



OKLAHOMA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION**



# WILDLIFE-O-GRAM

May 2024

Photo: Susan Ritter

# CONTENTS

- **House Bill 3462**
- **Game Warden of the Year**
- **Uniform Reminder**
- **Inspiring 4-H Youth**
- **Defensive Tactics Training**
- **2024 OKC Memorial Marathon Expo**
- **Outdoor Calendar**
- **Airboat Patrolling**
- **State Agency Co-ed Soccer League**
- **Pollinator Garden**
- **Supplemental Trout Project**
- **OKSSSP**
- **Giving Back**
- **Connecting Constituents with Conservation**
- **Bass and Badges**
- **Deploying Fish Habitat**
- **Tar Creek Apprenticeship Program**
- **Rick Grundman to Retire**
- **New Fish Poster**
- **Life after Retiring**
- **Shout Outs**
- **Game Bag**
- **ODWC New Employees**
- **HR Corner**
- **Directors Report & Commission Summary**
- **Birthdays**
- **Reelin' in the Years**

A close-up photograph of a brown toad with orange eyes, sitting on a patch of vibrant green moss. The toad's skin is textured with small bumps and spots. The background is blurred, showing dry pine needles and more moss. The text 'Around the Department' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

# Around the Department

Photo Jena Donnell

## **Legislative Update: House Bill 3462**

By Nels Rodefeld (C&E)

Here's a quick update on House Bill 3462 by Rep Nick Archer and Sen Grant Green. HB3462 is now signed into law by the Governor. The original version of the bill had the Dept of Agriculture providing for genetic testing of wild deer. It also had that the Dept of Ag and Oklahoma Wildlife Department may establish rules for possible release of deer as early as October of 2025.

This version passed the House and upon reaching the Senate, we worked with Senator Green to modify the bill with amendments we could support. Those amendments specify that ODWC will do genetic testing of 1,000 wild whitetail deer, over the next two hunting season, and after that data is available, ODWC and the Dept of Ag will review current science to determine if additional research or if program is warranted.

The USDA has made CWD research a priority and the last five years have seen more advancements in the understanding of this disease than the previous 50 years.

Wildlife Division and our entire leadership team was involved in considering this bill. It does not mandate that a stocking program will happen, only that it will be considered and once testing of wild deer has happened, an evaluation of all current scientific data will take place, and the Wildlife Commission, in concert with the Dept of Agriculture, may – or may not – authorize such a program at that time. Senator Green emphasized this during his presentation of the bill to the Senate Tourism and Wildlife Committee, and again when he presented the bill on the Senate floor.





Marshall Reigh, game warden stationed Grant Co., has been selected as the Oklahoma Game Warden of the Year. Reigh is pictured here with his favorite hunting buddy, daughter Syd.

**Marshall Reigh Selected as ODWC**

**Game Warden of the Year**

By Lt. Col. Wade Farrar (LE)

I am thrilled to announce the recipient of this year's ODWC Game Warden of the Year Award. After careful consideration of nominations and deliberation, it is my honor to recognize Game Warden Marshall Reigh for his outstanding commitment to wildlife conservation and exemplary service as a game warden.

Throughout the past year, Marshall has demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and innovation in his efforts to protect our natural resources. Marshall's tireless work in enforcing conservation laws, engaging with the community, and implementing creative solutions to conservation challenges has had a significant and positive impact.

Marshall has found ways to impact his community beyond the scope of just a ticket book and first-class wildlife law enforcement response. He understands that to truly have an impact on those around him it takes more than a shiny badge and stern steadfast enforcement. As a member of the local school board, Marshall has overseen the revamp of a mudhole near the school into an outdoor classroom and children's fishing area. He also worked with the local Pheasants Forever chapter to begin construction of a fully functional trap range for all the youth in the region to enjoy shotgun sports. Marshall has fostered a relationship with Autry Career Tech in Enid to amplify their specialized Outdoor Education classes. He is directly involved in the planning, teaching, and development of these previously unavailable outreach programs. These are now being used as the template for Career Tech schools around the state. He organized regional deer scoring events and taught a live demonstration class to teach people how to clean and process a deer using a harvested deer. Being somewhat of a "foodie" he networked with the Career Tech's culinary program and taught the students how to properly cook venison. His efforts in bridging the gap between outdoor education and culinary arts highlight his innovative approach and commitment to promoting sustainable living and appreciation for wildlife resources.

Please join me in congratulating Marshall for this well-deserved recognition. His passion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to conservation serve as an inspiration to us all.

I also want to extend congratulations to our runner-up, Game Warden Austin Jackson, for his exceptional dedication and contributions to wildlife conservation.

Thank you to each and every game warden nominated by their respective district. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed, and we applaud them for their commitment to protecting our natural resources. Your support and dedication to the wildlife resource and public safety are truly commendable.

**ODWC Uniform Ordering**

**Reminders and Updates**

By Daniel Griffith (A)

- Any Godfrey's order that has been placed was received and is being processed. If your order online still says "PENDING" it is being processed. The status will not change until the order ships.
- All orders are now shipping to the address you provided. It will not come to Headquarters unless you select to ship it to OKC.
- Be on the lookout for signature requests from your division administrative assistant once your item has shipped or been received. You will need to sign the invoice for the items you ordered verifying you received them.
- You have until the end of June to use any remaining credit on your account. There is no carryover and your credit will reset July 1.
- If you don't remember how to access the portal, info is on the TOAD [HERE](#).



