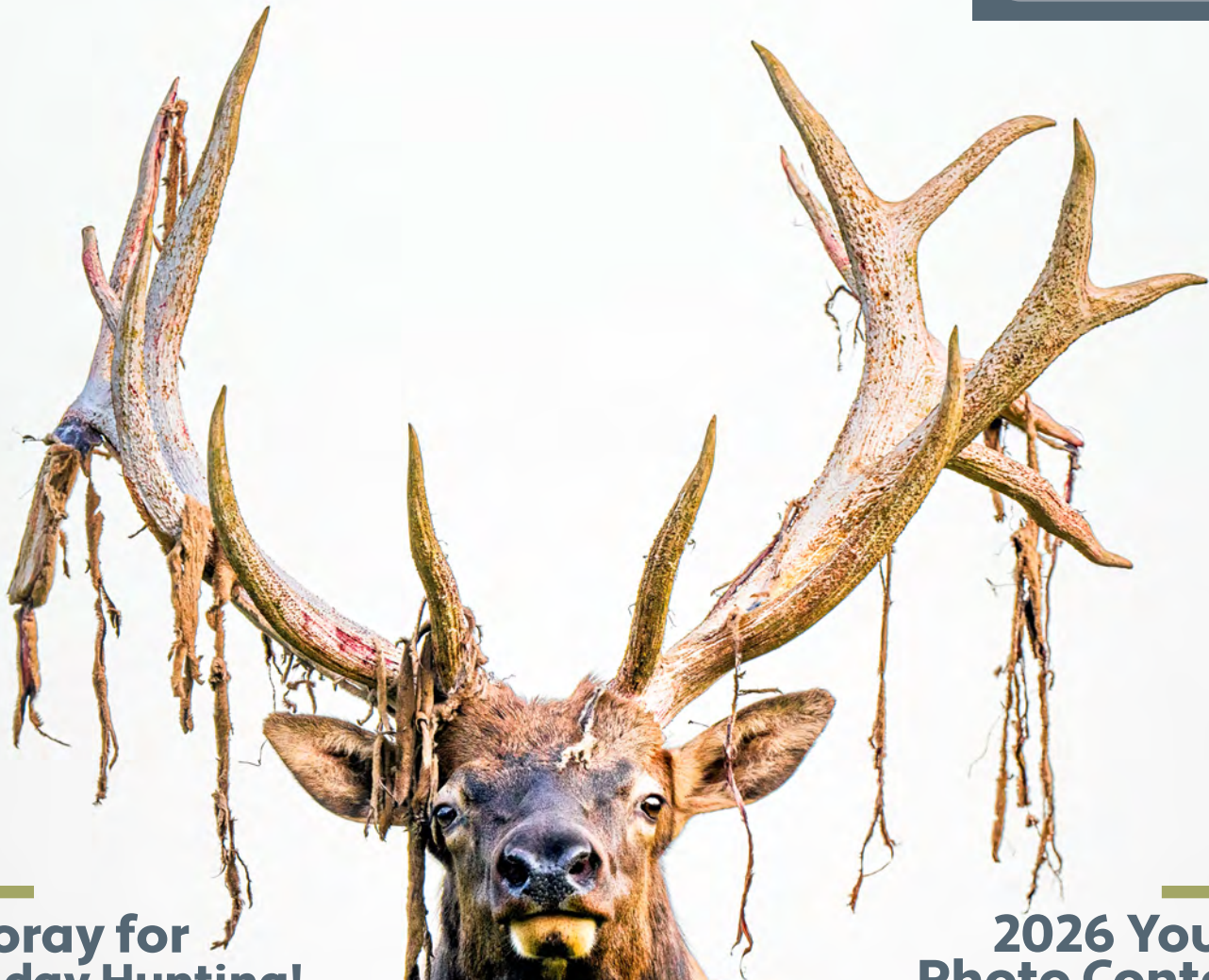




The Conservation LANTERN

FALL 2025



Hooray for Sunday Hunting!

Old Law Now History

2026 Youth Photo Contest

Theme: Pennsylvania
Pollinators

Farmers & Hunters Unite

What It Takes To Be
a Certified Hunter

Raffle Time

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Fall 2025

Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists

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The mission of Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists, Inc. is to protect and conserve Pennsylvania's natural resources, outdoor heritage, and Second Amendment rights.

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PFSC welcomes stories, art, and photographic contributions. We will consider, but assume no responsibility for, unsolicited proposals, manuscripts, art, or photographs.

For club/organization membership information or advertising inquiries, please contact the PFSC through the communication channels listed above.

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Saturday, November 1 is the deadline to submit content for the 2025 Winter Issue.

Please send submissions to alyssa@m7.agency

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PFSC Board Minutes available online at:
<https://pfsc.org/forms-%26-documents>

Password: PFSC2025

THANK YOU!

In each edition, we recognize specific individuals and organizations for their support of PFSC through donations, fundraisers, and memberships.

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Summary of Available Options

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CONFERENCE/EVENT SPONSOR

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Display informational materials and company banner at conference/event. Listed as sponsor in conference/event invitation and program. Listed as conference sponsor in magazine.

BUSINESS PARTNER

\$500

Name/logo/link on PFSC's website and listed as a business partner in the magazine for 1 year.

\$350

Name/logo/link on PFSC's website and listed as a business partner in the magazine for 6 months.

FRIEND OF PFSC

\$200

Listed as a "Friend of PFSC" on website for 6 months and in two editions of the magazine.

\$100

Listed as a "Friend of PFSC" in one edition of the magazine.

SILVER LEVEL

\$3,000

Name/logo/link on PFSC's website and magazine for 1 year. Half-page ad in magazine, one mailing, and listed as a sponsor of events and conference.

BRONZE LEVEL

\$1,000

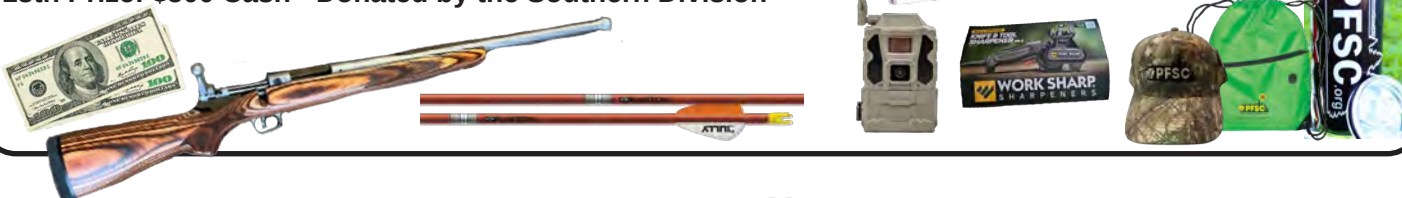
Name/logo/link on PFSC's website and magazine for 1 year. Quarter-page ad in magazine and listed as a sponsor of events.



PFSC 2026 Conservation Advocacy Raffle



- 1st Prize: Shaw 6.5 Creedmoor Rifle – Donated by Shaw Barrels
- 2nd Prize: TACTACAM Reveal Pro Trail Camera - Donated by TACTACAM
- 3rd Prize: Easton Premium Arrows (2 Boxes) – Donated by Lancaster Archery
- 4th Prize: Artwork: Elk Prints (2) - Donated by Steve Hamilton
- 5th Prize: Work Sharp Tool & Knife Sharpener - Donated by Work Sharp
- 6th Prize: Leupold BX-1 HD 8x42mm Binoculars - Donated by Clear Run Sporting Goods
- 7th Prize: PGC Print - The 'Lickin' Branch by Gerald Putt – Donated by the PA Game Commission
- 8th Prize: PFBC Framed Art Print - Donated by the PA Fish & Boat Commission
- 9th Prize: PFSC Membership Package: Lifetime Membership, Bag, Hat & Tumbler
- 10th Prize: Hunting Vest and Pint Glass - Donated by Orvis Lancaster Outlet
- 11th Prize: Savage Bolt Action .243 - Donated by the Firing Line
- 12th Prize: Beeman Air Rifle .177 Pellet Gun - Donated by Beeman
- 13th Prize: \$500 Cash - Donated by the Southern Division



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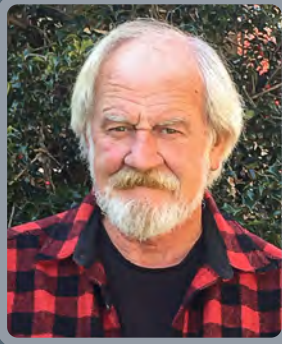
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By Denny Fillmore,
PFSC President

“

Good luck afield this fall! Hopefully, you will be able to take advantage of the extra hunting days.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PA Unloads Sunday Ban

The long campaign to abolish one of Pennsylvania's last remaining “blue laws” has finally been won. PA blue laws once dictated what stores could be open on Sundays and, to some extent, what they could legally sell if open. I'll bet most people alive today don't remember such restrictions on commerce. Sunday liquor sales and the end of many other Sunday restrictions became the norm in PA decades ago, not so with hunting on all but a handful of Sundays. For as long as I can recall, the General Assembly has refused to release control of this issue. Until now.

The blanket prohibition on Sunday hunting — which has been in place for over a hundred years and has seen little more than half-hearted attempts at modification in the past few decades — is now history. For better or worse, PA is now on a par with the majority of other states in allowing an entire week of hunting time, including Sundays.

