

**MICHIGAN  
STATE REPORT**  
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The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has 1,370 permanent employees, more than 1,200 non-career employees, and a \$279 million budget that supports over 70 distinct programs for wildlife and fisheries management, state parks and recreation areas, boating programs, conservation and law enforcement, forest management, state lands and minerals, and communications.

**FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009 BUDGET**

The DNR is funded by state general fund revenues, federal funds and a variety of restricted funds. The \$279 million Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget is composed of 4.0 percent General Fund and 18 percent federal funds, with the remaining 75.5 percent of the budget made up of approximately 78 different restricted funds.

Federal funding consists mainly of special purpose categorical grants from various federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Federal funds support programs for wildlife and fisheries habitat and development, forest management, recreation and other natural resource efforts. Restricted funding is generated from licenses, user fees and other charges. These funds support programs for wildlife and fisheries programs, operation of Michigan's 98 state parks, harbor and boating access site development, marine safety enforcement and education, snowmobile and off-road vehicle trail repair and development, and operation of Michigan's 150 state forest campgrounds. The department also generates timber sale revenue from state lands. Approximately 90 percent of timber sales revenue goes to the Forest Development Fund and are used for the protection and development of our state forests. The other 10 percent of timber sales go to the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund.

**FISHERIES**

Alewives have remained at very low levels in Lake Huron and in Saginaw Bay, resulting in continued changes in the fish community. In the absence of alewives, significantly high levels of natural reproduction of walleyes continue to be documented, likely as a result of decreased predation by alewives on young walleyes. Further stocking of walleyes in Saginaw Bay under this current situation is believed to have little or no benefit to the walleye population and thus, stocking of walleyes will not occur in Saginaw Bay again in 2009. The DNR will continue to monitor the situation and may resume stocking if and when adult alewives become abundant. With respect to Lake Huron salmonids, improvement was noted in Chinook salmon condition

although numbers remained lower than historic levels. Lake trout numbers continue to increase but size at age was reduced. Wild reproduction in lake trout was again noted in Lake Huron in 2008.

Forage abundance in Lake Michigan also remains at historically low levels, but the 2008 salmonid fishery continued at or above historic levels and early reports for the 2009 year is also encouraging. The effects in the reduction in forage numbers have been documented in the form of reductions in Chinook and coho salmon weight at age. Little natural reproduction has been found in lake trout in Lake Michigan waters.

The emergence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHSV) in Michigan's water of the Great Lakes as well as in inland waters has resulted in two major changes in the management of aquatic resources in Michigan. First, a moratorium was placed on the rearing and stocking of walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge for 2007 to ensure VHSV was not inadvertently spread by such activities. Additional testing of disinfection techniques for eggs of coolwater species were conducted unsuccessfully in the springs of 2007 and 2008. This testing will be repeated using improved methods in the spring of 2009. As a result of the unsuccessful disinfection tests for coolwater eggs, a decision has been made to begin resuming a very limited production of walleyes and muskellunge in 2008, using strategies to reduce risks associated with VHSV. This limited production strategy has continued in 2009.

Second, a series of restrictions on the use and movement of live fish, baitfish, and fish eggs used for fishing in Michigan were adopted in 2007. The intent of the regulation changes is to protect fish in inland waters to the extent possible from becoming infected with VHSV or at least dramatically slow the spread of the virus. In addition, the regulations are necessary to protect the state's fish hatchery system. Extensive surveillance and testing activities are ongoing to determine the distribution of VHSV throughout the state. Since 2006, VHSV outbreaks in Michigan have been very few and small in scope, although fish in one inland lake were found to have the virus that resulted in a fish kill in 2007. No positive VHSV detections were made in any fish samples collected for VHSV surveillance in 2008 which examined approximately 7,000 fish from over 70 locations. So far in 2009, VHSV has not been found in fish collected through the surveillance program, funded in part with USDA-APHIS funds, and no fish kills have yet been reported for this year.

## **WILDLIFE**

On August 25, 2008, chronic wasting disease (CWD) was verified in a three-year old white-tailed doe raised on a captive hunting facility in Kent County (southwest Michigan). The discovery triggered activation of the Michigan Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan and a statewide quarantine of 550 captive cervid operations. Other actions included an immediate six-month ban on feeding and baiting deer in the Lower Peninsula, prohibition of the rehabilitation of deer statewide, and the creation of a CWD surveillance zone in the nine township area surrounding the facility where the positive deer was found. Deer at the source facility were shot and tested, but no other positive cases were identified. Likewise, testing of all hunter-harvested deer in the surveillance zone, and enhanced sampling across the remainder of the state, yielded no additional cases. Although the prohibition on the rehabilitation of deer has been somewhat

relaxed, the temporary prohibition on baiting and feeding subsequently was made permanent by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission.

