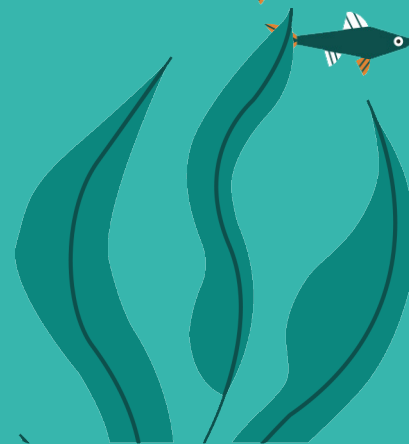
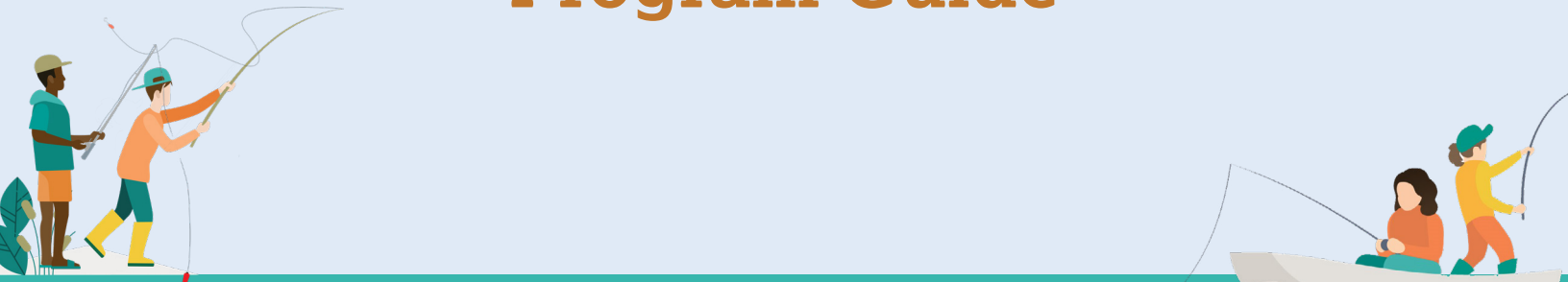


First Catch

CENTER

Program Guide



RECREATIONAL
BOATING & FISHING
FOUNDATION

First Catch CENTER

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Program Overview

Since 2017, Take Me Fishing™ First Catch Centers™ (FCC) have been bringing the joys of fishing to communities across the United States. These mobile trailers, equipped with fishing rods and gear, have inspired thousands to try fishing, especially in underserved areas.

Key Findings from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF), in collaboration with Responsive Management, highlight the importance of fishing for urban and multicultural audiences. Increasing fishing opportunities in underserved communities can:

- Encourage mentoring.
- Promote stronger family connections/experiences.
- Foster the development of future fishing interest.

Goal: To help increase participation in recreational fishing and boating.

RBFF has partnered with parks/wildlife agencies and non-profit organizations to deliver these fishing experiences through the unique FCC program.

FCC Program Goals:

- Offer hands-on fishing and boating programs in urban areas.
- Promote basic skills and conservation ethics.
- Increase participants' awareness, skills, and knowledge about fishing and boating.
- Provide enjoyable experiences for families, empowering them to use their new skills in future outings.

RBFF collaborates with selected state agencies and organizations to provide a fully equipped fishing education trailer. This trailer includes all necessary fishing supplies for a novice to get on the water for the first time (rods, reels, nets, coolers, rod racks, hooks, bobbers, lures) and co-branded promotional supplies (tent,



tablecloth). RBFF offers up to \$25,000 in the first year for the trailer and equipment, and up to \$1,500 in the second year for additional supplies.

After the initial two years, the agency/organization is responsible for funding and maintaining the First Catch Center.

Core competencies of the FCC program are available to review here; an abridged version is available at the end of the guide.

Prospective FCC operators must be state, local, or federal wildlife/parks agencies, or non-profit organizations, and are expected to:

- Conduct at minimum, eight FCC events annually in either urban or underserved communities.
- Establish and/or maintain a database of FCC participants to be utilized for future FCC events or marketing activities.
- Promote and market FCC events, working with RBFF, partner organizations, or their own communications teams.
- Provide local conservation education and information at events.
- Provide an annual summary of FCC events and accomplishments for at least three years.

