

AGENDA
Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting

Public Meeting: **Monday, March 6, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

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 – Richard Snow
4. Pledge of Allegiance – Richard Snow
5. Introduction of Guests
6. Presentation of Awards

Jimmy Foster, Communications Manager – 35 years

7. Presentation of Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society's publication and creativity award to Sarah Southerland for outstanding use of social media to promote native fish – Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication & Education Division and Inger Guiffrida, Secretary of the Board, Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society.
8. Recognition of Kristen Gillman as recipient of the Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society's "Oklahoma Award" – Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, and Inger Guiffrida.
9. Presentation of the USDA Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) in Oklahoma – Bill Dinkines and Scott Alls, Oklahoma State Director of USDA APHIS Wildlife Services.
10. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on minutes of the February 6, 2023, regular Commission meeting.
11. Presentation of the January 31, 2023, Financial Statements and consideration and vote to approve, amend, or reject miscellaneous donations – Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration.
12. Presentation of the FY 2022 Annual Financial Audit – Amanda Storck and Dan Bledsoe, Finley & Cook PLLC.
13. Director's Report – J.D. Strong
 - a. Federal and Congressional Update
 - Oklahoma Legislative Update – Catherine Appling-Pooler

- b. Calendar Items – discussion of upcoming department calendar items.
 - c. Agency Update – an update on current activity within each division of the agency.
14. Discussion of the appraisal and/or purchase of certain real properties located in Beckham and Adair Counties, 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 – Bill Dinkines
 15. New Business – Discussion of any matter not known about, or which could not have been reasonably foreseen 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
 16. Announce the April 3, 2023, Commission meeting will be in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
 17. Adjourn

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

MINUTES

Of the Regular Meeting on February 6, 2023, of the

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Held at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on February 6, 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 January 27, 2023, at 9:30 a.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
 JOHN P. ZELBST, Member
 MARK H. MABREY, Member
 JESS M. KANE, Member
 TIM DIEHL, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: D. CHAD DILLINGHAM, Member

J.D. Strong, Director, introduced the following guest: Jeff Knack, USACE; Alan Stacey, Waterfowl Hunter; Ben Haff, Waterfowl Hunter; Ray Penny, G&H Decoys, Inc.; Craig Endicott, Waterfowl Hunter; Rick Grundman, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation; Jason Murray, Governor's Office; Mickie Beard and Cheyenne Barnes for Clay Barnes tenure recognition.

Director Strong recognized Clay Barnes, Wildlife Biologist for 20 years of service and Russell Perry, Wildlife Biologist for 20 years of service.

Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication & Education Division introduced Colin Berg, Communication and Education Supervisor who gave a presentation on the accomplishments and future plans for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Shooting Sports Program. These programs include Archery in the Schools Program, Varsity Archery, Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports, FFA Sporting Clays and Wildlife Management Area shooting ranges. Commissioner Holder stated that the shooting sports programs are the best thing ODWC has done. His hometown of Altus has excelled in the archery program and have been helpful in recruiting other schools in the area. He asked if ODWC could consider creating something special for the kids that do well statewide. Director Strong stated that budget would be an issue but maybe sponsorships could be secured. He also encouraged the Commission to become familiar with educators in their districts and encourage them to participate in these programs.

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, addressed the Commission regarding Oklahoma Deer Management Strategies. Along with Director Strong, Mr. Dinkines stated that each year we get new requests from the legislature and in consideration of those anticipated requests, he thought the Commission would appreciate a presentation showing how successful our deer management plan has been for Oklahoma. Mr. Dinkines introduced Dallas Barber, Big Game Biologist. Mr. Barber stated that we had a very successful deer season which likely will be

a new record harvest and outlined the strategies in place. He said that management decisions rely on ecological, biological, and even social factors. Deer population dynamics rely almost solely on hunting as the management tool. Mr. Barber said that with hunters having a diverse set of goals, we decided to educate instead of regulate. The results of that have been positive regarding overall harvest including antlerless and trophy deer being harvested. Commissioner Diehl asked how we gather buck age structure data. Mr. Barber explained that we gather data from the DMAP properties, controlled hunts and student jaw pullers at various taxidermist/processors statewide. We also have an age my deer application on-line. Commissioner Kane stated that he gets a lot of comments and questions and he sincerely appreciated this presentation. He is proud of the huge Oklahoma deer success story.

Motion was made by Mr. Holder and seconded by Mr. Mabrey to approve the minutes from the January 3, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Catherine Appling Pooler, Legislative Liaison, gave an overview of wildlife related legislation currently proposed in the 2023 Oklahoma Legislative Session. Director Strong reminded the Commission that the Department has one request bill which is the license bill. The past couple of years, we pushed to have licenses taken out of statute and be determined by rule, but we couldn't get this proposal across the finish line. This year we have legislative authors who will run a bill proposal that will put our license fees in statute. This seems to be a more feasible plan to get the bill passed. You can follow the progression of these proposal on the department website under Legislative Tracker.

Director Strong 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. He reminded the Commission about Rack Madness scheduled for February 24 and the Legislative Fish Fry scheduled for April 26 at the State Capitol.

Rick Grundman, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation announced that the Foundation would be giving away a combination lifetime license at the Rack Madness event. He said that a sporting clays fundraiser will be held at Cedar Gate on May 12 and a building dedication and fundraiser is being planned for the Hackberry Flat Center to honor William H. "Bill" Crawford.

Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration presented the Financial Statement for December 31, 2022. Motion was made by Mr. Zelbst, seconded by Mr. Kane to accept the financial statements as presented and approve miscellaneous contributions. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Ms. Storck gave a license update:

Recreational Licenses - Number of licenses sold was up 5% from January 2022

- Resident Fishing - Up 22%
- Resident Hunting - Down 8%
- Resident Combo - Up 3%
- Nonresident Hunting - Down 15%
- Nonresident Fishing - Up 7%

Lifetimes

- Regular Lifetimes - Down 8% last month
- Senior Lifetimes - Up 16% (new year eligibility rush)

Amanda Storck requested Commission approval on a budget add-on resulting in a budget revision for FY23. These revisions total \$51,057.52 for Buffalofishes pass-through SWG grant and Mussel habitat evaluation project. Motion was made by Mr. Holder, seconded by Mr.

Mabrey to approve the budget add-ons and revisions as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Chairwoman Gaddis polled the Commission to confirm that each member received the email of proposed rule information from the Department and has had the opportunity to review and consider the public comments submitted in connection with the proposed rules. Roll call determined all Commissioners in attendance said "Aye".

Nels Rodefeld requested Commission approval on Permanent Rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 1. Operations and Procedures

Subchapter 15. Hunter Education Rules

800:1-15-2. Hunter education certification requirements [AMENDED]

800:1-15-3. Instructors [AMENDED]

These rule changes change the minimum course requirement from 8 hours to 6 hours and allows the hunter education coordinator to recertify lapsed hunter education instructors as opposed to forcing lapsed instructors to go through the recertification process.

Mr. Barwick asked if there were any safety concerns associated with shortening the Hunter Education course requirements. Mr. Rodefeld said that we can teach basic principles, but we can't force them to be safe and we feel the participants will take away more with a tighter course. Motion was made by Mr. Zelbst, seconded by Mr. Barwick, who stated that the Rule Committee met and reviewed proposed rules and recommend approval. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Bill Dinkines requested Commission approval on Permanent Rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 25. Wildlife Rules

Subchapter 1. Hunter/Trapping on Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Lands
[AMENDED]

800:25-1-8. Deer and Waterfowl Hunting on Keystone State Park [NEW]

Subchapter 3. Hunting on Corps of Engineers Lands

800:25-3-2. Areas open to archery equipment and shotguns with pellets only
[AMENDED]

800:25-3-3. Areas open to archery equipment only [AMENDED]

Subchapter 5. Migratory Bird Hunting Season

Part 11. Waterfowl Hunting Blinds

800:25-5-48. Purpose [AMENDED]

800:25-5-49. Permits for seasonal or daily blinds [REVOKED]

800:25-5-50. Drawing process [REVOKED]

800:25-5-51. Blind Construction [AMENDED]

Subchapter 7. General Hunting Seasons

Part 1. General Provisions

800:25-7-3. General provisions [AMENDED]

Part 5. Upland Game

800:25-7-20. Squirrel (fox and gray) [AMENDED]

Part 13. Deer

800:25-7-53. Deer – gun [AMENDED]

800:25-7-54. Legal firearms and archery specifications [AMENDED]

Part 19. Season on Areas Owned or Managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

800:25-7-124. McClellan-Kerr WRP [AMENDED]

Subchapter 24. Import of Cervids

800:25-24-3. Requirements [AMENDED]

Subchapter 30. Wildlife Depredation on Agricultural Crops

800:25-30-2. Procedures [AMENDED]

Subchapter 37. Nuisance Wildlife Control Program

Part 3. Wildlife and feral Hog Nuisance and Depredation Rules

800:25-37-12. General Provisions [AMENDED]

Subchapter 1 – These rules will open portions of Keystone State Park for deer and waterfowl controlled hunts.

Subchapter 3 – These rules will open certain Corps of Engineers lands at Ft Gibson Lake and Webbers Falls Lock and Dam 16 to hunting with archery equipment and shotguns with pellets, will restrict hunting to archery equipment and shotguns with pellets, for safety reasons, on certain Corps of Engineers Lands at Webbers Falls Lock and Dam 16, and will close hunting on certain Corps of Engineers lands at Eufaula Lake.

Subchapter 5 – These rules will restrict waterfowl hunting on Corps of Engineers lands to daily blinds only.

Subchapter 7 -These rules will require anyone hunting with an air powered arrow rifle to possess a valid air powered arrow rifle permit, will extend squirrel season through February 28, make it legal to hunt with an air powered arrow rifle during any open rifle season, establish criteria for legally transporting an arrow rifle in a motorized vehicle, define legal bullets for rifles and handguns, remove minimum barrel length for handguns, provide definition for an air powered arrow rifle legal for hunting, prohibit hunting with an air powered arrow rifle during archery and muzzleloader seasons, and open the WRP of McClellan-Kerr to additional hunting opportunity.

Subchapter 24 – These rules will define restrictions on transport of cervid carcass parts from any area designated as a Selective Surveillance Area, and authorize the Commission to establish, by resolution, CWD response measures.

Subchapter 30 – These rules add beehives to the list of agricultural crops subject to procedures for handling wildlife depredation complaints.

