

# Youth Hunt

## *Planning Guide*



PGC Photo – H. Korber

*Brought to you by the Pennsylvania Game Commission*



# Youth Hunt Planning Guide

This Guide is intended for groups who would like to take advantage of Pennsylvania's youth hunting opportunities by hosting a special species-specific hunt for interested and eligible junior hunters.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Pennsylvania Game Commission would like to thank the National Shooting Sports Foundation for allowing use of many of the concepts found in their 2008 *Best Practices Workbook for Hunting and Shooting Recruitment and Retention*.

This Planning Guide was adapted from the Game Commission's *Mentored Youth Pheasant Hunt Planning Guide*, revised May 2009, compiled by Lori Richardson, Mike Pruss, Joe Kosack and Calvin DuBrock.

Photographs appearing in this Planning Guide were provided by PA Game Commission photographers Hal Korber and Joe Kosack.



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## About the Pennsylvania Game Commission

Established in 1895 to protect and restore dwindling game populations, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has evolved into a highly diverse natural resources agency. Providing information and education has always been a vital component of the Game Commission's operations. Developed in 1996, the agency's website has become an outstanding communications tool. The latest news, information on wildlife, Hunter-Trapper Education information, "The Outdoor Shop," Game Commission history, maps of public hunting grounds, and other Game Commission information is just a mouse-click away. Additionally, hunting and furtaking licenses can be purchased online as well. Formed more than a hundred years ago, the Pennsylvania Game Commission continues to satisfy the needs of nearly a million hunters and trappers throughout the commonwealth.

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# **Pennsylvania Game Commission**

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<http://www.pgc.state.pa.us>

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## **STATE HEADQUARTERS:**

2001 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797  
(717)787-4250

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## **REGION OFFICES:**

### **Northwest Region**

Counties of Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie,  
Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer,  
Venango, and Warren

Post Office Box 31  
Franklin, PA 16323  
(814)432-3187

### **Northcentral Region**

Counties of Cameron, Centre, Clearfield,  
Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter,  
Tioga, and Union

Post Office Box 5038  
Jersey Shore, PA 17740-5038  
(570)398-4744

### **Northeast Region**

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Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming

Post Office Box 220  
Dallas, PA 18612-0220  
(570)675-1143

### **Southwest Region**

Counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver,  
Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana,  
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4820 Route 711  
Bolivar, PA 15923  
(724)238-9523

### **Southcentral Region**

Counties of Adams, Bedford, Blair,  
Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon,  
Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, and York

8627 William Penn Highway  
Huntingdon, PA 16652  
(814)643-1831

### **Southeast Region**

Counties of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin,  
Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh,  
Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia,  
and Schuylkill

448 Snyder Road  
Reading, PA 19605  
(610)926-3136

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## *Overview*

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Current trends of hunting participation rates and age of small game hunters represents a warning that the future of our outdoor heritage, wildlife conservation and hunting traditions are threatened. From the mid-1980's to present day, the number of hunters reporting hunting for small game has dropped about 75 percent, and the average number of days hunted per small game hunter has declined by approximately 65 percent. Compounding this alarming trend, only 30 to 40 percent of teenagers *interested in hunting* are actually trying it. Research points to two main barriers to hunter/trapper recruitment:

- 1) Lack of apprenticeship (mentored) experiences, and
- 2) Lack of social support, especially by family members

Research also shows that multiple experiences are required to provide adequate knowledge and skill development to successfully recruit new hunters.

## *Introduction*

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The Pennsylvania Game Commission has been working to increase youth hunting opportunities with the goal of recruiting youngsters into life-long hunters. Recently, the Mentored Youth Hunting Program was introduced which allows kids under 12 years of age the opportunity to gain hunting experience and learn about Pennsylvania's rich hunting heritage at an early age. Squirrels, groundhogs, coyotes, antlered deer and turkeys (spring season only) are currently a part of this program. Additionally, special "youth only" seasons for eligible junior hunters have been in place for squirrels, pheasants, antlerless deer, turkey and waterfowl.

To continue its efforts to enlist young hunters, a cottontail rabbit junior hunter season, coinciding with the ring-necked pheasant junior hunter season, was

established in 2010. This season runs the Saturday before Columbus Day, and then the Monday of Columbus Day through the following Saturday. Junior hunters (ages 12 through 16) with or without a required license, who have successfully completed a Hunter-Trapper Education course, and who are accompanied as required by law, can participate in the hunt on a statewide basis. It is important to note, however, the junior rabbit season is **not** part of the Mentored Youth Hunting Program.



When well-planned and implemented, special events not only provide participants with a memorable experience, they also play a crucial part in enhancing awareness and interest of those exploring the possibility of becoming life-long hunters. Although it is recognized that special events play an important role in the process of becoming a hunter, it is essential to acknowledge that participants must then be afforded “the next step;” this allows individuals to continue to move through the adoption process of becoming a hunting participant for life. Additionally, success requires a social support system, either through family or an external support structure. (National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2008)



Like all wildlife agencies, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is committed to addressing the challenges of hunter and trapper recruitment and retention. Part of this process is providing resources to conservation and sportsmen’s groups that would like to take part in Pennsylvania’s youth hunting opportunities. Such resources contain Best Practices and Recommendations for hunting and shooting recruitment and retention as outlined by the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

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### ***Why is hosting a special youth hunt important?***

The vast majority of those who hunt were initiated into hunting before their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Exposure to hunting and the “hunting culture” are extremely important in hunting initiation. It has been found that those introduced to the sport in a rural environment, along with other hunters, are more likely to hunt more frequently and avidly through their lifetime. In short, it “takes a hunter to make a hunter.” (Duda, Bissell, & Young, 1995)

According to a 2004 study by Responsive Management, *Factors Related to Hunting Participation in Pennsylvania*, it was concluded that Pennsylvania’s hunting population is older, with many hunters ceasing to participate due to health and age. With the majority of hunters in PA aging, a future dramatic drop in hunting participation across the commonwealth is a concern. In response to this realization, active recruitment of younger hunters is needed to preserve a high participation rate in Pennsylvania; this includes reaching beyond the current participation base of children who are likely to take on hunting as a life-long pastime due to their strong hunting social support system.

Additionally, hunters who start with small game hunting often make the progression to big game hunting, and this pattern is more apt to lead to long-term hunting. Furthermore, it has been found that inactive hunters and individuals who have left the sport were more likely to never have hunted small game than those who are considered active hunters. (Responsive Management, 2004)

An organized species-specific youth hunt, with parents (or other committed adult) requested to attend alongside their child, will give youngsters an early connection to the outdoors in such a way to increase the probability of them joining the ranks of life-long hunters: hunting-oriented relationships are formed while pursuing small game in a manner that provides clear guidelines and an established structure.

