

**OHIO**  
**STATE REPORT**  
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**STEWARDSHIP**

**STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021**

**H2Ohio Projects.** Launched the H2Ohio Water Quality Incentive Program (WQIP) on 2,300 acres of new wetlands and forested buffers. This will improve water quality in Lake Erie as part of Governor DeWine's H2Ohio initiative to reduce nutrient runoff in Lake Erie and Ohio's waterways. Further H2Ohio projects were initiated at Mallard Club Wildlife Area, Tipp City, Grand Lake St. Marys, Rust Wetland, and Mercer Wildlife Area. These projects will re-store 167 acres of important wetland habitat and help to redirect flow through wetlands to help filter and improve water quality to meet H2Ohio program goals.

**Added Public Lands.** Acquired 182 acres at Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area and 5,840 acres at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area. We also entered a management agreement with Pheasants Forever which provides 415 acres of new public access at Big Island Wildlife Area.

**Deer Regulations Success.** In the three years of harvest restrictions on public land, antlerless harvest was reduced by an average of 38%. According to camera surveys conducted on 17 public areas, deer populations have increased in response to the significant reduction in antlerless harvest. We found population increases of 60 to 70% in some areas.

**Piping Plovers.** Division of Wildlife staff assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Black Swamp Bird Observatory to protect and monitor a nesting pair of federally and state endangered Great Lakes piping plovers at Maumee Bay State Park. This is the first known nesting attempt by a pair of piping plovers in Ohio in 83 years.

**Lake Sturgeon Stocking Resumed in the Maumee River.** Partnered with Toledo Zoo and Aquarium, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey to stock more than 3,000 lake sturgeon in the Maumee River to restore their population.

**STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES FOR 2022**

**Wildlife Trade.** The commercial sale of wildlife is big business and can have a negative impact when invasive species, like marbled crayfish, are sold and potentially released to the wild. With partners throughout the U.S., we are increasing surveillance to ensure high-risk species are not offered for sale. Wildlife officers and investigators will focus efforts to educate the public about their invasive attributes and the laws against possession in Ohio.

**Wetland Repairs.** Wetlands provide stopover areas for migrating birds and waterfowl hunting opportunities. Routinely, the earthen embankments need repairs, and water control structures must be replaced to ensure functionality of these facilities. An assessment of more than 4 miles of embankments will be completed and used to develop designs at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area. Final designs for the Magee Marsh lakefront barrier will be completed, and two embankments at Indian Creek Wildlife Area are planned for construction.

**Conserve Habitat and Provide Opportunities.** We seek to preserve public access at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area with the remaining transfer of 16,300 acres, resolve a 30-acre inholding at Eagle Creek Wildlife Area, conserve 30 acres of wet woods habitat at Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area, and expand opportunities at Woodland Trails Wildlife Area to acquire 477 acres.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **OPPORTUNITIES ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021**

**Ohio Hunter Access Program.** The Ohio Hunter Access Program began taking reservations in September 2021. Currently, the program has allowed for 463 hunters to reserve public access in 28 counties. There are 59 properties available with an average parcel size of 140 acres, for a total of 8,300 acres of private lands open to hunters who participate in the program.

**Spring Valley and Delaware Shooting Ranges.** Construction was completed, and both ranges were opened to rave reviews. Delaware went from six shooting positions to 91. New features of both ranges include fixed trap throwers for shotgun, archery targets, and visitor amenities such as restrooms. More than 36,000 shooters visited these new ranges the first year.

### **OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVES FOR 2022**

**Lake Erie Fish Cleaning Stations.** Construct state-of-the-art fish cleaning stations along the Lake Erie shoreline in cooperation with local partners. These facilities will provide tables, water service, and grinders for fish waste disposal. Installation of these fish cleaning stations serving all anglers is particularly well-timed given the strength of the walleye population and exceptional walleye fishing that is anticipated to continue through the next decade.

**Shooting Ranges.** Construct and open the Tranquility and Indian Creek shooting ranges. Expand the hands-on shooting opportunities and trainings at Delaware and Spring Valley education centers. Initiate improvements at the Woodbury range and develop plans for the Grand River range.

