

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



# STRATEGIC PLAN | 2011-2030

THE NEXT GENERATION OF OHIO'S CONSERVATION JOURNEY:  
*BUILDING ON THE PAST TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE*

# 2011 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This strategic plan was created by Division of Wildlife employees with input from leaders in Ohio's conservation community, academic experts, and wildlife enthusiasts from across the state. The goal of this new plan is to provide a concise and easy-to-read document that reflects a shared vision of fish and wildlife conservation in Ohio.

We began the planning process with experience gained from our three previous strategic plans and the successes and challenges encountered during their implementation. A critical review of these plans, additional review of plans from other states, research and analysis, contributions from all division employees, and feedback from constituent leaders helped guide development of this plan.

A preliminary draft was presented for public review through the division Web site and a Web-based survey. We believe these efforts have resulted in a plan that addresses the challenges, issues, and opportunities related to fish and wildlife conservation in Ohio.





# LETTER FROM THE DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

The Division of Wildlife is pleased to present our new strategic plan. We invite all Ohioans to join us on the next generation of Ohio's conservation journey. This is the Division's fourth strategic plan, and like previous plans it builds on past successes and guides us toward future opportunities and challenges.

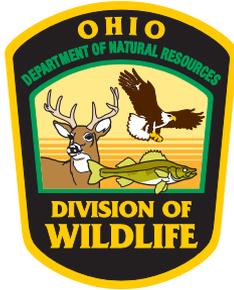
This strategic plan is a common, shared vision of the future of fish and wildlife conservation in Ohio. By design, it doesn't list how many fish are stocked into each lake, identify individual research projects, or determine when deer season will open from year to year. Instead, the plan steps back from detail to give a bird's-eye view of five cornerstones of Ohio conservation, our desired objective for each, and paths of direction. These include: **1)** stewardship of our resources; **2)** opportunities for participation in fish and wildlife recreation; **3)** connections we make with all fish and wildlife enthusiasts; **4)** traditions related to conservation; and, **5)** a standard of excellence in the work we do for you. From this broad perspective, the division can consider where Ohio's fish and wildlife resources have been, where they are today, and how we can work together to secure their future.



Since our beginning in 1873 as the Ohio Fish Commission, our agency has been at the forefront of Ohio's fish and wildlife conservation through our commitment, passion, and statutory authority. As we consider where we stand today and look to the future, we embrace a rich history of experiences and the strong support of anglers, hunters, and trappers -- the historic foundation of our success. Yet, we also welcome all conservation enthusiasts who share an appreciation of these resources and the contributions that fish and wildlife make to the quality of life in Ohio. So however you appreciate fish and wildlife -- with a fishing rod in hand, gun on your shoulder, traps in your packbasket, binoculars around your neck or a camera at the ready -- we encourage all who care about Ohio's fish and wildlife to travel together on this conservation journey to promote healthy ecosystems, protect recreational opportunities, and provide promise that the values we share today will be there for the next generation.

Just as you plan your next trip outdoors, this strategic plan helps the division prepare for the years ahead. It is our hope that everyone who enjoys fish and wildlife resources will join us on this journey to conserve and improve Ohio's fish and wildlife and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all.

Sincerely,  
Your Ohio Division of Wildlife



## OUR MISSION

To conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all.

Effective science-based management of Ohio's fish and wildlife resources incorporates the complex relationships among fish and wildlife, their habitats, and the interaction of people.

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"THERE CAN BE NO GREATER ISSUE THAN THAT OF CONSERVATION IN THIS COUNTRY."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



# WILDLIFE

Populations of bald eagles and peregrine falcons have rebounded, bringing these and other species back from the brink of extinction, ensuring their place among Ohio's rich diversity of wildlife.

Native wildlife species continue to be stressed by non-native invasive species. Because of international commerce on Lake Erie and its variety of habitats, this region is particularly vulnerable to invasions.

Ohio has generated record harvests in deer and walleye in recent years.

Low density suburban development may increase edge habitat species like white-tailed deer, but can also increase conflict between people and wildlife.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife produces more than 30 million fish that are stocked in Ohio's public waterways annually.





