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## PA Game Commission Compliance With Its Strategic Plan

Conducted Pursuant to Act 1998-166

May 2018

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## Summary

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

This audit of PGC's compliance with its Strategic Plan sought to determine PGC's progress in realizing its five core goals to: (1) put wildlife first; (2) improve wildlife habitat; (3) follow sound business practices; (4) serve the Pennsylvania public; and (5) improve support for hunting and trapping.

## Background

The Pennsylvania Game Commission was established by the state legislature in 1895 as an independent public wildlife protection agency. Act 1986-93 codified the game laws into the Game and Wildlife Code.

As of January 2018, the PGC had an authorized complement of 714 salaried positions. At that time, a total of 636 positions were filled and 78 were classified as vacant. Table 1 on page 5 of this report shows the distribution of the staff complement among the central office, six regional offices, and four game farms. The organizational structure of the PGC is being internally reviewed for change later in 2018. A new and updated organizational chart was not available for this report but is expected to be available later in 2018 following that review. Therefore, as it presently exists, the Commission's staff structure includes an Executive Office, six bureaus, and six regional offices. Game Commission revenues are derived from licenses and fees, fines and penalties, augmentations, and miscellaneous revenues, with the receipts from these sources being deposited into the Game Fund.

## Strategic Plan

The PGC's current Strategic Plan, 2015-2020, identifies the PGC's Vision, Values, Mission Statements, as well as the five core goals set forth above. The plan also identifies 34 Strategic Objectives that set forth specific initiatives or issues designed to accomplish each goal. These are designed to form the initial basis for directing the work of the bureaus, divisions, and regions to complete each goal. PGC has also identified 25 challenges that pertain to the people and groups served by the PGC and are overarching issues to be addressed by the Commission. The LBFC assessment of the degree to which the PGC has fulfilled the goals and objectives of its

2015-2020 Strategic Plan, along with a brief rationale for the rating given, is based on information provided by the PGC, with only limited confirmation/verification by LBFC staff.

In general, all five core goals are reported to be at least partially achieved regarding the identified strategic objectives with some goal-related objectives more fully developed than others, as summarized below:

Goal 1 of *managing, propagating, and protecting all of Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals and putting wildlife first in decision-making* is largely in process. Most strategic objectives here are being worked on and so are reported as partially achieved. Of note is that the priority actions in the 2015 wildlife action plan have had a good start and game bird, game mammal, and furbearer populations have had sustained hunting and furtaking levels.

Goal 2 addresses *managing wildlife habitats* and is more fully achieved than the others. In particular, this is in regards to the objective of (1) transitioning management practices on game lands toward large-scale, high-quality, early successional habitats via timber harvest, planting native warm-season grasses, old field management, and prescribed fire; the objective of (2) regularly updating State Game Lands Comprehensive Management Plans that maximize habitat potential; as well as the objective of (3) expanding use of the number of acres of prescribed fire to improve field, forest, and shrubland habitat by 10 percent.

Goal 3 is focused on *operating the PGC by using sound, proven business practices to ensure long-term financial stability, to sustain performance improvement and commitment to excellence*. While four of the seven listed objectives under this goal are either in process or largely achieved, including putting in place the process of assigning a senior management team to review all proposed/new programs to foster increased collaboration and efficiency, the remaining three objectives are reported to be largely not achieved. Two of these three unachieved objectives—construction of Game Commission Wildlife Research and Education Center and developing a marketing plan and offering expanded product through an outdoor shop—have been abandoned due to budgetary limits. The third unachieved objective relates to building annual revenues to \$140 million and requires an increase in license fees and/or another recurring revenue stream which has not happened.

Goal 4 is *to serve the Commonwealth as the leader in wildlife conservation* and has also been impacted by budgetary constraints. Three of the six objectives are reported as largely not achieved; two because of budgetary issues. PGC is, however, successfully providing education and outreach on wildlife topics, having recorded 14 webinars between March 2016 and November 2017. PGC also went live in 2016 with a more user-friendly website.

Goal 5 is *to support Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritages*. Six of eight objectives here are successfully in process through things such as the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Programs, an online bow hunter course (as well as other potential online courses), a new marketing campaign, and a new brochure for prospective landowners, among others.

Beyond these five overarching goals, we also looked at efforts of the PGC related to their deer population trends and forest habitat health. The overall deer population trend is increasing in five wildlife management units (WMUs) and stable in the other eighteen WMUs.

## Challenges

Regarding the 25 challenges identified by PGC, all but two of those challenges are reported to be either in process—partially achieved (12)—or fully/largely achieved (11). Some highlights of achievements in light of these challenges are as follows:

- greater and more frequent use of social media platforms;
- running live cameras for elk viewing and eagle nest viewing;
- increased wildlife management through forest management by 50 percent since 2015;
- renegotiated pipelines contracts in the southwest to increase revenue;
- reduced labor force where appropriate, both full- and part-time staff;
- outsourced production of day-old chicks to reduce staffing needs;
- initiated a pilot program at Middle Creek for increasing volunteer workforce;
- reformatted the annual report to make it more user friendly, also incorporating a digital copy that is available with links to PGC produced videos;
- reallocated resources to better serve habitat management including deer hunter focus areas to help with species management;
- technicians leveraged for minimal maintenance management on State Game Lands;
- use of larger scale timber sales;
- increased the number of acres treated with prescribed fire;
- staff developed a list of Habitat Crew buildings that were in need of replacement and systematically have been replacing buildings throughout the Commonwealth with structures that are more energy efficient and effective in housing and maintaining existing equipment;
- taken steps to reduce the late grouse season in an effort to help stabilize the population;

- better understanding of White Nose Syndrome and are able to use those findings to apply them to management principles; and
- started conducting town hall meetings in Chronic Waste Disease positive areas to educate the public.

The two challenges reported to be not or largely not achieved relate to (1) increasing net income from licensing in which the PGC is working to secure a license increase, and (2) addressing Chronic Waste Disease (CWD) in free-ranging cervids by preventing new introductions into the state, slowing geographic expansion, and decreasing its prevalence where it already exists. Despite increased efforts, CWD has continued to spread in established Disease Management Areas.

# **I. Introduction**

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Between 1984 and 1998, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) regularly audited the budget of the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). These annual “budget audits” were required by the Game and Wildlife Code.

In 1998, the General Assembly amended the Code to implement a new hunting license fee structure. This legislation, Act 1998-166, also changed the nature and frequency of the LBFC’s audit involvement with the Game Commission. Act 1998-166 requires that the LBFC conduct a performance audit every three years of the PGC’s compliance with its Strategic Plan. The first of these reports was released in February 2000.

## **Audit Objectives**

The performance audit of the PGC’s compliance with its Strategic Plan has the following objectives:

To determine the extent of progress made by the PGC in implementing the five core goals of the Commission’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan:

- Put wildlife first.
- Improve wildlife habitat.
- Follow sound business practices.
- Serve the Pennsylvania public.
- Improve support for hunting/trapping.

## **Scope and Methodology**

Our review primarily covers PGC activities over FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17, as they relate to the goals and objectives of the PGC’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

As in our prior reviews, the report “grades” the PGC’s success in achieving the goals and objectives of its Strategic Plan. This rating is based largely on information provided by the PGC as to their assessment of their level of achievement of the various objectives. We also reviewed PGC Annual Reports and the other supplemental materials in making these assessments.

## **Acknowledgements**

LBFC staff acknowledges the excellent cooperation and assistance provided by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and its staff during the audit. Appreciation for the cooperation and support they provided during this audit is extended to Executive Director Bryan J. Burhans, PGC Legislative Liaison Joshua Zimmerman, and the other members of the PGC staff who provided information for this report.

## **Important Note**

*This report was developed by Legislative Budget and Finance Committee staff. The release of this report should not be construed as indicating that the Committee's members endorse all the report's findings and recommendations.*

*Any questions or comments regarding the contents of this report should be directed to Patricia A. Berger, Executive Director, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, P.O. Box 8737, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-8737.*



## II. Background Information on the Pennsylvania Game Commission

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The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) was established by the state legislature in 1895 as an independent public wildlife protection agency. 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 1897-103 set forth the actions prohibited by law and the penalties for such actions. Act 1937-316 consolidated the game laws and changed the name of the Board of Game Commissioners to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Act 1986-93 codified the game laws into the Game and Wildlife Code.

### Powers and Duties

As directed in the Game and Wildlife Code, 34 Pa.C.S.A. §322(a), the Game 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.