### ***Okay, we’re convinced it’s important to host a youth hunt. Now what do we do?***

This Planning Guide includes useful forms and information to help you plan a successful youth hunt. Ideally, you will want to start planning this event four to six months in advance. Less than four months is possible, but it may be more difficult. Please see the enclosed *Sample Timeline* (pages 12 through 14). All forms found in this Planning Guide are also available for download at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us).

***When and where can we hold our event?***

Youth hunts in Pennsylvania must coincide with legal seasons specific to the species being hunted. Private Regulated Hunting Grounds are exempt from this mandate as long as they operate within the confines of their permits. If there is a “youth only” season for the species that you are targeting, it is highly recommended your event take place during that youth season. You may, however, hold your hunt anytime during the designated season, youth or otherwise, for the chosen species as outlined in the Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Digest.

You may hold your event on public or private land. If you choose to utilize private property, make sure appropriate permission is granted and the taking of small game and/or waterfowl is permitted.

***How can the PA Game Commission help us with our youth hunt?***

The Game Commission can help you by publicizing your event on its website. Complete and return the enclosed *Youth Hunt Notification* form (page 23) to let the Game Commission know about your event.

Additionally, the Game Commission will facilitate on-line registration for your event through its website; your Registration Committee Chair will have access to current, up-to-date information regarding the number of participants and other pertinent information.

***What should we do if we want to hold a Youth Pheasant Hunt?***

If you are interested in hosting a Youth Pheasant Hunt, please refer to the “Mentored Youth Pheasant Hunt Planning Guide, Revised May 2009,” available on the PA Game Commission’s web-site at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us). Included in the Mentored Youth Pheasant Hunt Planning Guide are the *Request for Live Birds* and *Mentored Youth Pheasant Hunt Notification* forms.

***Additional information can be obtained by contacting:***

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Pennsylvania Game Commission, Bureau of Information and Education  
(717)787-4250 ext. 3327 or 3628  
[recruitakid@state.pa.us](mailto:recruitakid@state.pa.us)

## ***Planning Your Event***

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Now that you have decided to host a youth hunt, you need to begin the planning process. Throughout this progression, it is imperative to remember the size of the hunt is not nearly as important as having a quality event that everyone enjoys - from the initial planning to the post-events, and the relationships that evolve in between. Although everyone recognizes there are important goals you'll want to accomplish, it is vital to remember if you are not having fun, others probably aren't, either.

**NOTE:** Although the terminology used for this event is a "Youth Hunt," it is essential you realize there are important differences between a "hunt" and a "youth event aimed at recruiting life-long hunters." This Planning Guide is to be used for events falling under the latter - don't be in a rush to simply "go hunting." The activities leading up to, and following, the actual hunt are as significant, if not more so, than the hunt itself. For more information on the development of these activities, please see *Pre- and Post-Hunt Activities* of this Planning Guide on pages 19 through 21. In addition, "mentor" used throughout this Planning Guide is referencing an experienced hunter who has taken on the responsibility of fostering hunting skills and a passion for the sport to a youth (and their parent(s)) who may not otherwise have that support; this is not to be confused with "mentored hunts" for youngsters under the age of 12.

The following steps will help ensure a successful youth hunt:

- **Designate a coordinator**
- **Establish a timeline**
- **Designate committees**
- **Develop an activity plan**
- **Recruit help**
- **Advertise**
- **Recruit participants**
- **Pre-register participants**
- **Have fun**
- **Say thank you**
- **Evaluate your success**



PGC Photo – J. Kosack

**Designate a coordinator.** One person needs to take charge of the event and become the Coordinator. This individual's job is primarily to delegate assignments and make sure everything is progressing on schedule.

**Establish a timeline.** A sample timeline has been included in this guide (*pages 12-14*); use it to develop a timeline of your own. Many people are more productive when they have a deadline, so be sure your volunteers know when they are supposed to complete their assignments. In order to utilize your timeline efficiently, the Coordinator should monitor progress frequently to ensure tasks are accomplished on schedule.

**Designate committees.** For events on the smaller side, a single person can function as a committee. A listing of suggested committees and their recommended tasks has been included for you in this guide (page 11).

**Develop an activity plan.** The planning committee should create an activity plan. Brainstorming is a good way to begin determining what your goals and objectives will be. The activity plan will define your focus and establish how you will accomplish those goals and objectives; make sure the goals and objectives you finalize can be evaluated easily. While using the plan, it is important for the planning committee to *focus on the end goal* of the youth hunt. To help you develop your activity plan, an outline can be found on page 24.



PGC Photo – J. Kosack

**Recruit help.** For adults who like to volunteer, youth events are looked forward to with excitement, so take advantage and tap into this source of energy! Help will be needed from the early planning phase of the event to the post-hunt activities. Find individuals you can expect to complete their assignments appropriately and on time. You may find it helpful to have your volunteers fill out the *Volunteer Questionnaire and Conduct Guidelines* form included in this guide (page 25). Also, it is a good idea to have all volunteers complete and sign a *Youth Hunt Consent and Waiver* form as well (page 32).

You will also need to recruit volunteers specifically as mentors - individuals who are committed to nurturing the development of technical skills and the social competence needed for a youngster to become a life-long hunter. Care must be taken when selecting mentors because their enthusiasm and ability to transfer the skills needed to be a hunter to another person are as important as their technical skills. Additionally, the development of a life-long hunter requires multiple experiences and exposure over a period of time until the individual sees himself or herself as a hunter; mentors need to recognize this commitment and be willing to engage with their mentee (and their participating parent/adult) over time. (National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2008)

If you are having some difficulty finding volunteers, here is a brief list of places to look to get you started:

- Hunter-Trapper Education instructors
- Hunting partners
- Coworkers
- Sportsmen's club members
- Conservation group members

**Advertise!** On page 29 you can find a sample news release; use it to create your own and generate some publicity. In addition, the Game Commission will send out a news release highlighting the agency's website as the place to find and register for youth hunts such as yours.

The local newspaper may be willing to do a story before the event to gather interest, or come out the day of the event to cover it; you won't know unless you contact them specifically. Additionally, this would give both you, and your sponsors, pre- and/or post-event publicity. If a news story isn't possible, perhaps you could consider placing an ad (paid or free) in your local newspaper.

