

PHILIP V. WAGNER  
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Hello

My name is Phil Wagner. I am 62 years old and live in Mifflinburg, Union County, in PGC management unit 4D all of my life.

This letter is about the Pennsylvania Game Commission's deer management plan over the past 14 years. I have attended my share of PGC January and April meetings and spoke to the commissioners about our deer population in Union and Eastern Centre Counties. I have had three one day tours of Union County with both PGC and DCNR officials between 2004 and 2006. Gary Alt himself attended the first Union County tour along with PGC executive director, Vern Ross. Other officials attending my tours of the county included PGC Commissioners Russ Schleiden, Steve Mohr, Greg Isabella and Tom Boop. DCNR officials that attended included Secretary DiBerardinis, Ron Benner, Jim Grace along with employees from the Bald Eagle State Forest office.

At the end of the first tour when Gary Alt attended, he told me that he didn't see any feed or habitat problem here in Union County or with an over population of deer. That tour was in late February or early March. When the antlerless license allocation was announced at the PGC's April meeting antlerless licenses were increased for this management unit. It didn't make any sense.

Commissioner Greg Isabella and others mentioned attended the second tour in Union County. Following the day tour we used a night scope supplied by Isabella to survey for whitetails after dark in farm fields near the mountains after dark. We never saw a deer.

In January of 2006, I took eight different soil samples from DCNR state forest lands here in Union and Eastern Centre counties. Samples were taken on Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, tested by Penn State on Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup> and results presented to PGC Commissioners and DCNR Secretary DiBerardinis and his employees on Tuesday, January 10<sup>th</sup> during a tour of the locations of the soil samples. The average ph level of the eight sites tested was 4.16. A normal ph level should be 7.0. Therefore, a level of 4.16 would mean that the soil is almost 1000 times worst than it should be (see attached papers).

DCNR argued that my findings were not accurate so I ask Secretary DiBerardinis for permission to take more soil samples from state forest land, didn't want to push my luck. He told me they would let me know. I never heard from him again. I called him in Philadelphia by phone, was told by his wife that he would call me back but I never received a call. I e-mailed him several times but no reply. No one at the PGC or DCNR wanted to talk to me about ph levels or acid rain for the lack of re-generation.

I think the deer management issue is a two agency problem, both the PGC and DCNR. While hunting is a big part of the lack of deer here in Union County we need to also look at our state forest land. You can do away with antlerless hunting here in most of state forest land and it will still not bring back deer hunting like we had here 20 to 30 years ago. Most of our deer harvest today is on private land, farmland and small woodlots, just the opposite of 20 or 30 years ago.

I have a share in a state lease cabin next to R.B. Winter State Park here in Union County. My grandfather, father, brother and myself all hunted from this cabin. We haven't hunted deer from the cabin for the past ten years or so. We do however still hunt bear from the camp. Last bear season (2013) in three days of hunting with 20 hunters on 10 organized drives the 20 hunters saw a total of 8 deer and some of them we may have seen twice. Years ago one hunter may have seen 8 deer or more on one drive. No one really hunts antlerless deer on this part of state forest land due to the lack of deer numbers, but we still don't have any deer. We need to improve forest habitat methods and DCNR listens just about as much as the PGC.

The following are my suggestions that the PGC and DCNR needs to change.

PGC: NO D-Map tags on state forest lands

Management units back to county by county

Antlerless deer season back to only 2 or 3 days

Reduction of antlerless licenses for sale at least in some counties, or even no doe hunting on state forest land in some areas.

Deer check stations, to report all deer killed in hunting season in order to have accurate numbers (other States do it).

DCNR: Mountain laurel in some counties is 8 feet tall or taller and is out of control. Needs to be removed or sprayed.

Do some large areas of controlled burning on state forest land to neutralize soil (ph level) and get needed re-generation.

Do liming on hundreds of thousands of acres of state forest lands.

Do more cutting! Some of our state forest land here in Union County looks the same as it did fifty years ago.

Address the soil ph levels – Acid Rain Issue!


The PGC Commissioners are quick to report that they don't year many complaints on the deer management program anymore at their meetings. Hunters have traveled for years to Harrisburg from 2004 to 2008 and the commissioners have not listened to anything the people have stated or suggested.

