

“I want over 60 million Americans fishing...”

When *Angling International* first spoke exclusively to **Frank Peterson**, he was beginning his new role as the CEO and President of the RBFF and the task of increasing angling participation in America. Here, two years on, he reflects on his successes so far.

Angling International: How would you sum up the progress made by the RBFF since that last interview?

Frank Peterson: I feel very positive about the progress we've made. We've increased awareness of the Take Me Fishing brand. Our website traffic is growing every year and our retention and recruitment programmes are making a significant impact. Through our marketing efforts, we believe we've helped stave off the participation decline and contributed to a 1.8% increase in freshwater fishing. We think that has to do with increasing fishing licence sales. In fact, last year fishing licence sales were up by 4.7%, the highest the industry has experienced in nearly 30 years. Additionally, our efforts to promote the sale of fishing licences have generated \$14 million for conservation and \$77 million for industry.

How have the difficult circumstances endured by the fishing and boating industries and communities hampered your progress?

Despite the difficult environment, we've been able to break through the clutter and continue to get our message out there about the fishing and boating lifestyle and its contributions to conservation.

This year, unfortunately, fishing licence sales were affected by a number of different factors including extreme weather in different parts of the United States, along with a devastating oil spill in one of our nation's largest fisheries.

In light of those events, we continue to reinforce the message that boating and fishing licence and equipment sales play such an important role in protecting our nation's waterways.

Finally, our ability to stay on top of what the industries' customers want helps us to provide them with the tools they need to stay competitive regardless of the environment.

What have been the big highlights?

TakeMeFishing.org was completely redesigned in April 2008. It has emerged as the premier online resource for American boaters and anglers with comprehensive 'where to' and 'how to' information. With its new design, the site reached almost three million



TAKE ME FISHING™
takemefishing.org

visitors last year. That compares to about 300,000 just three years ago.

Then there is Anglers' Legacy. Since 2007, more than 200,000 Anglers' Legacy Ambassadors have taken the pledge to introduce newcomers to the sport. According to a recent survey, ambassadors across the board have a significantly greater impact on participation and introduce more newcomers to the sport than non-ambassadors. They also report higher fishing-related and boating-related purchases.

We have also made strides in youth education. RBFF education grants engaged more than 450,000

Anglers' Legacy™

A national mission from **TAKE ME FISHING™**

youth participants. The partnerships that RBFF has forged with the Outdoor Foundation, Discovery Education, the Boy Scouts of America and other marquee organisations – along with \$1.4 million dedicated to youth outreach in the next year's budget – will fuel the continued expansion of this effort to reach the next generation of anglers.

What have been the major learnings – good and bad – over that time?

We learned that we have to understand the industries' customers and I think we are proving our value there by leveraging all the digital technology and communications vehicles that can help us deliver our message and tangibly affect participation. What can be frustrating is the knowledge that we're only touching a small segment of the market with our message. We attract about three million unique visitors to the website, but would like to see that number climb to 12 million in the next three years. A larger budget and increased revenue that we're able to generate out-side of government funding will help us achieve this.

Which of your marketing devices has proved most effective?

Our web-based approach and our move from mass media to a more regional and targeted approach have proven successful. Reinforcing our efforts around search engine marketing and search engine optimisation has also boosted our results during the past three years.

Two years ago you identified clearly targeted sectors – lapsed anglers, avid anglers and newcomers. Where have you enjoyed most success and has your target audience shifted in any way over time?

We've enjoyed success with all of those audiences, but the key going forward will be identifying, targeting and marketing to future growth areas. We're embarking on a comprehensive market segmentation study this year that should not only help our organisation but also will help the industry stakeholders who can use this to develop markets for growth.

Looking ahead, what are the key objectives for the RBFF in the short, medium and long term?

In the short term, we want to continuously improve the 'where to' and 'how to' content on TMF.org and build on our existing programmes. In the medium term we want to work more closely with industry and other stakeholders to develop valuable products and programmes that align with their marketing needs. In the long term we want more than 60 million Americans participating.

What support have you received from the industry and what is your message to them looking forward?

The support from the industry is stronger than it's ever been. We want them to know that their excise taxes are being used to grow the sport not only for today, but for future generations. We do that through all of our outreach programmes.

How many industry partners do you now have?

We work with more than 26 different retailers and manufacturers who use our Take Me Fishing or Anglers' Legacy brands on their products. This helps us increase brand awareness and drive website traffic.

How will you continue to measure the success of your efforts?

The first measure is simple. We must increase participation. We need to retain the anglers who are participating and introduce more newcomers. Our population is growing and that provides us a huge opportunity to break into new markets and introduce new anglers and boaters like never before. We'll continue to measure our success by getting the industry to adopt our brand because they see the value in it. Eventually, we would love to see a Take Me Fishing Center in every major retailer.

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