Prior to the event, call local radio stations to book a free public service announcement about your upcoming youth hunt - remember to call all the stations, not just the one you listen to.

Also, if your local cable company has a “community” channel, you may want to consider listing your event there as well.

Don’t forget about other places to advertise. Think about high-traffic areas in your community where you could hang posters featuring your event. What about sending a letter detailing your event to the local schools (*page 27*)? Along those lines, most schools have their own T.V. station where students host a morning news show; in addition to the daily announcements, many often will list out-of-school opportunities for students as well. Your area’s homeschoolers also should be contacted; most have local groups/co-ops – a simple web search for “PA Homeschoolers Groups” will net you the local contact information you will need.

Take a moment and think about the audience you *really* want/need to reach. Kids who are brought up in a hunting family will probably attend, but they will likely be hunters anyway;



reach out to youngsters who lack family hunting support because they have a low probability of entering into hunting as a life-long pastime on their own.

Social media outlets, such as Facebook, are a primary way for today’s younger generations to communicate with each other. Anyone with an account can very quickly and easily set up an “event page” for your youth hunt outlining the details, including a link to the Game Commission’s youth hunt calendar and on-line registration. The administrator of the account can then invite “friends” to take a look at the event page and RSVP as to their attendance – although this RSVP would in no way officially register them for the event, it could be used as a tool to remind those interested in attending to

register through the Game Commission’s Event Manager. Furthermore, those “friends” can send your event’s page to their “friends,” many of them bound to be members of just the group you need to reach – those who have no hunting support at home. Your event’s home on Facebook will soon take on a life of its own, including a “wall” where interested youngsters can post comments and encourage others’ attendance. Social networking will rapidly increase the speed of information regarding your youth hunt travels and can easily amplify the number of people willing to consider attending. You will, however, want to monitor comments posted on your event’s “wall;” should any unfavorable comments surface, simply delete them and don’t engage in perpetuating negative discussion.

Be creative – don’t let the ideas above limit your advertising ideas and possibilities!

**Recruit Participants.** Going hand-in-hand with advertising, recruiting participants will be the primary responsibility of your Publicity/Promotion Committee. In order to truly recruit new hunters, you will want to reach youth outside the current participant base, although children who are likely to become hunters anyway due to their strong hunting social support system are certainly welcome. Some places you might actively want to look for participants include:

- Hunter-Trapper Education classes
  - the PA Game Commission maintains a calendar of upcoming classes on their website; you may want to consider contacting instructors of local classes and ask them to promote your event
- Relatives with non-hunting parents
- Neighborhood youth
- Friends of your own children
- Local 4-H clubs
  - search for your county's Cooperative Extension Office using the Internet for contact information - many will have an on-line directory of local clubs, and even if they don't, you can always contact the Extension Office directly
- School conservation/environmental clubs and FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America)
  - Remember the letter outlining your event that was suggested to send to local schools (*page 27*)? You may want to address it to the associated club advisor(s) directly using the school's mailing address. Access your local school district's website and see if they list their campus clubs – if they do, many will include the advisor's name. If this information isn't readily available, a simple call to the school should help.

**Pre-register your participants.** It will be helpful to establish a minimum number of participants you are willing to host an event for, as well as a maximum number that can be reasonably and safely accommodated. Limit participants to a number you know you can comfortably handle.

In addition to accessing the Game Commission's website to locate a youth hunt, individuals will be able to register for the event using the Event Manager. To aid you in your planning, especially with check-in the day of your youth hunt, the Registration Committee Chair of your event will have real-time access to registrant details throughout the registration time period. Although you may want to consider a registration deadline of one week or more prior to the event, take into consideration possible walk-ins the day of the event throughout your planning process.

**Have fun.** Throughout your event, including pre- and post-hunt activities enjoy it! Remember, if you aren't having fun, chances are others are not as well.

**Say thank you.** At the conclusion of your youth hunt, write thank you notes to all volunteers, sponsors, donors and others that contributed to the success of your event.

**Evaluate your success.** See *Evaluating Your Success* (page 22).

For more information, see 'General Event Planning Considerations' on pages 15 through 17 and 'Preventing Snags' on page 18.



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## ***Suggested Committees and Assignments***

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Below are some examples of committees and corresponding tasks that you might find helpful in planning your event.

### **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- Establish a budget and determine funding needs
- Select working committees and chairs for each
- Determine target audiences
- Oversee overall planning
- Select dates and choose site (negotiate costs and contract)
- Determine partners or cooperating groups
- Check in to insurance needs and coverage
- Make sure bills are paid
- If providing a Hunter-Trapper Education course prior to the event, contact the appropriate Region Office (page iii)

### **PUBLICITY/PROMOTION COMMITTEE**

- Produce and distribute news releases, flyers and/or posters, radio and TV public service announcement information and other promotional materials
- Arrange for newspaper coverage and radio/TV interviews the day of the event
- Make contacts to recruit participants

### **REGISTRATION COMMITTEE**

- Contact the PA Game Commission using the *Youth Hunt Notification* form found on page 23
- Construct signs directing participants to sign-in the day of the event
- Compile sign-in materials and packets
- Sign-in participants and collect appropriate forms, including *Youth Participant Evaluations* at conclusion of event; collect registration fee (if applicable)
- Set up information desk and answer questions during event

### **PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

- Develop and facilitate the schedule of events
- Recruit instructors or leaders for activities
- Establish schedule; determine location, time and materials needed for each activity
- Oversee activities during the event
- Ensure participants are aware of pre- and post-hunt activities
- Organize "thank you" note writing or other recognition for all volunteers

