

Missouri
STATE REPORT
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Permit Restructuring and Pricing

For over a year, an internal committee took a comprehensive look at hunting and fishing permits, how they're structured, priced, and associated privileges. The committee's charge was to review and evaluate sport permit fees and structure in ways that:

- 1) Enhance agency permit revenues.
- 2) Promote citizen participation in hunting and fishing.
- 3) Assist potential federal aid receipts.
- 4) Assess equity issues as they apply to landowners, seniors and youths, and
- 5) Recommend a strategy for change, if warranted.

Ideas for consideration included permit pricing based on an analysis of CPI, a senior hunt and fish forever permit, adjustments to hunter education requirements for mentors, changes to landowner privileges, and discounted permits for youth to name a few.

Changing landowner privileges resulted in a firestorm of public comment. Permit price increases were also not well received. In the end, we deferred price increases, backed-off from landowner changes, and scuttled the senior permit idea.

Changes Effective July 1, 2009:

- Eliminated the existing youth deer and turkey hunting permit and the youth antlerless permit, while established a 50-percent discounted price for resident and nonresident youth on deer, turkey and trout permits.
- Approved allowing resident youth under the age of 16 to trap without a permit.
- Set a minimum age of 6 for obtaining deer and turkey permits.
- Approved allowing nonresident youth to hunt during the 2-day youth spring turkey season beginning in 2010.
- Approved allowing nonresident college and technical school students to purchase resident permits.
- Made the hunter-education and age requirements for mentors consistent.
- Established a new light goose conservation order permit for the 2010 light goose conservation order (residents \$5, nonresidents \$40).
- Eliminated nonresident landowner reduced-price deer and turkey hunting permits..

Non-resident hunter and angler permit changes effective July 1, 2009:

Nonresident Fishing, from \$40 to \$42

Nonresident Furbearer Hunting/Trapping, from \$120 to \$130
Nonresident Small Game Hunting, from \$75 to \$80
Nonresident Spring Turkey, from \$175 to \$190
Nonresident Fall Turkey, from \$105 to \$110
Nonresident Firearms Any-Deer Hunting, from \$175 to \$225
Nonresident Firearms Antlerless Deer Hunting, from \$7 to \$25
Nonresident Archer's Hunting, from \$150 to \$225
Nonresident Managed Deer Hunting, from \$175 to \$225
Nonresident Archery Antlerless Deer Hunting, from \$7 to \$25

Economic Conditions and MDC

Like every other state in the nation, Missouri is faced with a major economic crises and budget deficit. Fortunately, the Department's earmarked funding insulates the agency somewhat; however, because 60% of our revenue is tied to the Conservation Sales Tax, revenue has seen a significant decline.

In an effort to address immediate and longer-term financial issues, the Department has been reviewing programs and staffing, looking for opportunities to make cuts and re-direct resources. One of the goals of this effort is to reduce staff by 130 positions in the next 18 months. Also, a Voluntary Payroll Reduction Plan (VPRP) was rolled out to retirement eligible employees. VPRP offers a greatly reduced cost of health insurance to those eligible (80% of cost for seven years). Approximately 150 employees submitted letters of intent to retire under the VPRP.

Noodling

The legalization of hand fishing or "noodling" in Missouri is an ongoing conservation issue with a small group of fisherman who would like to see hand fishing legalized for catfish in Missouri waters. The 2009 Missouri Legislature reviewed two efforts to legalize hand fishing in selected waters or statewide during the catfish spawning season; neither passed.

Department of Conservation scientific research shows that hand fishing could have a significant negative impact on catfish populations in local tributaries, where the majority of hand fishing would take place. Our research shows that less than 25% of catfish migrate from large rivers to smaller tributaries. This degree of migration depends on seasonal water levels. Hand fishers have easy access to these smaller wading streams and the nesting cover catfish use, making these catfish especially vulnerable. If depleted, catfish populations in these tributaries would have great difficulty reestablishing their numbers.

Feral Hogs

The Department continues to address the problem of a growing feral hog population in the state. Feral hogs are a serious concern for Missouri's natural resources and agricultural interests. With the backing of a Governor's feral hog task force consisting of state, federal and private organizations we have stepped up our efforts to cooperatively eradicate feral hogs in Missouri. In fiscal year 2008 staff discovered and eradicated over 500 pigs from and around 20 different Conservation Areas across the southern half of the state. Successful eradication methods included, traps, snares, contracted dog handler, aerial gunning by helicopter and shooting with

night vision equipment. Through the Governor's task force we are supporting outreach efforts and changes in legislation concerning feral hogs in Missouri.

Table Rock Lake/Lake Taneycomo Habitat Initiative.

