

Awards Luncheon June 25, 2012

Members of the Awards Committee are: Ed Boggess, Minnesota; Terry Steinwand, North Dakota; Jeff Vonk, South Dakota; and myself. I want to thank them for their assistance in choosing the winners. We had 22 nominations for the five main awards.

Award winners are:

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award is given to the individual who in the past year has shown superior leadership, initiative, and dedication in their duties. This person should personify achievement, public service, education, and above all natural resource conservation. This award goes to **William (Bill) Miller, Wisconsin**; accepting the award for Bill will be

The Wildlife Biologist of the Year award is given to the individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative towards the better understanding of wildlife and their conservation. This award goes to **Chad Steward, Indiana**; accepting the award for Chad is Marc Reiter, Indiana DNR Director.

The Fisheries Biologist of the Year award is given to the individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative towards the better understanding of fishes and their conservation.

This award goes to **Craig Fuller, Missouri**; accepting the award for Craig is

The Spirit of the Shack award is given to the individual who exemplifies the ideals of the great conservationist and educator, Aldo Leopold, and who has contributed to conservation in a superior way. This individual should epitomize stewardship and dedication to fish and wildlife conservation. This award goes to **Andrew Hulin, Illinois**; accepting the award for Andrew is Marc Miller, Illinois DNR Director.

Excellence in Conservation award is given to the agency that has shown excellence in conservation through a specific project. Each member agency would select one project completed in the awards year that exemplifies the goal of fish and wildlife conservation. This year we have chosen two worthy recipients:

The Missouri River Outdoor Expo which is held annually at Ponca State Park had over 45,000 visitors in 2011. Families return year after year to take in varied activities such as: camping, outdoor cooking, wildlife observation, mountain biking, kayaking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, dog training, conservation, shooting sports and more; this group was nominated by Nebraska Game and

Parks Commission – award accepted by Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Director.

The Indiana Healthy Rivers Initiative was designed to enhance, restore and protect over 43,000 acres of land in the Wabash River/Sugar Creek Corridor and over 26,000 acres in the Muscatatuck River Corridor; this group was nominated by Indiana DNR – award accepted by Marc Reiter, IN DNR Director.

Sagamore of the Forest, Fields and Streams - “A sagamore is the head of northeastern Native American tribe. The word is generally synonymous with sachem, although sometimes a sachem is considered a chief of the first rank, and a sagamore one of the second rank. Sagamore can also refer to great man among the tribe to whom the chief would look for wisdom and advice.” This honor is bestowed on any Director or upper level staff member that has contributed significant service to MAFWA. To qualify for this recognition, recipients must provide 4 years of service to MAFWA, have a 75 percent meeting attendance and serve on one or more committees. This award goes to:

Rex Amack, Nebraska; accepting for Rex will be Jim Douglas, NE Game & Parks Commission Director.

President's Award – Kansas - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); accepting on behalf of Kansas NRCS is Eric Banks, Kansas State Conservationist.

The Past President's Award is given to **Keith Sexson, Kansas** who has served as the MAFWA President for the past year. Keith will receive this award at the business meeting on Wednesday.

Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Awards

Nominations Form 2012

Award Categories (check only one per form)

☐

Spirit of the Shack

☐

Fisheries Biologist of the Year

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Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: Korey Trowbridge

Organization: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Title: Warden Supervisor

E-mail: Korey.Trowbridge@wisconsin.gov

Phone number: 715-421-7804

Person nominated for award

Name: William (Bill) Miller

Organization: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Title: Conservation Warden

1. Provide a brief (one page or less) overview explaining why the individual/agency meets the criteria for the award:

Conservation Warden William (Bill) Miller has worked diligently to build a well-balanced, quality conservation law enforcement program that includes all three core areas: enforcement, education, and community involvement. Bill is an excellent warden and representative for the Wisconsin Warden Service and the department. Bill has always been strict in his professional role, yet personable and approachable.

Bill's program is characterized by a good blend of criminal and civil enforcement actions. Bill has the knowledge and experience, and more importantly, puts the effort in to investigate complaints that result in criminal charges. At the same time, even after 28 years of service, when other wardens may be resting on their prior successes, Bill is in the field on a daily basis and makes more civil cases than most, if not all other wardens in the state. Bill issued more than 200 citations and criminal complaints in 2011, in a variety of different enforcement categories. He also investigated 34 hotline complaints.

Bill works at all aspects of the warden job including fish and game enforcement, recreational vehicle enforcement, environmental enforcement, community wardening and education. Bill is a field training officer. Bill is continuously working at improving himself. In 2010, Bill volunteered to be a trainer for the new TRACS electronic citation program. Bill continues to assist wardens in the West Central Region with TRACS issues.

Bill also takes his teamwork philosophy beyond the borders of his county and team and works with the other wardens around the region and the state. He has willingly gone to other areas of the state to assist in their enforcement efforts.

Throughout his career, Bill has been more than willing to adapt and change his enforcement approach to align with the DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement Field Operational Priorities. Over the course of his career, new issues like OWI enforcement, ATV enforcement, deer baiting and feeding rules, deer farms, invasive species, and TRACS have forced the warden service to adapt and change. Bill has been and continues to be a leader through his dedicated approach to the enforcement of these new issues.

