

PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION



2014 ANNUAL REPORT





Title 34, Section 321 (a) It shall be the duty of the commission to protect, propagate, manage and preserve the game or wildlife of this Commonwealth and to enforce, by proper actions and proceedings, the laws of this Commonwealth relating thereto.

Working for Wildlife's Betterment

People have an intrinsic need for wildlife, but our hectic lives are leaving more and more of us less time to appreciate it. We often get lost in a hurry trying to keep home life and work at the forefront of our daily priorities. Cellphones. More Pennsylvanians. Longer commutes. It's hard many days to notice wildlife, let alone enjoy it.



R. Matthew Hough
PGC Executive Director

But imagine for a moment, how much longer winter would seem without seeing a robin, or a summer sunrise without the song of wild birds. Think of a fall without deer hunting or the sound of Canada geese heading south on their migratory highways. They all have meaning and value to us. They matter. A lot.

Back in 1971, Pennsylvanians by a four-to-one margin agreed, "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's

public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."

They remain words the Pennsylvania Game Commission lives by. Every day we work to manage more effectively this Commonwealth's wildlife resources and the habitat that supports them. We understand our need to lead in wildlife conservation and are thankful to all who partner with us for wildlife's betterment. We know, and hope everyone else understands, that wildlife still needs – and always will need – our help. It would be easy to add up our milestones and victories and proclaim things couldn't be better. But that's not so. There's still plenty to do.

This report showcases what's working in wildlife conservation, as well as where more work is needed. It also illustrates the varied roles in which the Pennsylvania Game Commission serves as it works with other agencies, partners and the public in the performance of its duties. The report also aims to familiarize more Pennsylvanians with our agency, its stakeholders and the resource it so diligently works to protect.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Matthew Hough".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert W. Schlemmer".



Robert W. Schlemmer
Commission President



Our Mission & Vision

Wildlife always has been an important part of Pennsylvania's cultural heritage. It's a state treasure that, every day, touches countless lives. For 120 years, the Game Commission has managed the Commonwealth's wildlife resources for all Pennsylvanians. The wildlife diversity we enjoy today is largely due to the agency's progressive, science-based wildlife-management programs, and support from the state's residents and outdoors organizations. It's a partnership that already has accomplished much for wildlife, and no doubt will continue. Pennsylvanians also are indebted to Legislators and Governors, both past and present, who have had the courage to enact critically important laws that set the stage for the state's wildlife recovery, as well as the creation of the state game lands system. Their work with the Game Commission to develop wildlife-friendly legislation became the envy of the nation and the glue that held the Commonwealth's once-fragile wildlife-restoration efforts together.



Mission

To manage Pennsylvania's wild birds, wild mammals, and their habitats for current and future generations.

Vision

To be the leader among wildlife agencies, and champion of all wildlife resources and Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritage.

Our Mission & Vision

The Game Commission's **Mission and Vision** statements guide the agency in all it does. Funded primarily by hunting and furtaker license sales, as well as revenue from things like timber sales and oil or gas leases on state game lands, and a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, the Game Commission is supported almost entirely by hunters and trappers, or assets that have been procured with license dollars.



Our Mission & Vision

Cooperation is the Key in fulfilling the Game Commission's mission. More than 700 full-time employees, along with thousands of part-timers and volunteers, work each day to achieve the agency's vision. Science leads the way for our wildlife-management decisions. More than 220 full-time wildlife conservation officers, and approximately 360 deputies, work tirelessly to protect our resource. Land managers and crews create and improve wildlife habitat statewide. These efforts, and those of our conservation partners and elected officials, join to ensure Pennsylvania's hunting heritage.



Our Science

Formed at the urging of the Pennsylvania State Sportsmen's Association, the Game Commission has managed the state's wildlife since 1895. Science is at the heart of everything we do. It guides our wildlife management, and can be credited for Pennsylvania's many conservation success stories.





Our Science

There are **480 species** of wild birds and mammals in Pennsylvania, and the Game Commission is responsible for managing all of them. No species has been extirpated through lawful hunting or trapping since the agency's creation, and growth among populations of bald eagles, river otters, fishers, elk and black bears are proof-positive of the agency's effective science-based management.



Deer and Pennsylvania's Economy

The state's deer hunters spent an estimated

\$964 million in 2010

resulting in **\$1.7 billion** of output in the Pennsylvania economy.

This level of economic activity supported

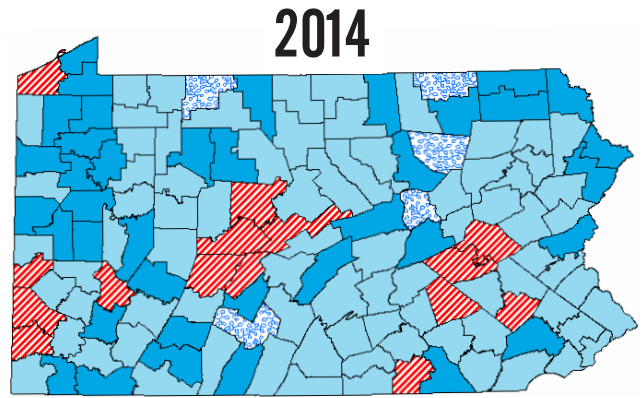
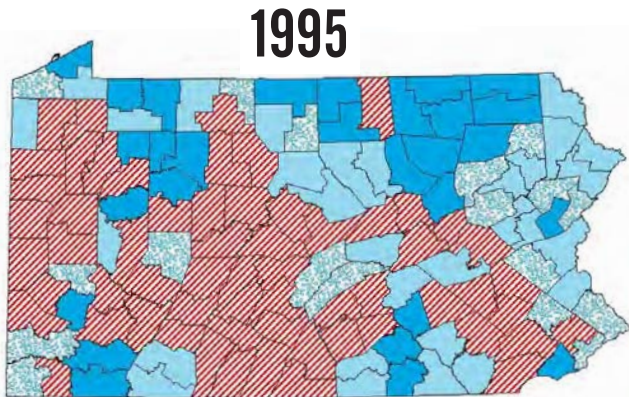
18,036 jobs and

\$598.1 million of wages and salaries.

Our Science

The **Deer Research Program** guides the management of our most popular game species. Since 2000, more than 5,500 whitetails have been captured and fitted with telemetry collars. The ongoing work has provided valuable information on deer movements, survival, mortality causes, and harvest rates, and helps the agency keep a finger on the pulse of the state's whitetail population.

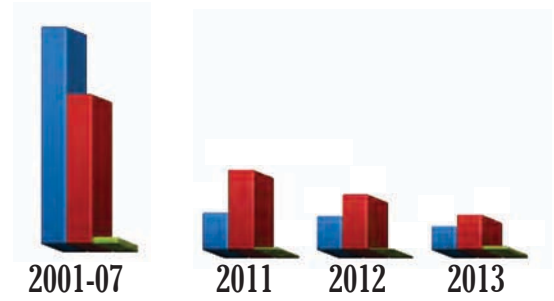
What a difference 20 years has made for Pennsylvania otters. In 1995, otters were **absent** from all the areas shown in red. Today, they inhabit about 90 percent of the state, and their populations are increasing in all **dark blue** areas on the map.



Our Science

River Otters continue to thrive. Once scarce in Pennsylvania due to factors including overharvest and habitat decline, they now can be found over most of the state and are becoming as common as beavers. The Game Commission completed its first-ever management plans for river otters, as well as bobcats, in 2014. Those plans will guide management of these furbearers through 2024.

White-nose syndrome has had a devastating impact on Pennsylvania's bats. The taller bars at the left of this graph show the average number of **Little Brown**, **Northern Long-Eared** and **Tri-Colored** bat captures per unit of effort during summer surveys from 2001 to 2007. White-nose syndrome arrived statewide in 2011, and fewer and fewer bats have been recorded since.



Our Science

Worldwide research into **White-Nose Syndrome** is being led by Game Commission scientists. The disease, which is caused by a fungus, has had devastating impacts on bat populations. Agency researchers have developed techniques to identify its presence earlier, and have closely tracked surviving bats in a search for answers.



Community Deer Management issues are addressed in a new DVD and online video to help residents and communities better manage deer in areas where hunter access is limited.

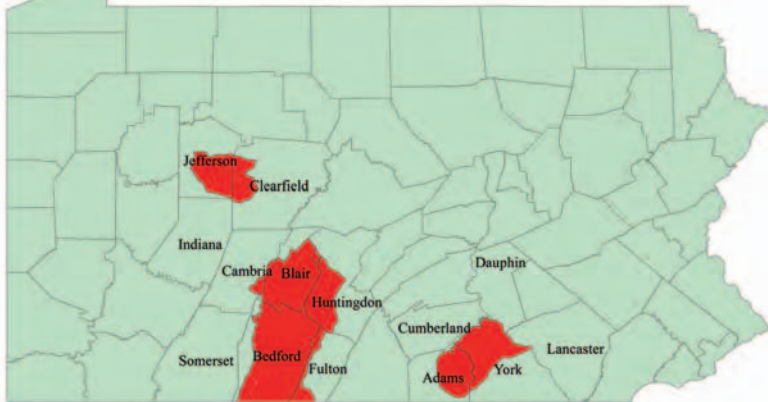


Our Science

Among **Groundbreaking Research** in 2014 was an initiative where scientists attached a small camera and GPS unit to a cow elk to find out more about the types of habitat elk prefer. Carried out in partnership with the Keystone Elk Country Alliance, this project is the first of its kind.

Disease Management Areas have been established in areas of the state where CWD has been detected.

DMA's shown in red.



Our Science

The Game Commission rigorously monitors **Chronic Wasting Disease**, which remains a threat to Pennsylvania's deer and elk. Since 1998, more than 52,000 deer have been tested for the disease, and a total of 10 free-ranging deer have tested positive. Special rules are enforced in areas where CWD has been detected, and in 2014 the Game Commission created a special hunting permit designed to keep the disease in check in the only area of the state where it has been detected in the wild.



