

**AGENDA**  
**Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission**  
**Regular Meeting**

**Public Meeting:**     **Monday, December 4, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**  
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

In compliance with the Open Meeting Act, this meeting is scheduled to be streamed live and recorded at [www.youtube.com/user/outdooroklahoma](http://www.youtube.com/user/outdooroklahoma)

The Commission may vote to approve, disapprove, or take other action on any of the following items. The Commission may vote to authorize public comment on any agenda item requesting a rule change.

1. Call to Order – Chairwoman Gaddis
2. Roll Call – Rhonda Hurst
3. Invocation – Ken Cunningham
4. Pledge of Allegiance – Ken Cunningham
5. Introduction of Guests
6. Presentation of Awards

Matthew Hensley, Wildlife Biologist – 20 years of service  
Clint Carpenter, Game Warden – 25 years of service

7. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on minutes from the November 6, 2023, regular Commission meeting.
8. Director's Report – J.D. Strong
  - a. Federal and Congressional Update
    - Oklahoma Legislative Update – Catherine Appling-Pooler
  - b. Calendar Items – discussion of upcoming department calendar items.
  - c. Agency Update – an update on current activity within each division of the agency.
9. Presentation of the October 31, 2023, Financial Statement and consideration and vote to approve, amend, or reject miscellaneous donations – Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration.
10. Presentation of the FY 2023 Annual Financial Audit – Amanda Storck and Dan Bledsoe, Finley & Cook PLLC.
11. Presentation of the FY2023 Actuarial Valuation Report for the Wildlife Defined Benefit Plan – Amanda Storck and David Sawyer, Definiti LLC.
12. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on the Department's Vehicle Policy – Amanda Storck.

13. Discussion and possible action to convene in Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S.2021, § 307(B)(1), to discuss the “the employment, hiring, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining or resignation” of the Director. [OWCC Vice Chairman Barwick and Chairman of the Performance Review Committee]
  - a. Vote to enter Executive Session.
  - b. EXECUTIVE SESSION pursuant to 25 O.S.2021, § 307(B)(1).
  - c. Vote to exit Executive Session.
  - d. Possible action regarding item(s) discussed in Executive Session.
14. New Business – Discussion of any matter not known about, or which could not have been reasonably foreseen 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
15. Announce the January 8, 2024 Commission meeting will be in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
16. Adjourn

**People with disabilities may request accommodations by calling 405-522-6279 at least three days before the meeting.**

## MINUTES

Of the Regular Meeting on November 6, 2023, of the

### OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Held at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on November 6, 2023. Commission meeting dates are filed with the Secretary of State, Office of Administrative Rules before December 15, annually. The agenda is listed on the Department's website and was posted at the entrance of the Wildlife Department Building on October 27, 2023, at 11:40 a.m.

Chairwoman Leigh Gaddis called the Commission in session at 9:00 a.m.

Rhonda Hurst, Executive Assistant, called the roll.

MEMBERS PRESENT:      LEIGH A. GADDIS, Chairwoman  
                                 JAMES V. BARWICK, Vice-Chairman  
                                 C. RICK HOLDER, Secretary  
                                 D. CHAD DILLINGHAM, Member  
                                 MARK H. MABREY, Member  
                                 JESS M. KANE, Member  
                                 TIM DIEHL, Member  
                                 JOHN P. ZELBST, Member

J.D. Strong, Director, introduced the following guests: Rick Grundman, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF); Laura McIver, Quail Forever/Pheasants Forever; Senator Brent Howard; Jerry Hamersley and Jeremy Atteberry, Altus Public Schools; Lynn Hagerman and Oscar Juanes, National Wild Turkey Federation; Niki Batt, Assistant Attorney General Council.

Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education, introduced Kelly Boyer, Communication and Education Specialist, who is the Archery In the Schools program coordinator. Mr. Boyer introduced the Altus Public School archery teams and their coaches, Jeremy Atteberry and Jerry Hamersley. These two teams won multiple awards at the state and national level. The Altus Intermediate Elementary and Altus Jr. High won 1<sup>st</sup> place teams at the OKNASP Grand State for the third year in a row. At the 2023 NASP National Competition, the Altus Intermediate Elementary were the National Championship Team for the third year in a row and the Turner Holder Elementary were Division National Champions. For the 2023 NASP Open Championships, Turner Holder, Grayson Wilmes Elementary, held the Division Male Champion award. Mr. Turner is the grandson of Commissioner Rick Holder.

Commissioner Holder stated that he had grown up in Altus and never remembered any sport getting this type of recognition. These students are part of an elite group of National Champions, he said. They spend countless hours practicing and have an amazing work ethic. Director Strong said he meets with other state Directors, and they are always bragging about the incredible Archery In the Schools Program in Oklahoma. These student accomplishments from Altus make us proud across the country. Senator Brent Howard addressed the group and said these students are developing characteristics that they can apply to the rest of their lives and are exceptional ambassadors for youth in Oklahoma. Representative Gerrid Kendrix sent a video of congratulations to be played for the audience.

