

**Ohio Division of Wildlife
State Report
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ADMINISTRATION

2008 Administration Accomplishments

Selected 17 wildlife officer cadets for the 2009 Wildlife Officer Academy which included an extensive revision and revalidation of the existing Wildlife Officer Cadet Exam increasing both the quality of the test and ease of administration. This process included integrated participation from employees representing all aspects of the Division.

- Passed legislation in the Ohio Administrative Code to allow limited use of electric personal all purpose vehicles (EPAPV) for mobility-impaired hunters on designated access roads on state wildlife areas.
- Green energy development was among the most high profile activities in Ohio last year. The Division hired a wildlife biologist specifically assigned to assess wildlife impacts of wind energy development in the state. Many wind energy developers have worked with the Division to minimize impacts to wildlife.

2009 Administration Initiatives

- Hire a contractor to develop, implement, and support the Wild Ohio Customer Relationship Management System (WOCRMS) to replace the existing Point of Sale Internet licensing systems.
- Develop electronic game checking, and integrate multiple Division databases into a single customer database to advance the Division's marketing and customer relationship management initiatives.
- Develop a new Division of Wildlife Strategic Plan.
- Explore the possibility of integrating the Ohio Administrative Knowledge System (OAKS), including human resources and financial data, into the Division's comprehensive management system (CMS).
- Develop a comprehensive human resources tactical plan that addresses the Division's long-term workforce needs.
- Participate in collective bargaining process for OCSEA and FOP.
- Initiate bat research to better guide development of wind energy in areas of Ohio with marketable wind resources.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITES

2008 Access and Opportunities Accomplishments

- Construction was completed on the Racine motorboat access project, which will open up additional fishing access to the R.C. Byrd pool on the Ohio River.
- Design was completed for the city of Fremont's 100-acre upground reservoir. Through our partnership with the city, the reservoir will provide fishing and boating access and allow for the restoration of Sandusky Bay.
- Completed site preparation and finalized the design for the Huron River motorboat access project which will provide additional fishing access to Lake Erie in the Huron area.
- There was a new record harvest for deer in 2008-09 with about 250,000 deer harvested, including more than 80,000 deer harvested by archers and nearly 10,000 deer harvested by youth hunters. More than 20,000 deer were harvested during the muzzleloader season.
- There were changes in waterfowl regulations that provided significant increases in waterfowl hunting opportunities. Ohio's goose season was expanded to a 70-day, two-bird bag limit for the entire state as a

result of four years of DNA research with Southern James Bay Population Canada geese. After years of banding efforts by Wildlife Management and Research staff, a three-wood duck bag limit was instituted for the 2008 season. The wood duck is the second most common duck in the bag for Ohio.

2008 Access and Opportunities Initiatives

- Continue to partner with landholding companies, conservation agencies, conservation organizations, and other landowners for added hunting and fishing opportunities on privately owned lands.
- Continue to work with municipalities to open up additional archery hunting opportunities.
- Complete the field trial facility at Tri-Valley Wildlife Area.

WILDLIFE REGULATIONS COMPLIANCE

2008 Wildlife Regulation Compliance Accomplishments

- Implemented vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and electronic catch reporting on commercial fishing boats in Lake Erie. This system will allow the Division to monitor commercial fishing boats and increase compliance of Lake Erie commercial fishing regulations.
- Nearly 36,000 contacts resulted in more than 7,200 arrests, including “Operation Opportunity” which resulted in convictions on 54 charges, including commercialization, deer, turkey, spotlighting, and migratory bird violations.
- Eighty-six pollution reports were received, resulting in more than \$40,000 in restitution.

2009 Wildlife Regulation Compliance Initiatives

- Improve the Turn-In-a-Poacher (TIP) hotline to include 24-hour live coverage service and Internet communications.
- Explore the use of a private Internet field base reporting system with an integrated records management system. A new system would replace MARCS and result in significant savings to the Division.

COMMUNICATIONS

Accomplishments

- Five national communications awards from the Association for Conservation Information were awarded to the Ohio Division of Wildlife. *Mammals of Ohio Field Guide* earned first place honors in its category. The Native Bird Aviary located at the Ohio State Fairgrounds (also known as Ruthven’s Aviary) and the cooperative National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) Thanksgiving Wild Turkey Release placed second and third, respectively, in their category. The *Wild Ohio* Butterfly Poster received second place in the poster category. The Division of Wildlife’s web site, wildohio.com received third place honors in the agency Web site category.
- The Sportsmen’s Migratory Bird Center attracted an estimated 150,000 visitors. Popular events include the International Migratory Bird Day, Bug Fest, and Ohio Waterfowler’s Festival.
- Ohio successfully hosted the 69th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Columbus in December 2008. More than 680 people representing dozens of state wildlife agencies and conservation organizations participated in the conference.

