

OUR VISION: *Conservation*

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

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# STRATEGIC PLAN







## Our Mission

To conserve and enhance  
Mississippi's wildlife, fisheries, and parks,  
provide quality outdoor recreation,  
and engage the public  
in natural resource conservation.



# Agency Overview

Mississippi's legislative leadership recognized the need for wildlife conservation in our state and founded the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission in 1932. Since then, the Agency has been the state's premier conservation organization. In 1989, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation merged with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation to form the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP). The MDWFP is a large state agency charged by state statute to conserve, develop, and protect Mississippi's natural resources and provide continuing outdoor recreation opportunities. The Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks governs the MDWFP and is authorized by state statute to formulate policies regarding wildlife; adopt, amend, and repeal regulations and rules as necessary for agency operation; receive and spend federal, state, or private funds; conduct studies to determine methods of managing and conserving wildlife; set fees and contracts; and receive advice and counsel of advisory committees.

## Over the decades the MDWFP has:

- Acquired and managed lands, waters, and parks to procure, in perpetuity, public areas for nature-based recreation and to provide habitat for fish and wildlife
- Provided technical guidance and information to private and public landowners on how to manage their land and water to benefit fish and wildlife
- Educated the public on the values and importance of Mississippi's natural resources
- Conducted research and population surveys to ensure sustain ability of native species
- Restored populations of white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, wood ducks, walleye, and striped bass
- Stocked millions of fish in public lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams statewide
- Constructed boat ramps to access to lakes, rivers, and streams statewide
- Educated the public on safe and ethical uses of Mississippi's natural resources through hunter and boater education
- Protected fish and wildlife populations through establishment and enforcement of laws and regulations
- Provided emergency response to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornados, and floods
- Assisted other agencies in ensuring public safety

The MDWFP is managed by an executive director who is recommended by the Commission and appointed by the Governor. The Agency is organized into six bureaus: Administrative Services, Law Enforcement, Freshwater Fisheries, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (MMNS), State Parks, and Wildlife. Three geographic regions (north, central, and south) are used to facilitate agency administration. The MDWFP manages state fishing lakes, fish hatcheries, state parks, wildlife management areas (some owned by other entities, but managed by MDWFP), three regional offices, and one museum. The MDWFP's annual budget is unlike that of many state agencies; approximately 90 percent of this budget is derived from user generated funds rather than state tax funds. Primary funding sources include hunting and fishing license sales, permit and registration fees, and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment.

The MDWFP is an equal opportunity employer and provider of programs and services. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of political affiliation, race, color, national origin, marital status, sex, religion, creed, age, or disability, they may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the MDWFP, 1505 Eastover Dr., Jackson, MS 39211-6374, or the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, 1801 L. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20507.



# CONSERVATION CHALLENGES:

Many significant challenges facing the MDWFP include:

- Declining populations of some fish and wildlife, as well as reduced recreational opportunities, due to land use changes and habitat loss
- Overcoming public apathy towards conservation issues
- Addressing the general public's lack of awareness of the Agency's mission and responsibilities
- Recruiting and retaining hunters, anglers, and non-consumptive users
- Partnering with other conservation agencies and organizations to address complex conservation issues
- Developing effective marketing campaigns to promote agency goals and increase public support
- Controlling destructive non-native, invasive species (plants and animals) and mitigating impacts of nuisance wildlife
- Transitioning from primarily focusing on consumptive use related conservation issues to addressing all conservation issues
- Increasing effectiveness and efficiency of agency programs and personnel
- Recruiting and retaining qualified staff
- Identifying a long-term, dedicated funding source to ensure conservation delivery through research, fish and wildlife management, monitoring, and facility maintenance and improvements
- Determining methods for non-consumptive users to share in funding conservation programs that have historically been primarily funded by hunters and anglers
- Acquiring adequate funding to maintain and enhance parks

Additionally, the following changes in societal trends must be considered as the Agency strives to fulfill its mission:

**Demographics / Population Shifts** - Mississippi's population has greatly increased during the past two decades and is projected to increase at a similar pace in the near future. Population expansion is shifting toward metro areas and moving inward from the coast. Also, the population is becoming more diverse.


**Social / Cultural** - Americans are busier than ever and with improvements in technology and communication there is more competition for leisure time, interests, and dollars. MDWFP customers are less interested in "roughing it" and are less inclined to take time to develop outdoor skills.

