



# Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

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Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists. Protecting our 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights.

## HOUSE GAME & FISHERIES and ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEES

### Hearing on HB 1576 – Endangered Species Designation

September 17, 2013

Good morning Chairman Causer, Chairman Miller, Chairman Haluska, Chairman Vitali and Members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 1576, relative to Endangered Species designation, IRRC and regulatory oversight.

The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (PFSC) has a strong and proud history representing the best interests of our grass-roots members on conservation, hunting, fishing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment and environmental issues since 1932. Our mission has always been to provide a statewide, united voice for the concerns of all sportsmen and conservationists; to insure their rights and interests are protected, and to protect and enhance the environment and our natural resources. Our membership is comprised of individuals, clubs (221), and statewide organizations (5), representing more than 70,000 sportsmen and sportswomen.

Acquiring unanimous consensus on any issue with such a broad membership base could be compared to efforts of "herding cats." An almost impossible task. However any mention of removing the Game Commission's or the Fish and Boat Commission's limited independence by submitting them to the IRRC process, or merging them under the DCNR umbrella, **always** results in a resounding "NO!" So even though our next board meeting isn't until September 20<sup>th</sup>, based on past experience, specifically related to any and all attempts related to placing the commissions under the IRRC process, and the feedback we are receiving from our membership and board members since introduction of this bill, we can say with utmost confidence, that this particular bill will also be opposed by an overwhelming majority of our membership base.

The current limited "independent" structure of our wildlife and fisheries resource agencies was set up by the legislature over a hundred years ago for a reason: To allow the agencies the ability to effectively manage our wildlife and fisheries resources using scientific data combined with input from the views of sportsmen, industry and other citizens, for the best long-term good of our resources. Being separate from IRRC and legislative control (not oversight) is a source of pride to sportsmen and conservationists, because it means our wildlife and fisheries management is recognized with the importance it deserves and it is understood it needs to be treated differently.

Following the 1973 enactment of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), your predecessors empowered the agencies to "*promulgate rules and regulations governing the taking, catching, killing, and possession of endangered species.*" They understood that protecting species at the state level is the most proactive way to prevent their extinction. Some comments have been made trying to allude it was an oversight that the Commissions were kept separate from the IRRC process. However, because of their great foresight, your predecessors set the process up this way specifically to protect not just T & E species, but our sporting heritage and our rich wildlife and fisheries resources from the threats of control by anti-hunters, ill-advised politicians, overzealous industry and others based solely on political whims, personal agendas or emotional public opinion polls.

Just as our founding fathers had the foresight to include our right to keep and bear arms in the constitution to prevent overbearing restrictions on gun ownership, your predecessors had the foresight to give the agencies this limited independence on wildlife management decisions to prevent exactly what some are currently now trying to do....politicize it.

The Game and Fish and Boat Commission's regulatory process is already open and transparent. An independent Board of Commissioners, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, receives recommendations from the experts, listens to public input, then weighs the information and makes decisions based on both the expert recommendations and the public input. Members of IRRC (a purely political group, appointed by legislators, with absolutely no expertise or experience in wildlife management, habitat management or sportsmen's issues, and who may or may not be anti-hunters) and the legislature will get final say on proposed T&E listings. Just by failing to act in a timely manner by IRRC or the legislature, they could literally cripple our agencies' ability to effectively protect imperiled species or protect wild trout streams.

Whether or not the process is put through an additional layer of bureaucracy by adding the purview of IRRC, the legislature still retains final oversight over both agencies and every move they make. We see this happening all the time when members introduce legislation trying to mandate a specific wildlife management regulatory action based on comments and complaints by their constituents or their personal views when they don't agree with a specific regulation or proposal.

The PFSC attends Commission meetings and comments on proposed regulations all the time. We do not always agree with every proposal or regulation. We have seen first-hand, the commissioners pushing agency staff, questioning the science and data behind their recommendations. The Boards are much more than the rubber stamp that some claim. They perform oversight and try to strike the right balance between the science and social concerns. The Commissions are not as they were unfairly characterized as "Judge, Jury and Executioner," but they could be characterized as "the Jury and Defender of our most imperiled species."

