

**AGENDA**  
**Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission**  
**Regular Meeting**

**Public Meeting:**     **Monday, June 5, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**  
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

In compliance with the Open Meeting Act, this meeting is scheduled to be streamed live and recorded at [www.youtube.com/user/outdooroklahoma](http://www.youtube.com/user/outdooroklahoma)

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 – Nathan Erdman
4. Pledge of Allegiance – Nathan Erdman
5. Introduction of Guests
6. Presentation of Awards

Wade Farrar, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement - 20 years of service; Casey Young, Warden Supervisor – 20 years of service; David Banta, Wildlife Technician – 25 years of service; Colin Berg Communication & Education Supervisor – 30 years of service.

7. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject or take other action on a donation of two Pulsar Thermal/IR Binoculars to be used in Lincoln and Pottawatomie Counties valued at \$5,000 from the Red Bud Chapter of Quail Forever – Nathan Erdman, Chief of Law Enforcement, Laura McIver, Regional Representative for Quail Forever and Lloyd Jones, President, Red Bud Chapter of Quail Forever.
8. Presentation on the Vamos a Pescar (Let's Go Fishing) program in partnership with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and OKC Latina – Nels Rodefeld, Communication and Education Chief, Jennifer Benge, Communication and Education Technician and Juliana Lopez, Founder, OKC Latina.
9. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on minutes of the April 3, 2023, regular Commission meeting.
10. 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.

11. Presentation of the March 31, 2023 and April 30, 2023, Financial Statements and consideration and vote to approve, amend, or reject miscellaneous donations – Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration.
12. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on the department's FY2024 Annual Budget – Amanda Storck.
13. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for retirees in accordance with the Retirement Plan – Amanda Storck.
14. Update and consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject or take other action on a Resolution to establish hunting dates, bag, possession limits, and special means of take for the 2023-24 Migratory Game Birds hunting season – Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division and Paxton Smith, Migratory Bird/Wetlands Biologist.
15. Update and consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on a Resolution establishing antlerless deer seasons and bag limits for the 2023-24 hunting season – Bill Dinkines and Dallas Barber, Big Game Biologist.
16. Discussion of potential litigation, which the Commission by majority vote may decide to discuss in Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S. 307(B)(4); with any action thereon to take place through discussion, consideration, and vote in Open Session – J.D. Strong, Director.
17. Discussion and action, if necessary, concerning the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation, including a status update, approval of appointment/reappointment of members for the Foundations' Board of Directors, Board Committees, fundraising and other related matters involving the Foundation – Commissioner Barwick.
18. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on the nominations of 2023-2024 Commissioner Officers – Commissioner Zelbst.
19. New Business – Discussion of any matter not known about, or which could not have been reasonably foreseen 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
20. Announce the July 3, 2023, Commission meeting has been canceled.
21. Adjourn

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

**BEFORE THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

**IN THE MATTER OF** )

)

Antlerless Deer Hunting )

Seasons and Bag Limits )

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the population of antlerless deer in Oklahoma continues to thrive across the state and unbalanced sex ratios due to excessive numbers of antlerless deer can result in poor herd health and imbalanced herd demographics. Adequate antlerless harvest is crucial to managing deer populations. High deer populations across parts of the state have resulted in an increased incidence of crop damage complaints on privately-owned property.

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation staff recommends that population concerns should be addressed by adjusting white-tailed deer antlerless bag limits and season dates in specific deer management zones. The Staff aims to provide private landowners opportunity to accomplish their deer management goals along with removing certain barriers preventing antlerless harvest and promoting maximized recreational hunting opportunity. The staff further recommends that recreational hunting in each of the ten deer harvest management zones should be utilized as the primary means to address biological and social concerns.

WHEREAS, Title 29, Section 2-149 of the Oklahoma Statutes, defines the term wildlife as "all wild birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and other wild aquatic forms, and all other animals which normally can be found in the wild state, regardless of classification." Pursuant to that section, antlerless deer are a wildlife species governed by the Wildlife Conservation Code and therefore, the season can be established by resolution under Title 29, section 5-401(A) of the Oklahoma Statutes.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED THAT, White-tailed Antlerless Deer Seasons and Bag Limits are hereby modified and substituted as follows for 2023, and shall remain in effect for future years until further modified or revoked:

## **ANTLERLESS DEER ZONES**

### **Zone 1:**

**Season Dates-** Open to antlerless deer hunting concurrent with the deer gun season as published in the current Oklahoma Hunting Guide. Muzzleloader season and holiday antlerless season remains closed.

**Bag Limit-** One antlerless white-tailed deer during regular deer gun. **Antlerless mule deer harvest is prohibited. All deer taken count toward the hunter's combined season limit of six deer**

### **Zones 2, 7, and 8:**

**Season Dates-** Open to antlerless deer hunting during deer muzzleloader and deer gun seasons as currently established with specific calendar dates as published in the current Oklahoma Hunting Guide.

**Bag Limit-** Four antlerless deer during muzzleloader season. Four antlerless deer during gun season. **All deer taken count toward the hunter's combined season limit of six deer.**

### **Zones 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9:**

**Season Dates-** Open to antlerless deer hunting during deer muzzleloader and deer gun seasons as currently established with specific calendar dates as published in the current Oklahoma Hunting Guide.

**Bag Limit-** Two antlerless deer during muzzleloader season. Two antlerless deer during gun season. **All deer taken count toward the hunter's combined season limit of six deer.**

### **Zone 10:**

**Season Dates-** Open to antlerless deer hunting during deer muzzleloader and deer gun seasons as currently established with specific calendar dates as published in the current Oklahoma Hunting Guide.

**Bag Limit-** One antlerless deer during muzzleloader season; One antlerless deer during gun season. **All deer taken count toward the hunter's combined season limit of six deer.**

## **HOLIDAY ANTLERLESS**

**Season Dates-** Open to antlerless deer hunting during dates published in the current Oklahoma Hunting Guide.

**Zone 1: CLOSED**

**Zones 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10: Bag Limit- Two Antlerless deer**

**DONE** the \_\_\_\_\_ day of June, 2023 in the regular and open meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.

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Leigh A. Gaddis, Chairwoman

ATTEST:

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C. Rick Holder, Secretary

## **2023 antlerless season dates and bag limits**

### **ZONE 1 ANTLERLESS DAYS:**

Zone 1 is closed to antlerless muzzleloader harvest and has a one antlerless white-tailed deer limit for deer gun season.

**Combined season bag limit of no more than six antlerless deer applies.**

- Archery Season..... Oct. 1, 2023 - Jan. 15, 2024
- Youth Deer Gun Season ..... Oct. 20 - 22
- Muzzleloader Season..... No antlerless days
- Deer Gun Season ..... Nov. 18 - Dec. 3

**The harvest of antlerless mule deer is prohibited.**

- Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season..... Closed

### **ZONES 2, 7 & 8 ANTLERLESS DAYS:**

Zones 2, 7 and 8 have a four antlerless deer limit for deer muzzleloader season and a four antlerless deer limit for deer gun season.

**Combined season bag limit of no more than six antlerless deer applies.**

- Archery Season ..... Oct. 1, 2023 - Jan. 15, 2024
- Youth Deer Gun Season ..... Oct. 20-22
- Muzzleloader Season ..... Oct. 28 - Nov. 5
- Deer Gun Season ..... Nov. 18 - Dec. 3
- Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season ..... Dec. 18 - 31

- The bag limit for **the Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season** is 2 antlerless deer. Antlerless deer harvested during the holiday antlerless deer gun season are bonus deer and do **not** count against the season bag limit

### **ZONES 3, 4, 5, 6 & 9 ANTLERLESS DAYS:**

Zones 3, 4, 5, 6 & 9 have a two antlerless deer limit for deer muzzleloader season and a two antlerless deer limit for deer gun season.

**Combined season bag limit of no more than six antlerless deer applies.**

- Archery Season ..... Oct. 1, 2023 - Jan. 15, 2024
- Youth Deer Gun Season ..... Oct. 20 - 22
- Muzzleloader Season ..... Oct. 28 - Nov. 5
- Deer Gun Season ..... Nov. 18 - Dec. 3
- Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season ..... Dec. 18 - 31

- The bag limit for **the Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season** is 2 antlerless deer. Antlerless deer harvested during the holiday antlerless deer gun season are bonus deer and do **not** count against the season bag limit.

