



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873
Email: fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov • Website: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb>

June, 2021

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #450

Fish and Wildlife Account Condition (Natural Resources -- Fish and Wildlife)

CURRENT LAW

The conservation fund is a segregated (SEG) trust fund used to finance many of the state's resource management programs administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The conservation fund is divided into several accounts, including the fish and wildlife account. The primary source of revenue to the fish and wildlife account is the fees charged for hunting, fishing and special licenses and stamps. The account supports the fish and wildlife management functions of the Department.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Account Revenues

1. Deer hunting licenses are a primary source of revenue to the fish and wildlife account. These licenses primarily include gun deer licenses and archery licenses issued to residents, nonresidents, and youths. In fiscal year 2019-20, 360,629 resident gun deer licenses were sold, raising \$8,655,100 for the Department. In 2019-20, 25,394 nonresident gun deer licenses were sold, raising \$4,063,100. In fiscal year 2019-20, resident and nonresident deer gun licenses combined accounted for 17.4% of revenue to the fish and wildlife account.

2. In addition to licenses purchased primarily for recreational fish and game activities, several types of licenses are required for specialized commercial fish and game activities. Other revenues to the account include stumpage revenues from timber sales on state habitat and wildlife areas, fees paid for hunter education and safety programming, an annual \$3 million transfer of tribal gaming revenue, and penalties and assessments for violating fish and game laws.

3. In recent years, revenues from hunting and fishing licenses have declined. Fish and wildlife account revenues have regularly been less than authorized expenditures for the account. In 2019-20, expenditures from the account exceeded revenues by \$1.3 million, and stagnant or declining revenues continue to be a concern. However, the account maintains an available balance of \$25.3 million as of June 30, 2020. Further, several license sales increased through 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many sought outdoor recreational activities while indoor activities and other gatherings were restricted. The attachment shows the estimated account condition through June 30, 2023, under Committee action to date.

Account Expenditures

4. The Bureau of Wildlife Management works to protect and manage the wildlife populations and habitats of the state and promotes wildlife appreciation and recreational opportunities. Wildlife biologists and technicians manage and regulate various species, including deer, bear, geese, turkey, and waterfowl. Wildlife personnel also assist in the management of wildlife on private lands and take part in wildlife-related educational efforts.

5. The Bureau of Fisheries Management undertakes various activities related to monitoring, maintaining and enhancing aquatic ecosystems and sport and commercial fisheries. Fisheries population and habitat surveys are conducted to monitor the status and health of the state's fisheries and aquatic habitat, and to evaluate regulation effectiveness and needs. In addition, DNR is responsible for Great Lakes fish management activities in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior.

6. DNR's Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE) is responsible for the investigation and enforcement of laws relating to fish and wildlife, recreational vehicles, environmental protection, water regulation, and shoreland zoning. These activities are performed primarily by conservation wardens whose enforcement authority varies depending on the type, location and severity of the violation. Enforcement activities include enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations, commercial fish and game activities, and treaty enforcement issues.

Prepared by: Eric R. Hepler
Attachment

ATTACHMENT

Fish and Wildlife Account Condition

	2019-20 <u>Actual</u>	2020-21 <u>Budgeted</u>	2021-22 <u>Base Plus JFC</u>	2022-23 <u>Base Plus JFC</u>	2020-21 <u>Staff</u>
Opening Balance	\$46,732,500	\$45,477,300	\$43,567,100	\$37,450,500	
Revenue					
Hunting Permits	\$28,476,200	\$28,718,000	\$28,600,000	\$28,600,000	
Fishing Permits	28,194,200	23,752,300	24,500,000	24,500,000	
Other Permits	11,798,700	14,127,000	13,000,000	13,000,000	
All Other Revenue	9,436,100	8,402,700	8,900,000	8,900,000	
Total Revenue	<u>\$77,905,200</u>	<u>\$75,000,000</u>	<u>\$75,000,000</u>	<u>\$75,000,000</u>	-
Available Balance	\$124,637,700	\$120,477,300	\$118,567,100	\$112,450,500	-
Expenditures					
Fish Management	\$15,919,200	\$15,919,600	\$16,671,700	\$16,671,700	157.39
Wildlife Management	12,252,500	12,041,600	12,268,500	12,268,500	109.07
Fish and Wildlife Grants and Aids	433,300	488,300	488,300	488,300	-
Wildlife Control and Abatement	2,839,600	3,264,900	3,283,200	3,283,200	2.00
Stamp Funded Programs	4,832,000	5,275,600	5,307,600	5,307,600	14.59
Go Wild Contract fees	2,420,200	2,863,100	2,863,100	2,863,100	
Other	86,900	81,000	75,900	48,200	-
Subtotal	<u>\$38,783,700</u>	<u>\$39,934,100</u>	<u>\$40,958,300</u>	<u>\$40,930,600</u>	283.05
<i>Split-Funded Appropriations</i>					
Internal Services	\$5,843,700	\$5,868,900	\$6,096,600	\$6,096,600	38.40
External Services	3,399,200	3,700,300	3,833,100	3,833,100	33.61
Division Management	5,805,900	6,500,900	7,014,900	7,014,900	56.95
Law Enforcement and Safety	18,539,200	18,077,000	18,429,600	18,429,600	135.23
Aids in Lieu of Taxes	594,500	594,500	594,500	594,500	-
Debt Service, Maintenance, Development, and Assessments	5,216,400	2,082,000	4,037,100	4,269,400	-
Handling Fees	977,800	152,500	152,500	152,500	-
Subtotal	<u>\$40,376,700</u>	<u>\$36,976,100</u>	<u>\$40,158,300</u>	<u>\$40,390,600</u>	264.19
Total Expenditures	\$79,160,400	\$76,910,200	\$81,116,600	\$81,321,200	547.24
Closing Cash Balance	\$45,477,300	\$43,567,100	\$37,450,500	\$31,129,300	
Encumbrances and Continuing Balances	\$20,185,600	\$20,185,600	\$20,185,600	\$20,185,600	
Available Balance	\$25,291,700	\$23,381,500	\$17,264,900	\$10,943,700	