

**MICHIGAN
STATE REPORT**
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Rebecca A. Humphries was named the 15th director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on April 19, 2004, leaving the DNR's Wildlife Division where she had served as chief since 1998. Humphries is responsible for the administration and direction of the department, which has 1,370 permanent employees, more than 1,200 non-career employees, and a \$288.2 million budget that supports over 70 distinct programs for wildlife and fisheries management, state parks and recreation areas, conservation and law enforcement, forest management, state lands and minerals, and communications.

DNR MISSION

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural resources for current and future generations.

FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008 BUDGET

The DNR is funded by state general fund revenues, federal funds and a variety of restricted funds. The \$288.2 million Fiscal Year 2007-2008 budget is composed of 7.9 percent General Fund and 16.6 percent federal funds, with the remaining 75.5 percent of the budget made up of approximately 40 different restricted funds.

Federal funding consists mainly of special purpose categorical grants from various federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Federal funds support programs for wildlife and fisheries habitat and development, forest management, recreation and other natural resource efforts. Restricted funding is generated from licenses, user fees and other charges. These funds support programs for wildlife and fisheries programs, operation of Michigan's 97 state parks, harbor development, marine safety enforcement and education, snowmobile and off-road vehicle trail repair and development, and operation of Michigan's 150 state forest campgrounds.

"Restricted revenues," which by statute can only be used to support related programs, are generated from hunting and fishing licenses (\$50 million), state park entrance and camping fees (\$39.1 million), two percent of the gas tax (\$17.6 million), snowmobile registration and snowmobile trail and ORV permits (\$10.0 million) and forest camping fees (\$1.3 million). Restricted funds also are used for nongame protection and management. The department also generates timber sale revenue from state lands. Approximately 90 percent of timber sales

revenue goes to Forest Management and are used for the protection and development of our state forests. The other 10 percent of timber sales go to the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund.

FISHERIES

Alewives have essentially disappeared in Lake Huron and in Saginaw Bay, resulting in profound changes to the fish community. In the absence of alewives, significantly high levels of natural reproduction of walleyes continue to be documented, likely as a result of decreased predation by alewives on young walleyes. Further stocking of walleyes in Saginaw Bay under this current situation is believed to have little or no benefit to the walleye population and thus stocking of walleyes will not occur in Saginaw Bay again in 2008. The DNR will continue to monitor the situation and may resume stocking if and when adult alewives become abundant.

The emergence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHSv) in Michigan's water of the Great Lakes as well as in inland waters has resulted in two major changes in the management of aquatic resources in Michigan. First, a moratorium was placed on the rearing and stocking of walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge for 2007 to ensure VHSv was not inadvertently spread by such activities. Additional testing of disinfection techniques for eggs of coolwater species were conducted in the spring of 2007. Based on those results, a decision has been made to begin resuming a very limited production of walleyes and muskellunge in 2008, using strategies to eliminate risks associated with VHSv.

Second, a series of restrictions on the use and movement of live fish, baitfish, and fish eggs used for fishing in Michigan were adopted in 2007. The intent of the regulation changes is to protect fish in inland waters to the extent possible from becoming infected with VHSv, or at least dramatically slow the spread of the virus. In addition, the regulations are necessary to protect the state's fish hatchery system. Extensive surveillance and testing activities are ongoing to determine the distribution of VHSv throughout the state. To date, outbreaks in Michigan have been very few and small in scope, although fish in one inland lake were found to have the virus that resulted in a fish kill. So far in 2008, VHSv has not been found in fish collected through the surveillance program and no fish kills have yet been reported for this year.

WILDLIFE

The department is initiating a strategic planning process for black bear management in Michigan. It will include extensive public involvement and input derived from regional meetings, an invited "Bear Management Consultation Team," and, following drafting of the plan, open houses and a public comment period. The timeline for this effort is aggressive, and the plan is expected to be in draft format during early spring 2009.

The need to update whitetail deer population goals and respond to the dynamic changes in public attitude requires the department to engage in a strategic planning process for our whitetail deer herd. This planning process will effectively engage the many segments of the public interested in deer management. This process will also rely heavily on the support, contributions, and facilitation from major constituent organizations like the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

The department is nearing the end of a multi-year process for developing the *Michigan Wolf Management Plan*. The planning process involved several phases, including review of the available science relevant to wolf management in Michigan, intra- and inter-agency scoping, public meetings and comment periods, focus-group meetings and public-attitude surveys, and development of guiding principles by a 20-member citizen advisory group. The department used the information obtained during all of those phases to develop a plan that is based on sound science and careful and respectful consideration of the diverse perspectives held by Michigan society. Approval of the final plan is expected in July 2008.