# HABITAT

With nearly 45,000 square miles of land, 2.25 million acres of Lake Erie, 60,000 miles of streams, over 120,000 surface acres of inland lakes and 451 miles of the Ohio River, outdoor enthusiasts can explore a diversity of opportunities.

More than 90 percent of Ohio's land is privately owned. The Department of Natural Resources manages two percent of Ohio's land area, of which a portion is managed for fish and wildlife recreation.

Habitat quantity and quality is the largest factor influencing wildlife populations.

Climate change could impact many of Ohio's valuable natural resources, including Lake Erie and wetland habitats. Warming temperatures may reduce Lake Erie and coastal wetland water levels and alter species composition. Growing season changes may increase non-native plant species competition, also impacting Ohio's wildlife.





“WHEN YOU PUT YOUR HAND IN A  
FLOWING STREAM, YOU TOUCH THE  
LAST THAT HAS GONE BEFORE AND  
THE FIRST OF WHAT IS STILL TO COME.”

LEONARDO DA VINCI

# PEOPLE

Ohio has more than five million wildlife enthusiasts who enjoy hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching. Annual participant spending on wildlife recreation can exceed \$3 billion.

Hunting and fishing generate nearly \$200 million in local and state tax dollars and supports more than 30,000 Ohio jobs. Wildlife watching generates more than \$160 million in local and state tax dollars and supports more than 22,000 Ohio jobs.

The most commonly recognized barriers for fishing and hunting participation are time, family and work commitments, and health issues.

The majority of anglers and hunters are males who live in rural areas. Wildlife watchers, however, tend to be females.

Computer and online communication skills are increasing among all adults.

Urban areas are home to four out of five Ohioans.

Many Ohioans are moving to “ex-urban” areas, just outside core metropolitan areas, reducing farmland around cities.

Young people are seeing their free time decrease.



# OUR VALUES

## THE DIVISION OF WILDLIFE BELIEVES THAT:

Input from constituents and open lines of communication with the public are essential.

Fish and wildlife recreation is socially and economically important to Ohio.

Sustainable consumptive use of fish and wildlife through hunting, fishing, and trapping is at the heart of effective conservation.

Fish and wildlife management must be based on the best available science.

Partnerships are necessary for effective fish and wildlife conservation.

Conservation is our priority when managing lands and waters.

The right to own and use firearms is essential to continue our hunting and shooting sports traditions.

A dedicated and professional workforce is key to achieving long-term success.

Effective fish and wildlife conservation requires integration of a unified wildlife agency.

Diverse fish and wildlife populations benefit everyone.

Providing quality customer service is critical to achieving our mission.

Diverse and dedicated funding is necessary for fish and wildlife conservation.

Fiscal responsibility is crucial to the future of Ohio's fish and wildlife management.





# OUR VISION

## THE DIVISION OF WILDLIFE'S IDEAL FUTURE INCLUDES:

Healthy ecosystems that support thriving fish and wildlife populations for all to enjoy

Recognition as the authority on all fish and wildlife-related issues in Ohio through science-based management with strong support from sportsmen and women, fish and wildlife enthusiasts, and conservation partners

Stable funding through multiple sources representing all who value fish and wildlife conservation

A highly qualified, well trained, and dedicated staff that understands and respects Ohio's fish and wildlife heritage and seeks to build upon it to create a better future





# OUR CORNERSTONES

THE DIVISION OF WILDLIFE'S FIVE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR  
DEVELOPING THE FUTURE OF OHIO'S WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT:

## STEWARDSHIP

Foster healthy ecosystems for the  
benefit of fish and wildlife

## OPPORTUNITIES

Improve opportunities for fish  
and wildlife recreation

## CONNECTIONS

Create, expand, and improve public awareness,  
understanding and appreciation of  
Ohio's fish and wildlife

## TRADITIONS

Preserve and promote Ohio's  
tradition of conservation

## EXCELLENCE

Maintain effective and professional  
agency operations





**"CONSERVATION IS A STATE OF HARMONY BETWEEN MEN AND LAND."**

**ALDO LEOPOLD**

# STEWARDSHIP

## STRATEGIC PLAN STEWARDSHIP

Foster healthy ecosystems for the benefit of fish and wildlife

Protecting and fostering healthy ecosystems to benefit Ohio's fish and wildlife is critical to conservation in the midst of social, political, and economic changes of the 21st century. Ohio faces new and continuing challenges to maintaining healthy ecosystems. With over 11 million people living in Ohio, balancing the needs of fish and wildlife with impacts from development and economic growth will be central to these efforts. The Division of Wildlife must lead by example when managing public land and water and encourage the protection, conservation, and management of private land and water. Threats to healthy ecosystems include habitat loss, invasive and nuisance species, pollution, disease, climate change, and other challenges. The Division of Wildlife will maintain diverse fish and wildlife populations and habitats while identifying and minimizing threats to ecosystems.