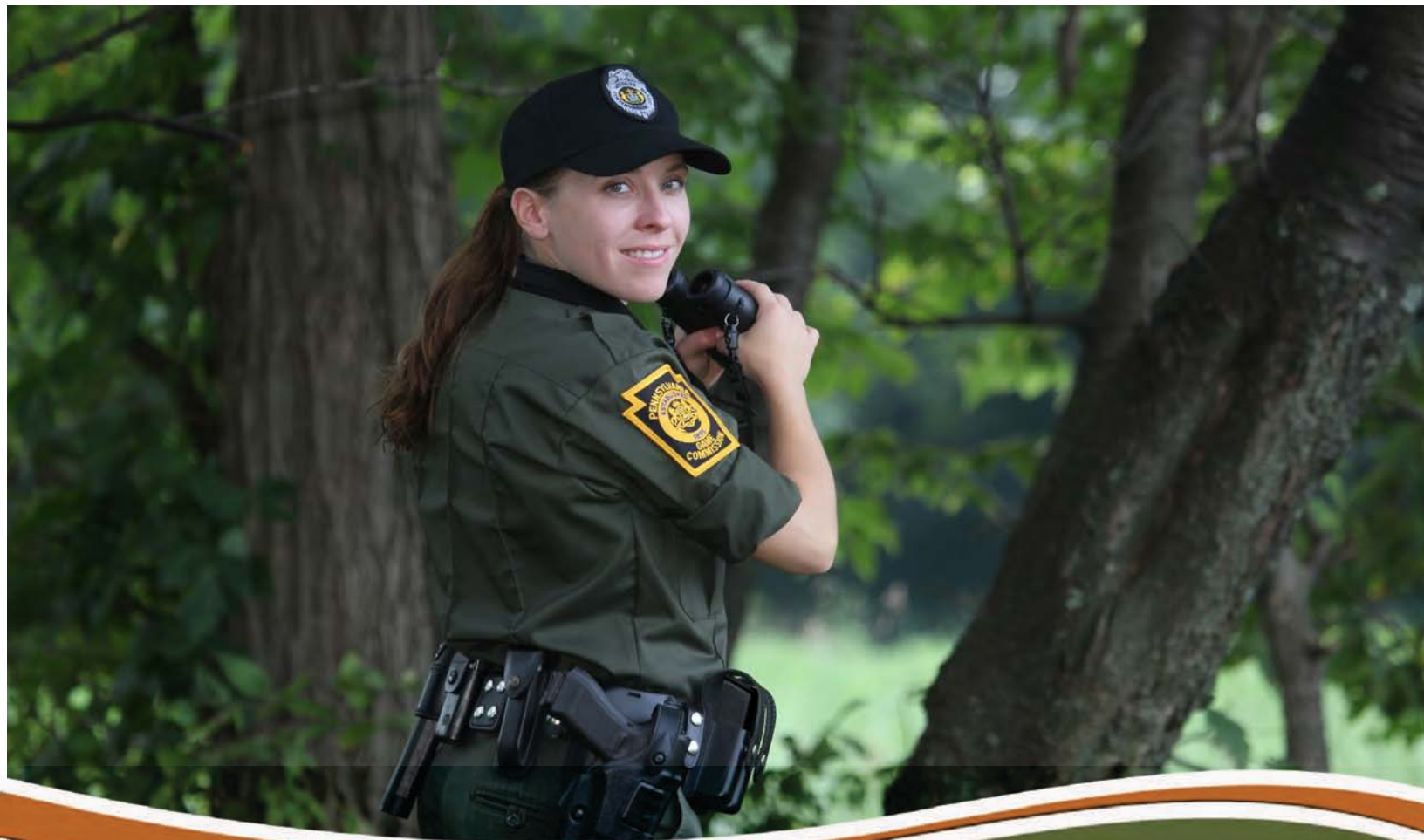
Our Science

An unprecedented migration of **Snowy Owls** last winter was documented with help from our wildlife biologists. A website, projectsnowstorm.org, tracked the migration by mapping movements with research telemetry radios as the owls wintered in the Mid-Atlantic, then returned to their Arctic homes last spring. The radios will continue to track birds through the summer if they again come south. New migratory patterns of this distinctive winter visitor were unveiled through this research.



Protecting our Resource

Wildlife conservation officers and their deputies spend considerable time protecting wildlife and enforcing the Game and Wildlife Code. Their efforts consistently turn up lawbreakers who disregard natural resources, public safety and the importance of wild places to Pennsylvanians.





Protecting our Resource

There are 222 full-time **Wildlife Conservation Officers** and 360 part-time deputies serving the Game Commission. Each WCO has a coverage area of about 325 square miles, but in addition to their law-enforcement duties, officers serve as local ambassadors of the Game Commission in communities throughout the Commonwealth. They lead hunter-education classes and teach school students about wildlife issues.

Our officers conducted more than **200,000** enforcement contacts in the past fiscal year.

Warnings were issued at nearly a

2:1 ratio

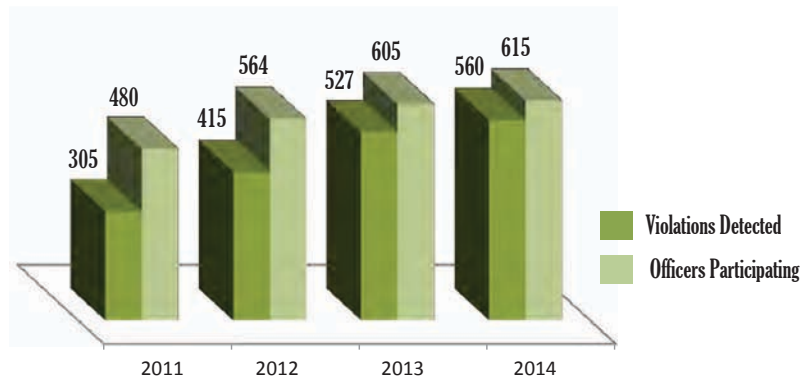
The contacts resulted in the detection of **20,575** violations

and investigations into them resulted in **13,530** warnings and **7,045** prosecutions.

The ratio of warnings to prosecutions demonstrates the fairness and firmness of our officers. Eleven complaints were filed against employees of the Game Commission in the most recent fiscal year, the agency's Profession Responsibility Coordinator reported. Investigative findings concluded nine of the complaints were not sustained and personnel were exonerated. In two of the complaints, however, the allegations were sustained. Countless agency employees in the performance of their duties regularly are praised by public.

Protecting our Resource

In each of the first four years of Operation Talon, both the number of officers participating and the number of violations detected increased.

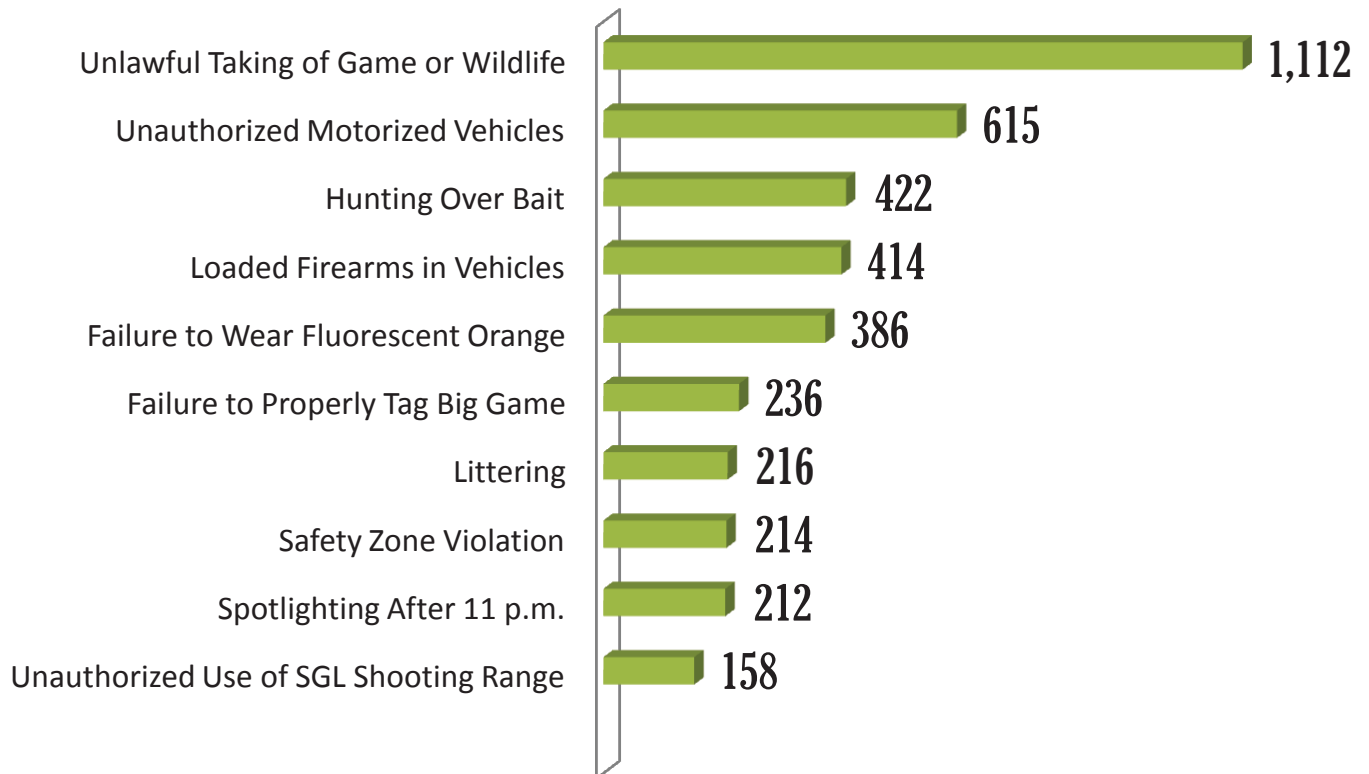


Protecting our Resource

Operation Talon, a multi-agency law-enforcement initiative targeted at detecting poaching and other illegal activity, proved effective once again in 2014. More than 700 officers from agencies including the Game Commission, state Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania State Police and state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, participated in the two-week effort, which resulted in 483 law-enforcement contacts. Officers during the stretch issued 217 warnings, filed citations for 307 violations of the Game & Wildlife Code, filed 10 charges for violations of the crimes code or vehicle code, and turned 22 cases over to other law-enforcement organizations.

Top 10 Violations

2013-14



Protecting our Resource

Officers Focus Their Efforts on the most-serious violations, as can be seen from this list of charges filed most frequently in 2013-14. Year after year, the unlawful taking of game or wildlife tops the list of charges filed, as officers work to protect Pennsylvania's wildlife for the Commonwealth's citizens.