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) testing of hunter harvested deer continues to show progress towards the goal of eradicating this disease in the wild. In 2008, 16,620 white-tailed deer were tested, and 37 were bovine bTB-positive. A bTB-positive deer was found outside the five-county northeastern Lower Peninsula TB area (Presque Isle, Montmorency, Alpena, Alcona and Oscoda) in Iosco County. In Deer Management Unit 452 in northeastern lower Michigan, the “core area” for bTB, the prevalence for the disease was 1.8 percent. Trend analysis of prevalence data from 1995 to 2008 indicates a statistically significant decreasing trend. The DNR is working with others to develop additional tools to help manage bTB, including an effective bTB vaccination, bTB rapid blood test, bTB disease model, and a new stakeholder process that directly engages hunter-landowners with the agricultural community in the area. For more information, visit [www.michigan.gov/bovinetb](http://www.michigan.gov/bovinetb).

The DNR spent significant time in 2008 working on a strategic planning process for black bear management in Michigan. The planning process included extensive public involvement and input derived from regional meetings, an invited “Bear Management Consultation Team,” open houses, and a public comment period.

The DNR is also working on a strategic deer management plan. The need to update white-tailed deer population goals and respond to the dynamic changes in public attitude requires the creation of this plan. This planning process is effectively engaging many segments of the public interested in deer management. This process is relying heavily on the support, contributions, and facilitation from major constituent organizations like the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

The DNR’s first Trapper Education Program was developed in 2008. The program will help teach current and future trappers about responsible trapping techniques, the history of trapping, and a variety of other important topics. The first trapper education train-the-trainer event will occur in June 2009 with the new student courses to convene in September 2009.

In 2008, the Department continued to work on two large-scale Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP). The statewide Karner Blue butterfly HCP was sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review. A multi-state Mitchell’s satyr butterfly HCP is being written in partnership with the Indiana DNR. These HCPs will affect conservation on over 10,000 acres of oak savanna and prairie fen habitat.

Biologists, researchers and volunteers in Michigan observed 1,791 singing male Kirtland’s warblers during the official 2008 survey period, up from 1,697 males observed in 2007. This was the highest number since monitoring began in 1951. The 2008 population exceeded the goal for delisting that was set in the Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Plan. For a second consecutive year, singing and mated males were observed outside Michigan. Nine birds were heard in Wisconsin and one male with a female was found in Ontario.

Reflecting the recent federal delisting of the gray wolf, the DNR will organize a wolf management advisory group, as directed in the *Michigan Wolf Management Plan*. The group will assist the DNR in deliberations regarding the status and management of wolves in Michigan.

Upcoming for 2009, the DNR will initiate steps for creating an elk management plan. Also, the DNR is unveiling a new hunt opportunity: the Pure Michigan Hunt. This is a new, multi-species hunting opportunity, with the goal of increasing public interest and enthusiasm for Michigan hunting while establishing a new source of revenue for natural resource management. Drawing applicants can purchase an unlimited number of applications (chances in the drawing) from March 1-December 31 for the following year's hunts. The application fee for the drawing will be \$4.00. Up to three lucky hunters will be selected, with drawing results announced the following January. The three winners will be authorized to purchase hunting licenses for elk, bear, antlerless deer, and turkey (spring and fall seasons) valid for hunting anywhere in the state during the regular hunting season(s) for each species. Hunters may harvest one animal per license per season, and would also be allowed to participate in the reserved waterfowl hunts at managed waterfowl areas. Successful applicants would be required to pay the standard fee for each license in the "Pure Michigan Hunt" package, less any discounts (senior or 15 percent multi-license).

## **STATEWIDE AND ECOREGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS**

The Michigan DNR uses a three-tiered planning structure for the management of Michigan's natural resources: statewide, regional and unit levels. Statewide plans include the Michigan State Forest Management Plan, Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan, Michigan's 2008-12 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Parks and Recreation Sustaining 90 Years of Excellence – 2009-2019 Strategic Plan, and the Michigan Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Plan. The Parks and Recreation 2009-2019 Strategic Plan was approved by the Director in May 2009.

Since the approval of the ORV Management Plan in May 2008, the Department has taken action on several components of this plan. These actions include evaluating existing ORV trails to determine which trails should be designated as motorcycle only trails, expanding ORV riding opportunities, enhancing the trail sign requirements and increasing enforcement activities related to illegal ORV use.

In mid-1997, the Michigan DNR began developing a comprehensive program to adopt a holistic resource management process at the regional level. This program has been known as Joint Ventures. The primary objective is to develop strategies for sustainable resource planning and management. The core of this approach is to utilize principles of ecosystem management, application of new technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), and implementation of adaptive management techniques to sustain the diversity and productivity of Michigan's natural resources.