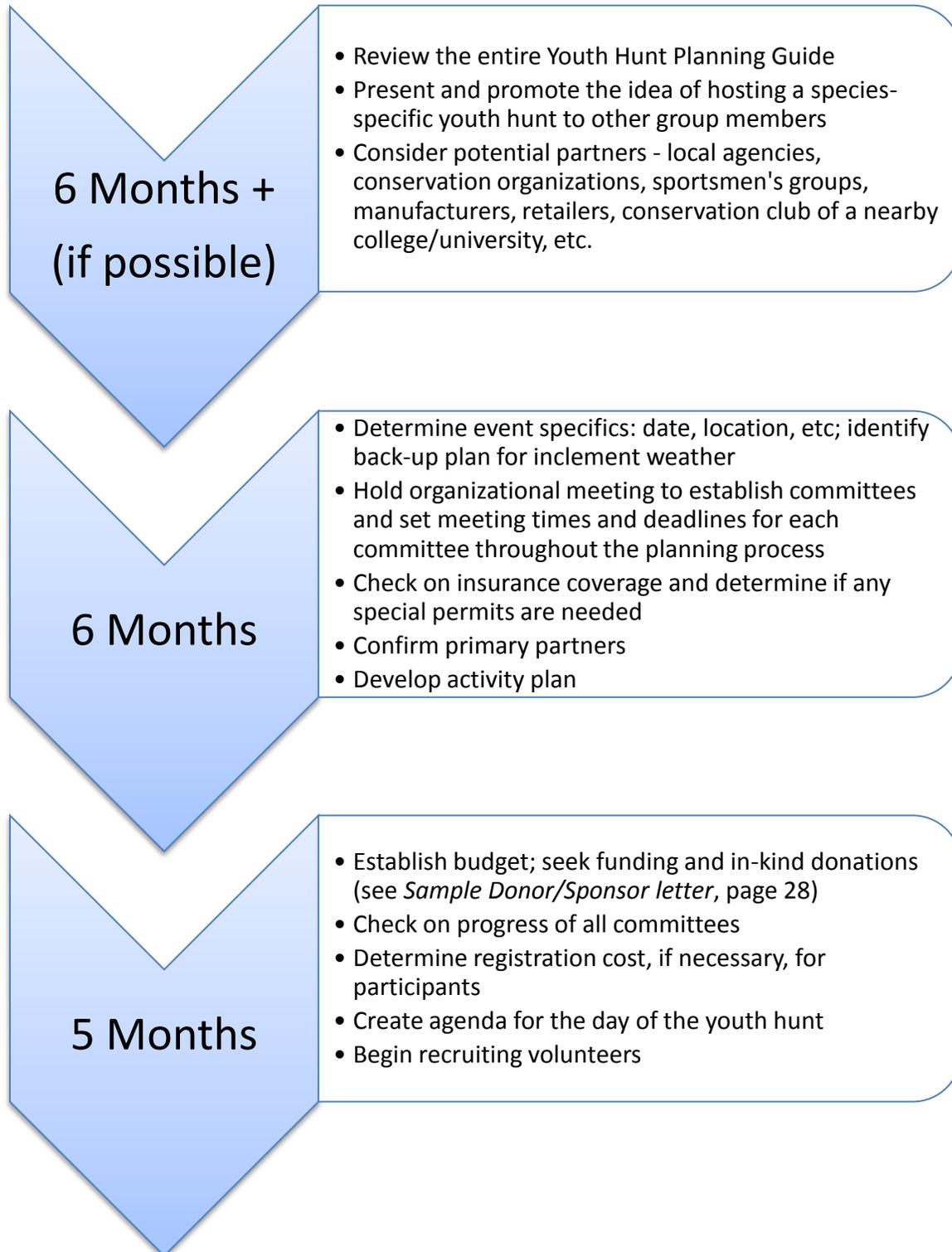
### **FUNDING COMMITTEE**

- Work with Planning Committee to determine needs for funding
- Recruit corporate sponsors, prizes and donations (see *Sample Donor/Sponsor Letter*, page 28).
- Keep track of all donors for follow-up "thank you" letters
- Acknowledge donors in program, with a sign, and/or at the event, etc.
- Organize "thank you" note writing or other recognition for donors and sponsors

## Sample Timeline

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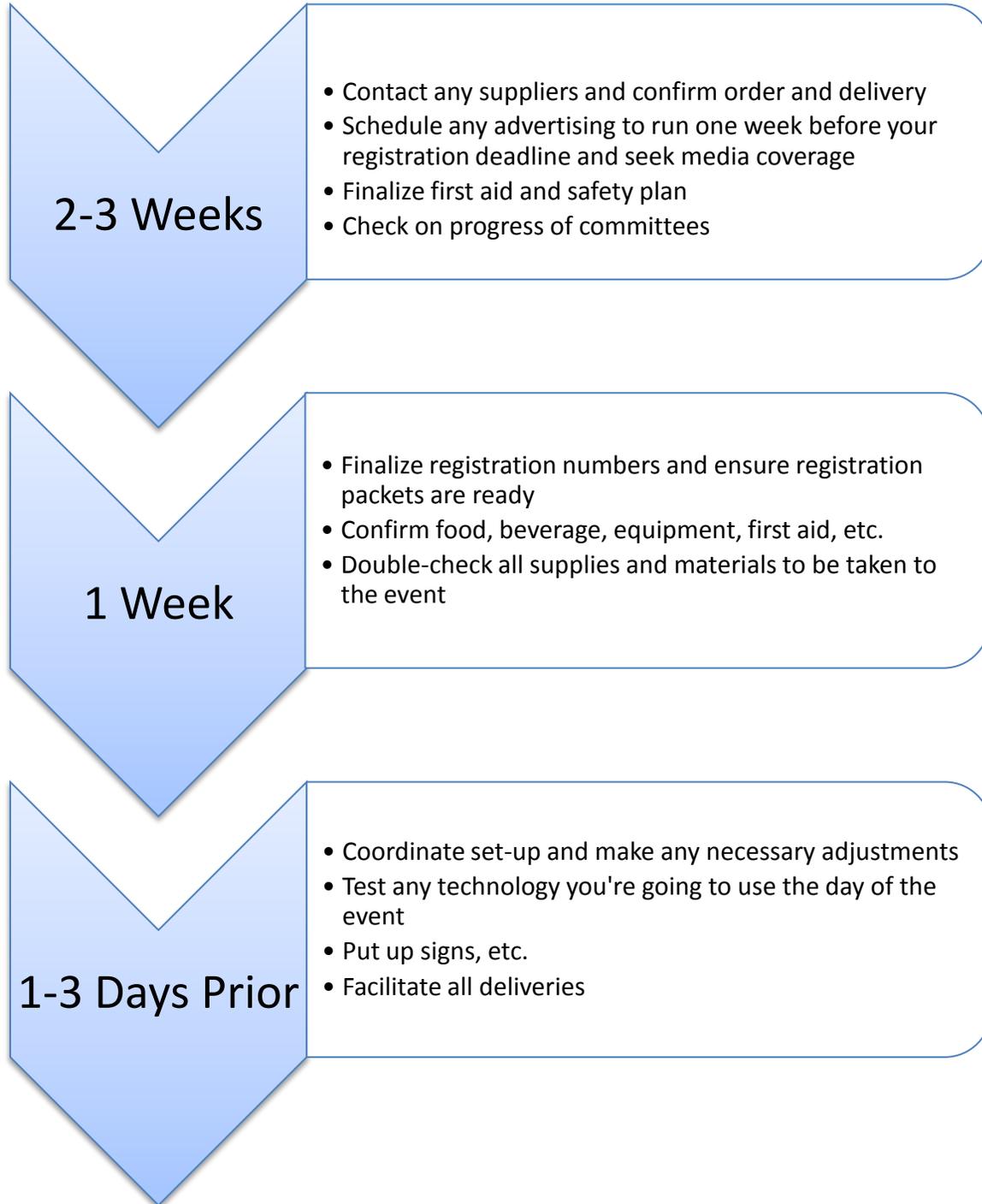
The Coordinator and/or Planning Committee should ensure tasks are being completed as scheduled. Following is a suggested timeline for planning your event.