Subchapter 37 – These rules add bears to the list of big game animals for which complaints must comply with the provisions defined in Title 800:25-30.

Chairman Gaddis gave a five-minute time limit for those in the audience that wish to speak. Mr. Jeff Knack with the USACE addressed the Commission regarding Subchapter 5, Part 11. Waterfowl Hunting Blinds. He stated that the Corps owned the property where the permanent blinds are located, but the Wildlife Department manages the wildlife and hunting/fishing regulations on these properties. The Corps asked ODWC to remove permanent blinds from the rules to allow more public opportunity with daily blind regulations. He also stated that large amounts of trash are left behind in the permanent blinds and when the lake is

flooded, the permanent blinds disintegrate and become refuse in the lake. Director Strong added that there are only four reservoirs left in the state that have seasonal permanent blinds.

Craig Endicott stated that the Commission considered the rule proposal on removing the seasonal waterfowl blinds three years ago. At that time, they created a waterfowl committee to review the issues. The committee identified some issues and worked to correct them. He was curious of what had changed in three years because no one has asked the committee about any new issues. He stated a few seasonal blinds in place does not prevent hunters from utilizing the remainder of these large lakes. Commissioner Mabrey indicated these blinds are located in his district and he appreciated Mr. Endicott's statements.

Ben Haff stated that he too had been on the Duck Blind Committee as a Game Warden at the time, now speaking as a private individual. He said nice blinds cannot be constructed for daily use. Permanent blinds keep the hunter out of the elements and allow them to bring new hunters who are not sure about waterfowl hunting and show them an enjoyable time, hopefully turning them into hunters. He feels it is a mistake to remove what limited opportunity there is for the public to have a permanent blind. He asked what would be required to create these same types of permanent blind drawings on other reservoirs?

Alan Stacey said he has been involved with the wetland waterfowl program through the Department as well as Ducks Unlimited for most of his career. He supported the statements of previous speakers and is of the opinion that this waterfowl blind program is cost effective; not prohibitive. He asked the Commission to please vote no on the proposal.

Mr. Dinkines stated that he appreciated and respected the speakers for their comments. He said that over the past few years, the Department has been trying to standardize the rules and regulations per Governor Stitt's Executive Order. Removing these permanent blind rules would simplify the regulations for all waterfowl hunters in this area. Additionally, the number of applicants and the number of blinds built continues to decrease so why not open these 4 areas up to daily blinds, first come first serve, like all the other reservoirs in the State. Director Strong restated that the landowners, Corps of Engineers, asked the Department to make these changes. He said it was not an effort to make our jobs easier, it was about public access, recruiting and need to increase waterfowl participants. Commissioner Kane asked if it's a permitting process, doesn't that provide for accountability with trash, etc.? Mr. Dinkines said yes except when blinds float away into the lake, we cannot identify who it belonged to. Mr. Barwick stated that the Rules Committee met and reviewed all rules and suggested that the Subchapter 5, Part 11. Waterfowl Hunting Blinds be removed from the less controversial proposals and vote that these proposed rules be tabled and look at other alternatives. Motion was made by Mr. Barwick, seconded by Mr. Zelbst to table Subchapter 5, Part 11. Waterfowl Hunting Blinds. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes". Motion was made by Mr. Barwick and seconded by Mr. Mabrey to approve the remainder of the rules as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Bill Dinkines and Nels Rodefled requested approval on Permanent Rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation
Chapter 30. Department of Wildlife Lands Management
Subchapter 1. Use of Department Managed Lands

800:30-1-16. Shooting ranges [AMENDED]

800:30-1-20. Restricted public use areas [AMENDED]

The proposal would allow for target shooting 30 minutes after official sunset.

The ODWC is in the process of constructing and renovating shooting ranges on ODWC owned and

managed land, some of those ranges will contain an archery range. This establishes rules for those

archery ranges.

These rules change the camping restrictions on Okmulgee WMA to allow angler camping during the period of October 1-February 15.

Mr. Barwick stated that the Rules Committee met and review proposed rules and recommend approval. Motion was made by Mr. Barwick and seconded by Mr. Kane to approve the proposed rules as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Chairwoman Gaddis outlines the new Commission Committees for 2023 and the list was available in each Commission packet.

Chairman Gaddis announced the March 6, 2023 will be held in Oklahoma City.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Leigh A. Gaddis, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

C. Rick Holder, SECRETARY

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

For the period July 1, 2022 Through January 31, 2023

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

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary	Account Groups			
	General	Capital Projects	Fund Types	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	01/31/2023	01/31/2022
			Trust			Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	15,340,246		4,228,376			19,568,622	19,584,524
Investments	0		256,585,906			256,585,906	279,861,557
Accounts Receivable	2,454,250					2,454,250	2,268,479
Monthly Lifetime License			224,600			224,600	252,275
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	5,968,965		7,000			5,975,965.00	3,519,830.00
Fixed Assets				78,200,275		78,200,275	76,671,187
Land				104,652,938		104,652,938	103,565,869
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	3,421,304
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
	23,763,461	0	261,045,882	182,853,213	21,202,403	488,864,959	481,707,305
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	362,792					362,792	535,821
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	224,600					224,600	252,275
Compensated Absences Payable (leave accrual)					0	0	3,421,304
Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
Total Liabilities	587,392	0	0	0	21,202,403	21,789,795	284,510
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			124,395,285			124,395,285	138,304,514
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			6,742,490			6,742,490	6,213,284
Investment in General Fixed Assets				182,853,213		182,853,213	180,237,056
Fund Balance	23,176,069		129,908,107			153,084,176	156,667,941
Total Fund Balance	23,176,069	0	261,045,882	182,853,213	0	467,075,164	481,422,795
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	23,763,461	0	261,045,882	182,853,213	21,202,403	488,864,959	481,707,305

