

Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee

—Authorized under *Minnesota Statutes*, sec. 97A.055, subd. 4b—

CITIZEN OVERSIGHT REPORT ON GAME AND FISH FUND EXPENDITURES FISCAL YEAR 2008

June 2009

DATE: June 22, 2009

LEGISLATIVE REPORT – Cost of Preparation

NAME OF LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

Citizen Oversight Report on Game and Fish Fund Expenditures, Fiscal Year 2008

Based on: Vote of Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee conducted via e-mail and completed on June 17, 2009; preceded by 6 months of volunteer work by citizen appointees.

Minnesota Statute Reference: *Minnesota Statutes*, section 97A.055, subdivision 4b

Prepared by: Elizabeth P. Carlson, Facilitator, Department of Natural Resources

Phone: 651-259-5531

E-Mail: beth.carlson@state.mn.us

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Staff Time		
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This report was approved by the Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee (BOC) by an e-mail vote completed on June 17, 2009.

BOC MEMBERS:



Brad Cobb
Budgetary Oversight Committee Chair



Brad Nylin
Waterfowl Stamp Subcommittee Chair



John Schneider
Fisheries Operations Subcommittee Chair



Dennis Fuchs
Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee Chair



Dave Bennett
Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee Chair



John Hunt
Ecological Resources Subcommittee Chair



Terry Johnson
Wildlife Operations Subcommittee Chair



Randy Goetsch
Enforcement and Operations Support
Subcommittee Chair



Scott Nagel
Big Game Subcommittee Chair

Senator Satveer Chaudhary



Eran Sandquist
Pheasant Stamp Subcommittee Chair

Representative David Dill

Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee

—Authorized under Minnesota Statutes Section 97A.055 Subd. 4b—

Brad Cobb, BOC Chair

Senator Satveer Chaudhary
Representative David Dill

Subcommittee Chairs:

John Schneider—Fisheries Operations Subcommittee
Dave Bennett—Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee
John Hunt—Ecological Resources Subcommittee
Scott Nagel—Big Game Subcommittee

Randy Goetsch—Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee
Terry Johnson—Wildlife Operations Subcommittee
Eran Sandquist—Pheasant Stamp Subcommittee
Brad Nylin—Waterfowl Stamp Subcommittee
Dennis Fuchs—Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee

June 17, 2009

Commissioner Mark Holsten
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Sen. Satveer Chaudhary
Chair, Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Sen. Ellen Anderson
Chair, Senate Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Budget Division

Rep. Kent Eken
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Rep. David Dill
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee – Game, Fish, and Forestry Division

Rep. Jean Wagenius
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Enclosed you will find the Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee (BOC) report for Fiscal Year 2008. As chair of the BOC I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of the various volunteer subcommittee members who have contributed countless hours of time to this final report. The BOC would also like to thank the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff for their cooperation throughout this reporting cycle and attendance at all of our monthly meetings. We would also like to extend our thanks to Beth Carlson for her support as the DNR's BOC liaison.

In general, the BOC found that expenditures complied with the overall requirements and intent of the Game and Fish Fund (GFF) and state statutes. We encourage all of you to review each subcommittee report and their findings and/or recommendations.

Besides the business of GFF budgetary reviews, the BOC also has the responsibility to express opinions or recommendations on issues affecting the GFF. Throughout the course of our reporting cycle we discussed a wide range of topics and proposed legislation that may have direct or indirect relationships to the GFF. Several of the GFF subcommittees want to briefly express some key

recommendations/comments in this letter. Again, we ask all of you to read each of the subcommittee reports, findings, and recommendations.

Wildlife / Fishing imbalance. The BOC has been trying to mediate discussions between the DNR and the legislature's natural resource and environmental finance committees to help resolve this issue. It appears that the DNR thinks that the legislature should provide guidance and the Legislative Committees think the DNR should come up with an actionable plan so the end result appears to be at a stalemate towards addressing the situation. The BOC proposes that the DNR and the Legislatures take a fresh look at this problem and similar to legislative conference committees come up with an agreement on how to fix the problem. *{Wildlife Operations Subcommittee}*

Game and Fish Fund balances going negative in FY12 (not counting the dedicated accounts). Both hunting and fishing license fees should be increased to help address this issue. *{Wildlife Operations Subcommittee}*

Payment in-lieu of taxes. PILT payments should also be restored to the 100% level and continue payment out of the General Fund. *{Wildlife Operations Subcommittee}*

Emergency deer feeding and Wild Cervid Management Account. In 2008, \$512,000 was spent from the Emergency Deer Feeding and Wild Cervid Management Account to pay for the efforts to manage TB in northern Minnesota. With yearly income of just over \$300,000, this account will be exhausted. Enhance the cervid health dedicated account so that it provides sufficient funds for future surveillance. Maintain current funding allocation for deer feeding, separate from the cervid health portion, and maintain a minimum balance of \$250,000. Refund all reimbursements from outside sources back into the DO1 account. *{Big Game Subcommittee}*

Risk of interbasin water transfers. Minnesota has always been considered "water rich" — in the coming decades its supply of fresh water will be coveted and jeopardized by states that are "water poor." We urge the state to put a priority on assessing how much surface water — both clean and contaminated — remains in this state and how much water is really left in aquifers that nourish our streams, rivers and lakes. The public should be reminded of the importance of clean abundant waters, and alerted to the possibility that Minnesota's water could be sold off as a commodity to alleviate economic stresses of the future. *{Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee}*

NAWEOA conference. The past 12 months have been difficult and challenging for the Division of Enforcement. The inappropriate spending revealed by the state audit as well as bad publicity surrounding the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association convention reflects poorly on the Division. Unfortunately the public impression of this matter is cast across the entire DNR not just a single individual or division. The Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee supports the measures taken by the DNR Commissioner's Office to ensure that similar activities will not be repeated. *{Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee}*

Leveraging constitutional amendment benefits for habitat-based recreation. The wild turkey management account is an important resource to sustain the sport of wild turkey hunting in Minnesota. Much more can be done to increase the recreational opportunities into the future for this and other habitat-based recreation by leveraging additional funds from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment. *{Wild Turkey Stamp Subcommittee}*

Cooperative habitat work. Two factors that will be critical in the future are improving the wild turkey habitat and providing ample areas for Minnesota's sportsmen and women to hunt and recreate. The agency, along with its conservation partners (public, private and non-profit), need to continue to work with private land owners, improve access and habitat on existing WMAs and public lands open to hunting, and identify prime wild turkey habitat that should be purchased or protected with conservation easement. *{Wild Turkey Stamp Subcommittee}*

Terrestrial and aquatic invasive species management. There is a recognized need for increased funding for both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species management and for continued prioritization of sensitive and/or high-quality habitats (both riparian and terrestrial) for long-term protection through improved zoning, easements, or acquisition. *{Ecological Resources Subcommittee}*

Farm Bill Assistance Partnership. The Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) is a vital tool for communicating with local landowners about new and ever-changing federal conservation programs. This Partnership is the front line of grassland habitat creation and protection in Minnesota and it is recommended that we not only continue but accelerate this effort going forward and that the FBAP committee consider bringing in national partners to expand this successful state program. *{Pheasant Stamp Subcommittee}*

Duck stamp. Everyone that buys a duck stamp should actually get the physical stamp. At present, you can get the physical stamp for an extra \$2.00, but we would like to see every person get the physical stamp at no additional cost because the stamp itself will suffer by not making it available to everyone who purchases a stamp. If someone wants the physical stamp they are charged \$2, and the cost is only roughly \$.076. *{Waterfowl Stamp Subcommittee}*

In conclusion,

Over the course of the FY 2008 reporting cycle, the BOC has addressed some tough issues with the DNR and we found the agency to be very cooperative in helping us get a better understanding of these various issues and working with us to find solutions. **The BOC strongly encourages both the DNR and the BOC legislative members to take the lead to address the fund imbalance.**

Minnesota voters this past November approved a historic and landmark amendment by creating funding for outdoor heritage, parks and trails, clean water, and arts and cultural. These funds are significant and some will help address past deficiencies in natural resource funding shortfalls and will complement future natural resource protection, enhancement, and restoration activities. **We must continue to supplement these new funds with traditional funding practices.**

Because of projected state-wide budget shortfalls, general funding to the DNR has been reduced. We ask the legislators to restore the appropriate level of general funding to the DNR when budget conditions improve. We need to keep a close watch over the Game and Fish Fund into the future and ensure that we have sustainable funding practices in place for future generation of anglers and hunters. **Future BOC members will need to work with the DNR to help chart a course of action based on a long range plan to ensure the stability of the game and fish fund.**

As chair of the BOC I want to personally thank the men and women from all nine subcommittees and the two legislative members who have donated their time and talents to the GFF oversight process. After serving three years as chairperson of this committee and four additional years as a subcommittee chairperson, I will be resigning from the BOC at the conclusion of this reporting cycle. It has been my honor and privilege to serve in this capacity. I will work with the DNR Commissioner's Office to ensure a smooth transition towards appointing a new BOC Chair.