## STEWARDSHIP OBJECTIVE

- ▲ Diverse and sustainable fish and wildlife populations and habitats representative of healthy ecosystems and sustainable use
- ▲ Minimized impacts from habitat loss, invasive and nuisance species, pollution, disease, climate change, and other challenges

## STEWARDSHIP



# R D S H I P

## STEWARDSHIP OUR PATH

### MILESTONES



- ▲ Balance the needs of fish and wildlife with the needs of people by mitigating incompatible ecosystem uses
- ▲ Manage and evaluate fish and wildlife populations and their habitats through the best available science
- ▲ Reintroduce and restore species and habitat where appropriate
- ▲ Protect and sustain fish and wildlife resources through regulations, enforcement, partnerships, and education
- ▲ Protect land and water resources through strategic acquisitions, easements, and partnerships
- ▲ Identify ecosystem- or population-level threats through research, surveillance, monitoring, and inventory
- ▲ Strive to prevent the introduction of and control spread of harmful species through legislation, regulation, policy, management practices, education, and partnerships

# OPPORT

## STRATEGIC PLAN OPPORTUNITIES

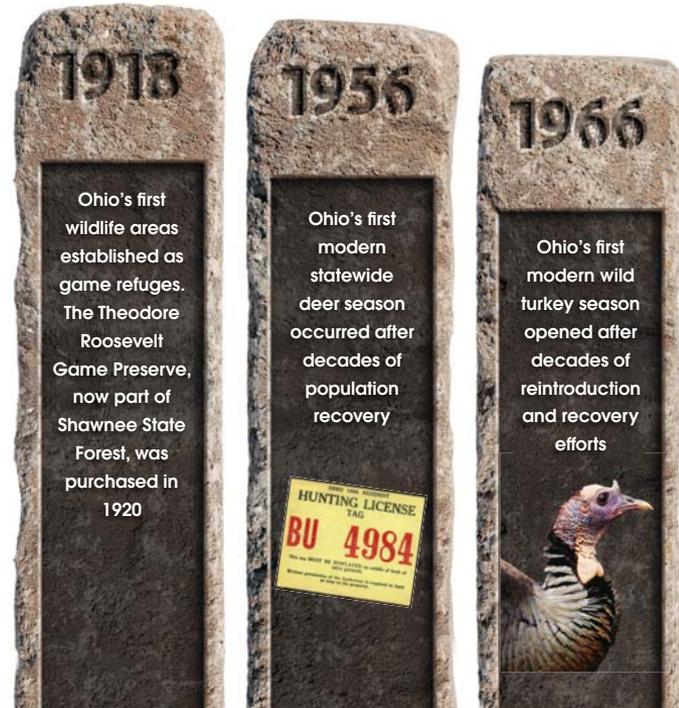
Improve opportunities for fish and wildlife recreation

Ohio provides world-class opportunities for fishing, hunting, trapping, bird watching, wildlife viewing, and other forms of outdoor recreation. Diverse populations of fish and wildlife are key to providing these opportunities. However, challenges to ecosystems and fish and wildlife populations may limit recreational opportunities. In addition, a variety of barriers to recreation and participation may potentially limit the quantity, quality, and accessibility of these opportunities. Many Ohioans are passionate about fish and wildlife recreation and the Division of Wildlife supports and encourages participation of these pursuits. Opportunities may be improved in a variety of ways, such as carefully managing fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, and removing barriers to participation.