Attached to our testimony is a copy of a letter from John Organ, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Chief, pointing out three specific concerns with the legislation that could lead to a loss of \$27 million annually in federal funding for Pennsylvania. Comments have been made that this is nothing more than a scare tactic, perhaps even fabricated and can easily be addressed in the legislative process. A simple phone call to Mr. Organ would verify the letter was not fabricated.

To be eligible for federal Pittman-Robertson and Dingell Johnson grants, states have to have fish and wildlife agencies that have sole discretion over how revenue for fishing and hunting licenses are used. The agencies also have to have the authority to ensure "the conservation of fish and wildlife." Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act provides for cooperation with States, and allows States to assume a degree of authority and control over endangered species matters. The state signed a cooperative agreement with the USFWS confirming this authority.

In order for States to be given this power, and the federal funding that comes with it, they must demonstrate they have the institutional capacity and legal authority to identify, list, and manage endangered species. If this infrastructure is dismantled, control will revert to the federal government. Changing the current procedures by adding IRRC to the process will be viewed by the USFWS as dismantling the current infrastructure and will thus void the cooperative agreement and open Pennsylvania up to more federal control and oversight regarding T&E species, and cause the potential loss in federal funding. The threat of lost funding alone is cause for serious concern and opposition to the bill, but there are other reasons as well.

Some have mistakenly claimed that no other state has separate, "independent" fish and wildlife agencies, so why should Pennsylvania? The misconception here is thinking that just because Pennsylvania has two separate agencies and the other states happen to have their fish and game agencies combined, sometimes within their sister resource agency like our DCNR, that this automatically makes them less "independent" when it comes to setting regulations for wildlife, aquatics and/or T & E species. Even though they are not "separate" agencies, most still have their own commissioner type systems that review and approve regulations; legislative oversight is no different than Pennsylvania's.

We often hear anecdotal reports of how the agencies are impediments to business or economic growth, however critics are hard-pressed to come up with specific examples, and when they do provide examples, the problems are almost always the result of a federal regulatory issue or a DEP permitting issue. The same is true for the reasons being given for why this legislation is needed. When looking into the details of the examples given, one finds those problems were related to federal issues as well, and nothing in this so-called corrective legislation would change that. Just because it may be agency staff providing the "boots on the ground" for the reviews, studies, etc., the guidelines were and will remain, federally mandated.

Other recurring complaints being expressed in comments in support of the legislation are about the "permitting process." The permitting process is controlled by DEP. A recent update of DEP's Policy for Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) Coordination During Permit Review and Evaluation (PNDI Policy), specifically pointed out that the role of the Game and Fish Commissions was "strictly review and advisory only." Putting the commissions under IRRC will not change the DEP permitting process or change federally mandated regulations and compliance mandates.

Some have asked, "What's wrong with having one more set of eyes review it?" The short answer is, it depends on whose eyes you are referring to and how much extra red tape and time it will add to the process. There's nothing wrong with asking for a second opinion, if the opinion is coming from other professionals in that field. You wouldn't seek a second opinion from an architect about a recommendation for surgery from your doctor. And it depends on what's really behind the reason for wanting the oversight in the first place. Because we all know...the issue is never the issue. For a party whose platform is supposed to be for smaller and less government, this legislation seems more like a push for more bureaucracy and government control instead of less.

In addition to putting the commissions under the scrutiny of the regulatory review process, the bill calls for the commissions and DCNR to create a centralized database to replace the decades-old computerized system of endangered flora and fauna. The commissions argue that the database would jeopardize wildlife because it would pinpoint their locations to poachers for the black market. We have heard from industry that a centralized database is not a problem in other states. If this is true, then provide us with specific details from those other states, and we will help work to implement a plan that would be acceptable to all parties. Mr. Arway has stated that the agencies were already working on a more efficient review process, but they are severely hindered by a lack of funds, so without a way to pay for these upgrades, this legislation is just one more unfunded mandate.