The PFSC has long maintained the position that the Game Commission ought to rightfully be the entity setting season dates, including Sundays, as they deem fit. The General Assembly had long refused to permit that to come about, clinging to control of that one day per week like they owned it. Well, now they don't. Many of the traditional obstacles to additional Sunday hunting were finally overcome this time around, including the endorsement by the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

As one who has been a licensed hunter for over 67 years, witnessing multiple dozens of changes in how, what, and when we can hunt, getting a few more Sundays seems like a pretty good idea. I believe the PGC will handle this new challenge very well. That said, some aren't happy with this change. As with most things, time will tell how this change holds up. Thanks to all who worked to make it happen.

Thanks to those who volunteered to represent PFSC at the recent Elk Expo. Even dodging the rain showers, they had a great time and did a terrific job explaining what the PFSC is all about and what it's been working for since 1932. Plenty to read about in this issue to stay informed, including reports from our state agencies and updates from our Legislative Director, Mike Kriner.

Thank you to all those who continue to support the PFSC through memberships and donations. Our 2026 Conservation Advocacy Raffle tickets are now available for purchase (see details on page 6). Please consider recruiting others to become members to help us continue our work well into the future.

SUMMER RECAP

25th Annual Elk Expo

The 25th Annual Elk Expo was held the weekend of July 26 and 27 at the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, PA. “Hosted by the Keystone Elk Country Alliance, it featured exhibits; seminars; the Keystone Elk Country Alliance Bull Tag Raffle; elk calling contests; presentations and an elk tag drawing by the PGC; and more than 100 vendors. Add in great entertainment and food, and it was tons of fun for everyone!



(L to R): Chuck Lombaerde, Terry Gerner, Dave Wentzel, Ed Sadler, Peggy Hamilton (photographer of fox photo), Jon Furness

Sunday Hunting Bill Signing

On July 9, Governor Josh Shapiro signed House Bill 1431, effectively ending the long-standing prohibition on Sunday Hunting. The new law, which takes effect September 7, gives the Game Commission the ability to regulate hunting on Sundays.



(L to R) Rep. Mandy Steele, Ed Sadler, Gov. Josh Shapiro, Adam Eckley, Mike Kriner

PA Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Annual HSH Reception



Mike Kriner & House District 45 Chair Anita Kulik



Duane Dunmire & Senate District 36 Chair James Malone



Former PA House Speaker Bill DeWeese & Duane Dunmire

On June 10, PFSC was a sponsor of the PA Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus's annual reception in support of Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH) — a venison donation program in which hunters share their extra venison with food pantries and community assistance centers across Pennsylvania, via a statewide network of participating butchers. HSH has distributed 2.5 million pounds of donated venison since 1991! Learn more at ShareDeer.org.



PFSC Northampton County Federation Annual Youth Field Day



PFSC Northampton County Federation hosted nearly 200 youth at their annual Youth Field Day on Saturday, June 7. Our team did a great job helping to engage and teach the next generation!

Hunter-Trapper Education Programs

Duane Dunmire, PFSC VP East, stopped by one of the many Basic Hunter-Trapper Education programs run by the PGC throughout the year. Designed to teach safe and responsible hunting practices, the program is mandatory for all first-time hunters and trappers regardless of age, before they can purchase a PA hunting or trapping license.



For more details on the programs and how to become an HTE instructor for the next generation of hunters and trappers, visit www.pa.gov/agencies/pgc/education/hunter-trapper-education.

Keeping Traditions Alive

As summer comes to an end, outdoorsmen turn their attention to fall and the upcoming outdoor opportunities. However, for many, June is the unofficial start to hunting season — with that first purchase of a license — and, for some, just getting it is a practice in tradition.

In my neck of the woods, for that first purchase, the Herr Brothers have been heading to PGC Headquarters on Elmerton Avenue for years. The tradition starts with breakfast and trying to figure out who is paying. Then it's off to the PGC where purchases are made and pictures are taken with the county WCO.

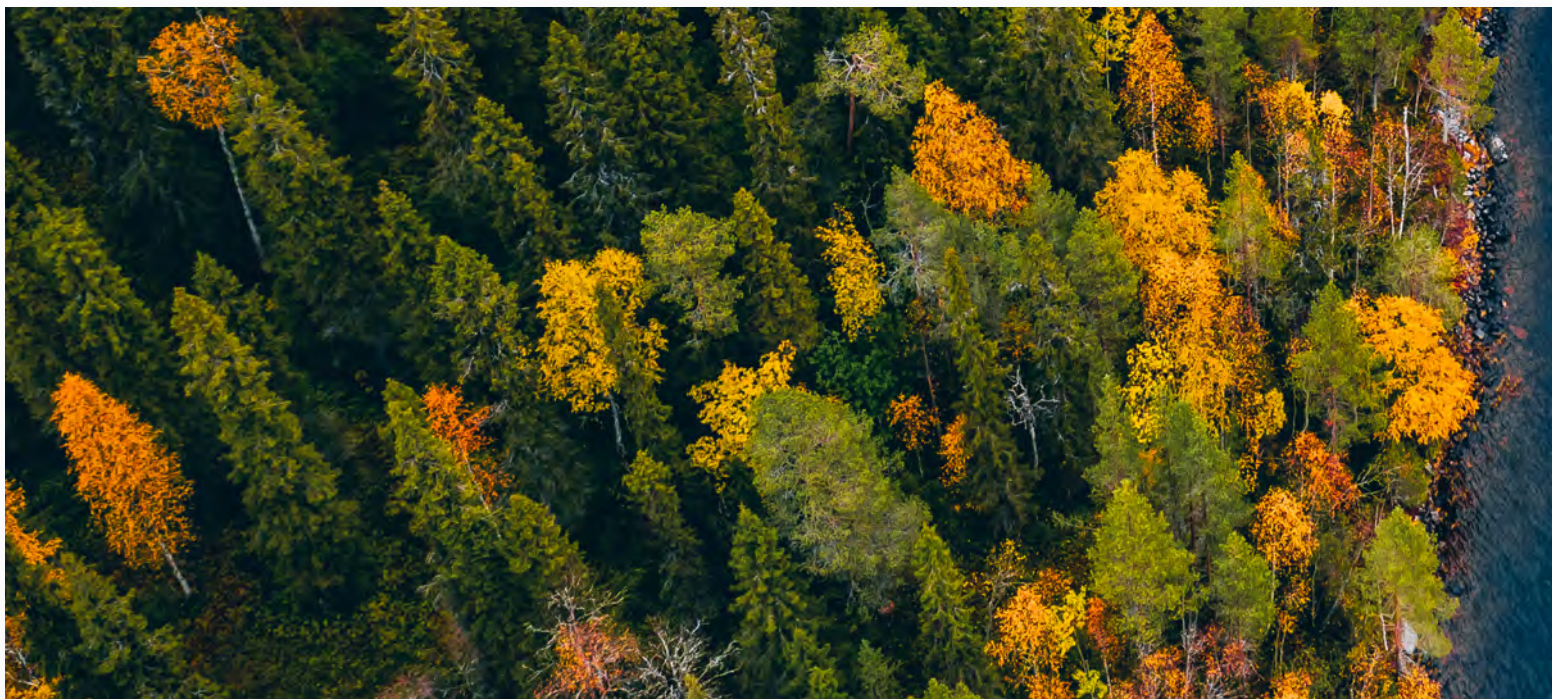
What are some other outdoor traditions? As I travel and meet people throughout this great commonwealth, I have made it a point to ask about their individual and unique traditions. Needless to say, I have heard some great ones.

Many are centered around food. The first-day-of-deer-season breakfast — which usually includes too much to eat and, in some cases, where it is eaten — is a great tradition. Lunch after a small game hunt, for some reason, always included a special pot of soup. Many stories that were shared were centered around snacks, especially after the youngest of the group went out for trick or treat.

Hunting spots were a great talking point. That rock that the family takes turns sitting on. That old, crumbling deer stand where someone in the family shot a huge buck years back. Many tales were of beloved family members or mentors, no longer with them, who passed down knowledge that is still used today. There's also the clothing from decades ago that still hangs at the camp but is no longer used for a variety of reasons.



By Duane L. Dunmire,
PFSC VP East



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT EAST

I enjoyed all the stories, but the ones that meant so much to me — and I believe meant so much to those telling the story — were the ones about a shotgun, rifle, or fishing rod that was passed down. Even when they weren't worth much money, the owner would not sell it for a million dollars. As these stories were shared, I completely understood, because I also have such memories, when something was passed down to me.

The love that was shared in these memories was evident. In some cases, a young person would share that someday they would get something that belonged to grandpa. What a memory to harvest an animal with an old gun, to catch a fish or trap your first muskrat with something that was passed down. Its worth cannot be measured.

As I get older, I often spend moments thinking about traditions or items that were passed down to me. I often shed a tear for my father or grandfather who took time to mentor me and to pass down their love for the outdoors.

Now, with so many people and groups working for decades to take our outdoor rights away, how is it that these traditions are still being shared and these tremendous memories still being made?

In Pennsylvania, the answer is simply the PFSC. In 1932, "five angry fisherman" began the fight, and it continues today. The PFSC needs to become a tradition for the outdoorsmen. We need to pass down the PFSC to our family members, to the younger generations in our sportsmen's clubs and organizations.

The fall edition of The Conservation Lantern usually goes to camps this time of year and is my favorite edition for that very reason — I know that it is shared with many people. I want the PFSC to become a tradition shared with many people, something we pass down just like an old hat or treasured piece of equipment we want others to embrace and care for because we know how special and important it is.

“

I ask that you please share the PFSC with others and pass it down so that the fight to preserve our heritage can continue. We need to embrace the PFSC as the only true statewide grassroots organization in Pennsylvania, just as we embrace that beloved object that was passed down to us. See you afield!