When anyone discusses the trait of sustained performance, Bill is an example for the WI Warden Service. The warden career is difficult, especially as one gets older and can take its toll on wardens both physically and mentally. There are numerous examples of wardens that have "burned out". Bill is like the Energizer Bunny, and even after 28 years just keeps going and going. Bill has represented the department well through his 28 years with his professional and ethical conduct both on duty and off duty in his community. He and his wife have become an integral part of the Adams County community by operating successful family businesses and raising three children. Bill has long been the face of the department in Adams County and has been an asset to other department functions (forestry, fisheries, wildlife management, and the environmental regulatory programs) as well. His career work as a Conservation Warden in Adams County will continue to have long lasting positive impacts on the resource and community.

2. Please list and/or describe specific projects, work or accomplishments relevant to the award. Please limit your information to one page.

Warden William (Bill) Miller has worked tirelessly with the youth located throughout Adams County teaching and mentoring them to be stewards of the resources for future generations. He administers the natural resource education portion of the Adams County youth expo days every year, making it a point to personally communicate his message to each and every 3rd grader residing in the county. In addition, he has customized all of his recreational vehicle safety and hunter education safety presentations to coincide with issues and resources associated directly with Adams County. He makes a point to incorporate and develop hands on, kinetic, learning opportunities during his safety presentations. Bill is active annually with the Castle Rock Bass Masters Club kids fishing day, by giving a safety presentation to all participants before they fish on Castle Rock Lake.

Bill is not afraid to get involved in his community. In 2010, Bill ran for and was elected to the Adams County Board of Supervisors. This was done on Bill's own time and shows his commitment to the people of his community and his willingness to see improvement in the county. Bill was also appointed to the County Board Law Enforcement Committee

In response to a Bureau of Law Enforcement Hunter Recruitment Objective, Bill initiated contact with the Adams County Bow Club and Adams County Sheriff's Office to coordinate a Learn to Hunt Turkey program in Adams County. Coordination is currently occurring for the event planned for spring 2012.

In 2011, Bill assisted a landowner that contacted Bill about naming an un-named stream in Adams County. Bill assisted the man with getting the application process started through the DNR and the Wisconsin Geographical Names Council.

Bill attended the Adams County Lake Alliance meeting in the spring of 2011 and gave a presentation regarding invasive species and applicable laws.

This past year, Bill has demonstrated his leadership qualities by working with a local deer farmer that decided to get out of the deer farm business. Bill acted as liaison between the DNR, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the farmer. Bill and a DATCP agent also met several times with another local deer farmer about a recent fence addition that was constructed and deer purchases. Deer had been placed within the new fence that had not been inspected. Bill completed several case reports and completed inspection of the new deer fence. Enforcement action was also taken. Bill communicated with his supervisor and Captive Wildlife Administrative Warden during the investigation. Not only has Bill worked tirelessly to bring all captive whitetail deer farms into compliance in Adams County, but he has helped set precedence in the state that captive wildlife issues are a priority to the WI Warden Service.

In 2011, Bill continued to be active in our initiative to make outdoor recreation safer. Bill developed several more enforcement cases of felons illegally hunting that were successfully prosecuted. Since the inception of the initiative, Bill had worked closely with a Regional Special Investigator during the initiation, development, and implementation of the project. Bill executed test cases to trouble shoot issues and problems with the investigative plan to assure a successful roll out of the project statewide. He also went above and beyond the initial scope of the project and was able to make additional arrests by conducting a historical investigative approach using information provided to him through the project.

Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Awards

Nominations Form 2012

Award Categories (check only one per form)

☐

Spirit of the Shack

☐

Fisheries Biologist of the Year

☒

Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: Mark Reiter

Organization: Indiana DNR – Division of Fish and Wildlife

Title: Director Division of Fish and Wildlife

E-mail: mreiter@dnr.IN.gov

Phone number: 317-232-8129

1. Provide a brief (one page or less) overview explaining why the individual/agency meets the criteria for the award:

Our Wildlife Biologist of the Year nominee is Chad Stewart, Indiana Deer Research and Management Biologist. Chad Stewart worked extremely hard on many management issues this past year that impact one of our most significant wildlife resources and success stories, the white-tailed deer. His most notable work involved his role in helping the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife (IDFW), Indiana's sportsmen, communities, citizens and landowners usher in a new realm of management for Indiana's burgeoning deer population – that of focusing deer-herd reduction in a strategically targeted manner to more adequately balance the ecological, recreational and economic needs of the state's citizens.

Chad Stewart's substantial knowledge of deer management and applied research was critical in developing and defending the IDFW's 5-year deer management strategy and administrative rule proposals. His expertise and his exceptional ability to understand and communicate with all the various deer hunting factions was critical during our deer stakeholder group meetings,

and in helping the IDFW through a series of public open houses and the entire prolonged administrative rule process. Chad's ability to quickly use on-line opinion surveying tools and effectively analyse which parts of the proposal were the most controversial allowed the IDFW to be better prepared and more proactive in our communications with the public. The highly controversial nature of the deer rule proposals demonstrated Chad's exceptional ability to readily adapt to a constantly changing environment, quickly assess situations and respond to staff, constituent groups and the media, as well as highlighting Chad's dedication and commitment to Indiana's deer resource and its users.

In recognition of Chad Stewart's accomplishments related to implementing a new deer management plan, accomplishments highlighted in the next section, professional service and dedication to the resource, service and dedication to those who utilize or are affected by Indiana's deer resource, and exceptional ability to carry out his responsibilities efficiently and effectively, I nominate Chad Stewart for consideration of the MAFWA Wildlife Biologist of the Year award.

2. Please list and/or describe specific projects, work or accomplishments relevant to the award. Please limit your information to one page.