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Trust Funds

Combining Balance Sheets
January 31, 2023

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	01/31/2023 Totals	01/31/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	458,478	3,769,898			4,228,376	3,967,775
Investments	28,048,716	97,399,415	124,395,285	6,742,490	256,585,906	286,074,841
Due From Other Funds		224,600			224,600	252,275
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	28,507,194	101,400,913	124,395,285	6,742,490	261,045,882	290,301,891
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			124,395,285	6,742,490	131,137,775	144,517,798
Fund Balance	28,507,194	101,400,913			129,908,107	145,784,093
Total Fund Balance	28,507,194	101,400,913	124,395,285	6,742,490	261,045,882	290,301,891

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, 2022 Through January 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	01/31/2023	01/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	15,056,840			15,056,840	13,100,252	14.94%
Other Wildlife Sales	1,802,262			1,802,262	1,823,366	-1.16%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	488,867			488,867	435,813	12.17%
Grant Revenue	15,291,380			15,291,380	18,267,823	-16.29%
Investment Income	133,825		36,971	170,796	133,345	28.09%
Miscellaneous	726,676			726,676	942,387	-22.89%
Total Revenues	33,499,850	0	36,971	33,536,821	34,702,986	-3.36%
Expenditures:						
Administration	4,503,012			4,503,012	4,385,159	2.69%
Wildlife	9,298,746			9,298,746	8,163,170	13.91%
Fish	5,601,861			5,601,861	6,293,107	-10.98%
Law Enforcement	6,791,473			6,791,473	7,136,384	-4.83%
Information and Education	1,873,235			1,873,235	1,815,868	3.16%
Capital Improvements	3,486,995			3,486,995	4,215,379	-17.28%
Land Acquisitions		1,077,649		1,077,649	6,955,255	-84.51%
Total Expenditures	31,555,322	1,077,649		32,632,971	38,964,322	-16.25%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	1,944,528	(1,077,649)	36,971	903,850	(4,261,336)	-121.21%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	0	0.00%
Operating Transfers In	4,144,938	1,077,649	7,768,714	12,991,301	8,856,356	46.69%
Operating Transfers Out	(1,077,649)		(4,144,938)	(5,222,587)	(8,621,653)	-39.42%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	3,067,289	1,077,649	3,623,776	7,768,714	234,703	3,210.02%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	5,011,817	0	3,660,747	8,672,564	(4,026,633)	315.38%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	18,164,252	0	24,846,447	43,010,699	65,499,816	-34.33%
Fund Balances January 31, 2023:	23,176,069	0	28,507,194	51,683,263	61,473,183	-15.93%

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances
Trust Funds
For the Period July 1, 2022 Through January 31, 2023

	Fiduciary Fund Types			01/31/2023 Totals	01/31/2022 Totals
	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust		
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	1,512,625			1,512,625	2,065,150
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	99,595			99,595	100,755
Interest and Investment Income	0	8,379,653	531,891	8,911,544	35,913
Employer Contributions		1,687,500	390,004	2,077,504	1,583,191
Employee Contributions		309,617	253,645	563,262	572,591
Total Operating Revenues	1,612,220	10,376,770	1,175,540	13,164,530	4,357,600
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		219,667	4,080	223,747	219,076
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	5,204,350	146,441	5,350,791	4,988,572
Total Operating Expenses	0	5,424,017	150,521	5,574,538	5,207,648
Operating Income	1,612,220	4,952,753	1,025,019	7,589,992	(850,048)
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	1,612,220	4,952,753	1,025,019	7,589,992	(850,048)
Fund Balances, Beginning	99,788,693	119,442,532	5,717,471	224,948,696	244,075,434
Fund Balances, January 31, 2023	101,400,913	124,395,285	6,742,490	232,538,688	243,225,386



Wildlife Contributions Report

January 2023

Total Payment Amount	Name Of Individual Or Business	Description Of Contribution
\$4.00	Michael Mathias	General Contribution
\$4.00	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: February 23, 2023

TO: OK Department of Wildlife Commission and Staff

FROM: Brittnee Preston

RE: Report on February Federal and Congressional Issues for March Commission Meeting

State of Play:

- > President Biden delivered his third State of the Union (SOTU) address, and it was a lively and likely a memorable delivery in the history of SOTU addresses. The President started out his speech addressing each Congressional leader noting that he looks forward to working with them all. The speech hit on several top of mind issues including climate change, police reform, gun safety law, the war in Ukraine and Medicaid and social security support programs. He received jeers and boos from Republicans on several of his talking points but, in one of the most discussed moments post speech, the President was able to swindle support through the bipartisan applause and cheers to protect the social support programs.

Congress:

Debt Ceiling:

- > The debt limit was reached on January 19th. The U.S. Treasury implemented extraordinary measures to address the payments on the \$31.4 trillion debt.
- > Congress seems to be at an impasse on negotiations to raise the debt ceiling. There were talks of passing a clean increase, but nothing has moved so far, and negotiations seem to have stalled.
- > The Congressional Budget Office reported that the government will exhaust its ability to issue additional debt sometime between July and September this summer.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act –

- > The push for Recovering America's Wildlife Act in the 117th Congress ended without passage. Although, it made significant progress last year and hopefully can build off that momentum in the 118th Congress.
- > The bill sponsors for reintroduction are expected to be the same as last Congress, Rep. Dingell in the House and Senators Heinrich and Blunt in the Senate.
- > It is not clear yet on when to expect the bills to be reintroduced, but the coalition's hope is this spring.
- > The Senate authors have identified a pay for on the bill but details on that have not been released yet.

FY24 Appropriations –

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.

- > The FY 2024 appropriations season is ramping up with anticipation of the President's budget to be released on March 9th.
- > We can expect to see agency hearings begin shortly after Congress receives the President's budget and topline numbers announced around the same timeframe.
- > The House Budget Committee plans to release examples of spending cuts by April, signaling that the new Republican majority is gearing up to potentially propose budget cuts in the FY 24 appropriations bills.
- > Following that, bill drafts will start to trickle out and, hopefully, move through the process toward the end of spring or the beginning of summer.

Committee work –

- > House and Senate Committees hosted organizational meetings setting up structure and directions for committees to commence work for this Congress. Now hearings can begin.
- > The Agriculture Committees have kicked off early hearings on Farm bill preparations. Farm bill hearings are ramping up with the Senate holding, on average, one hearing a week. So far, they have covered insurance, SNAP, nutritional programs and other commodity support programs.
- > The Senate Agriculture Committee's hearing on Farm Bill Commodity Programs, Crop Insurance and Credit did touch briefly on conservation efforts and climate issues. The committee focused attention on the importance to providing a safety net for farmers. They highlighted that the credit and the commodity support programs help farmers sustain their production and help new farmers stay afloat so that farmers can feed, fuel and clothes us all.

Agencies:

- > U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)
 - USFWS [announced](#) the final rule for the LPC listing will have a delayed effective date of March 27, 2023.
 - The USFWS [announced](#) a delay of the effective date of a final rule we published on November 30, 2022, reclassifying the northern long-eared bat as an endangered species. The effective date is now set for March 31, 2023.
 - The USFWS [announced](#) the 2023-2024 hunting regulations for migratory game birds. Comments are due by March 1, 2023.
 - The USFWS [announced](#) technical corrections to 62 wildlife and plant species on the threatened and endangered species lists. This is a direct and final rule. The effective date is set for May 3, 2023 unless significant adverse comments are submitted before the March 6, 2023 deadline.
 - The USFWS Region 2 [announced](#) the availability of the FY 2023 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) Traditional Conservation Grants Program. Applications are due by May 8th.

Coming up...

- > The debt ceiling needs to be addressed.
- > The FARM bill expires in September of this year.
- > The President's budget is expected on March 9th.
- > FY 24 Appropriations season will kick off soon.

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

Personnel Actions
February 2023

New Hires

Jaime Shay – Accounting Assistant, Central Office, 2/1/23

Amy Newcomb – Grants Assistant, Central Office, 2/1/23

Promotions

Matt Hensley – Wildlife Technician to Wildlife Biologist at Ouachita WMA,
2/1/23

Transfers

Zane Arnold – Warden, Delaware County to Warden, Coal County, 2/1/23

Matt Penwright – Warden, Pontotoc County to Warden, Pittsburg County, 2/1/23

Marvin Stanley – Warden, Cherokee County to Warden, Wagoner County, 2/1/23

Resignations/Terminations

Retirements

February 2023 DIRECTOR'S REPORT



OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF
**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

CALENDAR ITEMS:

Mar 9	GIS Day at the Capitol
Apr 12	OKSSSP State Competition, El Reno (Banner)
Apr 26	Legislative Fish Fry at the Capitol
May 12	OK Wildlife Conservation Foundation sporting clays fundraiser, Cedar Gate
May 19	Hackberry Flat Crawford Building dedication, Frederick at 2 PM

AGENCY UPDATE

ADMINISTRATION

Accounting

Accounts Payable:

- # of Claims Audited and Paid – 330
- Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid - \$2,345,877.84
- Total # Agency Cardholders – 192
- Total # Agency Approvers (no cards) – 15
- Total Agency Monthly Standard Spending Limits - \$362,500.00
- Total Agency Spending Limits w/ Approved Increase Requests - \$405,500.00
- # of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved – 31
- # of P/Card Transactions Processed – 706
- # of ODWC In-depth Audited Transactions – 71
- OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions – 0
- Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases - \$199,651.83
- PCard Program Refresher Training – 0
- New Approver Training at OMES – 0
- New Cardholder Training at OMES – 1

Risk Management:

- OMES Surveys or Premiums Completed – 256
- New Cases Reported – 0

Purchasing:

- # of Purchase Orders/CO issued – 40
- IT Acquisitions Processed – 12
- Construction Site Visits:
 - 1/6/2023 - Rebekah Pennington Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting Oolahaga WMA - Repair to Public Access Road
 - 1/20/2023 - Rebekah Pennington Site Inspection Meeting - Packsaddle WMA

