



## NOVEMBER 2021 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### **CALENDAR ITEMS:**

Oct 29 Wildlife Foundation Hall of Fame Gala, Omni Hotel OKC  
Nov 15-19 North American Falconer's Asso. Annual Conference, Quartz Mountain  
Nov 15-18 Grand National Quail Hunt, Enid, OK  
Jan 6-10, 2022 WAFWA Mid-Winter, Tucson, AZ

### **AGENCY UPDATE**

- ***LEGISLATURE:***
  - SSP 1021 - A study on the Wildlife Dept.'s plans for license streamlining and restructuring – was held on September 15<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. ODWC presented its proposed new license structure and fees, as well as the process followed to create the structure. The study can be watched here: [t.ly/053yQ](https://t.ly/053yQ)
  - HSP 1121 – A study of fence systems and standards in Oklahoma – was held on September 7<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 – 10:00. ODWC participated and offered insight into how we build and maintain fences on our properties. The study can be watched here: [bit.ly/3E8CMQL](https://bit.ly/3E8CMQL)
  - The Oklahoma and Texas Legislative Sportsmen's Caucuses are hosting a joint fishing and policy event in Durant on October 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>. Commissioners interested in attending can contact Kent Keene: [kkeene@congressionalsportsmen.org](mailto:kkeene@congressionalsportsmen.org).
  - The Governor has called the Redistricting Special Session. It is to begin on November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- ***HUMAN DIMENSIONS***
  - Completed the Bowfishing Survey report and shared with other agency personnel
    - Presented the results at the Oklahoma Chapter American Fisheries Society meeting
    - A follow-up interview instrument is being created to clarify themes uncovered in the survey.
  - Completed trainings on statistical analyses, data visualization, and GIS techniques
  - Shared the results of the private lands survey with private lands biologists at their quarterly meeting
  - Met to define major themes that emerged from the Women and Hunting focus groups conducted by Dr. Audrey King. A report on these focus groups will be shared in October and work began using these themes to develop a follow-up survey to be sent in early December.
  - Created a webpage on the TOAD which shares current human dimensions projects with the rest of the agency.
  - Began work on creating sampling practices for the 2021 Game Harvest Survey
  - Attended a webinar on the Relevancy Roadmap and how to create conservation relevancy at ODWC

### **ADMINISTRATION**

- Accounting
  - Number of Claims Audited and Paid - 515
  - Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid - \$2,998,265.75
  - Total # Agency Cardholders - 192 (22 approving officials)
  - Total Agency Spending Limit - \$359,000
  - Number of P/Card Transactions Processed -653
  - Number of In-depth Audited Transactions - 98
  - Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases - \$143,046.09
  - Number of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved - 33
  - OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions - 0
  - New and Refresher PCard-holder and Approver Training Completed 0 Sent, 0 Completed
  - Number of Purchase Orders/CO issued - 111
  - IT Acquisitions Processed - 19
  - OMES Surveys Completed - 3
  - Risk Management Cases Reported - 5 new ODWC vehicle accident/incident reports: Hail, Fire, Equipment, Dent/Ding, etc.
  - 5 pending 3rd party vehicle claims
  - 2 pending ODWC property claims: OKC HQ Freeze/Pipes, PRC Freeze/Pipes, Jenks Burglary
  - Construction Site Visits: Cheryl Luetkemeyer - Ouachita Shop Building Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 09/02/2021, Canton WMA Habitat Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting 09/15/2021, J A Manning Construction Progress Meeting 09/30/2021
- Human Resources
  - Open Full-time Positions, October 17
  - Positions Interviewed 1, Candidates interviewed 5
  - Positions Announced, 4
  - See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month.
  - Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), 5
  - WRP Class visit to Hackberry Flat WMA
  - Annual Open Enrollment for Benefits in Progress
  - Annual Vaccine Clinic
  - ODWC Financial Planning for Retirement Webinar
  - ODWC Biweekly Computer Trainings, 2
  - New Employee Orientation for 2 new employees
- IT
  - New Tickets: 114 Still Open 13
  - 5 of the 50 new laptops have been deployed and we are booking appts for field personnel beginning 10/19.
  - 124 LE computers arrived at our office
- License
  - Processed over 560 orders, including 480 licenses and 299 hard card orders (mail and walk-in orders) - \$58,000 in revenue
  - Shipped over 500 merchandise items (hats, books, etc), totaling over \$6,000 in revenue.
  - Processed \$92,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such as lease payments, fines, restitution, etc.
- Property