Nels Rodefild recognized Blake Podhajsky, Communication and Education Specialist, for receiving first place in the Family Participation/Youth Outdoor Education category in the Outdoor Writers Association of America awards. Mr. Podhajsky also won second place for the Hunting or Shooting Sports category.

Director Strong announced the ODWC award recipients from the 2023 Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies:

Riley Willman, Delaware County Game Warden, SEAFWA Game Warden of the Year  
Betsey York, Human Dimensions Specialist, Special Recognition Award

Jennifer Benge, Communication and Education Technician, Gold Award for Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Colonel Nathan Erdman and Captain Gary Emmons recognized and gave commendations to Wardens who were instrumental in a manhunt for the suspect that shot a Cleveland County Deputy. Captain Emmons said the following Wardens went above and beyond to bring resolution to a difficult situation – Lieutenant Casey Young, Jaylen Flynn, Royce Gillham, Zach Paulk, and Ty Runyan.

Rick Grundman, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation, presented the keys to a new Patriot Airboat to Colonel Nathan Erdman to be used statewide for law enforcement. This boat was donated to the Foundation by John and Debra Hall of Red Rock Ranch. Captain Ben Bickerstaff and Warden Stephen Paul were instrumental in facilitating this donation. Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Diehl to accept the airboat donation as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, introduced Lynn Hagerman with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), who presented a donation of \$28,000. Mr. Dinkines praised the NWTf for a long, outstanding partnership with ODWC. Mr. Hagerman requested the money be used for Canton WMA cedar removal, Waurika WMA, Archery in the Schools Program and the Scholastic Shooting Sports Program. Motion was made by Commissioner Mabrey, seconded by Commissioner Barwick to accept the donation as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Motion was made by Commissioner Zelbst, seconded by Commissioner Kane to approve the minutes from the October 2, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Director Strong said regarding the upcoming legislative session, we are planning to host a legislative reception at the department headquarters on February 5, 2024, the first day of session. Director Strong also gave a brief update and highlighted the Congressional report submitted by Brittnee Preston, the Department's part-time Federal and Congressional Liaison. This report was sent to all Commissioners and will be kept with the minutes of this meeting. Mr. Strong gave a Director's Report on calendar items and agency updates. This report was given to the Commission and will be kept with the minutes of this meeting. Director Strong noted that 2023 was a record-breaking bear harvest with a total of 86.

Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration presented the Financial Statement for September 30, 2023. Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Diehl to accept the financial statement as presented and approve miscellaneous contributions. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Amanda Storck requested Commission approval on a FY24 budget revision. A \$28,100 revision to move existing budget from division to the Administration IT budget and a \$68,422 from carryover to Communication and Education division for a total of \$96,522. Commissioner

Holder, Chairman of the Finance Committee, stated that the committee had reviewed this budget revision item and recommends approval. Motion was made by Commissioner Holder, seconded by Commissioner Dillingham to approve the budget revision as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Amanda Storck introduced Andrea Crews, Federal Aid Coordinator, who gave an overview of federal grants at the department. Commissioner Barwick asked about reversion of Wildlife Restoration funds. Ms. Crews explained we have never reverted funds by failing to obligate enough money into grants but have recently reverted due to grants ending with unspent money remaining and failing to recover those funds through fully-exhausted safety margins. Director Strong stated that it is getting harder and harder to match with state funds on our flat revenue. We must increase our income. Commissioner Barwick requested quarterly update reports on allocations of apportionments.

Bill Dinkines introduced Tell Judkins, Upland Game Biologist, who gave a presentation on quail and pheasant survey results and season forecasts. He also provided handouts of the results. Mr. Judkins said to help inform the public, this presentation will go on the department website immediately following the meeting and the upland update email was sent to constituents last week.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to enter into an executive session regarding the annual personnel review of the Executive Director. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to return to open session. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Commissioner Kane stated that no action will be taken at this meeting on the Executive Session. The Performance Review Committee will meet and follow up with Director Strong at a later date.

The Commission reviewed the follow list of possible meeting dates for 2024: January 2 (Tuesday), February 5, March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3, July 1, August 5, September 3 (Tuesday), October 7, November 4, December 2. Motion was made by Commissioner Mabrey, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to approve the dates with the revision of changing the January 2 meeting date to Monday, January 8 to avoid holiday conflicts. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

The December Commission meeting will be December 4, 2023 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Leigh A. Gaddis, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

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C. Rick Holder, SECRETARY

# October 2023 DIRECTOR'S REPORT



OKLAHOMA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION**

## CALENDAR ITEMS:

Dec 4 Monthly Commission Meeting, ODWC Headquarters, OKC  
Dec 7 Rulemaking Public Hearing at 7 PM, ODWC Headquarters, OKC

## AGENCY UPDATE

### ADMINISTRATION

#### Accounting

Accounts Payable:

# of Claims Audited and Paid 300

Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid 1,977,783.60

Purchase Card Program:

Total # Agency Cardholders 192

Total # Agency Approvers (no cards) 14

Total Agency Monthly Standard Spending Limits \$378,000.00

Total Agency Spending Limits w/ Approved Increase Requests \$558,000.00

# of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved 38

# of P/Card Transactions Processed 791

# of ODWC In-depth Audited Transactions 111

OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions 26

Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases \$216,879.85

PCard Program Refresher Training 36

New Approver Training at OMES 1

New Cardholder Training at OMES 4

Risk Management:

OMES Surveys or Premiums Completed 1

New Cases Reported 2

Purchasing:

# of Purchase Orders/CO issued 669

IT Acquisitions Processed 50

Construction Site Visits:

Mandatory pre-bid meeting 10/25/2023 Canton WMA

#### Federal Aid

- Federal Reimbursement Request: \$2,073,746.60
- Program Income: \$45,006.54
- In-Kind Contributions: \$25,288.00
- Ongoing Federal Audit Repayment: \$828,928.40 cumulative
- New Grants or Amendments Submitted: 3

- Grant Reports Submitted: 46
- Fisheries and Wildlife division Pcard charges sorted into 351 unique combinations of Fund / Division / Grant number / Project number / Product Code / Area / Object Code for claim jacket preparation
- Subaward invoices processed: 18
- Key Meetings / Milestones: Attended OSU celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Fish and Wildlife Coop Unit, as well as the annual business meeting of the Unit; Ongoing PeopleSoft migration (19 meetings); Meeting with Indirect Cost proposal contractor to review FY25 rate calculations and discuss options; Meeting with federal and NGO partners for Drummond Flat restoration planning; Meeting with USFWS and ODWC to discuss capital expenditures; Federal Aid Coordinator participated in Northeast Region supervisor's meeting; ongoing training of newest Grants Assistant; Compiled and submitted ODWC response to Civil Rights Review by USFWS
- Special Note: USFWS announced excise tax collections for the first three quarters of FFY23 were down 19.5% for Wildlife Restoration and 15.7% for Sport Fish Restoration

### **Human Resources**

# Open Full-time Positions - 20

Positions Interviewed - 4

Candidates interviewed - 19

Positions Announced - 3

Candidates Screened - 0

Filled Positions - 9 (4 new hires, 4 promotions, 1 transfer)

See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month

Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), - 2

Full time employees on March payroll - 337

DB Plan Members - 153

DC Plan Members - 184

Hourly employees on supplemental payroll - 31

Retirement meetings and / or calculations - 4

Work Comp Injuries - 0

Other misc:

- Continue to answer Workday questions
- MINRC meeting attended
- I&D Consortium
- Relevancy Meeting
- Submitted article for HR Corner & DEI in WOG
- Submitted article for LDP Level Two Kickoff for the WOG
- Recorded and edited training videos for Performance Review process
- Created HR Toolkit Fact Sheet for Performance Review process
- New employee orientation for 4 new employees

### **IT**

November was an average month for IT for inbound tickets 110 for the month. We are halfway through the full server migration. We have finished setting up and swapping our old virtual servers to their new homes. Now we are building new virtual servers to make sure we are compatible with security standards for years to come. There has also been extensive work with other departments to make sure they are ready for the PeopleSoft transition.

### Upcoming and Ongoing Projects:

- There was request for us to create a new Payroll Report for Peoplesoft.
- Migrated old VM's to their new hosts.
- Returned old, leased hardware to HPE.
- Our audit has concluded, and we are awaiting our finalized report.
- We have started the purchasing request for this coming years batch of leased hardware.
- We have worked closely with HR, Accounting and Property to create custom reports in the PeopleSoft system.

### License

- Processed over 676 orders, including 633 licenses/permits and 428 hard cards (mail and walk-in orders) - \$77,410 in revenue
- Shipped 533 in-house merchandise items (patches, books, etc), totaling over \$4,300 in revenue.
- Processed \$93,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
- Reviewed 1,262 online and paper applications for various licenses and permits.

### October License Review

Recreational Licenses were down 4.5% for the month compared to October 2022 and down 1% overall in the category year to date.

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Resident Hunting	-15% (6,485)	-14%
Resident Fishing	-0.5% (2,956)	+2%
Resident Combo	+7.5% (691)	-17%
Resident Youth Hunting	-15% (1,032)	-5%
Resident Youth Deer Gun Antlered	0% (8,491)	-2%
Resident Youth Deer Gun Antlerless	-1.5% (6,898)	-3%
Resident Deer Muzzleloader Antlered	-12% (4,713)	-12%
Resident Deer Muzzleloader Antlerless	-23% (2,322)	-24%
Nonresident Deer Muzzleloader	+2% (997)	+0.5%
Nonresident Deer Archery	+11% (3,246)	+3%

Lifetime Licenses were down 3% for the month compared to October 2022 and are down 3% year to date (13,571 sold).

