



STEWARDSHIP

2022 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **H2Ohio.**
 - Constructed phase one of an enhanced wetland to redirect agricultural runoff and restore a 15-acre wetland at Mercer Wildlife Area to help filter water directly from Grand Lake.
 - Completed construction on the Maumee Bay State Park project to provide water level control to the 130-acre wetland and allow open interchange of Lake Erie with the wetland.
 - Renewed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreements with ODA and USDA Farm Service Agency for both Lake Erie and Scioto River CREP areas to improve water quality within those watersheds.
 - Completed nine and funded 38 H2Ohio Water Quality Incentive Program projects in addition to providing further technical assistance for the 3,160 acres of wetlands and riparian buffers previously enrolled in the program.
 - **Wetland Repairs.** Wetlands provide stopover areas for migrating birds, as well as hunting opportunities for those pursuing waterfowl. The Division of Engineering has looked at the needed repairs at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area and a consulting firm is conducting an assessment to direct upcoming repairs. Two embankment repairs at Indian Creek Wildlife Area have been completed, and design plans for Magee Marsh Wildlife Area's lakefront barrier repair are finalized.
 - **Crayfishes of Ohio.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife, Midwest Biodiversity Institute, and the Ohio Biological Survey partnered to complete a three-year statewide survey of Ohio's crayfish and publish *A Naturalist's Guide to the Crayfishes of Ohio*, authored by Roger F. Thoma.
 - **Wildlife Trade.** Worked with partners to successfully prosecute two individuals selling marbled crayfish. One individual sold the crayfish over the Internet, shipping them to 38 different states and one U.S. territory. The Ohio Division of Wildlife presented investigation results to enforcement officers in other states and publicized efforts to prevent similar actions in the future.
 - **Sandhill Crane and Barn Owl Surveys.** The spring sandhill crane and barn owl surveys were expanded. Feathers are being collected and biologists are contacting landowners to further our ability to track changes in crane and owl populations, which remain on Ohio's state threatened species list.
 - **White-tailed Deer Herd Monitoring.** Ohio Division of Wildlife staff collected age information from 1,247 deer. Deer harvested during the first two weekends of November were compared with those harvested during the traditional seven-day gun season. No significant differences in age distribution were noted for antler-
- less deer; however, antlered deer harvested during archery season were generally older. Initial evidence suggests that hunter selectivity varies across the different phases of the deer season.
- **Ohio River Trophy Catfish.** Discussions continued among Ohio River Fisheries Management Team member states to review and consider revision and standardization of Ohio River catfish regulations based on insights from recent tagging studies and additional data.
 - **Conserve Habitat and Provide Opportunities.** The remaining transfer of 16,300 acres at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area was completed, along with the acquisitions of 30 acres of wet woods habitat at Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area, and 477 acres at Woodland Trails Wildlife Area. We continue to work with landowners to resolve a 30-acre inholding at Eagle Creek Wildlife Area.
 - **Replace Major Equipment.** Replaced the Ohio Division of Wildlife's helicopter and initiated the process to procure a vendor for building the Lake Erie research boat. These vehicles are used to survey and monitor wildlife populations which help to guide our management decisions. Additionally, a fish-hauling truck used in stocking operations at Senecaville State Fish Hatchery was replaced.
 - **Downlisting of Four Fish Species.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife downlisted the status of alligator gar, blacknose shiner, longhead darter, and Tippecanoe darter, as populations were noted to have increased through improved water quality resulting from the Clean Water Act and repatriation projects.
 - **Marine Stewardship Council Sustainability Certification.** Ohio and Ontario, Canada fisheries staff completed the first annual audit following a five-year recertification of the Lake Erie yellow perch commercial fishery. Many large seafood retailers require products to be certified and the certification is based on management, enforcement, and operation of the fishery. The Division of Wildlife participates in interagency management of the yellow perch fishery on Lake Erie to support sustainable sport and commercial harvest.
 - **Lake Erie Yellow Perch Harvest Regulations.** Ohio successfully passed Ohio Administrative Code modifications to modernize angler daily limits and commercial trap net quota allocations. These changes help maintain harvest levels within the Ohio jurisdiction that are below annual Total Allowable Catch set by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Lake Erie Committee.
 - **Lake Erie Yellow Perch Research.** Central basin yellow perch research was funded through The Ohio State University to determine the distribution of adult yellow perch in relation to environmental variables. The results of this study will be used to evaluate annual fisheries assessment surveys in relation to how perch interact with seasonal oxygen levels.