- Striped 15 Law trucks and 1 Wildlife truck. Removed emergency lighting, radio mounting boxes, antennas, decals, and lettering.
- Received 10 new Kenwood low band radios, contacted various vendors and factory reps. to setup programming.
- Bought and installed 3 batteries in Law Enforcement turn-in trucks.
- Bill Knight Ford delivered 11 new trucks for Fish and Wildlife Division
- Registered and titled 1 new boat, 2 boat motors and 1 ATV's.
- Had meeting with Lingo construction and sub-contractors to set start date on construction of the French drain. Construction estimated to last 5-6 weeks.
- Comdata cards expire 10/21. Working with Comdata to get new cards so I can get them distributed out to the divisions. I received new cards for Fish and Law, still waiting for Wildlife, C&E and Admin cards to come in.
- Working with divisions to get FY22 trucks order. I have a deadline of November 14 for orders to be in the bank with dealerships.
- Prepped 4 loaner trucks with radios and sent out to Game Wardens

## **FISHERIES DIVISION**

### **September**

#### Statewide Fish Stockings

| <b>Species</b>  | <b>Number Fish</b> | <b>Size</b> | <b>Number Locations</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Channel catfish | 164,886            | 2-3"        | 11                      |
| Channel catfish | 1,108              | 14-15"      | 5                       |
| Hybrid sunfish  | 3,488              | 6-8"        | 7                       |
| Rainbow trout   | 11873              | 11"         | 1                       |

#### Meeting attended

- Participated in the AFWA annual virtual meeting, September 8-10.
- Participated in the Oka' Institute 2021 Sustainability virtual conference, September 21-22.

#### Activities

- A new State record River Carpsucker caught from Konawa Lake was certified. The fish was 23.39"long and weighed 11 lbs 28 oz.
- Met with Trout Unlimited Chapter 420 and "Friends of the Arkansas River" concerning the new Zink Dam.
- Attended the Oklahoma Striped Bass Association meeting in Owasso and presented information on the Department's hatchery program.
- Attended the Northeastern State University Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society and presented on Fisheries Division programs.
- Professional and educational presentations were delivered on paddlefish and bowfishing projects.
- Assisted with three Close to Home Fishing Pond derbies at Moore, Buck Thomas, and Ten Arce.
- Coordinated with Madill HS fishing tournament on outreach efforts.
- Three manuscripts were written for The Oklahoma Academy of Science. Additionally, SEAFWA manuscripts are accepted and are in the process of being edited.
- The final proof of a rainbow trout resource use publication was submitted.
- Coordinated with Communication and Education Division on a communication strategy for the new bass regulation proposals.
- Assisted GRDA with "Rush for Brush" habitat project on Hudson Lake, which included installing 325 PVC- type artificial trees.

- Habitat buoys were inventoried and maintained on all reservoirs statewide.
- Gear bias of low-frequency electrofishing for Blue Catfish in reservoirs is ongoing, with 3,803 fish tagged with 481 recaptures at Wiley Post and 3,008 fish tagged with 496 recaptures at Arcadia.
- Smallmouth Bass growth and genetics research project field work and data collection is ongoing.
- Water quality readings below Texoma Dam and from three vertical profiles within the lake were collected.
- Assisted U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a fish removal and rescue effort in the Heyburn Lake tailrace.
- Standardized sampling data entry and analysis is ongoing. Fisheries data is accumulated and submitted to the OFAT database as time permits. Vouchered specimens from community sampling surveys were identified. Annual and final reports were prepared and reviewed before submitting to Federal Aid. Regional management plans are currently being updated.
- The FY21 caviar sales and inventory summaries and spreadsheets were completed and forwarded to the Accounting Section.
- Renovation of the Ponca City Office shop building continues.
- Routine grounds maintenance and upkeep was performed on all Department Lakes statewide.
- Assisted Wildlife Division with a controlled burn at Waurika WMA.
- 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.
- Channel catfish and bluegill ponds were harvested and distributed to landowners to complete annual farm pond fish distribution.
- Grounds maintenance at all hatcheries was ongoing, and included mowing, fence repair, equipment maintenance, and pond renovations.

