

MINUTES

Of the Regular Meeting on August 21, 2023, of the

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Held at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on August 21, 2023. Commission meeting dates are filed with the Secretary of State, Office of Administrative Rules before December 15, annually. The agenda is listed on the Department's website and was posted at the entrance of the Wildlife Department Building on August 14, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.

Chairwoman Leigh Gaddis called the Commission in session at 9:00 a.m.

Rhonda Hurst, Executive Assistant, called the roll.

MEMBERS PRESENT: LEIGH A. GADDIS, Chairwoman
 JAMES V. BARWICK, Vice-Chairman
 C. RICK HOLDER, Secretary
 D. CHAD DILLINGHAM, Member
 MARK H. MABREY, Member
 JESS M. KANE, Member
 TIM DIEHL, Member
 JOHN P. ZELBST, Member

J.D. Strong, Director, introduced the following guests: Rick Grundman, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF); Laura McIver, Quail Forever/Pheasants Forever; McKenna Periman and Deborah Torres from the Governor's Office; Susan Bergen, Landowner of the Year recipient; Jessica Elliott, Bergen Ranch; Raegen Siegfried, Shikar Safari & President of the OWCF; Jim Johnson, Shikar Safari and OWCF Board member; Stephen Ruiz, Barry Shrader, Scott Dittner, Bill Payeur, Kamala Gambly, Blue River Fly Fishers.

Director Strong recognized Phillip Cottrill, Jr., Game Warden, for 20 years of service; and Marni Loftis, Operations Manager, for 20 years of service. He also announced that the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies selected Oklahoma's Wildlife Conservation Commission as its 2023 Wildlife Commission of the Year among its 24 states and Canadian provinces at its recent summer conference.

Nathan Erdman, Chief of Law Enforcement, and Raegen Siegfried, Shikar-Safari Club International recognized Game Warden Riley Willman as the Shikar-Safari Club International Officer of the Year. The nominees from each District were: District 1 – Riley Willman; District 2 – Cody Youngblood; District 3 – Jim Gillham; District 4 – Trey Hale; District 5 – Dylan King; District 6 – Michael Zimmerman; District 7 – Orlando Martinez; and District 8 – Stephen Paul, who was the runner-up.

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, emphasized the importance of ODWC's partnerships with private landowners stating that conservation on private property is mission critical to our natural resources. He said the Department has been recognizing private landowners since the early 1980's. Mr. Dinkines introduced Josh Richardson, Private Lands Supervisor, who gave an overview of the criteria for this award. Mark Howery, Senior Biologist, gave a presentation of the Bergen Ranch located in Johnston and Pontotoc Counties. He said that Susan and Floyd Bergen have spent more than a decade working to enhance soil health, prairie plant diversity, and wildlife populations across 22,000 acres. Mr. Dinkines presented Susan and Floyd

Bergen as the recipients for the 2023 Oklahoma Landowner of the Year award. Mrs. Bergen said she is honored to receive this award and appreciates the partnership she has developed with ODWC.

Richard Snow, Assistance Chief of Fisheries Division, introduced Ethan Lovelace, Fisheries Biologist at the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area. Mr. Lovelace praised the amazing partnership we have with the Blue River Fly Fishers and their long history of dedication the Blue River area. Since 2005, the Blue River Fly Fishers have raised over \$75,000 that has been donated back to the area. Several members were in attendance and donated an additional \$12,308 to Blue River. Motion was made by Commissioner Holder and seconded by Commissioner Kane to accept the donation as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Richard Snow recognized Anthony Rodger as the 2022 Fisheries Division Professional of the Year. The Fisheries Division employees nominated for the award were David Bogner, Colter Fluman, Michael Hollie, Verlin Marrow, and Cliff Sager.

Director Strong presented the Spirit of ODWC Award to Karla Beatty, Human Resources Officer. Other nominations included David Arbour, Jeff Pennington, Lance Meek, Marni Loftis, Michael Bergin.

Director Strong recognized the Communication and Education employees who won 10 national communication awards at the recent Association for Conservation Information conference.

Three FIRST PLACE Trophies for:

Video: Outdoor Recreation: "Champions of Change" Blake Podhajsky.

Best Social Media Campaign: "Gar Week" Sarah Southerland and crew.

Regulations Publications: "The Fishing and Hunting Regulations" Smokey Solis and the entire regs committee.

Five SECOND PLACE Trophies for:

Video: How To/ Instructional: "Redbud Jelly" Blake Podhajsky (Missed first place by .67 and a special nod to the "talent" Tell Judkins). Mr. Judkins provided Redbud Jelly samples after the conclusion of the meeting.

Best Social Media Presence: "ODWC Social Media" Sarah Southerland and crew.

Photography Scenic: "Fishing Access" Darrin Hill.

Graphics: Logos / Illustrations: "A Rich History and a Bright Future - The ODWC Logo"

Smokey Solis along with the ODWC Brand Committee.

Poster: "Hunters Against Hunger Poster" Smokey Solis.

Two THIRD PLACE Trophies for:

Video: Recurring Program: "Outdoor Oklahoma" Blake Podhajsky, Darrin Hill, Todd Craighead.

One-time Publication: Book/Report: "Hunters Against Hunger Program Guide" Smokey Solis.

Director Strong added that Blake Podhajsky was also voted in by his peers as the President of the Association for Conservation Information at ACI's recent conference. ODWC will host the national conference in 2026.

Bill Dinkines recognized Nathaniel "Jr" Kester as the 2022 Wildlife Division Technician of the Year. Other nominees include: Kevin Anson and David Banta.

Bill Dinkines recognized Brett Cooper as the 2022 Wildlife Biologist of the Year. Other nominees include: Russell Perry, Jay Rouk, Curtis Tackett, Marcus Thibodeau, Jerrod Davis.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick and seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to approve the minutes from the June 5, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with

Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Chairman Gaddis called a 10-minute break.

Director Strong stated that not much is going on with the legislature during the interim, but we are planning to have a meeting or two with legislators before the next session. Director Strong also gave a brief update and highlighted the Congressional report submitted by Brittnee Preston, the Department's part-time Federal and Congressional Liaison. This report was sent to all Commissioners and will be kept with the minutes of this meeting. Mr. Strong gave a Director's Report on calendar items and agency updates. This report was given to the Commission and will be kept with the minutes of this meeting. Director Strong referenced the Commission Guidebook that is in each Commissioner packet. This reference guide was created by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies as a tool for state wildlife agencies and Commissions and Boards. Commissioner Barwick encouraged all Commission members to read this guidebook. Commissioner Zelbst asked if the Commission had read the article he sent regarding the new hog poison that has been invented, and he asked how it would affect Oklahoma. Director Strong stated that the EPA approval process is usually a slow process, and that the Oklahoma Congressional delegation will probably take an interest in this issue. He said although they are working on different delivery methods that will strictly target hogs, ODWC will be interested in making sure it does not affect non-target species, such as bears, racoons, etc.