During the midst of implementing the new deer management strategy and proposal/adoption of associated deer rules, Chad Stewart accomplished a number of other projects including: wildlife disease surveillance response to a cattle Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in southeastern Indiana, securing a \$47,000 grant from USDA to fund Chronic Wasting disease surveillance, development and implementation of a comprehensive deer hunter survey, working with IDFW biologists and communities on various deer-related issues, starting GiveIN Game - a new venison donation program, authoring 2 papers/co-authoring 1 paper in professional journals.

In response to TB being discovered in a cattle herd, Chad quickly engaged BOAH, USDA, and our Division of Law Enforcement and led an immediate deer depopulation and deer tissue sampling effort on the effected premises. Although none of the sampled deer tested positive for TB, Chad coordinated additional TB surveillance of white-tailed deer through tissue sample collection of hunter-harvested deer in a 4-county TB surveillance area during the opening weekend of this past deer firearm season. The expanding TB surveillance program added an additional layer to Chad's disease surveillance responsibilities beyond coordinating the ongoing statewide tissue sample collection and testing program for Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance. To help offset the costs of these disease surveillance programs to the Division, Chad was successful in securing a \$47,000 grant from USDA to cover CWD surveillance.

Chad developed and coordinated a comprehensive deer hunter survey that gathered hunter preference and harvest data, hunter demographic

information and assessed hunter opinion of the One Buck Rule. Data from the deer hunter survey will assist us in refining our deer management program and provide baseline data to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of our deer reduction strategy.

Over the course of the year, Chad also worked with a number of Private Lands Biologists and communities on various urban, suburban and agricultural deer-related issues. Chad was instrumental in 1) developing and promoting a standardized set of antlerless deer harvest guidelines for landowners, which utilizes antlerless hunting efforts and hunting effort success rates to determine hunting pressure needs, 2) simplifying our guidelines for issuing deer damage control permits, 3) developing our current policy regarding sharp shooting, 4) providing technical assistance to the Bloomington Urban Deer Management Task Force and assisting several other communities in developing deer reduction plans, with the ultimate goal of achieving local deer population levels that could be managed utilizing our existing hunting seasons and methods.

Chad is to be credited with bringing the concept of the GiveIN Game venison donation program to fruition. Although the program was originally developed in Nebraska, without Chad's continued and timely dedication to keeping current on the latest deer management techniques and programs, I suspect the program would have taken years to get going here. Indiana's GiveIN Game program fills a very important niche in the Division's deer reduction strategy – that of finding alternative ways to encourage hunters to harvest additional deer while making sure the additional venison is put to good use.

Chad authored and published the results of a lead fragmentation/sharp shooting study in the Journal of Wildlife Management, authored and published the results of the urban deer zone survey in the Wildlife Society Bulletin, while also co-authoring a distance sampling paper in Wildlife Society Bulletin. He found time to give presentations to sportsmen's groups, TWS chapter meetings, prepare and submit a deer management article for the Indiana Woodland Steward newsletter, as well as find time to submit paperwork to become a TWS Certified Wildlife Biologist.

As part of his regular duties he also coordinated numerous military/refuge hunts with 3 military installations and 2 national wildlife refuges and assisted with setting up the State Park hunts. He coordinated all facets of the Mandatory Deer Check program, analyzed last year's deer harvest data and updated all 92 county harvest data sheets, set the county antlerless bag limit quotas, prepared the annual Deer Harvest Summary, analyzed deer control permit data and prepared the annual Deer Control Permit summary, represented the Division on the AFWA Wildlife Health Committee, and completed countless requests for information and responses via email, telephone, radio shows, and newspapers.

Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Awards

Nominations Form 2012

Award Categories (check only one per form)

☐

Spirit of the Shack

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Fisheries Biologist of the Year

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Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: **Brian D. Canaday**
Organization: **Missouri Department of Conservation**
Title: **Fisheries Field Operations Chief – Ozark Unit**
E-mail: **brian.canaday@mdc.mo.gov**
Phone number: **573-522-4115 *3174**

1. Provide a brief (one page or less) overview explaining why the individual/agency meets the criteria for the award:

Please see the attached nomination for the *MAFWA Fisheries Biologist of the Year* for Mr. Craig Fuller, Fisheries Management Biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation.

2. Please list and/or describe specific projects, work or accomplishments relevant to the award. Please limit your information to one page.

Projects and supporting information are attached.

2012 Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Award Nomination
for
Fisheries Biologist of the Year

Craig J. Fuller
Missouri Department of Conservation
2350 S Jefferson, Lebanon MO 65536
(417)-532-7612

I am pleased to nominate Craig J. Fuller for the 2012 Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Fisheries Biologist of the Year Award. Craig's efforts have improved stream habitat, fish populations and angler enjoyment of aquatic resources, making him worthy of this consideration. "**Excellence**" best describes Craig's passion and abilities, and we are fortunate to have him in Missouri. I can think of no one that is more deserving of this award than Craig. The required information is summarized below.

Biographical Information

Craig is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia. He began his career with the Missouri Department of Conservation in 1991 and has been a Fisheries Management Biologist in Lebanon, Missouri since 1996.

Craig is married and a father of two. For Craig, fish are both a vocation and a passion. If he is not busy coaching a youth sports team in his free time, you will likely find him fishing an Ozark stream or reservoir with his family.