Biologists and volunteers in Michigan observed 1,697 singing male Kirtland's warblers during the 2007 survey, up from 1,478 males observed in 2006. The 2007 population represents the largest number of singing males recorded since monitoring began in 1951 and exceeds recovery goals. The Kirtland's warbler survey is conducted each year over a 10-day period during the first two weeks of June when the birds are establishing their nesting territories. Warblers are detected by listening for their songs. In 2007, singing males were found in 12 northern Lower Peninsula counties and five Upper Peninsula counties. Ten additional singing males were observed outside Michigan in Wisconsin and Ontario. Of particular importance this year was the discovery of three Kirtland's warbler nests in Wisconsin, which represented the first documented breeding of Kirtland's warblers outside Michigan in many decades. Approximately 3,000 acres of jack pine trees are planted or seeded annually on state and federal lands in Michigan for the primary purpose of providing habitat for nesting Kirtland's warblers and other wildlife.

In collaboration with the Detroit Zoo and other federal, state and private partners, the department is preparing to reintroduce the Karner blue butterfly within the boundaries of the Petersburg State Game Area in Monroe County, Michigan. The DNR received a grant in 2006 from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to complete a Mitchell's Satyr Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which will outline the steps needed to ensure protection of satyrs while allowing otherwise lawful activities to continue. The department is conducting a formal revision of the Michigan Threatened and Endangered Species List. The list will be forwarded for approval by the Legislative Joint Committee on Administrative Rules after public input has been received and incorporated.

Testing in 2007 on white-tailed deer continued to confirm progress toward eradication of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in the wildlife population. In 2007, 8,307 white-tailed deer were tested, and 27 were bovine TB-positive. For the first time in three years, TB-positive deer were found outside the five-county TB area (Presque Isle, Montmorency, Alpena, Alcona and Oscoda). Two positive deer were found in Iosco County and one positive deer in Shiawassee County. In addition, 196 elk and 10 moose were tested with none testing positive. In Deer Management Unit 452 in northeastern Lower Michigan, the "core area" for bovine TB, the prevalence for the disease was 1.4 percent. Trend analysis of prevalence data from 1995 to 2007 indicates a statistically significant decreasing trend. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/bovinetb.

In 2006, the department joined with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and three northern Michigan tribes to meet annually as the Michigan Interagency Cormorant Coordination Group. The group discusses cormorant issues and makes consensus recommendations on cormorant control actions under the Public Resource Depredation Order for double-crested cormorants. Consensus was initially obtained for colony reduction activities on nine islands in Lake Huron and Lake Michigan and three in the St. Mary's River. Recommendations for 2008 are similar to those for 2007 with only the colonies in the Les Cheneaux Islands, Thunder Bay, and the Ludington Pumped Storage Facility recommended for greater than 10 percent reductions in the adult population. Control activities in 2007 resulted in the take of 7,767 birds and the destruction or oiling of 13,325 nests.

DEPARTMENT-WIDE ISSUES

Statewide and Ecoregional Planning Efforts

The Michigan DNR uses a three-tiered planning structure for the management of Michigan's natural resources: statewide, regional and unit levels. Statewide plans include the Michigan State Forest Management Plan, Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan, Michigan's 2008-12 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and the Michigan Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Plan.

The State Forest Management Plan and ORV Management Plan were approved by the DNR Director in April and May 2008, respectively.

In mid-1997, the Michigan DNR began developing a comprehensive program to adopt a holistic resource management process at the regional level. This program has been known as Joint Ventures. The primary objective is to develop strategies for sustainable resource planning and management. The core of this approach is to utilize principles of ecosystem management, application of new technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), and implementation of adaptive management techniques to sustain the diversity and productivity of Michigan's natural resources.

As the first significant step in implementing Joint Ventures, the department appointed ecoregional planning teams to guide resource assessments, planning and management. The core mission of these ecoregional teams is:

"To plan and coordinate management of Michigan's natural resources, utilizing ecosystem management principles."

