

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Pennsylvania Game Commission Compliance with its Strategic Plan FY 2020-2023

June 2024



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For the ninth straight year the National Legislative Performance Evaluation Society (NLPES) awarded the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee with a Certificate of Impact. The Certificate of Impact is presented to legislative offices that produce evaluations or audit reports that resulted in documented public policy changes, program improvements, dollar savings or other public impacts.

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REPORT SUMMARY



Objectives and Scope

- ❖ *To determine the extent of the PGC's progress in implementing the six core goals of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan.*
- ❖ *To provide an update on incomplete objectives from the PGC's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.*

Report Overview

From 1984 through 1998, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) regularly audited the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) budget, as the Game and Wildlife Code required. In 1998, the General Assembly passed Act 1998-166, amending the Code by implementing a new hunting license fee structure and requiring the LBFC to conduct a performance audit of the PGC's compliance with its Strategic Plan every three years. The first of these reports was released in February 2000.

This audit of the PGC's compliance with its Strategic Plan reviews and determines the PGC's progress on its six core goals:

1. Manage diverse and sustainable wildlife for current and future generations.
2. Optimize opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to enjoy and experience wildlife in its natural habitat.
3. Provide and promote world-class hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities.
4. Engage, develop, and better inform employees to strengthen the PGC team.
5. Embrace emerging technologies, enhance operations, and maintain financial sustainability and accountability to sustain the PGC into the future.
6. Communicate and promote the value and varied programs, services, and resources the PGC provides.

The PGC is an independent public wildlife protection agency established by Act 1895-187. This act created the Board of Game Commissioners to "protect and preserve the game, song and insectivorous birds and mammals of the state..." and to "enforce the laws of this commonwealth relating to the same." Act 1897-316 consolidated the game laws and changed the name of the Board of Game Commissioners to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Act 1986-93, which became effective on July 1, 1987, codified the game laws into the Game and Wildlife Code (Title 34).

Strategic Plan

The PGC's *Pennsylvania Game Commission Strategic Plan 2020-2023* (Strategic Plan) identifies the PGC's Vision, Values, and Mission Statements and the six core goals mentioned above. The plan also identifies 41 Strategic Objectives that establish specific initiatives or issues to accomplish each goal.

In general, the six core goals' objectives are reported to be either complete or not complete. The progress of each of the six core goals is illustrated below.

Core Goal #1: Manage Wildlife

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
9	7	78%

Core Goal #2: State Game Lands and Habitat Management

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
7	3	43%

Core Goal #3: Hunting, Trapping, and Wildlife Viewing

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
6	3	50%

Core Goal #4: Staff Recruitment, Development, Retention, and Support

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
8	6	75%

Core Goal #5: Agency Sustainability, Operations, and Customer Experience

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
7	6	86%

Core Goal #6: Agency Communications and Branding

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
4	3	75%

SECTION I OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY



Why we conducted this study...

This study was conducted in response to Act 1998-166, which requires the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct an audit of the Pennsylvania Game Commission to review compliance with its FY 2020-21 to 2022-23 strategic plan.

Objectives

This study is in response to Act 1998-166, which requires the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct an audit of the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) to review compliance with its FY 2020-21 to 2022-23 strategic plan and the extent of progress made in implementing the plan's six core goals and their associated objectives.

The performance audit of the PGC's compliance with its strategic plan has the following objectives:

1. To follow up on any incomplete goals from PGC's FY 2015-16 to 2019-20 Strategic Plan.
2. To determine the progress made by the PGC in implementing the six core goals of the Commission's FY 2020-21 to FY 2022-23 Strategic Plan:
 - Manage wildlife.
 - State Game Lands and Habitat Management.
 - Hunting, Trapping, and Wildlife Viewing.
 - Staff Recruitment, Development, Retention, and Support.
 - Agency Sustainability, Operations, and Customer Experience.
 - Agency Communications and Branding.

Scope

The scope of this audit primarily covers PGC activities relating to the goals and objectives of the FY 2020-21 to 2022-23 Strategic Plan.

Methodology

To determine the extent of progress made by the PGC in implementing the goals and associated objectives outlined in its FY 2020-21 to 2022-23 Strategic Plan, LBFC staff reviewed the strategic plan, PGC Annual Reports, and other supplemental documentation provided by PGC. The PGC also provided information regarding the assessment of its level of

completion of the various goals and objectives of the strategic plan, as well as the actions it has taken to achieve them.

LBFC staff also reviewed PGC's assessment of any incomplete goals and objectives from its FY 2015-16 to 2019-20 Strategic Plan, as reported in our 2021 report.

Frequently Used Abbreviations and Definitions

This report uses several abbreviations for government-related agencies, terms, and functions. These abbreviations are defined as follows:

Acronym	Definition
AFWA	Association of Fish and Wildlife
BATS	Bureau of Automated Technology Services
BI & E	Bureau of Information and Education
CWD	Chronic Wasting Disease
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GWGS	Game Warden Group System
IUP	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
LEAD	Letterkenny Army Depot
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PEG 8000	Polyethylene Glycol
PGC	Pennsylvania Game Commission
R3	Recruit, Retain, Reactivate
SGL	State Game Lands
SPR	Statistical Population Reconstruction
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WNS	White-Nose Syndrome

Acknowledgments

LBFC would like to acknowledge the excellent cooperation and assistance of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, especially Deana Vance, Deputy Executive Director, Daniel Dunlap, Director of Administrative Services, and the various staff members who provided information for this audit.

Important Note

This report was developed by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee staff, specifically Anne Witkonis, Project Manager, and analysts Amy Hockenberry and James Wynne.

The release of this report should not be construed as an indication that the Committee, as a whole or its members, necessarily concur with the report's findings, conclusions, or recommendations. Any questions or comments regarding the contents of this report should be directed to the following:

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SECTION II STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023



Fast Facts...

- ❖ *The PGC did not fully complete its strategic goals in the 2020-23 Strategic Plan.*
- ❖ *The PGC completed 68 percent of its objectives.*

This section reviews the *Pennsylvania Game Commission Strategic Plan 2020-2023*, which covers July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2023. We requested the status of each goal and its corresponding objectives as of June 30, 2023. Additionally, we obtained information from the PGC to support its assessment of the status of each goal and objective.

The 2020-23 Strategic Plan consists of six core goals. To achieve these goals, the PGC further divided the goals into 41 objectives. Exhibit 1 provides a snapshot of the PGC's progress at the end of the Strategic Planning period.

Exhibit 1

Overview Status of Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal	Title	Objectives	Objectives Complete	Completion Rate
1	Manage Wildlife	9	7	78%
2	State Game Lands and Habitats Management.	7	3	43%
3	Hunting, Trapping, and Wildlife Viewing	6	3	50%
4	Staff Recruitment, Development, Retention, and Support.	8	6	75%
5	Agency Sustainability, Operations, and Customer Experience.	7	6	86%
6	Agency Communications and Branding.	4	3	75%

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information obtained from the 2020-23 PGC Strategic Plan.

A. Core Goal #1: Manage Wildlife - Manage diverse and sustainable wildlife for current and future generations.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
9	7	78%

Objective 1: Develop a strategic plan for the Wildlife Futures Program by June 30, 2023, to enhance wildlife disease detection and response.

Status: Complete.

The PGC and staff from the Wildlife Futures Program worked together to develop the first three-year strategic plan to conduct wildlife health surveillance, research, education, and outreach to inform and improve wildlife management in Pennsylvania.

The plan has been broken down into six specific target areas to improve different areas of the program.

- Target 1: Surveillance and Diagnostics. Be the PGC's resource for wildlife health surveillance and diagnostic expertise.
- Target 2: Research. Establish a nationally recognized wildlife health research program that informs disease management strategies implemented by the PGC.
- Target 3: Education and Training. Produce well-trained wildlife health professionals to protect wildlife populations, conserve them, provide medicine, and provide One Health in Pennsylvania.¹
- Target 4: Field Support. Provide the PGC staff with wildlife health field support and develop best management practices for handling and sampling live animals.
- Target 5: Communications and Outreach. Deliver effective and timely communications with constituents and partners, leading to increased support for disease management actions.
- Target 6: Program Sustainability and Visibility. Become an established, recognized leader in wildlife health programs supporting sustainable populations.

¹ One Health is a transdisciplinary concept designed to improve the well-being of humans, animals, plants, and the environment.

Objective 2: Assess and develop a plan by June 30, 2021, that maximizes the PGC efficiencies in collecting bear harvest data while ensuring adequate data are collected to manage black bears properly.

Status: Complete.

In January 2021, the PGC engaged with the Gavilan Group to assess the feasibility of statistical population reconstruction (SPR), a method for assessing a game population using an age-at-harvest model. Based on those meetings, the PGC developed and executed a contract with the Gavilan Group to develop SPR models to optimize data collection from harvested bears.

In January 2022, the PGC received and reviewed the first data report on the harvest hunter-effort data evaluation in an SPR context for black bears. The PGC used this information to review and revise a 2006 management plan into a five-year (2024-2029) management and biology of the black bear plan. The new plan aims to maintain healthy black bear populations in suitable habitats throughout the commonwealth.

Objective 3: Evaluate the feasibility of reintroducing American Martens to Pennsylvania by June 30, 2022, and develop a plan by June 30, 2023, if necessary.

Status: Complete.

In 2022, the PGC released a feasibility assessment for reintroducing the American Marten in Pennsylvania. The American Marten was a native species in Pennsylvania but was extirpated due to habitat loss.² The feasibility report found that the reintroduction of the American Marten in Pennsylvania is likely to be successful. The PGC Board of Commissioners directed the PGC to develop the American Marten Reintroduction and Management Plan for Pennsylvania: 2024-2033.

Before completing the 10-year reintroduction and management plan, the PGC conducted outreach and education to increase awareness and solicit feedback on the potential reintroduction. The extensive outreach included:

- Seventy-four public presentations.
- Twenty print and radio interviews.
- Eight articles.
- Four podcast episodes.
- Three informational handouts.
- Three public opinion surveys.

In January 2024, following a 60-day public review and comment period, the PGC Board of Commissioners voted to table plans to reintroduce the

² Extirpated refers to when a species or population no longer exists within a certain geographical location.

American Marten in Pennsylvania, citing the need to get further input from hunters.

Objective 4: Develop a data-driven model to focus law enforcement actions in high wildlife crime areas to reduce complaints and crimes by June 30, 2022.

Status: Incomplete

The PGC has indicated that this objective has yet to be completed because the previous system is no longer viable. The PGC is developing a new dashboard that will use data to show temporal and spatial trends for incidents. Wardens will document violations using GPS coordinates, which will then be used to create “hot spots” of violations.

Objective 5: Through June 30, 2022, evaluate the statewide Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan and enhance the ongoing CWD Management Plan.³

Status: Complete.

In July 2020, the PGC released the Pennsylvania CWD Response Plan, establishing a framework for managing CWD in Pennsylvania. The plan's primary goal is to minimize CWD's impact on Pennsylvania's deer and elk populations. Secondly, the plan aims to increase the public's understanding of, support for, and participation in CWD management.

The PGC has indicated that the CWD response plan and associated actions undergo constant review and evaluation as new information becomes available. As part of this evaluation and revision of the plan, the PGC's CWD response actions have expanded to include containment zones.⁴

Objective 6: Maintain an annual prevalence below 5 percent in CWD-established areas by June 30, 2023.⁵

Status: Incomplete.

To meet this objective, the PGC established regulations prohibiting the export of high-risk parts, feeding, and using urine-based attractants in established CWD areas. The PGC also collected samples from established areas to test the prevalence of CWD.

³ Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a contagious, fatal neurologic condition that affects members of the deer family.

⁴ Containment zones are smaller areas created within enhanced surveillance units designed to facilitate focused management strategies to prevent CWD from becoming established or spreading farther on the landscape.

⁵In established areas, CWD is already present and unlikely to be eradicated.

The PGC stated that although their goal was to achieve a CWD prevalence of below five percent, that goal is unlikely ever to be completed, and the goal now is to stop any increase in CWD in the established areas.

Objective 7: Minimize the establishment of CWD in control units by June 30, 2023.

Status: Complete.

The PGC changed the CWD response plan to authorize a statewide cooperator program.⁶ Under the plan, a statewide cooperator can accept high-risk parts imported from other states or exported from a disease management area.⁷ The PGC also established eight new containment zones around where new cases of CWD were detected.

During FY 2022-23, the PGC, through the Wildlife Futures Program, continued researching alternative testing methods to improve the diagnostic capabilities of CWD testing. The PGC and the Wildlife Futures Program began fieldwork on a CWD research project in Bedford and Fulton counties.⁸ The project will track deer with GPS collars to determine how CWD impacts movement, behavior, survival, and causes of mortality.

Objective 8: Protect and enhance bat hibernacula to minimize the impact of white-nose syndrome (WNS) by June 30, 2023⁹

Status: Complete.

The PGC completed temperature manipulation in two mines to protect the bat hibernacula, built five new bat gates, and repaired three others. In 2022 and 2023, the PGC and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources staff attended training on protecting critical hibernacula. To reduce WNS, the PGC applied Polyethylene Glycol (PEG) 8000 in an abandoned brick and concrete railroad tunnel.¹⁰ After analyzing two years of data, the PGC found that PEG 8000 benefits bat survival and showed a 92 percent reduction in the WNS pathogen load. The PGC also

⁶ The cooperator program is a collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, PGC, and the Wildlife Futures Program to combat CWD through information sharing, in the form of visual mapping tools, in a non-biased and transparent manner.

⁷ Disease management areas are created when there are new detections of CWD in free-ranging or captive deer.

⁸ The project is being conducted between the PGC, the PA Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Pennsylvania State University, and the Wildlife Futures Program.

