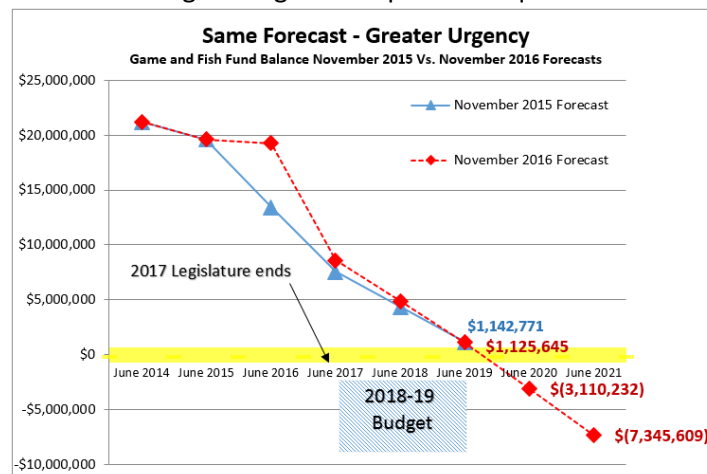


Budget in Brief: Fish and Wildlife

What is the problem we are trying to solve?

The Game and Fish Fund, the primary fund that pays for the Minnesota's DNR fish and wildlife management, is in decline. The Fund will fall to its minimum recommended positive balance of \$5 million in 2018 and be depleted in 2019. This declining balance is already negatively impacting 600,000 hunters and 1.5 million anglers as the DNR, unsure of when a fee increase will be enacted, is aggressively managing costs by delaying or cancelling habitat and research projects, reducing walleye and other game fish stocking efforts, reducing biological surveys/assessments needed to make informed management decisions and it is taking us longer to respond to inquiries from stakeholders.



What has Minnesota tried? What has worked, and what hasn't?

All Minnesotans benefit from healthy fish and wildlife populations and the quality habitats they depend upon. However, the Division of Fish and Wildlife does not receive General Fund dollars to support our management efforts. This leaves the Game and Fish fund and user fees as the primary means to support conservation work for fish, wildlife and law enforcement activities. Periodic fee increases are necessary to pay for the increased costs of management of 5,400 fishing lakes, 1.3 million acres of state Wildlife Management Areas, fish hatcheries and hunter/angler recruitment and retention programs. Hunters and anglers have been willing to accept fee increases in the past because the cost of a license is still a bargain for the incredible outdoor opportunities offered in our State.

What do we propose?

As part of the Game and Fish Fund's Citizen Budget Oversight Committee's (BOC) review of the 2015 Game & Fish Fund Report, the BOC recommended that the DNR "develop a comprehensive package of funding, including license fee increases for fishing, hunting, ice shelter, and the like, which will ensure the solvency of the GFF for the next decade, without a reduction in the level of management effort.

We agree with the BOC's recommendations and this proposal is the first step in a comprehensive funding package. We propose to increase the price of a resident annual fishing license by \$3, a resident deer hunting license by \$4, and a resident sports license by \$7. A \$15 shelter permit is being proposed for wheeled houses, as is a \$4 deer lottery application fee. We also propose to increase non-resident

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angling and deer hunting licenses. These increases will keep the Game and Fish fund solvent until 2021, if enacted in 2017. These fee increase amounts are a tiny fraction of what hunters and anglers spend to enjoy their pursuits. According to the latest national survey Minnesota hunters spend \$733 million annually with a ripple effect of 1.3 billion and Minnesota anglers spend \$2.4 billion annually with a ripple effect of \$4.2 billion annually.

What positive impact do we believe this will have?

Minnesotans enjoy world-class hunting and fishing opportunities. The proposed fee increases will ensure these opportunities are maintained. For example, the proposed fee increase will allow:

- Successfully implement the new statewide northern pike regulations aimed at preserving perch populations while reducing the number of small pike.
- Continued stocking of Minnesota's state fish through a cost-effective walleye stocking program.
- Habitat improvements on more than 1,400 Wildlife Management Areas allowing Minnesotans easy access to quality hunting opportunities.
- To continue to hunt healthy deer and perpetuate the "deer camp" hunting experience.
- Research to assist in the recovery of walleyes on Mille Lacs.
- Effective enforcement of fish and game laws statewide.
- Leveraging the benefits of Minnesota's Legacy Amendment habitat funding so that special projects can be completed to benefit game and fish species, and,
- Support 48,000 Minnesota private sector hunting-and fishing-related jobs, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If the legislature doesn't adopt this proposal, what alternate approaches has DNR considered?

Without a fee increase, the DNR will have to reduce spending to keep the Game and Fish Fund positive. These spending reductions will diminish DNR's ability to accomplish the actions listed above and maintain Minnesota as one of the nation's top three inland fishing destinations and a state where hunter numbers have continued to be remarkably stable for more than a decade.