

**MICHIGAN
STATE REPORT**
June 1, 2022

Mr. Daniel Eichinger, Director
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, Michigan 48909

STAFFING

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has approximately 1,400 permanent employees, 1,600 non-career/seasonal employees, and a \$464.3 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, and the historical museum and archives.

Dan Eichinger continues to serve as the Director of the DNR, Shannon Lott as the Natural Resources Deputy, and Mark Hoffman as the Administrative Deputy. David Shaw now serves as Chief of the Law Enforcement Division.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET

The DNR's fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget totals \$464,341,400 (including \$48.6 million General Fund), representing a slight 1.1% decrease from the DNR's original enacted FY 2021 appropriations due primarily to the removal of FY 2021 one-time investments in infrastructure improvements. New one-time General Fund investments include \$2 million for fish hatchery energy efficiencies and \$500,000 for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing. Restricted and federal funds were added for Kalamazoo River watershed improvements (\$6M), Land and Water Conservation Fund grants (\$7M), state park operations (\$2.7M), snowmobile trail easements (\$1.5M), off-road vehicle trail improvements (\$1M), and infrastructure improvements in state parks (\$16.1M) and recreational boating (\$11.1M).

Overall, the DNR's FY 2022 budget is comprised of state restricted funds (68%), federal funds (20%), General Fund (10%), and private funds (2%). 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 nearly 140 state forest campgrounds. The DNR also generates timber sales revenue from state lands, most of which is used for the protection and development of our state forests.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Work on the FY 2023 budget is expected to culminate in the next month as negotiations begin with the administration and legislature at a time when state coffers see an unprecedented level of surplus revenue.

The DNR has been tracking a wide range of policy bills. The DNR supported a bill package, subsequently signed by Governor Whitmer, that decriminalized a wide range of minor, hunting and fishing infractions. The DNR also supports a bill package that would professionalize the hunting and fishing guiding industry in the state.

This session, the legislature has also shown particular interest in the role, accountability, and authority of conservation officers. Legislation has been introduced to roll back the Open Fields Doctrine and to require conservation officers to wear body cameras while on duty.

NOTEWORTHY DIVISION ISSUES

The DNR tested approximately 7,700 animals during the past year for CWD, more than twice as many from the previous year. The DNR started a systematic approach to test all areas of the state in the next five years. The first phase of this approach included the southern three tiers of counties along with sample collection in known CWD-positive counties. 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 (UP). The Natural Resources Commission and the DNR continue to work to address this disease. The DNR and Michigan State University (MSU) continue to work together on addressing research gaps to help manage this disease.

Michigan continues to support Illinois in its nonfederal sponsorship for the Planning, Engineering, and Design phase of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project to protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp. Michigan and Illinois created a States and Provinces Forum, facilitated by the Great Lakes Commission, to provide an opportunity for review and input of the design process with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at key milestones. Significant engineering discussions combined with flow and channel modeling of the barrier elements have been completed in preparation of construction for Increment I. Approximately \$230 million has been appropriated for planning and construction in FY 2023; however, it requires an 80:20 cost share and a signed project partnership agreement to move forward. All eight states' governors have requested that full federal funding be authorized for construction in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022.

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

The DNR continues to make progress with its Arctic Grayling Initiative. A third year of broodstock is being procured from the Chena River, Alaska in May 2022. Three watersheds have been inventoried for future stocking, including the Manistee, Boardman, and Maple Rivers.

Research on competition between Grayling and non-native trout species has been completed. Our goal is to stock eggs in selected receiving waters in 2025.

Significant fires from the past year include the 378-acre Colfax Fire and 130-acre Miller Drop Zone Fire, both in the Northern Lower Peninsula. Multiple DNR units responded with partners to the Superior Cedar Products Fire in Carney, which resulted in a State of Emergency declaration in Menominee County. Staff also responded and filled 168 interagency assignments in 2021, of which 105 were out of state and 63 were in Michigan.

Four DNR Incident Management Teams (IMT) were dispatched to assist with operations at the Ford Field mass vaccination site in Detroit to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each team responded for a two-week period for a total of eight weeks. The teams helped coordinate and support the rollout and delivery of COVID vaccinations to the public.

The DNR has been working to incorporate renewable energy sources in strategic locations throughout the state. Solar arrays have been installed at various locations. The DNR is partnering with corporate sponsors to deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at state parks along Lake Michigan as the first phase of a multi-phased approach to bring EV charging to where visitors travel. The DNR has leased two former predominantly metallic and mineral mining sites located in Dickinson, Crawford and Roscommon Counties to Copper Country Power, LLC for the development of two utility-scale solar energy facilities. The DNR has also leased two former mine sites on state land to Circle Power for potential development of utility-scale solar generation. The pilot DNR carbon sequestration project, the Bluesource – DNR Big Wild Forest Carbon Project, has been listed with the American Carbon Registry (ACR) and is in the verification stage of development. The DNR listed a second carbon sequestration project with ACR at the end of 2021, the Bluesource – Michigan DNR Wolverine-Copper Country Forest Carbon Project.

The DNR continues to explore innovative solutions to financing solar development on sites with extraordinary costs, such as partnering with Michigan Land Bank. DNR staff have created Geographic Information System (GIS) based tools to identify prospective sites for future solar development on state lands and have started to evaluate identified parcels using several criteria to assure natural resources protection is considered. The DNR has led efforts to include other state agencies in examining surplus lands in their portfolios for potential solar energy projects. DNR has met with Consumers Energy with the goal of promoting solar development of marginal or unproductive public lands as recommended by the UP Energy Task Force and the Council on Climate Solutions.

The DNR updated its Public Lands Strategy and submitted it to the legislature for action. This document sets the high-level strategic direction for management of these assets and focuses on protecting natural and cultural resources, providing outdoor recreation, and performing responsible management. It recognizes the benefits that our public lands provide the residents and visitors to Michigan and contributes to our overall quality of life.

Preliminary design of the mass timber customer service center and storage facility in Newberry is 90% complete. Final design is expected to be completed within six months. Groundbreaking for the new facility will commence upon conclusion of the final design phase and is tentatively scheduled for late fall 2022 but could potentially be pushed back to spring 2023.

Over the last year, the majority of DNR office staff continue to work remotely after being sent home in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees who primarily work in the outdoors returned to those workplaces with appropriate safety procedures and protocols implemented. State parks opened in their usual timeframe and saw a significant increase in attendance and camping reservations, due to overwhelming demand from the public for safe outdoor spaces. Camping reservations to date for this year are down slightly from record highs last year. Hunting and fishing license sales are dropping back to pre-COVID rates. ORV and non-motorized trails continue to experience high usage. The increased demand over the past few years presents an interesting challenge in how to retain these individuals and educate new users about safety issues and conservation best practices.