⁹ White-Nose-Syndrome (WNS) is believed to have surfaced in Pennsylvania in 2008 and began killing cave bats in 2009. WNS refers to a white fungus on the muzzles and wing membranes of affected bats. Because the fungus is a cold-loving fungus, WNS is a condition that only affects bats while they hibernate. The fungus is not harmful to humans and does not grow on bats during the summer or when bats are at typical active temperatures.

¹⁰ Polyethylene Glycol 8000 (PEG) is a high-molecular-weight polymer used in many pharmaceutical products and can retain water.

found that using PEG 8000 had no unintended impacts on non-targeted species.

Objective 9: Reintroduce bobwhite quail at Letterkenny Army Depot (LEAD) by June 30, 2023.

Status: Completed.

On March 19, 2024, the Letterkenny Army Depot's Environmental Management Division employees and the PGC released 50 northern bobwhite quail in an unpopulated region, bringing the total bobwhite quail to 76.

B. Core Goal #2: State Game Lands and Habitat Management – Optimize opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to enjoy and experience wildlife in its natural habitat.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
7	3	43%

Objective 1: By June 30, 2021, refine the Private Lands Program to ensure alignment with the PGC's strategic direction to enhance access and habitats.

Status: Complete.

In August 2022, the PGC Private Lands Strategic Plan was adopted.

In collaboration with Pheasants Forever and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the PGC has implemented various programs from the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 to improve wildlife habitats while sustaining agricultural production.^{11,12,13} During FY 2022-23, nine farm bill biologists worked in 26 counties, conducted outreach to

¹¹ Pheasants Forever is an organization dedicated to conserving pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public access, education, and conservation advocacy.

¹² National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency of the US Department of Agriculture that provides technical assistance to farmers and other private landowners and managers.

¹³ Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, also known as the Farm Bill, is a comprehensive, multi-year law that governs a wide range of agricultural and food programs in the US. An extension of the act was signed into law in 2023, allowing authorized programs to continue through September 2024. The farm bill covers the Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs, the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, the Safety Net Programs, Farm Loans, and Disaster Assistance.

more than 1,400 individuals, developed or modified 401 conservation plans, and impacted 13,028 acres.

In addition to improving wildlife habitats, the PGC's private land forester assisted the NRCS in implementing farm bill forestry programs that benefit forest-dependent species. They conducted 76 site visits in 22 counties, completed or reviewed 12 forestry plans that impacted 3,120 acres, and performed work on another 4,300 acres.

During FY 2022-23, the PGC partnered with Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) to successfully apply for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to improve habitats for grassland bird species of greatest conservation need across three priority landscapes.¹⁴

PGC regional biologists consulted 55 private landowners and produced 44 management plans for species of greatest conservation need on 5,491 acres.

Objective 2: By June 30, 2023, reduce high-intensity agricultural practices on State Game Lands (SGLs) by 30 percent to maximize sustainable habitat.

Status: Complete

In January 2020, the PGC enacted a Special Use Permit system for sharecropping.¹⁵ This resulted in significant reductions in high-intensity agriculture across the landscape at SGL 280 and 290, with additional reductions in sharecropping acreage occurring on SGLs, mainly in the Southwest Region. Other sharecropping agreements from different regions, enacted before the change, are expiring and not being renewed.¹⁶

Based on the numbers presented by the PGC, this objective appears to have been achieved; however, due to the lack of a tracking system, there is no way to tell if the reduction occurred before or during the strategic planning period. In FY 2017-18, there were 10,976 acres of high-intensity agriculture; by FY 2023-24, it was down to 3,109.

During the 2020-23 strategic planning period, the PGC implemented a tracking dashboard in addition to the Special Use Permit system. This dashboard codifies sharecropping tracking/approval while updating

¹⁴ Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are lists of species designated in State Wildlife Action Plans that require the most conservation action.

¹⁵ Sharecropping, the term used by PGC, a process by which the Commission allows a farmer or agricultural operator to plant crops, such as corn, soybeans, oats, wheat, etc., that may have a specified wildlife value; the sharecropper grows and harvests their crops from the SGLs.

¹⁶ Each sharecropping agreement is based on the PGC's needs and the farmer's willingness. The Comprehensive Management Plan for each SGL dictates the course of action.

sharecropping geographic information systems (GIS) information, allowing the PGC to ascertain high-intensity agriculture acreage.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2023, mark 50 percent of high-visibility and at-risk-of-encroachment SGLs boundaries.

Status: Incomplete.

The PGC completed a GIS analysis and rolled out a boundary-line mapping tool for staff to increase signage in the areas most at risk of encroachment. The PGC also developed a boundary-line GIS application.

As of September 2022, the PGC had yet to develop a plan to mark the boundaries of identified SGLs because the Survey Section within the Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management was developing contract specifications in anticipation of bidding out work to begin in July 2023. The first contracted project bid went out in January 2024.

In May 2024, the PGC acknowledged that this objective still needs to be achieved and plans to continue working on it through the 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

Objective 4: By June 30, 2023, utilize prescribed fire to improve habitats on 20,000 acres annually, with three burn bosses trained at a low complexity level and two at a moderate complexity level within each region.

Status: Incomplete.

The PGC burned 38,652 acres using prescribed fire during the strategic planning period; however, it still needed to meet its goal of 20,000 acres annually, which it did not.¹⁷ The acreage burned was:

- 18,020 acres in FY 2020-21.
- 11,852 acres in FY 2021-22.
- 8,780 acres in FY 2022-23.

The PGC has indicated that while it has not fully achieved the second part of this objective, it has, as of June 8, 2023, achieved 50 percent of the objective with the following numbers of qualified personnel trained in fire leadership positions within each region:

- Northwest – 2 RXB2s and 2 RXB3s¹⁸
- Southwest – 1 RXB2 and 1 RXB3.
- Northcentral – 2 RXB2s and 3 RXB3s.
- Southcentral – 3 RXB2s and 2 RXB3s.
- Northeast – 4 RXB3s.
- Southeast – 3 RXB2s and 1 RXB3.

Objective 5: By June 30, 2022, identify acquisition opportunities meeting the prioritization model to enhance the SGL system.

Status: Incomplete.

Land acquisition continues by assessing opportunities, funding, and partnerships with a continued focus on indentures, access, and critical and unique habitats.¹⁹ Further GIS modeling creation is on hold pending the backfill of the Real Estate Division Chief position, which has been vacant since April 2022. Once filled, GIS modeling will become a first-level priority for the new division chief.

¹⁷ Prescribed fire or prescribed burn is an organized coordinated effort that works to apply fire at the right place, at the right time, and at the right intensity to improve the health and resilience of forests, grasslands, and shrublands. Prescribed fires are planned months, even years in advance, and are conducted under precise weather conditions by trained crews.

¹⁸ An RXB is a state or federally-qualified prescribed fire burn boss who plays a crucial role in managing prescribed fire operations by ensuring that prescribed fire operations are conducted safely and effectively.

¹⁹ Indentures refers to lands that are surrounded by State Game Lands on 3 sides.

The PGC established priorities but needs to develop a prioritization model. Due to staff turnover, the objective will be carried over to the next strategic plan.

During FY 2022-23, the PGC acquired an additional 3,509 acres through 16 contracts, two donations, and seven acquisitions completed through partnerships with land conservancies.

Objective 6: By June 30, 2023, strategically convert 10,000 acres of forest land annually into young forest habitat, prioritizing areas for ruffed grouse and species of greatest conservation need.

Status: Incomplete.

During the strategic planning, the PGC indicated it had created 13,493 acres of young forest. It created 6,099 acres in FY 2021-22 and 7,394 in FY 2022-23, failing to meet the objective of 10,000 acres annually.

The PGC bureaus of Habitat Management and Wildlife Management, with IUP and Pennsylvania State University, are researching ways to evaluate the effectiveness of young forest stand treatments for habitat and wildlife.²⁰

Objective 7: Develop a plan to prioritize unique or underrepresented habitat development opportunities by June 30, 2021.

Status: Complete

In May 2024, the PGC indicated they had held several statewide trainings on iMapInvasives and worked with the Western PA Conservancy to develop several plans focused on invasive species and underrepresented habitats.²¹ PGC has also developed a Comprehensive Management Planning template for use in the invasive species planning process at all SGLs.

²⁰ Young forest stand treatments are practices, such as thinning and underplanting to enhance the overall health of the forest.

²¹ iMapInvasives is an online, GIS-based data management system that assists community scientists and natural resource professionals working to protect our natural resources from the threat of invasive species.

C. Core Goal #3: Hunting, Trapping, and Wildlife Viewing – Provide and promote world-class hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
6	3	50%

Objective 1: By June 30, 2021, develop a plan to increase pheasant hunting opportunities to maximize hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3), including processes and timelines for increasing pheasant production, increasing pheasant stocking days, and extending pheasant stocking late-season opportunities.²²

Status: Complete.

In September 2021, the PGC surveyed 5,000 pheasant permit holders to determine pheasant release and additional hunting opportunities. Of the 5,000 surveys sent out, the PGC received 2,699, or 54 percent, responses.

In response to the survey results, the PGC initiated two late-season pheasant releases in the FY 2021-22 hunting season: one week before Christmas and New Year's and one the first week of January. During these late-season hunts, the PGC released a total of 18,415 pheasants. For the 2022-23 pheasant season, the PGC stocked approximately 16,000 pheasants on SGLs statewide.

To increase pheasant production, the PGC created and implemented a work plan that would occur outside of the 2020-23 strategic plan's time frame. The Bureau of Wildlife Management - Wildlife Operations Division and Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management - Engineering Division staff were to implement the plan in the fall of 2023. However, the plan was delayed, and the timeline was revised for FY 2024-25, with completion by the end of FY 2026-27.

The PGC purchases chicks and raises them in game farms that eventually release the birds for regulated hunting opportunities. In FY 2020-21, the 2021 production season, the PGC increased its chick purchase to 278,000. Through a procurement contract, the PGC will expand its chick purchase to 298,000 chicks annually for FYs 2021-22 through 2024-25.

²² R3 (Recruit, Retain, Reactivate) is an initiative within PGC that focuses on engaging and sustaining hunters and trappers.

To accommodate the increase in chick purchases, the PGC is expanding the Loyalsock and Southwest Game Farms infrastructure to boost production without sacrificing bird quality. In the spring of 2021, the PGC cleared a 10.8-acre wooded parcel at the Southwest Game Farm to convert to holding fields. As of January 2024, the new holding field construction was approximately 90 percent complete.

During FY 2022-23, the PGC issued 56,632 adult and 18,915 junior pheasant permits, continuing the steady increase in pheasant hunting permits since 2018.

Objective 2: By June 30, 2021, hold a biannual R3 Summit (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) to develop partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations to deliver the R3 mission per PGC's R3 Plan.

Status: Incomplete.

In May 2020, the PGC held its first R3 summit. Attendees at the summit included representatives from the Archery Trade Association, the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, Kinsey's Outdoors, Lancaster Archery Supply, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Deer Alliance, Pheasants Forever, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Delta Waterfowl, Governor's Advisor for Fishing, Hunting, and Conservation, and the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania.

No additional summits occurred after May 2020 due to a vacancy within PGC.²³ PGC filled the vacant position in 2022 and has indicated that it intends to begin holding R3 summits starting in 2025.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2021, implement a voluntary, online Bowhunting Safety Training program and increase the number of participants by 10 percent annually through June 2023.

Status: Incomplete.

PGC offers two different bowhunting courses online. The first, the Pennsylvania Archery Safety Course Online, is free and available to anyone over 11.²⁴

PGC fulfilled the first part of the objective by creating and offering the free, voluntary online bowhunting safety course; however, instead of

²³ The summit held in May 2020 was virtual due to COVID-19. In addition to the position not being backfilled until later in 2022, the pandemic made it difficult to restart with the changes, restrictions, and climate it created.

²⁴ This course is located at www.bowhunter-ed.com/pennsylvania-archery/.

increasing participation, there was a 31 percent decrease from FY 2021-22 to FY 2022-23.

Objective 4: By June 30, 2023, work with the legislature to pass legislation providing the PGC full authority for Sunday hunting opportunities.

Status: Incomplete.

In May 2024, the PGC indicated that the legislature still needed to enact legislation giving the PGC full authority for Sunday hunting opportunities.

Objective 5: By June 30, 2023, create three additional public shooting ranges and enhance current ranges in strategic locations to provide more public opportunity to support R3 initiatives.

Status: Complete.

The PGC currently manages 36 public shooting ranges across Pennsylvania. During the strategic planning period, the PGC completed a new archery range at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, in addition to new archery ranges at SGL 046 (Lancaster County), SGL 203 (Allegheny County), SGL 205 (Lehigh County), and SGL 230 (Cumberland and Perry Counties). The PGC also completed a rifle range on SGL 044 (Elk County) and shotgun pattern ranges on SGL 109 (Erie County) and SG 205 (Lehigh County).

The PGC has indicated it is planning several upgrades to existing ranges and building five new archery ranges during FY 2023-24.

Objective 6: By June 30, 2023, progress on implementing a vision for high-profile State Game Lands.

Status: Complete.

During the strategic planning period, the PGC focused on three high-profile SGLs:

SGL 180 (Shohola Falls Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Pike County):

The PGC's vision for SGL 180 is to revive waterfowl, increase recreational activities, reduce broad leaf milfoil presence to less than 10 percent within five years, provide resources and training to the PGC personnel to manage wetland ecosystems to benefit game and non-game species, restore viewing platforms, preserve eagle hacking towers, and construct a marsh viewing blind.

The PGC has indicated that 875 acres have been treated for milfoil.²⁵ It has also indicated that the Department of Labor and Industry approved the building plans for two viewing platforms, and the Department of Environmental Protection permits were approved. As of June 2022, both viewing platforms have been completed, and educational kiosks on bald eagles and waterfowl have been installed.

