

**MICHIGAN**  
**STATE REPORT**  
*June 1, 2021*

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#### STAFFING

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has 1,453 permanent employees, more than 1,600 non-career/seasonal employees, and a \$469.6 million budget that supports programs and infrastructure for wildlife and fisheries management, state parks and recreation areas, trails, boating programs, conservation and law enforcement, forest management, state lands and minerals, the historical museum and archives.

Dan Eichinger continues to serve as the Director of the DNR and Shannon Lott as the Natural Resources Deputy. Jared Duquette now serves as the Chief of the Wildlife Division and Jeff Stampfli as the Chief of the Forest Resources Division.

#### FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 BUDGET

The DNR budget is \$469,594,100 for fiscal year (FY) 2021. The General Fund increased 3.4 percent to \$50,697,300 from \$49,081,800 in 2020. The increase was due to a one-time appropriation (\$1.8M) to provide grants to county sheriff departments to enforce slow-no wake zones to mitigate high water impacts on local infrastructure. Restricted and federal funds were added for construction of a mass timber customer service and storage facility (\$5.0 M), to expand work done under the Good Neighbor Authority on National Forests (\$8.1 M), and infrastructure improvements to fish hatcheries (\$2.5 M), shooting ranges (\$4.4 M), state forests (\$2.5 M), and state parks (\$19.0 M). DNR is funded by state General Fund revenues, federal funds, and a variety of restricted funds. The budget consists of 11 percent General Fund, 19 percent federal funds and 70 percent restricted funds.

Federal funding consists mainly of special purpose categorical grants from various federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Federal funds support programs for wildlife and fisheries habitat and management, forest management, recreation and other natural resource programs. Restricted funding is generated from sales of licenses, user fees, and other charges. These funds support wildlife and fisheries programs, operation of Michigan's 103 state parks, harbor and boating access site development, marine safety enforcement and education, snowmobile and off-road vehicle trail repair and development, and operation of Michigan's 135 state forest campgrounds. The DNR also generates timber sales revenue from state lands. Approximately 90 percent of timber sales revenue goes to the Forest Development Fund and is used for the protection and development of our state forests. The other ten percent of timber sales goes toward the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund.

The DNR continues to operate under a discretionary spending directive issued in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. This affected spending in 2020 and continues to impact 2021. DNR employees continue to work remotely as the primary means to accomplish work unless an approval for on-site work has been granted. Travel and training have been reduced significantly. It is anticipated the current restrictions will change as the vaccination rates increase.

## LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Legislative activity has been reduced significantly since the COVID 19 event. Work on the Fiscal Year 2022 budget year is expected to culminate in the next two months as the legislature and the Governor work to allocate higher than expected General Fund and federal relief funds.

This past year, a legislative bill was introduced and approved by both the House and the Senate to allow the use of pneumatic bows during the archery season. This bill was vetoed.

Work continues with the legislature, stakeholders, and industry on the revision of the Commercial Fishing statute.

The voters approved a constitutional change to the State Park Endowment Fund (SPEF) which redirects royalties and bonuses from mineral leases to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) once the SPEF reaches \$800 M. In addition, the MNRTF program which provides funds for state and local recreation development and acquisition projects was amended to allow more flexibility between the spending ratios of development vs acquisition.

## NOTEWORTHY DIVISION ISSUES

The DNR tested approximately 3,500 animals during the past year for CWD which is a significant reduction from 2019. With the impact of COVID 19 restrictions and a change in the disease monitoring and surveillance approach, Wildlife greatly reduced the hours of operations for their annual check stations. This approach allowed the department to focus its surveillance efforts in those areas known to have CWD and continue to monitor with limited statewide sampling where positives have not been detected. Positive detections continue in Michigan's deer herd in specific areas of the central lower portion of the state. No additional positives were detected this year in the Upper Peninsula. The Natural Resources Commission and the DNR continue to work to address this disease. Research is still needed to assist with the management of this disease. DNR and MSU continue to work together to address the outstanding research issues awarding approximately \$960,000 in grants during 2020.

An Intergovernmental Agreement was signed in late December 2020 by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan DNR formalizing the collaboration and funding for the pre-construction engineering and design of the Brand Road Lock and Dam to prevent the spread of invasive carp. An escrow agreement was also formalized with US Bank, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Michigan DNR for \$8.0 M of the estimated \$10.1M needed to fund the design and engineering. The State of Illinois will provide the balance.

During 2020, the DNR provided firefighting personnel and equipment to various western states to assist during the very active fire season. Our staff were approved to travel to the various states as COVID 19 plans and precautions were put in place. In addition, several of our Incident Management Team members assisted with the establishment of alternative care locations during the initial COVID 19 response.

The Department continues to negotiate with the affected tribes to replace the 2020 Consent Decree.

The DNR has been working to incorporate renewable energy sources in strategic locations throughout the state. To date, a solar array has been installed at a fish hatchery. Other locations are currently being bid out for other solar applications. The DNR has also executed a contract for carbon sequestration as a pilot in the Pigeon River State Forest.

Over the last year due to the COVID 19 event, the majority of the DNR staff have been teleworking. Employees who primarily work in the outdoors are returning to work as appropriate safety procedures and protocols are approved and implemented. State Parks were not opened until June 22, 2020 which is a little over two months later than normal. This resulted in a significant decline in revenue although it was not as large as originally estimated due to the overwhelming demand from the public for safe outdoor spaces. Camping reservations to date continue to increase for the current year. Hunting and fishing licenses sales exceeded the previous year sales by \$5.1 M. ORV and non-motorized trails continue to experience high usage. The increased demand presents an interesting challenge in how to retain these individuals and keep them engaged as COVID 19 restrictions continue to ease.