

**MISSOURI
STATE REPORT**
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Financial Update

The Fiscal Year 2016 budget for the Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) continues at less than one percent of the total state government budget in Missouri. The primary sources of revenue are the one-eighth of one percent Conservation Sales Tax, at about \$115 million, and permit sales and Federal reimbursements, at about 60 million.

In Missouri, conservation pays its way, and is good for Missouri's jobs, economy, and quality of life. In Missouri each year, more than one million fish, 500 thousand hunt, and 1.7 million view wildlife. Fish and wildlife recreation generate four billion dollars in economic impacts and there is an additional eight billion in economic impacts from the forest products industry, for a total of \$12 billion in economic impacts. This economic activity supports 99,000 jobs and generates \$507 million in state and local taxes. Conservation makes Missouri a great place to live, work, fish, hunt, view wildlife, and be outdoors.

Organizational Changes

Conservation Commissioner Don C. Bedell was confirmed by the Missouri Senate in 2016 for a second six-year term, continuing with Commission Chair Marilyn J. Bradford, and Commissioners James T. Blair and David W. Murphy.

In late 2015, Deputy Director Tim Ripperger retired after 38 years with the Department of Conservation. Jennifer Battson Warren was selected as the new Deputy Director for Business and Aaron Jeffries was selected as the new Deputy Director for Administration/Communication, joining Tom Draper who continues as the Deputy Director for Resource Management. In addition to Administration, the Department has 10 Divisions. New Division Chiefs include Cyndi Voss for Administrative Services Division, Joanie Straub for Outreach and Education Division, and Jason Sumners for Wildlife Division.

The Department of Conservation currently has 1,435 full-time salaried employees, several hundred part-time hourly employees, and benefits from the partnership of thousands of volunteers and many conservation and outdoor organizations.

Highlights of Conservation Challenges and Successes

New Strategic Plan. A three-year strategic plan was approved for Fiscal Years 2017-2019 with updated Mission and Values statements, a new Vision statement, and six top-level Conservation Priorities. The Department appreciated the support of an outside four-member strategic review team and two external facilitators, including Alan St. John, Director of the Missouri Training Institute and Lora Silvanima, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commissioners and the Department's Administration and Division Chiefs worked together through a series of sessions to develop the new strategic plan.

The Department's mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. The Department's values include: excellent public service is essential—we work to deliver more than is expected; all citizens are important—we respect their opinions and value their trust; Missourians are partners to achieve conservation success—we communicate openly and look for ways to make it easier to partner; fairness, objectivity, sound science, integrity, accountability, and transparency guide our actions; and employees are the Department's most important asset—we all work to advance conservation by being results driven, working as a team, serving as ambassadors for conservation, and living out the conservation ethic through our actions. The new Department vision is: a future with healthy fish, forests, and wildlife where all people appreciate nature. The six new Conservation Priorities include:

Cultivate a conservation ethic by promoting the relevance, importance, and value of fish, forests, and wildlife, which means increasing understanding and interest in natural resources beginning at an early age; communicating the social and economic value and quality of life provided by fish, forests, and wildlife; increasing citizen participation in outdoor activities; and partnering with landowners, non-profits, businesses, agricultural groups, communities, schools, and others to develop increased support of fish, forest, and wildlife conservation efforts;

Help citizens connect with fish, forests, and wildlife where they live, through a statewide approach to community conservation, which means providing citizens across the state with opportunities to learn about and experience the outdoors where they live; providing technical assistance to communities and partner organizations to help citizens protect fish, forests, and wildlife; and demonstrating and promoting conservation-friendly development practices in urban settings;

Implement a strategic approach to land acquisition to enhance habitat management and public access, which means focusing land acquisition to both maximize fish, forest, and wildlife habitat conservation and increase citizen access to outdoor opportunities near where they live; and partnering with private landowners to implement voluntary access and easement programs;

Promote water quality and quantity for healthy fish, forest, and wildlife resources, which means working with partners, including individuals, farmers, landowners, communities, non-profits, and other governmental agencies to promote best practices and policies that

Ensure sufficient aquatic habitat for fish, forests, and wildlife; communicating to citizens the relationship between water quality and quantity and healthy fish, forests, and wildlife; and setting an example for best practices in fish, forest, and wildlife management activities;

Focus fish, forest, and wildlife management in identified priority geographies, which means implementing the Department's Comprehensive Conservation Strategy; coordinating with partners to identify the best opportunities to invest resources on a larger scale across the landscape that will sustain fish, forests, and wildlife; and targeting land acquisition in priority geographies;

And implement an equitable compensation system that balances fiscal responsibility with the ability to attract, retain, and develop staff, which means investing in high performing staff to deliver fish, forest, and wildlife conservation to Missourians; enhancing the Department's ability to recruit staff that reflect the diversity of the citizens we serve; and providing incentives for staff to advance their skills and abilities in both leadership and supervisory assignments.

