



## February 2022 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### **CALENDAR ITEMS:**

Jan 6-8	WAFWA Mid-Winter meeting (virtual)
Feb 1	Rules Committee meeting
Feb 7	Opening day of Oklahoma Legislative Session
Feb 15-16	OKNASP Western Regional Shoot, State Fairgrounds
Feb 17-19	NWTF Convention, Nashville
Feb 23-24	OKNASP Eastern Regional and State Shoot, Tulsa
Mar 1	Rack Madness, ODWC Headquarters
Mar 9-10	SEAFWA Spring Directors' Meeting, Athens, TX
Mar 14-18	The North American Wildlife Conference, Spokane, WA

### **AGENCY UPDATE**

#### ***LEGISLATURE:***

- The bill filing deadline has passed. Attached is a list of all new and carried-over wildlife bills for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the 58<sup>th</sup> Legislature.
  - ODWC has requested two companion bills to accomplish our license overhaul: SB 1709 (Thompson) and HB 4086 (Wallace).
- The Legislative Session begins on February 7<sup>th</sup> at noon.

#### ***HUMAN DIMENSIONS***

- The women and hunting survey closed on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Analysis is ongoing and a preliminary report will be available in mid-February; work also began on a peer-reviewed journal article sharing the results of the women and hunting focus groups with Dr. Audrey King.
- Hired 10 phone survey technicians to conduct the 2021 Game Harvest Survey. Data collection began with 6,000 surveys mailed out to hunters in late January and phone calls to those that haven't responded began on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Data collection will be ongoing throughout February.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

- Accounting
  - Number of Claims Audited and Paid - 512
  - Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid - \$10,809,541.62
  - Total # Agency Cardholders - 191 (21 approving officials)
  - Total Agency Spending Limit - \$366,000
  - Number of P/Card Transactions Processed - 519
  - Number of In-depth Audited Transactions - 80

- Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases - \$134,648.30
- Number of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved - 20
- OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions - 0
- New and Refresher PCard-holder and Approver Training Completed 4 Sent
- Number of Purchase Orders/CO issued - 96
- IT Acquisitions Processed - 23
- OMES Surveys Completed - 0
- Risk Management Cases Reported - 3 new ODWC vehicle accident/incident reports: Law (1) Wildlife (2)
- 1 pending 3rd party vehicle claims Law(1)
- 2 pending ODWC property claims: OKC HQ Freeze/Pipes, PRC Freeze/Pipes, Jenks Burglary
- 2 emergency declaration repairs: HQ power outage and HQ stairwell
- Construction Site Visits: JA Manning Construction Progress Meeting - 12/08/2021 Cheryl Lutkemeyer
- Human Resources
  - Open Full-time Positions, January - 17
  - Positions Interviewed, 2 Candidates interviewed, 5
  - Positions Announced, 6
  - See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month.
  - Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), 0
  - End of employment, 3
  - 1 – ODWC Biweekly Computer Trainings
  - 1 – Recruiting event at OSU Wildlife Law course
  - W2s mailed
  - DB annual statements mailed
- IT
  - IT took 70 inbound tickets
  - Roughly 300 inbound calls and text messages
  - Major Current projects:
    - Updating Drupal to further secure the back end of our website and webserver. This will also allow us to use more new features that have been added.
    - Consolidating and migrating IT's inventory from David Sutherland's to Drew Steagall's
    - Working with Ford Audio to fix our conference room audio issues.
    - We finished deploying the first batch of 50 laptops and are working on getting a second batch so we can finish getting everyone on a leased system.
    - I.T. imaged 124 Law Enforcement Rugged Laptops and are starting to deploy those now to their district captains.

- Working with accounting for licensing for our web server certificate, Adobe and Zoho CRM licenses.
- License
  - For December 2021, License Section:
    - Processed over 629 orders, including 561 licenses and 276 hard card orders (mail and walk-in orders) - \$127,817 in revenue
    - Shipped over 340 merchandise items (hats, books, etc), totaling almost \$6,000 in revenue.
    - Processed almost \$35,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
    - Reviewed and approved 1,370 online applications for various licenses (Lifetimes, Disability 5-Year, Fishing Guide, etc.) - Over 18,000 online approvals for all of 2021.

**FISHERIES DIVISION**

**December**

Statewide Fish Stockings

Species	Number Fish	Size	Number Locations
Rainbow trout	35,904	9-11"	10
Rainbow trout	407	14-24"	5

Meeting attended

- Participated in the annual ODWC/TPWD Lake Texoma fisheries coordination meeting, December 16 in Pottsboro, TX.
- Participated in monthly AFWA fisheries chief’s video conference calls.