Austin Jackson (LE) presenting skins and skulls to the Nowata County 4-H group.

**Inspiring 4-H Youth**

By Lt. Joe Alexander (LE)

Game Warden of the Year runner-up Austin Jackson and Lt. Joe Alexander shared the importance of native wildlife by presenting a Skins & Skulls class to the Nowata County 4-H Club at the OSU Extension Learning Center this month. 4-H is important because it empowers young people to develop essential skills such as leadership, responsibility, and teamwork through hands-on experiences like this one.



Instructors from LE: Logan Shimp and Josey Branch



Learning these tactics is crucial for law enforcement. This is a ground law enforcement move. This move keeps the bad guy from getting your gun.



"Rylee vs Riley" Game wardens Rylee Rolling and Riley Willman practice defensive tactics training.

**Game Wardens Attend Defensive Tactics Training**

By Lt. Joe Alexander (LE)

Districts 1 and 2 met in Wagoner County recently for a defensive tactics class instructed by Logan Shimp (Haskell Co.) and Josey Branch (Payne Co.). Defensive tactics training is crucial for game wardens as it equips them with the skills needed to safely and effectively handle potentially dangerous volatile situations while minimizing harm to themselves, civilians, and suspects. By mastering defensive tactics, wardens can confidently de-escalate conflicts, control combative individuals, and protect public safety during these high-pressure encounters.

**2024 Oklahoma City Memorial**

**Marathon Expo**

By Heather Del Moral (CE)

Because of our amazing volunteers ODWC was well represented at the Memorial Marathon Expo as our employees engaged in meaningful conversations with the public, sold licenses, showcased merchandise, and answered many questions. Thankful for our volunteers: Sarah Southerland (CE); Amy Newcomb (A); Amanda Thomas (CE); Megan Moore (CE); Jamie Weymouth (A); Jarrett Smith (CE).



Amanda Thomas (CE) talks to the cutest visitor.



Bill Dinkines' (W) son Hunter stops by the ODWC booth to say hello while Kara Gardner (CE) and Amy Newcomb (A) were working.

## **ODWC's Outdoor Calendar is Your**

### **Outlet for Promoting Events**

By Micah Holmes (CE)

If you have fishing clinics, public outreach events, etc. we'd love to add the information/dates to the Outdoor Calendar for the public. It is a great resource for constituents. It gives folks the chance to get engaged, learn a skill, attend an event, etc.

You can see that calendar here: [Outdoor Calendar](#)

All you need to do is fill out the form below and our Web Developer Kara Gardner (C&E) will get the information posted. Please feel free to share this with other organizations too so that they can submit their events as well.

**Outdoor Calendar  
Submission form**



## **Game Wardens Use Airboat to**

### **Patrol Remote Nowata County**

By Lt. Joe Alexander (LE)

Game wardens spent the day in the airboat patrolling the remote hard-to-reach areas of Nowata County. Airboats are a great tool used to navigate through shallow waters, marshes, creeks, and flats where regular boats or vehicles could never reach. During this beautiful spring day Austin Jackson (Craig Co.), JD Stauffer (Rogers Co.), Lt. Stephen Paul (Noble Co.), and Lt. Joe Alexander (Washington Co.) checked over 60 anglers who had never been checked by boat in this extremely remote area.”



Don't miss out on the fun! Sign up to play!

## State Agency Co-ed Outdoor Soccer League

By Megan Moore (CE)

What? Co-ed, outdoor soccer (11 players on field: eight guys, three girls) Games will be 35 minute halves (may shorten to 30 for heat).

Who? Any state or city employee or their family members (must be 18 or older; cannot be an active college or professional player) If you aren't interested in playing but have a son/daughter, spouse, sibling who is, please send them our way!

When? We will have 1 game each week, either on Monday or Thursday evenings (schedule will alternate nights throughout the season). The season will start July 15 and last approximately 8 weeks.

Where? Games will be played at the OKC Energy Practice Fields (2810 NE 63rd St, Oklahoma City, OK 73111)

Why? 'Cause it's fun!

For more information, contact Megan Moore ([megan.moore@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:megan.moore@odwc.ok.gov))

Cost: Registration will open soon! (The link isn't available yet)

Early bird discount (ends May 31) \$40

General Registration (June 1-30) \$45

Late Registration (July 1-15) \$55

Jersey cost: \$32

## ODWC Headquarters Home to

### New Pollinator Gardens

By Betsey York (CE)

