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PA Game Commission Compliance With Its Strategic Plan

Conducted Pursuant to Act 1998-166

June 2015

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I. Introduction

Between 1984 and 1998, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) 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 LB&FC’s audit involvement with the Game Commission. Act 1998-166 requires that the LB&FC 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 goals and objectives of Commission’s 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. In particular:

- the extent to which the Commission has implemented policies and programs to improve its relationship with the general public and its licensees in accordance with the strategic plan.
- the extent to which the Commission has required program accountability of its various functions through performance measurement in accordance with its strategic plan.
- the extent to which the Commission has improved its financial accountability of its various functions through performance measurement in accordance with its strategic plan.

Scope and Methodology

Our review covers PGC activities over the past three fiscal years, FY 2011-12, FY 2012-13, and FY 2013-14, as they relate to the goals and objectives of the PGC’s 2009-2014 Strategic Plan.

As in our prior review, we have “graded” the PGC’s success in achieving the goals and objectives of its Strategic Plan. As explained further in Chapter III, this

assessment required a substantial degree of subjective judgment. Nevertheless, we thought the PGC's Annual Reports and the other supplemental materials made available to us provided a reasonable basis from which such judgments could be made.

Acknowledgements

LB&FC 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 Matt Hough, 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 Philip R. Durgin, Executive Director, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, P.O. Box 8737, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-8737.

II. Background Information on the Pennsylvania Game Commission

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.¹

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 December 2014, the PGC had an authorized complement of 714 salaried positions. At that time, a total of 683 positions, were filled and 31 were classified as vacant. Table 1 shows the distribution of the staff complement among the central office, six regional offices, and four game farms.

¹The 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 December 2014)

	Salaried Positions ^a		
	Filled	Vacant	Total
<u>Central Office:</u>			
Executive Office ^b	12	1	13
Bureau of Administrative Services	26	1	27
Bureau of Information and Education	21	1	22
Bureau of Wildlife Management	62	1	63
Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management.....	42	2	44
Bureau of Wildlife Protection	19	1	20
Bureau of Automated Technology Services...	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>
Subtotal - Central Office ^c	198	9	207
<u>Regional Offices:</u>			
Northwest (Franklin)	89	4	93
Southwest (Ligonier)	82	3	85
Northcentral (Jersey Shore)	81	4	85
Southcentral (Huntingdon)	75	1	76
Northeast (Dallas)	82	5	87
Southeast (Reading)	<u>76</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>81</u>
Subtotal - Regional Offices	485	22	507
<u>Game Farms:</u> ^d			
Western	10	0	10
Loyalsock	10	0	10
Northcentral	8	0	8
Southwest.....	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>
Subtotal - Game Farms	<u>36</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>36</u>
Commission Total.....	683	31 ^e	714 ^e

^a Includes salaried positions only. Does not include wage positions and Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers.

^b Includes Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, Executive Secretaries, Chief Counsel, Legislative Liaison, Training Division, Policy Analyst, and Strategic Planner.

^c This figure includes positions that are assigned to the central office but work out of field locations.

^d Although broken out separately on this table, the Game Farms and the positions assigned to them are part of the Wildlife Management Bureau.

^e The PGC's total authorized complement is 714 positions. As of December 2014, a total of 31 positions were vacant. Forty-three positions in a "reserve" or "recruitment" category are not included in the total.

Source: PA Game Commission.

Organizational Structure

As shown on the PGC organizational chart in Exhibit 1, the Commission's 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.

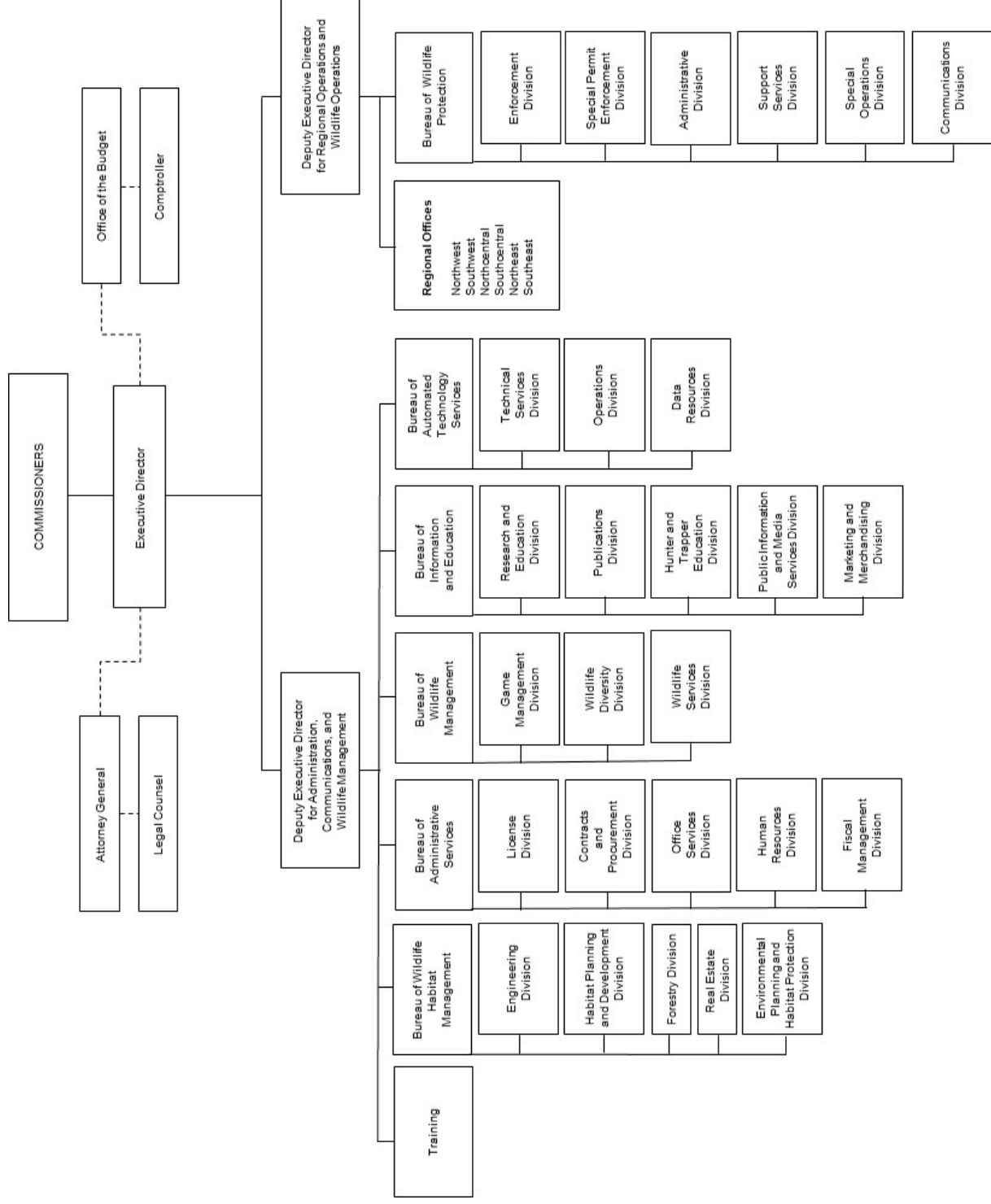
Deputy Executive Director for Regional Operations and Wildlife Protection. This Deputy Executive Director oversees all operations and activities for PGC regional offices as well as for the Bureau of Wildlife Protection.