Protecting our Resource

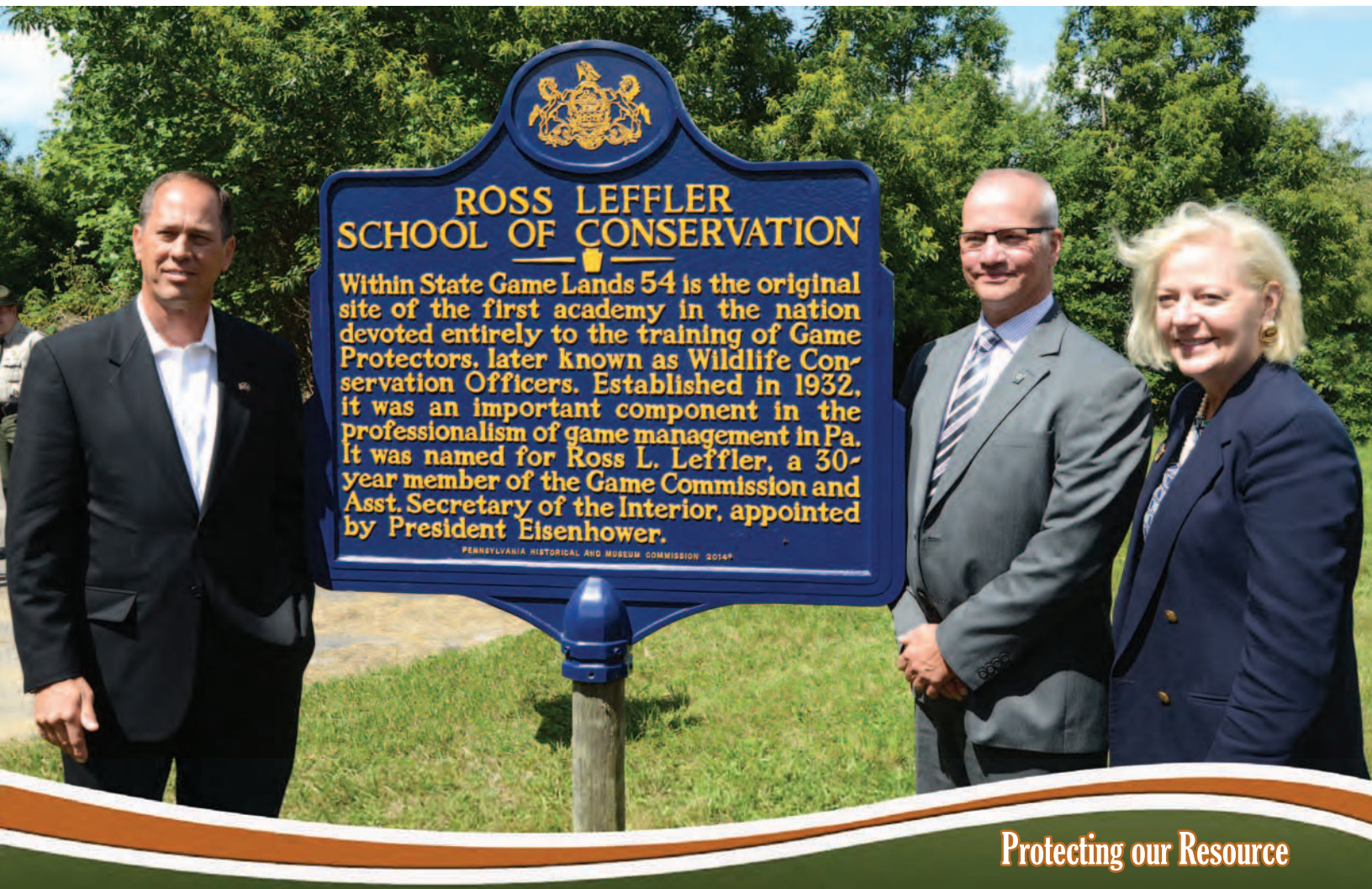
The **Manhunt for Eric Frein**, who allegedly opened fire outside a northeastern Pennsylvania state police barracks, killing one trooper and injuring another, was aided by the Game Commission's Woodland Tracking Team, an elite squad of wildlife conservation officers that previously used its tracking skills to save the lives of two individuals lost in the wilderness.



Protecting our Resource

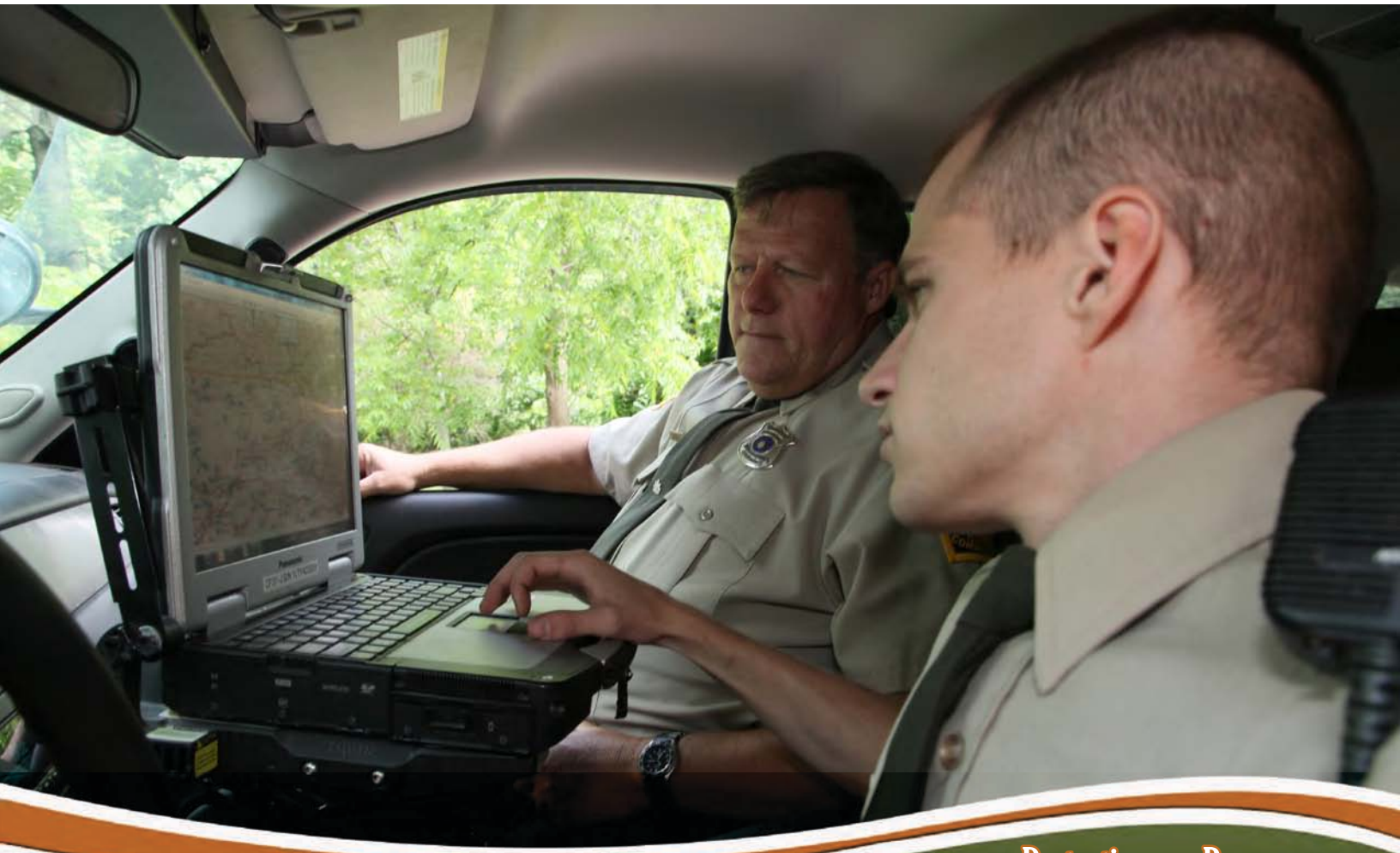
To protect critical **Bat Hibernacula**, prevent bats from being disturbed and slow the spread of white-nose syndrome, the Game Commission stepped up law-enforcement efforts to crack down on people who trespass and cause damage there.

Sen. Joseph Scarnati, left, Game Commission Executive Director R. Matthew Hough, and state Historical and Museum Commissioner Jean Craig Pepper Victor attended the August ceremony in Brockway.



