

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2019-21 BIENNIAL REPORT



Big Lake Sunset at Sandhill State Wildlife Area
Photograph courtesy of Shane Rucker



October 2021

State of Wisconsin
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October 15, 2021

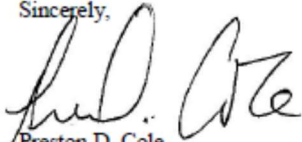
Governor Evers and Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature,

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, I am pleased to submit our 2019-21 Biennial Report. In accordance with s. 15.04 (1)(d) Wis. Stats., the report includes a review of performance and operations highlights and a summary of our agency's policy on flex-time and alternative work schedules.

It should come as no surprise that while the COVID-19 pandemic presented a multitude of challenges over the 2019-21 biennium, our staff remained steadfast in its commitment to protect the great people of Wisconsin and to protect our 84,000 miles of rivers and streams, 15,000 lakes, 800 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 190 miles of Mississippi River shoreline, over 5 million acres of wetlands, and 2 quadrillion gallons of groundwater.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding this report or if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Preston D. Cole
Secretary

**Department of Natural Resources
2019-21 Biennial Report**

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AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The Legislature created the department in 1967 by combining closely related conservation functions and combined them with newly emerging environmental protection programs. The department is administered by a secretary who is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Natural Resources Board establishes policy for the department and consists of seven citizen members who are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The department is organized with a headquarters office in Madison, five regional offices and over 165 other field stations and offices. The central office staff assists the secretary in directing the regions, which carry out the field operations of the department. Over 70 percent of the department's personnel operate from field stations outside of Madison.

The department coordinates the preservation, protection and regulation of the natural environment for the benefit of the people of this state and its visitors. Included in its objectives are water and air quality maintenance; water supply regulations; solid and hazardous waste management; fish and wildlife management; forest management and protection; providing parks and recreation opportunities; lake management; wetland, shoreland and floodplain protection; and law enforcement.

The department also coordinates federal, state and local aid programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal agencies, and it administers federal funds available for outdoor recreation and pollution abatement.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Division

The Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks plans and direct activities to protect, manage, conserve and wisely use the state's lands, plants, wildlife, fisheries, and recreational resources. This program's goals are accomplished by establishing objectives that include developing and maintaining game and nongame fish and wildlife populations; coordinating long-range programs of management and protection for Natural Heritage Conservation; and providing necessary access, opportunities, development and operations for statewide recreational and conservation activities within state parks, southern forests, wildlife and fish lands, public water bodies, scientific areas, and state natural areas.

Division programs include:

Wildlife Management -- protects and manages Wisconsin's wildlife populations, their habitats, and promotes wildlife enjoyment and appreciation for the benefit of current and future generations.

Parks and Recreation Management – provides citizens and visitors, of all ages and abilities, with the highest quality state parks, forests, trails, educational experiences, natural resource stewardship and services in their pursuit of a full range of outdoor recreational opportunities. The state park system boasts 49 state parks and recreation areas, more than 500 boat launches, 15 state forests, 16 state and national trails, over 5,000 campsites, plus thousands of acres for adventures.

Natural Heritage Conservation – works to conserve Wisconsin's native plants, animals and their habitats using science, collaborative approaches, and creative strategies. The program is responsible for managing and providing guidance on hundreds of non-game species throughout Wisconsin, including state and federally-protected species and their habitats. The program also manages the country's oldest and largest system of State Natural Areas which protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape and are used for a variety of recreational purposes.

Fisheries Management – manages fisheries activities in Wisconsin's 15,081 inland lakes, 44,000 miles of rivers and streams, 800 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, and 250 miles of Mississippi River frontage.

The **Office of Applied Science** – provides research and consultation services on statewide fish and wildlife priority issues. It is an independent unit, comprised of a fisheries research team and a wildlife research team, which reports directly to Division leadership.

The **Office of Business Services** – supports the work of the Division by providing centralized administrative services such as budget management, fiscal processing, technology support and communications.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Number of visits to the Wisconsin State Parks System.	15,100,000	15,300,000	15,200,000	15,900,000
Processing time for endangered resource reviews.	7 days	7 days	7 days	7 days

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Number of visits to the Wisconsin State Parks System.	15,300,000	15,400,000	15,500,000
Processing time for endangered resource reviews.	7 days	7 days	7 days
Percentage of approved fish quotas produced at State Fish Hatcheries that are stocked out.	90%	90%	95%
Cost per unit of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) samples	Reduce per unit sample cost by 2-3% from previous year.	Reduce per unit sample cost by 2-3% from previous year.	Reduce per unit sample cost by 2-3% from previous year.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Management