The Game Commission “has the power and duty to take all actions necessary for the administration and enforcement” of the Game and Wildlife Code. As stated in the Code, 34 Pa.C.S.A. §322(c), the Commission has the following specific powers and duties:

- To fix seasons, daily shooting or taking hours, and any modification thereof, and daily, season and possession limits for any species of game or wildlife.
- To remove protection, declare an open season or increase, reduce or close a season.
- To increase or reduce bag limits or possession limits.
- To define geographic limitations or restrictions.
- To fix the type and number of devices which may be used to take game or wildlife.
- To limit the number of hunters or furtakers in any designated area and prescribe the lawful methods of hunting or taking furbearers in these areas.
- To govern the use of recorded calls or sounds or amplified calls or sounds of any description for taking or hunting game or wildlife.

- To add to or change the classification of any wild bird or wild animal.
- To prohibit the possession, importation, exportation or release of any species of birds or animals which may be considered dangerous or injurious to the general public or to the wildlife of this Commonwealth.
- To manage and develop its lands and waters and other government or private lands and waters under agreement with the owners as it considers advisable and, by proper action and proceedings, enact and enforce regulations to insure the prudent and proper use of these lands.
- To collect, classify and preserve such statistics, data and information as in its judgment will tend to promote the object of the Game and Wildlife Code and take charge of and keep all reports, books, papers, and documents which shall, in the discharge of its duties, come into its possession or under its control.
- To take any necessary action to accomplish and assure the purposes of the Game and Wildlife Code.
- To serve the interest of sportsmen by preserving and promoting our special heritage of recreational hunting and furtaking by providing adequate opportunity to hunt and trap the wildlife resources of this Commonwealth.

## **Commission Composition**

The Game Commission is comprised of eight Pennsylvania citizens appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the Senate. Each Commissioner is to be a resident of a specific geographic region of the Commonwealth and is to serve a term of eight years.<sup>1</sup>

The Commissioners receive no compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The Commission is to hold meetings in Harrisburg in January and June or July and at such other times and places within the state as the Commission deems necessary.

## **Commission Staffing**

### **Staff Complement**

As of January 2018, the PGC had an authorized complement of 714 salaried positions. At that time, a total of 636 positions were filled and 78 were classified as vacant. Table 1 shows the distribution of the staff complement among the central office, six regional offices, and four game farms.

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<sup>1</sup> The Game and Wildlife Code, 34 Pa.C.S.A. §301, prohibits Commissioners from succeeding themselves at the end of an eight-year term or at the end of an interim appointment of more than four years. Commissioners can serve up to six months following the expiration of their term, or until a successor is appointed and qualified.

Table 1

**Staff Complement of the PA Game Commission**  
(Filled and Vacant Salaried Positions as of January 2018)

	Salaried Positions <sup>a</sup>		
	Filled	Vacant	Total
<u>Central Office:</u>			
Executive Office <sup>b</sup> .....	12	1	13
Bureau of Administrative Services .....	28	0	28
Bureau of Information and Education .....	18	1	19
Bureau of Wildlife Management <sup>c</sup> .....	24	18	42
Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management.....	38	9	47
Bureau of Wildlife Protection .....	20	1	21
Bureau of Automated Technology Services...	<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>17</u>
Subtotal - Central Office <sup>d</sup> .....	156	31	187
<u>Regional Offices:</u>			
Northwest (Franklin) .....	85	7	92
Southwest (Bolivar) .....	77	9	86
Northcentral (Jersey Shore) .....	81	4	85
Southcentral (Huntingdon) .....	75	6	81
Northeast (Dallas) .....	83	5	88
Southeast (Reading) .....	<u>62</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>77</u>
Subtotal - Regional Offices .....	463	46	509
<u>Game Farms:</u>			
Western <sup>e</sup> .....	0	0	0
Loyalsock .....	9	1	10
Northcentral <sup>e</sup> .....	0	0	0
Southwest.....	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>
Subtotal - Game Farms .....	<u>17</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>18</u>
<b>Commission Total<sup>f</sup> .....</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>714</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes salaried positions only. Does not include wage positions and Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers.

<sup>b</sup> Includes Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, Executive Secretaries, Chief Counsel, Legislative Liaison, and Training Division.

<sup>c</sup> Although broken out separately on this table, the Game Farms and the positions assigned to them are part of the Wildlife Management Bureau.

<sup>d</sup> This figure includes some positions that are assigned to the central office but work out of field locations.

<sup>e</sup> The Western and Northcentral Game Farms were closed in January, 2017.

<sup>f</sup> The PGC's total authorized complement is 714 positions, but funding cannot exceed 686 full-time equivalency (FTE) positions in accordance with the Governor's Budget Office. The Cadet Class will begin in March 2018 with graduation of 34 officers to commence working in full time salaried position in March 2019. The agency has 136 Wildlife Conservation Officer Districts state-wide, with 25 currently vacant, and more anticipated to be vacant by the graduation in March 2019 due to promotions and retirements.

Note: Wildlife Conservation Officers are also known by their working title, "Game Wardens."

Source: PA Game Commission.

## Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the PGC is currently under review for change. A new and updated organizational chart was not available for this report but is expected to be available later in 2018. Therefore, the structure outlined in Exhibit 1 is the structure of the Commission as it presently exists. As shown on the PGC organizational chart in Exhibit 1, the Commission's existing staff structure includes an Executive Office, six bureaus, and six regional offices.

**Executive Office.** The Executive Office is responsible for planning, directing, executing, and coordinating all of the PGC wildlife management programs in order to fulfill the agency's statutory and constitutional mandates. The functions of the Executive Office include developing and recommending a budget for consideration by the Commission and for presentation to the Governor as well as developing legislation to present to the General Assembly. Additionally, the Executive Office oversees the operation of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, evaluates existing policies, and develops new PGC policies. The Executive Office also establishes and maintains working relationships with other state, federal, and private agencies and sportsmen's groups.

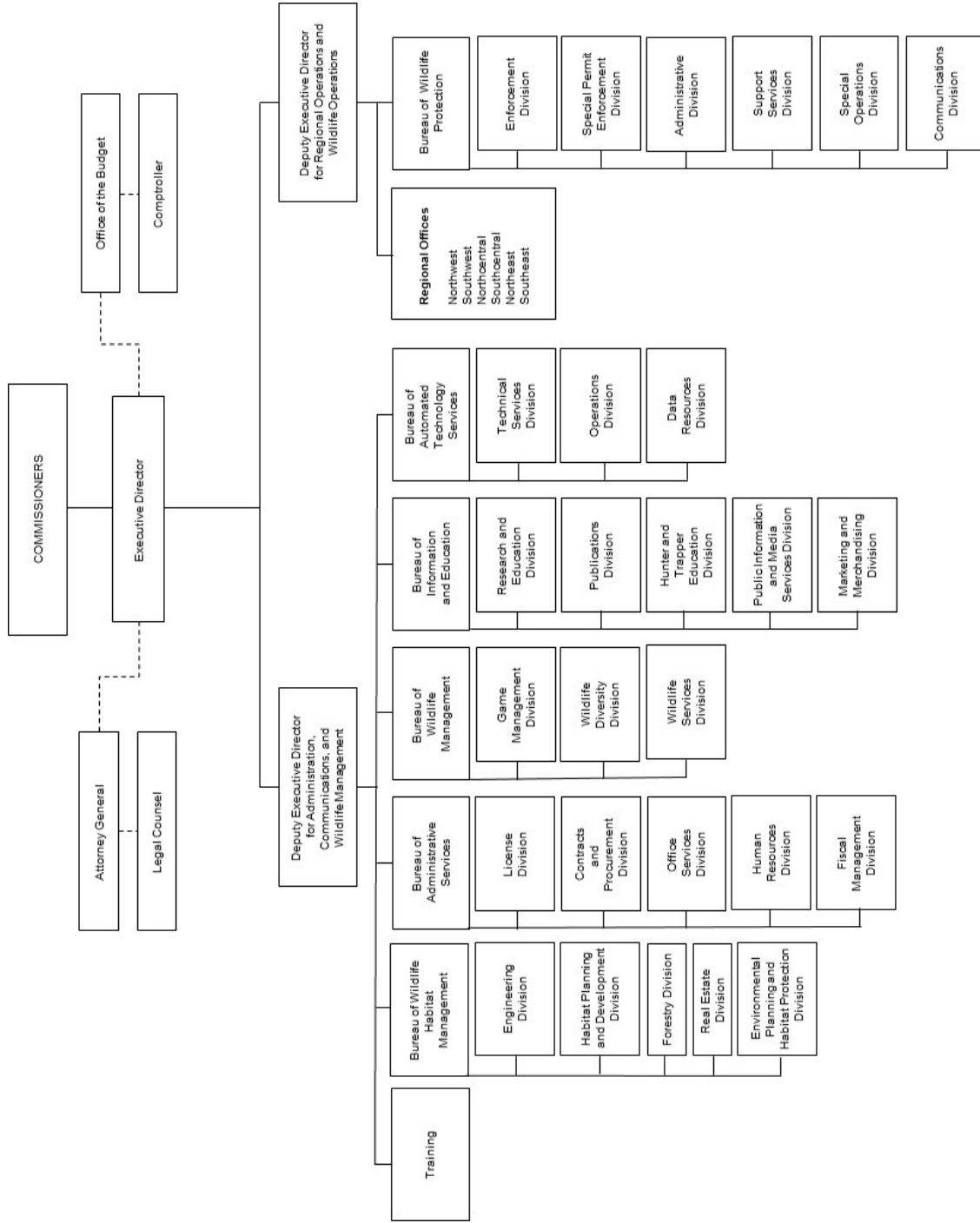
**Deputy Executive Director for Regional Operations and Wildlife Protection.** This Deputy Executive Director oversees all operations and activities for PGC regional offices as well as for the Bureau of Wildlife Protection.