Unlock the Power of PFSC Membership

Are you passionate about our outdoor heritage, 2nd Amendment rights, and conserving Pennsylvania's natural resources and wildlife? So is the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and Conservationists (PFSC) and the 70,000+ members and affiliates we represent.

As the state's largest and oldest conservation organization, we carry significant grassroots political weight in the fight to protect the rights and interests of hunters, fishermen, trappers, and others like you at the local, state, and national levels.

Our full-time advocates and government relations staff work diligently to influence legislation and regulations that matter to you. We also provide valuable education, training, and outreach to promote and protect responsible, ethical use of our natural heritage.

If you're not a member yet, we welcome you to join our community of like-minded people who share your values. Your membership will make us even stronger, and the stronger we are, the better we can defend our collective cause.

Benefits of Membership

INDIVIDUAL PERKS

- Membership card, quarterly magazine The Conservation Lantern (print and digital available), and monthly e-news updates
- Access to our members-only online portal featuring legislative/regulatory updates, resources, reports, and surveys
- Voting privileges on surveys, elections, resolutions, and policy positions
- Networking & event opportunities
- Lifetime members also receive a PFSC-branded hat, decal, and license plate as well as lifetime access to publications

ADDITIONAL PERKS FOR CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

- Votes proportional to 10% of your membership size, allowing it to directly shape PFSC's standpoints on key issues
- \$5 reimbursement for each regular PFSC Individual membership your club/organization recruits
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we speak.
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MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT WEST

Weekend at the Elk Expo

The PFSC has had a booth at the Elk Expo for the past few years, and I volunteered to man the booth this year with Jon Furness, our secretary; Dave Wentzel, our SW Division director; Terry Gerner, our NC Division director; Chuck Lombaerde, our past president; and Jim Marshall from our marketing partner, M:7 Agency.

As I own a camp in the area, this was to be our headquarters for the weekend. We started early Friday with setting up our booth and preparing for the weekend. By noon, the guys staying at camp had arrived, and we took the opportunity to see some of the sights before the show on Saturday. We visited Stevenson Dam, the First Fork, the Willows, Sinnemahoning Tavern, Driftwood Saloon, and Bucktail Overlook (Top of the World), and had dinner at the Benezette Hotel.

We spent the evening looking for and watching wildlife, and we were blessed to see elk, many deer (including a lot of does with twin fawns), and four flocks of turkeys. On our ride to the expo on Saturday morning, a small black bear crossed the road in front of us. We had seen all four Pennsylvania big game species in less than 24 hours and all within 10 miles of the expo.

The Expo itself was a great experience. We met many people who are passionate about the outdoors and talked to them about who the Federation is and what we do. We were also lucky to be positioned next to St. Mary's Sportsmen Club, a member club. We learned a lot about each other and look forward to doing things with them in the future.



By Ed Sadler,
PFSC VP West

PGC Executive Director Steve Smith stopped by to visit for a while and talked about the elk program and Sunday hunting.

As midafternoon approached, people gathered in and around one building to watch the live drawing conducted by Jeremy Bandfield, the PGC elk biologist. It was quite exciting to watch all the excitement as people agonized over every name called. Two of the successful applicants were present, and both drew a large ovation from the crowd. After the drawing, things began to wind down for the day, but we weren't finished. We spent the evening with commissioners Stanley Knick and Bob Schwalm discussing Sunday hunting and the things the PFSC felt were important going forward.

Sunday morning saw us back at the booth visiting with sportsmen again. We were also able to spend some quality time with other clubs, the leadership of KECA, and other organizations that are suppliers to sportsmen and women. As we tore down the booth, we reflected on what a great weekend we had, learning about the area, seeing wildlife, and meeting and talking to some great people. Overall, it was a quality weekend and an event I highly recommend attending next year.

SUNDAY FREEDOM:

PA Centuries-Old Hunting Ban Repealed!

On July 6, the longtime ban on Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania was repealed with Governor Shapiro's signing of House Bill 1431 — a move that state hunters, including approximately 850,000 currently licensed, have awaited for generations.

Taking effect on September 7, the law grants the Pennsylvania Game Commission full authority to decide which Sundays will be open to hunting. (Previously, the law only allowed hunting on three Sundays a year.) The Commonwealth now joins 39 other states that permit broader Sunday hunting access.

The achievement comes thanks to bipartisan leadership, specifically that of Rep. Mandy Steele (D-Allegheny), who was the bill's primary sponsor, and Sen. Dan Laughlin (R-Erie), who introduced identical legislation in the Senate and championed the cause for years.

"Repealing the archaic ban on Sunday hunting is a historic win for Pennsylvania's forests and for generations of hunters to come," said Steele, who took up hunting in adulthood with her kids.

"Allowing more Sunday hunting is a commonsense change that respects tradition while embracing the realities of today's world," said Laughlin. "I'm proud to stand with the many hunters and families who pushed for this reform over the years. This is a win for working people and for the preservation of Pennsylvania's hunting heritage."

The law had widespread support from agricultural and conservation groups who believe it will help farmers control exploding deer populations and protect their crops while supporting the state's long-term sustainability of agriculture.

"By making hunting more accessible for everyone, this new law isn't just a win for hunters — it's a win for conservation," said PA Game Commission Executive Director Steve Smith, emphasizing the broader impact. "It helps us better manage wildlife now and ensures we pass down this tradition to the next generation."

On July 28, the Board of Game Commissioners approved 13 Sunday hunting opportunities for the 2025 season.

Sept.

14, 21, 28

Oct.

5, 12, 19, 26

Nov.

**2, 9, 16,
23, 30**

Dec.

7

On these Sundays, any game that's in season may be hunted, with the exception of migratory game birds. To hunt on private land on these Sundays, hunters must obtain written permission from the landowner.



2025 PFSC LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR:

.....
Dan Laughlin & Mandy Steele



Each year, we like to recognize members of the legislature who have advocated for the interests and rights that we and our members hold so dear.

On September 9 during PA National Hunting & Fishing Day at the PA Capitol, we're planning on presenting our 2025 Legislator of the Year awards to Senator Dan Laughlin and Representative Mandy Steele for their ongoing efforts on our behalf — including their bipartisan leadership which was instrumental in the lifting of the Sunday Hunting ban through HB 1431 signed into law on July 9.

Each plaque recognizes them “for working diligently on behalf of hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists,” and “for supporting science-based fish & wildlife management by our wildlife resource agencies and unwavering support of allowing the Game Commission to have full regulatory authority of wildlife management decisions, including Sunday Hunting.”

Elected to the House in 2022, Steele represents the 33rd Legislative District in Allegheny County. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and mom of four children, Steele has founded and operated two nonprofit organizations. In 2019 became the first woman and Democrat elected to the Fox Chapel Borough Council.

Prior to being elected, Steele led bipartisan actions focusing on environmental and safety issues across 20 southwestern communities in Pennsylvania. She also led grassroots efforts to build green infrastructure systems to control stormwater, making communities safer from flooding and landslides.

A longtime advocate of repealing the ban whose previous legislation brought about the expanded Sunday opportunities hunters have enjoyed in recent years, Laughlin has served in the PA State Senate since 2016, representing the 49th District, which includes nearly all of Erie County.

As a small business owner, Sen. Laughlin strongly supports policies that create jobs, limit government spending, and ease the tax and regulatory burden on job creators. An advocate for government reform, he is committed to making state government accessible and accountable to the people he serves.





The Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation is the educational arm of the PFSC whose mission is to educate Pennsylvanians about our environment and inspire them to protect and conserve our natural resources. Donations to PWF are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

Phone: 717-232-3480
info@pawildlife.org
www.pawildlife.org

WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY:

Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders

By Sara Mueller, Ph.D., Executive Director

This summer, the Wildlife Leadership Academy hosted five immersive Conservation Ambassador Trainings throughout June and July, near Madisonburg, PA. Each week, 20 passionate high school students delved into hands-on learning centered on a different species — white-tailed deer, bass, trout, wild turkey, and black bears — alongside more than 100 wildlife, fisheries, and natural resource professionals from state and federal agencies, as well as allied conservation organizations.

Immersive Learning

Over the course of each week, the participants immersed themselves in study and practice.

Under the guidance of our volunteer instructor corps, a robust network of conservation professionals, students learned about the natural history, habitat, anatomy, ecology, and conservation through the lens of a focal wildlife species. As a project-based curriculum, students completed projects that included nature photography, nature journaling, presentations, a trifold board, and a mock town hall meeting. Students applied their knowledge in real time and were teaching others by the end of their five-day sessions.

Building Leadership Through Community Projects

Beyond the science, students developed leadership skills that they could apply in their home communities.

(Continued From Previous Page)

Students are encouraged to figure out what it means to lead themselves, lead others, and lead others to lead themselves. This summer, we watched them shine — delivering presentations with confidence, answering thought-provoking questions, and inspiring each other to care for themselves and the natural world. These skills will enable them to complete outreach projects and share their wildlife knowledge and leadership skills, which illustrate how education, service, creative arts, media engagement, and outdoor mentorship can serve society and conserve our natural resources.

Moments That Stayed With Me

These personal stories serve as a testament to the profound connection these students have with nature and their dedication to conservation. I think I learn more from the students than they learn from us. Throughout the week, when given the opportunity under a canopy of stars in front of a campfire, students shared personal stories of why conservation matters to them. Some spoke of family adventures, others of childhood wonder, and some expressed the heavy weight of saving our earth. I heard profound hope in their voices.