*Sample Timeline, continued*



*Sample Timeline, continued*



## General Event Planning Considerations

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### Safety

- ▶ Have adequate eye and ear protection available for shooting activities.
- ▶ Each person in a hunting party must abide by the Fluorescent Orange Requirements as outlined in the *Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Digest*; have enough fluorescent orange hats and vests to properly attire each member of your hunting parties while they are in the field. In almost every instance a special youth hunt will be held, the requirement is to have a minimum of 250 square inches on head, chest and back combined and visible 360 degrees at all times. For exceptions, see the most recent *Digest* for requirements.
- ▶ Strive for a ratio of one adult per youth participant. One great way to do this is to encourage parents to join in the hunt – not only will this satisfy your ratio, it will also help to foster family support, which is vital to hunter recruitment and retention.
- ▶ In order for Junior Hunters (ages 12 through 16) to be eligible to participate, they **must** have successfully completed a Hunter-Trapper Education course. To help registered participants fulfill this requirement, especially the segment who you are actively trying to recruit (those with little to no family/social

hunting support), consider offering a Hunter-Trapper Education class and encourage parents to also attend. If your hunt is going to be held outside of a youth-only season and an accompanying adult wishes to participate in the actual hunt, they **must** successfully complete a Hunter-Trapper Education course and have their proper hunting license prior to the event. To coordinate a certified HTE course, contact your Region Office (page iii).



- ▶ Decide what safety precautions you must take for your activities and events. Determine how you will make sure that everyone participating in the event understands the safety guidelines.
- ▶ Plan to study “Shoot – Don’t Shoot” scenarios with your participants.

### ***Shooting Activities***

- ▶ Will you supply shotguns for youth who don't have one to use? If so, where will you get them, who will prepare them, and how many will you need?
- ▶ How many shotshells will you need? Where will you get them? What gauges will you require? Consider using light loads for practice activities and the hunt itself. (See *Pre- and Post-Hunt Activities* on page 19.)
- ▶ Will you need clay birds as part of the day's activities, perhaps pre-hunt? If so, how many clay birds will you need, where will you get them, and how will they be thrown?
- ▶ If you will be using dogs, how many will be needed and where will you get them? What types of dogs will you be using? Who will handle them?
- ▶ How many fields/locations will you be using? How close are they to each other and how many hunters can they accommodate?
- ▶ Review the *Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Digest*. Remember that all game laws apply to this hunt. In regards to small game hunting parties of no more than 6 persons, even individuals not shooting but are walking along are considered part of the hunting party and count in that number. Be sure your volunteers and participants are aware of and adhere to all game laws.

### ***Expenses***

- ▶ As discussed earlier, find sponsors and donors for your expenses: food, shotshells, targets, door prizes, etc...

### ***Hunt Preparations***

- ▶ Make sure all participants have received guidelines for the hunt in advance. For example, where the event will be held, when the participants need to be there, and the safety rules. This information could easily be presented in conjunction with the on-line registration, or sent to registrants separately.

### ***The Day of the Hunt***

- ▶ Have a back-up plan in case of inclement weather.
- ▶ Visually examine each participant's Hunter-Trapper Education card *or* hunting license.
- ▶ Have the participants actively involved as soon as safety will allow; keep lectures and demonstrations to a minimum.

- Focus on the experience of the hunt rather than the kill. ***It's important that bagging game is not over-emphasized in a youth hunt.*** Inexperienced hunters may not always harvest their quarry, but they will take home memories of their first hunt and the events leading up to it. A hunt's success shouldn't be measured by whether a hunter takes game. Make sure all your participants feel successful.
- For an all-day event, you must arrange to feed your participants and staff a lunch. If you can, offer the game your hunt is centered around as the main course as it would be a great way to incorporate the events of the day.

### ***Wrapping Up***

- Offer a demonstration on cleaning and processing the game that was hunted and provide recipes.



PGC Photo – H. Korber

### ***After the Event***

- Thank your volunteers. Write an article for your club newsletter or organization publication expressing your gratitude. By recognizing your volunteers, you will be ensured volunteers for future events.
- Write thank-you notes to sponsors, donors and others who contributed to the event. Appropriate recognition can help you retain sponsors for a similar event next year.
- Write a post-event news release and send it to the local newspapers with an event photo. Allow this to serve as yet another way to thank all the businesses, sponsors, volunteers and youth who participated. Don't be shy about tooting your own organization's horn; you deserve it after hosting such a great event!
- Evaluate your success (see *Evaluating Your Success* on page 22).
- Plan future opportunities to engage participants; **multiple experiences are necessary to create a social network that facilitates lifelong hunters.**

## *Preventing Snags*

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- Allow enough time to plan your hunt (see the *Sample Timeline* on pages 12 through 14).
- Don't attempt to do it all yourself – find partners who share your goals and will also benefit from the activities that you are planning.
- As the saying goes, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!”
- Regularly check the progress of your committees and make adjustments as necessary.



- Keep it fun for your volunteers and don't forget to say “thank you”.
- Make sure you have covered all safety issues and have a first-aid/emergency medical plan. The *Emergency Plan* found on page 30 will help get you started.
- When it seems like a hassle, remember why you are holding a youth hunt.
- Plan for a rainy day. Plan for things that could go wrong.
- Remember to emphasize good manners and ethical conduct.