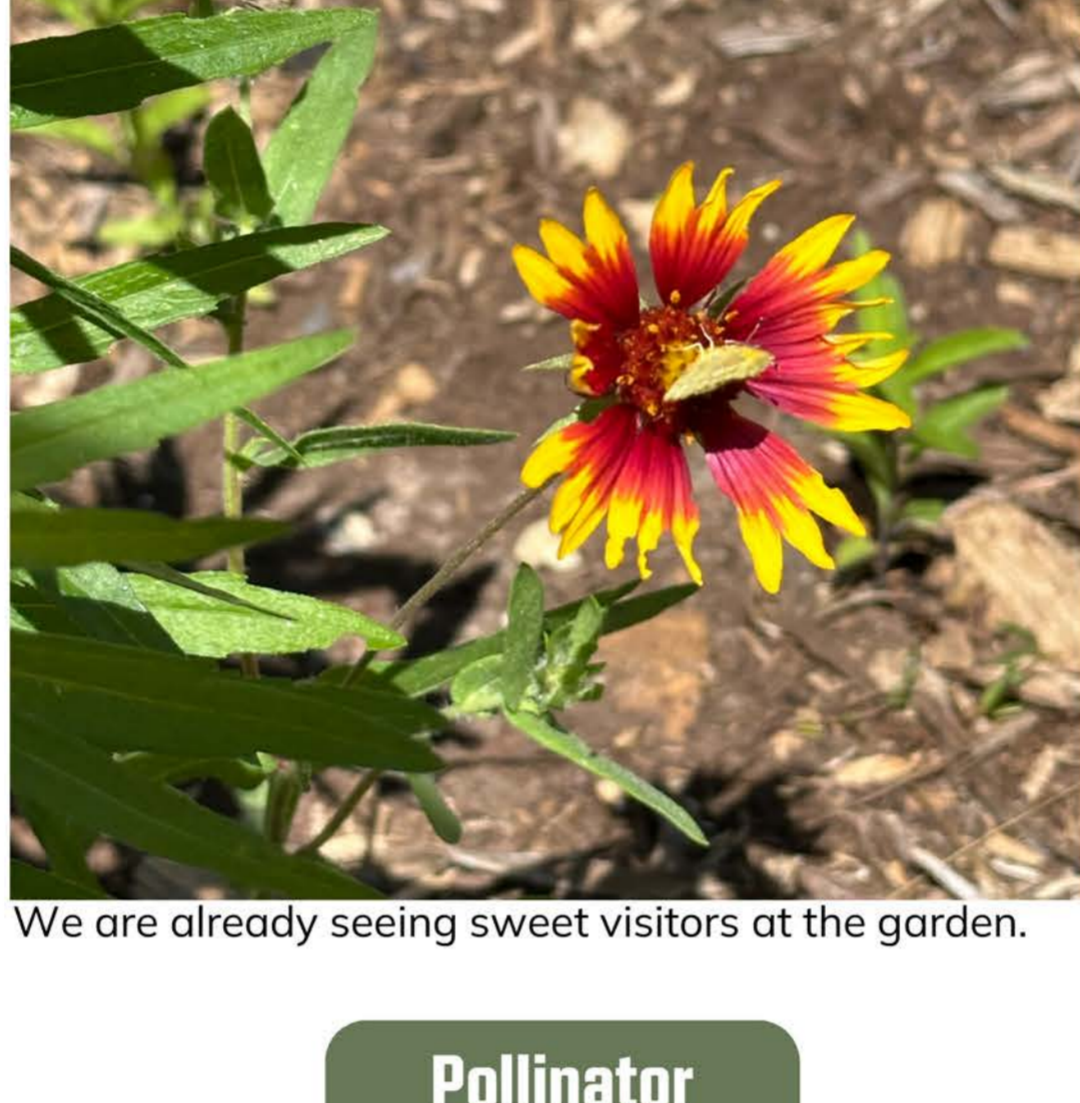
A group of central office gardeners planted the central office's first pollinator garden plots! The group spread a mixture of native seeds including goldenrod, partridge pea, prairie coneflower, maximilian sunflower, plains coreopsis, illinois bundleflower, annual sunflower, white yarrow, leadplant, white prairie clover, indian blanket, verben, purple coneflower, swamp milkweed, butterfly milkweed, showy milkweed, common milkweed, and lemon mint. Seeds were spread last fall to undergo natural stratification and we supplemented with more seed earlier this spring.



A helping hand makes a difference.



By planting the gardens, participants hope to help a variety of pollinators that frequent the area around Headquarters.



We are already seeing sweet visitors at the garden.

### Pollinator Garden Success



Corrie McClees (F) working on research and enjoying her new job.

## Supplemental Trout Testing

### Project Underway

By Doug Zentner (F)

The cost of trout has increased exponentially over the last couple of years. These ever-increasing costs were part of the driving force behind a bag limit reduction several years ago. Future cost projections suggest prices will continue to rise, causing a strain on the Department's ability to maintain year-round and seasonal winter trout fisheries. To help mitigate the effects of these price increases, and maintain these unique fisheries across the state, fisheries staff have begun several projects focused on trout. At Holdenville Fish Hatchery, our specific project centers on determining our ability to supplement year-round fisheries with trout from our state hatcheries. Our objectives are to determine if our hatcheries have the ability to produce trout over the winter period, and if fish produced from our hatcheries grow and survive in our year-round fisheries.

Focusing on the first objective: Staff at Byron state fish hatchery were able produce rainbow trout from eyed-eggs over this last winter. This was a monumental success as none of our state hatcheries are equipped for cold water fish culture and producing trout had never been attempted in the state prior (to the best of my knowledge). Production was so successful that half the fish were moved to Holdenville State Fish Hatchery for continued grow out due to space limitations. Our hatchery staff really "knocked this out of the park" and they deserve major accolades for their ability and willingness to take on a new and complex task.

Focusing on the second objective: Trout produced at our hatcheries are smaller than stocked "catchable" fish that are usually put in in our year-round fisheries. Current stocked fish fall under the category of "put-and-take" stocking where fish are already catchable size. Though there is no plan to discontinue put-and-take stockings, fish produced in our hatcheries can help supplement these put-and-take stockings via one time "put-grow-take" stockings in late winter/early spring. However, this would require fish produced in our hatcheries to both grow and survive in these fisheries. And so, we need a way to assess both the growth and survival our state produced fish. Therefore, we needed a way to identify these fish out in the field to determine their growth rates and survivability. To accurately identify these fish over the coming years we've decided to mark fish produced by our hatcheries by removing their adipose fin (a common method used to identify hatchery reared salmonids). Data from these fish will then be collected to determine the feasibility of this approach to help maintain our state's unique trout fishing opportunities.

