



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

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

DISTRICT OFFICES

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

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

Should the Fish and Boat, Game commissions set their own fees?



Currently, only the General Assembly can set the fees for hunting and fishing licenses in the state, but the Senate has approved two bills that would change this by giving the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission the authority to set their own fees.

Some who have contacted me believe that this would enable hunters and anglers to avoid sharp spikes in fee increases, as well as help the commissions avoid financial problems, especially since the commissions do not receive state funding.

Others have said they believe that approving the bills would give the commissions a blank check.

The last hunting fee increase was in 1999, and fishing licenses were last increased in 2005.

What do you think? Visit my webpage at www.pahouse.com/petrarca and let me know.

Senate Bill 1166 would give the PGC the ability to set its hunting and furtaking license fees, while S.B. 1168 would give the PFBC the authority to establish its fishing license fees. Both bills would give this authority for three years before being reviewed in 2019. The bills are currently under consideration in the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

Two other bills have been introduced in the Senate to increase the fees for both commissions. These two increase the fees outright, but the bills (S.Bs. 1103 and 1148) have not made any legislative progress.

Doe licenses on sale

Antlerless deer permits are now on sale via the U.S. mail, through county treasurers' offices.

The cost of a doe tag this year is \$6.90.

The Game Commission has allotted 31,000 licenses for local Wildlife Management Unit 2C and 55,000 for 2D. In all, the state has 748,000 antlerless licenses available. If licenses are still available, residents may apply for a second license starting Aug. 1 and a third license Aug. 15.

Over the counter sales begin Oct. 3.



Pa. Mammal Atlas

Pennsylvania has 64 species of wild mammals. To learn more about what they are, what they look like and where they can be found, visit www.pamammalatlasc.com.

You also can help by becoming a volunteer and submitting photos of the mammals you observe.



House rejects plan to study commercialization of state parks

Although under current law some development can occur, in June, the House considered a measure that would have called on the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to investigate entering into public-private partnerships to provide "additional recreational activities" within our 121 state parks, including Keystone State Park in Derry Township.

House Bill 2013 was defeated in a 77-123 House vote. However, a procedural maneuver makes it possible for the House to reconsider the bill at a later time.

I voted against this bill and remain opposed to potentially opening state parks to private developers for golf courses, hotels, water parks, restaurants, office buildings and amusement parks. Under the proposal, the "additional recreational activities" could be built within the state parks, and not just abutting them.

Our natural resources, which the state constitution calls "the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come," are some of our most valuable assets. As a trustee of these resources, I have sworn to "conserve and maintain" them for the benefit of all people, and I have faith in DCNR's commitment to do the same.

SPORTSMEN UPDATE



Tips for eagle viewing

As bald eagles have expanded their range in Pennsylvania, there's more opportunity to see them in the wild. Keeping in mind that disturbing eagles is illegal, the Game Commission offers the following eagle-viewing etiquette:

- ✓ **Keep a safe distance from nests**, at least 1,000 feet. Use binoculars or spotting scopes.
- ✓ **Remain quiet.** Whisper if talking is necessary.
- ✓ **Avoid sudden movements.**
- ✓ **No flushing;** don't make them fly.
- ✓ **Pay attention** to how the eagles react to your presence. If it acts agitated, vocalizes repeatedly or starts moving away, you are too close.
- ✓ **Stay out of restricted zones** that protect eagle nesting areas.
- ✓ **Respect the privacy of the landowner.**

Beagle trainers get help with new law

There are more than 60 AKC-recognized beagle clubs in the commonwealth, and over 100 beagle performance events are held in the state each year with thousands of participants.

Act 65 of 2015 provides some relief for beagle trainers:

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

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



Using dogs for tracking

The Senate is considering legislation that would allow the use of leashed dogs to track wounded or killed white-tailed deer. The bill (H.B. 1722), which I supported, would be a change from current law that prohibits such use of blood-tracking dogs.

Sometimes it can be difficult to track a wounded or harvested deer that might have traveled some distance, especially in poor weather or severe terrain. Using a properly trained blood-tracking dog can help in recovering a mortally wounded animal.



Law impacts disabled hunters

A new state law accommodates those who are disabled and permanently confined to a wheelchair to fully use that device while hunting.

Previously, a hunter using a motorized wheelchair had to power off their wheelchair every time they wished to load their weapon. This law lets hunters to have a loaded firearm while the wheelchair is in motion.

Senate considers bill to expand mentored youth hunting program



The state's mentored youth hunting program is open to children younger than 12 to introduce youth to the sport of hunting. The Senate is considering a House-passed bill that would expand the program to 12- to 17-year-olds so more youth can participate and learn to love hunting.

The same bill (H.B. 1452) also would create a new, discounted hunting license for Hunter Trapper Education instructors. This Volunteer Instructor License would recognize the time and effort these volunteer instructors dedicate each year to the sport and invest in the future of the program.