Federal Aid

- Federal Reimbursement Request: \$1,616,100.49 (includes quarterly "Federal Other" reimbursement requests)
- Audit Repayment: \$156,471.54 (\$620,532.20 cumulative)

- Grant Reports Submitted: 7
- Fisheries and Wildlife division Pcard charges sorted into 294 unique combinations of Fund / Division / Grant number / Project number / Product Code / Area / Object Code for claim jacket preparation
- Subaward Invoices Processed: 7 invoices totaling \$61,662.04
- Grants Assistant Key Meetings / Milestones: Training Grants Specialist on Federal Other Quarterly Draw. Drafting 21 revised final FFR's for repayment of questioned costs associated with the FY18-19 OIG audit
- Grants Specialist Key Meetings / Milestones: December Program Income \$27,461.86; December In-Kind contribution - 12,290.00; TRACS interim report trainings; SWAU troubleshooting; R2 FAC chat
- Federal Aid Coordinator Key Meetings / Milestones: Training new Boating Access Coordinator; Working with new Shooting Range Coordinator;
- Other FA Section Activities: Training of new Grants Assistant; Ongoing work with Accounting re policies for BABA and Capital Expenditures; Meeting in Jenks for future Oklahoma Aquarium grant (gallery update)

Human Resources

- # Open Full-time Positions – 35
- Positions Interviewed – 6
- Candidates interviewed – 27
- Positions Announced – 6
- Candidates Screened – 119
- Filled Positions – 6
- New Hires – 2
- Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), - 13

See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month

Other misc:

- 1 – MINRC Meeting
- 6 – Workday training for Performance Reviews
- Continue to answer Workday questions
- 3 - Workday Webinars
- Wildlife Resource Professional Workshop
- Interviews and testing for Game Warden positions

IT

- February brought in almost a third more tickets than January.
- I.T. conducted interviews for a help desk position. We had twenty-six people apply and interviewed 5. Selection has been made our selection waiting for a background check.
- Met with Rack Madness coordinators and built custom scripts to deploy the Rack Madness specific files and printers to all the computers that are being brought into H.Q.
- Deployed 10 laptops to be used as loaners for the Rack Madness Program.
- Deployed 10 laptops for the Betsey Yorks's survey program.
- We have multiple vendors visiting H.Q to place bids and give ideas for upgrading the Eagle's Nest A/V equipment.
- Deployed several laptops for the ongoing OMES refresh.

- Created a function within HR's systems so that we can hold or extend time if no one applies for a job after two weeks.

License

- Processed over 940 orders, including 818 licenses/permits and 596 hard cards (mail and walk-in orders) - \$72,847 in revenue
- Shipped 345 in-house merchandise items (patches, books, etc), totaling over \$3,200 in revenue.
- Processed \$43,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
- Reviewed 1865 online applications for various licenses and permits.

Property/Radio

- Received approval from OMES for 4 new heavy-duty trucks, for Fish Division (2) and Wildlife Division (2). Vehicle purchase requests completed.
- Distributed new employee uniforms across the agency. Over 2,000 clothing items were packaged based on employee orders.
- Rescheduled southeast trip for rebranding fish & wildlife vehicles in the field due to weather in January. Added one additional trip to cover more field vehicles.
- Collected information on over 240 miscellaneous items for surplus auction. Coordinated with staff to review items for exchange before going to auction. Currently 14 items scheduled for auction were repurposed.
- New HVAC contract for headquarters was bid and will be issued by the end of February.

FISHERIES DIVISION

Statewide Fish Stockings, January 2023			
Species	#Fish	Size	# Locations
Rainbow trout, USFWS	9,680	11" range	3
Rainbow trout, commercial	13,105	9"+	9
Rainbow trout, commercial	683	14-25"	7
TOTAL	23,468		

Meetings

- Staff presented at the Northeastern State University fish and wildlife club.
- Staff attended and judged at the local Muskogee, OK country regional science fair.
- Attended meeting w/ TPWD to discuss Lake Texoma fisheries management.
- Attended meeting w/ Chickasaw Nation, Director's Office, and Fisheries Division regarding Blue River flows.

Activities

- Finished moving riprap from north side of reservoir #3 to south side of reservoir #3, rotovate and shape pond bottoms, assisted Durant Hatchery with pulling pump, installed pump into wet well, pulled pump on phase 0 and sent in for repairs, identified major water line leaks and started repairs.
- Contacted NWOSU professors re potential internship recruitment.
- Finished metal shop move and organizing.