**Regional Offices.** Game Commission field operations are administered through its six regional offices in Franklin, Bolivar, Jersey Shore, Huntingdon, Dallas, and Reading. The Regional Offices are responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the implementation of all agency programs within a specific geographical area. Each region is responsible for the administration of agency programs including: Wildlife Protection, Information and Education, Habitat Management, and Wildlife Management. To accomplish these tasks, regional office staff provides administrative services by utilizing management information systems.

**Bureau of Wildlife Protection.** The Bureau of Wildlife Protection is responsible for administering and coordinating the agency's wildlife law enforcement program. Five divisions operate within this bureau including the Enforcement, Special Permit Enforcement, Administrative, Special Operations, and Communications Divisions.

Exhibit 1

**Pennsylvania Game Commission Organization Chart\***



\* Currently being reviewed for change by the PGC in 2018.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

*Enforcement Division.* The Enforcement Division supervises the operations of the agency quartermaster and acts as the primary firearms and ammunition custodian. Additionally, the division administers the Deputy Program, reviews law enforcement reports, handles all fencing agreements and bear claims, maintains security at Harrisburg Headquarters, conducts investigations, and performs selective enforcement operations.

*Special Permit Enforcement Division.* The Special Permit Enforcement Division manages and provides final approval to applications, required reports, and renewals of special use permits as provided for in the Game and Wildlife Code. Additionally, this division provides direction and guidance to all Wildlife Conservation Officers in the administration of the special permits program.

*Administrative Division.* The Administrative Division manages all records related to criminal prosecutions for violations of the Game and Wildlife Code. This includes maintaining an agency database of prosecutions; ensuring fair and equitable revocation of hunting and furtaking privileges; and providing prosecution data and trends for agency use as well as for external parties such as the legislature and the media.

*Special Operations Division.* The Special Operations Division comprises the special investigation unit and conservation K-9 units. This division is the PGC's lead liaison with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the CLEAN/JNET systems, and homeland security.

*Communications Division.* The Communications Division manages the maintenance contract used to maintain radio communications between regional dispatchers and regional staff and their field employees. Communication devices include phone lines, fiber, base stations, and public and private microwave and tower networks. In addition, the division manages the mobile units in PGC vehicles and acts as a liaison between the PGC and the Administrations' Office of Public Radios Systems.

***Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Communications, and Wildlife Management.*** This Deputy Executive Director oversees the operations and activities for human resources, contracts and procurement, communications, technology, and training. Additionally, this director oversees the management, protection, propagation, and preservation of Pennsylvania's wildlife resources and habitats.

*Training.* Under the direction of the Executive Office, Training directs and manages the overall training function, with emphasis on the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. Mandatory in-service law enforcement training for wildlife conservation officers (approximately 200) and deputy wildlife conservation officers (approximately 1,100), management training, safety training, out-service training,

Right-to-Know act compliance, Hazardous Material training, and other agency training is provided as required.

***Bureau of Automated Technology Services.*** The Bureau of Automated Technology Services is responsible for the Commission's information technology needs. The Bureau supplies information services and manages automated technology resources for the entire agency. This includes desktop computer support, systems analysis and design, computer programming, data resource management, data analysis, data reduction, office automation, local and wide area networking, data communication management, central computer operations, and central computer support. These functions are carried out by two divisions within the bureau, the Technical Services Division and the Data Resources Division.

***Technical Services Division.*** The Technical Services Division supports the desktop computing needs of the agency, GIS initiatives, services to PGC constituents, and the agency's presence on the World Wide Web. Several sections operate within this division: Webmaster, Networking Administration, PC Applications, and PC Support/Procurement.

***Data Resources Division.*** The Data Resources Division exists to support the agency's data resources, provide data entry services, perform database administration, support and maintain the mainframe applications, provide mainframe user support across the agency, and manage the technology initiatives assigned to this division.

***Bureau of Administrative Services.*** The Bureau of Administrative Services manages the operations and activities for human resources, the PGC budget, contracts, procurement, office services, and the issuing of hunting licenses. This Bureau is also responsible for the procurement, maintenance, and management/disposal of the Commission's automotive fleet. Five divisions operate within this Bureau including the Human Resources, Fiscal Management, Contracts and Procurement, License, and Office Services Divisions.

***Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management.*** The Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management is responsible for managing PGC lands acquired through purchase and lands secured through cooperative lease arrangements. The Bureau additionally provides for public access to these lands for recreational pursuits, and it reviews wildlife impact assessments statewide on private and public lands. The development of comprehensive plans and the development of these lands for wildlife habitats by timber harvests and removal of oil, gas and/or minerals is another major task assigned to this bureau. The bureau is charged with direct management of about 1.5 million acres of State Game Lands and assists with another 2.2 million acres of private land enrolled in the agency's Public Access Program. The bureau is comprised of five divisions including the Real Estate, Engineering, Environmental

Planning and Habitat Protection, Habitat Planning and Development, and Forestry Divisions.

*Real Estate Division.* The Real Estate Division is responsible for acquiring land, water, building, rights-of-way, easements, oil, gas, and minerals for purposes authorized by the Game and Wildlife Code. The Real Estate Division includes a legal section that provides legal advice, counseling, and technical services concerning all aspects of land acquisition, protection, litigation, and management.

*Engineering Division.* The Engineering Division manages infrastructure (bridges, building, dams, and roads) on State Game Lands. The division designs and constructs projects using the PCC and Growing Greener programs, conducts inspections of existing facilities, and coordinates disaster relief projects and funding. This division also includes a maintenance section that maintains the PGC headquarters building and Haldeman Island facilities.

*Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division.* The Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division oversees program management on oil, gas, and mineral recovery operations on approximately 1.5 million acres of existing State Game Lands as well as overseeing all environmental permit reviews and authorizations.

*Habitat Planning and Development Division.* The Habitat Planning and Development Division plans, develops, and implements wildlife management activities on State Game Lands and certain other public and private lands. The division also manages and implements the following: programs for federal and state habitat grants; GIS planning and development; public access for enhanced hunting and trapping opportunities; public and private lands habitat planning and development; and the cooperative use agreements on State Game Lands. The division coordinates State Wildlife Grants, Landowner Incentive Program Grants, and Section 6 Threatened and Endangered Species Protection Grants with the Bureau of Wildlife Management.

*Forestry Division.* The Forestry Division oversees management of the forestry program on Game Lands. This includes all aspects of planning and development for commercial timber sales, timber management relating to wildlife habitat goals and objectives, GIS planning for forest cover types, and timber forestry inventory analysis on all State Game Lands. This division also tracks all expenditures to inventory, plan, develop, implement, and manage for sustainable and healthy timber regeneration and future commercial sale values.

*Bureau of Wildlife Management.* The Bureau of Wildlife Management directs the Game Commission's statewide wildlife conservation and management programs. Programs include comprehensive wildlife species conservation planning;



wildlife investigations and research; wildlife population and harvest monitoring; wildlife harvest management; endangered and threatened species recovery projects and reintroductions; technical assistance in wildlife management; wildlife use permitting; wildlife habitat management; wildlife health monitoring and disease response; statistical, experimental design and data analysis and interpretation; and the propagation and release of pheasants for hunting recreation. This bureau is comprised of three divisions including the Game Management Division, the Wildlife Diversity Division, and the Wildlife Services Division.

*Game Management Division.* The Game Management Division designs and coordinates statewide and regional game and furbearer population monitoring and harvest management programs. The division also provides technical assistance on game management issues.

