



OKLAHOMA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION**

# **WILDLIFE-O-GRAM**

**April 2024**

Photo: Karen Paul

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**Around  
the  
Department**



STEVE MEYER +



**Wildlife License Modernization Act**

By Nels Rodefeld (C&E)

C&E and License division are collaborating to create comprehensive documents that outline all changes and associated prices. We will develop a plan to notify constituents and ensure that the 2024-2025 regulations booklets are thoroughly edited to clearly present the changes. We have uploaded resources accessible on the homepage of the TOAD. Further updates will be provided as soon as they are ready.

**SB941**

**Bassmaster Classic**

Several ODWC employees participated in the 2024 Bassmaster Classic, contributing in various capacities. They were involved in tasks such as assisting with the handling of fish, releasing bass back into Oklahoma waters, educating constituents about invasive species, engaging with the public, and facilitating license sales. Their efforts helped to showcase ODWC's presence and involvement at the event.

“Fish were weighed in and then released back into Grand Lake immediately following the weigh in at the BOK Center. Manning/Durant Hatchery staff and Northeast Region Fisheries staff released the fish.” -Brad Johnston (Northeast Region Fisheries Supervisor)

Bass numbers:

Day 1 had 272 fish with combined weight of 774 pounds.

Day 2 had 273 fish with combined weight of 787 pounds.

Day 3 had 123 fish with combined weight of 382 pounds.



Rylee Rolling (LE) is getting a behind the scenes peek at Bassmaster.



Tyler Wright (F) handing the bass off to Brad Johnston (F).



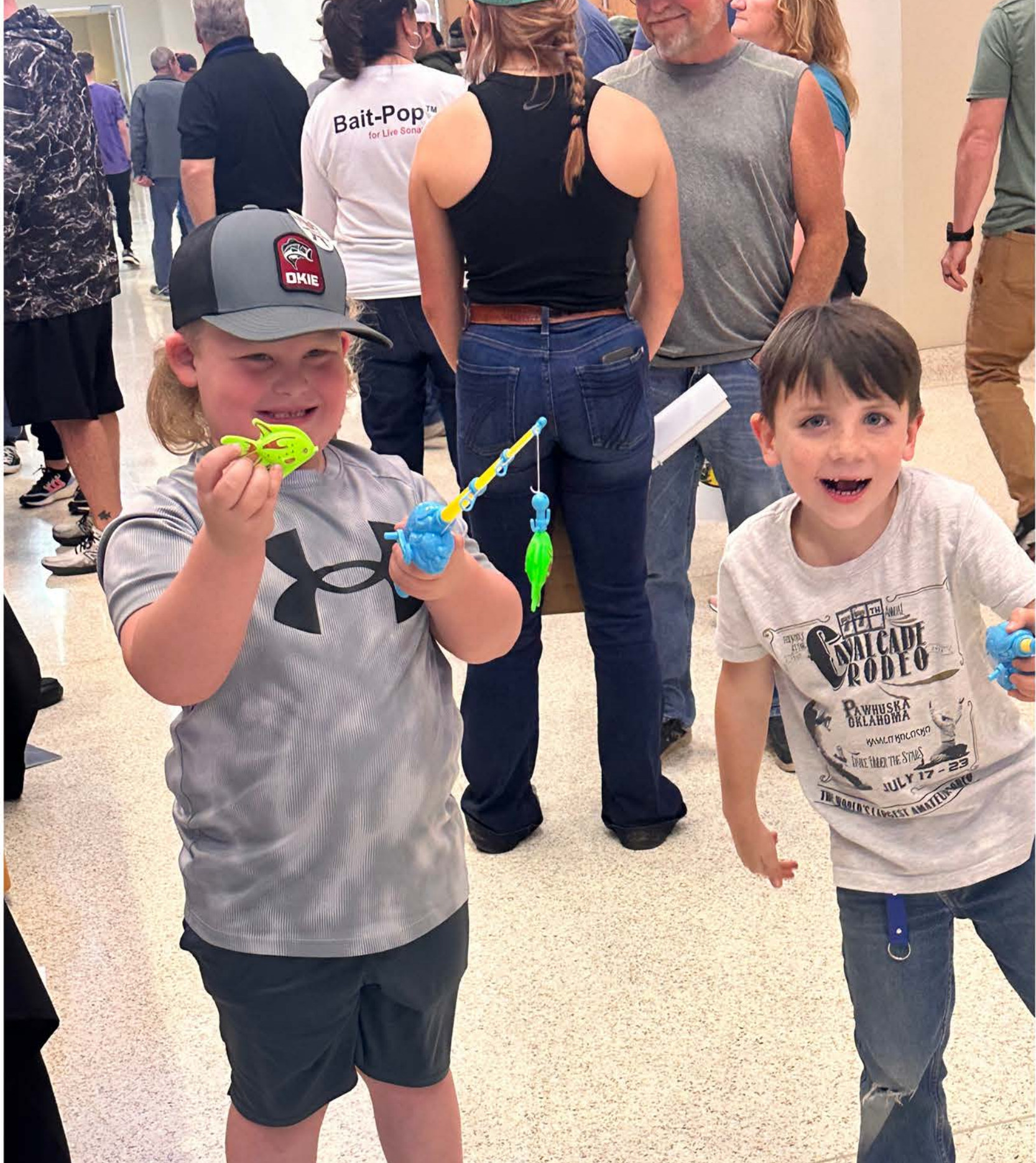
Scott Woodie (F) netting the bass.