Steps to getting a First Catch Center Trailer

- **Exploratory call with RBFF, if needed.** If you are unsure about your agency

or organizational fit with the FCC program, we would be happy to arrange a call with you to share more.

- **Submit application.** [Applications are submitted online](#) in mid-January to mid-February.

- **Branded item delivery.** Giveaway items, such as bobbers, neck gaiters, lip balms, and fish trading cards are available for all FCC operators from RBFF.
- **Trailer is wrapped by a company selected by the agency/organization**
- **Build out inside of trailer to your specifications.**

FCC Application Process

The application process for First Catch Centers will open for all qualifying organizations starting in mid-January and ending in mid-February.

To be eligible, interested states are required to submit an online application form during that time. [You can access the online application here.](#)

Applications are scored against the [FCC Core Criteria](#), which interested agencies should review before submitting their responses.

Once your application has been submitted, RBFF will review your application and reach out to each applicant about whether they have qualified.

If you qualify, you will receive a welcome email as well as a First Catch Center agreement which will need to be signed by your agency/organization and submitted back to RBFF.

FCC Frequently Asked Questions

- Are state agencies responsible for outfitting the trailer?

RBFF will provide each agency/organization initially with \$25,000 for finding and outfitting each new trailer in the first year. In the second year RBFF makes \$1,500 available for follow-up equipment needs. We also provide start-up giveaway items with the First Catch Center

brand. However in the long-term, it is the agency/organization's responsibility to source funding and or donations for the FCC.

- How does my organization receive these funds?

RBFF can pay vendors directly. We will need all new vendors to provide us with a New Vendor form and W9 for our record keeping.

- How many events are required to participate in the FCC program?

State agencies are asked to host a minimum of eight programs incorporating the FCC in a 12-month period.

- Is there an application deadline to apply for an FCC?

Applications are accepted from X to Y, and notifications of award are provided on Z. After RBFF's annual funds for this program are exhausted, approved applications may be placed on a waitlist.

- How do you get the physical trailer?

After a agency/organization has been approved for an FCC, they will be required to look for a local trailer supplier that meets their needs. RBFF can help direct state agencies to trailer suppliers that we have worked with in the past. FCC operators are required to insure and



register their trailers with the appropriate agencies.

- How is the trailer designed?

After a trailer is sourced and built, RBFF will help state agencies with getting their trailer wrapped in the official FCC design incorporating the Take Me Fishing™, First Catch Centers™, and individual state logos. Saltwater and freshwater designs are available.

The FCC operator will need to provide trailer dimensions and high-quality logo files as needed. Designs can also be modified to include partnerships with local organizations or trailer sponsors. Once the design is finalized, FCC organizations will need to find their own vendor to complete the physical application of the wrap.

Promoting your FCC trailer

Promoting your new FCC trailer is a great way to increase interest in fishing activities and gain new partners in outreach efforts. Below are a few ideas that have been successful with existing FCC operators:

Partnerships

Partnerships are the most commonly used marketing tool for FCC programs and creating exciting, compelling events. Many agencies are unable to or do not want to use state-wide communications accounts to focus on local activities, but can rely on partner providers to access their local networks more efficiently. Partnership marketing can help you reduce your expenses as well.

FCC operators frequently work with the following partners to co-host and co-market events:

- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts and 4H Clubs, and other similar youth programs
- Local police, fire, EMS, and military
- Local and State level Parks departments
- Non-profits, faith institutions, and other



- **RBFF approves or denies application**
- **Next steps call with RBFF**
- **RBFF sends an agreement to sign and return.** (Template text of this agreement is at the back of the guide.)
- **Trailer Purchase.** States are responsible for locating a trailer that meets their needs. RBFF can provide referrals to vendors we have worked with in the past.
- **Work with RBFF to design trailer wrap to specifications.** Once you know what trailer you will have, we will work together to design and approve the wrap that is placed on the exterior.
- **Equipment selection and delivery.** A template list of equipment is available, and we work with a third-party to source and deliver all of the basic fishing equipment you'll need for your trailer.