Another standout was a young woman who recited Pennsylvania's environmental rights amendment in front of a room full of her peers and their families. When she first arrived at our program, she was quiet and reserved. Her transformation, from a shy participant to a confident leader, was truly inspiring. Watching the room cheer her on and the smile blossom on her face left a permanent mark on my heart.

Join Us in Nurturing the Next Generation

Do you know a student who would make an extraordinary Conservation Ambassador? Nominate them today and be a part of our mission at wildlifeleadershipacademy.org/nominate.

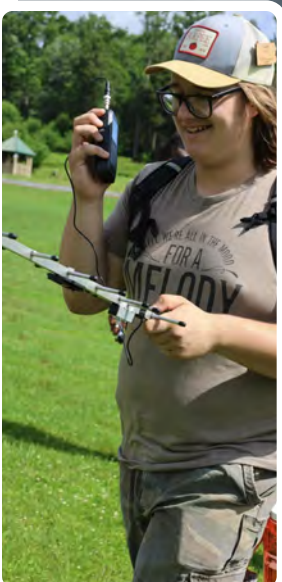
Inspiring Personal Growth: The Future of Conservation Leaders

As I reflect on this summer, what stands out to me is the remarkable personal growth and transformation of our students. The future of conservation leaders is bright with scientists who listen, educators who connect with communities, and project managers who respond to real challenges in the field. The 2025 cohort embodied curiosity, resilience, and compassion. They carry more than knowledge and field skills; the stories, relationships, and leadership they share can and will shape a healthier planet. It has been the highest honor to witness their growth. From our classroom to their home communities, I am positive that the future is bright.

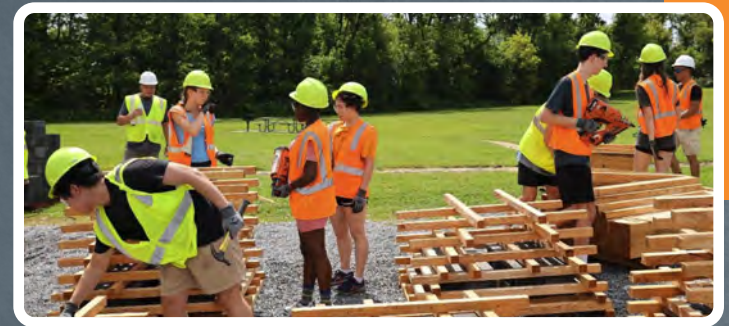


Macroinvertebrates

Radio Telemetry Exercise



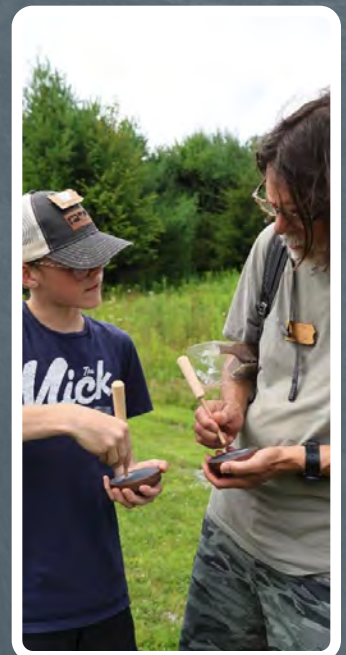
Bass Habitat Building



Stream Restoration Project



Turkey Calling Practice



Teambuilding



NEW PROGRAM A WIN-WIN FOR HUNTERS & FARMERS

Crop damage from wildlife has long been a significant problem for Pennsylvania's farmers, amounting to tens of millions of dollars annually. The main culprit has been the state's substantial white-tailed deer population, estimated to be around 1.5M, or roughly 30 deer per square mile.

One of the biggest struggles for farmers has been finding reliable hunters to help manage deer numbers. However, a new initiative by The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) looks to change that in a way that's mutually beneficial to farmers and hunters alike.

The Certified Hunter Program (CHP) is a voluntary certification designed to connect landowners experiencing agricultural losses with experienced, ethical hunters who meet a high standard of proficiency and conduct. The pilot phase took place in Southwest Pennsylvania in August, with plans for potential statewide expansion, depending on its success.

Introduced by Tyler Strohecker, PGC's Landowner Engagement and Hunting Access Manager, the CHP will create a pool of vetted hunters to help farmers combat crop damage, while also opening up potentially millions of otherwise inaccessible acres to those hunters.

"We are thrilled with the amount of positive traction the program has made so far," said Strohecker. "The number of hunters and landowners eager to participate has exceeded our expectations. We look forward to building the program and expanding into more areas next year."

CERTIFIED HUNTER REQUIREMENTS

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Have purchased a hunting license in four of the past five years
- Abide by the Certified Hunter Program Agreement

The Game Commission hopes this initiative will serve not only as a tool for wildlife management but also as a way to strengthen the relationship between hunters and landowners. According to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, there are more than 7M acres of farmland in the state, stewarded by nearly 50,000 farm families. Meanwhile, there are approximately 950,000 paid hunting license holders in PA, based on a recent Stacker analysis of data.

Property owners who participate in the CHP retain full control over how and when hunters access their land, including the ability to specify hunting zones, access points, and hunting times. This flexibility allows the program to adapt to each farm's specific needs and conditions.

"The [program] will alleviate some of the common barriers we hear from landowners and hunters when participating in Ag Tag and other programs," added Strohecker. "By removing these barriers, landowners can address crop damage in a safe and efficient manner while maintaining control over who accesses their property."

By connecting qualified hunters with those in need of deer population control, the CHP represents a step forward in cooperative wildlife management. For farmers suffering from crop damage and hunters seeking access to private land, the Certified Hunter Program is a win-win solution.



- Have no wildlife game code violations in the past three years and no major violations in the past 10 years
- Pass a shooting proficiency test, with distinct standards for rifle, shotgun, and archery
- Pass a Certified Hunter written exam covering landowner relations, ethics, hunting effectiveness, and farming practices (A study guide is provided to help prepare)
- Pass a criminal background check

For more details and to enroll your farm or apply to be a certified hunter, search for the "Certified Hunter Program" on [pa.gov](https://www.pa.gov)

2026

YOUTH PHOTO CONTEST

Calling all Pennsylvania school-aged children in grades 4-12: You're invited to participate in our 2026 photo contest!



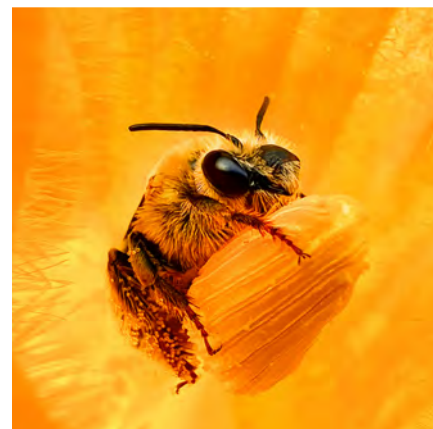
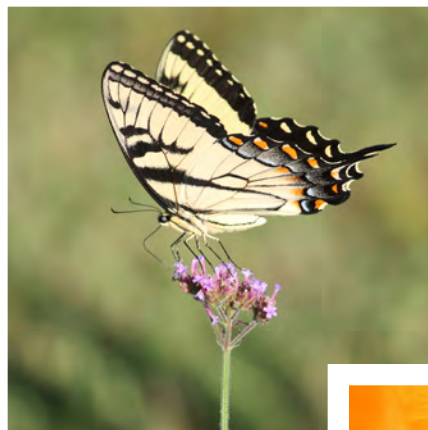
2025 PHOTO CONTEST WINNER

McConnell's Mills State Park. Farmers once used this mill to grind oats, wheat, corn, and buckwheat.

Caleb Pardoe – Butler County
(Sub-Junior 1st Place)

Theme:
Things Pennsylvania State Parks Protect

Each year, the PFSC and the PWF host a uniquely themed wildlife contest to encourage creative expression and foster an appreciation and understanding of the outdoor world. Through these contests, we aim to inspire our youth to delve deeper into the wonders of Pennsylvania's wildlife, fisheries, and natural resources.