The bill would also require the agencies to remove species from the endangered or threatened lists within two years if the agencies cannot produce "acceptable data" that the species' numbers remain weak. The agencies also could not define new endangered or threatened species if their numbers are acceptable outside of Pennsylvania, or if they are not already covered under the federal Endangered Species Act. According to Mr. Organ's letter, those changes could also make the state ineligible for federal funds. We understand there has been some discussion regarding clarification on the intent of this particular section, and we look forward to the continued relative dialogue, but we are also concerned about the additional financial burdens this could place on the agencies.

In summary, the PFSC opposes putting the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission under IRRC for any aspect of their regulatory authority. The commissions were purposely set up to be separate from IRRC to keep the politics out of wildlife and aquatics resource management, not just for game species but for all species. Requiring IRRC for T&E species is nothing more than the start of the chipping away at the already limited independence of the Commissions and is not supported by the sporting community.

Passing this bill would diminish scientific expert recommendations and replace them with bureaucratic and political control, thus further politicizing and limiting the ability of our agencies to effectively and efficiently manage and protect our wildlife and aquatic resources, T & E species and wild trout stream designations; and it would be a step in the wrong direction. Any changes to the current statute should not undercut the purpose of the law – which is to protect and restore the species so that protections can eventually be removed<sup>1</sup> – not to turn an area into a wildlife museum where the last few numbers can live out their final days. This legislation appears to be nothing more than an attempt to undercut the authority of the two commissions, perhaps only because the very independence of those commissions may be what bothers politicians the most.

PFSC's opposition to this legislation is not an attack on industry or an attempt to stifle jobs. The majority of our membership is comprised of blue collar workers struggling to make ends meet, but we still care about our resources and we want to find a balance that protects our environment, our resources, jobs and development. We recognize the need for responsible development and resource extraction, and the economic benefits they provide. We also recognize that development and resource extraction will leave a footprint on our environment. In light of these facts, we must continue to work together to minimize the impact to Penn's Woods, whether it's from extracting valuable resources, development, designating wild trout streams or hunting and fishing. We cherish the land and our resources, and we support and promote best management practices to ensure the continued protection of our land and natural resources. Sportsmen and women are stewards of our resources and our environment, and as your constituents, we ask that you do your duty to protect the interests of sportsmen, our resources and the environment, and oppose this legislation.

Again, thank you for allowing PFSC the time to present their position on this legislation.

<sup>1</sup> The proposed legislation defines critical habitat as only that area currently occupied by the species. The Federal ESA defines critical habitat in terms of the species' historic range, which recognizes the vital role of conserving habitat in order to facilitate recovery of the species. The purpose of the ESA, is to assist in recovery and not just protect what is remaining. "Critical habitat." The specific areas within the geographic area occupied by a listed species designated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-205, 16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).



## United States Department of the Interior

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035-9589



In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/Region 5/WSFR

AUG 09 2013

Carl Roe, Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Game Commission  
2001 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110-9797

Dear Mr. Roe:

My office received a copy of House Bill No. 1576 known as the Endangered Species Coordination Act. I have reviewed this Bill to see what implications, if any, it may have on Pennsylvania's ability to remain eligible to receive Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Funds. I have several concerns outlined hereafter.

#### **Section 2. Definitions**

Action is defined in part as "Promulgation of regulations." If the Game Commission's (and Fish and Boat Commission's) authority to issue regulations necessary to maintain compliance with provisions of 50 CFR Part 80 are interfered with, Pennsylvania risks losing eligibility to receive funding under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program (and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Program). Pennsylvania received \$19,158,429 in Wildlife Restoration funds in Fiscal Year 2013 (\$8,343,611 in Sport Fish Restoration funds).

#### **Section 3(c). Inclusion in centralized database.**

The Bill requires any fish, wildlife, or plant species listed as threatened or endangered to be included in a centralized database. The Bill provides no funding for implementing this and other requirements. Federal regulations under 50 CFR 80.10 require the State fish and wildlife agency to control expenditures of license revenues. If no additional funding is provided with this Bill, it in essence takes control away from the agency by requiring it to expend funds on the database.