- social cause organizations
- Industry partners such as Cabela's, Dicks, Bass Pro Shops, or smaller retailers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Established recreational activity organizations (such as local Fly Fishers)
- State Fairs
- Camping/Golfing events

The partner in question may have a great idea for what program they need/want to run – Scouts for example will often have specific requirements participants need to complete. However, other partners may need some inspiration or collaboration on coming up with exciting events to offer. Consider:

- Joint fishing tournaments
- Educational 1st-timer workshops
- Programs about conservation initiatives and local fishing regulations
- Events for families including Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, and Grandparents' Day, as well as school-year related events (Spring Break, graduation).
- Events with additional outdoors opportunities – grills/picnics, trails, paddling/boating, or holiday events

Some activities that you can do to take advantage of your partnership marketing opportunities include:

- Providing branded flyers, banners, images, or other advertising materials to the partner organization for their use
- Participating in their audience and social media channels with live interviews, video tours of the FCC, demonstrations, or other activities as appropriate

Lastly, marketing the FCC to leaders and representatives of potential partnership organizations can help them create downstream consumers. Consider "experience marketing" opportunities where partners can tour the FCC and see the resources first-hand, and provide training opportunities for them to learn to fish

or become authorized third-party users of the FCC trailer.

Use Social Media and Online Event Platforms

If your agency runs a social media program (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc.) the FCC branded trailer is a great visual opportunity to capture content! Consider working with your communications teams to highlight events and share upcoming ones with active online communities.

Digital event advertising extends beyond social media. Many platforms exist where events can be posted online for free and advertised to local audiences, including websites like NextDoor and The Patch as well as local newspapers. Some platforms may charge a small fee for use (such as Eventbrite) or charge a fee to boost your posting to more viewers.

[For more information on running digital outreach efforts, see RBFF's 10 Steps to Creating a Digital Marketing Campaign.](#)

Tracking Results

FCC operators are required to report on their activities while they are receiving funding, and are highly encouraged to continue providing reports to RBFF after their funding ends. A preview of the annual required reporting questions is provided at the end of this guide.

Evaluation is a highly critical component of any R3 effort and is used to help evaluate grant applications for FCC trailers. In addition to the metrics in the required reporting questions, we want to know how you are tracking success and encourage you to share your results with us.

Appendices

Appendix A: Program Application Questions

[The application is submitted online here.](#) Responses will be accepted in mid-January to mid-February. The application does not save your progress: you are highly encourage to draft your response in a separate document first.

Planning

- Describe your goals or desired outcomes for your proposed FCC program. (Max 5 Points)
Please note if these goals are derived from larger organizational strategic plans.
- Describe what metrics you would use to measure performance and determine success of the goals and outcomes listed above. Examples include total/average attendance per event, licenses purchased, survey responses, etc. (Max 5 Points)
- Describe the tools/platforms you would use to capture and measure metrics for program evaluation. (Max 3 Points)

Sustainability

- RBFF provides funding over two years for FCC physical needs. Please provide information on how your organization/agency would continue to financially support the FCC beyond these two years. (Max 3 Points)

Instructors, Mentors, and Curriculum

- Describe who would staff your First Catch Center (FCC). (Max 10 Points)
Provide the name and title of the person would be the primary point of contact for the FCC's operations, and their qualifications. Note if this role is vacant or to-be-created.
List any other staff members (by name and/or title) who would have responsibility for the outcomes of programming provided by the FCC. Please note any vacant positions.
- List any volunteers/volunteer initiatives that would have a significant impact on FCC operations. (Max 5 Points)
- Explain how this FCC would educate novice anglers who visit the FCC for active fishing events. (Max 5 Points)
Please note if you use a formalized curriculum, and if that curriculum is officially approved or vetted by your organization/agency or another similar organization.

Engagement Plan

- Define your target audiences for FCC outreach activities. Consider the audience's demographics, geography and status as anglers in this answer. (Max 5 Points)
Please note if any of your target audiences for FCC activities are communities that are traditionally underserved by the fishing industry (ex; women, people of color, anglers with disabilities, or other underserved groups in the proposed FCC region.)

Explain how you would track event attendance to understand if target audiences are being reached.

- Describe the types of events your organization/agency would host or participate in with the FCC trailer. (Max 10 Points)

If you are able, please specifically name any known events.

If you are unable to specifically name events, describe the types of outreach events and activities you are likely to undertake.

Please note if any of the planned events are primarily public relations opportunities that do not include an active opportunity to fish (for example, a state fair booth that doesn't have access to a body of water.)