THEME: PENNSYLVANIA POLLINATORS

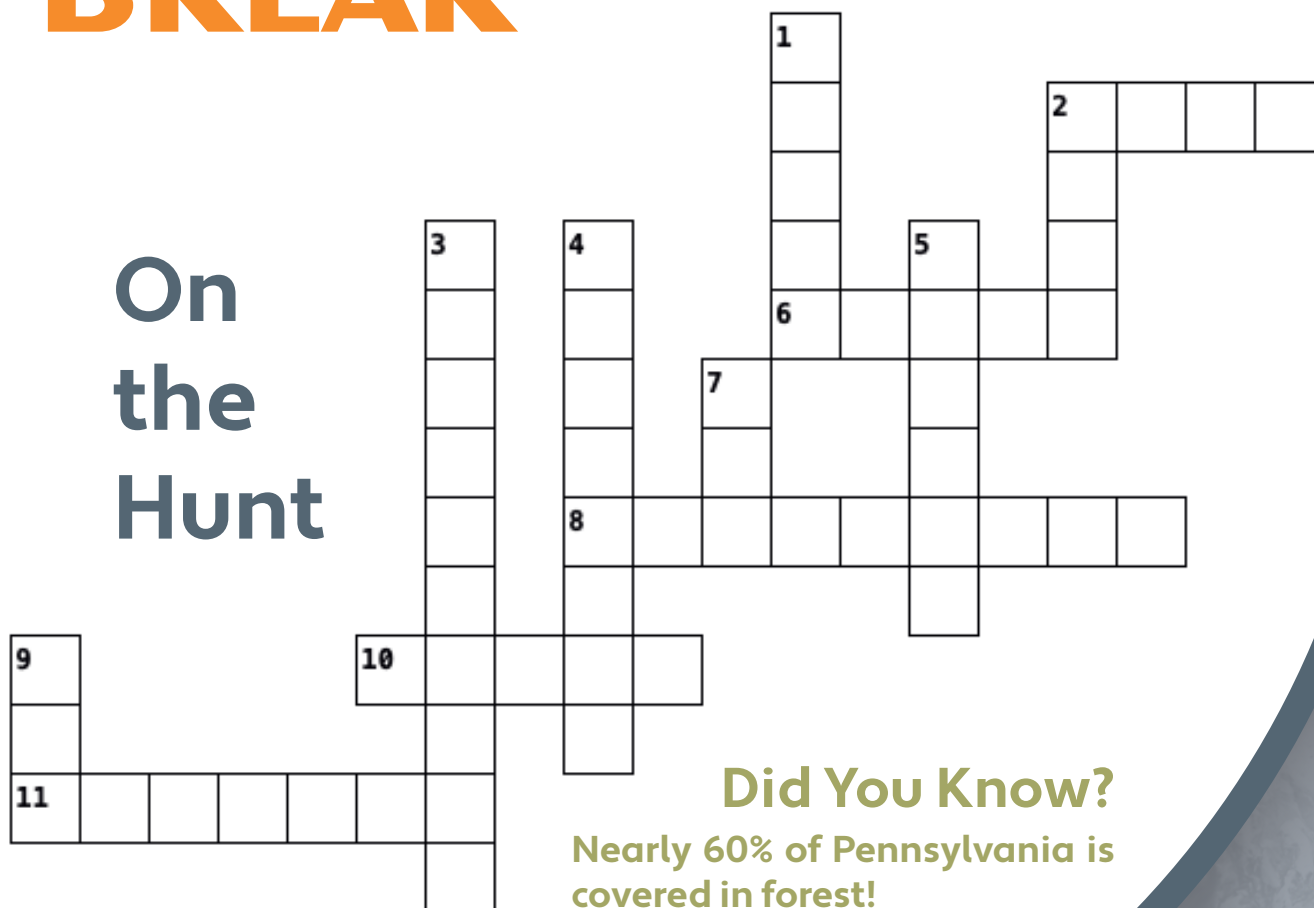
Aiding in the reproduction of flowering plants and the production of many crops, pollinators are essential for the health of our environment. This year, we're looking for depictions of Pennsylvania's pollinators, from bees to butterflies, and the results of their work. By looking closer at nature, and learning more about pollinators, you can see how conservation efforts promote and protect our natural resources.

Photographs must be submitted electronically, along with the artist contact form, to Beth@pfsc.org by March 1, 2026. Only one entry per student. All submissions must be originals taken in PA between March 2025 and February 2026 by the person entering the contest.

For further instructions, interactive entry form, and prize information, visit pfsc.org/home/f/2026-photo-contest

BROOKIES BREAK

On the Hunt



Did You Know?

Nearly 60% of Pennsylvania is covered in forest!

Across

- 2. A male deer
- 6. Used to see far from a distance
- 8. Elevated platform used by hunters
- 10. Concealment device or shelter for hunters
- 11. Legal process of checking and reporting a kill

Down

- 1. Used to lure in animals with sound
- 2. What antlers are made of
- 3. Clothing pattern for blending in outdoors
- 4. Act of preparing and watching an area before hunting
- 5. Individual projections on antlers used to score
- 7. A female deer
- 9. The time of year bucks seek mates

Answers: 2. buck | 6. scope | 8. treestand | 10. blind | 11. tagging // 1. calls | 2. bone | 3. camouflage | 4. scouting | 5. points | 7. doe | 9. rut

Word Bank

- ☐ Leaves
- ☐ Acorn
- ☐ Pumpkin
- ☐ Squirrel
- ☐ Bonfire
- ☐ Hayride
- ☐ Breeze
- ☐ Harvest
- ☐ Cider
- ☐ Scarecrow
- ☐ Hike
- ☐ Cornstalk
- ☐ Autumn
- ☐ Smores

Autumn in the Air

D C L Z T L S F I S X N N V
 I A A G Y W E V G C E S C V
 W C G R Q N E A S A D E O A
 C O T F T R B H V R Z T R U
 H R O R I H A R V E S T N T
 S N Z F P A E S E C S J S U
 K H N P P D Q R M R P V T M
 C O R D I E B G X O V L A N
 B X E R C I D E R W R N L F
 M I Y W N Q R L F A A E K O
 E A T R J J J B X K K S S Z
 H G K Q P U M P K I N V Y T
 R M U L N H T H H D R F I N
 S Q U I R R E L I U W U U E



Fall Scavenger Hunt

How many signs of fall can you find? Search by sight and do your best not to disturb the wildlife.

- ☐ Red Leaf
- ☐ Brown Leaf
- ☐ Orange Leaf
- ☐ Pumpkin
- ☐ Acorn
- ☐ Mushroom
- ☐ Yellow Leaf
- ☐ Green Leaf
- ☐ Worm
- ☐ Spiderweb
- ☐ Pinecone
- ☐ Squirrel
- ☐ Bird's Nest
- ☐ Scarecrow



M:7

CAPITAL SERVICES
GRAPHIC DESIGN
PHOTOGRAPHY
WEB DEVELOPMENT
VIDEOGRAPHY
AERIAL VISUALS
CORPORATE BRANDING
AD PLACEMENT
INFLUENCER MARKETING
REPUTATION MANAGEMENT
ADVANCED ANALYTICS
CONTENT STRATEGY
MEDIA RELATIONS
CRISIS COMMS PLANNING
BRAND JOURNALISM
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

PFSC Tags M:7 Agency to Help Increase Membership & Engagement

This is the first edition of The Conservation Lantern designed and edited by PFSC's new marketing partner, M:7 Agency, in close collaboration with Melody Schell, who faithfully served as the publication's editor-in-chief for more than 20 years. M:7 is a fully integrated marketing and communications firm based in Beaver, PA, which specializes in helping brands secure more customers, capacity, or capital.



The partnership aims to boost memberships and engagement, expanding the critical organization's reach across Pennsylvania and its role as a thought leader in the world of PA field sports and conservation. Moving forward, M:7 Agency will be working with the PFSC team to update and streamline marketing and fundraising materials, including the Lantern, emails, social media, the PFSC website, and more.



Vision+
Execution®

M:7 AGENCY

Learn more about us and how we help others grow at www.m7.agency

GEAR UP FOR ADVENTURE

Show everyone you're a proud member of PFSC with exclusive branded merch! Choose from hats, tees, tumblers, and more which also make great gifts for family and friends.



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By Mike Kriner,
PFSC Director of
Government Affairs

PFSC

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Hello again from the Pennsylvania Capitol. We are just over one-quarter of the way through the 2025-2026 legislative session, but we've already seen major success with five of the first 36 bills signed into law having an impact on our PFSC members and our outdoor community.

In an effort to bring the Capitol to you and prepare you for future elections, we thought it would be helpful for you to know how PA House and Senate members voted on some of our priority legislation. Below is a recap of nine bills we are highlighting along with a summary of the vote. You can view the full **Vote Sheet on PFSC Legislative Priorities** online at <https://pfsc.org/legislative-news>

Sunday Hunting

(Rep. Mandy Steele – House Bill 1431) Allows the PA Game Commission (PGC) to decide what Sundays are open for hunting throughout a given year. Also provides for trespassing on private property while hunting.

House



VOTING NO: Anderson, Armanini, Banta, Barger, Barton, Bashline, Bonner, Borowicz, Brown, Cook, Cutler, Day, Delozier, Diamond, D'Orsie, Ecker, Fee, Fink, Flood, Gillen, Gleim, Greiner, Hogan, James, T. Jones, Kail, Kauffman, Kephart, Klunk, Lawrence, Leadbeter, Mako, Maloney, Mentzer, Metzgar, Miller, Moul, Owlet, Rader, Rapp, Reichard, Rose, Rossi, Rowe, Ryncavage, Schlegel, Schmitt, Scialabba, Smith, Stambaugh, Stehr, Stender, Struzzi, Topper, Twardzik, Walsh, Wentling, White, Zimmerman



VOTING NO: Brennan, Vitali

Senate



VOTING NO: Brooks, Dush, Hutchinson, Keefer, Mastriano, Pennycuik, Schlegel Culver, Vogel, J. Ward



VOTING NO: Boscola, Haywood, Muth, Saval, Schwank, A. Williams, L. Williams

5th Amendment & Agriculture Protections

(Sen. Greg Rothman – Senate Bill 518) Protects an individual's 5th Amendment rights by ensuring no person may be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against themselves. Also says that at least one PGC member must have a background in both agricultural operations and wildlife. Additionally, makes the process more efficient for individuals disposing of wildlife taken as a result of crop damage.

House



VOTING NO: Barger, Maloney, Twardzik



VOTING NO: Brennan, Vitali

Senate



UNANIMOUS YES



UNANIMOUS YES



Body Cameras for PFBC, PGC, & DCNR

(Sen. Lisa Baker – Senate Bill 520) Approved by the PA Senate, House Judiciary Committee, and awaiting consideration on the PA House floor. Would allow for use of body cameras by Deputy Waterway Conservation Officers, Deputy Game Wardens, PA Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) Rangers, and State Park Officers.