Communicating With Missourians. The Department continues both traditional and emerging communication efforts with the Missouri Conservation magazine, which is mailed monthly, free, to over 550,000 Missourians. The Department has a children's magazine, XPlor, that has an online component. The Department also extends communication efforts with social media. The Department's Facebook page has more than 195,000 "likes" and reaches an average of 250,000 people per week who share our information with friends. Our Twitter feed has more than 8,400 followers who then pass our tweets along to thousands more. The Department's YouTube channels contain more than 1,300 videos and average about 100,000 views per month with more than 9.3 million total views. The Department has a weekly video update for Missourians called "Nature's Calling." More than 100,000 Missourians also stay in touch with Department news, newsletters, events, or other areas of interest through emails or texting sent directly to their phones. The Department has also been experimenting with text alerts for nature centers and interpretive sites. A "Trees Work" effort has been integrated into communication efforts to increase awareness of the benefits provided by trees and forests. The Trees Work approach has been recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation with the Public Awareness of Trees Award. A research project showed that public awareness of the benefits associated with trees rose 13 percent in communities where we have targeted messaging over the last three fiscal years. The targeted messaging continued with paid advertising on Pandora radio, broadcast radio, and various print media. In addition, last year the Department conducted a communications audit with an outside company to determine how effective communication is with Missourians and employees and has included the findings in ongoing efforts.

Listening to Missourians. Delivering excellent public service means listening to and understanding what Missourians say about conservation programs and services. In the recent fiscal year, there were 129 public engagement opportunities, including deer management and chronic wasting disease meetings, annual hunter surveys, conservation area plan comment periods, regulations committee comments, and unstaffed shooting range surveys. The Department also offers a 30-day public comment period for all area plans for citizens to provide

public review about management at Department areas. In this fiscal year, over 90 plans will be available for review.

Mobile Applications and Award Recognition. The Department developed the MO Hunting mobile application, which enables Missouri hunters, anglers, and trappers to purchase and view annual permits. Deer and turkey hunters also can Telecheck their harvests using the app, which provides an electronic permit stored on your mobile device. New regulations consider this to be a valid permit. The MO Hunting app has been downloaded more than 40,000 times. The MO Hunting app received a Governor's recognition award. The Department has also developed downloadable apps for Find MO Fish, Fall Colors, and the Missouri Conservationist magazine.

New Permit Delivery Approach. Hunters, anglers, and trappers in Missouri have been buying permits online through the Department website since 2011 and through the free MDC "MO Hunting" mobile app since 2014. Retail stores, convenience stores, and other places that sell permits will catch up to this online technology starting March 15, 2016. In mid-March, places that sell hunting, fishing, and trapping permits will switch from selling the familiar plastic-backed, rectangular, yellow permits to selling paper permits. They will also move from selling permits through a special machine connected to a phone line to using a regular computer or laptop with Internet access and a standard printer. There are no processing fees when permits are purchased either directly online or from a permit seller. People can buy Missouri hunting, fishing, and trapping permits all around the state at many gas stations, convenience stores, sporting-goods stores, large retail stores, and other vendors, and at many Department offices and all Conservation Nature Centers. People can also buy permits directly online from the Department website at mdc.mo.gov/buypermits and right from their smartphones through the free "MO Hunting" mobile app. One popular and convenient feature of the app is that no paper permits are needed. The app lets users upload electronic copies of all their permits to the mobile device to show as needed. People can also buy permits over the phone by calling 800-392-4115, using a credit card, paying a \$1 fee, and waiting a week for permits to arrive by mail. Permit sales account for about 18 percent of Department revenue and support a wide range of conservation activities around the state.

Conservation Volunteers. Volunteers are important Department partners. Volunteer highlights include the over 1,000 Hunter Education volunteer instructors that contribute more than 13,000 hours of classes, certifying over 20,000 students; the 4,088 Stream Teams that conduct water quality monitoring, remove trash, plant trees, and stencil storm drains; the 12 community based Master Naturalist chapters that contribute more than 62,000 hours in conservation projects; the over 60,000 hours of time contributed by nature center and interpretive center volunteers; over 6,000 hours of time from 126 protection volunteers; the more than 2,600 individuals, groups, and organizations that are involved in the Missouri Forestkeepers Network; and the Discover Nature Fishing volunteers that offered more than 300 classes.

Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. Conservation agencies will only meet future fish and wildlife commitments to the public within a system of healthy habitats. The Department is being proactive with habitat and species conservation programs by integrating the conservation priorities of our agency and conservation partners into a network of lands and waters.

Chronic Wasting Disease. The Department received final results from its 2015-2016 fall and winter testing of nearly 7,700 free-ranging deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Seven were confirmed to be positive for the fatal deer-disease. Three were from Adair County, two from Macon County, one from Linn County, and one from Franklin County (reported earlier in the year). The new cases bring the total number of Missouri free-ranging deer that have tested positive for CWD to 33 since the disease was first discovered in the state in 2010. Of the 33 cases, 21 have been found in Macon County, nine in Adair, one in Cole, one in Franklin, and one in Linn. The Conservation Department has collected more than 51,000 tissue samples for CWD testing from all around the state since it began testing for the disease in 2001.

