

**MICHIGAN
STATE REPORT**
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In Michigan, the agency charged with the conservation and management of the state's natural resources and environment has undergone a vast transformation since October of 2009.

First, the Michigan Historical Center and the Mackinac Island State Park Commission and facilities were transferred to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on October 1, 2009, following the abolishment of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (DHAL).

On January 17, 2010, the DNR and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) were abolished and the new Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) was created pursuant to Executive Orders 2009-45 and 2009-54. Previously, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) had appointed the Director of the DNR. For the new DNRE, the Director is appointed by the Governor pursuant to Section 6 of Article V of the Michigan Constitution.

The NRC continues to make decisions regarding the taking of fish and game, and continues to exercise its prescribed powers, duties, and functions of rule-making, licensing, and registration. The NRC may provide advice to the Director of the DNRE on matters relating to conservation policy. The NRC is not involved in decision-making or policy-making on environmental regulatory permits or issues.

The DNRE organization chart is attached. Appointments have been made to the top level management positions (deputy directors and division chiefs). The assistant division chief and regional director positions are currently in the appointment process. Once those positions are filled, the new division organizational structure will be implemented.

The DNRE Transition Plan also called for the creation of Citizen Advisory Councils (CACs) to work with the regional directors and provide the DNRE with information, ideas, emerging trends, and initiatives, and serve as a forum for the DNRE to inform key citizens with the expectation that they will, in turn, inform the broader public. The process to appoint the CACs is being established. They will be appointed as soon as the remaining regional directors are named.

The new DNRE has 2,697.5 permanent employees, more than 1,200 non-career employees, and a \$704.5 million budget that supports programs for wildlife and fisheries management, state parks and recreation areas, boating programs, conservation and law enforcement, forest management, state lands and minerals, the historical museum, archives, air, water, cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated sites, and waste.

FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010 BUDGET

The \$704.5 million fiscal year 2009-2010 budget reflects the combination of the former DNR, the former DEQ, and components of the former DHAL. The DNRE is funded by state general fund revenues, federal funds, and a variety of restricted funds. Combined, the budget consists of 6.2 percent general funds, 36 percent federal funds, and 57.8 percent restricted funds. The DNRE will be managing in excess of 86 restricted funds.

Federal funding consists mainly of special purpose categorical grants from various federal agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Federal funds support programs for air, water, cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated sites, waste, wildlife and fisheries habitat and development, forest management, recreation, and other natural resource efforts. Restricted funding is generated from licenses, user fees, regulatory fees, and other charges. These funds support programs for air, water, cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated sites, waste, 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 DNRE also generates timber sales revenue from state lands. Approximately 90 percent of timber sales revenue goes to the Forest Development Fund and is 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

Regulations for trout and salmon angling on inland streams are under review statewide. The review started two years ago and includes an effort to consolidate and simplify existing regulations wherever possible. An internal draft of the proposed changes was completed in 2009 and was subsequently presented to the DNRE's Coldwater Regulations Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee. Many comments have been received from committee members and from the public in general. Based on that input, the proposal has been amended to focus on a subset of the original objectives envisioned, including a priority effort to reclassify the gear restricted waters categories into a single category and increase the number of streams included in the new category.

Michigan currently has 112 miles of streams that are designated with some type of gear restriction when fishing for trout and salmon. The Legislature has authorized the DNRE to maintain up to 212 miles of streams in the gear restricted waters category. To date, staff has reviewed 1,300 miles of streams that were proposed by the public for classification in the new gear restricted waters category. Current efforts related to this proposal include 15 public meetings being held around the state to gather additional input from interested stakeholders regarding specific streams recommended for inclusion in the new category. This review will result in up to 100 additional miles of streams being designated for some type of gear restrictions, as well as potentially higher size limits and reduced bag limits for trout and salmon. Work with the Coldwater Committee in the upcoming months will continue in pursuit of

additional changes to statewide regulations for trout and salmon fishing in inland waters of Michigan.

