

OHIO
STATE REPORT
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EXCELLENCE

Excellence - Accomplishments

- The division completed and launched a new Strategic Plan for 2011-2030. The new plan replaces the previous 10-year plan that expired in 2010. The division relied heavily on input from constituents and its external conservation partners in developing the new plan.
- Developed the new Automated License and Game-Check System, including License Sales, Game-Check, Hunter Education, Law Enforcement, and Administrative modules.
- Ran a successful pilot test of the licensing and administrative modules during the fall deer season at approximately 65 license outlets across the state. During the pilot we issued more than 50,000 licenses and permits and collected over \$1 million in revenue. The pilot test enabled the Division to identify “bugs” and make corrections prior to full implementation.
- Conducted an evaluation of electronic game checking at 17 locations across Ohio and summarized comments from over 1,000 deer hunters. The findings from the evaluation were used to recommend and implement improvements prior to full implementation in 2011.

Excellence - Initiatives

- Successfully hire 18 highly qualified wildlife officer cadets to participate in the 2012 Wildlife Officer Academy. Recruit candidates through job fairs, advertising, media releases, and using internal and external partners. Facilitate extensive selection process including administering state proficiency test, law enforcement indexing, structured interviews, physical fitness testing, and background checks.
- Collaborate with the USFWS to finalize revisions to the division’s Comprehensive Management System (CMS). Implement new components including communications plan, advisory teams, and other initiatives to improve CMS administration and compliance.
- Implement the new Automated License and Game-Check System to full production (all modules).
- Assist with the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) revision. Review approved CWCS documents from other states and use the new biodiversity research partnership with OSU to hire an outside consultant to help revise and update Ohio’s CWCS.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship - Accomplishments

- The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves Heritage Program, including the Natural Heritage Database became part of the Division of Wildlife in 2010. The Natural Heritage Database has been re-named the Ohio Biodiversity Database, and presently contains over 18,000 records of Ohio's rare plant and animal species.
- Initiated three new research projects aimed at improving our understanding of how walleye hatches are being affected by weather and environmental conditions on Lake Erie, and where hatches are being produced. Results of this research will help focus management efforts on habitat restoration and protection.
- The federally threatened Lake Erie watersnake was proposed to be removed as a listed species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in June 2010. While the 1999 ESA listing of the snake was strongly contested, its delisting should be embraced as a true conservation success story.
- In cooperation with the Toledo Zoological Gardens, 893 endangered Karner blue butterflies were released on the Meilke Road Savanna Wildlife Area. This was the first year of a five-year plan to release Karner blue butterflies on the wildlife area.
- The daily operation of the 1(800) POACHER hotline was successfully contracted to All West Communications, providing service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, along with a secure database for reports.

Stewardship - Initiatives

- Continue to assist efforts to remove the Ballville Dam on the Sandusky River and Six-Mile Dam on the Walhonding River. Prioritize division-owned low-head dams for removal based on stream restoration potential.
- Implement a biodiversity research partnership with The Ohio State University to address priority information needs for aquatic and terrestrial species of greatest conservation need.
- Finalize fisheries and wildlife pre- and post-construction monitoring protocols for evaluating potential impacts of proposed wind energy facilities in Lake Erie. This information will guide DNR recommendations developed for the Ohio Power Siting Board and the Office of Coastal Management.
- Work with Ducks Unlimited and other partners to identify priority wetland restoration and enhancement projects near Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay. Seek funding for the best projects through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act.
- Develop new systems and procedures to accommodate acquisition of harvest data for wild turkeys and white-tailed deer through Game Check. In addition, begin collecting biological data needed for deer management from meat processors during the 2011 deer gun season.
- Present new cases at Environmental Crimes Task Force meetings across the state and continue to maintain a good working relationship with other agencies to aid in prosecuting those who commit these violations.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities - Accomplishments

- The newly constructed Huron Boat Ramp was dedicated on June 23, 2010. This ramp fills a large gap in public boat access to Lake Erie between Sandusky and Vermilion. The facility is the result of a partnership between the city of Huron and the ODNR Divisions of Wildlife and Watercraft.
- The Division's six fish hatcheries raised more than 27 million fish, including 459,000 steelhead, 14,500 muskellunge advanced fingerlings, 105,000 catchable rainbow trout, 558,000 brown trout, 3.6 million saugeye fingerlings, 205,000 walleye fingerlings, 20 million saugeye and walleye fry, 680,000 yellow perch, 1.5 million hybrid striped bass, and 247,000 channel catfish.
- The Great Miami, Mad, and Stillwater rivers were designated as State Watertrails in August 2010. These three watertrails open up hundreds of miles of water for recreation, and will be managed by the Miami Conservancy District.
- Wingfoot Lake, a 663-acre tract that includes the 371-acre lake was purchased from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. The property was dedicated as a state park and wildlife area on August 26, 2010. This acquisition created a unique opportunity to increase access for public fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife viewing within a 20-minute drive of nearly one million Ohioans in the Akron area.
- The first year of a two-year pilot project to link farmers experiencing crop damage with deer hunters through a web-based hunter access program (HuntOhioFarms.com) was completed and evaluated in partnership with the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Whitetails Unlimited, and the Quality Deer Management Association. Despite relatively low initial use by farmers and limited additional hunting opportunity provided to registered hunters, the division agreed to expand the number of eligible counties to those found in Deer Zone C (38 counties) for the 2010-2011 hunting season.
- Major acquisitions of forested habitats included the Wallace O'Dowd Wildlife Area (3,600 acres added to existing properties that now total 6,700 acres) and Vinton Furnace Wildlife Area (3,400 acres). The Vinton Furnace Wildlife Area acquisition was part of a much larger land acquisition by the Division of Forestry (12,100 acres) in Vinton County. Division of Wildlife land-holdings now total over 194,500 acres.