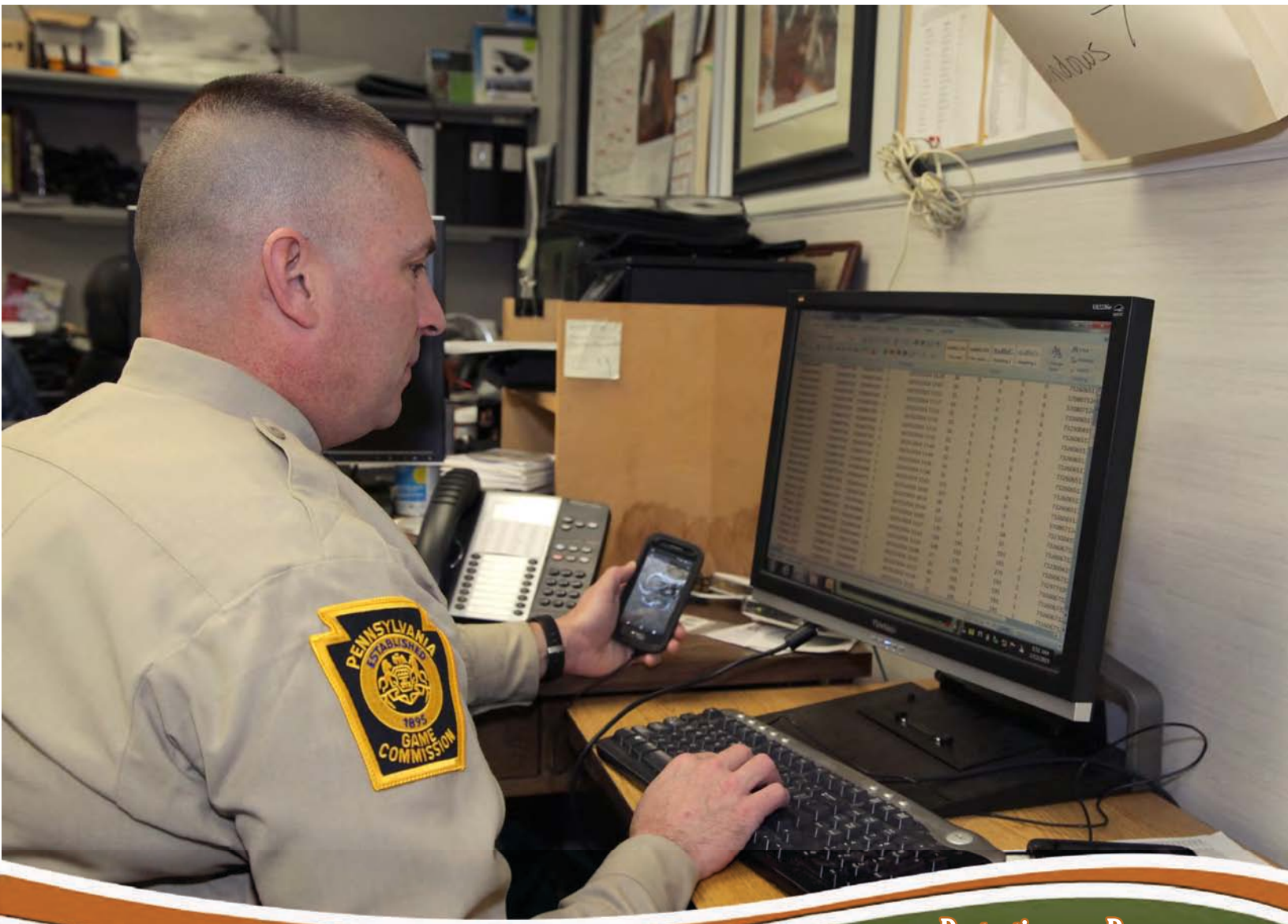
Protecting our Resource

The original site of the **Ross Leffler School of Conservation** received a historical marker from the state Historical and Museum Commission in August to commemorate its place in American conservation history as the first school of its kind in the United States. Located originally on State Game Lands 54 in Jefferson County, the school opened for business in 1936 and was moved to Harrisburg in 1987.



Protecting our Resource

The **Computer-Aided Dispatch** system now used by field officers provides officers the ability to patrol silently, cognizant of where every officer in the region is located at any given second. This reduces duplicity in patrols, aids in searches and increases officer safety. CAD also operates more efficiently in mountainous areas when cellphones won't.



Protecting our Resource

A new **Overt Special Investigations Unit** was assembled to assist with complex investigations. The unit receives specialized training in computer and cellphone evidence recovery, and was formed in response to the growing number of wildlife crimes involving the use of smartphones and electronic devices.



Protecting our Resource

Officers now are equipped with **Body Cameras**, thanks to overwhelming support from the state General Assembly, which adopted new legislation to correct an oversight that left wildlife conservation officers off the list of law-enforcement officers who are permitted to use the cameras. Use of the cameras has been shown to make the jobs of law-enforcement officers safer, and the mobile cameras are a good match for the fieldwork wildlife conservation officers perform.



Protecting our Resource

Poaching Cases are part of any officer's job, but one case in particular generated more than its share headlines in 2014 and serves as a fitting example of the fine law-enforcement work officers routinely turn in. Three men were arrested for the nighttime poaching of three bull elk, one of them among the largest on record in Pennsylvania. A conviction was quickly secured with the primary defendant sentenced to serve up to 18 months in jail, pay more than \$20,000 in fines and costs, in addition to losing his hunting privileges.



Protecting our Resource

The **30th Class** of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation will graduate in February 2015. The more than two dozen new officers will fill vacancies and return the “Thin Green Line” to full capacity.



Our Wildlife Habitat

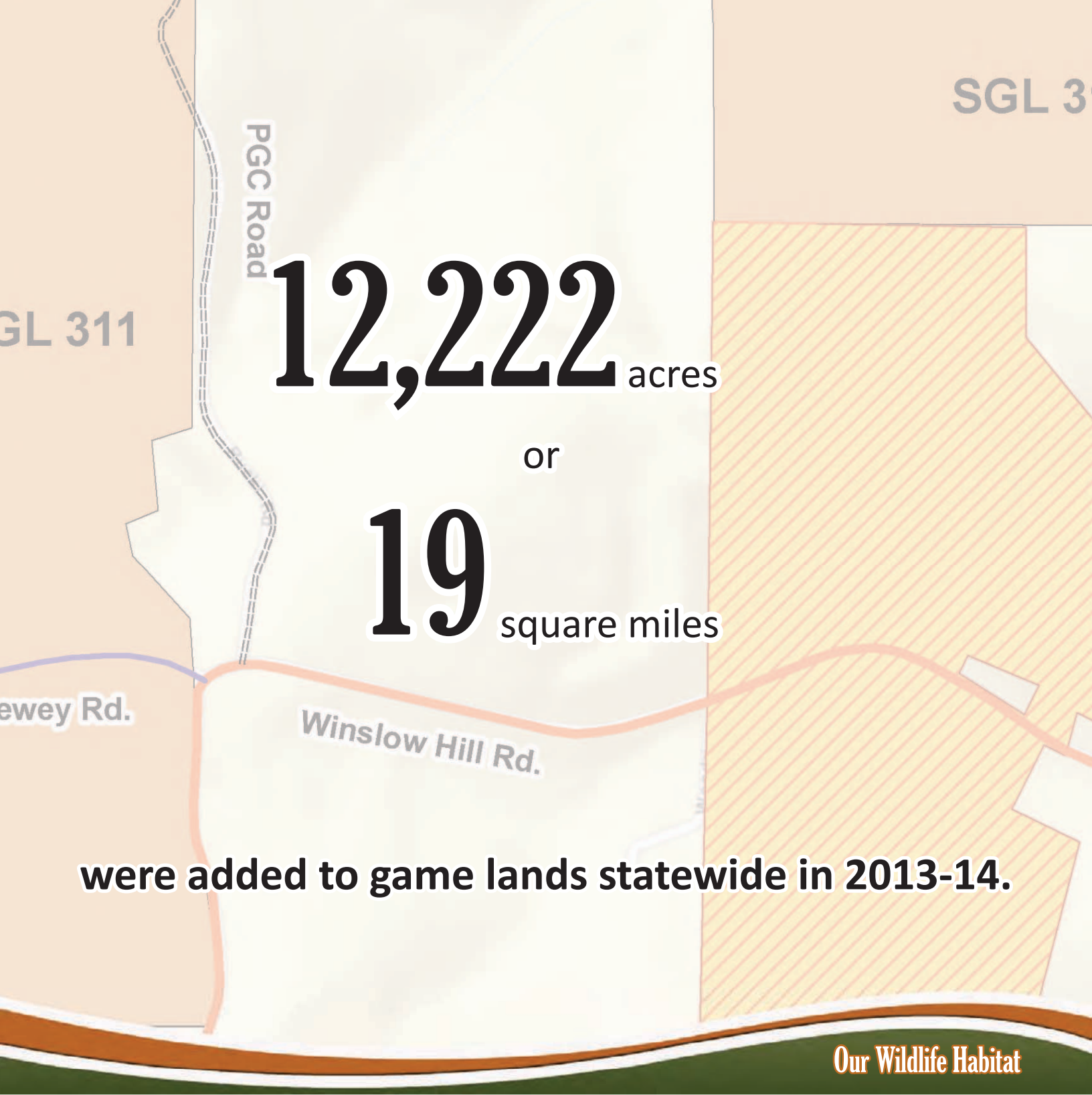
Game lands continue to be one of the Commonwealth's most-valued assets. The system totals almost 1.5 million acres. With each passing year, the challenge to manage this resource grows. Forest pests, extreme weather, and manpower and equipment limitations all impact our continuing management. But imagine where Pennsylvania's hunters, trappers, wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts would be without our system of game lands.





Our Wildlife Habitat

State Game Lands exist to provide habitat for wildlife, and hunting and trapping opportunities for license-buyers. Funding for the purchase of game lands comes from the state's sportsmen, through their purchases of hunting and furtaker license, sporting arms and ammunition, as well as revenue derived from the game lands themselves. The system totals almost 1.5 million acres statewide, and continues to grow. There are 307 separate state game lands, spread out across 65 of the state's 67 counties.



Key Land Acquisitions during 2013-14 fiscal year included separate purchases that led to the creation of two new state game lands. State Game Lands 332 was formed after a 2,297-acre purchase in Indiana County, and State Game Lands 335 grew out of a 1,121-acre purchase in Tioga County. The single-largest acquisition in the fiscal year totaled 3,840 acres across several tracts in Luzerne County. This land became part of State Game Lands 91.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Controlled Burning was used to improve wildlife habitat on 5,086 acres statewide in 2014.



Our Wildlife Habitat

More than 17,000 **Nesting Structures** and 1.8 million **Seedlings** from the Game Commission's Howard Nursery were distributed to improve wildlife habitat statewide in 2014.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Crews **Created or Maintained** more than 19,200 acres of fields and 1,900 acres of shrublands on game lands in 2014.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Gates were placed on **11 mine openings** to protect hibernating bats from disturbance, a problem identified by biologists as they continue to deploy ways to protect bats from white-nose syndrome.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Forestland requires constant attention to ensure the best habitat for the greatest variety of wildlife. During the fiscal year, 6,271 acres were harvested to improve habitat on state game lands. Another 5,652 acres received herbicide treatments or non-commercial harvesting, and 482 acres had deer-exclosure fences removed.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Over 1,500 **Environmental Reviews** were completed to evaluate projects having potential impacts to threatened or endangered bird or mammal species, species of special concern and their critical or unique habitat. The reviews included Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index (PNDI) reviews for 220 PennDOT, 266 energy development, 719 land development, 10 wind energy, and 76 mining projects. Additionally, 260 applications were reviewed for surface- and deep-mine operations. **The agency has 30 days to review these projects and most reviews are completed in 10 days or less.**



Our Wildlife Habitat

Public Access to Private Land is important to Pennsylvania's hunters and trappers. Through several programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and Working Lands for Wildlife, 12,176 acres of habitat improvements were made to fields and young forests for the benefit of wildlife and hunters on private lands. The Game Commission's public-access hunting programs comprise 2.2 million acres.



Our Wildlife Habitat

Conservation Plans were developed by Game Commission biologists for 93 species of special concern on 14,195 acres. Many of these areas were on private property, but others were on public lands where landowners were seeking assistance in making the properties more attractive for wildlife with special conservation needs.