Regional Offices. Game Commission field operations are administered through its six regional offices in Franklin, Ligonier, 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.

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.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Organization Chart



Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

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, the maintenance, and the 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 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands and assists with another 3 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 1.4 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 co-ordinates 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. As shown in Table 2, resident hunting license sales, the sale of timber, and federal reimbursements are the Commission's three top revenue sources and account for more than one-half of all PGC revenues.

Table 2

Game Fund Revenues and Expenditures
(Fiscal Year End)

Revenues
(\$ Millions)

	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Sale of Timber	\$ 6.6	\$ 7.2	\$ 7.1
Federal Aid Reimbursements	19.6	16.1	20.2
Resident Hunting Licenses	14.1	14.2	14.2
Nonresident Hunting Licenses.....	5.0	4.9	4.9
Antlerless Deer Licenses.....	4.8	4.8	4.6
Other Hunting and Furtaker Licenses.....	10.9	11.2	11.8
Natural Resources and Rights of Way.....	24.7	23.7	28.3
Investment Income	1.1	0.9	1.2
Miscellaneous	5.2	4.0	3.5
Game Law Fines.....	1.2	1.3	1.5
Game News Subscriptions	<u>0.7</u>	<u>0.7</u>	<u>0.6</u>
Total	\$93.9	\$89.0	\$97.9

Expenditures
(\$ Millions)

	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.....	\$37.6	\$39.8	\$ 44.1
Wildlife Protection	16.9	16.2	17.2
Administrative Service	11.7	13.6	16.6
Wildlife Management	11.2	10.8	13.0
Executive Office.....	7.0	5.1	5.0
Information and Education.....	4.4	4.0	5.2
Automated Tech. Services	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Total	\$92.1	\$92.8	\$104.9

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Game Fund Financial Condition

As shown in Table 3 below, the ending balance in the Game Fund on June 30, 2014, was \$23.5 million. Based on current revenue estimates and spending authorization levels, the Governor's Budget shows an estimated Fund balance of \$17.3 million at the end of FY 2014-15.

Table 3

Game Fund Comparative Financial Statement (\$000)			
	FY 2013-14 (Actual)	FY 2014-15 (Available)	FY 2015-16 (Estimated)
Beginning Balance	\$ 25,999	\$ 23,464	\$ 17,267
Plus:			
Revenue Estimate	\$ 97,939	\$ 103,360	\$ 98,834
Prior Year Lapses.....	<u>9,660</u>	<u>6,147</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Receipts	\$ 107,599	\$ 109,507	\$ 98,834
Funds Available	\$ 133,598	\$ 132,971	\$116,101
Minus:			
Total Expenditures	<u>110,134</u>	<u>115,704</u>	<u>115,889</u>
Ending Balance	\$ 23,464	\$ 17,267	\$ 212

Note: This is a budgetary basis financial statement as presented in the Governor's Executive Budget. The figures shown differ from those shown in the PGC Game Fund Balance Sheet and Game Fund Statement of Changes in Fund Balance, as published in the *Pennsylvania Game News* because the figures in the *Game News* are prepared on the modified accrual basis of accounting.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

For the PGC, a fund balance in the \$25 million to \$30 million range is of significance because of the timing of cash flow to the Game Fund. Because revenues from license sales do not begin to flow into the Game Fund until late August or early September, a balance of about \$23 million is needed as of July 1 of a new fiscal year in order to keep the agency operating.

III. The PGC's Strategic Plan, 2009-2014

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 (LB&FC) audit the Commission's compliance with its Strategic Plan every three years. This is the sixth report issued by the Committee under this mandate.

Strategic Plan Overview

The PGC's current Strategic Plan, 2009-2014, has seven goals and identifies the PGC's Vision, Values, and Mission Statements as shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

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

- VISION:** To be the leader among wildlife agencies, and champion of 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
 - Be open, honest, and forthright in all matters
 - Provide quality service both internally and externally
 - Carry out responsibilities in a polite, professional and considerate manner
 - Be ethical in the performance of all duties
 - Encourage the professional development of all employees
 - Have pride in our wildlife 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.

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 clear and concise statement of what the agency is seeking to accomplish. This statement serves as the purpose for everything the Commission does. All Commission functions are in support of its mission. The PGC Strategic Plan Structure is shown in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3

PGC Strategic Plan Structure



Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

As shown above, the PGC's **Goals** are macro level statements of how the Commission intends to complete its mission. Goals set priorities for the development of strategic objectives and transcend agency bureaus. The PGC has the following seven goals in its current Strategic Plan.

- Conserve, protect and restore wildlife populations for their many public values.

