

MINUTES

Of the Regular Meeting on January 8, 2024, of the

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Held at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on January 8, 2024. 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 January 4, 2024, at 7:50 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

Chairwoman Gaddis introduced the following guests: Rick Grundman, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF); Niki Batt, Assistant Attorney General Council; Elise Gundlach, WildCare Oklahoma; Stephen Banarzah; Steven Whitney; Peter Greguire, Bowfishing Association of America; Randy Woodward; Dustin Shatton; Jaci Statton, Youth Worlds; Karel Brewster, Oklahoma Rifle Association; O.D. Curry and Rick Nolan, Oklahoma Hunters & Anglers.

Wade Free, Interim Director, recognized Charles Cowell, Data Analyst/Programmer, for 35 years of service.

Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education Division, introduced Rick Nolan, President of the Oklahoma Hunters and Anglers (OHA), who presented the Department with a plaque in appreciation for the outstanding collaboration on the 2023 Oklahoma Deer Conference.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Holder to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to approve the minutes from the December 11, 2023 Commission meeting. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Interim Director Free referenced 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. Free updated the Commission on upcoming calendar items found on the Director's Report. This report was given to the Commission and will be kept with the minutes of this meeting.

Amanda Storck, CFO and Chief of Administration presented the Financial Statement for November 30, 2023. There were no miscellaneous contributions, so no vote was taken.

Amanda Storck gave a presentation to the Commission on the Legislative process.

Amanda Storck requested Commission approval on the Vehicle Policy. Commissioner Dillingham stated that the policy committee had met and recommends this policy. Motion was made by Commissioner Dillingham, seconded by Commissioner Diehl to accept the vehicle policy as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Chairwoman Gaddis addressed the Commission with the following statement; you all should have received an email of information for each rule being proposed by the Wildlife Department that is on the agenda today. The email included the on-line comments, email and mail-in comments and oral comments received at the public hearing. At this time, I would like to poll the members of the Commission to confirm that each member has received the email of rule information from the Department and has had the opportunity to review and consider the public comments submitted in connection with the proposed rules. Commissioner Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane and Gaddis responded "Yes".

Amanda Storck requested Commission approval of the following proposed permanent rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 1. Operations and Procedures

Subchapter 3. Functions, Organization, Powers and Duties

800:1-3-3. Function, organization, powers and duties [AMENDED]

This rule will add language regarding the Department Vehicle Policy.

Ms. Storck indicated that due to public comment and with the direction of the rules committee, the text had been slightly changed to clarify the language but does not change the meaning.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to approve the rule as presented with clarified language. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting "Yes".

Ken Cunningham, Chief of the Fisheries Division, requested Commission approval of the following proposed permanent rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 10. Sport Fishing Rules

Subchapter 1. Harvest and Possession Limits

800:10-1-4. Size and bag limits on fish [AMENDED]

800:10-1-7. Possession limit [AMENDED]

Subchapter 3. Methods of Taking

800:10-3-3. Additional definitions [AMENDED]

800:10-3-5. Use of bow and arrow, grabhooks, gigs, spears, and spearguns, snagging, noodling and netting [AMENDED]

Subchapter 5. Area Restrictions and Special Fees

800:10-5-6. Lakes, reservoirs, rivers and streams [AMENDED]

These rule changes set an aggregate daily bag limit and modified possession limit to protect and better manage long-lived native, nongame fish species such as the gars and buffalo

fishes. Additional changes prohibit the practice of shoot and immediate release in bowfishing, clarify the definition of equipment used for bowfishing, and correct an error in the name of Pensacola Dam among regulations where bowfishing is legal. To avoid a conflict between the new aggregate limit and an existing daily limit for nongame bait fishes, a size qualification for bait fishes was developed. Lastly, new guidance is proposed for the legal and proper disposal of dead fish, fish remains, and fish carcasses.

Chairwoman Gaddis recognized that there were attendees in the meeting who wanted to speak on these rules.

Motion was made by Commissioner Kane, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to allow for public comment on these rules. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Peter Greguire, Bowfishing Association of America, Missouri; Randy Woodward, Youth Bowfishing, Coweta, Oklahoma; Steven Whitney, Bowfishing Association of America, Missouri; and Stephen Banarzah, Bowfisherman, Denison, TX, all voiced their concerns regarding the proposed rules. They were not in favor of the bag limits or the proposed disposal regulations.

After full discussion, Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to table all proposed rules except 800:10-3-3, regarding the definition of a bow and arrow and 800:10-3-5, which corrects the name for the Pensacola Dam. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Diehl to approve sections 800:10-3-3 and 800:10-3-5 of the proposed rules. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division, requested Commission approval of proposed permanent rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 25. Wildlife Rules

Subchapter 1. Hunting/Trapping on Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Lands

800:25-1-7. Deer, Dove, Turkey, and Rabbit Hunting on Foss State Park

[AMENDED]

800:25-1-9. Deer and Waterfowl hunting on Ft. Cobb State Park [NEW]

800:25-1-10. Goose hunting on Great Plains State Park [NEW]

800:25-1-11. Deer Hunting on Salt Plains State Park [NEW]

800:25-1-12. Deer, Canada Goose, and Squirrel hunting on Sequoyah State Park

[NEW]

Subchapter 3. Hunting on Corps of Engineers Lands

800:25-3-2. Areas open to archery equipment and shotguns with pellets only

[AMENDED]

800:25-3-3. Areas open to archery equipment only [AMENDED]

Subchapter 7. General Hunting Seasons

800:25-7-52. Deer – primitive firearms (muzzleloading) [AMENDED]

800:25-7-53. Deer – gun [AMENDED]

800:25-7-54. Legal firearms and archery specifications [AMENDED]

Part 18. Management of Private lands

800:25-7-75. General provisions [AMENDED]

Part 19. Seasons on Areas Owned or Managed By The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

800:25-7-83. Beaver River WMA [AMENDED]

800:25-7-83.1. Beaver River WMA – McFarland Unit [AMENDED]

800:25-7-87.1. Candy Creek WMA [AMENDED]

800:25-7-92.1. Cimarron Bluff WMA [AMENDED]

800:25-7-92.2. Cimarron Hills WMA [AMENDED]

Subchapter 13. Commercial Hunt Areas

800:25-13-9. Tagging requirements [AMENDED]

These rules will add controlled hunts and hunting opportunities on certain state parks, update Corps of Engineer land and allow expanded hunting opportunities on Wildlife Management Areas. Remove 3-year tagging exemption and require visible tags to remain until the animal is removed from the commercial hunt area and change the Special Use Permit requirements and fees for private lands leased by the ODWC.