*Wildlife Diversity Division.* The Wildlife Diversity Division designs and coordinates statewide and regional endangered, threatened, and non-hunted species' population monitoring and restoration programs. It develops, reviews, and revises the Pennsylvania state Wildlife Action Plan (WAP); prioritizes objectives and strategies within the state WAP; and facilitates agency implementation of these priority actions. Additionally, the division administers State Wildlife Grant and Landowner Incentive Grant programs.

*Wildlife Services Division.* The Wildlife Services Division provides coordination and support services for game management, wildlife diversity, and regional operations on wildlife health issues. These services include providing GIS support to wildlife management bureau staff; providing technical support on wildlife research reports; producing quarterly bureau activities reports; propagating and releasing ring-necked pheasants; providing technical support to clubs, schools, and individuals in pheasant rearing; and selling pheasant eggs and chicks to the public. The division also provides oversight and training in wildlife pharmaceutical use; pathology and forensics; and safe wildlife capture.

***Bureau of Information and Education.*** The primary responsibility of the Bureau of Information and Education is the planning and development of statewide and regional education, communications, and marketing strategies to promote hunting, trapping, and the responsible use of the Commonwealth's wildlife resources and the Commission's programs and services. This bureau administers its programs through six separate operating divisions: Research and Education, Publications, Hunter-Trapper Education, Marketing and Merchandising, and Public Information and Media Services.

*Research and Education Division.* The Research and Education Division coordinates the PGC's conservation education and outreach activities within the

Game Commission. The division makes certain that the PGC's programming addresses state educational standards, develops statewide conservation education incorporating interpretive and outreach programming, and it provides educational materials.

*Publications Division.* The Publications Division produces the *Pennsylvania Game News*, the agency's flagship publication, and a wide variety of other publications to inform and educate the agency's many stakeholders about hunting, trapping, and wildlife conservation.

*Hunter-Trapper Education Division.* The Hunter-Trapper Education Division develops, directs, and manages all statewide hunter education programs. Current programs are comprised of the basic Hunter-Trapper Education course (which is required of all first-time hunters, regardless of age); the cable restraint trapping course; the voluntary bowhunter education course; and the remedial hunter education course. The division oversees nearly 3,000 instructors and 175 trainers who certify nearly 40,000 students annually.

*Marketing and Merchandising Division.* The Marketing and Merchandising Division designs and coordinates activities that address the agency's customers' needs and wants, including the wildlife art program, Pennsylvania's duck stamp contest, and other wildlife education and promotional products.

*Public Information and Media Services Division.* The Public Information and Media Services Division develops, coordinates, and approves all Game Commission news releases, responses to all news media outlets, and information for the PGC website. Also provided by this division are video and photographic services for news media and agency personnel.

## **PGC Revenues and Expenditures**

Game Commission revenues are derived from licenses and fees, fines and penalties, augmentations, and miscellaneous revenues. All receipts from these sources are deposited in the Game Fund. See Table 2.

Table 2

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**Game Fund Revenues and Expenditures**  
(Fiscal Year End)

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**Revenues**

	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
Sale of Timber .....	\$ 5,960,551	\$ 6,539,143	\$ 10,268,341
Federal Aid Reimbursements.....	24,257,404	26,567,455	26,525,584
Resident Hunting Licenses .....	14,059,165	13,931,508	13,582,295
Nonresident Hunting Licenses .....	4,851,950	4,828,300	4,805,839
Antlerless Deer Licenses .....	4,255,685	4,055,540	4,075,885
Other Hunting and Furtaker Licenses .....	12,081,450	12,719,990	12,879,322
Natural Resources and Rights of Way .....	26,467,920	32,829,257	26,397,763
Interest Income.....	3,069,298	1,258,052	3,013,822
Miscellaneous.....	4,386,135	3,299,544	3,079,709
Game Law Fines .....	1,571,149	1,615,588	1,623,071
Game New Subscriptions.....	<u>662,740</u>	<u>661,835</u>	<u>621,704</u>
Total .....	\$101,623,447	\$108,306,212	\$106,873,335

**Expenditures**

	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.....	\$ 45,282,022	\$ 43,011,427	\$41,945,701
Wildlife Protection .....	18,628,021	20,043,349	18,908,147
Administrative Service .....	12,823,774	12,141,139	13,515,025
Wildlife Management .....	12,992,562	12,123,259	10,871,866
Executive Office.....	5,739,512	3,631,681	3,533,183
Information and Education.....	5,656,239	4,952,340	4,121,372
Automated Tech. Services .....	<u>3,912,809</u>	<u>3,553,224</u>	<u>3,617,454</u>
Total.....	\$105,034,939	\$99,456,419	\$96,512,748

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

## Game Fund Financial Condition

As shown in Table 3 below, the ending balance in the Game Fund on June 30, 2016, was \$44.5 million. Based on current revenue estimates and spending authorization levels, the Governor's Budget shows an estimated Fund balance of only \$21.3 million at the end of FY 2017-18.

Table 3

<b>Game Fund Comparative Financial Statement</b>			
(\$000)			
	FY 2015-16 (Actual)	FY 2016-17 (Available)	FY 2017-18 (Estimated)
<b>Beginning Balance .....</b>	<b>\$ 36,539</b>	<b>\$ 44,455</b>	<b>\$ 29,872</b>
Receipts:			
Licenses and fees.....	\$ 34,037	\$ 34,691	\$ 35,011
Fines and penalties .....	1,616	1,605	1,605
Gas and oil leases .....	27,611	15,100 <sup>a</sup>	14,500 <sup>a</sup>
Federal receipts.....	26,480	28,185	26,965
Habitat license fee transfer.....	7,500	7,500	7,500
Interest.....	758	960	960
Sale of goods.....	1,116	741	631
Sale of wood products .....	6,533	7,500	8,000
Sale of publications .....	662	611	612
Other.....	<u>1,993</u>	<u>1,092</u>	<u>1,141</u>
Total receipts .....	<u>\$108,306</u>	<u>\$ 97,985</u>	<u>\$ 96,925</u>
<b>Total Funds Available .....</b>	<b><u>\$144,845</u></b>	<b><u>\$142,440</u></b>	<b><u>\$126,797</u></b>
Disbursements:			
Game Commission .....	<u>\$100,390</u>	<u>\$112,568</u>	<u>\$105,466</u>
Total disbursements .....	<u>-100,390</u>	<u>-112,568</u>	<u>-105,466</u>
<b>Ending Balance.....</b>	<b><u>\$ 44,455</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 29,872</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 21,311</u></b>

<sup>a</sup> Regarding the reduction in oil and gas lease receipts from FY 2015-16 to the other two years, PGC explained this change reflected volatility in the market. At the time the estimates were made, available data was showing that the market would trend downward based on many variables.

Source: Governor's Executive Budget 2017-18.

According to the PGC, a fund balance in the \$20 million range is needed to ensure the financial solvency of the agency. For example, the PGC is self-insured, therefore if one of their buildings burned down, the PGC would need to have revenue available to replace it. The PGC also needs to keep funds available to address outbreaks of wildlife diseases. Over half of the PGC revenues can be considered market-driven, including the federal Pittman-Robertson Funds, Oil, Gas, and Timber, etc., as these revenues are dependent on good markets; if any of these markets fail to perform, the PGC would need revenue to fill those gaps.

### III. The PGC's Strategic Plan, 2015-2020

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In 1998, the General Assembly amended the Game and Wildlife Code to implement a new hunting license fee structure. In addition to changing the license fee structure, Act 1998-166 also changed the nature and frequency of legislative oversight and audit activities at the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and included a number of new public, program, and financial accountability measures. Among these is a requirement that the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) audit the Commission's compliance with its Strategic Plan every three years. This is the seventh report issued by the Committee under this mandate.

#### Strategic Plan Overview

The PGC's current Strategic Plan, 2015-2020, has five goals and identifies the PGC's Vision, Values, and Mission Statements as shown in Exhibit 2.

#### Exhibit 2

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#### Statements of the PGC's Strategic Plan Vision, Values, and Mission

- VISION:** Champion all wildlife resources and Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritage.
- VALUES:** As an agency the PGC will:
- Place wildlife first in all decision making
  - Respect the views of our various stakeholders and citizens of the Commonwealth
  - Be open, honest, forthright, and ethical in all matters
  - Provide quality service both internally and externally
  - Carry out responsibilities in a polite, professional, and considerate manner
  - Recognize the value of a diverse staff to accomplish the wildlife management mission
  - Encourage the professional development of all employees
  - Recognize the value of the North American model of wildlife management
  - Have pride in our management heritage
  - Reflect on our success and lead for the future
- MISSION:** To manage Pennsylvania's wild birds, wild mammals, and their habitats for current and future generations.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

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The ***Vision*** provides the overall statement of where the Commission should be after completing the strategic objectives. It is intended to provide a concept and direction to the agency of “what it has been and what it will be.” The PGC’s ***Values*** are statements of traditional and future philosophies on how strategic objectives are to be achieved. Values reflect the public image of the Commission and are to serve as the standards for daily operations. An agency’s ***Mission*** is a concise statement of what the agency is seeking to accomplish. This statement is to serve as the purpose for everything the Commission does.

