



STRATEGIC PLAN FY2020-2023

**ONE TEAM
ONE VOICE
ONE PURPOSE**



ONE TEAM ONE VOICE ONE PURPOSE



PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION



VISION

Recognized and respected as the leader in innovative and proactive stewardship of wildlife and their habitats.

*Our **Vision** is what we hope to be. We are passionate about being a voice for Pennsylvania wildlife and inspired by the natural world in which we live.*

*Our **Mission** summarizes the reason we exist as an agency and guides decisions we make.*

MISSION

Manage and protect wildlife and their habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations.

Our **Values** are the house rules and govern our behaviors every day. They enable us to work well together to fulfill our mission.



Our **Guiding Principles** influence our actions. They cause us to evaluate our decisions against our mission and vision.

VALUES

PROFESSIONALISM

- Exhibit a positive attitude
- Be courteous
- Be honest and ethical
- Advocate for the Mission
- Be accountable and transparent
- Provide a quality experience in all customer interactions

TEAMWORK

- Communicate effectively
- Support a positive environment
- Share knowledge
- Be adaptable
- Advocate for and support the team
- Communicate with respect and trust
- Discuss differences and resolve conflicts
- Trust and be trustworthy

EXCELLENCE

- Be creative and innovative
- Learn from mistakes
- Balance quality with efficiency
- Own your job and lead
- Keep your promises and follow through
- Seek knowledge
- Perform the full scope of your job responsibilities

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE SHALL:

- Place wildlife and their habitats first using science-based principles
- Embrace our role as a public service agency and provide the best customer service possible
- Support ongoing development of staff to ensure the leaders of tomorrow are prepared to carry on the Mission
- Recruit, Retain and Reactivate (R3) hunters and trappers and consider the impacts of regulations on R3
- Espouse the “One Team. One Voice. One Purpose” philosophy to establish and foster one consistent Agency culture
- Communicate and broaden Pennsylvania Game Commission’s relevancy and leadership position in wildlife management and public safety
- Evaluate and adapt to environmental, social and political impacts on wildlife and habitats
- Assess and implement business practices that are efficient and cost effective

A Letter from the Executive Director

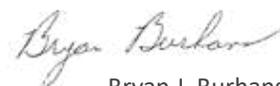
The Pennsylvania Game Commission's 2020–2023 strategic plan, in many ways, opens a new chapter in the agency's 125-year history, a history that is marked by successes, challenges, innovation, cutting-edge science and a team of employees second to none. It is because of this history the Game Commission is widely regarded as one of the leading wildlife conservation agencies in the United States.

Perhaps, I could have made this statement for every chapter in the agency's history, but we live in a different time. We perceive a widening gap in the public's trust of government. We see on the news every day a public critical of law enforcement. Social media is filled with posts from individuals who do not trust science or government in general. These perceptions are not new, and certainly not reality. So, what has changed?

What has changed is the way in which people communicate. Social media dominates how information is distributed and received; Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and the list goes on. This information is unfiltered and is often not based on fact.

Our new strategic plan lays out a roadmap to keep us focused and accountable to our goals. This plan has a strong focus on strategic communication and branding to deal with today's challenges. We have also focused on staff development to better help our employees deal with tomorrow's issues. Without question, as with previous strategic plans, we continue our steadfast commitment to the conservation of wildlife and creating opportunities to better connect people with the wildlife we are charged to protect.

This will be an exciting chapter in the agency's history. We are fortunate to have a committed and talented staff that make up the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Moreover, we are honored to continue to serve all citizens of this Commonwealth as the state's wildlife conservation agency.



Bryan J. Burhans
Executive Director,
Pennsylvania Game Commission



A Look Back Through 125 Years

Established from an Urgent Need

Pennsylvania's approach to wildlife management was uncomplicated in the 1700s and 1800s. Hunting and trapping seasons were lengthy, and bag limits, if there were any, generous. Government left it up to The People to decide how they'd take game. After all, many depended upon wildlife for income and table fare.

