



# The Fish and Wildlife Account Report

## Tackling the Funding Gap

Fish and wildlife management provides critical support for hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreation while benefiting Wisconsin's economy, image and quality of life. Demographic, cultural and land use changes are contributing to a license sales decline and reducing funds available for management work.

In the 2015-17 budget, lawmakers directed DNR to address the \$4 million to \$6 million annual gap in the Fish and Wildlife Account between revenue and authorized conservation work. DNR has submitted a report to the Legislature outlining options to increase revenue as well as close the funding gap if no new funds become available.

The DNR has also undertaken a major strategic alignment effort to prioritize workload and align functions to be as efficient with funding and staff as possible in order to accomplish priority work with existing resources.

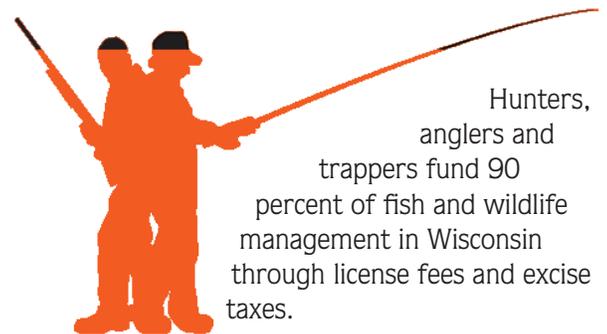
### Outdoor recreation destination

# TOP 10

- #1 in Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young trophy bucks
- #1 in bear harvest
- #2 in total number of hunters and #3 in number of trappers
- #3 in total number of visiting anglers, behind Florida and Michigan
- Top 10 in total number of deer, turkey, Canada geese and ducks harvested
- Top 10 in number of bass and walleye
- #1 in the world for largest lake sturgeon population

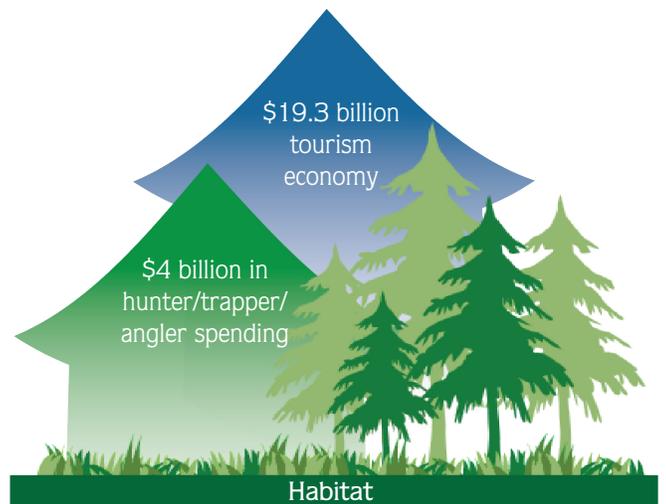
Wisconsin ranks among the top 10 states in multiple categories.

### Source of conservation revenue

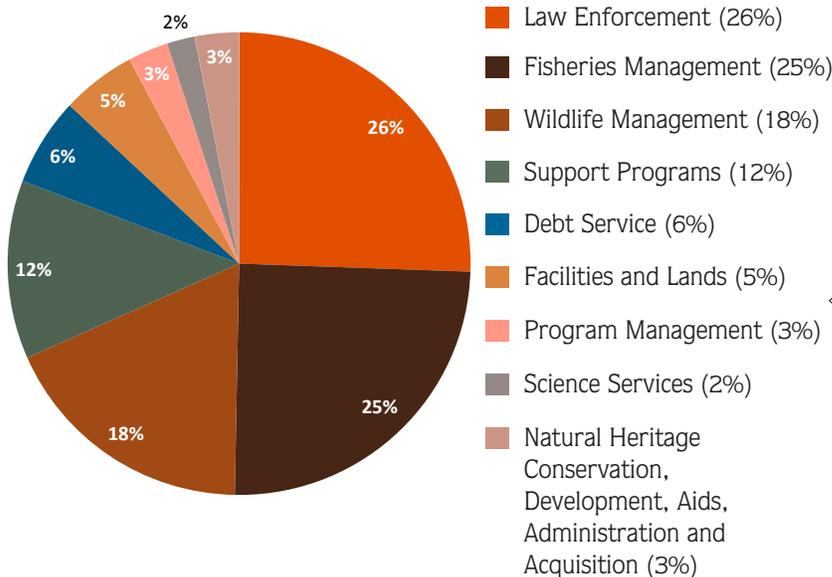


Hunters, anglers and trappers fund 90 percent of fish and wildlife management in Wisconsin through license fees and excise taxes.