Foundation Executive Director, Rick Grundman, announced the Call of the Wild Gala is set for September 29 @ the Omni Hotel in Oklahoma City. Everyone should have received their invitations. He also announced that the Oklahoma Waterfowl Festival will be held at the G&H Decoy headquarters in Henryetta on September 23. This event will be the site for the Oklahoma State Duck Calling Championship. The winner will be qualified for the National event in Stuttgart, Arkansas. All proceeds from this event benefit the Foundation. Mr. Grundman mentions an endowment from Midway USA Foundation that will support shooting sports and shooting ranges in Oklahoma and there is progress on the archery range at the Arcadia Conservation Education Area.

Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration presented the Financial Statements for May 31, 2023 and June 30, 2023. Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Holder to accept the financial statements as presented and approve miscellaneous contributions. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education, explained that the increase in revenue from the PR (Pittman Roberts) fund is primarily coming from recreational shooters. This increase in funds and the need to have facilities for shooters warranted a need to create a new FTE in C&E division for a Shooting Range Coordinator. Mr. Rodefeld introduced Amanda Thomas, who updated the Commission on shooting range project across the state. The most recent shooting range completion is at Kaw Wildlife Management Area (WMA). A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for September 14, 2023. Commissioner Mabrey asked Mr. Rodefeld if there were any plans to provide better signage for the WMA's and the shooting range facilities? He has notice that at Okmulgee WMA, there are no signs on the highway or roads leading to the area. Unless you drive by the entrance, you don't even realize it is there. He said we need to inform the public these facilities are available. Mr. Rodefeld said there is an outreach project in progress that is centered around hunting and recreational shooting that makes community access a priority, which would include better signage.

Bill Dinkines introduced a slate of employees who gave an update on Geographic Information System (GIS) based Wildlife Management Area Planning and Modernization. Russ Horton, Assistant Chief of Wildlife Division, presented on the journey wildlife division took to get to wildlife management plans and the spatial data related to those plans. Scott Parry,

Region Supervisor, presented how the WILMA (Wildlife Information Land Management Application) application is used to provide answers in a more efficient manner to a variety of questions. For example, how many miles of fence are on the Pushmataha WMA. David Murray, GIS Analyst, explained the various ways area biologist can enter information into GIS. GIS is about relating an activity to an area on the ground in relation to time.

Bill Dinkines reported that Oklahoma now has two confirmed detections of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Texas and Woodward Counties. Mr. Dinkines said we are the 26th State in the nation to have CWD. The important thing is to educate our hunters, not create panic, use a calm scientifically based response and keep hunting. He introduced Jerry Shaw, Programs Supervisor, who identified the surveillance areas and the procedures outlined in the ODWC CWD Response Plan, previously approved by the Commission. Commissioner Barwick asked about the field quick test that is being researched in Minnesota. Mr. Shaw says it is showing promise but has not yet been approved. He said this quick test or live test would be especially beneficial for captive breeders. Commissioner Zelbst inquired about transmission between animals. Mr. Shaw stated that it is spread through nose-to-nose contact and saliva. It can even be in plants and stay in the soil for years. Commissioner Diehl expressed concerns in communicating to hunters. Mr. Shaw said that we are working with C&E division to send some targeted marketing by notifying license holders especially in the surveillance areas.

The September Commission meeting has been cancelled and the October 2, 2023 meeting will be held in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Leigh A. Gaddis, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

C. Rick Holder, SECRETARY

AGENDA
Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting

Public Meeting: **Monday, October 2, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**
Hilton Garden Inn Bartlesville
205 S. W. Frank Phillips Ave., Garden Room D
Bartlesville, OK 74003

The Commission may vote to approve, disapprove, or take other action on any of the following items. The Commission may vote to authorize public comment on any agenda item requesting a rule change.

1. Call to Order – Chairwoman Gaddis
2. Roll Call – Rhonda Hurst
3. Invocation – Bill Dinkines
4. Pledge of Allegiance – Bill Dinkines
5. Introduction of Guests
6. Presentation of Awards

Russ Horton, Assistant Chief, Wildlife Division – 35 years
Wade Free, Assistant Director – 40 years

7. Recognition of students from Locust Grove schools on their achievements at the Archery in the Schools Program national tournament – Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education Division and Kelly Boyer, Communication and Education Specialist.
8. Presentation of the American Fisheries Society Sportfish Restoration Award to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation – Nels Rodefeld and Lynn Quattro, Assistant Chief of Freshwater Fisheries at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.
9. Presentation on Wildlife Management Area Activities for the Central Region – Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division and Jeff Pennington, Central Region Supervisor.
10. Presentation and update on Turkey Research in Oklahoma – Bill Dinkines and Colter Chitwood, Assistant Professor, OSU Department of Natural Resources Ecology and Management.
11. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on minutes of the August 21, 2023, regular Commission meeting.
12. Director's Report – J.D. Strong
 - a. Federal and Congressional Update
 - Oklahoma Legislative Update
 - b. Calendar Items – discussion of upcoming department calendar items.
 - c. Agency Update – an update on current activity within each division of the agency.

13. Presentation of the July 31, 2023 and August 31, 2023, Financial Statements and consideration and vote to approve, amend, or reject miscellaneous donations – Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration.
14. Discussion of Schooler Lake located in Choctaw County, donation of certain real property located in Payne County and disposal of certain real property located in Cherokee County, which the Commission by majority vote may decide to discuss in Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S. 307(B)(3); with any action thereon to take place through discussion, consideration, and vote in Open Session – Clayton Eubanks, Assistant Attorney General and Bill Dinkines.
15. Discussion and annual personnel review of the Executive Director which the Commission by majority vote may decide to discuss in Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S. 307(B)(1); with any action thereon to take place through discussion, consideration, and vote in Open Session – OWCC Vice Chairman Barwick, and Chairman of the Performance Review Committee.
16. Discussion and action, if any, on establishing and approving Commission Committees and Committee member assignments – OWCC Chairwoman Gaddis.
17. New Business – Discussion of any matter not known about, or which could not have been reasonably foreseen 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
18. Announce the November 6, 2023 Commission meeting will be in Oklahoma City.
19. Adjourn*

*The Wildlife Commission and Department Staff will have a lunch and museum tour at the Woolaroc Ranch immediately following adjournment. A quorum may or may not be present. No business will be discussed, nor will any action be taken following the adjournment of the regular meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.

People with disabilities may request accommodations by calling 405-522-6279 at least three days before the meeting.

***Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Financial Statement***

For the period July 1, 2023 Through August 31, 2023

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Balance Sheet - All Fund Types and Accounts Groups
August 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary	Account Groups			
	General	Capital Projects	Fund Types	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	08/31/2023	08/31/2022
			Trust			Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	9,580,288		4,418,033			13,998,321	13,063,928
Investments	0		268,797,834			268,797,834	249,192,776
Accounts Receivable	3,797,973					3,797,973	2,404,252
Monthly Lifetime License			172,925			172,925	179,550
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	6,926,052		7,000			6,933,052.00	4,381,611.00
Fixed Assets				77,444,689		77,444,689	77,150,379
Land				104,864,066		104,864,066	104,295,709
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	0
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					2,122,403	2,122,403	-3,924,890
	20,304,313	0	273,395,792	182,308,755	2,122,403	478,131,263	442,368,704
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	1,552,655					1,552,655	892,676
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	172,925					172,925	179,550
Compensated Absences Payable (leave accrual)					0	0	0
Net Pension Obligation					2,122,403	2,122,403	-3,924,890
Total Liabilities	1,725,580	0	0	0	2,122,403	3,847,983	(2,852,664)
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			128,283,963			128,283,963	120,834,407
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			7,553,630			7,553,630	6,031,113
Investment in General Fixed Assets				182,308,755		182,308,755	181,446,088
Fund Balance	18,578,733		137,558,199			156,136,932	136,909,760
Total Fund Balance	18,578,733	0	273,395,792	182,308,755	0	474,283,280	445,221,368
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	20,304,313	0	273,395,792	182,308,755	2,122,403	478,131,263	442,368,704

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Trust Funds

Combining Balance Sheets
August 31, 2023

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	08/31/2023 Totals	08/31/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	513,860	3,904,173			4,418,033	4,128,566
Investments	33,917,676	99,042,565	128,283,963	7,553,630	268,797,834	255,223,889
Due From Other Funds		172,925			172,925	179,550
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	34,431,536	103,126,663	128,283,963	7,553,630	273,395,792	259,539,005
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			128,283,963	7,553,630	135,837,593	126,865,520
Fund Balance	34,431,536	103,126,663			137,558,199	132,673,485
Total Fund Balance	34,431,536	103,126,663	128,283,963	7,553,630	273,395,792	259,539,005

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances
All Governmental Fund Types and Expendable Trust Fund
For the Period July 1, 2023 Through August 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	08/31/2023	08/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	1,792,055			1,792,055	1,618,006	10.76%
Other Wildlife Sales	332,270			332,270	369,568	-10.09%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	404,711			404,711	57,967	598.17%
Grant Revenue	5,002,402			5,002,402	3,864,752	29.44%
Investment Income	73,331		18,138	91,469	40,276	127.11%
Miscellaneous	122,180			122,180	180,134	-32.17%
Total Revenues	7,726,949	0	18,138	7,745,087	6,130,703	26.33%
Expenditures:						
Administration	1,609,766			1,609,766	1,006,253	59.98%
Wildlife	2,532,425			2,532,425	2,655,751	-4.64%
Fish	1,838,947			1,838,947	1,673,806	9.87%
Law Enforcement	2,735,255			2,735,255	1,898,765	44.05%
Information and Education	653,483			653,483	648,040	0.84%
Capital Improvements	1,660,202			1,660,202	2,091,190	-20.61%
Land Acquisitions		-		-	720,420	-100.00%
Total Expenditures	11,030,078	0		11,030,078	10,694,225	3.14%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(3,303,129)	0	18,138	(3,284,991)	(4,563,522)	-28.02%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	0	0.00%
Operating Transfers In	1,050,776	0	751,430	1,802,206	4,487,051	-59.84%
Operating Transfers Out	0		(1,050,776)	(1,050,776)	(1,770,210)	-40.64%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	1,050,776	0	(299,346)	751,430	2,716,841	-72.34%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	(2,252,353)	0	(281,208)	(2,533,561)	(1,846,681)	37.20%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	20,831,086	0	34,712,744	55,543,830	43,010,699	29.14%
Fund Balances August 31, 2023:	18,578,733	0	34,431,536	53,010,269	41,164,018	28.78%

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances
Trust Funds

For the Period July 1, 2023 Through August 31, 2023

	Fiduciary Fund Types			08/31/2023 Totals	08/31/2022 Totals
	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust		
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	276,775			276,775	303,425
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	26,265			26,265	28,235
Interest and Investment Income	0	800,311	25,642	825,953	2,917,800
Employer Contributions		0	117,653	117,653	126,756
Employee Contributions		87,464	80,815	168,279	164,832
Total Operating Revenues	303,040	887,775	224,110	1,414,925	3,541,048
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		55,229	1,310	56,539	54,973
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	1,516,961	12,860	1,529,821	1,448,898
Total Operating Expenses	0	1,572,190	14,170	1,586,360	1,503,871
Operating Income	303,040	(684,415)	209,940	(171,435)	2,037,177
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	303,040	(684,415)	209,940	(171,435)	2,037,177
Fund Balances, Beginning	102,823,623	128,968,378	7,343,690	239,135,691	224,948,696
Fund Balances, August 31, 2023	103,126,663	128,283,963	7,553,630	238,964,256	226,985,873



Wildlife Contributions Report

August 2023

Total Payment Amount	Name Of Individual Or Business	Description Of Contribution
\$5,000.00	Barry Shrader	Fish Division - Blue River
\$4,808.00	Barry Shrader	Fish Division - Blue River
\$9,808.00	Total	



J. KEVIN STITT, GOVERNOR

J. D. STRONG, DIRECTOR

Wildlife Conservation Commission

Leigh Gaddis

Chairman

James V. Barwick

Vice Chairman

Rick Holder

Secretary

Tim Diehl

D. Chad Dillingham

Jess Kane

Mark H. Mabrey

John P. Zelbst

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 19, 2023

TO: OK Department of Wildlife Commission and Staff

FROM: Brittnee Preston

RE: Report on August and September Federal and Congressional Issues for October Commission Meeting

Congress:

This summer, Congress faced several big-ticket items leading them to fall deadlines: the debt ceiling, regular appropriations, Farm bill expiration, Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization and the National Defense Reauthorization Act. While they attempted to take on a few of these, most of them were left hanging as they headed into their regular August recess.

Congress returned at the beginning of September with a shutdown looming most of their to do list undone. While both chambers have been working on their own versions of short-term funding solutions, without a clear path forward, it is unclear at the time of this report, if a shutdown will occur.

Time will tell...