#### **Section 8(b).**

See comment for Section 3(c) above. This Section requires the agency to develop and provide mitigation measures and best practices, but provides no funding. This could constitute a loss of control over expenditure of funds.

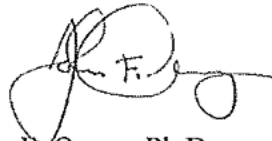
In summary, this Bill imposes impediments to the Game Commission's ability to codify regulations that may be necessary to maintain eligibility to participate in the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program. It also directs where funding will go, removing control from the

Carl Roe, Executive Director

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agency over expenditure of funds. It may also restrict the ability of the Game Commission to control activities on Game Lands leading to loss of control. I have significant concerns with this Bill and the risk it presents to the Game Commission relative to loss of Federal funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. F. Organ", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

John F. Organ, Ph.D.  
Chief, Division of Wildlife  
and Sport Fish Restoration





# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Pennsylvania Field Office  
315 South Allen Street, Suite 322  
State College, Pennsylvania 16801-4850

January 24, 2013

Steven Crescenzo  
L.R. Kimball  
415 Moon Clinton Road  
Coraopolis, PA 15108

RE: USFWS Project #2012-1228  
PNDI #20120725365302  
Armstrong Junior/Senior High School Project

Dear Mr. Crescenzo:

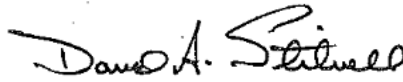
This is in response to your letter of December 3, 2012, which included an *Indiana Bat Conservation Plan* for the above-referenced project located in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. The proposed Armstrong Junior/Senior High School Project is located within the range of the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a species that is federally listed as endangered. The following comments are provided pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) to ensure the protection of endangered and threatened species.

The proposed project will affect approximately 20 acres of forest habitat in the vicinity of the Long Run Mine Indiana bat hibernaculum. To minimize adverse effects on Indiana bats, Armstrong School District has agreed to implement the measures outlined in their *Indiana Bat Conservation Plan* for the subject project. The Conservation Plan, which is enclosed, details specific measures that will be implemented to reduce the short-term and long-term effects of the project on Indiana bats, including the contribution of \$61,800 into the Indiana Bat Conservation Fund.

The Service has reviewed the Conservation Plan and found it to address the recommended avoidance, minimization and compensation measures outlined in our guidance. Therefore, with the implementation of these measures, the effects of the project on the Indiana bat are insignificant or discountable.

Please contact Pamela Shellenberger of my staff at 814-234-4090 if you have any questions or require further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David A. Stilwell".

