

Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania



"The largest statewide individual membership sporting advocacy organization in the Commonwealth"

Conservation supported through thousands of voices for hunting, fishing, trapping and our second amendment gun rights.

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Page 1

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Hunting and Fishing License Fee Increases "A Tale of Two Agencies"

Pennsylvania has a strong traditional sporting heritage in both Hunting and Fishing. It is no secret there is unequivocally a large difference in sportsman satisfaction of agency management between these two entities. It has been made very clear from many legislators that any license increase for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) can only follow a more responsive and substantive change in deer management and other issues across the commonwealth. There is no denying the PGC license increase has been held "hostage" per say by legislators as a tool to achieve cooperation from this agency. There are no "trout wars" only "deer wars" in Pennsylvania, as continually identified in our state's most prominent sporting publications. The Unified Sportsman of Pennsylvania has diligently worked to improve PGC deer management to include stronger social and economic parameters, and to recognize the vast difference between public and private land deer management..... with marginal success. Our Whitetail resource is our state animal and #1 game animal, so proper management is paramount.

Still today, shortcomings and poor responsiveness in many laws and regulations hinder our sport's ability to keep pace with national hunting excitement. As mentioned, the largest problem is poor deer management, and it continues to be recognized by some of our top legislators in a bipartisan manner. Just this past Sunday 3/20/2016 at our USP membership meeting, Representative Mike Hanna revealed a new bill that finally brings the long missing deer management parameters mentioned prior, into a legislative bill that will not ignore science, but will end many proven oversights by the PGC. Until these problems are rectified, **we do not support a license increase for the PGC!** Furthermore 2 million dollars have been spent in the last two years by the PGC to advertise and promote hunting, current 2015-2016 license sales totals will likely again realize a flat to declining trend at the end of the license year in June. Other than a few insignificant blips of increase in the past 15 years, perhaps indicating the last gasps of interest by exiting hunters, there has been a steady atypical hunting license sales decline followed by stagnation. In Pennsylvania it is clear the catalyst that started the license sales drop, was deer reduction started in the early 2000s and not some national trend as proclaimed.

Past and continuing practices:

The PGC boasts a 4% deer harvest increase this season. The truth is the number is only actually 3.8% and more significantly this increase is still behind the 2013-14 harvest by 11.7%. and the lowest since 2009-10 season.

The recent PGC advertising program proves as we predicted, would not stop falling license sales and further shows how sporting dollars are wasted on another fallacious endeavor. Bring back game and you will bring back hunters. Increasing game sightings and other direct hunting upgrades will prove far more beneficial in increasing license sales.

PGC Donations using sportsman's money like those given a few years ago to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and The Ned Smith Center for the Arts totaling \$500,000.00 from the previous executive director's authority is another prime example. Do you as an elected official of the people have the latitude or authority to issue these types of contributions unilaterally, in these magnitudes?

Payments made for land purchases above limits outlined in Title 34 game law are regularly being done.

Money put into escrow accounts rather than the game fund thru manipulations of revenue identification like recreational impacts or bonus payments. The Game News annual game fund pie chart report, identifies only 150,000.00 is spent for land purchases, when in fact tens of millions are being diverted and spent that should have been put into the game fund.

Highly questionable decisions from a game management agency like introducing viscous predators like the Fisher Cat from Vermont back into our declining habitat situation.

The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania strongly believes the PGC must comply with the above, before a license increase is granted, or it will be business as usual, and the factual cancerous decline in game numbers, hunters and their fiscal decline will continue.

Conversely supporting an agency that manages its affairs properly and provides a quality product for its customers can be validated with few words. The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania prides our organization as being strongly in tune with a large cross section of hunters and fishermen, trappers and shooters in the Commonwealth. We feel our determinations are based on objective analysis, and to validate that claim, we hold a positive overall opinion of The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). Their open door policies... satisfaction by the majority of fishermen... and constant monitoring and management of our waterways is evident. We also recognize the PFBC revenue generating potential is far below that of the PGC and they work hard to keep their fiscal house in order with limited resources. Once again there are no "fish wars" and there are strong inferences that can be drawn from such a simple statement. When problematic aquatic circumstances arise, any curative PFBC reaction always includes putting fishing impacts in front of the curve as decisions are made. I personally have witnessed the PFBC commissioner meeting format being more friendly to fisherman input, and have seen the PFBC evaluate and implement changes from contacts they receive from as few as 25 fishermen. The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania, for these reasons and others, **supports current legislation to allow the PFBC license increase as identified in SB 1168.**

Respectfully,

Randy Santucci

Chairman of the Board
Unified Sportsmen of PA