Nomination

Craig serves as the federal recovery team leader for the Niangua darter, a federally-listed, threatened fish. Craig has worked with county governments to coordinate the replacement of nine (9) low water crossings identified as barriers to aquatic organism passage, with a tenth (10th) bridge project currently under development. The crossing design is an open-channel span bridge that allows aquatic organisms to move freely within a natural stream channel. Craig secured funds from many state and federal partners (e.g., SEMA, FEMA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation), coordinated in-kind contributions from county commissions and road districts and conducts pre- and post-project monitoring. This work is truly a "win-win" for the counties, the darter and stream health overall. Craig shares his ideas and experiences, providing consultation on other low water crossing replacements statewide. These efforts are touted by the partners and used as the "gold standard example" for this kind of work statewide and in the Midwest.

In thinking about this nomination, words like: **Expert, Leader, Professional, Teacher, Student, Coach, Mentor**, and **Friend** come to mind. Craig Fuller has exemplified what it means to be a **Conservation Professional**, and we are fortunate to have him, his talents and his energy in Missouri. Craig willingly takes on difficult tasks and shows true **leadership** and **professionalism** in representing MDC and the resources he is dedicated to managing.

In addition to this work, Craig has a broad range of management responsibilities; working with private landowners on stream and riparian issues and managing popular Ozark stream fisheries for smallmouth bass, rainbow and brown trout,

Bennett Spring Trout Park and rock bass fisheries. Craig has also recently expanded his work load to include Pomme de Terre Lake, where he has focused on improving fish habitat for one of Missouri's premier muskellunge fisheries and is working with the local Muskies, Inc. chapter on a variety of projects.

As a longtime member of the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, Craig has chaired, co-chaired, and assisted with several committees including: the Rivers and Streams Committee and the Missouri Natural Resources Conference.

Through his careful consideration of issues, willingness to share innovative solutions and his technical skills, Craig is also seen as a valued member of teams addressing smallmouth bass management, trout allocation, angler access and statewide angler survey development. His leadership on these efforts exemplifies his well-rounded and professional fisheries career of nearly 20 years.

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Spirit of the Shack

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Fisheries Biologist of the Year

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Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: Ann Marie Holtrop

Organization: Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Title: Acting Head, Watershed Protection Section

E-mail: ann.holtrop@illinois.gov

Phone number: 217-785-4325

Hulin – Overview

It is indeed a privilege to share with you why my colleagues and I feel Andrew Hulin is worthy of your “Spirit of the Shack” award. Andrew is not the traditional fish or wildlife biologist one may think of with this award, yet we feel Andrew is particularly deserving because of his innovative approaches to conservation. Andrew is a Geographic Information Systems Analyst and an avid outdoorsman. He is naturally curious, and has a special gift for using his love of nature and his GIS skills to support management decisions. While he is known by some in the Office as the “GIS Ninja” for his analytical skills, he serves multiple roles including Smokey Bear during the State Fair.



Although he is capable of and has conducted robust and time consuming analyses, Andrew has made a significant impact to conservation in Illinois by finding simple answers to complex questions and by creating maps that facilitate evaluating management decisions in a different way than the norm. For example, a District Fisheries Biologist conducted vegetation surveys in some of the lakes he managed, yet was unsure how to use the data. Andrew worked with him to graphically represent the species composition and density of the vegetation at each sampling site. His approach had not been used before at IDNR and represented a novel manner for representing biologists’ data. This relatively simple project generated several questions for the biologist once he could see his data. For example, species composition and density were not uniformly distributed throughout the lake, which led to obvious questions of “Why?” and “Would we expect them to be?” The next step of this project is to relate fish data to coincide with the vegetation data. We expect the presence or absence of vegetation in parts of the lake may correlate with fish distribution. If so, then the results of this project will directly support management actions aimed at conserving and improving desired fish species.

Andrew is likeable, has a great sense of humor and has a fabulous rapport among wildlife and fisheries managers. He works alongside policy setters as well as technical staff, and easily fits in diverse crowds. Andrew prefers to work alongside biologists and loves the challenge of using GIS to empower field staff with scientific data. For example, he has assisted with sampling site selection for several taxa including mussels and turtles, and has contributed to four publications on the turtles of Bond, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties; distribution of woodchucks (*Marmota monax*); monitoring the status of mink (*Mustela vison*); and a survey for *Macrochelys temminckii* in southern Illinois. He is an award-winning map maker, and has contributed a series of maps in IDNR/Illinois Natural History Survey’s series of mussel basin survey reports. These examples and others, highlight Andrew’s greatest contribution to conservation biology, which is to expand the analytical capacity of fish and wildlife information to enhance the power and efficiency of management decisions.

Aldo’s life was highlighted by outdoor experiences, and so too in Andrew’s. Whether he is fly fishing in Montana, hiking in northern Michigan, hunting in Illinois, or running through a nearby park every lunch hour, Andrew is always conscious of the resources around him and our responsibility as public servants to protect those resources. As testament to his impact on the Office of Resource Conservation, at least six people from different Divisions contributed to this nomination. If we asked others, we have no doubt that additional examples of Andrew’s work

would be identified. For these reasons and those described on the page below, we believe that Andrew exemplifies the ideals of Aldo Leopold, and has contributed to conservation in Illinois in a superior way. We applaud his efforts to bring data into decision making, and to use existing resources to improve the way management is conducted in Illinois.

Hulin - Specific Projects, Work, or Accomplishments

Fish Species in Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC) Update – This joint project between IDNR and the INHS is updating the distribution and status of Illinois' fish SGNC. For each SGNC and sportfish species, location information from each of seven data sources was compiled into a single table containing available spatial and temporal information. Each data source expressed spatial information in a different manner, thus geographical information had to be transformed before points could be mapped in ArcGIS. This was a lengthy and painstaking task, yet Andrew did a fantastic job. Once the data were compiled, two maps were created for each species: a source-based map, which indicates museum or database origin, and a map that categorizes locations into one of four temporal periods. These maps and database are designed to be modified as new data become available, and are useful tools for assessing statewide and temporal patterns of fish distributions.

