals took the form of, “I’ll purchase another license if...” or “I’ll purchase another license as long as...”, followed by some qualifier. A few people in the Denver group mentioned that they would be likely to purchase a fishing license again provided they had adequate equipment and/or enough free time in which to fish.
- Several people in the Richmond group indicated their interest in fishing from a boat, as opposed to fishing from a shoreline. At least one person suggested that his future license purchasing plans depended, at least in part, on whether he would have another opportunity to fish from a boat (he did not own one himself).
 - When asked what they would tell a friend about getting a fishing license, the large majority of participants in the two groups indicated that they would recommend getting one. Interestingly, many participants appeared to frame their recommendation in terms of the license being a necessary step to avoid punitive action such as a fine for fishing without a license; in other words, their recommendation proceeded from the assumption that, because a friend was interested in fishing, a license would be needed in order to fish legally. At the same time, other reasons emerged from the discussion as well: participants said they would recommend a fishing license to a friend for the sake of being able to fish should the urge arise (i.e., simply having the freedom to fish); to be able to escape stress and enjoy peaceful recreation in nature; or to contribute money for conservation of lakes and other water bodies (as mentioned by a few Denver participants). A short digression in the Denver group concerned the availability of short-term licenses as opposed to annual licenses, thereby allowing new or novice anglers to try the activity before investing much money or time.
 - Participants were asked open-ended questions concerning things that made it difficult for them to renew or buy a license, or the types of things it would take for them to renew or buy a license again. In the Richmond group, several participants mentioned the constraints of “external” factors such as weather or time and work obligations. One person in this group also reiterated that his future license purchasing was likely contingent on invitations from others, particularly boat owners. In the Denver group, a few people reiterated external or time-related pressures, while others suggested promotional incentives such as “free fishing days” or lotteries in which new anglers could enter to win a free license or fishing trip. Others in the group suggested a general increase in residents’ awareness of public lakes, including details related to the species available in each location (one person emphasized that such information should be available to “non-avid” anglers in particular).

- Following the open-ended questions asking participants about things that would make them more likely to purchase a license and go fishing, the moderator asked participants about several specific forms of encouragement or reminding. Reactions from participants are summarized below:
- **Having someone to fish with:** The large majority of the Richmond group considered this an important form of encouragement, and most participants in the Denver group appeared to agree. While a few people in the Denver group commented that they sometimes preferred to fish alone specifically for the solitude, most in the group viewed fishing companions as a positive concept.
 - **An invitation from a friend or family member to go fishing:** As suggested elsewhere, this is one of the most important facilitators in encouraging fishing participation among both casual and novice anglers as well as more avid and committed anglers. Interestingly, participants in the Richmond group saw different benefits to this form of encouragement: some people emphasized that an invitation from a friend or family member would mean being able to go with a more experienced angler who could provide instruction or access to equipment. Others were interested in the social benefits of being able to connect with the person through shared time—these participants generally pointed out that fishing, as an activity, allows for relaxed interaction conducive to conversation (unlike basketball or other, more active activities). In the Denver group, a few people mentioned that they were more likely to go on a fishing trip if invited by someone, due to the excursion being initiated by someone else (in this way, the trip would feel more like a special outing).
 - **If a child asked to be taken:** In both groups, a few individuals stated that it would “depend on the kid.” At the same time, a substantial number of people across the two groups indicated that they would gladly take a child fishing, if approached for that reason. One person in the Richmond group stated that she would also gladly take older people fishing, as well as children. In the Denver group, one or two people said that they would want to make sure the child was interested in fishing for at least several hours or most of a day before committing to an involved trip to a lake.
 - **More specific tips about how to, where to, and when to fish:** Reactions in the Richmond group were fairly positive, although participants were not effusive when discussing this form of encouragement. Similarly, participants in the Denver group commented that while such materials certainly could not hurt, they should be free of charge. It was pointed out that individuals generally learn how to fish from other people, not books or instructional manuals.
 - **Educational “how to” videos:** Similar to the previous item, most people in the Richmond group indicated that they would be fairly unlikely to watch instructional videos of any considerable length, preferring instead to receive advice and guidance from other individuals (including employees or customers at bait shops). In the Denver group, participants pointed out that any number of instructional fishing videos can already be found on YouTube, for those who are interested.
 - **An educational event or class hosted by your state fish and wildlife agency:** Reactions to this were again fairly similar to the previous two items, with participants in

both groups pointing out limitations associated with available free time and suitable locations for such classes or events (YouTube was again brought up as a helpful resource for those unwilling or unable to travel considerable distances to a class/event). At the same time, some in the Denver group suggested that they would be open to participating in such events if they happened to encounter them at area parks or lakes at which they were already visiting or planning to visit.

- **Receiving information on local fishing opportunities (including preferences related to delivery methods, such as phone calls, letters, e-mails, or free smartphone apps):** One person in the Denver group stated that information on local fishing opportunities would be most valuable if it were distributed in hard copy at the time of a fishing license purchase (this person commented that “the simple fact that it’s handed to you makes you more likely to use it”). Regarding preferences in delivery methods, there was little consensus over the best ways to distribute this information: in the Richmond group, different participants preferred mail, e-mail, TV commercials, Twitter messages, and hard copy pamphlets and brochures (such as those provided at rest stops).

Additionally, there was a fairly lengthy digression on the pros and cons of a free fishing app: in short, the group was divided on the merits of an app, with some people emphasizing the convenience of smartphone integration and others pointing out that an app could be confusing, would require constant updates, or would simply lead to little-known fishing spots becoming overcrowded as they were advertised through the app. A few Richmond participants said they would trust local bait and tackle shop employees/customers over an app. Debate in the Denver group over the various delivery methods essentially mirrored the discussions from the Richmond group, albeit on a smaller scale: participants debated the various pros and cons in much the same way but spent less time on the subject as a whole (a few people in the Denver group liked the idea of an app, while others appeared to view it as unnecessary).

- **Receiving a reminder to renew a license:** Most people in the Richmond group viewed the idea of a reminder favorably. In the Denver group, responses were fairly similar (despite a few people suggesting that a simple reminder would be unlikely to persuade someone to buy a license if they were not already planning on doing so). Additional discussion in the Denver group concerned the convenience and ease of renewing a license, with some people stating their preference for renewal over the Internet (one person suggested an auto-renewal process similar to Netflix). Finally, one Denver participant recommended that short-term fishing licenses be sold on location at lakes, specifically at booths that rent equipment or provide information.
- **If the license purchasing or renewal process was easier:** on this topic, several comments in the Richmond group suggested that the process for purchasing and/or renewing a fishing license is already fairly easy. At the same time, a few participants discussed the possibility of allowing residents to renew a fishing license at the same time a driver’s license is renewed (presumably for a longer period similar to the valid term of a driver’s license, as opposed to a single-year fishing license period).

- In addition to the various forms of encouragement for purchasing a license, participants were asked about three types of messaging concepts designed to bolster fishing participation. Participants' responses are summarized below:
- **Being reminded that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation:** Many participants in the Richmond group appeared openly resistant to messaging that emphasized that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation. These individuals appeared to interpret the message as being overly prescriptive or authoritarian; such participants recommended that, rather than attempting to convert anglers or potential anglers into conservationists via messaging, agencies should simply let the fishing experience itself create “stakeholders” of the environment (i.e., individuals are likely to become dedicated to conservation as they become more experienced as anglers, but messaging to this effect will have little value).
 - **Being reminded that fishing helps connect people with nature:** While a handful of Richmond participants found this concept to be obvious, most in the group appeared to view the message itself as valuable. One person in the group suggested that a more powerful message would emphasize that fishing lets people “*disconnect* from the rest of the world outside of nature,” rather than allowing them to connect with nature. Similarly, the message received mixed reactions in the Denver group: a few people felt that it was too obvious, while others viewed it as a useful reminder to disengage and go outside.
 - **Being reminded that fishing helps people relax:** A number of people in the Richmond group said that they were more likely to be motivated by messaging that emphasized the competitive or exciting aspects of fishing, as opposed to the relaxation aspects. On the other hand, a few others reacted quite positively to this message, saying that it mentioned one of their most preferred aspects of fishing. Participants in the Denver group generally regarded this message quite positively, with comments addressing the value in reminders to relax.

Do you plan to buy a license again next year? Why or why not?

Yes [I will buy a license again next year]. It's cheaper than a ticket [for fishing without a license].
—Richmond first-time license buyer

I think for me, it's not how much fishing I'm planning on doing, it's having it whenever I want to do it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would go as many times as my father-in-law is going to go rockfishing. I don't really catch fish to keep them, but rockfish is so good. You can just freeze it, it's such a good fish. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I lived in DC, I went to college and graduate school there, so there's no fishing in DC. So when I got down here, my father-in-law said, "Let's go." He loves rockfishing. So yes, I plan to go as many times as he asks me to go, during the season. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I don't have a boat, so anytime we go, we go fishing off of a bank or a pier. —Richmond first-time license buyer

We don't have a boat and we've always just gone to the James River or to a pier. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My uncle passed away. When he passed away the boat left too, so I never got a chance to go back on the boat, and I never knew anybody that had a boat that I could go on. And I've never been pier fishing, I'd like to, but I've never done it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think a boat makes it a more pleasant experience, or more interesting. Because you're free to travel around, go to different spots. And the rhythm and all that adds to the sheer joy of it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I've taken my two kids; the youngest one, having kind of watched the older one fish, he's seen it and he's kind of engaged too, but we go to the parks, or the river. When I was a kid I used to go out in a boat, but going to the bathroom, if you're going as a family, sometimes that's a disincentive.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

When I'm fishing I like being able to move around the water and go different places. I'd rather be on the boat fishing than maybe on the pier where I can maybe move around. If I didn't have a boat or a person with a boat, I would wait for friends that knew good spots, because I don't really know.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

I'm a huge golfer, so going back to your question before about things you like to do more than fishing, I love to fish, but I'm a huge golfer. So I probably wouldn't spend a lot of time researching where is the hotspot in the James to go, all the tides and everything, I probably wouldn't, not for me. But if someone asked me to go, I'd go in a heartbeat. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Depending on how far the bank is or how far the parking is. Lugging everything down to the shore or to the pier can be a hassle. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Do you plan to buy a license again next year? Why or why not?