Click on the image to play a video of fisheries releasing the bass back into the lake.



Game Warden Jake Rowland visiting with a constituent.



Some happy kiddos who stopped to play a fishing game at the ODWC booth.





Jake Rowland (LE), Logan Shimp, (LE), Heather Del Moral (C&E), Cody Morris (LE) and Jennifer Bengé (C&E) had the privilege to meet legend Bill Dance.

On behalf of myself and B.A.S.S., I want to thank you and your staff for all the help you provided at the recent Bassmaster Classic in Tulsa. Fish hauling from Tulsa to Keystone and Grand Lake is no easy chore and we sincerely appreciate the time and effort your agency put into the task. Returning the bass weighed on the Classic stage back to the lakes where they were caught is something that the public expects, and it can only happen with the assistance of our state agency partners like ODWC.

We also appreciate the loan of the projectors for our Conservation Summit. That may seem like a small thing, but given the crazy rates for renting AV equipment, it really did help out and allowed us to provide amenities to the guests that would otherwise not be affordable. I hope to get the video recordings from the presentations posted on Bassmaster.com in the near future so you can share them with your other biologists.

Please forward my thanks to all of the management and hatchery staff that were involved in both the fish hauling and Conservation Summit. And don't hesitate to let me know how B.A.S.S. can help you in the future.

Gene Gilliland  
Conservation Director  
B.A.S.S.



# Name Change

Effective Monday, March 4, 2024, the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program is changing its name to the Office of Conservation Investment (OCI). This organizational name change is more inclusive of our current responsibilities and workforce, and better articulates the work we collectively accomplish to support the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

# Retirements

Rhonda Hurst insisted on not having a retirement party, but after 32 years of dedicated service her fellow employees were not having that. Below are some photos of her “not party” get together’s and some of the recognition plaques she was gifted.



Some of the crew at Pizzeria Gusto.



More folks joining the unparty to celebrate Rhonda.



Wade Free (A) presenting Rhonda with a plaque of appreciation for her 32 years of excellence in professionalism, open and honest communication, and work ethic.



Marshall Reigh (LE) with Col. Nathan Erdman giving a special plaque recognizing Rhonda of 32 years serving the sportsmen and women of Oklahoma and for her support to conservation from the GWA.



Commissioner Leigh Gaddis presented Rhonda with a beautiful glass vase as a token of appreciation for 32 years of dedication.

Game Warden Brek Henry celebrated with coworkers, friends and family in March eating BBQ and reminiscing over his impressive career. Brek served the sportsmen of Oklahoma for 30 years as both a game warden and a game warden supervisor.



Brek Henry and Patrick Matlock are all smiles as Brek opens some of his gifts.





David Robertson (LE) presenting Brek with a plaque for his dedicated service of 30 years. Way to go Brek!



30 years gives a lot of time to create lasting memories that make for good stories at retirement parties!



More congratulations, stories and maybe even some tears.

Data analyst/programmer Charles Cowell cruised into retirement after 35 devoted years at ODWC. Bon Voyage Charles! Enjoy your retirement!



Charles smiling from receiving a proclamation from the Governor.



Charles previous supervisor David Southerland came to wish Charles a happy retirement and tell some good stories!



A couple more blasts from the pasts, retirees Melinda Sturgess-Streich and Sherrie Schlucter, came to celebrate Charles.