In other relevant news, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) froze for a second time in a month during a press conference. His health and if he is "fit" for office is under scrutiny by many in and around the DC circuit including Senators within his own Conference. According to a memo being circulated on the Hill, it only takes 5 senators to request to convene a conference meeting to consider removal of the leader. As of now, he retains his leadership position, but it is unclear how this will pan out long term. He is the longest serving party leader in U.S. history.

Appropriations –

- > Appropriations season hit a stride in July. The House moved several of their bills and the Senate moved all 12 of their bills through committee for the first time in five years. However, Congress is still up against a tight deadline of September 30th to find agreement between the chambers on government spending.
- > A possible shutdown is looming, and it is no surprise that a Continuing Resolution will be needed to patch funding until they are able to work out final appropriations numbers.
- > Speaker McCarthy and the House GOP are discussing a short-term funding bill that extends spending until October 31st, cuts budgets and makes border policy changes.
- > The Senate says that measure is a non-starter in the Senate. They are eyeing bundling funding bills into minibuses but some members have voiced concerns with that, stalling the process of moving forward on that path.
- > Additionally, the White House has asked for \$4 billion in additional disaster relief funding, bringing the total request to \$16 billion.

We manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.

> As a refresh, below are highlights from the relevant appropriations bills released in each chamber:

HOUSE FY24 APPROPRIATIONS BILLS SUMMARY

AGRICULTURE BILL

- The bill provides funding of \$25.3 billion— a decrease of 532 million or 2.1% from the FY23 enacted levels.
- \$1.169 billion for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), a decrease of \$2.1 million. This includes increases of \$10 million for animal disease traceability, \$2.5 million for avian health, and \$8.5 million for specialty crop pests.
- \$911.399 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a decrease of \$29.7 million. It also, eliminates funding for equity initiatives and climate change.
- The bill also zeros out the Watershed Reserve Program funding and the Healthy Forest Reserve Program.

ENERGY AND WATER BILL

- Provides \$57.958 billion in discretionary spending, which is \$1.963 billion below the FY24 President's Budget Request.
- Provides \$9.57 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, which is \$910 million above the FY23 enacted program level.
- Provides \$1.863 billion for the Department of Interior, which is \$91 million below the FY23 enacted level.
- \$1.693 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation's Water and Related Resources Account, which is \$392.4 million above the President's Budget Request. It prioritizes projects that increase water supply and support drought response instead of climate change activities and duplicative programs.

INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT BILL

- Provides \$25.417 billion in discretionary spending, which is \$13.433 billion (35%) below the FY 23 enacted level.
- The bill provides a total of \$6.173 billion for EPA, \$3.96 billion or 39% below the FY 23 enacted level.
- Provides a total of \$14.3 billion in discretionary appropriations for DOI, \$677 million below the FY23 enacted level.
- \$1.2 billion for the Bureau of Land Management (MLR/O&C), \$255.4 million below the FY 2023 enacted level. Within this amount, the bill includes:
 - \$73 million for sage-grouse conservation,
- \$1.536 billion for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, \$236.9 million below the FY 2023 enacted level. Within this amount, the bill includes:
 - \$270 million for Ecological Services
 - \$13.28 million for National Wildlife Refuge System.
 - \$20 million for Multinational Species Conservation Fund.
 - \$22 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund
 - \$72.6 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, a \$1.2 million reduction from FY 23
 - \$17 million for migratory bird management
 - \$50.14 million for Aquatic Invasive Species, of which \$500,000 to be used for a new university collaboration to establish a Conservation Research Unit at a Wildlife CRU.
- \$3.039 billion for the National Park Service, \$555.9 million below the FY 2023 enacted level. Within this amount, the bill includes:
 - Provides \$38.564 million for the Chickasaw National Recreation Area to address critical; repairs in the Platt and Buckhorn Developed Areas.
 - \$2.7 billion for the Operation of the National Park System
 - \$80 million for National Recreation and Preservation.
 - \$175.4 million for the Historic Preservation Fund.
- \$1.347 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey, \$436.25 million below the FY 2023 enacted level.
 - Provides \$28.2 million for Cooperative Research Units
- The bill includes the following provisions related to the Endangered Species Act:

We manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.

- Strengthens the limitation on listing sage grouse to include bi-state population.
- Prohibits the introduction of bison in the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge.
- Prohibits the listing of the lesser prairie-chicken.
- Requires the Department of the Interior to reissue the 2020 rule delisting the gray wolf.
- Prohibits the up-listing of the northern long-eared bat.
- Prohibits introduction of the grizzly bear in the North Cascades Ecosystem.
- The bill includes the following provisions related to Hunting, Fishing, and Recreational Access:
 - Prohibits the regulation of lead content in ammunition and fishing tackle.
 - Blocks restrictions on hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting on Federal lands.
 - Improves the Department of the Interior cost recovery processes for special recreation permits on federal lands.

SENATE FY24 APPROPRIATIONS BILLS SUMMARY

AGRICULTURE BILL

- Provides \$25.9 billion for the USDA, a slightly smaller decrease as the House bill.
- The bill provides \$941.1 million for NRCS, a decrease from the FY23 enacted level.
- Provides \$1.2 billion for Plant and Animal Health.
- Provides level funding for the Watershed Reserve Program at \$2 million
- Like the House bill, the Senate bill zeros out the Healthy Forest Reserve Program.

ENERGY AND WATER BILL

- The bill provides \$58 billion in new discretionary budget authority.
- Provides \$8.9 billion, to the Army Corps of Engineers
- Provides \$1.92 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation

INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT BILL

- The bill provides a total discretionary funding level of \$42.695 billion, which is \$200 million more than the fiscal year 2023 enacted level.
- In accordance with the Great American Outdoors Act, the bill allocates \$1.9 billion for projects within National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund and \$900 million for projects within the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- The bill provides \$9.9 billion for EPA.
- Provides a total of \$15.639 billion in discretionary appropriations for DOI.
- \$1.5 billion for the Bureau of Land Management. Within this amount, the bill includes:
 - \$209 million for Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat Management
 - \$34.7 million for threatened and endangered species.
- Provides \$1.8 billion for the Fish and Wildlife Service, a steady funding level. Within this amount, the bill includes:
 - \$298.7 million for Ecological Services.
 - \$539.2 million for National Wildlife Refuge System.
 - \$21 million for Multinational Species Conservation Fund.
 - \$24.556 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund
 - \$73.8 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants
 - \$53.86 million for migratory bird management
 - \$247 million for Fish and Aquatic Conservation
 - \$50.643 million for Aquatic Invasive Species, which includes \$3,500,000 for zebra mussel eradication.
- Provides \$3.457 billion for the National Park Service,
 - \$29.9 million for National Recreation and Preservation
 - \$195 million for the Historic Preservation Fund.
- \$1.5 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey.
 - Provides \$29.3 million for Cooperative Research Units

We manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.

