



**MAY 2021
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

CALENDAR ITEMS:

April 7	OKSSSP State Shoot
April 14-16	Lt. Governor's Invitational Turkey Hunt
May 1	First <i>Vamos a Pescar</i> fishing clinic, South Lakes Park, OKC
May 3-7	Public Service Recognition Week
May 12	Legislative Fish Fry, State Capitol west lawn
May 15	Second <i>Vamos a Pescar</i> fishing clinic, South Lakes Park, OKC
May 20	Foundation, Department and OSU Coordination Night, Stillwater
May 25	Pinning ceremony for new Game Wardens, Headquarters
May 27	Commission Budget & Finance Committee meeting, Headquarters
May 28	Oklahoma Legislature adjourns Sine Die
June 5	Third <i>Vamos a Pescar</i> fishing clinic, South Lakes Park, OKC

AGENCY UPDATE

- **LEGISLATURE:**
 - The opposite chamber deadline has passed (4/22), and the Legislature now moves into conference committee and budget work. See packet for updates on the remaining Title 29/Wildlife-related bills. Sine Die is just around the corner!
 - Events/Activities:
 - ODWC hosted Representative Stan May, Senator Blake Stephens, Senator George Burns, and Senator Micheal Bergstrom on a paddlefishing trip.
 - SAVE THE DATE: Legislative Fish Fry, Wednesday, May 12th from 11:30-1
- **HUMAN DIMENSIONS**
 - Data from the elk reintroduction poll was very positive. The majority of respondents both in the reintroduction region and across the state are supportive of reintroducing elk to the western Arbuckle mountain region. Results were circulated to employees via the employee newsletter.
 - The Private Lands survey was sent out to almost 10,000 private landowners in Oklahoma. The results from this survey will be compiled over the summer and will assist the private lands crew in developing assistance programming to improve wildlife habitat across the state.
 - Work began on the Game Harvest Survey species and participation estimates. Final report will be available in August.
 - The Controlled Hunts Report was completed and the first draft was circulated for review.

FISHERIES DIVISION

March Statewide Fish Stockings

Species	Number Fish	Size	Number Locations
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Hybrid sunfish	400	6"	1
Rainbow trout	19,330	11"	2
Rainbow trout	7,087	9-14"	6
Rainbow trout	443	>14"	6
Saugeye	263,825	fry	1
Walleye	1,080,412	fry	1

Activities

- The Paddlefish Center is in full operation. Staff collected biological data, and processed fillets and caviar. A project was initiated with OSU to determine the temperature limits of Listeria growth in paddlefish caviar.
- Walleye and saugeye production is in full operation. Walleye and sauger broodstock were collected. Byron SFH staff spawned, incubated, and hatched 983,000 sauger eggs and 1.9 walleye eggs. Walleye and sauger fry were stocked into hatchery culture ponds for fingerling production.
- Leaking pond structures at Holdenville SFH were excavated and clay patch material has been ordered to effect repairs. Staff harvested and sorted channel catfish brooders for upcoming spawning season.
- New expanded metal was installed on pump cages, a new pump was installed, and new water lines were pulled under the road at Manning SFH. Smallmouth bass broodstock were collected for future hatchery production efforts. Staff continues to attend pre-construction meetings for the new pump station project.
- White bass broodstock were collected in preparation for upcoming hybrid striped bass production.
- Alligator gar sampling continues with many individuals captured likely from the 2019 spawning event. In total 480 alligator gar have been tagged with 25% having been tagged during winter 2020-2021.
- Spring electrofishing surveys were conducted on 7 reservoirs statewide. Genetics samples and otoliths were collected for analysis.
- Staff refurbished or created seven fish attractor sites at Weleetka Lake using 32 cedar trees.
- Gravel was placed on the roads at Vanderwork, Hall, and Doc Hollis reservoirs to improve access for anglers and boaters.
- Federal approval has been granted to begin engineering for a dam renovation project on Jap Beaver Lake. The approval process is ongoing for construction.
- Staff participated in Oka' Institute Advisory Council's quarterly meeting.
- Staff met with TPWD staff to discuss upcoming collaborative management activities on Lake Texoma.
- Staff participated in the Aquatic Invasive Species Webinar.
- Staff assisted numerous constituents by phone or email with questions pertaining to pond management, aquatic vegetation control, stocking requests, fish kills from cold weather, and lake fishing locations and information.
- Two video interviews with OKC charter high school students on ODWC and fisheries biology were conducted.
- Staff organized and conducted a field techniques demonstration day for Northeastern State University's Fisheries Research Methods class.