House The bill has not yet received a final vote for approval as of publication. **Senate** **UNANIMOUS YES**

Abandoned Boats

(Rep. Anita Kulik – House Bill 103) Addresses the issue of abandoned and derelict boats.

House **UNANIMOUS YES**
VOTING NO: Borowicz, Metzgar
Senate **UNANIMOUS YES**

Fishing Licenses for Disabled Veterans

(Sen. Tracy Penny-cuick – Senate Bill 232) Streamlines the process for a disabled veteran to get a PA fishing license.

UNANIMOUS YES

Hunting & Fishing Licenses for Military

(Rep. Chris Pielli – House Bill 968) Approved by the PA House and awaiting consideration by the PA Senate Game & Fish Committee. Would provide for reciprocal agreements with other states for hunting and fishing licenses for active duty military personnel and disabled veterans.

House **UNANIMOUS YES**
Senate The bill has not yet received a final vote for approval as of publication.

Hunting Licenses for College Students

(Rep. Mandy Steele – House Bill 1507) Approved by the PA House and awaiting consideration by the PA Senate Game & Fish Committee. Would reduce the cost for a hunting license for out-of-state college students.

House **UNANIMOUS YES**
VOTING NO: Heffley, Irvin, Lawrence, Mako, Stambaugh,
Senate No Final Vote Yet

PFBC \$

(Sen. Greg Rothman – Senate Bill 800) Approved by the PA Senate, the PA House Game & Fish Committee, and awaiting consideration on the PA House floor. Provides for the flexible use of Fish & Boat funds by the PA Fish & Boat Commission for improved efficiencies and budgeting.

Senate **UNANIMOUS YES**
House The bill has not yet received a final vote for approval as of publication.

PA Boating Advisory Board

(Rep. David Dellosso – House Bill 992) Improves the membership of the PA Boating Advisory Board at the PFBC.

UNANIMOUS YES

We still have some work to do to position some of our remaining legislative priorities for final approval by the state legislature, relating to:

- PA Trapper's Association's "Mentored Youth Trapping" permit proposal to allow youth to trap fishers, bobcats, and otters
- Protecting our 2nd Amendment rights
- Collaborating with Governor Shapiro and Senate leaders to continue appointing experienced commissioners to the PA Fish & Boat Commission and the PA Game Commission

Please use the **Vote Sheet on PFSC Legislative Priorities** to either thank or provide feedback to your state legislators on outdoor policy items you find to be critical to you. This outreach makes a big difference when they prepare to vote in the Capitol.



PIVOT POINT FOR PA HUNTING

By Steve Smith, Executive Director

History is marked by pivot points — singular moments when the tides of human affairs change course in dramatic fashion.

We rarely think of alterations to hunting seasons that way. We've added seasons in our 130 years as Pennsylvania's wildlife agency, permitting archery and flintlock hunting, for example. We've eliminated seasons, such as the post-Christmas one for ruffed grouse, to protect the resource. We've tweaked other seasons in other ways at other times. All were big changes in their way. None were necessarily seismic. This is seismic.

On July 29, our Board of Game Commissioners directed me to add, by Executive Order, 10 Sundays to the 2025 fall hunting seasons. With the three Sundays already slated, they give hunters the chance to pursue every species in season — with the exception of migratory birds — seven days a week from Sept. 14 through Dec. 7. Those 10 extra Sundays might not seem like a big deal to those outside our world. But we know better.

As multiple hunters at the annual Elk Expo told me, that one change doubled the amount of time they'll spend hunting this fall. Doubled! We've never increased opportunity so much for so many people all at once with one single action, ever. That's historic, seismic, monumental, incredible...you name the adjective and it fits. That it took so many people working so hard for so long to get here makes this moment all the sweeter.

www.pgc.state.pa.us

Connecting You With Wildlife

The prohibition on Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania goes back centuries, to 1692. In the days of William Penn, it banned not only hunting on Sundays, but also any other "sport or diversion" and even "worldly employment and business." The law remained in place when Pennsylvania became a state in 1787. It wasn't until 1978 that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled so-called "blue laws" unconstitutional. Even then, though, the ban fell away only incrementally over decades.

Going into 2025, the ban on Sunday hunting was one of the few prohibitions remaining. Repealing it was our top legislative priority — our Holy Grail — just as it had been for decades. We couldn't do it on our own, however. Only the General Assembly had that authority. Thankfully, we had lots of people on our side.

In the state legislature, Rep. Mandy Steele (D-Allegheny) in the House and Sen. Dan Laughlin (R-Erie) in the Senate led the charge, simultaneously introducing bills repealing the Sunday hunting ban. That was huge, indicating support not only in both chambers, but on both sides of the political aisle, too.

Hunting organizations and individual rank-and-file hunters, meanwhile, lobbied their elected officials to support those bills. Other partners — including the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, once the staunchest opponent of Sunday hunting — signed on to the effort as well. The result was passage of Act 36 of 2025. Gov. Josh Shapiro signed it into law on July 9. What a victory that was for us all!

The timing presented challenges, though. Our Board of Game Commissioners has a process for establishing seasons and bag limits. Typically, it meets once, preliminarily adopts regulations, puts them out for public comment, then meets a second time to enact them officially. Even then, the regulations must go to the Office of the Attorney General for review and be published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Best-case scenario, that process typically takes 12 weeks. That was too long to wait if we wanted to give hunters more Sundays starting this fall. So the board directed me to add 10 Sundays by Executive Order. That's a tool this agency has used, so far as we can tell, perhaps only twice before in its history. This was the perfect time to use it again. We've all waited long enough for this day.

It's important to note that adding Sundays to seasons doesn't change when they end. For many, that's on a Saturday. The firearms deer season, for example, still ends on Dec. 13, as originally set. And the rule that hunters need to get written permission to hunt private property on Sundays still remains. But keep an eye out for what else is to come. The 10 Sundays added to the fall seasons are ones we feel confident our state's wildlife resources can handle, based on years of data collected and analyzed by our professional staff, including biologists.

We considered but rejected, for now, offering Sunday hunting elsewhere. In the case of the extended firearms deer season available on properties in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), for example, we want to see what participation and harvest it generates in this, its first year, before adding time. Likewise, our youth spring gobbler season already generates a harvest of about 3,000 tons annually — twice as many as any state that already has a two-day youth season — so we want to take a closer look at that before adding days.

We also decided not to include Sundays in migratory bird seasons just yet. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — which has ultimate authority over those species — gives us a maximum number of hunting days we can offer. Adding Sundays would have put us over the limit and forced us to make cuts elsewhere, leading to a net loss of hunting time.

But rest assured, our staff will spend the time between now and January — the starting point for setting 2026-27 seasons — studying our wildlife populations, examining harvests, measuring what an additional weekend day of hunting means to them, and listening to what our license-buying hunters want.

I can't predict what will come of that. But I would expect that next year, with more time and information, we'll likely see more Sundays added to more seasons. That's up to our Commissioners, of course. But, unlike any of their predecessors over the last 130 years, they'll be free to decide what's best for managing our wildlife resources and promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations by including Sundays when and where they see fit. That will be another pivot point — one I can't wait to see.



RAMBLINGS OF A PA RIDGE-RUNNER

Ways of the Seasoned Hunter

by Lynn Hollis Adams, Susquehanna County

The approach of fall stirs the hunters that await it each year. The young hunters and the not-so-young ones purchase their licenses and tags, then return to their end-of-summer routines, with hunting season on their minds but not at the forefront. Then two days before the opener, panic sets in as mis-stowed gear, ammo, and all things hunting seem to have taken leave of where they were thought to be stored! Rifles not sighted in, cameras not where they should be, hunting shanties in disrepair and general chaos.

The exception is the post-70 hunter, who has long ago established a routine. Work schedules don't affect them. They just watch the sun rise and set. The gear they've used year after year sits ready, exactly where they placed it in closets and safes. Boots, coats, hats, and gloves — old friends that still serve them, waiting ready in their places.

The firearm of choice for the season ahead is tried and true, without a flashy name, just an old, trusted brand, and the same with the ammunition. Ammunition, which by the way, he has more of than he will ever need in the days of hunting he has left.

All things hunting fall into place and fit like favorite shoes; time has ensured that, thorough the practiced, prehunt rituals he doesn't even realize he does. The fire in his belly is still there to succeed and take a good animal, but the need to prove anything has long gone. That was accomplished over the years, and the notches on his old hunting knife's handguard bear witness and proof.

We never anticipate the slowdown; it just suddenly appears, and steep trails over hill and dale are memories, not something wobbly on their feet, old men should do, or for that matter, can do. Friends, young ones offer their help, providing places to hunt, helping drag out a deer, and even driving deer for them. The thoughts are appreciated, but old timers know "borrowed" help means someone sacrifices their hunt, so thanks are given, and they often go it alone, the best they can.

A deer on a flat stretch of open woods is a more sensible target than one deep in a valley on the other side of a swamp. Good sense prevails when capabilities are matched with reality; the knowledge is that he could have taken that buck had he chosen to do so.

A good hunt without the drag. The only fly in the ointment for the practiced old hunter is memory, and arriving at their chosen stand, they realize they forgot something lying in plain sight on the kitchen table that morning. It happens to young and old, but it is more likely to affect the gray-haired hunter. No matter, he has all season, no time limits, and no work schedules, only a wife who worries about his well-being afield. She never gets it that his last breath is better served alone in the woods with the smell of fall as he ends his last hunt; one should only be so lucky.