Mr. Dinkines said that due to public comments and staff input, recommendation was to pull the velvet buck lottery raffle proposal from consideration. Commissioner Barwick stated that the rules committee met and also agreed to pull the velvet buck lottery proposal. Commissioner Barwick also stated that the rules committee reviewed comments on the commercial hunt area tagging requirements and at this time, would recommend tabling that proposal. Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick seconded by Commissioner Zelbst to approve all proposed rules as presented except to table section 800:25-13-9 regarding the tagging requirements. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Bill Dinkines requested Commission approval on proposed permanent rules:

Title 800. Department of Wildlife Conservation

Chapter 30. Department of Wildlife Lands Management

Subchapter 1. Use of Department Managed Lands

800:30-1-2. Use restrictions [AMENDED]

800:30-1-6. Littering [AMENDED]

800:30-1-16. Shooting ranges [AMENDED]

These rule proposals will close prairie dog hunting on Cooper, Beaver River and Sandy Sanders Wildlife Management Areas, add shotgun hulls and cartridge casings to littering on Wildlife Management Areas and update regulations for shooting ranges and archery ranges on Department owned or managed lands.

Mr. Dinkines said after public comment and at the direction of the rules committee, the word cartridge was added before casings in the littering section to clarify the language. Motion was made by Commissioner Zelbst, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to approved the proposed rules as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Holder, seconded by Commissioner Barwick to enter into Executive Session. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to return to open session.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to authorize the Interim Director to proceed with the purchase of property adjacent to Deep Fork

WMA in Okfuskee County. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Amanda Storck requested Commission approval on a budget revision for \$207,000 which includes:

- \$135,000 for land purchase approved for Okfuskee County. NRDA and WSFR match will fund the purchase.
- \$32,000 for Waurika WMA for woody vegetation removal. NWTf has pledged \$8,000 plus a \$24,000 WSFR match.
- \$40,000 for Canton WMA for cedar removal. NWTf has pledged \$10,000 plus a \$30,000 WSFR match.

Motion was made by Commissioner Holder, seconded by Commissioner Diehl to approve the budget revision as presented. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barwick, seconded by Commissioner Mabrey to maintain confidentiality of the severance agreement with former Director, J.D. Strong and keep personnel records confidential as a preferred employment practice. Commissioner Kane asked Assistant Attorney General Niki Batt, regarding the severance package of former Director Strong, without the other party's consent, do we even have the option to make the severance package public? Ms. Batt stated that this specific question is governed by the Open Records Act and it is certainly within the authority and at the sole discretion of the public body to keep personnel issues confidential including the severance agreement. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Motion was made by Commissioner Kane, seconded by Commissioner Barwick to work with Assistant Attorney General Niki Batt to create a Press Release to craft an appropriate response regarding the severance package issued to former Director, J.D. Strong. Commissioner Kane stated that although he does not want to draw any more unnecessary attention to this issue, the Commission has received profound unfair criticism regarding the handling of this situation, so the press release would clarify that the Commission acted on the terms of the contract. Motion carried with Commissioners Mabrey, Diehl, Barwick, Holder, Zelbst, Dillingham, Kane, and Gaddis voting “Yes”.

Chairwoman Gaddis announced the February 5, 2024, Wildlife Commission meeting will be held in Oklahoma City.

The meeting adjourned at 11:43 p.m.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Leigh A. Gaddis, CHAIRWOMAN

ATTEST:

C. Rick Holder, SECRETARY

AGENDA
Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting

Public Meeting: **Monday, February 5, 2024, 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

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 – Nels Rodefeld
4. Pledge of Allegiance – Nels Rodefeld
5. Introduction of Guests

6. Presentation from the Oklahoma State Game Warden Association (OSGWA) to the OKC Latina for \$1,250 to replace the grant funding they lost for fishing clinics open to all but focused on the Hispanic/Latino population – Nathan Erdman, Chief of Law Enforcement Division, Marshall Reigh, OSGWA President and Juliana Lopez, OKC Latina.

7. Presentation and consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject or take other action on a \$11,182 donation from the Cherokee Strip, Central Oklahoma 89'er and the Plainsmen Chapters of Quail Forever/Pheasants Forever (QF/PF) to be used to support the Stars and Stripes Program and equipment to be used for prescribed burns and habitat management on northwest Wildlife Management Areas – Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife Division and Laura McIver, Regional Representative, QF/PF.

8. Presentation and consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject or take other action on a \$25,000 donation from the National Rifle Association for shooting range development – Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication & Education Division, Amanda Thomas, Shooting Range Coordinator and Peter Churchbourne, Director of Hunter's Leadership Forum of the National Rifle Association.

9. Consideration and vote to approve, amend, reject, or take other action on minutes from the January 8, 2024 regular Commission meeting.

10. Director's Report
 - a. Federal and Congressional Update
 - Oklahoma Legislative Update
 - b. Calendar Items – discussion of upcoming department calendar items.
 - c. Agency Update – an update on current activity within each division of the agency.

