



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Sportsmen Update



#### CAPITOL OFFICE

220 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202055  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055  
(717) 787-5142

#### DISTRICT OFFICES

239 Longfellow St.  
Vandergrift, PA 15690  
(724) 567-6982

620 N. Chestnut St.  
Derry, PA 15627  
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building  
901 Jefferson St.  
Latrobe, PA 15650  
(724) 539-7560

## House OKs bill to allow air- or gas-powered weapons

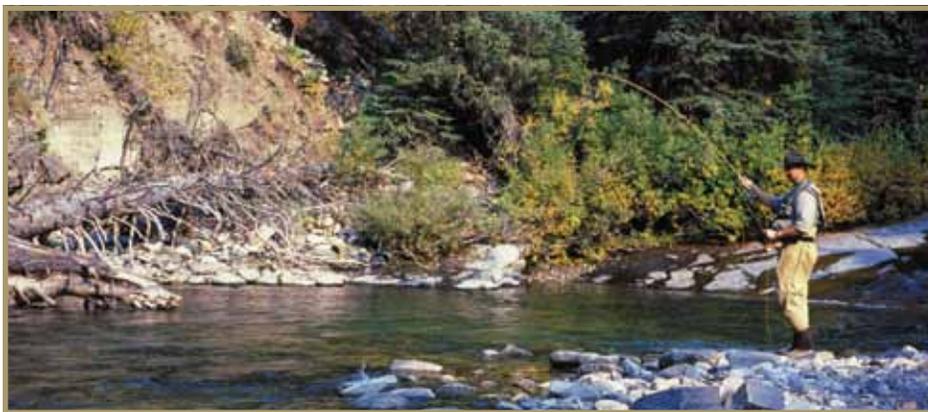
Legislation that would remove the prohibition on hunting with an air- or gas-powered weapon passed the House of Representatives unanimously earlier this year.

The measure (H.B. 263) would not automatically allow these weapons to be used for hunting, but would simply give the Pennsylvania Game Commission authority to regulate and allow use of such weapons during specific seasons or for specific species as they see fit in order to properly manage our various game species. Currently, the state's Game and Wildlife Code specifically prohibits the commission from allowing these weapons to be used.

Air- and gas-powered weapon technology has advanced in great lengths in recent years, with many such weapons

now having equal or greater muzzle energy and stopping power when compared with numerous small-caliber weapons currently allowed under law or regulation of the commission. Many states, including Virginia and neighboring Maryland, Ohio, New York, West Virginia and Delaware, allow hunting with air-powered weapons. This legislation would enable Pennsylvania to move into the 21st century and allow the PGC and their experts to use their data and expertise to determine whether the regulated use of these weapons is prudent with today's technology.

The bill was reported unanimously from the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee and awaits action by the full state Senate.



## Bill to help protect hunters from self-incrimination passes House

Legislation that would provide an individual with the right to remain silent during questioning in the investigation of a potential violation of the Pennsylvania Game and Wildlife Code unanimously passed the House.

Currently under the state Game and Wildlife Code, it is unlawful to refuse to answer, without evasion, upon request of any representative of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, any pertinent question pertaining to the killing or wounding of any game or wildlife. This is not consistent with the constitutional principle that protects an individual against self-incrimination. Anyone accused of a crime has a right to remain silent, and this provision in the Game Code essentially penalizes people for exercising that right.

It is time to remove this problematic section of the law to ensure there is no longer an issue with constitutionality, and individuals under investigation by the Game Commission will know their right against self-incrimination under questioning is protected.

The bill (H.B. 455) was reported unanimously from the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee and awaits action by the full state Senate.

## Bills would allow hunting with semi-automatic rifles

The state Senate unanimously passed legislation (S.B. 737) that would allow the limited use of semi-automatic sporting rifles for hunting coyotes and woodchucks. The bill would suspend the use of these firearms for varmint and predator hunting when those seasons overlap the regular seasons for deer, bear and turkey.

Most modern sporting rifles are chambered for common hunting cartridges and Pennsylvania is one of the few states that disallow these firearms for hunting of any kind.

I've co-sponsored similar legislation in the House (H.B. 366) that would allow hunting with semi-automatic rifles in Pennsylvania. More specifically, it would allow hunting with semi-automatic center fire rifles limited to a five-shell capacity and .22 caliber semi-automatic rim fire rifles with a built-in capacity limit.

Pennsylvania is one of two states forbidding such hunting.