**Ethics / Laws** - There is a growing concern that appreciation for wildlife as a public resource has declined. Many conservationists sense we are losing our "land ethic" as fewer landowners reside or make their living on rural lands. With an increasing number of conservation laws being passed, rules and regulations are complex, hard to understand, and difficult to enforce.

**Land Use Changes** - Urban and suburban sprawl, new roads, and infrastructure development has impacted sustainability of natural communities in some parts of the State. Farm Bill programs, conservation easements, and other private landowner incentive programs are helping protect more private lands for conservation. Agricultural practices are having new and different effects on wildlife and fisheries. During the past three decades, agricultural land has decreased, and largely been replaced by tree plantations. Meanwhile, the amount of mixed pine-hardwood forest has diminished. Landowners with an interest in hunting are increasing their efforts to manage for game species, but many of their management activities could be improved. Moreover, few landowners manage specifically for non-game wildlife.







**Outdoor Recreation** - Although the decline is slower than the national average, hunting and fishing participation is slowly decreasing in Mississippi. The average age of license holders is increasing and recruitment of new hunters and anglers is challenging. Access to private lands and public waters is decreasing due to increased fears of liability, while costs associated with joining or owning recreational lands are increasing. Public lands and waters are perceived as being less safe and offering lower quality fishing and hunting opportunities than private lands. Wildlife viewing (e.g., feeding, photographing, observing) continues to increase on public and private lands along with other recreation interests. Research indicates youth participation in outdoor activities has significantly declined and children are spending very little time playing outside. Parents have increased fear of children playing outdoors unsupervised. Competition for parks' customers from private facilities and other public lands is increasing as visitors are more attracted by amenities than natural resources.

**Habitat Management** – Healthy and abundant populations of many fish and wildlife species exist; however, others are declining. Nuisance wildlife are increasing, resulting in more damage to property and crops and an increase in nuisance wildlife complaints. Some invasive species populations (i.e., aquatic and terrestrial, flora and fauna) are expanding and replacing native species. Few species are being removed from the threatened and endangered species list because recovery of these species is difficult and expensive. Plans exist for recovery and restoration, but funds for these programs are still minimal. Urban and suburban sprawl is constantly increasing and causing additional habitat loss and fragmentation, destruction of travel corridors, nuisance wildlife problems, and spread of non-native, invasive species. Size of private land tracts is decreasing and this fragmentation contributes to management challenges. Water quality has improved in many streams and lakes over the past few decades, but some waters remain below state standards.

**Information / Education / Communication** – Customers and partners are seeking more information and educational services from all components of the agency. Demand for fisheries and wildlife technical guidance on private and public lands is increasing. Few Mississippi schools have comprehensive environmental or conservation education curriculum. Hunter and boating safety programs have resulted in significant declines in accidents as recreationists are better informed and safer today, but current delivery methods need to be evaluated. Communication tools (e.g., internet, cable/satellite, smart phones, social networking sites, webcast, text messaging, video conference, etc.) have greatly increased, but it is still challenging to effectively reach audiences for education and information.

## GOALS:

This strategic plan addresses six overarching goals of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks:

1. **Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat** - We will conserve Mississippi's fish and wildlife and their habitats.
2. **Outdoor Recreation** - We will encourage participation in fishing, hunting, and nature-based recreation and provide quality opportunities for safe and accessible enjoyment of our natural resources and parks.
3. **Information and Education** - We will improve public understanding of and involvement in conservation and management of fish and wildlife.
4. **Private Lands** - We will expand efforts to help private landowners advance conservation and address factors that limit managing their lands effectively.
5. **Public Lands and Waters** - We will manage public lands and waters to optimize benefits to fish, wildlife, and the people who enjoy these resources.
6. **Management and Administration** - We will enhance the MDWFP's capability to manage its resources and to operate effectively and efficiently, with accountability at all levels.

This strategic plan was developed by each agency bureau addressing the following questions, as applicable, to each of the preceding goals:

1. What kinds of changes are needed?
2. How will we get there?
3. How will we know when we get there?



# GOAL 1 – FISH, WILDLIFE, AND HABITAT

We will sustain Mississippi's fish and wildlife and their habitats.

## FISHERIES

The Fisheries Bureau is responsible for managing fisheries and their habitat in public water systems throughout the state. Fisheries management plans have been developed that address fish stocking, regulations, research, invasive species, and aquatic plant control. Fish populations need to be monitored periodically to update current management plans. New management plans should be developed for waters where plans do not exist. Additionally, programs need to be enhanced and developed to maintain and improve aquatic habitat.

