

# If Fishing Is How You See The World....

by Peter Jenkins



It doesn't matter how you vote, what cable news network you subscribe to, or which political party you affiliate with; if you're reading these words, chances are you consider yourself an angler.

And while this might define you as an "interesting person" on the sidelines at your kids' games, it also brings with it the responsibility of speaking out and standing up for things that matter to our lifestyle and passion.

If you identify yourself as a fisherman, that's likely because you come alive with a rod and reel in your hand. It's that feeling you get as you wrestle with your waders sitting on the tailgate, or when you start stripping line as the first shadow slides across the flat, or as you motor through the no-wake zone in the predawn light.

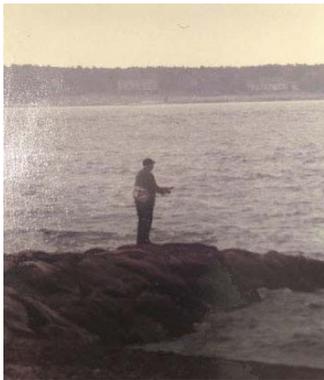
You are alive.

You love this.

Fishing is how you see the world.

Maybe you have been fishing for

decades, and you know there are precious few things that bring you to the peaceful, restorative place that fishing does. For me, it is the connection with my natural surroundings and the mentors long since gone who first showed them to me. Their gifts gave me a way to tune out all the noise and distraction that bombards my ADHD mind in this modern world.



**Peter's grandfather  
Wandell Mooney**

I am amazed that I have vivid memories of the bunker schools off the lighthouse and rolling up on them with my Grandfather and a 7/8 oz Atom Popper. As excited as twelve year old could

possibly be. Yet I regularly forget names, birthdays and what I had for breakfast.

The reality these days is that "tuning out" is becoming more difficult. No doubt you have witnessed some form of degradation in the salty things you love. Be it the parking spot now closed off down by the point, or the declining stock of striped bass, or any number of other examples.

In reality, much of what we love - the very things that we identify with and are drawn to as anglers- are under attack. We must now put in more than we take out. Otherwise, as we have already learned what we love will continue to disappear at an accelerating rate.

If you look down the road and imagine our sport in 10 or 15 years, the future is unclear at best, downright unsettling at worst.

As anglers, we must recognize that our shared passion bonds us. There is no room for our differing fishing methods, preferred species or distant geographies. The frontier of fishing is no longer technical or geographical. It is in our shared regard for what is wild. When the fish win, we win.

**The days of carefree participation are sadly behind us.** Especially if you desire a world where your kids and grandkids could enjoy experiences on the water similar to those that you experienced on your fishing journey, it's not enough to just be a "fisherman" these days; we all must band together to fight the good fight.

It is clear the resources and the places our sport depends on need a louder voice. Unless we speak up to protect and preserve the things that matter to our passion- the very foundations of the pursuit that makes us feel the most alive - we will find ourselves with even more limited resources in the years ahead. The individuals and agencies that are threatening the very things we love are

counting on our complacency.

One of the things that separate fishers from other recreationists is the great lengths to which our community will go in our pursuits and, in turn, protect the fisheries that feed our soul. If only more of us accessed that same motivation that gets us out of bed to fish at 3 a.m. or has us fishing through the 2 a.m. slack tide, we would be an unstoppable voice for conservation and change. We need to use this same drive to protect our passion for future generations.



Protecting what you love is not a red vs. blue or a right vs. left issue. Outdoor and conservation-driven activism and involvement should not be based on party affiliation or political alignments. It is sourced from our dedication, passion, and whatever other factors that bring you joy and connection on your terms. Fishing is highly personal, and in the eyes of this die-hard angler, the true definition of freedom.

*Peter Jenkins is the owner of The Saltwater Edge in Middletown, RI. He is a RISAA member and chairs the RISAA Public Access Committee, and is Board Chairman of the American Saltwater Guides Association*