Farm bill –

- > Farm bill discussions are swirling, and House and Senate drafts are expected soon. The House Agriculture Chairman, G.T. Thompson, said he expects a mid-September markup of the bill and will release text after August recess.
- > The House was slated to take up their version of the Agriculture appropriations bill during the last week of the July but tensions rose over funding levels and the upcoming Farm bill reauthorization. The House GOP pulled the bill from the floor calendar at the last minute.

Committee work –

- > Speaker McCarthy gave the green light to several House committees to open a formal impeachment inquiry on President Biden. The investigation will be led by House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) in coordination with House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jason Smith (R-Mo.).
- > Several Senators sent a [letter](#) to Director Martha Williams at USFWS and Assistant Administrator on Fisheries Janet Coit at NOAA expressing concerns with the agencies' joint roll back of the ESA reform rules. Sen. Lankford was a cosigner on the letter.

Agencies:

- > The USFWS [issued](#) a final rule prescribing the seasons, hours, areas, and daily bag and possession limits for hunting migratory birds for the 2023-2024 season.
- > The USFWS [announced](#) a grant opportunity for the Rapid Response Fund for Aquatic Invasive Species. “The Rapid Response Fund is intended to fund multiple projects each year and potentially serve as a catalyst for additional funds outside the Rapid Response Fund. It is recognized that rapid response costs may vary significantly depending on the species, size of the infestation, location, and the phase of the response, yet applicants are encouraged to ensure that budgets are cost-effective and focused on essential tasks to achieve desired management goals.” Applications will be accepted until funds are depleted.
- > The USFWS [noticed](#) a meeting of the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (HWCC) on September 12, 2023 from 1pm to 5pm EDT. The Council plans to discuss potential recommendations related to the process of considering the future use of lead ammunition on National Wildlife Refuge System lands.
- > The DOI [announced](#) a funding opportunity under their Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants program. The deadline for applications is November 2, 2023.
- > The USFWS issued a [final rule](#) revising the process for establishing regulations for certain Tribes on Federal Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands, and ceded lands. Under the rule, Tribes are no longer required to “annually submit a proposal to the Service for our review and approval and no longer publish in the Federal Register the annual Tribal migratory bird hunting regulations. Instead, the regulations now include elements of our current guidelines for establishing migratory game bird hunting regulations on Federal Indian reservations (including off-reservation trust lands) and ceded lands.”
- > USDA [announced](#) a grant opportunity for Program Funding for NRCS's Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Classic Program for Federal FY 2023. Applications are due by October 30, 2023.
- > USDA [announced](#) a grant opportunity for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials for FY 2023. Applications are due by October 30, 2023.

Coming up...

- > The FARM bill expires on September 30th.
- > The end of the 2023 fiscal year is September 30th.

***Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Financial Statement***

For the period July 1, 2023 Through July 31, 2023

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Balance Sheet - All Fund Types and Accounts Groups
July 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary	Account Groups			
	General	Capital Projects	Fund Types	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	07/31/2023	07/31/2022
			Trust			Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	10,181,220		4,397,799			14,579,019	14,767,313
Investments	0		274,273,367			274,273,367	259,230,844
Accounts Receivable	3,524,372					3,524,372	3,034,862
Monthly Lifetime License			103,850			103,850	123,875
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	6,217,255		7,000			6,224,255.00	3,207,874.00
Fixed Assets				76,963,194		76,963,194	77,031,479
Land				104,864,066		104,864,066	103,575,289
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	3,528,814
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
	19,922,847	0	278,782,016	181,827,260	21,202,403	501,734,526	457,374,586
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	921,960					921,960	650,400
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	103,850					103,850	123,875
Compensated Absences Payable (leave accrual)					0	0	3,528,814
Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
Total Liabilities	1,025,810	0	0	0	21,202,403	22,228,213	378,199
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			131,047,807			131,047,807	125,747,250
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			7,661,546			7,661,546	6,140,998
Investment in General Fixed Assets				181,827,260		181,827,260	180,606,768
Fund Balance	18,897,037		140,072,663			158,969,700	144,501,371
Total Fund Balance	18,897,037	0	278,782,016	181,827,260	0	479,506,313	456,996,387
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	19,922,847	0	278,782,016	181,827,260	21,202,403	501,734,526	457,374,586

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Trust Funds

Combining Balance Sheets
July 31, 2023

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	07/31/2023 Totals	07/31/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	504,496	3,893,303			4,397,799	4,111,919
Investments	36,625,299	98,938,715	131,047,807	7,661,546	274,273,367	265,371,842
Due From Other Funds		103,850			103,850	123,875
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	37,129,795	102,942,868	131,047,807	7,661,546	278,782,016	269,614,636
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			131,047,807	7,661,546	138,709,353	131,888,248
Fund Balance	37,129,795	102,942,868			140,072,663	137,726,388
Total Fund Balance	37,129,795	102,942,868	131,047,807	7,661,546	278,782,016	269,614,636

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances
All Governmental Fund Types and Expendable Trust Fund
For the Period July 1, 2023 Through July 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	07/31/2023	07/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	779,962			779,962	763,687	2.13%
Other Wildlife Sales	217,566			217,566	220,609	-1.38%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	113,762			113,762	42,803	165.78%
Grant Revenue	2,454,751			2,454,751	1,988,067	23.47%
Investment Income	37,300		8,774	46,074	19,245	139.41%
Miscellaneous	71,395			71,395	53,831	32.63%
Total Revenues	3,674,736	0	8,774	3,683,510	3,088,242	19.28%
Expenditures:						
Administration	836,787			836,787	509,135	64.35%
Wildlife	1,279,114			1,279,114	1,249,876	2.34%
Fish	898,571			898,571	688,525	30.51%
Law Enforcement	1,418,788			1,418,788	943,240	50.42%
Information and Education	275,137			275,137	270,429	1.74%
Capital Improvements	951,164			951,164	1,520,285	-37.44%
Land Acquisitions	-	-		-	0	0.00%
Total Expenditures	5,659,561	0		5,659,561	5,181,490	9.23%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(1,984,825)	0	8,774	(1,976,051)	(2,093,248)	-5.60%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	0	0.00%
Operating Transfers In	50,776	0	2,459,053	2,509,829	6,905,846	-63.66%
Operating Transfers Out	0		(50,776)	(50,776)	(49,790)	1.98%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	50,776	0	2,408,277	2,459,053	6,856,056	-64.13%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	(1,934,049)	0	2,417,051	483,002	4,762,808	-89.86%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	20,831,086	0	34,712,744	55,543,830	43,010,699	29.14%
Fund Balances July 31, 2023:	18,897,037	0	37,129,795	56,026,832	47,773,507	17.28%