Both bills await action by the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

## Fish and Boat Commission unveils big trout program, seeks help to pick name

Trout anglers will have an exciting opportunity to fish for big trout in eight streams next year under a new program being launched by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. And the PFBC wants anglers to help name the program by casting votes online at <http://fishandboat.com/stocking/large-trout.htm>.

Under the program, approximately 10 percent of the larger 2- to 3-year-old trout in the PFBC hatchery system that are stocked each year will be allocated to eight streams currently managed under Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only regulations. These fish will measure from 14" to more than 20" in length and will be stocked at a rate of up to 250 trout per mile, which is comparable to the numbers of fish of this size in Pennsylvania's best wild trout waters. By contrast, the current stocking rate for 2- to 3-year-old fish statewide in the adult stocked trout program is about 5 to 10 per mile.

The eight streams will be distributed broadly across the state so that at least one water is located within a reasonable distance of all of Pennsylvania's anglers.

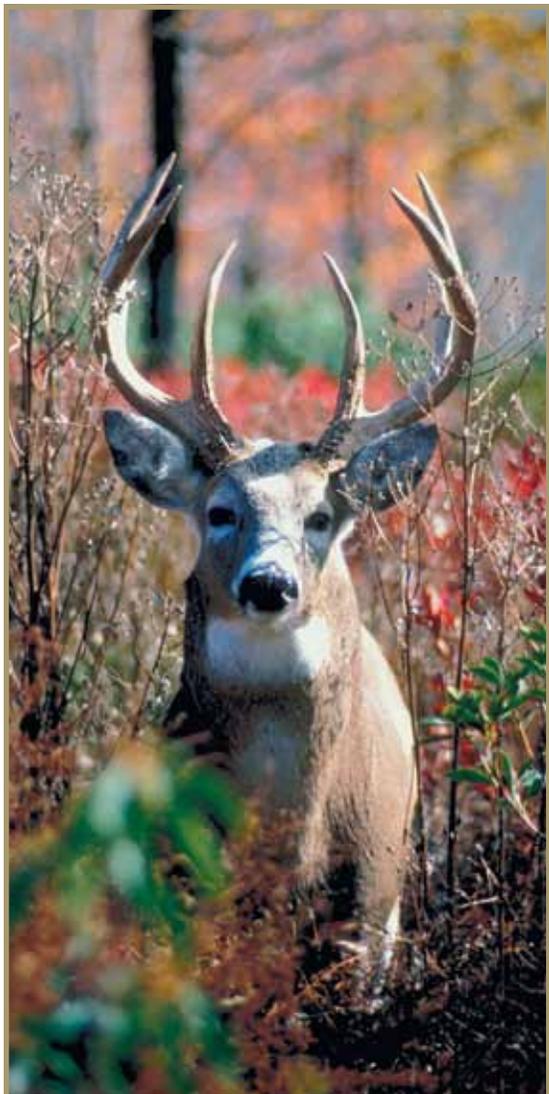
The PFBC has traditionally spread out the stocking of these larger trout with a moderate number allocated to each water statewide. While this will still occur, the new program will considerably increase the number of larger trout in the select locations, significantly increasing the opportunity for anglers to catch a large trout.

Currently this program is unnamed, and the PFBC is seeking the public's help in naming the program.

Individuals can either vote for one of the names provided, or write in a proposed name.

PFBC staff will review all of the suggestions and a name will be selected before the next PFBC quarterly business meeting on Sept. 28-29. Both the program name and the names of the selected waters will be released at the September meeting.

The public voting process will close on Sept. 4. To vote, go to <http://fishandboat.com/stocking/large-trout.htm>.



## Changes to deer management program gain preliminary OK

At its June meeting, the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to a proposal to make changes to the Deer Management Assistance Program, commonly known as DMAP.

In casting their votes, commissioners said they will continue to work with public landowners who would be affected by the proposal, and that the proposal might be amended before final approval.

DMAP provides private and public landowners an additional tool to meet deer-management goals on their properties through hunting. Landowners who apply may receive a number of DMAP permits they then can issue to antlerless-deer hunters for use during open deer seasons. The number of permits a landowner receives often is based on a formula of one permit per 50 acres, and the allocation may be increased due to heavy deer impact.

The proposal that was tabled would have limited the size of DMAP units on public parcels to 15,000 acres, and would have required DMAP coupons for public parcels be allocated based upon current conditions relative to goals and objectives outlined in an approved management plan.

Commissioners noted that DMAP was designed specifically as a tool to deal with localized deer-impact issues rather than issues across a broader landscape, and added that hunters have expressed concerns DMAP might have too great an impact on deer herds, especially on state-owned lands.

By limiting the size of DMAP units on public lands, deer can be managed at a more distinct local level, the commissioners have noted.