C&E DIVISION

- The Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program in El Reno was a huge success. The top 16 high school teams, 8 junior high teams, and 40 individuals, some of whom also qualified on teams, participated in the State Shoot. Those who have been to the OTA range at El Reno know how wide open it is and that the wind can come sweeping down the plains there. Sustained 25-30 mph winds with 35-40 mph gusts from the NW made it incredibly difficult. The teams and individuals shot very well under the extreme conditions.
- Most note worthy for the day was the gratitude that the coaches and student athletes expressed towards the Department for holding our regionals and the state shoot. Several parents, coaches and students commented about how happy they were that the shoots didn't get canceled.
- Without the assistance of every staff throughout the agency we would not be able to conduct these shoots so special thanks goes out to the following staff members. The number beside their name represents how many shoots each staff member assisted with.

C & E:

Damon Springer (5)

Shawn Gee (5)

Kelly Boyer (5)

Colin Berg (3)

Daniel Griffith (5)

Jason Smith (5)

Lance Meek (5)

Kelly Adams (1)

Whitney Jenkins (2)

Don Brown (2)

Kamon (Tulsa Intern) (3)

Parker (OKC Intern) (3)

Skylar St. Yves (5)

Heather Del Moral (1)

Micah Holmes (3)

Jennifer Benge (5)

Kasie Harriet (4)

Smokey Solis (1)

Wildlife:

Josh Richardson (1)

Dennis McCollough (2)

Emily Clark (1)

Jeff Neal (1)

Dallas Barber (1)

Keith Waag (1)

Joe Nabonne (1)

Jay Rouk (1)

Law Enforcement:

Chris Stover (2)

Russell Bradford (1)

David Robertson (1)

Zack Paulk (3) EMT

Mike Baker (3) EMT

John Grellner (1)

Matthew Farris (2)

Jacob Harriet (2)

Andrew Coffey (1)

Mark Riechenberger (1)

Stephen Paul (1)

Emily Long (1)

Brayden Hicks (1)

Mike Carroll (1)

Jared Cramer (1)

Patrick Matlock (1)

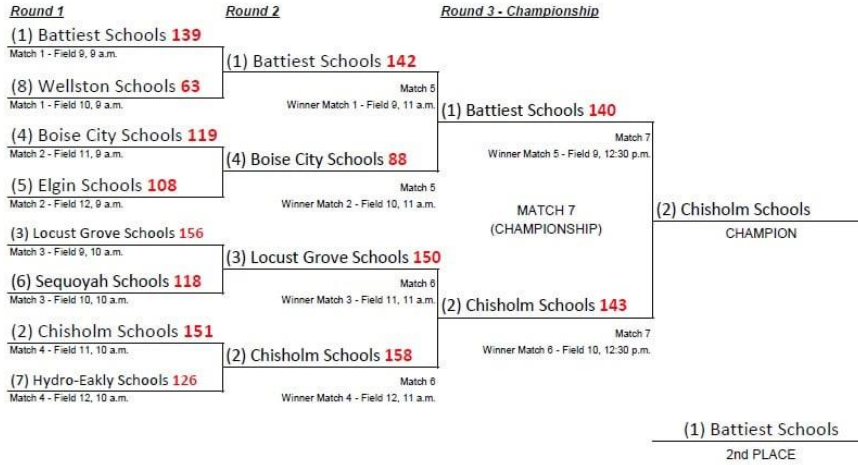
Fisheries:

Eric Brennan (2)

Chris Whisenhunt (2)

Matt Mauck (1)