Communication Initiatives

- Work with club agents and constituents to develop and implement conservation club agreements involving the Wild Ohio Customer Relationship Management System (WOCRMS).
- Continue to expand the Ohio Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (OFHFH) program.

- Implement a Web-based mapping tool that allows users to search and/or browse the availability of fish and wildlife species throughout Ohio. The tool will include the ability for users to select specific date ranges, hunting and fishing seasons, and geographic locations in order to facilitate customer interactions with Ohio wildlife.
- Finalize marketing plans for a reintroduction of the Ohio Conservation Stamp, conduct a juried art competition and produce a stamp displaying the winning photo for sale at the beginning of the 2010 license sales year.

EDUCATION

Education Accomplishments

- Twenty-four new Project WILD facilitators were trained, increasing the total number of facilitators to 335. More than 60 workshops and just over 900 educators were trained in Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, and Science and Civics.

Education Initiatives

- Develop a lesson plan to coincide with the Falcon Cam and offer an educator workshop incorporating this technology into classrooms.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Retention and Recruitment Accomplishments

- The Division hosted the second Annual National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) State Tournament. A total of 659 kids from 35 teams participated from across the state. Eighteen teams qualified to compete in the NASP National Tournament held in Louisville, Kentucky.
- The Division sold more than 64,500 youth hunting licenses in license-year 2008.

Retention and Recruitment Initiatives

- Continue to conduct and expand hunting, fishing, trapping, and shooting sports opportunities for urban youth and women through specials events, NASP, and Passport to Fishing.
- The Division of Wildlife will co-host the 50th National Trappers Association Annual Convention in July 2009.

UNIQUE HABITATS

Accomplishments 2008

- The Copperbelly Water Snake Working Group was formed in partnership with Indiana, Michigan, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to further advance the recovery of this state endangered and federally threatened species.

Initiatives for 2009

- Work with the USFWS and other partners to initiate the process for removing the Lake Erie watersnake from the federal Endangered Species Act list. The Lake Erie watersnake is currently a federally endangered species found only in the Lake Erie islands area of Lake Erie.

INLAND WATERS

Accomplishments

- The Division's six fish hatcheries raised more than 35 million fish, including 465,000 steelhead, 20,200 muskellunge advanced fingerlings, 112,000 catchable rainbow trout, 110,000 brown trout, 5.4 million saugeye fingerlings, 2.2 million walleye fingerlings, 22.9 million saugeye and walleye fry, 747,000 yellow perch, 2.9 million hybrid striped bass, and 747,000 channel catfish.

- More than 3,600 anglers responded to the Division of Wildlife's online angler survey during 2008. Results from this online survey will be combined with traditional field-based creel and fisheries surveys to determine where prospects exist to adjust regulations to enhance inland lake and reservoir fishing opportunities for Ohio's anglers.
- Nearly 600 anglers registered to participate in the on-line Muskie Angler Log. Summarized muskie catch information recorded in the Muskie Angler Log is used by Division of Wildlife biologists to track fishing success and catch rates in areas regularly stocked with muskie.

Initiatives

- Initiate new research with Bowling Green State University to improve fishing opportunities for yellow perch in upground reservoirs.
- Assimilate and assess bass population data from inland reservoirs to determine the effectiveness of present bag and size limit regulations. Propose regulation changes if necessary for the 2010 fishing season.

INVASIVE SPECIES and DISEASES

Accomplishments

- The Division hosted the first Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Advisory Committee meeting in April. This committee is comprised of government, industry, and environmental advocacy groups that will address AIS issues in Ohio. The AIS Advisory Committee initiated the process to revise Ohio's AIS State Management Plan.
- The Division collected significant data on Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) disinfection treatments for fish eggs. Eggs from VHS-positive muskellunge were treated with iodine prior to incubation and hatching at the London Hatchery. Subsequent VHS testing on the resulting fingerlings showed that the virus was not passed from parents to progeny.

