

# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## 2017-19 FISH & WILDLIFE REPORT



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December 2020

**State of Wisconsin**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
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November 25, 2020

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Assembly Chief Clerk  
17 West Main Street #401  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Jeff Renk  
Senate Chief Clerk  
B20 South East, State Capitol  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Subject: 2017-19 Fish & Wildlife Report

In accordance with s. 29.035, this report identifies the Department's use and expenditure of fishing, hunting and trapping license fees and other revenues that are deposited in the Fish & Wildlife Account for the biennium ending June 30, 2019.

Please contact Paul Neumann at (608) 266-0818 or at [paul.neumann@wisconsin.gov](mailto:paul.neumann@wisconsin.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
DocuSigned by:

Beth Bier

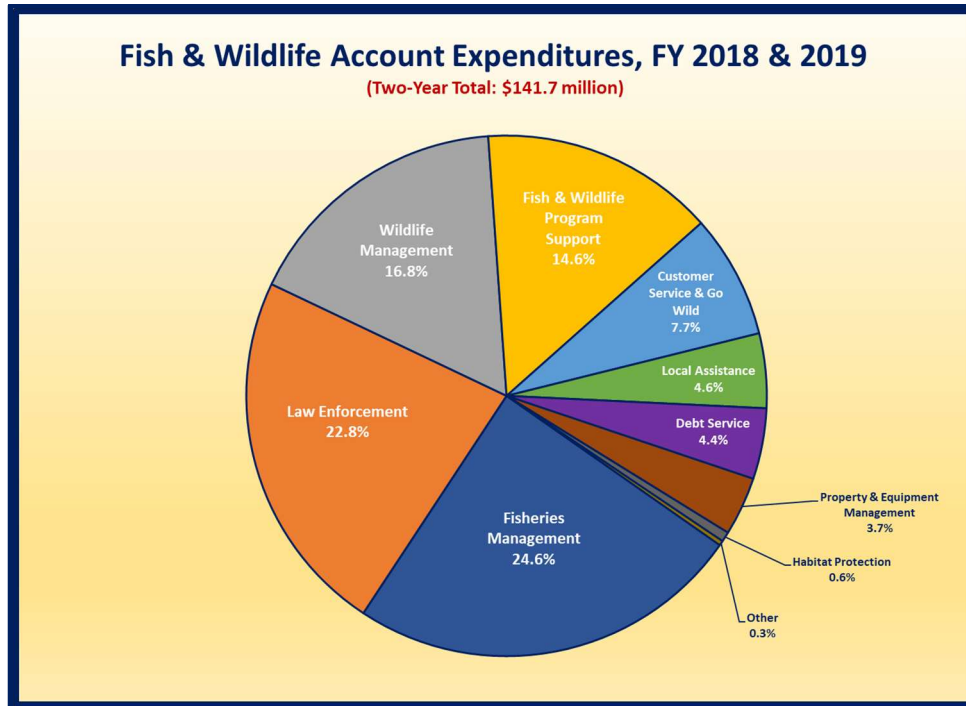
Deputy Secretary  
for: Preston D. Cole, Secretary

cc: Ryan Hutter, DOA  
Eric Hepler, LFB  
Keith Warnke  
Casey Krueger  
Kari Lee-Zimmermann  
Sean Kennedy  
Steven Little  
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## Report Summary

The Fish & Wildlife Account, one of ten accounts that comprise the Conservation Fund, is the state's depository for hunting and fishing license fees and other revenues. It supports the DNR's fish and wildlife management and law enforcement programs and approximately 550 positions agencywide.

This report specifically summarizes the Department's use of Fish & Wildlife Account revenues across 10 major categories for the biennium ending June 30, 2019. It excludes expenditure information for other funding sources including federal grants, general purpose revenue (GPR), bonding, and gifts and grants. As the graph and table illustrate below, nearly two-thirds of all spending from the Account comes from the three core programs of Fisheries Management, Wildlife Management and Law Enforcement.



