

**JANUARY 2021  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**



**CALENDAR ITEMS:**

Jan 5-8      WAFWA Virtual Mid-Winter Meeting

**AGENCY UPDATE**

**LEGISLATURE:**

- Committee assignments were announced for the Senate. The Senate Agriculture and Wildlife Committee will continue to be chaired by Senator Casey Murdock and Vice Chaired by Senator Roland Pederson. Full committee membership can be found here: <https://oksenate.gov/committees/agriculture-and-wildlife>
- Committee assignments were also announced for the House. The House Wildlife Committee will now be chaired by Representative Ty Burns and Vice-Chaired by newly elected Rep. Eddie Dempsey. Full committee membership can be found here: <https://okhouse.gov/Committees/CommitteeMembers.aspx?CommID=437&SubCommID=0>
- The Senate requested 1,675 bills, and the House requested 2,100 bills and 41 joint resolutions.
- The final bill filing deadline is January 21st.

**HUMAN DIMENSIONS**

- The controlled hunts application process survey with questions included about Foundation raffle opportunities and price points was sent out to 8,000 previous controlled hunts applicants. Three reminders attained a 25% response rate for this online survey. A second wave of invitations will be sent out in January to assess bias and results will begin to be available in early February.
- The conservation passport holders' survey closed and the final report is in progress.
- Interviews began with Oklahoma university faculty to assess ODWC engagement and recruitment with their universities. Interviews will be assessed for themes and the next stage will be talking with students about their interest and familiarity with ODWC.
- The 2020 Game Harvest Survey draft was created and circulated to wildlife supervisors. Topics covered include standard harvest and participation questions, communication preferences, WMA activity participation (other than hunting) and land access issues.
- Public comment form for rule change proposals was opened through online survey software.
- Final emails were sent to invite youth hunt participants to take part in an evaluative survey so private lands staff can make improvements to the program.

**FISHERIES DIVISION**

**November**

**Statewide Fish Stockings**

Species	Number Fish	Size	Number Locations
Channel catfish	58,526	7"	11
Rainbow trout	23,570	11"	2
Rainbow trout	7,155	9-14"	5
Rainbow trout	382	14-24"	5

**Activities**

- The final design workshop for the Manning SFH Phase I renovation project was held and the project has gone out for bid.

- Standardized sportfish surveys were conducted on 15 reservoirs statewide to monitor populations of catfish, crappie, hybrid striped bass, paddlefish, saugeye, walleye, and white bass; data entry and analysis is ongoing.
- Alligator Gar winter mark recapture surveys were initiated.
- Structures (otoliths, pectoral spine, anal spine, pectoral ray, and scales) are being aged to validate a non-lethal means to age largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass.
- Fin clips were collected for a new smallmouth bass genetics project in the upper Illinois River.
- Slenderhead darter specimens were collected for a taxonomy research project.
- A habitat assessment was conducted on the upper Illinois River.
- The ongoing angler survey on Lake Texoma was completed, and data analysis is ongoing. A creel survey was also initiated on Sunset Lake in to gauge angling pressure and angler catch and harvest.
- Grant package materials were completed for boating access and lake renovation projects on Atoka Bluestem, Bixhoma, Jap Beaver, and Stroud reservoirs.
- A dock replacement project on Eagle Lake was completed.
- Staff participated in OSU AUL search by attending virtual research seminars and Q/A sessions with candidates.
- Black bass sampling efforts on the upper Mountain Fork River were summarized for U.S. Forest Service personnel.
- Proofs were edited by staff for two NAJFM and 6 OAS manuscripts; wrote, edited, and created figures for Rainbow Trout research publication.
- Staff conducted a workshop for Wildlife Division staff on management of aquatic resources on private lands.
- Staff presented a farm pond management program for Wagoner High School science class.

## **I&E DIVISION**

- Kasie Harriet and Skylar St. Yves conducted several virtual hunting and fishing courses during the last month. Participation in the courses has increased showing interest amongst our constituency. Additional courses for 2021 are being added.
- A number of I&E employees attended the Brandt Marketing Summit. Insights into how to retain the current "COVID cohort" were discussed and the team is ready to work on Operation Retention.
- Daniel Griffith continues to update the website and is working to incorporate the regulations into webpages, making them easier to find. He is working with both R3 coordinators to provide the most appropriate and helpful information to hunters and anglers depending on their location on the R3 spectrum (beginner, intermediate and advanced). He has worked with [Nels Rodefeld](#) and [Rodney Derrick](#) to implement a new program, the Oklahoma Slam and Super Slam.
- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee conducted Varsity Archery training courses for 17 new high schools. Goal is to add 25 schools during this school year to this new program.
- Lance Meek and Jennifer Bengé continued to work on promotion of our on-line HE course option. We set a goal of certifying 5,200 students on line between August and December and we are on pace to exceed this goal.
- Lance Meek and Shawn Gee worked on finalizing the gun range projects at James Collins and Okmulgee gun ranges. They are both near completion and have opened back up for public use.
- Sarah Southerland is working on a Limited English Proficiency Plan to provide ODWC information in a variety of languages such as Spanish, American Sign Language and Vietnamese. She is also working with HECHO and Latino Outdoors to identify potential story

leads and outlets. Additionally, Sarah worked with Jennifer Benge to apply for a grant through their Vamos a Pescar program.

