Dear Mr. Murphy:

In response to your letter dated March 31, 2010, I have reviewed the Federation's resolution “Reduce the cost of Quail Habitat Establishment.” I certainly appreciate your concern. We have worked with our partners to develop practices, specifications, and program policies that provide landowners options to maximize available program funding to provide quality habitat for quail and other grassland birds, while reducing costs to the landowner.

These options are illustrated in our recent revision (January 2010) of the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Conservation Practice Standard and changes in the payment rates for EQIP and WHIP to establish quail and upland bird habitat. Further explanation is provided below.

The Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard now provides the landowner the option to use Missouri source and origin native seed or to use seed from Missouri or adjacent states for wildlife plantings. The following is an excerpt from 645:

"Seed for native species of grasses, forbs, or legumes used for wildlife plantings will be grown in (origin) and should be source identified (source) from Missouri or adjacent states. All seed mixes will contain multiple species (at least 3) having a good to excellent wildlife rating. Seed mixes will not contain species with a poor wildlife habitat rating."

Furthermore, we have made changes to the 2010 EQIP and WHIP program policies in Missouri to allow increased payment rates for forbs that are Missouri source identified versus forbs that are Missouri or adjacent states origin. These changes provide the landowner the choice in type of seed and costs, while providing seed that we feel will provide quality habitat for quail and upland birds. Other examples of financial and technical assistance we provide for quail habitat includes shrubby cover development, edgefeathering, downed tree structures, and prescribed burning.

NRCS will continue to work with our partners to provide quality wildlife habitat, while working with the landowners to meet their goals and objectives for wildlife. If you have any questions please contact Bob Ball, State Resource Conservationist at 573-876-0908.

Sincerely,

J.R. Flores
State Conservationist
Mr. David Murphy  
Executive Director  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
728 West Main St.  
Jefferson City, MO 65101-1559

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for sending copies of the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) resolutions regarding cave protection and amphibian habitat protection and restoration. I fully understand CFM’s wishes to have public access to caves. However, with the uncertainty of the spread of White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) and the devastating impacts to bat populations has caused me to consider taking actions that are a bit out of the ordinary.

The 600+ caves located on Mark Twain National Forest have been closed to the public since April 24, 2009, with a cave Closure Order signed into effect by the Regional Forester. I plan sign a Mark Twain National Forest Closure Order for an additional year, through April 24, 2011. This is in accordance to US Fish and Wildlife Service White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) Management: Area 3 Impelmentation Guide. This guide recommends access at all hibernacula and caves be confined to commercial and approved research uses. Recreation access to caves should be avoided.

Mark Twain National Forest has nine caves gated, with one new gate being designed this year. These gates will remain locked through April 24, 2011, in accordance to the Closure Order referenced above. During past years, before WNS, the gated caves were closed during bat hibernation then opened to the public to explore after the bats have left the hibernacula. For that reason, we do not have a key sign-out system.

These are not ordinary times, and I feel that eliminating any chance of humans introducing WNS to our caves by keeping them closed one more year is in the best interest of the wildlife we are protecting.

With regards to amphibian habitat protection and restoration, the Forest hosted a wetland restoration workshop last summer and is building a modest wetland program, creating new wetlands and restoration of fens. It is a very important habitat type; and I appreciate CFM recognizing it as such.

If you have any questions or would like further discussions, please call me at 573-341-7413.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

DAVID C. WHITTEKIEND  
Forest Supervisor
April 12, 2010

Mr. David W. Murphy  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
728 West Main Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65101-1559

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for the resolution from the Conservation Federation of Missouri concerning alternatives and environmental impacts of road de-icers. The Missouri Department of Transportation has been using sugar beet juice for several years now to improve the safety of our transportation system during inclement weather conditions and to make the best use of our resources. In fact, we used over 260,000 gallons of this product last winter.

One of MoDOT’s tangible results is to be environmentally responsible, and we take this responsibility very seriously. During snow removal operations, our main efforts are concentrated on getting the major highways back to a clear condition as soon as possible. We do this, obviously, for the safety of the traveling public. If we can do this job, and use environmentally friendly materials, then we feel we are meeting that responsibility in our snow and ice removal operations.