FISH & WILDLIFE ACCOUNT EXPENSES, BY CATEGORY		
Expense Category	FY 2018 & FY 2019	
	Expenses	% Share
Fisheries Management	34,792,712	24.6%
Law Enforcement	32,275,981	22.8%
Wildlife Management	23,821,066	16.8%
Fish & Wildlife Program Support	20,642,842	14.6%
Customer Service & Go Wild	10,896,791	7.7%
Local Assistance	6,562,091	4.6%
Debt Service	6,230,186	4.4%
Property & Equipment Management	5,172,372	3.7%
Habitat Protection	871,688	0.6%
Other	419,509	0.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 141,685,236</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FY 2018 & FY 2019

## Fisheries Management

- Collaborated with muskellunge anglers to evaluate both the age and growth characteristics of muskellunge in northern Wisconsin. As part of this project, hatchery-raised (known as age-0 muskellunge) and adult muskellunge have been implanted with individually numbered passive integrated transponder tags for several years. Recapture of these individuals through routine field surveys by DNR staff and angler catches over time have provided critical information on known age-0 muskellunge, growth rates, and mortality rates in an almost exclusively catch-and-release fishery.
- Initiated a long-term project testing to determine whether the addition of trees to littoral zones of Wisconsin lakes will increase fish production.
- During FY18 and FY19 the Bureau of Fisheries Management developed and publicly disseminated 289 Management Reports to determine, assess, and summarize fisheries management regulations, stocking protocols, and habitat protection and enhancement projects. In this biennium, the Fisheries Bureau completed 113 Fisheries Survey Reports, 83 Treaty Spring Reports, 35 Trout Survey Reports, 34 Creel Survey Reports, and 24 Management Reports for Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, the Ceded Territory, or other Administrative purposes.
- During FY18, DNR stocked over six million fish in Wisconsin's waterways, including 1.3 million fish in inland streams and nearly 2.5 million cold-water fish in the Great Lakes. In addition, inland lakes were stocked with approximately 2.2 million cool-water fish, which are sometimes referred to as warm-water fish. Cool/warm-water fish stocks larger than fry, such as fingerling, yearling, and adult, included approximately 1.7 million walleye, 195,200 northern pike, 61,900 muskellunge, 280,000 largemouth bass, and 20,400 lake sturgeon.
- During FY19, DNR stocked over 7.5 million fish in Wisconsin's waterways, including 1.9 million fish in inland streams and nearly 1.7 million cold-water fish in the Great Lakes. In addition, inland lakes were stocked with approximately 3.7 million cool-water fish, which are sometimes referred to as warm-water fish. Cool/warm-water fish stocks larger than fry, such as fingerling, yearling, and adult, included approximately 3 million walleye, 342,000 northern pike, 80,000 muskellunge, 233,000 largemouth bass, and 72,000 lake sturgeon.
- As part of the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative in FY18, DNR produced/purchased a total of 827,223 large fingerling walleye from public, private and tribal hatcheries that were stocked in 160 public waterbodies of the state. In FY19, DNR produced/purchased a total of 786,531 large fingerling walleye that were stocked in 145 public waterbodies of the state.
- The Department's Trout Team launched a statewide effort in 2017 to develop the first Inland Trout Management Plan. The DNR Trout Team also received stakeholder input with representation from each area of the state. The plan provided direction for inland trout management in Wisconsin and covered Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, and Lake Trout in inland lakes, ponds and streams. The plan guided the allocation of resources, identified constraints, determined locations and prioritization of management activities and provided an internal and external communication tool. The plan also included a wide variety of fisheries management activities such as surveys, habitat improvement and protection, stocking, fishing regulations, and land acquisition.
- Improved and maintained habitat on sixty-six (FY18) and sixty-five (FY19) trout streams and springs. These projects ranged from brushing and improving access to fixing eroded banks and

restoring stream channels. Beaver management on trout streams also continued throughout the fiscal year. The program continues to evolve with a focus on less intensive, more natural-like methods to improve in-stream habitat for specific trout species and life stages.

- During FY18 and FY19 fisheries monitoring surveys sampled over 1,700 lake, river and stream sites to assess fish population, habitat health and angler harvest. Wisconsin is now in its second decade of standardized monitoring of fish populations and habitat in its lakes, rivers, and streams. The upgraded and standardized monitoring system, along with a state-of-the-art database management system, has provided Wisconsin's fisheries biologists and administrators the ability to examine important statewide and local trends in fish population dynamics and harvest, providing necessary insight for effective regulation development and long-term planning.
- Continued purchases of stream bank easements through the Stream Bank Protection Program (SBP) which has the goal of acquiring 100 miles of perpetual easements to provide fishing access and protect habitat on trout and smallmouth bass streams. In FY18, Fisheries acquired 10.65 miles and in FY19, 21.64 miles. As of July 2019, a total of 73.09 miles of new public-accessible areas for trout and smallmouth bass stream fishing have been secured. The SBP program has been popular with landowners and anglers.