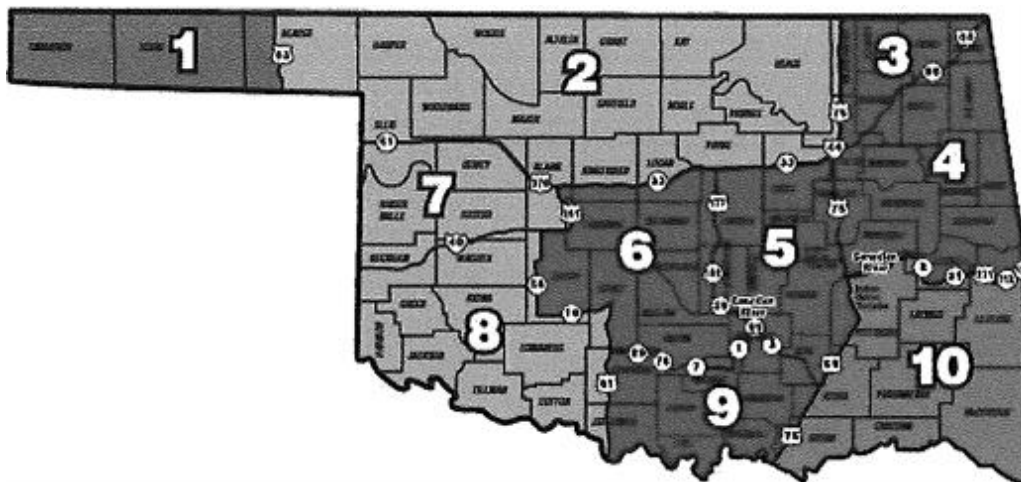
## **ZONE 10 ANTLERLESS DAYS:**

Zone 10 has a one antlerless deer limit for deer muzzleloader season and a one antlerless deer limit for deer gun season and a 2 antlerless deer limit for the Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season.

**Combined season bag limit of no more than six antlerless deer applies**

- Archery Season.....Oct. 1, 2023 - Jan. 15, 2024
- Youth Deer Gun Season ..... Oct. 20 - 22
- Muzzleloader Season ..... Oct. 28 - Nov. 5
- Deer Gun Season ..... Nov. 18 - Dec. 3
- Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season ..... Dec. 18 - 31
  - The bag limit for **the Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season** is 2 antlerless deer.  
Antlerless deer harvested during the holiday antlerless deer gun season are bonus deer and do **not** count against the season bag limit.

## **Deer Management Zones**



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

***For the period July 1, 2022 Through April 30, 2023***



**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Combined Balance Sheet - All Fund Types and Accounts Groups**  
**April 30, 2023**

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Types	Account Groups		04/30/2023	04/30/2022
	General	Capital Projects	Trust	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	12,806,809		4,317,804			17,124,613	18,365,260
Investments	0		261,372,009			261,372,009	258,903,399
Accounts Receivable	3,701,092					3,701,092	2,902,243
Monthly Lifetime License			184,250			184,250	218,275
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	6,451,862		7,000			6,458,862.00	4,161,918.00
Fixed Assets				78,193,214		78,193,214	75,467,046
Land				104,864,066		104,864,066	103,565,869
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	3,531,940
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
	22,959,763	0	265,881,063	183,057,280	21,202,403	493,100,509	459,036,142
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	803,680					803,680	1,363,725
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	184,250					184,250	218,275
Compensated Absences Payable(leave accrual)					0	0	3,531,940
Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
Total Liabilities	987,930	0	0	0	21,202,403	22,190,333	1,189,050
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			125,558,577			125,558,577	126,695,561
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			6,969,724			6,969,724	5,907,598
Investment in General Fixed Assets				183,057,280		183,057,280	179,032,915
Fund Balance	21,971,833		133,352,762			155,324,595	146,211,018
Total Fund Balance	21,971,833	0	265,881,063	183,057,280	0	470,910,176	457,847,092
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	22,959,763	0	265,881,063	183,057,280	21,202,403	493,100,509	459,036,142

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Trust Funds**

**Combining Balance Sheets**  
**April 30, 2023**

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	04/30/2023 Totals	04/30/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	479,516	3,838,288			4,317,804	4,042,036
Investments	30,435,868	98,407,840	125,558,577	6,969,724	261,372,009	264,810,997
Due From Other Funds		184,250			184,250	218,275
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	30,915,384	102,437,378	125,558,577	6,969,724	265,881,063	269,078,308
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			125,558,577	6,969,724	132,528,301	132,603,159
Fund Balance	30,915,384	102,437,378			133,352,762	136,475,149
Total Fund Balance	30,915,384	102,437,378	125,558,577	6,969,724	265,881,063	269,078,308

**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 April 30, 2023**

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	04/30/2023	04/30/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	18,747,943			18,747,943	17,374,215	7.91%
Other Wildlife Sales	2,819,646			2,819,646	2,681,401	5.16%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	1,648,350			1,648,350	1,404,694	17.35%
Grant Revenue	21,056,170			21,056,170	23,364,451	-9.88%
Investment Income	228,365		58,009	286,374	184,486	55.23%
Miscellaneous	1,007,962			1,007,962	1,209,253	-16.65%
Total Revenues	45,508,436	0	58,009	45,566,445	46,218,500	-1.41%
Expenditures:						
Administration	6,194,453			6,194,453	5,884,042	5.28%
Wildlife	13,281,598			13,281,598	12,033,644	10.37%
Fish	8,320,221			8,320,221	9,153,168	-9.10%
Law Enforcement	9,766,935			9,766,935	10,370,075	-5.82%
Information and Education	2,602,719			2,602,719	2,605,023	-0.09%
Capital Improvements	4,440,143			4,440,143	5,207,649	-14.74%
Land Acquisitions		1,288,777		1,288,777	6,955,255	-81.47%
Total Expenditures	44,606,069	1,288,777		45,894,846	52,208,856	-12.09%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	902,367	(1,288,777)	58,009	(328,401)	(5,990,356)	-94.52%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	874,655	-100.00%
Operating Transfers In	4,193,991	1,288,777	10,204,919	15,687,687	(755,710)	2,175.89%
Operating Transfers Out	(1,288,777)		(4,193,991)	(5,482,768)	(8,674,142)	-36.79%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	2,905,214	1,288,777	6,010,928	10,204,919	(8,555,197)	219.28%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	3,807,581	0	6,068,937	9,876,518	(14,545,553)	167.90%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	18,164,252	0	24,846,447	43,010,699	65,499,816	-34.33%
Fund Balances April 30, 2023:	21,971,833	0	30,915,384	52,887,217	50,954,263	3.79%

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances**  
**Trust Funds**  
**For the Period July 1, 2022 Through April 30, 2023**

Fiduciary Fund Types

	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	04/30/2023 Totals	04/30/2022 Totals
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	2,480,700			2,480,700	2,704,675
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	167,985			167,985	165,315
Interest and Investment Income	0	11,138,089	547,233	11,685,322	-10,650,070
Employer Contributions		2,250,000	554,197	2,804,197	2,357,003
Employee Contributions		436,974	365,558	802,532	813,216
Total Operating Revenues	2,648,685	13,825,063	1,466,988	17,940,736	(4,609,861)
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		237,993	5,390	243,383	288,818
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	7,471,025	209,345	7,680,370	7,161,923
Total Operating Expenses	0	7,709,018	214,735	7,923,753	7,450,741
Operating Income	2,648,685	6,116,045	1,252,253	10,016,983	(12,060,602)
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	2,648,685	6,116,045	1,252,253	10,016,983	(12,060,602)
Fund Balances, Beginning	99,788,693	119,442,532	5,717,471	224,948,696	244,075,434
Fund Balances, April 30, 2023	102,437,378	125,558,577	6,969,724	234,965,679	232,014,832



## Wildlife Contributions Report

April 2023

Total Payment Amount	Name Of Individual Or Business	Description Of Contribution
\$4.00	Tim Wedgeworth	General Donation
\$1,014.48	OnXMaps	Result of Collaborative Marketing Effort
\$5,000.00	Orange Bison Company	Total Archery Challenge Donation
\$4.00	Gregory Anson	General Donation
<b>\$6,022.48</b>	<b>Total</b>	

# June 2023 DIRECTOR'S REPORT



OKLAHOMA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION**

## **CALENDAR ITEMS:**

June 6-7 C&E Division Meeting, Broken Bow  
June 12-14 4-State Director/Commissioner Meeting, NW Arkansas  
June 27-29 Fisheries Division Meeting, Texoma  
July 3 Next Commission Meeting (unless canceled)  
July 10-14 WAFWA Summer Meeting, Santa Fe, NM

## **AGENCY UPDATE**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Accounting**

Accounts Payable:

# of Claims Audited and Paid - 319

Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid - \$2,871,401.90

Purchase Card Program:

Total # Agency Cardholders - 196

Total # Agency Approvers (no cards) - 15

Total Agency Monthly Standard Spending Limits - \$365,500.00

Total Agency Spending Limits w/ Approved Increase Requests - \$433,000.00

# of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved - 43

# of P/Card Transactions Processes - 718

# of ODWC In-depth Audited Transactions - 110

OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions - 0

Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases - \$238,663.07

PCard Program Refresher Training - 15

New Approver Training at OMES - 2

New Cardholder Training at OMES - 1

Risk Management:

OMES Surveys or Premiums Completed - 1

New Cases Reported - 4

Purchasing:

# of Purchase Orders/CO issued - 62

IT Acquisitions Processed - 14

Construction Site Visits:

N/A

#### **Federal Aid**

- Federal Reimbursement Request: \$2,164,383.39
- Program Income \$605,566.77; n-Kind contribution \$5,300.00
- Grant Reports Submitted: 23
  - Grant Amendments Submitted: 8

- Fisheries and Wildlife division Pcard charges sorted into 388 unique combinations of Fund / Division / Grant number / Project number / Product Code / Area / Object Code for claim jacket preparation
- Subaward Milestone: Processed: 10 invoices totaling \$63,084.74
- Key Meetings / Milestones: Ongoing migration to PeopleSoft platform (12 meetings); Meetings (2) regarding boating access projects at Wichita Mountains; Northeast Region supervisor's meeting; Committee working on BABA policy; Meeting with NMG&F regarding archaeology; FY24 budget revenue projections; Prep for new FY24 grants
- Vacancy in FA Section as of April 14

## **Human Resources**

# Open Full-time Positions - 21

Positions Interviewed - 3

Candidates interviewed - 23

Positions Announced - 3

Candidates Screened - 125

Filled Positions - 2

See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month

Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), - 21

Full time employees on March payroll - 339

DB Plan Members - 156

DC Plan Members - 183

Hourly employees on supplemental payroll - 43

Retirement meetings and / or calculations - 2

Work Comp Injuries - 1

Other misc:

- Continue to answer Workday questions
- FY24 Budget work
- MINRC meeting attended
- Continued cleanup of data in Workday
- Updated 7 HR Toolkit Factsheets
- Draft employee handbook update submitted for approval
- Redesigned and ordered ODWC tenure pins
- Attended 12 Workday Q&A sessions
- Attended new statewide learning services webinar on progressive discipline

## **I.T.**

- 147 tickets worked
- Assisted C&E with brainstorming for social media ideas as well as proper password procedure.
- Tested and documented proper procedure for conducting a Teams Meeting in the Oklahoma Room using the new microphone array.
- Assisted OMES in upgrading networking equipment in the Norman Research Lab's facility.
- Both backup and onsite storage arrays are now on the current version of Purity.
- Regained access to our Cisco USC manager by resetting the fabric interconnects simultaneously.
- Deployed laptops for several users.

- Created a VPN tunnel for OMES to look at our test SQL database to assist in PeopleSoft migration.
- Secured licensing for the Microsoft Teams Room.

### License

- Processed over 900 orders, including 852 licenses/permits and 644 hard cards (mail and walk-in orders) - \$59,799 in revenue
- Shipped 237 in-house merchandise items (patches, books, etc), totaling over \$2,500 in revenue.
- Processed \$280,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
- Reviewed 1659 online applications for various licenses and permits.

### Property

- Wrapped up surplus auction, met with buyers to pick up vehicles and items.
- Coordinated radio programming with DPS and over 50 of our Game Wardens across the state at OKC.
- Delivery of first 2023 trucks to be issued out into the field.
- Awarded contract for Headquarters Grounds Keeping/Maintenance.
- Distributed uniform items to recent new hires.

## FISHERIES DIVISION

Statewide Fish Stockings, April 2023			
Species	#Fish	Size	# Locations
Hybrid Sunfish (Aq Education)	1900	4-7"	5
Rainbow Trout, USFWS	9,316	11" range	1
Rainbow Trout, commercial	3,793	9"+	1
Rainbow Trout, commercial	260	14-25"	1
Saugeye	700,000	Fry	2
Walleye	7,353,950	Fry	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,069,219</b>		

### Meetings

- Staff attended the Oklahoma Clean Lakes and Watersheds conference at OSU in Stillwater.
- Participated in Blue River in-stream flow meeting with Chickasaw and Choctaw representatives.

### Activities

- Pickup and stock 4 million Walleye fry from Kansas Parks and Wildlife.
- Staff assisted Nebraska Parks and Game with Walleye broodstock collection efforts on Lake Merritt for two days. Approximately 4.2 million walleye eggs and 5.7 million Saugeye eggs were brought back in return. This trade completed the Walleye and Saugeye requests for Oklahoma.
- Complete annual fish health inspection with USFWS.



- Staff collected White Bass from Kaw and Grand Reservoirs and transported them to Byron Hatchery for upcoming Hybrid Striped Bass production.
- Filled and stocked 8 ponds with Walleye and Saugeye fry for fingerling production.
- Harvested Smallmouth Bass and placed them out to spawn.
- Harvested Northern Largemouth Bass ponds and placed them into two ponds for spawning.
- Collected brooder Northern Largemouth Bass from **Wichita Mountains** Wildlife Refuge.
- Harvested Channel Catfish ponds and placed them into two ponds.
- Harvested Florida Largemouth Bass brooders and stocked into spawning ponds and future brooders, fin-clipped, pit tagged, and stocked into hatchery ponds.
- Stocked extra Florida Largemouth Bass brooders into Lone Chimney Lake
- Harvested Koi brooders and stocked them into spawning ponds.
- Collected Northern Largemouth Bass brooders from American Horse.
- Assisted with Largemouth Bass pit tagging, habitat cubes, broodstock collection and various hatchery projects.
- Monitored water quality and stocked trout in Lower Mountain Fork River.
- Spring electrofishing was completed at Elmore City, Lindsay, Purcell, Smith, Verlin, Vanderwork, Lawtonka, Ft. Cobb, Duncan, Doc Hollis Lakes, Bristow, Sahoma, Bixhoma, Grand, Spavinaw, Lakes Elmer, American Horse, Lake Texoma and Mountain Lake. DNA and otoliths were collected for ongoing research efforts. Swabs were collected on blotchy bass for contribution in multi-state research efforts. All data is being entered and analyzed.
- Bristow City Lake (aka, George Horany Lake) where Largemouth Bass catch-per-unit effort was 129.75 with an overall relative weight of 94.
- Sahoma Lake where Largemouth Bass catch-per-unit effort was 87.75 with an overall relative weight of 102.
- Bixhoma Lake where Largemouth Bass catch-per-unit effort was 141.0 with an overall relative weight of 80.
- Grand Lake where Largemouth Bass catch-per-unit effort was 156.25 with an overall relative weight of 101. Big Bass during the sampling was 6.82 pounds. Tissue samples were obtained from bass exhibiting Blotchy Bass Syndrome.
- Spavinaw Lake where Largemouth Bass catch-per-unit effort was 92 with an overall relative weight of 94. Big Bass during the sample was 5.97 pounds.
- Staff provided information and interviews regarding Blotch Bass Syndrome to media outlets and for social media outreach.
- Staff spent considerable time assisting bass tournament directors with exemption process, frozen accounts, and reporting.
- Staff conducted creel surveys on the Close-to-Home Fishing Program Pond in Veterans Park, Jenks, interviewing a total of 25 anglers and Harrah's Heritage Park Pond. Further, staff are performing a creel survey on McGee Creek Lake.
- Staff participated in the Close-to-Home Fishing Program Committee meeting in Norman to discuss current issues, future stockings, updated signs, and overall program goals.
- Staff assisted with the annual Badges and Bobbers event at Vinita Lake, where 150 youth took part and learned basic fishing techniques and fish ID. Further, staff assisted with fishing clinics at Gentry Creek, outdoor activity education day at Purcell Lake, Pawnee Conservation Day, Hooked on Fishing, and Pack 3804 Fishing

Badge Clinic. High Plains Technology Center in Woodward had approximately 150 students. Eighty students attended the second clinic at the Outdoor Day with the Dewey County Conservation District. Staff and Law Enforcement staff provided fishing clinics in partnership with the Big-5 Community Service organization. These events were held in Coalgate and Marietta and provided fishing opportunities to nearly 800 kids and parents.

- Staff assisted Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery with Alligator Gar spawning.



- Channel catfish spawning boxes were placed in Purcell, Lindsay, and Elmore City lakes.
- Floating vegetation mats were installed at an Edmond Close-To-Home Pond.
- Staff wrapped up the 2023 spring harvest season for the Paddlefish Research Center. This included database error checking and quality control, production of data reports and summaries, temperature monitoring, pathogen testing, caviar packaging, sale, and shipment, facility wind-down, intern payroll and performance evaluations, and closure of special projects like reading and decoding hatchery coded wire tags and a fishing guide creel survey.
- Buffalofish otoliths continued to be prepared, cut, and aged for our statewide morphology and genetic assessment with Oklahoma State University.
- Staff assisted researchers at Missouri State University, and Paddlefish snagging guides on Bighead Carp collections in the Neosho River, taking blood samples for ploidy analyses, age structures, and gonadal examination.
- PRC staff gave several public tours of the PRC and educated two local FFA groups on Paddlefish ecology, biology, and management.