Population Isolation – Habitat fragmentation, physical structures and dispersal potential are three items frequently included as stresses of fish SGNC, all of which are related to juxtaposition of populations and barriers between those populations. This analysis identifies populations of SGNC and measures isolation of those populations, with an ultimate goal of determining dispersal potential amongst populations. Currently DNR assumes one population for each species, but this project attempts to identify individual populations. Based on his own research and initiative, Andrew proposed an approach that began with modifying a network analysis previously used for transportation. He worked closely with two stream ecologists in developing the approach, and together the three have developed an innovative way of defining individual populations. While not complete, the results of this project could be a driver for new management/conservation decisions based on biogeographical principles (similar in concept to how DNR evaluates terrestrial systems).

Illinois Chorus frog – Systematic surveys for Illinois Chorus frog (ICF) have not occurred in Illinois, and the species' status was questionable. Andrew created a GIS-based habitat model that identified potential habitat for the species. He then created a series of map books, so biologists could target sampling to these predicted locations. Once biologists started looking in places predicted to have suitable habitat for ICF, they found many frogs in previously undocumented locations. In addition to evaluating ICF's status and distribution, the results of this project have been used to target landowners for habitat restoration programs such as Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) and S.A.F.E.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Illinois recently opened CREP in the Kaskaskia River Watershed, and a biological monitoring program was developed to evaluate program effectiveness on biological communities. Using his GIS skills, Andrew helped generate random sample points for bird monitoring based on criteria determined by biologists. Subsequently he used a route analysis to determine the most efficient driving and sampling route given existing staff resources.

RiverWatch monitoring - Andrew assisted RiverWatch staff (Illinois' volunteer stream monitoring group) by recommending changes to their mapping protocols and database to make it more compatible with DNR's data.

Chronic Wasting Disease - Andrew's expertise is highly sought across the Office. He participates in IDNR's sharpshooting efforts to combat the spread of CWD in Illinois' whitetail deer herd.

Feral hogs – IDNR launched efforts to document the impacts of feral hogs across the state. Andrew has been instrumental in collecting GPS data during helicopter surveys.

Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Awards

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Spirit of the Shack

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Fisheries Biologist of the Year

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Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: Jim Douglas

Organization: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Title: Director

E-mail: Jim.Douglas@Nebraska.gov

Phone number: 402 471-5539

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is proud to nominate the Missouri River Outdoor Expo for MAFWA's Excellence in Conservation Award.

The Missouri River Outdoor Expo is an exceptional event in which the outdoor recreation community comes together to:

- Preserve the future and heritage of natural resources and outdoor recreation
- Provide families with hands-on opportunities to learn about outdoor skills, ethics, safety, respect and stewardship
- Annually celebrate outdoor traditions
- Provide opportunities to showcase outdoor products, art, tourism and organizations

The Missouri River Outdoor Expo has been held annually at Ponca State Park, near the town of Ponca in northeast Nebraska. The event has grown from 6,000 visitors in 2005 to over 45,000 visitors in 2011. Families return year after year to take in the new and varied activities: camping, outdoor cooking, wildlife observation, mountain biking, kayaking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, dog training, conservation, shooting sports (shotgun, muzzleloader, archery, pellet rifles, 22 long rifles), and more! Activities are provided that are suited for all ages and all levels of experience. There is a \$4 State Park Entry fee (per vehicle) at the gate, but all activities are free.

Behind the scenes, the real success of the Expo ties back to the community support and involvement. While the Commission is an active partner in the Expo, the success and growth of this event comes from the extensive community involvement from the town of Ponca (including the Better Ponca Foundation), regional communities, and regional businesses. The community secures sponsors, arranges for advertising, provides volunteers for the event, brings in nationally known competitions (such as Splash Dogs), and coordinates participation from national manufacturers of firearms, archery, and recreational equipment. Heritage sponsors (\$5,000 or more) include Interstate Batteries, Great Plains Communications, NE/IA Friends of the NRA, Scheels, Nebraska Game and Parks, Benelli, Siouxland Outdoors, Z-98 Sioux City Radio, Pheasants Forever, and News Channel 4 – KTIV; the list of other sponsors is too long to include in this application, and we'd likely forget somebody!

The Commission continues to work to develop similar outdoor expo's across the state, but has yet been unable to match the success of the Missouri River Outdoor Expo. Specifically, the exceptional community, regional, and industry support in planning, coordinating, and staffing the event and activities has been impossible to duplicate.

We believe this project would be a very worthy recipient of the inaugural MAFWA Excellence in Conservation Award. The challenges we face in terms of maintaining awareness and interest in conservation and outdoor recreation can only be met by working together with local communities, conservation partners, and broad outdoor recreation interests.

Because of the broad participation and community roots of the Missouri River Outdoor Expo, we have struggled in how to recognize the success of the project rather than

individuals or organizations. The Commission would be thrilled to provide broad recognition to all who make this event a success with this award at the 8th Annual Missouri River Outdoor Expo at Ponca State Park, September 15-16, 2012.