- Improve the public's appreciation of wildlife and their awareness and understanding of wildlife resource management.
- Promote and perpetuate our hunting and trapping heritage.
- Manage and protect a network of public and private lands and waters to provide habitat for wildlife.
- Enhance the public's understanding of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's mission and its responsibilities.
- Develop sustainable funding sources that support the agency's mission and identity.
- Promote a diverse, professional and efficient organization.

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 41 strategic objectives.

Supporting the strategic objectives are bureau and division activities referred to as **Operational Objectives**. A total of 150 operational objectives were identified under the various strategic objectives. The PGC also has identified numerous **Outcome** and **Output Measures**. Outcome measures evaluate the results of an activity, plan, process, or program within a strategic objective and compare them with the intended results. Output measures are quantitative expressions of those results.

Strategic Plan Implementation and Compliance

The PGC's 2009-2014 Strategic Plan is the first version of the plan whose goals and objectives we believed could be independently assessed. Nevertheless, our assessment required a substantial degree of subjective judgment because:

- The goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan are not specific, quantifiable, or time-limited. For example, the Strategic Objective 2.4 is "Promote wildlife conservation education throughout Pennsylvania." A more measureable objective would be "Promote wildlife conservation education by annually conducting at least 100 education programs for K-12 students, leading 20 volunteer education specialist programs, and establishing 1 new wildlife learning center."
- Although the Strategic Objectives do have associated Outcome Measures and Output Measures, these measures are also often not quantifiable (e.g., "Improve the public's appreciation and interaction for/with Commonwealth's wildlife resources"). For many objectives, our determinations had to be made largely on narrative descriptions of the PGC activities relating to the objective.

- The PGC does not collect or report information on many of the outcome and output measures included in the Strategic Plan.
- Many of the Goals and Strategic Objectives are overlapping and/or redundant. For example, Strategic Objective 2.3 is “Expand the availability of wildlife resource information to the public,” Strategic Objective 2.4 is “Promote wildlife conservation education throughout Pennsylvania,” and Strategic Objective 2.6 is “Increase the public’s understanding of wildlife and their habitat needs.” While there might be slight nuance differences in these objectives, they are all essentially the same objective. We focused on the outcome and output measures as enumerated in the Strategic Plan for each specific Strategic Objective, but also considered the outcome and output measures of related objectives in making our assessments.

Despite these difficulties, we thought the PGC’s Annual Reports and the other supplemental materials made available to us provided a reasonable basis from which a judgment could be made as to the level of achievement (as of December 31, 2014) of the PGC’s strategic objectives.

Our assessment of the degree to which the PGC has fulfilled the goals and objective of its 2009-2014 Strategic Plan, along with a brief rationale for the rating given, is presented in Exhibit 4. For additional information on the PGC’s activities with regard to any specific objective, 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	LB&FC Comment
GOAL 1: Conserve, protect and restore wildlife populations for their many public values		✓			1 Strategic Objective was Fully or Largely Achieved and 5 were Partially Achieved.
Strategic Objective 1.1: Maintain sustainable wildlife populations		X			As shown below, several species have made or are making good come-backs. However, many other species are in decline, some to the point where their sustainability in the Commonwealth is in doubt.
Deer	●				The PGC's deer plan objective calls for stable populations in 20 of the 23 Units, an increase in one Unit, and a decrease in deer in two WMUs. Actual population trends match the PGC's objective in all but 7 WMUs; in 4 WMUs, the deer population trend is increasing whereas the goal is to stabilize the population; in 2 WMUs, the population trends are stable whereas the goal is to decrease the population; and in 1 WMU, the population is stable whereas the goal is an increase. (See Table 4.)
Elk	●				The PGC estimates the PA elk population to be a minimum of 881. In 1974, the elk population was estimated at 38.
Bear	●				The PGC estimated the 2014 pre-season PA bear population to be 18,100. In 1990, PA's bear population was estimated at fewer than 7,000. Over the past 7 years, the bear population has been stable.
Turkey	●				In 2014, PA hunters experienced a better-than-average Spring season, with approximately 41,260 birds being taken. The 2013 Fall turkey harvest was 16,775; well above the 2012 harvest (14,074), but still below the long term averages.
Ring-necked Pheasant		●			Ring-necked pheasants are a non-native bird whose populations have decreased dramatically since the 1970s, due to habitat loss and changing agricultural practices. The PGC is attempting to establish self-sustaining populations of RNPs in 4 Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas. In early 2014, 68 RNPs were live-captured in Montana and brought to PA for release (wild-trapped birds have better survival rates than propagated birds). In the past, the PGC has had difficulty obtaining wild-trapped birds.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Ruffed Grouse		●			Ruffed grouse have been in a long-term decline. By 2025, PGC plans to restore the grouse populations to 1980 levels (226,000 males) from the 2007 population level of 197,000. This is to be done primarily by increasing the number of acres in early successional (young forest) habitat. Summer 2013 sighting survey numbers showed improvement, but 2014 sighting survey numbers were down 6% from 2013.
Northern Bobwhite Quail			●		PA bobwhite quail populations have declined by 97%. The bobwhite is now listed as a PA species of special concern, and most PA counties no longer have breeding bobwhites. The PGC has drafted a management plan for bobwhite quail, which includes identifying potential Bobwhite Quail Focus Areas to maintain and breed wild bobwhites, but it will require significant investments.
Woodcocks^a		●			2014 Spring male singing survey numbers were up 17% over 2013, but still well below long-term averages. Although woodcock populations have been stable over the past 10 years, they have declined an estimated 43% since the early 1970s, primarily due to the loss of early successional forest habitat. The PGC has an objective of creating an additional 1.17 million acres of such habitat by 2022.
Mallards^a		●			The state's 2014 mallard population is estimated at 72,016 breeding pairs, well below the long-term average of 94,530 pairs, but an improvement over recent lows (e.g., 60,499 breeding pairs in 2012).
Black ducks^a			●		Historically, black ducks were among the most abundant ducks in eastern North America. Populations have decreased dramatically, and PA is now estimated to have fewer than 500 pairs. Black ducks are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Pennsylvania.
Wood ducks^a	●				Wood duck populations are stable to increasing slightly (estimated at 61,555 breeding pairs in 201; similar to the 15-year average, but well above the average of the mid-1990s).