- Staff conducted the annual fish collection for Kaw Nation on Kaw Lake for their contaminant testing activities.
- Staff met with plant management from the OGE Sooner Station and ODWC's Boating Access Coordinator to discuss the replacement of the east boat dock on Sooner Lake using the Boating/Fishing Access Program.
- HEO began building jetties at Jap Beaver Lake.
- Approximately 1.5 miles of roads were shaped and rocked at Lake Vincent.
- Staff at Blue River completed the planned road and culvert maintenance project.
- Started acquiring sites for community sampling in the Deep Fork and Neosho watersheds.
- Completed SARP stream barrier assessment field training.
- Completed revisions on a manuscript entitled "Leveraging a century of fisheries surveys to prioritize conservation efforts for species in Great Plains streams of Oklahoma (USA)".
- Continued analyzing Neosho Bass and Smallmouth Bass diet data from the upper Illinois River watershed.
- Used our community data to compile a Largemouth Bass occupancy modeling dataset across the Great Plains ecoregion for use in the upcoming occupancy modeling workshop at Oklahoma State University.
- Assisted Southeast Region with Largemouth Bass mark-recapture study on Taft Lake.

## **C&E DIVISION**

- Blake Podhajsky, Todd Craighead and Darrin Hill met with the Lt. Governor at the Oklahoma Aquarium in Jenks to film a host segment for Outdoor Oklahoma TV.
- Several C&E specialists are working to collect video and content of the Game Warden Training Academy.
- Smokey Solis has been working to update the 2023-24 Fishing and Hunting regulations book. There are still several rounds of edits, and regulations are scheduled to hit the shelves by August 15.
- Blake Podhajsky finished Schnake Turbo and Frank's intensive Leadership Training Academy.
- Don and Jena worked to develop the first Outdoor Oklahoma issue dedicated to Wildlife Diversity. The May/June issue should be available soon. Jena made several field trips to gather content. Topics included grazing leases, chicken turtles, and fish habitat.
- Todd Craighead was recently presented with the Conservation Medal from the Cordelia Steen Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution for his lifetime of bringing conservation to the people of Oklahoma.
- Damon Springer, Jason Smith, Lance Meek, Jennifer Benge, Skylar St. Yves, Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee set up and conducted the SW Region OKSSSP shoot at Duncan with assistance from other agency staff. They also ran the OKSSSP state shoot at El Reno for the top 16 high school teams, top 8 junior high teams and individual qualifiers. Some amazing scores were shot at the shoot by teams and individuals.
- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee set up the summer teacher training schedule to engage 20 new schools with our suite of outdoor education programs as well as train teachers who are filling vacancies from current schools.

- Betsey designed and programmed the trapping survey and first invitations will be sent out at end of April. She began work on the 2023 Fishing Guide Survey. She also worked with fisheries division to determine how to apply the results of the farm pond technical assistance program survey. Betsey worked with Wildlife to conduct the Conservation Order Light Goose Season post season survey. And will present at the Wildlife Division meeting on human dimensions at the agency as well as the relevancy project.
- Michael Bergin worked with Brandt Information Services to update the recently expired merchandise agreement. He also helped fisheries launch a fundraising campaign aimed at raising money for habitat cubes.
- Skylar St. Yves conducted several virtual fishing courses focused on bank fishing for different species. He also assisted OG&E staff with a fishing clinics at Horseshoe Lake. He completed the Catfish Anglers Guide, reviewed photos submitted to the Dock and continued working on the fishing resource page as well as fishing blog.
- Lance Meek handled requests and assisted organizations and staff with several meetings that took place at the Arcadia Conservation Education center.
- Jason Smith handled the upkeep and maintenance of the equipment for the OKSSSP and open to the public shoots that were conducted in April.
- Several communications were released in April. Controlled hunts, Outdoor Adventure raffles, Gobbler Report, Youth Camp, and the Wild Side newsletter.
- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee began work on equipment purchases for the next rounds of schools that will be trained this summer to ensure that equipment kits are available for new schools.
- Jena Donnell launched an online citizen science project using iNaturalist called See.Share.Science-Athon. It had incredible participation with 500 participants, 4,000 observations and 1,200 species identified.
- Sarah Southerland and Jena have partnered with the Department of Mental Health and Jones PR to help promote the state's new mental health hotline, 988.
- Kasie Harriet and Lance Meek met with Oklahoma Deer Conference organizers regarding the 2023 Deer Conference which will be held in conjunction with the Outdoor Nation Expo in Shawnee this year.
- Amanda Thomas continued follow up work with the contractor at the Packsaddle Gun range, and did several site visits to meet with contractors working on the Kaw Gun Range. She also communicated with Altus and Western Oklahoma Junior College regarding their grant application to begin to move forward with their proposal.
- Education section staff worked an event at the Cedar Gate for the Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program.
- Jennifer Bengé worked on updates to the Hunter Education Manual so it is ready to go to print. She also organized and distributed the weekly fishing reports.
- The communication section has been working to plan a communication campaign aimed at addressing public hunting and shooting access.

## **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

- Turkey season concluded and preliminary harvest figures show an increase from last year.
- WMA O&M work completed:
  - General spruce-up prior to and during turkey season
  - 142 parking areas had trash removed.

- Roadwork:
  - 22 miles of road were bladed.
  - 1617 tons of gravel were placed on roads
  - Major road repairs continue at Spavinaw WMA
  - 17 culverts replaced at Atoka WMA
- 55 small signs were replaced.
- 79 acres of food plots were planted.
- 15 acres were mulched with ODWC skid steers.
- 224 acres were burned.
- 45 acres of food plots were sprayed.
- Maintained numerous WMA Shooting ranges, and planning for renovation or new ranges continued.
- Invasive species work completed:
  - 10 acres of sericea spot treatments
  - 5 acres of musk thistle were sprayed.
  - 10 acres of Chinese privet and other invasive woody species were mulched/sprayed
  - Cedar cutting projects at Sandhills, Canton, and Cooper WMA's are nearing completion
- Built one mile of electric fence at Hulah and Copan to better manage grazing due to ongoing drought conditions
- Cattle turn-in monitored and completed on all WMA's with grazing leases, and monitoring will continue for duration of grazing contracts
- Replaced deteriorated water control structures in Wetland Development Units, began renovation/restoration work at Ft Cobb wetland development unit (NRDA project), and replaced the primary water valve at Hackberry Flat Reservoir
- Intern candidates were reviewed and 6 were submitted for hire during the summer period.
- GIS work was updated to facilitate the work on the new federal aid grant
- Pronghorn research field work has begun. As of May 1, there were 90 radio-collared pronghorns on-air and being tracked.
- Spotlight surveys for mule deer at Beaver WMA will begin this month
- Substantial time and effort expended preparing proposed Division budget for FY 24
- Rule Change proposals have been submitted for consideration this cycle
- Turkey tissue samples (112+) were collected and will be submitted for DNA testing. At the beginning of nesting season there was a total of 64 turkeys with transmitters on-air (34 in SE and 30 in SW) for the turkey research projects.
- There is continued interest in touring Red Slough WMA. YTD (through May 1), 37 tours for 165 people. Tour groups included OK Conservation Commission, 4 university/college groups, two local FFA groups, and numerous individuals. 16 States represented including OK, TX, AR, LA, VA, MS, MO, WY, IA, Washington D.C., IL, KS, NC, CA, NH, and WA
- Assisted with the Lt. Governor's turkey hunt
- Bat acoustic surveys have begun
- Staff attended the Eastern Black Bear Workshop and WAFWA Western Wild Turkey Tech Committee meeting.
- Closed on 140 acre tract adjacent to Cookson WMA.

- Assisted with outreach, including 3 presentations to school groups, and assisting Stillwater PD with Cops and Bobbers fishing clinic.
- Section 7 compliance evaluations were completed for several PR projects scheduled to start or renew on July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Final work completed at Hackberry Flat WMA/Center for Crawford building dedication
- The biennial Wildlife Division meeting was held May 17-19



## **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- We had 11 wardens attend First Responder Chaplain training in Tulsa, OK on April 14th. The purpose of this training is to educate them so they will be better able to assist with or respond to officers in need of someone to talk to. Other topics covered in this training were: Suicide prevention & awareness, stress management techniques, introduction to CISM & PTSD, crisis processing applications, coping techniques for first responders, ect, ect. The 11 wardens attending were: Zach Paulk (D5), Lt. Joe Alexander (D1), Karlin Bailey (D2), David Garrett (D2), Logan Shimp (D2), Mark Hannah (D3), Zane Arnold (D4), Lt. Billy Bob Walker (D4), Brandon Lehrman (D7), Phillip Cottrill (D8), and Mike Baker (D8).
- New wardens all completed their academy training and are currently in their second week of the newly revised and improved FTO training.
- We held a badge pinning ceremony at Department headquarters on April 28<sup>th</sup>. This gave their families a chance to meet their co-workers and administration. This helps build the family feeling of the Department and promote the team concept.
- D8 Warden Phillip Cottrill made a good “hunting turkeys over bait case” in Major County. The Facebook post has reached almost 50K people.
- D7 wardens have made early out of season turkey hunting cases as well as some hunting turkey over bait cases.
- D2 wardens put on a great fish fry and retiree dinner on April 13th for the new wardens. This gave the new wardens a chance to visit with the D2 wardens, Director, a couple of retirees, Chairwoman Gaddis, and their Chief. A great time was had by all in attendance.
- D8 wardens hosted the annual 5 – State Game Warden Meeting at Kenton, OK. There were approximately 90 wardens from Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Colorado.

