

Pennsylvania Game Commission Promotes Opening of 10,400 Acres of new State Game Lands

NEWS PROVIDED BY

Pennsylvania Game Commission →

Sep 30, 2011, 03:11 ET

HARRISBURG, Pa., Sept. 30, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- In the past month, hunters and trappers have gained access to two parcels of State Game Lands totaling 10,400 acres in Centre and Clearfield counties thanks to recent additions the Pennsylvania Game Commission made to its State Game Lands network.

However, noted Carl G. Roe, agency executive director, in addition to these two new large tracts, hunters and trappers also have seen the State Game Land system increase in size with each meeting of the Board of Game Commissioners.

"At nearly every one of the Board's quarterly meetings, the Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management, in partnership with the agency's six region offices and field staff, as well as our conservation partners, have had at least one proposal to enhance, protect and increase the 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands," Roe said. "Our State Game Lands network is a lasting legacy that generations of hunters and trappers have secured and hand down to each new generation.

"Nearly all of these lands - past and present - were purchased with hunting and furtaking license dollars and federal excise taxes that fund the Pittman-Robertson program, which was created in 1937 and provides funding to states for management and restoration of wildlife and wildlife habitats. Some of the more recent purchases were made possible by the agency utilizing revenues from timber, oil, gas and mineral leases from existing State Game Lands."

Roe noted hunters and trappers have gained access to the Spring Creek Canyon Cooperative Management Coalition's more than 1,800 acres in Benner Township, Centre County, much of which has been off limits for several decades. Included in the Spring Creek Canyon is the 1,211 acres of State Game Land 333, which is the newest numbered SGL.

Act 55 of 2010 (House Bill 1890) authorized the state to transfer the 1,827 acres from the Department of Corrections' State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Rockview into joint management by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the state Department of Corrections, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pennsylvania State University and Benner Township.

"In early 2011, all of the parties identified in Act 55 entered into a cooperative management agreement to ensure these lands and waters would receive the protection they deserve, while providing significant access for all hunters and trappers," Roe said. "While some portions of the overall Spring Creek Canyon property that remain under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections will not be open to public hunting and trapping, the vast majority is open for the first time in decades."

As part of the overall cooperative management plan for Spring Creek Canyon, the Game Commission will manage its portion of the land as a terrestrial and aquatic wildlife resource management area. Other portions of the property are under the jurisdiction of the Fish and Boat Commission, which manages the controlled limited access area and nearby hatchery; Penn State University, which oversees the agricultural research and management area; and Benner Township, which manages a portion of the land designated as a recreational area.

State Senator Jake Corman, and State Representatives Kerry Benninghoff and Mike Hanna co-sponsored House Bill 1890, signed into law, as Act 55, on July 9, 2010. This authorized the Department of General Services to convey certain parcels of lands (totaling about 1,827 acres) known as the Spring Creek Canyon and the upland areas to the Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission, Penn State and Benner Township.

In Bell and Greenwood townships, Clearfield County, hunters and trappers gained access to nearly 9,200 acres of land added to State Game Land 87. Prior to the acquisition, which was approved by the Board of Game Commissioners on April 12, SGL 87 consisted of about 1,225 acres. With the new tract, SGL 87 now consists of 10,422 acres.

"About 5,000 acres of the parcel consists of natural upland hardwood forest," Roe said. "The remaining 4,000 acres are non-timbered land currently or historically cleared for surface coal mining and natural gas development. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' National Wetlands Inventory map identifies numerous natural and manmade wetland areas on the property. There are numerous high-quality streams on the property, which support populations of cold-water fish.

"Interestingly, if it was not for the Game Commission ownership of other properties, the funding required to secure this property would have never occurred. Giving up some resources in one place to secure such a large tract that previously was closed to hunting and trapping is something that was not entered into lightly. It now is time for us to enhance this property for both wildlife and the hunters. We are looking forward to that challenge."

For more information on the Game Commission's State Game Lands, visit the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us), put your cursor on "Hunt/Trap" in the menu bar at the top of the page, then click on "State Game Lands" in the drop-down menu list.

Note to Editors: If you would like to receive Game Commission news releases via e-mail, please send a note with your name, address, telephone number and the name of the organization you represent to: PGCNews@pa.gov.

SOURCE Pennsylvania Game Commission