Rodney Derrick (IT) presenting Charles with a retirement gift.

Mark Shurden (Wildlife Division) has announced his intention to retire on April 30, 2024, after 30 years of service. Mark began his ODWC career in 1994 as Habitat Crew Leader in the Fish Division. Working with Habitat Coordinator Robert Reese, Mark's primary duty was overseeing prison crews who placed habitat in eastern Oklahoma lakes. After 4 years, he transferred to the Eufaula WMA as the Wildlife Technician, where he has since served. The largest parts of Mark's duties as Wildlife Technician have centered around the WMA's Deep Fork Greentree Wetland Development Unit, where he has been instrumental in the operation and maintenance of the wetland. Associated duties include dike maintenance, mowing, keeping pumps running, and draining and drainage maintenance, all while carrying out other necessary Technician duties to keep the WMA presentable and available for constituents. Along the way, Mark has served in various other roles such as assisting with Archery in the Schools and working multiple Wildlife EXPOs.

Mark has expressed that he does not wish to have a gathering, but I urge you to reach out to him and offer your congratulations! We certainly wish him the best and would like to offer a send-off cash gift as he moves on to the next chapter. If you wish to pitch in, I will be gathering the donations. You can send your contributions to me directly via my Venmo account, @Pomoxis, with the subject "Shurden Retirement". If Venmo is not your thing, just give me a call.

JD Ridge  
Senior Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife Division  
(918) 617-1113



## Rack Madness 2024

A special thank you to every ODWC employee (and GWA folks) that played a part in Rack Madness. There were one hundred fifty-eight participants from across the state. 191 racks were scored (180 deer, eight elk, and three mule deer). We wouldn't be able to host such events without the invaluable commitment of our dedicated employees from every division who consistently go above and beyond in their efforts.



Mike France (LE) concentrating on scoring this nice rack.





JD Ridge (W) took a pause from scoring to pose for a picture.



Douglas Zentner (F) and Jeremy Duck (F) are the funnest door greeters.



Damon Springer (C&E) and Jason Smith (C&E) scoring a unique rack.

## Mid-South Hunting & Tackle Show

Game Wardens were on hand to assist Biologists and Technicians with deer scoring at the Mid-South Hunting & Tackle show held in Pryor.



Riley Wilman (LE), Hank Jenks (LE), Scott Cox (W), and Tony Crawford (W) were some of the ODWC folks scoring at this event.

## Ike's Hook'Em Early Fishing Event

By Colin Berg (C&E)

The Ike Foundation fishing event at Veterans Park Pond in Jenks went great. We had around 80 kids show up for the event. Each kid received a free rod and tackle box. Mike and his wife are passionate proponents of preserving the tradition of fishing. It was a pleasure to engage with them both, discussing our educational programs and family fishing clinics. They were truly enthusiastic about our emphasis on actively involving children in the joys of fishing.



Ike showing this kiddo the joys of fishing.



Becky Iconellis, Pro angler Ish Monroe, Colin Berg (C&E) and Ike wrapping up the day.

## OKNASP

By Kelly Boyer (C&E)

The Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools Program (OKNASP) is celebrated remarkable milestone marking its 20th year of empowering students through archery. With a rich history of fostering a love for the sport and promoting physical activity among students, OKNASP has seen tremendous growth and success over the years. In a testament to its impact, OKNASP and Oklahoma Varsity Archery programs recently achieved a significant feat, with approximately 4,000 students participating in its state archery competition this year. This participation not only highlights the program's popularity but also underscores its effectiveness in engaging students in a fun and meaningful way.

Furthermore, the dedication and skill of the archery participants have shone brightly, as evidenced by the impressive performance at this year's state archery events. A total of 60 individuals and 67 teams from Oklahoma have earned their spots to compete at the national level this spring. This remarkable achievement reflects the hard work, dedication, and talent of the students, coaches, and supporters involved in the program. As archery in the schools celebrates its 20th anniversary, it is not only a time for reflection on past achievements but also a moment to look forward to the continued success and growth of archery in Oklahoma schools. With its proven track record of nurturing skills, instilling discipline, and fostering camaraderie, The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation remains committed to empowering students and shaping their futures through the sport of archery.

Thank you to all that were involved in this milestone, your hard work, passion, and commitment have played a crucial role in the success of the archery programs.



Amanda Thomas (C&E) captured a photo of these kiddos on the line getting ready.



