



Program Reductions Already Made to Game and Fish Protection Fund

Decreasing revenue in the Game and Fish Protection Fund and increasing costs due to inflation has jeopardized the DNR's ability to protect, manage, and conserve the natural resources of our state.

Over the past three years, the DNR has initiated \$8 million in program reductions to maintain the solvency of the fund. Some of these program reductions include:

Fisheries

- **30-50% reduction in fish surveys of lakes and streams**

Without current data, fisheries managers' ability to manage fish stocks and provide quality fishing opportunities is reduced. This also reduces ability to prevent avoidable losses in aquatic habitat or ensure appropriate mitigation for unavoidable losses. Harvest data, which is critical for effective fisheries management, will be lost.

- **Reduced hatchery production/planting of coho salmon**

A 60% reduction of hatchery coho for Lake Michigan will have a negative impact on sportfishing and the charter boat industry. Fewer coho also may lead to instability in the forage base and food-web interactions.

- **Suspension of \$200K Inland Fisheries Grant program**

Budget cuts limit opportunities to help partners across the state with projects that improve aquatic habitat. Cuts also reduce efforts aimed at dam removal or repair, which, in turn, has a negative impact on water quality, fisheries habitat and recreational use.

- **Delayed major habitat restoration/enhancement program on Upper Au Sable River**

Delays could lead to lost benefits from previous work to control erosion and improve habitat for fish. Ultimately, less fish habitat means fewer fish, and fewer fish means reduced quality fishing opportunities.

- **Reduced research projects on ecosystem processes, habitat, etc.**

Critical information needed to provide scientifically sound basis for management and regulation decisions will be lost. Capacity to study and improve understanding of the needs and wants of anglers and the general public will be severely limited.

- **Reduced maintenance of facilities and equipment**

Reduced maintenance now will mean higher costs in the future as facilities and equipment deteriorate. Regular maintenance prevents down time caused by facility or equipment failures, and could prevent catastrophic fish losses.

Law Enforcement

- **Significant reduction of field conservation officers due to attrition**

Law Enforcement currently has over 50 vacant conservation officer positions. This reduces effort to protect natural resources and public safety, causes delays in responding to complaints, and creates areas of the state where there is little or no officer presence. Fewer officers handle more complaints, which leaves them with less time to patrol for more serious violations and hardcore poachers that do the most harm to the resource.

- **Limited ability to meet demands for additional hunter safety training**

Wildlife

- **Reduction of 66 seasonal or temporary workers resulted in:**
 - **Reduced wildlife population surveys**
 - **Reduced bovine TB and CWD monitoring**

Decreased surveillance for diseases increases the risk that a disease may become established. It is far easier to prevent a disease or nip it in the early stages than to get rid of one that is established.
 - **Reduction in food plots for deer/elk/turkey range**
 - **Reduction in food plots and grassland habitat restoration in southern Michigan state game and wildlife areas**
 - **Reduction in prescribed burning for pheasant habitat**

These cuts will result in poorer quality habitat for wildlife, everything from songbirds to game species. Poorer nesting cover leads to more predation on ground nesting birds. Cuts also reduce efforts to control invasive plants, such as phragmites replacing cattails, which degrade habitat for native wildlife.

Reductions also will result in poorer quality hunting experiences on public land for deer, turkey, ducks, pheasant and other small game.
 - **Reduction in dam/dike maintenance on waterfowl floodings**

Equipment used to manage water and habitat for waterfowl and other species could be unavailable at critical times. Ducks may not be able to get water when they need it most.
 - **Less signing and maintenance of visitor facilities on the state's 300,000 acres of state game and wildlife areas**
 - **Less litter/trash cleanup**
 - **Less boundary checking, posting "open to hunting" and "safety zone" signs**

Less signage will make public areas harder to find. The lack of parking and access to trails, combined with more trash, also limits access and causes a degraded hunting experience, and creates a greater maintenance bill in the future to maintain the integrity of public lands in southern Michigan and elsewhere.

Cuts in conservation programs not only threaten our fish, wildlife and public land resources, they also threaten Michigan's economy.