

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

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PUBLIC MEETING

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BEFORE: MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

STANLEY I. KNICK, JR., PRESIDENT

Haley J. Sankey, Vice President

Allen J. DiMarco, Secretary

Kristen Koppenhafer, Member

Scott H. Foradora, Member

Michael F. Mitrick, Member

Todd A. Pride, Member (via telephone)

Robert C. Schwalm, Member

MEETING: Monday, July 28, 2025, 1:02 p.m.

LOCATION: PA Game Commission

2001 Elmerton Avenue

Harrisburg, PA 17110

Reporter: Derek Richmond

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## A P P E A R A N C E S

W. CREIGH MARTSON, ESQUIRE

PA Game Commission

2001 Elmerton Avenue

Harrisburg, PA 17110

Counsel for Pennsylvania Game Commission

ALSO PRESENT:

STEPHEN P. SMITH, Executive Director

DR. MATTHEW SCHNUPP, Director of Bureau of Wildlife  
Management

LAUREN FERRERI, Director of Bureau of Information  
and Education

TIMOTHY HAYDT, Director of Bureau of Wildlife  
Habitat Management

MARY JO CASALENA

IAN GREGG

I N D E X

DISCUSSION AMONG PARTIES

4 - 60

## P R O C E E D I N G S

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PRESIDENT KNICK: All right.

I'm going to bring this July 28th,  
2025 meeting to order of the Game Commission. Pledge  
of Allegiance. Please stand.

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

PRESIDENT KNICK: Mr. Secretary, would  
you call roll, please?

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner  
Knick?

PRESIDENT KNICK: Here.

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner  
Sankey?

COMMISSIONER SANKEY: Here.

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner  
DiMarco, here. Commissioner Foradora?

COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Here.

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner  
Fredericks? Absent. Commissioner Koppenhafer?

COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: Here.

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner  
Mitrick?

COMMISSIONER MITRICK: Here.

COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner

1 Pride?

2 COMMISSIONER PRIDE: Here.

3 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Commissioner

4 Schwalm?

5 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Here.

6 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Mr. President,  
7 you have a quorum.

8 PRESIDENT KNICK: Okay.

9 Thank you. Okay. I have a motion to  
10 approve the minutes held - for the meeting held April  
11 12th, 2025.

12 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: So moved.

13 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Second.

14 PRESIDENT KNICK: Mr. Secretary, would  
15 you call - call for a vote, please?

16 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those in favor  
17 of the stated motion, would you please signify by  
18 saying aye?

19 (AYES RESPOND)

20 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those opposed,  
21 nay.

22 (NO RESPONSE)

23 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: The motion  
24 carries.

25 PRESIDENT KNICK: All right.

1                   At this time, I'd like to ask our  
2 Executive Director for some comments.

3                   MR. SMITH: All right.

4                   Thank you, President Knick. So, one  
5 word that we have heard a lot over the past couple  
6 weeks in reference to events has been the word  
7 historic. There have been historic votes, historic  
8 meetings. We had a historic bill signing, historic  
9 press conference.

10                  However, we are not done yet. There's  
11 still is one more historic moment that needs to take  
12 place for this year, and that's this meeting here  
13 today. Because for the first time in the 130-year  
14 history of our agency, we are having a meeting in  
15 which we know for certain the ban on hunting on  
16 Sundays is about to expire. The restriction that has  
17 been in place throughout the entire history of our  
18 agency will soon be taken out of Title 34.

19                  Looking ahead, what that means for the  
20 Board is when you come back in January and begin the  
21 process to set the seasons and bag limits for the  
22 '26-27 hunting season, you can incorporate Sundays as  
23 you see fit throughout the seasons and treat it  
24 essentially as any other day. That process of  
25 amending and adopting those seasons and bag limits,

1 as you well know, takes time. Typically, that  
2 process, you're looking at about a minimum of 12 to  
3 14 weeks for regulations to be proposed, published,  
4 adopted, finalized, and then published one more time.

5           That time work will certainly work for  
6 future seasons, but it presents challenges for this  
7 license year. If we tried to follow that standard  
8 regulatory process, the earliest that you could  
9 implement Sunday hunting would be approximately mid-  
10 November. And as you know, there are already three  
11 Sunday hunting dates established for that mid-  
12 November time frame. So essentially, it would become  
13 a moot point for this hunting year. That's an  
14 outcome that I think our hunters and for us at the  
15 agency would find unacceptable.

16           Fortunately, our predecessors decades  
17 ago had the foresight to adopt a regulation that  
18 allows for the executive director to issue an  
19 executive order extending seasons after they have  
20 already been established. And that's the option that  
21 I'm proposing today. I'm asking, and I'm  
22 recommending the Board to adopt a resolution  
23 directing the signing of an executive order that  
24 extends the established hunting seasons to include  
25 the Sundays from Sunday September 14th through

1 Sunday, December 7th.

2                   This resolution is simple and  
3 straightforward. It would open up Sundays for  
4 hunting during that time period. This would add ten  
5 additional Sunday hunting opportunities to the three  
6 that you already created in April of this year.

7                   One caveat that I would note is the  
8 executive order will need to exclude migratory game  
9 birds from Sunday hunting this year so that we can  
10 stay within the framework given to us by the US Fish  
11 and Wildlife Service for those seasons.

12                   As we look ahead to the remainder of  
13 the current license year, one comment that we've  
14 received, and I'm sure you have as well, is regarding  
15 the potential to hunt spring gobblers on Sundays as  
16 well. Our recommendation is going to be not to  
17 include spring gobbler seasons within that  
18 resolution, and you'll soon hear testimony from our  
19 Bureau of Wildlife Management regarding potential  
20 biological concerns.

21                   So you'll hear on those points  
22 shortly, and you'll also hear from the Bureau of  
23 Wildlife Management regarding the sustainability of  
24 our wildlife populations and why we are in a position  
25 to make these recommendations. I recognize that this



1 is an unusual process for this license year, but it  
2 provides a clear and timely path forward to implement  
3 Sunday hunting this fall for the majority of our  
4 hunting seasons. And quite frankly, I think we  
5 realize that our hunters have waited long enough.

6 So with that, I'll ask Dr. Matthew  
7 Schnupp from the Bureau of Wildlife Management to  
8 come and speak to what is proposed in the resolution  
9 and the biological impacts.

10 DR. SCHNUPP: Good afternoon,  
11 everybody. Steve said my name's Matthew Schnupp,  
12 Bureau Director for the Wildlife Management Bureau.  
13 Appreciate all your time this morning, this  
14 afternoon.

15 As you recall in the April meeting, I  
16 was up here really touting our hunters and their  
17 ability to meet our achievement - to meet our goals  
18 of our management objectives of antlerless  
19 allocations, and the fact that our hunters really  
20 showed up. And so, I'm really excited to be here  
21 today to give something back to them, which is the  
22 Sunday hunting, which we all know that they've really  
23 wanted for so many years. So I'm excited to be part  
24 of that, and certainly I think I can speak on behalf  
25 of staff to say that we are all excited to provide

1 that today.

2                   An important step in allowing Sunday  
3 hunting is that the Wildlife Management Bureau  
4 provides a thorough review of wildlife surveys and  
5 inventory data. And so, the staff of the Wildlife  
6 Management Bureau provided this review by evaluating  
7 various data sets that we have access to. The game  
8 take survey for one, the Grouse Hunter Cooperative  
9 Survey is another one. Mandatory check stations for  
10 bears, as you all well know, and as well as the  
11 research that we use as the foundation of our  
12 programs.

