

SOMERSET COUNTY TRIO PLEAD GUILTY TO WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS

HARRISBURG - Following a lengthy undercover investigation, three Somerset County individuals pled guilty to a variety of Game and Wildlife Code violations, involving deer, bear and ruffed grouse. **Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer Brian Witherite** filed all of the charges before District Judge Douglas Bell, Meyersdale.

Those individuals who pled guilty were from Salisbury.

The investigation began when information was provided about Holler illegally selling deer meat and bear gall bladders. While conducting an undercover investigation into these allegations, further information was obtained about the individuals illegally killing deer and ruffed grouse.

Based on the information, on Sept. 29, the opening morning of the 2007 archery season, WCO Witherite and Deputy WCO Jeremy Coughenour apprehended the individuals hunting over a baited area. Witherite and Coughenour discovered an untagged, eight-point antlered deer laying on the ground nearby and, after further investigation, uncovered a videotape of the hunt that showed the deer being shot by the one individual while the deer was standing on the bait pile in the woods.

On March 13, an individual pled guilty to nine counts of unlawfully buying and selling game and was ordered to pay fines of \$3,500 plus, and he had his hunting and trapping privileges revoked for 35 years. Of the nine counts, five involved the sale of deer meat, and four counts involved the buying and selling of black bear parts, including two gall bladders, one pair of paws and a bear hide.

On Oct. 18 and Nov. 8, another pled guilty to the following charges: one count of failing to tag and report big game kills, one count of using unlawful devices and methods, two counts of unlawfully taking and possession game or wildlife, one count of unlawfully killing a ruffed grouse in closed season, and two counts of illegally buying and selling game. He was fined a total of \$2,875, paid \$50 restitution and had his hunting and trapping privileges revoked.

On Oct. 18, another individual pled guilty to unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife, and was fined \$300 and received three years revocation of his hunting and trapping privileges.