



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

FISCAL YEAR 2016  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

*Conserving New Mexico's Wildlife for  
Future Generations*



# Hunting, fishing, trapping and . . . . . wildlife watching?



*There are opportunities for entire families to enjoy the outdoors at any of the department's 56 Wildlife and Waterfowl Management Areas.*

There are several connections to these activities, not the least of which involves people enjoying New Mexico's great outdoors. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish remains steadfast in its dedication to conserve the state's natural resources for future generations.

It isn't just about wildlife, for without the proper habitat, wildlife can't flourish, and the above activities would not be available for the public's enjoyment.

With all the alterations humans have made to the environment, the balancing act of managing wildlife has become increasingly complex. Hunting serves as a valuable management tool for maintaining robust, yet healthy, wildlife populations across the state.

Hunting, fishing and trapping also supports conservation financially. The Department of Game and Fish receives no general fund money and is supported primarily through the sale of licenses and federal dollars from excise taxes on the sale of firearms, ammunition and fishing and archery equipment. The work supported by those dollars benefits all who enjoy wildlife, whether they are hikers, wildlife watchers, hunters or anglers.

As fabulous as it is to be outdoors and see wildlife, the connection isn't as strong today. Outdoor activities face stiff competition, ranging from shopping malls to home entertainment centers. The majority of licensed hunters today were raised in a day with just four or five television stations; telephones were plugged into a wall and fingers served as home computers to do the math. The department is committed to help all New Mexicans unplug and rediscover our state's magnificent outdoor bounty.

Accepting the challenge to get people either engaged or re-engaged in outdoor activities, New Mexico Game and Fish personnel conduct a myriad of events, including a number of family-friendly Free Fishing Day opportunities. The two-day Game and Fish Outdoor Expo, a free event open to the public, attracts more than 4,000 people of all ages each year and features everything from shooting firearms or bows to paddling kayaks.

Game and Fish personnel are heavily involved in shooting sports activities, including the Responsible Hunter Program and the development of shooting ranges throughout New Mexico, promoting the safe use of firearms.

For the youth, department personnel participate in many fishing clinics, conduct hunter education classes and camps, and provide a Mentored-Youth Hunting Program. The National Archery in Schools Program, which had the highest percentage increase in school participation in the nation last year, attracted 829 young archers to the New Mexico State Championship Tournament in Albuquerque.

There are opportunities for entire families to enjoy the outdoors at any of the department's 56 Wildlife and Waterfowl Management Areas. Depending on the property, there's potential to hunt, fish, watch and photograph wildlife.

It's a lot for a small state agency to undertake, but all department personnel, along with many dedicated volunteers, are committed to developing the next generation of outdoorsmen and women and to introduce as many people as possible to the wonders of being outside. In the years to come, these same youths will become the next stewards of New Mexico's natural resources.

It's time to get the next generation of true conservationists outdoors and active – something we are committed to make happen.

Alexandra Sandoval, Director

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*Cover: New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Conservation Officer Keith Haws scans the Rio Grande Gorge near Taos. NMDGF photo by Karl F. Moffatt.*

# Administration

The department's administration is composed of its director, a deputy director, two assistant directors and the department's general counsel. The director serves as secretary to the State Game Commission, its seven-members appointed by Governor Susana Martinez.

As directed by the governor, the State Game Commission and state Legislature, the department focused on the following priorities in Fiscal Year 16:

## Field Operations

- Partnered with the New Mexico State Police to provide enhanced radio communication and dispatch services and to equip all of our officers with the latest Computer Aided Dispatch capabilities.

## Information and Education

- Built on the department's recruitment programs that bring families together by offering weekend outdoor hunter education courses in a family friendly learning environment designed to foster a positive exposure to a variety of outdoor recreation activities.
- Built a module within the department's public website that provides enhanced web-based access to historical and current data for educational purposes and to increase agency awareness and transparency.

## Wildlife Management / Ecosystem and Environmental Planning

- Continued to build partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Forestry, the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, Soil & Water Conservation districts, private landowners and others to leverage financial and contractual resources to enhance habitat for game and nongame wildlife across New Mexico.
- Focused additional biological efforts on understanding mountain lion distribution and population density to provide additional data resources for future management efforts in New Mexico.
- Developed the processes and structure necessary to create a detailed statewide riparian map to assist in future decision-making processes that support riparian and aquatic habitat restoration and enhancement projects.
- Revised the Share with Wildlife Program to leverage funding from the State Wildlife Grant and other funding sources to build a more effective program that supports wildlife and habitat restoration efforts to meet department obligations for terrestrial and aquatic species recovery and planning.

## Fisheries

- Provided additional focus on native trout restoration to include riparian habitat improvements and fish migration barrier construction and renovation. Specific efforts included Gila trout restoration in Whitewater Creek and Rio Grande cutthroat restoration in the Rio Costilla watershed.

## Information Systems / Administrative Services

- With the goal of improving the timely administration of its federal funds, the department has implemented a web-based federal aid cost tracking system that reduces data entry error, is more efficient and results in a more consistent federal-fund cash flow.
- Implemented a more efficient web-based employee time-reporting system that will allow staff more time to focus on specific work duties and eliminate duplicate data-entry while meeting both state and federal requirements.
- Decreased vacancy rates across all programs through proactive recruitment and focus on a "30-day recruitment-to-hire" program whenever a position becomes vacant.



Left to right: Assistant Director Chris Chadwick, Deputy Director Donald Jaramillo and Director Alexandra Sandoval. NMDGF photo by Martin Perea.







# Wildlife Management Division

## Recovery planning

Early in 2016, department personnel initiated the recovery planning process for three state-listed vertebrates, the endangered white-tailed ptarmigan, the Gila monster and the threatened Gould's turkey. Recovery planning in New Mexico is carried out under the authority and direction of the state's Wildlife Conservation Act. At the close of fiscal year 2016, planning for white-tailed ptarmigan was underway. Recovery plans for Gila monster and Gould's turkey are in their early stages. Draft plans for all three species will be submitted for review to the State Game Commission.