## Wildlife Management

- Completed a five-year wild elk translocation project from Kentucky to Wisconsin which resulted in the translocation and release of 163 wild elk. The project will augment the genetic diversity of the existing herd and establish a second herd in Jackson County.
- Continued Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) surveillance in CWD management areas.
  - In FY18, CWD surveillance was conducted in the Southern Farmland Zone located in southern Wisconsin, along with Washburn, Burnett, Polk, Barron, Eau Claire, Clark, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Portage, Adams, Waushara, and Juneau counties. The Department also sampled wild deer around CWD positive captive deer facilities in Marathon, Eau Claire, Oneida, Shawano, Waupaca, and Oconto counties. Weighted surveillance primarily utilizing taxidermists took place in Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Dodge, and Washington counties.
  - In FY19, CWD surveillance was conducted within the Southern Farmland Zone and the counties listed above and DNR expanded CWD surveillance to 19 counties in west-central and parts of northern Wisconsin.
- As part of a cooperative management agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2018, 35 DNR wildlife staff conducted a statewide spring breeding waterfowl survey. Survey results estimated an overall decline of more than 25,000 ducks in the duck population between 2018 and 2019. A total duck population of 439,397 was estimated in 2018 while the 2019 population estimate of ducks was 413,662. The Wisconsin Canada goose breeding survey estimate saw an increase of more than 13,400 geese between 2018 and 2019 – 157,950 geese were estimated in 2018 and 171,407 geese were estimated in 2019.
- In May 2019, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board approved the 2019-29 Black Bear Management Plan. The ten-year plan will guide future management actions and provide to an interested public a concise, informative overview of black bear ecology and management in Wisconsin.
- Initiated the largest and most comprehensive deer research project ever undertaken in Wisconsin: *The Southwest Wisconsin CWD, Deer and Predator Study*. The project goal is to comprehensively

examine factors which potentially impact deer survival and deer population growth in southern Wisconsin. These factors include CWD, predation, habitat suitability and hunter harvest.

- Launched Phase 2 of *Snapshot Wisconsin* – This project utilizes a statewide network of trail cameras to monitor wildlife year-round. Project success relies on the help of more than 1,500 volunteers and focuses on developing a cost-effective way to monitor all species of Wisconsin wildlife. Data collected through this project supports wildlife management decision-making at the DNR and is already being used in fawn-to-doe ratio studies; wolf-tracking efforts; and monitoring the reintroduction of elk herds in Wisconsin. In August 2018, volunteer enrollment in the program was expanded to all 72 counties on both public and private Wisconsin land.
- Launched a study in July 2018 to examine the extent to which beavers affect coldwater streams and trout populations in ecoregions and beaver management zones across the state. Study results will better inform both beaver and trout management strategies.
- With \$500,000 in funding from the Wisconsin waterfowl stamp, the Division completed twenty-two projects statewide, focusing on wetland restoration and habitat management.
- The Division raised and stocked 75,000 rooster pheasants annually on public hunting grounds; planted 63 dove food plots on wildlife areas; and created an on-line application to help waterfowl, woodcock, dove and pheasant hunters more easily locate prime hunting areas.
- In 2018, with the cooperation of participating counties, the Division provided wildlife damage abatement assistance to 1,003 agriculture producers who experienced damages to commercial agricultural crops caused by wild deer, elk, bear, geese, and/or turkey. In addition to providing damage abatement assistance, the Division provided nearly \$766,000 in compensation to agricultural producers for agriculture damages caused by deer, elk, bear, geese, and/or turkey.
- In 2018, the Department awarded \$24,478 in Urban Wildlife Damage and Control Grants to seven municipalities for developing either an urban Canada goose/Whitetail-deer management plan or a Canada goose/Whitetail-deer removal program.
- Conducted wildlife education and outdoor skills programs for nearly 94,000 participants at DNR's wildlife conservation education centers.
- Provided wildlife conservation education hands-on activities during the biennium to more than 1,000 elementary school students during the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo, which occurred at the Mackenzie Center.
- In 2018, Division staff and outside partners created and presented over 180 "Keep Wildlife Wild" themed educational outreach programs and activities for student, family, and youth groups across the state.