The Commission has also identified 25 ***Challenges*** that pertain to the people and groups served by the Game Commission and are overarching issues that need to be addressed by the Commission. These challenges are presented in Appendix A, along with the PGC’s assessment of the extent to which it has met the challenges.

The PGC has the following five core goals in its current Strategic Plan:

1. Put Wildlife First.
2. Improve Wildlife Habitat.
3. Follow Sound Business Practices.
4. Serve the Pennsylvania Public.
5. Improve Support for Hunting/Trapping.

The specific initiatives or issues designed to accomplish each goal are the PGC’s ***Strategic Objectives***. These are to form the initial basis for directing the work of the bureaus, divisions, and regions to complete the goal. The PGC’s plan contains 34 strategic objectives.

## **Strategic Plan Implementation and Compliance**

Our assessment of the degree to which the PGC has fulfilled the goals and objectives of its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, along with a brief rationale for the rating given, is presented in Exhibit 3. Our assessment is based on information provided by the PGC, with only limited confirmation/verification by LBFC staff. For additional information on PGC activities, readers may obtain the PGC’s Annual Reports, available online at: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=566361&mode=2>.

**Goals and Strategic Objectives Assessment**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<b>GOAL 1:</b> Manage, propagate, and protect all of Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals and put wildlife first in decision-making.		X			Rating based on achievement of Strategic Objectives for this Goal.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1:</b> <i>Keep Pennsylvania's wildlife from going extinct, becoming extirpated, or reaching the threshold where a species must be listed as Threatened or Endangered, anywhere this can be controlled.</i>		X			Following years of habitat improvements and planning, the federally-endangered Piping Plovers recolonized historically-occupied nesting area at Presque Isle State Park during the summer of 2017. However, progress has been limited for most species.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1.1</b> Recover population of peregrine falcon and ospreys to sustainable levels, sufficiently to de-list them by 2020.		X			Osprey have recovered sufficiently to be de-listed in 2017. The PGC reports that for three consecutive years, nest count and fledging success targets specified in the Peregrine Falcon Management Plan have been reached to warrant upgrading the state conservation status from Endangered to Threatened.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1.2</b> Have initial release of wild northern bobwhite quail to at least one focus area by 2020.		X			Although no birds have yet been released, habitat improvement activities are occurring at Letterkenny Army Depot and at the Middlecreek WMA. Numerous potential source states have been contacted and several are willing to provide quail once habitat quality is sufficient. Given this progress the PGC anticipates the objective will be achieved by the 2020 target date.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1.3</b> Prepare strategies to contain white-nose syndrome and stabilize the population of at-risk bats by 2016.		X			While most sites continue to see declines, several colder caves are seeing modest increases in bat populations. Field trials are ongoing to evaluate treatments for White-Nose Syndrome affected bats in winter hibernacula.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1.4</b> Install five bat gates by 2020 to protect highest priority bat hibernacula.		X			Bat conservation was advanced through site acquisition and hibernaculating projects. One new bat gate was installed at Ruth Cave and several additional bat-friendly gates are planned for 2018.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	<b>LBFC/PGC Comment</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 1.1.5</b> Begin implementation of priority actions detailed in the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) by 2016.	X				The WAP identifies 6 goals and 23 related objectives. While not completed, the PGC appears to have made a good start by surveying such animals as flying squirrels, Yellow Crowned Night-Herons, Golden-winged Warblers, and Goshawks. The PGC has also received a \$50,000 federal grant to support priority actions in the WAP. The PGC also reports WAP priorities are being incorporated into new calls for proposals recently announced by the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and into new State Wildlife Grants.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.2</b> <b>Sustain and enhance game bird, game mammal, and furbearer populations at sustained hunting and furtaking levels.</b>	X				This is a very broad objective. The PGC reports PA hunters consistently harvest 300,000-350,000 white-tailed deer, 40,000-50,000 wild turkeys, 3,000-4,000 black bears, and 100 elk annually. New hunting and furtaking opportunities since 2015 have included a longer black bear archery season concurrent with a portion of archery deer season; extended firearms bear seasons in additional Wildlife Management Units (WMUs); a river otter trapping season in 2 WMUs; a longer fisher trapping season with additional WMUs opened to fisher harvest; a fall turkey season in WMU 2B; and a youth wild pheasant hunt in the Central Susquehanna Wild Pheasant Recovery Area. For ruffed grouse and muskrats, species whose populations have declined in recent decades, research is underway to understand causative factors and identify appropriate harvest and habitat management responses.
<b>Strategic Objective 1.2.1</b> Update existing species management plans to guide and prioritize research, monitoring, and management efforts by 2020. All plans will be reviewed by 2016 and resubmitted to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Revisions will align with agency budgetary capacity.		X			The PGC is developing a new deer management plan for 2018 and completed a first draft of a wild turkey and snowshoe hare plan. For most plans, focus has been on comprehensive updates for the 2020 target date rather than interim reviews where no obvious issues have been noted.
<b>Goal #2:</b> <b>Manage wildlife habitats</b>		X			Rating based on achievement of Strategic Objectives for this Goal.



**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	<b>LBFC/PGC Comment</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 2.1</b> <i>Transition management Practices on State Game Lands towards large-scale (increase average acreage by 50%), high-quality, early successional habitats via timber harvest, planting native warm-season grasses, old field management, and prescribed fire. Decrease use of high-input, single-value plantings and practices, such as agricultural plantings.</i>	X				The PGC reports larger scale timber sales and prescribed fire units are the norm, with over 10,000 acres anticipated to be out for bid for this fiscal year for commercial timber. Preparation of fire units continues, as do regional meetings to ensure and assist with preparations for Spring 2018. The PGC anticipates full implementation of the plan to occur in 2018.
<b>Strategic Objective 2.2</b> <i>Increase grassland and young forest habitat on private land, including hunter access lands, by 5,000 acres by 2020. Focus as much effort as possible on hunter access and State Game Lands properties to enhance hunter opportunities.</i>		X			The PGC reports that, since 2015, a total of 3,250 acres of grassland and young forest habitat has been created on private lands enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. Using Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program funds, made available through the 2014 Farm Bill, the PGC has created 1,857 acres of grasslands and 1,393 acres of young forest habitat on Hunter Access properties which directly enhance hunter opportunities. Based on this progress, the PGC is on track to meet this objective by 2020.
<b>Strategic Objective 2.3</b> <i>Develop regularly updated State Game Lands Comprehensive Management Plans that maximize habitat potential, with the first round of initial planning accomplished by 2017; by 2020, implement completed plans according to timeline set within each plan.</i>	X				PGC reports that 276 plans have been completed with 31 still needing to be submitted and that over 90% of the required cover mapping on State Games lands has been completed.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<p><b>Strategic Objective 2.4</b>  <i>Focus State Game Lands acquisition efforts on lands which provide access to existing State Game Lands, inholdings, indentures, and sensitive habitats for special concern species and other unique landscapes consistent with available funding levels from the Game Fund, mitigation funds, and federal matching funding. When funding is lacking, curtail or discontinue land purchases and prioritize acquisitions to obtain the most critical and unique tracts.</i></p>		X			<p>The PGC reports the following for FYs 2015 and 2016:</p> <p>Fiscal Year 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>439 acres were acquired including one interior and one indenture, with each providing improved access, and three additional acquisitions to improve access into existing State Game Lands (SGL).</li> </ul> <p>Fiscal Year 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,953 acres were acquired including two interiors, seven indentures, and five acquisitions to improve access into existing State Game Lands. Two of the properties acquired connected detached parcels to existing State Game Lands.</li> </ul> <p>We also reviewed PGC minutes for 3 meetings, chosen at random, for donations/acquisitions. In these 3 meetings, the PGC approved 12 new tracts for donation, purchase, or exchange. All but two of the tracts were indentures or adjacent to SGL. In several instances, the minutes reflect that the new tracts directly address the goals and objective of the Strategic Plan. One of the purchases was a 21-acre tract that was home to several bird species listed in the Wildlife Action Plan.</p> <p>In 2017, 14,155 acres were burned, and in 2016, 10,556 acres were burned, exceeding the goal of 9,500 acres. The PGC reports the 2016 burns put it halfway to its goal of burning 20,000 acres annually.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Objective 2.5</b>  <i>Expand use of the number of acres of prescribed fire to improve field, forest, and shrubland habitat by 10% annually by 2020.</i></p>	X				
<p><b>Goal #3:</b>  <i>Operate using sound, proven business practices to ensure long-term financial stability, to sustain performance improvement and commitment to excellence.</i></p>		X			<p>Rating based on achievement of Strategic Objectives for this Goal.</p>

