



Testimony of Jan Jarrett
Vice President, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture)
Before the House Finance Committee
April 29, 2008
In regard to House Bill 1676

My name is Jan Jarrett and I am the vice president of PennFuture. I'd like to thank Chairman Levdansky and members of the committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the important matter of adequate funding for Pennsylvania's wildlife resource agencies.

As you know, PennFuture has been a strong supporter of adequate funding for the Fish and Boat and the Game Commissions and advocated to include the agencies in Growing Greener II. We were pleased when the Growing Greener implementation legislation provided \$27.5 million to the Fish and Boat Commission for capital improvements for its lands and facilities and \$20 million for the Game Commission for its lands and facilities.

While that funding was welcome and used to meet pressing needs, it provided only a portion of documented needs. For example, prior to the passage of Growing Greener II, the Fish and Boat Commission estimated that it needed \$85 million to upgrade the Commonwealth's fish hatchery infrastructure and \$58 million to address dam safety and dam repair needs and approximately \$10 million to address access improvement needs.

Thus far, our two independent wildlife resource agencies have invested Growing Greener dollars in projects around the state that benefit all Pennsylvanians, not just hunters and anglers. With Growing Greener funding, the commissions have made repairs to dams, bridges, fish hatcheries and roadways, improved wildlife habitats and improved hunter, angler and boater safety.

When considering if it is appropriate for taxpayer dollars to help support the Fish and Boat and Game commissions, we need to remember that all of us benefit from their work. Both agencies are charged with the protection of animals that are not pursued by hunters and anglers, some of which are endangered or threatened. The Fish and Boat Commission manages and protects reptiles and amphibians; the Game Commission manages and protects wading birds, song birds, bats, woodrats, eagles and more. Both agencies manage natural habitats

that provide homes for numerous plants and animals as well as help maintain clean water and clean air.

We also need to consider how much economic benefit the Commonwealth realizes from hunting and fishing. These outdoor sports bring in a total of \$5 billion in direct and indirect sales to Pennsylvania outfitters, retailers, lodgers, restaurants, gas stations and others. According to a study done by Southwick Associates for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the economic activity from hunting alone generates \$214 million in state and local taxes, none of which is returned to the Game Commission.

Both of our independent wildlife agencies fill crucial environmental protection and restoration roles that no other agencies handle, and they employ wildlife management professionals with expertise that exists in no other agency. It is vital that the Commonwealth plan on providing adequate funding to these agencies to ensure that their functions will be carried out so that future generations will be able to enjoy hunting, fishing and the natural habitats that support game and non-game animals.

Both commissions are funding almost entirely by license sales and both face some daunting demographics that are already impacting sales of hunting and fishing licenses. Changing family structures, competition from electronic forms of entertainment, participation by young people in structured sports and other activities, and a more urban population are resulting in fewer young people taking up hunting and angling. Sales of hunting licenses declined by about 27 percent between 1981 and 2006. Fishing license sales fell by more than 58,000 between 2004 and 2007.

Dedicating a small portion of the sales tax to our wildlife management agencies is one way to provide a stable funding floor that will allow the commissions to develop maintenance and improvement plans for facilities and programs. PennFuture is please to support this legislation.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to raise a warning about a coming funding crisis for Pennsylvania's environment. As you know, the Growing Greener II bond money will be spent by 2012 with many agencies actually running out by 2011. In addition, as each year passes, more and more of the tipping fee money that funds the Environmental Stewardship Fund will be diverted to paying the debt on the Growing Greener bond. The Environmental Stewardship Fund provides funding for watershed restoration projects, ongoing operation and maintenance of restoration projects, environmental education, acid mine land and acid drainage remediation, farmland preservation, conservation and trail planning, the Energy Harvest program and other projects around the Commonwealth.

The tipping fee generates about \$89 million a year. By 2012 the demands on that revenue stream will leave little to continue funding new projects. Up to \$60 million

will go to debt service on the Growing Greener bond, \$8 million is committed each year for Pennsylvania's share of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, \$3 million is committed to maintaining watershed specialists at conservation districts, and another \$3 million goes to operation and maintenance of restoration projects. That leaves only \$18 million for all the purposes that receive support from the Environmental Stewardship Fund.

In addition, the General Assembly provided a short-term fix for funding the Hazardous Sites Clean Up Fund that expires in 2012. We will need another \$40 million a year for HSCA to keep it operating at its full potential and continue to return brownfields to useful purposes.

If we are to maintain our community based protection, conservation and restoration projects and fully fund HSCA, we will need to identify a new source or new sources of funding. PennFuture looks forward to working with you and this committee on the next generation of environmental funding for Pennsylvania.

Thank you.