

Funding Needed to Continue Dog Law Enforcement Efforts

By Gary Miller

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today issued a special report showing the state's Dog Law Enforcement Bureau has been deprived of the resources it needs to keep dogs safe.

"The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement may run out of money this summer," DePasquale warned. "It's time for Pennsylvania to make sure it is adequately funding dog law enforcement."

The new special report follows up on DePasquale's 2013 performance audit of the bureau, which operates within the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The bureau is tasked with ensuring the welfare of dogs and puppies in kennels and boarding facilities. It also oversees annual licensure and checks rabies vaccinations for dogs.



The 2013 audit cited a lack of enforcement of the dog law and commercial kennel canine health regulations from 2008 to 2012. It also found numerous problems with restricted dog law funds being used for unrelated purposes.

DePasquale said his new report found the bureau resolved those issues and followed most of his audit's recommendations for improvement.

"Despite its financial challenges, Pennsylvania's Bureau of Dog Law enforcement is functioning much better -- thanks to it having adopted many of my recommendations," DePasquale said. "However, a lack of funding has forced the bureau to cut its staff by 18 percent since 2014 -- which means dog wardens are stretched pretty thin."

The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement currently employs 41 dog wardens, a decrease of 12 wardens working in the field since 2014. Dog wardens are responsible for inspecting roughly 2,600 kennels operating across the state at least twice annually. Dog wardens do not enforce animal cruelty statutes.

Part of the funding problem is that annual dog license fees, which make up nearly 90 percent of the bureau's revenues, have remained at \$8.50 -- or \$6.50 if the dog is spayed or neutered -- since 1996. If license fees were tied to the rate of inflation, those fees would be roughly \$14 and \$11 today. Some other jurisdictions have fees in the range of \$20 or higher.

The special report notes that although the bureau has sold more licenses in recent years, the sales increase has not been enough to offset the rising costs of operation.

Compounding the problem is a state law that forces the bureau to transfer the bulk of the fines and penalties it collects to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). Since 1998, more than \$4.4 million has been diverted to AOPC to pay for its computer system. The bureau is allowed to retain about \$69,000 of the fines and penalties it collects annually.

Without prompt legislative action, the bureau expects the dog law fund will become insolvent by July.

DePasquale's special report makes three recommendations:

- The General Assembly should update the dog license and kennel license fee structure, taking into account the rate of inflation since 1996;
- The General Assembly should allow the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement to retain all of the money generated through fines and penalties paid through Dog Law citations; and
- The General Assembly should strengthen penalties for kennels with serious violations that do not pass inspections and yet continue to operate during the appeal process.



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Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services



Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Strive for Perfection, Settle for Excellence

We all have standards we live by. From washing our hands to the way we dress. Some are a product of our upbringing and some are just part of our own individuality. We all know someone who is sloppy and those of us who are more detail oriented get a little crazy when we are with those people. I don't really care what the inside of your car looks like, but if you are operating one of my service trucks, I care quite a lot. A general propensity toward sloppiness carries over from personal life to work and soon shows up as lost tools, garbage left at a job, and a general lack of attention to details. We don't spend much time in one particular home during a job, maybe 2 days unless it is a major project, so we can't afford to let things lay all over the place. We also never make dirt that someone else has to clean up. Companies who do new construction work don't have the same problems so if we hire someone who previously worked on new construction, they almost always need some retraining to get to our standard of cleanliness.

Being hired to work in someone's home is a bit of an honor. Not everyone gets invited in, only someone trusted to add value to the home or repair an important piece of equipment. We take that seriously and always try to exceed the expectations people have. If we can replace a system neatly and leave the job site as clean as when we arrived but with more efficient equipment, we have achieved our goal. Some homes don't have an outside entrance to the basement and other homes have systems in the attic. Both of them require us to use the front door to get to the work area and we can't afford to leave marks on the floor or woodwork transporting equipment in or out. Floor and stair covering materials add to the cost and time it takes to set up and tear down but the alternative is damage or dirt left behind which is not acceptable to us or the homeowner.

I have heard people say "That's what you have insurance for" but I don't agree. Insurance is for unavoidable or accidental damage. Sloppiness is always avoidable. We all need to take responsibility for our actions and consciously avoid doing things that defy common sense. Even with that in mind, sometimes things happen that need to be fixed and fixing them is also part of the job.