It is good to note that the Conservation Federation of Missouri, with over 80,000 members, appreciates and supports our efforts to find and use environmentally friendly de-icers on Missouri highways. We will continue to look for these types of new products that will help us in our snow removal efforts. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Pete K. Rahn  
Director
April 5, 2010

David W. Murphy  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
728 West Main Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65101-1559

Dear David:

Thank you for your letter of March 31 regarding CFM’s resolution on the subject of illegal dumping.

The Attorney General’s Office maintains an aggressive staff of attorneys and investigators charged with protecting Missouri’s natural resources. We work in close coordination with the Department of Natural Resources.

There is no doubt that illegal dumping across Missouri remains a problem in our state, and its existence substantially demeans the environment we have pledged to protect. I encourage any private organization, such as your own, to fashion strategies to combat this environmental problem. While I have yet to see the specifics regarding “Operation Illegal Dump,” the concept of such a program unquestionably sounds promising.

I congratulate you on your commitment and applaud your continuing efforts.

Respectfully,

CHRISS KOSTER  
Attorney General
April 21, 2010

David W. Murphy, Executive Director
Conservation Federation of Missouri
728 West Main Street
Jefferson City, MO  65101-1559

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 31, 2010, in regard to the cost of establishing quail and upland bird habitat.

Through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides cost-share assistance to landowners who elect to enroll acreage in the program. A substantial amount of this cost-share assistance is provided as an incentive for landowners who choose to establish habitat for quail and other upland birds.

FSA is currently working with other federal and state agencies to revise the seeding rates and mixtures previously used on acreages enrolled in the CRP. It is anticipated that the revised rates and mixtures will be finalized before the next general CRP signup, which is tentatively scheduled for June or July of this year.

I do agree that both federal and state agencies should strive to make the seeding of conservation cover as economical as possible for landowners who enroll acreage into the CRP. Your resolution and comments will certainly be taken into consideration and will play a significant role as the new seeding specifications are developed.

I appreciate your interest in FSA programs.

Respectfully,

Edward J. Hamill
State Executive Director

GH:sm

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
April 22, 2010

David W. Murphy
Executive Director
Conservation Federation of Missouri
728 West Main Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear David:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Teaming with Wildlife Act of 2009. I appreciate you sharing the Conservation Federation of Missouri’s view on this issue.

Like many Americans, I believe the environment holds valuable natural resources that must be protected. We have a responsibility to provide future generations with clean air and water and adopt practices that will allow us to conserve and enjoy our resources while meeting our needs.

On March 19, 2009, Senator Tim Johnson introduced S. 655, the Teaming with Wildlife Act of 2009. This legislation would amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to ensure adequate funding for conservation and restoration of wildlife. Currently, this measure is under consideration in the United States Senate. I encourage you to contact your senators, Kit Bond and Claire McCaskill, and share your organization’s support for this legislation.

Should S. 655 come before the House of Representatives for a vote, I will keep your thoughts in mind. Again, thank you for contacting me. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely regards,

Roy Blunt
Member of Congress

RDB/tb
April 20, 2010

Mr. David W. Murphy
728 West Main Street
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for contacting my office regarding the Teaming with Wildlife Act of 2009. I appreciate you taking the time to share your views with me.

You will be interested to know that S. 655 is pending in the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, however, to this date, hearings have not been held. Before making a decision on legislation, I prefer to study the testimony from hearings, consider the opinions of Missourians, and review all information pertinent to the issue.

Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Please be assured that I will keep your comments in mind should this legislation be considered by the full Senate. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Bond
United States Senator

CSB: dp
June 1, 2010

Mr. Dave Murphy, Executive Director
Conservation Federation of Missouri
728 W. Main Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Dave:

The resolutions that pertain to the Department of Conservation, adopted at the 2010 annual meeting of the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), have been considered by staff. In response, we submit the following comments:

**RESOLUTION NO. 3 – CFM SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF A FORESTRY ASSOCIATION IN MISSOURI**

CFM encourages MDC, other public agencies and NGO's to consider financial and technical support to initiate a Forestry Association.