11. Presentation of the December 31, 2023, Financial Statement and consideration and vote to approve, amend, or reject miscellaneous donations – Lindsey Presley, Accounting Supervisor, Comptroller.
12. Possible Executive Session pursuant to Title 25 O.S. § 307(B)(4), and consistent with 2005 OK AG 29, ¶ 13, for the purpose of confidential communications between the Board and counsel from the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General concerning threatened, anticipated, or potential legal challenges regarding an open records request from Oklahoma Voice, where counsel has determined that disclosure of information related to the claim(s) or action(s) will seriously impair the ability of the Board to process or conduct litigation in this matter, provided that any action taken shall be in open session.
 - a. Vote to Enter Executive Session
 - b. Executive Session pursuant to 25 O.S. § 307(B)(4).
 - c. Vote to Exit Executive Session
 - d. Possible discussion and action on matters discussed in Executive Session.
13. New Business – Discussion of any matter not known about, or which could not have been reasonably foreseen 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
14. Announce the March 4, 2024 Commission meeting will be in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
15. Adjourn

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is hosting a legislative reception at the Department headquarters on February 5, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission is invited to this event. A quorum may or may not be present. No official business will be conducted, and no action will be taken during the event.

This agency receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. To request an accommodation please contact 405-522-6279. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any facility, program, or activity, or if you need more information, please write to: **Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.**

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

For the period July 1, 2023 Through December 31, 2023

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

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary	Account Groups			
	General	Capital Projects	Fund Types	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
			Trust			Totals	Totals
Assets and Other Debits:							
Cash	16,349,185		4,503,489			20,852,674	19,900,440
Investments	0		276,579,550			276,579,550	243,076,153
Accounts Receivable	4,336,148					4,336,148	2,765,712
Monthly Lifetime License			449,975			449,975	449,850
Legacy Permit / Operation game Thief	6,102,039		7,000			6,109,039.00	6,016,761.00
Fixed Assets				79,785,465		79,785,465	77,852,714
Land				106,273,449		106,273,449	104,548,000
Other Debits:							
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Compensated Absences					0	0	0
Amount To Be Provided For Payment of Net Pension Obligation					13,699,498	13,699,498	21,202,403
	26,787,372	0	281,540,014	186,058,914	13,699,498	508,085,798	469,802,272
Liabilities and Fund Balance:							
Liabilities:							
Accounts Payable (accrual)	620,817					620,817	155,047
Due to Other Funds (current month Lifetimes)	449,975					449,975	449,850
Compensated Absences Payable (leave accrual)					0	0	0
Net Pension Obligation					13,699,498	13,699,498	21,202,403
Total Liabilities	1,070,792	0	0	0	13,699,498	14,770,290	21,807,300
Fund Balance:							
Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			132,282,814			132,282,814	117,723,336
Reserved for Defined Contribution Benefits (DC)			8,129,258			8,129,258	6,278,769
Investment in General Fixed Assets				186,058,914		186,058,914	182,400,714
Fund Balance	25,716,580		141,127,942			166,844,522	141,592,153
Total Fund Balance	25,716,580	0	281,540,014	186,058,914	0	493,315,508	447,994,972
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	26,787,372	0	281,540,014	186,058,914	13,699,498	508,085,798	469,802,272

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Trust Funds

Combining Balance Sheets
December 31, 2023

	Expendable Trust	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust	12/31/2023 Totals	12/31/2022 Totals
Assets:						
Cash (Wildlife Heritage)	554,456	3,949,033			4,503,489	4,195,516
Investments	36,011,238	100,156,240	132,282,814	8,129,258	276,579,550	249,354,922
Due From Other Funds		449,975			449,975	449,850
Restricted Assets (OP. Game Thief)		7,000			7,000	7,000
	36,565,694	104,562,248	132,282,814	8,129,258	281,540,014	254,007,288
Fund Balance:						
Fund Balance Reserved for Employee Pension Benefits			132,282,814	8,129,258	140,412,072	124,002,105
Fund Balance	36,565,694	104,562,248			141,127,942	130,005,183
Total Fund Balance	36,565,694	104,562,248	132,282,814	8,129,258	281,540,014	254,007,288

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 December 31, 2023

	Governmental Fund Types		Fiduciary Fund Type	12/31/2023	12/31/2022	Percent of Inc. or Dec.
	General	Capital Projects	Expendable Trust	Totals	Totals	
Revenues:						
Licenses (without Lifetimes)	13,506,772			13,506,772	13,424,203	0.62%
Other Wildlife Sales	1,420,148			1,420,148	1,485,467	-4.40%
Agriculture and Oil Lease	448,374			448,374	312,686	43.39%
Grant Revenue	13,574,537			13,574,537	13,304,901	2.03%
Investment Income	226,719		58,734	285,453	137,153	108.13%
Miscellaneous	475,124			475,124	674,964	-29.61%
Total Revenues	29,651,674	0	58,734	29,710,408	29,339,374	1.26%
Expenditures:						
Administration	4,882,138			4,882,138	3,471,477	40.64%
Wildlife	7,657,970			7,657,970	7,801,728	-1.84%
Fish	5,015,193			5,015,193	4,803,190	4.41%
Law Enforcement	7,046,165			7,046,165	5,779,149	21.92%
Information and Education	1,601,321			1,601,321	1,646,351	-2.74%
Capital Improvements	2,256,621			2,256,621	3,221,442	-29.95%
Land Acquisitions		1,409,383		1,409,383	972,711	44.89%
Total Expenditures	28,459,408	1,409,383		29,868,791	27,696,048	7.84%
Excess(deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	1,192,266	(1,409,383)	58,734	(158,383)	1,643,326	109.64%
Other Financing Sources(uses):						
Sale of General Fixed Assets	0			0	0	0.00%
Operating Transfers In	5,102,611	1,409,383	6,896,827	13,408,821	6,419,130	108.89%
Operating Transfers Out	(1,409,383)		(5,102,611)	(6,511,994)	(5,071,074)	28.41%
Operating Transfers Out (215)			0	0	0	0.00
Total Other Financing Sources(uses)	3,693,228	1,409,383	1,794,216	6,896,827	1,348,056	411.61%
Excess of revenues & other financing sources over expenditures & other financing uses	4,885,494	0	1,852,950	6,738,444	2,991,382	125.26%
Fund Balances, Beginning of Year:	20,831,086	0	34,712,744	55,543,830	43,010,699	29.14%
Fund Balances December 31, 2023:	25,716,580	0	36,565,694	62,282,274	46,002,081	35.39%