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Lifetime Combo	0% (390)	-10%
Lifetime Fishing	+70% (92)	-5%
Senior Citizen Combo	-11% (371)	0%

### Mid-November License Review (Sales through Nov. 14)

Recreational Licenses are up 25% for the month compared to November 2022 and up 1% to date.

Notables include:



License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Resident Hunting	+43% (4,351)	-7%
Resident Fishing	+45% (981)	+2%
Resident Combo	+43% (43%)	-16%
Resident Deer Gun Antlered	+15% (2,953)	+1%
Resident Deer Gun Antlerless	+8% (2,033)	0%
Resident Youth Hunting	+39% (309)	-1%
Resident Youth Deer Gun Antlered	+14% (525)	-1%
Resident Youth Deer Gun Antlerless	13% (363)	-3%
Nonresident Youth Deer Gun Either Sex	+140% (96)	+37%
Nonresident Youth Deer Gun Antlerless	+153% (38)	+19%
Nonresident Deer Gun	+30% (1,094)	+15%
Nonresident Deer Archery	+11% (1,652)	+4%

Lifetime License sales are up 8% for the month compared to November 2022 and are down 2% year to date (14,089 sold).

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Lifetime Combo	-3% (168)	-10%
60-100% Disabled Veteran Combo	0% (53)	+5%
Senior Citizen Combo	+28% (173)	+1%

### Property

- Finished internal employee review of surplus items going to auction. 18 of the 140 items planned for auction were claimed by other agency staff to utilize in their regions.
- Deployed 1 new vehicle to fish division and received 2 two new law trucks to prepare for deployment. 1 new vehicle remains to be received for 2023.
- Received and approved law enforcement patches from new uniform vendor.
- Finalized list of vehicles going to auction and started preparing confirmed vehicles for auction by removing equipment and decals.
- Completed PeopleSoft Asset Management testing.

### FISHERIES DIVISION

Statewide Fish Stockings, October 2023			
Species	#Fish	Size	# Locations
Channel catfish	10,070	9-24"	24
Hybrid Sunfish	7,803	5-7"	14
Brown trout	5,096	9"	2
Rainbow trout, USFWS	10,077	10.74-11.11	3
Rainbow trout, Commercial	5,896	9+"	3
Rainbow trout, Commercial	397	14-24"	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,339</b>		<b>49</b>

## Meetings

- Staff attended SEAFWA where they attended presentations or committees, networked, and presented the findings of fisheries projects.
- Staff attended OCFWRU reunion at Oklahoma State University.

## Activities

- Completed annual fish trade with Wyoming receiving 5,000 catchable brown trout that were distributed to Lower Mtn. Fork and Illinois Rivers. In return, we loaded 70,000 1.25-inch Bluegill.
- BFH received 30,000 fertilized rainbow trout eggs from Tennessee. These eggs were incubated for 7 days and were successfully hatched. These fish are currently about an inch long and are feeding well.
- Hatchery Manager attended NWOSU Career Day to help with BFH-NWR internship program.
- Weekly electrofishing samples were conducted on four farm ponds to determine the effects of stocking tilapia in a farm pond. Largemouth bass data and diets were collected. Data analysis is ongoing.
- Trees and shrubs removal on the Etling dam was completed. American Horse was mowed for the last time this season and trash was picked up.
- Initial trout stockings were conducted at Bocher and Sunset lakes. Trout season opened on November 1st.
- Personnel investigated fish kill in Crow Creek in the city of Tulsa to determine if the cause was anthropogenic, however exact cause could not be readily determined.
- Personnel conducted gill net surveys on Bixhoma Lake to determine the presence or absence of gizzard and threadfin shad populations that were stocked earlier in the year as a forage base for largemouth bass.
- Personnel continued working on Federal Aid Reports for waters sampled throughout the state for the past 2 years.
- Staff attended the Eufaula public meeting to discuss fisheries management.
- Completed shop projects including the addition of an ice machine, additional washing station, and necessary plumbing.
- Staff developed and ordered area signs for BRPFHA and Ambassador coins. Additionally, BRPFHA made improvements to camping sites in Area 5.
- Staff collected dissolved oxygen readings below Texoma dam and communicated with USACE.
- Communicated with USFWS regarding BIL fish passage project potential at Blue River and submitted a letter of intent.
- Staff conducted a site visit at the City of Maud public fishing area. Staff discussed dam maintenance, vegetation control, and fisheries management.
- Staff conducted random samples and collected otoliths from crappie for age and growth on Eufaula Lake, Purcell, Pauls Valley, Thunderbird, Hugo, Pine Creek, Clayton, Tenkiller, Grand, Spavinaw, and Texoma Reservoirs. Trap net surveys were conducted on Claremore Lake for crappie and pulled otoliths of various length groups to determine regulation change impacts on age and growth. Otoliths were pulled from various length groups to determine the age and growth of the populations.