## OKSSSP Winds Down with Success

By Damon Springer (CE)

The Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program (OKSSSP) celebrated its 11th year in 2024. OKSSSP saw extremely fast growth and success over the past 11 years and continues to grow. The program started in 2013 with 20 pilot schools and now has over 200 Middle and High Schools involved. There were around 1200 students who participated in the two regional competitions held at the Oklahoma Trap and Skeet Association in El Reno on April 2 and 3 this year. The top 16 high schools and eight junior high schools as well as 80 individuals advanced on to the state shoot on April 17. Teams compete in a bracket-style competition until winners are determined through eliminations. Results of the event can be viewed on our website. [Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program \(OKSSSP\) | ODWC \(wildlifedepartment.com\)](https://www.okdwc.com/oksssp)

Shooting sports has grown in popularity over the past few years and most colleges in Oklahoma have a shooting team with several also offering scholarships. Several high school seniors have already signed letters of intent with colleges here in Oklahoma for the fall semester.

Thank you to all those involved in the events this year. Without your hard work, commitment, and effort these programs would not be the success they are. If you haven't had an opportunity to come out to assist or just see what the program is about, please try to set aside some time for next year. These kids are the future of conservation.



A rewarding day of seeing youth shooters in action



Amanda Thomas (C&E) helping the Boise City shooters refill the trap machine.



Michael Zimmerman (LE) with son Austin at the shoot.

## Giving Back

By Lt. Joe Alexander (LE)

Lt. Col. Wade Farrar and OSGWA President Marshall Reigh present a check to the members of a local high school fishing team to help them someday reach their dream of becoming professional bass anglers. Game wardens love to give back to their communities. Thank You, game wardens, for investing in the future of these young anglers!



Wade Farrar & Marshall Reigh presenting a check to a local high school bass fishing team.

## Connecting Constituents With Conservation

By Jena Donnell (CE)

In late April, the Wildlife Department made the most of its communication channels to share stories of four recent or ongoing conservation grants. The featured projects represented a mix of [federal grant programs](#), a handful of taxa, and a variety of ecoregions. A fifth story embraced the work of the Federal Aid Section and showed how conservation ideas are turned into success stories.



Projects from the Wildlife Restoration, Sport Fish Restoration, and State Wildlife Grant programs studying American black bears, blue catfish, and crawfish frogs, as well as a frosted elfin project supported by the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, were highlighted in a recent communication campaign.

ICYMI:  
Get the Updates

Tuning in all the Channels

- As with many other communication efforts, the updates centered around the [Outdoor Oklahoma Journal](#), a blog-style feature of [wildlifedepartment.com](#). Interviews with principal investigators were scheduled in February and March and the respective drafts were sent for multiple reviews. The three most recent journal entries are showcased on the website's front page and each entry is catalogued in a searchable archive.

- From there, the Outdoor Oklahoma Journal links were compiled in an email bulletin and sent to more than one million hunting and fishing license holders, media contacts, and other subscribers. The free email provider, GovDelivery, tracked the following stats for the bulletin:

We delivered 1,068,252 email bulletins. 422,225 were opened.

Outdoor Oklahoma Journal Entries and their number of link clicks below:

[Study Focused on Panhandle Black Bears Gets Big Picture Results](#): 1,617 link clicks

[It's Raining, It's Pouring ... the Crawfish Frog is Snoring](#): 415 link clicks

[Rethinking Sampling Gear Gives Better Estimate of Big Catfish](#): 858 link clicks

[Small Butterfly Gets Big Status Update](#): 291 link clicks

[The Business of Conservation](#): 393 link clicks

- Scattered among the linked journal entries were photographs, graphs, maps, and a [YouTube video](#) to further tell the stories. These content pieces were shared on the Wildlife Department's social media channels to magnify the message. The social media draft and journal link for the Sport Fish Restoration Program project were also used in the Weekly Fishing Report, generating 158 link clicks for that story. (Subscribers of the Weekly Fishing Report also received the bulletin highlighting the four grants, so these "extra" article clicks may not be additive.)

- Finally, the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund project will be published in the May/June 2024 issue of Outdoor Oklahoma magazine and other stories may be included in future issues. While an Outdoor Oklahoma television show segment was not produced for this highlight of grant work, a related [study of blue catfish on Kaw Lake](#) was produced and shared last year. Clips from that segment were included in the content pieces packaged for social media.

Sharing the Wildlife Department's work is an important part of the conservation story. It not only brings the state's amazing species and habitats into focus, but also shows the agency is a good biological and fiscal steward.

If you have a story idea, a project you're excited about, or a fun photograph or video, please consider sharing it with the Communication and Education Division. With your help, we can continue to connect constituents with our conservation efforts.

