

## Eastern Pennsylvania Firearms Coalitions / Support for HB 2083 / 9.16.16

The predecessor organization of EPFC.... Lehigh Valley Firearms Coalition was established in the early 1990's in response to the escalation of unnecessary firearms legislation of that period. The organization changed its name to Eastern Pennsylvania Firearms Coalition in 2003 due to the Coalition's expansion to surrounding counties.

The Coalition is made up of 63 clubs that share interests in protecting Second Amendment rights, conservation of outdoor resources, the shooting sports and the tradition of hunting and fishing. In the 63 clubs there is approximately 100,000 to 120,000 members of the individual clubs not including spouses and children who also express concern.

With the introduction of the current deer management program by the PGC over 15 years ago the EPFC has had a tense relationship with the PGC in that requested data on deer herd estimates, harvests and overall objective goals of the deer management program have been, if not ignored, they have been reluctantly addressed after much resistance by the PGC. Most of the response by the PGC is framed in a condescending and pacifying tone.....as if sportsmen and women who hunt are a bothersome nuisance.

There have been too numerous occasions over the last 15 years of less than satisfactory communication with the PGC to specify in this outline and the context of the legislative hearing. Therefore the most recent activity is certainly the most appropriate and telling as well.

In the late Spring 2016, after expressing continuous concerns regarding deer hunting densities in Wildlife Management Units 5C and 3D...these concerns spanned many years.

Commissioner Putman suggested Mr. Larouche visit with me. In 2013 Commissioner Martone had done a similar outreach with a WCO who I have known for decades...it was to no avail. I did not receive specific data then either.

Mr. Larouche and I met on 7/29/16. On 7/25/16 ...he, and the same WCO I had gone out with in 2013, had thermal imaged 14 square miles inclusive of my residence in Northwestern Lehigh County / WMU 5C.

Mr. Larouche reported the PGC thermal image activity ..a four hour taping located 341 deer and accordingly the PGC doubles that number in the area so the outcome is 48 deer per square mile.

**Of interest and prior to the actual thermal taping is that Mr. Larouche emailed me on 6/29/16 and due to my persistent asking told me the PGC estimated there were 48 deer per square mile.**

After the PGC thermal image taping coincidentally came up with the exact same 48 deer per square mile.....which would be a herd of nearly 800 animals and I shared that with folks around the area.....many eye brows were raised. Considering our observations and experience scouting and hunting for the last 15 years this deer density was just too implausible to believe.

Accordingly, the EPFC rented an industrial grade thermal unit and on 8/19/16 with the same map and GPS waypoints and knowing every road and area of the PGC taping we traced the exact points. Our tape showed only 18% of the deer reported by PGC...

Of note is that most of our members and hunters in the area have commented the herd is down 75 to 80% and is so lightly populated with deer that hunting is nearly impossible.

Further, the following Tuesday 8/23/16, we thermal imaged another area of approx.. 8 square miles north of the PGC area with similar terrain and farming / woodland characteristics. Our thermal image taping revealed 9 deer per square mile...deplorable!

May I add State Game Lands 205 and 217 are in and adjacent to the areas where thermal imaging was done.

Below is a summary of the PGC and EPFC findings...PGC finding 6X the number of deer in the same area.

PGC- 14 sq. miles WMU 5C / Northwestern Lehigh County / July 25, 2016 / deer count 341 ...**24** observed per sq. mile / 8pm to 12am / weather clear / daytime temp 78-83

Note: PGC claim deer count is double that observed...48 per sq. mile

PGC Thermal observation: average of 1.42 deer every minute for four hours

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1. Utilizing the map provided by PGC with GPS way points for same 14 sq. mile area / August, 19, 2016 / deer count 54 ...**4** observed per sq. mile / 8:15pm to 11:30pm / weather clear / daytime temp 75-80

EPFC Thermal observation: average of 1 deer every 3.6 minutes for three hours and fifteen minutes

2. Tues. August, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 / approx. 8 sq. miles north west and east of PGC observed area ..from area near New Tripoli and SGL 217 Blue Mountain area then south and east through Saegersville, Lynn Port and Slate dale then back through Germansville just above Pleasant Corners / deer count 9 ... **1.3** observed per sq. mile / 8:30 pm to 10pm / Weather clear / daytime temp 72-78

EPFC Thermal observation: average of 1 deer every 6.67 minutes for one hour and thirty minutes

EPFC equipment: Leased from Transcat, Rochester, NY / Fluke TI400 High Resolution Thermal Imager w/ wireless Connectivity FMV \$8495 ...leased for \$800 per month.

**It is with this most current experience that the EPFC supports and endorses HB 2083....**

**We have no confidence in the PGC providing accountable, objective and demonstrable evidence their long standing deer management program is beneficial...on the contrary in the view of our membership the PGC deer program has done irreparable harm to the tradition and economy of hunting throughout the state. As an aside...my hunting camp is in WMU 3D and the situation there is worse than 5C the area the thermal study was done.**

**Respectfully submitted:**

**Jack Iannantuono  
Co -Chair / EPFC**