



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Headquarters

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ROBERT L. ZIEHMER, Director

July 1, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Butler:

The resolutions that pertain to the Missouri Department of Conservation (Department), adopted at the 2016 annual meeting of the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), have been considered by staff. In response, we submit the following comments:

RESOLUTION NO. 2 – CREATE THE MISSOURI CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY AQUATIC RESTORATION TEAM (MoCCART)

CFM recommends that the Missouri Department of Conservation, Department of Natural Resources, and the Conservation Federation of Missouri combine efforts to create the Missouri Corporate and Community Aquatic Restoration Team (MoCCART).

RESPONSE: The Department recognizes the value of partnering with the private sector and has a long history of partnerships with corporate entities and communities in various projects. Through the years, the Department has established innovative relationships to bring together corporations, federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and private citizens. This has allowed partners to contribute in a fundamental way through donations of labor, materials, and funding to crucial projects involving Missouri's aquatic resources and related education programs. These opportunities also project a strong environmental and conservation image for the partnering corporations for marketing purposes. The Department will continue to investigate new partnerships as opportunities arise.

RESOLUTION NO. 3 – MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION BIRD APP

CFM recommends that MDC create an app to encourage Missouri citizens to use technology to enhance birdwatching enjoyment.

RESPONSE: The Department recognizes that technology plays an important role for the general public, especially with birdwatching activities. The Department realizes that technology will dominate the new learning paradigm and provide access for citizens to information that was once provided via records, tapes, brochures, and books. Currently, several downloadable free bird identification and information apps exist that include Missouri birds. Developing a new app would duplicate what is already available at no or relatively low cost from non-profit organizations. Because most states in the eastern half of the United States have many bird species in common, the free apps are usable throughout that region of the country.

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The Department is following a mobile strategy that will provide services to the community while developing applications that are maintainable and user-friendly. The Department currently supports Find MO Fish, MO Hunting, and Find MO Colors mobile applications. The next phase of mobile applications being developed will include Find MO Areas, which is intended to direct people to conservation areas throughout the State. As part of that application, the Department may include birding opportunities that exist on those areas to provide birders with local information that isn't available on existing apps.

RESOLUTION NO. 4 – URBAN FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

CFM encourages the USFS and MDC to maintain funding and support of the FIA in the Kansas City metropolitan area, Springfield and St. Louis metropolitan areas.

RESPONSE: The Department recognizes the importance of urban trees and forests to the citizens of Missouri. They provide numerous benefits including aesthetics, energy savings, storm water filtration, wildlife benefits, and health benefits. Because of the importance of these trees and forests, the United States Forest Service (USFS) is conducting Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) sampling within major urban areas of Missouri. These sampling efforts will provide valuable information about Missouri's urban forests including status and trends, health, values of ecosystem services, and risks from pests and disease.

Initially, the USFS' sampling effort was to be implemented in the St. Louis metropolitan area only. The Department, recognizing the importance of Urban FIA data, has partnered with the USFS to implement Urban FIA sampling by providing additional funds to support the program. This added funding will allow the USFS to hire additional contractors that will benefit the program in three ways. These funds support intensified sampling in the St. Louis metropolitan area, the addition of two sampling areas (Kansas City and Springfield/Branson), and accelerated implementation of the project.

The Urban FIA program is a permanent, long-term component of the USFS' overall nationwide FIA program and will provide valuable information about Missouri's urban forests. The Department plans to support the Urban FIA project by providing resources and financial assistance as approved by the Conservation Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 6 – MDC NOT ALLOW AIR GUNS DURING ARCHERY SEASON

CFM strongly urges the Missouri Department of Conservation to resist all efforts to deem these types of air guns to be archery equipment and not make them legal in Missouri's Archer seasons.

RESPONSE: Currently, the new "air bows" being advertised for hunting are generally defined as a firearm by the *Wildlife Code* because the device propels a single projectile at one discharge. They are legal for firearms and alternative methods deer hunting because, even though they are smaller than .40 caliber (the minimum requirement for an air-powered gun); they are a firearm capable of being loaded only from the muzzle (i.e., a muzzleloader). They are not archery equipment as defined by the *Code*. At present, the Department is not examining the use of air bows during the archery season.