## **CONNECTIONS**

### **CONNECTIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021**

**Statewide Urban Bird Conservation Program.** Wildlife staff are working with city building officials to reduce mortality of migratory birds. Through this program, building managers in Ohio's cities commit to maintain lights out during certain hours.

**Private Lands Habitat Improvement.** Wildlife management consultants provided 5,313 hours of technical assistance and quality customer service to landowners, conservation organizations, and agencies for wildlife habitat development and improvement throughout Ohio.

**Statewide Attitude Survey.** The Division of Wildlife contracted with Responsive Management to conduct a statewide study of Ohio residents to measure opinions on issues related to nature and wildlife. The results of this study will be used to assist our agency in better serving the interests of and communicating with Ohio residents.

**Implemented Digital Marketing Tools.** In partnership with Sovereign Sportsman Solutions (S3), we implemented the use of marketing automation and a customer relationship management platform. Digital marketing campaigns promoting products, opportunities, experiences, and information were launched to engage target audiences and strengthen the agency's brand. These tools help us to strengthen our service and connections to hunters, anglers, and wildlife conservation supporters.

## CONNECTIONS INITIATIVES FOR 2022

**Private Lands Outreach.** Staff plan to support statewide habitat improvement initiatives such as the Hocking Plateau Shared Stewardship Project, Working Lands for Wildlife, and H2Ohio. Develop partnerships with the National Wild Turkey Federation and Ruffed Grouse Society for private land development of young forest habitat projects.

**Customer Relationship Management System.** Staff will evaluate the current license sales system and establish desired capabilities and functions for a more comprehensive customer relationship management system. The request for proposals will outline deliverables including a license sale module, a mobile app, online learning resources, and other tools to help customers interact more readily with the Division of Wildlife.

**Renovate the Migratory Birding Center at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area.** Create a state-of-the-art welcome center with interactive displays to launch a better overall experience at the wildlife area. Upgrades will include modern displays, upgraded amenities, and a more accessible floor plan with a lift to the upper level.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

### ENGAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021

**Ohio Birding Academy.** Birding experts within the Division of Wildlife launched a virtual training on birding behaviors and identification to provide staff with knowledge and confidence to engage members of the birding community and new partner organizations.

**HuntFish OH App.** Added new features to the Division of Wildlife's mobile application to provide Ohio's hunters, anglers, and shooters with license purchasing options, game check, and other resources from their phones. Nearly 200,000 customers have downloaded the app.

**Wild Ohio Harvest Community Website.** Launched educational content and media on the new Wild Ohio Harvest Community website that equips the public with the knowledge and confidence to pursue wildlife recreation. Additional resources will promote opportunities to gain hands-on experience in a professionally led class, course, or experience.

#### ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES FOR 2022

**Wild Ohio Harvest Community Expansion.** Work with partner organizations to create connections between programs, experiences, and information offered to provide a network of opportunities for the public to choose their own path to learning new skills and exploring their personal connection to wildlife conservation.

**Citizen Science Participation.** Continue to encourage the use of the Ohio Herp Atlas ([atlas.ohparc.org](http://atlas.ohparc.org)) as a way for citizen scientists to contribute their observations of amphibians and reptiles. Verified records will be incorporated into the Ohio Wildlife Diversity Database.

#### **EXCELLENCE**

##### EXCELLENCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021

**Law Enforcement Reorganization.** The law enforcement program structure was reorganized to gain efficiencies for an increased uniform presence in the field.

**Conservation Adventures.** Division of Wildlife staff along with the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation launched an initiative aimed at increasing wildlife conservation education programs. Called Conservation Adventures, the program fundamentally shifts the way we educate high school students about the value and importance of conservation. Conservation Science is the first course of its kind offered to high schools.

##### EXCELLENCE INITIATIVES FOR 2022

**Wildlife Officers.** We will hire 20 new wildlife officer cadets. The new cadet class will fill anticipated vacancies due to retirements. Wildlife officers combine law enforcement and wildlife conservation with public service.

**Shooting Range Check-in Process.** Develop a shooting range check-in process within our current license system. The check-in system will allow users to scan their shooting range permits for entrance and make check-out more efficient.