Sampling schedules will be developed and followed for all major water systems. Sampling results will be used to update existing management plans and to develop new plans where appropriate. Fish hatcheries will be upgraded to increase production and meet stocking needs. Aquatic habitat will be improved by working with state and federal agencies and landowners to implement actions listed in state management plans for aquatic invasive species and water resources. Goals will be achieved when fisheries management plans are completed and water quality and quantity becomes sufficient to sustain a healthy and diverse fishery.



## FACILITY AND GROUNDS:

The Agency manages numerous facilities and infrastructure on thousands of acres of state-owned property. Development of facilities, grounds, and infrastructure (e.g. buildings, roads and utilities) does not directly sustain fish, wildlife, and their habitat; however, it does impact those resources. Previously, facilities have been developed in remote, natural areas resulting in development of extensive infrastructure systems including miles of roads and utilities. A facilities and grounds operational plan needs to be prepared to ensure new development, upgrades, and renovations have a minimal impact on natural resources and meet acceptable energy conservation levels.

The Agency will develop a plan and adopt methods of construction and facility management that minimize potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources. We will identify and recommend demolishing older, high maintenance facilities and utilize sites with existing infrastructure for new construction. Most undisturbed areas will be left natural to maintain our state's natural scenic beauty and fish and wildlife habitat. Success will be achieved when a facilities and grounds operational plan is developed and implemented for new developments, upgrades, and renovations.



**Splash Pad**  
**Paul B. Johnson State Park**

## LAW ENFORCEMENT



The Law Enforcement Bureau investigates crimes that involve the unlawful exploitation of fish and wildlife resources within the state and the transportation of unlawfully taken resources across state lines. To address current conservation law enforcement challenges, officers need enhanced training. The Bureau will evaluate and improve its training program to produce better educated, more professional officers to prevent and address illegal activities in problem areas and to apprehend, disrupt, and dismantle criminal enterprises that cause losses in fish and wildlife resources. The reduction of complaints and violations affecting natural resources will be used as performance indicators.

## MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The Museum performs fish, wildlife, and habitat surveys, acquires specimens, maintains collections, and manages a Natural Heritage database. A major part of this work focuses on species and ecosystems of greatest conservation need. Research collections and occurrence records in our database should grow to reflect environmental and population changes over time and must be continuously updated to represent current conditions. Focusing efforts on priority species and habitats, and addressing information gaps is needed to meet our goal of providing sound conservation technical guidance to developers, land managers, researchers and educators.



Aquarium at MMNS

The Museum will continue to build and operate Mississippi's most comprehensive database for species and habitat occurrences, and strive to remain the state's central repository for scientific collections. We will reduce the backlog of cataloged specimens, obtain collections from universities and private collectors, and acquire specimens through biological surveys. Efforts to strategically acquire and analyze tissue samples will be increased to meet the growing demands for conservation genetics. Surveys and remote sensing will be used to monitor changes in priority populations and habitats.

Success will be determined by reduction or elimination of information gaps for priority species and habitats. Long-term effectiveness will be indicated by increased or stabilized priority populations and habitats and by the number of species recovering and being removed from rare or endangered species lists.

## WILDLIFE:

Mississippi has expansive wildlife resources; however, wildlife populations and habitats are facing unprecedented challenges due to land use changes, urbanization, and the proliferation of non-native and nuisance species. The Wildlife Bureau needs to develop innovative programs and partnerships to monitor and manage wildlife and their habitats. Increasing public awareness and support for conserving fish, wildlife, and their habitats is also critical to sustaining wildlife resources.

The Wildlife Bureau will ensure that sound, science-based management benefits Mississippi's wildlife and their habitats. Conservation partnerships within the Agency and with other conservation organizations will be developed or enhanced to collaboratively address conservation challenges. We will work closely with our existing constituents while actively soliciting support from other non-traditional user groups. Relationships with all user groups will be enhanced through outreach, a renewed public image, and an increased public presence.

Wildlife Bureau goals will be achieved when sufficient natural habitats throughout Mississippi sustain a broad diversity of native wildlife species and a productive conservation partnership is developed with the public and the conservation community.