Russ Horton (W) with a future archer, his sweet granddaughter Callie.



ODWC Peer Support Program

If you weren't able to attend our latest coffee chat, you missed out on an excellent presentation by Joe Alexander on our exciting new Peer Support Program (PST). We have put the presentation on the homepage of the TOAD. Don't miss the opportunity to check it out!

Peer Support Team (PST) What is it?

- The purpose of the Peer Support Team (PST) is to provide all ODWC employees the opportunity to receive emotional support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.



Meet your team! Their contact information is listed below.

How Do I Contact?

- Logan Shimp - (918) 429-3123
- David Garrett - (918) 431-2539
- Zach Paulk - (405) 850-9757
- Mark Hannah - (580) 513-4651
- Brandon Lehrman - (580) 450-7706
- Karlin Bailey - (918) 625-5971
- Phillip Cottrill - (580) 860-4964
- Zane Arnold - (580) 320-2948
- Lt. Mike Baker - (580) 651-9135
- Lt. Billybob Walker - (580) 320-2959
- Lt. Joe Alexander - (918) 331-5798



Peer Support Program

Job Descriptions:

By Vicky Scaggs (HR)

We have made some changes to some of our job descriptions.

The changes deal with the requirements on some positions for education and years of experience. Most of these changes are for the experience requirement of "9 years with a bachelor's degree and 7 years with a master's degree" and there are a few other positions that were affected with this change that had adjustments as well. We have also taken into consideration candidates who may have a PhD.

HR will be making changes to the job descriptions and updating the TOAD with the new job descriptions. This may take us some time as there are several that need changed.

The image below has a summary of the old requirements and to the right in yellow, the changes. I also want to point out it only has jobs that had a change. No change: not on the list. These changes are in affect as of today, 4/3/2024.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, a member of the HR staff, or your division leadership.

Post	Grade	Current					Proposed					Degree	Experience	Sup Exp	
		Degree	Experience	Sup Exp			Degree	Experience	Sup Exp						
Chief	20	Bachelors	9	5			Bachelors	10	5	Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Deputy Chief	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Hatchery Supervisor	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
O/E Supervisor	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Operations Manager	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Regional Supervisor	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Research Supervisor	17	Bachelors	9	2	Masters	7	2			Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Wildlife Land/Mineral Coord	17	Bachelors	9	2			Bachelors	7	2	Masters	5	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Hatchery Manager	16	Bachelors	10	5	Masters	8	5			Masters	3	2	Ph.D.	3	2
Senior Biologist	16	Bachelors	9		Masters	7				Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Senior O/E Specialist	16	Bachelors	9		Masters	7				Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Warden Supervisor	16	Bachelors	9							Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Shooting Acc. Coordinator	16	Bachelors	9							Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Shooting Range Coordinator	16	Bachelors	9							Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Wildlife Investigations Specialist	16	Bachelors	9							Masters	3		Ph.D.	3	
Assistant Hatchery Mgr	15	Bachelors	2							Bachelors	0				
O/E Specialist	14	Bachelors	1							Bachelors	0				

Employee Exception for Recruitment Qualifications

A new policy has been added to the employee handbook to allow for an exception on recruitment qualifications for current employees. This policy update is effective as of 4/3/2024:

ODWC recognizes the significant contributions our employees make to the agency each and every day. At times we have employees who are interested in a promotion or job change where they do not meet the minimum requirements for a position. In an effort to do what's best for the agency and our employees, we are instituting an exception for current agency employees. If you have been employed with ODWC 5 or more consecutive years, have achieved a meets standard or better performance rating for the last 3 years, and do not have any disciplinary actions in the last 5 years, this exception may allow your experience at ODWC to help you meet the minimum qualifications for some positions.

This does not mean you will be selected for an interview or that you will be selected as the top candidate for the position. It does, however, give you the ability to be selected for an interview if you are one of the top candidates.

How will this work?

If you are interested in an announced position but you do not meet the minimum qualifications ask yourself, do I meet the requirements listed above for an exception to be granted? If you have 5 years with ODWC, have a rating of achieved expected results or better on your performance appraisal for the last 3 years, and no disciplinary actions in your file for the last 5 years, go ahead and apply to the position. Human Resources will review your application and discuss eligibility for an exception with the division and the agency director. If an exception is granted, you may be considered for the position. An exception does not mean you WILL be selected to interview or chosen as the top candidate. It does, however, give you an opportunity to be considered and / or selected for the position.