From my point of view, I don't go out on a boat a lot, so I'm basically either surf fishing or on the shore. I learned different things about fish: the North Anna power station, people don't know that's a man-made lake, it's a huge lake, and it's stocked with bass. But the water runs through the intake and it's heated, so the water's around 50-60 degrees year round, so the bass can grow to enormous size there. You can fish from the shore, there are little docks. There have been some citation-sized bass caught there. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think the biggest bass I ever caught was about 13 or 14 pounds. And that's fun. That is a seriously not-wanting-to-get-caught fish. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Yes [I do plan to buy another fishing license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

For winter, I'd like to do some ice fishing. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yes, and probably every subsequent year too. I'm going to definitely be a repeat-offender. I just got addicted to it. I really did. And when I got my own gear and didn't have to borrow anyone else's, I really got into the strategy part of it: going into the store and figuring out which specific lures I need for specific fish. And then you get into, "What about this kind of bobber, or this kind of lure?" It's strategy. I love it. The only thing I'd choose over fishing is going to a Broncos game. —Denver first-time license buyer

It's a total gear-head sport. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, getting started, it's about what do you use? How do you pick [which type of equipment to use]? —Denver first-time license buyer

What to use, what's what—what lures to use for whatever type of fish you're targeting. [Fishing] brings you an awareness of the environment and you look at things a little differently when you're out on the lake. You start to realize that these are the places where your daily resources come from. You start to want to know a little more about the water or the area where your fish come from. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd like to buy another license but it depends on things like equipment; we have starter stuff. Equipment, boat, whether the husband wants to go again. When we went [fishing], my husband had vacation time, so he could take time off. In the middle of last summer, he switched jobs and his days off are Thursdays and Fridays, which aren't my days off. So would I buy a license if I can't go? No. But he might get one. But when I'm down with school, my life will slow down and I can do these things. I'd like to go camping again in the future. So, it depends on a few things but I'd like to [buy a license again]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I don't know [if I'll buy a license again]. It depends if my kids are interested, or if my sister takes us somewhere again. Because I don't really know where to go, where I can take my kids. They're teenagers now, so they're kind of into catching [fish]—if we're not catching something, they'll want to go home. Maybe we'd like to try river fishing or creek fishing, where it's more walking rather than just sitting all day long. —Denver first-time license buyer

Patience is definitely an issue. —Denver first-time license buyer

What would you tell a friend about getting a fishing license?

To try it. It's not that expensive. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You just go try it, you can get a decent pole for fairly cheap, and go with someone you know, and if you don't like it's not that much money that you're out, at least you can say that you tried it. I think most of the time you're kind of by yourself you're going to enjoy it. Plus if you're going with other people it is sort of an experience. Everybody off a boat, or off a pier together. I think it's a fun thing to do that's different. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Even purchasing online was easy. I know people go to bait shops to buy them and it takes them forever to hand write everything and print the stuff out. I did it right online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's not a good feeling to be someplace and a game warden walk up and you have a cooler full of things that shouldn't be in there. —Richmond first-time license buyer

There is no other reason [outside of enforcement]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The driver is the risk for someone to incur a fine or lose a car. I think the general public knows that there is a fine or some penalty for not having a license. I think it's the key driver for most people to have one. If there wasn't one, none of us would probably get one [a license]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If I knew friends that were under a lot of stress or pressure at work, I would say, "Hey, have you tried fishing? It's really relaxing, I think you'd like it." —Richmond first-time license buyer

The premise of the question I take issue with. I don't know if I would necessarily tell them so much as invite them – versus you should do this. That leads to the natural, okay sure. You kind of walk them through the process. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It creates that zone, that spot, where if you're in the middle of a project and you need a break from it or it's over with, you say, "Hey, let's go fishing." I seem to recall there's a free day, somewhere. If they had any more of those it would be a catalyst, like saying, "Hey, let's go, it doesn't require a license." And then once you do it and you like it, you're like my son: you catch the fish, then you want to do it again. —Richmond first-time license buyer

When my son originally asked, [a free fishing day] was something that had kind of popped up on his radar, but we couldn't go that day. So, I ended up having to back in and buy a license. Having those amnesty days are a good catalyst to start that conversation. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I'd tell them to get one so they don't get a ticket. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'd say, why not [get a fishing license]? —Denver first-time license buyer

If you don't have the equipment but if you're with friends who do, [you'll need a license in order to fish]. —Denver first-time license buyer

What would you tell a friend about getting a fishing license?

Well, isn't the license like a habitat stamp? Essentially you're paying for maintaining natural places.
—Denver first-time license buyer

There's an old saying: it's better to do it right than to have to explain why you did it wrong. If you have to explain why you did it wrong, it'll probably cost more than the license would in the first place.
—Denver first-time license buyer

I think if you're not sure you're going to like it or go multiple times, you can get a day pass and you have 30 days to upgrade to a [longer-term license] and only pay the difference. You can upgrade to the annual. —Denver first-time license buyer

If you catch more than two fish on any trip, you've paid for the license. It's like money in the bank.
—Denver first-time license buyer

With ice fishing, if you buy the pass in late December or February, the season ends in March. You can only go for so long. —Denver first-time license buyer

I would tell a friend to get a license, yes. —Denver first-time license buyer

I would tell a friend [buying a license] provides money to keep the lake stocked. Ecological preservation. —Denver first-time license buyer

Is there anything specific that is making it difficult for you to renew or buy a license?

Work. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Just busy. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The weather. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If I can't find anybody with a boat, I might not buy a license next year. But if I can, like I said, I like going out there, it's something that I personally like doing, but unless I find somebody with a boat I might not get one. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I've got two newborns at home, so I don't really have a lot of time to go out. —Richmond first-time license buyer

What would it take for you to renew or buy a fishing license again?

If it was cheaper. No, I'm kidding, but it's definitely an incentive. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe external things or personal issues that prevent you from getting out there in the first place. I'd love to go fishing but it's the fact that you have so many other things going on in life. You have to prioritize. Maybe some things in life don't allow you to bypass them to go fishing or do the things you like. —Denver first-time license buyer

How about National Fishing Day—everybody gets off work. I would be there. There are certain times of the year when people can go fishing without a license. There's a free weekend. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe more community lakes or ponds for people who can't go all the way to the mountains every time. Maybe a little pond with bluegill where the little ones can go catch them. —Denver first-time license buyer

What about if, when you buy a fishing license, you're put into a lottery where once or twice a year, people are chosen from the lottery and win something. Free license, free trip. Something like that. —Denver first-time license buyer

If my kids showed an interest. If they said, "Hey, I'd really like to go fishing" or maybe if my sister encouraged me more. I wouldn't say right now, "Oh, I'm all-out for fishing," but if my kids were interested I think I'd be willing to purchase a license. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe there should be more of an effort to make the lakes public; let people know about all these lakes to go to. Talk about the quality of the lake and what's available there, how is fishing during the day. I know there are fishing magazines but there needs to be more of a push for non-avid people, people who don't seek that type of information. —Denver first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?**Having someone to fish with?**

[majority of Richmond group agrees that this would encourage them]

Yeah, definitely. —Denver first-time license buyer

It's usually more fun to have people to go with. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, it's half and half because sometimes I would prefer to go by myself. —Denver first-time license buyer

Not really. Sometimes I'd prefer to have a friend there but I love the tranquility, so "me, myself, and I" is just as good of a fishing partner. —Denver first-time license buyer

An invitation from a friend or family member to go fishing?

Who says no to going fishing? —Richmond first-time license buyer

[Being invited] makes it easier for someone like me because I don't have any equipment. So if you invited me, I'd go! I'll pack the food because I don't have any equipment. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think it's something nice to do that's a little outdoorsy—more so than, "Let's go see a movie or let's go sit out and drink on the back porch." At least it's something kind of different that you're doing together, which I think is nice. And sort of just a different level of bonding with the family. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's good for children. Because they are always into TV and video games, it's good to get them outdoors, into nature which they should be into, instead of sitting in the house in front of the TV. So that's what I like about it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

As weird as it might sound, fishing lessons might be interesting. Usually I think the reason we hook up initially with anyone who fishes is [fishing is] something that comes without directions, so [with the help of a companion], you know how you set up the line, how to tie this and do that. Unless you go with someone who knows, you're really out of luck. I certainly was. —Richmond first-time license buyer

In a world so over-stimulated, it's nice to have that connection with somebody. You know, if my dad said "Hey, let's go" I wouldn't say no. There's that element of excitement in fishing, but it's in that space, it's not that it's a tech-free zone, because you have gadgets and things that go, but it's that moment of space where you connect and bond and create something. And that was the part that really drove the nostalgia reference that I had from a kid, that I wanted to give my kid, and that excitement on his face, that joy. That's a strictly human kind of experience that you don't get from watching TV or going to the movies. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's not like if your friend says, "Let's go get a basketball and play one on one," you're kind of playing

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

basketball, you're really involved playing basketball. But with fishing, there's a lot of down-time where you're not catching anything, and you're not, like, sitting at a table across from each other, which is kind of uncomfortable for people that have conversations about what's going on with you. Fishing, you're just sitting in the boat, you're both probably looking different ways, someone's in the front, someone's in the back, and you can say what's going on at work, and you're kind of just sitting there and you can talk without being one-on-one. It allows you to get away from all that erroneous white noise with technology and stuff, and get back in nature. It's quiet, but you can also have conversation with people, the kind of conversation where you catch up in ways that you don't normally do because things are so crazy busy. And because we go through our routines. We go to work, we go work out, we go home and watch football or basketball on TV. So, hypothetically, if I went out on a boat with my wife and we went fishing, we would probably just have conversations about stuff that we wouldn't in our regular Monday through Friday, nine-to-five routine. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Nothing else matters [when you're fishing]. And I've had that situation, I had an [expensive] estimation job done on our house and I wasn't sure how I was going to pay for all of it, but we went to the pier down in Ocean View, and it didn't matter. I didn't think about it, it just didn't matter. Because you're at peace, relaxed with the family; no cell phones, nobody called me. I just left my phone like it didn't matter. I'd deal with it when I got home. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It would depend on the friend or family member. If someone wants to go fishing but they can't keep their hole [mouth] shut, it wouldn't be fun. —Denver first-time license buyer

No matter who invited me, I would go. I have a mild visual impairment. I drive but I don't drive far. The two spots near me have really low water, they aren't good fishing. To drive out where the fishing is better, I would want someone with me. I don't want to get a hook in my hand and be unable to get it out. —Denver first-time license buyer

The fact that someone else initiates it—it wasn't you that came up with the idea—makes it more of a priority. Sometimes peer pressure is a good thing. —Denver first-time license buyer

Most people have a hard time allowing themselves the forgiveness of taking days off. Someone else saying, "Hey, we're planning this thing, do you want to go?"—it adds to the willingness to catch up on the relationships and have fun. It makes you feel okay about it. —Denver first-time license buyer

If a child asked you to take them?