## GOAL 2 – OUTDOOR RECREATION

**We will encourage participation in hunting, fishing, and nature-based recreation and will provide quality opportunities for safe and accessible enjoyment of our natural resources and parks.**

### FISHERIES

The Fisheries Bureau manages state-owned lakes and public waters to provide an array of fishing and boating opportunities. Fishing participation has shown a slight decline in Mississippi, although it is slower than the national average. Programs such as the Community Assistance Program and Fishing Rodeos have been developed to provide opportunities to introduce people to fishing in urban settings. Furthermore, public fishing access is decreasing throughout the state as lakes previously available to the public, primarily Delta oxbows, essentially become private waters. This occurs when established boat ramps are purchased by individuals or groups who then prohibit public use. The Fisheries Bureau needs to improve and develop programs to encourage participation in fishing and provide quality opportunities for safe and accessible enjoyment of public and private waters.

The Fisheries Bureau will evaluate all current programs and assess the development of new programs to efficiently use Sport Fish Restoration funds. The Bureau will continue to work with city and county governments to expand the Community Assistance Program. The Fishing Rodeo program will also target areas of the state that have not had events in the past. Marketing efforts will be expanded to increase awareness of fishing and opportunities for aquatic-based recreation. The Bureau will evaluate public lakes at risk of losing public access and seek to develop partnerships to acquire lands to increase public access. Goals will be achieved when fishing participation increases and permanent boating access is established on all public waters.



**Lake Bogue Homa**

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Law Enforcement Bureau enhances outdoor recreation by enforcing conservation laws to ensure safe, enjoyable experiences. The Bureau also manages public shooting facilities to provide a quality and safe environment for practice and sport shooting. Conservation laws and regulations need to be evaluated because some laws are difficult to understand and may be a deterrent to hunting and fishing participation. Shooting sports programs and facilities should be expanded to better meet growing customer demands.

The Law Enforcement Bureau will update and streamline regulations to make hunting and fishing laws easier to enforce and less confusing to users. Establishing new shooting ranges will provide a safe environment to practice shooting firearms and increase opportunities for participation in shooting sports. Outdoor recreation goals will be achieved when use of shooting ranges and participation in hunting and fishing increases.





## MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

Studies suggest children are less involved in nature and the outdoors than in the past and nature deficit disorder is possibly contributing to a variety of health problems. The Museum introduces children to nature by providing quality outdoor experiences and encouraging participation in outdoor recreation statewide.

Walking trails and outdoor play areas at the Museum need to be improved and expanded. Programs need to be enhanced and developed to reach non-traditional users. Water based recreation activities provided by the Scenic Streams Stewardship Program need to be promoted. Increased advertising, promotion of fishing events, and expanded use of programs such as Project Wild are necessary to achieve greater public and sponsor participation.



**Joan Elder and a baby alligator entertain visitors in the Museum preschool room**

The Museum will pursue more expansive trail grant awards and additional partnerships to assist with trail maintenance and development. Marketing strategies will be used to promote and increase participation in workshops, events, and activities. Customer feedback and increased numbers of visitors to the museum will indicate success.

## STATE PARKS

State Parks offer a multitude of recreational opportunities, unique histories, and an abundance of undeveloped natural habitat. However, State Parks are not being fully utilized. Amenities need to be identified that are most desired by the public. Historic and natural resources on State Parks also need to be identified and promoted to both traditional and non-traditional users.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan will assist in identifying desired amenities along with conducting public surveys. State Parks will work with other bureaus and agencies to identify historical and unique natural resources. A multi-media marketing effort will be implemented to increase awareness of recreational opportunities. Federal funding programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Recreation Trails Program will continue to be utilized. State Parks will realize their outdoor recreation goals when visitation increases among current and new user groups.