## Bass and Badges

By Lt. Joe Alexander (LE)

This past weekend in Vinita, families gathered at Vinita City Lake to enjoy a day of fishing fun. The Bass and Badges fishing derby is hosted by city, state, and tribal agencies all coming together for one goal and that is getting people outside fishing. Warden Austin Jackson (Craig Co.) helps coordinate this wildly popular all-day event. There was zero expense for families to come to enjoy the day fishing and lunch was provided. There were over 160 kids registered who all went home with a brand-new fishing rod and reel. Archery was also a big hit with the families and top shooters receiving a brand-new bow donated by a local archery shop. This great event fosters a sense of community pride and camaraderie, providing opportunities for residents to come together, celebrate their shared interests, and strengthen trust and bonds with law enforcement agencies all while enjoying a great day fishing. A big thank you to everyone for working so hard to make this a great event! Hats off to: Austin Jackson (Craig Co.), Riley Willman (Delaware Co.), JD Stauffer (Rogers Co.), Monte Reid (Mayes Co.), Kody Moore (Mayes Co.), Joe Alexander (Washington Co.), Hank Jenks (Delaware Co.), Grace Carter (F), Tony Crawford (W), and Russell Perry (W).



Austin Jackson (LE) and daughter Finley won the "Most Fish Award" for the day. Proud dad moment!



Tony Crawford (W) and Russell Perry (W) showing the kiddos how to shoot a bow. Way to go fellas!



The Bass and Badges event brought ODWC employees from across divisions together for a successful day of sharing the outdoors



The smile tells you everything you need to know about this event.

## Deploying Fish Habitat

Story sent by Major League Fishing

EUFULA, Okla. (May 8, 2024) – Inclement weather has wreaked havoc across Oklahoma for the past week, but MLF pros and the Oologah-Talala High School Fishing Team managed to put a few hours of sunshine to good use during the Major League Fishing (MLF) Bass Pro Tour MillerTech Stage Four Presented by REDCON1. The MLF Fisheries Management Division (FMD) partnered with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) to complete the Minn Kota Habitat Restoration Project supported by Humminbird on Lake Eufaula on Thursday, May 2.

Photos from the Minn Kota Habitat Restoration Project supported by Humminbird on Lake Eufaula

Bass Pro Tour anglers Josh Bertrand, Stephen Browning, Ott DeFoe, Edwin Evers, Gary Klein, John Murray, Britt Myers, Micheal Neal, Skeet Reese, Colby Schrumpf, and Greg Vinson joined the Oologah-Talala High School Bass Fishing Team, ODWC, Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation, MossBack Fish Habitat founder David King, and Director of the MLF FMD Steven Bardin, , to construct MossBack fish habitat products including 60” Conservation Cubes, Safe Haven XLs and John Godwin Crappie Towers. The structures were weighted down using supplies donated by local Lowes Home Improvement store #2571 and deployed into Eufaula Cove.

The Bass Pro Tour anglers in attendance spoke with the group, took photos, signed autographs and built structures with the high school team and other volunteers, before handing off deployment of the structures to the students and ODWC staff.

The project was part of a four-year large-scale habitat restoration program for Lake Eufaula that the ODWC began earlier this year. The ODWC will receive an annual donation from the City of Eufaula which they plan to increase through federal matching programs. The potential value of the four-year project is more than \$150,000 for the ODWC.

Eufaula Cove is an important part of the 105,000-surface-acre fishery due to the number of tournaments hosted out of the cove’s marinas. After most five-fish tournaments at Peter’s Point-Nichols Point on Lake Eufaula, fish are released back into the cove, making habitat designed to improve fish recovery a valuable resource.

“ODWC’s commitment to our fisheries is unmatched and being able to experience this project with the Oologah-Talala High School Fishing Team is an extremely valuable opportunity,” said Edwin Evers, just before loading the students on the bus to buy them lunch.

The MLF FMD hopes to continue using this blueprint across other projects, to maximize grants and further increase the impact to local communities on the Bass Pro Tour.

For complete details and updated information on Major League Fishing and the MLF Fisheries Management Division, visit [MajorLeagueFishing.com/fisheries-management](https://MajorLeagueFishing.com/fisheries-management). For regular updates, photos, tournament news and more, follow MLF’s social media outlets at [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).



Pictured: ODWC fisheries employees: Michael Hollie, Michael Williams, David Bogner, Juliane Perry, Madison Mitchell along with MLF pros and the Oologah-Talala High School Fishing Team.

# Tar Creek Apprenticeship Program

By Lance Meek (CE)

Shawn Gee (CE), Heather Gaylord (CE) and Lance Meek (CE), were recently hosted by the Quapaw Nation, where they were joined by Jason Adair (LE) and Chris Newkirk (LE) to conduct a hunter education and Fishing in the Schools training for marshals and game wardens of the Quapaw Nation. They will be putting this training to use this June as a part of the "Summer 2024 Tar Creek Apprenticeship Program." This is a six-week program made up of 30 students, ages 16-21 from the Cherokee, Eastern Shawnee, Miami, Ottawa, Peoria, Seneca-Cayuga, and Wyandotte Tribes. With areas of Ottawa County being part of an EPA Superfund Site due to past mining operations the tribes hope to educate the participants on the dangers of pollution and what steps can be taken to clean and restore the lands and waterways, as well as an appreciation of outdoors and outdoor related activities.



Pictured: Quapaw Marshals; Miami Nation Tribal Police; Miami OK police Detectives; Bureau of Indian Affairs Police; Ottawa county OK Sheriffs Department and ODWC employees Jason Adair (LE); Heather Gaylord (CE), Lance Meek (CE), Chris Newkirk (LE).



Heather Gaylord, Lance Meek, Chris Newkirk, Mark Byfield and Seth Hembree (Quapaw Nation Game Wardens), Jason Adair, Charles Addington (Director of the Quapaw Nation public safety) and Michael Mullin (Chief Investigator- QNMS)

## Rick Grundman to Retire

Rick Grundman, the first Executive Director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF), will retire effective June 30, 2024.