Depends on the kid. —Richmond first-time license buyer

In all seriousness, it depends on the kid. Children are like people, you take some and leave some. Just because they're small doesn't mean you really have to like them. But I think sometimes it can be great fun, other times, [it is less fun]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would. If you think about it, you know how you feel when you catch a fish, imagine how a three year old feels when they catch a fish. It's exciting when they catch it to see the smile on their face. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

I think that's true of anyone at any age, it's a wonderful thing to do. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would. I don't have any kids, but I definitely would take any of my million nephews and nieces, and hypothetically if their father or mother didn't like to fish, and they had expressed interest in fishing, and they're like, "No one else will take me," for them it's a huge barrier of entry, because not only do they not have a boat, they don't have a driver's license, they don't have a car to drive to the lake, even if they have a boat, they can't drive a boat. It would definitely make me step up and take any kids, especially in my family, or even my friends' kids who were like, "I really want to go fishing."
—Richmond first-time license buyer

I think I'd love to take old people fishing. I mean like really old people. Geriatric people, you know, 70s, 80s, 90s. I would love it. That would thrill me, absolutely. I mean obviously there's the joy in the companionship of whoever we go with, but I think that if you go with someone significantly older than yourself, I'm always fascinated by the stories they tell. Their life experiences, it's just wonderful. It's like living with or conversing with this living bit of history. And doing fishing on the side.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

It would depend on the child. —Denver first-time license buyer

It would have to depend on the age. —Denver first-time license buyer

My kid is only 4, so he doesn't care right now, but maybe someday. —Denver first-time license buyer

Age, yes; if they're less than 3 or 4, it might be a little risky to give them a fishing pole. Depends on how well you watch children. But I'm not going to take a kid who says 30 minutes into it that they're done; no, we're here and we're going to do the half-day or full day or whatever it is. That's why I like all the other things you can do at a lake; if there's no fishing or you're not catching anything, there are other things to do. —Denver first-time license buyer

When we started this [group], eighty percent of us said we remembered fishing with our parents. No matter who the kid is, that experience of teamwork, camaraderie, confidence—that's an unforgettable experience for a child. If a child asked me, I would absolutely want to give them that. —Denver first-time license buyer

More specific tips about how to, where to, and when to fish?

Yeah. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I like that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's more about the person who's going to teach you. Most people don't pick up a book like "Fishing for Dummies." You learn from people. —Denver first-time license buyer

Some of us are already in it. We already love it. None of this is going to get us to buy a license; we're already going to. But to encourage new fishers, some kind of free "how to" manual or basic setup—

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

something to make it seem less overwhelming for people who want to get started. —Denver first-time license buyer

Good salespeople, too; I'm not going to pick up a book, but I want to walk in and say, "This is where I'm going, can you give me a couple tips?" At least to get some kind of direction, like the type of hooks or something. —Denver first-time license buyer

Educational "how to" videos?

I have an impressive tackle box, but I don't know what to do with most of the stuff, much like my golf bag. But I don't go to golf shops and talk to scratch golfers because I'm not a scratch golfer. I don't go to the tackle shop where a guy, he just puts his rod out there and he knows what to put on it, he knows all that, I don't know all that, I don't have time to learn all that. I just want layman's, really simple [advice, like] "This is a small mouth lake, here's what's good to put on the end of your rod to try to catch them." —Richmond first-time license buyer

You go into a bait and tackle shop, anybody can go in there and ask questions, and they can say so and so came in the other day and he was using such and such. —Richmond first-time license buyer

But that's not the way I plan though. I plan much further in advance. If I know I'm going fishing on Saturday, I have a lot of downtime on the computer at work, I can just check it out then, get the right gear in the car, have my logistics in order. I'm already too set on what I'm doing that day. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The easiest thing, the most educational thing, is the local people. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Yeah, if I were going to go fishing and I wanted to learn how to fish for steelhead or whatever, I would much rather go with someone who regularly goes steelhead fishing, and have him show me how to do it, and show me what bait is really effective, than to read an instruction manual or a book or a DVD, because that's what I'm trying to get away from. I just spent all day researching or writing at work. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I've watched some spin casting videos. —Denver first-time license buyer

You can find everything on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Videos are appealing to those who are into it [fishing]. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, I would YouTube something in a heartbeat. —Denver first-time license buyer

Fishing videos are like watching baseball highlights—no one wants to watch the whole game. —Denver first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?**An educational event or class hosted by your state fish and wildlife agency?**

I wouldn't do it, that's just me. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Yeah. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It would help me fish, but I don't have time for that. I don't have much time off, I wouldn't want to take a Saturday. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I have a fish encyclopedia that tells you about every type of fish, whether salt water, freshwater, what time of year they're most active, what kind of water they're most active, and it does me absolutely no good. It still doesn't work. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That'd be cool. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, the downside to that is the location: where is it, where do you have to go? In today's age, everything is broadcast or televised or put on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Having people put on tutorials might be more appealing though. —Denver first-time license buyer

It sounds like it could be pretty fun. They show you how to do a few things, and maybe have a raffle for a free pole or something. —Denver first-time license buyer

And even if you don't get to take something home, you can do it while you're there, maybe catch a fish from the lake. —Denver first-time license buyer

Receiving information on local fishing opportunities?

Maybe if that was included in the purchase of a license. I know stuff is available but just having it handed to you, you're more willing and likely to look at it than if you searched on your own. Just the simple fact that it's handed to you makes you more likely to use it. —Denver first-time license buyer

How would you prefer to receive that information? Would you prefer to receive a phone call, letter, e-mail? Or would you prefer to seek the information on a website or free app?

I like mail. —Richmond first-time license buyer

E-mail. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well if you looked at it just sort of like a weather report, a fishing report. The fish are biting at such and such a place. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Or a Twitter feed or a commercial. Like you were saying, like the Discovery Channel. Something like that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

You know with commercials, I've seen commercials for state parks but I've never seen any commercials for fishing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That information is out there. In different pamphlets, brochures. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Even at rest stops, when you're traveling in the state of Virginia. All you see are different places to visit but there's nothing about the best fishing holes in that area. Something like that would be good. —Richmond first-time license buyer

An app would be nice. That'd be easiest. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You get the benefits of both. It's not overly burdensome – there isn't somebody pushing something on you, because you're self-selecting, but you've got one place to go to get this information you're looking for. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The only thing about that, where you are is going to depend on what kind of fish are there. Say you're up in the mountains someplace. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It would have to be able to pick up where you are, like a location finder, and say here are the best spots. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Depending on where you are, are you going to be able to have a signal to even get the app? I like the brochure best. You can lay in bed in read it, you can take it on a boat, you have access to it. It's easier, old fashioned. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If you're going to go fishing, you could just look to see if this is a good weather day on your app, is this a good lake, are the fish biting, and then you're like, "Okay, it's definitely not coming in the boat, it's going to stay in the car," if you're not into technology on the boat. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I mean we bring ours with us. We have a dry box, so we're not sitting looking at it the whole time – we look at the weather and then put it up, but an app would be nice because maybe you've been there for like an hour and a half and you're like well let's see if this is kind of a bad spot. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think the best source is your local bait and tackle shop. They know everything. Everybody that comes in gives them information about what's going on, where it's going on. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would trust the tackle shop information-givers over the app for sure. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Perhaps it could be tied into satellite mapping. You know, because often if you plug in an address to get from A to B, they'll also have places of interest or other searches you can do. And you know you could put in good fishing places. —Richmond first-time license buyer

To me that kind of technology is always behind. Because it has to be compiled, and then it has to be

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

put up. It's always yesterday. —Richmond first-time license buyer

And then it becomes just another thing that's well publicized where the hot spots are. If someone wrote a piece in the *Richmond Dispatch* on Saturday, and everyone wants to go fishing on Sunday, I'd avoid that place. So once it's like broadcasted and circulated where the hot spots are, I'd be more likely to go to someone like him and ask, "How are you doing at blah blah blah?" I'd be more likely to ask an individual. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Again, the app is something you'd probably use if you were already going fishing, versus it wouldn't convince you to go fishing. But if you see a brochure that's telling you where hot spots are or where what kind of fish will be in what kind of area. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I'm going to go right back to the beginning and say you know what, I don't really care if I catch a fish or I don't, it's the joy of going. So I wouldn't use any of those things like the app. I'm just going fishing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think e-mail is the best way. Like if you bought a license, you would receive an e-mail welcoming you and providing information on where to go. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe get a Facebook page? You follow the page and like the page, it always tells you about upcoming stuff. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe link fishing reports to your phone? —Denver first-time license buyer

Oh, I would definitely like an app. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'm not a big app fan. I'd rather you send me an e-mail or there be a website to go to. —Denver first-time license buyer

I like the app. Maybe you type in the fish you're going for and it tells you where they stock them. —Denver first-time license buyer

Receiving a reminder to renew your license?