Sincerely,



Bradley H. Cobb
Chair, Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee

FISHERIES OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: John Schneider (Roseville, MN)
Terry Peltier (Forest Lake, MN)
Jeff Bergeron (Andover, MN)
Jeff Byrne (Victoria, MN)
Betty Wilkens (Mora MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Fisheries Operations Committee wishes to thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff for providing their assistance to the committee in completing its charged duties. A special thanks to both Ron Payer and Peter Skwira for providing the committee with requested information, documents and reports.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

VHS Virus

A management plan concerning the spread of this virus and its cost was adequately present by DNR managers. We applaud the DNR's efforts at keeping ahead of the spread of this virus and offer our continued support.

Ongoing Issues

Loss of shoreline habitat

Our state's lakes are still losing an alarming amount of shoreline habitat due to development. The DNR's response to last year's request for greater effort was to list some effective measures recently taken. We applaud these efforts, but remind all that they are not enough.

Committee response: Effective leadership that thinks outside the box is needed. To start, the angling public needs to more deeply understand this issue. Why is it being allowed to happen? Why is DNR limited in its response? Who or what agency needs to better control developmental pressures? What can citizens do? What legislation and policy will need change? What typical actions by shoreline owners must change?

The committee asks the DNR to identify and define the biggest hurdles that must be addressed, and report back to the angling public. These may well be outside present DNR abilities and purview. The angling public understands that this is a large and complex issue, but we are not satisfied with the pace of solving it.

Let's Go Fishing Funding

The legislature continues to consider having the Game and Fish Fund [GFF] pay for these types of activities. The committee wants to thank the DNR leadership for their efforts at preventing this diversion of funds.

Committee response: We strongly believe that efforts at recruiting new and retaining old anglers are a justified expense for the GFF. But these efforts need to show success at revenue

generation. If we are spending money that does not generate more dollars to the fund than are being spent, we would be wasting dollars that could be better spent on improving the fisheries resource. ***We absolutely refuse to support efforts to make the GFF a social welfare fund. We believe that funding Let's Go Fishing would be an unwarranted diversion of funds and again ask the DNR and legislature to prevent this.***

Treaty costs

The committee is frustrated by the ever increasing cost of treaty management [FY08/\$742,000], and the escalating drain on the GFF.

Committee response: Since the legislature is unwilling to appropriate *General Fund* dollars for treaty management effort, we believe that the DNR must identify cost savings/reductions that can be made. Presently, one out of every six dollars being spent by fisheries on “planning and coordination” is spent of treaty cost. This is not an effective use of these funds.

The committee requests a thorough review of these efforts with an eye towards changing process to achieve cost savings.

Fishing Tournaments

The tournament angling public is frustrated by the slow progress towards addressing their concerns.

Committee response: Frustrated tournament anglers have gone to the legislature this session to seek changes. We are disappointed by DNR management inaction that led to anglers taking this argument to the legislature. Leadership on this issue failed.

The committee believes answers need to be found for two separate issues: reduction of tournament management costs/process within the DNR, and appropriate fee structures for all tournaments to recover this cost. We continue to believe that tournaments must cover the cost of their management expenses.

Division support costs

Cost coding across the DNR for this area still is not uniform.

Committee response: The committee applauds the DNR's recent announcement that finance will begin an internal discussion and fact finding effort to better understand this issue. However, *we are concerned that an entire year went by with little effort in this regard. Since fisheries is charged as much as 4 times as much as other divisions for support costs, we are deeply concerned by the lack of success at understanding the imbalance and await the DNR's response.*

Next License Fee increase

What should the cost of an angling license be?

Committee response: The mix of funds that are used to fund fisheries management effort is shrinking. This winter, the DNR announced that state budget shortfall makes **NO** General Fund dollars available to cover fisheries management costs. The committee feels this is unwise and unwarranted. Angling, as perhaps the largest contributor to summer tourism, generates huge general fund tax dollars. Not reinvesting an adequate share of these tax dollars will hurt the state's economy in the long run, and certainly be unfair to the citizens and businesses that benefit from these reinvestments.

The committee understands that an inflationary increase in the cost of angling licenses is due in the next year or two, and support discussions in this regard. We remind DNR managers and legislators that funding from other sources [LCCMR, bonding, Legacy funding, etc] need to pay their fair share of the fisheries management costs.

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report

The Fisheries Operations Committee has found the expenditures listed within the FY 2008 Game and Fish Report to be compliant with the legislative intent of Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.075, subd. 3.

Stocking

Current Situation Overview: Stocking management efforts to maintain the state's fish stocks by specie appear uneven.

Problem Statement: Walleye stocking costs continue to escalate, while efforts for muskellunge are declining, and Trout/Salmon seem consistent.

Proposed Solution: *The committee wants the DNR to review the cost effectiveness of stocking various species in regards to "effort compared to fish caught within the creel". The changes in funding for fisheries activities means that dollars spent on effort must be maximized for enhancement of angling experience. The committee is beginning to believe that we are unwisely spending dollars on stocking at the loss of spending on other efforts. A better understanding of the cost per fish caught may impact opinions as to the value of stocking. We also believe that stocking efforts are beginning to be decided by political pressures instead of fisheries science.*

Environmental review

Current Situation Overview: Environmental review costs to the GFF vary dramatically across DNR divisions: in thousands of dollars - Fisheries was \$510, Wildlife was \$119, and Ecological resources was \$634.

Problem Statement: These activities are important, but the cost is increasing and can be viewed as subsidizing developers.

Proposed Solution: *The DNR should consider cost saving measures, perhaps cross interdisciplinary training, to reduce these costs. Another potential option is to charge developers to recover the total costs of these activities. This committee would like to see a plan presented that makes these efforts both more successful and at the same time less costly.*

Angling enforcement

Current Situation Overview: There has been a substantial spike in the cost of angling enforcement - \$10,184,000 in FY08.

Proposed Solution: *Fisheries management should review the effectiveness of these efforts, and make a report back to the committee on its enforcement needs.*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Committee members look forward to a more open discussion of these and future issues. We believe that DNR management is becoming more introverted in its management decision making process. We look forward to a more open dialog about these issues. Less spin and more engagement would be appreciated by the angling public. Big steps on some tough issues are needed.

TROUT AND SALMON STAMP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Dave Bennett (Burnsville, MN)
John Eaton (Two Harbors, MN)
Tom Helgeson (Minneapolis, MN)
John Lenczewski (Eden Prairie, MN)
Howard McCormick (Cloquet, MN)
Chuck Prokop (White Bear Lake, MN)
Sue Rousseau (Golden Valley, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Trout and Salmon Stamp Committee wishes to thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff for providing their assistance to the committee in completing its charged duties. A special thanks to both Mark Ebbers and Linda Erickson-Eastwood for attending all of our meetings and providing the committee with requested information, documents and reports, and to other DNR staff that attended some meetings to offer assistance with specific issues. A special thanks also to Karl Kaufman for his valuable contribution while serving on the TSSC, and to Scott Thorpe, for having attended and participated in many meetings over the past four years as a citizen. Welcome new member Howard McCormick representing Arrowhead Fly Fisheries.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

Not applicable this year.

Ongoing Issues

Lake Superior Cormorant Control



The near complete destruction of established vegetation on Knife Island is visual testimony to a bureaucracy that simply cannot implement for the stakeholders their own mission statements – MNDNR – “conserve and manage the state’s natural resources” and USFWS – “Our mission is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.” The 2009 return of steelhead to the Knife River was approximately 50% of DNR’s original projections. The DNR steelhead return projections did not take into account cormorant impacts and the North Shore Kamloop rainbow trout fishery has virtually collapsed.

Minntac Discharge to the Dark River and St. Louis River Watersheds

In general, Jeff Udd of MPCA says that as a result of U.S. Steel's revised water management strategy the "water quality of the streams in question will get better and over time will get a lot better." All treated water will be recycled back into the plant. The revised management plan will insure that Class I water quality standards will be met in the Dark River. Monitoring of water quality conditions in area water bodies will continue in the future, but on exactly what and how often will be determined as a part of the permitting process, which is yet to be done. For all the above reasons, we would conclude that this situation has probably been successfully dealt with, albeit from the standpoint of the MPCA's criteria for success. In this regard, the subcommittee, and Jeff as well, would feel reassured if there was concluding communication and concurrence between the DNR and MPCA on what is being done there, especially as regards protection of the brook trout population in the Dark River.

Trails and Trout Waters

The TSSC remains concerned about ATV usage of the North Shore Trail and other trails crossing cold water streams in that legislation may be introduced in the future to allow ATV usage of these trail systems.

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee has reviewed the following accounts and expenditures of the FY 08 Trout and Salmon Stamp Fund:

Habitat Improvement	\$189,421
Fish Culture and Stocking.....	443,037
Easement Acquisition and Identification	0
Lake Superior Research and Special Projects.....	122,814
Cancel to account.....	755,272
Total.....	\$75,000

The Trout and Salmon Stamp Committee has found the expenditures to be compliant with the legislative intent of Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.075, subd. 3.

The FY 2008 Game and Fish Report was acceptable to the Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee.

Policy Issues

Legislative Concerns

Current Situation Overview: The TSSC is concerned about legislation introduced that is not consistent with what it believes to be “best management practices” for the resource and what appeared to be an abundance of this legislation in the 2009 session – for example, two lines and extension of the lake trout season.