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances
Trust Funds
For the Period July 1, 2023 Through July 31, 2023

	Fiduciary Fund Types			07/31/2023 Totals	07/31/2022 Totals
	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust		
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	103,850			103,850	123,875
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	15,395			15,395	16,170
Interest and Investment Income	0	2,844,263	224,520	3,068,783	7,364,775
Employer Contributions		0	59,220	59,220	53,539
Employee Contributions		43,582	40,719	84,301	82,773
Total Operating Revenues	119,245	2,887,845	324,459	3,331,549	7,641,132
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		54,860	1,280	56,140	54,572
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	753,556	5,323	758,879	718,270
Total Operating Expenses	0	808,416	6,603	815,019	772,842
Operating Income	119,245	2,079,429	317,856	2,516,530	6,868,290
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	119,245	2,079,429	317,856	2,516,530	6,868,290
Fund Balances, Beginning	102,823,623	128,968,378	7,343,690	239,135,691	224,948,696
Fund Balances, July 31, 2023	102,942,868	131,047,807	7,661,546	241,652,221	231,816,986



Wildlife Contributions Report

July 2023

Total Payment Amount	Name Of Individual Or Business	Description Of Contribution
\$2,500.00	Fidelity Charitable	Fish Division/Blue River Trout
\$20,000.00	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation	Arcadia Lake Project
\$22,500.00	Total	

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
J.D. Strong, Director

Personnel Actions
August 2023

New Hires

Sam Johnston – Fisheries Biologist, Streams Program, Porter Office - 8/1/23

Treager Stout – Grants Assistant, Central Office, 8/1/23

Promotions

Transfers

Resignations/Terminations

Annie Ensey – Accounting Assistant, Central Office, 8/4/23

Keith Waag – DP/GIS, Wildlife Division, 8/17/23

Daniel Perkins – Warden, Jackson County, 8/21/23

Retirements

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
J.D. Strong, Director

Personnel Actions
September 2023

New Hires

Grace Carter – Fisheries Biologist, NE Region, Miami Field Office - 9/1/23

Tracer Wagner – Wildlife Technician, Keystone WMA – 9/1/23

Caleb Taylor – Fisheries Technician, Jenks Field Office – 9/5/23

Promotions

Sid Tabor – Wildlife Technician at Honobia & Three Rivers WMAs to Biologist at Honobia & Three Rivers – 9/1/23

Transfers

Matt Pallett – Fisheries Technician, Streams, Porter Office to Fisheries Technician, Jenks Office – 9/1/23

Resignations/Terminations

Morgan Winstead – Fisheries Technician, ANS, Porter Office – 9/8/23

Ann Worden – Administrative Assistant, Fisheries Division at Holdenville – 9/8/23

Retirements

October 2023 DIRECTOR'S REPORT



OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF
**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

CALENDAR ITEMS:

Oct 7 Capt. Jeff Brown retirement, Cowboy Country Fellowship in Talala, 4:30-8pm
Oct 11 Kaw WMA Shooting Range WMA ribbon-cutting, 1 PM
Oct 14-17 SEAFWA Annual Meeting, Corpus Christi, TX
Oct 19 Gala Sponsor Appreciation Fish Fry – ODWC

AGENCY UPDATE

ADMINISTRATION

Accounting:

Accounts Payable:

- # of Claims Audited and Paid – 358
- Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid - 2,186,792.50

Purchase Card Program:

- Total # Agency Cardholders - 191
- Total # Agency Approvers (no cards) - 14
- Total Agency Monthly Standard Spending Limits - \$ 370,500.00
- Total Agency Spending Limits w/ Approved Increase Requests - \$491,000.00
- # of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved - 42
- # of P/Card Transactions Processed - 890
- # of ODWC In-depth Audited Transactions - 572
- OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions - 5
- Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases - \$ 261,482.96
- PCard Program Refresher Training - 6
- New Approver Training at OMES - 0
- New Cardholder Training at OMES - 0

Risk Management:

- OMES Surveys or Premiums Completed - 2
- New Cases Reported - 4
- Purchasing:
 - # of Purchase Orders/CO issued - 62
 - IT Acquisitions Processed - 20

Construction Site Visits: 4

- Barren Fork WMA - Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 8/3/2023
- San Bois WMA - - Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 8/9/2023
- Lake Jap Beaver- Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 8/15/2023
- Packsaddle WMA- Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 8/16/2023

Federal Aid:

- Federal Reimbursement Request: \$2,255,657

- Program Income \$120,535; In-Kind contribution \$2,320
- New Grants of Amendments Submitted: 12
- Grant Reports Submitted: 12
- Fisheries and Wildlife division Pcard charges sorted into 397 unique combinations of Fund / Division / Grant number / Project number / Product Code / Area / Object Code for claim jacket preparation
- Key Meetings / Milestones: Site visit to Atoka WMA for shooting range project. Northeast (Next Level) supervisor's meeting in Jenks. Coffee Chat presentation regarding Build America, Buy American (BABA) requirement. Met with Fisheries Supervisors regarding BABA. Met with USFWS regarding Partners for Fish & Wildlife grants.
- Subawards: 4 invoices processed, totaling \$33,615.94; 5 new subawards began July 1.
- Prepared Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance for FY23 for the annual audit. Compiled requested documents for auditors.

Human Resources:

- # Open Full-time Positions - 22
- Positions Interviewed - 5
- Candidates interviewed - 18
- Positions Announced - 8
- Candidates Screened - 94
- Filled Positions - 5
- See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month
- Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), - 0
- Full time employees on March payroll - 342
- DB Plan Members - 155
- DC Plan Members - 184
- Hourly employees on supplemental payroll - 39
- Retirement meetings and / or calculations - 5
- Work Comp Injuries - 1
- Other misc:
 - Continue to answer Workday questions.
 - Selection of participants for LDP Level Two
 - Submitted article on LDP for the WOG
 - Orientation for 3 new employees
 - Updated curriculum for Performance Management Process course
 - Revision of the DC Booklet
 - Updated curriculum for Progressive Discipline course
 - Finalized revisions of the DC Retirement Booklet and sent to printer.
 - Submitted article for HR Corner in the WOG
 - Planning and facilitation of Retirement Seminar
 - OSU CASNR Career Fair
 - Completed Mental Health in Natural Resources webinar.
 - Completed FEMA Emergency Management Institute online course: IS-907: Active Shooter: What you can do
 - Developed and delivered 3rd Quarter Safety Training for Headquarters
 - Attended MINRC meeting
 - Completed DEI for the WOG
 - WAFWA Diverse Student engagement initiative

- Biennial I&D Summit (DEI Training)

IT:

- This month I.T. took 134 inbound tickets.
- Many ongoing projects at the moment. This includes finishing the Eagles Nest AV revamp.
- Moving from the planning phase to starting the execution of our server hardware and software refresh.
- Kickoff meeting for our yearly I.T. audit that will begin right after the server refresh.
- Laptop refresh started.