OUTDOOR VOICES

Where Tradition Meets Innovation



Available on:



& thekeystoneexperience.com

Hosted by Rob “Mountain Man” Warrick and heading into its sixth season, The Keystone Experience brings hunters, trappers, fishermen, and outdoor enthusiasts together for relaxed, authentic, and insightful discussions about “all things outdoors.”

While the main focus is on hunting — from gear and tips to tactics and tricks — the video podcast touches upon a wide variety of subjects near and dear to the hearts of PA sportsmen and conservationists.

Warrick started hunting and trapping at the age of 12, bought his first bow at 16, and has been hooked on the outdoors ever since. Born 250 years too late, he’s a modern-day mountain man!

“I want to see the youth get involved in hunting, fishing, trapping and shooting,” said Warrick. “Without them, there is no future for our sport. So, take a kid hunting. Also, join organizations like the PFSC who fight for our rights and are Pennsylvania’s voice for sportsmen and women. One last thing: Never apologize for being a hunter or trapper.”



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FIXING PA'S ABANDONED BOAT PROBLEM

By Tim Schaeffer,
Executive Director

Just about every summer, the same story unfolds along Pittsburgh's North Shore: Someone ties an old fiberglass boat to the river wall and decides to never come back for it.

The Three Rivers area can be so busy, especially in summertime, that it usually takes a couple of days or weeks to realize that a boat has been abandoned. Once that realization kicks in, the cause is typically an irresponsible boat owner who is nowhere to be found, resulting in a private property owner, or the City itself, left to clean up someone else's mess. All the while, local residents grow livid over the addition of another eyesore in their community.

While the Steel City makes an excellent example because the scenario I described is so common, the problem of abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV's) is truly statewide and affects other regions of Pennsylvania with active boating communities, including the length of the Susquehanna River, the Delaware River near Philadelphia, and of course, Lake Erie.

I've actually been on ride-alongs with long-time Waterways Conservation Officers who've told me they've been passing by the same abandoned or "dumped" boat for half their careers. For someone who's never dealt with the issue before, you might ask, "What's the big deal? Why can't you just tow the boat away?" Unfortunately, the answer's not that simple.

While the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) is no more responsible for removing abandoned boats from waterways than PennDOT is responsible for towing abandoned cars from the highway, the PFBC does have a hand in the process. Under the Fish and Boat Code (58 Pa. Code § 93.17), the process for identifying and removing ADVs has been extremely frustrating, especially for property owners who just wanted to clean up the mess without the red tape. Thankfully, we're well on our way to making things easier.



On June 30, Governor Shapiro signed into law Act 28 of 2025, formerly House Bill 103, which gives communities stronger tools to deal with ADVs. The law, which will take effect in early 2026, creates clear definitions for “abandoned,” “at-risk”, and “derelict” boats — terms that were previously missing from state law — and gives local authorities a process to investigate, tag, and remove problem vessels.



Abandoned boats are not only eyesores in communities, but they can also be dangerous for aquatic life. Boats, just like motor vehicles, contain gas, oil, and other mechanical fluids that can leak and pollute our waterways. Many abandoned boats become small shipwrecks when they begin to sink, making the removal process even more difficult, all while towing fees and environmental cleanup costs stack up, often totaling thousands of dollars.

Bottom line: If you have a boat that you no longer want, dumping it illegally for someone else to deal with is no longer an option in Pennsylvania without serious consequences. Along with enforcement of this updated law, as an agency, we’ll be stepping up our efforts to educate boaters about the responsibilities that go with owning a boat, including the costs of eventually disposing of them, so they aren’t faced with a risky decision in the future.

“These boats don’t just sit and rot. They leak fuel, block access, and sometimes even break loose and cause accidents,” said State Representative Anita Kulik of Allegheny County, chair of the House Game and Fisheries Committee, and prime sponsor of the bill. “Local officials have been asking for clear authority to deal with this, and this bill finally delivers it. I want to thank Senator Greg Rothman and the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee for their support, Senator Devlin Robinson for sponsoring a companion bill, and my colleagues in both the House and Senate for working together to get this bill passed. I’m also grateful to Governor Shapiro for signing it into law so that we can protect our waterways and the people who enjoy them.”

Act 28 of 2025 requires the PFBC and local officials to notify boat owners and give them 14 days to remove, repair, or properly store their boat. If owners do not act, authorities can remove the vessel, and municipalities are allowed to recover removal and storage expenses. The bill also increases penalties for abandoning a boat, with more serious consequences for cases that involve significant cleanup costs.

STRIPED BASS FISHERY PLAN AIMS TO ADDRESS LOOMING CRISIS

Plan Could Bring New Limits for Anglers

Aiming to rebuild the struggling striped bass population, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) this week released a proposed update to the striped bass fishery plan for public comment.

The update, known as Addendum III, includes various options that could lead to new regulations for anglers and watermen. Following a public comment period on those options, final adoption of any new measures is expected at the ASMFC's annual meeting in late October.

In Maryland, striped bass recruitment, or reproductive success, has been below average for six consecutive years. There are not enough young striped bass to grow up and replace the big fish being caught, foreshadowing a potential future disaster. The Chesapeake Bay produces between 70 to 90 percent of all striped bass on the East Coast, and low striped bass recruitment is also occurring in other nursery areas such as the Hudson and Delaware rivers.

Challenges contributing to these striped bass struggles include pollution, loss of habitat, overfishing, invasive predators like blue catfish, and warming water temperatures due to climate change. Chesapeake Bay states have proactively closed fishing for striped bass during the hot summer months, when fish are most vulnerable to dying after being caught and released.

But the ASMFC's 2024 striped bass stock assessment showed that without additional action by ASMFC member states it's unlikely that striped bass will recover to their target numbers by 2029 due to higher than predicted fishing rates in 2024. The striped bass addendum issued this week includes several options intended to further reduce fishing and help striped bass rebound to the target by 2029.



Over the coming months, ASMFC will host public hearings on Draft Addendum III, where participation will be critical to support striped bass conservation. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is reviewing changes to the document and will share further information ahead of public hearings and public comment deadlines.

“ASMFC needs to be proactive in rescuing a struggling striped bass population enjoyed by Pennsylvania anglers when they spend time on the Bay,” said Julia Krall, Chesapeake Bay Foundation Executive Director in Pennsylvania. “It would be tragic to lose such an important fishery.”

“Pennsylvania, along with other ASMFC member jurisdictions, remains committed to conserving and rebuilding the coastwide striped bass stock through management options presented in Addendum III,” added Kris Kuhn, Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission’s Bureau of Fisheries. “We look forward to hearing from the public during this process to implement conservation measures and sustainably manage this cherished fishery. The management options selected through Addendum III to protect and rebuild this species will have a lasting impact, not only for the striped bass population as a whole, but for the anglers who enjoy recreational striped bass fishing opportunities on the Delaware River and Estuary.”



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Headquartered in Bryn Mawr, PA, they advocate for the communities they serve and protect over 7,600 acres of forests and other habitats throughout their footprint. They're also one of the most significant publicly traded water, wastewater service, and natural gas providers in the U.S.

BEST YEAR YET TO HUNT KQDC

By John Dzemyan,
KQDC Coordinator

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The 2025/2026 deer hunting seasons will open up the best opportunities deer hunters have ever had to hunt the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative and surrounding DMAP on public and private lands. The week between Christmas and New Year's Day is a time when young people are on school breaks, and now they can use rifles with their DMAP permits to harvest antlerless deer.

The DMAP rifle season will start Friday, December 26, and continue until Saturday, January 24. This will give DMAP hunters five weeks that include five more Saturdays to harvest antlerless deer with KQDC DMAP permits.

Permits are available online at the PA Game Commission DMAP website. Our 2025 spring and summer surveys show that deer numbers are still higher than what the habitat can sustain over the long term. If you're looking for large, uncrowded forested areas to hunt with a good chance of having snow cover, the KQDC is the place to go!



AUTUMN OPPORTUNITIES

By Cindy Adams Dunn —
DCNR Secretary

With the cooler weather of autumn at hand, we at the DCNR are looking forward to the changing leaves and many outdoor recreation opportunities that our state parks and state forests provide. If you are looking for a place to fish, hike, camp, boat, or simply enjoy some beautiful natural surroundings, our parks and forests have it all. We are still open and still awesome! In this issue I wanted to touch on the fall foliage outlook, the October 'Walk in Penn's Woods' program, and the new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Fall Foliage Outlook

Last year (2024) was an excellent year for fall color, and this year is shaping up well. Commonwealth forests benefitted from abundant rainfall in May, blunting a very active wildfire season. Precipitation continues to sporadically fall throughout Pennsylvania this summer, and thus far we've managed to avoid prolonged periods of dryness. "Our forests should enter fall in a healthy condition, setting the stage for a great seasonal show. I expect another great year for fall color," said Ryan Reed, who writes the DCNR Bureau of Forestry's weekly fall foliage reports.

Pennsylvania is ideally situated in North America to host two major forest communities — oak-hickory and northern hardwoods, both of which offer scenic fall displays at slightly different times. The northern hardwoods typically peak earlier, with the oak-hickory forests a week to two weeks behind. Sometimes, if the conditions are right, both peaks will overlap. Those years are often the most memorable for color, as it seems that all the woods are ablaze with color, whether observing from a river valley or a high vista.



Department of Conservation & Natural Resources Report



Photo Credits:
PA DCNR



www.dcnr.state.pa.us

Fall foliage season is truly a magical time in Penn's Woods. We are blessed with millions of acres of publicly accessible forests, and endless opportunities to view the fall spectacle.