RESOLUTION NO. 11 – CFM SUPPORTS MDC’s PROPOSED REGULATION TO NOT ALLOW THE TAKE OF FERAL SWINE ON PROPERTY OWNED, LEASED OR MANAGED BY THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

CFM encourages the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) to not allow the take of feral swine on MDC owned, leased and managed lands.

RESPONSE: The Department’s mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state and we recognize that feral hogs are an extremely destructive, invasive, non-native species. They pose serious threats to the state’s fish, forest, and wildlife resources as well as agricultural and other interests.

Hunting is a great tool to manage populations of wildlife; however, the Department doesn’t want to manage the feral hog population, we want to eliminate it. Other states have shown that hog hunting actually increases feral hog numbers and distribution because of illegal releases of more hogs into the wild for future hunting opportunities. Also, feral hogs travel in large groups and because of their high reproductive rate, the entire group must be removed at one time or remaining hogs quickly replace those taken and no progress is made. Hunters only take one or two hogs from the group and the rest scatter to new areas and become smarter and more difficult to remove. Therefore, the Department has proposed a ban on the take of feral hogs on all lands owned, managed, or leased by the Department. The Department appreciates CFM’s support shown in this resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 13 – BANNING FELT OR POROUS SOLED SHOES AND OR BOOTS IN ALL WATERS OF MISSOURI

CFM encourages the Missouri Department of Conservation to expand its existing regulation to ban porous soled shoes and boots to all waters in Missouri.

RESPONSE: The Department recognized that felt or porous soles could be potential vectors for invasive species like Didymo and banned the use of felt or porous soles in all cold water fisheries on March 1, 2012. The Department also recognizes that other invasive species such as Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) could be introduced to a warm water body by felt or porous soled boots or shoes since a small portion of the plant tuber has been shown to be viable. Hydrilla is a federally-listed noxious weed that can harm our aquatic resources. It chokes out local aquatic plant communities, interferes with boating and fishing, clogs water intake systems, and adversely changes the dynamics of fish populations. The Department will continue to work toward balancing the implementation of new regulations with outreach and education efforts on this and other invasive species topics.

RESOLUTION NO. 23 – EXTENDING TURKEY HUNTING HOURS

CFM requests that the Missouri Department of Conservation change turkey hunting hours to one-half hour before sunrise to sunset effective throughout the 2017 and future Spring Firearms turkey seasons.


RESPONSE: Hunting hours during the regular spring turkey season will not be extended during 2017. As with many changes to turkey hunting regulations, there are a number of considerations involved such as biology, hunt opportunity and quality, and the opinions of hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts who share the woods with turkey hunters. As such, the Department will consider a wide range of information as it explores the possibility of all-day hunting during the spring firearms turkey season.

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Half-day spring turkey hunting is a long-standing tradition in Missouri; one that dates back to the first modern season in 1960. At that time, the Department estimated that there were only several thousand turkeys remained in the state. Populations were rather fragmented and turkeys were absent from the landscape in most counties. As such, half-day spring turkey hunting was designed to reduce gobbler harvest and potential disturbance of nesting hens. However, given the increase in the state's turkey population and their range expansion, this topic warrants our careful consideration.

Because all-day spring turkey hunting is permitted in most states, we can glean a wide range of information about how this regulatory change affects turkey harvest and hunter participation. This information will be critically important as the Department explores the appropriateness of all-day hunting in our state. Also critical to our evaluation of permitting all-day hunting is input from Missouri's citizens. Our agency conducts annual turkey hunter surveys and will continue to do so, in part, to assist in providing the types of opportunities desired by our hunters. In addition to obtaining information from hunter surveys, the Department will reach out to our partners, citizens, and outdoor enthusiasts to obtain input as we deliberate on this issue.

Sincerely,



ROBERT L. ZIEHMER
DIRECTOR

c: Conservation Commission
Deputy Director Draper
Deputy Director Battson Warren
Deputy Director Jeffries
Commission Secretary