- Lance Meek worked on completing the gun range project at Silverleaf. It was our first project with a private, open-to-the-public gun range. The improvements have been made and the final grant requirements are nearly complete.
- Damon Springer and Jason Smith worked on projects at the Arcadia Conservation Education Area including the major road project and working to repair a broken water line that feeds the wildlife offices and storage facility.
- Over 160 schools have submitted scores to Kelly Boyer as part of our virtual qualifying scores for the OKNASP state shoots. Kelly worked on putting those scores into an excel spreadsheet so when all three shoot dates are completed that we are able to break them into Grand State which will be held at the OKC Fairgrounds in February and a virtual shoot for tie 2.
- Jena Donnell worked with the Private Lands section to produce the latest edition of Your Side of the Fence. The newsletter that is distributed to conservation-minded landowners around the state.
- Sarah Southerland and Todd Craighead joined USFWS and ODWC employees at Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge to video and photograph the planting of 1,800 seedlings.
- Skylar St. Yves neared completion of a new on-line angler recognition program which is going live in January. He continued to update the fishing resources page on the website and conducted several virtual fishing courses.
- Michael Bergin and Blake Podhajsky worked to produce a “sensory” video of venison being prepared for the upcoming Holiday Antlerless Season. This video is short, and will appear on social media, the OOH, text messages and email.
- Smokey Solis worked with Blake Podhajsky to produce a special “thank you” video featuring Director, J.D. Strong. This video will be sent in an email to all license holders, and be seen on social media. Darrin Hill produced a video highlighting Blue River PFHA that aired on OETA. See the video [here](#).
- Kasie Harriet worked with volunteers from the NWTF to set up a mentored squirrel hunt that will be taking place at Sequoyah State Park in January. The event is limited to 25 mentors and 25 new hunters.

## **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

- GIS data entry for WMA management plans continues and nearing completion.
- WMA maintenance and management activity this month included: 34 miles of roads were maintained and 505 tons of rock were placed, 11 miles of fireguards were maintained, 130 acres of food plots were planted, 11 acres were managed by mowing, disking, treating with herbicide, or removing cedars.
- Wetland unit pumping was completed on an additional 100 acres.
- Personnel conducted 18 waterfowl surveys on area lakes, conducted 26 hunter use surveys, and conducted 35 controlled hunts. Three elk hunts have been completed at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Two more hunts (the 3rd “regular hunt” and the 2nd “walk-in” hunt) will be held in January.
- Ag and Grazing leases were re-written for bid.
- Dirt work was started on the Sans Bois WMA shop building.
- Division staff assisted with a virtual outreach clinic entitled “Finding a Hunting Spot: How to use the ODWC mapping system”.
- WMA staff began working on fireguard maintenance/preparation, burn equipment maintenance/preparation, writing burn plans, etc. for upcoming prescribed burns.
- WMA use this year increased, as expected, from previous years, in large part due to the COVID-19 crisis. Unfortunately, along with this increased use, we saw increased vandalism on some WMA’s.

- The deer herd health evaluation will be starting in January. This winter, efforts will be focused on Northwest and North Central Oklahoma.
- Private lands youth antlerless hunts were a success. The new hunts in Beckham county ran 100% success rate, every youth that attended harvested at least 1 deer, and several purchased additional tags and harvested more than one deer. Oklahoma Youth Hunt Program volunteers were much appreciated and some good connections were made for future fruitful partnerships. Attendance was pretty high; there were a few no-shows, but not much higher than "normal" years.
- FY '21 Partner match money from the Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation was received, and will be used for private lands habitat work in NW Oklahoma. We currently have several applications on file and are awaiting clearance through FWS to begin work. Approved projects will result in good on-the-ground habitat work several months. The total grant is for \$500K, with \$200K of habitat work planned for this FY.

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- Capt. Marni Loftis put on a revocation class for everyone in Law Enforcement. She has been working on getting everyone that should be suspended done and entered into our system. This could mean some extra money in reinstatement fees for the Department, once we get Game Wardens and Court Clerks on the same page.
- Covid has been hitting Law Enforcement in the last few weeks. A number of officers have either had it or have been on quarantine for someone in their family having it.
- Game Wardens are busy still working investigations from deer season and also working the waterfowl season hunters. The guide waterfowl hunters have caused an increase in calls and sometimes issues in NW and SW Oklahoma.
- Law Enforcement ordered 12 trucks this year instead of our normal 23. They are Dodge ½ ton 4X4 trucks. This will be the 3rd year for Dodges and so far so good.