Over the last four years, Grundman has been instrumental in elevating OWCF's profile and fostering its mission to support projects benefiting the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the state's natural resources.

"Rick's leadership has been invaluable in advancing the mission of OWCF," said Raegen Siegfried, OWCF Board President. "Under his guidance, the Foundation has significantly increased its visibility and raised funds to support vital conservation efforts across Oklahoma."

Grundman took over the OWCF director role after an extensive career spanning 24 years as an executive in the natural gas utility and midstream industries. Throughout his career, Grundman has been actively involved in community and charitable organizations, serving on the board of numerous institutions, including the Parent Child Center of Tulsa, State Chamber of Oklahoma, and the Alzheimer's Association. His dedication to servant-based leadership and community service has left an indelible mark on these organizations.

During his tenure, Grundman spearheaded efforts to enhance OWCF's profile across the state and raise funds to support critical projects benefiting the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. His advocacy for Oklahoma's fish, wildlife, and habitat has inspired many to contribute to the Foundation's mission, both as individuals and through corporate donations. OWCF was formed in 2018 to encourage private support of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. The Foundation's vision is to enable all outdoor enthusiasts to actively enjoy our state's wildlife and wild spaces. As a nonprofit organization, OWCF provides citizens with an outlet to show their passion for the outdoors by investing their time and money in projects that will make a difference for generations to come.

For more information about the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation and its initiatives click the button below:

OKWCF



Rick Grundman the first Executive Director of the OKWCF.

## New Fish Poster Makes a Splash

By Heather Del Moral (CE)

Smokey Solis (CE) collaborated with Ashley Nealis (F) and other dedicated members of the fisheries team to revamp the Common Fish of Oklahoma poster. Thanks to the R3 Fishing grant, funding was secured for this project. These informative posters are now accessible to ODWC employees for outreach initiatives. For those planning to visit the central office, kindly coordinate with Heather Del Moral (CE) to arrange for the pickup of the posters, as they are too heavy for mailing.



## Life After Retiring

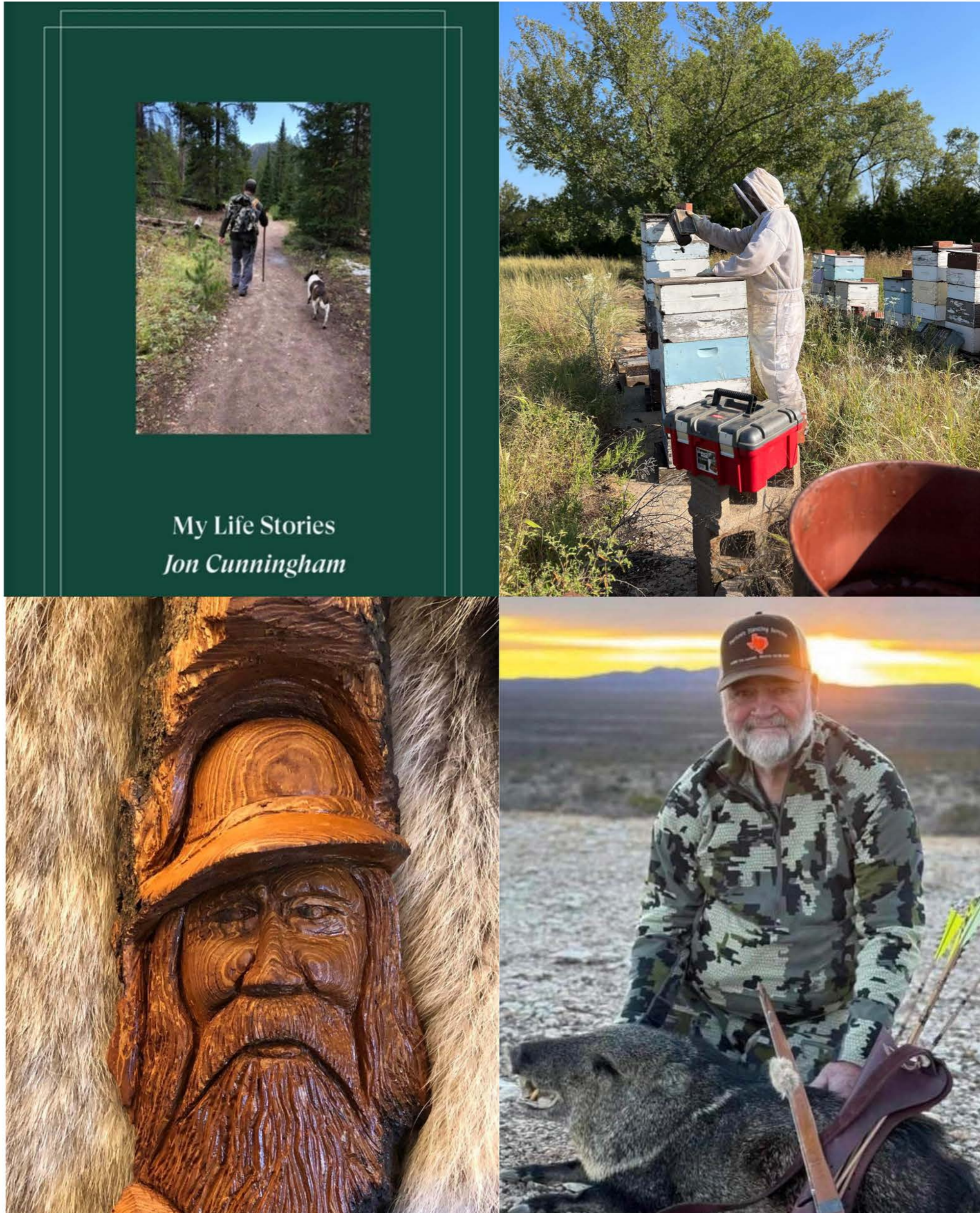
By Heather Del Moral (CE)