That would be good. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That would be helpful. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I may need a reminder, just to embed it in the back of my mind. A reminder might embed it back in your brain like that, like, "I need to go fishing, back out to the water." That's just me. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think it would be cool if you incorporated your fishing license with your driver's license. You could literally just make it an option for X number of dollars. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That would be helpful, sure. There you go. —Denver first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

That would probably be more an incentive to renew, rather than just relying on your memory. Or just looking at your pass every time. —Denver first-time license buyer

I ended up using my license after it had expired; it was still nice out! I didn't know I couldn't use it. —Denver first-time license buyer

If I'm not going to go, I'm not going to go. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, if you're interested, you're interested. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think a reminder would remind me to think about whether I wanted a pass! I mean, going digital, maybe they send you a link to the website showing the good lakes. Maybe if you got a one-day license, they send you something saying, "It's almost past that window" [allowing the person to upgrade to an annual pass for the price difference]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think being able to renew your license over the phone or on the internet would be awesome. A lot of us are busy and don't want to spend time in Walmart on the weekends. —Denver first-time license buyer

What would really be cool is if you pay with your credit card, you could sign up for auto-renewal, where you would just automatically have your license renewed. An option to auto-new your license, like Netflix. I think it would probably encourage more people to buy. —Denver first-time license buyer

If you could do it online as opposed to having to stand in line somewhere—I mean, we're in the "Information Age," and if I could log on to a site and get a day license or a year license, or whatever, and here's my credit card information, [that would make it much more convenient for me]. —Denver first-time license buyer

My own personal preference is to just go to the place and get it done. I'm not one to get online all the time. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe offering day licenses at the lakes, the bigger lakes—they have the booth, they're there. As long as they have access to the internet, they should be able to link into the system. —Denver first-time license buyer

If the license purchasing or renewal process was easier?

Mine wasn't that difficult. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Mine wasn't either. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The only thing was the trout stamp, that was a little annoying at the state park. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's not difficult, but again if you dropped the barrier of entry, if you're already renewing your driver's

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

license, why not? —Richmond first-time license buyer

But then you'd have to have to have fishing licenses that last, what, 8 years? —Richmond first-time license buyer

You could just have the independent reminder that that part of your license needs renewal, because it's not compulsory that you fish. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's a bit like your auto insurance. No one knows whether you're insured or not unless they ring it in for verification. And similarly, if you're out on the water and you're fishing and the game guy comes along, you can produce your license which shows you ticket the box and he could have a central checking mechanism. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Being reminded that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation?

No, I think it's compassion fatigue. To a certain extent you can get bombarded with the politically correct [messaging]. I would find it more offensive than incentive. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would say no, because I think the more people you drive to go fish, and you generate more interest in fish, those people, just like the hunters, they love hunting, and they're stakeholders—they have a driving interest that the forest and the land isn't polluted by despoilers or people who are leaving junk or people who are throwing stuff in the water, and fisherman similarly feel the same way. The more you get people fishing, the more they have a heightened interest to how important it is to preserve what it is they like. It comes down to a very self-interested way of looking at it, but that's okay. Now they're stakeholders in the environment and making sure what they like is preserved for them and their kids. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's a secondary motivator. Most people are, for good or bad, selfish. In the beginning, when we all talked about what made us go fishing, it was about what we got out of it, not necessarily something that we gave back. And I think to your point, once you've gotten there and you've experienced it and you liked it, then the preservation of that is important. But as a primary incentive to go fishing, no. —Richmond first-time license buyer

From a department's perspective, you drive interest in preserving the environment from a bottom up perspective. Hypothetically, we all love fishing, so we're all going to make sure we don't throw our beer cans over the boat. And bottles in the water, because we're going to know the fish aren't going to be around long if you're doing that. I think we're all tired of like, messages being forced upon us by organizations that all have a message to penetrate; I think people are just worn out by that. People go fishing to get away from that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I agree with them, there's so much out there, commercials that tell you don't pollute, it's already out there. We don't need to be reminded or hounded about it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think Virginians don't mind the [fish and wildlife agency] distributing and circulating information about topography and how weather changes to enhance the fishing experience. I just don't think that people like the sort of top-down message that you need to protect the environment and fishing is a way

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?

to do that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

First-time people just trying to get out there, I think it would just make them think, “Jeez, I don’t know which ones to keep and which ones not,” I think it might make it more intimidating to begin in the first place. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Being reminded that fishing helps you connect with nature?

Isn’t that stating the obvious? —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think that’s a good selling point if what they’re trying to achieve is to generate more interest in fishing. Sure, because we’re all here saying what’s the key reason we’re going fishing? For that reason [connecting to nature]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

And getting kids away from electronics is the big draw. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think it would remind people of what they already know about why they like fishing, which is a good message if that’s what they’re trying to achieve. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If I saw that in an advertisement it would trigger the reasons in my head why I like fishing.
—Richmond first-time license buyer

I see a slightly different commercial. Not so much connecting with nature, but disconnecting from the rest of it. There’s this dome over a boat and my son’s sitting there, and there’s this white noise bombarding it, so there’s this safe zone over it. The picture I get in my head is not plugging in [to nature], but disconnecting from the rest of it [outside of nature]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

No. —Denver first-time license buyer

No. —Denver first-time license buyer

That’s spam folder [material]. —Denver first-time license buyer

If you like to go out and fish, you should value those things and that education, because you’re using the resources. Why not educate yourself about what you’re using and how you’re using it? —Denver first-time license buyer

I think it would be a good idea. People sit in their cubicles and get that e-mail [with the fishing and connection to nature message] and say, “Oh—I’d rather be there than here.” It’s a reminder.
—Denver first-time license buyer

I think people get tired of inching along the highways in their metal coffins, bumper to bumper, with idiots who can’t drive—I think it’s appealing for people to think about getting away from it.
—Denver first-time license buyer

I’d go [if I got that message]. —Denver first-time license buyer

Would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy a fishing license?**Being reminded that fishing helps you relax?**

Oh yeah. —Richmond first-time license buyer

That's a good one. —Richmond first-time license buyer

What it's like to unplug, relax. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's a competition. If you're sports-minded and you want the competition of going out and getting your fish, not just going out and just relaxing, it's like, "I need those fish." I'm sitting here picturing *The Andy Griffith Show*, where they're walking down with their fishing pole to a little hole—those times are gone. —Richmond first-time license buyer

When I go fishing, I want to catch something. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well, there's a time between your fish where you do get time to sit and relax while you're waiting for that bite, and it's exciting when you get that bite. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I don't have to catch a fish if I have a good time. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I never looked at it [as a competition], I just looked at it as going out fishing, having fun doing something I never did before. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You don't get skunked that much anyways. I don't know about you guys, but it's rare when you don't get any bites. It's not very common. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Catching something adds to the fun. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Even if you go for the relaxation, who wants to go home and not have a trophy? Because that seems like a loss. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It's both. I don't know how to weigh it, but it's both [relaxation and wanting to catch fish]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Yeah! That is a very good one. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, I often forget that just to be outside in nature is relaxing. It tunes you into what's going on. I'm concentrating on my 15-page paper or work or whatever else is going on in life. —Denver first-time license buyer

That's true. My mom has a thing on her computer, because she sits at a cubicle all day, that tells her to go outside and walk and stretch. And it's not that she doesn't know that, but it helps to have that reminder—it pops up on her screen. —Denver first-time license buyer

EXPERIENCES WITH AND OPINIONS ON PURCHASING A LICENSE

- Most participants in the two groups learned of fishing licenses as a legal requirement through parents (typically while the participant was young and initially being exposed to fishing) or from fishing companions. At the same time, a small number of individuals in each group said they were unaware that licenses were needed to fish until their most recent fishing trip or license purchase (this was most common among non-natives to the state).
 - Asked where they looked for information about buying a fishing license, common responses included “online” (a generic response that appeared to refer mostly to fish and wildlife agency websites), bait and tackle shops, retailers such as Dick’s Sporting Goods and Bass Pro Shops, and big-box stores such as Walmart. A small number of people in each group said that they looked specifically to the state “wildlife organization” or fish and wildlife agency for information about fishing licenses (in the Denver group, a few participants referred to the “Department of Wildlife”). Finally, a few people noted that fishing licenses tend to be common knowledge and that friends, family members, or “average Joes” can provide information about them.

- On the whole, almost no individuals in the Richmond group experienced any major problems or frustrations in purchasing their fishing license; a few people described the process as “easy” or “a non-event.” One Richmond participant mentioned that Virginia issues just one paper copy of its state fishing license and that he preferred to have more copies in case he lost one (this person said he printed off multiple copies to store in different places). Another person said he desired an electronic signature option for e-mailed licenses. In the Denver group, participants who purchased a license at Walmart were much more likely to share frustrating experiences during the purchasing process: almost invariably, each person who went to Walmart for a fishing license reported a negative or frustrating experience, usually involving an unhelpful or unknowledgeable sales associate.

How did you know you needed a license?

Someone told me. A mate. Just someone that I knew who went fishing. And I had no idea I needed a license until I was told. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I was just told by my husband. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The person who was taking me said, “You need to get a license.” —Richmond first-time license buyer

My dad told me when I was little. —Denver first-time license buyer

Yeah, my dad told me at a certain age that it was time to buy one. —Denver first-time license buyer

Where did you look for information on getting or buying a license? What are the trusted sources for this information?

Online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I did it direct at Bass Pro Shop. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I was just told to stand in line and get a pass, I just followed. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Bait and tackle shop. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The wildlife organization for the state. Because if I'm looking for the purposes of not running afoul of the authorities, I would want to know, precisely [what the requirements are]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Dick's Sporting Goods. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Dick's is where I go. They have stuff I need, and at the same time I'm like I don't fish that much, I'll get all the gear I need while I'm getting my license, I didn't have to really research it to know where to get it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, my friend just said to go buy it at Sportsman's Warehouse or Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

I always go to the DOW: Department of Wildlife. —Denver first-time license buyer

Department of Wildlife people. —Denver first-time license buyer

Probably any retailer of fishing equipment. —Denver first-time license buyer

Maybe just the "average Joe"; most people do know. —Denver first-time license buyer

And if you don't know, you go to a place that sells fishing stuff and ask them. And they'll hand you one of those Department of Wildlife books. —Denver first-time license buyer

How or where did you actually buy your fishing license? How was the experience? How did the experience compare to experiences you've had purchasing other types of licenses or memberships, such as a hunting license, a boating registration, a gym membership, a membership-based group or club?