# APPENDIX I—EXPENSE CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

## ***Fisheries Management***

The fisheries management program protects, maintains and develops Wisconsin's fisheries and aquatic resources. It manages fisheries in 15,000 lakes, 84,500 miles of streams and rivers, two Great Lakes, and a portion of the Mississippi River and serves approximately one million resident and nearly 400,000 non-resident adult anglers.

## ***Law Enforcement***

Law Enforcement provides law enforcement, public safety, environmental compliance, resource protection and recreational safety to the people and visitors of Wisconsin. This effort is accomplished through a three-pronged approach of enforcement, education and community involvement with the goal of voluntary compliance and fair and equal treatment.

## ***Wildlife Management***

Wildlife Management works to protect and manage Wisconsin wildlife populations and their habitats, and to promote wildlife enjoyment and appreciation for the benefit of current and future generations. In total, wildlife staff manage around 664,000 acres of land (made up of wildlife, state natural areas and many state fishery areas). Their charge is to protect, conserve, manage, and regulate the use of Wisconsin's wildlife and its habitats for people to hunt, trap, or watch wildlife on public land.

## ***Fish & Wildlife Program Support***

This expense category is comprised of several programs that provide administrative support to fisheries, wildlife and law enforcement activities. *The Department is prohibited from expending more than 16% of funding from the fish and wildlife account in any fiscal year for these administrative purposes.*

## ***Finance***

Finance administers and manages the Department's accounting, operating budget, purchasing needs, financial and grant reporting, controllership functions, etc.

## ***Facilities & Lands***

Facilities & Lands provides an array of professional and technical internal services, including real estate, infrastructure engineering and construction, facilities management, fleet management, safety and risk management, long- and short-range property planning, and policy development that guide DNR real asset operations.

## ***Technology Services***

Technology Services provides information technology (IT) consulting, administration, and support for DNR infrastructure (e.g., servers, databases, networks), end user devices (e.g., computers, cell phones, software), shared system development platforms (e.g., GIS), IT project and portfolio management, and related IT services.

## ***Human Resources***

Human Resources provides services which include recruitment and selection, compensation, payroll and benefits, training and development, and compliance with state and federal labor laws.

### ***Secretary's Office & Division Leadership***

The Secretary's Office & Division Leadership implement policies established by the Governor, Legislature, and Natural Resources Board, and is responsible for providing policy direction and supervision for all Department activities and overseeing staff in the Madison office, regional offices, customer service centers and work sites throughout the state.

### ***Legal Services***

Legal Services provides legal support and representation in development, implementation, review, and enforcement of Department programs. Its responsibilities include providing legal advice on the Department's authority for daily operations, drafting or reviewing proposed legislation and administrative rules, training of Department staff, serving as counsel at administrative hearings, determining Department compliance with applicable state, local and federal statutes and regulations, and resolving legal problems on a case-by-case basis.

### ***Management & Budget***

Management & Budget guides the agency's biennial budget development, provides revenue estimates for current and future fiscal years, coordinates the fiscal estimate process, manages the Pittman-Robertson and Sport Fish Restoration grants awarded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and responds to both external and internal requests for budget-related information.

### ***Community Financial Assistance***

Community Financial Assistance (CFA) administers grant and loan programs to develop and support projects that protect public health, natural resources, the environment and outdoor recreational opportunities.

### ***Environmental Analysis & Sustainability***

Environmental Analysis and Sustainability facilitates cross-agency coordination on important project and policy proposals, leads social science research for internal programs, provides laboratory services and certification, and assures proactive DNR participation and clear communications with business, internal and government customers.

### ***Office of Communications***

The Office of Communications oversees agency communication efforts and consults with management and programs to direct the department's communications, public affairs management, marketing and outreach initiatives. It also serves as a focal point for department media requests and contacts statewide.

### ***Rent***

Includes rent expenses for administrative buildings, including the central office headquarters in downtown Madison.