**RESPONSE:** The Department of Conservation is actively working on the development of a Forestry Association, and greatly appreciates the support of CFM. The timing for the formation of a Forestry Association in Missouri is excellent considering landscape altering issues that loom on the horizon, as mentioned in the resolution. Developing and growing this association under the wing of CFM would exhibit an excellent partnership and provide multiple synergistic opportunities.

The Department has requested funding for this project in the FY11 budget and is currently contacting other public agencies and NGO's to determine the financial and technical support they can provide to make this exciting opportunity a reality. CFM's continued support will facilitate a Forestry Association that is quickly self-supporting while meeting the needs of forest landowners, forestry stakeholders and citizens interested in forestry. The Department's Forestry Division looks forward to meeting with you soon to agree on an approach to create a Forestry Association in Missouri.

**RESOLUTION NO. 6 – TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE ACT 2011 (S655)**

CFM supports passage of the Teaming with Wildlife Act 2011, an act that would help provide funding to protect fish, forest and wildlife nation-wide, as well as provide for educational and recreational use of these resources.

**RESPONSE:** The Missouri Teaming with Wildlife (TWW) coalition, consisting of more than 250 organizations, ranks sixth in the nation in the number of conservation partners. This coalition supports efforts to secure permanent funding needed to fully implement Missouri's Comprehensive Wildlife Commission.

DON C. BEDELL
Silkston

DON R. JOHNSON
Festus

CHIP McGEEHAN
Marshfield

BECKY L. PLATTNER
Grand Pass
Strategy (i.e., state wildlife action plan) to conserve wildlife and their healthy habitats for future generations. CFM, Missouri Prairie Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Missouri, Ozark Regional Land Trust and the Department consistently demonstrate dedication and leadership to the coalition through the Missouri TWW Steering Committee. Most recently, in February, 2010, several members of the Steering Committee participated in the 2010 TWW Fly-in in Washington, DC. While conducting “Hill Visits” with Missouri’s two Senators and nine members of Congress, we asked for their support for passage of the Teaming with Wildlife Act of 2011. In addition, The Department is a member of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), thereby participating in national TWW coalition committees and advocacy activities, all of which support passage of the Teaming with Wildlife Act 2011, and any other legislation that would ensure permanent funding for the State Wildlife Grant Program. The Department greatly appreciates all efforts of the CFM and our other conservation partners that provide grassroots support for increased and permanent funding for conservation programs in Missouri.

**RESOLUTION NO. 7 – EDUCATION CONCERNING ZEBRA MUSSELS**

CFM recommends that the Missouri Conservationist and Missouri Wildlife magazines are utilized for a public information campaign about zebra mussels and that the Missouri State Water Patrol include information about zebra mussels and that outdoor retailers and water-related utility companies help educate the public about aquatic invasive species.

**RESPONSE:** Zebra mussels have been a focus of the Missouri Department of Conservation for several years. The Department hired an invasive species coordinator in 2005 and Missouri’s Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Plan has been completed and approved. A recently completed survey of Missouri’s registered boat owners revealed that boaters get their information concerning ANS most often from the Missouri Conservationist, followed by other magazines, newspapers and newsletters. Furthermore, boaters told us that they didn’t know what steps to take to avoid transferring ANS. Therefore, we will make a concerted effort to use the Missouri Conservationist and Missouri Wildlife magazines to inform readers about ANS and what they can do to prevent transferring them. The Department’s invasive species coordinator provides brochures for the Missouri State Water Patrol to include with regatta permits, which are required for all fishing tournaments and other organized activities conducted on Missouri’s large public waterways. Boater registration information is more difficult, but we will continue to look for ways to reach boaters. Including ANS information along with steps to prevent transferring ANS between waters in the Boating Safety Course is a novel idea that has not been investigated. Thank you to the Youth Leadership and Conservation Education Committee for that suggestion. The Department will continue to look for ways to contain zebra mussels in the waters where they currently exist. The only way we can hope for success is for the public to use their watercraft responsibly by taking the necessary steps to prevent transferring ANS to new waters.

**RESOLUTION NO. 9 – CFM SUPPORT OF EDUCATION FOR LIVING WITH WILDLIFE**

CFM supports enhancing the Missouri Department of Conservation’s efforts in educating the public about human-wildlife conflicts to ensure the safe enjoyment of wildlife by Missouri’s citizens.