Online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Dick's [Sporting Goods]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Bass Pro Shop. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Walmart. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It was easy. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It was a non-event. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You hand them your ID and just do it. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Better than the DMV. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I mean there wasn't a line. The only hassle I had was waiting for somebody to get to the counter [in Walmart]. Because there's really no guy in the fishing area. You always see all that stuff over there but you never see anybody at the station, so that was my only hassle. But once somebody came, it was like that [snaps fingers to indicate the simple and easy process]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It was pretty simple. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I wanted multiple copies, if that's fair to say. So if you went to Walmart, K-Mart, Dick's, wherever, you get the one Virginia copy, and I'm prone to lose things, and I printed off literally three PDFs, did the full, did the signature, threw one in my glove box, one in my tackle box, one in my office at home, and that's how I have to roll. I mean I picked up the two years license, most likely I'll have to get the reserve that's in the office for the tackle box if it gets wet and destroys it or something. I don't want to have to be bound to one little piece of paper. —Richmond first-time license buyer

One of the things I noticed is you have to sign it, and since it's e-mailed, I would like to have almost like an electronic signature so I don't have to print it, because I've got my phone, even if it's as you were saying in the box somewhere, I can pull it out and say "here it is," I don't have to go ruffling for it, for that same reason. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My experience was positive. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would do it online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would do it online now that I know I can. It's easier. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I got mine at Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

How or where did you actually buy your fishing license? How was the experience? How did the experience compare to experiences you've had purchasing other types of licenses or memberships, such as a hunting license, a boating registration, a gym membership, a membership-based group or club?

Dick's [Sporting Goods]. —Denver first-time license buyer

Bass Pro Shops has them, Cabela's has them. REI probably has them. —Denver first-time license buyer

There's a Walmart on every corner. —Denver first-time license buyer

It was horrible, most people at Walmart don't know what they're doing. —Denver first-time license buyer

I just couldn't work the computer. It took 30 minutes. —Denver first-time license buyer

The lady messed up our licenses the first time, and my husband doesn't do well with crowds. We stood there for 15 minutes just trying to get basic information. The lady was like, "I don't know." My husband had a fit and I had to calm him down and go back and get the equipment. It was irritating. —Denver first-time license buyer

The people [at Walmart] never know what they're doing. About anything! And I went to a tiny little place in Nebraska one year and they didn't know what they were doing either. —Denver first-time license buyer

I like that you get the actual ticket, the pass, right then and there. You can go fishing that day. You don't have to wait for it to come in the mail. —Denver first-time license buyer

Renting boats at lakes is easier [than getting a fishing license], going to the national park and getting a pass is easier. It takes 5 minute and they're super-helpful. —Denver first-time license buyer

It was just horrible at Walmart. The lady just didn't know what was going on. I just know that in the future, I need to prepare myself for that. I need to know it might be a process. My kids and I were waiting there and they were so irritated by the time we got up to the counter, and the salesperson was a little flustered and my kids were agitated and I kept telling them to be calm. At least I know next time the possibility of that happening. I can expect that. —Denver first-time license buyer

AWARENESS OF AND OPINIONS ON LICENSE FEES FUNDING CONSERVATION

- Participants were asked whether they knew how fishing license fees are used. In the Richmond group, a few participants commented that such fees were used for “department overhead” (i.e., overhead for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries), while others commented more specifically that fees are used to “stock fish” or for “land management.” In general, less than half the group was able to articulate that the fees are used for conservation management. Similarly, only a few people in the Denver group appeared to recognize that license fees are used for this purpose; one woman compared fishing licenses to a national park pass, the fee for which she said went to “preserving the area and taking care of wildlife.” Few if any participants across the two groups were aware that states receive matching Federal Aid funds for fishing licenses sold.
- In the Richmond group, very few participants suggested that knowing license fees are used to support state conservation efforts made them more likely to buy a license or fish; one exception was a female participant who, in discussing how she always purchased a fishing license for a small and little used Maine lake where she and her husband vacationed, mentioned specifically that she thought of the license fee as a contribution to conservation efforts. By contrast, most other participants in the group said that, while they were happy to learn that license fees are used for conservation funding, simply knowing this was unlikely to change their future license purchasing behavior (not that these participants would purchase licenses any *less* frequently). Denver participants reacted favorably when informed that states receive matching federal funds for licenses sold. A few people specifically approved of the fact that license fees are used to support state resources, while one or two people indicated that someone who was unsure whether to buy a license might decide to do so after learning that the fee would support wildlife in his/her state. Others in the group suggested that a license basically amounts to a user fee (i.e., the purchase is necessary to participate legally); these participants generally did not view the Federal Aid concept as being particularly persuasive or important in terms of their future license purchases.

Can you tell me where the fishing license fees go and how the money is used?

I kind of assumed it was used for stocking fish and doing other stuff like that, maybe to make the experience better and to maintain. Though I'm not sure if that's true. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Operational cost for the department and land management. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I never considered it. Just overhead for the department, local stuff. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I had a national park pass. I opted to pay because it goes to preserving the area, taking care of the wildlife, doing the things to keep it nice and pretty and natural. If you're going to go enjoy the outdoors, and your kid is snagging a beer can or the elk are caught on a pop can ringer, that's not being in the outdoors; that's the city imposing on the natural resources. I do not mind paying those things to be outdoors and have a good time. —Denver first-time license buyer

Money from license fees are the primary source of funding for the state fish and wildlife agency, and the license fees are used for managing fishing, hunting, and fish and wildlife conservation. The number of licenses sold also determines how much federal funding the agency receives. Overall, revenue from license sales and the matching federal funds provide the vast majority of funding for fish and wildlife management and conservation in the state. Does knowing this make you more likely to buy a fishing license?

No. Because as awful as it sounds, I really don't care. I'm buying a license to pursue something that I want to do, and any [additional] benefit I'm not interested in. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I would buy one anyway. I didn't know why it was important in the first place. I was shocked that you had to pay to fish. It makes sense, you do have to preserve it, to pick up trash. I didn't mind, I was shocked, but I didn't mind. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think it goes for a good cause, to help keep the programs going. I didn't know it was dollar for dollar matching, for the government. I figured there was something like that, but not all. So at least I'm kind of helping the state maybe get more funding to help our parks. It doesn't make me more likely [to buy a license]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

We vacation in Maine on a little lake, and they never patrol there, no one ever comes out to check, but we always get licenses because we figure it's a good way to support, to keep it in good condition, so that definitely has been [an incentive]. You don't know [if anyone is] going to check you, so you really don't have to get one. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I didn't know if I was right [that the money from fishing licenses goes toward conservation and management], because when you're in a small town, you think more like that. When we're here, you don't think about the James River necessarily [depending on user fees]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

[Moderator asks whether Denver participants would purchase a license solely for the sake of conservation funding, even if they knew they were unlikely to use the license]

No, I don't think I would. —Denver first-time license buyer

I just think it's more convincing [to sell a license] than to just ask someone to donate \$40 for wildlife. You're going to get someone to buy a pass before they just donate for no reason. At least the pass is an incentive. Most people won't just put the wildlife ahead first [without a license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I hate to say it, but people are always on the lookout for the government to swallow their money or for their money to go to an organization that's not doing something for them. If I had not done research on the national parks, I would never have known that the cost goes back to the park. I think if they gave that information when people are asking about park licenses and fishing licenses, it might improve people's willingness to buy the pass and go [fishing or hiking in parks] more often. —Denver first-time license buyer

Money from license fees are the primary source of funding for the state fish and wildlife agency, and the license fees are used for managing fishing, hunting, and fish and wildlife conservation. The number of licenses sold also determines how much federal funding the agency receives. Overall, revenue from license sales and the matching federal funds provide the vast majority of funding for fish and wildlife management and conservation in the state. Does knowing this make you more likely to buy a fishing license?

[Moderator asks whether Denver participants knew that license fees fund Colorado Parks and Wildlife; majority of group indicates that they did know this. Moderator then asks whether Denver participants knew that Colorado Parks and Wildlife receives matching federal funds for every license sold; majority of group indicates that they did not know this]

No kidding? That's a pretty good incentive right there. —Denver first-time license buyer

I'm basically sold. I go fishing too much to not have a license. But knowing this is even more of a reason to spread it to my friends to let them know as well [that license purchases help the environment]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think knowing that you're not putting money in some corrupt politician's pocket, but that you're helping to restock the lakes and keep them clean and whatnot [is helpful at encouraging people to purchase a license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

Colorado state tax coming back to Colorado sounds pretty good to me, keeping the local economy boosted. —Denver first-time license buyer

There's definitely an appeal there, just based on the fact that I'm participating in environmental conservation. And then, furthermore, getting Colorado state taxes to come back here [to the state]. —Denver first-time license buyer

But I don't think that that in itself [buying a license because the money will come back to Colorado Parks and Wildlife] is a motivation for someone to [buy a license]. If they truly love what they're doing, like fishing, then whatever costs are associated with giving you that ability, are worth it. —Denver first-time license buyer

But there are a lot of people who fish and don't get the license, so if you make it known that getting a license will help you preserve the wildlife, [more people may be likely to purchase a license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I think if you're with people who are on the border and aren't sure whether they'll like it [fishing], that [knowing that the license fee benefits the agency and conservation as a whole] might be the kicker that gets them to do it [purchase the license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

I agree to an extent. Knowing that [the license fee benefits the agency and conservation as a whole] isn't going to make me decide to buy one; it'll make me bitch less [about the cost]. I'm not going to be pissed off about spending that much money because I like the wilderness, I like to go and have stocked lakes. But for me, it's not going to make the decision of whether I buy one or don't buy one. I'm going to buy a license because I don't want the fine. —Denver first-time license buyer

MAJOR FINDINGS

APPEALS OF FISHING

I like being on the water, just the quiet, and the competition. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It can be just as exciting as it is relaxing, the more fish you catch. If there's a group of people, you want to catch just as many as they are. —Richmond first-time license buyer

When you're with people, the time you spend reminiscing and catching up with everyone. I enjoy that part the most. —Denver first-time license buyer

I do a lot of catch and release but it's about the joy of catching something. Catching your own food. Fish are a good source of protein, if it's big enough. —Denver first-time license buyer

For me, it's the solitude; hearing the water, the wildlife. The relaxation. —Denver first-time license buyer

Comments from participants in both locations illustrated the variety of different reasons anglers take part in fishing. While prior research has indicated that novice anglers tend to be more often motivated by the social aspects of fishing than by the sport/recreation and utilitarian aspects (e.g., catching fish to eat), the focus groups suggest that first-time license buyers are a heterogeneous group, rather diverse in their opinions on the various appeals of the sport.