13                   And so ultimately, we are not  
14 concerned with the addition of the 13 Sundays as  
15 written in the resolution. Ultimately, our harvest  
16 monitoring programs are robust enough to be able to  
17 handle modifications like Sunday hunting. And if we  
18 detect a population impact, we would adjust  
19 accordingly next year. This is really something that  
20 we get tout in Pennsylvania is that we have species  
21 specific biologists focused solely on species within  
22 Pennsylvania. And so, this is really something that  
23 we can adjust to on an addition of a 13 day Sunday  
24 hunting and really monitor that moving forward to  
25 make sure that that negative impact isn't seen. And

1 if it is seen, then we adjust accordingly.

2                   However, as Steve had mentioned, there  
3 is an exception to migratory bird season due to the  
4 federal framework and season setting process. We are  
5 recommending that Sundays remain closed.  
6 Additionally, although it's outside of the bounds of  
7 the current resolution, we are concerned with Sunday  
8 hunting during spring turkey season.

9                   Our recommendation is to use the  
10 results of the current research project as a guide  
11 forward for setting future turkey season  
12 recommendations. And you will hear more from Mary  
13 Jo, who will follow up, who's our turkey biologist in  
14 Pennsylvania, as well as Ian Gregg, who is our  
15 Division Chief of Operations, will talk to you about  
16 some of the federal framework issues that we ran  
17 into. But ultimately, again, this is really a joyful  
18 day to be able to be here and be part of this  
19 process.

20                   Now obviously, there are more game  
21 species than - than turkey and water - migratory game  
22 birds. So I'm happy to take any questions that you  
23 guys may have on other species of concern. But I do  
24 want to recognize the staff that's in the room that  
25 lives day in, day out to make sure that these

1 populations are monitored and that this evaluation  
2 was provided in a thorough manner. And so, I'll do  
3 the best that I can to represent their programs. But  
4 ultimately, I do want to call attention to them that  
5 - that, again, work day in and day out to manage  
6 that.

7 PRESIDENT KNICK: Do we have any  
8 questions from the Board?

9 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: I'll kick  
10 things off if nobody else will. Dr. Schnupp, can you  
11 speak to grouse having four additional Sundays, and  
12 knowing that grouse is a species we've been  
13 monitoring very, very closely the last few years and  
14 kind of how that plays into the equation here?

15 DR. SCHNUPP: Sure, sure. Yeah. So  
16 Reina Tyl has done a great job of monitoring the  
17 grouse populations in a number of different ways.  
18 Game take survey as well as really tip our hats to  
19 the grouse hunters. I mean, the grouse hunters is a  
20 small group, tight knit people, hunters that go out  
21 and really, that have the skills and expertise that  
22 collect the data that we ask them to collect. Total  
23 number of grouse flushed, so on and so forth.

24 And so, we've been monitoring that.  
25 And if - if those of you that were here during the

1 time when we actually withdrew the late season. And  
2 so, we did that because our previous grouse biologist  
3 now, still part of the Bureau within the recovery  
4 division, Lisa Williams, made a really close  
5 connection between West Nile virus and grouse  
6 populations. And so, her recommendation was to pull  
7 back that late season survey. When we - I'm sorry,  
8 late season hunting, when we knew that the harvest  
9 was actually additive. So that means that it really  
10 mattered, that when we harvested those birds late in  
11 the season, that was our breeding population. So we  
12 drew that season back.

13 We saw great support and a great  
14 response from our grouse hunters to do that. And so,  
15 with that being said, within the resolution's  
16 framework right now, we would see those additional  
17 season dates in the early season. And so we do not -  
18 we don't expect a direct impact, but frankly, we  
19 again would rely a lot on our grouse hunters and our  
20 game take survey to monitor that to make sure that  
21 that doesn't become an issue.

22 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: Thank you.

23 DR. SCHNUPP: Yes, thank you.

24 PRESIDENT KNICK: Anyone else? Well  
25 thank you, Matthew. Appreciate it.

1                   DR. SCHNUPP:   Okay.

2                   So next we'll introduce Mary Jo  
3 Casalena.

4                   MS. CASALENA:   All right.

5                   Good afternoon, everybody.  As Matthew  
6 mentioned, I'm Mary Jo Casalena, the wild turkey  
7 biologist.  And thanks for inviting me here to  
8 provide our Bureau's perspective of wild turkey  
9 seasons regarding Sunday hunting for the fall 2025  
10 season.

11                   Our ten-year turkey management plan  
12 guides all turkey related recommendations.  The  
13 population objective is to sustain and enhance  
14 populations within the limits of social and  
15 biological carrying capacities in each of our  
16 wildlife management units.  To meet that objective,  
17 we annually monitor populations and adjust harvest  
18 accordingly.  Oops, I forgot to advance the slide.  
19 There we go.

20                   Compared to large mammal populations,  
21 wild turkeys have more dramatic annual fluctuations  
22 in reproduction and survival.  So as a result,  
23 wildlife managers cannot precisely control turkey  
24 population change over the short term, but we can  
25 facilitate desired trends over the longer term

1 through a combination of harvest and habitat  
2 management in concert with population monitoring and  
3 research to assess the effectiveness of our  
4 management actions.

5                   We reviewed the population and harvest  
6 trend data and determined there will be no biological  
7 concerns with Sunday hunting for the fall 2025 turkey  
8 seasons. The increased opportunity ranges one to  
9 three Sundays. Most importantly, the wildlife  
10 management units with decreasing population trends  
11 will have only one added day. And these are Wildlife  
12 Management Units 3D and 4C. You can see on the slide  
13 in the light blue with a one week season and  
14 Management Unit 5B down in the southeastern part of  
15 the state also in the white blue - yeah, light blue,  
16 and that has a three day season currently.

17                   Wildlife management units that will  
18 have two to three additional days have stable to  
19 increasing population trends. And those are in the  
20 green and the darker green on the slide. And again,  
21 I keep forgetting to advance my slides here. Sorry  
22 about that.

23                   So our annual harvest and our  
24 population monitoring will be able to capture any  
25 impacts that this change may have. Now, Sunday

1 hunting, as Steve and Matthew mentioned, is not  
2 recommended within the current spring season  
3 structure due to biological concerns. For the youth  
4 season, the biological concern is the timing of when  
5 the youth season occurs, and that is before half of  
6 the hens have started incubating their nests. Now  
7 the additional day, excuse me, that additional day,  
8 that Sunday, would increase disturbance to hens at  
9 this - at that crucial part of their life cycle,  
10 potentially impacting reproductive output. Also, the  
11 youth season has a large hunter base and harvest, as  
12 you can see from this table here.

13                   Our average youth season harvest is  
14 about 2,300 turkeys compared to New York there on the  
15 slide at about 2,200 turkeys during their youth  
16 season. And I put New York as well as Virginia up  
17 there because they're the states with the second and  
18 third largest youth harvest in the Northeast. And  
19 so, you can see New York has about 2,200 birds  
20 harvested. And the number of youth hunters in  
21 Pennsylvania is only 6,100 compared to the youth  
22 hunters in Pennsylvania (sic), about twice that  
23 number, 12,800. So that's, again, you know, about  
24 half of the hunters, but about the same amount of  
25 harvest between New York and Pennsylvania.



1                   And I also would like to mention that  
2 New York and Virginia also have, currently have a two  
3 day season, Saturday and Sunday, also half-day  
4 seasons.

5                   Now the biological concerns for the  
6 regular season are, again, hen disturbance, but you  
7 know, early in the season. And secondly, the harvest  
8 in wildlife management units with declining  
9 population trends.