But there was a price to pay for this loose form of management, if, in fact, it could be called management. By the mid-1800s, game had become scarce near most civilized parts of the state. Some counties, at the urging of residents, petitioned the General Assembly to close various hunting seasons or ban certain game-taking practices within their boundaries. And legislators often obliged. But with no one enforcing the laws, protective measures weren't worth the time and ink used securing their passage.

Compounding the conservation problems associated with the unlimited taking of wildlife were land-use activities that compromised an environment that, for the most part, was ecologically balanced before European colonization. Large-scale timbering operations began stripping mountainsides of vegetation, making them more susceptible to erosion. Dams being built on waterways stopped annual fish migrations. Poisonous discharges from factories, flooded mines and cesspools strangled aquatic life in waterways. Residential and agricultural development also swallowed important, sometimes irreplaceable, wildlife habitat, particularly wetlands and lowlands.

By the 1890s, Pennsylvania's wildlife community had lost several long standing members. Elk had been extirpated for about 25 years. Wolves, mountain lions and fishers mostly disappeared in the latter 1800s. And before the century closed, beavers and passenger pigeons were gone completely. Deer and otters, even black bears lost tremendous ground, but still were found here and there. Few wild animals received the protection they needed. Wildlife was being sold in marketplaces and served in restaurants.

On June 25, 1895, Gov. Daniel H. Hastings signed a law creating the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners, an agency that in 1936 was renamed the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Hunters throughout the state had lobbied for the legislation for years.

While some species already were gone, there was hope for others, such as the white-tailed deer and wild turkey, which were at their lowest population levels ever. There was no time for half-stepping. Protective measures were needed urgently.

Success & Challenges

Through its first 125 years, the Game Commission successfully has restored once-dwindling populations of deer, wild turkeys, black bears, river otters and wood ducks, and the agency reintroduced beavers, fishers and elk.

Species threatened by extinction, such as bald eagles, peregrine falcons and ospreys, are back in a big way as a result of extensive recovery programs, often involving other states and the federal government.

The agency also is focused on species suffering deep declines.

Its work with cave bats, which have suffered tremendous losses to white-nose syndrome, and ruffed grouse, which are battling West Nile virus, is at the forefront of national efforts to restore these beleaguered species.

Pennsylvania's battle against chronic wasting disease (CWD), first detected in Pennsylvania captive and wild deer in 2012, increasingly commands attention and consumes resources.

And in a state already dramatically altered by chestnut blight and gypsy-moth invasion in the past century, State Game Lands and other properties now face invasive plants such as mile-a-minute weed and others that suffocate a landscape that's also lost its ash to emerald ash borers.

It also is important to remember that managing wildlife is about more than managing wildlife. Each year, civilization and wildlife move closer to one another. In that process, problems arise for both. Despite mounting problems, much good has occurred in Penn's Woods as a result of the Game Commission.

Try to put a price on restoring the state's elk, black bears, wild turkeys and whitetails, or returning beavers, otters and fishers to their former ranges. Add to that the resurrection of extirpated peregrine falcon and osprey populations, as well as rebuilding a bald-eagle population from three remaining nests in Crawford County. There now are more than 250 nesting bald eagle pairs statewide.

