

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Distinguished members,

I appear before you concerning the effect of the transfer of private properties to Pennsylvania Game land's and the effect on taxpayers.

Currently in Warren County about 32% of the county is Public Land. This includes the Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania Game Lands and Pennsylvania State Forest.

Currently there are 36,922.03 acers of State Game Lands with Assessed Value based on 50% tax ratio of \$5,460,475.00. In 2026 the assessed tax ration will go from 50% to 100% (Tax Ratio) for a value of \$10,920,950.00.

Based on the \$3.00 per acer formula that is currently used Warren County will receive \$. Warren County will lose \$16,744,97 per year based on the \$3.00 formula. To sum that may not seek like much, but in rural Warren County it is a big issue. Who has to make up the difference? The taxpayer!

At least with the Allegheny National Forest, Warren County receives 25% of timber sales that occur in Warren County. This works out to between \$300,000.00 to \$350,000.00 per year, yet on Game Lands and Forest the county receives \$119,766.09. The US Forest Service also provide over \$600,000.00 in Rural Secure Schools funding.

As you can see the National Forest does provide more funding. The counties will receiving \$ from the Game Commission. However, the counties do not receive any funds from timber harvesting or lease agreements. Where does all those funds go? They go into what some call the Game Commissions war chest to purchase more land. Again, this straps the taxpayers. My position is based on a new article from the Warren Times Observer several months ago where the former Executive Director of the Game Commission stated that the Commissions goal is to buy up as much land as possible. Should some of those funds come back to the taxpayer?

A question I ask myself everyday as a County Commissioner, is having 32% of Public Lands a curse on Warren County Taxpayers? We know that Public Land is pretty much lost as far as development is concerned.

Our county applies for every federal, state and private grant available. With that being said we have been seeing a trend that grant monies are going to larger metro population centers and rural Pennsylvania is being overlooked.

Since the mid 70's our county population has fallen from 47,000 + to current day population of 38,000 +. We have seen almost all manufacturing jobs leave Warren County including the original business Blue Stem (New Process), PDM who manufactured and installed the St. Louis Arch, Osram Sylvania and the list goes on.

To be clear we are not anti-Game Commission. I am a hunter and have hunted on Game Lands 143 since I was 12 years old. Game Lands 143 was in my back yard while growing up. I still hunt there with my friends and my Grandsons.

A better system needs to be found. Just a few years ago I believe the rate was \$1.20 per acer. Well, we are thankful for the increase to \$3.00, the state needs a way to be fairer to the Taxpayers.

Respectfully submitted.

Kenneth L. Klakamp, Chair

Warren County Commissioners