

OHIO
STATE REPORT
May 1, 2021

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STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2020

- Initiated projects under the H2Ohio program to improve water quality, reduce erosion and nutrient runoff, and provide quality wildlife habitat across the state. The 21 projects are valued at \$24,203,149 and will impact 2,912 acres of wetlands.
- Restored aquatic habitat and eliminated a navigation hazard on the Walhonding River in Coshocton to remove the Six Mile Dam. More than 12,000 freshwater mussels representing 24 species, including federally listed rabbitsfoot and sheepsnose were relocated by staff during its removal.
- Created a permanent barrier between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes watersheds at Long Lake (Portage County), reducing the risk of Asian carp and other invasive fishes from entering Lake Erie.
- Continued a partnership with the University of Toledo, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Michigan DNR to remove invasive grass carp from western Lake Erie tributaries and explore methods for permanent eradication.
- Partnered with Ducks Unlimited to direct Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant funds towards wetland restoration. Projects included 110 acres of wetland habitat at Toussaint Wildlife Area in Ottawa County, and design support for 77 acres of wetlands at Little Portage Wildlife Area, also in Ottawa County.
- Identified suitable habitat for the Ohio Stream and Wetland Foundation for wetland mitigation at the Mosquito Creek Wildlife Area in Trumbull County. The project improved 170 acres of forested and wet meadow habitats for the federally threatened eastern massasauga snake.
- Developed wildlife rules and certification with white-tailed deer processors and taxidermists to allow the safe importation of out-of-state harvested animals. This will support small business in Ohio while complying with best management practices to control Chronic Wasting Disease.

STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- Advance production techniques of native mussels by supporting research at the Freshwater Mussel Conservation and Research Center at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Mussels produced in this facility will further restoration efforts of rare mussels to their historic Ohio ranges.
- Reduce nutrient runoff in Ohio's waterways and improve wildlife habitat by implementing the H2Ohio initiative and additional incentives for Lake Erie and Scioto River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs. Funding would launch the construction of wetlands and streamside buffers to achieve better water quality in the watersheds.

- Develop a management plan outlining the approach to assess and prescribe management techniques for grasslands, wetlands, forests, and unique habitats on the more than 200 properties owned or managed by the Division of Wildlife.
- Respond to concerns of variable and low catch rates of yellow perch in Lake Erie by sponsoring a new research project through The Ohio State University to understand impacts of invasive species on yellow perch diets, distribution in the lake, and angler catches.

OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITIES ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2020

- Created the state's largest wildlife area with the acquisition of more than 24,000 acres of the Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area in Noble, Morgan, and Muskingum counties.
- Improved and expanded public shooting ranges at Delaware Wildlife Area in Delaware County, Spring Valley Wildlife Area in Greene County, and Fernwood State Forest in Jefferson County. The Delaware Wildlife Area range includes more than 90 pistol and rifle shooting stations and a new design for better lead management. The Spring Valley Wildlife Area range offers rifle and pistol areas with distances from 10 to 100 yards. Both ranges provide static and walk-through archery options, elevated shooting platforms, and education buildings to conduct hunter education, food processing workshops, identification clinics, and pollinator habitat.
- Enhanced fishing opportunities statewide by stocking public waters with more than 46 million sport fish of 11 different species.
- Upgraded public boat access facilities at Zepernick Lake (Columbiana County), Fox Lake (Athens County), Lake Rupert (Vinton County), Tycoon Lake (Gallia County), Mogadore Reservoir (Portage County), Grant Lake (Brown County), Ismond Pond and Highlandtown Lake (Columbiana County), Catawba Island and Dempsey Access (Ottawa County), East Fork Lake (Clermont County), Kelleys Island (Erie County), and the Scioto River (Pike County).
- In partnership with The Ohio State University, biologists evaluated channel catfish stocking practices in reservoirs. Results of this work will improve stocking efficiency and expand opportunities for harvest in small impoundments.
- Expanded small game and furbearer hunting opportunities by allowing additional dates during the white-tailed deer-gun hunting season, which was traditionally closed for other species.
- Developed rules in conjunction with the aquaculture industry and scientific community to allow the sale of American bullfrog and green frog tadpoles, two common native species. These tadpoles are present in the fish hatchery ponds as byproducts of fish production.
- Acquired a key access point to the Grand River Wildlife Area in Trumbull County, providing additional hunting opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- Improve boat access areas with ramp repairs, courtesy dock additions, parking lot renovations and dredging at South Bloomfield and Circleville (Pickaway County) on the Scioto River, Killbuck-Walshonding confluence (Coshocton County), Griggs Reservoir (Franklin County), Monroe Lake (Monroe County), Fox Lake (Athens County) and the Village of Powhatan Point (Belmont County) on the Ohio River.
- Enhance fishing and boating access at Fairport Harbor by partnering with the Village of Fairport Harbor, the Lake County and Fairport Port Authorities, Lake Metroparks, and Lake

County commissioners to construct a new breakwater, improve the boat ramp and transient docks, add restrooms and a fish cleaning station, and double the amount of trailer parking.

- Expand hunting, trapping, and wildlife watching on private land in areas of the state lacking public access. Private landowners who enroll their property to allow public access will receive incentive payments and incentives for wildlife habitat improvement. Funding will be provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Volunteer Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program in conjunction with other USDA conservation programs.
- Modernize five public shooting and archery ranges by improving facilities and safety measures on ranges managed by the Division of Wildlife.
- Acquire remaining portions of the Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area and look for opportunities to expand wildlife areas to provide additional habitat and resolve access and boundary issues.
- Produce and stock more than 40 million sportfish in Ohio's public waters.

CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2020

- Released HuntFish OH, a mobile application, to provide Ohio's hunters, anglers, and shooters with license purchasing options, game check means, and other resources through their mobile devices. The app had nearly 50,000 downloads within the first three months. This app was made possible with support from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation and Sovereign Sportsman Solutions.
- Launched a virtual Birding Academy to teach staff about birding behaviors and identification to equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to engage members of the birding community and new partner organizations.
- Developed the Chat with a Biologist series to supplement in-school curriculum while students were learning in virtual environments. Wildlife employees joined more than 50 classrooms online and presented on wildlife-related topics.
- Created how-to webinars to educate staff and the general public on important topics such as game check, canine use in conservation, ginseng rules and regulations, becoming a wildlife officer, and waterfowl hunting.
- Staff developed recommendations for seven wildlife areas (Delaware, Pipe Creek, Andreoff, Appalachian Hills, Beaver Creek, Eagle Creek, and Beach City) to appeal to a new and broader constituency of resource users. Improvements undertaken in the coming year include adding entrance signs and directional trail markers, improving primary trailhead parking areas, installing informational kiosks, and providing paddling access and kayak rental options at Pipe Creek and Appalachian Hills wildlife areas.
- Added all ODNr controlled hunts (122) and furbearer lotteries (108) into the Ohio Wildlife Licensing System to improve accessibility. This online system had 87,085 entries, and successful customers received permits through their Ohio Wildlife Licensing System account along with specific rules and area maps.

CONNECTIONS INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- Update the Lake Erie Fishing Guide to share boating access and angler information.
- Create a Wildlife Co-existence Guidebook to outline management approaches, prevent human-wildlife conflict, or minimize the frequency and severity of interactions.

- Expand the utility of the HuntFish OH mobile application to include push notifications to communicate with users. Integrate features that pair customers with events and activities. Create a shooting range reservation system to monitor usage that pairs customer preferences with suggested wildlife recreation opportunities.
- Add two fish cleaning stations in Lake Erie's western basin adjacent to fishing access areas in cooperation with partners at Lake Erie Shores and Islands and the city of Huron. These stations will provide convenient opportunities for local and visiting anglers to clean their catch after a day of fishing.

ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2020

- Optimized accessibility to digital content with a newly designed and mobile-friendly website, as well as expanded the use of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter) to include LinkedIn. These efforts will improve customer service and increase interaction with a diversity of audiences.
- Refreshed the Strategic Plan to be more inclusive to diverse communities.
- Translated the 2019-2020 hunting regulations into Spanish to connect with Ohio's growing Hispanic population.
- Created a bald eagle nest survey and received more than 2,500 reports from citizen scientists who helped confirm 707 bald eagle nests in 85 counties, a 150% increase from the last census in 2012.
- Twelve swans were collared with assistance from participating Ohio zoos, including Cleveland, Toledo, Akron, Columbus, and Cincinnati. Citizens can follow movements on marked trumpeter swans at trumpeterswan.netlify.app/locations.html.
- The number of students completing hunter education courses online (8,541) is on track to exceed last year's combined online and in-person totals (11,047). Students participating in the trapper education course has also increased during this same time with instructors able to schedule advanced trapper education workshops on select wildlife areas.
- Trained more than 1,200 educators on Project WILD. These workshops focus on wildlife conservation curriculum for schools

ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- Conduct focused marketing on retaining wildlife participation, especially anglers. Compile human dimensions research and implement studies to understand societal trends and apply findings to increasing relevancy of wildlife conservation among a broader constituency.
- Open two new educational centers at the Spring Valley Wildlife Area and Delaware Wildlife Area shooting ranges for student instruction. Programs are designed to increase a student's knowledge, skills, and abilities in shooting sports.
- Launch educational content and media on the new Wild Ohio Harvest Community website that equips the public with the knowledge and confidence to pursue learning to hunt, fish, and shoot. Additional resources will promote opportunities to gain hands-on experience in a professionally led class, course, or experience.
- Add information to wildohio.gov about hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities on public fishing and wildlife areas so Ohioans can conveniently and efficiently plan their outdoor experiences.

EXCELLENCE

EXCELLENCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2020

- Twelve cadets completed their basic peace officer training and wildlife office academy in 2020, from a pool of more than 900 applicants. The newly commissioned wildlife officers began their field training program and filled vacant county assignments.
- Added an auto-renewal option to our license system. Currently, there are nearly 7,000 enrolled customers.
- Awarded \$535,000 in grant funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to acquire an additional 345 acres at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area in Morgan County.
- Awarded a three-year grant from U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Bill's Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program to increase access to hunting, trapping, and wildlife watching opportunities on 27,000 acres of private lands. In addition to providing access, this statewide program will also give landowners funding to improve wildlife habitat.

EXCELLENCE INITIATIVES FOR 2021

- Streamline the law enforcement section to provide increased support to wildlife officers and focus on customer service.
- Begin the hiring process for a 2022 Wildlife Officer Academy. These cadets will fill anticipated retirement vacancies and allow the Division of Wildlife to maintain quality customer public service within the community.
- Extend patrols for wildlife officers on Lake Erie by acquiring a cabin boat. This new vessel will protect staff during inclement weather.