SGL 280 (Blue Marsh WMA, Berks County): The PGC’s long-term goal for SGL 280 is to transition the area to create one of the commonwealth’s most extensive tracts of small-game hunting.

PGC intends to use controlled burns, invasive plant control, the development of young forest habitats, and wildlife-friendly agricultural practices to achieve its vision.

SGL 290 (Haldeman Island WMA, Dauphin County): The PGC’s vision for SGL 290 is to provide additional public access for primary wildlife viewing and other recreational activities, improve and create native habitats that support grassland species and opportunities for public hunting, improve the management of existing water impoundments to provide better waterfowl and shorebird habitats, create and improve approximately 100 acres of woodcock habitat, and create wildlife and habitat management educational opportunities.

The PGC indicated that it had constructed a new parking lot to provide additional public parking and created a public access/educational trail beginning at the new parking lot and ending at the public viewing platform. PGC has also planted approximately 93 acres of native trees and shrubs to expand the woodcock habitat and has converted 266 acres of sharecrop land into native grasslands.

D. Core Goal #4: Staff Recruitment, Development, Retention, and Support – Engage, develop, and better inform employees to strengthen the PGC team.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
8	6	75%

²⁵ Milfoil is an invasive aquatic plant that poses significant ecological and recreational challenges and impacts aquatic ecosystems and human activities around lakes and ponds.

Objective 1: Complete the first year of quarterly new supervisors' training by June 30, 2021, to enhance morale and overall personnel performance.

Status: Complete.

As of February 2024, human resources conducted quarterly training for new supervisors for the past three years. Some topics covered include safety and medical, Equal Employment Opportunity, the Americans with Disabilities Act, recruiting and hiring, employee onboarding, supplemental employment, commercial driver's license, seasonal position, leave without pay, benefits, leave, labor relations, payroll, and position descriptions.

Objective 2: By June 30, 2023, increase the number of interns who convert to agency employees.

Status: Complete.

While internship positions doubled, from 26 in past years to 53 during the strategic planning period, only nine interns have moved into salaried positions (three in 2020, one in 2021, two in 2022, and three in 2023).

The PGC offers internship opportunities in each of its six regions. These opportunities provide college students with hands-on experience in wild-life management, habitat management, forestry, biology, and education while monitored by experts in their fields of study.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2023, limited-term employee opportunities for habitat management crews will be increased to enhance future candidate pools and increase capacity during workload peaks.

Status: Complete.

During the strategic planning, the PGC hired 64 limited-term/semi-skilled laborers (18 in FY 2020-21, 19 in FY 2021-22, and 27 in FY 2022-23) to fill vacancies within each region. The PGC indicated that hiring has increased over previous years. In addition to these hirings, the PGC moved current limited-term employees to fill vacant full-time positions.

Objective 4: By June 30, 2023, provide targeted, ongoing training to build depth and to help employees understand, implement, and embody key job-aligned skills.

Status: Complete.

The PGC Training Division conducted a PGC-wide survey on training needs, specifically on whether there is sufficient cross-training to fill positions in case of an employee's extended absence. The Training Division developed monthly training videos based on survey results on various topics.

The PGC considers conducting employee performance reviews, one of those topics, to be a key job-aligned skill. Supervisors have had refresher training on conducting these reviews, which the PGC will conduct biannually.

Objective 5: Implement an agency-wide succession planning process to cross-train staff, address one-deep scenarios, and develop talent by June 30, 2023.²⁶

Status: Incomplete.

On April 3, 2024, the PGC's New Supervisor Mentor Program launched due to the survey conducted in the previous objective. The PGC has noted that the mentor program will eventually include all new employees. In May 2024, the PGC indicated that agency-wide succession planning had yet to be formalized and that this objective would continue to be ongoing.

The PGC Training Division used independent contractors to develop leadership training that has been made available to employees via the PGC's intranet. The training includes video training, video logs, leadership roundtables, and podcasts.

The Northcentral and Southwest regions have cross-trained clerical staff to address one-deep scenarios. In January 2024, the PGC indicated that it planned to begin cross-training warehouse employees in each position; however, the cross-training could not be completed due to repeated turnover.

²⁶ A one-deep scenario is when only one person functions in a critical position but needs to have backup staff who are experienced and knowledgeable in that position.

Objective 6: By June 30, 2022, develop and implement an orientation program for new employees.

Status: Complete.

The PGC has developed and implemented a two-phase New Employee Orientation Program. Phase One of the new employee orientation is a web-based training series consisting of the following 11 modules:

- Welcome from the PGC Executive Director.
- Overview of each of the seven bureaus, consisting of seven modules.
- The History of Conservation in Pennsylvania.
- An Introduction to Human Resources.
- Agency Organization.

Phase Two of the new employee orientation is an in-person visit to the PGC Headquarters and Middle Creek WMA to show new employees some key areas of the PGC. It is an annual event typically held in August.

Objective 7: By June 30, 2023, evaluate the Ross Leffler School of Conservation curriculum to reduce the length of in-residence training for game warden cadets.²⁷

Status: Complete.

After evaluating the Ross Leffler School of Conservation curriculum, the Training Division reduced it from one year to 44 weeks. The PGC found that a comprehensive review is necessary to reduce cadets' overall training time further.

Objective 8: By June 30, 2021, enhance the marketing efforts to increase employee recruitment by 10 percent for open positions to attract the best candidates.

Status: Incomplete.

In February 2024, the PGC hired a dedicated recruiting position to work with the PGC regional and Harrisburg staff to enhance the recruitment process for all positions within the PGC. The PGC continues to market employment opportunities via social media and will continue to improve this process through the 2023-26 strategic planning period.

²⁷ The Ross Leffler School of Conservation has been PGC's training facility for conservation officers since 1932. The school is part college, part police academy, and part museum. The current curriculum consists of more than 1,400 hours of instruction on more than 140 subjects taught by nearly 200 instructors, many of whom are PGC employees. While in training, cadets get paid bi-weekly and receive the same employee benefits given to all commonwealth employees, in addition to all meals and lodging being provided at the school at no extra charge.

E. Core Goal #5: Agency Sustainability, Operations, and Customer Experience – Embrace emerging technologies, enhance operations, and maintain financial sustainability and accountability to sustain the PGC into the future.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
7	6	86%

Objective 1: Implement a unit system for game warden field operations by June 30, 2023, to enhance efficiencies, customer experience, and officer safety.

Status: Complete.

The PGC created and implemented the unit-based Game Warden Group System (GWGS) to eliminate the previous district system. Each unit will cover at least two counties, but in some cases, more, with four or five units per region. Wardens are assigned to a specific geographic area and work in teams to patrol and service calls.

As of March 2023, all game wardens work in their assigned GWGS groups. A Game Warden Group Supervisor, a newly created position, supervises a group of five state game wardens.

Objective 2: Implement a replacement schedule for equipment, vehicles, and buildings by June 30, 2022, for better fiscal planning and strategic utilization.

Status: Incomplete.

As of June 2021, the Administration Bureau, GIS, and Bureau of Automated Technology Services (BATS) staff discussed options to generate a report using GIS and the Asset Management System (AMS) to prioritize replacements. However, due to BATS staffing constraints, this still needed to be finalized.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2022, consolidate dispatch operations to enhance efficiency, customer experience, and officer safety.

Status: Complete.

In July 2021, the PGC completed the first phase of the consolidation. Phase one of the consolidation included building the central dispatch center and transferring dispatch operations from the Northcentral, Southcentral, and Southeast Regions to the new centralized center. The following actions were taken to complete the first phase:

- Include the dispatch floor and the director's office in the main construction.
- Completed all electrical and network cabling.
- Purchased all the radio and computer equipment.
- Created a Dispatch Supervisor position.
- Purchased and installed all dispatch furniture.
- Completed the installation of all radio and computer equipment.
- Hired Dispatch Supervisors and dispatchers.
- Completed the test of all radio and computer equipment.
- Dispatchers trained.

Phase II of the consolidation included constructing an additional area for four dispatch consoles and transferring operations from the Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast regions. The PGC stated that all dispatch operations have been transferred to Harrisburg, and the center is fully operational.

Objective 4: By June 30, 2022, enhance the K-9 Unit with three additional certified teams.

Status: Complete.

In the spring of 2020, the PGC added three new Labrador Retrievers in the Southwest, Southcentral, and Southwest Regions. There is now one K-9 unit for each of the six PGC regions. In March 2022, all three new K-9 units were fully certified in article searches, wildlife detection, and human tracking.

Objective 5: By June 30, 2023, use technology to increase customer service and convenience.

Status: Complete.

The PGC implemented a new license sales system, HuntFishPA, that can hold all PGC license lotteries, sell PGC merchandise, and sell hunting licenses. The PGC has also integrated its mobile app to enable access to HuntFishPA accounts and the eLicense store.

The new Deer Management Assistance Program system for landowner renewals, with a red tag/agriculture permit function to maintain consistency in allocation, went live in March 2022.^{28,29}

Objective 6: By June 30, 2023, present the legislature a recodification plan for Title 34.

Status: Complete.

After conducting an internal review of Title 34 and holding several meetings on the recodification, the PGC wants to prioritize specific legislative goals. Therefore, it decided not to proceed with the recodification package for legislative action.

Objective 7: Implement the GIS strategic roadmap by June 30, 2023, and continue to leverage GIS mobile maps and applications to enhance efficiency in the field.

Status: Complete.

In January 2020, the PGC and the Timmons Group released the GIS RoadMap Implementation Plan for the PGC. The plan aims to guide the PGC through three to five years of delivering an effective and efficient GIS with high-quality results that align with the PGC's current operational plans and initiatives. The PGC has used this plan to improve small mammal data management and reporting, evaluate the oil, gas, and mineral lease management solutions, leverage data analytics for performance measures, strengthen the GIS organization, and establish role-based GIS training.

²⁸ The Deer Management Assistance Program is one of the PGC's landowner programs. It provides an additional way for landowners to manage deer populations on their properties.

²⁹ The Agricultural Deer Control (AG Tag) Program, formerly known as "Red Tag," is a special permit for deer control related to agricultural depredation. This special permit authorizes landowners or lessees to enlist the aid of hunters to remove deer causing damage on agricultural lands outside of the regular deer hunting seasons. A permit is valid from August 1 to September 15 and February 1 to April 15, excluding Sundays. Only antlerless deer may be taken under this program.

F. Core Goal #6: Agency Communications and Branding – Communicate and promote the value and varied programs, services, and resources the PGC provides.

Objectives	Objectives Completed	Completion Rate
4	3	75%

Objective 1: By June 30, 2021, create frequently asked questions (FAQ) for consistent messaging and make it available to all staff quarterly.

Status: Complete.

The PGC has indicated that the FAQ page is available to all PGC staff and updated every quarter.

Objective 2: By June 30, 2021, develop an aggressive marketing program to address the negative effects of feeding wildlife.

Status: Incomplete.

The PGC has posted awareness on social media and the PGC website and will continue this objective in the next strategic plan.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2021, develop an enhanced process to communicate regulation changes to hunters and trappers.

Status: Complete.

The PGC indicates that this objective is a moving target and will never be 100 percent complete due to the ever-changing nature of technology. The PGC has indicated that it will continue to spread awareness through social, traditional, and new media outlets.

Objective 4: Compete and implement a Communications Plan to increase public awareness and reach targeted audiences by June 30, 2021.

Status: Complete.

The PGC has created and implemented a plan to grow its social media presence, continue in-person outreach, and increase marketing efforts. However, this is a moving target objective and will continue to change.

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SECTION III

2015-20 STRATEGIC PLAN: REVIEW OF INCOMPLETE GOALS



Fast Facts...

- ❖ *The 2015-2020 PGC Strategic Plan had five goals and 34 associated objectives.*
- ❖ *As of our last report, 13 objectives associated with four goals were incomplete.*
- ❖ *Four of those 13 objectives are now complete, with eight outstanding and one abandoned.*

Overview

In May 2021, LBFC released the eighth performance audit of PGC’s compliance with its *Pennsylvania Game Commission Strategic Plan 2015-2020* under Act 1998-166. This plan had five core goals with 34 associated objectives. One goal and its objectives were fully achieved, but four goals, with 13 outstanding objectives out of 34, were not completed by the report’s release.

This section reviews the goals and objectives of the 2015-20 Strategic Plan that were not fully achieved by the release of our last report. These goals were:

- Partially achieved,
- Not achieved,
- Largely not achieved, or
- Unknown/unable to assess.

PGC provided status updates on the remaining four goals and their 13 associated objectives.

Exhibit 2 summarizes the status of the remaining 13 goals.

Exhibit 2

PGC Strategic Plan 2015-2020 Status Update for 2024

Objectives	2021 Status	2024 Status
Objective 1.1.2	Incomplete	Complete
Objective 1.2.1	Incomplete	Ongoing
Objective 3.1	Incomplete	Abandoned
Objective 3.2	Incomplete	Complete
Objective 3.3	Incomplete	Complete
Objective 3.4	Incomplete	Complete
Objective 3.7	Incomplete	Complete/Discontinued
Objective 4.3	Incomplete	Ongoing
Objective 4.4	Incomplete	Ongoing
Objective 5.1	Incomplete	Ongoing
Objective 5.3	Incomplete	Incomplete
Objective 5.5	Incomplete	Ongoing
Objective 5.8	Incomplete	Complete

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from information obtained from the PGC.

A. Core Goal #1: Manage, propagate, and protect all of Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals and prioritize wildlife in decision-making.

This goal had eight objectives, of which six were fully achieved, leaving two partially completed.

1. **Objective 1.1.2** - *Carry out the initial release of wild northern bobwhite quail to at least one focus area by 2020.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC made progress on this objective but estimated that it would not be fully achieved until 2023.