Addition to the employee handbook:  
Employee Handbook: Section 2 – Hiring and Selection

7. Job Qualifications

A: Candidates must meet the minimum qualifications for each position to be considered for a position.

B: If you are a current employee with 5 years full-time employment with ODWC, achieved expected results or higher on your last three years of performance appraisals, and no disciplinary action in the last 5 years, an exception to the posted requirements on the job description may be allowed .

If interested in the position and you think your work experience qualifies you for the position, complete an application for the position. HR will review your application and discuss your qualifications with the division chief / assistant chief / and position supervisor. If you are one of the top candidates who have applied for the position, the division will ask the director for permission to make an exception to the posted job requirements.

If an exception is granted, you will be allowed to interview for the position.  
Note: An exception gives an employee the ability to interview for a position. It does not guarantee they will be selected to interview or that they will be the person selected to fill the position.

Beaver River Shooting Range Update

By Amanda Thomas

Vast efforts and thanks to Beaver WMA biologist Hayden Savage and technician Cody Crisswell, as well as assistance from a few others, the installation of a 4-strand hot wire fence around the shooting range was completed yesterday so that constituents will be able to access and enjoy the range without any concerns of livestock being on the range.



Beaver hotwire fence entrance.





The new Beaver hotwire fence will keep out any wandering livestock.

## **Lexington WMA**

Last month during a prescribed burn, Zack Smith (W) stumbled upon a group of baby flying squirrels nestled in a dead tree. He found the encounter quite remarkable. Zack chose not to disturb the adorable little critters.



Thank you Zack for sharing your cool find!



A photograph of a fishing rod extending from the bottom left towards the upper right, crossing over a calm lake. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds from a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the background, there are dark, silhouetted hills or mountains. The text 'SHOUT OUTS!' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the fishing rod and the sky.

**SHOUT OUTS!**

Photo by: Heather Del Moral



Marcus Thibodeau (W) wanted to give a shout out to wildlife division employees: Scott Parry, Ron Smith, Scotty Webb, Brian Powell, Alex Cooper, Weston Storer, Jesse Groggin, Joe Nabonne, Thad Potts and Chase Kokajan.

During the smokehouse creek fire that came into Ellis and Roger Mills counties from Texas, these guys showed up to protect WMA infrastructure with technician Adam Dreyer while myself and Lewis Jennings fought wildfire, and managed resources for our designated counties with our fire depts. This over-one-million-acre wildfire gave us a lot to worry about but knowing we could leave our areas in the hands of this crew to focus on the task at hand is something each of us, our families and our communities are extremely thankful for.

This is a shining example of “The ODWC family coming together”.