## Mount Taylor elk recruitment

Department biologists are investigating low calf recruitment in the Mount Taylor elk herd in Game Management Unit 9. Survey trends showed a declining calf-to-cow ratio in recent years with a five-year average of 14-to-100. In February, 40 elk were captured by helicopter and all pregnant adult cows were fitted with Global Positioning System collars and vaginal implant transmitters. Telemetry tracking allowed biologists to determine general calving areas and implant transmitters provided the exact timing and locations of birth. During the calving season from mid-May to mid-June, ground and air crews captured approximately 40 calves and attached ear-tag transmitters to allow telemetry tracking and monitoring. All tagged calves will be monitored via ground and aerial tracking to determine overall survival and cause-specific mortality.

## Elk hunting

Over 36,000 elk licenses were sold/converted during the 2015-2016 hunting season, with a statewide hunter success rate of approximately 38 percent. Aside from some regional differences, elk herds are stable. There were three population management hunts during the 2015-2016 license year, targeting elk in areas of high concentration.

## Deer hunting

Over 36,600 deer licenses were sold/converted during the 2015-2016 hunting season. Of license holders that hunted, 34 percent successfully filled their tags and an estimated 10,635 bucks and 138 does were harvested. In response to public comments, public deer hunting licenses were reduced by approximately 11 percent for the 2015-2018 rule cycle. The purpose of the reduction was to increase hunter success and satisfaction. During the 2015-2016 hunting season, the first with the reduced allocation, hunter success increased from 26 percent in 2014-2015 to 34 percent and overall harvest rose from 9,386 to 10,773.



*Top: The department is preparing a recovery plan for endangered Gould's turkeys in southwestern New Mexico. NMDGF photo by Dan Williams.*

*Bottom: An ongoing study of the Mount Taylor elk herd may provide answers to the herd's declining calf-to-cow ratio. NMDGF photo by Leland Pierce.*

*Opposite: Darrel Weybright, former assistant chief for wildlife management, poses with the last elk he net-gunned before retiring last March. NMDGF photo by Nicole Quintana.*



## Pronghorn hunting

There were 4,526 pronghorn licenses sold/converted during the 2015-2016 hunting season. The statewide harvest was an estimated 2,876 bucks and 289 does. Of the license holders that hunted, 75 percent successfully filled their tag. In general, hunters have been satisfied with their pronghorn hunt, with a satisfaction rating was 4.1 of a possible 5.

## Research

A research project in collaboration with Texas Tech University was initiated in Game Management Unit 36 near Capitan. Personnel are researching overall pronghorn fawn survival and cause-specific mortality in relation to predator densities in the study area. Fifty-six fawns were captured and ear-tagged with radio transmitters from May to June. As of late June, 17 radio-marked fawns were still alive.

In addition to marking fawns, department personnel radio-marked coyotes in the study area and monitored them to obtain home-range estimates. Baited camera grids were placed in the study area in June 2016 to estimate predator densities based on mark-recapture rates. During fiscal year 2017, the department will continue to investigate predator-prey relationships and will manage for improved pronghorn fawn survival. The remote cameras will help biologists evaluate the effectiveness of management actions targeted at improving fawn survival.

## Habitat restoration

The Wildlife Management Division uses Habitat Stamp, Big-game Enhancement, Habitat Management and Access Validation and federal Pittman-Robertson funds, along with capital outlay authorizations to support wildlife habitat restoration projects statewide. Of these state and federal funds, \$17 million has been earmarked for forest, rangeland and riparian restoration efforts over the next three to five years, including a collaborative effort with New Mexico State Forestry to implement \$5 million of restoration activities. These projects will utilize thinning, mastication, prescribed fire and lop-and-scatter techniques to improve thousands of acres across New Mexico. The department continues to expand habitat partnership opportunities in close collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Forestry, New Mexico State Land Office, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts and local Soil and Water Conservation districts for increased forest resiliency, watershed health and wildlife habitat benefits.

## New Mexico Hunters Helping the Hungry

Department personnel have worked with representatives of the Roadrunner Food Bank and the New Mexico Environment Department to establish the New Mexico Hunters Helping the Hungry program. This program allows hunters to donate meat from legally harvested deer and elk to help feed the needy and hungry throughout New Mexico. Hunters will take their donations to one of 11 certified wild-game meat processors scattered throughout the state where the meat will be ground. Roadrunner will collect the donations and transport them to one of their partner agencies that prepare and cook meals for those in need. The program officially began this hunting season. Roadrunner will operate and administer the program.

## Raton bear project

For many years, the City of Raton, a small, northern New Mexico town adjacent to excellent bear habitat, has been dealing with nuisance bears. From spring through fall, bears regularly enter town in search of easily available food sources. Raton's aging waste-handling system relied on old, unsecured dumpsters that were not bear resistant. Over time, this created a situation in which many bears never strayed far from town and became dependent on food found in dumpsters as an important, or primary, dietary resource. These bears also have become habituated to people, increasing the odds of negative human-bear interactions, which is potentially dangerous for people and bears. Through a federal aid grant, the department assisted Raton with the purchase of 650 new, bear-resistant dumpsters that are compatible with the city's existing equipment and infrastructure. The new dumpsters will make Raton more "bear proof." The goal of this project was to make the readily available food sources less available and encourage bears to move out of town and back into surrounding mountains.

## Open Gate

The Open Gate Hunting and Fishing Access Program advanced efforts during fiscal year 2016 to provide public hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities on private land and to improve access to public lands. Program results included access across 30 Open Gate Properties using funds from Habitat Management and Access Validations purchased by the same sportsmen and women who benefit from use of the properties. Efforts made within the program opened gates to 66,640 acres of private land this year, expanding public hunting opportunities for dove, quail, pheasant, waterfowl, sandhill crane, turkey, javelina, deer, Barbary sheep and bobcat. Open Gate efforts resulted in public fishing access to 17 miles of stream shoreline and eight water bodies encompassing 758 surface acres. Program funding also provided the means to lease and develop right-of-ways, improving access to 143,334 acres of public land. All Open Gate projects were made possible with assistance from the department's Field Operations Division, Wildlife Management Division and Fisheries Management Division. Program representatives also cooperated externally with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico State Land Office and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to improve access.