Current Status: **COMPLETE.** The PGC indicated to the LBFC that over 3,500 acres of quail habitat are ready to receive quail. In March 2024, quail was released within the LEAD Bobwhite Quail Focus Area in Franklin County.

2. **Objective 1.2.1** - *Update existing species management plans to guide and prioritize research, monitoring, and management efforts by 2020. All plans were to be reviewed by 2016 and resubmitted to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Revisions were to align with agency budgetary capacity, curtail or discontinue land purchases, and prioritize acquisitions to obtain the most critical and unique tracts.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC stated that some species management plans were reviewed and revised by 2016 and that most plans were focused on more comprehensive updates for 2020. The snowshoe hare initial plan was nearly complete and was undergoing internal review. The plans that were reviewed and revised by 2016 include:

- Pennsylvania Wild Turkey Management Plan 2018-2027.
- Elk Management Plan in Pennsylvania: A Five-Year Plan 2020-2025.
- Bobwhite Quail's 2021-2023 management plan was completed.

As of the May 2021 LBFC report, a review of the following plans was not completed by 2016:

- White-tailed Deer: The revision of the 2009-2018 management plan was ongoing, and completion was delayed due to the diversion of staff time to Chronic Wasting Disease research and management and personnel changes.

- Fisher: The revision of the 2008-2017 management plan is ongoing and was delayed due to personnel changes.
- Black Bear: The revision of the 2006-2015 management plan is ongoing and delayed due to multiple personnel changes.
- Ring-necked Pheasant: revision of the 2008-2017 management plan was not completed due to limited success in restoring sustainable wild populations of pheasants.
- Beaver: The revision of the 2010-2019 management plan was to begin following the completion of the fisher management plan and was delayed due to personnel changes.

Current Status: **ONGOING.** The PGC provided the LBFC with the following status updates for each of the above incomplete plan reviews:

- White-tailed Deer: The White-tailed Deer plan procedures were revised through changes to forest measures, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management was expanded into a stand-alone plan. These changes formed the basis for season and bag limit recommendations approved by the PGC Board of Commissioners each April. PGC initiated a formal and complete revision of the deer plan, but personnel changes and diversion of staff time to CWD management delayed it. PGC anticipates formal revision in FY 2024-25.
- Fisher: Status unchanged due to limited staff time and time commitment for American Marten reintroduction.
- Black Bear: Formal revision approved in FY 2023-24.
- Ring-necked Pheasant: Status unchanged due to limited success of wild population restoration and staff focus on northern bobwhite quail reintroduction.
- Beaver: Status unchanged because of limited staff time due to time commitment for American Marten reintroduction.

B. Core Goal #2: Manage Wildlife Habitats.

This goal had five objectives, all fully or largely achieved by the release of the May 2021 LBFC report.

C. Core Goal #3: Operate using sound, proven business practices to ensure long-term financial stability, sustain performance improvement, and commit to excellence.

This goal had seven objectives, two of which were fully achieved; the remainder were in various stages of completion.

1. **Objective 3.1** - *Initiate the construction of the Game Commission Wildlife Research and Education Center in State College to house specific Game Commission staff by 2020.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC found that the funding for this objective was non-existent. The commission anticipated placing the staff members at their Harrisburg headquarters.

Current Status: **ABANDONED.** This objective was abandoned. The PGC biologists on staff work in the Harrisburg headquarters following an office building expansion.

2. **Objective 3.2** - *Reposition 20 percent of dispersed non-law enforcement field staff from home offices to the most efficient headquarters by 2020.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC indicated in the 2021 report that it made progress towards this objective by moving employees to different offices and reducing the number of PGC-owned vehicles; however, COVID-19 kept employees teleworking, making this objective challenging to assess.

Current Status: **COMPLETE.** Over 25 Wildlife Management staff report to PGC headquarters, primarily accomplished through attrition, promotions, and new hires.

3. **Objective 3.3** - *Reduce the number of in-person staff meetings by 50 percent and replace them with webinar technology by 2016.*

Status as of 2021 Report: This objective could not be assessed due to the proliferation of telework during COVID-19. However, before COVID-19, the PGC progressed in procuring and utilizing the technology needed for web conferencing and public webinars.

Current Status: **COMPLETE.** Using the Teams platform, the PGC noted that most of its meetings are conducted online, effectively completing this objective.

4. **Objective 3.4** - *Send all new members of the Board of Commissioners to a wildlife management training course to support Board activities better.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC stated that board members were sent to training as their schedules allowed, but some members could not attend due to extenuating circumstances.

Current Status: **COMPLETE.** All members of the Board of Commissioners have attended three training sessions with the Wildlife Management Institute.

5. **Objective 3.7** - *Develop a marketing plan, offer expanded product offerings through the outdoor shop, and evaluate nontraditional revenue sources by 2017.*

Status as of 2021 Report: The PGC Marketing Bureau evaluated various "non-traditional" revenue sources but did not implement them as of the conclusion of the Strategic Plan period. Its goal was to establish a pilot program geared towards the hunting/outdoor industry, with a launch sometime in 2022.

Current Status: **COMPLETE/DISCONTINUED.** The PGC indicated that it is continuing to expand its products to customers, but any initiatives toward evaluating nontraditional revenue sources have been discontinued.

D. Core Goal #4: Serve the commonwealth as the leader in wildlife conservation.

This goal had six objectives, four of which were fully achieved, and the remaining two are in various stages of completion.

1. **Objective 4.3** - *Evaluate new tools to improve communications and engagement with the non-hunting public and merge as part of the Working for Wildlife program.*

Status as of 2021 Report: This objective's initial status fell outside the scope of the 2021 LBFC report due to the Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communications forming after the end of the Strategic Plan period (June 30, 2020). The PGC stated that the newly formed Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communications would have a

position solely focused on non-consumptive audiences.³⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions delayed hiring for this position, and PGC could not estimate when the position would be filled.

Current Status: **ONGOING.** The PGC stated that significant progress was made in improving communications with non-hunters through print and digital media, including creating the Marketing and Strategic Communications Bureau to expand outreach efforts.

2. **Objective 4.4** - Increase volunteer Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer ranks to 450 officers by increasing recruitment efforts and removing barriers to PGC employees becoming Deputies.

Status as of 2021 Report: In January 2018, PGC changed the title of law enforcement officers from "Wildlife Conservation Officer" to "State Game Warden." As of the 2021 report, there were 265 Deputy Game Wardens. However, the number of interested applicants has failed to meet the number needed to replace retiring deputies.

Current Status: **ONGOING.** As of March 28, 2024, the PGC has 147 Deputy Game Wardens and stated that the Deputy Committee is still developing new methods for deputy recruitment, including:

- All uniform items are now issued and include boots, radios, and firearms.
- A Game Warden recruitment video was created and posted to social media.
- The PGC attempted to increase deputies' stipend but was unsuccessful.

Despite a deputy recruitment push, the number of deputy applicants has fallen below that of deputy retirements each year.

E. Core Goal #5: Support our hunting and trapping heritages.

This goal had eight objectives, four of which were fully achieved and four that were partially completed.

1. **Objective 5.1** - Increase hunter access with an enrollment campaign focused on new, high-value opportunities with a goal of no net loss by 2020.

³⁰ Per the May 2021 LBFC report, non-consumptive audiences are Pennsylvania residents who DO NOT purchase hunting licenses, fur taker's licenses, or shooting range permits but are still interested in wildlife.

Status as of 2021 Report: The Hunter Access Program had more than 11,500 parcels of private lands encompassing approximately 2.18 million acres in 65 of 67 Pennsylvania counties. PGC partially achieved this objective due to meetings and a focus group devising a plan to engage with landowners to focus on the number of quality acres in the program and not simply the total number of acres.

Current Status: **ONGOING.** The PGC indicated that significant developments from the previous strategic plan have resulted in increased attention to the modernization of the Hunter Access Program. Beginning in FY 2022-23, the PGC entered a contract with the Penn State University Office of Research and Outreach to conduct a social science study to understand better the public's perception of the current Hunter Access Program and how it could be modernized and developed meaningfully. The researchers conducted three in-person focus groups and a series of virtual in-depth Zoom interviews with landowners currently enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. The survey results provided information on how to adapt best and develop a new, more modern Hunter Access Program.

In FY 2023-24, the Private Lands Program began working with the Bureau of Automated Technology Services (BATS) to develop a new, in-house hunter-access system based on a hunter-permitting system like those in other states. This system will require landowners who wish to enroll to sign an agreement that allows the PGC to display their property boundaries with other necessary information, for example, where to park, which species can be hunted, the location of tree stands, etc. This system will likely launch during the 2025 hunting season.

2. **Objective 5.3** - *Work with non-government organization partners, establish a non-PGC position to develop a support network to better recruit and sustain women hunters, lapsed hunters, and mentored adult hunters, and use this network to add 5,000 new license buyers by 2020.*

Status as of the 2021 Report: The PGC had yet to establish a support network to recruit and sustain women hunters, lapsed hunters, and mentored adult hunters. PGC reported that specific partnership guidelines established by the US Fish and Wildlife Service were a barrier to formal NGO agreements.

Current Status: **INCOMPLETE.** The PGC stated that implementing hunter recruitment, retention outreach, and marketing programs has expanded, but the specific benchmark of leveraging a support network to add 5,000 new license buyers was incomplete.

3. **Objective 5.5** - *Develop a formal stewardship process for landowners in the public Hunter Access program. The goal is to increase the retention of existing landowners and build program branding by 2016.*

Status as of the 2021 Report: The PGC established a Private Lands Committee and developed a strategic plan, which it reviewed and preliminarily approved at the time of the report. The commission also indicated that it would continue to “*establish new and novel ways to secure funding and apply stewardship activities on high-priority Hunter Access lands.*”

Current Status: **ONGOING.** The PGC indicated that significant developments in the previous strategic plan's work toward this objective have resulted in increased attention to modernizing the Hunter Access program (See *Current Status* of Objective 5.1 above).

4. **Objective 5.8** - *Expand hunter recruitment and retention outreach to maintain no net loss in license sales through 2020.*

Status as of the 2021 Report: The PGC stated that since the newly formed Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communication had been in place, revenue had increased within license privilege, permit, and application sales.

Current Status: **COMPLETE.** The PGC indicated that the Hunter R3 (Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation) is an ongoing initiative; efforts to expand hunter recruitment are continuous. PGC achieved the goal of maintaining no net loss in license sales through 2020. Exhibit 3 illustrates PGC's license sales from FY 2018-19 through FY 2022-23. Total license sales increased by five percent from FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21. However, this trend did not continue, as sales declined in the following two fiscal years.

Exhibit 3

PGC License Sales
FY 2018-2022

License Type	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
General Hunting Licenses	855,486	860,743	879,664	857,964	844,826
Additional Licenses	1,583,814	1,682,099	1,789,168	1,775,183	1,779,428
Furtaker Licenses	43,793	45,956	50,522	46,556	47,090
Total Licenses	2,483,093	2,588,798	2,719,354	2,679,703	2,671,344

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from information obtained from the PGC.

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SECTION IV PGC BACKGROUND



FAST FACTS...

- ❖ *The Pennsylvania Game Commission was established in 1895 and has operated for over 100 years.*
- ❖ *The Board of Commissioners is composed of nine members from various geographical locations throughout the commonwealth.*
- ❖ *The PGC divides Pennsylvania into six regions.*

Act 1998-166 directs the LBFC to conduct a performance audit of the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s (PGC) compliance with its strategic plan. This section provides an overview of the PGC, including its composition, organizational structure, and staffing.

A. PGC Vision, Values, Mission, and Guiding Principles

The PGC is an independent public wildlife protection agency established by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1895. For over 100 years, the PGC has managed the commonwealth’s wildlife resources and habitats. The PGC vision and mission are as follows:

Vision: Recognized and respected as the lead in innovative and proactive stewardship of wildlife and their habitats.

Mission: Manage and protect wildlife and habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations.

Exhibit 4 shows the PGC’s established professionalism, teamwork, and excellence values.

Exhibit 4

PGC Values

Professionalism	Teamwork	Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit a positive attitude. • Be courteous. • Be honest and ethical. • Advocate for the mission. • Be accountable and transparent. • Provide a quality experience in all customer interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate effectively. • Support a positive environment. • Share knowledge. • Be adaptable. • Communicate with respect and trust. • Trust and be trustworthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be creative and innovative. • Learn from mistakes. • Balance quality with efficiency. • Own your job and lead. • Keep your promises and follow through. • Perform the full scope of your job responsibilities.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information obtained from PGC.

With its mission and vision, PGC's guiding principles aid in its decision-making. Under the guiding principles, the PGC aims to:

- Place wildlife and wildlife habitats first using science-based principles.
- Embrace its role as a public service agency and provide the best customer service possible.
- Engage in ongoing staff development.
- Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate (R3) hunters and trappers and consider the impacts of regulations on R3.³¹
- Espouse the "One Team. One Voice. One Purpose." philosophy to establish a consistent agency culture.
- Communicate and broaden PGC's relevancy and leadership position in wildlife management and public safety.
- Evaluate and adapt to environmental, social, and political impacts on wildlife and habitats.
- Assess and implement efficient and cost-effective business practices.

B. PGC Authority

The PGC is an independent public wildlife protection agency established as the Board of Game Commissioners by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1895. In 1937, the Pennsylvania General Assembly consolidated the game laws and changed the name of the Board of Game Commissioners to the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). Act 1986-93 further codified the game laws into Title 34, Game (Title 34), which became effective on July 1, 1987.