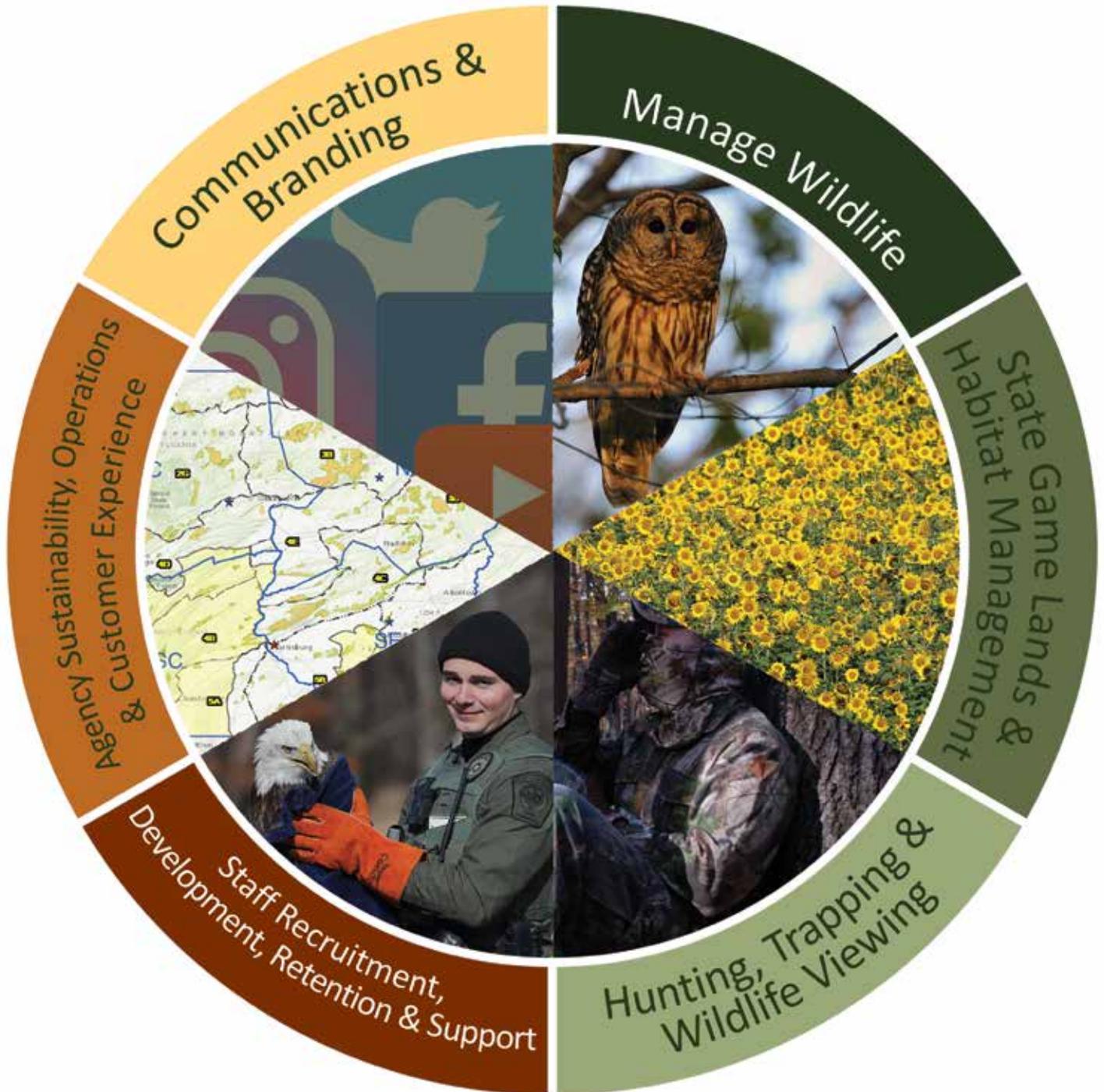
And let's not forget the nest-box campaigns to help cavity-nesting bluebirds and wood ducks right their declining populations; programs that offer seedlings from the agency's Howard Nursery to help build better wildlife habitat; and encouraging the establishment of warm-season grasses and riparian corridors to help grassland nesters and other birds.

The agency's presence surely has helped make our outdoors more fulfilling and inspirational than most Pennsylvanians could expect.

The Game Commission's first 125 years have witnessed plenty through troubled times. An overachieving workforce, complemented by an exceptional corps of volunteers, partnering agencies, conservation organizations and institutions, not to mention a caring license-buying public, all have contributed on this amazing journey.

It's through that support and concern for the resource that agency employees find their inspiration. It's a winning combination that promises to sustain wildlife conservation another 125 years and beyond.