## ***Pre- and Post-Hunt Activities***

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As previously acknowledged, one of the main barriers to hunter/trapper recruitment is the lack of social support, especially by family members. By asking an adult who is a large part of a child's life (parent, aunt/uncle, grandparent, etc.) to attend along with the youngster, this support is fostered; this participation includes all activities surrounding the hunt such as pre- and post-hunt activities. Additionally, post-hunt activities that keep new participants (including parents) involved and give them "the next step" toward becoming a life-long hunter, are vital. Follow-up support, especially that of a mentor, encourages skill set improvement while assisting in the continuation of a hunting social network.

Following are some examples of pre- and post-hunt activities that will enhance the hunter recruitment process. It is important to note that mentors should continue to stay engaged with their child/parent (or other supporting adult) even after the conclusion of the last post-hunt activity associated with your youth hunt.

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### **Pre-Hunt**

1. Don't assume your participants (including the adults who are encouraged to accompany their youngster) will already have Hunter-Trapper Education Certification.
  - a. As mentioned earlier, consider conducting a Hunter-Trapper Education class for participants, especially if you have certified HTE instructors as part of your volunteer pool. Request all volunteers to attend as well, as they will serve as mentors throughout the process of each youngster (and their adult) identifying themselves as a hunter. A Hunter-Trapper Education class is the perfect stage for participants and mentors to meet and get to know each other.
  - b. Otherwise, notify youth that have registered and their parents that this training is required for their participation in your event. Direct them to the Game Commission's web-site or Region Office (*page iii*) for dates and times. Most classes are held between March and mid-October.

2. Plan an afternoon in the field prior to the hunt at the hunt location with participants, their parent or other adult, and volunteers/mentors. This will give the youth a chance to get familiar with the site and mentors a chance to explain the process of the hunt. Consider walking the field in small “hunting parties” and discussing “Shoot – Don’t Shoot” situations. For example, if you are in a group of three, walking side-by-side and a bird jumps up ahead and flies to the right, which hunter(s) may shoot?
  3. Plan an afternoon of shooting and learning. Arrange stations for gun safety, marksmanship, field lore, animal tracking, hunting with dogs, etc. Peer teaching can be effective if you have experienced youth hunters willing to help. When offering practice opportunities at the trap range, try to provide activities for the youth who are waiting for their chance to shoot such as “Shoot – Don’t Shoot” situations, information on how to hunt with dogs, or current hunting regulations.
- 

## **Post-Hunt**

1. As a finale, invite your participants **and their families** to attend a barbeque or wild game feast to celebrate the experience. If you’ve noticed a recurring theme throughout this planning guide, it is that family support is important to a youth’s continued participation in the sport. A gathering of this sort provides a great opportunity for your participants to tell tales of the hunt and socialize with friends, family and peers to relive the hunting experience.
2. Recognize your participants by posting photos from the event and the names of those who took part in the day. A great place to do this would be the barbeque/wild game feast. Additionally, you could designate an area in your organization’s clubhouse to showcase memories of the day. Another idea that would be sure to be preserved for years in many scrapbooks would be to take out a spread in the local newspaper with photos and names. If a social media outlet, such as Facebook, was utilized for advertisement of your youth hunt, encourage the continuation of that networking by posting photos and encouraging discussions and contacts.

3. Utilize the contact information collected from registration to build a follow-up database. However, you must re-assure the participants their information will only be used to contact them regarding additional, similar-type events. It is important to stress that their information is secure.
4. Don't limit follow-up activities to just outdoor skills workshops, range days, and other activities related to shooting and hunting; although these types are often best, any reason for participants to stay connected to their new-found network is suitable. Habitat improvement projects, stream-side litter clean-ups, and other similar activities help to maintain social support in addition to adding a sense of responsibility toward the environment. (National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2008)



5. Check with adult mentors after the hunt to see if they are keeping in contact with the youth that attended the hunt. ***The lack of a mentor is one of the biggest barriers preventing youth who are interested in hunting from actually participating in, and adopting, the sport.*** Encourage mentors to offer to take a youngster (or two), and their supporting adult, on any hunting-related excursion – something as simple as a trip to a local sporting goods store to stock up on hunting supplies, or out in the field/woods to scout for an upcoming season, will make a world of difference.
6. Consider offering youth participants and their parent/guardian (or other encouraging adult) complimentary year-long memberships to your club. Having both the youngsters and their supporting adult as members of your organization will help to continue fostering a strong social support network that is so vital to recruiting and retaining new hunters.

## *Evaluating Your Success*

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One of the most important parts of planning is evaluating the success of your event. This allows you to compare your results with your initial objectives. You can determine if you reached your goals and objective, provide information for program improvement, and determine the worth of your program.

The most common evaluation is one that solicits feedback on teaching methods and participant satisfaction through a simple questionnaire that participants fill out after the program. See the enclosed *Youth Participant Evaluation* on page 33.

Another great way to assess your success is to have your committee members evaluate the event - see the enclosed *Committee Evaluation* on page 35. Share the results with the planning committee and discuss them. Some questions you will want to consider as a group include:

- What can you do better?
- Which activities were strong and especially liked by the participants?
- How were the volunteers/mentors received?
- Did you accomplish your goals and objective?
- How can you make a good program even better for future youth hunts?



It would be beneficial for the Event Coordinator to complete an evaluation of the event and return it to the Game Commission. The information provided on the *Event Coordinator Evaluation* (found on page 36) will help the Pennsylvania Game Commission continue to develop better programs aimed at hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation within the commonwealth.

## ***Youth Hunt Notification***

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The Pennsylvania Game Commission can help advertise your youth hunt opportunity on its website and in news releases. Additionally, through our Event Manager calendar, participants and volunteers can register on-line and your Registration Committee Chair will have access to real-time registration information. To take advantage of this service, please complete and send this form to: *Youth Hunt Program, PA Game Commission; 2001 Elmerton Avenue; Harrisburg PA 17110-9797*. This form can also be downloaded from the Game Commission's website ([www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)), completed electronically and returned to [recruitakid@state.pa.us](mailto:recruitakid@state.pa.us).