Under §103(a) of Title 34, *"The ownership, jurisdiction over and control of game or wildlife is vested in the commission as an independent agency of the commonwealth in its sovereign capacity to be controlled, regulated and disposed of by this title."*

Powers and Duties

As directed by Title 34, §322(a), the *"duty of the commission is to protect, propagate, manage and preserve the game or wildlife of this commonwealth and to enforce, by proper actions and proceedings, the laws of this commonwealth relating thereto."*

³¹ Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate (R3) focuses on recruiting new hunters and trappers, retaining existing hunters and trappers, and reactivating those hunters and trappers whose licenses have lapsed.

Furthermore, §322(c) outlines the following specific powers and duties of the commission:

- Fix seasons, daily shooting or taking hours, and daily season and possession limits for any species of game or wildlife.
- Remove protection, declare an open season, or increase, reduce, or close a season.
- Increase or reduce bag or possession limits.
- Define geographic limitations or restrictions.
- Fix the type and number of devices to take game or wildlife.
- Limit the number of hunters or furtakers and prescribe lawful methods of hunting or taking furbearers in designated areas.
- Govern the use of recorded calls, sounds, amplified calls, or sounds of any description for taking or hunting game or wildlife.
- Add or change the classification of any wild bird or animal.
- Prohibit the possession, importation, exportation, or release of any species of birds or animals considered dangerous to the public or wildlife.
- Manage and develop lands and waters and other government or private lands and waters under agreement with landowners; enact and enforce regulations to ensure appropriate use of these lands and waters.
- Collect, classify, and preserve statistics, data, and information to promote the purpose of Title 34 and take responsibility for all reports, books, papers, and documents.
- Take any necessary action to accomplish and ensure the purposes of Title 34. Serve the interests of sportspeople by preserving and promoting recreational hunting and furtaking and providing adequate opportunities to hunt and trap wildlife resources.

C. PGC Board of Commissioners

Per Title 34, the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners comprises nine individuals from various geographical districts, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Each commissioner must be a commonwealth citizen knowledgeable about wildlife conservation and restoration. Commissioners may serve up to three consecutive terms of four years and receive no compensation for their services except travel reimbursement.³²

³² Title 34, §322(a)(b)(c).

Exhibit 5 shows the current Board of Commissioners.

Exhibit 5

PGC Districts and Commissioners

District	Counties Represented	Commissioner	Term
1	Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren	Kristen Schnepf-Giger, President	Nov. 2019 – Nov. 2023 (1 st term)
2	Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, Westmoreland	Dennis Fredericks, Secretary	Nov. 2022 – Nov. 2026 (2 nd term)
3	Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, Potter	Scott Foradora, Vice President	Nov. 2022 – Nov. 2026 (2 nd term)
4	Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, Somerset	Haley Sankey	Dec. 2021 – Dec. 2025 (1 st term)
5	Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Sullivan, Tioga, Union	Allen DiMarco	Dec. 2021 – Dec. 2025 (1 st term)
6	Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, York	Michael Mitrick	Feb. 2022 – Feb. 2026 (2 nd term)
7	Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming	Stanley Knick Jr.	Feb. 2022 – Feb. 2026 (2 nd term)
8	Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia	Todd Pride	Feb. 2022 – Feb. 2026 (1 st term)
9	Carbon, Berks, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Schuylkill	Robert Schwalm	Jul. 2022 – Jul. 2026 (1 st term)

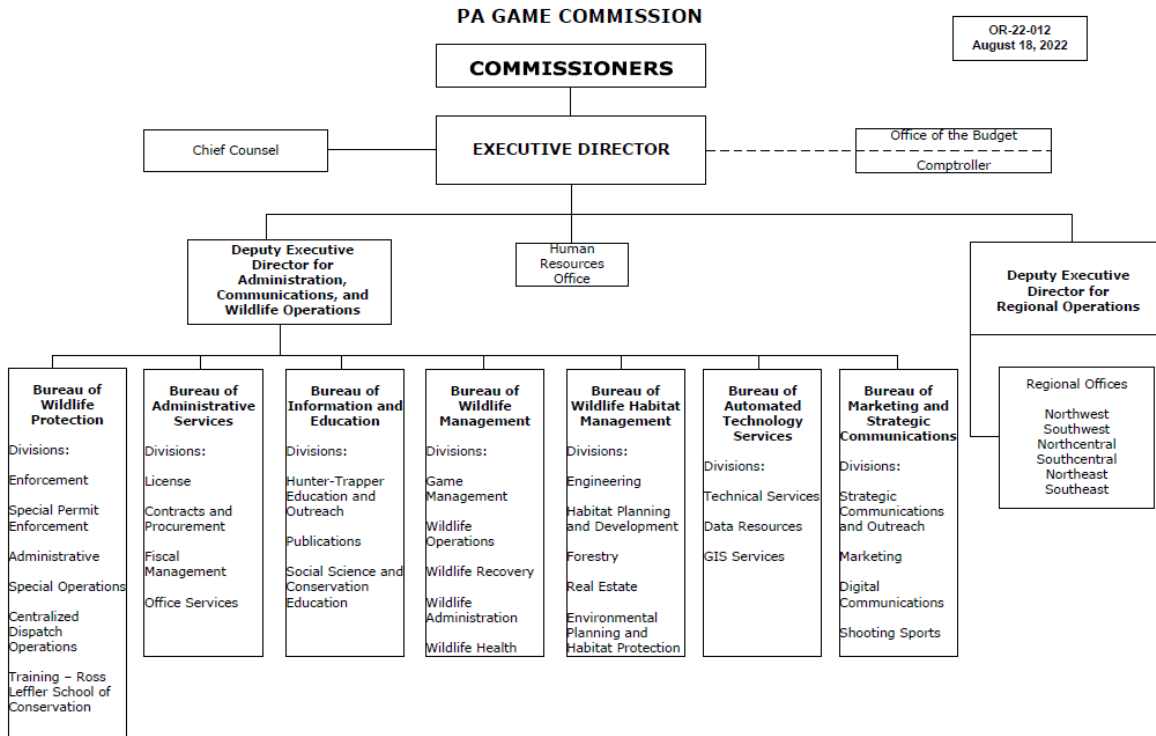
Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information obtained from PGC.

D. Agency Structure, Function, and Staffing

The PGC updated its organizational chart in August 2022. As shown in Exhibit 6, the PGC has an Executive Office that oversees two Deputy Executive Directors, one responsible for the seven bureaus within the PGC and one responsible for the six regional offices. Below is an introduction to the PGC's offices, bureaus, and divisions.

Exhibit 6

PGC Organizational Chart



Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information obtained from PGC.

Executive Office

The Executive Office administers all PGC wildlife management programs to fulfill the agency’s statutory mandates. It also develops and recommends a budget for the commission’s consideration and presentation to the governor and drafts legislation.

The Executive Office oversees human resources functions, the operation of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, the evaluation of existing policies, and the development of new policies. It establishes and maintains working relationships with other state, federal, and private agencies, and sportspersons’ groups.

Human Resources Office. The Human Resources Office administers programs and activities in the following areas:

Labor Relations. Conducts contract negotiations, contract interpretation, training, grievance investigation, and arbitration and is responsible for employee conduct and discipline.

Classification and Pay. Advises managers and supervisors on appropriate compensation for new and reclassified employees, oversees SAP transactions, develops and revises job specifications, and conducts desk audits.³³

Recruitment, Selection, and Placement. Plans and administers recruitment, selection, and placement programs. Advises and trains bureau directors and managers regarding the selection and placement of all civil service and non-civil service employees.

Employee Benefits and Services. Directs employee benefits, workers' compensation, and safety programs. Coordinates leave administration, record keeping, transaction processing, affirmative action, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, and workforce analysis and planning.

Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Communications, and Wildlife Operations

The Deputy Executive Director oversees operations and activities for contracts, procurement, communications, technology, and training. Additionally, this director oversees the management, protection, propagation, and preservation of Pennsylvania's wildlife resources and habitats.

Bureau of Administrative Services. The Bureau of Administrative Services manages the operations and activities for the PGC budget, contracts, procurement, office services, and issuance of hunting licenses. The bureau is also responsible for managing the PGC's vehicle fleet. The bureau is comprised of the following four divisions:

Contracts and Procurement. Administers purchases for PGC distribution for goods, services, and commodities. Manages all purchasing cards and acts as the Fixed Asset Coordinator.³⁴

Fiscal Management. This division supervises the preparation, analysis, and control of bureau and regional budgets and federal grant programs and liaises with the PGC's federal partners.

³³ SAP transactions occur in the commonwealth's enterprise software use for budgeting, procurement, and human resources-related transactions.

³⁴ The Fixed Asset Coordinator assigns numbers to all land purchases, donations, exchanges, tangible objects over \$25,000, and intangible objects over \$1,000,000. This position also completes quarterly reports for the comptroller's office and posts values to all assets.

License. This division oversees the administration and management of all hunting license activity. Its approximately 650 issuing agents include small businesses, corporations, and government offices. The division also manages legal actions involving hunting licensure, administers IT for the license system, and provides program and technical assistance to issuing agents, customers, and PGC staff.

Office Services. This division oversees the in-house print shop, mailroom activities, storekeeping, surplus, and office supply and equipment purchases. It also manages the PGC vehicle fleet and oversees game warden and civilian clothing inventory and distribution.³⁵

Bureau of Automated Technology Services. The Bureau of Automated Technology manages information technology and GIS resources and services, including hardware, software, security, data management, infrastructure, network, telecom, web services, IT procurement, and support. It has three divisions.

Data Resources. This division provides regions within the PGC with planning, design, development, testing, deployment, and maintenance to support agency business initiatives. It also performs data administration.

GIS Services. Manages projects, software, tools, applications, data, and architecture related to geospatial initiatives and technologies that support agency objectives.

Technical Services. This division provides desktop and mobile computing needs, network and web administration, IT procurement, database administration, and help desk support services.

Bureau of Information and Education. The Bureau of Information and Education is responsible for statewide information and education programs, which include customer service, education, media relations, production, public involvement, human dimensions, and training/internal communications.³⁶ It coordinates regional supervisors' information and education activities with the PGC Game Wardens, Deputy Game Wardens, and hunter-trapper education instructors. This bureau is comprised of the following three divisions:

Hunter-Trapper Education and Outreach. This division administers the PGC's Hunter-Trapper Education program and Hunter-trapper

³⁵ Storekeeping is the management and oversight of inventory, supplies, and equipment used by the PGC. Surplus refers to items that are no longer needed or not actively used by the PGC.

³⁶ Human Dimensions projects are surveys sent to hunters to solicit their input on various topics such as antler restrictions, Sunday hunting, reintroduction of the American Marten, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts.³⁷ It also manages the Hunter Education grant within the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act and Sports Fish Restoration Program.^{38,39}

Publications. This division directs and coordinates the PGC's media relations activities and creates printed materials, such as the Hunter-Trapper Digest and the monthly magazine Pennsylvania Game News. The division's additional responsibilities include drafting and disseminating news releases, editorials, brochures, and books.

Social Science and Conservation Education. This division directs social science and human dimensions projects, which help to understand better those who purchase hunting or trapping licenses. It also assists the Board of Commissioners in its decision-making process and coordinates the PGC's involvement in conservation education programs.

Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communications. The Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communications supports all PGC programs, including regional efforts. It directs the overall marketing efforts of the PGC to ensure effective strategies are implemented, measurable, and consistent with the PGC's strategic plan. The bureau is comprised of four divisions:

Digital Communications. Develops and oversees the PGC's digital media presence, website content, and design development and coordinates with the Bureau of Automated Technology Services for implementation. It creates content and designs digital marketing efforts, including email and digital ad campaigns, radio/television advertising, and billboards. The division develops materials to support the PGC podcast and a digital web series designed to promote the PGC and provide public outreach on various topics, including hunting, trapping, wildlife habitat management, wildlife protection, and wildlife science efforts.

Marketing. Develops marketing strategies to support hunting and trapping license sales, strategic communication goals, and other PGC programmatic efforts; manages strategies to enhance agency brand, public image, and public trust; evaluates metrics resulting from specific marketing efforts; works with bureaus and regions to identify specific areas where marketing and strategic communication efforts are needed; and

³⁷ The Hunter Education Program provides grant funds to state and US territory fish and wildlife agencies to provide instruction in firearm and archery safety, wildlife management, conservation, ethics, game laws, outdoor survival, and wilderness first aid. The Wildlife Restoration Act authorizes the Hunter Education Program and is supported through revenues from manufacturers' excise taxes collected on pistols, revolvers, bows, arrows, and archer accessories.

³⁸ The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, passed in 1937, designates an excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment that states can use to fund wildlife restoration.

³⁹ The Sport Fish Restoration Program, created in 1950 with the passing of the Sport Fish Restoration Act, provides funds to fish and wildlife agencies of the states, the District of Columbia, and US territories for fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education.

obtains corporate sponsorships to support other program efforts such as *Operation Game Thief*.⁴⁰

Shooting Sports. Supports growing statewide shooting range projects and shooting sports programs. It also manages the PGC's shooting range grants and range construction projects and the PGC's Rangle Improvement Program, which offers funding to over 800 Pennsylvania private ranges. This funding is used to improve clubs and ranges across the state. This division also manages the three federal Pittman and Robertson grants.⁴¹

Strategic Communications and Outreach. This division directs the overall preparation of messaging regarding new and proposed regulations, frequently asked questions, inquiries on social media, and email requests; directs outreach to achieve hunter retention, recruitment, and reactivation efforts; and works with regions and bureaus to evaluate communication needs, especially for controversial and complex issues.

Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management. The Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management (BWHM) manages PGC-owned lands and lands under cooperative agreement leases. It also provides public access to hunting, trapping, and other wildlife-focused recreation and reviews wildlife impact assessments on private and public lands. The bureau is charged with direct management of over 1.5 million acres of state game lands. It assists with another 1.8 million acres of private land enrolled in the PGC's Hunter Access Program. The bureau is comprised of the following five divisions:

Engineering. Manages infrastructure on state game lands; designs and constructs buildings, bridges, roads, and shooting ranges; inspects existing facilities; coordinates disaster relief projects; and maintains the PGC headquarters building.

Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection. This division oversees oil, gas, and mineral recovery management on approximately 1.5 million acres of state game lands and all environmental permit reviews and authorizations.

Forestry. Oversees the management of the forestry program on state game lands, which includes all aspects of planning and development for

⁴⁰ Operation Game Thief is a program that protects wild birds and mammals and encourages people who have information about wildlife crimes to report it.

⁴¹ The Pittman-Roberston Restoration Act was passed in 1937. Pittman-Robertson funds are derived from a federal excise tax on hunting and shooting equipment. These funds are collected by the federal government and disbursed to the states as matching grant money to state wildlife agencies. In 2023, Pennsylvania received nearly \$42 million in funding from the Pittman-Robertson program. Eligibility for these federal funds depends on revenue derived from the state sale of hunting and fishing licenses and used only for administration, which includes the functions required to manage the PGC and the wildlife-related resources for which it has authority under state law.

commercial timber sales, timber management relating to wildlife habitat goals and objectives, herbicide treatments to manage invasive species, deer deterrent fencing, insect pest suppression, GIS planning for forest cover types, and forest inventory analysis on all state game lands. This division also tracks all expenditures to manage sustainable forest regeneration and future forest values.

Habitat Planning and Development. Develops and implements wildlife habitat management activities on state game lands and other public and private lands. The division also manages the following programs for federal and state habitat grants: public access to private lands for enhanced hunting and trapping opportunities; public and private lands habitat planning and development; comprehensive planning process for state game lands; and cooperative use agreements and special use permits on state game lands. It coordinates State Wildlife Grants, Landowner Incentive Program Grants, and Threatened and Endangered Species Protection Grants with the Bureau of Wildlife Management (BWM).

Real Estate: Responsible for acquiring lands, waters, buildings, rights-of-way, easements, oil/gas, and mineral assets. This division includes a Survey Section to conduct surveys of state game lands and protect against encroachments and a Right of Way Section to manage the licenses and permits for the utility rights of way across state game lands.

Bureau of Wildlife Management. The Bureau of Wildlife Management (BWM) is responsible for directing the PGC's statewide wildlife conservation and management programs, including comprehensive species conservation planning, investigations, and research; population and harvest monitoring; harvest management programs; endangered and threatened species recovery projects and reintroductions; technical assistance in wildlife management, permitting, and habitat management; health monitoring and disease response; and data analysis. This bureau is comprised of four divisions:

Game Management. Designs and conducts management-directed research studies; works with technical staff to develop management plans implemented at the regional level; develops, implements, and evaluates technical wildlife management program goals, objectives, and strategies; directs long-range wildlife species management plans; directs the development and implementation of technical program rules and procedures and evaluates compliance; evaluates program implementation at staff and regional levels to determine effectiveness and recommend appropriate remediation. The division designs and coordinates statewide and regional game and furbearer population monitoring and harvest management programs; provides technical assistance on game management issues and prepares reports of findings for the Board of Commissioners, Executive Office, and senior staff. In addition, the division develops and

manages the program budget and serves as a liaison for the Penn Vet Wildlife Futures.⁴²

Wildlife Administration. Works with BWM division chiefs and bureau director to develop and maintain a comprehensive database of wildlife research. The division also works with staff to manage annual work plans based on the statewide research and monitoring project database; participates in the review process for research and monitoring program proposals; serves as a liaison for the Penn Vet Wildlife Futures Program; compiles quarterly reports of program-based expenditures and accomplishments from bureau and regional biologists for the Executive Office, board meetings, and legislative briefings; and assists in the administration of wildlife management bureau programs.

Wildlife Diversity. Conducts management-directed research studies; manages statewide and regionally endangered, threatened, and non-hunted species population monitoring and restoration programs; coordinates the Pennsylvania State Wildlife Action Plan; assists in the administration of State Wildlife Grant and Landowner Incentive Grant programs; analyzes wildlife data to determine population status and trends; develops and manages databases of species survey data and important habitats; provides technical assistance in wildlife impact assessments for proposed energy and development projects; provides technical assistance on non-game management issues; and serves as a liaison for the Penn Vet Wildlife Futures Program.

Wildlife Services. This division provides coordination and support services for game management, wildlife diversity, and regional operations on all operational-related issues and needs; assists in administration of State Wildlife Grant and Landowner Incentive Grant programs; administers large-scale wildlife management and conservation projects; assists in coordination of contracts used for bureau-related activities; recommends seasons, bag limits and other regulations for game and furbearer management; provides expert testimony at various hearings, administrative and legal proceedings on wildlife management and conservation matters; coordinates and assists in wildlife staff training; coordinates national wildlife surveys; manages wildlife databases; provides technical support on wildlife research reports; produces quarterly bureau activities reports; serves as a liaison for the Penn Vet Wildlife Futures Program; coordinates and directs propagation and release of ring-necked pheasants for increased public hunting opportunities; and provides technical support to clubs, schools, and individuals in pheasant rearing.

⁴² Penn Vet Wildlife Futures Program was launched in 2019 as a partnership between the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine (Penn Vet) and the PGC to strengthen the resilience of the commonwealth's 480 species of birds and mammals. This program is discussed further in the following section.

Bureau of Wildlife Protection. The Bureau of Wildlife Protection (BWP) administers and coordinates the PGC's wildlife law enforcement program under the statutory requirements of the Game and Wildlife Code, Title 58 of the Pennsylvania Code, other applicable state laws, federal statutes, and PGC policies and directives.

Administrative. Oversees the prosecution reporting system, Incident Management System, and all hunting license revocations; serves as administrator for the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact; coordinates agency shooting team activities; oversees the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network operation; and supervises Justice Network operation.

Centralized Dispatch Operations. Responsible for the call center, which receives all calls related to wildlife through two toll-free numbers—833-PGC-HUNT and 833-PGC-WILD—and is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week.⁴³ This division also monitors 200 full-time state game wardens and 250 deputy state game wardens using computer-aided dispatch and the Pennsylvania Statewide Radio Network (PA-STARNet) radio system.⁴⁴ This division also oversees the outfitting of law enforcement vehicles, including decal application, radio installation, and emergency vehicle lighting and equipment.

Enforcement. This division oversees the day-to-day operations of the Law Enforcement Uniform System, which includes interactions with uniform equipment vendors, managing adequate inventories of uniform equipment, and overseeing agency firearms records. The division serves as agency liaison for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Federal Firearms License; coordinates the Deputy Game Warden program; reviews all resistance and assault on officer reports; serves as lead agency representative to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency; and issues firearms.

Special Operations. Oversees the Special Investigations Program and the K-9 Unit; coordinates the activities of the Woodland Tracking Team; develops bureau policies and procedures (SOPs); directs the operation of the Statewide Law Enforcement program; manages personnel issues; assists with and conducts internal investigations; serves as lead officer for the Middle-Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network; serves as PGC Homeland Security Officer; manages training and equipment through grant programs; assists with drafting legislation for

⁴³ Wildlife violations include, for example, roadkill deer reports for pick up, mistake kill reports, nuisance wildlife, and injured wildlife.

⁴⁴ PA-STARNet is the commonwealth's statewide wireless voice and data network for public safety and emergency response communications initiated by Act 1996-148 to replace multiple, incompatible radio systems used by various state government agencies. This system is used by 22 commonwealth agencies, both houses of the legislature, business partners, and other external organizations, including county and municipal agencies serving dispatch and mobile voice and data communications for public safety and emergency response.

the Game and Wildlife Code; serves as program manager for the Conservation Officers Assistance program; and participates in Deputy Game Warden Trial Board hearings.

Special Permit Enforcement. Manages the Agency Special Permit System; coordinates the activities of the Rehabilitation Council; acts as liaison officer to the Departments of Health and Agriculture; reviews disabled persons permits; oversees all special use permits; coordinates annual meetings with the Sporting Dog Owners group; and reviews law enforcement materials for publication in *Pennsylvania Game News*.

Training School. Manages the training function, emphasizing the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, the PGC's training facility for Conservation Officers since 1932. The school is part college, part police academy, and part museum. The training program is approximately 50 weeks and covers the following subject areas: Wildlife Management Principles, Law Enforcement Principles and Methods, Wildlife Laws and Regulations, Land Management Practices, Public Relations and Conservation Education, Firearms, Defense and Control Tactics, and Use of Force; and Agency Administration.

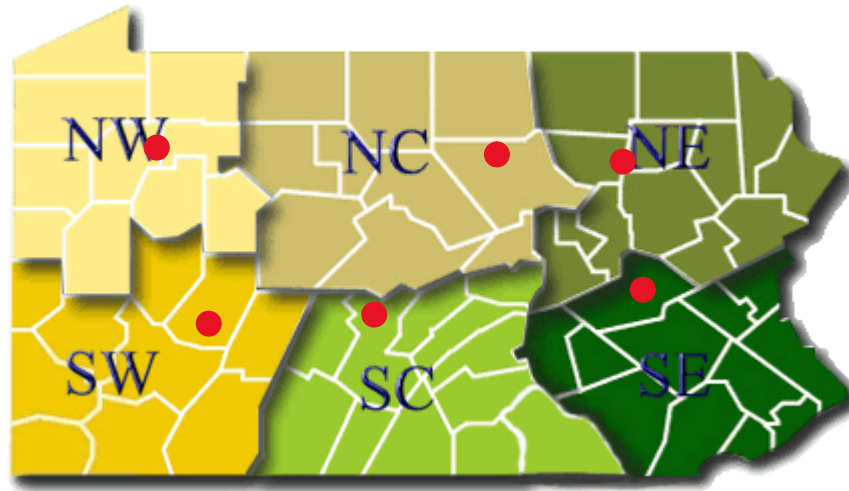
Deputy Executive Director for Regional Operations

The Deputy Executive Director for Regional Operations oversees all operations and activities for the six PGC regional offices.

Regional Offices. PGC field operations are administered through its six regional offices, as shown in Exhibit 7. These offices are responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the implementation of all agency programs within a specific geographic area.

Exhibit 7

PGC Regions and Office Locations



^a The red dots indicate the locations of the six regional offices.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Exhibit 8 shows each region's counties and each regional office's location.

Exhibit 8

PGC Regional Offices

Region	Counties	Location
Northwest	Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren	Franklin, PA (Venango County)
Northcentral	Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Union	Jersey Shore, PA (Lycoming County)
Northeast	Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming	Dallas, PA (Luzerne County)
Southwest	Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland	Bolivar, PA (Westmoreland County)
Southcentral	Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, York	Huntingdon, PA (Huntingdon County)
Southeast	Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill	Reading, PA (Berks County)

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information from the PGC Hunting & Trapping Digest.

PGC Staffing Complement

As of February 2024, the PGC had an authorized complement of 856 salaried positions, of which 719 were filled and 137 were vacant. Exhibit 9 illustrates the distribution of the staff complement in the central office, six regional offices, and two game farms.

Exhibit 9

PGC Staff Complement

	Filled	Vacant	Total
Central Office			
<i>Executive Office</i>			
- Executive Office	6	-	6
- Chief Counsel	3	2	5
- Human Resources	8	2	10
<i>Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Communications, and Wildlife Operations</i>			
- Bureau of Administrative Services	24	38	62
- Bureau of Automated Technology Services	27	2	29
- Bureau of Information and Education	14	1	15
- Bureau of Marketing and Strategic Communications	16	5	21
- Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management	34	9	43
- Bureau of Wildlife Management	30	2	32
- <u>Bureau of Wildlife Protection</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>68</u>
- Total	223	68	291
Regional Offices			
<i>Deputy Executive Director for Regional Operations</i>			
- Northwest Regional Office	86	7	93
- Northcentral Regional Office	87	14	101
- Northeast Regional Office	80	14	94
- Southwest Regional Office	77	15	92
- Southcentral Regional Office	81	9	90
- <u>Southeast Regional Office</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>77</u>
- Total	478	69	547
Game Farms			
- Loyalsock	9	-	9
- <u>Southwest</u>	<u>9</u>	-	<u>9</u>
- Total	18	-	18
PGC Total	719	137	856

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with information obtained from the PGC.

E. Game Fund

The PGC administers the Game Fund, which comprises all fees, royalties, fines, penalties, and other monies. Title 34 requires the Game Fund to be used to carry out the work of the PGC, including the purchase of land and the cost of activities to promote public interest in recreational hunting and furtaking, nongame species, endangered or threatened species, and all other game or wildlife in the commonwealth.

Per Title 34, a minimum of \$4.25 from each resident and nonresident license and \$2.00 from each antlerless deer license issued is used for habitat improvement, development, maintenance, protection, and restoration for natural propagation of game and wildlife on all lands under the control or operation of the PGC, including lands enrolled in the PGC's public access programs, and other public lands open to hunting.

V. APPENDICES



Appendix A – Act 1998-166

GAME AND WILDLIFE (34 PA.C.S.) - OMNIBUS AMENDMENTS

Act of Dec. 21, 1998, P.L. 1274, No. 166

Cl. 34

Session of 1998

No. 1998-166

HB 1994

AN ACT

Amending Title 34 (Game) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing for the director's compensation; imposing duties upon the Executive Board; providing for commission accountability; and further providing for the use of certain Game Fund revenues, for appropriation and audit of moneys, for powers and duties of enforcement officers, for jurisdiction and penalties, for acknowledgment of guilt and receipt for payment, disposition of nonresidents, for unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife, for buying and selling of game and wildlife, for classes of licenses, for license costs and fees, for disabled person permits and for the arrows for crossbows.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Section 302(b) of Title 34 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended to read:

§ 302. Director.