Problem Statement: The TSSC feels the DNR’s input on some of this legislation may be a simple presentation of the “facts” without taking a strong stance on what is best for the resource, understanding that those proposing the legislation may not be capable or willing to interpret the facts in an “unbiased” light. The stakeholders must assemble an opposition to the proposed legislation, which requires a significant sacrifice on their behalf.

Proposed Solution: *When approached by their constituents on possible legislation related to fish and game issues, the legislators should “steer” those constituents to follow procedures defined by Chapter 14 rulemaking process, rather than simply introducing a bill.*

Ongoing Efforts to Control Invasive Species

Current Situation Overview: The TSSC remains concerned over the impacts of aquatic invasive species, including organisms and pathogens such as spiny water fleas, New Zealand mud snails, zebra mussels, and viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), on trout and salmon populations in Lake Superior and its tributaries, as well as the larger ecosystems themselves. The Committee is especially concerned that, unless additional preventative measures are immediately undertaken, VHS may soon be transported into the Lake Superior basin from another Great Lake and severely damage trout and salmon populations here.

Problem Statement: While detrimental effects on specific aquatic populations have been difficult to observe, introductions of aquatic invasive species have contributed to a general decline in the pristine quality and integrity of these aquatic systems. On average, a new aquatic invasive species is introduced to and spread among the Great Lakes every several months! Unless bolder steps are taken to prevent it, it is likely that VHS, and other invaders, will soon be spread into Lake Superior and eventually have catastrophic effects on its native and wild populations of salmonids. Eventually, these invasive species would also spread into our inland trout waters, as well as all of Minnesota’s warmwater lakes and streams. We commend the MNDNR and the Legislature for acting last year to restrict the movement of potentially contaminated fish and fishing equipment, and to allow the MNDNR to track the movement of fish that are potential carriers of the virus (S.F. 3576). We further applaud the Legislature for its passage of ballast water legislation (S.F. 3056), and also the MPCA for its leadership in including intra-Great Lakes ships, as well as ocean-going vessels, in new ship ballast water and bilge water disposal regulations. However, these measures are not adequate to ensure that VHS and other aquatic invasive species are not transported into Lake Superior via commercial shipping activities. A significant proportion of the state's trout and salmon angling opportunities hang in the balance. More than one million dollars in trout stamp and angling license dollars are invested annually to restore and improve the native and wild trout and salmon populations here. Minnesotans' investment in this greatest of coldwater fisheries necessitates bolder action.

Proposed Solution: *The TSSC urges the MNDNR, the MPCA, and the Minnesota Legislature, to work together to find solutions (technical, political, or other) to the imminent threat which VHS and other aquatic invasive species pose. Specifically, ballast water treatment standards should be strengthened and the timetable for compliance shortened, via legislation and/or the MPCA’s rulemaking. We urge that the two ballast water treatment research/testing proposals recommended for funding by the LCCMR be so funded without delay. We further urge the MNDNR to continue to do all it can, through regulations and other means to further protect Lake Superior fisheries.*

Better Timber Harvesting Guidelines for Riparian Areas

Current Situation Overview: The Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) published voluntary site-level timber harvesting and forest management guidelines in 1999, and revised guidelines in 2005. In August 2007, a team of scientists completed their review of the adequacy of the guidelines to protect riparian forest functions.

Problem Statement: Forested watersheds can provide the favorable water storage and runoff, water quality, and in-stream habitat essential for healthy trout populations. How riparian forests are managed, including what timber harvesting practices are used, influences these forest benefits. Without these benefits, many of Minnesota's northern trout streams could no longer support trout. The adequacy of portions of the guidelines to protect riparian forest functions has been repeatedly questioned. MNDNR Fisheries personnel, the American Fisheries Society, and conservation groups have urged revisions of the current "best management practices" (BMPs) for timber harvesting in riparian areas, especially along trout streams and lakes. The MFRC declined to revise the riparian zone BMPs in 2005, instead appointing a riparian science technical committee to evaluate the current science regarding the management of riparian forests. The technical committee report contained the scientists' professional judgment on how to improve the guidelines so that they adequately protect Minnesota trout streams and lakes. The MFRC has not adopted any of these recommendations. The current guidelines are voluntary BMPs, not regulations, and often permit deviation away from (i.e., lessening of) what protections do exist. The current guidelines provide no clear guidance for those landowners who wish to improve, not merely lessen the harm to, the trout and salmon fisheries in their watersheds.

Proposed Solution: Last year the TSSC recommended that the MNDNR take two very different steps to address this problem: (1) request the MFRC revise the guidelines to incorporate the conclusions and recommendations of the technical committee, at least in those watersheds which contain trout streams and lakes; and (2) have the Fisheries Section contract with the same scientists who served on the technical committee to have them draft a landowner guide which provides real guidance for those landowners and land managers who wish to improve (not merely lessen negative impacts to) the trout fisheries in forested watersheds. It was suggested that the guide be provided in an easy to understand format and mailed to all owners and managers of land in forested watersheds that support trout populations, and that separate guidance be developed for the Lake Superior basin, given its unique combination of topography, geology and hydrology.

The MNDNR's written response of October 2008 suggests that the agency has taken neither action. The TSSC is not satisfied with this "response" and renews its requests. The TSSC is aware that the technical committee was not instructed to actually revise the guidelines, yet their work was completed more than 20 months ago and the revision process still has not begun. No response was made to the second recommendation. The development of geographically targeted landowner guides designed to improve the long term health and productivity of trout stream watersheds is not dependent upon the MFRC reworking minimal statewide standards designed for very different purposes. These two efforts are independent, and fundamentally different. The open timetable allowed for the second (MFRC) process cannot be permitted to delay providing conservation-minded landowners and land managers the information they need to manage for healthy, productive fisheries. MNDNR Fisheries should act quickly to seize and build upon the expert judgment already developed at taxpayer expense, so that Minnesotans can improve their local trout water.

Copper, Nickel, and Other Metal Mining

Current Situation Overview: Serious consideration is being given to the advent of Cu-Ni and other precious metal (cobalt, gold, platinum, palladium) mining near the BWCAW boundary and in the Superior National Forest. PolyMet Mining, the first of three companies to formally apply for the necessary permits, has submitted an EIS on open-pit 'nonferrous' mining near Babbitt.

Problem Statement: The subcommittee is concerned about the outcome of the review of the EIS because of the potential effects of sulfide mineral mining, the type of ore body to be exploited here, and the associated acid mine drainage (AMD) that have occurred elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada. By 1989, an estimated 180,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, and 12,000 miles of U.S. streams had been polluted by AMD. Mining site stabilization has cost up to \$410,000 per hectare. Wisconsin has declared a moratorium on this type of mining until it has been demonstrated elsewhere that it can be done without polluting ground or surface water bodies with AMD or heavy metals during ten years of operation, plus for ten years after mining has stopped (1997 a. 171 (s. 293.50)). We are concerned about the proximity to and possible effects of AMD and jointly mobilized toxic heavy metals and other pollutants on the valuable aquatic resources in the area to be mined in Minnesota. As pointed out by experts like the DNR's own Kim Lapakko and others, many geological and environmental factors can affect the extent of the hazards posed by this mining, complicating the challenge of predicting them ahead of time. Some effects have not occurred until well past the time actual mining was completed.

Proposed Solution: *Therefore, the TSSC urges the DNR to apply the greatest possible oversight and expertise in reviewing the adequacy of the company's estimates of the potential impact of this mining on the environment and water resources of northeast MN. Furthermore, the requisite mining permits should not be granted until the current and future protection of aquatic ecosystems in the vicinity of the mine or waste rock deposits are shown to be possible by reference to other 'clean' sulfide mining sites, by conducting the appropriate effect estimation/mitigation tests, and by requiring that the protective measures indicated by these examples or tests will indeed be implemented by PolyMet. The state should also obtain assurances in any permit that is granted that PolyMet can provide monetary resources to pay for all recovery or other remedial measures that are necessary to prevent or stop any AMD or heavy metal pollution of ground or surface waters that might occur after completion of mining activities.*

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- **Long Term Goal:** Minnesota has always been considered “water rich” — in the coming decades its supply of fresh water will be coveted and jeopardized by states that are “water poor.”
 - **Short Term Goal:** The state should put a priority on assessing how much surface water — both clean and contaminated — remains in this state and how much water is left in aquifers that nourish our streams, rivers, and lakes.
 - **Short Term Goal:** The public should be reminded of the importance of clean abundant waters, and alerted to the possibility that Minnesota's water could be sold off as a commodity to alleviate economic stresses of the future.
- **Long Term Goal:** Argument over the realities of climate change has tended to neutralize reaction to evidences that many believe put our cold water resources at risk. Because so much is at stake and because we need answers, the DNR should be increasing vigilant and proactive.
 - **Short Term Goal:** The state must begin (or accelerate where it has already begun) a comprehensive monitoring of our cold waters to detect and quantify warming that affects plant, animal and fish habitats and the temperatures of streams and rivers.
 - **Short Term Goal:** As effects of climate change — whatever their origins — are known the public should be informed and data presented so that there can be a unity of accord going forward.