Commissioners said they will continue to discuss potential changes to DMAP with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and other public landowners, and they will take those discussions and additional public comments into consideration in casting their final vote.



## Help for beagle trainers subject of Senate bill

Pennsylvania is the heart of beagle field trials and rabbit hunting.

There are over 60 American Kennel Club recognized beagle clubs in the commonwealth, with membership ranging from 15 to well over 100. All of these clubs own considerable acreage that they manage for small game habitat, promoting populations of cottontail rabbits on which beagles are trained and field trialed. These grounds represent significant efforts in conservation not only for their intended purpose, but as habitat for many game and non-game species, open space, soil and water conservation and other important recreational activities.

Beagle field trials are the largest segment of AKC-licensed performance events. More than 100 events are held in Pennsylvania each year, including championship trials, AKC-licensed field trials and hunt tests, and events sanctioned by the Pennsylvania Beagle Gundog Association and the Northeast Beagle Gundog Federation. These events reach thousands of participants and generate significant economic stimulus in rural areas in terms of travel, tourism, restaurant meals, lodging, purchase of pet supplies, veterinary services and facilities maintenance.

In order to host field trials and provide year-round training opportunities, beagle clubs are required to obtain a valid dog-training area permit from the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Legislation that unanimously passed the state Senate would propose the following changes to state law to provide some relief for beagle trainers:

- The acreage requirement for dog training areas would be lowered from 100 acres to 50 acres minimum.
- The requirement to obtain a special permit to lawfully trap and hunt furbearers on club grounds would be removed. Hunting or trapping of furbearers or other protected game animals could occur only during seasons established by the commission.

The bill would enable clubs to manage their property with regard to big-game hunting, just as other sportsmen's organizations and private property owners do.

Dog training areas need to be posted each year with a legible notice before Oct. 1, but the bill would specify that the boundary lines would no longer need to be marked with 10-by-12 signs.

Beagle clubs are inviting targets for vandalism and trespass, and most are unoccupied and unpatrolled.

The addition of unlawful acts would allow for the Pennsylvania Game Commission to prosecute offenders for listed offenses.

The bill (S.B. 77) awaits action by the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

## State could up penalty for killing eagles



Those who kill golden and bald eagles could face stiffer penalties under Pennsylvania law.

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval in June to a measure that would increase to \$2,500 the replacement cost for killing bald eagles or golden eagles.

The bald eagle had been classified as a state-threatened species until early 2014, when it was removed from the threatened list because its recovery met objectives outlined in the state's bald-eagle management plan.

While golden and bald eagles both remain protected by federal and state law, the fact that neither bird was classified as threatened meant that killing a golden or bald eagle resulted at the state level in \$200 in replacement cost. Replacement costs are restitution for unlawfully killed wildlife and typically are paid in addition to fines.

Commissioners said the \$2,500 replacement cost emphasizes that although golden and bald eagles are recovered in Pennsylvania, they still require further protection.

---

## Important websites

### PA Fish and Boat Commission

[www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us)

### PA Game Commission

[www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)





STATE REPRESENTATIVE

## Joseph A. Petrarca

220 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202055  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055

Website: [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca)  
Email: [petrarca@pahouse.net](mailto:petrarca@pahouse.net)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/RepJoePetrarca](http://www.facebook.com/RepJoePetrarca)

lpo.kl.0815

## Mentored youth hunters could see rabbit, dove opportunities

Mentored youth hunters could see added opportunities in the 2016-17 license year, to begin about a year from now.

At its June meeting, the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to a measure that would add rabbits and mourning doves to the list of species mentored youth hunters may pursue.

The Mentored Youth Hunting Program was established in 2006 as a way to give youth younger than 12 an opportunity to experience hunting in a tightly controlled setting under the close supervision of an adult mentor. The program has been successful and safe, and the list of species that can be pursued by mentored youth hunters has been expanded over the years.

In casting their preliminary vote, the commissioners pointed out that sporting organizations and other interested groups have continued to encourage the Game Commission to expand mentored youth hunting opportunities and, particularly, to add rabbits and mourning doves to the list approved for mentored youth.

If the measure gains final approval, mentored youth hunters still would need a migratory game bird license to hunt and harvest mourning doves.

Requiring the license would facilitate the Harvest Information Program, a cooperative state and federal program designed to improve information collected regarding the harvest of migratory game birds. The license costs \$3.70 for residents and a mentored youth permit costs \$2.70.

The measure will be up for final approval in September.



## MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Free notary service
- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Birth and death certificates
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups