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

**Personnel Actions**  
**April 2023**

**New Hires**

Cameron Gammill - Wildlife Biologist at Lexington WMA, 4/3/23

Dalton Norris – Fisheries Biologist, NW Region, 4/10/23

S. Julianne Perry – Fisheries Technician, SE Region, 4/17/23

**Promotions**

Luke Taylor – Assistant Hatchery Manager to Hatchery Manager, Durant State Fish Hatchery, 4/1/23

**Transfers**

Mason Eddings – Hatchery Technician at Durant SFH to Fisheries Technician at Blue River PHFA, 4/1/23

Kimberly Clark – Hatchery Technician at Holdenville SFH to Hatchery Technician at Durant SFH, 4/1/23

**Resignations/Terminations**

Tina Davis – Grants Specialist, Central Office, 4/14/23

**Retirements**



## MINUTES

Of the Regular Meeting on April 3, 2023, of the

### OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Held at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on April 3, 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 March 27, 2023, at 3:40 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  
                                 JOHN P. ZELBST, Member  
                                 TIM DIEHL, Member\*

\*Commissioner Diehl was attending his Senate Confirmation and entered the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

J.D. Strong, Director, introduced the following guest: Rick Grundman, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation; Karel Brewster, Hunter's Consortium; Greg Conrad, Six Degrees Sporting Goods; Jeff Boxrucker, National Fish Habitat Partnership; Doug Nygren, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat; Gene Gilliland, Friends of Reservoirs; Laura McIver, Troy Ellefson, Kevin Bennet, and James Dietch, Quail Forever/Pheasants Forever.

Director Strong recognized Scott Parry, Regional Supervisor for 25 years of service.

Ken Cunningham, Chief of Fisheries Division, introduced Doug Nygren with the Reserve Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP), who gave an update on the program and partnership opportunities. He recognized Jeff Boxrucker, former Assistant Fisheries Chief and 30-year employees of the ODWC who, after his retirement, was instrumental in helping get the Reservoir Partnership formed.

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, gave a brief overview of the department's donor funded Stars & Stripes Project. This program was created in 2016 and has collected \$86,000 in donations. The department has issued 1,031 licenses to military veterans and select survivors of veterans lost while serving their country. Mr. Dinkines introduced Laura McIver, Quail Forever, who presented the department with a donation of \$1,300 from the Cherokee Chapter Quail Forever for the Stars and Stripes Project. Ms. McIver also presented a donation of \$2,000 from the Central Oklahoma 89er Chapter to be used to purchase an ATV for use during prescribed burns on Hickory Creek Wildlife Management Area. Motion by Mr. Barwick, seconded by Mr. Kane to accept the donations as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Motion was made by Mr. Holder and seconded by Mr. Zelbst to approve the minutes from the March 6, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".



Director Strong gave an overview of wildlife related legislation currently moving through the 2023 Oklahoma Legislative Session. You can follow the progression of these proposal on the department website under Legislative Tracker. He 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. He reminded the Commission about the Legislative Fish Fry scheduled for April 26 at the State Capitol and the building dedication for William H. "Bill" Crawford at the Hackberry Flat Center on May 19, 2023.

Rick Grundman, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation announced that the Foundation will hold a sporting clays fundraiser at Cedar Gate on May 12. Blake Shelton, Foundation Board member, graciously did a PSA for the sporting clays event. As Director Strong mentioned, there will also be a building dedication on May 19 for the Hackberry Flat Center to honor William H. "Bill" Crawford. The Foundation funded the signage and bronze plaque for the building. The Foundation submitted \$75,000 to the department to support the engineering and planning study for the Hackberry Flat pipeline project. The Foundation is starting a "Friends Raisers" event to be held in each Commission district in conjunction with OWCF board members to recruit potential supporters.

At the request of Commissioner Barwick, due to several people wanting to address the Commission, Chairwoman Gaddis moved agenda item #14 ahead of the #11 agenda item.

Commissioner Barwick requested Commission approval to adopt a written position statement from the Commission pertaining to pending legislation, particularly SB 352 and HB 2355, which provides among its provisions, authorization for the use of arrow rifles that the legislation calls air bows, as a legal hunting method during any open season, including the general archery and primitive firearms seasons. Commissioner Barwick stated that he and Chairwoman Gaddis took a draft version of this position statement to the Capitol on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 and distributed it to the wildlife committee members of both houses of the legislature. He said the air powered arrow rifle, called an air bow by the legislation, has nothing to do with archery. It is a rifle. He also stated the Commission had the statutory and constitutional authority to approve hunting seasons and methods of take, so such determination should be made by the Wildlife Commission, rather than the legislature, as set forth in Article 2 Section 36 of the Oklahoma Constitution, which provides:

*Right to hunt, fish, trap and harvest game and fish.*

*All citizens of this state shall have a right to hunt, fish, trap, and harvest game and fish, subject only to reasonable regulation as prescribed by the Legislature and the Wildlife Conservation Commission. The Wildlife Conservation Commission shall have the power and authority to approve methods, practices and procedures for hunting, trapping, fishing and the taking of game and fish. Traditional methods, practices and procedures shall be allowed for taking game and fish that are not identified as threatened by law or by the Commission. Hunting, fishing, and trapping shall be the preferred means of managing game and fish that are not identified as threatened by law or by the Commission. Nothing in this section shall be construed to modify any provision of common law or statutes relating to trespass, eminent domain, or any other property rights.*

Added by State Question No. 742, Legislative Referendum No. 345, adopted at election held on Nov. 4, 2008.

Commissioner Mabrey said he had received many calls from avid bowhunters who are opposed to this bill. He said there is an archery season for a reason, it is a difficult sport and

takes a lot of time and practice to become successful. Mr. Barwick added that we want to hunt deer, not just shoot deer.

Greg Conrad owner of Six Degrees Sporting Goods addressed the Commission to say that the air bow is just another piece of hunting equipment and that it is no different than a crossbow, which is already legal during archery season. He also believes the air bow can be more easily used by people with disabilities. Mr. Conrad manufactures the air bow (air powered arrow rifle), but says this legislation is not about the money, it's about access and better opportunity for ADA participants. He stated that a majority of his products are given away. Commissioner Zelbst stated that when someone says it's not about the money, then it is always about the money. Commissioner Dillingham thanked Mr. Conrad for his presentation and stated that the department is sensitive to ADA requirements, but he cannot support the proposal the way the bill is written, as it is too wide open and does not appropriately address the ADA.

Karel Brewster, Hunter Consortium, announced that she wrote Senate Bill 352 and feels like it appropriately addresses disabled people. She also indicated that the Department's proposed rules on air powered arrow rifles in Title 800:25-7-54(6) does not allow hog hunting, but Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education, said that the rule states that air powered arrow rifles are allowed anytime rifles are allowed, which is year-round for hogs and coyotes.

Commissioner Barwick stated that we would prefer that legislators and lobbyist consult with the Department and Commission before filing bills that affect the Wildlife Department. We need to have dialogue regarding the science and the effort to preserve the resource and create a partnership between the Department and the legislature. We all serve the citizens of Oklahoma.

Further discussion of the position statement rendered a request from Commissioner Kane to delete the paragraph regarding technology available to hunters. Commissioner Barwick agreed and suggested an additional paragraph to clear up any confusion over the use of arrow rifles to hunt coyotes and feral hogs.. Director Strong also stated that the Archery Trade Association (ATA) does not consider anything without a string as archery equipment and that the Airgun Sporting Association is not supportive of airguns during archery season, including those that shoot arrows. Mr. Strong also indicated his disappointment that the discussion has evolved into an ADA discussion as the department is very sensitive to the needs of disabled hunters. He also said that a partnership with the legislature is the goal and he hoped that, moving forward, there would be more productive conversations between the department and the legislature. To be at odds with each other does not do any good to advance the cause of recruiting hunters.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to approve the position statement with the changes outlined above. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration presented the Financial Statement for February 28, 2023. Motion was made by Commissioner Zelbst, seconded by Commissioner Dillingham to accept the financial statements as presented and approve miscellaneous contributions. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes". Ms. Storck gave a license update:

Recreational Licenses - Number of licenses sold was down 18% from March 2022

- Resident Fishing - Down 24%
- Resident Hunting - Down 41%
- Resident Combo - Down 30%

- Nonresident Hunting - Up 12%
- Nonresident Fishing - Down 19%
- Lifetimes
- Regular Lifetimes - Down 22%
- Senior Lifetimes - Down 11%

The cause of slow sales in March is unknown, but we'll take a deeper look and keep eyes on April for an upswing with turkey season coming. Controlled Hunts applications are open so shoutout to License Section, Wildlife Division, and any others helping people with the application process!

Nels Rodefald introduced Betsey York, Human Dimensions Specialist, who presented a PowerPoint on the department's human dimensions research programs. Human dimensions of wildlife management research focuses on collecting information from hunters, anglers, and those that love the outdoors, and focuses on beliefs, attitudes, and values. This data also helps us understand activity, motivations, and barriers, as well as preferences, expectations, and satisfaction with how the Wildlife Department manages the outdoors in Oklahoma. Ms. York indicated that all reports conducted for human dimensions research are on the Department's website. She also stated that the response rate is about 40% which is a really good rate. Commissioner Barwick asked if there are any incentives for participation. Ms. York said each participant is entered into a drawing for a WMA Atlas and an Outdoor Oklahoma hat.

At this point in the Agenda, Commissioner Diehl joined the meeting.

Commissioner Dillingham asked how we take the report information and use it to create the budget such as infrastructure needs. Bill Dinkines said that the results from the infrastructure question on the survey is used to help guide the budget process on what is allotted for infrastructure projects. With a limited budget, this helps us prioritize the need. Commissioner Diehl asked about the Oil & Gas Companies helping with roads on WMA's. Mr. Dinkines said they do maintain the roads to the wells, but we have more difficulty in getting their help on the main roads that are used by everyone.

Wade Free, Assistant Director, introduced a new pilot program which is a controlled hunt for a family focused R3 hunt. In an effort for the Department to stay relevant and using science, we learned that females are more interested in a family hunt and want better education on where to hunt. Guided by the agencies R3 model, we landed on a family focused hunt. This hunt will be at Cross Timbers WMA, consisting of 35 permits and will be a separate campaign outside the controlled hunt system. For this pilot project, there will be no cost to the applicants. Mr. Free introduced Kelly Adams, Communication and Education Supervisor, who presented the results of the Women and Hunting Survey which was done in conjunction with OSU and conducted focus groups. Women make up 12.5 % of hunting participants and 30% of 2021 female hunters were new compared to 23% nationally. Survey showed that family hunts may be a better recruitment tool than a women-only hunt. If this project is successful, it will be expanded and added into the controlled hunt process.

Commissioner Barwick stated the Legislature, Rules and Litigation Committee of the Commission did not have a recommendation for the Commission with respect to the litigation matter because the Committee was unaware of the matter. He mentioned that perhaps the matter should be tabled until reviewed by the Committee unless time was of the essence. The Department's legal counsel Clayton Eubanks said it was. Motion was made by Commissioner Zelbst, seconded by Commissioner Dillingham to enter into Executive Session to discuss potential litigation. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to return to Open Session. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Commissioner Barwick announced that there is no action on the litigation at this time.

Chairman Gaddis announced the May 1, 2023 Wildlife Commission meeting will be held in Oklahoma City.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Leigh A. Gaddis, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

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C. Rick Holder, SECRETARY

**BEFORE THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

IN THE MATTER of hunting                    )  
dates, bag, possession limits,            )  
and special means of take                )  
for Migratory Game Birds                )  
for the 2023-24 hunting seasons        )

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, all species of migratory birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Title 16, section 708-711 of the United States Code and the regulations governing the hunting, taking, possession, and transportation of migratory birds in Title 50, subchapters A-J of the Code of Federal Regulations;

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Interior promulgates regulations annually governing seasons, limits and shooting hour schedules for migratory birds based on data gathered each year regarding breeding population indices and reproductive success;

WHEREAS, the Commission is required to select hunting season dates, bag and possession limits within the general framework created by the federal regulations and Oklahoma's seasons are published annually in the Code of Federal Regulations in conformance with the federal Administrative Procedures Act, Title 5, section 551 et seq. of the United States Code; and

WHEREAS, the Department staff recommends that the Commission set season dates, bag and possession limits as follows in order to provide optimal opportunity to the sporting public as a whole based on migration chronology, environmental factors, and population surveys.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED THAT, pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Title 29, section 3-103 (D)(15), 5-401 and 5-406 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the migratory game bird season dates, bag and possession limits and special means of take for the State of Oklahoma rule hereby established as follows for the migratory game bird hunting seasons of 2023-24; and thereafter on approximately the same dates each year, but with possible variation in any particular year to help accommodate and maximize hunter's weekend time in the field and to comply with the current federal regulation framework, thereby increasing hunter opportunity using the most liberal bag and possession limits for the seasons selected within such framework; until further modified or revoked:

## **WEBLESS MIGRATORY GAME BIRD AND WATERFOWL SEASONS**

### **DOVE**

**(Mourning, White-winged and Eurasian Collared)**

#### **Season Dates and Open Areas**

September 1 -October 31, 2023 and  
December 1 -December 29, 2023

#### **Bag and Possession Limit**

15 daily, 30 in possession after first day combined, 45 in possession after the second day combined. The limit may consist of any combination (aggregate) of mourning doves, white- winged, and fully dressed (those without a head or fully feathered wing naturally attached to the carcass) Eurasian collared doves. However, there is no bag limit on Eurasian collared doves if the head or one fully feathered wing remains naturally attached to the carcass of all such birds while being transported to their final destination.

### **SORA AND VIRGINIA RAIL**

#### **Season Dates and Open Areas**

September 1 -November 9, 2023; statewide

#### **Bag and Possession Limit**

25 daily, 50 in possession after first day, 75 in possession after the second day

### **GALLINULE**

**(Purple Gallinule and Common Moorhen)**

#### **Season Dates and Open Areas**

September 1 - November 9, 2023; statewide

#### **Bag and Possession Limit**

15 daily, 30 in possession after first day, 45 in possession after the second day

### **WOODCOCK**

#### **Season Dates and Open Areas**

October 28 - December 11, 2023; statewide

#### **Bag and Possession Limit**

3 daily, 6 in possession after the first day, 9 in possession after the second day

### **WILSON'S (COMMON) SNIBE**

#### **Season Dates and Open Areas**

September 30, 2023 - January 14, 2024; statewide.

#### **Bag and Possession Limit**

8 daily, 16 in possession after the first day, 24 in possession after the second day.

## **SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON**

### **Season Dates and Open Areas:**

September 9 - September 24, 2023; statewide.

### **Bag and Possession Limit:**

6 teal daily, 12 in possession after the first day, 18 in possession after the second day.

## **SPECIAL SEPTEMBER RESIDENT CANADA GOOSE SEASON**

### **Season Dates and Open Areas:**

September 9 - September 18, 2023; statewide

### **Bag and Possession Limit:**

8 daily, 16 in possession after the first day, 24 in possession after the second day.

No special provisions.

### **SHOOTING HOURS:**

Shooting hours for all migratory game birds listed shall be one-half hour before official sunrise to official sunset.

## **WATERFOWL, COOT, AND SANDHILL CRANE SEASONS**

### **DUCKS, MERGANSERS AND COOTS**

#### **SEASON DATES:**

##### **Panhandle Counties (High Plains Mallard Management Unit)**

October 7, 2023 -January 3, 2024

##### **\*Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days**

September 30, 2023 & February 3, 2024

##### **\*Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days**

September 30, 2023 & February 3, 2024

Waterfowl Zones 1 and 2 will share THE SAME dates and bag limits
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##### **Zone 1 AND Zone 2**

November 11 -November 26, 2023

December 2, 2023 -January 28, 2024

##### **\*Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days**

November 4, 2023 & February 3, 2024

##### **\*Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days**

November 4, 2023 & February 3, 2024

#### **BAG LIMITS:**

**Duck Limits** - The daily bag limit for ducks and mergansers is six. The daily bag limit may include no more than: Five mallards (only two may be hens), three wood ducks, two redheads, two canvasbacks, one scaup and one northern pintail.

**Merganser Limits** - There is no separate bag limit for mergansers. They are now included in the duck limit.

**Coot Limits** - The daily bag limit for coots is fifteen.

### **POSSESSION LIMITS:**

The possession limit after the first day of hunting is two times the daily bag limit, and after the second day of hunting is three times the daily bag limit for ducks, mergansers and coots.

### **SHOOTING HOURS:**

One-half hour before official sunrise to official sunset

### **\* SPECIAL YOUTH, VETERAN, AND ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL WATERFOWL HUNTING DAYS**

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service is allowing two days outside of the regular waterfowl season to provide special hunting opportunities. The daily bag limit may include ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. Bag limits will be the same as allowed during the regular season. All species and sex specific duck bag limit restrictions remain in effect.

Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. An adult, at least 18 years of age, must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult **cannot hunt waterfowl** but may participate in other open seasons.

Veterans (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than for training), may participate.

### **GEESE AND SANDHILL CRANE**

#### **SEASON DATES:**

**Dark Geese (includes Canada geese, brant, and all other geese except white-fronted geese and light geese)**

November 4 - November 26, 2023

December 2, 2023 - February 11, 2024

**White-fronted Geese**

November 4 - November 26, 2023

December 2, 2023 -February 4, 2024

**Light Geese (Snow, Blue & Ross')**

November 4 - November 26, 2023

December 2, 2023 - February 11, 2024

**\*\*Conservation Order Light Goose Season (COLGS)**

February 13 - March 30, 2024

**Sandhill Crane**

October 21, 2023 - January 21, 2024; west of I-35 only

#### **BAG LIMITS:**

**Dark Geese** - The daily bag limit is eight.

**White-fronted Geese** -The daily bag limit is two.

**Light Geese** -The daily bag limit is fifty. (\*\*no daily bag during COLGS)

**Sandhill Crane** - The daily bag limit is three.



**POSSESSION LIMITS:**

The possession limit for dark geese, white-fronted geese and sandhill crane is three times the daily bag limit. There is no possession limit for light geese (snow, blue & Ross').

**SHOOTING HOURS:**

One-half hour before official sun rise to official sunset.

**\*\* CONSERVATION ORDER LIGHT GOOSE SEASON (COLGS)**

During the COLGS, special means of take will be allowed, including electronic calls, unplugged shotguns, one-half hour after sunset shooting hours and no daily bag or possession limits. The Conservation Order and special means of take provisions are designed to increase harvest and allow hunters to help reduce the population of mid-continent light geese (snow, blue & Ross'). All other waterfowl regulations will apply, including use of federally approved nontoxic shot. All participants will be required to have in their possession while hunting, all necessary licenses, waterfowl stamps and a Harvest Information Program permit (HIP). **The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is required by federal regulation to estimate the harvest of light geese during the COLGS. Therefore, to participate in the COLGS hunters should provide the ODWC with their name, full mailing address and telephone number so that they may be contacted after the season with a harvest survey.**

**HUNTERS CAN REGISTER FOR THE COLGS BY PROVIDING THEIR NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER BY:**

Internet at: [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com) and clicking on the Conservation Order Light Goose link.

Or by sending a postcard or letter to:

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Attn: COLGS

PO Box 53465

Oklahoma City, OK 73152

**\*\*SPECIAL EXTENDED FALCONRY SEASONS\*\*****DUCKS, MERGANSERS, and COOTS****SEASON DATES AND AREAS:****Zone 1 & Zone 2**

February 12 - February 26, 2024

**SANDHILL CRANE****SEASON DATES AND AREAS:****West of Interstate 35 only**

January 22 - February 4, 2024

**GALLINULE****SEASON DATES AND AREAS:****Statewide**

February 1 - March 8, 2024

**RAIL**

**SEASON DATES AND AREAS:**

**Statewide**

February 1, 2024 - March 8, 2024

**WOODCOCK**

**SEASON DATES AND AREAS:**

**Statewide**

December 12, 2023 - February 11, 2024

**DOVE**

**SEASON DATES AND AREAS:**

**Statewide**

February 18, 2024 - March 5, 2024

**BAG AND POSSESSION LIMITS:**

Daily bag and possession limits may not exceed three and nine migratory game birds respectively, singly or in the aggregate for which an open hunting season or special extended falconry season is established. Regular season bag limits do not apply to Falconry.

**HAWKING HOURS:**

One-half hour before official sunrise to official sunset.

DONE the \_\_\_\_ day of June, 2023 in regular and open meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.

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Leigh Gaddis, Chairperson

ATTEST:

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Rick Holder, Secretary

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

***For the period July 1, 2022 Through March 31, 2023***

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

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Types	Account Groups		03/31/2023	03/31/2022
	General	Capital Projects	Trust	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	12,799,820		4,280,547			17,080,367	18,738,073
Investments	0		258,221,115			258,221,115	275,684,159
Accounts Receivable	4,073,739					4,073,739	3,583,456
Monthly Lifetime License			187,150			187,150	275,525
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	6,126,273		7,000			6,133,273.00	3,991,585.00
Fixed Assets				78,201,907		78,201,907	75,691,717
Land				104,864,066		104,864,066	103,565,869
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0 *	0	3,505,071
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
	22,999,832	0	262,695,812	183,065,973	21,202,403	489,964,020	477,125,980
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	765,643					765,643	497,559
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	187,150					187,150	275,525
Compensated Absences Payable(leave accrual)					0	0	3,505,071
Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	-3,924,890
Total Liabilities	952,793	0	0	0	21,202,403	22,155,196	353,265
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			124,163,161			124,163,161	135,254,551
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			6,814,418			6,814,418	6,289,840
Investment in General Fixed Assets				183,065,973		183,065,973	179,257,586
Fund Balance	22,047,039		131,718,233			153,765,272	155,970,738
Total Fund Balance	22,047,039	0	262,695,812	183,065,973	0	467,808,824	476,772,715
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	22,999,832	0	262,695,812	183,065,973	21,202,403	489,964,020	477,125,980

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Trust Funds**

**Combining Balance Sheets**  
**March 31, 2023**

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	03/31/2023 Totals	03/31/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	471,979	3,808,568			4,280,547	4,014,221
Investments	29,022,846	98,220,690	124,163,161	6,814,418	258,221,115	281,973,999
Due From Other Funds		187,150			187,150	275,525
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	29,494,825	102,223,408	124,163,161	6,814,418	262,695,812	286,270,745
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			124,163,161	6,814,418	130,977,579	141,544,391
Fund Balance	29,494,825	102,223,408			131,718,233	144,726,354
Total Fund Balance	29,494,825	102,223,408	124,163,161	6,814,418	262,695,812	286,270,745

**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 March 31, 2023**

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	03/31/2023	03/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	17,345,840			17,345,840	16,427,016	5.59%
Other Wildlife Sales	2,212,599			2,212,599	2,294,563	-3.57%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	1,154,716			1,154,716	1,028,878	12.23%
Grant Revenue	18,558,670			18,558,670	21,491,407	-13.65%
Investment Income	195,521		50,472	245,993	166,939	47.36%
Miscellaneous	843,674			843,674	1,086,664	-22.36%
Total Revenues	40,311,020	0	50,472	40,361,492	42,495,467	-5.02%
Expenditures:						
Administration	5,423,411			5,423,411	5,299,803	2.33%
Wildlife	12,018,955			12,018,955	10,649,924	12.85%
Fish	7,329,310			7,329,310	7,881,669	-7.01%
Law Enforcement	8,521,199			8,521,199	8,825,470	-3.45%
Information and Education	2,316,633			2,316,633	2,261,297	2.45%
Capital Improvements	3,674,886			3,674,886	4,842,907	-24.12%
Land Acquisitions		1,288,777		1,288,777	6,955,255	-81.47%
Total Expenditures	39,284,394	1,288,777		40,573,171	46,716,325	-13.15%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	1,026,626	(1,288,777)	50,472	(211,679)	(4,220,858)	-94.98%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	874,655	-100.00%
Operating Transfers In	4,144,938	1,288,777	8,742,844	14,176,559	7,254,365	95.42%
Operating Transfers Out	(1,288,777)		(4,144,938)	(5,433,715)	(8,621,653)	-36.98%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	2,856,161	1,288,777	4,597,906	8,742,844	(492,633)	1,874.72%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	3,882,787	0	4,648,378	8,531,165	(4,713,491)	280.99%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	18,164,252	0	24,846,447	43,010,699	65,499,816	-34.33%
Fund Balances March 31, 2023:	22,047,039	0	29,494,825	51,541,864	60,786,325	-15.21%

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

Fiduciary Fund Types

	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	03/31/2023 Totals	03/31/2022 Totals
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	2,296,450			2,296,450	2,486,400
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	138,265			138,265	140,915
Interest and Investment Income	0	9,540,101	486,188	10,026,289	-1,729,660
Employer Contributions		1,687,500	497,451	2,184,951	1,682,195
Employee Contributions		394,568	326,793	721,361	733,220
Total Operating Revenues	2,434,715	11,622,169	1,310,432	15,367,316	3,313,070
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		185,807	4,140	189,947	230,453
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	6,715,733	209,345	6,925,078	6,444,662
Total Operating Expenses	0	6,901,540	213,485	7,115,025	6,675,115
Operating Income	2,434,715	4,720,629	1,096,947	8,252,291	(3,362,045)
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	2,434,715	4,720,629	1,096,947	8,252,291	(3,362,045)
Fund Balances, Beginning	99,788,693	119,442,532	5,717,471	224,948,696	244,075,434
Fund Balances, March 31, 2023	102,223,408	124,163,161	6,814,418	233,200,987	240,713,389