10                  Our ongoing research, turkey research  
11 studies were developed to help inform future  
12 recommendations. These studies are the Hen  
13 Population Dynamics Study with Penn State University  
14 of Pennsylvania and several surrounding states. The  
15 completion date for that will be September 2026.  
16 Secondly, the fall season setting decision model  
17 development process, and that again is with Penn  
18 State University. That completion date also is  
19 September 2026. And then finally, the gobbler  
20 survival and hunting mortality study, again with Penn  
21 State. And that completion date is June of 2026. So  
22 we'll have final results of these studies for the  
23 2027-28 season recommendation packages. In the  
24 meantime, we will continue to use our robust data set  
25 to monitor population level effects for the 2026-2027

1 season package. Packages.

2 So in conclusion, I would like to  
3 state that these Sunday hunting recommendations are  
4 guided by our research and monitoring. We have no  
5 biological concerns for the fall 2025 seasons, as we  
6 stated. We recommend analyzing research results  
7 prior to analyzing Sundays to the spring seasons.  
8 And again, these recommendations are data driven.

9 We will continue to utilize our  
10 monitoring of the data and monitoring or assessing  
11 population sustainability. Oops, I'm sorry. I  
12 forgot to say the last thing. And that is that  
13 recommendations can be adjusted as research analyses  
14 are completed as Steve and Matthew previously stated.

15 So with that, I thank you very much  
16 for your time, and I ask if there's any questions.

17 PRESIDENT KNICK: Does anybody have a  
18 question? Commissioner Schwalm.

19 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Thank you, Mary  
20 Jo. Well done. Hey, what do we - how many second  
21 gobbler tags do we issue and would you know how many  
22 birds we actually take on that second tag?

23 MS. CASALENA: Yeah, there's about, on  
24 average, around 21,500 tags that we issue. And keep  
25 in mind we hunters need to purchase that license,

1 that tag prior to the season, the regular season  
2 opening. And the harvests range from, trying to  
3 think. I think it's around 5,000. No, I think it's  
4 around, yeah. It's around 3 to 5,000. I can check  
5 on you to get the actual number.

6 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Please.

7 MS. CASALENA: I do want to mention,  
8 keep - now keep in mind, as I mentioned before, the  
9 timing of our spring season harvest is really the  
10 biological concern. With the second tag that's, we  
11 have a daily limit of one bird, right? So, you know,  
12 so obviously the second tag has to come, you know,  
13 after the first day of the season.

14 But so, when we're comparing the  
15 second tag harvest to other harvests, it's difficult  
16 to. It's almost comparing apples to oranges because  
17 the second tag that harvest occurs throughout the  
18 entire season. If you bear with me here, I can pull  
19 up a slide that shows that. Here. Let's see, I have  
20 a bunch of different slides here. Where did I put  
21 that one? I must not have added that one in. No,  
22 that's annual recruitment. Okay, so. Oh, here it  
23 is.

24 So this is the percent of the special  
25 license harvest by day of the season. And you can

1 see it's a pretty stable harvest throughout the  
2 entire season. So my point here is, I'm sorry. Let  
3 me show that to you on full screen there. There you  
4 go. That's much better. And don't mind that blue  
5 graph, that blue line. That's nothing. I was trying  
6 to put these things, put these slides together pretty  
7 quickly and I wasn't able to get rid of that blue  
8 line.

9 But the red line, the orange line is  
10 the percent of the special harvest by day of season.  
11 I don't know if that helps you with the - with that  
12 question that you asked?

13 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Is -  
14 Commissioner Schwalm, may I ask an addendum to your  
15 question?

16 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: What is - I  
18 think what you're asking is the percentage. Like,  
19 it's showing we get to 100 percent, but that's the  
20 participation by the end of the season.

21 Correct?

22 MS. CASALENA: No, that's harvest.  
23 That's the - that's the percent of the special  
24 harvest by the day of the season. So, you know, from  
25 zero percent of the - so obviously, you know, zero at

1 the first day of the season. Yeah. So I was -  
2 basically, it's just trying to show you the - the,  
3 you know. That the harvest from the special tag is  
4 pretty consistent throughout the season.

5 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Is the special  
6 tag the blue line?

7 MS. CASALENA: No, the special tag is  
8 the orange line. So it's just showing you -

9 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Yeah because -

10 MS. CASALENA: - that harvest is  
11 occurring pretty steadily for the second tag for the  
12 entire season.

13 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Right, I  
14 understand now. And you're going to get what  
15 percentage, of the 21,000, how many are filled out  
16 percentage? That's what you're going to get back to  
17 us on?

18 MS. CASALENA: Well, yeah. I'm going  
19 to get back to you on the exact harvest.

20 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Yeah.

21 MS. CASALENA: Yeah. The exact  
22 harvest. It's somewhere between 3 and 5,000.

23 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: So if I may ask  
24 another question. So if we took a look at, once we  
25 find out what the total amount is of a harvest on

1 that second tag, there might be a possibility in the  
2 future, obviously not this year, but looking down the  
3 line that we could possibly move the mentored hunt  
4 later into the season or move it up where it wouldn't  
5 be in that early part of the season where turkeys are  
6 most vulnerable, and possibly do something with that  
7 second tag like eliminate it? Would that be something  
8 that would enable us to move forward for the second -  
9 for a two-day mentored hunt?

10 MS. CASALENA: Yeah, you could change  
11 the dates of the mentored hunt to be sometime during  
12 the regular season, but you wouldn't need to - so we  
13 did, through Penn, through cooperation with Penn  
14 State, we just received the data, Friday as a matter  
15 of fact, where they - they

16 - there was a survey that asked hunters  
17 about different, their - different opinions about the  
18 spring season.

19 One - one of the - one of the  
20 questions was regarding the second tag. And - and  
21 this is, you know, data from the 2024, just right  
22 after the 2024 spring season, asking hunters if they  
23 basically, you know, if they wanted to keep the  
24 second tag, if they wanted to eliminate the second  
25 tag, if they would want the second tag for the second

1 half of the season. And the majority of the hunters  
2 stated their opinion was to keep the special tag, so.

3 So I mean, you know, typically what  
4 we've been trying to do is, you know, help formulate.  
5 The Bureau of Wildlife Management formulates  
6 recommendations based on biology, but also adding  
7 some information on human dimensions is an important  
8 aspect of, you know, of viewer consideration. So I  
9 wanted to make sure that you're aware of that. And  
10 obviously when the study is completed from Penn  
11 State, then all of that information will be provided  
12 to you.

13 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: What if we  
14 asked the hunters would you be willing to give up the  
15 second tag to enable us to have a two-day mentored  
16 hunt? Would we be able to do something like that?

17 MS. CASALENA: Well, that's.

18 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: I think you  
19 would get a different response versus just asking the  
20 question, would you be more willing to sacrifice the  
21 second hunt?

22 MS. CASALENA: Yes, so that would be  
23 -.

24 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: The second tag,  
25 excuse me.

1                   MS. CASALENA: Yeah, that would - that  
2 would be out of - that would be a question higher up  
3 the chain, so.

4                   MS. FERRERI: Yeah, Bob, the thing is  
5 we do need to mention this areas within the  
6 information and education. We can certainly work  
7 with PWM to figure out a way to ask those questions  
8 to specifically get to that point. It all depends on  
9 the way you ask the question to the public. We  
10 absolutely will get more information on that.

11                   COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Thank you.  
12 Thank you, Mary Jo.

13                   MS. CASALENA: You're welcome. Are  
14 there any other questions?

15                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Yes. I know  
16 it's premature, but you've heard me say before, Mary  
17 Jo. Is some of your questions and/or planning - we  
18 do not have a fall turkey tag. So we -

19                   MS. CASALENA: Correct.

20                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA: - don't  
21 precisely know how many people are hunting or  
22 opportunistic in an archery stand anymore. So is  
23 that something we could look at in the future, fall  
24 turkey tag? Like, play into your biological, so we  
25 know how many hunters there are up and to and



1 including, you know, what the popularity of spring  
2 turkey season and the kill of limiting some of the  
3 hen take in the fall?

