

Fact Sheet
LB&FC Report on Pennsylvania Game
Commission Compliance With Its Strategic Plan

Background: Each year between 1985 and 1998 the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) issued an audit report on the PGC's budget. These annual "budget audits" were required by the Game and Wildlife Code. Act 1998-166 changed the nature and frequency of these audits. Act 166 now requires that the LB&FC conduct a performance audit of PGC compliance with its "Strategic Plan" (*Strategic Plan for Managing Pennsylvania's Wildlife Resources, 1998-2003*) at three-year intervals.

Summary of Findings: (See pages S-1 to S-14.)

1. The PGC finalized its *Strategic Plan* in 1998, but has not made a systematic and concerted effort to implement the *Plan* or link it to the annual budget. As a result, the *Plan* has not yet proven to be a significant factor in guiding agency operations, programming, or fiscal decision-making.
2. The PGC's *Strategic Plan* has numerous deficiencies (e.g., related to format, structure, and content), and its implementation has, to a large degree, been overtaken by other important events which are occurring within the agency. Two of these events, a changeover in agency leadership and a 1999 management review, are resulting in fundamental management and organizational changes which impact *Plan* implementation.
3. A management review which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management Assistance Team (MAT) completed at the PGC in mid-1999 resulted in 53 separate recommendations to improve PGC management and effectiveness. Six of these recommendations relate to the PGC's *Strategic Plan* and planning process. The MAT review suggested a substantial revision of the existing plan, including a modification of the *Plan's* program structure.
4. A significant redirection and reorientation of the PGC is underway. This period of "agency revitalization" began with the appointment of a new Executive Director in May 1999 and an expressed commitment to improve all aspects of the agency's operations. To date, the PGC has made substantial progress in a number of areas, and many other initiatives are in process. As part of this effort, the PGC's Executive Director also plans to reexamine and strengthen the agency's *Strategic Plan* and strategic planning process.
5. The PGC has not established a formal program performance measurement system to ensure accountability of its various functions as is required by the Game and Wildlife Code. Although a program performance measurement system has not yet been put in place, the PGC has taken steps in other ways to increase its accountability and improve its relationship with the Legislature, its licensees and stakeholders, and the general public.
6. PGC expended \$58.4 million in FY 1998-99, about 1 percent less than the prior year. In the same year, PGC revenues totaled \$51.8 million resulting in an annual operating deficit of \$6.6 million. Revenues in FY 1999-00, the first year in which the new license fee structure is in effect, are estimated to increase by 18.0 percent to \$61.1 million. The 1998 amendments to the Game and Wildlife Code require that the PGC spend additional monies from license revenues for habitat improvement and restoration (estimated to be at least \$5.7 million during FY 1999-00).
7. Despite increased revenues from the recent license increase, current PGC projections show the Game Fund reaching a deficit position in FY 2003-04. However, a deficit in that year is not likely as the PGC has historically underestimated its annual revenues, and the Budget Office closely monitors the balance when granting the PGC spending authorization.

Recommendations: (See pages S-14 to S-16.)

1. The PGC should fill the position of Strategic Planner and carry out a comprehensive reexamination and revision of its *Strategic Plan* and planning process.
2. In revising and strengthening its *Plan*, the PGC should consider the possible use of the "Comprehensive Management System" (CMS) approach developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Organization of Wildlife Planners.
3. Once hired, the PGC's Strategic Planner should coordinate the development of an agency-wide performance measurement system, and the PGC Commissioners should invite the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's MAT Team back to the PGC to conduct a follow-up review.