## Wildlife Contributions Report

**March 2023**

<b>Total Payment Amount</b>	<b>Name Of Individual Or Business</b>	<b>Description Of Contribution</b>
\$20.00	Jim & Sue Henderson	In Memory of John Meyer
\$75.00	Marilyn Myers	In Memory of John Meyer
\$25.00	Long Family Trust	In Memory of John Meyer
\$75,000.00	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation	Hackberry Flat WMA - pipeline planning/W-224- D-1
\$4.00	Derrick Yarnall	Donation
\$20.00	Terry Willingham	Donation
\$2,000.00	Quail Forever OK Chapter	Wildlife - Equipment - Cross Timbers
\$10.00	Joseph King	General Contribution
\$2,391.90	OnXMaps	Result of Collaborative Marketing Effort
\$2,000.00	Horizon Gas Gathering	Wildlife Division/James Collins WMA
\$9.00	Peter Galbraith	General Contribution
<b>\$81,554.90</b>	<b>Total</b>	





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:** May 25, 2023

**TO:** OK Department of Wildlife Commission and Staff

**FROM:** Brittnee Preston

**RE:** Report on May Federal and Congressional Issues for June Commission Meeting

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### Congress:

#### Debt Ceiling:

- > House Republicans released a proposed debt ceiling plan at the end of April that would raise the U.S. borrowing limit by \$1.5 trillion or extend the debt ceiling through March 2024. The plan also proposed \$4.5 trillion in cuts. The GOP amended the bill midweek and ultimately passed the Limit, Save, Grow Act by a vote of 217-214 on April 26th.
- > The House and Senate Leadership were invited to the White House mid-May for a meeting on the debt ceiling however, they emerged without a plan.
- > Negotiations have been a roller coaster breaking down and starting back up, offers were flowing back and forth and then it would all pause.
- > The President, reportedly, is keeping his option of using the 14th amendment open. Secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen, has called it a constitutional crisis however, usage of the provision that would allow the Treasury to borrow above the debt limit and pay its obligations. Legal challenges likely would arise.
- > Senate Leader McConnell and 40 Senators signed a letter stating they will not support a debt ceiling increase without substantive budget and spending reforms.
- > The President is keeping his option of using the 14th amendment open and Congressional Democrats are encouraging the President to use this power if it becomes necessary. Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, has called it a constitutional crisis, however, if the President used the 14th amendment provision allowing the Treasury to borrow above the debt limit and pay its obligations, legal challenges likely would arise.

#### Floor work –

- > The Senate passed [SJRes 9](#) disapproving of the DOI's rule listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken. The House has an identical resolution (HJRES 29) that passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee at the end of April. Biden has said he intends to veto these resolutions.
- > [SJRes 24](#), by Senator Mullin, disapproves the USFWS rule on the Endangered Status of the Northern Long-eared bat. The resolution passed the Senate by a vote of 51-49.

#### Committee work –

- > Hearings –

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.

- House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on several bills including:
  - H.J. Res. 29 (Rep. Mann), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Lesser Prairie-Chicken; Threatened Status With Section 4(d) Rule for the Northern Distinct Population Segment and Endangered Status for the Southern Distinct Population Segment";
  - H.J. Res. 46 (Rep. Bentz), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Marine Fisheries Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat".
  - H.J. Res. 49 (Rep. Stauber), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for Northern Long-Eared Bat".

Mr. Stephen Guertin, Deputy Director of the USFWS, testified on the Service's reasoning for issuing rulings to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken and the Service's efforts on white nose syndrome and the Northern Long-Eared Bat. Members emphasized concerns with restrictions on private landowners and how the Services' decisions have impacted them. Mr. Guertin pointed out the threatened with a 4d rule listing allows for flexibility on economic activity.

- The House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on DOI's budget. Sec. Haaland testified on the agency's budget as it relates to USFWS, BLM, BIA and NPS. The hearing questions largely focused on public lands and energy issues, both renewable development and drilling permitting. There was a lot of discussion on resources, cuts and the need to do more with less appropriations.
- House Natural Resources Committee hearing on four bills including:
  - H.R. 615 (Rep. Wittman), "Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2023
  - H.R. 2872 (Rep. Graves of Louisiana), To amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 to allow States to issue electronic stamps.
  -
- This week the Senate EPW held a hearing on the USFWS FY 2024 budget. Martha Williams, USFWS Director, testified at the hearing. Ms. Williams noted the USFWS works with others to conserve and protect wildlife and strives to host collective and cooperative conservation efforts. The Service's budget request is \$4.2 billion including: \$2 billion available under permanent appropriations which mostly goes to state fish and wildlife agencies and a \$30 million increase in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program under the ESA. Ms. Williams pointed to several recent delistings as successes of the partners program. She specifically mentioned that the Service's goal is to avoid listing all together. She noted that the Service is trying to streamline their processes and is working with less than they had in the budget two decades ago. Ms. Williams said that while the Service has grown, staff has decreased and the Service needs a funding increase to increase the workforce so they can properly manage lands and waters. Questions at the hearing centered around many state or species specific issues including: grizzly bears, white nose syndrome, and wildlife crossings. A couple of senators discussed some of their ESA concerns and problems specific states have bumped into as well. Senator Mullin was not in attendance at the hearing.

#### > Mark ups –

- The House Natural Resources Committee held a markup on the below bills. They were all reported favorably to the full House.
  - H.J. Res. 29 (Mann), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Lesser Prairie-Chicken;

Threatened Status With Section 4(d) Rule for the Northern Distinct Population Segment and Endangered Status for the Southern Distinct Population Segment”;

- H.J. Res. 46 (Bentz), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Marine Fisheries Service relating to “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat”;
  - H.J. Res. 49 (Stauber), Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for Northern Long-Eared Bat.”
- The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture advanced a \$25.3 billion draft USDA appropriations bill. This represents a 2% decrease from last year's enacted funding level. The bill pulled back \$8 billion in unobligated COVID relief funds and reallocated them throughout the bill.

### Agencies:

- > The USFWS [proposed](#) a new rule “pertaining to wetland easements to bring consistency, transparency, and clarity for both easement landowners and the Service in the administration of conservation easements. The proposed regulations would codify the process by which the Service establishes drain tile setbacks in wetland easement contracts. Setback distances would be calculated based upon the best available science considering soil characteristics, tile diameter, the depth of the tile below the surface, and/or topography sufficient to the easement contract's standard of protection that ensures no drainage of adjacent protected wetland areas. The proposed regulations would apply only to setbacks provided by the Service beginning on the effective date of the final rule.” Comments are due by June 27, 2023.
- > The USFWS [announced](#) a cooperative agreement grant opportunity for White-Nose Syndrome research and conservation. Applications must be submitted by June 30, 2023.
- > The USFWS announced a grant opportunity under the R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program. The [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies \(AFWA\)](#) and the Service work cooperatively to manage T-MSGCP and R3-MSGCP. Administratively, both programs function similarly, with AFWA setting the strategic priorities for project activities and providing the Service a priority list of projects to be considered for awards and the Service administering the program and managing the awards. Applications are due by June 15, 2023. There is a two-phase process to apply. You must submit your Full Grant Proposal (without Federal forms) through the AFWA MSCGP portal by June 15, 2023. No proposals should be submitted through GrantSolutions during this first phase. If your proposal is selected for further consideration, you will be invited in mid-August to submit a Final Full Grant Proposal (with Federal forms) by September 5, 2023, through GrantSolutions.
- > The USFWS announced [final](#) revised Mitigation Policy and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Compensatory Mitigation Policy which “establishes fundamental mitigation principles and provides a framework for applying a landscape-scale approach to achieve, through application of the mitigation hierarchy, no net loss of resources and their values, services, and functions resulting from proposed actions.”

### Coming up...

- > The debt ceiling needs to be addressed.
- > The FARM bill expires in September of this year.
- > FY 24 Appropriations is in full swing.

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

**Personnel Actions**  
**May 2023**

**New Hires**

Brooke Beverly – Fisheries Biologist, Durant State Fish Hatchery, 5/15/23

**Promotions**

Marcus Thibodeau – Wildlife Biologist, Packsaddle WMA to Senior Biologist,  
5/1/23

**Transfers**

**Resignations/Terminations**

Tristan Mills – Wildlife Technician, McCurtain WMA, 5/18/23

**Retirements**