

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: VEHICLES

### QUESTION:

To quote from the publication Woods and Waters, put out by the Unified Sportsmen of PA, an anti-PGC organization, "The PGC lies about lack of funds while they are flush with gas money to the extent they can issue \$55,000 - \$60,000 SUVs to WCOs. Why not just a \$28,000 pickup truck for a field agent to go check SGL gates of check hunters to see if they are with in their limit of rabbits."

### ANSWER:

Putting aside the sarcasm, and the insulting and disrespecting of the efforts of the WCOs and the mandates of the PGC, the writer attempts to pass off irresponsible, unsupported allegations as the truth.

Instead, an auditor, or an intelligent sportsman, might ask:

How many new PGC vehicles were bought?

How many of the new vehicles are SUVs?

Were they specially outfitted for law enforcement?

What did the WCOs drive before they got the "new" SUVs?

What was the age, mileage, and condition of the old vehicles?

What was the trade-in value?

Is the \$60,000 price the actual cost?

What was the MSRP?

Was there a fleet large-purchase discount?

Wouldn't a 10-year/100,00 mile warranty for 127 SUVs actually save money in maintenance costs based on LBFC maintenance data?

The PA Auditor General, Eugene DePasquale, picked up on a PGC vehicle audit based on his own experience when he took office in 2013. At that time, based on information from a September 5, 2016, article in the *Daily Item*, Sunbury, by investigative reporter John Finnerty, the Auditor General was looking to duplicate vehicle usage reductions for all agencies as he did in his organization.

When the Auditor General took office, he had 244 cars and trucks in his fleet. That number has been slashed. The OAG, now with 463 employees, has 19 vehicles.

The AG attributed his cut to taking advantage of technology that reduced the amount of time employees spend on the road. That's all well and good for auditors who can complete their assignments on the internet.

Asked about the overall government fleet, AG DePasquale allowed that some agencies simply need more cars to do their work. He noted the state police, for example, need lots of cars for their patrol duties. The state police have 3,215 cars and 6,200 troopers and officers – roughly one car for every two employees.

PGC employees (and the PFBC, for that matter), also need to be in the field to complete their assignments. To carry out their duties WCOs need vehicles to cover the more than 1.5 million acres of state game lands that foster hunting and trapping in the Commonwealth according to the PGC 2016 Annual Report..

For the PGC, based on Legislative and Budget Committee data at the time of the proposed audit, there were 760 employees and 636 vehicles with an average annual maintenance cost of \$1600 per vehicle. (Not all vehicles were SUVs, and the term 'vehicles' includes tractors, back hoes, etc)

(The PFBC had 381 employees and 432 vehicles with an average annual maintenance cost of \$1500 per vehicle--more vehicles than employees. But one needs to look behind the numbers to see the true picture. For instance, a typical PFBC scenario might be a fish hatchery, like Tylersville. There are 10 employees, but 15 vehicles--eight pickups, two of which are junkers still on the books, and seven trucks for use of the Great White Fleet for trout stocking. And that's only one of 15 fish hatcheries.)

The PGC had 20 vehicles assigned to Harrisburg. The rest were out in the field. The PGC does more than enforce laws (as does the PFBC).

There are 127 full-time wildlife conservation officers with 14 vacant districts and more than 365 part-time deputies serving the Game Commission. Each wildlife conservation officer has a coverage area of about 335 square miles. In addition to their law-enforcement duties,

officers serve as local ambassadors of the Game Commission in communities throughout the Commonwealth. They help manage hunter education classes and teach school students about wildlife issues

As the state's watchdog, the AG certainly has a right, even a duty, to be inquisitive about an agency with 760 employees and 636 vehicles. By all means, he should ask the vehicle-use questions; but he shouldn't obstruct much needed license-fee revenue legislation to do a time consuming audit that replicates six PGC compliance audits done by the Legislative and Budget Committee since 2000.