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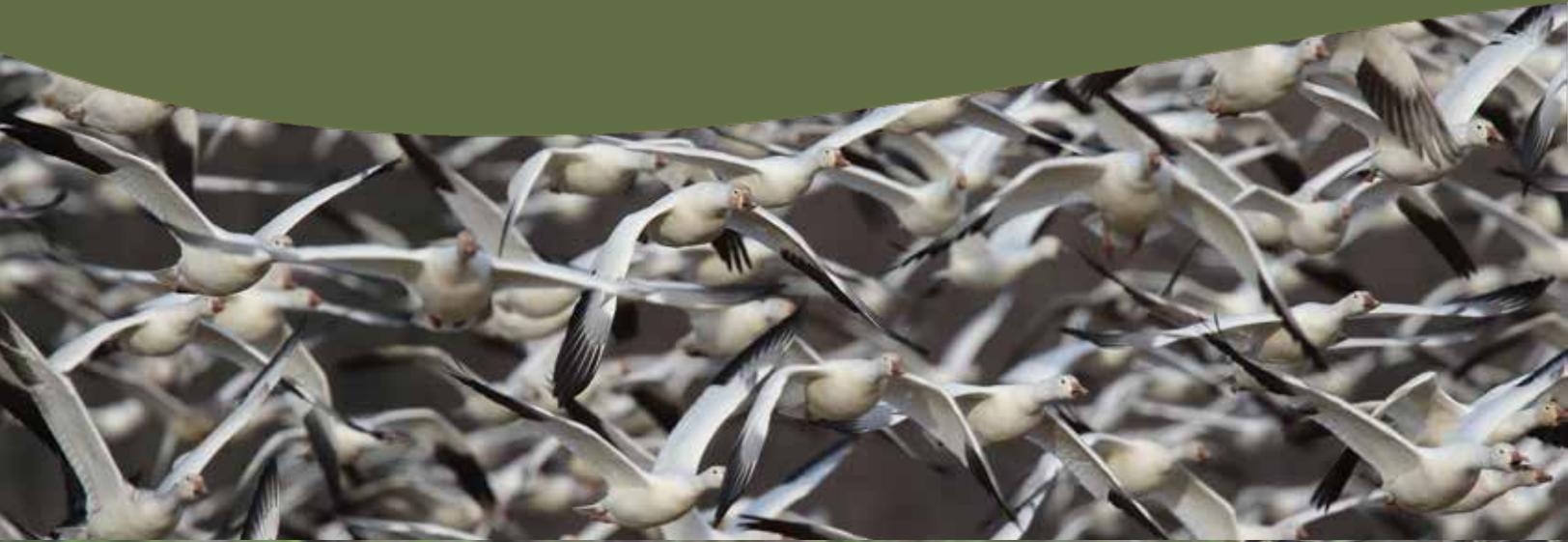
1. MANAGE WILDLIFE





- 1. Manage Wildlife – Manage diverse and sustainable wildlife for current and future generations.**
 - I. By June 30, 2021, develop a strategic plan for the Wildlife Futures Program to enhance wildlife disease detection and response. Progress according to the plan through June 2023.
 - II. By June 30, 2021, assess and develop a plan that maximizes agency efficiencies in collecting bear harvest data while ensuring adequate data are collected to properly manage black bear populations for the long term. Progress according to the plan through June 2023.
 - III. By June 30, 2022, evaluate the feasibility of reintroducing American martens to Pennsylvania. If a plan is necessary, develop by June 30, 2023.
 - IV. By June 30, 2022, develop a data-driven model to focus Law Enforcement actions in high wildlife crime areas to reduce complaints and crimes.
 - a. By June 30, 2023, utilize the model to identify high-crime areas and design an appropriate law enforcement program to address the issues.
 - V. Through June 2023, evaluate the statewide Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan and enhance the ongoing statewide Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan.
 - VI. By June 30, 2023, maintain an annual prevalence below 5% in Chronic Wasting Disease Established Areas.
 - VII. By June 30, 2023, minimize the establishment of chronic wasting disease in Control Units (“sparks”).
 - VIII. By June 30, 2023, protect and enhance bat hibernacula to minimize the impact of white-nose syndrome.
 - a. By June 30, 2022, apply white-nose syndrome PEG 8000 treatment to two new sites and examine effectiveness of reducing disease.
 - b. By June 30, 2023, adjust airflow in at least five mines to lower internal mine temperatures in an effort to slow pathogen growth.
 - c. By June 30, 2023, build five bat-friendly gates to exclude humans and remotely monitor five bat hibernacula.
 - IX. By June 30, 2023, reintroduce bobwhite quail at Letterkenny Army Depot to restore this extirpated species.