David A. Stilwell  
Acting Field Office Supervisor

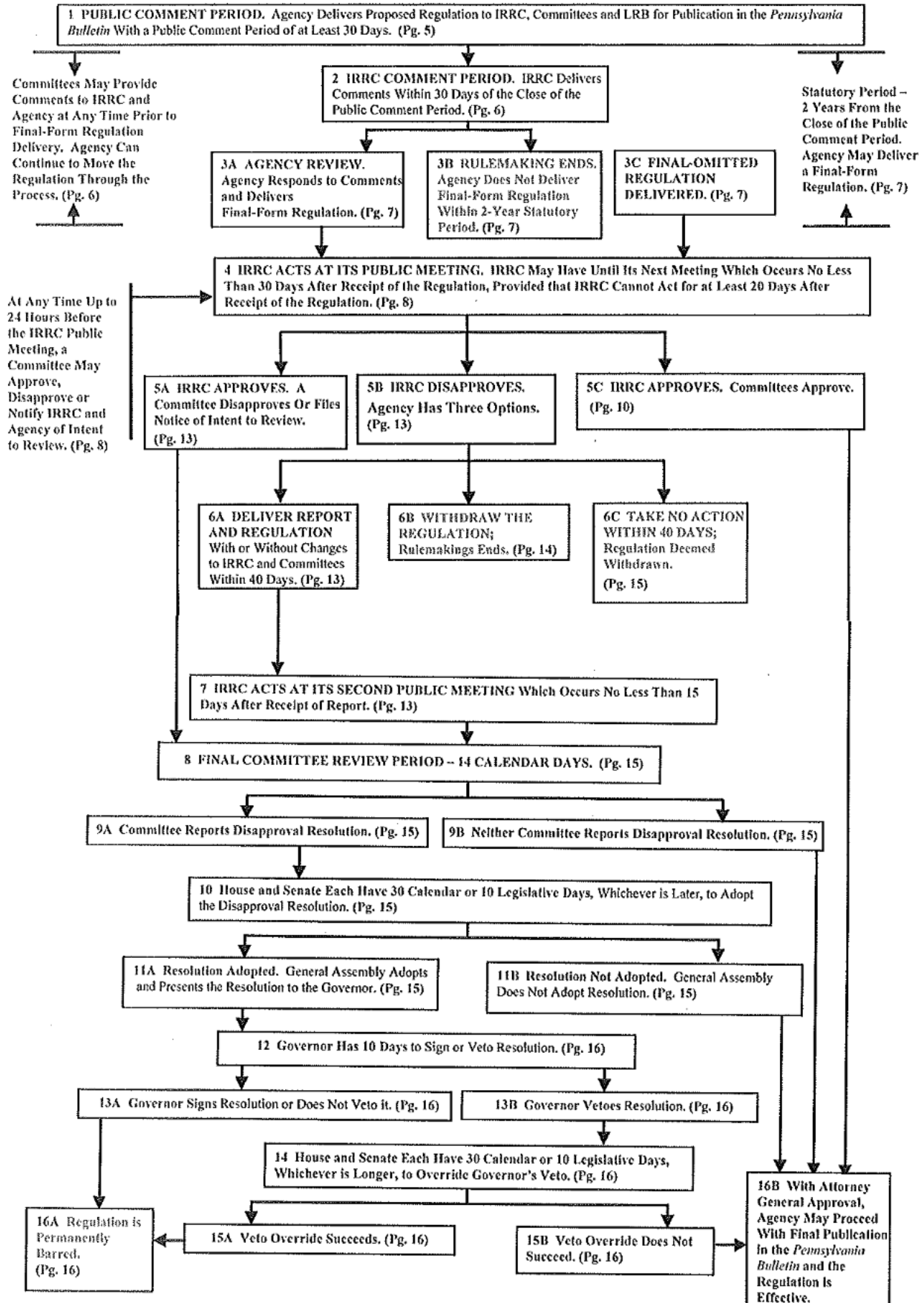
Enclosures

cc:  
PGC – Librandi-Mumma  
PGC – Broucek (if includes IBCF)



# Summary of the Regulatory Review Process Under Act 148

Blue - Highlights Actions; Green - Agency Proceeds with Final Publication; Red - Represents End of Process



## Nation's symbol climbs back from the brink

### Pa. considers removing bald eagle from its list of threatened species

By Beth Brelje  
Pocono Record Writer  
August 15, 2013 12:00 AM

Bald eagles could be removed from the state's list of threatened species as the number of nesting pairs in Pennsylvania has increased.

The growth started, in part, with Canadian eaglets that in 1983 were placed in prime eagle habitat in Pike County.

Pennsylvania had just three documented eagle nests at that time. All were in Crawford County near the Ohio state line, said Travis Lau of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

The commission started a restoration program that year and brought 12 eaglets, all 7 weeks old, from Saskatchewan, Canada. Six were released on Haldeman Island, in state game lands on the Susquehanna River. The other six were released on Shohola Lake in Pike County.

Between 1983 and 1989, the commission released 88 eagles from Canada into Pennsylvania habitat.

When releasing eaglets early in the program, biologists placed the young birds in 100-foot high hatching towers, built to approximate eagle nest height. There is a platform for the nest, and a ladder and small room where a biologist could sit to feed the eaglets fish on a fork and yet remain concealed so the birds would not know they were being fed by a human.