2011 Missouri River Outdoor Expo, overview:

- 45,000 estimate attendance at public even on September 19th and 20th
- Sunday, September 20th was the busiest single day in history
- September 17th school event (by invitation/reservation only due to demand) had 626 students from 17 schools participate
- 82 vendors plus 16 food vendors
- Over 75 hands-on activities for all ages and levels of experience
- 20 shuttles ran continuously throughout event
- Drawings for 40 half-price youth lifetime hunt/fishing permits
- 961 volunteers that contributed 6,094 hours
- 146 NGPC staff contributing 3,520 hours
- Over 4,000 archery shooters shot 15,000 arrows
- 9,200 clay pigeons and 9,500 shells used at the shotgun range
- 3,000 shots fired at the muzzleloader range
- 10,000 pellets used at the pellet gun range
- 6,000 shots fired at the .22 rimfire range
- Maps of vendors/activities throughout the park, with shuttles to move people to activity stations that they may not have walked to
- Bleachers to hold people for demonstrations (trick-shooting, Splash Dogs, etc)
- Connecting kids and families with the outdoors through hands-on experiences!



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Wildlife Biologist of the Year

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Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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Excellence in Conservation

Nominator information

Name: Mark Reiter

Organization: Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife

Title: Director, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife

E-mail: mreiter@dnr.in.gov

Phone number: 317-232-8129

2. Provide a brief (one page or less) overview explaining why the individual/agency meets the criteria for the award:

In June 2010, Indiana Governor, Mitch Daniels, announced the largest conservation initiative ever to be undertaken in Indiana. Two distinct ecological riparian corridors along the Muscatatuck and Wabash Rivers were identified for landscape-scale conservation projects, known locally as the Healthy Rivers INitiative (figure 1). Eight key objectives developed by the Governor's Office and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the HRI are:

- Design an effective model for sustainability of natural resources,
- Connect fragmented parcels of public land on a broad scale to benefit wildlife diversity,
- Restore and enhance riparian habitat, including wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests,
- Protect essential habitat for threatened and endangered species,
- Open public access for recreational opportunities (fishing, hunting, hiking, canoeing, bird watching, and boating),
- Preserve significant rest areas for migratory birds, especially waterfowl,
- Create a regionally significant conservation destination, and
- Provide additional flood relief to current riparian landowners.

Indiana is small geographically, ranking 38th by land area, but densely populated (ranks 15th in population density). Only about 4% of land area in Indiana, approximately 900,000 acres, is available for any type of conservation or public recreation. The combination of population density, about 170 persons per acre, and the scarcity of public lands, presents significant wildlife conservation challenges.

The Indiana Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy (SWAP) lists loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitats, as significant problems affecting wildlife and their habitat in Indiana. The Strategy identifies priority conservation actions needed for species and all types of habitats to include habitat protection, habitat restoration, and population management through hunting and trapping.

It is well-recognized that modern conservation of wildlife and their habitats must occur at the landscape level. Landscape conservation can address fundamental conservation issues such as migration corridors, as well as multiple species issues not as easily addressed by species-specific conservation approaches. Landscape level accomplishments include support for larger and more diverse wildlife populations, improved water quality, and sustainable, resilient conservation systems.

In recognition of the accomplishments presented in the next section, as well as the ground breaking nature of this multiple partner, multiple discipline, landscape level project, the Indiana Healthy Rivers INitiative (<http://www.in.gov/dnr/6498.htm>) is being nominated for the 2012 Excellence in Conservation Award.

2. Please list and/or describe specific projects, work or accomplishments relevant to the award. Please limit your information to one page.

The Indiana Healthy Rivers Initiative was designed to enhance, restore and protect over 43,000 acres of land in the Wabash River /Sugar Creek Corridor and over 26,000 acres in the Muscatatuck River Corridor. By June of 2011, a total of 3,000 acres had been added to the 22,382 acres of existing conservation lands to make a total of 25,382 acres protected for conservation purposes in perpetuity. These lands have been protected for future generations through a combination of fee simple acquisition from willing sellers, conservation easements and wetlands reserve program signups.

These lands will provide for the conservation of all wildlife species that use them. This initiative will be beneficial to the public and surrounding communities by providing flood protection to riparian landowners, increasing public access to recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, boating, and bird watching. The project will leave a conservation heritage legacy for future generations by providing a major conservation destination and focus across a broad regional landscape.

The project has captured the interest of a broad range of partners, including but certainly not limited to The Nature Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Indiana Heritage Trust and Ducks Unlimited, elevating the project, and the initiative to a landscape level paradigm shift for conservation in Indiana.