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

	Fiduciary Fund Types			12/31/2023 Totals	12/31/2022 Totals
	Nonexpendable Trust	Pension Trust	DC Trust		
Operating Revenues:					
Licenses (Lifetime)	1,667,500			1,667,500	1,737,875
Other Sales (Senior Citizen Licenses)	71,125			71,125	73,265
Interest and Investment Income	0	7,051,538	438,763	7,490,301	1,577,752
Employer Contributions		700,000	352,221	1,052,221	1,462,370
Employee Contributions		259,914	240,809	500,723	485,704
Total Operating Revenues	1,738,625	8,011,452	1,031,793	10,781,870	5,336,966
Operating Expenses:					
Administration		109,384	2,740	112,124	134,904
Benefits and Participant Refunds	0	4,587,632	243,485	4,831,117	4,548,820
Total Operating Expenses	0	4,697,016	246,225	4,943,241	4,683,724
Operating Income	1,738,625	3,314,436	785,568	5,838,629	653,242
Nonoperating Expenses:					
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nonoperating Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Net Income	1,738,625	3,314,436	785,568	5,838,629	653,242
Fund Balances, Beginning	102,823,623	128,968,378	7,343,690	239,135,691	224,948,696
Fund Balances, December 31, 2023	104,562,248	132,282,814	8,129,258	244,974,320	225,601,938



Wildlife Contributions Report

December 2023

Total Payment Amount	Name Of Individual Or Business	Description Of Contribution
\$2,500.00	Oklahoma NRCS	Partner portion of printing Landowner Habitat Mgmt calendar
\$2,500.00	BancFirst	Fish Division/Veterans Park Pond - Jenks
\$5,000.00	Total	

February 2024 DIRECTOR'S REPORT



OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF
**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

CALENDAR ITEMS:

Feb 5 Legislative Reception at ODWC Headquarters
Feb 13 & 14 Oklahoma Archery in the Schools State Shoots, OKC
Feb 21 & 22 Oklahoma Archery in the Schools State Shoots, Tulsa
March 6 Rack Madness, ODWC Headquarters, OKC

AGENCY UPDATE

ADMINISTRATION

Accounting

Accounts Payable:

of Claims Audited and Paid 341
Total Dollar Amount of Claims Paid 3,951,768.63

Purchase Card Program:

Total # Agency Cardholders 195
Total # Agency Approvers (no cards) 13
Total Agency Monthly Standard Spending Limits \$450,500.00
Total Agency Spending Limits w/ Approved Increase Requests \$465,000.00
of PCard Spending Limit Increase Requests Approved 18
of P/Card Transactions Processed 586
of ODWC In-depth Audited Transactions 145
OMES documentation requests for PCard transactions 11
Total Dollar Amount of P/Card Purchases \$150,504.46
PCard Program Refresher Training 6
New Approver Training at OMES 5
New Cardholder Training at OMES 5

Risk Management:

OMES Surveys or Premiums Completed 1
New Cases Reported 0

Purchasing:

of Purchase Orders/CO issued 57
IT Acquisitions Processed 2

Federal Aid

December Activities

- Federal Reimbursement Request: \$1,562,812.58
- Program Income: \$42,853.00
- In-Kind Contributions: \$62,466.00

- Ongoing Federal Audit Repayment: \$981,329.27 cumulative
- New Grants or Amendments Submitted: 1
- Grant Reports Submitted: 54
- Fisheries and Wildlife division Pcard charges sorted into 313 unique combinations of Fund / Division / Grant number / Project number / Product Code / Area / Object Code for claim jacket preparation
- Subaward invoices processed: 24
- Key Meetings / Milestones: Ongoing PeopleSoft migration (>20 meetings, running test scripts); New grant kickoff meeting with Northeastern State University (bat research project); Region 2 Federal Aid Coordinator's monthly meeting
- Noteworthy: ODWC submitted FY25 indirect cost rate proposal

See attached quarterly summary of apportioned funding - federal fiscal year 2024. (New, as per request from Commission following November presentation regarding Federal Aid.)

Human Resources

Open Full-time Positions - 22

Positions Interviewed - 3

Candidates interviewed - 10

Positions Announced - 9

Candidates Screened - 210

Filled Positions - 5 (1 new hires, 3 promotions, 1 transfer)

See included personnel report that shows personnel actions for the month

Temporary Employees Processed (Interns & Aids), - 4

Full time employees on March payroll - 334

DB Plan Members - 151

DC Plan Members - 183

Hourly employees on supplemental payroll - 31

Retirement meetings and / or calculations - 2

Work Comp Injuries - 2

Other misc:

- New employee orientation for 2 new employees
- Planned and facilitated LDP Level Two Workshop on Presenting and Facilitating
- Completed MAT on-demand webinar: Presenting for Impact
- Distributed information on Annual Performance Review to all employees; answered questions about process in Workday
- Finalized update of Employee Handbook and associated acknowledgement form
- Finalized Driver Responsibility Certification form and associated acknowledgement form
- Updated information and resources on TOAD HR pages
- Submitted HR Corner article for January WOG
- Entered timesheet data and ran test payroll for GPC

License

- Processed over 525 orders, including 458 licenses/permits and 429 hard cards (mail and walk-in orders) - \$125,013 in revenue
- Shipped 336 in-house merchandise items (patches, books, etc), totaling over \$3,800 in revenue.
- **IT**

- IT took in a total of 62 tickets in the last 30 days. We have already experienced severe weather throughout the state. Thanks to OneDrive and Zsclaer employees can continue to work from wherever they are.
- Upcoming and Ongoing Projects:
- We have begun prepping IT tasks for Rack Madness 2024.
- There has been an ongoing effort to create a program for Shotgun in the Schools that we will continue to work on.
- The Web Site and GIS are being upgraded to Windows server 2022.
- Pure Storage has scheduled our mid-life server upgrade for our storage.
- New Dell computers have been ordered. We have received notifications that Dell will fulfill our order after OMES images them.
- Processed \$21,000 in miscellaneous revenue, such lease payments, fines restitution, etc.
- Reviewed 1,152 online and paper applications for various licenses and permits.

December License Review

Recreational Licenses were down 12% for the month compared to December 2022 and down 1% YTD. Large decreases could be attributed to the first renewal period for 365 day licenses being spread throughout the course of the year.

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Resident Hunting	-44% (3,369)	-11%
Resident Fishing	-74% (3,846)	-4%
Resident Combo	-63% (1,279)	-22%
Resident Holiday Deer Gun Antlerless	+10% (4,341)	+10%
Resident Youth Hunting	+8% (282)	-2%
Resident Holiday Youth Deer Gun Antlerless	-17% (751)	-9%
Nonresident Deer Gun	-4% (535)	+7%
Nonresident Deer Archery	+7% (464)	+5%

Lifetime License sales are down 7% for the month compared to December 2022 and down 2% YTD (15,915 sold).

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)	YTD Change
Lifetime Combo	+3% (513)	-6%
60-100% Disabled Vet Combo	-12% (90)	+5%
Senior Citizen Combo	-2% (252)	+1%

Early January License Review (Sales through Jan. 21)

Recreational Licenses were down 31% for the first 21 days of the month compared to January 2023. Large decreases are likely attributable to 365 licenses purchased in 2023 not expiring until later in the year, but we'll be watching the trends over longer time periods.

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)
Resident Hunting	-30% (1,949)
Resident Fishing	-70% (2,818)
Resident Combo	-43% (1,730)
Resident Youth Hunting	-62% (62)
Resident Youth Fishing	-78% (69)
Oklahoma Waterfowl Stamp	+4% (5,400)
Nonresident Hunting	-6% (957)
Nonresident 5-Day Hunting	+3% (4,535)
Nonresident Fishing	-59% (1,362)

Lifetime Licenses were down 32% for the first 21 days of the month compared to January 2023 (863 sold).

Notables include:

License Type	Pct Change MTD (# Sold)
Lifetime Combo	-19% (159)
Senior Citizen Fishing	-45% (145)
Senior Citizen Combo	-30% (414)

Property

- Held open house for PurpleWave Auction January 29th, with auction closing January 30th.
- The new uniform portal was sent to Chiefs for review.
- Annual inventory was distributed out to staff.
- Continued testing new asset management system.
- Multiple Warden trucks were prepared for upcoming new hires.

FISHERIES DIVISION

December Fisheries Director Report

Statewide Fish Stockings, December 2023			
Species	#Fish	Size	# Locations
Rainbow trout, USFWS	17,335	11"	2
Rainbow trout, Commercial	10,409	9+"	8
TOTAL	27,744		

Meetings

- Met with Graver Engineering to discuss 90% plans for Manning Reservoir and 60% plans for the Watonga Dam project at the Manning Hatchery.
- Staff attended the Water Research Review project updates.

Activities

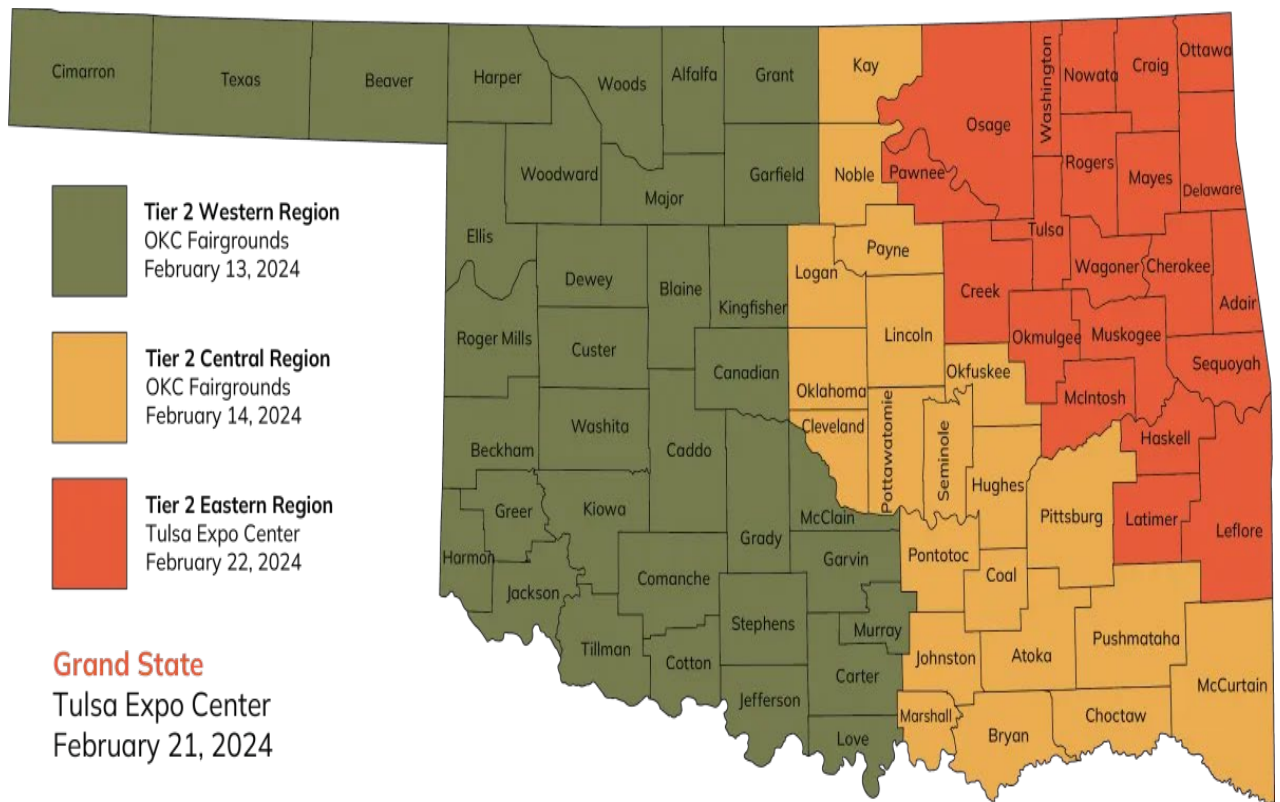
- Staff continued intensive indoor propagation of rainbow trout fingerlings. These fish are currently pellet trained and doing well. Growth rates are better than expected. Tanks are cleaned daily, and fish are sampled weekly to increase feed rates for maximum growth and health.

- Staff has started hauling unit renovation projects. The old tank will be completely overhauled and refinished to like new condition. New O2 and airlines, regulators, and aerators will be replaced as well as hardware and a new gel coat applied.
- Maintenance on all production ponds not being utilized is ongoing consisting of reshaping the pond, basin repair, rip-rap, replacing water lines, gate structures, and concrete.
- Staff conducted creel surveys and reviewed trail camera images at OKC trout ponds to determine fishing pressure.
Staff monitored Oklahoma River draining in OKC to prevent stranded fish and mortality. Construction should be completed by the end of March 2024.
- Staff finished installing new logo CTH signs and posts, inspections on boat docks, fishing piers and ramps at area lakes and ponds. Submitted repair needs to the Boating Access Coordinator.
- Staff coordinated pollution response at private pond in SW OKC. Reported incident to DEQ and Fish Kill Coordinator.
- Staff completed Bowfishing Trials at the OFRL, finalized analysis for Catfish tagging projects, finished edits and published two OAS manuscripts.
- Stream Program technicians processed a total of 214 Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish otoliths that were collected during our 2023 standardized spring low-frequency electrofishing surveys.
- Data analyses were conducted on standardized fall black bass surveys and on a Redfin Darter occupancy modeling dataset. Black bass analyses will be incorporated into our 2023 annual report and the occupancy of Redfin Darter is being analyzed to determine the distribution of the species, the mechanisms underlying its distribution, and inform the species conservation ranking.
- We prepare reports detailing the species caught on private land for landowners who permitted us and are interested in the data. The last of the landowner reports were completed and sent to landowners in December.
- Equipment maintenance including net repair, boat motor oil changes, trailer wiring, repairing anode triggers, cleaning anode rings, and cleaning the shop is happening in division-wide preparation for the upcoming sampling schedule.
- Meetings attended by Stream Program staff included a meeting with USFWS regarding the Peppered Shiner species status assessment, the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Planning meeting hosted by the OWRB, an OKAFS EXCOM meeting, and meetings to assist in the development of the Creel Application.
- Completed and submitted compliance paperwork for Durant State Fish Hatchery for the replacement of over 5,000 feet of fencing.
- Personnel continued composing and editing extensive lake reports for multiple reservoirs in the region for Federal Aid Grant compliance and to ensure sampling data is up to date for each body of water sampled from 2022 and 2023.
- Staff are aging crappie, white bass, striped bass hybrid, and walleye from the 2023 Fall SSP sampling.
- Several interviews with different magazines for the upcoming 2024 Bassmaster Classic being held on Grand Lake March 22-24
- Staff are conducting and assisting with paddlefish sampling on Grand and Kaw Lakes.
- Continued silt removal from Jap Beaver Lake Basin and the contractor began dewatering and built access road for the primary structure at Jap Beaver Lake.

- Sank cedar trees and or Shelbyville cubes at Burtschi, Vanderwork, Doc Hollis, Clinton, Ft Cobb, Ellsworth, Lawtonka, and Crowder Lakes with additional trash being picked up.
- Conducted angler surveys on Fort Gibson and certified state record northern hogsucker.
- Staff assisted SOSU with community gill netting on Lake Texoma, USFWS with invasive carp sampling on Red River, and provided goldeye, shortnose gar, and longnose gar for OFRL ongoing projects.
- Staff refurbished 18 fish attractors at Arbuckle Lake with new sunken trees.
- Blue River staff-built metal frames for the new signs pending installation.
- Staff attended the virtual MLF Fisheries Management Summit.
- Staff compiled bass tournament reports from Lake Texoma.
- All fishing access projects in the northwest region were inspected. Only one deficiency was identified and addressed with the cooperator. Additionally, dam inspections were completed at American Horse, Elmer, Vincent, and Chambers. The operator at Elmer was found inoperative and was removed for repairs.

C&E DIVISION

- Amanda Thomas continued to move all range projects forward, with several teams meetings with all ODWC staff that have ongoing or upcoming range renovation and construction projects along with our engineers and environmental compliance staff. She attended the pre-bid meeting for the construction phase of the Atoka range. She also engaged in several meetings regarding the Optima range renovation.
- Submitted a grant proposal to Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation that would enable C&E to hire a local video production company to produce a short commercial or commercials and related assets highlighting fishing in Oklahoma that would be shared on a variety of ODWC platforms.
- Prepared for upcoming Open House event at Lexington WMA on Feb. 17. At this family-friendly hands-on learning event participants will learn wing-shooting techniques at the WMA's shooting range, learn about squirrel hunting and how to hunt Oklahoma's public land, and also learn about Lexington WMA.
- Registration for the event is limited to 50 people. Lunch will be provided by the nonprofit group, Oklahoma Hunters & Anglers (OHA). Lance Meek worked with the engineering firm in preparing plans for paving the parking areas at Arcadia as well as landscaping to move water away from the Arcadia building.
- Heather Gaylord is working with the Oklahoma Hunters and Anglers on a Crappie 101 workshop to be held in February at the Arcadia Conservation Education Area.
- Produced several information flyers for use in providing educational information to state legislators and others.
- Colin Berg attended the Archery Trade Association Explore Bowhunting Summit and trade show where he had a chance to interact and visit with manufactures regarding the ODWC programs and efforts to engage and activate bowhunters and recreational archers.
- Kelly Boyer and Shawn Gee worked on qualifying scores, awards and all equipment needed for the upcoming OKNASP and Varsity Archery State Shoots.



