



Bankrupt!

By J.T. Fleegle

WHEN I DO win Powerball, I am sure my monetary worries will be over for life. I mean who can't live out the rest of their days with \$164 million. What! You're telling me that a normal Joe can become rich and spend more money than he has ever made in his life in a matter of a couple of years. Inconceivable.

Perhaps it is inconceivable to you and me — the poor schmucks who haven't won the lottery. But it is true. You've read about them in the paper, seen them on the news. Even those with a multimillion dollar paycheck can't seem to balance their budgets. I guess it should come as no surprise, then, that the pioneers of Pennsylvania filed for natural resource bankruptcy as well.

Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh were all well-established cities by 1800, with growing populations. And people were hungry. As communities grew, wildlife surrounding them disappeared. But fear not, market hunters (those who turned a profit from their ability to harvest wildlife) did their duty by supplying settlements with a steady stream of deer and other game. Those who pursued deer wrote of taking three with one shot, seven in one day, and 100 in one fall. Of course, hunters of that era didn't have the hang ups that we do today. Jacklighting, salt licks, dogs – all were acceptable methods of meeting supply and demand.

By 1840, the number of Pennsylvanians stood at three million. The deer season (Aug 1 – Dec 1 with no limit) which had been set nearly a hundred years earlier, seemed to do little to slow the decline of this much-sought prize. The General Assembly changed deer season in 1869, and in 1876, and, again, in 1895 (Oct 15 to Dec 15). But those pieces of legislation, like previous game laws before them, did little for the deer. Mostly because no one paid them any mind.

And the dwindling numbers of deer certainly didn't stop anyone from hunting them even if it was within season. There is a rather famous account by John M Phillips in which he and a friend jump a buck and kill it after three days of tracking. Mr. Phillips tells his friend that "I have killed the last deer in Pennsylvania." Mr. Phillips is known as one of Pennsylvania's foremost conservationists yet he was not deterred from withdrawing the last buck from the Pennsylvania resource bank. No wonder people go bankrupt after winning the lottery.