## OPPORTUNITIES OBJECTIVE

- ▲ Sufficient fish and wildlife populations to accommodate sustainable recreational opportunities
- ▲ Minimized barriers to participation in fishing, hunting, trapping, bird watching, wildlife viewing, and other related pursuits
- ▲ Increased participation in fishing, hunting, trapping, bird watching, and other fish and wildlife pursuits

## OPPORTUNITIES



# TUNITIES

## MILESTONES

1995

Ohio's first  
modern  
mourning dove  
season



1998

Sunday  
hunting in Ohio  
legalized



2005

Ohio  
established  
apprentice  
hunting and  
trapping  
licenses  
through the  
Families Afield  
program

## OPPORTUNITIES OUR PATH

- ▲ Increase and promote “close to home” opportunities for fish and wildlife recreation
- ▲ Increase and promote urban opportunities for fish and wildlife recreation
- ▲ Provide timely, up-to-date, and accurate information about recreational opportunities
- ▲ Conduct research to better understand how and why people value wildlife
- ▲ Increase access to land and water through purchases, easements, agreements, and partnerships
- ▲ Increase, improve, and maintain public access areas
- ▲ Use special events to provide unique opportunities and improve wildlife recreation skills
- ▲ Implement clear and concise regulations that are easily understood and effectively enforced
- ▲ Stock fish and wildlife where appropriate to create, enhance, and diversify recreational opportunities
- ▲ Use science-based management to maintain and enhance fish and wildlife populations for public use and recreation

# CONNE

## STRATEGIC PLAN CONNECTIONS

Create, expand, and improve public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Ohio's fish and wildlife

The future of fish and wildlife resources depends on informed conservation actions by citizens. As technologies change and channels for outreach and education continue to evolve, the Division of Wildlife must stay at the forefront of these changes to deliver products and programs that connect people with fish, wildlife, and habitat. The Division of Wildlife has the responsibility to educate and inform Ohioans about fish and wildlife resources and promote the values of fishing, hunting, trapping, and fish and wildlife appreciation. Collectively, these actions can foster awareness, increase understanding, inform decisions, create a desire to participate in fish and wildlife recreation, and enhance skills and behaviors associated with these activities.

## CONNECTIONS OBJECTIVE

-  Increased public knowledge and understanding of the relationship between people, wildlife, and habitat
-  Increased public appreciation of Ohio's fish and wildlife

## CONNECTIONS



# CTIONS

## MILESTONES



2004

Ohio became the 10th state to introduce the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)



2010

The division launched the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp to allow all Ohioans to invest in wildlife conservation



2010

Wildlife's Internet presence is expanded with the use of social media



## CONNECTIONS OUR PATH

- ▲ Expand the Division of Wildlife's role as the source of fish and wildlife information and education
- ▲ Provide a variety of fish and wildlife exhibits, programs, and experiences
- ▲ Develop and maintain partnerships to better deliver the Division of Wildlife's conservation message and promote opportunities to experience fish and wildlife
- ▲ Maintain a corps of Division of Wildlife-trained partners and volunteers to assist, lead, and promote special programs
- ▲ Develop and promote educational materials that address fish and wildlife management principles, outdoor skills, and other conservation concepts
- ▲ Provide accurate fish and wildlife information using current communication technologies
- ▲ Provide information and guidance to reduce conflicts and improve human interactions with fish and wildlife
- ▲ Identify and address customers' evolving information needs

# TRADI

## STRATEGIC PLAN TRADITIONS

Preserve and promote Ohio's tradition of conservation

The traditions of fishing, hunting, trapping, and other recreational pursuits are an important part of our culture, both socially and economically. Social, economic, and political changes create potential barriers to participation and challenges to passing on these traditions. Young Ohioans are particularly at risk of being disconnected from the outdoors. Early and guided involvement in these recreational pursuits is critical to participation by the next generation. Likewise, continued participation is a necessary link in establishing a lasting conservation ethic. Participation in fishing, hunting, and trapping is decreasing. At the same time, more people than ever appreciate wildlife through activities like bird watching, wildlife viewing, and photography. In order to pass on Ohio's tradition of conservation to future generations we must continue to promote fishing, hunting, trapping, and fish and wildlife appreciation.