## Elk and Antelope Private Land Use programs

The Elk and Antelope Private Land Use System programs (E-PLUS and A-PLUS, respectively) work with New Mexico landowners to manage elk and pronghorn antelope populations on private land. These programs provide a mechanism to recognize the contributions of landowners to the management of wildlife populations. Through both E-PLUS and A-PLUS, landowners may receive private land authorizations they may give or sell to interested hunters. These programs also open private land to public hunters, providing access that otherwise might not be readily available. During the 2015-2016 hunting season, the E-PLUS program had 4,125 properties enrolled, providing access to more than 8.5 million acres of private land and 20,689 hunting opportunities. During the 2015-2016 hunting season, the A-PLUS program had 1,241 properties enrolled, providing access to approximately 13 million acres of private land and eight million acres of public land and created 4,684 hunting opportunities.



Top: Juvenile pronghorn antelope fawn, Clayton, N.M. Photo by Larry Lamsa.

Bottom: Forest thinning is one technique used to restore wildlife habitat. NMDGF photo.



Top: 650 new bear-resistant dumpsters will help Raton be more "bear-proof." NMDGF photo by Karl F. Moffatt.

Bottom: The Open Gate Program provides hunters and anglers public access to otherwise unavailable private land. NMDGF photo by Martin Perea.



## Geographic Information Systems Section

The Geographic Information System Section provides ongoing system administration, development and coordination, data acquisition, mapping, editing and spatial analysis for several department programs and projects. Individual assistance is provided to department staff that use system data and applications. Additionally, many of the projects conducted by the section provide valuable tools for the benefit of hunters, anglers and the general public. Notable examples this year include updating the Game Management Unit maps, developing an interactive property locator map for the Open Gate Program, developing an interactive map showing the locations of watercraft inspection station sites for the Aquatic Invasive Species Program, and updating the Big Game Hunting Unit maps data layer for the Bureau of Land Management's CarryMap Observer application.



## Habitat Stamp Program

The Habitat Stamp Program is a collaborative partnership between the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, sportsmen, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, implemented under authority of the Sikes Act (16USC670a) and the State Game Commission. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the program. Since its inception in 1986, the stamp program has provided over \$19 million for 2,312 habitat enhancement and wildlife management projects. Through the continued financial support of hunters, anglers and trappers recreating on federally managed public lands in New Mexico, and the support of other wildlife conservationists who willingly purchase a habitat stamp, the state's wildlife resources continue to benefit through a user-supported fund dedicated to proactive wildlife management and conservation. The Habitat Stamp Program's five Citizen Advisory Committees recently met to prioritize projects for funding for fiscal year 2017. With a total annual project implementation budget of \$742,300, the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service have been allocated \$347,011 and \$395,289, respectively.



## Lesser prairie chicken

From March to May, department personnel coordinated and conducted lesser prairie chicken ground surveys in eastern New Mexico. Personnel enlisted 35 surveyors from agencies and organizations, including the department, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, the Center for Excellence for Hazardous Materials Management, Eastern New Mexico University's Fish and Wildlife Club, The Nature Conservancy and the Audubon Society. Personnel and volunteers were able to complete 52 roadside survey routes and covered approximately 28,000 acres of prairie chicken areas.

## Nongame birds

Department personnel performed avian inventories on numerous wildlife management areas and are working with the Habitat Section to conduct restoration work for species of greatest conservation need documented on the inventoried properties.

Top: Wildlife drinkers are one of many projects completed with funds from the Habitat Stamp Program. Motion-camera photo.

Bottom: Many conservation partners contributed to conservation of lesser prairie chickens by participating in spring roadside surveys. NMDGF photo by Dan Williams.

# Fisheries Management Division

## Fish stocking

The department's Fisheries Management Division manages six fish hatcheries, including a warm water hatchery. Division biologists conduct routine fish surveys and make management recommendations on more than 160 waters around New Mexico.

In fiscal year 2015-2016, the department stocked more than 3.3 million triploid rainbow trout. The division also stocked more than 250,000 each of channel catfish, Rio Grande cutthroat trout and kokanee salmon, over 14 million walleye, 142,688 largemouth bass, 38,325 smallmouth bass and 39,987 Gila trout. The division grew thousands of larger trout to add to catchable-size deliveries under a large-trout program that was viewed favorably by anglers and is evaluating expansion of the program.

## Habitat improvements

Division biologists focused significant efforts on habitat improvement projects. Stream habitat improvement projects were completed on department-managed properties in Pecos Canyon and the Mimbres River. The work in the Pecos River is directed at improving sport fishing while the work in the Mimbres River is to improve conditions for native fish and amphibians.

## Native species restoration

Species restoration efforts for native trout continued with the treatment of Costilla Reservoir and the installation of a fish migration barrier on Willow Creek. The Costilla Reservoir treatment is the largest lake restoration undertaken by the department in over 40 years and will benefit Rio Grande cutthroat trout. The fish migration barrier on Willow Creek will protect an additional pure population of Gila trout, furthering the department's efforts to move this species toward delisting under the Endangered Species Act. The department has begun the environmental compliance process to restore Gila trout in Whitewater Creek.

## Invasive species control

The division inspected more than 10,000 watercrafts in an effort to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species. New regulations regarding inspection and Clean, Drain and Dry were passed by the State Game Commission and implemented by the division. A contractor for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation began watercraft inspections at Navajo and Elephant Butte Lakes with department oversight. New Mexico remains free of aquatic invasive species, but continued diligence is required.

## Angler satisfaction

The annual angler satisfaction survey indicated over 92 percent of all anglers were satisfied with their fishing experience and 56 percent were very satisfied. Fifty-six percent of anglers reported a preference for cold-water species like trout, 19 percent expressed a preference for only warm water species and 20 percent fish both cold- and warm water species.

