

# THE UNSPOKEN REASON BEHIND DEER REDUCTION

## DCNR and Audubon call the shots, while PGC remains infiltrated and complies.

**I. DCNR Green Certification vs Deer Reduction.** In 1998, DCNR entered into an agreement with the Forest Stewardship Council – a German-based environmental organization that was partnered with the International Rainforest Alliance – in which DCNR would pay FSC an annual fee, and in return FSC would grant DCNR an annual Green Certification Award. According to this mutually-beneficial scheme, the annual Green Certification Award would give environmentally-minded retail and wholesale customers the impression that lumber from DCNR's state forests was superior to other sources of wood products, and, therefore, domestic and international sales of DCNR lumber would increase. Three men (FSC's regional representative, DCNR's chief of forestry, and PGC's chief of wildlife management, who was, himself, not a hunter) conspired to use this opportunity to permanently reduce the deer herd. The trio included a provision in the DCNR/FSC green certification agreement that the Game Commission would need to comply with herd reduction in order for DCNR to be granted the annual award. While in reality this was not the case but simply a ruse by the three men, they succeeded in convincing the governor, who adjusted the Commission's board of game commissioners and executive staff toward achieving herd reduction. Therefore, herd reduction was initiated for two reasons: for DCNR money and for an anti-deer, environmental agenda. This scheme soon proved to be a socioeconomic disaster for the state. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee determined that as of 2011 the annual DCNR gain in revenue from the green-certification/deer-reduction scheme was about \$1.2 million per year, while the cost to Commonwealth economic activity – primarily to family businesses and rural communities – was a minimum of \$501.6 million per year. The LB&FC further calculated that a minimum of \$40 million in annual tax revenue is being lost as a result of the deer-reduction program -- \$25 million in lost state tax revenue and \$15 million lost annually in local taxes. By 2017, these annual impacts had increased to \$1.16 billion in losses to our economy and \$92.5 million in tax losses.

**II. DCNR's Old Growth Forests.** In 2004, DCNR along with The Nature Conservancy established 550,000 acres of State Forests plus 1-2 mile buffers as 400-500-year-old old-growth forests. DCNR seeks the permanent near-elimination of deer and human development on these lands. According to DCNR's published plan, *"The proposed old-growth forest must be resurrected from fragmented and structurally homogeneous second-growth forests that are subject to anthropogenic disturbances."* In other words, human encroachment such as hunting, energy development, and cabins are intended to be minimized or eliminated. Most importantly, their plan requires the dramatic and permanent reduction of the deer population: *"Reducing Pennsylvania's deer population will require a long-term political process. This will not be easy."* For more than a hundred years, the goal was to increase deer...." PGC is complying with DCNR's request for high annual antlerless allocations plus high DMAP allocations. According to DCNR, in 2002 32% of all DCNR state forest stands were included in the old-growth system. Only 2% were listed in the 0-10-year age class – the age class most valuable to deer, grouse, and many other wildlife species -- and DCNR's policy has been to fence these early-stage forests from access by deer. DCNR projects that by 2140 the old-growth system will have been increased from 32% coverage in 2002 to 55% of all state forest stands. This is an unacceptable policy that will further degrade deer, grouse, and wildlife populations with catastrophic impacts to sport hunting and rural economies for centuries.

**III. Infiltration by Fringe Environmentalists.** Before leaving the agency, PGC's chief of wildlife management hired three NC State University students who had all been trained on a 5-square-mile agricultural demonstration farm in Maryland called Chesapeake Farms. They were trained not as conventional wildlife biologists, but, instead, on methods to reduce deer in order to decrease impacts to farm crops. PGC hired them to expand their training to a statewide level by permanently reducing the state's deer herd. They have accomplished their task and remain employed by PGC. Further, two successive presidents of Audubon who were instrumental in collapsing the state's deer herd are now positioned as Secretary of DCNR and as an executive in PFBC who is poised to assume leadership of that agency. At this time, merger of PGC into PFBC and especially into DCNR would place all three of Pennsylvania's conservation agencies into the hands of Audubon.

**IV. Conservation vs Preservation.** There are two fundamental and diametrically opposed natural resources management philosophies. **Conservation** is defined as the wise management and use of natural resources. This multiple-use approach has been a staple of the Commonwealth's conservation agencies (DCNR, PGC, and PFBC) for generations, providing forest products, mining and energy development, hunting and fishing, cabin ownership, and other recreational activities for the state's 12.8 million citizens. Conversely, **preservation** is a hands-off ideology that sets aside large tracts of land to exist undisturbed by human intervention. In 2002, DCNR (with support by private foresters and environmental organizations including The Nature Conservancy, International Rainforest Alliance, and Audubon) embarked on a centuries-long mission to preserve a projected 55% of state forest stands within its 2.4-million-acre state forest system. **The choice between these two philosophies that is now made by legislators and the governor – either to manage Pennsylvania's forests for "old trees" or for "abundant wildlife" -- will dramatically shape the social and economic future of Pennsylvania. Passage of HB**

**1483 represents the tipping point for Pennsylvania's natural resources management future and the socioeconomic stability of rural communities.**

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