WILDLIFE OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Terry Johnson (New Brighton, MN)
Kevin Hisey (Chatfield, MN)
Michael Hunziker (Lakeville, MN)
Rob Theobald (Owatonna, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Operations Subcommittee wishes to thank Dennis Simon of the Minnesota DNR for his valuable support and contributions. The Wildlife Operations Subcommittee reviewed the FY 2008 Game and Fish Fund Report and the appropriations, budgets and expenditures for the Wildlife Operations and Maintenance in the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Land and Minerals.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

Not applicable this year.

Ongoing Issues

Fishing Overspending and Wildlife Underspending

Current Situation: Fishing expenditures continue to exceed fishing revenue, while wildlife expenditures continue to be less than wildlife revenue. On November 15, 2008, the DNR provided short and long-term recommendations to the House of Representatives and Senate Policy and Finance Committees and divisions with jurisdiction over natural resources on Game and Fish Fund receipts. Since that time, there has been no action or guidance from any legislative group.

Problem: The spending imbalance continues to be a concern of the Wildlife Operations Subcommittee because we believe that wildlife/fishing expenditures should be proportional to revenues for these activities.

Proposed Solution: *Please note that in the new issues section of this report we are recommending that both hunting and fishing license fees be increased to ensure the financial wellness of the Game and Fish Fund. In addition to this increase, we are recommending that any increases or decreases in appropriations to the Fish and Wildlife Division of the DNR take into account the current imbalance and be used to reduce this imbalance.*

Excess Fund Balance in Wild Rice Account

Current Situation: The Wild Rice Management Account is used mainly to control water depths on designated public waters to improve natural wild rice production. The work is mainly contracted out to third party vendors.

Problem: This account's \$40,000 fund balance is higher than we believe necessary. After consulting with officials from the DNR, we feel that this account's FY end balance does not need to be in excess of \$10,000.

Proposed Solution: *We recommend that the DNR expand this program into lakes that traditionally have been wild rice lakes but no longer contain wild rice and/or accelerate traditional uses of funds for wild rice management.*

School Trust Lands

Current Situation: The Minnesota DNR is responsible for managing a large portion of the Minnesota School Trust Land.

Problem: Based on State Statutes, the School Trust Lands are to be managed in a manner to secure the maximum long-term economic return consistent with sound natural resource and conservation practices. Currently, some of the DNR land is being managed primarily for the environment and not for the long-term economic return. Because of this, there currently exists a threat whereby the DNR may lose administrative responsibility for some School Trust Land parcels within WMAs and State Forests due to this "mismanagement." If that were to happen, the likely results will be degradation of habitat quality, fragmentation and loss of public use.

Proposed Solution: *We recommend the DNR acquire fee-title interest in the high-priority parcels. Funding sources need to be identified so that high-priority parcels can be preserved for the benefit of the environment and at the same time provide improved benefits for the School Trust.*

NEW ISSUES

Fishing and Hunting License Fee Increase

Current Situation: When the dedicated accounts are removed, the forecasted amount of appropriations out of the Game and Fish Fund currently exceeds the forecasted amount of revenues coming into the Fund, thus creating an imbalance.

Problem: With the imbalance of appropriations/revenues within the Game and Fish Fund, the current forecast has a projected negative fund balance by the end of fiscal year 2012. By statute, the Fund cannot operate with a negative balance.

Proposed Solution: *The Wildlife Operations Subcommittee recommends to the BOC that the DNR propose a package of license fee increases sufficient to restore the Game and Fish Fund balance, provide for sufficient carry-over balances and provide for inflationary increases for the next 4 bienniums. We are recommending a time period of 4 bienniums (8 years) because historically license fee increases occur on average about every 8 years.*

PILT Funding

Current Situation: The Governor's budget reduces the PILT (payment-in-lieu of taxes) to counties to an 80% level.

Problem: This will worsen relationships between the County Government and the DNR and we believe make it more difficult to increase the amount of WMA's in many of the counties.

Proposed Solution: *We recommend that PILT payments be restored to a 100% level. In addition we recommend that the formulas for PILT payments be re-evaluated. This committee strongly recommends the PILT payments be made out of the General Fund due to the wide and varied usages for lands qualified for PILT payments.*

WMA Acquisitions Goals

Current Situation: In 2002, the DNR adopted the Citizen's Advisory Committee recommendation to acquire 210,000 acres in a 10-year time frame. This goal is not being met. In fact, instead of an average of 21,000 acres per year being acquired, the average is between 5,000 to 6,000 acres and this includes both purchased and donated land.

Problem: The DNR's response to last year's Budgetary Oversight Committee's recommendations made it clear that increased land costs are one of the primary reasons WMA acquisition goals are not being met. Another factor that needs to be considered is the capacity of DNR to properly develop acquired land into WMAs suitable for public use. Currently the DNR has the capacity to acquire and develop WMA's at a much higher level than is currently being accomplished. Using today's average land acquisition prices, the DNR has the capacity to acquire and develop approximately \$20 million dollars worth of land and the current amount of funding is only at the \$10 million-dollar level.

Proposed Solutions: We recognize that the WMA acquisitions goals are not being met; however there still exists the capacity within the DNR staff to acquire and develop more land than is currently being funded. *We recommend that the Legislature increase funding for WMA acquisition from all available sources (Game and Fish Fund, Small Game Surcharge Account, RIM, Bonding, LOHC, LCCMR) to the \$20 million dollar level which would better align actual WMA acquisitions with the Citizen's Advisory Committee recommendation and also recognize the current capacity of the DNR to properly develop WMA's.*

Policy Issues

No new policy recommendations at this time.

BIG GAME SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Scott Nagel (Little Falls, MN)
Todd Grimes (St. Charles, MN)
Carrie Mellesmoen (Inver Grove Heights, MN)
Doug Strecker (Hackensack, MN)
Darwin Vicker (Austin, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Big Game Subcommittee would like to thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for their assistance with this year's report. This unique open access has given us a greater appreciation for the tasks they have been given.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

Not applicable this year.

Ongoing Issues

The MDNR should be encouraged to continue their efforts to:

1. Ban big game shooting preserves throughout Minnesota. As evidenced by the recently infected elk farm in Cannon Falls, it is becoming increasingly apparent these facilities represent a risk to wild cervids. The revenues generated by a small group of individuals who kill these animals are minor compared to the economic value of wild deer and elk.
2. Pursue funding and cooperative research and management programs that benefit moose populations.
3. Improve and develop new WMA maintenance programs.

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The Big Game Subcommittee reviewed appropriations and expenditures documented in the FY2007 Game and Fish Fund Report as well as those of the following dedicated accounts:

Deer/Bear Management (231)
Deer Management Account (232)
Emergency deer feeding / Wild cervid health management

After review of the FY08 expenditures, we find that all funds appropriated for dedicated accounts encompassing deer management, deer and bear management, and emergency deer feeding/wild cervid health management have been used for their intended purposes.

Fiscal Issues

Deer Feeding / Cervid Health future balance

Current Situation Overview: There is a concern the balance will be exhausted because of bovine TB and CWD surveillance and there will be no funds available for deer feeding in the future.

Problem Statement: In 2008, \$512,000 was spent from the Emergency Deer Feeding and Wild Cervid Management Account to pay for the efforts to manage TB in northern Minnesota. With yearly income of just over \$300,000 this account will be exhausted.

Proposed Solution:

1. *Enhance the cervid health dedicated account so that it provides sufficient funds for future surveillance.*
2. *Maintain current funding allocation for deer feeding, separate from the cervid health portion, and maintain a minimum balance of \$250,000.*
3. *Refund all reimbursements from outside sources back into the DOI account.*

Game and Fish Fund Imbalance

Current Situation Overview: Fisheries is projected to be 101.4% of revenue, while Wildlife is projected to be 94.5% according to the Game and Fish fund allocation report. The FY2008 Game and Fish Fund report depicts a greater imbalance of 114.4% and 93.3%.

Problem Statement: Fisheries expenditures have exceeded revenues and the current proposal allows for a widening of the gap, rather than correcting the problem.

Proposed Solution: *Fisheries revenues need to be increased to align expenditures with revenues. The committee recommends DNR work with stakeholders to formulate a plan to correct the imbalance.*

Policy Issues

Not applicable this year.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over the past few years we have all had the great fortune of high deer and bear populations and we would like to thank the staff of the DNR and all the partnering organizations for their efforts to keep the programs running through some very tough economic times.

PHEASANT STAMP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Eran Sandquist (South Haven MN)
Gary Duncomb (Eden Valley, MN)
John Maile (Paynesville, MN)
Rod Mitchell (Mankato, MN)
Roel Ronken (Minneapolis MN)

INTRODUCTION

The PSOC would like to thank Bill Penning, our DNR Liaison for his help and expertise.

In 2008-09 the PSOC turned-over one (1) Committee appointment and welcomed one (1) new PSOC member; Gary Duncomb.

Gary, a retired professional educator and President of the Meeker County Pheasants Forever Chapter, brings a diverse and encompassing knowledge and talent to the PSOC with a wealth of knowledge about upland game management, is familiar with the Minnesota DNR and their pheasant management goals and objectives and is an avid outdoors person who loves to hunt.

The PSOC wants to recognize departing Committee member Kyle Thompson. His leadership and dedication to wildlife conservation and pheasant management will be greatly missed and we wish him well in all he does.

PREVIOUS REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

The PSOC wishes to thank the DNR for acting upon Committee recommendation to spend down the surplus PHIP Account dollars. In addition, the Committee also thanks the DNR for maintenance and midterm reviews of the Long Range Pheasant Plan.

Ongoing Issues

Not applicable this year.

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Report on Expenditures

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Pheasant Habitat Stamp Improvement Program (PHIP) report to the PSOC was reviewed in January and February 2009. The PSOC has reviewed the FY 2008 expenditures for the PHIP account and found them to be compliant with language in Minnesota Statutes, section 97A, 075, subd.4. This action was completed and voted on by the entire Subcommittee on February 3, 2009.

Policy Issues

Farm Bill Promotion

Current Situation Overview: Minnesota has in recent history experienced 40 year highs in the pheasant population. However, the PSOC recognizes the current pressures being placed on those grasslands as a result of commodity prices, politics and competing interests.

Problem Statement: Grassland complexes which exist especially through our Federal Farm Bill Conservations Programs are set to decline drastically over the next several years. The PSOC believes the general public doesn't fully understand the negative consequences of this trend. In addition many successful grassland conservation programs aren't being given additional acreage allotments.

Proposed Solution: The PSOC realizes the benefit of lobbying efforts in Washington DC. More grassland acres can be created or destroyed with the stroke of a pen than any other way. *The PSOC recommends that the PHIP account maintains the current level of funding for lobbying and promotion efforts (used by PF).*

Proposed Solution: The PSOC also recognizes the importance and places a high priority to the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) that provides local technical support to landowners who want to enroll in conservation programs. *The PSOC recommends that an appropriate amount of PHIP funds be used to continue this valuable program at current or expanded levels.*

Proposed Solution: The PSOC recognizes the importance of managing the current existing habitats to maximize it productivity. *The PSOC recommends the DNR offer various opportunities (workshops, etc) where landowners can learn different habitat management techniques and how to conduct best practices.*

Proposed Solution: *The PSOC believes incorporating a wildlife friendly rotational grazing plan into the "Farm Bill supported grasslands" as a contract management option or as a standalone Grazing/CRP program will help maintain grassland complexes thus supporting the rural community and protecting pheasant habitat.*

Food Plot Guidance

Current Situation Overview: Food plots are used extensively as an easy, feel good way to believe you are impacting pheasant populations. This is due to the fact that pheasants are often seen near these areas during hunting season. The PSOC commends the DNR for their efforts to continue to study the benefits and cost effectiveness of food plots.

Problem Statement: Food plots tend to trump the limiting factor to pheasant populations in Minnesota: nesting and brood rearing cover. 67% of the PHIP private land expenditures (\$181,000) were spent on food plots on private land in FY2008. This represents too much emphasis on a single short-term survival strategy at the expense of longer-term land management practices.

Proposed Solution: *The PSOC recommends that DNR continue their effort to study the effectiveness of food plots and create best practice guides designed to maximize the effectiveness of food plots. In addition, we recommend private land food plots demonstrate a significant public benefit.*

Proposed Solution: *The PSOC recommends reducing or eliminating the use of PHIP dollars for food plots on private lands and reallocating these funds for private land management, increased FBAP, and/or Roadside Habitat funding.*

Roadside Habitat Management

Current Situation Overview: There are roughly 500,000 acres of roadside habitat located in Minnesota's pheasant range. Many of these acres are mowed recreationally, cut for hay or illegally farmed.

Problem Statement: In some areas, roadsides constitute the majority of the nesting habitat available.

Proposed Solution: *The PSOC recommends a continued study of roadside habitat in relation to wildlife production. The PSOC recommends continuing or increasing funding of roadside habitat with an emphasis of restoration back to native grass forb mix and a continuation of the media campaign meant to educate landowners on the benefits of roadsides.*

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- **Long Term Goal** - The PSOC believes that we should be using tactics and strategies that will eventually lead us to a Minnesota pheasant harvest averaging 750,000 roosters per season, which will require 6 million acres of grassland in the MINNESOTA pheasant range as outlined in the Long Range Pheasant Plan.
 - **Short Term Goal** - To reach this goal, more habitat is required. Given that markets aren't favorable to increasing grassland acres, we recommend that the DNR work to maintain the current acres.
 - **Short Term Goal** - In addition, an effort to better manage existing acres aimed to produce maximum potential.
 - **Short Term Goal** – Fully maintain or increase FBAP staff to maximize landowner education and participation in our Federal Farm Bill Conservation Programs. Additional look into key national partners like NRCS or FSA ,which will result in additive benefits.
- **Long Term Goal** - Look into incorporating a wildlife friendly rotational grazing plan into the “Farm Bill supported grasslands” that will help maintain grassland complexes.
- **Long Term Goal** – Strive to reduce acres of negative food plots, but also indentify and maintain the food plots that help pheasants survive through stressful winters..
 - **Short Term Goal** – create best practice guide for food plots that is aimed at educating landowners to planting only the most effective food plots.
- **Long Term Goal** – have a working roadside for wildlife habitat program that has enhanced our current roadsides.
 - **Short Term Goal** – work to create high visibility demonstration plots that act as a guide to further enhance roadside acres. Continue to educate landowners on why roadside is so important, and offer financial assistance to willing landowners wanting to improve their roadside habitat.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We again wish to thank the DNR and partners for their efforts. We have been experiencing high pheasant populations due to favorable weather and increased habitat. However, we are on the cusp of losing many grassland acres that we all worked hard to acquire. We need to ensure that losses are as minimal as possible and the remaining habitat is managed to achieve its full potential. We believe the PHIP Account can help mitigate these issues as outlined in the above in the report.

WATERFOWL STAMP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Brad Nylin (Plymouth, MN)
Ryan Heiniger (Lakeville, MN)
Tom Kowal (St. Cloud, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Chair of the Waterfowl Stamp Subcommittee (WSS) would like to recognize the ongoing efforts of Mr. Ryan Heiniger and Tom Kowal for their contributions to the committee.

The WSS would also like to recognize and thank Mr. Ray Norrgard, Wetland Wildlife Consultant, with the Department of Natural Resources for his contributions of time and technical assistance to the Subcommittee in the preparation of this report.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

The DNR did not implement a fee increase to the duck stamp to offset funding shortfall.

Ongoing Issues

Waterfowl Stamp

Current Situation Overview: In the 2007 legislative session, Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.405, subd. 2 (d), was modified to require waterfowl hunters to pay an additional \$2 fee to receive a copy of the actual waterfowl stamp. The premise behind the change was that since the electronic license confirms a waterfowl stamp has been purchased, hunters should not be required to have a Minnesota migratory waterfowl stamp in their possession – thus making the hard copy optional.

Problem Statement: The WSS expressed concern last year that if enacted, this change would erode the time – honored connection between waterfowl hunters and the contributions of the stamp to improve habitat. For many years, waterfowl hunters automatically received a stamp in the mail without having to pay a processing fee. Although the DNR has stated in writing their commitment to maintain the pictorial stamp, we remain concerned the demise of the stamp as we know it has started. There is strong evidence to support our claim. In 2007, only 14,645 (14.6%) of 100,133 waterfowl hunters paid the extra \$2 processing fee, while in 2008, only 15,774 (16%) of 95,675 waterfowl hunters paid for the pictorial stamp. In 2006, all 101,000 waterfowl hunters would have received the stamp. Additionally, the WSS learned that the actual fulfillment costs were only \$0.76 rather as compared to the \$2 hunters are being charged.

Proposed Solution: *The WSS would like to go back and make the physical stamp available to everyone who buys a stamp for \$7.50. We don't agree that charging \$2 to purchase the physical stamp is appropriate, when the cost to produce is around \$0.76. Minnesota has a very rich history with the duck stamp and we would like to see it stay that way.*

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The WSS has received the Game and Fish Fund Report for FY 2008 and found that the expenditures from the Waterfowl Habitat Improvement Account (233) are compliant with the governing Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.075, subd. 2.

Declining revenue in Waterfowl Stamp Account

Current Situation Overview: The waterfowl stamp account is currently experiencing a decline in both revenue and purchasing power. This is being caused by a combination of declining numbers of waterfowl and the negative impacts of inflation on the cost of implementing waterfowl conservation projects and programs.

Problem Statement: The number of waterfowl hunters has declined by more than 20 percent since 1998. In 2008, the total number of waterfowl hunters dropped below 100,000. The price of the waterfowl stamp is currently \$7.50 and was last raised in 2004. In 2008, approximately \$717,756 was generated from the sale of 95,975 stamps.

Proposed Solution: *The WSS feels that it is too premature to recommend a stamp increase at this juncture. Given the DNR has a stated goal of retaining 140,000 waterfowl hunters, we believe the potential exists to generate additional revenue by selling more stamps (i.e. recruiting more hunters) rather than charging existing hunters a higher price. The WSS recommends the DNR continue to develop and implement a marketing strategy to recruit new waterfowl hunters in a similar fashion to what has been done for fishing.*

Policy Issues

No new policy recommendations at this time.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- **Short Term Goals**
 - #1 – Annually enhance 36 shallow lakes by installing/replacing water control structures and adding fish barriers.
 - #2 – Designate two shallow lakes per year for wildlife management purposes.
 - #3 – Annually restore and protect 40,000 acres of wetlands and prairies through a combination of WMA acquisitions, RIM easements, farm bill programs and other conservation measures in areas of highest importance to breeding waterfowl.
 - #4 – Annually prevent loss of existing natural habitats and land currently enrolled in federal farm programs.

