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Auditor General releases report critical of Pa. Game Commission finances

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Auditor General Eugene DePasquale addressed reporters at a May 30 news conference in the East Wing of the Capitol.

1

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Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale Thursday released an audit report critical of financial practices at the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Pointing to 7 escrow accounts in which the commission held \$6.5 million as of last year, DePasquale said “the commission’s financial officer didn’t even have knowledge of the specific accounts, balances or purposes until my audit.”

He recommended the escrow accounts be placed under the control of the Pennsylvania Treasury, “where there is more transparency,” but not mixed into the state’s General Fund.

He also criticized the commission's handling of money due from oil and gas lease royalties, with "accounting so poor that we were not even able to determine if the Game Commission is receiving the funds it is due."

Noting that those royalties grew from \$9.3 million in 2015 to \$19.2 million in 2017, DePasquale worried that "the commission is relying on gas and oil companies to say how much they owe."

In addition, he said, "the commission never levied interest penalties on delinquent payments and did not enforce the submission of annual production reports, which could have provided an extra layer of accountability."

Checks for royalties were not always deposited in a timely manner, "often several weeks after they were stamped received, including 1 which was not deposited for 63 days," he said.

The report also questioned the commission's long-standing practice of holding a reserve of millions of dollars in its Game Fund as a hedge against the seasonal nature of some of its revenue, including the sale of hunting and trapping licenses, which tend to happen mostly in summer and early fall.

DePasquale said the balance was more than \$72.8 million last year.

The [audit, launched in February 2018](#), looked at the commission from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2017.

The commission responded to the report with a news release that stated in part:

“Because the audit reviewed the Game Commission’s performance from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2017, some of these recommendations already have been implemented independently, and the Game Commission has agreed to work toward implementing nearly all of the others.

“The Auditor General’s recommendations will be implemented, if they have not been already.”

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