Unlike many other activities, fishing has numerous dimensions of enjoyment and can be appreciated from different perspectives. It has a strong social appeal: for many individuals, fishing is simply the backdrop or setting in which people can reminisce and socialize. Fishing has a sporting aspect that appeals strongly to individuals who are interested in developing the skills needed to hook and land a fish, or becoming proficient at different types of fishing. Fishing has a strong nature-based appeal: for many people, it is simply an activity that provides a reason to experience the outdoors. Similarly, there is also the appeal of relaxing in solitude by water, a concept mentioned by numerous participants in the groups. In general, the focus groups reinforce the fact that onetime, casual, and less avid anglers choose to participate in the activity for different reasons.

Interactions during the group discussions often helped participants to consider the appeals of fishing in different ways, and an effective marketing approach may be to point out some of the various ways of enjoying fishing, rather than singling out one specific aspect. As many participants in the groups suggested, fishing can be as relaxed or as exciting as the angler desires, depending on the person's goals and expectations.

MOTIVATIONS FOR FISHING

I think when I was a kid it was more about catching the fish and taking the fish home and showing everyone what I caught. But as I got older I started to catch and release everything and now that I'm 45 now, it's really irrelevant if I catch anything at all. I just like spending time with the person I'm with. That's the key part of it now, the relaxation, more than the catching the fish. Just being outside on the water. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I don't know [if I'll buy a license again]. It depends if my kids are interested. They're teenagers now, so they're kind of into catching [fish]—if we're not catching something, they'll want to go home.

—Denver first-time license buyer

In addition to recognizing that fishing can be enjoyed in a number of ways, an important concept to keep in mind when marketing fishing is that motivations for fishing often shift with age. A number of participants in the two groups mentioned how their own preferences or expectations for the sport had changed over the years. One common theme from the groups (supported by much previous research) was for younger anglers to be especially interested in catching fish, particularly as this type of experience provides some action and represents the opposite of quiet, slower-paced outings in which the main appeal is relaxation. By contrast, many older anglers said they were content simply to spend time with others, experience nature, or enjoy solitude. Further evidence of this tendency for motivations to shift with age emerged in the comments addressing reactions to fishing trips during which no fish were caught: parents of younger anglers as well as younger anglers themselves were more likely to communicate frustration, while many older individuals were less likely to indicate that the failure to catch a fish had impacted the trip in a negative way (the quotations above exemplify this tendency).

DISSATISFACTIONS WITH FISHING

Mosquitoes. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Coming back empty-handed is a little disappointing. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If you're shore pier fishing, you can be in a spot, get a couple of good hits, and everybody on the pier is going to run to that same spot, in a little area this big like the fish are going to wait there. Then you've got about 10 tangled lines. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Finding garbage in the lakes. People that litter make my skin crawl. —Denver first-time license buyer

I hate seeing all the extra fishing line everywhere. You have line hanging off every tree around you on the lake. —Denver first-time license buyer

It sucks to go somewhere where the banks are full, or like when you get out there in a boat and every time you stop, someone else is set up 15 feet away from you. If you fish in the city, the one thing that's really hard is getting away from everyone else. —Denver first-time license buyer

Local lakes are crowded and you can't cast without crossing someone else's line, and then you have to argue with your next-door fisherman. —Denver first-time license buyer

First-time license buyers in the two groups were asked about dissatisfactions or things they enjoyed *least* about fishing, and many comments addressed environmental factors that impacted the setting of the fishing trip, such as litter or mosquitoes. A minority of participants specifically mentioned occasions during which they failed to catch any fish (this was more common in the Richmond group). One common theme across the two groups was the issue of overcrowding at popular fishing areas; comments addressing crowding were particularly common in the Denver group, especially when participants mentioned lakes within the city. The issue of tangled fishing line was also repeated fairly often and suggests scenarios in which banks or piers become overly

crowded with other anglers, thereby impacting the experience. Related to this is the fact that some people desire to fish but are constrained by time—casual and novice anglers, in particular, are less likely to commit substantial time and planning to longer trips that require them to travel greater distances. Unfortunately, according to some anglers in the groups, local fishing areas sometimes represent the most crowded opportunities.

IMPORTANCE OF INVITATIONS

Who says no to going fishing? —Richmond first-time license buyer

In a world so over-stimulated, it's nice to have that connection with somebody. You know, if my dad said "Hey, let's go," I wouldn't say no. There's that element of excitement in fishing, but it's that moment of space where you connect and bond and create something. And that was the part that really drove the nostalgia reference that I had from a kid, that I wanted to give my kid, and that excitement on his face, that joy. That's a strictly human kind of experience that you don't get from watching TV or going to the movies. —Richmond first-time license buyer

My buddy was going fishing and invited me. I got addicted all over again. I fished a lot as a kid but I didn't do it for a while. Mainly it was about being invited. —Denver first-time license buyer

No matter who invited me, I would go. —Denver first-time license buyer

Comments from the two focus groups reinforce the importance of invitations from friends and family members in bolstering participation from novice or casual anglers (i.e., one-time license buyers). Few if any individuals in the groups decided to purchase a license and go fishing completely on their own initiative; rather, the overwhelming majority of participants obtained a license because of an invitation from a friend or family member (another important reason for a license purchase was having a child who asked to be taken fishing or wanting to expose a son or daughter to fishing). Specific reactions to the concept of being invited to go fishing are discussed in a later finding in this section, while some additional research conducted with new anglers provides greater support for the importance of invitations.

A recent Responsive Management study examining the motivations of one-time anglers in Iowa found that this group was highly dependent on going with family and friends—like many of the Richmond and Denver participants, these people had been invited to go and likely would not have gone without such accompaniment. A survey question measuring the reasons they first bought an Iowa license reinforced the importance of family and invitations: Iowa one-time anglers were more likely to have first purchased a fishing license to take a child or grandchild, because of an invitation from a friend, or because of a request from a family member, thereby mirroring tendencies in the Richmond and Denver focus groups.

EXPERIENCES PURCHASING FISHING LICENSES

Purchasing online was easy. I know people go to bait shops to buy them and it takes them forever to hand write everything and print the stuff out. I did it right online. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It [purchasing a fishing license] was a non-event. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well, my friend just said to go buy it at Sportsman's Warehouse or Walmart. —Denver first-time license buyer

It was just horrible at Walmart. The lady just didn't know what was going on. I just know that in the future, I need to prepare myself for that. I need to know it might be a process. My kids and I were waiting there and they were so irritated by the time we got up to the counter, and the salesperson was a little flustered and my kids were agitated and I kept telling them to be calm. At least I know next time the possibility of that happening. I can expect that. —Denver first-time license buyer

The focus groups suggest that most first-time license buyers were able to navigate the license purchasing process fairly easily and unremarkably, particularly those individuals who purchased their license online (other individuals reported generally positive experiences purchasing a license at a retailer such as Bass Pro Shops or at a local bait and tackle store). The major exceptions were individuals who purchased a fishing license at Walmart, with several participants in the Denver group discussing negative experiences they had at the store. The most common issue appeared to be unknowledgeable or unhelpful sales associates or long wait times at the sporting goods counter; these issues were compounded when the purchaser was unfamiliar with licensing requirements or was seeking information about license or stamp requirements for a specific lake or area.

Despite these negative anecdotes, many individuals (particularly in the Denver group) were able to look past the initial obstacle of a difficult or confusing purchasing process. Indeed, the fourth quotation above illustrates the fact that many novice anglers are willing to put up with some momentary frustration in order to fulfill their end goal of obtaining a license to go fishing. In the quotation above, the purchaser had every reason to leave the store, but instead stayed and ended up purchasing the license because she and her husband were adamant about going fishing. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that not all first-time license buyers will be as patient, and a frustrating license purchasing experience at a big-box retailer like Walmart has the potential to discourage those who wish to try fishing. For this reason, it may be worth recommending the purchase of a license online as often as possible.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON FISHING AND LICENSES

Someone told me [I needed a fishing license]. Just someone that I knew who went fishing. And I had no idea I needed a license until I was told. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The wildlife organization for the state [is where I would get information about fishing and licenses]. Because if I'm looking for the purposes of not running afoul of the authorities, I would want to know precisely [what the requirements are]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I always go to the DOW: Department of Wildlife. —Denver first-time license buyer

Probably any retailer of fishing equipment [would be able to provide information about fishing and licenses]. —Denver first-time license buyer

My dad told me at a certain age that it was time to buy one [a fishing license]. —Denver first-time license buyer

When asked who they went to for information about fishing and licenses, a small number of people in each group specifically mentioned a state fish and wildlife agency or organization. However, there was a much greater tendency for casual anglers to mention retailers such as Cabela's and Bass Pro Shops, as well as stores like Walmart. As mentioned in the previous finding, one shortcoming of major general-purpose retailers (Walmart in particular) is that employees are ill-equipped to answer questions from new anglers about various types of fishing equipment and licenses or stamps needed for specific lakes and water bodies. Novice anglers desire simple, clear information on these subjects, and they may become intimidated or confused more easily than experienced individuals when they fail to receive clear information at a store.