### **Contact Person**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Cell Work (*circle one*)  
Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Cell Work (*circle one*)  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Club or Organization hosting the event**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of event:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Game being hunted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of the event and nearest town(s)/crossroads:** (*Ex. Vineland Conservation Club near Smithville*)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **County and Wildlife Management Unit where event will take place:**

County: \_\_\_\_\_ WMU: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the fee to participate?** \_\_\_\_\_ **What is the registration deadline?** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Who should interested youth contact?**

Contact Person    Club    Other (Please provide name and contact info) \_\_\_\_\_

**What number of youth participants should your event's on-line registration be capped at?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Will you be providing an opportunity for interested participants to gain Hunter/Trapper Education certification as part of your event or will participants be required to already be HTE certified?**

Will be providing an HTE certification opportunity  
Please provide details (date, time, location, etc.) which you coordinated through your Region Office (refer to page 15 for more details regarding scheduling a certified HTE course): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Participants must be HTE certified elsewhere prior to participation  
(*Remember, all participants MUST be HTE certified to participate.*)

## *ACTIVITY PLAN*

You may wish to complete more than one activity plan if you are holding activities on more than one date such as pre- and post-hunting activities. ***Remember, multiple experiences are required to provide adequate knowledge and skill development in order to successfully recruit new hunters. The more mentored encounters you provide for your participants, the more likely they will be to pursue hunting later on in life.***

Name of activity:

Date to be held:

Approximate time needed for the...

• Introduction:

• Activity:

• Conclusion:

Goal(s) of the activity:

Objectives (What do you want participants to be able to do know, understand or develop an appropriate attitude about? Include skills, ethics, safety, conservation issues, respect for the land, etc.):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Materials and Resources Needed

Introduction:

Activity:

Conclusion and follow-up:

### Procedure (What do you need to do to prepare?)

Introduction:

Activity:

Conclusion and follow-up:

What safety measures will need to be taken? First aid? Emergency procedures?

Alternate Activities (in case of bad weather or unforeseen problems):

Follow-up:

Evaluation (How did it go? What should you change next time?):

*I would like to VOLUNTEER to help with the Youth Hunt*

Please complete and return this form to:

*(Your organization's Contact Information)*

Please also register as a volunteer  
for your specific Youth Hunt on-line  
at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The best times to reach me are: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to offer my assistance with the Youth Hunt.

I will bring the following food items: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to help cook or serve food at the event. I am available to help at the following times:  
\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to help with registration. I can help:

- With pre-registration (assembling registration packets, etc.)
- During the event at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to mentor a young hunter. I am available:

- During the event at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_
- For pre- and post-hunt activities that may take place on days preceding or following the main event.

I have [a] well-trained hunting dog(s) and would like to be a guide for the event. I am available:

- During the event at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_
- For pre- and post-hunt activities that may take place on days preceding or following the main event.
- My dog(s) is/are the following breed(s): (please also list quantity)  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in photography and would like to take pictures. I am available:

- During the event at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_
- For pre- and post-hunt activities that may take place on days preceding or following the main event.

I would like to help. Please let me know what I can do. I am available:

- During the event at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_
- For pre- and post-hunt activities that may take place on days preceding or following the main event.

I would like to help by: \_\_\_\_\_

*-See next page for Volunteer Conduct Guidelines-*

## *Volunteer Conduct Guidelines*

We appreciate your willingness to assist in our event. In order to maintain a high-quality event for the benefit of all volunteers and sponsors, every volunteer is asked to follow these guidelines.

### **As a volunteer for this Youth Hunt, I will:**

Conduct myself in a professional manner and help to maintain a safe, positive environment for all concerned.

### **I will not:**

- Use alcohol at any time before or during the event.
- Wear clothing that displays inappropriate sayings or graphics.
- Inappropriately touch or become intimate with participants.
- Use profane or degrading language.
- Lobby for or promote private, political, or religious cause, or distribute material that does not meet the approval of the sponsoring organization.
- Deliberately take actions that place a participant or volunteer in an unsafe situation, regardless of whether the activity results in harm or injury.

I have read and understand these guidelines and promise to abide by them.

---

Volunteer's Signature

---

Date

## *Sample Letter to Local Schools*

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[Organization name]  
[Your name and title (if applicable)]  
[Your/Organization's Address]  
[Your/Organization's City, State, Zip Code]  
[Your/Organization's contact phone number]  
[Your/Organization's e-mail]

Date

Name (Research the school's conservation/environmental club advisor and address to them, if possible)  
School District  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]:

The **(organization name)** is committed to maintaining Pennsylvania's outdoor heritage, wildlife conservation, and hunting traditions. We believe in order to maintain this valued way of life, today's youth must be allowed the opportunity to gain hunting experience and learn about Pennsylvania's rich hunting heritage at an early age. With the alarming trend of single-parent families and lack of family support in regards to hunting, we are committed to providing these experiences for all interested youth.

We would like you to help promote our commitment by publicizing to your student body an opportunity for youth interested in hunting who may not have the support needed at home. On **(day of week, date)**, the **(organization name)** will sponsor a youth **(species)** hunt for youth ages 12-16 at **(location)**. The **(cost)** registration fee will include lunch. Those attending will be eligible to win door prizes and other giveaways such as **(list planned door prizes/giveaways)**. To participate, youth must successfully complete a Hunter-Trapper Education class **(if your organization is hosting an HTE opportunity prior to the hunt, include details; if participants must be certified elsewhere, include the Game Commission's website as the resource to find local HTE classes)**. Interested participants must pre-register for the event on-line at the Pennsylvania Game Commission's website, [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us), or by calling (717)787-4250.

Would you please consider highlighting this event your students? If a forum for out-of-school activities, such as a morning news show/daily announcements, is in place in your school, we would appreciate if you would run the above information prior to the registration deadline of **(date)**.

Thank you in advance for your encouragement of youth participation in our event. If you have any further questions, you may contact me using the above contact information.

Sincerely,

[Publicity/Promotion Committee Chair's Signature]  
[Publicity/Promotion Committee Chair's Typed Name]

## *Sample Donor/Sponsor Letter*

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[Organization name]  
[Your name and title (if applicable)]  
[Your/Organization's Address]  
[Your/Organization's City, State, Zip Code]  
[Your/Organization's contact phone number]  
[Your/Organization's e-mail]

Date

Organization/Business Name of potential donor/sponsor  
Name (if possible, try to find an individual within the organization/business that you can contact)  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]:

The (**organization name**) is committed to maintaining Pennsylvania's outdoor heritage, wildlife conservation, and hunting traditions. We believe in order to maintain this valued way of life, today's youth must be allowed the opportunity to gain hunting experience and learn about Pennsylvania's rich hunting heritage at an early age. With the alarming trend of single-parent families and lack of family support in regards to hunting, we are committed to providing these experiences for all interested youth.

We would like you to join us in this commitment by considering the donation of (**list what you would specifically like this organization/business to donate in terms of door prizes/giveaways, food, shotshells, targets, funds to cover expenses, etc.**) for our youth (**species**) hunt for youth ages 12-16 on (**day of week, date**), at (**location**).