Opportunities - Initiatives

- Continue improvements and renovations at Castalia Hatchery (new fish production building), London Hatchery (new electrical system and alarms), and St. Marys and Kincaid hatcheries (new wells). These capital projects will increase fish production, improve water quality, and enhance safety for staff.
- Initiate a statewide research project to learn more about variation in the success of largemouth bass populations among reservoirs differing in habitat and fishing pressure. Focus on reproductive success and first-year growth and survival of largemouth bass, and explore habitat influences on abundance and survival.
- Pursue an agreement with Kentucky, West Virginia, Indiana, and Illinois to unify Ohio River fishing regulations for black bass, crappie, and hybrid striped bass throughout the river.

- Finalize wildlife area management plans and related GIS maps to provide better direction for management of public lands. Also, work with The Ohio State University to develop and conduct a survey to better understand the activities, preferences and diversity of users of wildlife areas across Ohio.

CONNECTIONS

Connections - Accomplishments

- A statewide survey of Ohio steelhead anglers was completed in cooperation with The Ohio State University to evaluate participation, attitudes, and opinions regarding this popular fishery. Responses indicated that 89 percent of steelhead anglers are satisfied with this fishery, and spend an average of 37 days per year fishing Lake Erie tributaries.
- Trained 1,683 educators through 87 workshops that focused on Project WILD, Aquatic Project WILD, or Growing Up WILD. Since many of the WILD activities have been correlated to state education standards, demand for training and materials have greatly increased.
- Wildohio.com remains a very popular site for Ohio wildlife information. About three million people visited the site with an average of 10,000 visitors per day. A social media presence was launched on both Facebook and Twitter.
- Completed the first year of sales for the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp (OWLS), which was designed to gain both funding and support for wildlife diversity projects from voluntary sources. In its first year, OWLS netted over \$20,000.
- Hosted the 26th Wildlife Diversity Conference with 942 attendees. The Division hosted the first conference in 1984, with 40 people attending.

Connections - Initiatives

- Participate in a new inter-jurisdictional effort on the Great Lakes to better understand commercial and recreational fishing stakeholder interests. Create a Human Dimensions Task Group within the Lake Erie Committee to facilitate incorporation of these interests into quota management decisions.
- Collaborate with a variety of conservation and science interests, including division fisheries and wildlife biologists, to renovate visitor center exhibits at the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve. The improved exhibits will have key messages about wetland, estuarine, and fisheries resources that will more effectively convey conservation principles to the public.
- Expand the use of electronic communications efforts to increase the number of Fish Ohio Report subscribers to 15,000, the *Wild Ohio* eNewsletter subscribers to 70,000, and the *Wild Ohio* Educator Edition of the eNewsletter to 10,000. Increase Facebook followers to 10,000 and Twitter followers by 50 percent.
- Complete Phase 1 of the Lake Erie Birding Trail project which will encourage birding tourism in Ohio. The project will feature 80+ sites for birding along the Lake Erie coast, and includes Ohio SeaGrant and Coastal Ohio as partners. The project will include signage, and web-based and print guides that include maps, highlights, photographs, and timely information.

TRADITIONS

Traditions - Accomplishments

- The division hosted the 31st annual Governor's Fish Ohio Day, which recognizes and promotes the state's excellent fishery and the economic benefits fishing brings to the state. Recognized over 14,000 anglers from Ohio and 41 other states for trophy catches in the spin-off Fish Ohio recognition program.
- Added 107 schools to Ohio's National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) for a total of 412 participating schools. Hosted the 4th Annual NASP State Tournament with participation from more than 1,000 youths. Thirty of the teams went on to compete in the NASP National Tournament in Kentucky.
- Instructors trained 18,994 students in hunter education and 651 in trapper education, as well as training 110 new hunter education volunteer instructors.

Traditions - Initiatives

- Continue to hold an annual Governor's Fish Ohio Day. This event highlights Ohio as a destination for fishing and showcases Lake Erie as a destination for travelers.
- Produce video segments that can be used in *Wild Ohio TV*, but can also be good instructional segments for use on the Web, using currently important topics such as such as tree stand safety.
- Implement the *Explore Bowhunting Program* in as a youth-focused archery program designed to introduce youth to the sport of archery shooting and bowhunting.

ADMINISTRATION

Administration: Accomplishment

- Delivered Workplace Violence and Sexual Harassment training to all Division employees including identifying, preventing, and reporting violations. Employees were also educated regarding the long-term affects of not addressing these behaviors including morale, employee stress, health risks, and legal ramifications.

Administration: Initiative

Continue to review Risk Management and Health and Safety policies within the Division. Identify training needs to reduce employee injury and employee workers' compensation liability.