Activities

- Attended pay meeting for the Manning SFH pump station project, provided oversight on the project, and worked with construction and properties and engineering staff to resolve construction issues. This project is nearing completion.
- Geotechnical surveys were conducted at Manning SFH in preparation for the phase 2 reservoir construction project.
- Grounds maintenance at all hatcheries continues, and all fish houses, ponds, buildings, and equipment were winterized.
- A cooperative agreement was finalized between ODWC and ODOT to allow fishing access at Eldon Bridge over the Barren Fork east of Tahlequah.
- Staff continues to coordinate with GRDA staff to resolve issues on the upper Illinois regarding commercial use of ODWC properties.
- Construction was completed on the North-Central Region shop building renovation.
- Revised engineering plans to address seepage below the Watonga dam were received and approved. The contractor is reviewing the plans and preparing to remobilize.
- A new gate was installed on the south roadway at Lake Burtschi to prevent trash dumping and other illegal and inappropriate activities.

- Culverts and access roads at the Blue River PFHA were repaired and maintained.
- Parking and angler access sites on Lake Ozzie Cobb were improved, and vegetation control efforts were completed.
- Grounds maintenance, including mowing and picking up trash, continues at all Department lakes and fishing areas.
- Staff met with the new BA/Shooting Sports Coordinator to review ongoing projects and view several existing and potential future projects.
- Active boating and fishing access projects statewide were inspected and deficiencies were noted.
- Artificial fish habitat structures were installed at four sites on Lake Tenkiller, and three habitat sites on Shawnee Twin Lakes using 66 donated Christmas trees. Habitat buoys were added on Lake Nanih Waiya.
- Creel surveys are being conducted at Robbers Cave SP, and the Route 66 and Edward Park CTHF to gain more insight concerning trout angler satisfaction, particularly due to moving trout stockings in the OKC area from Dolese CTHF to Route 66 and Edward Park CTHF.
- Winter paddlefish sampling and tagging surveys were conducted on Grand, Hudson, and Oologah reservoirs.
- Work continues on a native game fish monitoring and outreach effort.
- Standardized surveys were conducted on 5 reservoirs statewide. Otoliths were removed from a subsample of collected fish, and otoliths from previous samples are currently being analyzed and results incorporated into regional management plans.
- Stream sampling shapefiles and datasets were updated using with NHDV2 Plus and StreamCAT software in preparation for the upcoming sampling season.
- Staff was interviewed by Ed Godfrey regarding pending bass regulations and Texoma winter fishing opportunities.

## **C&E DIVISION**

- For the second year in a row, the agency has been selected for the competitive Vamos a Pescar Program through the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. This year the agency will be working again with OKC Latina and Scissortail Park through two different grants to expand fishing opportunities in Hispanic communities.
- Michael Bergin worked with Brandt and OKC-based 1577 Productions to produce three hunting commercials using funds from a grant. Three talents and stories were featured including our own Heather Del Moral and Game Warden Ben Haff. Each video includes a :15, :30 and :60 second version. These commercials will be used as digital ads and as our own fodder for emails, Outdoor Oklahoma Journal, and other communication outlets. This project is made possible through a grant from the Association for Conservation Information, which is a national communications organization for fish and wildlife professionals.
- Kelly Boyer received and entered qualifying scores for just under 4,000 student archers for the OKNASP and Varsity Archery Shoots. Four in person state shoots will take place in February and qualifying scores are used to determine which shoot the schools will participate in.

- Sarah Southerland continues to add content to the Department's latest social media platform, TikTok. So far, ODWC's TikTok audience is comprised mostly of females and young adults.
- Daniel Griffith is close to launching the Department's new website. At his most recent team meeting, Daniel announced March/April as the ideal launch date. Remaining steps are to receive ODWC's new brand, apply those assets, and an ODWC all employee review.
- Michael Bergin is working to produce the 2022-23 fishing and hunting license hard cards scheduled for release Feb. 1. The latest editions feature artwork from two Oklahoma artists, Nora Hall and Carolyn Mock. We are working to invite these artists, as well as the winning duck stamp artist, to be recognized at an upcoming Commission meeting.
- Also in the works is a unique digital dashboard that displays recruited, retained and reactivated customers in real time. The data is customizable and user-friendly. This dashboard will serve as a great resource for marketing and R3 specialists.
- The video crew continues to seek story leads and produce episodes for Outdoor Oklahoma. Their newest premier season kicked off with the January 23 episode featuring what is thought to be the largest bass ever caught on camera for ODWC. 2022 will feature 3 premier seasons. Each premier season will run 6-7 episodes.
- Shawn Gee attended the annual Archery Trade Association show in Louisville Kentucky; he presented information during seminars at the show about our ODWC archery programs which the ATA has been instrumental in providing support and materials over the years.
- Skylar St. Yves continued to work on fishing page information. He provided an end of the year summary for fishing license sales comparing 2019, 2020 and 2021 sales as part of a retention effort for fishing license holders. He also set up several trout fishing clinics that are taking place in January and February. These courses have proven to be highly popular and each is full to capacity.
- Smokey Solis has begun edits for the 2022-23 Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Guide. New this year is that the regulation will no longer include advertising. The Regulation Committee is hopeful the regulations will be easier to read without the distraction of ads.
- Kasie Harriet and Colin Berg participated in virtual planning meetings for the second annual beginning squirrel hunt, and the second annual deer conference with NWTf volunteers. Conference will likely be held in August; more details to come when they are finalized.
- Communication section worked with Becky Rouner to develop plans for the 2022 Rack Madness event scheduled for March 1.
- Jena Donnell worked with the Private Lands staff to produce the latest edition of Your Side of the Fence. She has helped grow email subscriptions to for various e-newsletters by sending a very successful call-to-action encouraging people to sign up for ODWC's various e-newsletters. Jena is also working to promote the Tax Check-Off for the Wildlife Diversity Program.