4 MS. CASALENA: So our current research  
5 shows that our, the fall harvest has. That the  
6 actual fall harvest has declined, you know, quite  
7 substantially. In 2024, actually it was about 8,000  
8 turkeys that we harvested. And so, that was pretty  
9 similar to 2020. Between 2021 and 2023, it dropped  
10 below 8,000.

11 In our current research with Penn  
12 State and UPenn shows that hen harvest rates are -  
13 are very low, less than two percent. So, but then we  
14 also see that whenever we increase hunting  
15 opportunities, yes, we do increase harvest. So  
16 you're always going to be, you know, increasing hen  
17 harvest rates. But so, currently, our fall harvests  
18 are not at the breaking point for turkey populations,  
19 specifically, you know, those that have increasing to  
20 stable population trends. We only have three  
21 wildlife management units with decreasing population  
22 trends at this point.

23 So long story, I guess that's a long  
24 answer to your question. But we do, to answer your  
25 question about the number of fall turkey hunters, I

1 mean we do have the game take survey, and we also  
2 know the number of spring turkey hunters with their  
3 spring turkey hunter survey. So those are crucial  
4 pieces of data that we are able to get from those  
5 surveys. Whether we would provide a fall turkey tag  
6 or a spring turkey tag, I mean that would be up to,  
7 you know, the Board and the Agency. It would be a  
8 completely different method of managing the turkey  
9 population. So there would be a period of years  
10 where we would have to adjust to that completely  
11 different methodology. And so, you know, we would  
12 have to create a new, a brand-new data set. So it  
13 would take time to develop that, and then the  
14 previous data wouldn't really be used to compare  
15 because it would use a completely different type of  
16 data set.

17 But, I mean, anything is possible.  
18 But I just want to make sure that the Board is aware  
19 that whenever you make a major change like that, then  
20 you need time to then analyze the data and look at  
21 the trends. And we would probably need new research  
22 with Penn State to develop a different fall season  
23 decision model, so.

24 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Thank you.

25 MS. CASALENA: You're welcome.

1                   COMMISSIONER SANKEY: I think maybe  
2 what Commissioner Foradora was after, and correct me  
3 if I'm wrong, but we talked a lot - we talk about  
4 incidental take. And do we have any way of  
5 understanding how many of the fall turkeys are taken  
6 just because someone's deer hunting and they happen  
7 to cross our paths? And is that something we could  
8 also maybe survey to get a better idea of?

9                   MS. CASALENA: Yes. Yeah, we did ask  
10 that survey in the 2020 survey, and I don't have  
11 those numbers off the top of my head, but, you know,  
12 again, a lot has changed with fall turkey hunting  
13 since 2020. With the elimination of rifles, then we,  
14 you know, that incidental take obviously will be a  
15 lot different. Yeah.

16                   So, and so, but we do have the - we  
17 have the information from archery hunting, you know,  
18 prior to archery hunting, incidental take.

19                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA: So when I ask  
20 the question, how reliable? What archers going to  
21 say they stuck three arrows through a turkey in a  
22 fall season and not get them?

23                   MS. CASALENA: Well, that's going to  
24 be consistent across, you know, across all. All  
25 species and all methods, most likely.

1                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA:   Okay.

2                   MS. CASALENA:    Yeah.

3                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA:   But that is,  
4   thank you. Somehow we need to take that into account.  
5    Thank you.

6                   MS. CASALENA:    Okay.

7                   COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER:   Mary Jo,  
8   can you speak a little bit about what you're  
9   anticipating from an increased harvest standpoint? I  
10   know we've talked before that Sundays don't  
11   necessarily equate to a Saturday harvest, but it's  
12   probably more than a Tuesday harvest. So how, kind  
13   of walk us through in your mind's eye, so to speak,  
14   how these additional days, whether it's one or three,  
15   is okay? Like, there's a lot of turkey hunters out  
16   there that are thinking man, fall season structures,  
17   how we can manipulate population levels at the WMU.  
18   And there's a lot of concern that, just to make sure  
19   that we're not kind of putting the cart before the  
20   horse, and that biologically, we're okay with this.

21                   MS. CASALENA:    Yeah. So I haven't had  
22   time to, you know, to make the calculations exactly  
23   how we predict the harvest is going to change. But I  
24   do want to mention that with the structure that we  
25   have right now for fall season with no rifles, you

1 know, and we have the ability to, because we've  
2 decreased the harvest and number of hunters, then we  
3 do have the ability to provide more opportunity in  
4 terms of season length right now.

5                   And we, you know, we did see an  
6 increase in fall harvest in 2024 because we increased  
7 season length for 15 wildlife management units,  
8 decreased it in two. So just knowing what happened  
9 from 2020 to 2023, and then, you know, a slight  
10 increase in harvest in 2024, going with one  
11 additional day, knowing that, okay, so Virginia  
12 started Sunday hunting in 2014, and they estimated  
13 that the addition of Sunday equated to about a  
14 Friday, maybe a Thursday, you know, harvest. It  
15 certainly wasn't Saturday, but it wasn't like, you  
16 know, a Tuesday, like you said.

17                   So knowing that information from  
18 another northeastern state, Virginia's actually still  
19 considered the northeast for our technical committee,  
20 by the way. So, you know, knowing that and knowing  
21 what we've done in the past with hunter opportunity,  
22 that's where we're basing our biology on. And, you  
23 know, basically all of the data. Thankfully, we have  
24 lots of very good data.

25                   COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: So you're

1 saying we have the wiggle room? That's what I hear  
2 from you.

3 MS. CASALENA: Yes, yes.

4 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: Perfect.

5 MS. CASALENA: That's exactly what I'm  
6 saying.

7 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: Perfect.

8 Thank you, Mary Jo.

9 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any other questions?

10 All right. Thank you, Mary Jo.

11 MS. CASALENA: Okay.

12 Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

13 MR. SMITH: Panel, I think we need to  
14 make a quick technical break here. He's going to  
15 jump in.

16 ---

17 (WHEREUPON, THERE WAS A PAUSE DURING THE PROCEEDING.)

18 ---

19 MR. GREGG: Good afternoon, everyone.

20 I'm Ian Gregg, Chief of the Wildlife Operations  
21 Division in the Bureau of Wildlife Management. It's  
22 definitely been exciting times here the last few  
23 weeks with the passage of Act 36, and our Bureaus, as  
24 you've heard, spent a lot of time digging into the  
25 biology of these different species. And in most

1 cases, that strongly supports the additional Sunday  
2 hunting opportunities that are being proposed.

3           We've heard a couple of concerns as  
4 well from a biological standpoint, and I'm here today  
5 to cover one additional species group, migratory game  
6 birds, where the Bureau of Wildlife Management is  
7 recommending that Sundays remain closed to hunting  
8 for the 2025-26 license year. That actually has  
9 nothing to do with biology, but it's a matter of some  
10 logistical constraints and data gaps that we have,  
11 which I'll be covering in this presentation.

12           Before I get into the regulatory  
13 weeds, I just want to take a step back and talk a  
14 little bit about these species in general. They  
15 probably aren't typically the first ones that come to  
16 your mind when you think of Penn's Woods, but they  
17 are definitely important to our constituents. Recent  
18 estimates from the Harvest Information Program  
19 indicate that Pennsylvania has between 15 and 20,000  
20 hunters that pursue ducks, geese and doves annually,  
21 as well as about 3,500 woodcock hunters. And all of  
22 those numbers are in the top five among the 17 states  
23 in the Atlantic Flyway. And actually, the last few  
24 years, we ranked first in the Flyway for the number  
25 of goose hunters, even a little bit ahead of our

1 neighbor to the south, Maryland, which is much more  
2 commonly thought of as a destination state for  
3 waterfowl hunting.