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<b>Strategic Objective 3.1</b> <i>By 2020, initiate construction of Game Commission Wildlife Research and Education Center in State College to house specific Game Commission staff.</i>			X		The PGC reports that budgetary constraints have forced it to abandon this initiative.
<b>Strategic Objective 3.2</b> <i>By 2020, reposition 20% of dispersed non-law enforcement field staff from home offices to the most efficient headquarters.</i>		X			The PGC reports that effective August 1, 2017, it had relocated ten employees from home offices to regional offices or headquarters and had reduced the number of permanently assigned vehicles by 30.
<b>Strategic Objective 3.3</b> <i>By 2016, reduce the number of in-person staff meetings by 50% and replace with webinar technology.</i>		X			The PGC reported the software to be used for web conferencing has been procured. The committee selected the Citrix GoTo line of products, which includes, GoToMeeting for web conferencing, GoToWebinar for public webinars, and GoToAssist to allow PGC computer support staff to remotely troubleshoot computer problems, saving travel time and correcting problems in much less time. Agency-wide totals for the time period of Oct. 16, 2016 – Oct. 16, 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GoToMeeting – 130 sessions, 21 organizers, 299 attendees, average session duration 41 minutes</li> <li>GoToWebinar – 7 sessions, 2 organizers, 967 attendees, average session duration 36 minutes</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Objective 3.4</b> <i>Send all new members of the Board of Commissioners to a wildlife management training course to better support Board activities.</i>		X			A 1/2-day deer management course is provided to new members of the Board.
<b>Strategic Objective 3.5</b> <i>By 2020, build annual revenues to \$140 million.</i>			X		This objective requires an increase in license fees and/or another recurring revenue stream. Neither has happened as of the end of 2017.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<b>Strategic Objective 3.6</b> <i>By 2015, assign senior management team to review all proposed/new programs to foster increased collaboration and efficiency. The Executive Office will review and approve all grant applications prior to submission.</i>	X				The PGC reports that this process has been put in place.
<b>Strategic Objective 3.7</b> <i>Develop marketing plan and offer expanded product offering through outdoor shop by 2017 and evaluate nontraditional revenue sources.</i>			X		The PGC reports budgetary constraints and inability to hire a marketing professional have forced it to abandon this initiative.
<b>Goal #4:</b> <i>Serve the Commonwealth as the leader in wildlife conservation.</i>		X			Rating based on achievement of Strategic Objectives for this Goal.
<b>Strategic Objective 4.1</b> <i>Establish a monthly webinar series available to all citizens by 2016 to provide education and outreach on wildlife conservation and agency topics, targeted to reach 50,000 viewers by 2020.</i>	X				The PGC has recorded 14 webinars between March 2016 and November 2017 on a variety of topics including Bald Eagles, Snow Goose Migration, and Elk viewing. The PGC has established a schedule for the continuation of the series through 2018.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	<b>LBFC/PGC Comment</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 4.2</b> <i>By 2020, develop a comprehensive communications and marketing plan to increase Pennsylvania Game Commission effectiveness in reaching all Pennsylvania citizens.</i>			X		Not yet met, but the PGC anticipates progress with the proposed hiring of a marketing director in the current calendar year.
<b>Strategic Objective 4.3</b> <i>By 2018, evaluate new tools to improve communications and engagement with the non-hunting public and merge as part of the Working for Wildlife program.</i>			X		The PGC reports budgetary constraints have forced it to abandon this initiative. However, the PGC reports efforts to increase engagement with the non-hunting public through tools such as the Eagle Camera, Elk Camera, and other conservation education.
<b>Strategic Objective 4.4</b> <i>By 2020, increase volunteer Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer ranks to 450 officers by increasing recruitment efforts and removing barriers from Pennsylvania Game Commission employees' becoming Deputies.</i>			X		The PGC reports the Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer (DWCO) committee has completed its report and it has been submitted to the Executive Office. All recommendations have been approved. Several recommendations will have to be put on hold until budgets permit implementation. A new deputy game warden recruitment brochure was developed and has been distributed at job fairs and is available at the regional offices. The deputy position is also mentioned when anyone calls or requests information on the WCO positions. The PGC also reported having approximately 365 Deputy WCOs in 2016, up modestly from approximately 350 in 2013 and that budget constraints have caused delays in recruiting and training new DWCOs.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	<b>LBFC/PGC Comment</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 4.5</b> <i>The Alternate-users Working Group is comprised of users of State Game Lands who do not necessarily use these lands for the primary use of hunting, trapping, and wildlife management (bicyclists, hikers, bird watchers, snowmobilers, etc.). By May 2016, working group will collectively develop strategic plan to reduce conflict between user groups, reduce illegal activities, and reduce damages to State Game Lands system.</i>		X			The PGC reports that the working group meetings have proved very helpful and positive and that alternative users will continue meeting to discuss issues. The PGC believes that many of the major issues previously discussed have been resolved and that the dialogue will continue to further ensure SGLs are protected into the future.
<b>Strategic Objective 4.6</b> <i>By 2018, overhaul agency website to increase user satisfaction, utility, and provide a more professional image for the agency.</i>	X				The PGC's new website went live in spring of 2016, and the PGC reports it is proving to be more user-friendly. The website is updated to provide quick access to relevant content, based on time of the year. The PGC is also working on a solution to improve its live mapping technology, which allows hunters to customize their own maps with features such as aerial photographs and topographic base maps.
<b>Goal #5:</b> <b>Support our hunting and trapping heritages</b>		X			Rating based on achievement of Strategic Objectives for this Goal.
<b>Strategic Objective 5.1</b> <i>Increase Hunter Access with an enrollment campaign focused on new, high value opportunities with a goal of no net loss by 2020.</i>		X			The PGC has held several meetings of the Hunter Access Program focus group and has developed a plan to address the objective and brochures to engage landowners in the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Programs.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<b>Strategic Objective 5.2</b> <i>By 2018, develop online, advanced hunter education courses.</i>		X			The PGC has an online bow hunter course and has contracted for an online advanced turkey hunting and online cable restraint course, both of which were to be completed in 2017. As of the end of 2017, however, only the bow hunter course was on the PGC website.
<b>Strategic Objective 5.3</b> <i>Working with NGO partners, establish a non-Pennsylvania Game Commission position to develop support network to better recruit and sustain women hunters, lapsed hunters, and mentored adult hunters. Use this network to add 5,000 new license buyers by 2020.</i>		X			PGC reports it has met with staff from the National Wild Turkey Foundation on developing this position and is evaluating the success of similar positions in other states.
<b>Strategic Objective 5.4</b> <i>By 2020, increase harvest rate of Pennsylvania Game Commission-released pheasants by 10% to increase hunter opportunity.</i>		X			The PGC reports the 2015 pheasant harvest rate study showed an average rate of 50%, an improvement from the 42% found in 1998. The PGC reports that further analysis has allowed them to determine harvest rates by property, and restrict pheasant stocking to areas with the best harvest rates and most habitat. Harvest rates are low for hunter access properties and for female pheasants, so the PGC has reduced the percentage of birds going to hunter access properties from 14% in 2016 to 4% in 2017, and are shifting the sex composition of the birds to be released in 2018 to 75% males, rather than the 52% in 2017. A new pheasant stocking locations interactive map was posted to the web-site to help hunters find pheasant stocking locations near them.
<b>Strategic Objective 5.5</b> <i>By 2016, develop a formal stewardship process for landowners enrolled in the public Hunter Access program. The goal is to increase retention of existing landowners and build program branding.</i>		X			Based on survey results, the PGC is undertaking a marketing campaign this winter. The PGC is also utilizing VPA-HIP funds to pay for habitat improvements on Cooperator properties to benefit wildlife and provide a tangible benefit to landowners.