Initiatives

- As part of the revision process for Ohio's AIS State Management Plan, the AIS Advisory Committee will initiate development of a Rapid Response Plan to address future AIS introductions in Ohio.
- Continue research on VHS disinfection techniques for fish eggs, and follow protocols for handling adults and treating eggs to protect Division hatcheries from this disease.
- Continue to collaborate with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, hunting preserves, and propagators to address Chronic Wasting Disease and wild boar issues.
- Collaborate with wild boar shooting preserves, wild boar propagators, and Ohio Department of Agriculture to develop a wild boar control program.

OHIO RIVER

Accomplishments

- Angler creel surveys were conducted in the Racine and R.C. Byrd tailwaters of the Ohio River. Information was collected on catches of popular sportfish such as sauger, walleye, bass, catfish, and hybrid striped bass.

Initiatives

- Revise and update the Ohio River Fishing Guide in cooperation with fisheries biologists from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.

LAKE ERIE

Accomplishments

- A new management system for the Ohio commercial trap net fishery was developed and implemented in concert with recommendations from the Lake Erie Commercial Fishing Task Force, and to comply with new laws from Senate Bill 77.

Initiatives

- Develop fish assessment and research plans associated with removal of the Ballville Dam on the Sandusky River and potential fish restoration opportunities. Objectives will involve comparison of pre- and post-dam removal fish populations, and the potential for re-introduction of sauger into selected Lake Erie tributaries.
- Provide technical guidance for fish impingement and entrainment issues at Bayshore Power Plant and for wind energy development on Lake Erie.
- Conduct sonar mapping of Lake Erie's Central Basin reefs to help evaluate their potential as possible spawning sites for lake trout restoration.

STREAMS and WATERSHEDS

Accomplishments

- More than 1,700 Northern riffleshell mussels were released into Big Darby Creek in central Ohio. This was the largest release of a federally endangered species in Ohio and involved an extensive partnership with The Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, The Ohio State University, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Franklin County Metro Parks, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.
- Through partnerships with several organizations, the Division assisted in protecting 958 acres of riparian corridor along Paint Creek, Little Darby Creek, Chagrin River, Clear Creek, Pymatuning Creek, and Grand River.

Initiatives

- The Division will continue to work with the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District to remove the East Branch Dam on Euclid Creek. The Division will also develop strategies for removing Six Mile Dam on the Walhonding River, the German Farm Dam on the Auglaize River, and the SR 82 dam on the Cuyahoga River.

WETLANDS

Wetlands Accomplishments

- Twenty-one acres of wetland were created on the Mackey Ford Wildlife Area through a mitigation project in cooperation with the Columbus Regional Airport Authority.
- Partnered with Toledo Metroparks in the purchase of Howard Farms which includes nearly 1,000 acres of restorable wetlands in the western Lake Erie Marsh Region.
- Completed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant at Pickerel Creek resulting in the purchase, restoration, and enhancement of 282 acres.

Wetlands Initiatives 2009:

- Complete the Ohio wetland inventory.

FORESTLANDS

Accomplishments

- The Division continued to participate in the Appalachian Fire Learning Network to use prescribed burning and timber management to retain the oak-hickory forest type on the Shawnee Forest Focus Area. This network includes the Division of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy and other conservation agencies and organizations that work toward a landscape level management scheme for Ohio's forests.

Initiatives

- Plan and initiate commercial timber harvest on wildlife areas, resulting in early successional habitat that is important to many forestland wildlife species, including ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and woodcock.

GRASSLANDS

Grassland Accomplishments

- Completed a pilot study of the effects of harvest on fragmented quail populations with the cooperation of the Terrestrial Wildlife Ecology Laboratory at The Ohio State University.
- In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Environmental Defense, Pheasants Forever, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Division developed Ohio's CP38 SAFE project (State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement). This conservation practice will allow up to 11,200 acres of eligible cropland to become high quality wildlife habitat.
- We completed the third and final year of avian monitoring on private lands enrolled in the CP33 Grassland Buffers for Upland Birds program.

Grassland Initiatives

- Investigate the effects of harvest on fragmented quail populations of different densities to better assess acceptable levels of harvest pressure.

HUMAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Accomplishments

- A new initiative with the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry, combined with expanded use of the reduced price antlerless deer permit, increased pressure on the doe segment of the white-tailed deer population.

Initiatives

- Promote the concept of additional hunter access and increased efforts of landowners to increase hunting access and antlerless deer harvest as a means of controlling deer damage, instead of resorting to deer damage permits.