### ***Customer Service & Go Wild***

This category is comprised of the Customer & Outreach Services program, which manages license sales and general information service delivery at DNR Service Centers, online sales through the *Go Wild* system and statewide DNR call center operations. The program is responsible for the development and implementation of information systems that are used to issue hunting and fishing licenses, and business outreach services for contracted DNR sales agents.

### ***Local Assistance***

This category includes funds distributed to local units of government and other entities for the following:



- Aids to counties and tribes for wildlife or fish management projects (e.g., game food seeding, prescribed burning, lake and stream improvements, etc.)
- Payments in lieu of taxes to jurisdictions to offset the loss of property tax revenue related to Department land purchases and land owned by any federal agency.
- Payments to assist landowners with excessive levels of crop damage from deer, geese, turkeys, bear, elk, and cougar, and to assist urban area municipalities with nuisance populations of deer and/or geese.
- Payments for the administration of the deer donation program and for the associated venison processing costs.
- Aids to maintain and improve the breeding habitat for migratory waterfowl.

## ***Debt Service***

This category includes principal and interest costs for bonds issued to fund the acquisition, construction or improvement of administrative facilities, fish hatcheries, and wildlife areas.

## ***Property & Equipment Management***

This category includes property management services, prescribed burning on Department lands, equipment maintenance and replacement, and the construction, improvement, and maintenance of facilities.

## ***Habitat Protection***

This category is comprised of the Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) program, which works in collaboration with partners and stakeholders to: identify, protect, and manage native plant and animal species and natural communities; to enhance and restore populations and habitats; and to promote knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin's native species and ecosystems.

## ***Other***

This category includes hunter and trapper education and safety programs, aquatic invasive species research and control efforts funded from voluntary contributions, and other miscellaneous expenses.

## APPENDIX II—DETAILED SUMMARY OF FISH & WILDLIFE ACCOUNT EXPENDITURES

Expenditure Category	Ch. 20 Appropriation	Appropriation Title	FY 2018 Expenditures	FY 2019 Expenditures	FY 2018 & 2019 Expenditures
<b>Fisheries Management</b>	20.370(1)(kr)	Commercial Fish Protection & Great Lakes Resource Surcharge	43,000	25,000	68,000
	20.370(1)(ku)	Great Lakes trout and salmon	1,902,384	1,561,387	3,463,771
	20.370(1)(kv)	Trout habitat improvement	1,661,315	1,367,400	3,028,715
	20.370(1)(kw)	Sturgeon Stock and Habitat	126,750	165,353	292,104
	20.370(1)(ky)	Sturgeon stock and habitat-inland waters	33,400	58,200	91,600
	20.370(1)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	13,944,576	13,903,946	27,848,522
<b>Fisheries Management Total</b>			<b>17,711,426</b>	<b>17,081,286</b>	<b>34,792,712</b>
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	20.370(3)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	16,907,643	15,368,338	32,275,981
<b>Law Enforcement Total</b>			<b>16,907,643</b>	<b>15,368,338</b>	<b>32,275,981</b>
<b>Wildlife Management</b>	20.370(1)(hr)	Pheasant restoration	122,336	128,836	251,172
	20.370(1)(ht)	Wild turkey restoration	602,331	532,415	1,134,745
	20.370(1)(hu)	Wetlands habitat improvement	227,345	268,546	495,891
	20.370(1)(hw)	Pheasant stocking and propagation	0	447,600	447,600
	20.370(1)(hx)	Bonus Deer Permit Fees; CWD	100,000	400,000	500,000
	20.370(1)(lr)	Beaver control; fish and wildlife account	36,211	36,200	72,411
	20.370(1)(ls)	Control of wild animals	280,300	280,300	560,600
	20.370(1)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	10,532,872	9,825,774	20,358,647
<b>Wildlife Management Total</b>			<b>11,901,395</b>	<b>11,919,670</b>	<b>23,821,066</b>
<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Program Support</b>	20.370(1)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	756,699	845,403	1,602,102
	20.370(8)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	9,126,018	8,327,396	17,453,415
	20.370(9)(mu)	General program operations - state funds	811,628	775,697	1,587,325
<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Program Support Total</b>			<b>10,694,345</b>	<b>9,948,496</b>	<b>20,642,842</b>
<b>Customer Service &amp; Go Wild</b>	20.370(9)(hu)	Handling and other fees	152,500	1,552,884	1,705,384
	20.370(9)(hv)	Fee amounts for statewide automated issuing system	2,383,162	2,334,090	4,717,251
	20.370(9)(mu)	General program operations - state funds	2,567,096	1,907,059	4,474,155
<b>Customer Service &amp; Go Wild Total</b>			<b>5,102,758</b>	<b>5,794,033</b>	<b>10,896,791</b>
<b>Local Assistance</b>	20.370(5)(aq)	Resource aids - Canadian agencies migratory waterfowl aids	173,720	171,373	345,093
	20.370(5)(ar)	Resource aids - county conservation aids	136,207	197,622	333,829
	20.370(5)(au)	Resource aids - Ducks Unlimited, Inc payments	33,280	32,600	65,880