Potential impacts of cormorants on fish communities and other colonial birds in Michigan continue to be a highly controversial issue. The DNRE has partnered with the USDA's Wildlife Services, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and tribes in the 1836 treaty-ceded territory of Michigan to control cormorant numbers in Michigan since the initiation of the Cormorant Depredation Order in 2004. In 2009, 9,522 cormorants were culled and 4,430 nests were oiled. Additionally, harassment of cormorants were conducted at numerous inland lakes, Great Lakes ports, and stocking sites. Michigan is limited to the culling of 10,500 birds per year under the current environmental assessment. We are seeking permission to cull additional cormorants in the future, and an environmental assessment for Michigan is currently under public review.

In Lake Erie, projections of the population of walleyes in the western basin continue to decline. The DNRE is working with angler groups, charter boat captains, and many other publics to develop a response for harvest regulations for 2011. We are reviewing the potential to establish a system whereby abundance criteria are set by a fisheries order to allow an immediate response in regulations to any change in the total allowable harvest level that is established each March by the Lake Erie Committee under the aegis of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

WILDLIFE

Michigan's success in preventing and responding to the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is underpinned by rigorous surveillance, strong public education efforts, responsive scientific laboratory support, a ban on the importation of captive cervids, a CWD contingency plan, and restrictions on the importation of cervid carcasses from CWD areas. DNRE's surveillance efforts are threefold: "targeted" (identifying and testing free-ranging cervids statewide that show symptoms consistent with CWD), "active" (testing of outwardly healthy cervids harvested by hunters), and "road kill" (testing of free-ranging cervids collected as road kill). To date, 32,412 free-ranging white-tailed deer, 1,395 free-ranging elk, and 57 free-ranging moose have been tested for CWD and all have been found to be negative. Michigan uses Biorad's ELISA test as a screening test for CWD and IHC (immunohistochemistry) for confirmation on retropharyngeal lymph node samples. The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) has tested over 11,100 privately-owned cervids with the only positive being the privately owned white-tailed deer from Kent County. Surveillance results to date suggest that Michigan does not have a large outbreak of the disease like Colorado, Wyoming and Wisconsin.

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) has been present in wild white-tailed deer in northeastern Lower Michigan since at least 1994. In 2009, surveillance activities for bTB continued, with an emphasis on the five-county area of Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, Oscoda and Presque Isle counties. There also was increased surveillance in a 10-mile radius around positive deer in Shiawassee and Iosco counties from 2007 and 2008, respectively. Thirty-one white-tailed deer cultured positive from 5,723 deer submitted for testing. Since the index cases were first identified, over 184,244 free-ranging deer have been tested for bTB and 669 infected deer have been found. Increasingly, the spatial epidemiology of the disease is revealing a highly focal,

clustered pattern. Strategies for eradication of bTB in Michigan continue to focus on 1) reducing deer population densities to biological carrying capacity, and 2) reducing artificial congregations of deer by restriction or elimination of baiting and feeding. Apparent bTB prevalence was 1.9 percent in 2009. Trend analysis of prevalence data from 1995 to 2009 indicates a statistically significant decreasing trend. For more information on wildlife disease in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

The DNRE completed the strategic black bear management plan for Michigan in June of 2009. 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. Bear issues continue to be in the forefront in regulations discussions. The DNRE has created a short-term bear work group to discuss and provide recommendations regarding problem and nuisance bear management, and the management of bears on public lands to the department.

The DNRE adopted its first-ever strategic deer plan as a result of more than two years of effort by staff and statewide deer management partners. Public engagement with the process included open public meetings, a survey commissioned through Michigan State University to assess public attitudes, and planning meetings with a deer advisory team composed of 24 group representatives holding diverse interests in deer management. A similar process has been initiated to update the department’s 1984 elk management plan.

The DNRE continues to work on two large-scale Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP): one for the Karner Blue Butterfly and the other for the Mitchell’s Satyr Butterfly. Together, these HCPs will affect conservation on over 10,000 acres of oak savanna and prairie fen habitat. The DNRE also has begun work on a multistate wind power HCP.

Biologists, researchers, and volunteers in Michigan observed 1,798 singing male Kirtland’s warblers during the official 2009 survey period, up from 1,791 males observed in 2008. This represents the highest number since monitoring began in 1951, and exceeds the goal for delisting in the Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Plan. For a third consecutive year, singing and mated males were observed outside Michigan in Wisconsin and Ontario.