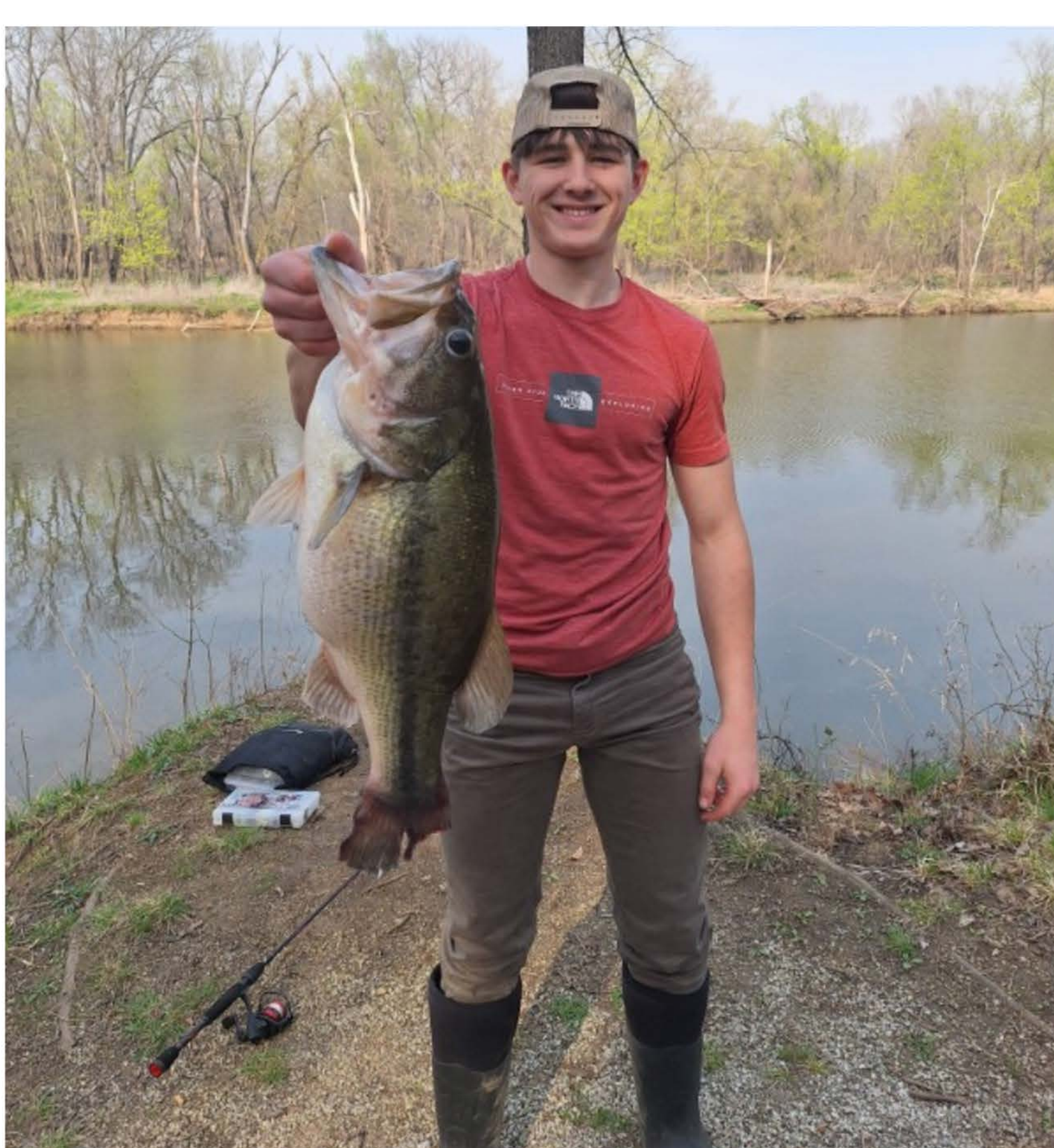
# Game Bag

Photo By Darrin Hill





Brad Johnston (Fisheries) and his family went white bass fishing on Big Cabin Creek (a tributary of Hudson Lake). It was a good day of fishing as they caught around 50 white bass, a couple hybrid striped bass, and the surprise of the day was a 9 pound largemouth bass!



Keegan (15 years old) showing off his biggest bass ever.



Sawyer (8 years old) showing off one of the hybrids he caught.



Sawyer was just as excited as his big brother on the largemouth bass!

Jason Schooley (Fisheries) took a 10-day backcountry trip to Death Valley in early March with his family.