Four ecoregional teams (ecoteams) have been formed for the purpose of drafting Regional State Forest Management Plans and all-ownership Ecoregional Resource Plans: Western Upper Peninsula, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Northern Lower Peninsula, and Southern Lower Peninsula. Each ecoteam is committed to the fair and responsible management of resources in their identified geographical boundaries. They incorporate the ecological, social, and economic impact of resource management decisions into the department's management processes. These processes involve the creation of consultative and collaborative opportunities

for citizens and stakeholders in the identified region to communicate to the department what they value and why, and to create true partnerships with private landowners and other agencies that will result in sustainable management of natural resources. The teams have been working with citizens and partners on Regional State Forest Management Plan processes.

Ecoregional Resource Plans are strategic plans that will provide direction to more specific regional and unit-level plans, such as Regional State Forest Management Plans, State Park Management Plans, and State Game Area and Wildlife Flooding Master Plans.

To further the implementation of Joint Ventures, the department appointed a Statewide Resource Planning Team to review draft ecoregional plans for consistency and compatibility with other plans.

The Michigan DNR is one of the first state agencies in the country to apply an integrated ecosystem approach to resource planning and management on such a large scale. This process has been and will continue to be adaptive and innovative, and the teams are expected to base their assessments and planning processes on the concepts of resource sustainability, with a fully open and participative public process. Oversight of the teams is coordinated at the department level under a decision-making body known as the Statewide Council (Council). The Council appoints ecoteams, the Statewide Resource Planning Team, and approves the planning process. The DNR Director approves the statewide and regional management plans.

Land Consolidation

Continuing to work on the land consolidation strategy is another major initiative the department has been working on over the last year. In 2003, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) adopted a new policy on land holdings administered by the state. The NRC directed the department to conduct a comprehensive boundary review of its 97 state park and recreation areas, 97 state game and wildlife areas, and 3.9 million acres of state forests. Phase I included a boundary review of existing lands and public comment. The new boundaries were reviewed by the NRC and approved by the DNR Director in May 2004. Phase II in the department's land ownership strategy included an evaluation of state-owned, DNR-administered lands located outside boundaries, and evaluated their contribution to the DNR's natural resource management goals. Public comment was accepted for each county as the department developed parcel recommendations. Public meetings were held for each set of 10 counties included in the review, beginning in December 2004. Each county then was reviewed by the department's land exchange review committee, which submits recommendations to the NRC and DNR Director. As of April 2008, all 83 counties have completed the Phase II requirements. Phase III, the final phase of this review effort, involves the disposition of land parcels the DNR has determined do not contribute to its natural resources management goals. This phase began in 2006, and will continue until all identified parcels have been offered for sale to local units of government, alternative conservation owners, or sold at public auction. See [Land Consolidation Strategy](#).

Conservation Education

In November 2004, the department signed an agreement with the Archery Trade Association and its two foundations, ArrowSport and the Bowhunting Preservation Alliance, to increase archery and bow hunting opportunities while increasing future support from Michigan's bow hunters for wildlife conservation. The agreement is designed to expand archery and bow hunting participation by helping the state secure federal funding and private expertise to develop archery ranges, archery education, and bow hunter education and hunting programs. In 2004, the department piloted the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) in Michigan with 12 schools. To date, 250 schools have adopted the program, and 284 physical education teachers have been trained as certified basic archery instructors. The department is also partnering with local units of government to pilot community archery programs and to assist with new range development.

Trail Connectivity

The state trail connectivity initiative is to acquire, connect and develop the statewide network of trailways for future transportation purposes, interim recreational trails use, and provide for the public health and the economic benefits that developed trails bring to local communities. The past year has seen the successful negotiation and acquisition of the 42-mile Ionia to Owosso corridor in Ionia, Clinton and Shiawassee counties, as well as the 24-mile Escanaba to Hermansville corridor in Delta and Menominee counties. Trail surface improvement projects on 9 miles of the Fred Meijer White Pine State Trail in Kent County and on 12 miles of the Falling Waters State Trail in Jackson County have been celebrated with community ribbon cutting ceremonies in April and May. The trail improvement project on the 62 miles of the North Central State Trail in Otsego and Cheboygan counties will be celebrated on June 7 at seven communities that the trail passes through from Gaylord to Cheboygan to Mackinaw City. The department will continue to work with Michigan Department of Transportation and our major railway stakeholders to achieve the vision of statewide trail connectivity.