^a Management of these birds is a federal responsibility.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Hooded and Common Mergansers^a	●				2013 estimates of total hooded and common mergansers were well above average and appear to have increased in recent decades.
Canada goose^a		●			The resident population of Canada geese in PA—around 250,000—appears to be stabilizing after rapid growth in the 1990s, but is well above the goal of 150,000.
Snow goose^a		●			The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found snow geese to be overabundant and has allowed additional hunting of these geese. The PGC has instituted such conservation seasons, but the 2014 snow goose harvest (regular and conservation) was only 3,433, 17% below the 6-year average.
Fishers	●				The PGC reports that fisher populations are rapidly expanding since being re-introduced in 1996. Fishers were extirpated in PA and several other parts of the U.S. in the early part of the 20 th century.
River otter	●				Otter populations have expanded to the point that the PGC's goal is now to maintain a stable population. In 2014, the PGC completed its first-ever management plan for river otters.
Bobcat	●				Bobcat populations have been expanding since 1990, both in numbers and geographic locations. The PGC reports that recent data suggests populations are starting to stabilize or decline slightly.
Beaver	●				Beavers, once rare in Pennsylvania, are now plentiful.
Coyote		●			The widespread expansion of coyotes, a species that may not be indigenous to Pennsylvania, is a recognized threat and problem for both humans and native PA wildlife. The PGC has taken a number of actions to reduce coyote numbers (e.g., no closed season on coyotes and allowing additional trapping devices), but the PGC has not adopted a formal plan for how to address coyote expansion.