STEWARDSHIP

2023 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Wildlife Population Research.** New wildlife research projects will be initiated to study population dynamics of hen wild turkeys and gray fox, evaluate strategies to reduce livestock predation by coyotes, and create spatial habitat models for ruffed grouse and ring-necked pheasants.
- **Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife, The Ohio State University, and the Ohio Biological Survey partnered to complete a four-year statewide survey of odonates which will culminate in the publication of *A Naturalist's Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio*, authored by Jim McCormac, Dave McShaffrey, and MaLisa Spring, in 2023.
- **Natural Resource Damage Assessment Funds Directed to Conservation Efforts at Ohio Zoos.** Through a settlement with Monsanto, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources received \$750,000 which will be directed to the Columbus and Toledo zoos to upgrade facilities for rare mussel, fish, reptile, and amphibian research and repatriation efforts.
- **Reassessment of the Grass Carp Eradication Efforts in the Western Basin of Lake Erie.** The Division of Wildlife is heading into the last year of the *Lake Erie Grass Carp Response Strategy (2019-2023)*. In 2023, we will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to develop a plan for the next five years with the goal to eradicate grass carp from Lake Erie by targeted removal (University of Toledo) and the development of a behavioral barrier on the Sandusky River (USACE).
- **Green Energy Solutions.** Explore feasibility of and incorporate green energy solutions into planned facilities, such as shooting ranges, to help offset rising energy costs and create sustainable infrastructure.
- **Cuyahoga River Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife is collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service to determine whether habitat improvements in the Cuyahoga River provide the potential for successful lake sturgeon stocking and reproduction. A long-term annual stocking program, like efforts in the Maumee River, is being considered following completion of habitat evaluations and creation of a rehabilitation plan.
- **Sandusky and Maumee Rivers Sauger Reintroduction.** Research at the University of Toledo is being supported to determine the potential for successful sauger reintroduction in the Sandusky and Maumee rivers. Sauger were historically abundant in Lake Erie river, bay, and nearshore habitat prior to their extirpation resulting from environmental degradation and overharvest. Researchers at the University of Toledo will seek to determine whether stocking sauger could lead to a self-sustaining population given removal of the Ballville Dam and habitat and water quality improvements of the past five decades.
- **Chronic Wasting Disease Outreach.** Focus on education and enforcement of deer carcass transportation and disease surveillance area rules to help control the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease.
- **Injurious Aquatic Invasive Species.** Work with the aquaculture industry and pet trade to update the injurious species list and prevent the movement of injurious aquatic invasive species.



OPPORTUNITIES

2022 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Shooting Ranges.** Construction was completed and Indian Creek and Tranquility wildlife area shooting ranges were opened to the public. Indian Creek is a new range offering additional shooting opportunities in southwest Ohio. Both rangers offer multiple distances for shooters.
- **Controlled Hunts.** Using the digital marketing platform, staff sent targeted emails to those who have participated in controlled hunting opportunities in the past to remind them to continue participation as well as inform them of changes. The customer base continues to grow.
- **Ohio Landowner Hunter Access Program.** Overall, 90% of survey respondents indicated they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access Partnership program. By adding additional properties, the Division of Wildlife will likely increase both hunter participation and satisfaction. The spring 2022 sign-up enrolled 37 new contracts for 7,889 new acres.
- **Lake Erie Fish Cleaning Stations.** State-of-the-art fish cleaning stations are under construction along the Lake Erie shoreline in cooperation with local partners at Huron, Avon Lake, and Marblehead (Mazurik Boat Ramp). These facilities will open for use during the spring of 2023 and feature cutting tables, water service, and fish waste disposal. The project at Mazurik also includes a new four-season restroom.
- **Fish Stocking.** During 2022, the Division of Wildlife stocked more than 52 million fish of 11 different species in Ohio's public waters. This exceeded the 44 million fish requested for stocking by fisheries managers largely due to exceptional production of walleye, saugeye, and yellow perch fry. All program needs were met while stocking 203 waters statewide to maintain and improve opportunities for Ohio anglers.
- **Updated Boat Access Facilities and Repaired Dams.** Facility improvements including installation of an accessible fishing pier, new ramps, parking areas and access lanes, as well as courtesy docks and dredging were completed at 13 sites. Project sites included those at South Bloomfield and Elmon Richards accesses and Griggs Reservoir (Scioto River); Killbuck-Walwhonding River