A recent Responsive Management study that looked at casual and novice anglers in Washington State found that newer anglers' dependence on friends and family as fishing partners tended to influence their sources of information about fishing: newer anglers were less likely to find information from the primary source—the state fish and wildlife agency—and more likely to obtain the information from friends and relatives. Similarly, in addition to acquiring information about fishing and licenses from retailers and sporting goods stores, many first-time license buyers in the Richmond and Denver groups mirrored the tendency of Washington novice anglers to look to friends and family members for guidance or information.

ATTITUDES TOWARD CONSERVATION FUNDING AND FEDERAL AID

I think it goes for a good cause, to help keep the programs going. I didn't know it was dollar for dollar matching, for the government. I figured there was something like that, but not all. So at least I'm kind of helping the state maybe get more funding to help our parks. It doesn't make me more likely [to buy a license]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I hate to say it, but people are always on the lookout for the government to swallow their money or for their money to go to an organization that's not doing something for them. If I had not done research on the national parks, I would never have known that the cost goes back to the park. I think if they gave that information when people are asking about park licenses and fishing licenses, it might improve people's willingness to buy the pass and go [fishing or hiking in parks] more often. —Denver first-time license buyer

The focus groups explored whether participants were more likely to purchase a license and go fishing if they knew that license fees were used to manage and conserve wildlife and natural resources in their state. Participants were initially asked whether they knew how fishing license fees were used, and were then read a brief explanation of the Federal Aid process through which states receive matching funds for licenses sold.

In general, less than half of the participants in each group were able to articulate that the fees are used for conservation management, and few if any participants across the two groups were aware that states receive matching Federal Aid funds for fishing licenses sold. In the Richmond group, very few participants suggested that knowing license fees are used to support state conservation efforts made them more likely to buy a license or fish; one exception was a female participant who, in discussing how she always purchased a fishing license for a small and little used Maine lake where she and her husband vacationed, mentioned specifically that she thought of the license fee as a contribution to conservation efforts. By contrast, most other participants in the

Richmond group said that, while they were happy to learn that license fees are used for conservation funding, simply knowing this was unlikely to change their future license purchasing behavior (not that these participants would purchase licenses any *less* frequently).

Denver participants reacted favorably when informed that states receive matching federal funds for licenses sold. A few people specifically approved of the fact that license fees are used to support state resources, while one or two people indicated that someone who was unsure whether to buy a license might decide to do so after learning that the fee would support wildlife in his/her state. Others in the group suggested that a license basically amounts to a user fee (i.e., the purchase is necessary to participate legally); these participants generally did not view the Federal Aid concept as being particularly persuasive or important in terms of their future license purchases.

REACTIONS TO VARIOUS FORMS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Focus group participants were asked for their reactions to several specific forms of encouragement or reminders about license purchasing and fishing; their reactions to each item are summarized below:

Having someone to fish with:

It's usually more fun to have people to go with. —Denver first-time license buyer

Well, it's half and half because sometimes I would prefer to go by myself. —Denver first-time license buyer

The large majority of the Richmond group considered this an important form of encouragement, and most participants in the Denver group appeared to agree. While a few people in the Denver group commented that they sometimes preferred to fish alone specifically for the solitude, most in the group viewed fishing companions as a positive concept.

An invitation from a friend or family member to go fishing:

[Being invited] makes it easier for someone like me because I don't have any equipment. So if you invited me, I'd go! I'll pack the food because I don't have any equipment. —Richmond first-time license buyer

The fact that someone else initiates it—it wasn't you that came up with the idea—makes it more of a priority. Sometimes peer pressure is a good thing. —Denver first-time license buyer

As suggested elsewhere, this is one of the most important facilitators in encouraging fishing participation among both casual and novice anglers as well as more avid and committed anglers. Interestingly, participants in the Richmond group saw different benefits to this form of encouragement: some people emphasized that an invitation from a friend or family member would mean being able to go with a more experienced angler who could provide instruction or access to equipment. Others were interested in the social benefits of being able to connect with the person through shared time—these participants generally pointed out that fishing, as an activity, allows for relaxed interaction conducive to conversation (unlike basketball or other, more active activities). In the Denver group, a few people mentioned that they were more likely

to go on a fishing trip if invited by someone, due to the excursion being initiated by someone else (in this way, the trip would feel more like a special outing).

If a child asked to be taken:

I would. If you think about it, you know how you feel when you catch a fish, imagine how a three year old feels when they catch a fish. It's exciting when they catch it to see the smile on their face. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I'm not going to take a kid who says 30 minutes into it that they're done; no, we're here and we're going to do the half-day or full day or whatever it is. That's why I like all the other things you can do at a lake; if there's no fishing or you're not catching anything, there are other things to do. —Denver first-time license buyer

In both groups, a few individuals stated that it would “depend on the kid.” At the same time, a substantial number of people across the two groups indicated that they would gladly take a child fishing, if approached for that reason. One person in the Richmond group stated that she would also gladly take older people fishing as well as children. In the Denver group, one or two people said that they would want to make sure the child was interested in fishing for at least several hours or most of a day before committing to an involved trip to a lake.

More specific tips about how to, where to, and when to fish:

It's more about the person who's going to teach you. Most people don't pick up a book like “Fishing for Dummies.” You learn from people. —Denver first-time license buyer

Reactions in the Richmond group were fairly positive, although participants were not effusive when discussing this form of encouragement. Similarly, participants in the Denver group commented that while such materials certainly could not hurt, they should be free of charge. It was pointed out that individuals generally learn how to fish from other people, not books or instructional manuals.

Educational “how to” videos:

I were going to go fishing and I wanted to learn how to fish for steelhead or whatever, I would much rather go with someone who regularly goes steelhead fishing, and have him show me how to do it, and show me what bait is really effective, than to read an instruction manual or a book or a DVD, because that's what I'm trying to get away from. I just spent all day researching or writing at work. —Richmond first-time license buyer

You can find everything on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Similar to the previous item, most people in the Richmond group indicated that they would be fairly unlikely to watch instructional videos of any considerable length, preferring instead to receive advice and guidance from other individuals (including employees or customers at bait shops). In the Denver group, participants pointed out that any number of instructional fishing videos can already be found on YouTube, for those who are interested.

An educational event or class hosted by your state fish and wildlife agency:

It would help me fish, but I don't have time for that. I don't have much time off, I wouldn't want to take a Saturday. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Well, the downside to that is the location: where is it, where do you have to go? In today's age, everything is broadcast or televised or put on YouTube. —Denver first-time license buyer

Reactions to this were again fairly similar to the previous two items, with participants in both groups pointing out limitations associated with available free time and suitable locations for such classes or events (YouTube was again brought up as a helpful resource for those unwilling or unable to travel considerable distances to a class/event). At the same time, some in the Denver group suggested that they would be open to participating in such events if they happened to encounter them at area parks or lakes at which they were already visiting or planning to visit.

Receiving information on local fishing opportunities (including preferences related to delivery methods, such as phone calls, letters, e-mails, or free smartphone apps):

Depending on where you are, are you going to be able to have a signal to even get the app? I like the brochure best. You can lay in bed in read it, you can take it on a boat, you have access to it. It's easier, old fashioned. —Richmond first-time license buyer

If you're going to go fishing, you could just look to see if this is a good weather day on your app, is this a good lake, are the fish biting, and then you're like, "Okay, it's definitely not coming in the boat, it's going to stay in the car," if you're not into technology on the boat. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Maybe if that was included in the purchase of a license. I know stuff is available but just having it handed to you, you're more willing and likely to look at it than if you searched on your own. Just the simple fact that it's handed to you makes you more likely to use it. —Denver first-time license buyer

One person in the Denver group stated that information on local fishing opportunities would be most valuable if it were distributed in hard copy at the time of a fishing license purchase (this person commented that “the simple fact that it's handed to you makes you more likely to use it”). Regarding preferences in delivery methods, there was little consensus over the best ways to distribute this information: in the Richmond group, different participants preferred mail, e-mail, TV commercials, Twitter messages, and hard copy pamphlets and brochures (such as those provided at rest stops).

Additionally, there was a fairly lengthy digression on the pros and cons of a free fishing app: in short, the group was divided on the merits of an app, with some people emphasizing the convenience of smartphone integration and others pointing out that an app could be confusing, would require constant updates, or would simply lead to little-known fishing spots becoming overcrowded as they were advertised through the app. A few Richmond participants said they would trust local bait and tackle shop employees/customers over an app. Debate in the Denver group over the various delivery methods essentially mirrored the discussions from the Richmond group, albeit on a smaller scale: participants debated the various pros and cons in much the same way but spent less time on the subject as a whole (a few people in the Denver group liked the idea of an app, while others appeared to view it as unnecessary).

Receiving a reminder to renew a license:

I may need a reminder, just to embed it in the back of my mind. A reminder might embed it back in your brain like that, like, “I need to go fishing, back out to the water.” That’s just me. —Richmond first-time license buyer

What would really be cool is if you pay with your credit card, you could sign up for auto-renewal, where you would just automatically have your license renewed. An option to auto-new your license, like Netflix. I think it would probably encourage more people to buy. —Denver first-time license buyer

Most people in the Richmond group viewed the idea of a reminder favorably. In the Denver group, responses were fairly similar (despite a few people suggesting that a simple reminder would be unlikely to persuade someone to buy a license if they were not already planning on doing so). Additional discussion in the Denver group concerned the convenience and ease of renewing a license, with some people stating their preference for renewal over the Internet (one person suggested an auto-renewal process similar to Netflix). Finally, one Denver participant recommended that short-term fishing licenses be sold on location at lakes, specifically at booths that rent equipment or provide information.