Retirement often marks a significant transition, prompting reflections on life's next chapter. In the case of Jon Cunningham, a retired game warden from ODWC since 2014 after 31 years of dedicated service, it is clear that retirement does not equate to slowing down. Jon has immersed himself in a dynamic post-retirement life, becoming a sought-after guest speaker at numerous events, particularly within church communities. His captivating talks intertwine personal anecdotes, including his near-fatal accident, with the timeless wisdom of the gospel.

Jon's retirement is far from idle. At the request of his sons, he has chronicled his experiences as a game warden, penning over 50 enthralling stories spanning more than 300 pages- a cherished legacy for his family. In addition to his literary pursuits, Jon has embarked on the enriching journey of wood carving, honing his skills in this intricate craft. Furthermore, he tends to approximately 50 honeybee hives, demonstrating a deep connection to nature and a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Jon Cunningham's post-retirement endeavors exemplify the vitality and fulfillment that can be found in embracing new passions and making meaningful contributions to personal and community life.

If you would like to update us on your adventures after retirement, please reach out to me directly! heather.delmoral@odwc.ok.gov; 405-521-3856



A collage of photos of some of Jon's adventures since retiring

A vibrant bird, possibly a Painted Bunting, is perched on a weathered, light-brown branch. The bird has a striking blue head and back, a bright green wing, and a deep red breast and tail. It is facing left, with its head slightly turned towards the viewer. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of brown and green, suggesting a natural, wooded environment. The lighting is bright, highlighting the bird's colors.

# SHOUT OUTS!

Photo: Aneda Smith



# Game Bag



Tammy St. Yves (A) sent in this photo of her daughter Sophie, aka “Little Toot”with her first fish using her Frozen pole on Grand Lake. Sophie announced, “I am catching it, but I am NOT touching it.” As she was reeling the fish in, she said, “Come over here, little fish!” Her momma was proud and laughing all at the same time!



That is a big first fish! Go girl!

Matthew Farris (LE) sent in this photo of his son Hank and his friend Harlow doing some pond hopping!



Fishing friends are the best kind of friends!

David Banta (W) is one proud dad. His kids competed in an annual national Bible Bowl competition in Ft. Worth, Texas. They studied so hard and won against 30 other teams. They are reigning champs, as they won last year as well. Way to go team! David's son also entered the speech contest which was presenting a devotional in front of a panel of judges. He competed against 13 other young men and won!



David Banta standing proudly with his wife Erin, daughter Dovie (15) and son Jackson (13).

Bill Dinkines (W) was proud to be with his son Hunter as he harvested a beautiful tom this turkey season. Bill has passed on the love, passion and tradition of hunting. R3 efforts start with us!



Great harvest, Hunter! And a beautiful photo, Bill!

Kristi Keeling's (A) daughter Paige has made her momma proud with all of her accomplishments in Wellston FFA this past year.



Paige showing her Duroc Barrow up the hill at OYE. Attagirl!

A photograph of a field of red flowers, likely Indian paintbrush, with a building visible in the background. The flowers are in sharp focus in the foreground, while the building is blurred. The text "ODWC NEW EMPLOYEES" is overlaid in the center.

# ODWC NEW EMPLOYEES

Photo: Heather Del Moral

**Mona Meiser**  
**Wildlife Technician**



We're proud to spotlight Mona Meiser, our new OLAP Wildlife Technician who is stationed in Woodward. Originally from Norman. Mona's journey began at Norman High School and continued with a bachelor's degree in natural resource and ecology management from Oklahoma State University, specializing in wildlife.

After graduation, Mona's passion led her to roles as a seasonal field technician for the American Bird Conservancy and later as a farm bill biologist for Pheasants Forever and the NRCS. Her love for the outdoors shines through in her favorite activities: hiking with beloved dogs, bird watching, herping, and hammocking, where she can unwind and apply her wildlife knowledge.

Beyond work, Mona cherishes time with friends and family, and enjoys any activity involving animals. Mona's dedication to wildlife finds a perfect fit in our organization, where everyone shares a deep commitment to conservation. Something you might find surprising about Mona is that she has 22 tattoos and counting! Congratulations, Mona, and welcome to our team!

**Wyatt Slade**  
**Wildlife Technician**



Let's welcome Wyatt Slade, our new McCurtain County Wilderness Area Wildlife Technician hailing from Pratt Kansas. Wyatt's journey began at Skyline Schools in Pratt before pursuing a degree in wildlife ecology at OSU, where he graduated in May 2023 with a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology and rangeland management.

Wyatt's diverse experience includes internships with ODWC and a background in wheat harvest and hay crews, alongside managing a family farm and cattle operation. His passion for animals, honed through years in FFA and 4-H, is evident in his love for target shooting, camping, and caring for animals. An avid history buff, Wyatt's interest in military and firearms history has taken him to historic sites like Auschwitz and Pearl Harbor.