4                   And of course, if you've ever been in  
5 a traffic jam at Middle Creek during the snow goose  
6 migration in the spring, you know that these species  
7 are very important to our nonconsumptive users as  
8 well.

9                   Just like all these other species that  
10 we've been talking about, management of migratory  
11 game birds is very much data driven. In this case,  
12 it's a federal state partnership in collecting that  
13 data, but there's definitely some heavy lifting that  
14 goes on, on the Game Commission side. Just as one  
15 example, we have numerous agency staff that conduct  
16 population surveys in the spring, winter, and fall  
17 months for various species. We also band around  
18 2,000 to 3,000 resident Canada geese, around 2,000 to  
19 3,000 ducks, and around 800 to 900 mourning doves  
20 every year to get data that provides information on  
21 harvest and survival rates that's used in setting  
22 those seasons.

23                   We've also had recent or current  
24 involvement in a variety of migration and nesting  
25 satellite telemetry projects for American woodcock,



1 for mallards, and for Atlantic population Canada  
2 geese.

3                   From a habitat standpoint, we put a  
4 lot of manpower and money into wetland restoration  
5 and management, young forest management, managed dove  
6 fields, and staff from our agency also participate in  
7 the Atlantic Flyway Council process by which  
8 regulations are set.

9                   All that said, with all that state  
10 level investment that we do have in these species,  
11 it's important to remember that migratory game birds  
12 are ultimately under federal authority based on the  
13 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. And that status has a  
14 lot of ramifications for what we can do with our  
15 hunting seasons for those species, including some  
16 aspects specific to Sunday hunting that I'll be  
17 talking about here as we go through the presentation.

18                   One important thing to note is that  
19 each state gets an allotment every year of total  
20 hunting days for each migratory game bird species  
21 under the federal frameworks, and that varies by  
22 species. So for example, for mourning doves, we're  
23 allowed 90 days of hunting. For ducks, we get 60  
24 days of hunting in each of our four duck zones. For  
25 woodcock, we get 45 days. For Atlantic population

1 Canada geese, in recent years we've gotten 30 days.

2                   And even though Sundays have been  
3 closed in Pennsylvania, our hunters get the full  
4 allotment that they're allowed under those federal  
5 frameworks. That hasn't always been the case. Prior  
6 to 1997, Pennsylvania and other states where Sundays  
7 were closed to hunting by state law. The way the  
8 feds looked at it, if those Sundays fell within your  
9 season frameworks, if they were closed at the state  
10 level, they still counted against your hunting days  
11 for those species. So, for example, if Pennsylvania  
12 was offered a 60-day duck season, the Sundays that  
13 fell within that season counted against us as if they  
14 were hunting days. And so, our hunters actually had  
15 really about 51 days to hunt ducks.

16                   That changed in 1997 when the Fish and  
17 Wildlife Service approved Pennsylvania and nine other  
18 states in the Atlantic Flyway for what's called  
19 compensatory days. And I realize the language may be  
20 a little bit confusing here. This doesn't have  
21 anything to do with compensatory and additive  
22 mortality, which is a biological issue that we deal  
23 with for some species. But here, compensatory days  
24 is basically just think of it as providing equal  
25 opportunity.

1                   So basically, what that means is for  
2 states where Sunday hunting is closed by state law,  
3 for each Sunday that's closed during a particular  
4 season, we're able to tack on another Monday through  
5 Saturday elsewhere in the season, so that our total  
6 number of hunting days available to our hunters stays  
7 the same as in states that have Sundays open to  
8 hunting. So since 1997, if Pennsylvania's offered a  
9 60-day duck season, because of compensatory days, our  
10 hunters actually get 60-days to hunt ducks.

11                   Initially, those compensatory days  
12 were only applied to waterfowl, ducks, and geese, but  
13 in 2018, they were also expanded to the webless  
14 species such as doves and woodcock.

15                   So it's important to note that because  
16 of compensatory days, our hunters already get the  
17 maximum number of allowable hunting days for each  
18 migratory game bird species. So this is different  
19 than deer or squirrels or grouse that we're talking  
20 about, where we keep our existing season dates as  
21 they were approved by the Board in April, and just  
22 fill-in Sundays within those existing seasons. For  
23 migratory game birds, to include Sundays would mean  
24 that we'd have to subtract an equal number of days  
25 elsewhere in the season to remain within those total

1 hunting allocation limitations that we get from the  
2 Fish and Wildlife Service. So we'd just be shifting  
3 those days rather than adding days.

4                   And it might seem at first glance like  
5 maybe that's kind of a no brainer, let's just go  
6 ahead and do that. But it's actually not that  
7 simple. So even with some of these species that have  
8 relatively long hunting seasons, typically the  
9 combination of biology and weather means that often,  
10 there's only relatively short windows within those  
11 seasons that you really have a peak migration that  
12 hunters are trying to get out there and catch. A lot  
13 of our avid hunters actually prefer our current  
14 structure where we have six days a week of hunting,  
15 but more weeks to use up those available days,  
16 because that just spreads out your weeks, gives you a  
17 little bit better chance that you're going to catch  
18 those migratory peaks somewhere in the season.  
19 They're going to save their vacation days. When the  
20 weather's right, the ducks are coming through, that's  
21 when they're going to go hunting, and there's a  
22 little better opportunity that with keeping Sundays  
23 closed and having more weeks in the season, they may  
24 hit those dates as they want to.

25                   On the other hand, typically our less

1 avid hunters would say, weekends are all I have  
2 available to hunt and just give me the Saturdays and  
3 Sundays, and I'll take the chance of having fewer  
4 weeks in the season and maybe having a little lower  
5 likelihood of catching those migratory peaks. So  
6 this is like a lot of things that we deal with.  
7 There's not really a right or wrong answer. You can  
8 see when you talk to each individual where they're  
9 coming from with their perspective and how their  
10 preference makes sense. But also like a lot of other  
11 things, it's not really possible to make everyone  
12 happy.

13                   We do know, I'm sure you've seen  
14 probably public comments on both sides of this  
15 question. We've also done some surveys in the past  
16 that seem to indicate that it's a pretty close split  
17 of our hunters on which of these possibilities they  
18 prefer. But the most recent data on that is ten  
19 years old at this point. This is also, as was  
20 referenced in the turkey presentation, it's - for  
21 something this complicated, it can be difficult to  
22 ask survey questions in a way that the respondents  
23 actually understand the tradeoffs that we're asking  
24 them about and are giving us back accurate data. So,  
25 there's some question about that piece of it as well.

1                   So it'd be nice in all this if we  
2 could kind of dip our toes in the water with Sunday  
3 hunting for migratory game birds, go part way, see  
4 what happens, and then go from there. But that's  
5 where we bump into some issues with back in 1997,  
6 when compensatory days were approved for Pennsylvania  
7 and the other states, the Fish and Wildlife Service  
8 put some logistical constraints or sideboards on  
9 those Sundays and compensatory days, basically to  
10 make sure that there was some balance between states,  
11 that there wasn't all kinds of variations between the  
12 various states, and also just to make sure there  
13 weren't any detrimental biological impacts.

14                   So one of the important sideboards  
15 that we have to deal with is that when it comes to  
16 compensatory days and Sundays, a state has to either  
17 be all in or all out. So if we were to allow even  
18 one Sunday of hunting for even one species of  
19 migratory game bird, we would lose our compensatory  
20 days for all migratory game birds. So that's why the  
21 past few years, with the three Sundays open in  
22 November, there hasn't even been any consideration to  
23 opening our migratory game birds on those three  
24 Sundays because although we'd get that opportunity,  
25 we'd lose the compensatory days from the rest of the

1 season. And actually, the net effect would be a loss  
2 of hunting opportunity for our migratory game bird  
3 hunters. And that would still continue to be the  
4 case at any point until we allow all Sundays for all  
5 migratory game birds. Obviously, the more Sundays  
6 you add in, the less of an effect that is. But  
7 still, losing compensatory days means that you cost  
8 opportunity overall.