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

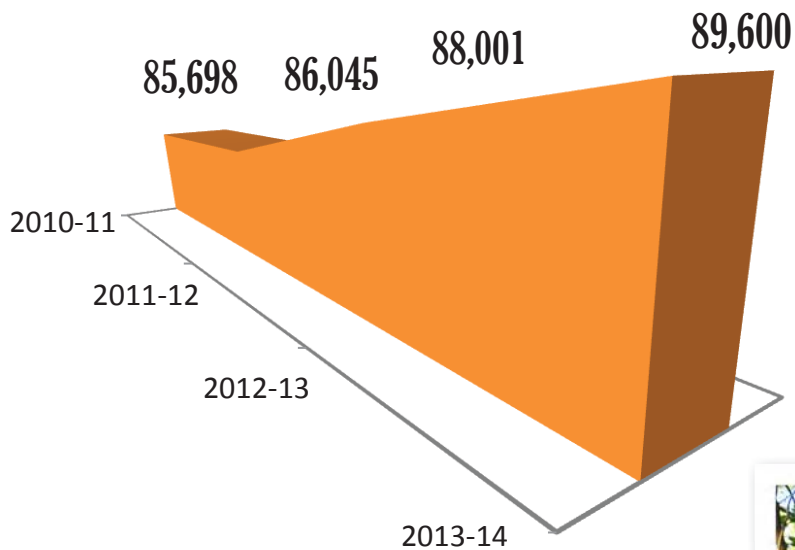
The importance of hunters to wildlife conservation can never be overstated. With their annual contributions of license fees and federal excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition, they have almost single-handedly underwritten the greatest chapter in America's grand conservation legacy. All Americans owe a debt of gratitude to hunters and trappers. Wildlife has had no greater champion.





Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

The Mentored Youth Hunting Program continues to give more and more youngsters opportunities to spend time afield hunting with adult mentors. During the 2013-14 license year, **35,380 permits** were purchased – the highest number since the program began in 2009.



The sale of Junior Hunting Licenses has increased in each of the past four years.



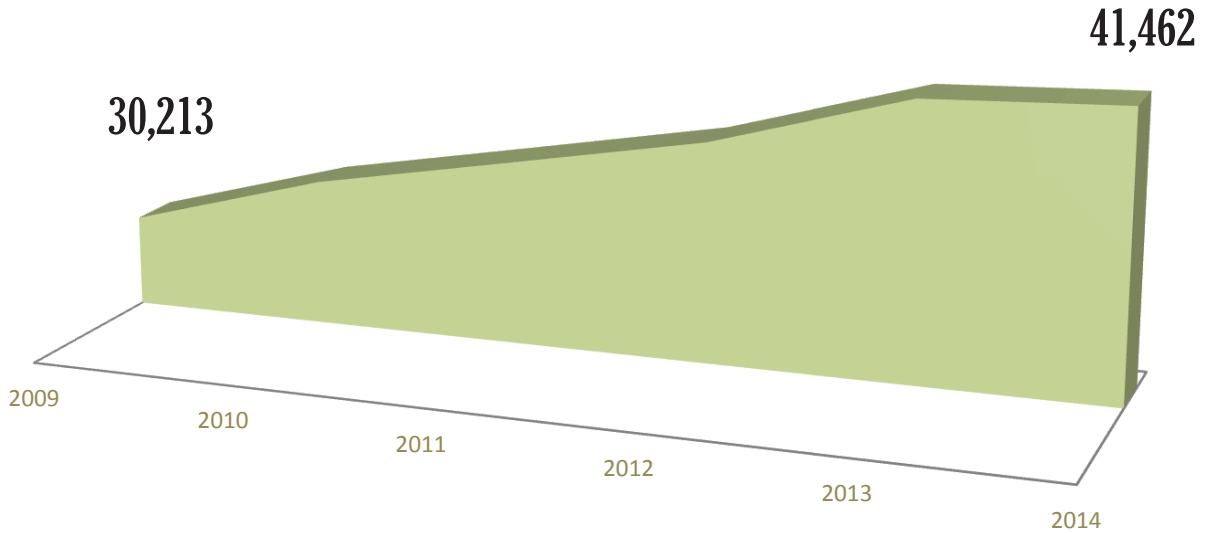
Midway through the 2014-15 license year, Junior License sales again were brisk.



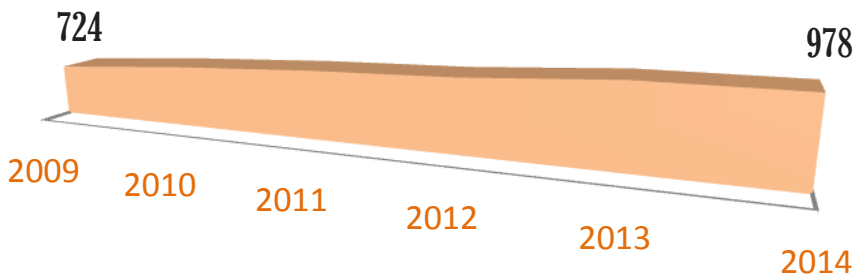
Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

The sale of **Junior Hunting Licenses** makes up a significant portion of overall sales. In the 2013-14 license year, **89,600** juniors ages 12 to 16 purchased a license, and the number of resident juniors buying combination hunting and furtaker licenses – **54,479** – was the highest on record.

Number of New Hunters

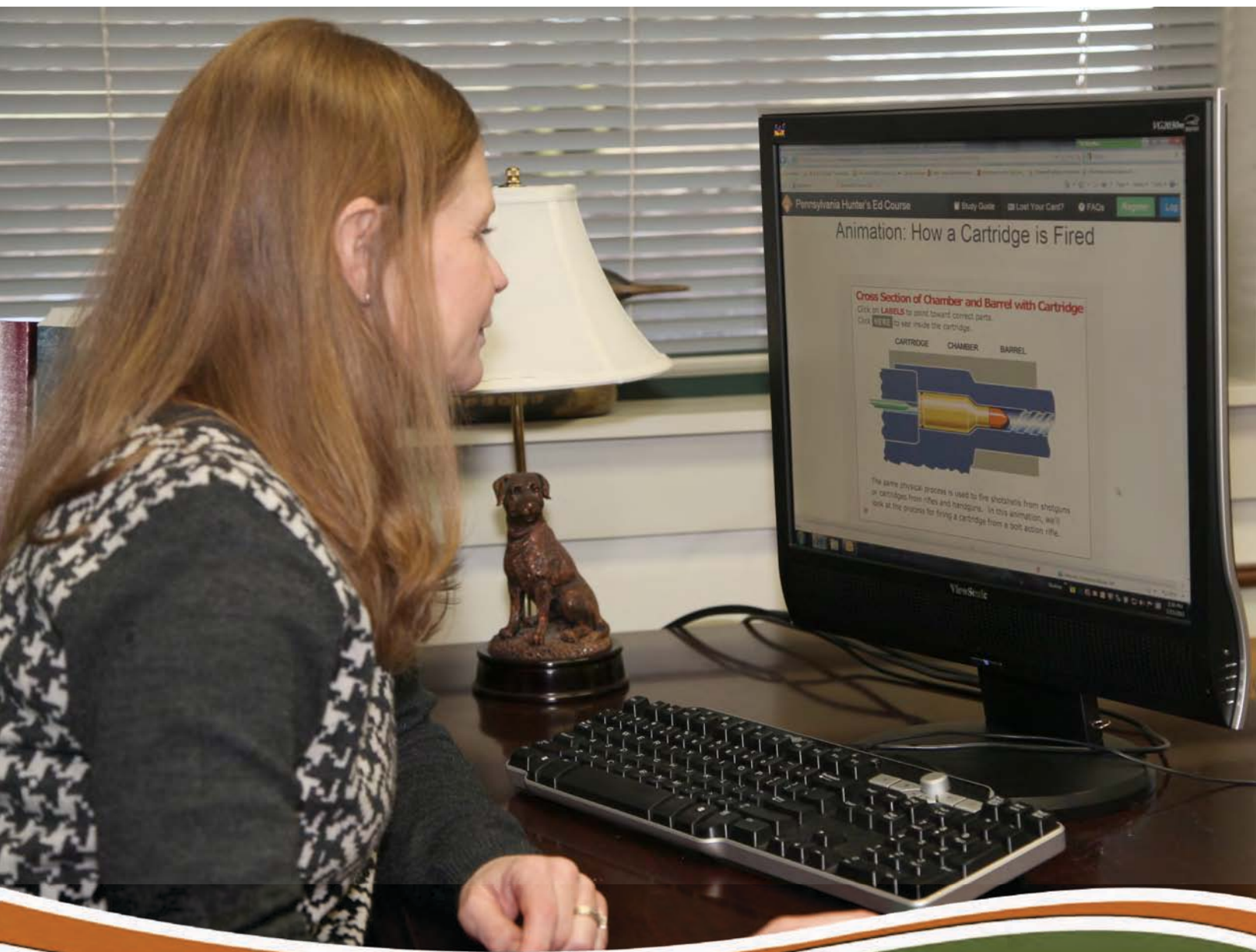


Number of Classes Held



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

The Hunter-Trapper Education Program continues to replenish Pennsylvania's hunter ranks. A record number **41,462** students were certified through the program in 2014, continuing an upward trend that can be credited to efforts to hold more classes at convenient times, dates and locations.



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

A fully **Online Hunter-Trapper Education** course was developed in 2014. The online option responds to a need to provide alternative methods for completing the course, and it will be funded by those who use it. By making the course available to take at home, the Game Commission can better meet demand for courses.



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

The **Mentored Adult Hunting Permit** was created in 2014 as a way to introduce newcomers to hunting. Patterned after the highly successful Mentored Youth Hunting Program, this new initiative gives new hunters opportunities to head afield with friends.



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

The Game Commission's **Pheasant Propagation Program** in 2014 produced **220,742** birds for release statewide on properties open to public hunting. Hunter surveys continue to show strong support for the program.