As the first significant step in implementing Joint Ventures, the department appointed ecoregional planning teams to guide resource assessments, planning and management. Four ecoregional teams (ecoteams) have been formed for the purpose of drafting Regional State Forest

Management Plans and all-ownership Ecoregional Resource Plans: Western Upper Peninsula, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Northern Lower Peninsula, and Southern Lower Peninsula. Each ecoteam is committed to the fair and responsible management of resources in their identified geographical boundaries. They incorporate the ecological, social, and economic impact of resource management decisions into the department's management processes. These processes involve the creation of consultative and collaborative opportunities for citizens and stakeholders in the identified region to communicate to the department what they value and why, and to create true partnerships with private landowners and other agencies that will result in sustainable management of natural resources. The three northern ecoteams have been working this year with citizens and partners for the development of Regional State Forest Management Plans.

The three northern ecoteams are also implementing a Biodiversity Conservation Planning Process in 2009, working collaboratively with partners to identify potential Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs) in State Forests, State Parks and Wildlife Areas. Management direction for selected BSAs will be incorporated into Regional State Forest Management Plans, Parks Plans, and Wildlife Plans.

The Michigan DNR is also working on a planning requirement from the 2008 Federal Farm Bill for cooperative forestry programs (including Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, and Urban and Community Forestry). This planning process involves the development of a Statewide Assessment and Strategy that will identify goals and objectives for strategic issues and priority areas related to these cooperative programs.

The Michigan DNR is one of the first state agencies in the country to apply an integrated ecosystem approach to resource planning and management on such a large scale. This process has been and will continue to be adaptive and innovative, and the teams are expected to base their assessments and planning processes on the concepts of resource sustainability, with a fully open and participative public process. Oversight of the teams is coordinated at the department level under a decision-making body known as the Statewide Council (Council). The Council appoints ecoteams, the Statewide Resource Planning Team, and approves the planning process. The DNR Director approves the statewide and regional management plans.

## **CONSERVATION EDUCATION**

The Department accepted the statewide sponsorship of Project WILD in October 2007. Several teacher workshops and a facilitator workshop were conducted to continue spreading this nationally known curriculum supplement to new educators. In all over 200 educators and facilitators received training in 2008.

The Salmon in the Classroom program, which works with schools to raise salmon from eggs to smolts for release in streams, continues to be a popular program. During the past year, the curriculum material was upgraded and redesigned. Nearly 100 schools participated in this educational activity, with many more schools indicating interest.

The Department sponsored its second No Child Left Inside Days, with a proclamation signed by the Governor. The Department worked with a number of conservation and education

organizations to form a Michigan No Child Left Inside Coalition. The group sponsored a presentation by Richard Louv which attracted over 2000 attendees, the largest group to date to hear his message about children and nature.

The Department first offered the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) to schools in 2002. We now have over 320 schools in the program and over 60,000 students. A Michigan student, Jessica Nystron, set the World Record in the 2009 NASP Women's High School Division National Championship, scoring 298 out of 300.

The Department piloted Community Archery in 2008 with more than 2,000 participants. The program is offered through four communities in the Lansing area, two YMCAs, state parks and other groups.

The Department worked with partner groups to pilot an After School Archery Program in 2008. The program consists of any archery program beyond NASP, and can include 4-H, after school clubs, YMCAs and parks and recreation organizations.

The educational curriculum, Explore Bowhunting, can be used to teach bowhunting's basic skills to students aged 11 to 17. The Archery Trade Association created the program to spark interest and passion for bowhunting in youths. The curriculum helps students understand animal behavior and nature through bowhunting, photography, and wildlife-watching. Michigan piloted the program in 2008, and has about 50 in the pilot program.

## **TRAIL CONNECTIVITY**

The state trail connectivity initiative is to acquire, connect and develop the statewide network of trailways. Past year accomplishments include paving a trail in the City of Muskegon and designs for several trailhead sites. The Cheboygan Recreation Trailhead is scheduled for construction later this year and the Mackinaw City Trailhead Phase Two will be bid later this year.

Several significant trail surface projects are also scheduled for construction this season, including a section of trail that will link the Tri-Centennial State Park to the City of Detroit's Dequindre Cut Trail. This project will link the city's urban trail system to the Detroit Riverfront. Two other projects that are moving forward as a result of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 include the resurfacing of 18 miles of the 33.5 mile Kal-Haven Trail State Park and 5.5 miles of the Pere Marquette State Trail.

Two comprehensive trail planning and design efforts commenced this past year, including the 26 mile rail-trail between Escanaba and Hermansville in the Upper Peninsula, and the 42 mile long Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Rail-Trail located in the middle of the Lower Peninsula. The department will continue to work with the Michigan Department of Transportation, local units of government, and our major trailway stakeholders to achieve the vision of statewide trail connectivity.