## APPENDIX II—DETAILED SUMMARY OF FISH & WILDLIFE ACCOUNT EXPENDITURES

Expenditure Category	Ch. 20 Appropriation	Appropriation Title	FY 2018 Expenditures	FY 2019 Expenditures	FY 2018 & 2019 Expenditures
	20.370(5)(cz)	Resource aids -- interpretive center	0	13,500	13,500
	20.370(5)(dq)	Aids in lieu of taxes-lands acquired before a specified date	292,311	292,091	584,401
	20.370(5)(fq)	Wildlife damage claims and abatement	2,487,065	2,461,299	4,948,364
	20.370(5)(fr)	Wildlife abatement control grants	22,635	11,223	33,858
	20.370(5)(fs)	Venison Processing	113,184	123,982	237,166
<b>Local Assistance Total</b>			<b>3,258,402</b>	<b>3,303,689</b>	<b>6,562,091</b>
<b>Debt Service</b>	20.370(7)(aq)	Resource acquisition and development - principal repayment and interest	0	77	77
	20.370(7)(at)	Recreation development-principal repayment and interest	2,348,007	2,240,198	4,588,205
	20.370(7)(eq)	Administrative facilities - principal repayment and interest	746,013	895,891	1,641,905
<b>Debt Service Total</b>			<b>3,094,021</b>	<b>3,136,166</b>	<b>6,230,186</b>
<b>Property &amp; Equipment Management</b>	20.370(1)(jr)	Rental property and equipment--maintenance and replacement	372,831	316,085	688,917
	20.370(1)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	1,302,613	1,676,064	2,978,676
	20.370(2)(mv)	General program operations -- state funds; forestry (prescribed burning)	487,288	142,809	630,097
	20.370(7)(fs)	Resource acquisition and development - state funds	139,770	244,796	384,566
	20.370(7)(hq)	Facilities acquisition, development and maintenance -- conservation fund	85,887	191,051	276,938
	20.370(7)(jr)	Rental property and equipment - maintenance and replacement	32,153	64,425	96,577
	20.370(7)(mr)	Resource maintenance and development-state park, forest, and riverway roads, conservation fund		116,600	116,600
<b>Property &amp; Equipment Management Total</b>			<b>2,420,542</b>	<b>2,751,830</b>	<b>5,172,372</b>
<b>Habitat Protection</b>	20.370(1)(mu)	General program operations--state funds	546,438	325,250	871,688
<b>Habitat Protection Total</b>			<b>546,438</b>	<b>325,250</b>	<b>871,688</b>
<b>Other</b>	20.855 (1)(bm)	Service fees for cancelled checks	2,586	5,922	8,508
	20.370(1)(kq)	Taxes and assessments -- conservation fund	51,533	26,389	77,922

## APPENDIX II—DETAILED SUMMARY OF FISH & WILDLIFE ACCOUNT EXPENDITURES

Expenditure Category	Ch. 20 Appropriation	Appropriation Title	FY 2018 Expenditures	FY 2019 Expenditures	FY 2018 & 2019 Expenditures
	20.370(1)(lq)	Trapper education program	48,500	48,500	97,000
	20.370(3)(at)	Education and safety programs	9,668	163,540	173,207
	20.370(4)(ks)	Aquatic Invasive Species Control; Voluntary Contributions	30,794	32,077	62,871
<b>Other Total</b>			<b>143,081</b>	<b>276,428</b>	<b>419,509</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$71,780,050</b>	<b>\$69,905,187</b>	<b>\$141,685,236</b>