This coming fall and winter, the Department will increase its CWD-testing efforts in its CWD management zones. The management zones consist of 29 counties within, or that touch a radius of approximately 25 miles, from where the disease has been found. Counties in the CWD management zones are: Adair, Boone, Callaway, Carroll, Chariton, Crawford, Cole, Cooper, Franklin, Gasconade, Jefferson, Knox, Linn, Livingston, Macon, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Osage, Putnam, St. Charles, St. Louis, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Shelby, Sullivan, Washington, and Warren. The Department will require hunters to present their deer for CWD testing at a Department testing location if they harvest it in one of these 29 counties during the opening weekend of the fall firearms deer season, November 12 and 13. The testing is free and hunters can also get free test results. The Department will also continue to work with meat processors and taxidermists in the 29 counties to provide free CWD testing during other parts of the upcoming deer-hunting seasons. The Department will continue its broader ongoing CWD monitoring efforts with a focus on the northern half of the state for the upcoming season.

For more information on CWD in Missouri, visit the MDC website at mdc.mo.gov/CWD

Science-Based Conservation. The Department uses a science-based approach to manage fish, forests, and wildlife in the state and research projects are one of the ways the Department obtains information for decision-making. For example, the Department is conducting a five-year wild turkey research project to monitor populations in several counties across the state. This research includes banding and putting radio transmitters on wild turkeys to determine gobbler and hen survival. The research will also determine what proportion of the banded wild turkey population is harvested by hunters. The results will inform wild turkey management decisions and sustain opportunities for all Missourians to view this majestic bird in the wild. Another research effort involves efforts to propagate and restore the Ozark and eastern Hellbender. The Department has partnered with the Saint Louis Zoo to conduct captive breeding. At the zoo, 4,000 larval and juvenile hellbenders have been reared and will be released in their native Ozark rivers. The Department is also monitoring black bears. Black bear capture efforts for research purposes have included 109 individual bears and staff are monitoring 38 collared bears.

Additional research efforts include harvest and attitude surveys, public use surveys at Department ranges and areas, deer survival and movements, pallid sturgeon sampling, and the long-term, landscape scale, Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project.

Eliminating Feral Hogs in Missouri. The Department continues to work with partners and landowners to eradicate feral hogs from the landscape. Following the experiences of other states and through monitoring trends in Missouri, the Department has proposed to eliminate hunting for hogs on Department areas, since hunting has not been demonstrated to help to eradicate hogs. The Department and other partners have increased feral hog eradication efforts this year through trapping. Citizens are being asked to report feral hog sightings or damage.

Helping Children and Families Discover Nature. Helping children and families discover nature is a key part of the Department's mission. Last year, the Department held Discover Nature Girls Camps for girls ages 11–15 to get young women excited about the outdoors. Camp classes included hunter education, archery, canoeing, fishing, tree-stand safety, and Dutch oven cooking. The Department's Discover Nature Schools conservation education curriculum, which is used in 99 percent of Missouri school districts for grades pre-K through 12, helps teachers engage students with hands-on, outdoor learning. In addition, the Discover Nature Fishing program helps kids and families have fun in the outdoors by learning to fish. Last year, more than 5,000 people learned to fish for the first time through this program.

Archery in the Schools Program Builds Champions. The Department provides Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP) grants to schools for equipment, as well as free teacher and staff training for those administering the program. More than 135,000 Missouri students from 500 schools participate in MoNASP. The MoNASP program promotes education, self-esteem, and physical activity for kids in grades four to 12.

Technical Assistance for Landowners. The Department's Private Land Services Division continues to provide Missouri landowners with technical assistance and coordination that benefits fish, forest, and wildlife conservation. The Division, with 74 full-time positions, has over 36,000 contacts each year and helps landowners apply \$140 million in federal funding for conservation practices and program cost-shares. Private Land Services is also implementing a Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program statewide, to enhance habitat management and public access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

Shooting Range Renovations. The Department began construction of a new, state-of-the-art staffed shooting facility at Busch Shooting Range in St. Charles. The new range will incorporate the most current national shooting range design standards, including numerous improvements for user convenience, safety, and reduced waiting times. Originally built in 1975, the Busch range sees more than 40,000 shooters annually. The Department has five staffed ranges and over 65 unstaffed ranges throughout the state.

National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Department staff serve on the National Technical Workgroup for the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. The 2016 survey for the 50 states will include a new contracted approach to reduce costs and increase the reliability of results. The national results continue to be conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey is the best source for participation information and economic impacts from fishing, hunting, and wildlife-viewing. The Department also participated in ongoing testing with the contractor, Rockville Institute, to determine if using state logos and letterhead increased response rates.