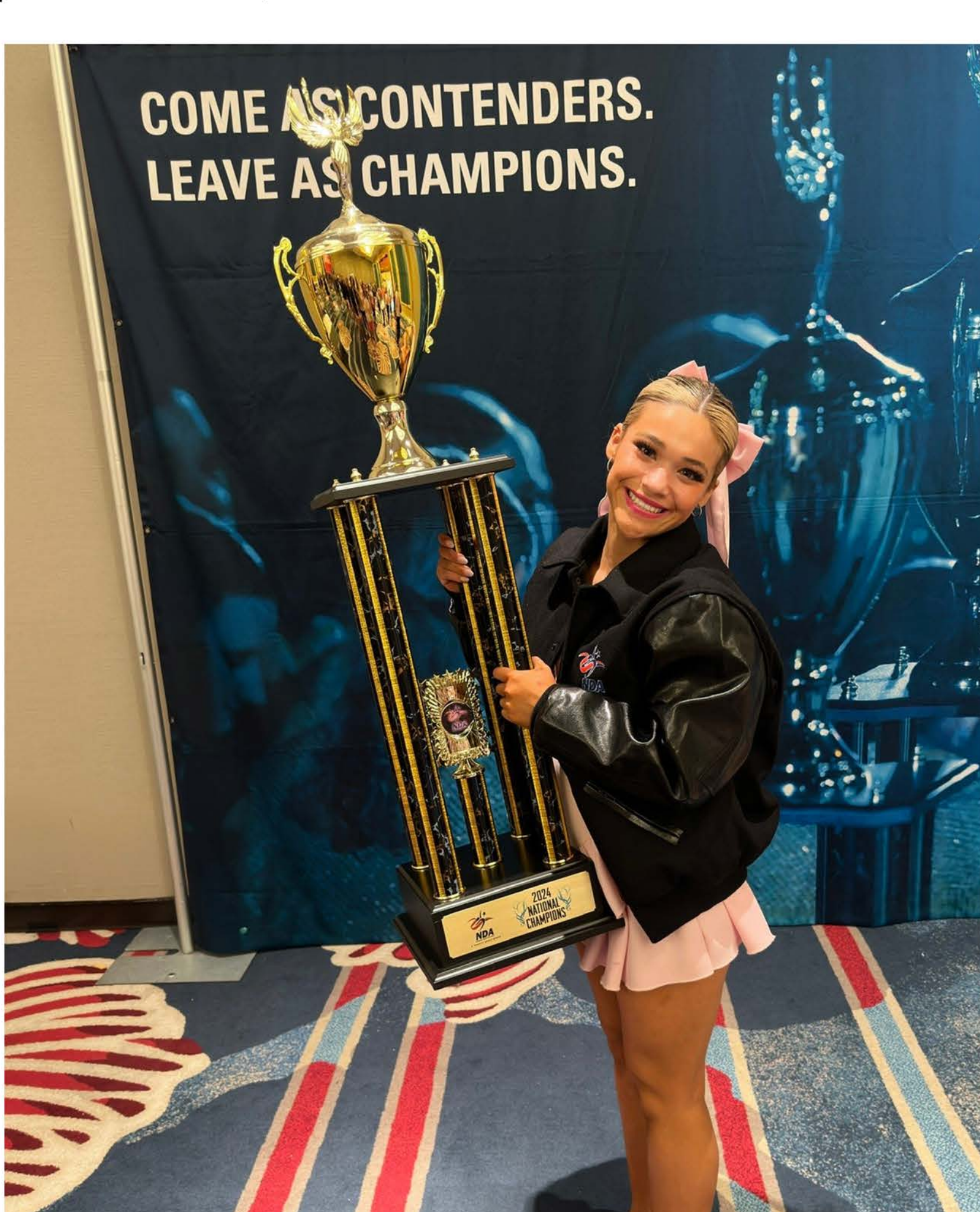


Jason in Echo Canyon with wife Nina and son Finn

Darrin Hill's (C&E) son, Reed, earned his Eagle rank in Scouts BSA this year and celebrated with a Court of Honor.



Heather Del Moral's (C&E) daughter, Armonia, from Southmoore Pom team, took 1st place in the Jazz category at the National Dance Alliance High School National Championships held in Orlando, Florida.





# ODWC NEW EMPLOYEES

Photo by Todd Craighead



## **Maddie Ingram** **license assistant**



Welcome Maddie Ingram to the Team!

We're thrilled to introduce Maddie Ingram, our new License Assistant.

Outside of work, Maddie has a passion for exploring the great outdoors with her beloved dog, Miso. She enjoys hiking and discovering various plants and mushrooms, along with Miso's excitement in spotting squirrels.

In her spare time, Maddie indulges her creative side as a freelance concert photographer, capturing memorable moments in live music events. She's also an avid traveler and music enthusiast, always eager to attend live performances, whether behind the lens or simply as a fan.

Exciting news is on the horizon for Maddie as she looks forward to tying the knot in October. Her and her partner are proud parents to three adorable fur babies – a corgi, a rabbit, and a guinea pig.

Please join us in welcoming Maddie Ingram to the team, and don't hesitate to reach out and introduce yourself!

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## **Michael McLaughlin** **Wildlife Biologist**



We're delighted to welcome Michael McLaughlin to our team. Michael brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience in wildlife management and conservation.

Michael's journey into the field of fish & wildlife management is truly remarkable, as he pursued his degree while on active duty through American Military University. Prior to joining us, he served as a research lab technician in the wildlife ecology and conservation department at the University of Florida, honing his skills and passion for protecting our natural resources.

Michael is an avid outdoorsman, finding solace and excitement in hunting and fishing. His passion lies particularly in hunting turkeys, waterfowl, and bowhunting for whitetails. When he's not in the great outdoors, Michael channels his creative energy into music, playing various instruments and recording music from his home studio.