Access; Powhatan Point Marina (Ohio River); as well as Zepernick, Fox, Greenfield, Rock Mill, Mogadore, and Monroe lakes. Additionally, a kayak launch and turnaround were installed at Knox Lake and preliminary efforts to improve the Fairport Harbor access began. Dam assessments and remedial repairs were initiated at Spencer, Wingfoot, Highlandtown, Clark, Rupert, and Shreve lakes.

2023 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Senecaville State Fish Hatchery Capital Improvement Project.** Design plans have been completed and a contractor has been selected for a \$1.6 million capital improvement project at Senecaville State Fish Hatchery. This hatchery produces walleye, saugeye, hybrid-striped bass, and channel catfish for stocking statewide. Project construction will begin in the spring.
- **London State Fish Hatchery Display Pools.** New display pools will be constructed at London State Fish Hatchery to feature fish raised at this hatchery (brown trout, rainbow trout, and muskellunge) and other fish of Ohio.
- **Dam Repair.** Repairs will be made to dams at Spencer Lake and Highlandtown Lake and progress will continue to be made towards restoration of the Shreve Lake dam.
- **Fishing Pier.** A new fishing pier that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act will be constructed at Tycoon Lake.
- **Boating Access Partnerships.** Ohio Division of Wildlife staff are working with several localities to provide improvements to boating access at Fairport Harbor Marina, Steubenville Marina, and Neville Boat Ramp.
- **Grand River Shooting Range.** This project is in the design phase with construction slated to begin in 2023. This range update will include additional shooting positions out to 200 yards, an outdoor education center, archery courses, and restrooms.
- **Ohio Landowner - Hunter Access Program Expansion.** Renew existing property agreements and expand the OLHAP program to provide additional properties for hunter access. Competitive funding for habitat improvements on OLHAP properties will be available for participating landowners.



EXCELLENCE

2022 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Wildlife Officers.** Through an extremely stringent process, the Ohio Division of Wildlife hired 11 new wildlife officer cadets and started training them to fill vacancies. Upon completing basic peace officer training, they will complete a specialized wildlife officer school and then six months of field training.
- **Fish Hatchery Improvements.** A comprehensive assessment of state fish hatcheries resulted in proceeding with a \$1.2 million infrastructure improvement project at London State Fish Hatchery. This hatchery produces brown trout, rainbow trout, and muskellunge.
- **Shooting Range Check-in Process.** Created a remote check-in process at Indian Creek and Tranquility wildlife area shooting ranges in partnership with Sovereign Sportsman Solutions. The system allows users to scan their shooting range permits for entrance and makes check-out more efficient.
- **Update Statewide Fisheries Database.** Preliminary project documents and a request for proposals were completed in efforts to enhance the database that houses fisheries survey data collected from Ohio's inland lakes, the Ohio River, and Lake Erie. The revision will improve data entry, security, and use in addition to improving public access to summary information.
- **Conservation Adventures.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife continues to partner with the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation and their Conservation Adventures program. More than 50 schools around the state have adopted the curriculum and interest continues to grow. This program is aimed at increasing wildlife conservation education programs and fundamentally shifts the way we educate high school students about the value and importance of conservation.
- **Law Enforcement Operations.** A plan was implemented during 2022 to restructure the Ohio Division of Wildlife's law enforcement operations, including the position of district enforcement operations manager. Designated as a uniform position, these managers guide all enforcement operations in their respective districts, while at the same time being ready to respond to assist officers or in an emergency. In 2022, all positions were filled.
- **Pre-Planning Environmental Assessment Tool.** Worked with InnovateOhio Platform to develop a self-service planning tool that helps users identify where potential interactions with sen-

sitive species in Ohio might occur. The tool provides up-front data inquiry visualization to prevent disruptions to wildlife and delays in development, and helps planning consultants meet permit requirements.