This initiative builds upon a long-standing public/private partnership in southwest Missouri to improve and restore fish habitat in Table Rock Lake, Lake Taneycomo and their watersheds through cover augmentation, shoreline and water level management, watershed management and other water quality-related projects. The Missouri Department of Conservation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Bass Pro Shops, Tracker Marine, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southwestern Power Administration, various non-government organizations, angler groups and private citizens are working cooperatively to ensure the success of this five-year project. This project is an excellent opportunity to act proactively to maintain and enhance fish habitat in and around two of the Midwest's most popular sportfisheries. This project can be a national example in sustaining and improving reservoir sportfish populations through large-scale habitat improvements using additional funding provided through both the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) and the More Fish Campaign.

Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo are located in the White River Hills region of the Ozark Plateau along the Missouri-Arkansas border. At conservation pool, Table Rock Lake encompasses 43,100 acres with 745 miles of shoreline, and Lake Taneycomo covers just over 2,000 acres. Crappie, white bass, walleye and paddlefish are among the primary sportfish in Table Rock; however, black bass receive the most attention and fishing pressure. Lake Taneycomo supports an excellent rainbow trout and brown trout fishery. The combined annual economic benefit of angling on Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo is conservatively estimated at \$67 million.

Between October 2007 and December 2008, approximately 400 fish habitat structures were installed in Table Rock Lake, 795 septic tank pump-outs designed to reduce nutrient inputs into Table Rock Lake were completed and five (5) cost-share projects for erosion control and sediment reduction in the Table Rock Lake watershed were initiated. Efforts in each of these areas are ongoing. In addition and working with the Corps of Engineers and the Tennessee Valley Authority, the scope of work was completed for consideration of a forebay liquid oxygen diffuser at Table Rock Dam to ameliorate seasonal, low dissolved oxygen levels in releases to Lake Taneycomo.

Horseback Riding on State Lands

Legislation was introduced to allow horse and mule riding on virtually any state owned or managed property in Missouri, including state conservation areas. At least two other states in the Midwest (IA and MI) had similar legislation proposed. The Missouri legislation passed; however, the language of the bill was softened to protect Missouri Department of Conservation authority and prerogatives as they pertain to management, public safety, condition, etc.

Missouri Hunters Set a Safety Record in 2008

Missouri recorded 15 firearms-related hunting accidents in 2008, the fewest since the Missouri Department of Conservation began keeping records in 1963. Conservation Department records show that the incidence of firearms hunting accidents peaked in 1986, when 98 people were hurt

in such incidents. That was not the most lethal year, however. While only seven hunters died in firearms hunting accidents in 1986, 22 lost their lives in both 1966 and 1970. Twenty perished in firearms hunting accidents in 1963 and 1967. The number of total firearms hunting accidents hovered in the 70 to 90 range from 1976 through 1985, and Missouri averaged 11.8 fatal firearms hunting accidents during that period.

Spring Turkey Harvest

As expected, spring turkey-hunting data for the three-week season were less favorable this year, with permits and harvest down compared to last year. Reports from hunters varied from feast to famine, with complaints of a scarcity of turkeys more common this year. Regular season harvest of 41,830 was down 3.6 percent from the 2008 harvest of 43,416. Number of resident regular permits sold also declined 2.2 percent to 90,331; nonresident permits declined 8.4 percent to 7,540; landowner permits declined 6.8 percent to 44,172 for residents, and 11.8 percent to 516 permits for non-residents.

Although Missouri turkey hunting has declined, the state's spring harvest of 44,713 (including 2,883 from youth weekend) still ranks among the best in the nation. There were one fatal and three nonfatal firearm-related incidents reported to Protection Division. This compares to three nonfatal incidents during the 2008 spring season. The nonfatal incidents this year were shooter/victim and the fatal incident was self-inflicted. All three nonfatal incidents involved the victim being mistaken for game. The fatal incident in Barton County occurred as the hunter was removing his gun from his vehicle prior to hunting.

Apprentice Hunting Permit

A year has gone by since the apprentice hunting authorization was initiated in Missouri and numbers reflect much of what we expected—positive use and feedback.

2008-09 Numbers Combined

3,810 sold (**2008**=3,338; **2009**= 472)

1,320 Female / 2,348 Male / 142 Unknown

Ages range from 16 – 86

1,510 (40%) fall within the ages of 22 – 29

Highest numbers age 24 (203) and 25 (205)

Rapid drop-off after age 42 (i.e., age 42=81, ages 43-86=single digit)

Youth deer harvest third-largest on record

Young hunters checked 1,772 deer during the final youth portion of Missouri's firearms deer season, bringing the year's youth harvest to 12,172 and the total firearms deer harvest to 238,319. The 2008-2009 firearms deer hunting season was the first to offer two youth hunting segments of two days each. This year's youth harvest fell 95 short of last year's number, a decrease of less than 1 percent.