### Economy and environment work together

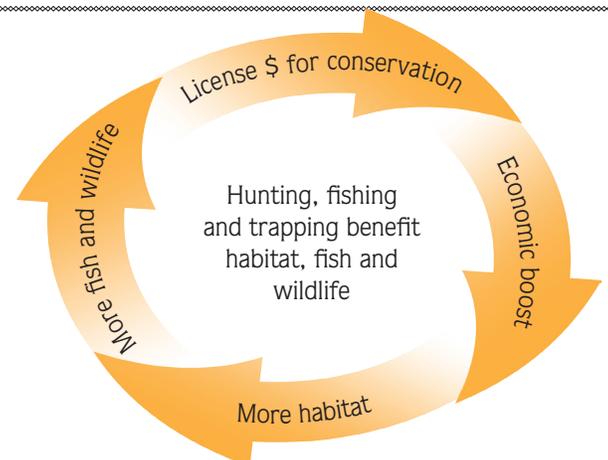


### Programs funded by the Fish and Wildlife Account



## Conservation for All

Ninety-six percent of respondents to a statewide survey agree that thriving fish and wildlife populations boost the economy.



## Addressing the gap

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DNR's report to the Legislature identifies options to increase revenue as well as options to minimize the need for additional revenue through greater efficiency and prioritization.

Many of the options below would require approval by the Natural Resources Board and Legislature. No single option would solve the gap and DNR looks forward to working with stakeholders to find sustainable solutions.

### Options to increase revenue



**Link license fees to increases in the Consumer Price Index** or other costs.

**Enact a one-time license fee increase** to reflect recent inflation or bring underpriced licenses in line with comparable fees in other states.

**Set uniform discount rates** for similar groups of licenses such as Junior, Senior or combination licenses. A simpler fee structure could increase revenue and establish consistency for the public.

**Eliminate or reduce first-time buyer licenses**, which provide discounts of up to 75 percent for residents and 50 percent for non-residents. Recent analysis shows these discounts are not effectively recruiting new participants but are significantly reducing revenue.



**Offer new and flexible license packages.** New combinations of licenses and other options may better respond to today's customers given that sales of Conservation Patron and Sports licenses have dropped more than 40 percent over the past decade.



**Offer customer engagement and loyalty programs.** This option might include loyalty discounts for repeat buyers, automatic renewals and other options recommended by the Sporting Heritage Council to retain and reactive hunters, anglers and trappers.



**Individual access fee for state wildlife, fisheries and natural areas.** Wildlife watchers, hikers and others would pay admission to access the more than 600 DNR state natural, fishery and wildlife areas. Access would be included with regular license purchases.



**Non-motorized watercraft registration fee.** Fees for kayaks, canoes and paddleboards could help cover the costs of boating facilities, safety and enforcement activities. Wisconsin owners now voluntarily register some 18,000 non-motorized craft, paying \$11 for a three-year cycle. An estimated 335,000 non-motorized craft use Wisconsin waterways each year.



**Gift cards and e-license gift certificates.** Gift cards and online gift certificates would respond to customer interest and could help increase revenue.

## Other options to address the funding gap

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- Continue to prioritize work and focus on core needs as part of DNR's strategic alignment effort.
- Reduce collaboration with conservation groups on habitat development and management projects.
- Decrease habitat management and invasive species control, which would result in less game produced on public land.
- Reduce pheasant stocking by 50 percent.
- Cap enrollment in the Deer Management Assistance Program.
- Reduce trout habitat work and fish stocking.
- Continue to leave 2,000 acres of wetland impoundments unmanaged, reducing waterfowl reproduction.
- Reduce acquisition of stream bank easements.

