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From: "GM, PGCNEWS" <pgcnews@state.pa.us>

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## GAME COMMISSION RESPONDS TO DEER REPORT

HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners President Russell Schleiden today offered the following comments regarding today's release of a report titled: "Managing White-Tailed Deer in Forest Habitat from an Ecosystem Perspective: Pennsylvania Case Study." The report was sponsored by Audubon Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Habitat Alliance.

Schleiden said: "This report is but one more voice in the broad spectrum of opinions and views on how the Pennsylvania Game Commission should manage deer. However, this report's claim that deer management can be better handled by a merged agency that includes the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, is an issue that was examined during the last Legislative Session, and was proven to be merely a distraction from the primary objective: ensuring adequate funding for proper wildlife management. Also, the idea that a larger agency would serve the public and wildlife resources interests better is questionable at best. Since when has a larger bureaucracy ever been more efficient, effective or responsive?"

"My concern is that the authors of this report are merely trying to create a structure for managing deer that marginalizes hunters' views and opinions. The Game Commission, as a state government agency, historically has directed deer management, with input from the state's varied stakeholders - hunters, biologists, farmers, foresters, landowners and local officials - and we believe that the current process is working.

"Since 1999, the Game Commission has implemented an aggressive program designed by our biologists on the Deer Management Team to balance Pennsylvania's deer herd with its habitat to improve the health and quality of our deer herd and deer hunting. This plan focuses on allowing the habitat to recover so that all wildlife - both game and nongame, including deer - will prosper in a healthy eco-environment.

"As we consider the input we have received so far about the 2005-2006 seasons and bag limits, we have heard from those who agree with the authors of this report that more deer need to be harvested. We also have heard from those who believe that we are harvesting too many deer. We will continue to fulfill our mandate as Commissioners to provide a balance that will be acceptable to the majority and continue to keep the best interests of white-tailed deer resource and its habitat first and foremost."

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