

FACT SHEET

LB&FC Report on an Audit of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's FY 1996-97 Budget

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) administers and enforces the state's game laws and provides for the protection and propagation of wildlife. The Game and Wildlife Code requires that the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) conduct an annual audit of the PGC's budget.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. **Revenues** - PGC revenues, at \$52.3 million, increased by 1.4 percent over the prior year level. Revenues from three sources accounted for 87 percent of the total: licenses and fees (48 percent); the sale of timber and wood products (24 percent), and federal aid reimbursements (15 percent). The report includes a detailed analysis of PGC revenues. (See pp. 10 to 16.)
 2. **Expenditures** - Cost containment and budget reduction measures reduced PGC expenditures by nearly 6 percent in FY 1996-97 to \$54.5 million. Spending cuts were evident in all areas including personnel services, operational expenses, fixed assets, and subsidies and grants. Many fixed asset purchases, including land acquisition, are being deferred pending further legislative consideration of license increase proposals. (See pp. 17 to 27.)
 3. **Game Fund Balance** - As of June 30, 1997, the Game Fund had a reserve of \$30.9 million, substantially higher than the balance which had previously been projected for that date. The current size of the Fund reserve is attributable to cost containment and budget reduction actions taken by the PGC and restrictions on spending authorization imposed by the Governor's Budget Office. Current PGC projections show the Fund balance dropping to \$8.7 million in FY 1999-00. (See pp. 28 to 32.)
 4. **Cost Containment/Budget Reduction Actions** - The PGC has taken a combination of cost containment measures and budget reduction actions to maintain operations within authorized spending levels. While these actions have appreciably slowed the projected decline of the Game Fund reserve, they are not without consequence for Pennsylvania sportsmen since many have immediate and/or long-range impacts on PGC programs and services. (See pp. 33 to 39.)
 5. **PGC Strategic Plan** - After 12 years and numerous delays, the PGC has formally adopted a *Strategic Plan for Managing Pennsylvania's Wildlife Resources, 1998-2003*. PGC officials plan to link the agency's annual budget to the *Strategic Plan* and adjust their cost accounting system accordingly. This should improve the Commission's budgeting/planning functions and enable future audits to measure and assess PGC expenditures in relation to specific *Strategic Plan* program areas and objectives. Recommendations: The PGC should develop guidelines for personnel to use in linking the budget to the plan and initiate an internal monitoring and reporting system to track accomplishment of *Plan* goals and objectives. (See pp. 40 to 45.)
 6. **Public Access Program** - During FY 1996-97, the PGC's Public Access Program made an additional 4.5 million acres of land available to sportsmen at a relatively minimal cost to the Game Fund. This acreage, which is in addition to the Commonwealth's 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands, provides public hunting opportunities on privately-owned lands. Recommendation: The PGC should periodically publish and list on its web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us. (See pp. 52 to 54.)
 7. **Proposed Management Study** - The Commission is proceeding with plans to have an independent outside consultant evaluate PGC management practices. PGC staff are working with a Management Assistance Team from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish the scope and objectives for the management study. Recommendation: The PGC should seek input and suggestions from the House and Senate Game and Fisheries Committees in establishing the scope and objectives for this review. (See pp. 55 to 56.)
- Other FY 1996-97 Budget-Related Topics** - Another section of the report deals with a wide range of budget-related topics and questions raised by legislators, legislative staff, and various sportsmen's groups. These include, for example, spending for habitat improvement, grants and subsidies, land survey activities, out-of-state travel, pheasant propagation, in-lieu-of tax payments, regional office expenditures, research, WCO training, and toll-free telephone lines; others pertain to the Howard Nursery, the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, and the *Pennsylvania Game News*. (See pp. 57-102.)