- Explain how your organization/agency incorporates Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) objectives into its work, and/or how R3 efforts and initiatives would be integrated with a FCC program. (Max 5 Points)
- Identify partners who could play a role in FCC program operations. Partners may include municipalities, federal/state agencies, NGOs and non-profits, schools, community organizations, sporting groups, and businesses. Please note if you already have established relationships with the partners identified. (Max 3 Points)
- Describe how you would promote and market your FCC events. Consider things like traditional marketing, social media, email marketing, word of mouth efforts, partnership marketing, etc. (Max 3 Points)

Bonus

- BONUS: Name up to three of the locations where the FCC would go to host fishing events for novice anglers. For each location described, please indicate if it has the following: co-recreational activities, restrooms, food/beverage availability, site features that meet Americans with Disabilities Act guidance, or a connection to public transportation. (Up to 3 points.)

Appendix B: Program Agreement Template Text

The mission of Take Me Fishing™ First Catch Centers™ (FCC) is to offer hands-on fishing and boating programs in urban areas, promoting basic skills and conservation ethics. These experiential programs aim to increase participants' awareness, skills, and knowledge about fishing and boating. Our goal is to provide positive and enjoyable experiences for families in metropolitan areas, empowering them to apply their newfound skills in future outings. RBFF is actively seeking partners to collaborate on a fishing education trailer project, which will be fully branded and equipped with all necessary fishing supplies to bring fishing and boating opportunities to underserved communities.

RBFF Will Provide:

Up to \$25,000 in the first year for a fishing education trailer, fully wrapped with branding logos, and fully equipped with all of the necessary fishing supplies (rod and reel outfits, nets, coolers, rod racks, photo props, hooks, bobbers, lures and more.) to take fishing and boating opportunities in underserved communities.

Up to \$1,500 in the second year of the program for new or missing equipment or supplies needed.

Assistance in acquiring trailer, wrap, equipment, gear, etc.

Advice and feedback on the trailer acquisition process, promoting events, social media support, etc.

State Partner Will:

Host a minimum of 8 events in urban environments, providing a hands-on fishing experience to novice anglers

Where feasible establish/maintain a database or create a customer ID for participants as well as collect data on attendees that attend a fishing event.

Identify how the state will use the database of participants to promote future events and link these individuals to other local fishing opportunities.

Integrate First Catch Center Core Components into state program. Identify other partners/ associated organizations that will assist with events.

Develop a "Schedule of Activities" for the trailer to be provided to RBFF to help states promote attendance at the events.

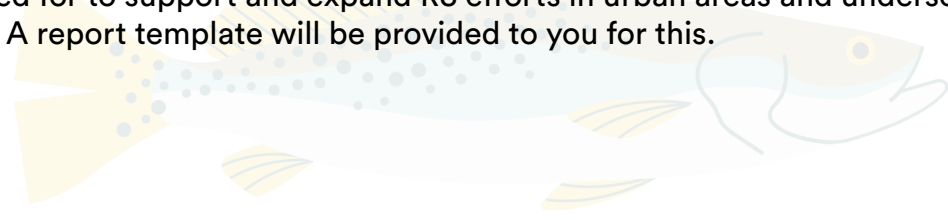
Where feasible, share photos of the event(s) on social media and tag @Take_Me_Fishing on appropriate social media channels. (We recognize photos may need permission/photo release.)

Procure a portion of equipment locally from independent from local vendors and or tackle shops.

Use the First Catch Center in at least one non-fishing event to market First Catch Centers to diverse audiences. (i.e., state/county fair, local parade, state park event).

Provide local conservation education and information at events. If feasible, have hands on conservation activities such as a clean-up day before fishing, recycling containers/fishing line, etc.

Provide RBFF an annual summary of events and accomplishments. Identify additional efforts the trailer is used for to support and expand R3 efforts in urban areas and underserved demographics. A report template will be provided to you for this.



Appendix C: Reporting Template

Reporting will be completed in an online form. These questions are for your reference only.

State Agency or Organization Name:

Contact Name/Email:

Years the FCC has been in operation:

1. How many events were held where the FCC trailer was present?
2. What was the total number of participants across events where the FCC trailer was present?
3. Who was your target audience at the start of the year? Did your events successfully reach your target audience?
4. How were the events promoted? Were these promotions successful?
5. What partner organizations did you work with? (Schools, parks departments, local businesses, sport groups, etc.) Did those partners provide any feedback on the experience that you can share?
6. Please detail your retention or reactivation efforts with attendees at events. (For example, did you collect emails from participants and follow up, subscribe participants to a newsletter, send them away with flyers for your next event?)
7. Do you track the sale of licenses to events you host? If so, do you know how many licenses were sold to attendees who came through an FCC event? If no, do you know what would it take for you to be able to do this?
8. Do you have other metrics that you use to track your R3 efforts as relates to the FCC events?
9. Is there anything that would be useful for RBFF to provide when it comes to amplifying your R3 efforts? (Webinars, consulting, meet-ups, template flyers, resources, etc.)
10. What were some anticipated or unanticipated obstacles you encountered with your outreach efforts? Were you able to mitigate those obstacles in any way?
11. Any other thoughts or items worth sharing? (Consider: memorable anecdotes, stories from events, issues we should know about?)
12. Have there been any staffing changes related to the FCC? If we should contact somebody else for future program reporting, please be sure to include their name and email.
13. Please upload any photos that show the FCC in action: (checkbox: is RBFF authorized to reproduce these photos?)

Appendix D: FCC Core Criteria

Category: Evaluation

- Agency has clearly defined goals for their FCC work that are supported by larger agency strategic plans or initiatives. Max 5.
- Agency has clearly defined and attainable metrics for these goals. Max 5.
- Agency has shared what tools/platforms they will need to measure their impact. Max 3.
- Agency will be able to sustain the FCC beyond the two years of provided funding. Max 10.

Category: Curriculum/Instruction

- Agency has staff members who would be dedicated to the FCC who can develop/conduct formal and informal learning opportunities (e.g., classes, events). Max 8.
- Agency has a pool of volunteers who can help run or facilitate events at the FCC on a regular basis. Max 5.
- Agency has a plan of education for teaching novice fishers. Max 10.

Category: Engagement Plan

- Agency has a plan or the resources to host at least 8 events over a calendar period of 12 months (pro-rated depending on delivery date of the trailer for first-year's reporting). The majority of events cannot be public relations style events that provide no opportunity to actively fish (i.e., state fairs). Max 10.
- Agency has defined target audiences it is attempting to reach with FCC events, and is particularly focused on reaching underserved audiences (ex; women, people of color, anglers with disabilities, or other underserved groups in the FCC applicant's region.) Max 5.
- Agency has Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) considerations in mind with the FCC. Max 5.
- Agency has identified potential partners who can support their FCC's impact. Max 3.
- Agency has a plan to promote their events to ensure maximum attendance and coverage. Max 3.

Bonus Competencies: Accessible and Amenitized Facilities

- Up to 3 bonus points are available if they confirm that the following are found at at least one of their intended fishing sites: co-recreational activities, restrooms, food/beverage availability, site features that meet Americans with Disabilities Act guidance, connection to public transportation. One point will be awarded for each confirmed feature.

[The full criteria plus application scoring rubric is available online.](#)



OVERVIEW

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) operates a First Catch Center (FCC) trailer in the Sacramento metro area, in support of their Fishing in the City program to improve angling opportunities for California's growing urban population.

“The FCC provides a center of operations for whatever site we are at, and it solves logistical and transportation challenges” said CDFW's Richard Muñoz. “It's a visual notifier for participants as well,” added Lacey Carlson. Our community really knows when they see the FCC trailer that ‘oh! Fishing in the City is here.’ It provides us the opportunity to mobilize our education and move around to all different urban ponds.”

The trailer is one of two in California. It is staffed by CDFW technicians, outreach coordinators, and scientific aides; events are typically supported by 3-5 volunteers.



PARTNERSHIPS

One of CDFW's key partnerships is with Hooked on Fishing, Not on Violence (HOFNOV), whose mission to use sport fishing as a vehicle to mentor to children and create real moments of truth between mentors and participants. While they had worked together before, the pandemic formalized their partnership with the shared goal to keep kids connected and outside.

Several of HOFNOV's youth participants have gone on to become active anglers and mentors as they age into adulthood.

“It was always the goal of both programs to create meaningful connections with the outdoors to communities have been historically marginalized from outdoor spaces,” says Muñoz. “These participants have a voice in what we do together, and we want to be informed by the voice of the communities we are trying to reach out to.”

CDFW also works with the City of Sacramento, and the Cordova, Fulton-El Camino, Sacramento, Cosmunes, and Southgate Recreation and Parks districts.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION FOCUS

Leveraging the reach of partners is a key component of CDFW’s outreach strategy. “Outside of word of mouth, anytime that you have that partnership for advertising that works well, because we can only use social media to advertise statewide, but the local groups help us get out into each of those specific targeted communities,” said Carlson. When a local park posted information about Fishing in the City’s upcoming clinic there, “all of a sudden we had so many different community members coming out to this program who were specific to the Elk Grove community, who had never even heard of this program before.”

