

Today's Date: Saturday, May 09, 2009



The Clarion News

"Clarion County's Best Local News and Information Source Since 1840"

Johnson motors
CHEVROLET • CADILLAC **www.johnsonauto.com**

Over 250 Vehicles Just a Click Away • The Word Gets Around



Opinions

You ain't gonna gitcheer-deer – a hullapa-loozer of a plan

By John C. Street



[Click Here to Submit a Classified Ad Online.](#)

[General News](#)

[Living Section](#)

[Academics Section](#)

[Sports](#)

NEW! [Local High School Sports](#)

[Opinions](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[The Weather](#)

[About Us](#)

[The Derrick Online!](#)



The Outpost

By John Street

With the current condition of our economy, this can't be repeated too often...

"According to a report commissioned by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (www.nssf.org), Keystone State hunters – nearly all of whom are deer hunters – spend \$1.7 billion every year in the conduct of their favorite pastime and, as a direct consequence, support 28,000 jobs and add \$214 million tax dollars to the state's treasury."

As previously reported in this column ("You ain't gonna' gitcheerdeer ... and you deserve to know why," **CLARION NEWS**, March 12), there are a handful of state legislators who appear ready and willing to throw the business of hunting under the bus.

While this author did not expect the revelations made in that column to bring the "Deer Audit" process to a screeching halt, he did hope – by shining some light on the shenanigans of that handful of state legislators – several of the major sportsmen's organizations in the state, and maybe even a few of the better known outdoor writers, would make a stink about the lack of transparency.

Instead, these revelations went over like flatulence in a church service; everyone knew something didn't smell right but didn't want to point a finger for fear it would be perceived that they were just deflecting culpability.

There was one very praiseworthy exception.

Having learned on Friday, April 24, that a hurry-up meeting of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee was being held the following Tuesday to award a contract for the deer audit, two members of the Allegheny County Sportsmen's League, Inc. spent the weekend preparing a "review and analysis" of the "Audit History and Stakeholder Input."

This "Review and Analysis" (available at www.acslpa.org) is a comprehensive compilation of the events and circumstances leading up to the unanimous call for the deer audit. More importantly, however, it presented a prescription for getting rid of the stink that no one wanted to claim.

"... we suggest," the author's advised the members of the LB&FC, "that you call for a transparent examination of the methods and data used by the game commission to measure and make decisions on harvest reports and the three factors of habitat condition, deer health and deer-human conflicts.

"We also suggest expanding the analysis to the field to examine actual habitat conditions on Game Lands and other representative properties within select Wildlife Management Units so that Legislators and the public can better understand deer densities and habitat conditions."

Unfortunately, for all the impact this "review and analysis" had on changing the course of the LB&FC's hurry-up meeting, the men who prepared it might just as well have gone fishing that weekend. As expected (because it was pretty well known in advance), on Tuesday, April 28, the LB&FC awarded the contract to the Pennsylvania Game Commission's old buddies at the Wildlife Management Institute.

Consequently, since the WMI has been on the shoot-the-deer bandwagon from the beginning, it must logically be assumed that unless substantial changes are somehow forced into the "Scope of Work" section of that contract, the outcome of this audit is a foregone conclusion; the controversial deer management program will continue unabated and unchanged -- and Pennsylvania will be one big step closer to the demise of a business that generates \$1.7 billion a year, provides employment for 26,000 of its citizens and plunks a cool \$214 million dollars into the state's tax larder.

As this treatise is being prepared, those same two members of the Allegheny County Sportsmen's League are working diligently to find a way to inject those changes into the "Scope of Work" section of the contract but the prospects are not at all bright. Rep. David Levdansky (D-Allegheny), the driving force behind taking the deer audit away from the Game and Fisheries Committee (where it rightly belonged) and into the LB&FC, apparently still has the political juice to finish what he started; providing cover for the game commission to proceed with their kill-the-deer management program.

Given the consequences – the further crippling of Pennsylvania's \$1.7 billion hunting industry – it is most logical to wonder about Rep. Levdansky's motive. Surely he must understand the domino affect of his actions.

And, just as surely, those upper echelon employees of the Pennsylvania Game Commission who, by all indications are supporting Rep. Levdansky's efforts, must know they're cutting the agency's throat. Unnecessarily culling the deer herd even more will result in fewer licenses being sold and that can only result in one thing; ultimately, a loss of independent status for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Can you say M-E-R-G-E-R?

For over 100 years, hunters – through their license dollars and the taxes they pay on their equipment – have been the financial backbone of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. In the process (and this can't be repeated too many times) they have fostered a \$1.7 billion dollar business that employs 28,000 of their fellow citizens and adds a whopping \$214 million tax dollars to the state's treasury. And lest it be forgotten, these hunters' license and tax dollars have covered the cost to "protect and conserve" all of Pennsylvania's wildlife, not just the whitetail deer.

Whatever plan Rep. Levdansky has up his sleeve, it must be a hullapaloozer. If he's willing to risk crippling one of the largest businesses in Pennsylvania and, as a causal consequence, pull the financial rug out from under – all – wildlife management, it better be.

'Cause if he's wrong, there's going to be economic "hull" to pay and all of Pennsylvania's wildlife will be the "loozer."

John Street is an inquisitive contrarian who writes, frequently with humor, about current events in fish and wildlife research as well as the ethical and societal issues that affect the outdoor life. He can be contacted through the Clarion News at rsherman@theclarionnews.com

Hosting by [USChoice](#).