License:

- Processed over 500 orders, including 525 licenses/permits and 413 hard cards (mail and walk-in orders) - \$63,491 in revenue
- Shipped 284 in-house merchandise items (patches, books, etc), totaling over \$3,600 in revenue.
- Processed \$191,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
- Reviewed 901 online and paper applications for various licenses and permits.

Property:

- Building repairs completed: Waterfall pump in lobby, AC Unit Coil & Compressor, Aquarium UV Sterilizers, and one Aquarium pump
- Pre-planning meeting for planned winter surplus and vehicle auction with PurpleWave.
- Deployed 16 new vehicles and received 16 turn-ins to prepare for auction. 13 new vehicles remain to be processed and deployed for 2023, with 10 on hand being prepared.
- Began working with a new uniform vendor for staff. Multiple meetings with opportunity to review samples in late September.

FISHERIES DIVISION

Statewide Fish Stockings, September 2023			
Species	#Fish	Size	# Locations
Channel catfish	423	14-24"	10
Hybrid bluegill	300	6"	1
Hybrid Sunfish (Aq Ed)	1000	6"	2
Rainbow trout, USFWS	9,469	10.74-11.11	2
Rainbow trout, Commercial	9,788	9+"	1
Rainbow trout, Commercial	298	14-24"	1
TOTAL	21,278		15

Meetings

- Staff attended the OKAFS meeting in Grove, OK, where several staff gave presentations.
- Staff members attended the AFS national meeting in Grand Rapids, MI, where planned and facilitated a symposium on the management of nongame fishes and gave multiple presentations, attended trainings, and networked.

- Staff members attended a meeting at 3 Valley Museum in Durant and gave a presentation about “The History of Striped Bass in Lake Texoma”.
- Staff attended the Trout Unlimited meeting in OKC.
- Staff attended the regional OWRB water planning meetings.
- Staff attended and presented to the Oklahoma Striped Bass Association regarding the current state of the fishery in Keystone Lake.

Activities

- Hoop netting for channel catfish was conducted at Lake Carl Etling. Catch rates and size structure were good. Otoliths were pulled for age and growth analysis. Data analysis is ongoing.
- Maintenance on the Carl Etling dam was conducted. The scaling on the concrete intake structure was repaired. Trees in the spillway and along the face of the dam were cut down.
- A fish kill on Canton was investigated. Initially, only drums were impacted throughout the lake but an algae bloom along the dam was observed the following week. This bloom resulted in low dissolved oxygen locally and had a minor impact on several species.
- Staff completed numerous repairs on hatchery grounds, Staff completed pond #10 reshaping project, outfitting new fish hauling unit and truck, repairs to spray rig, tractor, installed doors on wood shop, Blower systems, AC unit at Blue River Pump Station, Recirculation system in fish house, pond valves, and began installing RAS in the Fish building.
- Staff developed a SharePoint file to house research information with fisheries staff.
- Conducted creel surveys at McGee Creek Lake.
- Conducted blue catfish survey at Lake Texoma and collected otoliths for aging.
- Set two solar-powered light on existing poles at Blue River (Wilderness Area and Handicap Parking) for constituent benefit.
- Staff weighed state record Silver Carp from Red River below Denison Dam.
- Staff participated in Durant School Career Fair, attended online Citizen Science symposium and Angler Survey Committee webinar.
- Electrofishing sampling and Blue catfish tagging at Lake Ellsworth.
- Continued dirt work at Jap Beaver Lake.
- Pre-bid meeting for Jap Beaver renovation project.
- Inspected Jap Beaver Drain Line with CCTV-good/acceptable condition.
- Staff salvaged smallmouth buffalo from a Keystone Lake total weight bowfishing tournament for ongoing statewide buffalofishes morphology and genetics project.
- Personnel completed summer creel survey of Close-to-Home Fishing Program (CTHFP) pond, Veterans Pond in Jenks, to determine angling pressure, angler success, and angler opinion regarding regulations and management of Close-to-Home ponds in area. A total of 88 contacts/responses were recorded.
- Monitoring water quality on Keystone Lake to stay in front of possible striped bass die offs due to high water temps and low DO that tend to occur in Keystone during hot dry stretches of the summer months. Water quality hasn't dipped to levels resulting in any kills so far this summer.

- Annual young-of-year Striped Bass seining on Keystone Lake to determine reproductive success was completed.
- Investigated major fish kill on Tulsa Close-to-Home pond, Hunter Park Pond, and determined the cause was due to natural, rapid dissolved oxygen depletion.
- Finished the spawning season collections of Flathead catfish from Grand Lake for age and growth study, as well as the OFRL catfish nesting cavity project. Thus far, weight, sex, stomach contents, and otoliths have been obtained from 206 flathead catfish from Grand Lake for the project. Personnel obtained data from 165 flathead catfish and 57 channel catfish from 178 nesting cavities to supplement the OFRL catfish nesting project. Personnel also started prepping Flathead catfish otoliths for aging.
- Coordination and planning for the big Shelbyville cube project.
- Continued conducting creels on Fort Gibson Lake and mowing and maintenance on Dept Lakes.
- Conducted multiple days of flathead sampling and bluecat shocking on Fort Gibson.
- Collected and began aging approximately 150 skipjack otoliths from the Arkansas River.
- Assisted the S Central Region with Blue Catfish data collection by pulling otoliths and sexing fish from Lake Texoma.
- Continued tagging Blue Catfish at Lake Ellsworth for the Blue Catfish sampling gear bias evaluation.
- Investigated multiple fish kills in the OKC area and assisted with a fishing derby at Choctaw Ten Acre CTH pond.

C&E DIVISION

- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee conducted two teacher training courses for schools that are starting our outdoor education programs and for new teachers at existing schools that will be taking over programs (45 teachers attended).
- Amanda Thomas oversaw the final review and signed off on the final invoices for the Kaw WMA shooting range. A ribbon cutting event is planned for October 11.
- Damon Springer and Jason Smith conducted a teacher training course for schools that will be starting OKSSSP at new schools as well as new teachers taking over existing programs.
- Jason Smith worked on compliance related documents and processes for the Arcadia Conservation Education Area Archery range project.
- Amanda Thomas organized and coordinated an internal/partners meeting to update everyone on the status for each range project that has yet to begin or be completed. The paperwork has been completed for all projects that were scheduled for the FY 24 budget cycle. Some have been awarded and work is underway.
- Promotional materials were prepared for the agencies first appearance at the Fiesta de las Americas, an event chosen by the ODWC Relevancy Team in an effort to reach out to new audiences.