* * *

(b) Compensation.--Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the [commission] **Executive Board of the Commonwealth** shall fix the compensation of the director.

* * *

Section 2. Title 34 is amended by adding a section to read:

§ 328. **Accountability.**

(a) **Relationship with public.**--The commission shall implement policies and programs to improve its relationship with the general public and with its licensees in accordance with its strategic plan.

(b) **Program accountability.**--The commission shall require program accountability of its various functions through program performance measurement in accordance with its strategic plan.

(c) **Financial accountability.**--The commission shall improve the financial accountability of its various functions through performance measurement in accordance with its strategic plan.

(d) **Law enforcement accountability.**--The commission shall maintain a system to respond to citizen complaints against wildlife conservation officers and deputy wildlife conservation officers. The commission shall release information relating to the number and nature of complaints received on at least an annual basis. The commission may release further information related to the nature of the complaints, provided that the release of such information is not prohibited or restricted by any contract, regulation, order of court or statute to the contrary.

(e) **Reports to General Assembly.**--No later than January 31 of each year the commission through its executive director shall make annual written reports on the matters described in subsections (a), (b), (c) and (d) to the Game and Fisheries Committee of the Senate and the Game and Fisheries Committee of the House of Representatives. The commission shall meet with the respective committees of the General Assembly to receive oral testimony in relation to annual written reports when so requested.

Section 3. Sections 521(b), 522, 901(a), 902 and 925(e) and (f) of Title 34 are amended to read:

§ 521. Establishment and use of Game Fund.

* * *

(b) **Specific allocation of certain revenues.**--

(1) A minimum of \$1.25 from each resident license for which the full fee has been paid and a minimum of \$2 from each antlerless deer license issued for which the full fee has been paid shall be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game or wildlife on all lands under the control or operation of the commission, including lands enrolled in the commission's public access programs **and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the commission.** The moneys collected under this paragraph shall be deposited into two separate accounts and shall be used exclusively for the natural propagation of **game and** wildlife by:

(i) Improving and maintaining any natural wildlife habitat by the production, distribution and planting of trees, shrubs, vines and forage crops.

(ii) Forest management practices related to the creation and development of food and cover.

(iii) Development and management of food and cover openings.

(iv) Purchase, construction and enhancement of wetlands and riparian areas.

(v) Construction and maintenance of nesting structures.

(vi) The prorated cost for the purchase, maintenance and operation of equipment, tools and materials necessary to meet the habitat improvement objectives of this section. No moneys in these accounts shall be used for capital purchases under this subparagraph.

The commission shall submit an annual report on all expenditures from this account in the manner prescribed under section 522 (relating to appropriation and audit of moneys).

(2) Any moneys collected by or for the commission from the sale of the migratory bird hunting license shall be used solely for the purpose of migratory game bird management, habitat acquisition and improvement and related program administrative costs.

(3) **A minimum of \$3 from each resident and nonresident license for which the full fee has been paid shall be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game on all lands under the control or operation of the commission, including lands enrolled in the commission's public access programs and other public**

lands open to hunting under agreement with the commission. The moneys collected under this paragraph shall be used exclusively for the natural propagation of game by:

(i) Improving and maintaining any natural wildlife habitat by the production, distribution and planting of trees, shrubs, vines and forage crops.

(ii) Forest management practices related to the creation and development of food and cover.

(iii) Development and management of food and cover openings.

(iv) Construction and enhancement of wetlands and riparian areas.

(v) Construction and maintenance of nesting structures.

(vi) The prorated cost for the maintenance and operation of equipment, tools and materials necessary to meet the habitat improvement objectives of this section. No moneys in these accounts shall be used for capital purchases under this subparagraph.

The commission shall submit an annual report on all expenditures from this account in the manner prescribed under section 522.

§ 522. Appropriation and audit of moneys.

(a) Appropriation.--[All] **Subject to an annual review and recommendations under subsection (b), all** moneys in the Game Fund are hereby appropriated to the commission and may be expended only for the purposes authorized under this title.

(b) Audit and report.--[The commission shall submit an annual written and oral report to the Game and Fisheries Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives no later than March 31 of each year. The written report shall include complete budgets for the current fiscal year and for the fiscal year about to commence. An audit of the budget for the concluding fiscal year shall be conducted by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee and shall be submitted to the Game and Fisheries Committees no later than February 28 of each year.]

(1) A performance audit of the commission to examine the commission's compliance with its strategic plan for the concluding fiscal year shall be conducted by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee and shall be submitted to the Game and Fisheries Committee and the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and the Game and Fisheries Committee and the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives no later than February 28, 2000. After February 28, 2000, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee shall conduct a performance audit of the commission every three years no later than February 28th.

(2) No later than January 31 of each year the commission through its executive director shall submit an annual written report to the Game and Fisheries Committee and the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and the Game and Fisheries Committee and the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives which shall include the complete budget for the current fiscal year and for the next fiscal year. The commission shall meet with the specified committees of the General Assembly to receive oral testimony in relation to the annual written reports and to examine the commission's compliance with section 328 (relating to accountability) when so requested.

(c) Expenditures from Game Fund.--[The] **After review under subsection (a), the** commission shall submit to the Governor, for approval or disapproval, estimates of the amount of moneys to be expended from the Game Fund. The State Treasurer shall not honor any requisition for expenditure of any moneys in excess of the amount approved by the Governor. Moneys in the Game

Fund shall be paid out upon warrant of the State Treasurer drawn after requisition by the director of the commission.

§ 901. Powers and duties of enforcement officers.

(a) Powers.--Any officer whose duty it is to enforce this title or any officer investigating any alleged violation of this title shall have the power and duty to:

(1) Enforce all laws of this Commonwealth relating to game or wildlife and arrest any person who has violated any of the provisions of this title while in pursuit of that person immediately following the violation.

(2) Go upon any land or water outside of buildings, posted or otherwise, in the performance of the officer's duty.

(3) Serve subpoenas issued under the provisions of this title.

(4) Carry firearms or other weapons, concealed or otherwise, in the performance of the officer's duties.

(5) Purchase and resell game or wildlife, or any part thereof, for the purpose of securing evidence.

(6) Stop and inspect or search, at any time, [without warrant,] any means of transportation within this Commonwealth. Any officer who stops any means of transportation shall be in uniform and present a badge or other means of official identification and state the purpose of the inspection or search.

(7) Inspect and examine or search, at any time or place, any person or means of transportation or its attachment or occupants, or any clothing worn by any person, or any bag, clothing or container when the officer presents official identification and states the purpose of the inspection or search.

(8) Inspect and examine or search, at any time, [without warrant,] any camp, tent, cabin, trailer or any means of transportation or its attachment being used when the officer presents official identification to the person in charge and states the purpose of the inspection or search.

(9) Secure and execute all warrants and search warrants for violations of this title or, with proper consent, to search or enter any building, dwelling, house, tavern, hotel, boardinghouse, enclosure, vehicle or craft or any attachments thereto, to open, by whatever means necessary, any door, compartment, chest, locker, box, trunk, bag, basket, package or container and to examine the contents thereof and seize any evidence or contraband found therein.

(10) When making an arrest or an investigation or when found in the execution of a search warrant, seize and take possession of all game or wildlife or parts of game or wildlife which have been taken, caught, killed, had or held in possession, and seize all firearms, shooting or hunting paraphernalia, vehicles, boats, conveyances, traps, dogs, decoys, automotive equipment, records, papers, permits, licenses and all contraband or any unlawful device, implement or other appliance used in violation of any of the laws relating to game or wildlife.

(11) Administer any oaths required by the provisions of this title or relative to any violation of any law relating to game or wildlife and, where game or wildlife is found in a camp or in possession or under control of any individual or hunting party, question the person or persons, under oath, relative to the taking, ownership or possession of the game or wildlife.

(12) Operate or move any vehicle, permanently or temporarily equipped with a type of flashing or rotating red light or lights or audible device or both, approved by the commission, upon any street or highway

within this Commonwealth when performing duties within the scope of employment.

(13) Demand and secure assistance when the officer deems it necessary.

(14) Demand and secure identification from any person.

(15) Enforce all the laws of this Commonwealth and regulations promulgated thereunder relating to fish, boats, parks and forestry and other environmental matters, under the direction of those agencies charged with the administration of these laws.

(16) Require the holder of any license or permit required by this title or by commission regulation to sign the holder's name on a separate piece of paper in the presence of the requesting officer.

(17) When acting within the scope of the officer's employment, pursue, apprehend or arrest any individual suspected of violating any provision of Title 18 (relating to crimes and offenses) or any other offense classified as a misdemeanor or felony. The officer shall also have the power to serve and execute warrants issued by the proper authorities for offenses referred to in this paragraph and to serve subpoenas issued for examination. All powers as provided for in this paragraph will be limited by such administrative procedure as the director, with the approval of the commission, shall prescribe. The regulations shall be promulgated within 90 days of the effective date of this paragraph.

(18) When acting within the scope of the officer's employment and under the procedures outlined by the executive director, to use a facsimile in the enforcement of the provisions of this title and the regulations promulgated hereunder.

* * *

§ 902. Deputy Game Commission officers.

Except for the powers conferred under section 901(17) and (18) (relating to powers and duties of enforcement officers), deputy Game Commission officers shall, unless further restricted by the director, exercise all the powers and perform all the duties conferred by this title on Game Commission officers[.], **except deputy wildlife conservation officers shall not be authorized to issue citations or field acknowledgments of guilt for violations and shall provide the information to the wildlife conservation officer. Retired wildlife conservation officers, retired waterways conservation officers, State park rangers, State forest rangers or current or retired State or municipal police officers shall exercise all powers and duties conferred on deputy Game Commission officers, including the right to issue citations and field acknowledgments of guilt for violations.**

§ 925. Jurisdiction and penalties.

* * *

(e) Installment payment of fines.--[Installment payments under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9758(b) (relating to installment payment) for fines imposed for summary offenses under this title or the regulations shall not exceed a period of one year. Installment payments for misdemeanor offenses under this title or the regulations other than section 2522 (relating to shooting at or causing injury to human beings) shall not exceed a period of two years.] **Upon a plea and proof that person is unable to pay any fine and costs imposed under this title, a court may, in accordance with 42 Pa.C.S. § 9758 (relating to fine), permit installment payments it considers appropriate to the circumstances of the defendant, in which case its order shall specify when each installment payment is due.**

(f) Nonpayment of fines and costs.--Unless otherwise provided in this title, each person who fails to pay the fine imposed may, after hearing before

a district justice, be imprisoned until the fine is paid in full. [No term of imprisonment for nonpayment of fines shall exceed 90 days.] **The court may imprison the person for a number of days equal to one day for each \$40 of the unpaid balance of the fine and costs not to exceed 120 days.**

* * *

Section 4. Section 926(a) of Title 34 is amended and the section is amended by adding a subsection to read:

§ 926. Acknowledgment of guilt and receipt for payment.

(a) General rule.--[A] **Except as provided in subsection (d),** a person charged with violating any provision of this title which is a summary offense may sign **within ten days of the commission of the offense** an acknowledgment of the offense committed and pay to an officer of the commission the penalty in full, as fixed by this title, plus any costs of prosecution which may have accrued. The printed receipt for this payment shall only prove full satisfaction of the monetary fine for the offense committed and in no way shall limit the commission from further revoking hunting and furtaking privileges.

* * *

(d) **Limitations of acknowledgments of guilt.--On and after June 30, 1999, acknowledgments of guilt pursuant to this section shall be used only in such counties as the commission may designate by regulation for such use. The commission shall only designate such counties for continued use of field acknowledgment as it finds to have summary offense procedures that differ from Statewide summary offense procedures.**

Section 5. Section 931 of Title 34 is amended to read:
[§ 931. Arrest of nonresident.

(a) General rule.--Upon the arrest, apprehension or citation of a nonresident of this Commonwealth for any violation of this title that is a summary offense, any officer whose duty it is to enforce the provisions of this title shall, unless the defendant elects to acknowledge guilt in accordance with section 926 (relating to acknowledgment of guilt and receipt for payment), escort the defendant to the appropriate district justice for a hearing, posting of bond or payment of the applicable fine and costs, unless the defendant chooses to place the amount of the applicable fine and costs in a stamped envelope addressed to the appropriate district justice and mails the envelope in the presence of the officer who shall issue the defendant a citation.

(b) Procedure upon payment by mail.--If the defendant accepts the citation and mails the amount of fine and costs prescribed in subsection (a), he shall indicate the payment constitutes a bond for a hearing based on a plea of not guilty. The district justice shall then handle the case as a "plea entered by mail."

(c) Form of payment.--The amount of fine and costs shall be paid in cash, money order, certified check or guaranteed arrest bond. The commission, by regulation, may enlarge or restrict the type of payment which may be made by mail.]

§ 931. **Disposition of nonresident offenders.**

Subject to any inconsistent regulations or rules prescribed pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S. § 3502 (relating to financial regulations):

(1) **Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (2), upon the apprehension of a nonresident of this Commonwealth for any violation of this title that is a summary offense, the officer whose duty it is to enforce this title shall issue a citation as provided by the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal procedure unless the nonresident offender elects to proceed under section 926 (relating to acknowledgment of guilt and receipt for payment).**

(2) **An officer whose duty it is to enforce this title shall be authorized to arrest a nonresident for a summary offense violation of this**

title and escort him to the appropriate issuing authority for a hearing, posting of bond or payment of the applicable fine and costs only when one or more of the following circumstances exist:

- (i) the nonresident offender refuses to accept a citation from the officer.
- (ii) The nonresident offender fails to provide positive identification showing his mailing address.
- (iii) The officer has reasonable grounds to believe the nonresident offender is a repeat offender under this title.
- (iv) The officer has reasonable grounds to believe the nonresident offender is hunting while his hunting privileges are suspended or furtaking while his furtaking privileges are suspended.
- (v) The officer has reasonable grounds to believe the nonresident offender has failed to respond to a citation issued under this title or to pay assessed fines or penalties for a prior offense under this title.
- (vi) The officer has reasonable grounds to believe the nonresident offender may pose a threat of harm to another person or property or to himself or herself.
- (vii) The officer has reasonable grounds to believe the nonresident offender will not appear as required if issued a citation.

