

FEBRUARY 2021  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Feb 1 Legislative session begins and adjourns *Sine Die* on May 28
- Feb 9 Commission Rules Committee meets from 2-4 PM
- Feb 23-25 Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) Virtual Workshop
- Feb 25 Deadline to get bills out of committee in house of origin
- Mar 1 Next Commission meeting
- Mar 2 SEAFWA Spring Directors' Meeting (virtual)
- Mar 8-12 The 86<sup>th</sup> North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference (virtual)

**AGENCY UPDATE**

**LEGISLATURE:**

- See attached for full list of Title 29/Wildlife-related bills that were filed.
- The 58th Legislative Session begins on February 1st.
- **HUMAN DIMENSIONS**
  - A second wave of invitations to the controlled hunt survey was sent out to assess bias. The survey is now closed with over 4,500 responses. Results will be analyzed and available in early spring.
  - The final report for the conservation passport survey was written and will be shared with strategic plan team leads.
  - Results from the interviews with university faculty were compiled. These results will influence the questions that we ask students on how ODWC can better engage and recruit university students.
  - The 2020 Game Harvest Survey was sent to 6,000 hunters and temporary employees were hired to make phone calls to the sampled group of hunters. Topics covered this year include standard harvest and participation questions, communication preferences, WMA activity participation (other than hunting) and land access issues.
  - The public comment form was closed and comments were compiled to be given to commissioners.
  - A report was compiled from the feedback form for the private lands youth hunts.

**FISHERIES DIVISION**

**December**

Statewide Fish Stockings

Species	Number Fish	Size	Number Locations
Channel catfish	9,800	6-7"	7
Rainbow trout	34,907	11"	3
Rainbow trout	9,770	9-14"	5
Rainbow trout	592	14-24"	5

Activities

- Staff was actively engaged in the selection process for the Fisheries Assistant Unit Leader at the Oklahoma State University Coop Unit.
- Assisted with a Discovery Channel documentary on the Department's Paddlefish Program.
- Prioritized aquatic research needs for the upcoming State Wildlife Grant RFP.

- Participated in an annual coordination meeting with TPWD to discuss Lake Texoma fishery management.
- Habitat enhancement projects on Carl Albert, Meeker, Murray, Ozzie Cobb, Sardis, Tenkiller, and Texoma reservoirs were completed using large cedar trees. All projects were marked, and locations were uploaded into the Department's online fish attractor map and highlighted through Facebook posts.
- Reviewed and provided comments on a draft Lake Texoma shoreline management plan.
- Completing data entry and analysis from 2020 fall sampling efforts, and results are being included in annual reports.
- Updating and completing five-year regional management plans for 2016-20, and are drafting new plans for 2021-25.
- Region stocking needs for 2021 were reviewed and revised as necessary.
- Winter paddlefish netting and tagging surveys continue on Fort Gibson, Grand, and Hudson reservoirs.
- Alligator Gar surveys are being conducted when weather permits.
- A creel survey at Sunset continues. Preliminary results indicate this lake is popular as anglers continue to catch trout.
- Slenderhead Darter specimens were collected, prepared, and shipped to Yale University for genetics analysis.
- Monitoring of the drawdown at Lake Jap Beaver continues in preparation for an upcoming dam renovation project.
- Work continues on shop building renovation plans for the Ponca City Office.
- A fishing dock at Eagle Lake was installed and the gangway boards were replaced.
- Dirt work for the heavy equipment building at Canton was completed, and a road to the site was built and rocked.
- Byron SFH staff started construction on a new hatching jar storage cabinet and completed fish house holding tank refinishing projects.
- Manning SFH staff pulled one of their water supply pumps for repair and continued reshaping pond bottoms and levies.
- Blue River PFHA staff inspected and temporarily repaired damaged roads and bridges. Permanent solutions are being discussed.

## **I&E DIVISION**

- Smokey Solis sent out a video featuring Director Strong saying "thank you" to our sportsmen and women. The video accompanied an article highlighting ODWC's top achievements in 2020 in an email sent to all our license holders.
- Michael Bergin continues to finalize the target audience, message, and timeline for Operation Retention. Additionally, he is working with R3 coordinator Kasie Harriet to execute a recently acquired grant from ACI. Through this grant, he is working to develop influencer videos for social media ads. He is also working with Mike Chrisman to develop marketing plans for the upcoming ODWC raffle hunts.
- Colin Berg, Kasie Harriet and Skylar St Yves participated in a webinar with RBFF regarding methods to retain anglers. They are all involved with a special ODWC retention effort and plan for 2021.
- Kelly Boyer entered scores for the virtual shoots that OKNASP students have been participating in. Schools that wanted to qualify for an in person or virtual state shoot shot and submitted scores from three different virtual shoots. The average of their scores were used to determine the top 20 elementary, middle and high school teams. They are invited to an in person event at the OKC Fairgrounds on February 23 & 24. 212 schools submitted scores, down around 30% from last year but very good for all of the different COVID

protocols that schools have implemented. Schools that didn't qualify for the in person event will participate in another virtual shoot to determine tier 2 level state champions.