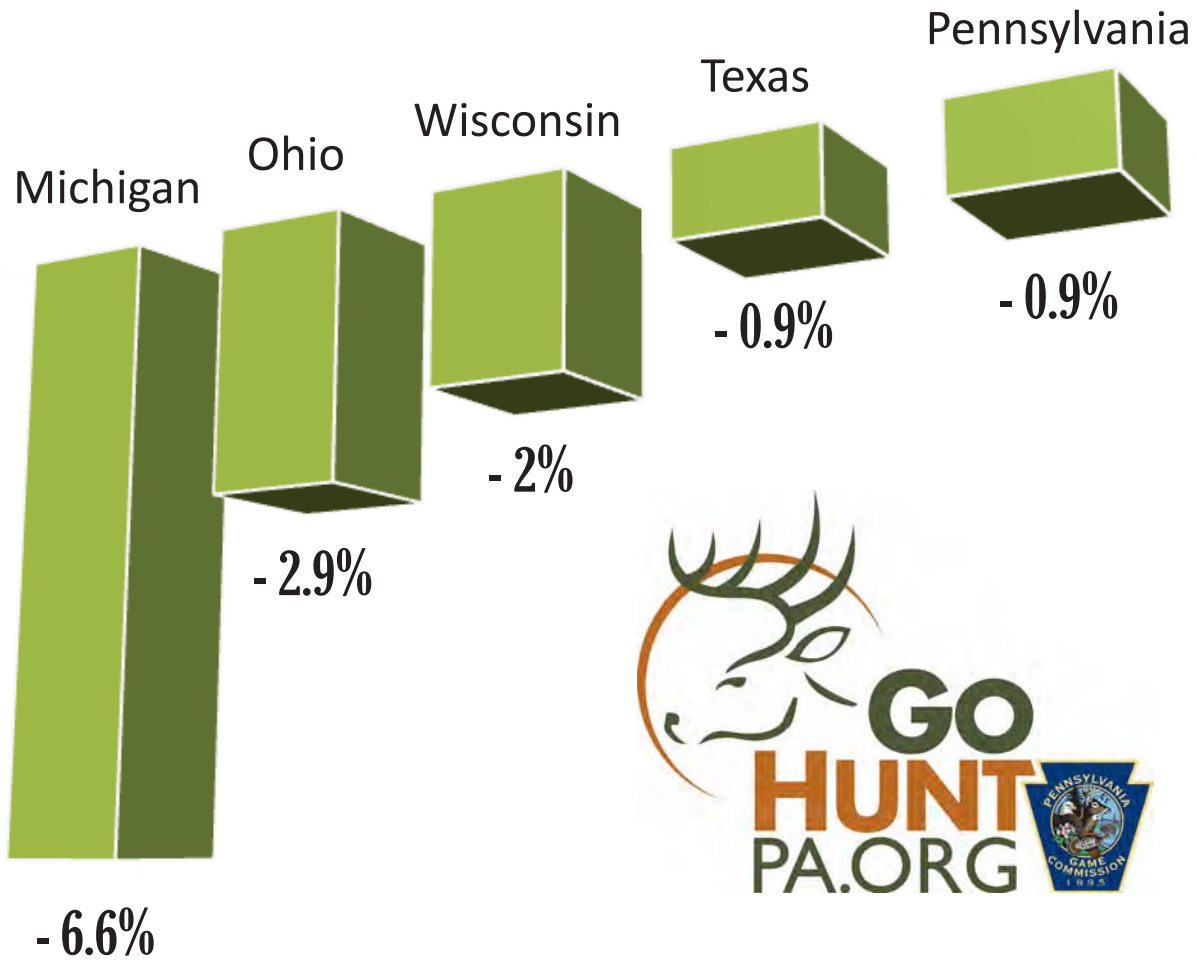


Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

GoHuntPA hit the airwaves in 2014 in the form of radio and television commercials aimed at boosting hunting license sales by reaching out to those hunters who might not buy a license each and every year. The initiative included the creation of a streamlined hunting website, GoHuntPA.org, where hunters could buy a license, and find out what's in season and where to hunt.

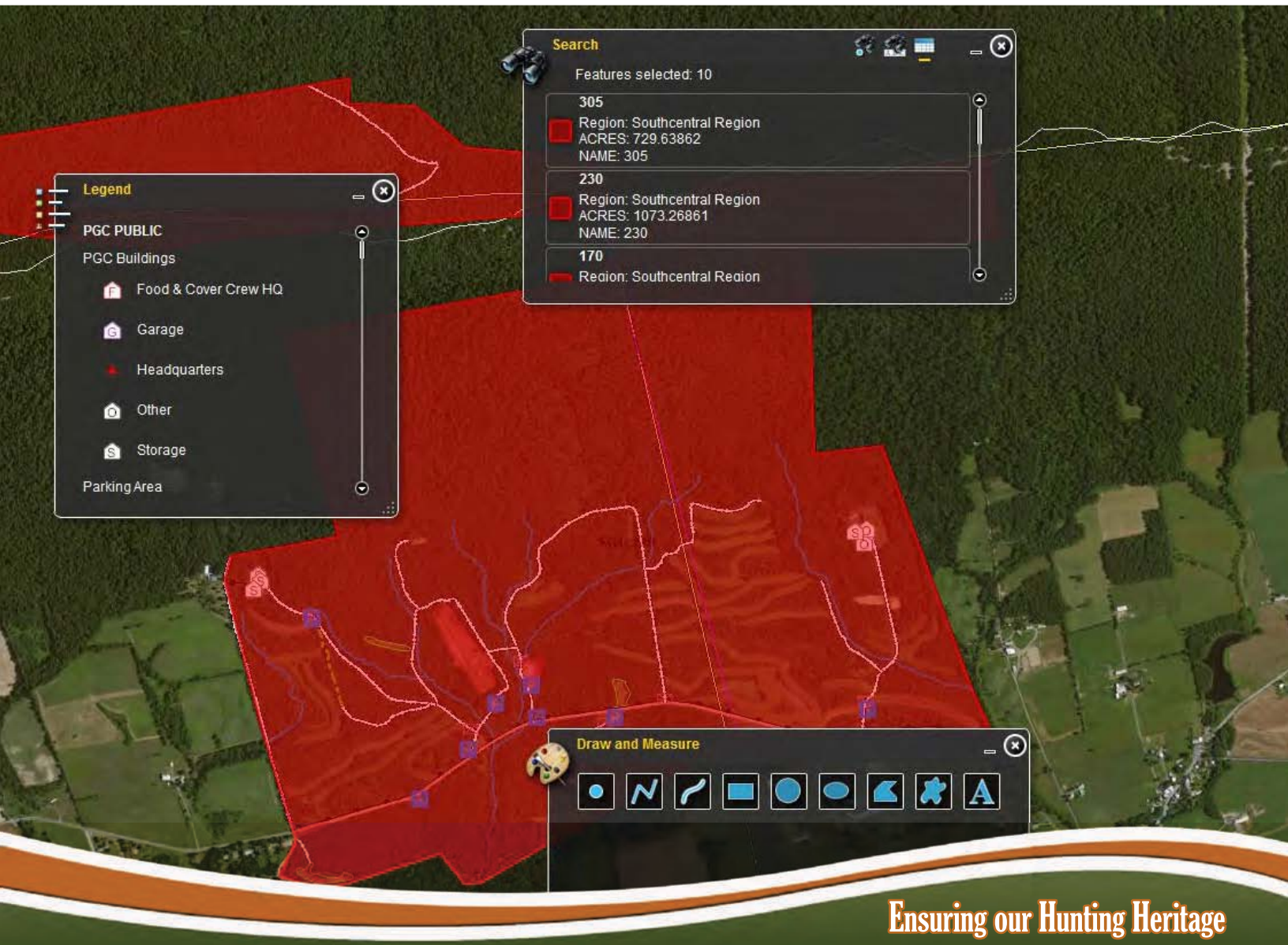
Percent decrease of license sales

Ending December 2014



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

This **Targeted Marketing Campaign** can be credited for holding hunting license sales relatively steady in Pennsylvania in a year when many other top hunting states saw significant losses in hunter numbers.



Ensuring our Hunting Heritage

A new online **Mapping Center** makes it easier than ever for hunters and trappers to find lands that are open to the public, how to reach them and even where to park when they get there.



More than 3,000,000 watched

A **Camera Installed at a Bald Eagle Nest** in Pittsburgh generated live streaming video that was made available on the Game Commission's website in 2014. More than 3 million viewers around the globe, including entire classrooms of students, tuned in regularly as an adult pair of eagles successfully hatched three eggs, with the young eaglets fledging the nest in July. Meanwhile, the Game Commission's website, as a whole, accounted for nearly **13.6 million viewer sessions** in 2014.



Our Conservation Team

While state law places with the Game Commission the important task of managing the state's wildlife resources and their habitats, it goes without saying that the job cannot be carried out without the help of many partners in conservation. Their efforts are vital to fulfilling the agency's mission.





Our Conservation Team

The sale of just two **Elk Hunting Licenses** raised over \$200,000 for conservation in Pennsylvania, thanks to the efforts of our partner groups and the General Assembly. A license auctioned off by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation generated \$41,000, and a license and hunting package raffled off by the Keystone Elk Country Alliance not only drew a huge crowd, shown above, but raised more than \$163,000. Best of all, revenue from these efforts remained on Pennsylvania's elk range to fund continuing conservation initiatives.



Our Conservation Team

Hunters Sharing the Harvest and the Game Commission have been partners since the nonprofit started up in 1991. And the partnership is as strong as ever. In 2014, the Game Commission donated \$20,000 to the program, which feeds Pennsylvania's hungry with venison donated by hunters. The money combined with other donations to enable Hunters Sharing the Harvest to eliminate a \$15 fee hunters previously paid in addition to their donation. The fee covered the costs of having the deer processed. Those costs now have been shouldered by a team of conservation partners.

Below, Rawley Cogan, left of the Keystone Elk Country Alliance and Rep. Matt Gabler, R-DuBois, receive from Game Commission Executive Director R. Matthew Hough plaques commemorating the passage of House Bill 2126, which reinstated the special elk conservation tag and created an additional tag for KECA to auction off.



Above, House Game and Fisheries chairman Rep. Keith Gillespie, R-York, tours Pennsylvania's elk range with Game Commission staff. Below, Sen. Jim Brewster, D-McKeesport, and Senate Game and Fisheries chairman Sen. Richard Alloway II, R-Chambersburg, celebrate the passage of Senate Bill 1187, which created the new Pennsylvania Hunting Heritage License plate.



Our Conservation Team

Elected Officials always have been important to wildlife conservation in Pennsylvania. Their efforts have tangible impact, and the Game Commission is proud of the effective working relationship that exists here in our Commonwealth. The Hunting Heritage license plate, which has the potential to raise significant revenue for conservation efforts, could not have been created without the help of our elected officials.