If none of this letter has made you stop and think about the destruction of hunting in Pennsylvania than the following statement should be all the information you need to proceed to see that things on state forest lands be improved and do it now.

In November of 2012 the joint House and Senate legislative budget and finance committee released the results of a cost/benefit analysis of DCNR's "green certification".

"DCNR's timber sales increase by 1.2 million per year. Deer reduction program costing the state economy \$285 million per". Need I say more, it's that simple!

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Wagner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Philip V. Wagner

**Phil Wagner**

**From:** "Phil Wagner" <mg53@evenlink.com>  
**To:** <GLEVENGOOD13@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 10, 2006 8:48 PM  
**Subject:** PGC & DCNR OFFICIALS TOUR PART OF UNION COUNTY

This afternoon PGC Commissioners Russ Schleiden, Steve Mohr, Tom Boop and Greg Isabella along with DCNR secretary DiBerardinis, Jim Grace and several foresters from the Bald Eagle State Forest along with myself spent several hours touring part of Union County along Rt. 192 from West of Forest Hill to R. B. Winter State Park.

I have been staying in touch via e-mail with Commissioner Isabella. Following the three day bear season I e-mailed Isabella with a deer report after the first two days with 20 or more hunters. The results were not good in the area along Rt. 192 that we hunted. Plotting the area out on a DCNR state map it made up four one square mile sections. Our findings after hunting bear for two days and five drives showed two deer per square mile.

Commissioner Isabella telephoned me on a Sunday evening during the first part of December. My conversation centered on no new regeneration on state forest land even after our deer herd here in Union County has been annihilated. I told him that I think it is time that DCNR is force into taking steps to get their forest to regenerate.

About two weeks ago PGC Commissioner Boop telephoned me to tell me that Isabella had made plans for a Union County tour with Secretary DiBerardinis, Tom Boop and himself and that they wanted me to be the tour guide and focus on forest land along Rt. 192 here in Union County.

Last Thursday night, Greg Isabella again telephoned my home and told me that the other two mentioned PGC Commissioners along with DCNR Jim Grace would be going along on the Tuesday afternoon, January 10th tour.

We left Lewisburg today at 1p.m. and headed West on Rt. 192 for the mountains. I stopped first at a private section on mountain land with a new food plot from there I continued West into Bald Eagle State Forest land. At the first stop I showed a forestry map of where we were and how a deer or bear drive is done with drivers, flankers and watchers. I also provided a handout of soil tests that I had done by the Penn State Extension Service yesterday on nine different site samples. The first site was from the first stop on private land and the food plot ph level tested 6.9. All other sites 2 thru 9 were done on state forest land with the high site of 4.67 and the low site of 3.74, for an average ph on the eight state forest sites at 4.16.

A balance ph level I guess is at 7. If you have a reading of 6.0 that means the soil is 10 times worst than at 7.0. If you have a reading of 5.0 that means you have a site that is 100 times worst and if you have a site at 4.0 that is 1000 times worst. I guess you can see where the average of 4.16 falls. The DCNR foresters produced paperwork that showed some areas by their numbers in the northern part of Union County close to interstate 80 at 5 to 5 1/2. I pointed out the very dense high mountain laurel which the sunlight was not able to shine thru this beautiful sunny day and grapevine that was very visible at the first three stops made this afternoon. If we were to have a deer problem we wouldn't have any grapevine like that that we found.

Discussion was held between all parties about the quality of the forest and even the Bald Eagle State employees agreed that this area is bad but no one in the group had a cure to solve the problem. I told them several times that we did not have the deer in this area to keep trees from regenerating it was other factors. Spraying and burning of area tracts of forest land was discussed along with cutting of trees to open up the canopy. No final results from this afternoon tour although Secretary DiBerardinis stated that they would sit down and look at the issues from the tour and he made notes on some of the ideas to follow-up on.

Secretary DiBerardinis suggested that this area be part of the fly-over this winter and see what kind of numbers they would come up with. That will most likely be looked at later to see if it is justified.

Phil Wagner  
 Union County  
 570-524-7525  
 10a.m to 5p.m.