^a Management of these birds is a federal responsibility.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 1.2: Develop and enforce laws and regulations to protect wildlife populations and habitat	X				In FY 2013-14, PGC officers conducted investigations that resulted in 13,539 warnings and 7,045 citations. This compares to 12,958 warnings and 6,758 citations in FY 2012-13. The most frequent violation in both years was Unlawful Taking or Possession of Game or Wildlife. In 2014, the PGC participated in Operation Talon, together with officers from the PFBC, PSP, and DCNR. During this 2-week operation, officers issued 217 warnings and filed citations for 307 violations of the Game & Wildlife Code.
Strategic Objective 1.3: Assess public values and uses of wildlife		X			The PGC hired a Human Dimensions Specialist in July 2010. The HDS is a peer reviewer of the <i>Human Dimension of Wildlife</i> journal. The HDS also participates or consults on various surveys of hunters and furtakers, but these surveys are more to estimate the number of participants and animals taken than they are to assess public values and uses of wildlife.
Strategic Objective 1.4: Improve the population trends of endangered, threatened and wildlife species of greatest conservation need		X			The populations of several endangered/threatened birds (e.g., bald eagles, ospreys, and peregrine falcons) are increasing but the populations of many other Pennsylvania threatened or endangered species (e.g., Indiana bat, Northern flying squirrel, golden-winged warbler, and both black and yellow-crowned night herons) do not appear to be improving. Populations of the upland sandpiper, northern harrier, and long-eared owls--all endangered or threatened species--continue to decline.
Strategic Objective 1.5: Restore extirpated wildlife species where landscape attributes and public values are favorable		X			Although the PGC has successfully reintroduced river otters and fishers, it has not attempted to restore any new extirpated (species that have disappeared from PA) in recent years. The PGC has, with federal Endangered Species funds, restored more than 30 acres of critical shoreline habitat at Presque Isle, Erie, to benefit the piping plover (federally endangered, and currently extirpated from PA). This habitat work could also benefit extirpated common terns, if successful. Other extirpated species include Bachman's sparrows, Bewick's wrens, mountain lions, timber wolves, lynx, and American marten.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 1.6: Manage nuisance wildlife impacts professionally, effectively, and economically		X			The PGC reports it has a system in place that tracks the number of nuisance wildlife calls that WCOs respond to, but does not "release information relating to the number and nature of complaints received on at least an annual basis," as required by Act 1998-166. In FY 2011-12, the PGC worked in conjunction with the Northeast Wildlife Damage Management Research and Outreach Cooperative on a survey of public attitudes toward wildlife problems to obtain information on strategies to address public concerns regarding nuisance wildlife problems.
GOAL 2: Improve the public's appreciation of wildlife, and their awareness and understanding of wildlife resource management	✓				3 Strategic Objectives were Fully or Largely Achieved, 3 were Partially Achieved.
Strategic Objective 2.1: Determine the public's awareness, attitudes, values and knowledge of wildlife and support for wildlife resource management		X			The PGC hired a Chief of Research and Education in July 2010 and has conducted a number of surveys about hunting and wildlife viewing. Facebook and twitter accounts were also established to monitor the public's attitude and knowledge of wildlife issues.
Strategic Objective 2.2: Enhance the public's knowledge and understanding of the role of hunting and trapping in wildlife management		X			One of the PGC's objectives is to establish baseline information on the public's perception of the role of hunters and trappers. We found no evidence that the PGC has attempted to establish such baseline information. The PGC does, however, produce various products, including the <i>PA Game News</i> , emphasizing the importance of hunting and trapping in wildlife management. The PGC also has displays and a presence at the PA Farm Show and other shows and events across the Commonwealth.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 2.3: Expand the availability of wildlife resource information to the public	X				The PGC reported making improvements to its website related to wildlife resources, including White-Nose Syndrome map updates; produced short videos on barn owls, waterfowl banding, and chronic wasting disease; live-streamed a barn owl and bald eagle nest cam and snow goose migration at Middle Creek; mailed newsletters to over 550 Grouse and Woodcock Hunter Cooperators; and provided various other public information services and products.
Strategic Objective 2.4: Promote wildlife conservation education throughout Pennsylvania	X				The PGC reports that in FY 2012-13 it conducted 133 wildlife conservation workshops with 3,188 teachers/educators. 15,000 students participated in county Envirothon events and 300 competed at the state event. The National Envirothon event was held in PA in 2012, with assistance provided by PGC staff. These programs have been active and operational for several years.
Strategic Objective 2.5: Promote the "Connect with Wildlife" program		X			The PGC has taken steps to promote the Connect with Wildlife theme, including involving volunteer citizens in the summer Appalachian Bat Count. PGC also promotes the Christmas Bird Count, the oldest running citizen science project about birds in America. The PGC works with citizen volunteers on various other projects, but these typically involve fewer than 200 citizens (not including events where nest boxes are built).
Strategic Objective 2.6: Increase the public's understanding of wildlife and their habitat needs	X				In 2013-14, PGC biologists reported developing conservation plans for 93 species of special concern on 14,195 acres, many of which were private property. The PGC also reported that habitat improvements were made to 12,176 acres of fields and young forests through several programs for the benefit of wildlife and hunters on private lands. Various other activities, include a number of wildlife habitat articles being written and published, also occurred.
GOAL 3: Promote and perpetuate our hunting and trapping heritage		✓			2 Strategic Objectives were Fully or Largely Achieved, 4 were Partially Achieved, and 1 was Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 3.1: Increase hunter and trapper recruitment		X			The PGC reports general hunting licenses increased by 0.5% from FY 2009-10 to FY 2013-14 (from 948,323 to 952,989), but fell back to 943,811 in FY 2014-15. This is above the average for the most recent 10-year period, but still well below sales in 2003 (1,018,248). The PGC also reports the number of new hunters is up, from 30,213 in 2009 to 41,462 in 2014. The PGC created a Mentored Adult Hunting Permit in 2014 as a way to introduce newcomers to hunting, and the sale of junior hunting licenses increased to 89,600 in FY 2013-14 compared to 85,698 in FY 2010-11.
Strategic Objective 3.2: Promote the safe, responsible and ethical behavior of hunters and trappers		X			During FY 2012-13, the PGC reported 28 hunting-related shooting incidents, with no fatalities. While higher than in FY 2010-11 (25 incidents), this is still below the 10-year average. The Unlawful Taking of Game or Wildlife continues to be, by far, the most common violation of the Game Code. The PGC certified 37,089 students in FY 2012-13 and 41,462 students in FY 2013-14 through its Hunter/Trapper Education Program.
Strategic Objective 3.3: Increase the retention rate of hunters and trappers		X			The Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System has been in effect for 5 years, and the PGC is beginning to analyze data for trends related to hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation, together with license-buying habits. GoHuntPA, a radio and television commercial, was aired in 2014 aimed at boosting hunting license sales for hunters who might not buy a license every year.
Strategic Objective 3.4: Provide sustained opportunities for hunters and trappers to take wildlife	X				Total deer harvest during the 2013-14 season was estimated at 352,920, an increase of about 3% compared to the previous year. <i>Bowhunter Magazine</i> ranks bowhunting among the 50 states, and PA ranked near the top in both total harvest density (2 nd) and archery harvest density (3 rd). The antlerless success rate for hunters remained about 25% for the licenses issued. The number of 2.5 year and older bucks harvested has increased substantially over the past 15 years, from 34,500 in FY 1998-99 to 71,200 in FY 2013-14. Of the top seven bear harvests on record in PA, 4 have occurred in the past 4 years.
Strategic Objective 3.5: Promote and expand hunting and trapping access on public and private lands			X		In FY 2013-14, only 2.2 million acres of private land were enrolled in the public access hunting program, down from 2.7 million acres in FY 2012-13. These figures are well below the 4.4 million acres of private land that were enrolled in 2007. In FY 2012-13, the PGC acquired 11,332 acres of new state game lands and 12,222 new acres in FY 2013-14.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
<i>Strategic Objective 3.6: Improve hunter and trapper understanding of their role in wildlife management</i>	X				A record number of students (41,462) were certified through hunter/trapper education classes in FY 2013-14. An online hunter/trapper education course was developed in 2014, allowing hunters to complete the course at home.
<i>Strategic Objective 3.7: Provide enhanced pheasant hunting opportunity through a put-and-take operation and a reintroduction program</i>		X			The Strategic Plan calls for the PGC to release up to 250,000 pheasants annually for public hunting. In 2010 and 2011, the PGC released only 111,929 and 112,350 pheasants, respectively, citing fiscal cutbacks. In FY 2012-13, the PGC released 200,968 pheasants for hunting and in FY 2013-14, that number was increased to 220,742. Pheasant populations have been established on four of the PGC's five Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas, but a fifth site reached the end of its 6-year evaluation period without meeting the thresholds for success and has been terminated.
GOAL 4: Manage and protect a network of public and private lands and waters to provide habitat for wildlife		✓			1 Strategic Objective was Fully or Largely Achieved and 7 were Partially Achieved.
<i>Strategic Objective 4.1: Provide planning and technical habitat management guidance to landowners</i>		X			In FY 2012-13, PGC regional wildlife biologists completed 101 new private landowner assistance plans (PLAP) encompassing 14,174 acres statewide and visited other PLAP properties to view implementation. The PLAP program targets private property owners to make their property more attractive for wildlife, particularly species of greatest conservation need. From 2004 to 2013, wildlife diversity biologists made 1,189 site visits with private landowners and enrolled 180,735 acres in the Private Landowner Assistance Program.
<i>Strategic Objective 4.2: Increase game lands acreage with an emphasis on access, interiors, indentures, and critical or unique habitats</i>		X			In FY 2012-13, the PGC acquired 18,304 acres of new state game lands and 12,222 new acres in FY 2013-14. The new acreage amounts to about 2 percent of total State Game Land acreage. Of the land acquired in 2012-13, two properties were interiors, five were indentures, and seven were new access routes. The PGC did not indicate whether any of the new purchases included critical or unique habitats.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 4.3: Complete all comprehensive State Game Lands plans		X			Comprehensive game lands planning includes updating infrastructure records, habitat cover, forest types, access roads, parking lots, and all aspects of Game Lands management. In 2012-13, plans were completed for 160,236 SGL acres in 40 separate plans. As of the end of FY 2012-13, 161 comprehensive management plans covering 504,000 of PGC's 1.5 million acres had been completed.
Strategic Objective 4.4: Promote wildlife habitat planning and management on non-Game Commission public lands		X			Coordination on non-PGC public lands provides additional hunting and habitat management opportunities. There are 37,319 acres of Army Corps of Engineers land managed by PGC through cooperative agreements and an additional 41,965 acres of State Forest and State Park habitats cooperatively managed by Game Commission crews. PGC also reports working with DCNR to improve woodcock habitat on 900 acres of state forests and working with various state and federal agencies to implement the Prescribed Burning Practices Act as a habitat management tool.
Strategic Objective 4.5: Avoid, protect, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on wildlife habitats					In FY 2012-13, a total of 981 acres of right-of-way impact was mitigated through re-vegetation plans, and the PGC received payments of \$4.6 million for habitat damages. The PGC also denied 10 ROW requests due to potential adverse impacts or because viable alternatives were available. PGC regional wildlife diversity biologists assisted with 93 PA Natural Diversity Inventory reviews of oil and gas projects and numerous other PNDI reviews for construction and development, pipeline, and mining projects. The PGC's efforts to improve forest health through its deer management plan does not, however, appear to have been effective, at least as yet, as there has been little or no improvement over the past 8 years in the number of WMUs with improved forest health (see Exhibit 5).
Strategic Objective 4.6: Provide and maintain adequate infrastructure to support wildlife habitat management and hunting/trapping		X			In FY 2012-13, the PGC reported infrastructure improvements of \$1.5 million as part of timber sales. The PGC also reported that 28 new bridges and 2 new buildings were constructed on game lands in FY 2012-13 as well as 6 building renovation projects. The PGC also reported it has a large backlog of projects to complete in the next decade. (See also Table 5.)