Our Conservation Team

Our Conservation Partners are forever important to improving conditions for wildlife and working to benefit the state’s hunters and trappers. For example, the National Wild Turkey Federation in 2014 reached a much-appreciated milestone. NWTf’s total donations to the Game Commission have now exceeded \$6 million – money that has gone directly to benefit wildlife and hunters.



Our Finances

Wildlife and Pennsylvanians depend greatly on the Game Commission's ability to remain solvent. To its credit, and wildlife's benefit, the Game Commission has accrued almost 1.5 million acres of state game lands, which has gone on to generate significant amounts of revenue through mineral, oil and gas leases and timber sales, not to mention rights-of-way. A spike in federal aid caused by historic increases in firearms and ammunition purchases also has sustained the agency in recent years by helping it maintain its carry-over funding from January through June, when income is limited. But in the last fiscal year, expenditures outpaced revenues by about \$5 million. There hasn't been a license fee increase since 1999 and, as illustrated below, our need for one grows annually.

In the 1997-98 fiscal year,
when the last license fee
increase was approved,
Personnel costs totaled **\$40,462,000**
And total expenditures were
\$58,188,000

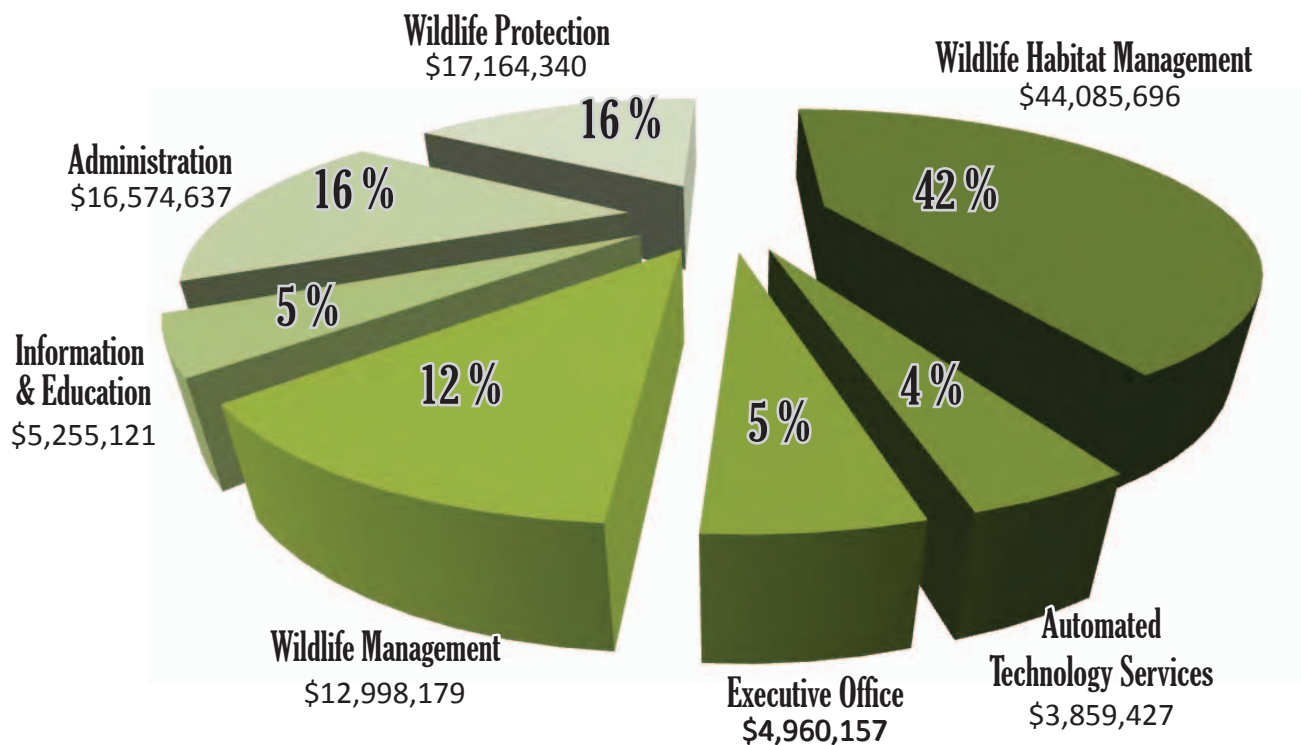
By contrast, in 2013-14

Total expenditures were
\$104,897,597
With personnel costs totaling
\$64,711,630

The \$24 million jump in personnel costs
comes despite a **REDUCTION** in personnel
There were 12 fewer filled positions in 2013-14

Game Fund Expenditures

Fiscal year ended June 30, 2014

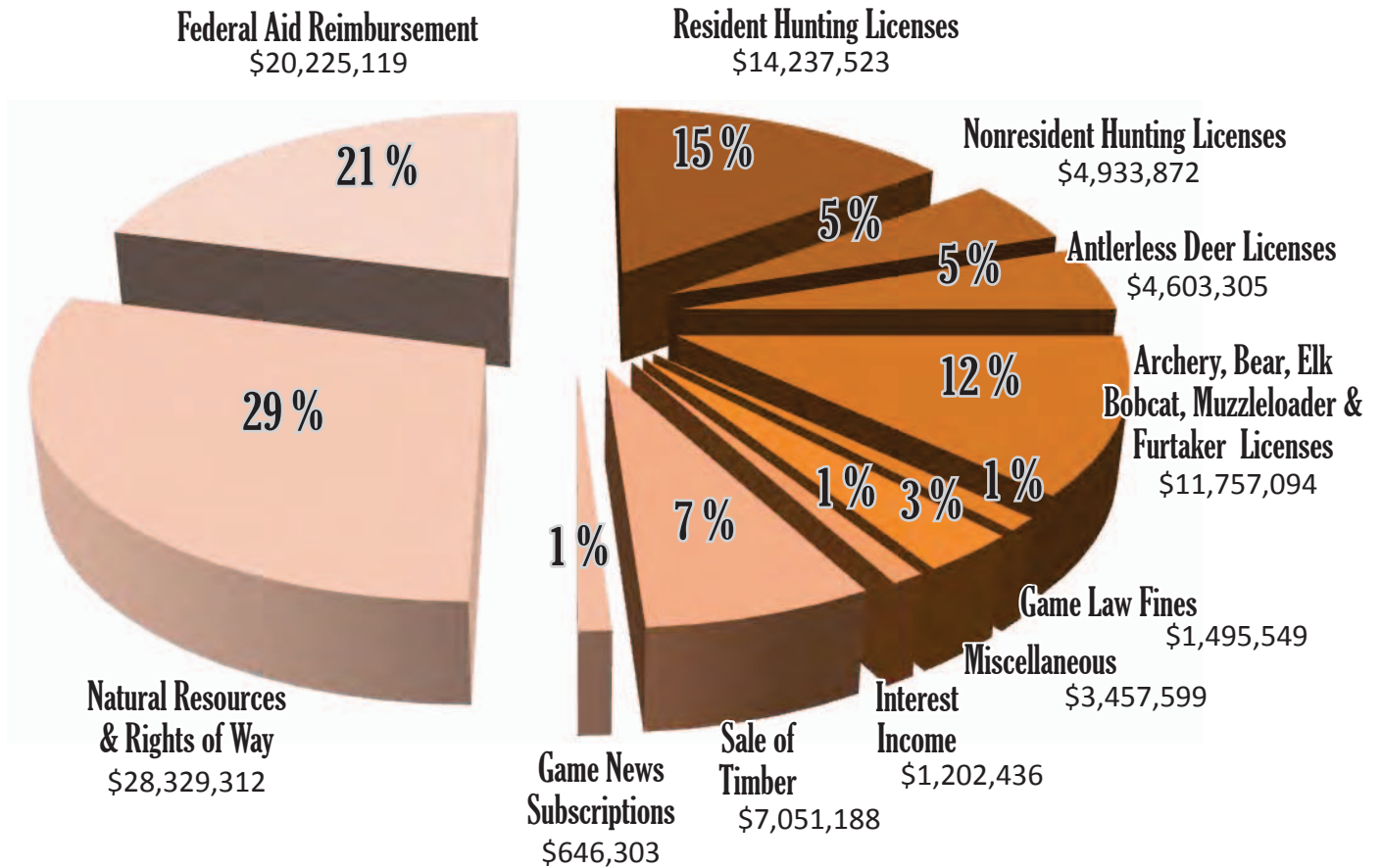


Our Finances

This **Budget Overview** depicts a \$42,147,965 restricted fund balance in the Game Fund at the close of the fiscal year. That's a decrease of \$5,297,961 compared to the June 30, 2013, balance of \$47,445,926. Fiscal year 2013-14 expenditures exceeded revenues earned.