Hunting Heritage license plate available

Pennsylvania has a number of specialty license plates available. One such plate is the Pennsylvania Hunting Heritage Plate, which has the image of a white-tailed deer on it.

The cost is \$56. This money is divided among Hunters Sharing the Harvest and nonprofit sportsmen's clubs to promote sport hunting, youth hunter education and the conservation of game species in the state.



Get involved!

The Game Commission has a number of public programs where interested Pennsylvanians can get involved in protecting and managing the state's flora and fauna. For more information on any of these programs or to get involved, contact the regional wildlife diversity biologist for our area at 724-238-9523 or by mail to 4820 Route 711, Bolivar, PA 15923.



Private Landowner Assistance Program

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is responsible for managing the state's wild bird and mammal populations. The Private Landowner Assistance Program is designed to help interested landowners create, preserve or enhance wildlife habitat. The program is free.



Hunter Access Program

The Hunter Access Program creates a partnership between the Game Commission and a landowner through a term-lease agreement of at least 50 acres for five years or more.

Hunters and trappers help to manage game and furbearer populations while the commission provides a variety of benefits to the landowner, from law enforcement to wildlife habitat improvement.

More than 13,000 landowners and tenants currently are taking advantage of this program. The properties, located in most of the state's 67 counties, cover more than 2.6 million acres.

Barn Owl Conservation Initiative

Pennsylvania barn owl populations have been steadily declining over the past several decades due to the loss of farmland and grassland habitats where the owls hunt for small mammals, and the loss of secure nesting sites. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is seeking information on barn owl sightings throughout the state. If you are aware of any barn owls in your area or have habitat that could potentially attract nesting barn owls – hayfields, pastures and meadows – this program may be for you.



Did you know?

Barn owls are 10 to 15 inches tall and have a wingspan of 41 to 47 inches. They're often called "monkey-faced owls" for their distinctive long, heart-shaped face. They have a nearly pure-white to dusky breast with small spots, small dark eyes, and their hoot sounds like hissing or a scream.

To determine if you have a barn owl on your property, look in barns, silos, and abandoned buildings, and under possible roost sites for regurgitated owl pellets, which are dense pellets of undigested fur and bone about 1 to 2 inches long. Also, after dark, listen for long, hissing shriek-like noises, which are very different from the typical "hoots" of most owls.

Cooperating Sportsmen's Clubs Pheasant Chick Program

Sportsmen's organizations interested in augmenting the commission's propagation efforts and increasing localized recreational hunting opportunities are eligible to receive day-old pheasant chicks.

The organizations will be responsible for raising and taking care of the chicks and then releasing them on public hunting lands in time for small game season.

Bird, mammal surveys

In order to improve its ability to monitor bird populations, the commission is always looking for volunteers to participate in spring and summer surveys. Observations are invited on herons, marsh birds, cranes, osprey and bats. Data sheets and instructions for observation protocol are available on the web at www.pgc.pa.gov.

Ruffed Grouse & American Woodcock Cooperator

Several hundred Pennsylvania grouse and/or woodcock hunters help the Game Commission manage these important game birds by keeping a log of their daily hunting activities.

This survey helps the commission track the status of these game bird populations, as well as hunter success. Hunters are asked to record number of flushes and hours by county(ies) hunted. To participate, download the appropriate data form from the website at www.pgc.pa.gov and mail it in at the end of the season.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Joseph A. Petrarca

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

Website: www.pahouse.com/Petrarca
Email: petrarca@pahouse.net
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RepJoePetrarca

lpo.kl.0816

Fishing Tackle Loaner Program

Many of our beautiful state parks, including Keystone, offer the Fishing Tackle Loaner Program. This partnership between the state Fish and Boat Commission and the American Sportfishing Association enables the public to borrow rods, reels and a tackle box full of hooks and other gear.

This equipment is borrowed in much the same way books are borrowed from a library. Those wanting to borrow gear complete a form and the loan is made. The equipment is returned to the site at the end of the loan period.

At Keystone, contact the park office to borrow a rod and reel.

Please visit <http://fishandboat.com/loaner.htm> to learn more about the program.

Operation Game Thief

Wildlife crimes affect us all. The illegal shooting or taking of big game or protected, endangered or threatened species, or any crime against those species, should be reported through the Game Commission's toll-free tip line: Operation Game Thief – 1-888-PGC-8001. Please provide as many details as possible, including a description of what you saw and the species involved; the date, time and location; and any descriptive details on the person involved and vehicle.

Calls to the hotline are always answered by a secure recording device. Callers may remain confidential; however, your contact information is necessary to claim any monetary reward.

Other violations should be reported to the regional office serving the county in which the violation is taking place, as quickly as possible. Our local regional office is located off Ligonier Street in Bolivar; phone: 724-238-9523.

Petrarca has A+ NRA rating

The National Rifle Association grades legislators based on their voting record on gun rights. As an avid sportsman, I remain proud of my A+ NRA rating.

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 Program problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups