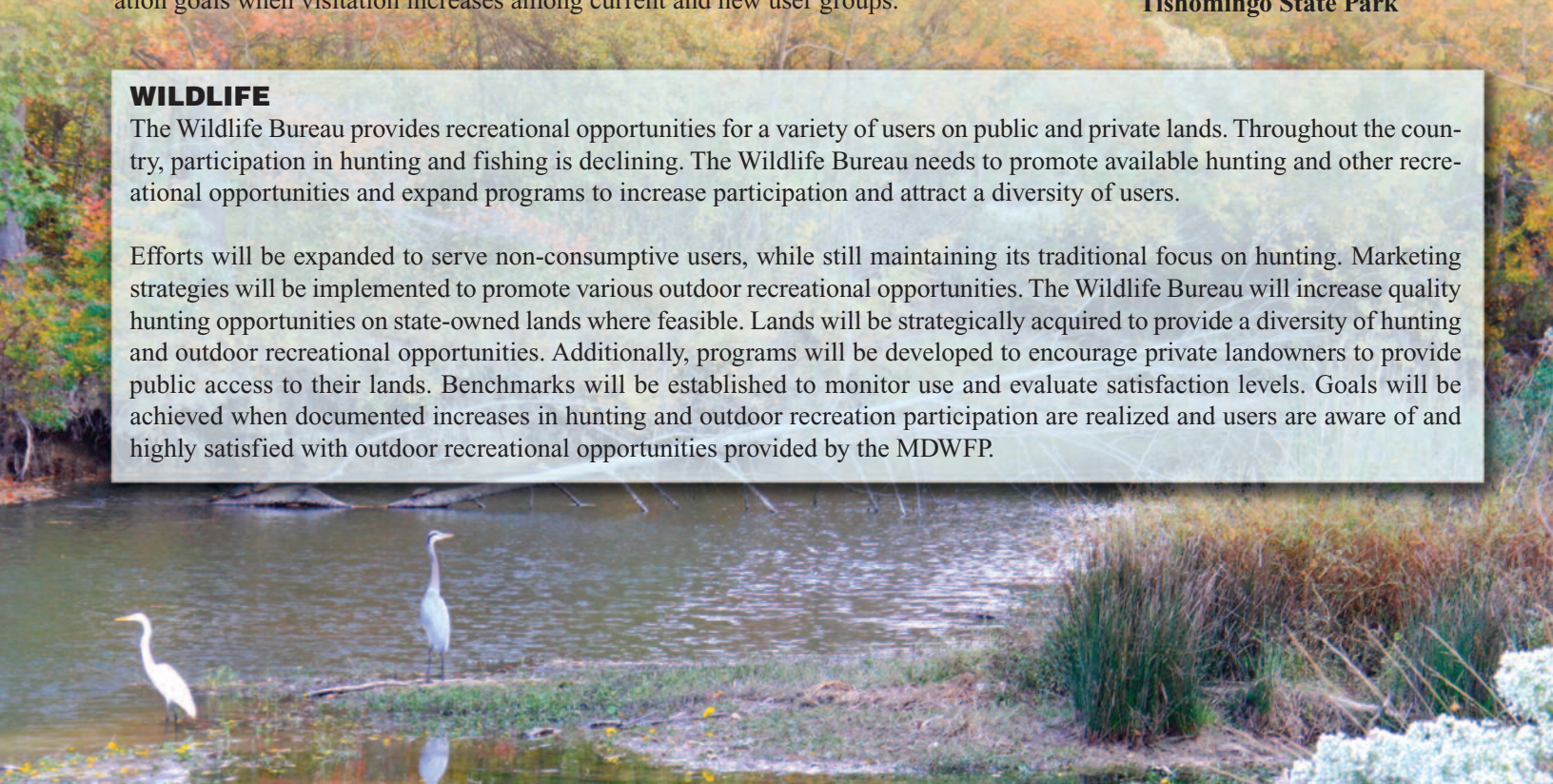


**Suspension Bridge  
Tishomingo State Park**

## WILDLIFE

The Wildlife Bureau provides recreational opportunities for a variety of users on public and private lands. Throughout the country, participation in hunting and fishing is declining. The Wildlife Bureau needs to promote available hunting and other recreational opportunities and expand programs to increase participation and attract a diversity of users.

Efforts will be expanded to serve non-consumptive users, while still maintaining its traditional focus on hunting. Marketing strategies will be implemented to promote various outdoor recreational opportunities. The Wildlife Bureau will increase quality hunting opportunities on state-owned lands where feasible. Lands will be strategically acquired to provide a diversity of hunting and outdoor recreational opportunities. Additionally, programs will be developed to encourage private landowners to provide public access to their lands. Benchmarks will be established to monitor use and evaluate satisfaction levels. Goals will be achieved when documented increases in hunting and outdoor recreation participation are realized and users are aware of and highly satisfied with outdoor recreational opportunities provided by the MDWFP.







## **YOUTH OUTREACH**

The youth outreach program coordinates efforts to provide opportunities and encouragement for youth to participate in nature-based activities. The Youth Participation Initiative (YPI) program provides funding for educating youth in hunting, fishing, conservation, and safety. Additional programs are needed to introduce youth to nature based activities with an emphasis on children who do not historically participate. Laws and regulations need to be evaluated to identify potential barriers to youth participation.

Each MDWFP Bureau will collectively encourage youth participation in all areas of fish and wildlife conservation and recreation. State Park lands will be evaluated for expanded hunting opportunities and other youth outdoor activities. The MDWFP will partner with other agencies, municipalities, schools, and private landowners to provide outdoor opportunities to a diversity of youth. Barriers to youth participation in fishing, hunting, and nature-base recreation will be identified and strategically addressed. A comprehensive marketing program will be developed to target youth and inform parents on the benefits of youth participation in outdoor recreation. Current laws and regulations will be evaluated and adapted to minimize potential negative impacts on youth participation. Benchmarks will be established to monitor youth participation. The MDWFP will be successful when more youth are involved in conservation and outdoor recreational activities.

## **GOAL 3 – INFORMATION AND EDUCATION**

**We will improve public understanding of and involvement in conservation and management of fish and wildlife.**

### **FISHERIES**

The Fisheries Bureau informs the public on fisheries conservation and management issues. Public demands for information about fishing and management of private lakes and ponds are increasing. Programs need to be improved, developed, and implemented to expand the availability of fishing information and education.

We will increase public awareness of fisheries conservation and management efforts through all available media outlets. The Fisheries Bureau will conduct workshops with other partners to provide information on management of private lakes and ponds. To evaluate efficacy of information and education, the Fisheries Bureau will establish benchmarks to monitor public understanding of fisheries conservation and management. Information and education goals will be achieved when established benchmarks are reached regarding public awareness, understanding, and participation of conservation efforts.







## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The Law Enforcement Bureau educates the public about conservation, shooting sports, and hunter, boating, and archery safety. Student participation and the number of volunteer instructors in hunting and boating education programs are declining and may reflect decreased involvement in these activities. Enhanced delivery methods and updated materials are needed to effectively reach youth and adults.

A comprehensive evaluation of hunting and boating education programs will provide insight on programmatic effectiveness and identify ways to improve delivery. Increased participation may be achieved by making hunter and boater education classes more accessible and by focusing on non-traditional audiences. Hunter education curriculum will be integrated into Archery in Mississippi Schools and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science conservation education programs. Public outreach programs will be standardized and made relevant to a variety of audiences. Performance indicators will include data that represents an increase in participation in hunting, boating, fishing, shooting sports, and archery education programs among all age groups.

## **MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE**

The Museum provides conservation education and information for the general public and school systems statewide through educational programs, teacher workshops, aquariums, exhibits, and special events. Updated and enhanced Museum exhibits and statewide programs are needed to improve current conservation education efforts. Additionally, conservation education programs are not adequately covering all areas of the state and need to be expanded.

We will address the demand for hands-on, inquiry based, early childhood education programs that meet state and national standards. The Museum will expand conservation education and outdoor learning opportunities by collaborating with communities and schools in parts of the state that are not currently covered. Exhibits will be designed to improve the way information is presented using the latest and most effective techniques to engage a broader audience. Teacher and student evaluations, surveys, visitor counts, and focus groups will be used to assess effectiveness of our exhibits and other educational efforts.





## **WILDLIFE**

The Wildlife Bureau informs private landowners and the public on a wide range of wildlife management and conservation issues. A diverse constituency that is actively involved in wildlife conservation is needed. Specifically, we desire that Mississippians become well informed and knowledgeable about conservation and our management role.

The Wildlife Bureau will establish benchmarks and monitor public understanding of wildlife conservation to evaluate efficacy of information and education efforts. Programs will be adapted or developed to increase conservation awareness and improve public perception of the MDWFP. Awareness and involvement in conservation will be improved by engaging the public in planning and active management of natural resources. We will use public lands as demonstration areas and conduct workshops to inform and educate the public on management and conservation issues. Information and education goals will be achieved when we have reached established benchmarks regarding public awareness, understanding, and participation of conservation efforts.



## **YOUTH OUTREACH**

The MDWFP provides youth programs to increase awareness and understanding of natural resource conservation and to provide opportunities for participation in nature-based activities. Today's youth are tomorrow's hunters, anglers and conservationists, and therefore need to be introduced to, educated in, and involved with conservation and management of fish and wildlife.

A youth outreach advisory committee will be formed to evaluate, improve, and develop educational programs. These programs will educate youth on the importance of natural resource conservation, how hunting and fishing relates to wildlife and fisheries management, the role MDWFP plays in natural resource management, and how youth can participate in nature-based activities. We will partner with other agencies, organizations, schools, and private landowners to educate youth regarding the importance of conserving and managing public and private lands and water. Benchmarks will be developed to monitor and evaluate effectiveness of youth outreach programs. The MDWFP will be successful when more youth have an improved appreciation for and understanding of conservation and become more active in the outdoors.





## GOAL 4 – PRIVATE LANDS

We will expand efforts to help private landowners advance conservation and address factors that limit managing their lands effectively.

### FISHERIES

The Fisheries Bureau provides technical guidance to private lake and pond owners interested in fisheries management. Evaluation of the technical guidance program is necessary to address demands from private landowners. Promotional efforts are needed to increase public awareness of the program.

Fisheries staff will be strategically used to address the demand for technical assistance. Targeted marketing will be implemented to increase awareness. Benchmarks will be developed and used to evaluate customer satisfaction and determine management success. Goals will be achieved when the demand for technical guidance is adequately met and landowner needs are satisfied.



Basic Pond Construction

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

Conservation officers communicate with landowners and encourage them to utilize their knowledge and resources to effectively manage their properties. Advanced education, continual training, and instant access to information are necessary for officers to efficiently meet private landowners' needs.

To improve officers' capability to assist landowners in accomplishing their management objectives, officers with post-secondary education, preferably in natural resource management, will be recruited and all officers will be continually trained. Officers will be equipped with current technology to improve their capability to provide accurate information and timely customer service. Success will be achieved when officers effectively assist landowners in meeting their natural resource management goals.

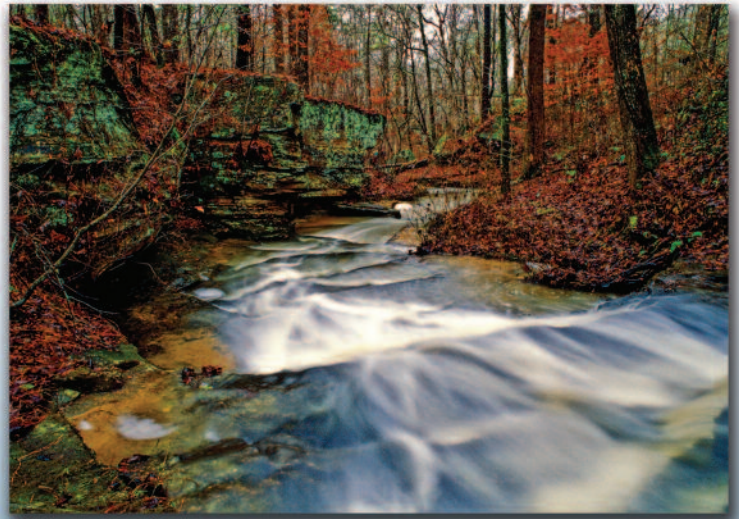




## MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The Museum provides technical guidance and project reviews to private landowners and developers with an emphasis on conservation and protection of priority species and habitats identified in the Mississippi Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. However, information regarding species and habitat occurrences on private lands is often inadequate.

The Museum will cooperate with private landowners and managers to conduct surveys and provide technical guidance to support conservation of priority species and habitats. Follow-up surveys and remote sensing will be used to monitor changes in populations and habitats. Collaboration with landowners and biologists will help identify properties for designation as natural areas or scenic streams. Environmental reviews will be completed on development projects as requested to assist developers in minimizing impacts to species of concern. Success on private lands will be indicated by increased or stabilized priority populations and habitats and by an increase in registered natural areas and designated scenic streams.



**Scenic Stream Program**

## WILDLIFE

Wildlife Bureau programs assist landowners with managing wildlife populations and habitats. Although these programs are successful in advancing private lands conservation, current resource levels should be expanded to effectively meet the needs and demands of private landowners. Furthermore, a variety of information is collected on management activities (e.g., DMAP data, acres impacted, etc.), but success or effectiveness of conservation program delivery have not been evaluated.

The Bureau will foster a broad, habitat conservation philosophy through landowner education and cross-disciplinary training for biologists. To encourage habitat management activities, we will develop a state-level, cost-share program for conservation management activities on private lands. We will increase our understanding of and cooperation with other agencies' cost share programs. Benchmarks will be identified to evaluate effectiveness of conservation program delivery.

Goals will be achieved when formal agreements are established and we are working more effectively with cooperating organizations. Additionally, success will be achieved when more private lands are managed for wildlife habitat across all landscapes in Mississippi.



**Monitoring waterfowl populations and evaluating habitat**





## GOAL 5 – PUBLIC LANDS and WATERS

We will manage public lands and waters to optimize benefits to fish, wildlife, and the public who enjoy these resources.

### FISHERIES

The Fisheries Bureau manages state-owned lakes and public waters throughout the state to benefit fish populations and a variety of user groups. Comprehensive water management plans need to be developed for public lakes and streams. State-owned lakes must be properly maintained and improved to provide safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation. Partnerships with other agencies must be enhanced to address watershed management issues that affect aquatic resources, and water quality and quantity.

The Fisheries Bureau will work with other agencies to formulate water resource management plans by conducting surveys, evaluating conservation projects, and obtaining public input. Inspections of state-owned lakes and facilities will be conducted to prioritize maintenance requirements. Goals will be achieved when public water management plans that improve aquatic resources are implemented, and state-owned lakes are properly maintained benefitting both fish and users.



**Tombigbee State Park Lake**

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Law Enforcement Bureau enforces rules and regulations on public lands and waters and is the primary agency contact with people using these resources. Improving officer knowledge and access to information is necessary to effectively communicate with the public to increase their understanding of regulations and enhance their outdoor experience. Conservation officers will be trained in public relations, educated about public land and water recreational opportunities and regulations, and provided with advanced technology to allow immediate access to information in the field. Customer satisfaction surveys will be conducted to establish benchmarks and evaluate officer effectiveness.

### FACILITY AND GROUNDS

The MDWFP manages facilities and infrastructure development and renovation on state-owned properties. Facilities and infrastructure require constant maintenance, upgrading and renovation. The agency will identify needs, develop facility improvement plans, and schedule preventative maintenance. Goals will be realized when prioritized facilities and infrastructure upgrades have been addressed and preventative maintenance plans are being followed.





## MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The Museum performs biological research and surveys on public lands and waters. Even though more than two-thirds of the state is in private ownership, species of greatest conservation need are concentrated on public lands and waters and are in need of management. We will continue to provide information and technical guidance to managers of non-MDWFP public lands and waters to improve habitat for those species. However, Museum biologists will focus efforts on biological surveys and inventories on state-owned wildlife management areas, lakes, and parks. Success will be achieved when populations of priority species and habitats are stabilized or increased.

## WILDLIFE

The Wildlife Bureau manages wildlife management areas (WMAs) to provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. We need to actively manage forest resources, expand the use of prescribed fire, manage wetlands, restore native plant communities, and focus efforts to eradicate invasive and exotic plants and animals. Resources will be strategically utilized to manage habitats on priority WMAs to maintain healthy wildlife populations. Baseline inventories will be developed for habitat parameters on WMAs. Goals will be reached when agency-owned lands are managed for long-term conservation of wildlife habitat and multiple user groups enjoy diverse outdoor recreational opportunities that are consistent with natural resource management goals.



## GOAL 6 – MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

**We will enhance the MDWFP's capability to manage its resources and to operate effectively and efficiently, with accountability at all levels.**

The MDWFP is a large organization with a specialized workforce that is widely distributed throughout the state. Continual oversight and review is necessary to ensure accountability and program effectiveness. Improved communication is needed to keep all employees current on agency programs, activities, policies and procedures. Communication must be open, effective, and fluid throughout the chain of command. Technical programs must strive to improve service delivery in all areas. Stable and adequate funding is necessary to maintain programs, facilities, and personnel required to accomplish the agency's mission.

The MDWFP will evaluate all programs and activities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Agency staff will work with administration, state legislature, and conservation organizations to obtain long-term, stable funding for parks and natural resource conservation. We will work with the MDWFP Foundation and MMNS Foundation to develop and implement a plan for soliciting financial support for agency programs from private foundations, individuals, and corporations. We will continue to recruit, train, and retain qualified staff at all levels and explore alternative service delivery options including outsourcing. Partnerships will be developed with other agencies and organizations to address natural resource conservation issues. Innovations that centralize the flow of information to customers, provide more efficient internal workflow, and share resources across work units will be explored.

Success will be achieved when the MDWFP becomes a diverse, effective, cohesive team with a clear understanding of our conservation mission and goals. We will achieve our goals when the agency is recognized, respected, and emulated by the conservation and recreation community and the public. Future success will be achieved when long-term, stable funding is secured for natural resource conservation, all programs are sufficiently staffed, and the agency successfully partners with other organizations to achieve conservation and recreational goals.