- Conducted out of state fish trades with Supervisors.
- Rainbow trout were stockpiled in hatchery raceways for stocking of Blue River at later date.
- Monitored trail cameras for research project.
- Collected and hauled Sauger to the Bryon Fish Hatchery for production purposes.
- Staff assisted with interviews for an on-call engineer for the agency.
- Staff identified encroachment issues at Lake Elmer and worked with Law Enforcement to correct the issue.
- All deficiencies identified in the dam inspection at Lake Elmer were corrected. They included tree and rock removal, and a valve repair.
- Conducted joint paddlefish gillnetting on Eufaula w/USFWS. Catch rates were higher than expected and almost all fish had coded wire tags (hatchery stocked fish).
- Repairs continue at the PRC facility and preparing for upcoming season.
- Continued work on bowfishing evaluation project.
- Completed both the 2022 Black Fork of the Poteau black bass report and the community report for the lower Arkansas River watershed.
- Continued work on ongoing research including analyzing diet data from upper Illinois River Smallmouth Bass genetics project and compiling otolith age data from states across the country to facilitate a large-scale Smallmouth Bass growth publication. We currently have data for 24,893 Smallmouth Bass representing 137 populations from 26 states.
- Biologists created PowerPoint presentations for the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society annual meeting.
- Attended numerous functions including Peppered Shiner species status assessment meeting, statewide black bass management plan meeting, Blue River instream flow meeting, academic committee meeting for graduate student leading the Blunface Shiner SWG research project, net repair workshop in Louisiana, and performance review training.
- Staff completed 2 angler creel surveys at McGee Creek
- Staff completed habitat enhancement project at McGee Creek by refurbishing existing brushpiles and replacing buoys as needed.
- Finalized data analysis from 2022 EF and TN samples.
- Staff assisted with controlled burns at Lake Nanih Waiya, Cross Timber and Hickory Creek WMA's.
- Continued Blue Catfish wintertime sampling (mark/recapture) efforts at Lake Ellsworth
- Published *Surfacing response thresholds of Blue Catfish exposed to low-frequency electrofishing (Monague et al. 2023)* in N. American Journal of Fisheries MGMT
- Constructed Channel Catfish spawning boxes to be placed and evaluated this summer.
- Close to home fishing ponds trail camera were evaluated to understand pressure.
- Staff use the time to do routine annual equipment maintenance for upcoming years activity.
- Continued Medicine Creek Trout area creel survey.
- Installed survey boxes at Lake Ellsworth.
- HEO dug out valve at reservoir at Hackberry Flat WMA.

C&E DIVISION

- Kelly Boyer, Shawn Gee, Damon Springer, Jason Smith, Lance Meek, Jennifer Benge, Amanda Thomas, Skylar St. Yves, Kasie Harriet, Colin Berg and staff from other divisions set up and ran the Varsity Archery and OKNASP state shoots (West and Central Region Tier 2 state shoots at the OKC Fairgrounds) (East Tier 2 and Grand State at the Tulsa Fairgrounds).
- Micah Holmes and Betsey York closed out the research and planning phase of the ODWC Relevancy project. Over the last eight months, ODWC participated in an AFWA multi-state conservation grant focused on increasing conservation relevancy. The cross-division team completed work to develop relevancy goals via extensive data collection and workshop discussions. The survey data showed several groups where additional emphasis could help others understand how the agency is relevant to their lives. Of those groups identified, three population segments were selected by the ODWC Relevancy Team to target for conservation relevancy efforts: (1) Hispanic populations, (2) urban populations, and (3) wildlife enthusiast populations who are not primarily motivated by hunting. Across these three population segments, the relevancy project team came up with almost 50 relevancy actions they believed would help us engage with these groups. The relevancy team met to narrow down these actions into 3-5 efforts that will be accomplished in the next year and will focus first on Hispanic populations in welcoming them in the hunting, fishing and wildlife enthusiast community.
- Jason Smith, Lance Meek and Damon Springer worked with Oklahoma County on the Arcadia Road Project. The asphalt road is nearly complete and working on getting the purchase requisition out for the parking lots and conservation facility drainage.
- Micah Holmes, Jennifer Benge and Sarah Southerland participated in the National Marketing Summit in Houston hosted by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. All 50 states are represented at this meeting where state agencies and NGOs come together to collaborate and share about best practices and innovative programs aimed at increasing the number of anglers and improving their experiences to create lifelong participants.
- New artwork for 2023 hard license cards launched in early February. This year we commissioned local artist and outdoorsman Shea Meyer to produce the paintings featured on the new cards. The original paintings will be matted and framed and then provided to the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation to be auctioned off at one of their future events. The proceeds then will be used to continue to further our agency efforts. Michael Bergin reported the total of hard cards and field tags sold for 2022 exceeded \$82,000. Since going to a \$6 card, ODWC gets \$1.20 in the marketing fund for each that we sell.
- Micah Holmes collaborated with the national technical committee to draft new R3 Priorities. Following review by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies these revised priorities will be used to guide the proposals submitted and funded as part of the Multistate Conservation Grant Program.
- Jena Donnell attended the Conservation Exchange Group. She also worked to develop regional updates sharing details for projects funded that specific region by the Wildlife Diversity Program. This is intended to help inform game wardens, fisheries and wildlife biologist of the field studies that occur in their area. She also began efforts to promote the wildlife diversity tax check-off option.