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Muñoz noted the time involved in making sure the trailer was fully designed and equipped for CDFW’s specific use cases. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation provides the trailer/trailer wrap and essential fishing gear, but fully setting up the interior with cupboards, shelving, and gear storage takes additional time to achieve.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Because of Fishing in the City’s impact with the FCC and with HOFNOV, Sacramento began to stock a new urban pond with fish. “Southside Park is in downtown Sacramento and close to a lot of the folks from their program,” said Muñoz. “Previous to this partnership we weren’t stocking that pond at all, but now we can reach a whole new community that we hadn’t before. The mobility and the infrastructure that comes from the FCC allowed us to focus more on partnerships, on new waters, and new communities.”

Carlson also notes that the Fishing in the City program supported by the FCC has created opportunities for new anglers to get the equipment they need to get started. “A lot of community members have donated fishing equipment to us as well, like fishing poles, and more. We clean those up, get them prepped and send the donated gear back out into the community. I worked with a family whose kids came to one of our clinics and suddenly became so passionate, and we were able to set both their kids up with a fishing rod, tackle boxes, and everything they needed to get out there and go fishing again and again.”



OVERVIEW

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission’s (NCWRC) goal with the First Catch Center (FCC) program is to bring fishing directly to people, helping raise awareness of the abundant opportunities across the state, and particularly in urban areas.

“The biggest thing the FCC does is break down barriers” said NCWRC’s Angler Engagement Coordinator Matthew Rieger. “It cuts down travel distance for people to try fishing and it brings the equipment right to them. A lot of people aren’t aware of the fishing we have in urban areas, so getting the trailer to a location like that lets people know this opportunity is in their backyards.”

The trailer is housed in Raleigh, in the center of the state. Rieger is the lead for the FCC program, and works with engagement and enforcement staff across North Carolina’s 9 districts.



PARTNERSHIPS

Working with their agency’s ADA Coordinator, the FCC has participated in several Adaptive Recreation Expos as well, which helps people with disabilities find opportunities to kayak, bike, fish, hunt, and otherwise enjoy the outdoors. Since partnering with community groups who support accessible fishing access, the FCC has been equipped with adaptive fishing gear, and NCWRC makes tools like track wheelchairs available.

“For those who want to support anglers and people with disabilities, I would recommend doing research on equipment like different wheelchair holders, grasping tools, things of that nature. Then work with an ADA coordinator or somebody who is connected with these community groups to find new opportunities.”

NCWRC also works with the YMCA, Rotary Club, and the Waccamaw Siouan Indian Tribe, among others.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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This program was conducted in 2023 and partially funded by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) under cooperative agreement #F23AC00806 from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



First Catch Centers North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION FOCUS

Empowering repeat visitors to become volunteers is a key way to retain (and recruit) more anglers, says Rieger. “If somebody comes to multiple programs, the desire is obviously there. It’s not difficult to teach somebody how to become a volunteer, and once they become one they go fishing all the time. It also opens up different niches of fishing – our volunteers specialize in basic fishing, bass, catfish, fly fishing, and more. And the volunteers create their own community as well – a seasoned volunteer will invite out a new angler, forming a new relationship that doesn’t depend on any event.”

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

There is high demand for the FCC but not enough availability on popular weekend dates. NCWRC has successfully utilized online scheduling platform Jotform to help interested third parties find available dates so high-priority events can be secured well in advance.

In addition, in a state as geographically large as North Carolina physically moving the trailer to different locations can pose a challenge. NCWRC would like to bring more trailers online in the future to serve regional markets more efficiently.



TRAINING PARTNERS TO USE THE FCC

Rieger says that showcasing the FCC to potential partners has been the best way to market the program. “You can tell somebody about it 10 times and they forget about it. But if you have somebody walk through it, they see it, they feel it, and you can see their excitement.”

NCWRC focuses on train-the-trainer style introductions to the FCC so local partners, volunteers, and district supervisors can confidently use the trailer. “I offer training for teaching kids and adults at the basic level, with PowerPoints, handouts, shadowing opportunities, and hands-on experiences for all the staff.” This training gives partners who use the trailer a sense of ownership and confidence that empowers them to bring in their communities to try fishing for the first time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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matthew.rieger@ncwildlife.org

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