If the license purchasing or renewal process was easier:

It’s not difficult, but again if you dropped the barrier of entry, if you’re already renewing your driver’s license, why not? —Richmond first-time license buyer

On this topic, several comments in the Richmond group suggested that the process for purchasing and/or renewing a fishing license is already fairly easy. At the same time, a few participants discussed the possibility of allowing residents to renew a fishing license at the same time a driver’s license is renewed (presumably for a longer period similar to the valid term of a driver’s license, as opposed to a single-year fishing license period).

REACTIONS TO VARIOUS MESSAGING CONCEPTS

Focus group participants were asked for their reactions to several messaging concepts designed to encourage license purchasing and fishing; their reactions to each concept are summarized below:

Being reminded that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation:

No, I think it’s compassion fatigue. To a certain extent you can get bombarded with the politically correct [messaging]. I would find it more offensive than incentive. —Richmond first-time license buyer

From a department’s perspective, you drive interest in preserving the environment from a bottom up perspective. Hypothetically, we all love fishing, so we’re all going to make sure we don’t throw our beer cans over the boat. And bottles in the water, because we’re going to know the fish aren’t going to be around long if you’re doing that. I think we’re all tired of like, messages being forced upon us by organizations that all have a message to penetrate; I think people are just worn out by that. People go fishing to get away from that. —Richmond first-time license buyer

Many participants in the Richmond group appeared openly resistant to messaging that emphasized that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation. These individuals appeared to interpret the message as being overly prescriptive or authoritarian; such participants recommended that, rather than attempting to convert anglers or potential anglers into conservationists via messaging, agencies should simply let the fishing experience itself create “stakeholders” of the environment (i.e., individuals are likely to become dedicated to conservation as they become more experienced as anglers, but messaging to this effect will have little value).

Being reminded that fishing helps connect people with nature:

I see a slightly different commercial. Not so much connecting with nature, but disconnecting from the rest of it. There’s this dome over a boat and my son’s sitting there, and there’s this white noise bombarding it, so there’s this safe zone over it. The picture I get in my head is not plugging in [to nature], but disconnecting from the rest of it [outside of nature]. —Richmond first-time license buyer

It’s the relaxation, but it’s the blocking of that time. It’s almost a forceful [way of deciding that] from here to here, the rest of it doesn’t exist. It makes space to relax. —Richmond first-time license buyer

People sit in their cubicles and get that email [with the fishing and connection to nature message] and say, “Oh—I’d rather be there than here.” It’s a reminder. —Denver first-time license buyer

While a handful of Richmond participants found this concept to be obvious, most in the group appeared to view the message itself as valuable. One person in the group suggested that a more powerful message would emphasize that fishing lets people “*disconnect* from the rest of the world outside of nature,” rather than allowing them to connect with nature. Similarly, the message received mixed reactions in the Denver group: a few people felt that it was too obvious, while others viewed it as a useful reminder to disengage and go outside.

Being reminded that fishing helps people relax:

The thing that everyone keeps talking about is the relaxation factor, and I would absolutely agree with that. Very peaceful. I strive toward simplicity in life, and trying to keep it the least complicated, and fishing is the same. Fishing is simplicity. —Richmond first-time license buyer

I think people get tired of inching along the highways in their metal coffins, bumper to bumper, with idiots who can’t drive—I think it’s appealing for people to think about getting away from it.
—Denver first-time license buyer

A number of people in the Richmond group said that they were more likely to be motivated by messaging that emphasized the competitive or exciting aspects of fishing, as opposed to the relaxation aspects. On the other hand, a few others reacted quite positively to this message, saying that it mentioned one of their most preferred aspects of fishing. Participants in the Denver group generally regarded this message quite positively, with comments addressing the value in reminders to relax.

APPENDIX: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction: State Purpose of Focus Group

- To better understand first-time fishing license buyers' participation in and opinions on fishing, as well as their motivations for fishing.
- Being conducted for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, in partnership with [CO Parks and Wildlife / VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries]. (www.takemefishing.org)

Rules of Focus Group

- Speak one at a time.
- Do not interrupt.
- Be respectful of others' opinions, even if you disagree.

Participant Introductions

- Name
- The type of [COLORADO / VIRGINIA] fishing license you last bought (i.e., annual vs. short-term license)
- How often you go fishing

Fishing Participation

- First, let's talk about when you have gone fishing since you bought a license.
- Who did you typically go fishing with?
 - With family, with friends, or by yourself?
 - When going fishing with others, who was typically the leader or the one who made decisions about fishing, such as when and where you went? Was it you or someone else?

Introduction to and Reasons for Fishing and Purchasing a License

- Now I would like for you to tell me about how you got started fishing.
- Why did you first decide to buy a license?
 - What are the main reasons you decided to buy a license? What made you want to go fishing?
 - What did you hope to experience or get out of fishing?
- Did anyone influence your decision to first go fishing?
 - Did anyone help get you started? Who?
 - Have they continued to encourage you to go fishing? Why or why not?
- Did your fishing experiences meet your expectations? Why or why not?
 - Did your experiences satisfy the reasons for which you first bought a license? Why or why not?

Opinions on Fishing

- Now let's talk about fishing in general.
- What do you enjoy most about fishing?
- What do you enjoy least about fishing?
- Are there any disadvantages, complications, or hassles associated with fishing that make it less appealing than other activities?
- What other activities do you prefer to participate in instead of fishing?
 - Why do you prefer these activities? Why are they more appealing?

Likelihood and Motivations for Future Fishing Participation

- Have you continued fishing? Why or why not?
- Do you plan to buy a license again next year? Why or why not?
- What would you tell a friend about getting a fishing license?
 - Would you tell them they should or shouldn't get a license? Why? What reason(s) would you give?
- Is there anything specific that is making it difficult for *you* to renew or buy a license?
- Are there any things that would make you start fishing again? What are they?
 - What would it take for you to renew or buy a fishing license in [CO / VA] again?
- What about the following – would any of these make you more likely to renew or buy your fishing license? (IF YES) Why would *this* make you more likely to get a license?
 - Having someone to fish with
 - An invitation from a friend or family member to go fishing
 - If a child asked you to take them
 - More specific tips about how to, where to, and when to fish
 - Educational “how to” videos
 - An educational event or class hosted by your state fish and wildlife agency
 - Receiving information on local fishing opportunities
 - How would you prefer to receive that information?
(*Wait for initial responses before probing further.*)
 - Would you prefer to receive a phone call, letter, e-mail?
 - Or would you prefer to seek the information on a website or free app?
 - Receiving a reminder to renew your license
 - If the license purchasing or renewal process was easier
 - Being reminded that fishing is important for fish and wildlife conservation
 - Being reminded that fishing helps you connect with nature
 - Being reminded that fishing helps you relax
- Are there any other things that would encourage you to buy a license again? What are they?

Experiences With and Opinions on Purchasing a License

- Next, let's talk more about buying your license.
- How did you know you needed a license?
- Where did you look for information on getting or buying a license?
 - What are the trusted sources for this information?

- How or where did you actually buy your fishing license?
 - Online, at a store, or by phone or in person at [COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE / THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES]?
- How was the experience? Was it a positive or negative experience? Why?
- How did the experience compare to experiences you've had purchasing other types of licenses or memberships, such as a hunting license, a boating registration, a gym membership, a membership-based group or club?
- Did your experience purchasing your fishing license affect whether or not you will purchase again in the future? How?

Awareness of and Opinions on License Fees Funding Conservation

- Can you tell me where the fishing license fees go and how the money is used?
- (IF NECESSARY) Money from license fees are the primary source of funding for the state fish and wildlife agency, that is, [COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE / THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES], and the license fees are used for managing fishing, hunting, and fish and wildlife conservation. The number of licenses sold also determines how much federal funding the agency receives. Overall, revenue from license sales and the matching federal funds provide the vast majority of funding for fish and wildlife management and conservation in the state.
- Does knowing this make you more likely to buy a fishing license? Why or why not?

Closing

- Thank you for coming tonight and talking about your fishing and your opinions with me.
- Does anyone have any additional comments or questions?

ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Management is an internationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Our mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public. Utilizing our in-house, full-service telephone, mail, and web-based survey center with 50 professional interviewers, we have conducted more than 1,000 telephone surveys, mail surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups, as well as numerous marketing and communication plans, needs assessments, and program evaluations.

Clients include the federal natural resource and land management agencies, most state fish and wildlife agencies, state departments of natural resources, environmental protection agencies, state park agencies, tourism boards, most of the major conservation and sportsmen's organizations, and numerous private businesses. Responsive Management also collects attitude and opinion data for many of the nation's top universities. Specializing in research on public attitudes toward natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, Responsive Management has completed a wide range of projects during the past 22 years, including dozens of studies of hunters, anglers, wildlife viewers, boaters, park visitors, historic site visitors, hikers, birdwatchers, campers, and rock climbers. Responsive Management has conducted studies on endangered species; waterfowl and wetlands; and the reintroduction of large predators such as wolves, grizzly bears, and the Florida panther.

Responsive Management has assisted with research on numerous natural resource ballot initiatives and referenda and has helped agencies and organizations find alternative funding and increase their membership and donations. Additionally, Responsive Management has conducted major organizational and programmatic needs assessments to assist natural resource agencies and organizations in developing more effective programs based on a solid foundation of fact.

Responsive Management has conducted research on public attitudes toward natural resources and outdoor recreation in almost every state in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan. Responsive Management has also conducted focus groups and personal interviews with residents of the African countries of Algeria, Cameroon, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Responsive Management routinely conducts surveys in Spanish and has conducted surveys in Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese and has completed numerous studies with specific target audiences, including Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians, women, children, senior citizens, urban, suburban and rural residents, large landowners, and farmers.

Responsive Management's research has been upheld in U.S. District Courts; used in peer-reviewed journals; and presented at major natural resource, fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation conferences across the world. Company research has been featured in most of the nation's major media, including CNN, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and on the front pages of *USA Today* and *The Washington Post*. Responsive Management's research has also been highlighted in *Newsweek* magazine.

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