WILDLIFE DIVISION

- Saturday, February 17th will be the Lexington WMA Open House, which is a family friendly hands-on learning event. Participants will learn wing shooting skills at the WMA gun range, learn about squirrel hunting methods, and learn how to effectively hunt Oklahoma public lands. The seminar and shooting range portions run from 9 a.m. to noon, and lunch will be provided by the nonprofit group Oklahoma Hunters and anglers (OHA). After lunch, participants can squirrel hunt on the WMA. Mentor hunters will be provided by OHA to assist new or beginning hunters and also demonstrate how to properly prepare harvested squirrels.
- Pronghorn aerial surveys were recently completed and aerial capture for the ongoing pronghorn research project began January 28th.
- Research crews are prepping and starting to capture wild turkeys in sw and se Oklahoma.
- Mule deer captures for ongoing research project slated to begin February 1st.
- It is dormant season prescribed burning time and some areas have already been burned. Final preparations are being made to firebreaks and burning equipment on other areas, and staff will start posting/publishing required notifications.
- GIS Staff worked with IT to switch out and update the GIS server.
- The first of three planned Land Trapping Workshops (January 20-21 (Hulah / Copan WMA), February 3-4 (James Collins WMA), and February 10-11 (Packsaddle WMA) was held on Jan 20-21. Weather conditions were not the most favorable, but we had 11 participants and based on their feedback, the workshop was very successful and well received. Trapping season remains open through Feb. 28th.
- The Oklahoma Furbearers Association will hold their annual Fur Auction on March 9th, at the Okmulgee County Fairgrounds.

- Controlled hunts on WMA's have wrapped up for the 2023-24 season. Staff continued to conduct waterfowl counts on assigned areas and prepare / submit Wetland Unit status reports. Ag lease inspections continue, and work is underway for letting upcoming ag leases. Early preparations have begun for grazing leases. Cedar control projects continue throughout the state. 90 acres of disking accomplished in a wetland unit that was in a planned dry cycle to control undesirable plants and stimulate growth of native food plants. 14 acres of sunflowers were mowed and 15 acres were disced to promote native forb growth. 90 miles of firebreak were prepared, 26 miles of area roads were maintained, over 100 tons of gravel spread. And lots of trash to pick up following deer season.
- The OLAP limited access program worked well this year. OLAP biologist position was filled (promotion of OLAP technician Joshua Luft) on February 1st.
- Applications for Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) projects have been processed and property/project evaluations have begun. The program remains very popular, and again this year, applications far exceed funding capacity.
- Private lands youth hunts wrapped up with an overall success rate of 57%.
- The Wildlife Research Committee is evaluating 7 PR funded proposals and the Wildlife Diversity team is evaluating 8 State Wildlife Grant funded proposals submitted in response to the respective Request for Proposals issued this FY. Each team will make funding recommendations for consideration and funding for the FY 25 budget.
- Diversity staff are working on coordinating outreach events and tours at Hackberry Flat WMA.
- Big game harvest data is being processed and verified. Preliminary, unverified harvest numbers indicate we may end up with the 3rd highest deer harvest total to date. Current data indicates 43% of the harvest was antlerless deer.
- Progress and preparation is underway for the Rack Madness event (March 6th) with sufficient measurers to ensure a smooth event for staff and participants.
- Migratory bird staff are coordinating efforts for white-fronted and arctic-nesting Canada goose captures for GPS collar deployment.
- Staff continue to work with the City of Edmond on potential waterfowl hunting opportunity at Arcadia Lake.
- The OSU quail research project is underway, and to date reports ~40 banded birds harvested, and an additional 38 birds banded in December.
- Analysis of the quail wings donated in the western WMA wing boxes is underway. Information from these wings can give us a closer look at harvested bird sex ratio and age.
- Calls for technical assistance through the Quail Enhancement Program have sharply increased in early 2024, with landowners (over 8,000 acres) from 5 counties reaching out for help on improving quail habitat.
- Division representative attended the NWTF state Board meeting and provided presentation at the Awards Banquet in Shawnee.
- Planning and compliance are underway for Walnut Creek WDU (Ft. Cobb WMA) improvements and Mountain Park WDU in conjunction with DU. All Wetland Development Units are being evaluated for repair needs.

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

- As of February 9th all Game Wardens will have been through the Water Enforcement Techniques. This class is lifesaving training for anyone that does law enforcement work in or around water. The remaining wardens have attended a class located at Ada, Weatherford and Tahlequah to get everyone finished up and certified.
- D6 Wardens Michael Taylor, Tucker Clem and Lt. Mike Carroll participated in a trapping camp for kids of all ages. This camp is put on by the Oklahoma furbearers alliance. The camp hosted 40 kids who spent three days trapping on private property that area landowners graciously allow them access to. They learn things like reading sign, setting different kinds of traps and sets, and how to handle the fur once they have it. This was started at lake Waurika a few years ago after Michael Taylor's boys attended the camp in Stillwater. Michael was instrumental in getting this started in the southern part of the state.
- D1 has been busy with Boat Shows this month. Several of our GWs attended the Tulsa Boat Expo on Jan 4-7. We have a much larger presence at the Tulsa Boat, Sport and Travel Show on Jan 29-Feb 4th where GWs from D1, D2, D8 and D4 manned a large display complete with our new Grand Lake Fluid Boat, the D8 Air Boat, and a new outfitted Warden truck. Fluid Boats, the OSGWA, and the Wildlife Foundation helped sponsor this event and GW Austin Jackson was instrumental in making this entire event come to fruition.
- D1 Wardens Brandon Fulton and Travis Garrett made an outstanding baiting/license/early shooting waterfowl case and Chris Newkirk finished up an illegal deer/trespassing case in Nowata Co.
- D2 Wardens have made numerous waterfowl baiting cases over the last few months in almost all areas of D2. They also executed a search warrant where seven bucks were confiscated along with firearms and other evidence.
- D1 Game Warden Rylee Rolling assisted Tulsa County with a search warrant case of non-native venomous snakes in a residence there. They had 2 Timber Rattlesnakes and 2 Gaboon Vipers in the house. Some checking from Warden Rolling in the license database on the spot, showed their current license to possess the snakes.
- D8 Lt. Mike Baker is currently working a large case with New Mexico and Texas guys roaming over the 3-state area poaching animals.
- D8 Capt. Ben Bickerstaff made a good case on a group of guys that were over limit on pintails.
- D8 Wardens Menefee and Badley worked a good case on a local individual shooting a buck after deer archery season was over, with a rifle.
- Wardens will be attending the Backwoods show coming up March 1-3rd and then at the office for Rack Madness on March 6th. We had 18 wardens at each of the three days at the Backwoods show and another 27 wardens at Rack Madness. Making sure we are representing the Department at these functions is making sure we are relevant to the citizens of Oklahoma.