**Exhibit 3 (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LBFC/PGC Comment
<i>Strategic Objective 5.6 Revise and improve Hunter Access Program. Create an internal committee by 2017 to address future direction of the Hunter Access Program; define a five-year strategy and specific management goals; and develop marketing strategies to support program goals. This committee will develop the plan to align with agency financial capacity.</i>		X			An Internal Committee was established in 2017 and has had multiple meetings. Survey work of internal staff has been completed and is being reviewed as part of the planning phase for future direction. The PGC reports its new brochure for prospective landowners is a big hit and includes catchy photos and tutorials from existing landowners, with the hopes of securing additional properties.
<i>Strategic Objective 5.7 Implement marketing programs and outreach efforts to achieve a no-net-loss of general hunting licenses sales between 2015 and 2020.</i>			X		Not yet met, but progress is anticipated to be forthcoming with the proposed hiring of a marketing director in the current calendar year.
<i>Strategic Objective 5.8 Expand hunter recruitment/retention outreach to maintain no-net-loss in license sales through 2020.</i>			X		Not yet met, but progress is anticipated to be forthcoming with the proposed hiring of a marketing director in the current calendar year. (See 5.7 above.)  License sales have declined over the last three license years: LY 2014-15 --- 988,952 LY 2015-16 --- 980,356 LY 2016-17 --- 958,122

Source: Developed by LBFC staff based on PGC-provided data, Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Reports, and other publically available sources.



We also looked at efforts of the PGC related to the deer population trend and forest habitat health. Table 4 shows that the overall deer population trend is increasing in five WMUs (1A, 3A, 3C, 4C, and 4E) and stable in the other 18 WMUs.<sup>1</sup>

Table 4

<b>Estimates of Deer Populations by WMU, Post-Harvest 2009-2017</b>						
<u>WMU</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2015<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>Population Trend</u>
1A ...	36,152	41,549	48,472	49,169	65,707	Increasing
1B ...	58,926	46,503	55,713	47,438	74,053	Stable
2A ...	50,336	49,033	53,996	30,033	57,963	Stable
2B ...	b	b	b	b	b	Stable
2C ...	72,402	66,729	61,386	66,027	69,034	Stable
2D ...	88,666	101,182	113,774	110,214	112,499	Stable
2E ...	42,709	38,134	44,546	50,549	43,144	Stable
2F ...	67,724	70,765	83,063	61,020	74,387	Stable
2G <sup>c</sup> .		44,582	60,019	40,343	67,942	Stable
2H <sup>c</sup> ..		15,410	13,356	16,872	15,704	Stable
3A ...	32,513	39,532	41,358	36,181	49,426	Increasing
3B ...	46,869	49,768	53,709	55,249	80,598	Stable
3C ...	54,141	59,245	67,720	67,997	85,083	Increasing
3D ...	37,563	30,250	29,225	33,778	33,302	Stable
4A ...	34,628	38,125	36,579	23,772	29,746	Stable
4B ...	39,044	37,273	52,903	45,362	55,941	Stable
4C ...	45,224	58,091	45,586	50,265	55,311	Increasing
4D ...	62,529	73,017	67,011	56,905	63,984	Stable
4E ...	37,339	51,706	48,318	59,206	62,285	Increasing
5A ...	20,504	21,098	28,014	25,032	28,581	Stable
5B ...	59,568	55,951	75,260	60,538	73,573	Stable
5C ...	b	b	b	b	b	Stable
5D ...	b	b	b	b	b	Stable
<b>Total</b>	<b>886,837</b>	<b>987,943</b>	<b>1,080,008</b>	<b>985,950</b>	<b>1,198,263</b>	

<sup>a</sup> The Bureau of Wildlife Management Project Annual Job Report on White-tailed Deer Research Management identified population trends as increasing, decreasing, or stable based on graphical and statistical methods, specifically the Mann-Kendall Test for Trend (Mann 1945, Kendall and Gibbons 1990). These percentages are informational and are not necessarily the basis for the population characterization.

<sup>b</sup> Estimates are not available for these WMUs. See Rosenberry et al. 2011 for further information. Population trend assessment in these WMUs is based on antlered harvests and antlerless catch per unit effort estimates.

<sup>c</sup> WMUs 2G and 2H were created in 2013 by dividing WMU 2G.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

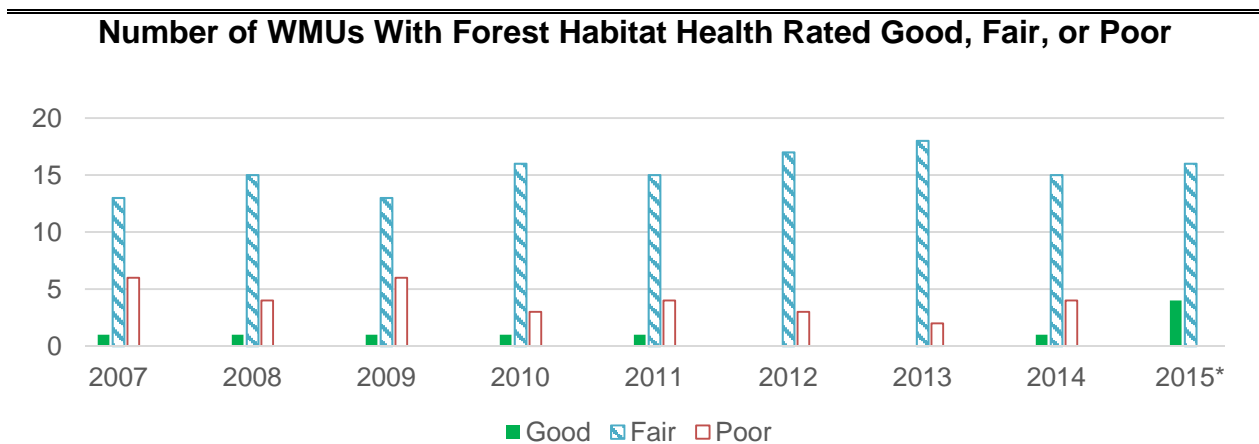
<sup>1</sup> A 6-year trend is used. The 2009-2011 data was not used in this calculation.

Exhibit 4 shows the number of WMUs where forest habitat health was rated as good, fair, or poor. These ratings are based on the percentage of forest plots within the WMU having adequate regeneration (e.g., tree seedlings and saplings growing under the forest canopy). If 70 percent of forested plots have adequate regeneration, forest habitat is considered good. If fewer than 50 percent of forested plots have adequate regeneration, forest habitat is considered poor. If 50-70 percent of forested plots have adequate regeneration, forest habitat is considered fair.

The criterion for good habitat (70 percent or more plots with adequate regeneration) is the threshold at which trees can be harvested with standard forestry practices and forest canopy replacement will occur without requiring further mitigating actions.

As Exhibit 4 shows, the number of WMUs where forest health is rated as good has increased from none in 2012 and 2013, to one in 2014, and four in 2015. We noted, however, that none of these four WMUs had 70 percent or more of their plots rated as good. The PGC explained that if an estimate is statistically different from 50 percent but not significantly different than 70 percent, the ‘benefit of the doubt’ yields a determination of ‘Good.’ An estimate is classified as ‘Fair’ if it is not statistically different than either 50 percent or 70 percent. A WMU would have to be statistically lower than the 50 percent level to be considered ‘Poor.’ The amount of statistical error, or precision, is largely determined by sample size.

Exhibit 4



<sup>a</sup> 2015 data are based on samples collected from 2011 to 2015, Pennsylvania. Results are based on all forested plots and cannot be compared to some previous years that only included 40% to 75% stocked plots.

Source: PGC’s 2016-17 Deer Population Report, June 2017.

## **IV. Appendix**

## APPENDIX A

### Status of Challenges as Reported by PA Game Commission

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	PGC Comment
<b>Challenge 1:</b> Improve service to current and future customers and expand communications and cooperation with legislature.		X			Provided legislative breakfasts, detailed district reports, quarterly newsletter, and expanded regional Information & Education Supervisor responsibilities to include legislative outreach. Using social media and web-based platforms to more effectively and efficiently communicate with the public.
<b>Challenge 2:</b> Use marketing to better sell our agency and our mission.		X			Offered marketing position to two candidates and both turned it down. However, we have increased our communications and expanded the mediums that we use.
<b>Challenge 3:</b> Communicate more clearly using all available media.	X				On-going effort. Using with greater frequency social media platforms, including Facebook (FB), YouTube, etc. Running live cameras for elk viewing and eagle nest viewing.
<b>Challenge 4:</b> Articulate and publicize our mission and its scope.		X			Same as Challenge 3 above. New format for annual report to make it more reader friendly. Using Operation Game Thief to get the public more engaged with helping to turn in individuals who are breaking the law.
<b>Challenge 5:</b> Articulate our mission-critical role in science-based wildlife management.		X			Expanded social media, including FB and Instagram, continuation and marketing of Deer forest study blog, and increased Communications output for PGC activities.
<b>Challenge 6:</b> Increase net income from licensing.			X		Working at securing the first license increase from the Legislature since 1999.
<b>Challenge 7:</b> Retain current license buyers and recruit new license buyers.		X			Expanded hunter mentor program. Developed online hunter safety course, including cable restraint course. Hired Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) coordinator to expand youth field days and youth pheasant hunts.