9                   So the next logical question might be,  
10 okay, well, if we can't be all in or all out, let's  
11 just go all in now. And then if we decide we don't  
12 like that in the future, we'll pull back and go back  
13 to our current structure. Well, there we run into  
14 another one of those sideboards from 1997, which is  
15 that compensatory days only apply to states where  
16 their Sunday closures have been in place since before  
17 1997. So if we were to allow, whether it's this year  
18 or some future year, migratory game bird hunting on  
19 all Sundays, if we ever wanted to go back and close  
20 Sundays again, that new closure would no longer be  
21 before 1997, we'd no longer be eligible for  
22 compensatory days, and we'd be back in that situation  
23 where we have Sundays closed but no compensatory  
24 days, and we're costing our hunters opportunity.

25                   To be clear here, I'm not saying that

1 opening Sunday's to migratory game bird hunting in  
2 the long term is necessarily a bad decision. Just  
3 that it's a decision that's a one-way door. So  
4 before we ever make that decision, we need to be sure  
5 that we have all our ducks in a row, pun intended,  
6 before making that leap.

7                   So basically, that's the background of  
8 the Bureau of Wildlife Management recommendation for  
9 this year. First of all, that all Sundays for all  
10 migratory game birds remain closed in the 2025-26  
11 license year. And along with that, that whatever  
12 regulations or executive orders are used to modify  
13 other aspects of the '25-26 hunting seasons, that we  
14 include a statement that says Sundays remain closed  
15 for migratory game bird hunting.

16                   Also, obviously, the human dimensions  
17 piece is an important issue here. So we've already,  
18 in cooperation with the Bureau of information and  
19 education, gotten started to develop some focus  
20 groups. And basically, that'll just be some face to  
21 face interactive conversation to go through some of  
22 these complexities, make sure that the tradeoffs are  
23 understood, and develop some survey questions that  
24 actually give us back accurate data where we know  
25 that the respondents are understanding what we're



1 trying to ask them and giving us what they really  
2 think.

3                   Based - following up from those focus  
4 groups then, we'd actually conduct some hunter  
5 surveys to get a larger sample size of our migratory  
6 game bird hunters and see what actually is their  
7 preference. We're also, as mentioned earlier,  
8 Pennsylvania hasn't been the only state in this boat.  
9 So a few of the ten states that were originally  
10 approved for compensatory days since then have  
11 instituted Sunday hunting for migratory game birds.  
12 So we're in the process of requesting information  
13 from those states if they have any data on how did  
14 migratory game bird hunter participation, harvest,  
15 and satisfaction change after they made that change  
16 to Sunday hunting.

17                   So basically by this, by next spring,  
18 when time comes to start the 2026-27 regulatory  
19 process, we should have more and better data to be  
20 able to come back to the Board with a recommendation  
21 on whether either to continue our current structure  
22 or to open all Sundays to migratory game bird hunting  
23 in the future.

24                   Thank you. And with that, I'd be  
25 happy to take any questions.

1                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you, Ian. Any  
2 questions? Anybody have any questions? All right.

3                   Thank you, Ian.

4                   MR. GREGG: Thank you.

5                   PRESIDENT KNICK: At this time, a  
6 motion to accept the resolution?

7                   COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: So moved.

8                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Second?

9                   COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Second.  
10 Second.

11                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Any discussion?  
12 None being heard, Mr. Secretary, would you call for a  
13 vote?

14                   COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: Real quick,  
15 President, if I - if I may. I just wanted to make a  
16 couple comments. You know, I think after you know,  
17 the legislation was passed, the Governor signed it.  
18 Anybody that's on social media has seen stuff and it  
19 has ranged from, man, I hope we go wide open, full  
20 throttle, 52 Sundays a year, no holds bars, let's go.

21 To holy moly, there's no place for hunting on  
22 Sundays in Pennsylvania. Shut it down, and  
23 everything in-between.

24                   What I like about what we have in  
25 front of us today is that we've gone from the three

1 Sundays that we had before to 13 now. And I think  
2 what's important to me, you know, as a Commissioner  
3 and also as a hunter, is that those are 13  
4 consecutive Sundays. So hopefully, it minimizes  
5 confusion for when hunting is allowed on Sundays.  
6 I've seen some news releases from organizations that,  
7 you know, might lead people to believe that they can  
8 hunt on any Sunday that they want, which if you're in  
9 this room, hopefully you know that's not the case.

10 But I think continuing to drive that  
11 messaging that, hey, you know, the legislature gave  
12 us this responsibility, and we're taking a big step  
13 today, but it's a very calculated, very strategic  
14 step to say let's roll this thing out. Let's do it  
15 in a way that's meaningful. And at the same time,  
16 let's look ahead to next year and say is this the  
17 framework that we want to continue with? Is there  
18 opportunity to expand it or do we need to throttle it  
19 back?

20 So, you know, kudos to the  
21 Pennsylvania Game Commission staff for putting these  
22 recommendations together, to our legislature for us  
23 sitting here today and even having this discussion,  
24 right? This is a decade or more in the works for us  
25 to be able to, to even sit up here and talk about

1 this. So it's a huge day for that, and a lot of  
2 work's gone into getting to where we are.

3 So for the, you know, for the side of  
4 the aisle that says let's go 52 weeks a year, full  
5 throttle, just respectfully asking you to pump your  
6 brakes a little bit. And for those that say, man,  
7 like, I don't like Sunday hunting and I don't think  
8 there's any room for it, for them to understand that  
9 we hear them too and we're taking a soft, calculated  
10 approach and making sure that we do this the right  
11 way.

12 PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you,  
13 Commissioner.

14 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Mr. Chairman?

15 PRESIDENT KNICK: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Echo  
17 everything, what Commissioner Koppenhafer said as  
18 well as I just want to recognize the internal staff,  
19 Steve and Wildlife Management, you know, for this  
20 short turnaround. And I interact with hunters as  
21 much as anybody does. And quite frankly, I don't  
22 think our general hunting public expected anything to  
23 be done this year. So, thank you for doing the  
24 research. I know you guys and ladies have worked  
25 countless hours. So, there'll be a lot of thank

1 you's to go around, but I think I just want to  
2 recognize the work that was done here. So thank you.

3 PRESIDENT KNICK: Okay.

4 Thank you, Commissioner. Any more  
5 comments? Go ahead.

6 COMMISSIONER PRIDE: Mr. President,  
7 this is Commissioner Pride. Can you hear me?

8 PRESIDENT KNICK: Yes. Go ahead,  
9 Todd.

10 COMMISSIONER PRIDE: Well one, I  
11 apologize for not being able to be there in-person  
12 and also want to just kind of reiterate what Steve  
13 Smith said regarding this being a historic time.

14 But I just want to make a point. I  
15 share this with Steve and others of you here. As we  
16 take this very significant step in expanding the, you  
17 know, Sundays that we have and, you know, I'm fully  
18 supportive of our biologists and the team that we  
19 have in place. But I think as we've all seen over  
20 the last 20 years from when Dr. Gary Alt had led, you  
21 know, the initiative to expand our antler  
22 restrictions, obviously all the things that he went  
23 through in those early years to what we I think now  
24 see as a very healthy population of bucks. I'm not  
25 sure if that's on my end or your end, but.