## TRADITIONS OBJECTIVE

-  Consistent recruitment of fish and wildlife enthusiasts
-  Devoted participants and conservation organizations that are the critical link to passing on fish and wildlife traditions

## TRADITIONS



# TIONS

## MILESTONES



## TRADITIONS OUR PATH

- ▲ Promote youth- and family-oriented events to recruit and retain participants in fish and wildlife recreation
- ▲ Partner with fish and wildlife clubs and organizations to develop conservation recruitment programs
- ▲ Create skill-building opportunities through mentoring, hands-on participation, and memorable outdoor experiences
- ▲ Encourage participation in shooting sports to improve hunter recruitment

“THE NATION BEHAVES WELL IF IT TREATS THE  
NATURAL RESOURCES AS ASSETS WHICH IT  
MUST TURN OVER TO THE NEXT GENERATION  
INCREASED, AND NOT IMPAIRED, IN VALUE.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

# EXCEL

## STRATEGIC PLAN EXCELLENCE

Maintain an effective and professional agency

To ensure effective management of Ohio's fish and wildlife, the Division of Wildlife must maintain secure funding, workforce excellence, and public accountability.

Dedicated funds generated from the sale of fishing and hunting licenses, permits, and federal excise taxes on related equipment sustain agency operations. However, an ever-expanding role in conservation requires additional funding sources.

A work environment that promotes employee satisfaction and productivity will attract, maintain, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and innovative staff. Ohio's conservation journey will require creative alignment of staff and skills to meet emerging challenges. Career development and quality training will help ensure professional and dedicated employees and build leadership.

Efficient business practices are critical to responsibly manage programs. The division will continually strive to improve these practices to further strengthen Ohioans' confidence that funds are appropriately spent on conservation priorities.

## EXCELLENCE



1886

Ohio's first game warden appointed; in 1888 legislation was passed calling for a game warden in every county



1937

Pittman-Robertson Legislation created a federal excise tax on hunting and shooting equipment annually generating millions of dollars for wildlife conservation across the country

1939

The Ohio Wildlife Fund was established to ensure that hunting and fishing license monies are used for fish and wildlife conservation

# LENCE

## MILESTONES



1950

Dingell-Johnson Legislation created a federal excise tax on fishing equipment annually generating millions of dollars for sport fish conservation across the country

1983

State income tax check-off program was established to allow Ohio taxpayers to donate a portion of their tax refund to the division for non-game wildlife management programs

2011

The Wild Ohio Customer Relations Management System (WOCRMS) begins, improving license sales transactions and record keeping

## EXCELLENCE OBJECTIVE

- ▲ Expand sources of funding dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation
- ▲ Outstanding services provided by a high-performance staff
- ▲ Business practices that are efficient, responsible, and accountable to the public

## EXCELLENCE OUR PATH

- ▲ Protect Division of Wildlife revenue generated from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and equipment, while continually seeking new sources of revenue
- ▲ Recruit and retain a broad range of fish and wildlife enthusiasts to enhance support for the Division of Wildlife's mission
- ▲ Use partnerships to leverage fish and wildlife conservation funding
- ▲ Recruit, train, and retain a highly-qualified staff
- ▲ Continually improve our business practices to ensure the most efficient use of funds
- ▲ Report allocation of fiscal resources annually to provide accountability to the public

## DIVISION OF WILDLIFE | STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife is responsible for management of fish and wildlife resources as mandated by Ohio law. The specific powers and duties of the Division are found in three documents: 1) the Ohio Constitution; 2) the Ohio Revised Code, Sections 1531 and 1533; and 3) the Ohio Administrative Code.

The Division of Wildlife holds ownership to all wild animals in trust for the benefit of Ohio's citizens. Fish and wildlife management practices, regulations, and enforcement are based on wildlife being a usable and renewable resource.

The chief of the Division of Wildlife has broad authority, with approval of the Wildlife Council, to adopt rules and regulations for managing lands and waters that will ensure sound management of fish and wildlife, to conduct management activities and acquire property to develop and conserve the wildlife resource, and to promote programs to educate Ohio citizens about conservation, fishing, hunting, and, trapping.

Revenue from the sale of licenses, permits, products, etc. is deposited into the Wildlife Fund to be used solely for future fish and wildlife management. These funds are protected by state and federal legislation that prevents their diversion for purposes other than fish and wildlife conservation.