**Appendix A (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	PGC Comment
<b>Challenge 8:</b> Leverage asset-based revenue without becoming overly dependent on it.	X				Increased wildlife management through forest management by 50% since 2015 with the goal of increasing early successional wildlife habitat and expanding asset-based revenue. Renegotiated pipelines contracts in the SW to increase revenue based on changing demand from industry.
<b>Challenge 9:</b> Realign fully loaded labor costs based on strategic requirements.	X				Reduced labor force where appropriate, both full and part-time staff. Restructured pheasant propagation program by consolidating 4 farms into 2 farms and reducing overall propagation staff by 50%. Outsourced production of day-old chicks to reduce staffing needs.
<b>Challenge 10:</b> Collect and use performance metrics in decision-making.		X			Data crunching and evaluation of on-ground activities to better understand where changes can be made. Specific performance measures have been developed in our timber and State Game Lands (SGL) habitat management programs.
<b>Challenge 11:</b> Embrace the future work model.		X			Hired forest technicians to focus on landscape-level land management; restructured information and education responsibilities to focus on relationship building with legislature and sportsmen.
<b>Challenge 12:</b> Plan for and execute staff transition.		X			Complete transition of senior leadership positions in executive office, bureau directors, and region directors. Currently focusing on leadership and supervisory training with focus on developing next suite of agency leadership.
<b>Challenge 13:</b> Invest in, empower, and enlighten the workforce.		X			Quarterly newsletter to keep employees more informed with agency activities, not just their program areas. Increased communications with employees within program areas as well. Focused efforts by executive office staff to plan in-person visits with field staff to improve communications with all levels of staff and build morale.

**Appendix A (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	PGC Comment
<b>Challenge 14</b> Leverage, empower, and promote the volunteer workforce.	X				Initiated a pilot program (Middle Creek) for increasing volunteer workforce. Developed two mobile apps to promote citizen participation. Increased engagement with Hunter-Trapper Education instructors, supporting legislation that would allow them to purchase a discounted hunting license.
<b>Challenge 15:</b> Support and champion the strategic plan.	X				Reformatted the annual report to make it more user friendly, also incorporating a digital copy that is available with links to PGC produced videos. Conducted interim annual report meeting with staff to gauge progress of strategic plan implementation, and incorporated new action items developed through these meetings.
<b>Challenge 16:</b> Maximize human capital across the organization.		X			Allowing employees to take on additional special project roles to leverage individual talents. Expanded peer contacts.
<b>Challenge 17:</b> Manage State Game Lands using approaches that are realistic for staffing levels and provide for improvements in long-term habitat quality that is accessible to hunters and trappers.	X				Reallocated resources to better serve habitat management including deer hunter focus areas to help with species management. Increased use of prescribed fire and expanded forest management with a focus on early successional habitat development.
<b>Challenge 18:</b> Develop cost/effective policy for habitat management.	X				Technicians leveraged for minimal maintenance management on State Game Lands. Use of larger scale timber sales. Increased the number of acres treated with prescribed fire.
<b>Challenge 19:</b> Manage invasive species on State Game Lands to reduce negative impact to ecological function.		X			On-going work that will never fully be achieved just by the nature of invasive species. We continue to treat for invasive species to control the spread.

**Appendix A (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	PGC Comment
<b>Challenge 20:</b> Develop maintenance and re-placement plans for physical assets.	X				Staff developed a list of Habitat Crew buildings that were in need of replacement and systematically have been replacing buildings throughout the commonwealth with structures that are more energy efficient and effective in housing and maintaining existing equipment. Rifle ranges are being repaired and upgraded as well, based upon review by engineering division staff.
<b>Challenge 21:</b> Control Chronic Waste Disease (CWD) in free-ranging cervids by preventing new introductions into the state, slowing geographic expansion, and decreasing its prevalence where it already exists.			X		CWD has continued to spread in established Deer Management Areas (DMAs). A new DMA has been created in Lancaster County to deal with a CWD positive deer from a cervid farm. Created a new "Special Assistant for CWD Response" to coordinate efforts with PA Department of Agriculture, other state wildlife agencies, and the public. Increased surveillance efforts in 2017 by 30%, initiated sharp shooting at specific locations in DMA2 and DMA3 to contain spread and reduce incidence of CWD. Initiated on-the-ground research project in DMA2, focusing on wild deer.
<b>Challenge 22:</b> Further evaluate the impact of West Nile virus and avian influenza to wildlife populations.	X				Taken steps to reduce the late grouse season in an effort to help stabilize the population. Studying grouse in areas of the state that seem to be unaffected by West Nile. Approved large-scale research project to look at where habitat management efforts could be expanded where West Nile Virus is less of a threat. Working to evaluate the impact on wild turkeys.
<b>Challenge 23:</b> Monitor the prevalence of White Nose Syndrome (WNS) and develop measures to protect remaining populations of cave-dwelling bats.	X				Better understanding of WNS and are able to use those findings to apply them to management principles. Research and monitoring is ongoing. Continue to gate caves to reduce disturbance to bats.

**Appendix A (Continued)**

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	PGC Comment
<b>Challenge 24:</b> Monitor the geographic distribution and prevalence of CWD in Pennsylvania to inform our hunting community and the general public.	X				Increased testing and monitoring of deer, particularly in DMAs. Started conducting town hall meetings in CWD positive areas to educate the public. Attending statewide meetings as requested to discuss CWD.
<b>Challenge 25:</b> Cost effectively use evolving communication technology to increase efficiency of operations for all staff.		X			Began installing the new P25 communications for PGC staff. Expanded use of smart phones for some field staff.



## APPENDIX B

### **Response to This Report**

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

2001 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797

Executive Office  
717-787-3633



May 29, 2018

The Honorable Robert B. Mensch  
Chairman, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
Room 400A Finance Building  
613 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8737

Dear Chairman Mensch,

The Pennsylvania Game Commission would like to take this opportunity to thank the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee for their work on this report. Particularly, thank you to Patricia Berger and Rick Jones for the extensive time and effort that they spent on this.

While we had hoped to have our organization chart finalized in time to include in this review, it is in the final stages of completion and will be finished in the near future. Some of the changes that are being made in terms of purview at the executive level will help streamline workflow and ensure a better continuity of operations.

For the past 120 years, the Game Commission, in accordance with our legislatively mandated mission, has managed the Commonwealth's wildlife resources for current and future generations of Pennsylvanians – not only the 67 game species that are hunted or trapped, but all 480 species of Pennsylvania's wild birds and wild mammals. Wildlife has always been an important part of Pennsylvania's cultural heritage. Every day, it touches the lives of countless Pennsylvanians, hunters and nonhunters alike, and many of us consider wildlife to be a one of the most precious resources this state has to offer.

Although we are a state agency, we do not receive any general fund revenue. Our main funding streams come from a number of sources including Pittman-Robertson Funding; the sale of oil, gas, and minerals (OGM) on state game lands; and of course, hunting and furtaking license sales. These revenue streams are not stable and fluctuate from year to year.

Our license sales are as close to stable funding source as we can get. Historically, license sale revenue has been the number one source of funding for the Game Commission. The last license increase for the PGC was in 1999. Over the past 19 years, we have seen years of good markets and bad. Lately, we have been successful at revamping some of our wildlife programs and have implement numerous expenditure cuts across the board in order to save money. This hasn't come easy and without sacrifices

When looking at the financials in this report, you will notice some discrepancies between the PGC financial numbers and the financials from the Governor's Executive Budget. Please keep in mind that the Executive Budget (2017-18) was drafted at a time that used the most accurate and up-to-date numbers as possible. However, that budget document was developed using numbers from the summer and fall of 2016. This was before gas and timber markets rose, and prior to the PGC making some significant cuts in spending.

These cuts, along with upticks in natural gas markets and timber production have put us in a better position financially right now, but we don't predict this will last. For example, revenues that provide funding to the Pitman-Robertson federal grant are currently down 30% for the first two quarters of 2018; if this decline continues, it would result in millions of dollars of lost revenue to the agency. We still need to pursue more stable funding through a license increase.

The PGC remains committed to our mission of managing the state's wild birds, wild mammals, and their habitats for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryan Burhans".

Bryan J. Burhans  
Executive Director