1/10/06



January 9<sup>th</sup> 2006

Mr. Phil Wagner  
2020 Green Ridge Rd  
Mifflinburg PA 17844

Dear Phil –

The soil samples you dropped at our office for pH testing were quite “eye opening” to say the least. I will describe our methods which are the same equipment and standards employed by the Agricultural Services Lab at Penn State. The data is summarized in tabular form and I have noted some observations of the impacts which the pH readings are having on the environmental health, land use and water quality at the sample sites 2-9. Sample 1 I would not consider to be adversely affected based on the pH results and the type of plants contained in the sample.

## Methods and Materials

Each soil sample was thoroughly mixed inside it's bag and separated from the roots, sticks and stones using a 40 mesh sieve. A twelve to fifteen cubic centimeter (cc) subsample was scooped out and placed in a 250 milliliter (ml) glass beaker. Each beaker was then filled with 50 cc of de-ionized water and the soil slurry was stirred to dissolve the clumps and get the particles into solution. After mechanically stirring each sample for 1 minute the pH probe was removed from a pH 7.01 buffer standard, triple rinsed in de-ionized water and placed in the soil water slurry which was slowly rotated until the digital read out on the Milwaukee model SM 102 pH meter stopped fluctuating and reached a steady state. At that point the probe was removed from the slurry, triple rinsed in a stream of de-ionized water from a wash bottle and the electrode recalibrated using the pH 7.01 buffer. As mentioned, this technique is totally ISO certifiable and is the industry standard for pH soil determinations.

## Results

PRIVATE LAND	sample number	pH reading	soil physical description
	1	6.90	grey clay soil with white clover plants
STATE FOREST LAND	2	4.12	dark peat with plant roots & leaf mold
	3	4.32	peat with small dead roots
	4	4.06	heavy peat
	5	3.74	peat mixed with 50% large grained sand
	6	4.08	peat with 25% small sand grains & roots
	7	4.07	peat with 35% fine sand
	8	4.24	peat with hemlock needles
	9	4.67	grey loam peat mix with pine needles

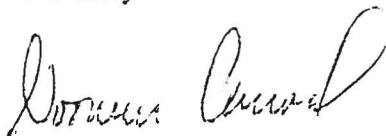
## Discussion

The salient point to remember is that the pH scale above is a logarithmic scale. A pH value of 6 is 10 times more acidic than a neutral or "balanced" pH of 7. Subsequently pH 5 is 100 times more acidic than pH 7 and a pH of 4 is 1000 times. The sites were samples 5, 6 and 7 are located would be additionally worrisome from the standpoint of trying to sustain tree and plant growth because of the high percentage of sand found in the samples. Sandy soils with little or no clay or loam present have no buffering capacity to capture or retain any plant nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus or potassium. Rain fall in areas 2 - 8 would additionally leach out toxic levels of iron and aluminum impairing the ability of any nearby streams to support quality fisheries. The nearby waters are likely discolored due to the high peat content.

The low soil pH also severely restricts the type of plants and trees that will survive on those thin acidic sites (mountain laurel, some conifers, azalea, and marginal species of oaks if they can root). Any carrying capacity of these acidic sites with the exception of site 1 would have to be significantly amended with limestone before they could be improved for practices such as growing grass legume mixes.

If you have any questions regarding the pH data please feel free to contact me at the Mifflinburg office at 966-8194.

Sincerely



Norman Conrad  
Senior Extension Educator – Crops & Soils  
PSU Cooperative Extension

Locations of soil samples by number

- #1 - Private ground owned by Arch Owens of Mass. East side on Icy Spring Gap on North side of Route 192. New Food Plot.
- #2 - North side of Route 192 across creek from Rapid Run Hunting Camp.
- #3 - South side of Route 192, across Rapid Run from Smith's cabin. Just East of lightline.
- #4 - South side of Boyer Gap road, 300 yards West of lightline.
- #5 - On Sand Mountain road, 200 yards West of tower, South side of road.
- #6 - On Sand Mountain road,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile East of lightline on North side of road.
- #7 - Up McCall's Dam road above lookout at Tram road that connects to lightline on East side of road.
- #8 - In Centre County just West of Union County Line, on south side of road down in at Stuck's cabin and across creek on trail.
- #9 - On top of Jones Mountain at Buffalo Path on South side of road.

All soil samples other than sample number one (#1) were taken on Bald Eagle State Forest Lands.