1                   We also have experienced, obviously,  
2 the decline that we have had in hunters  
3 participating, and in, you know, certain parts of the  
4 state, a good number of parts of the state, we have  
5 an overpopulation. So what I'd like to make sure  
6 that we have with our staff is the ability to  
7 collect, you know, the data that we need in going  
8 for, you know, effectively seven days a week or a  
9 number of months with continued pressure on, you  
10 know, our entire herd. Obviously, we're going to see  
11 some impact on, particularly our mature bucks, our  
12 mature does with seven days a week. I know there's  
13 been some studies regarding the harvest numbers might  
14 not change, but we effectively will have more  
15 pressure.

16                   And I'd like to make sure that we've  
17 got things in place that we can analyze, you know,  
18 not just the numbers that we see at the end of the  
19 season, but you know, any determination of what the  
20 makeup of those numbers are. You know, we're seeing  
21 more, you know, younger bucks taken, mature bucks  
22 taken, you know, younger does or mature does.  
23 Because there's going to be some impact. So I just  
24 want to make sure we've got the data collection, you  
25 know, tools in place. And then as we get to the end,

1 after the season, to be able to have some comparable  
2 analysis possibly, you know, other states that have  
3 similar characteristics of a deer population.

4 So, I just want to make that point as  
5 we take this very big step.

6 DR. SCHNUPP: Mr. President, if I  
7 could?

8 PRESIDENT KNICK: Yes, sir. Go ahead.

9 DR. SCHNUPP: Commissioner Pride,  
10 unfortunately you're not here because you'll miss  
11 half the folks in this room grimace when I say deer  
12 aging. Our biologists do a fantastic job of going  
13 out every year as well as foresters and other agency  
14 staff in support of our annual deer aging. And  
15 during that process, we collect anywhere from 23 to  
16 25,000 samples statewide, specifically looking at and  
17 addressing your concerns about harvesting antlerless  
18 deer as well as antlered deer. So we will certainly  
19 continue that process and procedure, and keep tight  
20 track of the harvest and modify accordingly.

21 COMMISSIONER PRIDE: Thank you, Matt.  
22 Thank you for that.

23 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any more comments?

24 COMMISSIONER KOPPENHAFFER: One more,  
25 just kind of housekeeping thing. I think it's

1 important for hunters to understand that as we're  
2 rolling this out for this year, we're sticking with  
3 kind of our traditional season framework where we're  
4 ending a lot of seasons on Saturdays, right? So when  
5 you look at stuff like our special firearm season,  
6 whether it's for deer or bear, that runs Thursday,  
7 Friday, Saturday. And so this year, Sunday, October  
8 26th, for instance, that doesn't mean that that  
9 season is an extra day. So I think that's going to  
10 be important as far as messaging from us to get out  
11 to hunters and very important for hunters to realize  
12 that just because it's Sunday doesn't mean that  
13 there's an extra day tacked onto every season that's  
14 out there.

15 PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you,  
16 Commissioner. Anything else?

17 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Yes, I'd like  
18 to say something. I've heard an awful lot of kudos  
19 from this bench up here, or this desk, back to all  
20 the people that were involved in all these decisions  
21 and all the work's been done. But one of the things  
22 I think some of us have failed to realize or  
23 acknowledge publicly is that there are going to be a  
24 lot of people on the other side of this that are in  
25 charge of enforcing and all the additional duties



1 that are going to fall upon them.

2 And I ask them for their cooperation  
3 and understanding, which I know that you have. And I  
4 want to tell you how appreciative I am of your  
5 willingness to work with us and work through this and  
6 help us make this thing a success.

7 PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you,  
8 Commissioner DiMarco. Commissioner Schwalm.

9 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Wow. What a  
10 great day this is, huh? I've never been so excited,  
11 I'm like a kid at Christmas. But I would like to say  
12 thank you to our legislators and Governor Shapiro and  
13 everybody that worked to get us to this point. And I  
14 would especially like to thank our staff, our  
15 biologists, and Steve for getting this done that we  
16 can begin on September 14th. I mean, it's so  
17 important that we get this out there and get moving  
18 on it.

19 With all that being said, I would just  
20 like to say to all of my fellow hunters out there,  
21 let's make this a golden opportunity and do Sunday  
22 the way it needs to be done. We need to recruit, we  
23 need to reactivate, and we need to retain. We can  
24 turn this around. We finally got this in our  
25 arsenal. Let's make it happen. Thank you.

1                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you,  
2 Commissioner Schwalm. Anything else?

3                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Since we're on  
4 thank you's. I'd like to recognize that I'm not an  
5 active farmer myself, but the Pennsylvania Farm  
6 Bureau as well. So, they were an intimate part of  
7 the partnership here with the Game Commission. I  
8 know Steve spent countless hours with the  
9 counterparts there and just want to recognize them  
10 for a great - great partnership and that we'll have  
11 currently and going forward. So, thank you.

12                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you,  
13 Commissioner Foradora. At this time, Mr. Secretary,  
14 would you call a vote, please?

15                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: All those in  
16 favor of this proposed legislation or amendments,  
17 would you please signify by saying are?

18 (AYES RESPOND)

19                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those opposed,  
20 nay.

21 (NO RESPONSE)

22                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Mr. President,  
23 the motion carries.

24                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Okay, thank you.

25                   ATTORNEY MARTSON: The next item for

1 consideration can be found on page four of your  
2 agendas. To effectively manage the wildlife  
3 resources of this Commonwealth, the Commission at its  
4 April 12th, 2025 meeting proposed to amend Section  
5 147.804 to expand the mentored hunting program to  
6 authorize its participants to acquire agricultural  
7 deer control harvest permits and snow goose  
8 conservation permits. Mentored youth and mentored  
9 adults are currently ineligible to participate in  
10 these programs. This amendment is now before the  
11 Commission for final adoption.

12 PRESIDENT KNICK: Do I have a motion?

13 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: So moved.

14 COMMISSIONER FORADORA: Second.

15 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any discussion?

16 None being heard, Mr. Secretary, will you call a  
17 vote, please?

18 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those in favor  
19 of the proposal, please signify by saying aye.

20 (AYES RESPOND)

21 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those opposed,  
22 nay.

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Mr. President,  
25 motion carries.

1                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Okay, thank you.

2                   ATTORNEY MARTSON:   The next item for  
3 consideration can be found on page six of your  
4 agendas. To effectively manage the wildlife  
5 resources of this Commonwealth, the Commission at its  
6 April 12th, 2025, meeting proposed to amend Section  
7 147.762 to improve accessibility to and the  
8 effectiveness of the agricultural damage depredation  
9 permit program. This amendment is now before the  
10 Commission for final adoption.

11                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Do I have a motion?

12                   COMMISSIONER SCHWALM:   So moved.

13                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Second?

14                   COMMISSIONER FORADORA:   Second.

15                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Any discussion?

16 None being heard, Mr. Secretary, would you call a  
17 vote, please?

18                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Those in favor,  
19 signify by saying aye.

20 (AYES RESPOND)

21                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Opposed, the  
22 same sign.

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Motion carries.

25                   ATTORNEY MARTSON:   The next item for

1 consideration can be found on page eight of your  
2 agendas. Natural Lands Trust Incorporated is  
3 offering 16.5 more or less acres of land in Buck  
4 Township, Luzerne County adjacent to State Game Land  
5 Number 91. The option price is \$400 per acre to be  
6 paid from the Game Fund as authorized under Section  
7 705(a)(1) of the Game and Wildlife Code. Natural  
8 Lands' acquisition of the property is contingent upon  
9 receiving funding through partnership grants.  
10 Covenants, conditions, and restrictions associated  
11 with these funding sources will be required to accept  
12 the property. Access is from Route 115.

13 PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you. Do we  
14 have a motion?

15 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: So moved.

