



Executive Summary

Wildlife Tourism on Pennsylvania Public Lands

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Pennsylvania residents and visitors sometimes use Pennsylvania State Game Lands for hiking, bird and wildlife watching, horseback riding, rock climbing, and mountain biking. While these secondary recreational uses are allowed, the main purposes of the State Game Lands (SGLs) are to manage habitat for wildlife and provide opportunities for lawful hunting and trapping.

At times, the non-consumptive use of SGLs has been a point of contention since some view non-hunting users on game lands as privileged, or sometimes, unwelcome guests.

To learn more about the extent to which the general public participates in non-consumptive, or wildlife tourism activities, on public land in Pennsylvania, Dr. Susan Ryan of California University of Pennsylvania conducted research by surveying hunters, non-hunters, and public policy stakeholders in 2016 and 2017.

The research examined the characteristics of wildlife tourists and their non-consumptive use of wildlife assets on Pennsylvania public lands, specifically focusing on Pennsylvania State Game Lands, which are administered by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

The research also reviewed policy issues surrounding the access and use of Pennsylvania State

Game Lands, and gathered input on public policies that govern these lands.

For the research, wildlife tourists were broadly defined as those who engage in non-consumptive or non-lethal wildlife activities for leisure purposes.

Data from the surveys were summarized to present a profile of current wildlife tourists and Pennsylvania's available wildlife tourism product. It also summarized findings on policy issues related to permits and land use access for non-hunters and non-hunting activities.

Based on the research results, the researcher offers several policy considerations as follows:

- Allow the Pennsylvania Game Commission to focus on science-based land and wildlife management;
- Encourage greater communication between tourism stakeholders and wildlife stakeholders through the Pennsylvania Travel and Tourism Partnership or another suitable outlet;
- Present simplified, visible, harmonious land use guidelines;
- Increase fines for abusive users;
- Implement an information campaign on the funding reality of Pennsylvania State Game Lands (SGLs);

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- Implement selective secondary-user, activities-based and voluntary, donation-based permitting;
- Implement secondary permitting on those SGLs that are used more often by secondary users, which are typically SGLs closer to urban centers;
- Increase permit fees for non-resident hunters; and
- Conduct a hunting tourism study to better understand hunting tourism's economic impacts.

For a copy of the research report, *Wildlife Tourism on Pennsylvania Public Lands*, visit the Center's website at www.rural.palegislature.us.

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