**RESPONSE:** The Department of Conservation is committed to educating the public about human-wildlife conflicts and responding to public concern surrounding wildlife species. The Department has employees who are dedicated to educating and assisting the public with wildlife
conflicts. The Department also offers free publications as well as educational and interpretive programs relating to human-wildlife conflicts that are available throughout the state at nature centers, shooting ranges and outdoor education centers, interpretive and visitor centers. Human-wildlife conflict information is also disseminated through teacher workshops, Discover Nature Schools educational units, the Department’s website, the Missouri Conservationist magazine and XPLOR, the Department’s magazine for children ages 7-12. The Department will continue to provide and enhance these services as staff time and resources allow.

RESOLUTION NO. 10 – IMPLEMENTATION OF WATERFOWL REFUGES ON THE MISSOURI RIVER
CFM urges the Missouri Department of Conservation to research and provide recommendations and need for waterfowl refuges on the Missouri River.

RESPONSE: A number of waterfowl refuges have been established along the floodplain of the Missouri River since the earlier period of river refuges in the 1950s and 1960s. Existing waterfowl refuges are designed and managed primarily to provide quality resources for migratory birds (and other wildlife) and only secondarily for hunting, if it fits with the first priority. The resolution is proposed for hunter benefits and not necessarily for wildlife. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Department provide refuge for migrating waterfowl at several locations along the Missouri River. Aerial survey data indicate that waterfowl primarily use the river when shallow water is frozen. Refuge-like conditions already occur when cold temperatures create ice flows and limit hunter access. An area designated on a reach of river (e.g., 2 miles) and bounded by the top of bank on each side would be difficult to manage as a refuge given the disturbance from water vessel passage and the opportunity for pass shooting from the adjacent floodplain. Even if the refuge also took in part of the adjacent floodplain, there would continue to be the issues of vessel passage and finding locations where public land would be adjacent on both sides of the river. The process of establishing new refuges on the Missouri River would ultimately be viewed as favoring some hunter-landowners over others. Regarding geese, there is significant refuge distributed along the Missouri River but the geese tend to be more widely spread and are using these areas much less than they have historically, because other “refuge” opportunities, such as municipalities, are available to the birds.

RESOLUTION NO. 12 – MDC BE REQUESTED TO REAFFIRM THEIR COMMITMENT TO BOBWHITE QUAIL AND GRASSLAND SONGBIRDS TO PARTNERS AND TO MDC STAFF
CFM requests that the Department of Conservation reaffirm their commitment to bobwhite quail and grassland songbirds to partners and to MDC staff.

RESPONSE: Bobwhite quail and grassland songbirds have been a focus of the Department of Conservation for several years. Nineteen conservation areas across the state have been designated as Quail Emphasis Areas (QEA) based on the habitat quality, public demand, size of the managed area and proximity to urban areas. The goals of the QEA system are to provide quality hunting opportunities and to showcase exceptional habitat management for northern bobwhite. Since 2004, management efforts on QEAs have focused on improving habitat for quail by creating better nesting, brooding and shrubby cover, increasing usable space for northern bobwhite, controlling invasive species and restoring natural communities that support quail. A review process was established in 2007 and five QEA’s are reviewed each year. This year we will complete our first cycle of reviews. Public land managers and Private Land Conservationists still identify and budget projects for QEAs on public land and Quail Focus Areas on
private land. We couldn’t have accomplished this without partnerships that are equally committed to grassland bird conservation goals throughout the state.

**RESOLUTION NO. 13 – REDUCE THE COST OF QUAIL HABITAT ESTABLISHMENT**
CFM requests State and Federal agencies look at ways to lower the cost of establishing quail and upland bird habitat.

**RESPONSE:** The Department and our conservation partners take many factors into account when developing technical recommendations and specifications for practices to improve and enhance wildlife habitat. Cost is one important factor that is considered when developing these guidelines. The guiding purpose is to insure the best outcome for the money spent when utilizing public funding.

The Department's cost-share program is often used to establish nesting and brood-rearing cover for bobwhite quail in ways that also contribute to conservation of native ecotype plant materials associated with the greatly diminished native plant communities of Missouri. The Department's cost-share program requires the use of Missouri source and origin native seed and follows USDA guidelines for the mixtures offered. While Missouri source and origin native seed is often more expensive than other options, we believe that using Missouri seed helps ensure successful establishments that persist over time and best meet the needs of wildlife while contributing to genetic diversity on the landscape.

Seed prices vary from year to year regardless of species. Some partners offer seed mixture options that do not require Missouri source and origin seed, and their prices may be lower. In addition to seeding practices, there are other lower-cost practices available which may be appropriate for a given landowner's habitat goal. Landowners have many choices among various programs offered and consider all options when making their decisions.

The Department continues to look for more cost-effective seeding options for quail and other wildlife species. We will continue to work with USDA and other conservation partners to achieve this while maintaining a science-based approach with an eye toward consistent establishment, long-term persistence and effectiveness in regard to habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

**RESOLUTION NO. 14 – ENFORCEMENT OF WILDLIFE CODE PERTAINING TO THE RELEASE OF PEN RAISED QUAIL**
CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation have targeted enforcement of code violation as it pertains to releasing pen raised birds for the purpose of restocking. For example, hosting local education events that inform the public of the dangers of releasing pen raised birds, create written publications and utilize other multimedia resources.

**RESPONSE:** The Department of Conservation actively works with quail habitat organizations to share concerns about releasing captive-reared quail. Staff have been involved in discussions with landowners and hunters on the importance of habitat restoration in improving quail numbers. We will continue our efforts to inform the public through the media, meetings and one-on-one contacts that creating good habitat is the key to restoring a huntable population of quail.
In 2009, the Department developed a pamphlet for distribution to hunters and landowners interested in the permits and requirements for captive game birds. This pamphlet contains information on why the stocking of captive-reared quail may negatively impact wild populations and stresses the importance of habitat restoration and will be a useful tool in programs concerning quail habitat management. These pamphlets are available at Department offices and will soon be available on the internet.

RESOLUTION NO. 15 – REINSTATMENT OF THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FOOD PLOT PROGRAM
CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation fully fund their Food Plot Program to Landowners.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation still has a food plot program, but it is currently not funded with Department funds. We have provided approximately 24,750 pounds of seed to 425 landowners. We agree this program has been a valuable tool for public relations and the Department is activity working with NGO’s and seed companies to provide reduced or no-cost seed to landowners.

RESOLUTION NO. 16 – SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR CONSEP CERTIFIED WINGSHOOTERS
CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation continues and promotes the CONSEP training program, and consider providing inducements and special considerations for those wingshooters who have taken CONSEP training and received certification.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation plans to continue offering “Effective Wingshooting for Hunters” workshops in an effort to improve shooting skills, raise awareness and increase effectiveness of stewards/mentors of the resource. In addition, our basic shotgun education classes through the Discover Hunting program have been expanded to include critical information and skills taken from the workshops, such as effective patterning, apparent lead shooting and distance estimation. To address the question of providing inducements and special considerations for those wingshooters who have taken “Effective Wingshooting for Hunters” workshops, we will raise the topic through the Hunting Participation Working Group, which includes representatives from Protection, Wildlife and Outreach & Education divisions. As always, CFM will continue to play a critical role in support of these wingshooting workshops.

RESOLUTION NO. 17 – UNIFORM PROCESS FOR DISABLED HUNTERS USING MOTOR DRIVEN LAND CONVEYANCE
CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation consider creating a uniform process for determining disability qualifications for hunter who require motor driven land conveyance.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation has a uniform process for hunters to take wildlife from a stationary vehicle. The Wildlife Code of Missouri 3 CSR 10-7.410 (1)(O) states: “Any properly licensed person with disabilities, as defined in this Code, may hunt and take wildlife from a stationary vehicle, provided while hunting s/he carries a physician’s statement provided by the Department and signed by a licensed physician which certifies the person has either a permanent or temporary disability which qualifies him/her to hunt from a stationary vehicle. Printed copies of the physician’s statement form can be obtained from the Missouri Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180.
and online at www.missouriconservation.org. This disabled person shall provide a copy of the signed physician’s statement to the department within ten (10) days of receiving the exemption.”