- Don Brown completed a project to scan and archive every issue of Outdoor Oklahoma magazine. Every issue since 1945 can be found online through the Department of Libraries' "Digital Prairie" catalog.
- Lance Meek completed the final site inspection of the improvements to Silverleaf gun range as part of a large range renovation grant.
- Shawn Gee continued to document the progress of the range renovation at James Collins and Okmulgee. Both ranges are open, but final inspection has not been completed. Once hydro seeding has been completed a final inspection will take place.
- Jennifer Benge prepared final student certification numbers that completed the online NRA HE course during a special effort to increase use of the online course August-December of 2020. 5,115 students completed their course during the special campaign. The agency has documented \$191,860 worth of contributions in the 18 months since the online course has been used as a match through a federal grant. Peter Churchbourne, with the NRA intends to attend the March Commission meeting to make a presentation on this successful collaboration.
- Darrin Hill and Smokey Solis filmed a private land youth hunt in Beckham County. Photos were also taken and will be shared with the Wildlife Conservation Foundation to use on their website (the Foundation donated the blind, shooting sticks, chairs, ect.).
- Daniel Griffith is working with IT to develop another section of the Cy Curtis program recognizing the Oklahoma Slam and Super Slam. Daniel also worked to create webpages for the new raffle hunts. Daniel plans to meet with the Website Council later this month to discuss Q4 and yearly analytics. Pageviews were up 30% with an increase in pageviews from 6,704,256 in 2019 to 8,773,581 in 2020. Even with increased traffic, the website operated more efficiently by decreasing page load time.
- Whitney Jenkins is working to complete profiles for each Foundation member. These profiles will be featured throughout the year in the WOG and will also be shared with the Foundation to use on their website.
- Kasie Harriet assisted NWTF staff with the organization of a mentored squirrel hunt at Sequoyah State Park. Hunt is being held January 23rd.
- Sarah Southerland partnered with Smokey Solis to mentor a hispanic family on their first duck hunt. Sarah completed an article about the hunt and plans to use it in several ODWC as well as share it with HECHO. [Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors.](#)
- Damon Springer, Jason Smith, Shawn Gee and Kelly Boyer conducted an OKSSSP training for 12 teachers at the OKC Gun Club.

### **Upcoming Scholastic Shooting Sports Program shoots**

March 2, Enid

March 4, Duncan

March 23, SE, Coweta

March 24, NE, Coweta

April 7, State Shoot, El Reno

### **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

- Staff continues to wrap up a very successful, new state record deer harvest.
- WMA staff continues to make preparations for dormant season prescribed burning, and a number of burns have already been conducted.
- The deer Herd Health Evaluation project will occur throughout the month of February, with collections scheduled for Mondays and Tuesdays in February. Sampling will occur in North Central and Northwest Oklahoma.
- Winter Pronghorn Population Survey flights, are scheduled for this week (week of Feb 1).

- WMA staff is preparing areas for the upcoming grazing season, monitoring NRDA contracts, and monitoring ag leases, and a number of dove fields have been planted.
- The Farm Service Agency approved the Dept's Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (CRP-SAFE) proposal. This proposal will give landowners enrolling in CRP a more wildlife-friendly cover type option for their CRP planting (native grasses with a high forb component). The CRP-SAFE proposal is targeted at providing improved habitats for bobwhite quail, lesser prairie chicken, and monarch butterflies. The enrollment period for the general CRP signup is Jan 4-Feb 12, 2021. ODWC has been active in helping to promote this new opportunity and will provide assistance to FSA by conducting annual spot inspections of CRP-SAFE-enrolled properties to review/certify proper establishment. (the enrollment dates are set by FSA, not us and we weren't notified that our proposal had been approved until after the enrollment period was actually open)
- Mid-winter waterfowl surveys and survey flights are ongoing and nearing completion.
- Work on development and refinement of the Dashboard component of the WMA Plans continues, and the initial data entry portion of the project has been completed
- Requests to score antlers are increasing as they normally do this time of year. (The 60 day drying period for racks harvested during deer gun season is essentially past.)

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

- Law has been working on PMP and inventories. Getting these done in the middle of Covid has made for a little longer process.
- Still lots of waterfowl hunting going on, with decent numbers of birds being reported.
- Law Enforcement 2020 activity totals for 114 Wardens are below:

<b>Year: 2020</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Miles Driven:</b>	2,142,351
<b>Citations Issued:</b>	2149
<b>Field License Issued:</b>	1304
<b>Written Warnings:</b>	1044
<b>Admin. Fines Collected:</b>	1353
<b>Sportsman Compliance Checks:</b>	92884
<b>Hunter Education Classes:</b>	119
<b>Articles Written:</b>	86
<b>Programs (Excluding HE):</b>	892
<b>DISTRICT MAN HOURS</b>	
<b>Assisting (Fish, Game, I&amp;E, Public):</b>	17218
<b>Distributing Literature:</b>	915
<b>Training:</b>	14139.5
<b>Investigations:</b>	10453.5
<b>Patrol:</b>	138,384