- **Long Term Goals**
 - Enhance 1,800 shallow lakes for waterfowl migration habitat.
 - Restore and protect an additional 2 million acres of wetlands and grassland complexes beyond what existed in 2006.
 - Maintain a breeding duck population of 1 million birds and achieve a recruitment rate of 0.6.
 - Retain an average of 140,000 waterfowl hunters.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The future of waterfowl hunting is at a crossroads in Minnesota. There is good reason to be optimistic given the progress made in the last few years under the Duck Recovery Plan and with the passing of Dedicated Funding last November and the formation of the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council (LOHC) that will provide a major infusion of new funding into shallow lake programs, working lands initiative, acquiring new wildlife management areas, etc. However, steadily declining numbers of waterfowl hunters coupled with uncertainties in federal farm programs and accelerating pressures to maximize crop production are serious threats to habitat conservation and will need to be addressed accordingly.

The WSS believes the DNR should continue to aggressively and promptly implement a recruitment strategy to reverse the decline in waterfowl hunter numbers. The DNR should also acknowledge the potential loss of current hunters as “baby-boomers” continue to age and eventually stop waterfowl hunting. Bringing new hunters into the sport will help ensure a continuation of the proud waterfowling tradition in Minnesota as well as provide new revenue to offset inflationary pressures currently eroding the buying power of the stamp fund.

The WSS would like to see the DNR do another hunter survey again in the FY09. The WSS believes that it is time again to do this as it will help to gain information on how to best recruit hunters as well as learning what is working currently and how we can start to turn the tables on how to best get more people involved in the outdoors.

WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Dennis Fuchs (St. Cloud, MN)
Tom Glines (Coon Rapids, MN)
Dave Mahlke (Winona, MN)
David Maier (Royalton, MN)
Al Kokesch (Morton, MN)

INTRODUCTION

We wish to thank Bill Penning, DNR Farmland Wildlife Program Leader, for his assistance with our review of spending in this account. Also, we would like to welcome Al Kokesch from Morton, Minnesota, to the Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee.

The Department of Natural Resources has done a great job of taking our previous recommendations and considering them in regards to the wild turkey resource and its management.

Highlights:

- Special Youth Turkey Hunts and reduced license charge
- The license fee and the “old turkey stamp” have been rolled into one license cost. There was a loss in revenue due to the fact that some 3,000 hunters did not purchase the stamp that should have done so. This also simplified the purchase of the Turkey License at ELS vendors.
- For the spring season of 2009, there was a 10% (4,336) increase in permits available

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

- The DNR has released turkeys in northwestern Minnesota in January-March of 2007 and is continuing with the study of bird movements and survival.
- The DNR has begun implementing the Long Range Wild Turkey Management Plan.
- Under the guidance of Jay Johnson, Hunter Recruitment/Retention Supervisor, the DNR, in partnership with National Wild Turkey Federation volunteer mentors and hunt coordinators, has increased the youth turkey hunt opportunities through Mentored Hunts in spring of 2008 to over 400 permits. With mentors, 250 youth went afield and harvested 94 birds in 2008.
- Physically Challenged hunts continue to increase as demand increases.
- The successful Trap and Transplant Program has been suspended. The wild turkey populations will be monitored to determine if additional work will need to be done in the future.

Ongoing Issues

The Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee would like to recommend the following changes to the policies governing the Wild Turkey Account Fund.

Turkey Habitat Increase

Current Situation: Minimal effort to increase turkey habitat in South Central, Southwestern, and West Central Minnesota on public and private lands.

Problem: During the last several years DNR has primarily focused on grassland and wetland habitat work. We would like to see additional emphasis placed on increasing the commitment to forest management and restoration work throughout the turkey range.

Proposed Solutions: *Cooperate with DNR and NWTf Wild Turkey Biologists to develop a wild turkey habitat management and restoration plan and implementation strategy. This plan should focus especially on the riparian corridors in the above named areas as well as the blufflands of southeastern Minnesota as identified in the North American Wild Turkey Management Plan. Provide and identify training for SWCD and others in wild turkey habitat management. Local SWCDs and partners could then provide workshops and field days for interested private landowners located along river/stream corridors, riparian areas, and historically wooded areas to complement grassland and wetland management providing additional turkey habitat. Funding for training, workshops, fieldwork, and staff should be pursued through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment. Farm Bill Assistance grants should include opportunities to promote wild turkey habitat management. We strongly encourage interagency (DNR, BWSR, USFWS, USDA FSA, USDA NRCS, SWCD, NWTf, and others) cooperation in wild turkey habitat management.*

Information and Education about Wild Turkey Management

Current Situation: There is increasing need to inform and educate the general public, land owners, and hunters about the management of wild turkeys, especially in the areas of the State where wild turkeys have been recently introduced.

Problem: A major success story of wild turkey population increases through habitat and management improvements needs to be shared with the public.

Proposed Solutions: *Increase the number of landowner workshops/land owner appreciation days. Continue to hold hunter education classes and provide wild turkey information to press and other media aimed at the general public. Develop new wild turkey management information that schoolteachers could use in the classroom. Produce media releases for mass distribution. Also, the wild turkey success story should be told in the DNR Conservation Volunteer magazine and other media outlets.*

Turkey Habitat Acquisition

Current Situation: There are more turkey hunters in the state than we have current opportunity for permits.

Problem: Lack of public lands in which to turkey hunt.

Proposed Solution: *Continue to identify and acquire prime parcels and improve existing public land open to hunting for wild turkeys.*

Public Lands Inaccessible for Public Recreation

Current Situation: The State owns forest land in prime wild turkey habitat areas of Minnesota that are landlocked by private lands making them unavailable for public hunting and recreation.

Problem: Prime public wild turkey hunting areas are inaccessible to hunters and others.

Proposed Solution: *Develop a program to purchase "walk in" access easements to the landlocked public parcels to provide wild turkey hunters and others access to the landlocked public Forestry lands.*

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee has reviewed FY 08 expenditures from the Turkey Stamp Fund and found them to be compliant with the language of Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.05, subd. 4b (9).

Budget plans

Current Situation Overview: In FY08, the annual budget was \$148,000. In 2008 with rollover dollars from 2007, there was \$172,000 to spend in the final year of the biennium. \$122,000 was spent and the remaining \$50,000 was rolled back into the Wild Turkey Management Account.

Information request: *The FY08-09 biennium will have a \$172,000 budget; we would like to know how the DNR Turkey Committee plans to budget that money.*

Policy Issues

No new policy recommendations at this time.

MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVES

- **Long Term Goal** – 50,000+ Wild Turkey Hunter Opportunities for Spring Hunting
 - **Short Term Goal** – Expand size of permit areas by merging existing permit areas into larger units.
 - **Short Term Goal – Spring Season:** Allow over-the-counter permits for the last four permit seasons for archery and the last two permit seasons for gun.
 - **Short Term Goal – Fall Season:** Allow over-the-counter permits for a 30-day hunt open to all hunters (hunting dogs allowed).
 - **Short Term Goal** – Consider multiple tags for a hunter during the spring season.

- **Long Term Goal** – Increase wild turkey habitat on WMAs and other public lands with existing wild turkey populations.
 - **Short Term Goal** – Purchase lands that have wild turkey habitat (mature forest stands)
 - **Short Term Goal** – Use wild turkey management account fund to improve and create hardwood stands on existing WMAs and other public lands open to hunting if in the appropriate ecoregion and in the wild turkey range.
 - **Short Term Goal** – Purchase easements to access public lands open to public hunting surrounded by private land.

- **Long Term Goal** – Sufficient funding for financial and technical assistance for turkey management and habitat on private lands.
 - **Short Term Goal** – The DNR should provide or identify training for staff and other partners to facilitate private landowner wild turkey habitat management workshops. Workshops should also illustrate Federal, State, and local financial assistance programs available to private landowners to implement wild turkey habitat management projects.
 - **Short Term Goal** – Maintain SWCD and other agencies technicians to assist private landowners with habitat management goals. Technical assistance staff should be funded with the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment funds. The Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council should be informed of the need for additional technical

assistance at the local level. Also, the DNR BWSR Farm Bill Assistance Grant should be leveraged to increase technical assistance to landowners. This would provide landowners with additional education and information about USDA Farm Bill programs to promote turkey habitat.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The wild turkey management account is an important resource to sustain the sport of wild turkey hunting in Minnesota. Much more can be done to increase the recreational opportunities into the future by leveraging additional funds from the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy amendment.

Two factors that will be critical in the future are improving the wild turkey habitat and providing ample areas for Minnesota's sportsmen and women to hunt and recreate. Public lands, both state and federal, and private lands need to be managed with interagency cooperation to maximize our efforts for turkey habitat which includes mature roost trees, fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs for natural food sources, sufficient nesting cover, and brood rearing habitat. The agency, along with its conservation partners (public, private and non-profit), need to continue to work with private land owners, improve access and habitat on existing WMAs and public lands open to hunting, and identify prime wild turkey habitat that should be purchased or protected with conservation easement.

ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: John Hunt (Big Lake, MN)
Steve Chaplin (Roseville, MN)
Mark Peterson (Birchwood, MN)
Paula West (Brainerd, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The subcommittee wishes to thank Division of Ecological Resources Director Steve Hirsch of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for his assistance in arranging meetings and providing background data and information as the committee prepared its FY08 expenditures report.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

Lakes and Rivers

Shoreland Environmental Review Thresholds

The MN Environmental Quality Board (EQB) continues to move toward adopting revised thresholds for environmental review of proposed projects that include shoreland area development. EQB held administrative law judge hearings in February and March 2009 with final rules to be issued soon. We thank DNR for their ongoing participation in this effort.

Ecosystem Health

Previously identified issues are ongoing.

Integrated Conservation Information

Information on Habitats of High Biodiversity Significance

Current Situation Overview: The County Biological Survey is within a few years of completing the initial catalog of significant natural lands for the entire state.

Problem Statement: Comprehensive information on the location and status of Minnesota's significant natural lands is needed to drive the state's protection efforts. We need to know how many high-quality examples of each of the state's native habitat types are left and where they are located. This information can be used to direct expenditures from the Game and Fish fund for land acquisition that achieves the multiple objectives of protecting both high-quality game and fish habitat and significant biodiversity lands.

Proposed Solution: *The response provided by DNR to this issue in last year's report indicates that they continue to work to gather and efficiently disseminate natural resources data for use by a broad group of natural resource managers.*

Nongame and Rare Resources

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs)

Current Situation Overview: The SNA program would benefit from broader public support and recognition.

Problem Statement: The allowable uses of SNAs continue to be misperceived by some citizens. The DNR needs to move beyond the reorganization and regionalization of the SNA program of the last two years and invest in marketing the recreational opportunities provided by SNAs.

Proposed Solution: *The response provided by DNR to this issue in last year's report indicates that they acknowledge the importance of this issue and will continue to move beyond their reorganization of the SNA Program into increased marketing of the recreational opportunities available on SNAs.*

Ongoing Issues

Lakes and Rivers

Identifying Sensitive Lakeshores

Current Situation Overview: Sensitive lakeshores provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, but are increasingly threatened by development.

Problem Statement: DNR has established objective, science-based criteria to identify sensitive lakeshores and assembled the protocol in a manual that describes the criteria, process and methodology. DNR does not, however, have a systematic program to work with local units of government to identify and protect sensitive lakeshores across the state.

Proposed Solution: *DNR should leverage its recent pilot project with Cass County to look for strategic opportunities to work with counties to establish sensitive shoreline districts in their jurisdiction that would provide additional habitat protection from the potential impacts of shoreland development. Game and Fish Fund dollars should be considered as a source of partial funding for this effort.*

Ecosystem Health

Terrestrial Invasive Species Management

Current Situation Overview: The presence of terrestrial invasive species on state-owned lands remains an increasing problem. The Division's role is to help other divisions within DNR inventory and manage terrestrial invasive species on DNR-managed lands.

Problem Statement: Funding provided to DNR for terrestrial invasive species management is provided 100% from the state's General Fund. In addition to the funding levels being inadequate to address the issue on state-owned lands, General Fund support is particularly vulnerable to reductions during times of budget deficits as we are currently experiencing.

Proposed Solution: *Funding from non-General Fund sources at amounts above current levels is needed to allow the planning and implementation of comprehensive, cooperative projects with local land managers. Given the role that motorized trail use and off-trail OHV travel can play in the spread of terrestrial invasive species, consideration should be given to enacting OHV license surcharges, utility trailer license surcharges, or other sources of funding for terrestrial invasive species management.*

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management

Current Situation Overview: More than thirty-five percent of Minnesota's primary recreational lakes (general development and recreational development lakes) contain at least one AIS, and the number of infested lakes continues to grow each year.

Problem Statement: AIS displace native aquatic plants, disrupt fish and wildlife habitat, compete for food sources, and interrupt the food chain, leading to shifts in both forage and game fish populations. In addition, despite the \$2 surcharge on non-resident fishing licenses for AIS management, there is a structural imbalance in the funding for AIS management. This imbalance must be solved while finding ways to increase enforcement of current AIS-related laws, respond to newly discovered infestations, and more effectively manage established infestations.

Proposed Solution: *Additional sources of ongoing funding for management, prevention, enforcement, and rapid response to AIS must be secured through such means as increased boat license surcharges, public water access fees, out-of-state angling license surcharges, or other sources.*

Integrated Conservation Information

No ongoing issues

Nongame and Rare Resources

Biofuels

Current Situation Overview: Despite recent market turmoil, production of motor fuels (primarily ethanol and biodiesel) from corn and soybeans remains an important economic factor for rural Minnesota, and both the federal and state government are considering mandates that would increase use of these biofuels.

Problem Statement: The growing of corn and soybeans for subsequent conversion into ethanol and biodiesel can require large amounts of groundwater and fossil fuels to produce. Many of the biofuel production facilities are located in areas with limited groundwater resources and the impacts of large-scale groundwater withdrawals on sensitive groundwater receptors (i.e. wetland complexes, trout streams, fens, etc) are not always well understood or characterized during the environmental review process.

In addition, increased biofuel production in the United States has led to increased domestic and international demand for corn and soybeans. This increased demand has led many agricultural producers to take marginal cropland out of the CRP to produce row crops for fuel and food. This loss of grassland habitat will have a negative impact on wildlife populations (especially game and non-game birds) and on groundwater and surface water quality within watersheds.

Proposed Solution: *DNR should continue to exercise its permitting and environmental review authority (i.e. groundwater appropriations and EAW/EIS preparation) in a manner that ensures that the potential impacts to fish and wildlife habitats (both immediate and cumulative) are adequately identified, evaluated, and minimized and that water conservation strategies are required in all biofuels-related groundwater appropriation permits and EAW/EIS documents.*

Protection of High Significance, Biologically Diverse Habitats

Current Situation Overview: The County Biological Survey has identified hundreds of thousands of acres of land of high biodiversity significance across the state. Many of these lands are also high quality game, fish, and forest habitat.

Problem Statement: Too many acres of the remaining high quality natural lands and habitats are lost each year to development or conversion.

Proposed Solution: *A comprehensive plan for private lands of high biodiversity significance is needed. To achieve the multiple goals of increasing outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting lands of significant biodiversity value, future acquisition decisions by DNR should become more proactive by targeting the lands with the highest biodiversity value for each category of recreational lands. A tracking and reporting system is also needed to understand how well lands acquired by DNR protect the identified lands with biodiversity significance.*

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The format for the FY08 Game and Fish Fund report for the Division of Ecological Resources was acceptable.

The Ecological Resources Subcommittee has reviewed the Division's FY08 Game and Fish Fund expenditures and has found the expenditures to be compliant with legislative intent (Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.057, subd. 2) and that to the extent we can determine, the dollars have been appropriately spent on activities that support game and fish related activities.

The Subcommittee notes that the Division's total FY08 expenditures (combined Game and Fish Operations and Heritage Enhancement funds) represent only 3.8% of the total expenditures made from the Game and Fish Fund during the fiscal year and that Game and Fish funds provided approximately 10% of the total FY08 non-bond expenditures for the Division. Figure 1 depicts how both the Game and Fish Operating dollars and the Heritage Enhancement dollars were expended within the Division by major program area.

Policy Issues

Comments on new policy issues have been organized by the four key resource areas of the Division and then prioritized within each resource area.

Lakes and Rivers

Updating Minnesota's Shoreland Rules

Current Situation Overview: Minnesota's remaining undeveloped shorelands are under increasing development pressures and many developed shorelands are being re-developed with larger structures. All over the state, developments are being proposed on rivers, lakes, and streams that put these precious waters at risk. Some of these projects are high density planned unit developments. Some funnel lake access from lots away from a lake. Some are proposed on lakeshore that is generally unsuitable for development on sensitive shorelands or on small shallow lakes and small streams that simply can't sustain much, if any, development.

Problem Statement: It has been almost 20 years since statewide shoreland development rules were revised and the current rules are not adequate given the current and future potential for development of these critical habitat areas.

Proposed Solution: A shoreland rules update process has been in progress for the past several years and is currently nearing completion. The State Legislature mandated that DNR commence rulemaking, however, it did not mandate that the rules be completed. There has been wide

public, industry, and government participation in the process. With completion of rulemaking, new shoreland rules can be in place in 2010. The citizens of Minnesota have waited long enough for rules that can adequately protect the shorelands of Minnesota, the health of its lakes, and the sustainability of fish and other wildlife that depend on healthy waters. DNR should complete rule development without delay and move to hearings by December 31, 2009.

Ecosystem Health

Lead as an Environmental Pollutant

Current Situation Overview: Over the past decade there has been increasing recognition that elemental lead in the environment poses a significant environmental hazard to nongame avian species. Bald eagles, trumpeter swans, and other species are poisoned when they ingest spent shot or lead sinkers. DNR has led efforts to reduce the use of lead shot in Minnesota but additional progress is needed.