The delisting rule for the gray wolf in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota was withdrawn in July 2009; at present, the gray wolf remains federally endangered. The DNRE applied for a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage depredation of livestock by wolves, but the permit has not been issued. The DNRE will continue to organize a wolf management advisory group as directed in the *Michigan Wolf Management Plan*. The group will assist the DNRE in deliberations regarding the status and management of wolves in Michigan.

The Pure Michigan Hunt provided a new experience for hunters this year, allowing three lucky hunters to 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 are also allowed to participate in the reserved waterfowl hunts at managed waterfowl areas. Overall, there were 33,758 applications sold for this first drawing, raising more than \$135,000 for the

DNRE's Game and Fish Protection Fund. The three winners from this first drawing included: a 14-year-old Vicksburg Middle School student, a 63-year-old lawyer from Dearborn, and a 59-year-old businessman from Macomb. The winners also received "Nuge Java" brand coffee from The Evelyn Bay Coffee Company, archery hunting equipment from Ten Point Crossbows, Horton Manufacturing and Darton Bows, and vests and calls from the National Wildlife Turkey Federation.

STATEWIDE AND ECOREGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

The DNRE 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 department began developing a comprehensive program to adopt a holistic resource management process at the regional level. This program was known as Joint Ventures. The primary objective was to develop strategies for sustainable resource planning and management. The core of this approach is to utilize principles of ecosystem management, the application of new technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), and the 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 impacts 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 the sustainable management of natural resources. The three northern ecoteams have continued to work this year with citizens and partners to complete first drafts of Regional State Forest Management Plans.

The three northern ecoteams are completing the implementation of a biodiversity conservation planning process in 2010, while 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 DNR completed 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 involved the development of a Michigan Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy that identifies goals and objectives for strategic issues and priority areas related to these cooperative programs.

The DNR was 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 and the Statewide Resource Planning Team, and approves the planning process. The DNRE director approves the statewide and regional management plans.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Conservation education programs continue to grow within the DNRE. Statewide influence and visibility have also increased due to a dedicated effort to include DNRE staff at statewide professional development conferences and meetings. This includes four formal presentations at the 2010 Michigan State Science Teachers Conference and several presentations at the State Environmental Education Conference.

Michigan's salmon in the classroom program continues to expand with 116 schools participating this year. This year, more than 7,000 students will have taken part in this seven month classroom program. Refinements in curriculum, and teacher and web site training continue to occur.

Project WILD, a fairly new program to the DNRE, is growing at an incredible pace largely due to the release of the early learners curriculum. The number of teachers certified this year has doubled to approximately 500. Project WILD was a main component of the statewide Head Start conference. Alignment of all WILD curriculum activities with new Michigan Department of Education standards is also underway.

All DNRE Park Interpreters were trained in Project WILD and given direction to offer at least one workshop at their location this fiscal calendar year. Interpreters have also been more involved in Salmon in the Classroom and the Academy of Natural Resources.

The DNRE continues its leadership with Michigan's No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Coalition and DNRE's Director, Rebecca Humphries, spoke at the state's NCLI Summit last June.

Nearly 500 schools are involved in Michigan's National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), and progress continues to be made to connect programs in communities and after-school archery opportunities. The Explore Bowhunting program also continues to be piloted throughout the state.

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 phase two of the Mackinaw City Trailhead 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 (now William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor) 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 (MDOT), local units of government, and our major trailway stakeholders to achieve the vision of statewide trail connectivity.

The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is coordinating with the DNRE and MDOT to spearhead a comprehensive trail planning effort called the "Airline Trail." This lake-to-lake trail would extend over 220 miles from the City of South Haven to the City of Port Huron.

The cross-state trail, or Airline Trail, would cross nine southern Michigan counties, and link existing state and local trails, such as the Kal-Haven, Kalamazoo Valley, Falling Water, Lakelands, Huron Valley, Macomb Orchard, and St. Clair County Trails into a single "Cross State System."