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 4.7: Enhance and increase wildlife habitat on state game lands through the recovery of natural resources	X				Revenues for oil/gas and mining deposited into the Game Fund were \$19.8 million in FY 2012-13 and \$23.2 million in FY 2013-14, well above the averages for the period FY 2004-05 through FY2010-11 (about \$4.8 million). Timber revenues were \$7.3 million in FY 2012-13 and \$7.1 million in FY 2013-14, above some recent years (e.g., \$4.4 million in FY 2010-11) but below the timber revenues generated 10 years ago, which often approached or exceeded \$15 million.
Strategic Objective 4.8: Identify and manage key habitats identified in the Wildlife Action Plan		X			The PGC reported that in FY 2012-13, all comprehensive management plans submitted (40) listed key habitats per the Wildlife Action Plan. The PGC took steps to expand wetland habitats and improve habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species, including the Indiana bat, small-footed and long-eared bats, Allegheny woodrat, and golden-winged warblers. One new Important Bird Area has been established since 2012, but no new Important Mammal Areas (these are Audubon programs).
GOAL 5: Enhance the public's understanding of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's mission and its responsibilities	✓				2 Strategic Objectives were Fully or Largely Achieved and 1 was Partially Achieved.
Strategic Objective 5.1: Determine the public's knowledge and understanding of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, its legal mandates, responsibilities and funding		X			We could not find evidence that the PGC has undertaken efforts to assess the public's understanding of the PGC mandates and responsibilities, but it has undertaken many educational efforts to educate the public on PGC's role and responsibilities in various areas.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
<i>Strategic Objective 5.2: Use a stakeholder process to gather public input in developing programs and plans</i>	X				In FY 2012-13, the PGC reported it met with more than 30 stakeholder groups for a deer management update, including question and answer periods. PGC staff held an annual waterfowl symposium at the Middle Creek WMA to distribute information and receive recommendations from various groups and individuals. Similar meetings were held with Woodcock Limited of PA, the PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, and other organizations. Surveys of hunter attitudes and meetings to garner input from hunter and select conservation groups were also undertaken.
<i>Strategic Objective 5.3: Promote a league of partnerships to achieve mutual goals for wildlife and habitat</i>	X				The PGC partners with a wide variety of groups and organizations pertaining to both game and non-game species. In FY 2012-13, PGC staff participated in numerous committees and councils to facilitate cooperative regional efforts regarding migratory game birds, nongame migratory birds, mourning doves, and resident upland game birds. The PGC also participates in the Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee and various other regional initiatives and ventures. PGC has coordinated with several organizations and practitioners on research and responses to chronic wasting disease, the PA Prescribed Fire Council regarding prescribed burning, and regional and national agencies regarding native plant restoration.
GOAL 6: Develop sustainable funding sources that support the agency's mission and identity		✓			2 Strategic Objectives were Partially Achieved and 2 were Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved.
<i>Strategic Objective 6.1: Partner with the Wildlife For Everyone Endowment Foundation, other foundations and non-governmental organizations to financially support wildlife conservation programs and projects</i>		X			The PGC partnered with the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation to acquire designated wetlands for species of special concern and to fund several interns in the PGC. In FY 2012-13, the PGC received \$87,761 from the PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (PANWTF) for 51 PGC habitat proposals and worked with PSU's Center for Watershed Stewardship and Penns Valley Conservation Association on habitat improvement in Centre County. The PGC also provides financial support for the NWTTF regional biologist and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative coordinator.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 6.2: Increase the use of grants, mitigation and reimbursements		X			The PGC reported receiving \$711,512 in federal reimbursements and miscellaneous wildlife grants in FY 2013-14. The PGC did not report a total figure in FY 2012-13, but did indicate receiving grants from a number of sources, including several federal Pittman-Robertson and USFWS grants and grants from private sources such as the NWTf, PANWTF, and the Palmerton Natural Resources Trustee Council.
Strategic Objective 6.3: Seek legislative action to provide alternative funding sources			X		A bill was introduced to provide an increase in license fees, but it never moved through the legislature. The PGC reported in 2013 that it does not anticipate alternative funding related to taxes in the near future.
Strategic Objective 6.4: Create a Friends of Wildlife donation program			X		In 2013 the PGC reported that the Friends of Wildlife donation program was redirected to the Dave Grove Scholarship Fund in Penn State University.
GOAL 7: Promote a diverse, professional and efficient organization		✓			2 Strategic Objectives were Fully or Largely Achieved, and 5 were Partially Achieved.
Strategic Objective 7.1: Ensure that agency employment and volunteer recruitment information is widely distributed to the public		X			The PGC used volunteers for the wild turkey hen harvest and survival rate study and the woodcock singing ground survey. To improve recruitment of Wildlife Conservation Officers, the PGC completed a video for the Cadet Civil Service Exam. The PGC issued news releases to solicit volunteers and has a series of volunteer instructor recruitment tools including a 6-minute DVD, banner displays, brochures, and an online recruitment presence.
Strategic Objective 7.2: Promote and increase professional development opportunities for employees		X			PGC staff are members of numerous wildlife organizations; serve on many professional committees and organizations; attend and give presentations and many workshops, symposia, and conferences; and publish articles in the <i>Pennsylvania Game News</i> and other publications. The efforts and opportunities for professional development are similar to opportunities in prior years.