## **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

- The annual Pronghorn Aerial Surveys are underway and expected to be complete by the first week of February.

- Staff and Commissioner Dillingham met with DU's rep and Garfield County Commissioners to discuss needed/planned roadwork as part of the Drummond Flats wetland restoration. A special thanks to Commissioner Dillingham for his role in bringing this meeting to fruition.
- Region personnel are busy preparing for the upcoming grazing season, including upgrading / repairing and installing water systems/gates/fences, and working on preparing bid packages for leases to be bid in the next few weeks.
- Staff continue preparing for the burning season, which is already underway in those portions of the state where conditions are conducive to burning. Most of the state went under severe to extreme drought conditions, and 30 counties are already under burn ban. Unless conditions improve, dormant season burning will certainly be curtailed on WMA's across the state.
- Late winter habitat management activities (brush control / cutting, winter disking, disking fields to stimulate native sunflower production for dove fields, etc.) are ongoing.
- Routine infrastructure maintenance and repair is picking back up now that most major hunting seasons are winding down: Roads, parking areas, camping areas, signs and shooting range maintenance.
- Agricultural, hay and grazing leases were inspected and lessees were contacted about any discrepancies / deficiencies / violations of lease terms/conditions.
- Staff continue to work on data entry for dashboard component of WMA management plans.
- Numerous programs were presented at schools / to civic groups upon request.
- The controlled elk hunts were completed at Wichita Mountains NWR. Three walk-in elk hunts and 2 traditional elk hunts were held. There were 234 elk harvested on the refuge.
- Youth waterfowl hunts were conducted at various places across the state as water and waterfowl availability allowed. Hopefully some late season cold fronts will continue to push birds down from the north before season ended.
- Acquisition of an additional 6,269.32 acres adjoining Sandy Sanders was finalized.
- Staff have begun processing WHIP applications received since the first of the year, and scheduling site visits. For current year WHIP projects recently completed, began compliance inspections and processing reimbursement paperwork.
- We are working with HR to fill the following vacancies: OLAP technician, Sandhills Technician, Beaver River WMA biologist, Grassy/Red Slough Technician, and SW Oklahoma Private lands Biologist.
- Staff continue to work with researchers to finalize design and paperwork necessary to begin several new research projects.
- Staff will be conducting herd health evaluations in southeast and southcentral Oklahoma.
- All staff are busy working on PMP closeouts for 2021 and initial PMP's for 2022, as well as annual inventory inspections.
- Staff utilized planes and pilot assistance from USFWS to conduct annual mid-winter waterfowl surveys. Summary reports will be forthcoming.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- D4 had a special emphasis on Blue River Fishing and Public hunting area on Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Wardens checked 225 fishermen and issued citations to 25 individuals. Tickets ranged from no licenses, to unmarked stringers, over limits, and 1 possession of controlled dangerous substance arrest.
- Law recently promoted Game Warden Emily Long to the new Special Wildlife Investigator position. This position will be a shared position with the USFWS and will focus on larger multi-state investigations with commercial ties to Oklahoma's natural resources.
- Wardens across the state have been busy finishing up investigations from deer season and working waterfowl hunters (if they have some waterfowl around).
- Captains and Supervisors are completing employee evaluations and inventories of all Department issued equipment. This takes a few weeks due to checking boats, ATVs, guns, radios, night vision and thermal optics.

Law Enforcement Division totals for 2021:

Year: 2021	Totals
Miles Driven:	2,208,004
Citations Issued:	1829
Field License Issued:	1450
Written Warnings:	1049
Admin. Fines Collected:	1364
Sportsman Compliance Checks:	78,894
Hunter Education Classes:	115
Articles Written:	56
Programs (Excluding HE):	2706
<b>DISTRICT MAN HOURS</b>	
Assisting (Fish, Game, I&E, Public):	14,476.5
Distributing Literature:	809.5
Training:	13,497.5
Investigations:	8982
Patrol:	120,196