Thank you in advance for your consideration of supporting our event. If you have any further questions, you may contact me using the above contact information.

Sincerely,

[Funding Committee Chair's Signature]  
[Funding Committee Chair's Typed Name]

***News Release***

**For Immediate Release**

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Conservation Group/Club Will Host a Youth (*species*) Hunt

The (*organization name*) will sponsor a youth (*species*) hunt for interested young people, ages 12-16 at (*time*) on (*day of week, date*), at (*location*). The (*cost*) registration fee will include lunch. Interested participants must pre-register for the event. An adult (parent, aunt/uncle, grandparent, etc.) is asked to accompany each youngster.

“We have been planning this event for months and are looking forward to helping kids have fun while learning about wildlife and conservation and habitat,” said (*event chairman’s name*), chairman of the event. “We have a lot of activities planned, including (*types of activities, demonstrations, etc. planned*). Everyone who attends will be eligible to win (*door prizes offered*) in the door prize drawing.”

The event is being co-sponsored by (*list partners*). Several local businesses also are supporting the hunt through donations of prizes and food, including (*names of businesses*).

For more information, contact: (*name and phone number of registration chairman*). Registration is available on-line at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us) or by calling (717)787-4250 ext. 3327 or 3628.

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**EMERGENCY PLAN**

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First Aid Kit Location(s): \_\_\_\_\_

AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Location(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Extinguisher Location(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Where will participant *Emergency Medical Authorization* forms be located during the hunt? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Nearest Police Station: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Fire Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Local E.M.S.: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Veterinary Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions from hunt location: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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<b>First Aid/CPR certified volunteers and cell phone numbers the day of event</b>	
Name	Cell Phone Number

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In case of a wide-spread emergency, what signal will be used to indicate everyone participating needs to immediately gather at a central meeting location, and where will that location be? \_\_\_\_\_

---

*This information must be shared with all participants at the outset of the day's events*

***Emergency Medical Authorization Form***

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Please complete this form to facilitate prompt authorization of medical treatment in the case of an emergency.

Youth Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Adult accompanying youth and relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate relative or childcare provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Known allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last tetanus shot: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information/Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

***Youth Hunt Consent and Waiver***

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant) desire to participate in a special youth hunt sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_ (organization). I have the permission and consent of my parent(s) or legal guardian(s), \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (parent(s)/guardian(s)) as is reflected by their signature(s) on this form.

We, Participant and Parent(s), understand that hunting is a sport involving firearms. Firearms, when mishandled, can be dangerous. I, Participant, understand that I must use the utmost care during the special youth hunt and agree to live up to the highest standards of hunting and firearms safety. I agree to follow all instructions given by the hosting organization, its members, agents, employees, licensees, volunteers and associates (Representatives) assisting with the hunt. I/We, Parent(s), hereby consent to Participant’s participation in the hunt and authorize representatives of Organization to exercise control over Participant during the hunt.

We, Participant and Parent(s), also hereby grant the hosting organization unconditional rights to use the participant’s name, voice, and photographic likeness in connection with articles, press releases, and audio/video productions that are a result of this event.

We, Participant and Parent(s), for and in consideration of Participant being allowed to engage in these activities, hereby release and forever discharge Organization and its Representatives from any and all claims, damages, demands, actions or causes of action of every name and nature arising out of these activities, and do agree that we will indemnify and save Organization harmless against loss or damage that may result from Participant’s participation in the special youth hunt. We acknowledge that we are executing this Consent and Release of our own free will, mindful of possible hazards of such activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and seals, intending to be legally bound hereby, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.  
(Month) (Year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

### ***Youth Participant Evaluation***

Information you provide will help us evaluate the success of the event and identify and implement program improvements. Please complete and return this form to the registration table before you leave today.

Youth Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**You may circle more than one answer for each question:**

1. How did you hear about this youth hunt?
 

a. Mailing	d. Website (Which one? _____)
b. Friend	e. The organization hosting the event
c. Newspaper	f. Other _____
  
2. Why did you register for this event?
 

a. To learn new skills	c. It sounded like fun
b. To improve skills I have	d. Other _____

3. Please rate the following by checking the appropriate box.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
The activities were:					
The instructors were:					
My mentor was:					
The meeting space was comfortable?					
Lunch was:					
My overall rating of the program is:					

4. How many animals/birds of the game you were hunting did you see?
  - a. None
  - b. 1 – 5
  - c. More than 5
  
5. Have you ever hunted before?
 

a. Yes – How many years? _____	b. No
--------------------------------	-------



## ***Committee Evaluation***

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Congratulations! You've done it. Give yourself a pat on the back and take a few minutes to reflect on your recent adventure. Addressing these questions as a committee may help you develop better programs in the future.

1. What was the best moment of the day?
2. Was there a worst moment of the day? If so, please explain.
3. What went really well?
4. What could you have done better?
5. Did the registration process run smoothly?
6. Did the event receive adequate promotion/publicity?
7. Were you able to recruit youth who otherwise would not have had a hunting opportunity? For instance, youth from non-hunting families.
8. Were you able to recruit adequate staff, mentors, participants, funding, and/or donations?
9. Which activities were not well received, were ineffective, or need more work?
10. Which activities were especially liked by participants, were very effective, and/or ran smoothly?
11. How did participants and volunteers/mentors receive each other? Were there any awkward moments for the youth, parents or mentors?
12. Did you accomplish your goals and objectives?
13. What can future committees do to make the program even better next time?

***Event Coordinator Evaluation***

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The information you provide in this evaluation will help the Pennsylvania Game Commission continue to develop better hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation programs. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

**Send to: Youth Hunt Program; PA Game Commission; 2001 Elmerton Avenue; Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797**

This evaluation can also be downloaded from the Game Commission’s website (www.pgc.state.pa.us), completed electronically, and returned to recruitakid@state.pa.us.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Name of organization who hosted the event \_\_\_\_\_

How many youth participated in your event? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of those youth do you believe would otherwise have not had the opportunity to have a hunting experience, for instance, youth from non-hunting families? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you able to:

	YES	NO
Recruit enough staff?		
Recruit enough mentors?		
Recruit enough participants?		
Acquire adequate publicity?		
Acquire adequate funding?		
Acquire adequate donations?		

Will your organization offer a similar program next year, and during a “youth-only” season, if possible? If not, why?

What is your biggest need to make your program more successful?

How could the Pennsylvania Game Commission help you make your event more successful?

## *Works Cited*

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