- Conducted gillnetting on Pine Creek, Clayton Lakes, Birch, Skiatook, Sooner, Lone Chimney, Ponca, and assisted SOSU with gillnet sampling in Widowmore cutoff lake, and Claremore Lake. Gill net surveys were also conducted on Grand and Hudson Lakes, with white bass and hybrid striped bass otoliths collected for age and growth data and to determine stocking success of hybrids.
- Staff assisted USFWS with Alligator Gar collection at Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery. Also, obtained data for an interagency assessment of the sensitivity of sex prediction models for the species
- Staff completed annual inspections of Boating and Fishing Access projects statewide. Met with Pauls Valley and Edmond to go over dock grant requirements and applications.
- Staff assisted with an OGE partnership fishing clinic at Sooner Lake, Eagle Scout Project at Edmond CTHFP ponds, and three fishing clinics.
- Assessed sauger stocking success on central region lakes.
- Worked on the first draft of Skipjack Herring sampling report and began work on lake reports.
- Conducted ongoing angler creels on Ft Gibson and McGee Creek Reservoirs.
- Completed CITES info for USFWS/Caviar export permit.
- Met with w/state parks and LMFR federation about Lower Mtn Fork River trout fishery.
- Staff attended the kickoff course for LDP 2.
- Six black bass surveys were completed on the Little River. We removed otoliths from 32 Little River Bass and 34 Spotted Bass. An additional survey was conducted on the Illinois River to target trophy-sized Smallmouth Bass for an age/growth dataset. Two individuals > 20" were collected, processed, and aged. All black bass data was entered in Excel.
- Started a collaborative project with Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri compiling Neosho Bass age and size data. Currently, we have data from over 700 individuals across 11 streams. Additional data collection is planned for next year. Data will be used to publish growth and size standards to facilitate population comparisons across the Neosho Bass range.
- Reports for landowners, which describe the species we captured on their property during our community surveys, were prepared and sent to the landowners who expressed interest.
- Miscellaneous duties conducted by staff members also included reviewing and approving scientific collector permit applications and letters of authorization, performed quality control checks on 2023 community data entry, started working on Southern Division AFS abstracts and presentations, entered historical community data into our database, and continued assisting with the development of the Shiny creel application.

## **C&E DIVISION**

- Damon Springer, Shawn Gee, Kelly Boyer, Lance Meek, Jason Smith and Jennifer Benge conducted the District FFA Clay target shoots at Norman and Oklahoma City.
- ODWC was recognized as the state that has made the most progress on fishing related R3 efforts over the past five years.

- Kassie Harriet conducted virtual learn to hunt courses with record attendance at the deer gun course. She also oversaw the review of hunting photos submitted to The Tailgate on the website.
- Betsey York compiled and presented the report from the survey of Oklahoma trappers.
- Gar Week was an outstanding success on social media.
- Lance Meek submitted OMES paperwork for the engineering contract for the Arcadia Conservation Education Area parking lot.
- The ODWC hunt at Crosstimbers is scheduled to take place on Dec. 2-3.
- Outdoor Oklahoma video staff attended the Lexington Wildlife Management Area hunt to document that event as part of the access communication plan. Staff conducted Hunter Education courses leading up to the deer gun season.
- Staff worked to produce new episodes of the Outdoor Oklahoma television show. The latest issue of Outdoor Oklahoma magazine featured the annual calendar focused on private land management.
- Lance Meek coordinated use of the Arcadia Conservation Education facility by several partner groups as well as agency staff.

## **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

The past couple of months mark the period of highest visitor use on WMA's with major fall seasons open or recently ended. User contacts are very high this time of year. Habitat management continued as season and peak use dates allowed:

- Installed 4 new entrance signs
- Maintained 52 miles of firebreaks in preparation for planned dormant season burns
- Mowed /disced 114 acres for habitat manipulation
- Maintained 49 miles of area roads
- Masticated / chemically treated 177 acres of invasive vegetation
- Pumping Wetland Development Units as conditions allow.
- Monitored and inspected agricultural leases
- Muzzleloader season got off to a slow start (very wet opening weekend), but harvest picked up substantially with cooler weather and increasing deer activity the remainder of the season, with a total harvest of just over 15K, (up from ~12k in 2022)
- Through the end of Muzzleloader season, antlerless harvest was 53% of the total harvest. This percentage always declines with rifle season but puts us on target to meet our management goal of 40-45% antlerless harvest.
- Quail season opener was slow, with a lower than anticipated number of hunters, and success was variable, but most hunters on most areas reported seeing fair to good numbers of birds. The number of phone calls being fielded by WMA staff indicates that use is likely to noticeably increase post deer gun season.
- Assigned staff continued to work with DMAP cooperators to ensure management goals / harvest needs are being met
- Numerous controlled hunts were conducted. As always, these are very well received and appreciated by constituents.
- Wildlife Diversity staff attended the Swift Fox Recovery Team annual meeting. Mark Howery and Cheyenne Gonzalez will co-chair the team for 2024. Oklahoma will host the next annual meeting (probably spring 2025).
- Processed payment claims for all OLAP land leases. OLAP Biologist position is temporarily vacant, but we plan to refill without missing a beat.

