

Report Highlights

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

A 1998 amendment to the Game and Wildlife Code requires the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit every three years of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's compliance with its strategic plan for agency operations (*Conserving and Protecting Wildlife for Everyone, 2003-2008*). This is the third report issued under this mandate. The report also addresses the current and projected financial condition of the Game Fund.

Summary of Findings: (See pp. S-4 to S-10.)

- 1. Strategic Plan Implementation. Although the PGC finalized and published a five-year Strategic Plan in May 2003, full-scale implementation of the plan has not occurred. The PGC has progressed through the first two of the four phases of a standard strategic planning model: the "Inventory" phase and the "Strategic Plan development phase. However, the PGC has not yet had either an operational plan to implement its Strategic Plan or an effective evaluation component to monitor implementation progress.
- 2. Impact on Operations. For a number of reasons, the Commission's planning process has not been a priority and the Plan itself has had relatively little, if any, meaningful influence on day-to-day Commission operations, programming, or fiscal decision-making.
- 3. Linkage to the PGC Budget. To function as intended and to effectively guide agency operations, a Strategic Plan must be linked to the agency's budgeting process. In the case of the PGC, this linkage has not yet occurred.
- 4. Program Performance Measurement. The PGC has not yet developed a performance measurement system to assess progress in implementing its Strategic Plan; the Game and Wildlife Code directs the PGC to establish such a system to enhance program and financial accountability.
- 5. Factors Impacting Implementation. Several factors have contributed to implementation problems, primary of which have been an apparent lack of commitment to Plan implementation from the agency's former director; ongoing budgetary problems within the agency; and the elimination of the in-house "PGC Strategic Planner" position.
- 6. Prospects for Plan Implementation. The PGC's current Executive Director has expressed a

strong commitment to the current plan and the strategic planning process. His intent is to incorporate the Strategic Plan into day-to-day PGC operations and to tie the plan to the budget.

- 7. Game Fund Balance. Despite expenditure cuts and ongoing cost-containment measures, the Commission is in need of a substantial revenue augmentation in order to stem the decline in the Game Fund balance and avoid further reductions in programs, services, and staff.

Projections indicate that the fund balance will decline to approximately \$20.6 million by June 30, 2006, about the same level it was at in FY 1999-00 when the last fee increase was granted.

Recommendations: (See pp. S-11 to S-12.)

To operationalize and strengthen its Strategic Plan and strategic planning process, the PGC should:

1. As soon as financially feasible, fill the position of PGC Strategic Planner that has been vacant since early 2003. This position should be organizationally located in the Executive Office and should report directly to the PGC Executive Director.
2. Issue an agency-wide directive clarifying the status of the Commission's strategic planning process and the role the plan is to play in agency operations and budgeting.
3. Seek consulting assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Management Assistance Team (MAT) and the Organization of Wildlife Planners (OWP) to fully activate the planning process, relate the plan to the budget, and develop an agency-wide performance measurement system. Specialized consulting assistance is available to the PGC at little or no cost from the OWP and MAT.
4. Explore the availability of financial assistance for planning in the form of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service strategic planning grant.