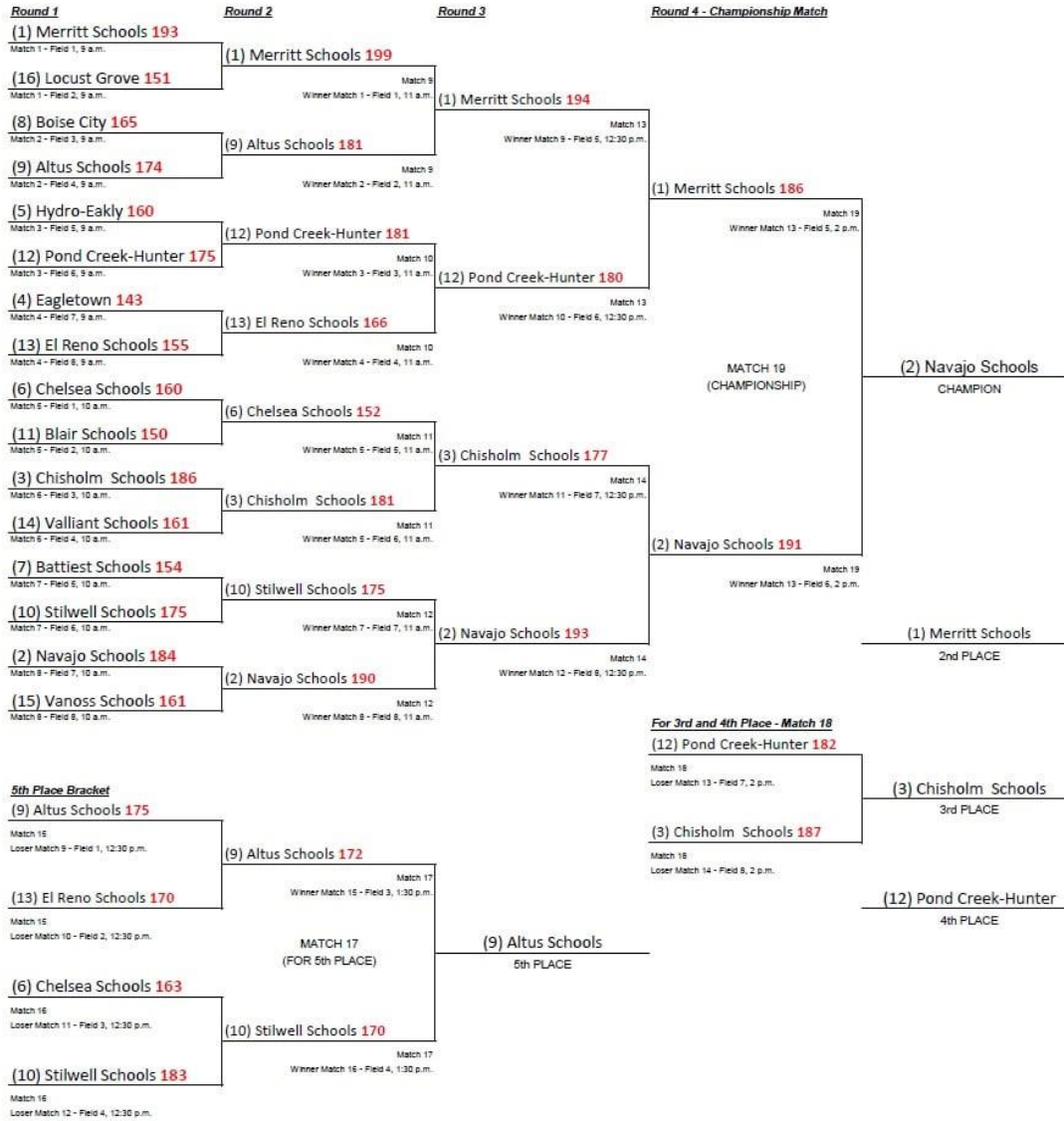
OKSSSP State Shoot - Junior Division Bracket



For 3rd Place - Match 8



OKSSSP State Shoot - Senior Division Bracket



HS INDIVIDUAL FEMALE SCORES

SCORE	TIEBREAKER*	NAME	SCHOOL
24	11 13 0	Barnett, Breegan	Merritt Schools
23	2 2 19	Funkhouser, Kya	Navajo Schools
22	5 1 12	Tennell, Emma	Chisholm Schools

HS INDIVIDUAL MALE SCORES

SCORE	TIEBREAKER	NAME	SCHOOL
23	5 0 18	Harold, Jordan	Navajo Schools
22	4 1 6	Miller, Carson	Altus Schools
22	0 1 10	Wagar, Sam	Chisholm Schools

JR INDIVIDUAL FEMALE SCORES

SCORE	TIEBREAKER	NAME	SCHOOL
19	1 1 0	Ottinger, Shelby	Boise City Schools
17	0 3 5	Darling, Addison	Merritt Schools
16	5 0 0	Brummett, Ciara	El Reno Schools

JR INDIVIDUAL MALE SCORES

SCORE	TIEBREAKER	NAME	SCHOOL
22	8 1 9	Tennell, Braden	Chisholm Schools
20	7 0 0	Coffey, Gunner	Elk City Schools
20	3 7 6	Hamilton, Kelson	Chisholm Schools

- Thanks to Corey Jager for sharing information with State Senators and State House Members regarding teams that fell within their districts. Senator Blake Stephens and Senator George Burns were able to make it out to the state shoot and both highlighted their attendance in their weekly facebook updates.