2023 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Sport Fish Data Visualization in the DataOhio Portal.** An updated statewide fisheries database will improve public access to summary sport fish information in the DataOhio Portal. The new visualization will add to fish stocking information in the DataOhio Portal and provide comparisons of fish populations that can further guide angler decisions on where to fish in Ohio waters.
- **Expanding the Extent of Acoustic Tagging Efforts on Lake Erie.** Pilot projects are underway to expand acoustic tagging efforts to yellow perch and smallmouth bass. Management of walleye, lake sturgeon, and other large-bodied Great Lakes fish species has greatly benefited from acoustic tagging efforts that are supported by the Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observation System. New projects will help determine optimal tag sizes for survival and detection of small-bodied fish such as yellow perch and the number and placement of additional receivers needed to optimize detection of smallmouth bass and other species that primarily inhabit shallow nearshore areas and may not move as extensively.
- **Water Safety Training.** Implement additional water rescue and survival training for wildlife officers to better prepare them to aid the public and fellow officers in times of crisis.
- **Wildlife Officers.** We will hire 15 new wildlife officer cadets. The new cadets will fill anticipated vacancies because of retirements. Wildlife officers combine law enforcement and wildlife conservation with public service.
- **Wildlife Management & Research Staffing.** Staffing reorganization of the Wildlife Management & Research section will include hiring 6 Assistant Wildlife Management Supervisors, 8 Wildlife Management Consultants, 3 Wildlife Research Technicians, and backfilling Wildlife Area Technician positions to increase customer engagement with private landowners and increase habitat management on public lands.



CONNECTIONS

2022 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Private Lands Outreach.** Staff supported statewide habitat improvement initiatives and developed partnerships for private land development of young forest habitat projects.
 - Took part in the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team and cross-agency prescribed fires with the Ohio Division of Forestry and Wayne National Forest in the Hocking Plateau Shared Stewardship Project Area.
 - Participated in landowner field days with the Pheasants Forever Working Lands for Wildlife Grazing Specialist to discuss habitat improvement efforts for bobwhite quail in southern Ohio.
 - Worked with partners to market extra Division of Wildlife EQIP funding to establish wild turkey habitat improvement practices. Efforts resulted in almost \$3 million and nearly 500 EQIP contracts in Ohio.
 - Co-hosted both landowner and professional wild turkey habitat workshops with Ohio State University Extension, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other partners.
 - Created a spatial habitat model for ruffed grouse habitat in eastern Ohio to target areas for young forest creation.
 - Worked with USDA-FSA and NRCS, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and other partners to implement H2Ohio WQIP and the Lake Erie CREP.
 - Partnered with the Ohio Division of Forestry, Ohio Society of American Foresters, and The Nature Conservancy to create a website providing a listing of forestry and wildlife habitat vendors.
- **Lake Erie Charter Boat Captain Certification Program.** The Division of Wildlife partnered with Ohio Sea Grant and Lake Erie charter boat captains to develop a Charter Boat Captain Certification Program. The certification promotes the charter industry, fisheries stewardship, sustainable resource use, and ethical fishing and boating through a series of educational modules as part of a complete curriculum. The program will launch during 2023.
- **Customer Relationship Management System.** Staff have evaluated the current license sales system and established desired capabilities and functions for a more comprehensive customer relationship management system.
- **Magee Marsh Visitor Center Under Renovation.** Renovation of the Magee Marsh Visitor Center is scheduled to be completed

in spring 2023, in time to welcome birders. The updated information center will be attractive and accessible and feature educational, immersive displays about the area's hunting heritage, its wildlife and habitats, and ongoing conservation work.

- **International Mentorship Program.** In conjunction with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the African Center for Aquatic Research and Education's African Women in Science Program, the Ohio Division of Wildlife hosted delegates from Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Lake Erie staff demonstrated sampling techniques, discussed inter-agency management, and learned about the scientific and cultural differences that the African scientists experience at home. Several staff continue to meet with these scientists through a mentorship program.
- **Implemented Digital Marketing Tools.** In partnership with Sovereign Sportsman Solutions, we implemented the use of marketing automation and a customer relationship management platform. Optimized campaigns continue to expand product promotion to new audiences. These tools help us to strengthen our service and connections to hunters, anglers, and wildlife conservation supporters.

