



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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OUTDOOR REPORT

Point-of-sale system will streamline license-purchasing process

In an effort to improve customer service, both the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission will implement a point-of-sale system to simplify the license- and stamp-purchasing process.

Under the system, hunters and anglers will swipe their driver's licenses through a magnetic reader and all of their personal information will be filled in on the application form automatically. They then will select the licenses and stamps they want to purchase. After the first time a hunter or angler purchases a license this way, he or she will be assigned a permanent number that will be stored in an electronic file. In subsequent years, they only will need to enter changes for their personal information and the types of licenses or stamps wanted.



The system also will benefit licensing agents by automatically auditing and generating reports for accounting purposes, eliminating a large amount of paperwork. It will help the Game, and Fish and Boat commissions because it will generate a computer database of license buyers and allow both commissions to conduct surveys of license buyers. It will also indicate the churn rate of hunters and anglers and allow the commissions to contact them and find out why they did not purchase a license.

Bill would increase penalties for poaching

I supported legislation (H.B. 2205) that would have increased penalties for poaching game animals and selling game parts and trophies. These issues have not been addressed for more than 20 years, and it's time to modernize the laws already on the books.

Although the bill stalled in the House Game and Fisheries Committee and will not be able to move further in the process this session, I will support it when it is reintroduced in the coming legislative session. There is a deep concern in the outdoor community, especially among sportsmen, that the punishments for taking game illegally have not kept pace with the seriousness of the crime or with the penalties of surrounding states. Pennsylvania is becoming the land of opportunity for criminals who have little to fear from our state's game law penalties, and that's a circumstance we need to change.

Hunters can donate deer meat to the hungry

Hunters can help food banks, pantries and soup kitchens feed Pennsylvania's hungry by donating extra deer meat through a program called Hunters Sharing the Harvest. Hunters can take their deer to one of nearly 80 participating meat processors throughout the state and specify how much of the venison they would like to donate.

To learn more about Hunters Sharing the Harvest and obtain a list of participating meat processors and county coordinators, visit the Game Commission's Web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "Hunting" and then "Hunters Sharing the Harvest." Information may also be found at www.sharedeer.org or by calling toll free 1-866-474-2141.

Fish and Boat Commission proposes junior fishing license

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has proposed charging \$5 to youth ages 12 to 15 for a junior fishing license. Thirteen states currently require fishing licenses for their youth anglers, with the average cost at about \$12.



PFBC says the potential annual revenue from the junior license would be about \$2.1 million per year, offsetting the \$480,000 spent annually by the commission on youth programs. The additional revenue would be dedicated solely to preserving and expanding programs and services that benefit young anglers, including grants to clubs and youth programs, training workshops, purchase of equipment and materials for angling education programs, and special events.



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Program gives young people chance to see first-hand what hunting is like

The state's Mentored Youth Hunting Program was designed to expose children younger than 12 to hunting and the outdoors in a safe way, allowing them to take a more active role in hunting in the field while under adult supervision. A properly licensed hunter who is 21 or older may act as a mentor, guiding a youth in hunting or other activities such as scouting, gun safety and wildlife identification.

If a young person in your life is interested in learning to hunt, consider acting as a mentor. There is no permit or registration required, and you will be helping to preserve hunting's future in our state. To find out more about the Mentored Youth Hunting Program or becoming a mentor, visit www.pgc.state.pa.us online and click on Hunting.

MENTORED YOUTH HUNTING PROGRAM:

- Unlicensed youth under 12 may accompany a mentor into the woods to hunt specific game in Pennsylvania.
- Mentors must be properly licensed and at least 21, and are expected to teach youth about hunting and scouting, firearms and hunter safety, and wildlife identification.
- The ratio of mentors to youth in any hunting party must be one to one. While moving, firearms must be carried by adults; when a mentor and youth reach a stationary hunting location, the mentor may turn the firearm over to the youth, but must remain within arm's reach of the youth at all times.
- Mentored youth may take antlered deer, subject to the same restrictions governing licensed junior hunters, as well as squirrels, woodchucks (groundhogs) and spring gobbler.

At its October meeting, the state Board of Game Commissioners approved adding coyotes to the list of species that may be hunted by youths under the age of 12 while under the supervision of a mentor.

House approves deer management audit

I voted for a resolution (H.R. 642) adopted in the House that authorizes the Budget and Finance Committee to conduct an audit of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's deer management program.

An independent audit will give us accurate, reliable and trustworthy data to effectively make decisions on how to improve Pennsylvania's deer management program. It will help determine if we are harvesting the right number of deer of the right age and sex ratio in the right places and whether the program is having the desired impact on habitat and forest regeneration.

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee will oversee the audit process and has also sent letters seeking suggestions to about 30 groups, including the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania, Quality Deer Management Association, Audubon Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association. The audit contract will be awarded to an out-of-state consultant for a completely objective view.



Elk license auction now law

Legislation allowing the state to auction off an elk license to hunters to serve as a fundraiser for the state Game Commission is now law. The commission will offer a special elk conservation hunting tag through an auction every year. Proceeds from the auction will go toward improving elk habitats in the Commonwealth. The commission will be required to prepare an annual report for the General Assembly detailing how the proceeds are used.

Pennsylvania currently has a limited number of elk licenses, with the number of interested applicants far eclipsing the total available. The auction is a way to spark interest in the state's outdoor tourism industry, as well as generate money to help our elk population.