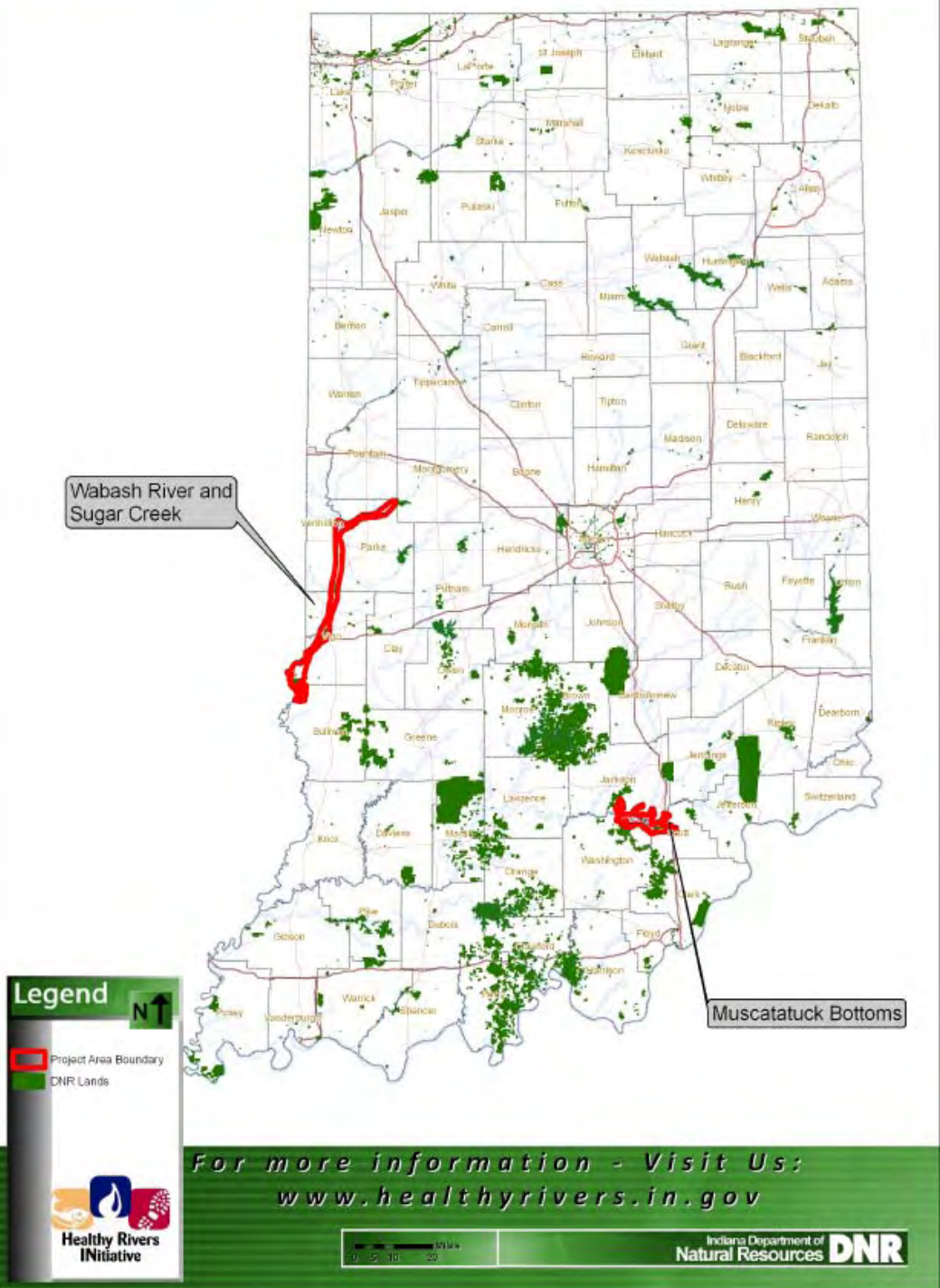
In addition to wildlife conservation, this initiative is poised to address an incredible range of conservation and social issues, among them water quality enhancement, human impacts of flooding, corridor development for climate change mitigation, regionally significant conservation destinations intended to enhance rural economies, outdoor healthy habits recreation opportunities and most importantly a model for sustainable natural resources management that is consistent with current economic development requirements.

In recognition of these accomplishments, the Healthy Rivers Initiative was one of two Indiana projects selected for recognition by the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. Barack Obama announced this initiative in April 2010 to foster a 21st century approach to conservation that is designed by and accomplished in partnership with the American people. As a result, two projects from each state were chosen as the best investments in the nation to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands and create travel tourism and outdoor recreation jobs across the country.

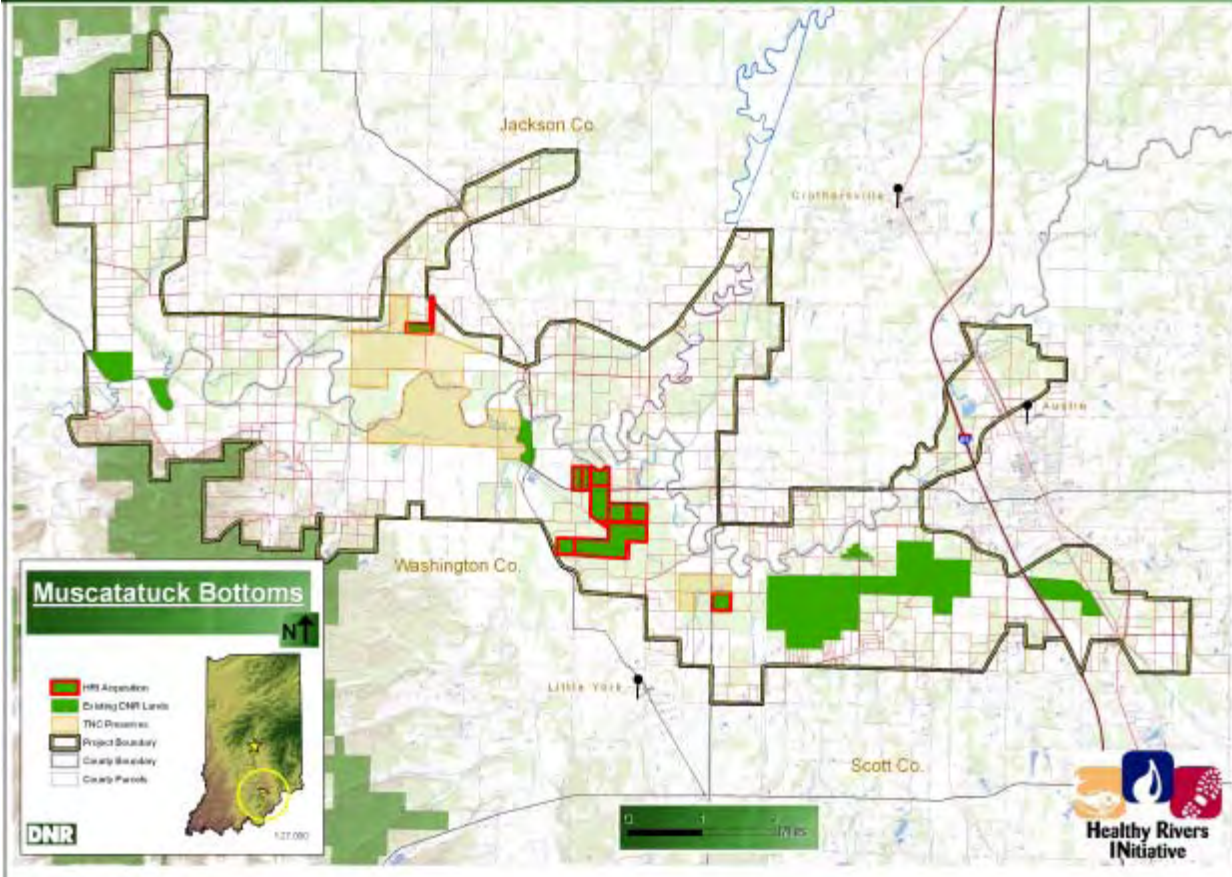
Figure 1. color maps of the project areas