16 PRESIDENT KNICK: Second?

17 COMMISSIONER MITRICK: Second.

18 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any discussion?

19 MR. HAYDT: Mr. President?

20 PRESIDENT KNICK: Yes.

21 MR. HAYDT: I'd just like to publicly  
22 acknowledge Natural Lands Trust for partnering with  
23 us on this acquisition and getting us to the \$400 per  
24 acre price.

25 PRESIDENT KNICK: Okay.

1                   Thank you. Any more comments? None  
2 being heard, Mr. Secretary, would you call the vote,  
3 please?

4                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those in favor,  
5 signify by saying aye.

6 (AYES RESPOND)

7                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those opposed,  
8 nay.

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10                  COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Motion carries.

11                  PRESIDENT KNICK: Okay, thank you.

12                  ATTORNEY MARTSON: The next item for

13 consideration can be found on page ten of your  
14 agendas. Lorraine Tatarko is offering 18.5 more or  
15 less acres of land in Blacklick Township, Cambria  
16 County, adjoining State Game Land Number 79 to the  
17 Commission in exchange for 3.8 more or less acres of  
18 State Game Land 79 in Blacklick Township, Cambria  
19 County. This exchange is authorized under Section  
20 723(1) of the Game and Wildlife Code. Commission  
21 staff determined the proposed exchange is in the best  
22 interest of the Commission as it improves the  
23 integrity and manageability of SGL 79. Access to the  
24 parcel is from Station Road.

25                  PRESIDENT KNICK: Do we have a motion?

1                   COMMISSIONER SCHWALM:   So moved.

2                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Do we have a second?

3                   COMMISSIONER MITRICK:   Second.

4                   PRESIDENT KNICK:   Any comments,  
5 discussion?   None being heard, Mr. Secretary, would  
6 you call a vote, please?

7                   COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Those in favor,  
8 signify by saying aye.

9   (AYES RESPOND)

10                  COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Those opposed,  
11 nay.

12   (NO RESPONSE)

13                  COMMISSIONER DIMARCO:   Mr. President,  
14 the motion carries.

15                  PRESIDENT KNICK:   Thank you.

16                  ATTORNEY MARTSON:   The next item can  
17 be found on page 12 of your agendas.   On May 15th,  
18 2008, the Game Commission, PennDOT, and the Federal  
19 Highway Administration entered into a Cooperative  
20 Interagency Agreement for Interdepartmental Land  
21 Transfer and Establishment of State Game Land Banks.  
22 The State Game Land Banking Agreement streamlines  
23 transportation development projects by allowing  
24 PennDOT Districts to establish the State Game Land  
25 Banks in advance of highway projects impacting less

1 than five acres of State Game Lands. The Agreement  
2 expedites the mitigation process whereby impacts can  
3 be debited from existing land banks instead of being  
4 addressed on a case-by-case basis.

5 PennDOT agreed to transfer exclusive  
6 jurisdiction and control of 22 more or less acres of  
7 land located at Hanover Township, Luzerne County to  
8 the Commission. The tract was identified as being  
9 acceptable for use as a State Game Land Bank Site in  
10 accordance with the Agreement. The property, known  
11 as the Witinski Bank Site, is an indenture to State  
12 Game Land Number 207. Both Indiana bats and northern  
13 long-eared bats show a potential presence on the  
14 property.

15 PRESIDENT KNICK: Do we have a motion?

16 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: So moved.

17 PRESIDENT KNICK: Do we have a second?

18 COMMISSIONER SCHWALM: Second.

19 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any discussion?

20 COMMISSIONER MITRICK: I have a

21 question. Is that an interstate highway there? Is  
22 that what that is or?

23 MR. HAYDT: Yes, that's Interstate 81.

24 COMMISSIONER MITRICK: It is 81?

25 MR. HAYDT: Yep. Yeah, I'd also like



1 to thank, you know, PennDOT for working with us on  
2 this acquisition, or this transfer I should say, and  
3 getting us a piece of ground that we're, like,  
4 especially interested in adjoining State Game Lands  
5 207. And again, with the potential for bat habitat  
6 on that property. So, it's kind of a win-win for  
7 both agencies.

8 PRESIDENT KNICK: Any other discussion  
9 or comments? None being heard, Mr. Secretary, would  
10 you call a vote, please?

11 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those in favor,  
12 signify by saying aye.

13 (AYES RESPOND)

14 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Those opposed,  
15 nay.

16 (NO RESPONSE)

17 COMMISSIONER DIMARCO: Mr. President,  
18 motion carries.

19 ATTORNEY MARTSON: The next and final  
20 item for your consideration can be found on page 14  
21 of your agendas. On June 11th, 2025, the Commission  
22 approved by notational vote, a legal settlement  
23 affecting the boundary line of State Game Land Number  
24 44. Mark Larson and Laurie Snickles currently own  
25 Horton City Lots 148 and 177, Horton Township, Elk

1 County, adjacent to SGL 44 as shown on the attached  
2 Exhibit 4. Each lot comprises one-quarter acre more  
3 or less of land. The Commission acquired the lands  
4 surrounding Lots 148 and 177 in 2008, giving rise to  
5 a boundary line dispute. The parties wish to resolve  
6 the matter by way of an exchange to establish an  
7 agreed-upon, shared boundary. The lands at issue are  
8 within a safety zone.

9                   The Executive Director and Staff  
10 recommended the agreed-upon boundary line be accepted  
11 and the Commission authorized the Bureau of Wildlife  
12 Habitat Management and Chief Counsel's Office to  
13 proceed with settlement of this dispute.

14                   This is an informational item only.  
15 Therefore, no further action is required.

16                   PRESIDENT KNICK: Thank you. With our  
17 agenda ending, I'd like to say a few words.

18                   On behalf of the Board of Game  
19 Commissioners, I would like to extend our sincere  
20 thanks and appreciation to everyone who helped to get  
21 Sunday hunting legislation signed into law. This  
22 bipartisan issue and the bill received support from  
23 both Democrats and Republicans in the House and the  
24 Senate before being sent to Governor Josh Shapiro,  
25 and signed as Act 36 of 2025.

1 I would also like, this is -  
2 specifically thank the following people.  
3 Representative Mandy Steele, Senator Dan Laughlin,  
4 House and Game Fisheries Committee Chair Anita Kulik,  
5 Senate Game and Fish Committee Chair Greg Rothman,  
6 Senate Game and Fish Committee Chair James Malone,  
7 former Senate Game and Fish Committee Chair Jim  
8 Brewster. We also sincerely thankful for Governor  
9 Josh Shapiro's support for this historic new law to  
10 provide freedom and opportunity to all of our  
11 hunters. Thank you, Governor, for making this day  
12 possible.

13 Thank you again to all the individuals  
14 as well as the hunters and the groups who work right  
15 alongside the agency to make this historic law a  
16 reality, and current and future generations of  
17 Pennsylvania hunters.

18 And on one more note, I would like to  
19 thank the Board of Commissioners and the past Board  
20 of Commissioners for seeing and pushing Sunday  
21 hunting. And above all, I'd like to thank our  
22 Executive Director Steve Smith and staff for all  
23 their hard work to get this done. I thank everybody  
24 involved in every group. Thank you very much. This  
25 was a group effort, and a great thing.

1                   Do we have any more comments or any  
2 new business? None being heard, meeting is  
3 adjourned.

4                   \* \* \* \* \*

5                   MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:17 P.M.

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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings,  
a meeting held before Chairman Knick, was reported by  
me on 7/28/25 and that I, Derek Richmond, read this  
transcript, and that I attest that this transcript is  
a true and accurate record of the proceeding.

Date the 14th day of August, 2025

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Derek Richmond", is written over a horizontal line.

Derek Richmond,

Court Reporter