Exhibit 4 (Continued)

	Fully or Largely Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved	Unknown/ Not Able to Assess	LB&FC Comment
Strategic Objective 7.3: Increase employee knowledge and understanding of the Pennsylvania Game Commission		X			The PGC provided a deer management training program to all PGC employees.
Strategic Objective 7.4: Analyze workloads to determine organizational structure and requirements		X			In 2013, the PGC reported it reorganized the Bureau of Information and Education, and the Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management conducted a workload analysis of PNDI permit requests. The PGC reported that the BWHM analysis increased efficiency of the permit requests and eliminated the backlog.
Strategic Objective 7.5: Promote recognition for employees and volunteers	X				The PGC has several programs for awards to both employees and volunteers. The PGC issued 111 Outstanding Hunter Education Instructor awards in FY 2012-13, as well as 6 Regional Instructors of the Year and 1 State Instructor of the Year.
Strategic Objective 7.6: Modernize the administrative infrastructure	X				The PGC has deployed a Computer Aided Dispatch System to its WCO force and reports that the system has been well-received. In June 2013 the PGC added a Mapping Center to its web portal, which allows hunters and others to search and print maps of state game lands and to find lands that are open to the public, including where to park. The PGC has also undertaken disaster recovery tests, including testing the re-routing of data traffic from Harrisburg to the NWRO.
Strategic Objective 7.7: Analyze processes to ensure continued improvement of programs		X			The PGC reports it is migrating the application programs running on its mainframe computer to a server-based platform. It had established a completion date of December 31, 2014, but now has a new completion date of August 31, 2015. The PGC also undertakes training for its personnel in such areas as how to identify and respond to chronic wasting disease and proper techniques for banding birds. WCOs are now equipped with body cameras.

Source: Developed by LB&FC staff. Information in the "Comment" section is from Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Reports and other publicly available sources.

Table 4

Estimates of Deer Populations by WMU, Post-Harvest 2009-2014

<u>WMU</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>% Change 2009 to 2014</u>	<u>Population Trend</u>	<u>Deer Plan Objective</u>
1A....	36,152	44,148	41,549	42,420	48,472	55,114	52.5%	Increasing	Stable
1B....	58,926	44,469	46,503	51,697	55,713	53,799	-8.7	Stable	Stable
2A....	50,336	56,286	49,033	68,080	53,996	43,379	-13.8	Stable	Stable
2B....	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Stable	Stable
2C ...	72,402	62,340	66,729	64,888	61,386	68,683	-5.1	Stable	Stable
2D ...	88,666	86,493	101,182	102,440	113,774	144,084	62.5	Increasing	Stable
2E....	42,709	38,317	38,134	30,384	44,546	45,529	6.6	Stable	Stable
2F....	67,724	46,887	70,765	53,210	83,063	65,614	-3.1	Stable	Stable
2G ^b ...		41,125	44,582	58,441	60,019	49,313		Stable	Stable
2H ^b ..		12,338	15,410	12,554	13,356	16,537		Stable	Stable
3A....	32,513	31,412	39,532	31,224	41,358	45,317	39.4	Stable	Increase
3B....	46,869	48,895	49,768	58,481	53,709	63,803	36.1	Increasing	Stable
3C ...	54,141	65,624	59,245	64,359	67,720	58,925	8.8	Stable	Decrease
3D ...	37,563	25,378	30,250	31,299	29,225	25,127	-33.1	Stable	Stable
4A....	34,628	30,789	38,125	49,191	36,579	42,196	21.9	Stable	Stable
4B....	39,044	43,550	37,273	60,340	52,903	50,517	29.4	Stable	Decrease
4C ...	45,224	44,256	58,091	45,093	45,586	49,072	8.5	Stable	Stable
4D ...	62,529	46,284	73,017	70,495	67,011	61,428	-1.8	Stable	Stable
4E....	37,339	36,311	51,706	44,225	48,318	50,707	35.8	Stable	Stable
5A....	20,504	20,512	21,098	35,598	28,014	29,715	44.9	Increasing	Stable
5B....	59,568	53,213	55,951	60,723	75,260	63,591	6.8	Stable	Stable
5C ...	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Stable	Stable
5D ...	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Stable	Stable
Total	886,837	878,627	987,943	1,035,142	1,080,008	1,082,450	22.1%		

^a 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.

^b WMUs 2G and 2H were created in 2013 by dividing WMU 2G.

