

Game and Fish Fund Citizen Oversight

History and Agency Support

Authorization in Statute

Citizen oversight of the Game and Fish Fund has been authorized in statute since 1994. The current citation is Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.055, subd. 4b. The Game and Fish Fund contains monies from several sources, including:

- License fees, stamps, and surcharges for hunting and angling
- Lottery in-Lieu funds
- Some federal funds
- Fines and miscellaneous receipts

How the Oversight Structure Has Evolved

1994 — Established in Minn. Stat. § 97A.055, subd. 4a	2001 — Reauthorized and restructured in Minn. Stat. § 97A.055, subd. 4b	2011 — Reauthorized and restructured in Minn. Stat. § 97A.055, subd. 4b
Seven separate committees. Members appointed by DNR Commissioner.	Integrated structure with several subcommittees plus an umbrella group. Members appointed by DNR Commissioner.	Integrated structure with two principal citizen oversight committees plus an umbrella group. Members appointed by DNR Commissioner.
The "general" committee was commonly called the "Citizen Oversight Committee" (COC). COC members wrote the 2001 reauthorization bill and found sponsors.	Subcommittees designate their own chairs, which together form an umbrella "Budgetary Oversight Committee" (BOC). DNR Commissioner appoints another person to chair the BOC, because the statute bars subcommittee chairs from chairing the BOC.	Each committee designates its own chairs plus four other members to serve on an umbrella " Budgetary Oversight Committee " (BOC). DNR Commissioner appoints an 11th person to chair the BOC, because the statute bars subcommittee chairs from chairing the BOC.
Tasks are to review annual reports of revenue and expenditures and make recommendations to the legislature and the commissioner for improvements in the management and use of money in the game and fish fund.	Oversight participants sought and gained two additional tasks: Recommendations to the commissioner for outcome goals from expenditures (added in 2000; sought by Wildlife Operations Committee) Biennial budget plan recommendations to the commissioner by August 15 of each even-numbered year (added in 2001; sought by former COC)	Tasks remain unchanged from previous authorization.

Member appointments

The commissioner appoints the committee members and the BOC Chair and sets the terms and conditions of appointment. These appointments are for individuals, not formal representatives of particular organizations.

- The commissioner appoints committee members for terms of up to two years through an open application process.
- An application process for open seats is conducted every year in the fall. The open application process is a self-nomination process.

- Members appointed under an open application process are eligible to serve up to six consecutive years. A member with maximum consecutive service becomes eligible to apply again for appointment after a two-year break. Current members interested in another term must apply again and members are not guaranteed another consecutive term.
- The BOC Chair appointment is reviewed every year and is renewable by mutual agreement of the BOC Chair and the DNR Commissioner.
- A member may voluntarily withdraw from their term of appointment by notifying their DNR manager liaison or the DNR commissioner by email or letter. The commissioner may terminate an appointment if the member does not meet the expectations for a member in good standing and will communicate a termination of appointment to the member by email or letter.
- A member's appointment is subject to review by the commissioner, notwithstanding their initial term of appointment. An oversight committee may ask the commissioner to review a member's appointment by a vote of that committee.

Eligibility

- The DNR is committed to appointing a diverse mix of Minnesotans who bring a variety of knowledge and interests about hunting, fishing, and trapping. Applicants must have a strong interest in monitoring the proper expenditure of funds received from licenses, permits, stamps, and related revenue sources.
- An applicant must meet both of these requirements:
 - Be a Minnesota resident; and
 - Purchased a personal or commercial Minnesota hunting, fishing, or trapping license since Jan. 1, 2021, or licensed their vehicle with an active critical habitat license plate.
- Appointed members may serve up to six consecutive years. Current members interested in another term must apply again and are not guaranteed appointment to another term.
- Seasonal and temporary employees of the Minnesota DNR Fish and Wildlife Division become eligible for appointment one year after the end of their last employment with the DNR.
- Retired and former full-time employees of the Minnesota DNR Fish and Wildlife Division are not eligible for appointment.
- Persons whose employment may involve administration of activities funded by the Game and Fish Fund are not eligible for appointment.

Oversight committee structure

The **Fisheries Oversight Committee (FOC)** reviews fisheries funding and expenditures, including activities related to trout and salmon stamps and walleye stamps.

The **Wildlife Oversight Committee (WOC)** reviews wildlife funding and expenditures, including activities related to migratory waterfowl, pheasant, and wild turkey management and deer and big game management.

Members work together on reviewing the DNR's annual Game and Fish Fund Report on how the DNR spent money from the Game and Fish Fund. Each committee reviews the report in detail, requests additional information as needed, discusses questions and any issues of concern, and drafts a report on their findings. An umbrella **Budgetary Oversight Committee (BOC)** addresses matters of common concern and merges FOC and WOC reports into a final joint oversight report. The report is delivered to the DNR commissioner and legislative committees with jurisdiction over natural resources financing and policy.

DNR Support

DNR supports the oversight committees in their statutory duties in the following ways:

- DNR managers and staff provide technical information and assistance to the oversight committees. DNR managers and commissioners are available for BOC meetings.
- DNR hosts online meetings and provides meeting rooms.
- A facilitator liaison assists the BOC with work planning, effective meetings, group decision-making, and production of reports and other communications.

Since FY 2002, the DNR has posted on the DNR's website its annual Game and Fish Fund expenditures reports, BOC reports and correspondence, and other information about citizen oversight of the Game and Fish Fund.