Senator George Burns

April 9 at 11:30 AM · 🌐



We've finally reached the final committee deadline of this legislative session. It's been fast and furious, but April 8 was the deadline to hear House bills that were approved in their chamber in our Senate committees. They sent about 400 bills to our chamber, and we approved just over 300 of them. We'll now turn our focus on hearing these bills on the Senate floor. We must finish this work by April 22.

Although we were busy this week, I made some time to sneak away and support the Battiest, Eagletown and Valliant Shooting Sports Team, as well as an individual entry from Broken Bow, at the state contest in El Reno. All of these students are skilled in shooting sports and gun safety, and I'm proud of them for competing in these events. Congratulations to the Battiest Junior Team for placing second in the state contest.



Senator Blake Stephens

April 9 at 11:15 AM · 🌐



April 8 was the deadline for Senate committees to vote on House bills. It was very busy, but I still had the chance to sneak away and support the Stillwell and Locust Grove Shooting Sports teams competing at the state contest in El Reno. It was great to smell the gun smoke in the air while supporting the top shooters across our state this past week.

The Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program, hosted by the Oklahoma Wildlife Department, is part of the outdoor education curriculum offered to our public schools. This trap-based shotgun program is for seventh through 12th graders and focuses on providing a fun, safe environment for kids interested in shooting sports.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife trains teachers for the program to teach basic shooting skills like trap-shooting fundamentals and gun safety. After the teacher completes the training, the Wildlife Department will provide an equipment kit to the school worth approximately \$2,000 with a gun safe, target thrower, targets, safety glasses and ear plugs. These schools are eligible to participate in the shooting sports competition.

I'm a firm believer that an outdoor education class would be a great addition to every school across the state. So many children are removed from the outdoors and truly don't know the basics of hunting, fishing, camping, shooting and other outdoor sports, and implementing this course could develop life-long passions or skills for some of our youth.

I actually had the opportunity to teach outdoor education at Locust Grove in a summer school and after-school program several years ago. I taught skills like identifying animal tracks and how to skin and process a deer. The kids had a blast and I know these are skills they'll carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Speaking of education, I'm excited to share I was chosen as the Oklahoma Education Association's (OEA) Lawmaker of the Week. I'm a proud supporter of our public schools, teachers and administrators that work diligently to serve our students and their parents. Every child is entitled to a high-quality public education, and working towards this goal is a top priority of mine here at the Capitol.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you. If there's anything I can help you with, please reach out to my office by emailing Blake.Stephens@oksenate.aov or calling 405-521-5574.



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April 9 at 11:15 AM · 🌐

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[See More](#)



In other Communication and Education Division business:

- With the help of Wade Free and Nels Rodefeld as fishing Captains, Sarah Southerland, Blake Podhajsky and Todd Craighead shot an episode of Outdoor Oklahoma featuring Wayne and Candice Hubbard. The Hubbards host and produce Urban American Outdoors TV. UAO has been on air since 2003 and is 4x EMMY Nominated and has won over 75 Broadcast Industry Awards. Along with hosting and producing duties, they sponsor free annual outdoor kid events that have serviced over 75,000 youth in the past 10 years and provide food to families in need in the community. Wayne also consults the Department of Interior on Diversity and Inclusion.
- Daniel Griffith reports the last quarter for Jan, Feb & March on the website was **statistically the biggest quarter ever in the history of the website**. 2015 was the highest pageview count previously for Q1 at 1.8 million views, and 2021 was 3.3 million. 2020 was the previous high on session for Q1 at 566k sessions, with 2021 surpassing it with 702k sessions. These higher numbers could be part of the new analytics tracking code.
- “A Field Guide to Oklahoma’s Reptiles and Amphibians” became available for sale in the Go Outdoors Oklahoma shop early April. **In the first week, more than 500 copies were sold.** These funds directly support the Wildlife Diversity Program.
- Smokey Solis worked to **incorporate more than 1,000 edits** into the 2021-22 Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Guide. The quantity of this year’s regulations has changed. We reduced the fourth contract period from \$65,000 to \$40,000 thus reducing our quantity from

325,000 copies to 200,000 copies. The estimated delivery date of the 2021-2022 regulations is July 8, 2022.

