

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
POSITION STATEMENT
Proposed Legislation
Hunting and Fishing License Modernization

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation ("ODWC") and its governing body, the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission ("Commission"), were born as a non-appropriated agency shortly after statehood in 1909. Since its inception, ODWC's primary funding mechanism has derived from hunters and anglers through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Federal excise taxes on sporting equipment were later created by the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Acts to ensure state fish and wildlife agencies, including ODWC, were never deprived of the necessary funding for fish and wildlife conservation activities. It was a vote of the people of Oklahoma in 1956 to amend the Oklahoma Constitution that solidified this system of dedicated funding to ensure sustainable wildlife populations for future generations of Oklahomans to enjoy. With its passage in 1956, Article 26 of the Oklahoma Constitution affirms that any money derived from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses shall only be used for the purpose of fulfilling the ODWC mission, thus securing a system of long-term funding for wildlife conservation in the state of Oklahoma.

In light of this Constitutional and historical directive, the Commission met in a regular open session before the public, with a quorum of the Commission present, to consider legislation proposed before the 2nd Session of the 58th Legislature and to discuss how such legislation might retain and bolster the traditional funding mechanisms for wildlife conservation in the state of Oklahoma. Pursuant to said discussion, a motion was made, duly seconded and approved by a vote of 6 to 0, and said Commission passed by a majority vote to adopt the following position regarding licensing policy.

It is the position of the Commission that legislation addressing the following categories would serve to benefit Oklahomans and the fish and wildlife resources entrusted to our care:

1. Legislation that allows the Commission to use the administrative rules process, including its robust public participation and legislative oversight opportunity, to develop a hunting and fishing license structure and associated fees that is more responsive to customer needs, current economic markets, inflation, and conservation needs.
2. Legislation that allows ODWC and the Commission to routinely review its regulations regarding licenses, permits and tags to ensure they are streamlined, simple to understand and that they remove barriers to hunter and angler participation.
3. Legislation that confirms the Commission's Constitutional duties and helps ensure all fees, monies, or funds arising from the operation and transactions of the Commission shall be expended and used by the Commission for the control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of fish and wildlife.

Done this 3rd day of January 2022

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

C. Rick Holder

Attest: C. Rick Holder (Jan 7, 2022 10:19 CST)

Rick Holder, Sec.

By: Leigh Gaddis (Jan 7, 2022 10:09 CST)

Leigh Gaddis, Chairwoman