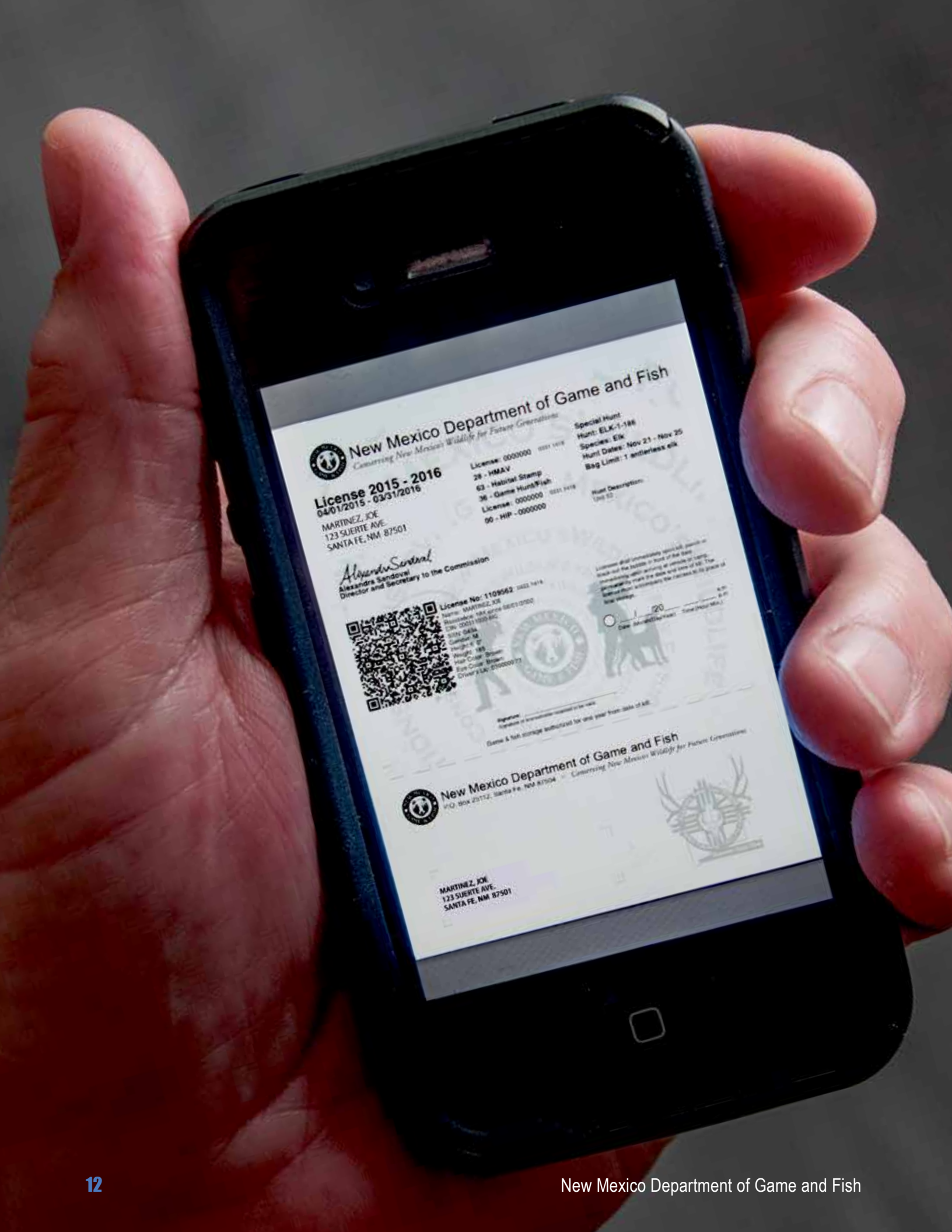


Fish Culturalist Cameron Gallegos inspects trout at Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery. NMDGF photo by Karl F. Moffatt.

## Fish Stocked in FY 2015

Channel catfish . . . . .	53,406
Gila trout . . . . .	1,819
Largemouth bass . . . . .	198
Smallmouth bass . . . . .	105
Kokanee salmon . . . . .	1,330
Rainbow trout . . . . .	576,877
Rio Grande cutthroat trout . . .	1,102
Walleye . . . . .	173
<i>(pounds of fish stocked)</i>	





# Administrative Services Division

The Administrative Services Division manages all financial operations and transactions for the department, which includes accounts payable, procurement, budget, department licensing operations and federal aid.

## License sales

The Licensing Section manages all sales of hunting and fishing licenses through its online licensing system, area offices and 147 participating vendors.

In fiscal year 2016, 208,957 fishing licenses, 55,374 combination game hunting and fishing licenses and 58,100 game hunting licenses were sold. In addition, 91,911 big-game licenses, 13,787 turkey licenses and 1,834 trapping licenses were sold. An additional 560,857 permits and stamp validations were sold/issued. During the 2015 Legislative session, House Bill 203 was passed and signed into law, which provided a 50 percent discount on licenses for active-duty military and veterans. During the 2015 license year, the department processed approximately 176,688 applications for special hunt drawings.

## Budget

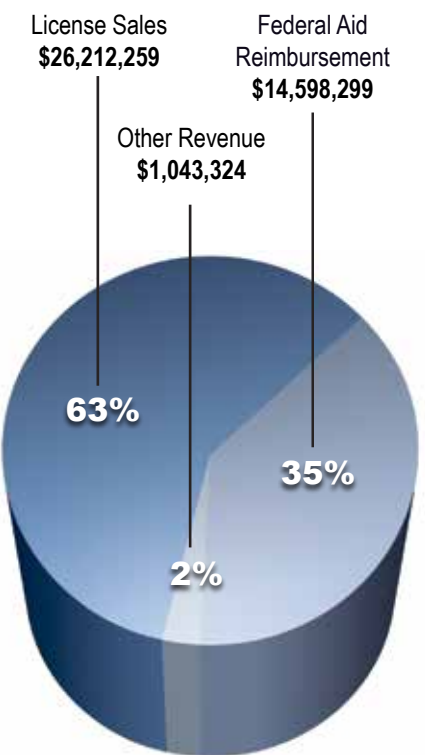
The Budget Section formulates, manages and adjusts the budget for the department. The New Mexico Legislature appropriated an operating budget of \$39,887,800 for fiscal year 2016. Employee salaries and benefits accounted for \$20,761,200 of the budget; contractual services accounted for \$3,762,300; and other expenses accounted for \$13,866,400. The Legislature also appropriated \$500,000 from the Game Protection Fund and \$500,000 from the Trail Safety Fund to be transferred to the Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department.

Employee salaries and benefits include salaries and insurance. Contractual services include anything involving the furnishing of labor, time or effort, such as engineering services. Other expenses can be anything from office supplies or vehicles to the transfer of money to another state agency provided it is for the direct benefit of New Mexico's wildlife, such as habitat restoration.