The definition of a person with a disability for the purpose of the *Wildlife Code* is as follows: “A person who is blind, as defined in section 8.700, RSMo, or a person with medical disabilities which prohibits, limits or severely impairs one’s ability to ambulate or walk, as determined by a licensed physician as follows: The person cannot ambulate or walk fifty (50) or less feet without stopping to rest due to a severe and disabling arthritic, neurological, orthopedic condition or other severe and disabling condition; or the person cannot ambulate or walk without the use of, or assistance from, a brace, cane, crutch, another person, prosthetic device, wheelchair or other assistive device; or the person is restricted by a respiratory or other disease to such an extent that the person’s forced respiratory expiratory volume for one (1) second, when measured by spirometry, is less than one (1) liter, or the arterial oxygen tension is less than sixty (60) mmHg on room air at rest; or the person uses portable oxygen; or the person has a cardiac condition to the extent that the person’s functional limitations are classified in severity as class III or class IV according to standards set by the American Heart Association. (A person’s age, in and of itself, shall not be a factor in determining whether such person is physically disabled.)”

The Department presently has 3,620 stationary vehicle hunting method exemption permits issued. However, the authorization to hunt from a stationary vehicle does not give permission for the hunter to drive the vehicle anywhere desired. The hunter must check with the property owner (private or public) on whether or not the vehicle is allowed and under what conditions. Due to multiple areas under different ownership, the Department does not have control of all the factors that would be necessary to provide uniformity on where a vehicle can be driven. The Department will continue to seek opportunities with our partners on managed hunts to see what uniform possibilities exist for determining the use of a motor driven land conveyance by disabled hunters.

**RESOLUTION NO. 18 – MAINTAINING HUNTING, FISHING AND TRAPPING OPPORTUNITIES ON THE CURRENT RIVER ADJACENT TO CURRENT RIVER STATE PARK**

CFM supports the departments of Conservation and Natural Resources working collaboratively to ensure the continuation of the hunting, fishing and trapping of furbearing animals, as provided by the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*, in that portion of the Current River which flows adjacent to Current River State Park.

**RESPONSE:** The Department of Conservation is always looking for ways to improve, expand and promote hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities. It must be noted that 3 CSR 10-12.105 designates state parks as wildlife refuges which would prohibit hunting or trapping of wildlife on those properties. Thus, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would have to officially authorize hunting on Current River State Park land and allow for traps to be set on or along the banks of the Current River.

However, in this particular stretch of the Current River, which forms a boundary between Current River State Park and the Sunklands Conservation Area, fishing is already allowed from bank to bank. In addition, hunting is allowed on the Sunklands Conservation Area to the river boundary with state park and trapping is allowed on the Sunklands Conservation Area side of the river with a special use permit issued by the area manager (3 CSR 10-11.187).
Since the Current River State Park land is currently owned, operated and managed by DNR, the Department actively pursues an open dialogue with DNR to investigate the possibility of establishing a memorandum of understanding in which additional hunting, fishing and trapping activities and opportunities might be extended to their property. As a result of these discussions, DNR has agreed to hold a total of four modern firearms and muzzleloader managed hunts during the 2010 fall deer season at Current River State Park.

RESOLUTION NO. 20 – THE PROTECTION OF THE COLUMBIA BOTTOM CONSERVATION AREA
CFM expressed support to protect the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation appreciates the support of CFM to protect the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area (CBCA) from development pressures adjacent to its borders. Staff in the St Louis area have been answering questions regarding the potential development of a casino in the Mississippi River floodplain adjacent to the CBCA. As you know, we continue to track this issue and believe support for protection of the public resource is best when conducted through grassroots efforts of citizens.

RESOLUTION NO. 21 – CFM SUPPORT OF CAVE PROTECTION THROUGH CAVE GATING WITH KEY SIGN-OUT ON PUBLIC LAND
CFM supports the protection of cave ecosystems through cave gating and encourages public land management agencies to adopt the guidelines established by Bat Conservation International and American Cave Conservation Association and allow access for research and recreation with key check-out systems on public and private land.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation has long been a leader in developing designs for bat-friendly cave gates and installing gates on high priority bat caves on public and private lands. These gates are intended to reduce human traffic during vulnerable times in the bats’ life cycles, reduce vandalism of caves and protect the public from unknowingly entering caves that are especially hazardous. To date, a total of 116 caves in Missouri are protected with quality gates and 26 of these are owned by the Department. Because not all caves can or should be gated, the Department uses a set of criteria to guide decisions as to whether an individual cave should be gated. The Department hosted a national cave gating workshop in 2009 to train people from across the nation in the latest science and design for constructing cave gates that restrict unauthorized human entry while allowing airflow and free passage of bats. With the threat of white-nose syndrome (WNS), the Department is identifying the highest priority caves for gating to allow bats to resist and recover from this disease without human disturbance. These caves are being prioritized by their importance to bats and vulnerability for disturbance or transmission of WNS. The Department is actively seeking funding to assist with the construction of these gates on its properties and properties owned by collaborating landowners, both public and private.
RESOLUTION NO. 22 – CFM SUPPORT OF AMPHIBIAN HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION
CFM supports amphibian habitat protection and advocates habitat restoration and will recommend that the Department of Conservation, the Department of Natural Resources and other state and federal conservation agencies and NGO's (Non-government Organizations) enhance their efforts in restoring various amphibian habitats.

RESPONSE: All states in the Continental U.S. have included amphibian and reptile (i.e., herpetofauna) species of greatest conservation need in their State Wildlife Action Plans as taxa which are either poorly studied or in need of better management. The Department’s wildlife action plan includes the conservation of amphibians and their habitats as a priority. Given their narrow home ranges, specialized habitats and life history requirements, amphibians are particularly vulnerable due to habitat loss and potential impacts from climate change. In addition, amphibians are threatened by over-commercialization, inadequate regulatory protection and serious diseases (e.g., amphibian chytrid fungus, ranavirus). In fact, amphibians are more imperiled worldwide than either birds or mammals. Furthermore, only about one-third of the states have dedicated staff charged with the management of herpetofauna. However, Missouri is one of the fortunate states that have a full-time herpetologist. We conduct training, provide technical advice and have numerous publications ranging from life history information to restoring amphibian habitats. We conduct inventories and monitoring of amphibian populations, identify important amphibian conservation areas, develop habitat restoration designs and improve amphibian habitats through natural community management. We also develop safeguards and information aimed at reducing the spread of infectious diseases that impact amphibians. On a national scale, Missouri participates in Midwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (MWPARC) and we are active in committees (made up of representatives from each state fish and wildlife agency in the U.S.) that address amphibian and reptile conservation. We share your concern for amphibian conservation and appreciate CFM support of our efforts toward amphibian habitat protection, restoration and prevention of the spread of amphibian diseases.

RESOLUTION NO. 24 – WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME ACTION PLAN
CFM supports the Department of Conservation in establishing a white-noise syndrome action plan and a working group of partners to educate the public and delay or prevent the spread of white-noise syndrome into Missouri.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation completed its White-Nose Syndrome Action Plan, formulated by an inter-divisional committee of Department staff, in April, 2010. This plan directs efforts to monitor bat populations, conduct surveillance to detect the presence of white-noise syndrome (WNS), restrict access to important bat caves depending on the proximity of WNS and encourage public education about the disease, its spread and the importance of not disturbing bats to enhance survival.

A statewide working group was initiated in February, 2010, to begin efforts to develop a coordinated action plan that includes state and federal agencies, researchers, organized caving groups, private conservation organizations, commercial show cave owners and interested private landowners. The Department coordinated with the USFWS in April, 2010, to facilitate a meeting with this group along with representatives from Oklahoma and Arkansas to identify issues that should be addressed in the action plan and potentially expand the effort to represent a regional plan that includes all three states in which the Ozark karst resources occur. This organization will continue working on plan development with a goal of completing the plan before mid- to late winter when WNS is normally detected.
The fungal agent causing WNS was detected in a privately owned cave in Pike County in April, 2010. This finding initiated most of the actions identified in the Department’s action plan and implementation began immediately. The Department will continue working with partners to track the spread of this disease and minimize its impact to the important bat and cave resources that are valued by the public of Missouri.