- Final proofs have been reviewed and we anticipate having landowner calendars delivered and ready to distribute in early December.
- GIS section continues updating database as needed to keep reporting and public facing sites current.
- Will be closing on the Killian and Kromer tract acquisitions at Packsaddle WMA by the end of the year.
- Furbearer season opened December 1. The fur market report is a roller coaster (as has been the case the last few years. Generally speaking, beaver, river otter, bobcat and striped skunk pelts are forecasted to remain at or above last year's prices.
- Falconry activity has fluctuated commensurate with weather conditions. Oklahoma had one passage peregrine falcon trapped (by a non-resident trapper from New Mexico), near Jay, OK on the 2nd day of legal trapping season.
- Mountain lion activity has hit a high for the 2023 season. There have been 14 confirmations of mountain lions across the state, and 8 of those have been in Osage county. As of 11/9/2023 we have had 71 confirmed mountain lion reports submitted since 2002.
- The CWD SSA Sample collection freezers have seen some use, with an anticipated increase in use during the deer gun season. Samples are being collected, and the remainder of the parts are disposed of within the SSA at approved landfills.
- Staff are working closely with OSU staff on the quail research project evaluating effects of hunter use on quail populations on WMA's. The short break in quail season (first 9 days of deer gun season) should allow for an assessment of progress and identify any needed change in methodology.
- Working on grazing (watering) infrastructure at Packsaddle and Ellis County WMA's.
- Continue monitoring the recently translocated Red-cockaded woodpeckers released on the McCurtain County Wilderness Area

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- Game Wardens have been very busy with cases with deer season going full strength. Lots of calls, spot lighters, illegal deer, road hunting complaints, etc.
- Wardens conducted an overpass operation in D1 with minimum luck.
- Decoys were shot in D3 and D8 over opening weekend as well.
- We have two new Captains in the state.
  - D1 Hank Jenks (Clinton.jenks@odwc.ok.gov in email)
  - D8 Ben Bickerstaff (formally Alfalfa County)
- Warden Chris Newkirk transferred from Nowata County to Delaware County to fill the opening that was made when Hank Jenks promoted to Captain.
- New PowerReady program has been working out great on the new FTO program.



J. KEVIN STITT, GOVERNOR

J. D. STRONG, DIRECTOR

Wildlife Conservation Commission

Leigh Gaddis

Chairman

James V. Barwick

Vice Chairman

Rick Holder

Secretary

Tim Diehl

D. Chad Dillingham

Jess Kane

Mark H. Mabrey

John P. Zelbst

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** November 20, 2023

**TO:** OK Department of Wildlife Commission and Staff

**FROM:** Brittnee Preston

**RE:** Report on November Federal and Congressional Issues for December Commission Meeting

### Congress:

Speaker of the House updates –

- > After twenty-two days, fourteen candidates, four nominees, and four floor votes; the Speaker of the House position was filled! Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) was officially elected and sworn in as Speaker of the House on October 25th.
- > Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana was elected to be Speaker of the House by a vote of 220-212. He is in his 4th Congressional term, has never served in a leadership position and has never held a committee chairmanship. He did not waste any time putting the House back in business. The Speaker put forward a resolution on Israel within minutes of his election and began floor work on an appropriations bill later that same day.

General activity –

- > The House Natural Resources committee held a couple of markups on several bills including:
  1. [HR 5009](#) — Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver reauthorization (WILD) Act.
  2. [H.R. 520](#) - To amend the Endangered Species Act to provide that artificially propagated animals shall be treated the same under that Act as naturally propagated animals.
  3. [H.R. 5504](#) - To require the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to withdraw proposed rules relating to the Endangered Species Act.
- > The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing on Wildlife Migration Corridors this week and heard testimony from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Center for Public Lands. The witnesses really centered their comments on encouraging smart investment in infrastructure, which they believe can solve the connectivity and free movement of wildlife. They emphasized that connectivity and free movement is a fixable problem. Unfortunately, the biggest hurdles are cost and coordination between applicable agencies: USFWS and DOT. Wildlife corridors are construction projects and they do cost a lot of money. USFWS and the DOT need to be working together to change the dynamics of moving these projects forward.

Appropriations –

We manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.