Eventually the eaglets flew off and thrived in the new habitat.

In 1998, there were 25 pairs of nesting eagles in the state, and by 2006, Pennsylvania had 100 nests.

In 2012, there were 237 known nests, and so far in 2013, Pennsylvania has 266, each with a pair of eagles and on average each nest producing 1.6 eaglets.

Most of the eagles in Pennsylvania today are believed to be the descendants of the original 88 eaglets, Lau said.

### 'Protected'

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Management is recommending the bald eagle be upgraded from "threatened" to "protected" status statewide.

Doug Gross, a biologist who heads the bureau's Endangered and Nongame Birds section, addressed the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners Monday, saying the bald eagle's remarkable comeback in Pennsylvania has reached a point where eagles safely can be removed from a threatened species list.

"This year marks just another high point in the spectacular and widespread recovery of bald eagles in Pennsylvania, and it's clear that the definition of a threatened species no longer describes them accurately," Gross said.

According to Pennsylvania regulations, a threatened species is defined as one that, throughout its range in the Commonwealth, may become endangered in the foreseeable future.

The Bureau of Wildlife Management's recommendation to delist the bald eagle as a state threatened species is based on eagles achieving a number of goals outlined in the state's bald eagle management plan.

The plan calls for delisting eagles as threatened if all four criteria are met for five consecutive years.

There must be at least 150 active nests statewide; successful pairs in at least 40 counties; at least a 60 percent success rate of known nests; and productivity of at least 1.2 eaglets fledged per successful nest.

Three of those criteria already have been met for a five-year span, and eagles in 2013 will exceed for a fifth straight year the requirement of nesting successfully in at least 40 counties, Gross said.

## What's next

The proposal to delist will be made formally to the Board of Game Commissioners at the board's regular meeting in September. The board then could choose to vote on the proposal at a subsequent meeting. That process will allow for public comment on the proposal.

If eagles are removed from the state's list of threatened species, the state protections will be removed, such as the state recommendation to get no closer than 1,000 feet to an eagles nest.

But protections such as the federal recommendation to get no closer than 650 feet to a nest will be enforced federally. Eagles will still be protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act.

Under the Eagle Act, those who harm or disturb eagles are subject to a civil penalty of up to one year in jail or a \$5,000 fine for their first offense, and criminal convictions can result in fines as high as \$250,000.

"We will not be abandoning the bald eagle, but giving it less emphasis as we turn to new challenges in bird conservation in the state," Gross said.

The game commission, too, will continue to follow its bald eagle management plan, which calls for the agency to monitor nests at least through 2017.

# Bald Eagle Numbers Soar In Pennsylvania

With more than 250 nests counted statewide, population showing big gains.

HARRISBURG, Pa., July 1, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A bald eagle soaring high on the Fourth of July. It's about as American an image as one could conjure.

And for Pennsylvanians this Independence Day, the opportunity to witness such a sight firsthand is greater than at any other time in recent memory.

In the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of efforts to restore bald-eagle populations in the Commonwealth, the bird – a national symbol of strength and freedom – not only is continuing its remarkable comeback, but is taking it to new heights. The Pennsylvania Game Commission this week released its preliminary count of bald eagle nests statewide, and the numbers chart yet another high point in an impressive upward trend.

So far this year, 252 eagle nests have been confirmed throughout the state, with nesting eagles present in 56 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

That's a sharp increase from the previous mid-year report, which the Game Commission typically releases just before the Fourth of July.

A year ago, there were 206 confirmed eagle nests in 51 counties.

Game Commission Executive Director Carl G. Roe said that as eye-popping as the latest numbers might be, they're far from surprising.

"We're to the point in Pennsylvania where the bald eagle's success is something that's expected," Roe said. "Year after year, their numbers grow. Year after year, their range grows broader.

"It truly is a remarkable story," he said. "And remarkably, it's a true story, and one that continually builds up to a better and better ending."