Governor's Healthy Rivers INitiative:

Acquiring New Land for Conservation and Public Recreation



Governor's Healthy Rivers Initiative: Acquiring New Land for Conservation and Public Recreation



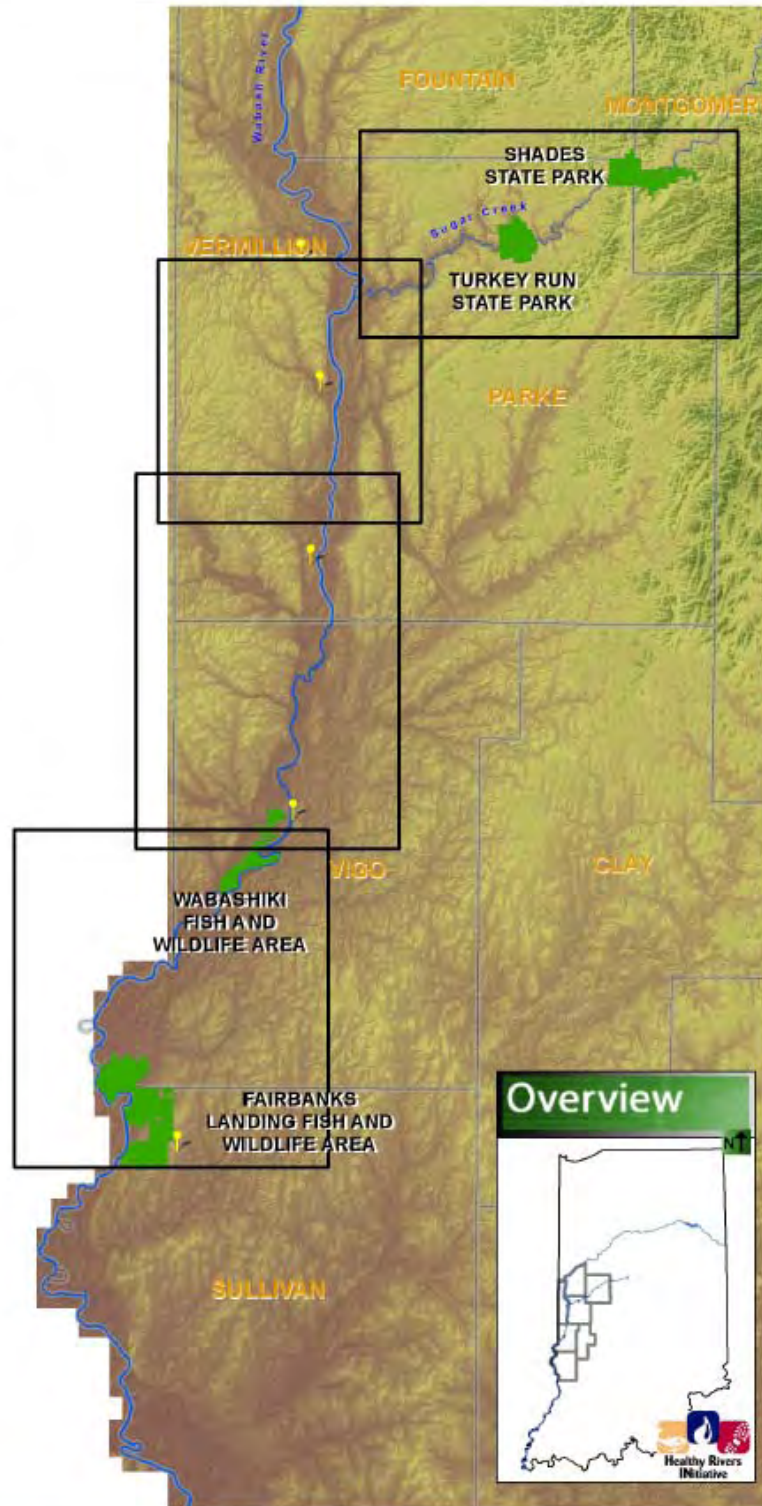
Governor's Healthy Rivers Initiative: Wabash River and Sugar Creek

Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3

Zone 4



Overview



0 3.75 7.5
Miles

Indiana Department of
Natural Resources **DNR**