- > Ahead of the government funding deadline of November 17<sup>th</sup>, the White House submitted a supplemental funding request for aid to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan totaling around \$106 billion.
- > The House and the Senate both attempted to pass the remaining appropriations bills during the first couple of weeks of November.
- > The Senate passed a three-bill spending package including: Mil-Con, Agriculture and Transportation-HUD spending bills.
- > The House passed a \$14.3 billion Israel aid bill as well as a few appropriations bills. Among those, they passed the Interior and Environment appropriations, which has a large amount of programs relevant to ODWC in it.
- > Even though both chambers active moved appropriations bills in the days leading up to the funding deadline, a CR was still expected.
- > The Senate is tossed around the potential of pushing through a maxi-bus on the 9 appropriations bills left on their docket, but ultimately, the appetite for a larger bill was not there and they ran out of time.
- > Government funding was extended a few days before the 17<sup>th</sup> through a CR, which easily passed both the House and the Senate.
- > Speaker Johnson put forth a clean CR for consideration with two deadlines:
  - Funding for agencies covered by the Military Construction-VA, Agriculture, Energy-Water and Transportation-HUD bills would be extended to Jan. 19, and
  - the agencies covered by the other eight annual appropriations bills would be extended to Feb. 2.
  - The bill did not include spending cuts nor emergency spending for Israel, Ukraine or the border but it does include a one-year extension of Farm bill programs.
  - The bill passed the House by a vote of 336-95 and the Senate by a vote of 87-11.
  - Only two Oklahoma House members voted against the CR: Representatives Brecheen and Hern.
- > This is the first time in over a decade that Congress has not been faced with a potential shutdown at Christmas time.

#### Farm bill –

- > A one-year extension was included in the CR. The Farm bill now expires on September 30, 2024.

#### Agencies:

- > The USFWS [announced](#) that they are expanding hunting opportunities on three National Wildlife Refuges.
- > The USFWS [announced](#) the FY 2024 Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) Program. Applications are due by February 22, 2023.

#### Coming up...

- > The FARM bill expired on September 30, 2024
- > The current CR expires on January 19<sup>th</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

***Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
Financial Statement***

***For the period July 1, 2023 Through October 31, 2023***



**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Combined Balance Sheet - All Fund Types and Accounts Groups**  
**October 31, 2023**

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary	Account Groups			
	General	Capital Projects	Fund Types	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	10/31/2023	10/31/2022
			Trust			Totals	Totals
<b>Assets and Other Debits:</b>							
Cash	12,361,528		4,462,872			16,824,400	16,180,043
Investments	0		251,653,678			251,653,678	237,781,081
Accounts Receivable	4,546,054					4,546,054	4,246,868
Monthly Lifetime License			332,600			332,600	334,825
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	7,169,197		7,000			7,176,197.00	4,474,157.00
Fixed Assets				78,016,078		78,016,078	77,680,906
Land				105,173,206		105,173,206	104,295,709
<b>Other Debits:</b>							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	0
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	21,202,403
	24,076,779	0	256,456,150	183,189,284	21,202,403	484,924,616	461,728,835
<b>Liabilities and Fund Balance:</b>							
<b>Liabilities:</b>							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	641,954					641,954	413,826
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	332,600					332,600	334,825
Compensated Absences Payable (leave accrual)					0	0	0
Net Pension Obligation					21,202,403	21,202,403	21,202,403
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>974,554</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21,202,403</b>	<b>22,176,957</b>	<b>21,951,054</b>
<b>Fund Balance:</b>							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			120,556,319			120,556,319	116,266,651
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			7,118,054			7,118,054	5,978,307
Investment in General Fixed Assets				183,189,284		183,189,284	181,976,615
<b>Fund Balance</b>	<b>23,102,225</b>		<b>128,781,777</b>			<b>151,884,002</b>	<b>135,556,208</b>
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>23,102,225</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>256,456,150</b>	<b>183,189,284</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>462,747,659</b>	<b>439,777,781</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>	<b>24,076,779</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>256,456,150</b>	<b>183,189,284</b>	<b>21,202,403</b>	<b>484,924,616</b>	<b>461,728,835</b>

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Trust Funds**

**Combining Balance Sheets**  
**October 31, 2023**

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	10/31/2023 Totals	10/31/2022 Totals
<b>Assets:</b>						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	533,459	3,929,413			4,462,872	4,166,348
Investments	24,539,665	99,439,640	120,556,319	7,118,054	251,653,678	243,759,388
Due From Other Funds		332,600			332,600	334,825
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	<b>25,073,124</b>	<b>103,708,653</b>	<b>120,556,319</b>	<b>7,118,054</b>	<b>256,456,150</b>	<b>248,267,561</b>
<b>Fund Balance:</b>						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			120,556,319	7,118,054	127,674,373	122,244,958
Fund Balance	25,073,124	103,708,653			128,781,777	126,022,603
Total Fund Balance	<b>25,073,124</b>	<b>103,708,653</b>	<b>120,556,319</b>	<b>7,118,054</b>	<b>256,456,150</b>	<b>248,267,561</b>

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances**  
**All Governmental Fund Types and Expendable Trust Fund**  
**For the Period July 1, 2023 Through October 31, 2023**