- Micah Holmes and Colin Berg, as well as Federal Aid staff, met with officials at the Oklahoma Aquarium to discuss a Sportfish Restoration grant that would fund a renovation of the Fishes of Oklahoma exhibits.
- Betsey York began collecting data for the annual Game Harvest Survey. She also created draft survey instrument for the 2023 Trapper Survey working with Jerrod Davis.
- Amanda Thomas, Lance Meek and Colin Berg finished first round of ODWC range renovation and construction site visits. They visited all the ranges that have been completed to date and looked at upcoming project sights with the local biologists. Staff were given an update on the status of ranges as well as the initial phase of planning for the FY 24 budget. Multiple meetings were held with Engineers, Federal Aid staff and internal staff to sort through all of the ongoing projects.
- Skyler St Yves conducted several in person basic trout fishing courses around the state and continued to update and maintain the Fishing Resources pages and The Dock on the website.
- Damon Springer finalized the OKSSSP Regional and State Shoot information and sent out registration info to coaches.
- Kasie Harriet and Colin Berg traveled to Nashville TN, for the NWTF annual convention and show. Kasie and Colin presented on the R3 position which is funded by a cooperative grant with funding from the ODWC and NWTF.
- Jennifer Benge compiled the weekly fishing reports for distribution, and she handled getting all of the OKNASP and Varsity Archery score sheets prepared and assembled the 350 teacher packets for the state shoots.
- Outdoor Oklahoma Adventures launched Feb. 1. This year the Department is offering 4 adventures: guided paddlefish trip, elk hunt, lifetime license combo license and a youth deer hunt.

WILDLIFE DIVISION

- Burn, burn, burn. Staff will be putting lots of effort into finish up prescribed burning
- McGee bathroom should be delivered any time.
- Several conferences that staff attended: NWTF, OKTWS, and Deer Study Group
- Cedar tree harvest contract on James Collins started its second year
- Turkey researchers have started trapping and installing transmitters in both the southeast and southwest portions of the state; pronghorn captures are complete in the panhandle.
- Staff across the state conducted winter turkey flock surveys
- Several other research projects began at the first of the year (Alligator snapping Turtle distribution, Freshwater mussel abundance, Crawfish Frog abundance and habitat, Buffalo fishes, and Frosted Elfin)
- Bear den work has begun for this season with a number of dens scheduled for visits this month
- Working with timber companies on renewing lease agreements for Three Rivers and Honobia Creek WMA's
- Pronghorn aerial surveys were conducted in panhandle counties.
- Staff are preparing grazing leases for bid, prescribed burn plans and equipment/firebreak preparations, conducting ag/grazing/hay lease inspections, inventory inspections, and preparing for upcoming grazing season (checking water tanks, windmills, solar wells, fence conditions, etc.).

- Monitoring cedar cutting projects on Canton and Ft Supply WMA's.
- 8.5 miles of old fence were replaced, and 145 acres of mechanical forest thinning were completed (NRDA - Cross Timbers WMA)
- Worked on Wetland Development Unit equipment and pumped 225 acres of Wetland Development Units
- Aerial herbicide applied on 291 acres
- Staff continue late winter discing of strips and plots for forb production
- Masticated 97 acres of timber
- Maintained 21 miles of area roads
- The Corps of Engineers teamed up with ODWC at the Fort Gibson WRP to train their employees in effective fire management during the first full week of March
- Herd health evaluations are complete. This effort seeks to sample 40 antlerless deer from two different regions each year. Deer are necropsied and data collected includes conception timing, age, disease detection panels, and general health assessments
- Wildlife Division, with the assistance of some Law Enforcement, hosted 2 separate Land Trapping Workshops. The Eastern Workshop was hosted at Ft. Gibson WMA and had 15 participants with over 100 enrolled on a waiting list. The Western Workshop was hosted at Packsaddle WMA and had 11 participants with over 50 enrolled on a waiting list. The immediate feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive and supportive. We have surveys that attendees have filled/will fill out to gather data regarding reason(s) for trapping, experience level for trapping, views toward trapping, and knowledge level before and after the workshop. .
- The furbearer season is coming to an end and this season has not been unusual compared to recent seasons. There have not been many requests for additional CITES tags to be mailed out, though we have gained 4 or 5 new private tagging stations in areas of the state where we didn't currently have any. We also added 3 new Fur Dealers for the state of Oklahoma and 1 Non-resident Fur Dealer. The fur market has been better than anticipated for bobcat, river otter, striped skunk, and beaver. Most other species have either retained their value from previous years or have declined in both value and demand
- Tell Judkins continues working with Pheasants Forever /Quail Forever on ways to assist the Department with archaeological surveys and historical site locations and clearances
- Dallas Barber attended the Southeast Deer Study Group in Baton Rouge LA at the end of February. At this annual meeting Dallas represents the agency on the Cervid Working Group as well as the Deer Study Group. Dallas presented a program on how Oklahoma has been able to alter the age structure of our deer herd using education and voluntary restraint guidance to our hunters instead of regulation changes. Oklahoma continues to get attention around the nation for this effective management strategy and resultant shift in both herd health and population dynamics.
- We completed acquisition of an additional 80 acres adjacent to Sandy Sanders

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

- The new FTO class was held at the Arcadia Education Building on February 13th & 14th. This is a new FTO class that was created and put on by Capt. Marni Loftis. She did an amazing job with this class and all things related to the FTO process. All forms and materials that are used have been updated and are all on computer now instead of the old paper forms. She deserves a great big pat on the back for making all this happen.

- D6 put on its yearly training at Ft. Cobb St. Park this last month as well. They spent the 21st – 23rd at the park getting their training done for the year.
- We have had numerous wardens assisting with the Archery in the Schools state shoots over the last month as well, with wardens assisting with the shoots in OKC and Tulsa.
- New Wardens reported to their first day on the job on March 1st they are currently at Camp Gruber in the Game Warden Academy. If anyone is interested in observing a day or two at the Academy let Nate or Wade know and we can work out a good day to be there.