## Federal assistance

The department is reimbursed for projects approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration Program, funded in part by excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment and motorboat fuel.

The Federal Aid Section continues to utilize a web-based Federal Aid Cost Tracking System. This system allows all department employees to submit and report time electronically, eliminating paper reporting. The system maximizes the timeliness and accuracy of time reporting related to department grants. The Administrative Services Division continues to work



Department Revenue Sources

*Opposite: 100% online licensing has streamlined the license sales and application processes.*

with the department's Information Technology Division to improve and upgrade the system to provide the most user-friendly product possible.

The Federal Aid Section currently is managing 66 grants. Some of the projects for the fiscal year included aquatic invasive species management, habitat restoration, hunter education, wildlife surveys and lesser prairie chicken management.

The Share with Wildlife fund, generated by license plate sales and the state income tax check-off program, supported 21 projects in the fiscal year. Other grant-funded agency work included efforts to conserve and recover species listed as threatened or endangered under the New Mexico Wildlife Conservation Act. Many of these projects were partially reimbursed through federal grants and involved studies of a variety of species, including the Grace's warbler, red-faced warbler, Rio Grande chub, Rio Grande sucker, western river cooter, Gila monster, white-tailed ptarmigan and Gould's turkey.

### Procurement

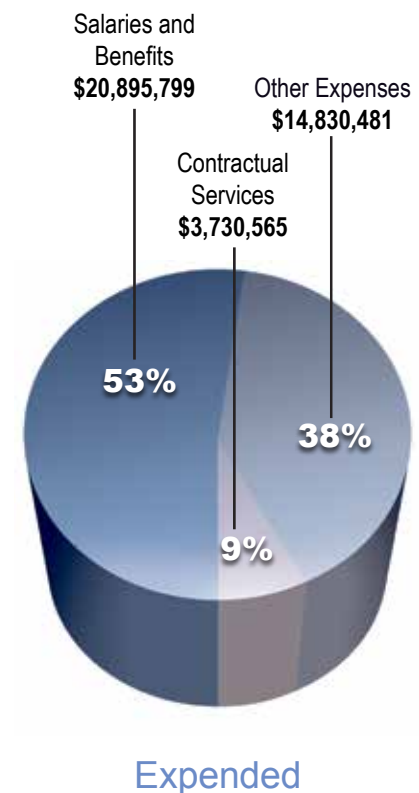
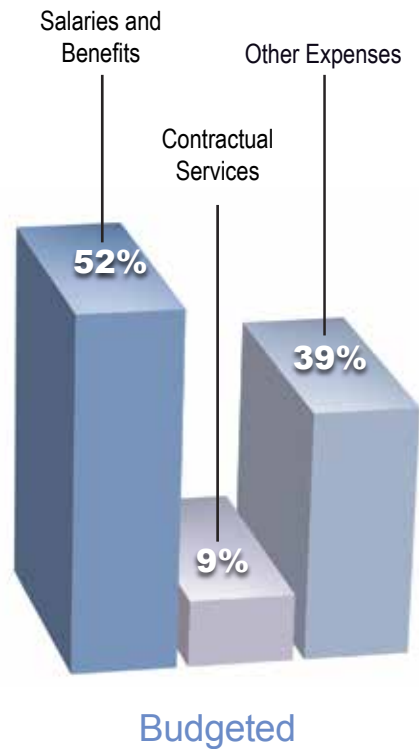
In fiscal year 2016, the Procurement Section issued one request for proposals, 37 statewide price agreements, 35 professional service contracts and 28 invitations to bid. The section worked closely with the department's Information Systems Division to acquire and install modern Computer Aided Dispatch systems in over 70 law enforcement vehicles. These systems provide essential access to real-time information, adding to the safety and well-being of officers in the field.

### Annual financial audit

The department's annual financial audit for fiscal year 2015 was completed on time. The auditor's report issued an unmodified opinion with no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies or noncompliance material to financial statements noted in the department's financial statements.

### WAFWA/CBMA

In September 2015, the Administrative Services Division hosted the annual conference for Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies/ Conservation Business Manager's Association. Conferences are held yearly for the business-related aspects of conservation. The conference included approximately 300 participants from 19 states. Events were held at the Albuquerque Balloon Museum, Bernardo Wildlife Management Area and Albuquerque Marriot and included department-sponsored skills-based training and guest speakers.

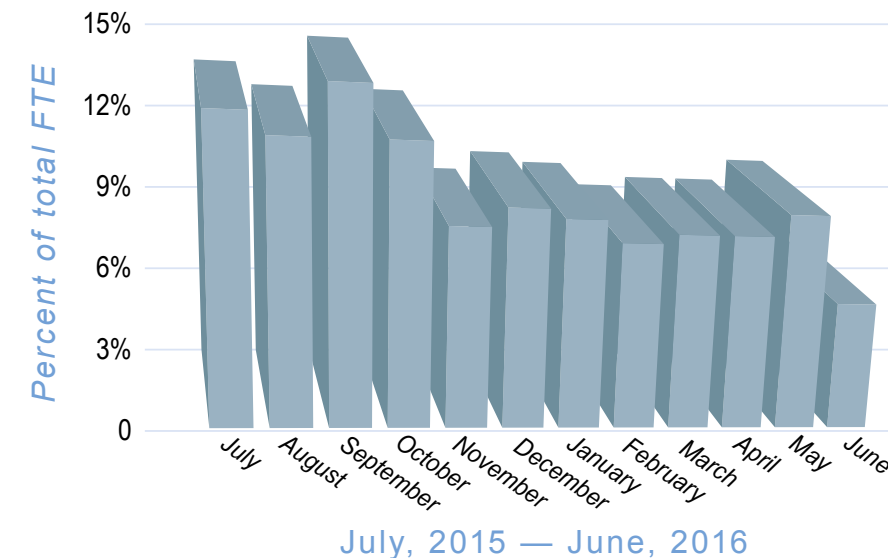


## Human Resources

### Employee retention

The Human Resources Department focused on strategies aimed at reducing the agency's vacancy rate and increasing retention. The retention strategies have been successful in enhancing the ability of the agency to adapt more effectively to meet the needs of the employees resulting from past organizational change. Embracing the ideal of the "lifer" employee as a coveted goal described by the director, the human resources strategies cater toward the longevity of each employee. These strategies have been accomplished by establishing a supportive work climate conducive to employee retention. The directorate has provided a vision for enhancing job satisfaction, loyalty and commitment, as well as increasing employee recognition for which the Human Resources Department staff incorporated into three key employee retention strategies and focal areas:

- Skill recognition - The department hired 89 employees, and of those, 39 were internal promotions. Hiring from within confirms the department's confidence in internal candidates' quality of skills and experience, and the department's value of institutional knowledge.
- Cost effectiveness - "Best bang for the buck" is achieved through ensuring that vacancies are filled to alleviate the need for one individual performing the essential job functions and tasks for multiple positions, which is a lead indicator for employee burnout.
- Training - Focusing on new employee orientation has been key for achieving a high rate of employee retention. Ensuring employees are prepared and knowledgeable about what will be expected of them is a key component to this day-long training. In addition, introducing new employees to members of the directorate, along with the division chiefs, by way of individual presentations throughout the day has been a



Fiscal Year 2016  
Vacancy Rate  
Decrease





# Information and Education Division

## Publications, media relations

The department took its most effective public outreach tool up a notch by completing a redesign of the popular “New Mexico Wildlife” magazine. The publication, which reaches more than 300,000 people who receive it quarterly in their local newspapers, was designed to appeal to younger readers and have a longer shelf-life. It also is available online through the department website. Public outreach through media also increased with the department’s improved email distribution system that sent out more than 80 news releases promoting department activities to as many as 160,000 media outlets, partners and customers at a time. Rules and information booklet publication continued in reduced numbers in FY 2016 as more and more customers got that information digitally from the department website. The department also continued its strong social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

## Website and video

The department’s redesigned website continued to impress customers and staff with a more sophisticated interface, a modern look and easy access to the license application and purchase system, education programs and information about department programs and wildlife conservation efforts. One vast improvement has been easy access from cell phones and other mobile devices. The department also stepped up its video outreach and capabilities with upgraded equipment that has been effective for use in educational programs, staff training, media outreach and wildlife management promotion.

## Marketing

The department continued efforts to attract more hunters and anglers by spreading the word about outdoor opportunities through radio advertising, fliers, billboards, participation at trade shows and other activities. The first annual Governor’s Special Hunt Auction and Awards Banquet in February raised more than \$162,000 for wildlife conservation programs while putting a public spotlight on the department’s special “incentive” hunts that support wildlife management of elk, bighorn sheep and other species.

## Archery continues to grow

The department’s National Archery in the Schools Program continues to introduce more youths to the sport. Approximately 25,000 students from about 130 schools across the state participated in 2016. Over 800 participants attended the state tournament in Albuquerque, which ranked among the largest archery competitions in the West and earned the program’s coordinator, Brian Guzman, an award from the chamber of commerce for bringing in almost \$200,000 of economic activity. Guzman was also honored for overseeing the fastest-growing, per capita, program in the country.



*Opposite: More than 3,500 children and their families attended the New Mexico Outdoor Expo to learn about fishing, casting, shooting and other outdoor skills. NMDGF photo by Dan Williams*

*Top: New Mexico Wildlife magazine got a facelift in 2016. It is published quarterly and distributed statewide. NMDGF design by Ron Short.*

*Bottom: Youth archery instruction. NMDGF photo by Ron Short.*





## Angling for our youth

The department's Fishing Skills and Aquatic Education Program hosted 160 fishing camps and 150 fishing skills presentations statewide, providing angling skills and ethics instruction to 12,300 students and adults. An additional 17 schools and 2,900 students also received training in fisheries management practices, water quality monitoring and angling skills. Fishing clinics and workshops were presented at schools, community centers, scouting groups, 4-H clubs, home-schoolers and youth groups. Five free fishing derbies and skills camps were conducted statewide on Free Fishing Day in June.

## Hunter Education

The department's Hunter Education Program conducted 179 classes attended by 4,456 students during the year. Another 938 students earned their hunter education certificates through the optional online course and 843 registered with the Mentored Youth Program.



The department and conservation organization partners also hosted 10 comprehensive training camps throughout the year to provide participants advanced, hands-on, hunter education and related training. Free weekend-long hunter education camps were conducted at the Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron and Camp Washington Ranch near Carlsbad, where 64 students earned their certificates. The department hosted free youth hunt camps, including a quail hunt on the Armendaris Ranch, a white-tailed deer hunt on the Wedding Cake Ranch in Clayton and separate antelope and elk hunts at Vermejo Park.

## Off-highway vehicle training

The department's Off-Highway Vehicle Training Program provided 48 classes during the year, graduating 91 youths and 75 adults. Over 400 students completed online training. The training course curriculum was revised to reflect changes in state law allowing the use of all-terrain vehicles and recreational off-highway vehicles on some paved roads.



Top: Fly-tying was one of many educational opportunities available to children at the New Mexico Outdoor Expo. NMDGF photo by Martin Perea.

Center: Department Hunter Education Program Coordinator Jennifer Morgan observes a student in the field. NMDGF photo.

Bottom: Conservation Officer Marcelino Peralta instructs a young rider during an off-highway vehicle training safety training session. NMDGF photo by Dan Williams.

## Promoting outdoor recreation

The department's annual Outdoor Expo at Albuquerque's Shooting Range Park attracted more than 4,000 visitors. The family friendly event featured pistol, shotgun, muzzleloader and archery ranges. The division also hosted the second annual Outdoor Adventures Hunting and Fishing Show in February at the state fairgrounds in Albuquerque. Over 6,000 people attended the outdoor show.

## Shooting sports

The department implemented plans to construct two rudimentary public shooting ranges on department-owned properties in Tres Piedras and the Urraca Wildlife Area in northern New Mexico. The department continues to work with communities and other partners to develop new shooting ranges and improve existing ranges to provide safe, clean, user-friendly places for the public to shoot. The department currently is working on plans for new or improved ranges in Cibola County, Clayton and Santa Fe.

