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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 642 Session of  
2008

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INTRODUCED BY LEVDANSKY, STABACK, GODSHALL, SURRA, BRENNAN, CALTAGIRONE, CARROLL, CAUSER, CONKLIN, CUTLER, DALLY, DeLUCA, EVERETT, FLECK, FRANKEL, GERGELY, GOODMAN, HANNA, HARHART, HORNAMAN, JAMES, KORTZ, LONGIETTI, MAHER, McCALL, MENSCH, MILLARD, PASHINSKI, PAYNE, PEIFER, PICKETT, PYLE, QUINN, READSHAW, ROAE, RUBLEY, SAYLOR, SONNEY, STERN, TRUE, VULAKOVICH, WALKO, BEYER, J. WHITE, MAHONEY, YOUNGBLOOD, KULA, ROHRER, BAKER, WOJNAROSKI, BELFANTI, MACKERETH AND BOYD, MARCH 17, 2008

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON GAME AND FISHERIES, MARCH 17, 2008

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
2 conduct an evaluation and study of the Pennsylvania Game  
3 Commission's current deer management program and practices.

4 WHEREAS, The white-tailed deer is this Commonwealth's State  
5 animal and a valuable part of this Commonwealth's natural  
6 heritage; and

7 WHEREAS, As provided for both in law and the Constitution of  
8 Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is  
9 responsible for managing white-tailed deer, as well as all other  
10 wildlife species; and

11 WHEREAS, Beginning in 2000, the PGC began to change its deer  
12 management practices and, in 2003, adopted a deer management  
13 plan that changed the way in which deer management goals are  
14 defined; and

15 WHEREAS, Instead of management goals being defined as the

1 number or density of deer in an area, management goals were  
2 defined based on establishing targets on deer health, forest  
3 habitat health and deer-human conflicts; and

4 WHEREAS, The goals of the PGC's current deer management  
5 program are to maintain a healthy deer herd, to maintain a  
6 healthy forest habitat, to reduce or minimize deer-human  
7 conflicts, to provide recreational opportunities for hunters and  
8 to improve the public's knowledge and understanding of deer and  
9 the deer management program; and

10 WHEREAS, Many sportsmen across this Commonwealth have serious  
11 and longstanding concerns about the status of the State's deer  
12 resource and the future of this Commonwealth's great hunting  
13 tradition; and

14 WHEREAS, The PGC is not able to provide an accurate estimate  
15 of this Commonwealth's current deer population; and

16 WHEREAS, The PGC's current deer management practices have  
17 lost credibility with a substantial segment of the hunting  
18 population; and

19 WHEREAS, Many sportsmen consistently voice strong concern and  
20 dissatisfaction with PGC's current deer management program and  
21 the resulting drastic reduction in the number of deer now  
22 remaining on public hunting lands within this Commonwealth;  
23 therefore be it

24 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the  
25 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct an  
26 evaluation and study of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's  
27 current deer management program and practices; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the study examine historical deer population  
29 trends in this Commonwealth over the past 12 years and determine  
30 how the size of the State's deer herd has changed over time in

1 each Wildlife Management Unit or its approximate equivalent; and  
2 be it further

3 RESOLVED, That this analysis include the most current  
4 information on the number of deer in Pennsylvania, both State-  
5 wide and in each Wildlife Management Unit, and current and  
6 historical information on the age of the herd for both buck and  
7 doe, in absolute numbers and percentages; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the study identify the circumstances and  
9 problems that led to the initiation of a new approach to deer  
10 management in this Commonwealth beginning in the year 2000 and  
11 how the current goals and objectives of the PGC's deer  
12 management program address these problems; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the study document and conduct a science-based  
14 review and analysis of the basic components, principles and  
15 objectives of the PGC's deer management program with an emphasis  
16 on examining the modeling, techniques and management decision-  
17 making practices currently employed by the PGC, the extent to  
18 which they are based on sound science and the impact the deer  
19 management program has had, to date, on the size and health of  
20 this Commonwealth's deer herd, healthy forest regeneration,  
21 including the potential effects of factors other than the size  
22 of the deer herd, such as acid rain, and reducing the level of  
23 deer-human conflicts; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the study compare this Commonwealth's deer  
25 management practices to such practices in a sample of selected  
26 comparable states and determine if there are more proven and  
27 scientifically based deer management methods available that  
28 should be considered for use in this Commonwealth, including  
29 better methods for determining the size of the present deer  
30 herd; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the study determine whether PGC's current  
2 Wildlife Management Units are appropriately sized for sound  
3 management, and, in particular, whether reducing the size of  
4 Wildlife Management Units would likely result in improved deer  
5 management; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the study develop findings and  
7 recommendations, as appropriate, for improving PGC's deer  
8 management program; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
10 be authorized to contract with an independent, out-of-State  
11 third party to provide specialized and technical assistance in  
12 conducting the evaluation and study; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That such contractor be authorized, subject to the  
14 approval of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, to  
15 subcontract portions of this study to Pennsylvania-based  
16 subcontractors; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That to assist in addressing the objectives of this  
18 resolution, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee or its  
19 contractor be authorized to assemble and subcontract with a  
20 panel of individuals from outside this Commonwealth who are  
21 acknowledged and recognized experts in the field of wildlife  
22 management with specific deer management expertise; and be it  
23 further

24 RESOLVED, That such persons should be drawn from both  
25 academic institutions and State wildlife agencies and have  
26 expertise in areas including, but not limited to, wildlife  
27 ecology, biology and management, including wildlife population  
28 and habitat management; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
30 report its findings and recommendations to the House of

- 1 Representatives within 12 months of the adoption of this
- 2 resolution.