With over a decade of service in the Air Force, including three overseas deployments, Michael brings a unique perspective to our team. His background in law enforcement, particularly as a criminal investigator, underscores his dedication to serving his community and upholding justice. Michael's commitment to conservation is deeply rooted in his family history, as his grandfather was a Special Agent with US Fish and Wildlife. His grandfather's influence instilled in him a lifelong passion for conservation, which ultimately led him to pursue a career in this field. Outside of work, Michael is a proud father to a four-year-old son named Easton.

If you see Michael around, don't hesitate to introduce yourself and make him a good ole ODWC welcome!





# HR CORNER



## **TimeKeeping Tips**

PLEASE DO NOT ENTER ANY TIME FOR APRIL until you receive directions from HR. With the transition to PeopleSoft GPC, we are asking all employees to hold off on entering any of your time/leave for April until HR gives you the go-ahead. Please watch your email for further instructions.

## **Deadlines**

APRIL TIMESHEET DEADLINES: All employees (full-time and part-time) must have all April hours entered and submitted by noon on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. All supervisors must have all timesheets reviewed and approved by end of day on Wednesday, May 1, 2024.



## **March Personnel Actions**

### **New Hires**

Maddie Ingram – License Assistant, Central Office, 3/4/24

Lydia Gearhart – Game Warden, Coal County, 3/4/24

Tristian Leonard – Game Warden, Woods County, 3/4/24

Dartanion Tilley – Game Warden, Nowata County, 3/4/24

Andrew Vaughan – Game Warden, Dewey County, 3/4/24

Wyatt Slade – Wildlife Technician, McCurtain County Wilderness Area, 3/4/24

Michael McLaughlin – Wildlife Biologist, Keystone/Skiatook/Candy Creek, 3/18/24

### **Promotions**

Tracer Wagner – Wildlife Technician to Game Warden, Texas County, 3/4/24

### **Resignations/Terminations**

Jamie Green – HR Management Specialist, Central Office, 3/7/24

Anthony Rodger – Fisheries Senior Biologist, Porter Office, 3/8/24

Catherine Appling-Pooler – Legislative Liaison, 3/15/24

Kyle Troxell – Fisheries Technician, Blue River PFHA, 3/15/24

Billy Bob Walker – Game Warden Supervisor, District 4, 3/29/24

### **Retirements**

Charles Cowell – Data Analyst/Programmer, Central Office, 3/31/24

Brek Henry – Game Warden, Sequoyah County, 3/31/24

Rhonda Hurst – Executive Assistant, Central Office, 3/31/24





[VIEW DIRECTOR'S REPORT](#)

[COMMISSION SUMMARY](#)



## Birthdays

- DERRICK, RODNEY 4/1
- YOUNGBLOOD, CODY 4/5
- AUSTIN, CODY 4/6
- CRAMER, JARED 4/7
- MATTIODA, MATT 4/7
- WAGNER, TRACER 4/7
- BULEY, DALTON 4/8
- LONG, EMILY 4/8
- WEBB, SCOTT 4/8
- GARRETT, TRAVIS 4/13
- JOHNSON, CLAYTON 4/14
- BARFIELD, JAY 4/16
- WORD, KENNY 4/16
- BERSCHE, JAKE 4/18
- DEALY, JONATHAN 4/20
- ADAIR, JASON 4/21
- PATTERSON, CHAS 4/22
- CAMPO, LEAH 4/25
- SAVAGE, HAYDEN 4/25
- GEARHART, LYDIA 4/26
- THOMPSON, BRETT 4/26
- TALBERT, ALEX 4/27
- KOKOJAN, CHASE 4/28
- WOODIE, SCOTT 4/28
- CARTER, GRACE 4/29





## REELIN' IN THE YEARS

- ARNOLD, ZANE 3
- BEAVER, CLINT 22
- CARTER, JOHN 17
- COX, SCOTT 30
- CUNNINGHAM, KEN 20
- GAMMILL, CAMERON 1
- GARRETT, DAVID 3
- LANGFORD, DYLAN 3
- LOWE, LEAH 4
- LUFT, JOSHUA 2
- MAUCK, MATT 17
- NORRIS, DALTON 1
- PAUL, STEPHEN 11
- PERRY, JULIANE 1
- ROLF, TUCKER 3
- ROWER, JAMES 11
- ROWLAND, JAKE 3
- SPRINGWATER, TERRY 11
- STANLEY, MARVIN 38
- STREBER, MARY 10
- SUTTLES, ERIC 17
- VELEY, ANGELA 10
- WEBB, SCOTT 36
- WHEELER, JUSTIN 20
- WHISENHUNT, CHRIS 22