Game Fund Revenues

Fiscal year ended June 30, 2014



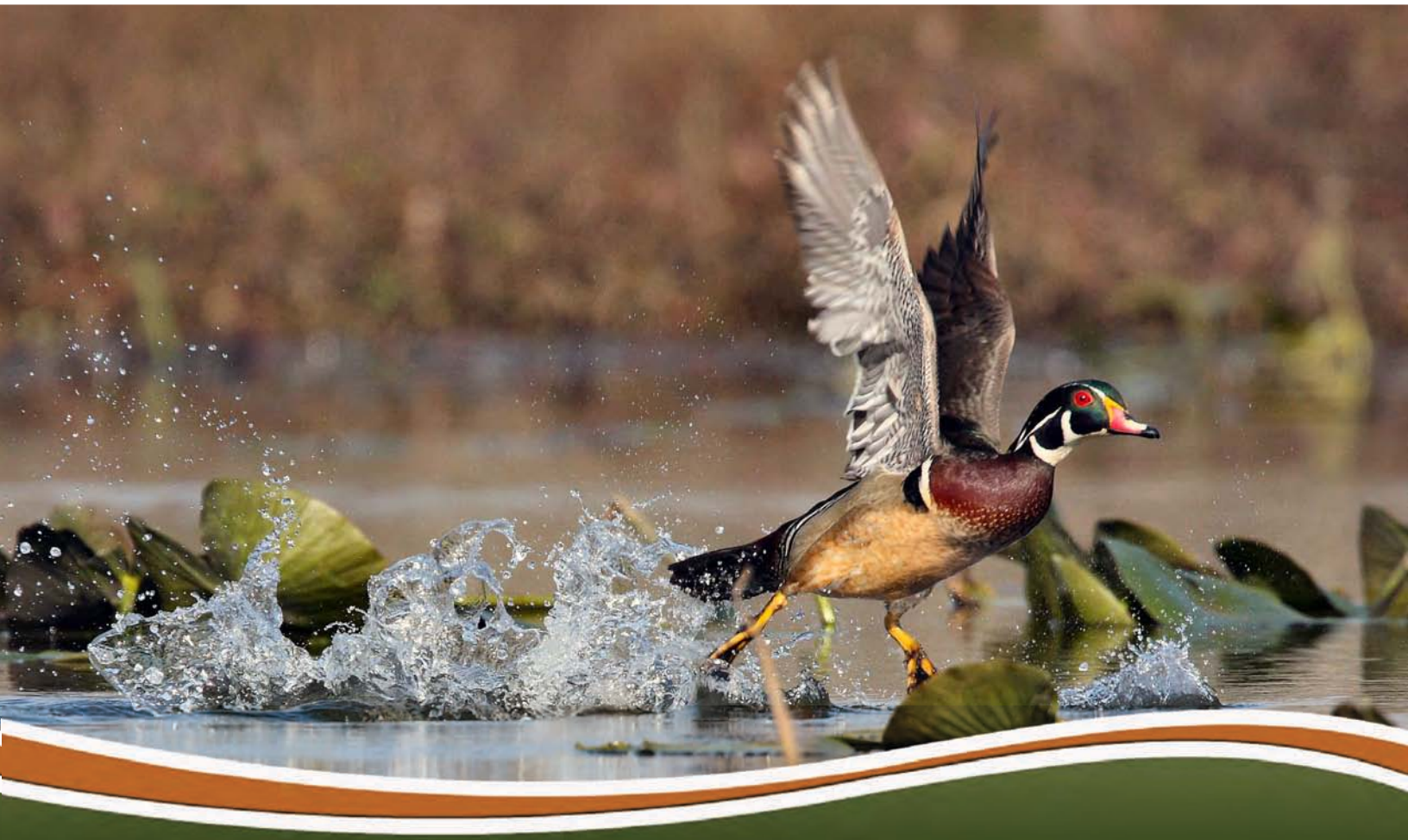
Our Finances

Actual Cash Receipts reported and credited to the Game Fund during the 2013-14 fiscal year were \$97,939,300, an increase of \$8,883,591 over the previous year's actual cash receipts. More-detailed budget information is provided in the February 2015 edition of *Pennsylvania Game News* magazine.



Our Success

From groundbreaking scientific research to ever-evolving law-enforcement initiatives, from work to improve wildlife habitat to efforts to make it easier for hunters to buy licenses and find new places to hunt, the combined efforts of agency staff – with support from legions of hunters, trappers and conservation partners – have led to many successes. Just a few of them are highlighted here.





The story of **Bald Eagles** is, without question, one of the greatest wildlife success stories ever to unfold in Pennsylvania. When the Game Commission began its restoration program in 1983, only three known bald-eagle nests – all of them located in the northwestern corner of the state – remained in Pennsylvania. In 2014, at least 275 eagle nests were documented in 59 counties statewide. The Game Commission celebrated that population recovery by removing the bald eagle from the state’s list of threatened species. Even with the change, eagles remain protected under state and federal law.



Our Success

Pennsylvania's thriving **Elk** herd is the envy of surrounding states, and elk continue to play an important role in wildlife conservation here. A 2014 aerial survey documented the state's herd to include at least 881 animals, and elk hunting opportunities again were expanded in 2014, with a record 108 elk licenses – 27 of them for bulls – made available by lottery. That's an increase of 22 licenses compared to the 86 allocated in 2013. Respectively, the auction and raffle of two additional elk licenses in 2014 raised more than \$200,000 to support conservation efforts. And, of course, thousands of visitors continue annually to travel to northcentral Pennsylvania to experience the wonder of the elk's bugling season.



Our Success

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, on the border of Lancaster and Lebanon counties, offers visitors a chance to view snow geese and tundra swans in almost unimaginable numbers. In peak years, up to 170,000 snow geese and up to 15,000 tundra swans will stopover at Middle Creek on their long migratory journeys back to destinations farther north. Thousands of visitors make trips annually to Middle Creek in late February and early March to watch migrating waterfowl, and Middle Creek also is a favorite destination of hunters. Built in the 1960s, it is a lasting example of progressive wildlife management and conservation intuition.



Our Success

Pennsylvania's **Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas** continue to support wild ring-necked pheasant populations that might someday provide a unique opportunity to hunters. In 2014, for the first time in three years, Pennsylvania was able to secure wild ringnecks from another state for release into one of the Commonwealth's four Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas (WPRAs). Sixty-seven Montana birds and four that were born and raised in the wild in Pennsylvania were released in March into the Franklin County WPRA. It was the first release for the Franklin County WPRA and, with it, all four of the state's WPRAs have received wild birds. Hen pheasant densities in all WPRAs are approaching or exceed target levels.

Pennsylvania remains a top deer-hunting state

1990s

1. West Virginia
- 2. Pennsylvania**
3. Wisconsin
4. New Jersey
5. Alabama

Today

1. Maryland
- 2. Pennsylvania**
3. South Carolina
4. Delaware
5. Georgia

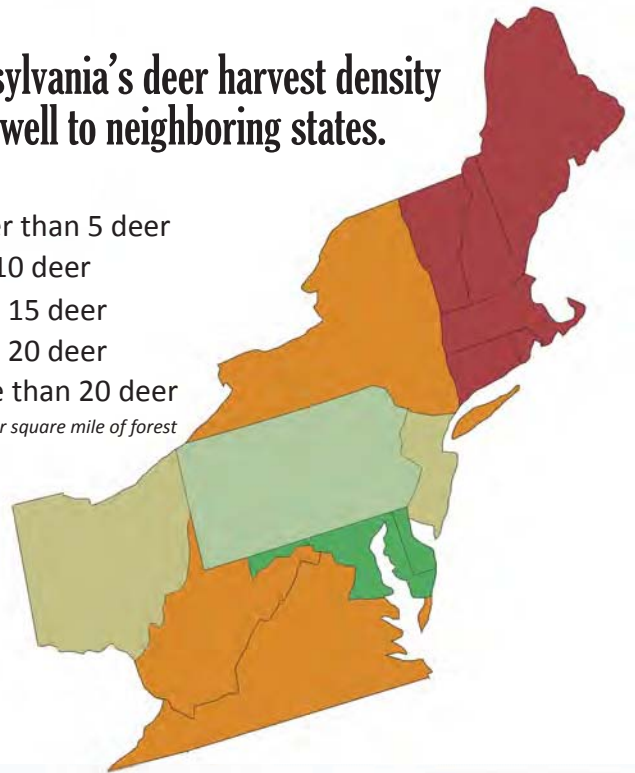
Rankings based on deer harvested per square mile of land area.



Overall, Pennsylvania's deer harvest density compares well to neighboring states.

- Fewer than 5 deer
- 5 to 10 deer
- 10 to 15 deer
- 15 to 20 deer
- More than 20 deer

Deer harvested per square mile of forest



Our Success

Deer Hunting is an important part of Pennsylvania's heritage and it's important to note that, even as times change, Pennsylvania remains a top deer hunting state. The total deer harvest during the 2013-14 seasons was estimated at 352,920, an increase of about 3 percent compared to the previous year.

Archery harvest density among the best in the nation

Each year, Bowhunter Magazine ranks bowhunting among the 50 states, and Pennsylvania again ranked near the top in both total harvest density and archery harvest density. These numbers reflect harvests per square mile, using the total square miles within each state, including all types of land use.

Total Harvest Density

1. Maryland 9.5
- 2. Pennsylvania 7.9**
3. Michigan 7.7
4. South Carolina 7.5
5. New Jersey 7.0

Archery Harvest Density

1. New Jersey 3.9
2. Maryland 3.3
- 3. Pennsylvania 2.3**
4. Michigan 2.3



Geographically, the Mid-Atlantic region of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland leads the nation in white-tailed deer harvest densities.



Antler restrictions continue to pave the way for older, larger-antlered bucks to show up in our whitetail harvest. The age structure of the antlered deer in the 2013 harvest was 49 percent 1.5 year-old-bucks and 51 percent 2.5-year-old and older bucks. Over the past four years, more than 300 deer entries have been added to the state's Big Game Records listings.

Our Success

The **2013-14 Deer Harvest** included an estimated 134,280 antlered deer and 218,640 antlerless deer. The antlerless success rate for hunters remained about 25 percent for the licenses issued.



Pennsylvania leads the nation in bear research.

Game Commission staff in 2014 captured and placed tags on 889 bears statewide. Through this effort, biologists are able to reliably estimate bear populations based on the number of marked bears that turn up in the annual harvest.

In 1990, Pennsylvania's bear population
was estimated at fewer than 7,000

It's grown substantially since then

In 2014, the statewide bear population was estimated at

18,100 bears

Over the last seven years, the statewide
bear population has been stable



Our Success

Black Bears are thriving in Pennsylvania, with the statewide population nearly tripling since 1990. Bears continue to expand their range within Pennsylvania, where possible. Still the statewide population has remained stable for many years – a testament to sound, science-based management.

The top seven bear harvests on record in Pennsylvania all have occurred since 2005, with four of them taking place in the past four years.

1. 2011	4,350
2. 2005	4,164
3. 2012	3,623
4. 2009	3,512
5. 2013	3,510
6. 2008	3,458
7. 2014	3,366



A record
173,523

bear-hunting licenses were sold in 2014.

The previous record – 167,438 – was set in 2013.

Our Success

Bear-Hunting Opportunities have increased significantly in recent years. To keep the population in check in areas of the state that can't support many bears, bear hunting is open during all deer seasons. And in many other areas, bear seasons extend beyond the brief statewide seasons. Hunters have responded in recent years by buying more licenses and recording some of the largest bear harvests on record.



Our Success

Generations of Pennsylvanians continue to pass along our rich hunting tradition. These individuals are key to wildlife conservation, present and future, in the Keystone State. As the Game Commission continues to create new hunting and trapping opportunities as it carries out its conservation mission, much thought is given to hunters and all that they do to celebrate our heritage.



Notes

Countless entities help to make wildlife conservation in Pennsylvania what it is.

Below are just some of our important partners.