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	10/31/2023	10/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
<b>Revenues:</b>						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	7,195,975			7,195,975	7,003,860	2.74%
Other Wildlife Sales	764,939			764,939	838,718	-8.80%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	444,534			444,534	311,176	42.86%
Grant Revenue	9,093,490			9,093,490	9,022,742	0.78%
Investment Income	146,448		37,737	184,185	84,071	119.08%
Miscellaneous	386,837			386,837	414,958	-6.78%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>18,032,223</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37,737</b>	<b>18,069,960</b>	<b>17,675,525</b>	<b>2.23%</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>						
Administration	3,038,131			3,038,131	2,143,576	41.73%
Wildlife	5,364,828			5,364,828	5,559,995	-3.51%
Fish	3,432,718			3,432,718	3,418,239	0.42%
Law Enforcement	5,074,942			5,074,942	4,032,390	25.85%
Information and Education	1,130,205			1,130,205	1,250,844	-9.64%
Capital Improvements	1,513,731			1,513,731	2,815,039	-46.23%
Land Acquisitions		309,140		309,140	720,420	-57.09%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>19,554,555</b>	<b>309,140</b>		<b>19,863,695</b>	<b>19,940,503</b>	<b>-0.39%</b>
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(1,522,332)	(309,140)	37,737	(1,793,735)	(2,264,978)	-20.81%
<b>Other Financing Sources(uses):</b>						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	0	0.00%
Operating Transfers In	4,102,611	309,140	(5,574,746)	(1,162,995)	3,339,664	-134.82%
Operating Transfers Out	(309,140)		(4,102,611)	(4,411,751)	(4,818,783)	-8.45%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
<b>Total Other Financing Sources(uses)</b>	<b>3,793,471</b>	<b>309,140</b>	<b>(9,677,357)</b>	<b>(5,574,746)</b>	<b>(1,479,119)</b>	<b>276.90%</b>
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	2,271,139	0	(9,639,620)	(7,368,481)	(3,744,097)	96.80%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	20,831,086	0	34,712,744	55,543,830	43,010,699	29.14%
<b>Fund Balances October 31, 2023:</b>	<b>23,102,225</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25,073,124</b>	<b>48,175,349</b>	<b>39,266,602</b>	<b>22.69%</b>

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances**  
**Trust Funds**  
**For the Period July 1, 2023 Through October 31, 2023**

	Fiduciary Fund Types			10/31/2023 Totals	10/31/2022 Totals
	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust		
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	833,525			833,525	912,100
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	51,505			51,505	55,970
Interest and Investment Income	0	(6,138,716)	(483,793)	-6,622,509	-1,509,072
Employer Contributions		700,000	234,760	934,760	1,357,182
Employee Contributions		175,703	160,827	336,530	328,878
Total Operating Revenues	885,030	(5,263,013)	(88,206)	(4,466,189)	1,145,058
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		108,710	2,650	111,360	133,632
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	3,040,336	134,780	3,175,116	2,958,401
Total Operating Expenses	0	3,149,046	137,430	3,286,476	3,092,033
Operating Income	885,030	(8,412,059)	(225,636)	(7,752,665)	(1,946,975)
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	885,030	(8,412,059)	(225,636)	(7,752,665)	(1,946,975)
Fund Balances, Beginning	102,823,623	128,968,378	7,343,690	239,135,691	224,948,696
Fund Balances, October 31, 2023	103,708,653	120,556,319	7,118,054	231,383,026	223,001,721



## Wildlife Contributions Report

October 2023

<b>Total Payment Amount</b>	<b>Name Of Individual Or Business</b>	<b>Description Of Contribution</b>
\$700.00	Oklahoma Striper Association	Fish Division
\$1,000.00	DeCom Inc.	Fish Division
\$25,000.00	National Wild Turkey Federation	Wildlife Division - Packsaddle WMA
\$10,000.00	National Wild Turkey Federation	C&E Division - NGO Donation for NASP
\$11,000.00	National Wild Turkey Federation	Wildlife Division - Sandhills WMA (\$7,500) and Cimarron Bluff WMA (\$3,500)
<b>\$47,700.00</b>	<b>Total</b>	

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**J.D. Strong, Director**

**Personnel Actions**  
**November 2023**

**New Hires**

Kyla Chong – Accounting Assistant, Central Office, 11/6/23

Eric Cox – Fisheries Technician, Streams Program, Porter Office, 11/15/23

Waylon DePasse – Fisheries Technician, Invasive Species, Porter Office, 11/15/23

Kamdyn VanDorn – Fisheries Technician, ANS, Porter Office, 11/15/23

**Promotions**

Anthony Rodger – Fisheries Streams Biologist to Fisheries Senior Biologist/Research  
Coordinator, 11/1/23

Chris Whisenhunt – Fisheries Biologist to Fisheries Senior Biologist Environmental Compliance,  
11/1/23

Ben Bickerstaff – Warden Supervisor to District 8 Chief, 11/1/23

Hank Jenks – Warden, Delaware County to District 1 Chief, 11/1/23

**Transfers**

Zane Arnold – Game Warden, Coal County to Johnston County, 11/1/23

**Resignations/Terminations**

Jeffrey Tibbits – Wildlife OLAP Biologist, 11/10/23

Zack Prewitt – Wildlife Technician, 11/9/23

**Retirements**