2023 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Put-in-Bay Aquatic Visitor's Center.** Work will begin on a \$5 million renovation of the Put-in-Bay Aquatic Visitor's Center that will upgrade the facility and prepare it for future outreach and education.
- **Visible Patrols.** As people return to the outdoors and the use of our areas increases, we will focus on more visible patrols on heavily used Ohio Division of Wildlife properties so visitors feel safe while using our areas. These patrols will protect our properties from misuse or abuse and protect the public that has come to enjoy our natural resources.
- **Review and Update Resources.** The Ohio Division of Wildlife has a wealth of resources available for use by the public. We will review publications and online information to ensure clear, accurate information is provided and readily available to the public to gain compliance with regulations.
- **Engaging New Audiences.** Explore ways to reach new persons to help them comply with regulations. This outreach could translate into better compliance and foster good relationships between the public and the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

A photograph of two individuals in camouflage clothing and hats, standing in a field of tall, dry corn stalks. One person is pointing towards the other, who is smiling.

ENGAGEMENT

2022 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Wild Ohio Harvest Community Website.** The website expanded online skills content and recipes to equip the public with the knowledge and confidence to pursue wildlife recreation. Additional resources promote opportunities to gain hands-on experience in a professionally led class, course, or experience.
- **Wild Ohio.** The magazine continues to be recognized for its award-winning content and design. With more than 40,000 subscribers, article topics are being expanded to encompass all the ways Ohioans participate in outdoor recreation. The 2022 calendar edition featured a new 13-month layout while continuing to display the very best of wildlife photography.
- **Kayak Locker.** The cellular service necessary to operate self-service kayak lockers was not sufficient at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area; therefore, the locker will be installed at Wildlife District Three in Akron to provide users with the ability to rent one of six kayaks to enjoy the various fishing ponds.
- **Citizen Science Participation.** In collaboration with the International Crane Foundation and the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, the Division of Wildlife helped coordinate a 24-county sandhill crane count. More than 300 sandhill cranes, a state-threatened species, were documented in the state.
- **Bee Survey.** In partnership with The Ohio State University, Ohio Bee Survey volunteers and lab members netted approximately 116 species of bees statewide. Sixty-five of these species are considered specialists, meaning they are dependent on a select few flowering plant species, demonstrating the importance of biodiversity.
- **Bat Survey.** The Division of Wildlife along with 32 volunteers completed 18 mobile acoustic survey routes to study bat distribution in Ohio. Seven of these routes were new in 2022 and the remaining routes have been surveyed at least once before. All data are uploaded to the North American Bat Monitoring Program, which monitors bat population trends for the entire continent.
- **Trout and Steelhead Summit.** The Division of Wildlife met with members of 19 Ohio trout fishing organizations and clubs, Cleveland Metroparks, and Geauga Park District at a stakeholder summit to provide updates and facilitate discussions about trout in Ohio.

2023 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Hatchery Engagement.** Install informational kiosks at the state fish hatcheries to provide the public with more awareness of hatchery operations and facility opportunities. Additionally, develop a self-guided walking tour for visitors at St. Marys State Fish Hatchery.
- **Lake Erie State of the Lake Dashboard.** Lake Erie fisheries staff worked with interagency partners and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to publish an interactive dashboard that characterizes the status of Lake Erie fish populations. Survey and fisheries indicators are used to graphically display the status of fish stocks that are important to stakeholder groups. The dashboard replaces printed publications and provides an easily updated format to summarize each five-year assessment period.
- **Wildlife Rehabilitation.** Work with licensed wildlife rehabilitators to improve and implement additional minimum standards for wildlife care, providing a resource the public can turn to with injured wild animals.
- **Wild Ohio Harvest Community Expansion.** Continue to build partnerships with new organizations and connect them to Wild Ohio Harvest Community resources online and in person.
- **Expanded Student Outreach.** Continue to expand the Ohio Division of Wildlife's education and outreach to middle schools and high schools by supporting student wildlife research projects. Grants, professional development for teachers, and coordination of the Environmental Education Council of Ohio's annual Student Wildlife Research Symposium further enhance this initiative.