# Information Systems Division

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish was one of four agencies selected by the New Mexico Department of Information Technology (DoIT) and Department of Finance Administration to have a Payment Card Industry gap analysis conducted to ensure credit card information is being securely handled and processed. The gap analysis identified areas where efforts by the department could be focused to ensure system security, and the division has made significant strides to meet and successfully address these areas. In addition, division personnel will participate on a state steering committee to assist approximately 35 other state agencies to address the security of credit information.

The division collected old, broken and obsolete IT equipment and cell phones from all department locations. Over three tons of obsolete IT equipment and 170 cellular phones were properly disposed or recycled.

The division completed setting up a presence at the DoIT data center to mirror Game and Fish systems at the Santa Fe office. This capability will duplicate the department's mission-critical systems and will be operational at all times. If there is an issue in Santa Fe, or the department needs to increase its resource levels to support demands when the systems are heavily tasked, the site will keep systems running.

The amount of data storage has been increased to accommodate growth and archiving/retention requirements. The connection speed between the data storage and servers has been increased to allow larger data and more people to access the storage without a reduction in response time. New information security components are in the process of being installed to increase the division's ability to monitor, detect and block intrusions and potential data breaches.

Working in consort with the department's federal aid section, the division on July 1 replaced the current Federal Accounting Cost Tracking System. The purpose of the system is to manage/audit hours and miles charged to federal grants and to ensure the department is reimbursed with federal money for these activities. The task is to develop an extension to the tracking system for employees to directly enter all hours instead of having employees submit their hours on paper and have the hours manually entered into the system by one person, which will reduce or eliminate data entry errors.

The applications team successfully implemented changes to the web applications used to sell/purchase licenses for the 2016 season and the hunting license application period, which started Jan. 13. The major modification was a 50 percent price reduction for active-duty military and veterans who are New Mexico residents. The hunting application deadline was 5 p.m. March 23. There were 174,936 applicants, a 3.6 percent increase compared with 2015. Fifteen percent of all customers claimed they were veterans and 1.5 percent stated they were active-duty and took advantage of the discount. Approximately 25 percent of customers who used the public license sales web site did so with a mobile-device.



The Information Services Division helps maintain numerous web applications and business systems that serve hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts. NMDGF photo by Russ Verbosky.



# Ecological and Environmental Planning Division



The Ecological and Environmental Planning Division coordinates the department's environmental review process. Staff provides technical assistance to municipal, state and federal government agencies and private landowners in protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat. The division implements the Share with Wildlife Program and maintains BISON-M, a database of New Mexico's wildlife species. It also represents the department to regional and statewide initiatives to develop and apply wildlife-related information management and planning tools.

## Technical guidance

The Technical Guidance Section works with private sector, state and federal agencies, community, nongovernmental organizations and other project proponents to provide information on wildlife and habitats within a project area and provide recommendations on projects to mitigate adverse effects to wildlife and habitats. Section biologists review and comment on Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Assessments, scoping documents, Forest Plan revisions and amendments, Resource Management Plan revisions and amendments, renewable and non-renewable energy development and transmission projects, communication infrastructure and a variety of other projects.

Technical Guidance staff worked with a broad range of partners including:

- New Mexico Department of Transportation for identification and planning for two wildlife vehicle collision mitigation projects funded by the Highway Safety Improvement Program: U.S. Highway 550 south of Cuba; and Interstate 25 through Raton.
- New Mexico Endemic Salamander Team activities on survey and monitoring projects, including evaluation of inventory methods to determine Jemez Mountains salamander response to landscape changes.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to update the nationwide permit coordination process.
- Local working groups, department property managers and project evaluation committees for funding and implementation of stream and riparian restoration, including the Water Trust Board Project Management Team (New Mexico Finance Authority) and River Stewardship Program (New Mexico Environment Department).
- The division, through Natural Heritage New Mexico, has provided data updates for the west-wide Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool currently hosted by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
- New Mexico Environment Department, Energy, Minerals and Natural



Top: Jemez Mountains salamander — federally endangered species. NMDGF photo by Mark Watson.

Bottom: Burrowing owls, considered a species of greatest conservation need. NMDGF photo by Don MacCarter.

Resources Department's Mining and Minerals Division, and Freeport-McMoRan for reclamation of historic mine, mill, and waste rock disposal sites in Pecos Canyon.

- New Mexico Copper Corporation on development of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Copper Flat Mine.
- A variety of working groups and committees to provide biological expertise and guidance, including the New Mexico Division of Forestry's Forest Stewardship Committee, Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Planning Steering Committee, Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program, local watershed groups, New Mexico Conservation Information System partners' working group, and the New Mexico chapter of The Wildlife Society.
- Forest planning under the 2012 planning rule.
- Renewable energy development companies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop pre-construction wildlife survey protocols, identify species of conservation interest and reduce potential for incidental golden eagle take at multiple sites, including at least two new major renewable energy projects in eastern New Mexico.
- Collaborative Forest Restoration Program project proposal review.

## Share with Wildlife and BISON-M

Share with Wildlife is a donation-based program that annually funds wildlife research, education, rehabilitation and habitat-enhancement projects. There were eight new projects funded for 2016 for which contracts were implemented with researchers and nonprofits to do work on a variety of nongame species. The department's Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M) database contains more than 6,500 species including all vertebrates and selected invertebrates in New Mexico. Information includes the taxonomy, status, distribution, habitat associations, food habits, life history, management practices and scientific references of the species. The database is available to the public at [www.bison-m.org](http://www.bison-m.org).

## Planning initiatives

The division was responsible for revision of the New Mexico State Wildlife Action Plan. The action plan is a required component of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program that allocates funds to each state to benefit at-risk wildlife species and their habitats to help prevent listing. All division personnel worked on the action plan revision throughout the fiscal year to revise and prioritize the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, tabulate the ecoregions and habitats across the state that provide habitat for wildlife and identify threats and conservation actions associated with those wildlife habitats in each ecoregion. Recent activity has focused on addressing stakeholder comments and concerns.

The division assisted with writing of management plans for new department wildlife areas at River Ranch and Double E Ranch and drafted a comprehensive management plan for Double E Ranch. In addition, the division has prepared a Conceptual Management Plan for the potential purchase of a parcel of property adjacent to the department's Red Rock Wildlife Management Area.