**RESOLUTION NO. 25 – 15-INCH LENGTH LIMIT STREAM BLACK BASS SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS**
CFM requests that the regulations of a 15-inch minimum length limit and a daily creel limit of one fish be implemented on specified areas. These areas would furthermore be recognized as Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas.

**RESOLUTION NO. 27 – 18-INCH LENGTH LIMIT STREAM BLACK BASS SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS**
CFM requests that management regulations of an 18-inch minimum length limit and a daily creel limit of one fish be implemented on specified areas. These areas would furthermore be recognized as Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas.

**RESOLUTION NO. 28 – SMALLMOUTH BASS IN UNIMPOUNDED WATERS**
CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation raises the minimum length limit for smallmouth bass in unimpounded waters to 15 inches. It should also be requested that the daily creel limit for smallmouth bass be decreased to three fish per day.

**COMBINED RESPONSE TO NOS. 25, 27 AND 28:** The Department of Conservation recognizes The Smallmouth Alliance (TSA) as an active conservation group known for their willingness to assist the Department in a number of conservation efforts. The Department concurs that it is timely to reconsider smallmouth bass fishing regulations and has been on this track for over a year. During this time Fisheries Division has met with TSA on a couple of occasions and reiterated the Department's commitment to consider new regulations.

The effort began as Fisheries staff evaluated the Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas which were instituted in the 1990s. A summary report was published in September, 2009, several years ahead of schedule. Fisheries Division immediately instituted a plan for taking what we learned from that effort and have been moving forward to determine how best to manage the smallmouth fishery.

The Department’s plan for moving forward with smallmouth bass management is outlined as follows:
- Implement a six step process which includes:
  - Reinstitute Fisheries Division’s Smallmouth Bass Working Group
  - Form subcommittees to address the issues of Research Need Identification, Sampling Protocol Review, and Evaluation Process
  - Respond to CFM resolutions and the TSA request of the Regulations Committee
  - Develop Angler Surveys
  - Initiate fieldwork based on subcommittee findings
  - Develop recommendations based on results of the five previous steps
For each year, starting in 2010 and ending in 2013, conduct the following three actions:
  - Conduct fieldwork and angler surveys as determined by the work of the subcommittees
  - Conduct data analysis and review results
  - Submit recommendations for regulation changes

The first three steps are complete and second three are underway. Implementation of this plan will result in well thought out and progressive management of Missouri’s smallmouth bass resource.

RESOLUTION NO. 29 – BAN ON TREBLE HOOKS IN CATCH AND RELEASE STREAM SECTIONS IN MISSOURI
CFM recommends a ban on treble hooks in catch and release stream sections in Missouri.

RESPONSE: The Department of Conservation manages the limited cold waters of Missouri to afford a variety of trout angling opportunities, from the four trout parks to the various blue, red and white ribbon trout areas on Missouri streams to Lake Taneycomo to winter fisheries in selected small impoundments. Selected waters are managed with regulations which restrict the use of certain lures and baits. Catch-and-release areas and seasons in the four trout parks are managed under a flies only regulation. Treble hooks are prohibited on these selected stream reaches, either year-round or seasonally. Outside of the trout parks, where catch-and-release fishing is required seasonally by regulation, only flies and artificial lures are authorized. In these areas, soft plastic baits and natural and scented baits are prohibited seasonally. Anglers retain the option to use a variety of artificial lures including flies, in-line spinners and hard-bodied crankbaits, offering anglers the chance to fish these waters with bait-cast, spin-cast or fly fishing methods.

We have found that the greatest reduction in trout hooking mortality results from the exclusion of natural, scented and soft-plastic baits. Based on our experience, the additional reduction in post-release mortality would be minimal by further limiting the use of treble hooks where regulations currently allow only flies and artificial lures. Therefore, we will not pursue regulation changes at this time. The concerns and interest expressed by CFM members on this issue are appreciated, and we will continue to monitor and assess this issue and pursue any regulation changes as warranted.

The Conservation Commission endorsed these Department responses at its May 28, 2010, meeting. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. ZIEHER
DIRECTOR

c: Conservation Commission
   Deputy Director Draper
   Deputy Director Ripperger
   Commission Secretary