For places to go to see fall color, please look here: <https://maps.dcnr.pa.gov/storymaps/fallfoliage/>

To track the progress of fall color, please read our Fall Foliage Reports found here:
<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/FallFoliageReports/Pages/default.aspx>

A Walk in Penn's Woods

I also want to take the opportunity to remind you of the annual Walk in Penn's Woods event on Sunday, October 5, which is a fantastic reason to venture out into our parks and forests. Many of the walks are educational and participating staff are happy to share their knowledge of the area's natural resources and history. To find walks offered by DCNR staff, please see the Calendar of Events (events.dcnr.pa.gov/). Most walks offered will be publicized on the calendar by early September, so stay tuned for that. To learn more about this annual event sponsored by the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, please go to: paforestry.org/about-walk-in-penns-woods

2025-2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The DCNR recently unveiled the 2025-2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan — Pennsylvania's five-year blueprint for expanding and enhancing outdoor recreation across the state.

The new plan, titled "Outdoor Places, Shared Spaces," outlines 14 goals and 55 action steps to meet the outdoor recreation needs of Pennsylvanians. With more than 6,400 local parks, 2.3M acres of state forests and parks, and 1.5M acres of state game lands, Pennsylvania offers countless opportunities to get outside, connect with nature, and build community.

In January 2024, the DCNR launched a more than year-long public engagement process to develop the plan,

which is required every five years to maintain eligibility for funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund — a program that has invested \$216M across 1,600 Pennsylvania recreation and public lands projects.

Guided by a 40-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the plan emphasizes the role of public recreation spaces in building social connection, economic opportunity, and ecological resilience. It is organized around five key priorities:

- ▼ Promoting community and economic development
- ▼ Advancing health and wellness
- ▼ Supporting access and inclusion
- ▼ Addressing infrastructure and maintenance
- ▼ Advancing sustainability and climate resilience

The DCNR is committed to conserving and stewarding Pennsylvania's public natural resources for the benefit of all people — now and for future generations. The department is taking intentional steps to make public lands more accessible, offer welcoming and inclusive programs and services, and build a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth.

You can find the plan here:
grabify.link/QEHB8D.dcnr

Those of us at the DCNR hope you have a safe and enjoyable autumn season, and we hope to see you out there!

Department of Environmental Protection Report

dep.pa.gov

Jessica Shirley, Acting Secretary



Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection



2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence Given to 19 Projects Statewide

This year, Governor Josh Shapiro and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) honored 19 projects completed by schools, businesses, and community organizations around the state with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence.

"The Environmental Excellence honorees embody the innovative thinking needed to protect our environment and shape a more sustainable future here in Pennsylvania," said DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. "Together, we will spur the next generation of environmental stewards. These projects showcase our ability to work collaboratively to preserve and protect Pennsylvania's natural resources."

Applications were evaluated for their degree of environmental protection, innovation, partnership, economic impact, consideration of climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice, as well as outcomes achieved. The awards went to:

■ **Penn State Center for Science & the Schools – AG SEED-Lings**

■ **Green Allies – Althouse Arboretum**

■ **East Hempfield Township – Amos Herr Wetland Restoration**

■ **Clarence & Mary Ann Harms Center for the Environment at Westminster College – Apiary**

■ **The Watersmith Guild – Aqua Lab Adventures**

■ **Discovery Pathways – Youth Environmental Leaders Program**

■ **UpstreamPgh – Dornbust Street Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project**



- Schuylkill Haven Area HS Biology Club – Empowering Environmental Stewardship
- Pennsylvania Resources Council – Hard to Recycle Collection Event Program
- Pennsylvania Resources Council – Hard to Recycle Collection Event Program
- California Area School District – Nature’s Classroom: Advancing Environmental Stewardship Through Outdoor Education & Innovation
- Luzerne County Courthouse Office of Solid Waste & Recycling Management – Old Air Force Building Renovation
- Phoenix Contact USA – EV Charging Station
- Philadelphia Zoo – The Unless Contest
- City of Lancaster – Wetlands at Long’s Park
- Hauser Nature Center – Universal Access Trail
- Friends of the Wissahickon – Valley Green Run Restoration & Pedestrian Bridge
- Warrington Township, Mountain at Lions Pride Park – Ecological Restoration of Native Wetland Habitat



- Earth Conservancy – WeReclaim!
- U.S. Steel Mon Valley Clairton Coke Plant & AKJ Steel Industries, Inc. – Expanded Recycling of Coke Plant Materials

WHY DO WE TRAP?

By Mike Spittle — VP East, PA Trappers Association (PTA)

Encouraging the
Conservation
of Our Wild
Furbearing
Resources



Our favorite time of the year is now upon us. You feel that chill in the air. You see the leaves changing colors and begin to fall, and the woods now have that smell to them that we've waited all year for. Hunting and trapping season has arrived! A question I'm asked frequently is, "Why do trappers do what they do?" Why trap?

There was a time in our industry where money was the incentive — one mink pelt was the equivalent of a day's pay. Long liner trappers could make a whole year's worth of money in three or four months of trapping. Those days, at least for now, are gone. The fur market is an export market that has been severely depressed for several years, with no end in sight. Yes, we do get money from the pelts we sell, but it comes nowhere close to offsetting the expenses we have in harvesting that fur. So if it isn't for the money, then why do it?

Trapping is the most effective method for managing furbearer populations. Trappers are fur management. The Fur Takers of America constantly promotes the idea that the cruelest thing we can do to wildlife is to fail to manage it. By keeping animal populations under control, we minimize disease and human conflicts, thereby balancing nature. Furbearers are a renewable resource. A new crop of them is born every spring, and if left unchecked, would, in a short period of time, be out of control. Trappers, by harvesting that surplus of

animals, keep the population of critters compatible with their habitat.

Another big reason why trappers trap is for the challenge. Catching an animal on its home turf with a trap is a test of skill and patience. You have to enter their world and create a situation where they will step into the exact spot that you want them to. Considering all the territory they have access to, you have to make them step right there.

Pennsylvania has 13 furbearers that are legal to harvest. Several have their own special seasons and criteria that apply to them. Each of those 13 critters has its own unique challenge to catching them. Those opportunities are open to anyone who has the desire and meets the requirements to do so.

You must obtain a fur takers license to hunt or trap furbearers in Pennsylvania. Bobcat, fisher, and otter also require a permit for each and are managed by individual wildlife management units. Beaver are managed by six different zones in the state, each having its individual regulations and harvest limits.

Trapping is allowed on any of our state game lands and on private property where you have permission from the landowner. The PA Trappers Association sponsors many trapper training schools throughout the state and will teach anyone who has an interest in learning how to trap. Check our website www.patrappers.com for dates and locations.



Trapping has always been a part of Pennsylvania's heritage. It was trappers in pursuit of beaver pelts that first explored this country some 250 years ago. We've been doing what we do for a long time, and if you're up for the challenge, we'd love to have you join our ranks. Visit patrappers.com to find out how you can help us manage the populations of animals that God has given us dominion over.

Become a PTA Member!

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Representing PA Sportsmen Since 1932

ELECTION OF OFFICERS NOTICE

NOTE: The list of names that will be on the ballot will be provided in our Winter Edition.

Job Descriptions:

1. President – The President shall provide leadership and management direction to PFSC, performing all duties usually associated with the office and shall perform such other duties as may properly be assigned by the Board of Directors.

2. Vice Presidents (East & West) – It shall be the duty of the Vice Presidents to assist the President in the performance of duties when called upon to do so. In the absence of the President, the Vice President with the longest tenure shall preside at the meetings of the Federation and the Board. They shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to them by the President or Board.

3. Treasurer – It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to supervise the collection and dispersal of all monies by working closely with staff assigned to financial duties. The Treasurer will disclose the financial status of the Federation to the Board Secretary

4. Secretary – It shall be the duty of the Secretary to supervise the recording of all meetings of the Board and the Executive Committee. The Secretary shall make a transcribed, permanent copy of the recordings and keep one copy in their possession and deliver one copy to be maintained where other official records are kept, as a permanent record. The Secretary shall have such powers and shall perform such other duties as the Board may direct.

Job Requirements & Eligibility for Office:

Anyone wishing to run for an officer's boardseat must:

- **Have been an individual member for the last three consecutive years or have been actively involved with the PFSC for at least three years at the county, division, or state level.**

(The three-year requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of all board members.)

- **Must be a current individual member in good standing and must remain an individual member in good standing during his/her tenure.**
- **Officers will be responsible for fulfilling the duties of the office to which they are elected.**

Officer Election Procedure:

Interested candidates must submit a letter of interest and resume describing their conservation background to the state office by November 1 of the year prior to the spring election.

Membership status of the applicant shall be confirmed for eligibility for office.

Names of all eligible candidates and brief resumes will be printed in the official Winter publication with full resumes posted on the website. All eligible applicants shall be added to the official ballot.

Ballots:

Ballots will be printed and mailed to all eligible members (individuals, clubs, organizations) in February of the election year (2026).

Ballots may either be returned to the election committee via US mail by the Monday before the Spring meeting (March 16, 2026) or hand-carried to the meeting and deposited in the ballot box.

All individual members shall have the right to cast one vote for their preferred candidates. All affiliated clubs and state organizations shall have the right to cast three votes for their choice of candidates.

If there is only one candidate for each open seat, no ballots will be mailed.

The PFSC Secretary shall announce the voting results or cast the vote if no mailed ballot was required and certify the election during the Spring board of directors meeting.

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