#### **C&E DIVISION**

- Communication Section staff worked with License Division and LifeShare of Oklahoma to promote their new and unique partnership with ODWC. Through this partnership, hunters and anglers can register to become an organ and tissue donor when they purchase a hunting and fishing license. Oklahoma is one of the first states to adopt this new way to register to be an organ and tissue donor.
- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee submitted purchase requests for OKFITS equipment kits and OKC and Tulsa Fairgrounds rentals for OKNASP and Varsity Archery State Shoots that will take place in February. We will again be hosting four state archery shoots (2 in OKC and 2 in Tulsa)
- Michael Bergin continues to work with Brandt on marketing and advertising projects. Michael recently selected a production company to produce three digital videos that feature unique Oklahoma hunters and their stories. Prior to the youth deer gun season, Michael Bergin worked with Brandt to send a push notification to all GoOutdoorsOklahoma app users. The effort was followed by a text message to previous youth deer gun hunters who do not have the app, or the app notifications turn on.
- Skylar St. Yves and Lance Meek participated in a family fishing clinic at the OG&E Sooner Lake power plant. This was the second clinic conducted via the partnership with OG&E personnel. Some of the clinic participants were foster kids and their families.

- Like last year, we have partnered with OnX to provide hunters with a discounted membership. With this unique promotion the ODWC receives a percentage of total sales.
- The Regulation Committee selected JF Griffin as the next vendor for the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations. JF Griffin is not a new vendor and has been producing the regulations for several years. New for the next edition, however, is no ad space. This will remove 26 pages and allow for better layout and easier reading.
- Kasie Harriet and Colin Berg promoted the Learn to Hunt Program to Owasso 8th grade students. 7 students and their parents signed up to participate in the first Learn to Hunt group. Several participated in a youth hunt and education event put on by the instructors for the group. Two additional participants were added bringing the total to 9 kids and 9 adults. The group has plans to conduct at least one activity during the next year. Participants will be introduced to a variety of hunting methods and will have an opportunity to participate in several hunt days as well as field to fork activities.
- Smokey Solis developed an outline for a video project that will showcase different cooking recipes using fish and game.
- Damon Springer, Jason Smith, Shawn Gee, Kelly Boyer, Jennifer Bengue, Lance Meek, Skylar St. Yves and Colin Berg assisted with FFA District Clay Target Program shoots at Ft. Supply, Norman, Coweta and Broken Bow. The final district shoot will take place in early November at Altus and the state shoot will be at OKC Club the middle of November.
- Smokey Solis worked with Corey Jager to produce an informative but condensed booklet outlining the proposed new license structure, and its benefits. Corey plans to provide legislators with the information this fall.
- Kelly Adams worked with Corey Jager, Betsey York and Audrey King (OSU) to conduct a focus group of active and lapsed female hunting license holders. The focus groups provided some insights into the unique barriers faced by female hunters. Kelly, Betsey and Corey are also working to finalize a survey intended for active and lapsed female hunting license holders tentatively scheduled for release the end of November, or early December.
- Damon Springer participated in the Midway USA Foundation virtual shooting sports annual meeting. Received updated information on the Foundation and their continued support of shooting sports across the country.
- Kelly Adams worked with Fisheries Centrarchid Committee to produce communications about the upcoming black bass rule change proposal.
- Lance Meek continued work on several gun ranges and met with staff to discuss what ranges were out for bid, those that were undergoing engineering and those that would be going through the EA process during the next year.

## **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

- Larry Wiemers is retiring effective October 31 after almost 20 years of service.
- Preparation (campgrounds, roads, etc.) continues for quail opener and deer gun season on WMA's. WMA staff have been busy working controlled hunts and assisting hunters. WMA participation appears to be steady (similar to last year, possibly up slightly on 5 year average so far). Fall / winter food plot plantings are nearing completion. Recent rainfall helped with the final push to get plots planted, particularly in the west where things have been very dry.
- NRDA funded activities recently completed or ongoing: 2 miles of new firebreak was constructed on Washita Arm WMA, 80 acres of tree thinning via mastication was completed on Lexington WMA, Cedar tree mastication projects were awarded and are now underway on Ft. Supply and Cooper WMA's, and a mastication project on Sandy Sanders WMA was recently completed.

- Deer archery season opened to hot and dry weather, only to develop into storms and torrential rains across much of the state. Youth season opened to cooler days and much better weather to keep hunters in the woods and not covered in sweat. By the time of this Commission meeting Primitive season will be underway.
- The "first half" of private land youth hunts have finished (usually landowners host these prior to muzzleloader and rifle seasons, or after rifle season ends, so "second half" will start in mid-Dec) and went fairly well, especially considering the first of the two weekends had temps in the upper 90s. 13 of 24 youth hunters harvested deer.
- Dept. staff volunteered to assist as a guide/mentor during a non-profit organization's recent deer hunt for youth with health issues.
- Looking at echeck data from Oct 1-Oct 18 for both the 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons shows a slight decrease from 2020 numbers overall but a slight increase in youth rifle season.