Despite his Kansas roots, Wyatt finds solace in the natural beauty of their current surroundings, relishing the trees, mountains, and water. Wyatts parents, three younger brothers, and his girlfriend, Brook Langford, are all very special to Wyatt. His joy lies in working outdoors and embracing new skills and crafts with each passing day. Congratulations, Wyatt, and welcome to our team!

**Garrett Scott**  
**Wildlife Technician**



Welcome aboard Garrett Scott, our newest Wildlife Technician for Red and Grassy Slough WMA's. Garrett's educational journey took him through Salina High School before earning a bachelor's degree in integrative biology with a concentration in fish and wildlife from Northeastern State University.

Garrett's dedication to wildlife shines through his previous internships with ODWC and his recent role at Xcaliber International. Outside of work, Garrett finds solace in fishing, enjoying the social aspect with his wife and friends, as well as birdwatching and hunting, which he finds humbling.

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In his downtime, Garrett enjoys cooking, lifting weights, and indulging in rom-coms with his wife, Jessica, and their four dogs. Their marriage stands out as his most notable life experience.

Currently, Garrett is immersed in an alligator survey on Red Slough WMA, with more experiences and adventures yet to come. Welcome to the team, Garrett!

# SANS BOIS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

- VEHICLE USE RESTRICTED TO DESIGNATED ROADS.
- CAMPING IN DESIGNATED AREAS ONLY.
- CLOSED TO ALL NON-HUNTING ACTIVITIES EXCEPT HUNTER CAMPING OCTOBER 1 - JANUARY 31 AND SPRING TURKEY SEASON.
- HELP KEEP THE AREA CLEAN - PLEASE PACK YOUR TRASH OUT WITH YOU.
- CONSULT REGULATIONS BEFORE ENTERING.



OKLAHOMA  
OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Unless exempt you  
must have a  
valid fishing or hunting  
license  
or a  
Wildlife  
Conservation  
Passport  
before entering this  
area.  
Consult the current  
Oklahoma Hunting or Fishing Guide  
for full regulations.

NO ATVs  
OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT  
OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

## HR CORNER

Photo Jena Donnell

DESIGNATED  
CAMPING  
AREA  
OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT  
OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

## Timekeeping Tips

- PLEASE DO NOT ENTER ANY TIME FOR MAY until you receive directions from HR. With the transition to PeopleSoft GPC, we are asking all employees to hold off entering any of your time/leave for May until HR gives you the go-ahead. Please watch your email for further instructions.
- CHANGES AND/OR APPROVALS TO TIMESHEET AFTER THE FIRST OF THE MONTH DEADLINE: If changes or approvals are made to an employee's timesheet after the timesheet deadline (i.e. first day of the following month), please contact HR so we can make adjustments for payroll purposes. Changes/approvals after the first do not automatically pull through in Workday which can affect an employee's paycheck amount.

## Deadlines

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

## Work Phone Numbers in Workday

- Supervisors you can now update your employee's work phone numbers in Workday! Please check work phone numbers for your direct reports and make any necessary changes. A quick reference guide is available here:

**Workday Guide**

## **April Personnel Actions**

### **New Hires**

Corrie McClees – Fisheries Hatchery Technician, Holdenville, 4/1/24

Garrett Scott – Wildlife Technician, Red & Grassy Slough, 4/1/24

Dalayne Richard – Wildlife Administrative Assistant, 4/8/24

Mona Meiser – Wildlife Technician, OLAP, 4/15/24

### **Promotions**

Tammy St. Yves – Wildlife Administrative Assistant to Executive Assistant, 4/1/24

Stacey Priest – Assistant Hatchery Manager @ JA Manning to Hatchery Manager at Durant SFH, 4/1/24

Jon West – Fisheries Streams Biologist to NE Regional Supervisor, 4/1/24

### **Transfers**

Resignations/Terminations

Adam Dreyer – Wildlife Technician @ Packsaddle, 4/13/24

Colby Rowe – Fisheries Heavy Equipment Operator NW Region, 4/15/24

Angela Veley – Fisheries Administrative Assistant, NW Region, 4/15/24



[VIEW DIRECTOR'S REPORT](#)

[COMMISSION SUMMARY](#)



Scott Cox (W) recognized for 30 years.



Ken Cunningham (F) recognized for 20 years.

## Birthdays

- DEL MORAL, HEATHER 5/2
- WILLIAMS, JOE 5/3
- ZIMMERMAN, MICHAEL 5/3
- HARRIET, JACOB 5/5
- ROUK, JAY 5/6
- WEYMOUTH, JAMIE 5/10
- CASTRO, ZACKARY 5/14
- GARDNER, KARA 5/17
- GEE, SHAWN 5/17
- BERSCHE, JEREMY 5/20
- MITCHELL, MADISON 5/21
- PARRY, SCOTT 5/22
- BOGNER, DAVID 5/24
- ROBERTSON, DAVID 5/24
- DAVIS, JERROD 5/25
- MCCLEES, CORRIE 5/25
- BEAVER, CLINT 5/27
- BICKERSTAFF, BEN 5/28
- PHIPPS III, CLINTON 5/28
- SCHNEIDER, KENT 5/29
- JOHNSON, BAILEY 5/31
- STEGALL, DREW 5/31



## REELIN' IN THE YEARS

- AUSTIN, CODY 7
- BANTA, JOHN DAVID 26
- BERG, COLIN 31
- BEVERLY, BROOKE 1
- LOVELACE, ETHAN 7
- WALLACE, DREW 5
- WHILES, ALEXIS 5
- WILMOTH, MIKKI 20