Top: River otters were reintroduced in 2008 to the Rio Grande watershed, where they are now thriving. NMDGF photo by Dan Williams.

Bottom: The department recently acquired the River Ranch in southwestern New Mexico and is developing a management plan for future conservation, management and recreation. NMDGF photo by James Stuart.



# Field Operations Division



The Field Operations Division received six new district officer positions and reclassified two former positions to sergeant/district wildlife supervisor. This reclassification gave the department the ability to add two additional supervisory districts in the regions of Tucumcari and Socorro. These two areas were recognized as needing additional officers to meet the increasing demands of public safety and customer service. Field operations now has much-needed upgrades in communications for law enforcement officers and other department staff. Officers now have high-watt, high-band radios, laptop computers in their vehicles with Computer Assisted Dispatch, and are receiving dispatch services from New Mexico State Police/Department of Public Safety.

## Operation Game Thief

Operation Game Thief received 216 tips from the public in fiscal year 2016, a 7 percent decrease over the previous year. As of June, reports of violations resulted in 74 charges being filed, many of which are still under investigation. OGT paid \$8,725 in rewards and received \$19,000 in donations.

## License revocations

The department collected \$87,150 in penalty assessments and \$8,350 in Parental Responsibility Act Reinstatement fees (334 obligors reinstated after coming back into compliance). The State Game Commission revoked the license privileges of 483 wildlife violators and suspended the privileges of 990 anglers and hunters who failed to comply with the Parental Responsibility Act.

## Field law enforcement

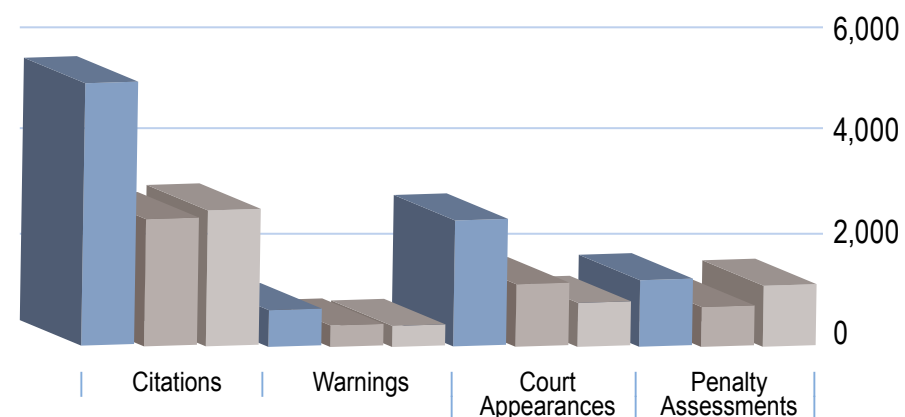
Conservation officers made over 71,000 field contacts while checking licenses and patrolling public, state trust, and private lands, streams and lakes. Conservation officers logged 44,688 hours in the field and issued 3,114 citations or criminal summons for various wildlife-associated violations. Approximately 1,493 of the citations issued were penalty assessments.

Top: Department conservation officers regularly conduct roadblocks in hunting areas to assist hunters and check for violations. NMDGF photo.

Bottom: Conservation officer Clint Henson assists some young anglers during a fishing clinic. NMDGF photo.

Number of Citations by Fiscal Year

- FY 2014
- FY 2015
- FY 2016



Officers also conducted 222 special operations, including roadblocks, decoy wildlife operations, saturation patrols and off-highway vehicle patrols. During the course of this past fiscal year, officers arrested 73 individuals with outstanding arrest warrants and conducted 22 search warrants.

## Outfitter and guide registration

There were 279 outfitters registered, generating about \$140,000. There were 1,418 individual guides registered, generating about \$90,000. The ability to use social media to find clients coupled with the increasing popularity for outdoor activities has led to an increase in unlawful guiding and outfitting. The 2016 draw audit revealed 182 invalid applications and officer investigations resulted in 112 rejected applications for various violations and fraud.

Complaints, investigations and convictions have resulted in five outfitter/guide revocations and/or suspensions, 10 registration denials and 20 individuals subject to revocation for various wildlife violations and fraud.

## Officer training and education

The department continues to send officers to specialized training to enhance their abilities. Trainings include: Wildlife Human Attack Response, General Police Instructor Development, Firearms Instructor Development, Defensive Tactics Instructor Development and Law Enforcement First Line Supervisor.

The department also partners with the New Mexico Department of Public Safety Basic Law Enforcement Academy and regional satellite academies. The department continuously sends specialized instructors to assist with multi-agency training at these law enforcement academies in the areas of defensive tactics, firearms, standardized field sobriety testing, driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs and off-highway vehicles. Approximately 300 hours of instruction was provided to various academies throughout the state.

The department has been actively recruiting and training conservation officer trainees throughout the year. Two hiring events have taken place since July 1, 2015. Approximately 500 individuals applied for conservation officer trainee positions, of which 154 were invited to test and interview for the position, and 15 were hired.

## Special investigations

In some circumstances special investigations are required for certain types of violations. Division personnel have developed, and is continuing to develop, a Special Investigations Unit. Illegal trophy and commercial poaching activities may require special efforts to detect, deter and prosecute suspects. Decoys, aerial and ground surveillance or other special law enforcement methods are used to apprehend poachers that may be out of sight of the law-abiding citizen. The investigative unit implements the most modern technologies. Wildlife forensics services, such as DNA analysis and bullet examination, are state of the art. These services are provided by agencies such as the New Mexico State Crime Lab, the Wyoming Game and Fish Laboratory, and the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Top: Department officers made more than 71,000 contacts with hunters and anglers in the field in Fiscal Year 2016. Some of those contacts were in the wilderness.

Bottom: An investigation yields an illegally taken elk. NMDGF photo.



*Like winds and sunsets,  
wild things were taken for granted  
until progress began to do away with them.*

*Now we face the question  
whether a still higher 'standard of living'  
is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free.  
For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese  
is more important than television.*

ALDO LEOPOLD (1887–1948)



**New Mexico Department of Game and Fish**  
*Conserving New Mexico's Wildlife for Future Generations*

[www.wildlife.state.nm.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us)