**2021-22 Season**

Total Harvest: 13,595  
51% Antlerless

**Youth Rifle:** 4,675  
46% Antlerless

**2020-21 Season**

Total Harvest: 14,421  
51% Antlerless

**Youth Rifle:** 4,465  
43% Antlerless

- Dove season, anecdotally, seems to have shown reduced harvest rates this season. Data collected from the dove wingbee this winter will allow a more empirically derived assessment of long-term harvest rates and population status. Hunting success was hit or miss, across the state. Fewer overall dove during the opening two weeks was reported by many field biologists. Extensive water and high native seed abundance across the landscape likely had birds less concentrated and spread out. A mid-season survey (third week in September) in western Oklahoma observed high concentrations of mourning dove. However, most dove hunters are not hunting that late into the season.
- Early teal season, similar to dove season, was hit or miss, regarding hunting success. Large numbers of blue winged teal were observed migrating a week prior to season opening, during teal season, and moving through mid-October. Migration seems to have been spread out over a longer than average period of time, for these typically early migrants. Reports from eastern Oklahoma were that hunting success was limited, where western Oklahoma had mixed success.
- Wetland development units are busy pumping/flooding. Overall, WDUs look average to above average regarding obligate wetland seeding plant production (migratory bird forage). Some green-tree units will not be flooded this season, due to excessive flooding in early/mid summer, in order to maintain natural flooding dynamics and limit tree mortality from over-flooding
- Bi-monthly WDU status reports will begin in the first week of November and will be uploaded to the agency's website in the migratory bird hunting section.
- General duck season opened in the panhandle counties on October 9th and Sandhill Crane on the 23rd. General duck and goose season for the majority of the state (Zones 1 & 2) open in the first two weeks of November. We expect lower than average duck harvest rates, biased toward adults, due to limited production in the breeding range this spring/summer.
- Coal Creek wetland project is nearing the completion of the 404 permit review.
- Neosho Bottoms wetland project has been proposed to the Tar Creek Trustee Council, approved for funding, and the draft environmental assessment will be going out for public comment in late October (estimated).

- Drummond Flats restoration project is nearing completion of engineering plans. Next steps will be the environmental permitting process, bidding and estimating cost, and procuring funding.
- Quail roadside counts are completed. Tell Judkins will present a brief overview at this commission meeting.
- Atoka WMA had 9.5 miles of roads completely reworked and opened up, Atoka PHA had 9 miles of roads completely reworked and widened, and Stringtown WMA had 1 mile of roads repaired and graveled, McGee Creek WMA had 3 miles of roads graveled with an additional 10 miles maintained, and a severely damaged access road on Hugo WMA was repaired and re-graveled. Between these 5 areas 23 miles of roads have been repaired with 1450 tons of gravel. Along with road work, road shoulders have been opened with mulching:



- Through the end of Bear Archery season (October 18) a total of 65 bears were harvested:

|                         | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>LeFlore County</b>   | 18          | 16            |
| <b>Latimer County</b>   | 7           | 2             |
| <b>Pushmatah County</b> | 9           | 4             |
| <b>McCurtain County</b> | 8           | 1             |
| <b>Totals</b>           | <b>42</b>   | <b>23</b>     |

- 4 Research bears were harvested (3 M, 1 F), 2 bears with PIT tags (had been previously handled, likely as cubs) were harvested, and no collared bears were harvested.
- The cooler weather at the end of the archery season, the fact that the fall acorn crop has begun to fall in substantial numbers and the pressure from archery season will all impact the potential for muzzleloader harvest, and few, if any, bears are expected to be harvested during muzzleloading season.

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- Unfortunately we have investigated two different hunting accidents this year. One during bear archery season in SE Oklahoma and one during the youth hunting season south of Ada. The accident in SE Oklahoma was a fatality while the one south of Ada was not. It is a

good reminder to always be careful and not take anything for granted when out in the field hunting.

- Recently Game Warden Riley Willman responded to a disturbance call assisting the local Sheriff's office. Upon entering the residence he found an individual that had cut both wrists. Riley put two tourniquets on the subject and saved their life by his quick actions.
- Game Warden Jeremy Bersche (D1) and Lt. Paul Welch (D1) recently made a good case on some individuals out shocking fish on Skiatook Lake. More details to follow once the case has been to court.
- The disposition schedule for the body camera footage was recently approved by the Records Department for the State. This sets the retention time of the different categories when dealing with the cameras.