J. KEVIN STITT, GOVERNOR
WADE FREE, DIRECTOR

Wildlife Conservation Commission
Leigh Gaddis Tim Diehl
Chairman D. Chad Dillingham
James V. Barwick Jess Kane
Vice Chairman Mark H. Mabrey
Rick Holder John P. Zelbst
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 23, 2024

TO: OK Department of Wildlife Commission and Staff

FROM: Brittnee Preston

RE: Report on January Federal and Congressional Issues for February Commission Meeting

Congress:

General activity –

- > Border Security negotiations have stalled in early January as focus shifted to keeping the government open beyond the January 19th deadline.
- > A topline budget agreement was reached between the House and Senate leadership and the White House. However, some House conservatives opposed the spending agreement and attempted to halt movement on it. Speaker Johnson held the line and moved forward with a vote on the agreement and the House and Senate ultimately passed a continuing resolution pushing another bifurcated deadline into March.
- > The House Natural Resources Committee held a markup on several bills including Chairman Bruce Westerman's (R-AR) Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experience (EXPLORE) Act. This bill aims to modernize the visitor experience on public lands by "reducing overcrowding, improving access for those with disabilities and streamlining the permitting process for small businesses that rely on our public lands." The EXPLORE Act is the House version of the Senate's S.873, America's Outdoor Recreation Act, which passed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in July 2023. The House bill passed Committee by unanimous consent. Both the House and Senate versions of the bills are bipartisan and widely supported.

Appropriations –

- > Appropriations were set to expire January 19th and February 2nd. Negotiations stalled heading into the holiday break for many reasons but ultimately, a topline number was agreed upon in early January and a continuing resolution was passed avoiding a government shutdown just days before January 19th.
- > Congressional leaders reached a bipartisan deal on topline fiscal 2024 spending limits of \$1.66 trillion. The House GOP stalled procedural hurdles in the week leading up to the deadline leaving the fate of a stopgap bill and a long term deal up in the air; however, Speaker Johnson pushed forward keeping the topline budget deal intact and passed a short-term fund deal extending appropriations to March 1st and March 8th.
- > The stopgap measure passed with both republican and democrat support. Below is a list of the appropriations bills that expire on each date. Most of ODWC's issues fall in Agriculture, Energy and Water and Interior and Environment bills.

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.

- Bills expiring on March 1:
 1. Military Construction-VA,
 2. Agriculture,
 3. Energy-Water
 4. Transportation-HUD bills
 - Bills expiring March 8:
 1. Commerce, Justice and Science
 2. Defense
 3. Financial Services
 4. Homeland Security
 5. Interior and Environment
 6. Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
 7. Legislative Branch
 8. State and Foreign Ops
- > The White House is still pushing Congress to supply Ukraine with aid. Members are split on what to do with supplementary aid.
- > Border security negotiations have been another hold up. This issue took center stage leading up to the holiday break, stalled out in early January but has picked back up. Oklahoma's senior Senator, James Lankford, is leading the republican position in the negotiations. This has a direct link to FY 24 appropriations negotiations because the House Republicans say they will not vote for a funding bill without border security reforms.
- > Senate and House tax experts have held several meetings as they pushed to strike a tax deal that could reinstate business deductions in exchange for an enlargement of the child tax credit (CTC). This issue is likely to weigh heavy on the appropriations discussions too.

Farm bill –

- > A one-year extension was included in the CR passed in November. The Farm bill is now set to expire on September 30, 2024.
- > The House and Senate Agriculture chairs are pushing to get floor time as early as this spring. Unfortunately, the additional continuing resolution pushing funding deadlines into March will inevitably push the Farm bill and other policy issues into the summer. Some members of Congress have mentioned they think the best time for a Farm bill movement will be in the lame duck Congress after the election in November.

SCOTUS:

- > The Supreme Court heard oral arguments on a case seeking an opinion on the deference courts give federal agencies' interpretations of the laws they implement. The Chevron Doctrine, which came out of the 1984 case *Chevron v. Natural Resources Defense Council*, is in question. The 1984 case upheld an EPA regulation and set up a two part test for courts to use in reviewing how an agency interprets the law it implements. The challengers in the case before SCOTUS now claim the deferential standard is unconstitutional. The Biden administration maintains it is constitutional. This case could shake up federal agencies' regulatory power considerably.

Coming up...

- > The FARM bill expires on September 30, 2024
- > The current CR expires on March 1st and March 8th

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Wade Free, Interim Director

Personnel Actions
January 2024

New Hires

Heather Gaylord – C & E Specialist, Central Office, 01/02/2024

Joshua Porter – Fisheries Technician, OFRL, 01/02/2024

Promotions

Michael Baker – Warden, Beaver County to Warden Supervisor, D8, 1/1/24

Matt Mattioda – Wildlife Senior Biologist to NE Regional Supervisor, 1/1/24

Stephen Paul – Warden, Noble County to Warden Supervisor, D8, 1/1/24

Transfers

Chris Newkirk – Game Warden, Nowata County to Delaware County, 1/1/24

Resignations/Terminations

Luke Taylor, Hatchery Manager at Durant, 1/31/24

Retirements