The officer shall not exercise his authority to arrest a nonresident under this paragraph if the nonresident offender chooses to place the amount of the applicable fine and costs in a stamped envelope addressed to the appropriate issuing authority and mails the envelope in the presence of the officer.

(3) The amount of fine and costs to be mailed to the issuing authority under paragraph (2) may be paid in cash, personal or other check, credit card or guaranteed arrest bond.

(4) The officer shall give the nonresident offender a receipt for payment, a copy of which shall be mailed with the payment and a copy retained by the officer.

Section 6. Section 2307(b) and (d) of Title 34 are amended and the section is amended by adding subsections to read:

§ 2307. Unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife.

* * *

(b) [Retention of game or wildlife lawfully taken.--Except as fixed by regulation of the commission, game or wildlife lawfully taken within this Commonwealth during the open season may be retained by residents until the end of the license year in which taken.] **Reserved.**

* * *

(d) **Exceptions.--This section shall not apply to authorized individuals who euthanize critically injured game or wildlife, which shall be permitted when it is reasonable to believe that the chance of survival of the injured game or wildlife is minimal or the injured game or wildlife poses a threat to human safety.**

[(d)] (e) Penalties.--A violation of this section relating to:

- (1) Threatened or endangered species is a misdemeanor of the third degree.
- (2) Elk or bear is a summary offense of the first degree.
- (3) Deer is a summary offense of the second degree.
- (4) Bobcat or otter is a summary offense of the third degree.
- (5) Wild turkey or beaver is a summary offense of the fourth degree.
- (6) Any other game or wildlife is a summary offense of the fifth degree.

(f) Definition.--As used in this section, the term "authorized individual" means any person who:

- (1) Has 18 Pa.C.S. (relating to crimes and offenses) enforcement powers.
- (2) Is a currently employed waterway conservation officer or deputy waterway conservation officer.
- (3) Is a currently employed wildlife conservation officer or deputy wildlife conservation officer.
- (4) Is a currently employed State park ranger or a State forest ranger.
- (5) Is a veterinarian licensed to practice in the United States.

Section 7. Section 2312(c) of Title 34 is amended to read:

§ 2312. Buying and selling game.

* * *

(c) Exception.--

(1) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the purchase or sale of game raised under authority of a propagating permit in this Commonwealth or the capture and sale of game or wildlife after securing a permit from the director and payment of any fees established by the commission or the purchase or sale of the tanned, cured or mounted heads or skins, or parts thereof, of any game or wildlife not killed in a wild state in this Commonwealth, or the sale or purchase of any inedible part thereof, from game or wildlife lawfully killed, if such parts are disposed of by the original owner within 90 days after the close of the season in which the game or wildlife was taken. Prior to selling parts of game or wildlife under the provisions of this subsection, all edible parts shall be removed.

(2) The commission may by regulation authorize the buying and selling of inedible parts of game and wildlife as it deems appropriate.

(3) This subsection shall not be construed to permit any individual or agency other than the commission to sell the skins or parts of game or wildlife killed as a protection to crops, or accidentally killed upon the highways, or seized as contraband.

* * *

section 8. Section 2705(7) of Title 34 is amended and the section is amended by adding paragraphs to read:

§ 2705. Classes of licenses.

Unless otherwise provided, any person wishing to exercise any of the privileges granted by this title shall first secure the applicable resident or nonresident hunting or furtaker license as follows:

* * *

(7) [(Reserved).] Senior lifetime resident combination hunting and furtaking license, including archery and muzzleloader privileges, to residents who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in the year of the application for the license. The commission shall develop, implement and administer a system to provide tags, report cards and applications to those residents who hold a senior lifetime resident hunting license issued under this paragraph. The system shall require the applicant or license holder to pay any approved fee assessed by the issuing agent.

(7.1) Junior resident combination hunting and furtaker license, including archery and muzzleloader privileges, to residents who have reached or will reach their 12th birthday in the calendar year of application for a license but who have not reached their 17th birthday prior to the date of the application for the license and who present a written request, containing the signature of a parent or guardian, for the issuance of a

license. The actual privileges granted to the holder of a junior resident combination license shall not be exercised until that person in fact is 12 years of age.

* * *

(11.1) Junior nonresident combination hunting and furtaker license, including archery and muzzleloader privileges, to nonresidents who have reached or will reach their 12th birthday in the calendar year of application for a license but who have not reached their 17th birthday prior to the date of the application for the license and who present a written request, containing the signature of a parent or guardian, for the issuance of a license. The actual privileges granted to the holder of a junior nonresident combination license shall not be exercised until that person in fact is 12 years of age.

* * *

Section 9. Sections 2709 and 2923 of Title 34 are amended to read:
§ 2709. License costs and fees.

(a) License costs.--Any person who qualifies under the provisions of this chapter shall be issued the applicable license upon payment of the following costs and the issuing agent's fee:

- (1) (i) Junior resident hunting - \$5.
(ii) **Junior resident combination hunting and furtaker - \$8.**
- (2) Adult resident hunting - [~~\$12~~] **\$19.**
- (3) (i) Senior resident hunting - [~~\$10~~] **\$12.**
(ii) Senior lifetime resident hunting - \$50.
(iii) **Senior lifetime resident combination hunting and furtaker - \$100.**
- (4) Bear hunting:
 - (i) Resident - [~~\$10~~] **\$15.**
 - (ii) Nonresident - [~~\$25~~] **\$35.**
- (5) Antlerless deer[,]:
 - (i) **Resident**, including resident military, resident disabled veteran and landowner - \$5.
(ii) **Nonresident - \$25.**
- (6) Archery deer [- \$5.]:
 - (i) **Resident - \$15.**
 - (ii) **Nonresident - \$25.**
- (7) Muzzleloader deer [- \$5.]:
 - (i) **Resident - \$10.**
 - (ii) **Nonresident - \$20.**
- (8) [(Deleted by amendment)] **(Reserved) .**
- (9) Adult nonresident hunting - [~~\$80~~] **\$100.**
- (10) (i) Junior nonresident hunting - \$40.
(ii) **Junior nonresident combination hunting and furtaker - \$50.**
- (11) Seven-day nonresident small game - [~~\$15~~] **\$30.**
- (12) Junior resident furtakers - \$5.
- (13) Adult resident furtakers - [~~\$12~~] **\$19.**
- (14) (i) Senior resident furtakers - [~~\$10~~] **\$12.**
(ii) Senior lifetime resident furtaker - \$50.
- (15) Adult nonresident furtaker - \$80.
- (16) Junior nonresident furtaker - \$40.
- (17) Resident disabled veteran hunting or furtaker under section 2706(b) (relating to disabled veterans) - no cost.
- (18) Replacement license - \$5. Antlerless deer and bear licenses shall be replaced by the original issuing agent only.

(19) Owners or possessors of land open to public hunting under section 2706(d) (relating to owners or possessors of land open to public hunting) - \$3.

(20) Migratory game bird hunting license [- issuing agent fee only.]:

(i) Resident - \$2.

(ii) Nonresident - \$5.

(b) Refunds.--Except as provided in section 501 (relating to refund of moneys paid erroneously or unjustly), license fees are not refundable.

(c) Agent fee.--Issuing agents shall be entitled to and may retain as full compensation for their services an additional sum of [75¢] **\$1** for each license or replacement license.

§ 2923. Disabled person permits.

(a) Use of vehicle as a blind.--

(1) Unless further restricted by commission regulation, a permit to hunt from a stationary vehicle may be issued to a person with permanent disabilities who qualified for a hunting license pursuant to Chapter 27 (relating to hunting and furtaking licenses) **or who possesses a junior resident license under section 2705(2) (relating to classes of licenses)** and who meets any of the following requirements:

(i) Has paraplegia and has permanent paralysis of both legs and lower parts of the body.

(ii) Has hemiplegia and has permanent paralysis of one leg and one arm on either side of the body.

(iii) Has both feet or one hand and one foot amputated.

(iv) Is permanently confined to a wheelchair or must use crutches or a walker as a means of support to pursue daily activities.

(v) Presents an affidavit and doctor's certificate stating the applicant is physically unable to walk 25 yards off the roadway.

(2) Unless further restricted by commission regulation, a permit to hunt from a stationary vehicle may be issued to a person who qualified for a hunting license pursuant to Chapter 27 and presents an affidavit and doctor's certificate stating the applicant is unable to walk 25 yards off the roadway due to a temporary injury or condition and may require an external means of support to ambulate. This permit is only valid for the license year in which issued.

(3) Permittees shall carry the permit upon their person while hunting. Any person named on this permit may hunt while using an automobile or other vehicle as a blind. The permittee shall not use the vehicle to flush or locate game. The vehicle may be used only as a blind or platform from which to shoot. The firearm shall be unloaded at all times while the vehicle is in motion.

(4) Any person who possesses a junior resident license under section 2705(2) and otherwise qualifies for a disabled person permit must comply with section 2711(a) (8) (relating to unlawful acts concerning licenses). Any parent or person 18 years of age or older serving in loco parentis or as guardian or some other family member 18 years of age or older shall not use a vehicle as a blind unless that person meets the requirements of this section.

(b) Regulated hunting grounds.--A permit may be issued to hunt on a regulated hunting ground to any person who presents a doctor's certificate showing that the person is physically unable to walk for an extended period of time, authorizing him to hunt for, pursue and kill from an automobile or other vehicle on regulated hunting grounds those species of game authorized

for release on such areas, subject to rules and regulations prescribed by the commission. The permittee shall carry the permit while hunting on regulated hunting grounds.

(c) Bow and arrow or crossbow.--A permit shall be issued to any person who presents a doctor's certificate showing that the person is, because of a permanent physical condition, unable to hunt with a conventional bow and arrow, authorizing that person to hunt by the use of:

(1) A bow and arrow which is held in place by a brace secured around the body of the hunter or is triggered with the aid of a mechanical device.

(2) A crossbow subject to the following restrictions:

(i) When hunting deer, bear or turkey, the crossbow must have a draw weight of not less than 125 pounds nor more than 200 pounds.

(ii) The arrows for the crossbow must be tipped with [a broadhead of not less than seven-eighths of an inch wide and have a minimum of two nonmoving, exposed cutting edges] **broadheads of a cutting edge design.**

The permittee shall carry the permit upon his person at all times while hunting.

(d) Penalty.--A violation of this section is a summary offense of the fifth degree.

Section 10. This act shall take effect as follows:

(1) The amendment or addition of 34 Pa.C.S. §§ 328, 522, 901 and 2307 shall take effect immediately.

(2) The amendment of 34 Pa.C.S. §§ 521, 902, 925, 926, 931, 2705 and 2709 shall take effect July 1, 1999.

(3) This section shall take effect immediately.

(4) The remainder of this act shall take effect in 60 days.

APPROVED--The 21st day of December, A. D. 1998.

THOMAS J. RIDGE

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Appendix B – PGC Response



June 14, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Phillips-Hill,

This letter is in response to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee's Report on the *PA Game Commission's Compliance with Its Strategic Plan* pursuant to Act 1998-166.

First, we would like to thank Christopher Latta and his staff, specifically, Anne Witkonis, Amy Hockenberry, Shanika Mitchell-Saint Jean, Matthew Thomas, and the entire LBFC team for their diligent work and dedication to this report. It is always a pleasure to work with such a great and professional team.

Despite the challenges facing all wildlife agencies, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has made significant improvements within the agency in alignment with the strategic plan and touched on each core goal to complete key objectives.

A recent survey from Southwick Associates reported a steady decline in hunting license sales nationwide over the past few years. Pennsylvania ranked as one of only six states to see license sales stabilize during this time. In addition to our rich hunting heritage, we credit the agency's increased outreach and marketing efforts as well as strong Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) initiatives throughout this strategic planning period.

The Keystone State also stands out as a leader in wildlife management. After years of planning and intensive habitat work, the Game Commission, in partnership with Letterkenny Army Depot, released a total of 76 bobwhite quail to reintroduce the native species after 25 years of extirpation in Pennsylvania. This historic reintroduction and related habitat work supports the agency's mission, falls in line with the strategic plan, and inform further management of the state's grassland species.

The agency's focus on underrepresented habitat development, such as hosting multiple statewide iMapInvasives trainings, working with the Western PA Conservancy to develop plans for addressing invasive species, and creating Comprehensive Management Planning template to guide these processes, will benefit the entire state game lands system for years to come.

The Game Commission values its employees and recognizes none of these efforts would be possible without their dedication to our mission. In order to empower staff and ensure continuity of operations, the agency conducted a survey on training needs, developed monthly training videos based on the results, and provided refresher training on key job-aligned skills.

To further support staff and ensure officer safety, the agency consolidated and transferred all dispatch operations to Harrisburg headquarters. This massive undertaking has already proven to enhance efficiency and customer experience on a large scale.

Since 1895, the Game Commission has remained faithful to its mission, and we look forward to continued improvements based on the new strategic plan.

In summary, we thank the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee for the review and analysis of the PGC Compliance with its Strategic Plan. We believe these results reflect the great work that is being done managing the wildlife resources and PGC assets for all citizens of this great Commonwealth.

Respectfully,



Stephen P. Smith
Executive Director