



PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

SOUTHWEST REGION

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NEWS RELEASE

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OVER TWENTY DEER POACHED, JAIL SENTENCES IMPOSED

Three Washington County men charged with killing 21 deer over a two-day span in December 2023 recently pleaded guilty in county court, receiving jail sentences, lifetime loss of their hunting licenses and thousands of dollars in fines.

Ezra McClelland, 20; Julian Marth, 21; and Grant Bamberger, 20, all of Washington, Pa., each pleaded guilty Sept. 18 to multiple felony charges in the poaching spree. In addition to permanently losing their hunting licenses, each was sentenced to serve seven days in county jail and ordered to pay more than \$6,300 in fines and restitution. Neither of two rifles used in the poaching spree and seized in the investigation will be returned.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission launched its investigation into the poaching spree Dec. 9, 2023, after receiving a tip multiple deer had been shot and left lay during the early morning hours, with the actors making no attempt to retrieve them. Nine deer were found.

Then on Dec. 17, another tip about similar activity came in from the same vicinity. Twelve deer were found, but this time a witness observed the suspect vehicle's license plate number.

Game Wardens from Washington and Allegheny counties along with the Southwest Overt Special Investigator and K-9 Handler interviewed with the offenders and collected evidence at each scene. Of the 21 deer shot, six were antlered bucks.

Local residents who observed suspicious activity and alerted the Game Commission in a timely manner were crucial in the apprehension of those involved, and ultimately, bringing those responsible to justice. The significant penalties that result from cases like this might serve as a deterrent for others, as well.

Report poaching and wildlife crimes to the Pennsylvania Game Commission by calling the agency's 24-hour dispatch center at 1-833-PGC-HUNT or 1-833-PGC-WILD, or call the Operation Game Thief toll-free hotline at 1-888-PGC-8001.

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