Just 30 years ago, the bald eagle's future in Pennsylvania looked bleak. Its population decimated by the effects of water pollution, persecution and compromised nest success caused by organochlorine pesticides such as DDT, only three pairs of nesting eagles remained in the state – all of them located in Crawford County, in northwestern Pennsylvania along the Ohio border.

But in 1983, the Game Commission launched what would become a seven-year bald eagle restoration program. The agency, as part of a federal restoration initiative, sent employees to Saskatchewan to obtain eaglets from wild nests. Initially, 12 seven-week-old eaglets were taken from nests in Canada's Churchill River valley and brought to specially constructed towers at two sites. At these towers – at Haldeman Island on the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg, and at Shohola Lake in Pike County – the birds were "hacked," a process by which the eaglets essentially are raised by humans, but without knowing it, then released gradually into the wild.

In all, 88 bald eaglets from Canada were released from the sites as part of the program, which was funded in part by the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh and the federal Endangered Species Fund.

This reintroduction jump-started the recovery.

By 1998, Pennsylvania was home to 25 pairs of nesting bald eagles. Within the next three years, the number of nesting pairs doubled. Eagles continued to thrive, and in 2005, the Game Commission took the bald eagle off the state's endangered list and reclassified it as a threatened species.

A year later, more than 100 nests were confirmed statewide. And now, the number stands at 252.

It's not likely to stop there, either, said Patti Barber, a biologist with the Game Commission's Endangered and Nongame Birds section. While the mid-year update on nests provides a good indicator of how bald eagles are doing statewide, Barber said it's a preliminary number and additional nests typically are confirmed as the year goes on.

In 2012, for instance, 206 nests were reported preliminarily, but the year-end total was 237 statewide. It was a showing similar to 2011, when the preliminary total of 203 nests increased to 217 by year's end.

But with a lofty 252 nests at mid-year, how many more could really be out there?

"It's hard to say, but in all likelihood more remain to be counted," Barber said. "Our tally was 249 just a week or two ago, and three more were reported since that time, so I'd be surprised if the preliminary number doesn't grow."

Perhaps the easiest way to report a nest is to contact the Game Commission through its public comments email address: [pgccomments@pa.gov](mailto:pgccomments@pa.gov), and use the words "Eagle Nest Information" in the subject field. Reports also can be phoned in to a Game Commission Region Office or the Harrisburg headquarters.

Barber said discovering a new eagle nest can be exciting, but people need to keep their wits about them, and make sure they're not doing anything to frighten the birds.

Those encountering nests are asked to keep a safe distance. Disturbing eagles is illegal under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Some pairs are tolerant of human activity, while others are sensitive. Their reaction often depends on the activity and approach of the individual, the nesting cycle stage, and if the eagles are used to seeing people.

"Where there is regular public access and established viewing areas, some pairs can be very tolerant if visitors are predictable and nonthreatening," Barber said. "But when someone sneaks to the base of a nest tree, most eagles become alarmed."

Barber said there have been cases where people purposely flushed eagles from nests in attempts to get pictures of them in flight. Such behavior not only is illegal, but runs the risk of killing unhatched or recently hatched birds, she said.

Adults that are scared from a nest could abandon it, or might not return in time to keep unhatched eggs at the proper incubating temperature. Frightened eaglets also could jump from the safety of the nest, then have no way to return, Barber said.

"There are all types of problems associated with getting too close to a nest," Barber said. "For the sake of eagles, use you binoculars or a spotting scope. They are after all, still on the comeback trail from being an endangered species." While the bald eagle population grows stronger each year in Pennsylvania, the birds remain classified as a threatened species statewide.

Their rebound, however, continues to astonish and provide those who love wildlife with reason to celebrate. Just this year, 41 pairs of eagles – believed to be first-time nesters – nested at new sites.

It goes to show you the extent of the bald eagle's success. In Pennsylvania, and the nation as a whole, this magnificent raptor truly is living up to its iconic image of enduring American strength and freedom.

"There's no better story to tell and retell every Fourth of July," Roe said.