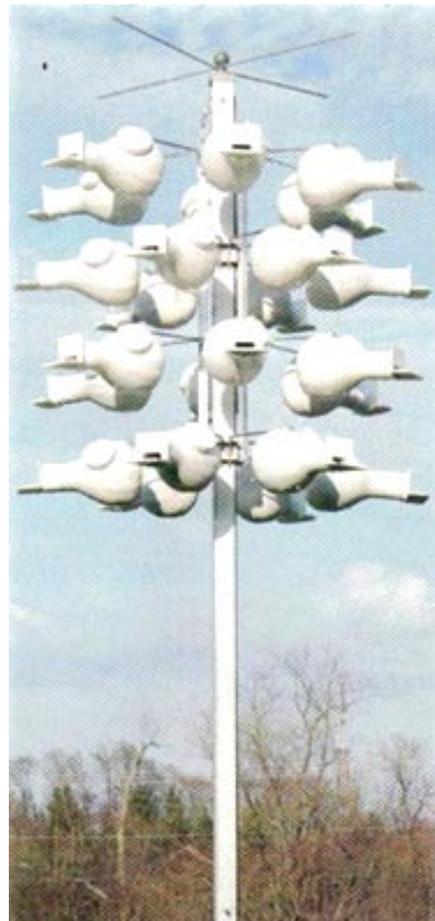
Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at www.SlateBeltEnergy.com

Friends of Minsi Lake Approves \$2500 To Purchase Two Purple Martin Towers

By Michael Ortoski / Vice Chair of Friends of Minsi Lake

NAZARETH - At their monthly meeting last week, Friends of Minsi Lake (FOML) approved up to \$2500 to purchase two purple martin towers & components for installation at Minsi Lake. One tower each will be installed on the East & West Shores.

FOML will order & pay for the materials directly from Troyer's Birds' Paradise. The materials will be shipped to Northampton County Parks & Rec. Parks & Rec staff & volunteers with the Lehigh Valley Audubon Society will install the towers at Minsi Lake.



Purple Martin Towers

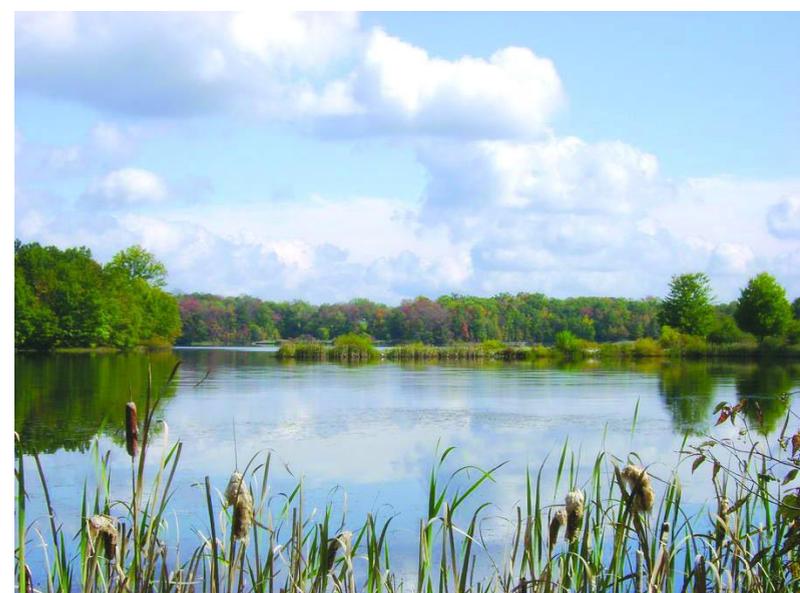
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society (LVAS) will service and maintain the towers. This is another great partnership FOML has made for our community.

LVAS has and continues to lead bird habitat improvement projects at Leaser Lake with the friends group there. They currently have 4 martin towers, all of them occupied to full capacity during the breeding season. They also have installed dozens of waterfowl, songbird & screech owl nesting boxes there.

LVAS would like to invest the same efforts at Minsi Lake, which we welcome with open arms!



Purple Martin



Minsi Lake Trout Stocking

By Michael Ortoski

UPPER MT. BETHEL - Pa. Fish and Boat Comm. has released the 2020 stocking schedule for Northampton County. In their first schedule they accidentally omitted Minsi Lake in error. It is now corrected on their website but their may be some literature out there with the error.

The Dates are:

03/24/20 12:30 PM rainbow and golden trout.

05/06/20 12:30 PM rainbow only.

10/09/20 12:00 PM rainbow only.

Regional Opening Day Saturday, April 4, 2020

STATEWIDE Opening Day Saturday, April 18, 2020

Go to www.fishandboat.com for all the details.



Trout Stocking Schedules Available

By Rep. Joe Emrick

HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission announced this week its 2020 trout stocking schedules are now available online and the FishBoatPA mobile app.

The commission plans to once again stock approximately 3.2 million trout in 707 streams and 130 lakes open to public angling. PFBC plans to double the amount of trophy-sized trout being stocked to approximately 60,000 fish, 70% of which are slated to be stocked during the preseason.

The 2020 trout season will officially open Saturday, March 28, with the Regional Mentored Youth Trout Fishing Day program in 18 southeastern counties, including Northampton County. The following weekend – Saturday, April 4 – kicks off the Regional Opening Day of Trout Season.

A second Mentored Youth Trout Fishing Day will be held on April 11, the Saturday before the April 18 regular statewide opening day of trout season.

For more information on trout stocking, trout season and how to obtain a 2020 fishing license, visit www.fishandboat.com.