- Colin Berg worked with OG&E staff to schedule the Sooner Lake Family Fishing clinic that will be held on October 9th.
- Kasie Harriet conducted a pair of virtual hunting courses and worked on getting the schedule finalized for the fall virtual courses.
- Staff distributed regulation booklets at drop sites around the state.

WILDLIFE DIVISION

- Stop the Bleed training for Wildlife Division staff was held on September 22nd. Thank you to LE staff that provided the training.
- Monarch Watch and monarch tagging events are planned for the first week of October at the Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area.
- Diversity staff continue to coordinate with USFWS Tulsa and ODOT regarding a colony of over 1,000 Yuma Bats roosting under a bridge in Cimarron County.
- Diversity senior Biologist Mark Howery attended the Central Flyway Council meeting in Montana to represent the agency on the Nongame Technical Committee.
- Research staff released the 2023 Request For Proposals solicitations for fish, wildlife, and SGCN research with proposals due December 15.
- Research staff continue to communicate with current grant partners regarding project updates and findings to date, including interim report review.
- WMA's
 - Staff have been busy getting WMA's in shape for the upcoming hunting seasons.
 - Over 1600 tons of gravel were spread on WMA roads, and numerous miles of road were bladed.
 - The last 2 weeks of September have been extremely busy with food plot mowing / discing / planting on several hundred acres on WMA's across the state.
 - Over 3500 acres of growing season burns including dove fields were completed.
 - Controlled hunts coming up at numerous WMA's and Refuges across the state.
 - Eastern Red Cedar cutting projects at Canton and Sandhills WMA's are wrapping up.
 - Shooting range use continues to increase as hunting season near, keeping staff busy with range maintenance and clean up.
 - Wetland work is being done on multiple units to prepare for the upcoming seasons, and pumping has begun on some units.
 - Continuing to monitor agricultural leases. Grazing and hay lease activities have wrapped up for the 2023 season.
 - Conducted deer spotlight surveys on WMA's across the state.
 - Dove season opening day use was reported as lighter than usual. Dove concentrations were spotty across the state, but some areas reported decent hunter success.
 - An Eastern Red Cedar mulching project on Black Kettle WMA (NWTF Waterways For Wildlife providing matching funds) is underway.
 - The water control structure project at Hackberry Flat WMA has been completed.

- Private Land youth hunt opportunities kick off with the first of 7 hunts in October to occur this coming weekend (6th-7th). An additional 7 hunt opportunities will occur in December.
- Pronghorn either-sex hunts wrapped up with 35 of 45 tags filled (78%), doe controlled hunts wrapped up with 25 doe hunters checking in and 14 does harvested (56%), landowner doe hunts start November 25.
- Bear scent station surveys were completed in numerous counties across eastern Oklahoma.
- Pheasant survey routes were run in assigned counties, and a summary report is being prepared.
- Staff attended the NWTf state board meeting on September 9. Funding for two habitat projects on WMA's (Waurika and Canton) was awarded.
- Deer archery season opens October 1. There were no changes in bag limits or season structures for the 2023-24 seasons. The only rule change involves carcass movement restrictions in the CWD surveillance areas.
- Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) renewal and sign up period has wrapped up with 88 properties enrolled. This totals almost 420K acres across 45 counties. Spotlight counts have been completed by cooperators and permit allocations are being determined for mailing prior to youth gun season.
- CWD Selective Surveillance Areas (SSA's) were assigned by the CWD Response team. Maps are being published online and shared through various outreach methods. Sites have been set up in Boise City, Hooker, Hardesty, Woodward and Mooreland for freezers for hunters to drop off deer heads for CWD testing. Those freezers have been delivered to regional staff and should be in operation as of opening day. Plans for collecting samples from freezers have been made.
- Completed August Roadside Quail Surveys/Report. The statewide quail index for August was 2.23 quail per route. While this is up 45.8% from the 2022 survey, it is still well below both the 34-year average and the 10-year average. A full report and forecast will be provided after the second phase (October quail routes) of this survey has been completed.
- Prepared and distributed the October Roadside Quail Survey info packet to assigned personnel. The October portion of the statewide survey began yesterday
- Numerous biologists attended the Texas Statewide Quail Symposium
- Upland biologist furthered our partnership with PF/QF by assisting with a STEP Program with the Canadian Valley Chapter of Quail Forever, and speaking at the OKC QF Banquet and the Redbud Chapter clay shooting tune up event
- Upland game Biologist spoke at the Cross Timbers Field Day
- Staff met w/OSU researchers at Packsaddle to get mule deer research underway.
- The annual waterfowl festival at G&H Decoys in Henryetta was held on 9/23. Multiple staff presented / participated at an ODWC booth
- Paxton Smith and Jason Rockwell have returned from assisting the Central Flyway in their annual breeding ground duck banding efforts in North Dakota, banding a little over 700 ducks. This will help estimate harvest and survival for different species.
- Programs supervisor Jerry Shaw and Paxton attended the annual Central Flyway meetings held this year in Bozeman Montana. Paxton chaired the Webless Birds committee and represents Oklahoma on the Technical Committee. Jerry is our rep as the Flyway Council Member.
- Habitat and season timing for teal season were good this year. Multiple reports of good numbers of teal and good harvest.

- September rains are improving wetland habitat in some areas as migrations are beginning.
- The Oklahoma Fur Bearer's Alliance Fall Convention is Oct 13 and 14 at the Okmulgee County Fairgrounds. Jerrod Davis will attend and represent the agency.
- Work has been completed on the initial draft of the Trapping Survey results and sent out for review. Survey results will be used in ODWC R3 efforts to bolster trapping interest.
- Peregrine trapping season starts on Sept 20. We (Oklahoma) are allowed 5 passage peregrine captures and there is plenty of interest from qualified falconers seeking these birds. The Oklahoma Falconry Association is hosting a trapping day at the Great Salt Plains.
- Staff conducted the following outreach/assistance efforts: a woodland management presentation to a class at Connors State College, Seiling public schools career day, North Fork chapter of QF meeting, Hunter Ed. class in Cheyenne, and an Outdoor Classroom presentation in Elk City.

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

- All Districts have completed the transition to the new handguns and red-dot sights. We are currently in the process of the gun buyback program through H&H for officers that wish to purchase their old duty handgun.
- The four new officers that have not completed CLEET will start their academy on Oct. 11th and complete it in February. Those officers are:
 - a. Tanner Raasch – D7
 - b. Dillon Jones – D7
 - c. Zach Hansen – D3
 - d. Trae Taylor – D4
- Dove opener was busy out West and Southwest, slower in other parts of the state.
- Hunter Safety classes are in full swing across the state with numerous classes every weekend.