

# THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

## PGC's Deer Team is Conducting a Masterful Campaign of Deception

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Sportsmen and many legislators have become accustomed to the deceptive antics of the Pennsylvania Game Commission – telling sportsmen that collapsing the statewide deer herd was in their best interest, and claiming that hunters are now harvesting as many deer per year as were harvested during the heydays of Pennsylvania deer hunting in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. In order for hunters to have harvested 352,920 deer in 2013 and 303,973 deer in 2014, there would need to be a statewide population of 1,834,847 deer – representing densities of 69 deer per square mile (dpsm) on every square mile of forested land area in the state, or 41 dpsm on every square mile of land area including forests and agricultural fields, towns and suburban backyards, playgrounds and soccer fields, roadways and parking lots, and the city streets of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Of course, PGC's claims are absurd. Their collective noses must be growing faster than forest seedling regeneration.

The agency that once was trusted by sportsmen and lawmakers alike to honorably perform its legislated mission with the utmost of integrity has now stooped to an agenda-driven arm of the forest industry and fringe environmentalists.

Yesterday, an article was published in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review entitled "Figuring out deer dilemma". The article identified three forms of deception that are being perpetrated by PGC.

This is in addition to antics of commissioners who are trying to convince sportsmen and legislators that the commissioners have decreased doe permits by 300,000 over the past two years -- 150,000 last year and another 150,000 this year. It reminds me of the premise that if you tell a lie enough times that people will start to believe it. However, the truth is that last year the commissioners allocated 779,500 and this year 746,500. That represents an overall decrease of 33,000 doe permits this year (not 150,000 as is being claimed by commissioners), which is a 4% decrease from last year's allotment. However, 25,000 of the reduction comes from a reconfiguration of WMU 5C outside of Philadelphia, leaving only a total decrease of 8,000 doe tags for the remainder of the state -- a real decrease of only 1% from last year's doe allocation. It doesn't matter if the deer team requests 896,500 (as they did this year), 5,746,500, or 10,746,500, commissioners can't claim that the commissioners decreased the "real" allocation by 150,000 (as they're claiming) any more than they can claim that they decreased it by 5 million or 10 million.

Regarding the article, there are three major deceptions that PGC is trying to use to influence sportsmen and legislators. Following are some relevant quotes from the article:

- "A new survey suggests its deer hunters want different things based on age. The commission last fall tasked Responsive Management, an outdoor recreation polling firm, with questioning deer hunters. The idea, among other things, was to see what they thought of concurrent and split deer seasons..."
- "Support for concurrent seasons was strongest among those hunters younger than 18. But the group most supportive of split seasons was hunters ages 55-64."
- "It's clear younger hunters prefer longer, more flexible seasons. But they're not getting them. In fact, the commission -- based on what the survey says -- has moved to favoring the wants of older hunters."
- "Starting this fall, commissioners will manage 18 of 23 units with split seasons. Is that wise?"

- "Keeping them all happy, or at least reasonably satisfied, always will be tough. But it's important."

**Deception #1: PGC is concerned about hunters.** Permit me to quickly dispel this fantasy. First, a couple of years ago Deer Biologist Fleegle wrote in a PA Game News article that "hunters who were complaining about low numbers of deer should take their blue balls and go home". Secondly, a former member of Governor Corbett's Sportsmen Advisory Council recently stated that following a two-hour presentation by the deer team, a member raised his hand and stated that not once did the presentation include mention of the interests of hunters or hunting. Thirdly, another member of the Advisory Council informed me that when asked about the importance of hunters during a deer management presentation, Executive Director Carl Roe responded that "hunters are of no concern in deer management decisions". While PGC has had **NO** concern for the interests of sportsmen for over 15 years, now that the perception might be used to serve their purpose, the deer team claims that hunters are a principal concern. Hogwash!

**Deception #2: Young hunters under 18 vs older hunters.** First, if asked, children will always want cake, ice cream, and candy. I am 100% sure that the deer team cares not one bit what children 18 months to 18 years are interested in. If specifically asked, they'd likely want to hunt 365 days a year, 24/7. Kids also would not choose to go to school, eat their vegetables, do their homework, or go to bed before dawn. Trying to convince sportsmen and legislators that the wishes of children are important to them is simply a joke. It is now an issue because it can be used to serve PGC's purpose, and give the perception that the agency is taking the tough road by favoring the wishes of older hunters. Double hogwash!

**Deception # 3: Concurrent vs Split Seasons.** Right now the PGC, commissioners, and some outdoor writers are creating a perception that the choice of concurrent versus split seasons is a legitimate choice. It is not, and instead is creating a win/win scenario for the PGC. According to PGC's definition, a concurrent season is 12 days during which we can hunt buck and doe simultaneously, while a split season is a concurrent season of 7 days during which we can hunt buck and doe simultaneously. If the PGC succeeds in making this simpleton comparison fly, then sportsmen and legislators deserve this pabulum that they are being spoon fed. In either choice, PGC's deer team wins. Seven to 12 days of a concurrent season is exactly what the deer team wants and needs in order to maintain the herd at greatly reduced numbers. No matter how PGC presents it, there is no "split season" being offered. A split season should be defined as 12 days of buck only and 3 days of doe only. It is a tried and true deer management practice that is being used across the country, and has been for generations -- before foresters and fringe environmentalists gained control of the PGC. Regardless of how you slice it, the Emperor is not wearing clothes. Triple hogwash!

It's high time that the legislature takes charge of a natural resources crisis and again puts professional, responsible, and trustworthy wildlife biologists in charge of our state mammal.