2. STATE GAME LANDS AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT



2. State Game Lands and Habitat Management – Optimize opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to enjoy and experience wildlife in its natural habitat.

- I. By June 30, 2021, refine the Private Lands Program to ensure alignment with the agency’s strategic direction to enhance access and habitats.
- II. By June 30, 2023, reduce high-intensity agricultural practices on State Game Lands by 30% to maximize sustainable habitat.
- III. By June 30, 2023, mark 50% of high-visibility and at-risk-of-encroachment State Game Lands boundaries.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, complete GIS analysis to identify State Game Lands boundaries that need greater visibility and are at risk of encroachment.
 - b. By June 30, 2022, develop a plan to mark identified State Game Lands boundaries.
- IV. By June 30, 2023, utilize prescribed fire to improve habitats on 20,000 acres annually, with three burn bosses trained at a low complexity level and two burn bosses trained at a moderate complexity level within each region.
- V. By June 30, 2022, identify acquisition opportunities meeting the prioritization model to enhance the State Game Lands system.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, create a land acquisitions prioritization model utilizing GIS.
 - b. By June 30, 2021, communicate additional opportunities for land donations.
- VI. By June 30, 2023, strategically convert 10,000 acres of forest land annually into young forest habitat prioritizing areas for ruffed grouse and species of greatest conservation need.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, analyze feasibility, develop a plan and determine resources.
- VII. By June 30, 2023, develop a plan to prioritize unique or under-represented habitat development opportunities.
 - a. By June 30, 2022, conduct a statewide evaluation to identify current and new wetlands and moist soil habitat development opportunities.
 - b. By June 30, 2022, conduct a statewide evaluation to identify other unique or under-represented habitats on State Game Lands, such as pollinator habitats, for potential habitat development opportunities.



3. HUNTING, TRAPPING AND WILDLIFE VIEWING





3. Hunting, Trapping and Wildlife Viewing – Provide and promote world-class hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing opportunities.

- I. By June 30, 2021, develop a plan for increasing pheasant hunting opportunities to maximize hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation including processes and timelines for: increasing pheasant production, increasing pheasant stocking days and extending pheasant stocking late-season opportunities. Progress according to the plan by June 30, 2022.
- II. By June 30, 2021, hold a bi-annual R3 Summit (recruitment, retention and reactivation) with the purpose of developing partnerships with NGOs to deliver the R3 mission in accordance with the agency’s R3 Plan.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, identify and implement programs to recruit more women and minorities. Progress according to the plan through June 2023.
 - b. By June 30, 2022, align hunting and trapping opportunities, in the R3 Plan, with dates that optimize participation.
- III. By June 30, 2021, implement a voluntary, online Bowhunting Safety Training program. Increase the number of participants by 10% annually through June 2023.
- IV. By June 30, 2023, work with the Legislature to pass legislation providing the Game Commission full authority for Sunday hunting opportunities.
 - a. By June 30, 2022, revise language in the current legislation and increase the number of hunting days.
- V. By June 30, 2023, create three additional public shooting ranges and enhance current ranges in strategic locations to provide more public opportunity in support of R3 initiatives.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, identify locations for additional ranges.
 - b. By June 30, 2022, develop plans for creating three additional ranges and enhancing current ranges.
- VI. By June 30, 2023, progress on implementation of vision for high-profile State Game Lands.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, complete implementation of vision goals for State Game Lands 180 (Shohola Falls Wildlife Management Area).
 - b. By June 30, 2023, complete 100% of vision goals for State Game Lands 290 (Haldeman Island Wildlife Management Area)
 - c. By June 30, 2023, complete 85% of vision goals for State Game Lands 280 (Blue Marsh Wildlife Management Area).

4. STAFF RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, RETENTION AND SUPPORT



4. Staff Recruitment, Development, Retention and Support – Engage, develop and better inform employees to strengthen the Pennsylvania Game Commission team.