Problem Statement: Neither sportsmen nor the fishing and hunting equipment industry appear ready to completely ban the use of lead in hunting and fishing products. A step-by-step process to find ways to further reduce the use of lead without impacting the enjoyment of outdoor recreational activities is needed.

Proposed Solution: *DNR should expand its current educational campaign aimed at changing public and industry attitudes about the use of lead in hunting and fishing activities. The eventual goal should be to greatly reduce or eliminate the release of lead into the aquatic environment.*

Integrated Conservation Information

No new policy recommendations at this time.

Nongame and Rare Resources

Prairie Landscape Protection and Restoration

Current Situation Overview: Tallgrass prairie is the most impacted major habitat type in Minnesota. Less than 1% of the original prairie survives in small remnants. Many of the remaining prairies are under threat of conversion to other land uses or from encroachment by woody plants or terrestrial invasive species.

Problem Statement: Prairie protection activities are largely uncoordinated in the state, especially when dealing with large-scale prairie landscapes. A more coordinated approach is needed to efficiently utilize Game and Fish funding as well as the new sources from the Constitutional Amendment.

Proposed Solution: *To meet the goal of prairie protection in Minnesota, concentrations of native prairie and grasslands across the state have been identified. DNR now needs to undertake a multi-divisional and multi-partner planning process to develop a protection and restoration plan for each identified prairie landscape area with the goal to protect remnants of high-quality native habitats, reduce fragmentation, and improve wildlife populations within a working system.*

Fire Management and Training

Current Situation Overview: Many native prairies and savannas in Minnesota need additional management to impede the encroachment of woody plants and invasive species. Prescribed fire is the treatment that can cover the largest acreage at the lowest cost. DNR and other agencies can hire fire crews to do the burning directly but are limited by budgets, and hiring restrictions from employing enough fire crews to meet the prescribed fire need. One solution is to encourage private businesses and nonprofits to expand their capability to provide fire services.

Problem Statement: Private business and nonprofits must overcome several hurdles to provide prescribed fire services. The biggest hurdles deal with liability issues and the training of burn crew members and burn leaders required to safely conduct prescribed burns.

Proposed Solution: *DNR should develop a training program in conjunction with its own prescribed fire activities that would allow individuals to develop the necessary skills and certifications to be a fire crew member and advance to burn leader status. DNR should also work with the Legislature to evaluate the benefits of establishing a “Prescribed Fire Insurance Fund” and to change statutes to reduce potential liabilities for properly trained individuals using approved prescribed fire practices.*

Wildlife Management Planning

Current Situation Overview: In 2006, after a 3-year effort involving a wide range of conservation organizations in the state, DNR published *Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*. The document focused on Minnesota’s 292 “species of greatest conservation need” as an effort to direct and inform conservation efforts throughout the state.

The State Wildlife Action Plan is a strategic plan to be used by conservation organizations and agencies to help focus their efforts on species of greatest conservation need. Recognizing the differences in missions, funding etc., it was acknowledged that each agency and organization may approach implementation of the plan differently. To date, DNR has focused implementation efforts on ensuring that staff understands the plan and the information upon which it was developed so they can integrate the plan into their work. The Division has used the plan to prioritize project funding, identify priority key habitats, and partner on implementation projects with groups such as USFWS, TNC, Minnesota Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, Audubon Minnesota, National Wild Turkey Federation, USGS, and other divisions within DNR. Staff are currently working on developing multi-level performance measures for the plan, upgrading and developing communication tools and beginning the second year of a collaborative grassland monitoring effort with USFWS and TNC.

Problem Statement: Although each partner involved in the development of the plan is responsible for the implementation of the plan within their agency or organization, no process for documenting and sharing implementation efforts and priorities exists.

Proposed Solution: *DNR should convene an interdisciplinary planning group to develop a 5-year plan that would begin to prioritize the goals and strategies identified in the state wildlife plan, identifying opportunities for other organizations and partners to assist in working towards the specified state goals, and implementing as funding permits the strategies identified in the report.*

Endangered Species

Current Situation Overview: Minnesota’s Endangered Species Statute (Section 84.0895) requires DNR to designate species meeting statutory definitions of endangered, threatened, or species of concern. The statute also requires a review of this list every five years to keep the list current. There are currently a total of 439 species on this list.

Problem Statement: While statute requires an updating of this list every five years, this list has not been updated since July 1, 1996. The status of some species, such as the bald eagle, has changed since this was last updated.

Proposed Solution: *DNR needs to complete the review of species on this list in a timely fashion and formally approve the updated listing.*

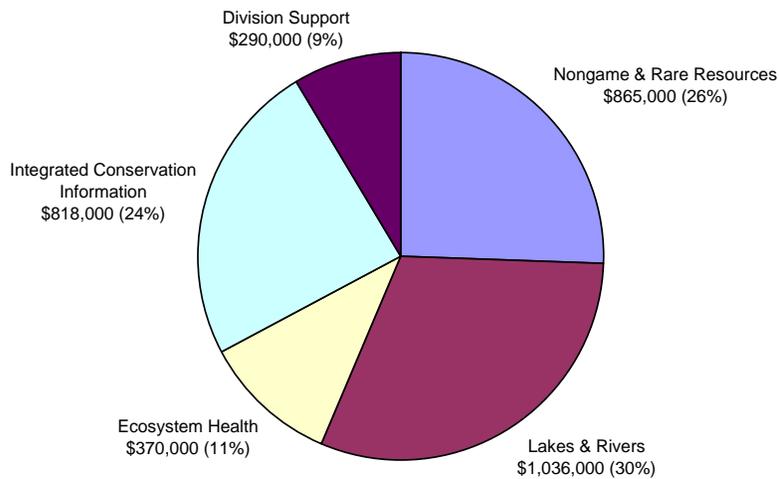
MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Given the Division's broad spectrum of both game and non-game programs and funding sources, the Ecological Resources Subcommittee believes that establishing measurable objectives for all program areas and activities of the Division is beyond the scope of our oversight.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Ecological Resources Subcommittee has found the FY08 Game and Fish Fund expenditures in the Division of Ecological Resources appropriate and justified within the context of the Game and Fish Fund.

**Figure 1. Ecological Resources
FY08 Expenditures of Game & Fish Fund (\$3,379,000)
(includes Game & Fish and Heritage Enhancement)**



ENFORCEMENT AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR: Randy Goestch (Andover, MN)
Lee Borash (Minneapolis, MN)
Jeff Coombe (Maple Grover, MN)
Sven Lindquist (Spring Lake Park, MN)
Dan Ross (Deer River, MN)

INTRODUCTION

The Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee lost one member last year. This committee would like to recognize departed Committee Member Tom Neustrom for his direction, dedication and contributions to our committee.

This committee would like to thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff members, Denise Anderson, Chief Financial Officer; Ken Soring, Acting Director as well as Jim Konrad, DNR Enforcement Director; and Robin Persons, DNR Enforcement for their continued service, support and assistance.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ISSUES

Satisfactorily Addressed Issues

North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association convention investigation

The Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee would like to acknowledge the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association convention investigation and audit. This Subcommittee supports the auditor's findings and actions taken by the Commissioner.

Ongoing Issues

No ongoing issues to report at this time.

NEW ISSUES

FY08 Game and Fish Fund Report on Expenditures

The Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee reviewed the Enforcement as well as the Operations Support sections of the Game and Fish Fund Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30 2008. This Subcommittee accepts the expenditures as reported in this document.

Fiscal Issues

Conservation Officer Attrition:

Current Situation Overview: The current Conservation Office count is down by 17 Officers with two additional Officers eligible for retirement by the end of calendar year 2009. Calendar year 2010 will see an additional 14 to 16 Officers eligible for retirement.

Problem Statement: Budget Concerns for FY 2009 indicate that a Conservation Officer Academy will not take place in FY 2009 and the officers lost through attrition will not be replaced at this time.

Proposed Solution: Understanding the budget concerns the DNR should consider replacing 50% of the Conservation Officer deficit. This would get some replacement Officers back in the field while reflecting FTE cost savings for Officers not replaced. Several open positions could reflect poorly on the department and may be very difficult to fund a full complement of 211 Conservation Officers in the future.

Fleet Costs

Current Situation Overview: The Division of Enforcement spent \$1.61 million for fleet operational expenses from the Heritage Enhancement Account

Problem Statement: Fleet operations expenditures for FY 2008 were excessive. The level of spending for equipment and vehicles for the Division of Enforcement when the State of Minnesota has significant budget shortfall casts a dim light on the DNR. Several Officers have been observed operating Division of Enforcement vehicles that are inefficient and have significantly more capability than a Conservation Officer would need.

Proposed Solution: Extend the time frame between fleet purchases. Consider vehicles that are more economical to operate and better match the daily needs of the Division of Enforcement fleet operators.

Policy Issues

No new policy recommendations at this time.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The past 12 months have been a difficult and challenging period for the Division of Enforcement. The inappropriate spending revealed by the audit as well as bad publicity surrounding the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association Convention reflects poorly on the Division. Unfortunately the public impression of this matter is cast across the entire DNR not just a single individual in the Division of Enforcement. The Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee supports the measures taken by the Commissioner's Office to ensure similar activities will not be repeated.