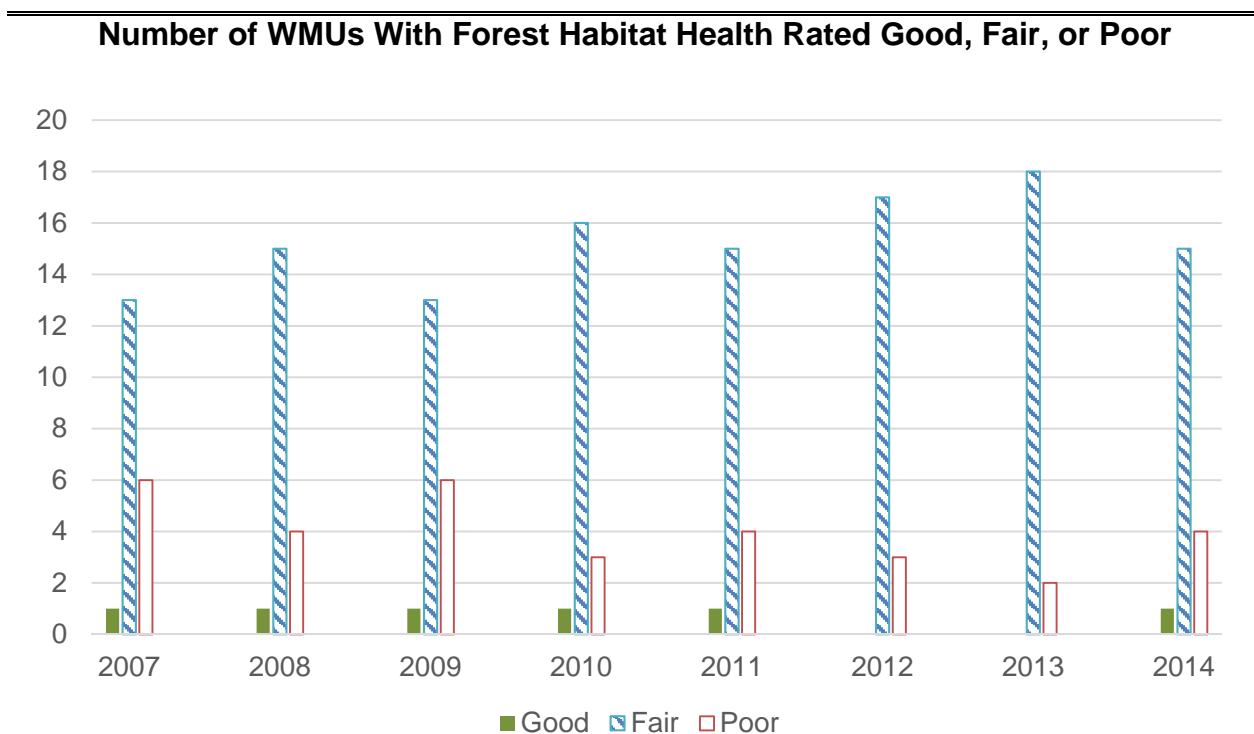
Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Exhibit 5 shows the number of Wildlife Management Units 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.¹

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 further requiring further mitigating actions.

As Exhibit 5 shows, there has been no significant overall change in the forest health of the WMUs over the past eight years, with the 2014 measurement matching the average for the period (i.e., 1 WMU rated good; 15 WMUs, fair; and 4 WMUs, poor).

Exhibit 5



Source: PGC's 2015-16 Deer Population Report, April 2015.

¹ Results from individual plots are compared in a paired analysis over a five-year period. For example, plots measurements from 2005 are compared to their remeasured results in 2010 to see if regeneration has improved on this plot.

Table 5

PGC Game Land Construction and Maintenance Expenditures (\$ Millions)			
	<u>FY 2011-12</u>	<u>FY 2012-13</u>	<u>FY 2013-14</u>
Game Lands Construction and Maintenance	\$10.219	\$11.557	\$21.158 ^a

^a Increase largely due to new construction costs incurred for the North East Regional Office Building.

Source: Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Recommendations

We recommend:

1. **The PGC consider streamlining its Strategic Plan by eliminating redundant objectives and outcome and output measures for which data is not collected or that are not particularly relevant to the objective.** The PGC Strategic Plan contains 41 strategic objectives, 150 operational objectives, and over 500 outcome and output measures. Several of the PGC's strategic objectives are very similar. For example, Strategic Objective 2.4 (Promote wildlife conservation education throughout Pennsylvania) is very similar to Strategic Objective 2.5 (Promote the "Connect with Wildlife" program) and Strategic Objective 2.6 (Increase the public's understanding of wildlife and their habitat needs). Many of the operational objectives, outcome and output measures are also so similar or inter-related that they add little new value. Streamlining the plan to a more manageable number of objectives and measures should make it easier for both the PGC and the public to understand the plan, focus on critical objectives and measures, and assess results.
2. **As the PGC works to refine its Strategic Plan, an effort be made to develop strategic and operational objectives that are time-limited and quantifiable.** Ideally, the PGC's objectives would be time-limited and measureable (e.g., the PGC will increase State Game Lands by at least 3,000 acres annually). Very few PGC objectives are this specific. Though it may be unrealistic to expect all of the objectives to be so readily measured, we recommend the PGC work toward developing time-limited, quantifiable objectives wherever possible.
3. **The PGC should attempt to assess the extent to which they are achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan in a way that would be meaningful to the public.** In recent years, the PGC has published an Annual

Report which provides quantitative and narrative data regarding the activities PGC staff has taken to address each of the various strategic objectives in the plan. However, these descriptions, which have often been several pages long, do not come to conclusions that would assist the reader in determining the extent to which the objective was or was not achieved. We recommend the PGC consider including as part of its Annual Report an easy-to-understand assessment (perhaps along the lines of this report) of the extent to which the plan's objectives were achieved that year.

IV. Appendix

Response to This Report



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June 12, 2015

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

Dear Chairman Mensch,

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

A strategic plan not only provides the guidance in setting priorities for our agency, it also serves as an important communications tool for our partners, legislators, and constituents. The challenges with completing the plan as initially laid out are limited by the resources available to execute the plan, unforeseen emergencies that arise, such as Chronic Wasting Disease or Avian Flu, and the commitment of the PGC team to get the job done.

Fortunately for us, commitment is not an issue. We have some of the most dedicated and hard-working employees in the Commonwealth. Financial constraints have certainly impacted our ability to expand programs and initiatives, yet we have been able to continue providing a high level of products and services as expected by the hunters of Pennsylvania. We are currently seeking the authority to increase our revenue stream, something that has not happened in over 15 years.

We have been working diligently over the past year on a new Strategic Plan which incorporates several of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee's recommendations. It is now proceeding through the public comment period, and we look forward to sharing that plan with you in the very near future.

We appreciate the professional manner in which the report was conducted and would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to Mr. Durgin and his staff for their time and effort on this.

Sincerely,

R. Matthew Hough
Executive Director