- Blake Podhajsky, Darrin Hill and Todd Craighead worked with Lt. Governor Matt Pinnell on an Outdoor Oklahoma segment featuring the Oklahoma Fishing Trail.
- Michael Bergin deployed several marketing strategies aimed at increasing turkey licenses sales and controlled hunt applications. As part of Operation Retention, we are working to directly target lapsed 2020 license buyers with various messaging and channels including email and text messaging.
- Sarah Southerland and Michael Bergin are working to execute a plan to promote Close to Home Fishing. Through email, social media, and text messages, we hope to encourage current and lapsed 2020 fishing license buyers to use these waters. Messaging emphasizes CTH waters are outstanding resources for active anglers to introduce new or young anglers, they offer convenient fishing opportunities for the whole family, they're located at city parks with other amenities like playgrounds, walking trails, and picnic tables, they are just a short drive and they're regularly stocked with easily catchable fish species.
- Colin Berg held two virtual calls with Donnie Jones (OG&E) and Rick Grundman (OK Wildlife Conservation Foundation) to plan summer fishing clinics that will be held at OG&E power plant facilities. OG&E staff will be participating in an Aquatic Education Volunteer Training course so they can conduct clinics throughout the year with schools and community members as part of an OG&E volunteer led programming.

WILDLIFE DIVISION

- Title 800 trapping language is being reviewed, and new rules are being drafted due to new legislation recently signed by the Governor.
- Progress on the Arbuckle Elk project is being made with research needs being discussed with OSU, key area landowner meetings conducted, and elk testing requirements being discussed with ODAFF staff and administration.
- Technical assistance visits are picking up as Covid restrictions and concerns are lessening.
- The security fence/gravel pad was completed at the new Arbuckle Springs shop.
- The inaugural digital Your Side Of the Fence publication was sent out on April 14th. YSOF has traditionally been a paper publication. With an increased Private Lands staff we are now able to write enough content to stay with a bi-annual printed version but also roll out an additional 2 newsletters that we will be sending out via digital delivery. Stats from this venture are: Delivered to 10,506 emails, Opened by 2,597 (24.7%, as of Apr 19th). Unique Article Clicks: Technical Assistance-456, Growing Season Burns-148, Trophy Bass-141, Wildlife Food for Thought-115, Listing Decision Expected for LEPC-68.
- WHIP applications for FY22 closed on May 1. As of April 19 we had received 66.
- Much time on WMAs in April centered around working with wild turkey hunters. Turkey season has seen higher hunter use than average, with moderate success. Many hunters reported finding fewer than normal turkeys yet hunting pressure remained high throughout the season.
- Many WMA grazing leases had turn-in dates in April, and WMA personnel continue to work on grazing infrastructure (water wells, tanks, fence, etc.).
- Preparation for summer food plots is ongoing, and milo planting has begun.
- Staff are actively planning and preparing for growing season burns. Personnel finished up conducting dormant season prescribed burns.
- The NRDA cedar cutting project at Canton WMA is nearing completion, and cedar and mesquite mastication on many WMAs continues.

- Preparations are being made for a wetland water control structure renovation project at Hackberry Flat WMA.
- Maintenance was completed on 7 miles of roads, 11 miles of fireguards, 30 parking areas and 1 shooting range, 10 acres of habitat were managed with mowing/strip disking/herbicide/mastication/cedar cutting, and personnel installed /repaired / replaced 11 area signs and patrolled and cleaned 3 camp grounds.
- Personnel advertised and opened 7 hay leases totaling 230 acres.
- Personnel continue working on the dashboard component of the WMA Plans.
- The new shop/security fence at Sans Bois WMA has been completed, and the septic system is expected to be installed within the next month.

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

- We had the 26 Wardens that were due for new body armor come up and get measured in April. Each vest cost \$910.00 and comes with two carriers. These vests are good for five years.
- Paddlefish enforcement has been busy this year with a couple of good cases already made, including one with over 60 lbs. of caviar they were trying to smuggle out of the state.
- District 7 had a special emphasis on opening day of spring turkey season. They focused their enforcement on Black Kettle WMA. With 7 Game Wardens working the assignment, they checked 70 sportsmen, issued 5 Administrative fines and issued 2 citations.
- The Game Warden Academy is in full swing right now. They are staying at Greenleaf State Park and doing their classroom and field training at Camp Gruber. D2 has provided a couple of meals to the new trainees and instructors. Let Wade or Nate know if interested in visiting and watching some of the training.
- New Dodge trucks have started showing up to be issued out to the field. We ordered 12 extended cab trucks for this year.