- I. By June 30, 2021, complete the first, full year of quarterly new supervisors’ training to enhance morale and overall personnel performance.
 - a. By June 30, 2022, enhance and deliver second year of quarterly supervisors’ training to enhance morale and overall personnel performance.
 - b. By June 30, 2023, enhance and deliver third year of quarterly supervisors’ training to enhance morale and overall personnel performance.
- II. By June 30, 2023, increase the number of interns who convert to agency employees.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, develop a process for communicating with, recruiting, on-boarding, properly placing and managing interns.
 - b. By June 30, 2021, increase internship participation across the agency to enhance the future candidate pool.
- III. By June 30, 2023, increase limited-term employee opportunities for habitat management crews to enhance future candidate pools and increase capacity during workload peaks.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, increase opportunities by one per land management group.
 - b. Through June 30, 2023, review and refine limited-term employee opportunities for habitat crews.
- IV. By June 30, 2023, provide targeted, on-going training to build depth and to help employees understand, implement and embody key job-aligned skills.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, provide targeted training to help employees understand and enhance key job-aligned skills.
 - b. By June 30, 2022, develop a senior staff leadership development process.
 - c. Through June 30, 2023, evaluate the effectiveness of the targeted training programs and adjust as needed.
- V. By June 30, 2023, implement an agency-wide succession planning process to cross-train staff, address one-deep scenarios and develop talent.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, develop an agency-wide succession planning process and evaluate and refine the process through June 30, 2022.
- VI. By June 30, 2022, develop and implement an orientation program for new employees.
- VII. By June 30, 2023, evaluate the Ross Leffler School of Conservation curriculum in an effort to reduce the length of in-residence training for game warden cadets.
- VIII. By June 30, 2021, enhance the marketing efforts to increase employee recruitment by 10% for open positions to attract the best candidates.

5. AGENCY SUSTAINABILITY, OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



5. Agency Sustainability, Operations and Customer Experience – Embrace emerging technologies, enhance operations and maintain financial sustainability and accountability to sustain the Pennsylvania Game Commission into the future.

- I. By June 30, 2023, implement a unit system for game warden field operations to enhance efficiencies, customer experience and officer safety.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, design the unit system.
 - b. By June 30, 2023, reduce response time to public calls for service by 50%, respond to 100% of incidents within 24 hours and eliminate unfulfilled calls.
- II. By June 30, 2022, utilize an equipment, vehicles and buildings replacement schedule for better fiscal planning and strategic utilization.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, develop a replacement schedule.
 - b. By June 30, 2021, use equipment utilization data to prioritize replacements.
- III. By June 30, 2022, consolidate dispatch operations to enhance efficiency, customer experience and officer safety.
- IV. By June 30, 2022, enhance the K-9 Unit with three additional certified teams.
- V. By June 30, 2023, use technology to increase customer service and convenience.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, integrate licensing, lotteries and merchandise in one convenient website for an improved customer experience.
 - b. By June 30, 2021, implement an electronic license option.
 - c. By June 30, 2022, evaluate the feasibility of alternative tagging and reporting.
 - d. By June 30, 2022, broaden the capabilities of the automated licensing system to streamline deer management landowner assistance programs.
 - e. By June 30, 2023, enhance the agency mobile app to integrate customer account functionality for licensing, tagging, lotteries and harvest reporting.
- VI. By June 30, 2023, present a recodification plan for Title 34 to the legislature.
- VII. By June 30, 2023, implement the GIS strategic roadmap and continue to leverage GIS mobile maps and applications to enhance efficiencies in the field.



6. AGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AND BRANDING



6. Agency Communications and Branding – Communicate and promote the value and varied programs, services and resources provided by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

- I. By June 30, 2021, create a FAQ for consistent messaging and make it available to all staff on an ongoing quarterly basis.
- II. By June 30, 2021, develop an aggressive marketing program to address the negative effects of feeding wildlife.
- III. By June 30, 2021, develop an enhanced process to communicate regulation changes to hunters and trappers.
- IV. By June 30, 2021, complete and implement a Communications Plan to increase public awareness and reach targeted audiences.
 - a. By June 30, 2021, develop an outreach program to engage and communicate with non-consumptive users. Progress according to the plan through June 2023.





Many photos in this document were donated by Jacob Dingel.

Pennsylvania Game Commission
2001 Elmerton Avenue
Harrisburg PA 17110
Phone: 717-787-4250
www.pgc.pa.gov