- In FY20 and FY21, **statewide CWD surveillance** was focused on annual areas of interest, disease assessment, disease detection, and hunter request testing for adult deer anywhere in the state. CWD surveillance was conducted within the Southern Farmland Zone, designated CWD surveillance areas, and a statewide sweep to include the second year of increased sampling in 19 counties in west-central Wisconsin and the first year of increased sampling in 18 counties in northern Wisconsin. In FY21 the sweep began in 17 counties in Northeast Wisconsin and also saw the implementation of the option for hunters to electronically submit CWD sample data through Go Wild.
- CWD **Adopt-a-Kiosk** and **Adopt-a-Dumpster** (AAD) programs continued, and FY20 was the first year that a cost-share option was available for AAD. For more information on CWD and CWD sampling and results please visit the [WDNR's CWD internet page](#).
- In 2020, with the cooperation of participating counties, the Division provided **wildlife damage abatement assistance** to 964 agriculture producers who experienced damages to commercial agricultural crops caused by wild deer, elk, bear, geese, and/or turkey.
- In 2020, in cooperation with USDA-Wildlife Services, the **Wolf Conflict Program** responded to 148 wolf complaints, verifying wolves involved in 98 of these reports. Compensation was paid for verified livestock losses, missing calves, hunting dogs and pet dogs.
- Through the **Deer Donation Program**, 1,609 deer were donated by hunters in 2020, resulting in approximately 64,360 pounds of ground venison distributed to food pantries across the state.
- In FY2019 and FY2020, 100 **ruffed grouse** were trapped annually, examined, and translocated to Missouri as part of a **species restoration program**. Wildlife Management provided health assessments, disease testing, and handling assistance to the Missouri Department of Conservation for a ruffed grouse translocation effort. The combined efforts of the exam and travel plans resulted in zero mortalities of birds during transit and successful drumming counts in areas where the ruffed grouse were released.
- Monitored over 100 elk within the newly **established Black River elk herd**, including annual calf collaring and winter trapping for collar replacement. This herd continues to grow at about 15-20% per year since initial introduction in 2015-2016.
- Produced and stocked 131,100 **pheasants** (FY19 and FY20 combined) from the **Poynette State Game Farm**. Production efforts were reduced in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)**
 - In FY20 Wildlife Management had 109 new enrollments, 86 re-enrollments, staff conducted 201 site visits and prescribed management recommendations for 64,127 acres.
 - In FY21 Wildlife Management had 141 new enrollments, 124 re-enrollments, staff conducted 304 site visits and prescribed management recommendations for 96,000 acres.
- A new Mess Hall was constructed at **Crex Meadows** and a new building was constructed at **Navarino Wildlife Area**. Both facilities will provide a place for engaging the community and will facilitate the experiential learning of future generations of natural resource professionals.
- **Disabled hunter access projects** were recently completed at **Powell Wildlife Area** (in cooperation with a local family) and **Woodboro Wildlife Area**. An ADA-accessible viewing and hunting blind was

installed at Powell Wildlife Area in Vilas County. At Woodboro Wildlife Area in Oneida County, barrier rocks on several hunter walking trails have been adjusted to allow entry by all-terrain wheelchairs and an ADA accessible hunting blind was constructed on a wildlife opening. In Wildlife Areas statewide there are approximately 50 ADA hunting blinds and 13 wheelchair accessible wildlife observation blinds.

Parks and Recreation

- Set **record attendance** in FY20 and FY21, with FY21 attendance totaling over 20 million visitors.
- **Resident annual sticker sales** increased 43% and non-resident annual admission sticker sales increased 142% by the end of FY21.
- **Campground occupancy** continued to increase; by the end of FY21, occupancy had increased close to 30%.
- Converted all **campsites to 100% reservable**.
- Implemented an **online park admission program (Your Pass Now)**.
- Completed the **redesigned Eagle Tower at Peninsula State Park** and for the first time, allowed visitors of all physical capabilities to enjoy the views of Lake Michigan. The DNR received a generous \$750,000 private donation from the Friends of Peninsula State Park that helped with the construction project. The tower offers panoramic views of the park, surrounding islands, the Upper Michigan shoreline and local communities – making it a popular spot for viewing sunsets and taking selfies. And while the stairs are available for quick access, the canopy walk provides an educational and picturesque way to access the scenic views the tower has to offer.
- Continued implementation of **electronic payment kiosks** throughout the state, which have processed over \$2 million in sales of daily and annual admissions by the end of FY21.

Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC)

- Completed **prescribed burns** on 7,754 acres of prairie, grassland, oak savanna, and barrens habitats managed by program.
- Controlled **terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species** on 10,345 acres of State Natural Area properties and other public lands.
- **Coordinated over 300 volunteers** who worked over 11,438 hours to improve and restore habitats on 88 State Natural Area properties. This volunteer effort improved habitat conditions across 3,339 acres of public lands.
- Completed 1,618 **rare, threatened, and endangered species** field visits and desktop reviews providing technical assistance or consultation for permitted and reviewed projects.

Fisheries Management

- Completed the **first statewide Trout Management Plan** in 2019. The plan sets goals, objectives, strategies, and actions for Wisconsin trout management for 2020-2029. The plan, covering Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout and Lake Trout in inland lakes, ponds, streams, and Wisconsin's Great Lakes tributaries, provides strategic direction for inland trout management in Wisconsin.

- Completed the **statewide Sturgeon Management Plan** in 2020. The plan maintains, protects, restores, and promotes sturgeon populations and their habitats in Wisconsin using science-based research and balanced management for the benefit of the resource and all stakeholders.
- Stakeholders were engaged to develop a **statewide Walleye Management Plan** that is scheduled to be completed by December 2021. The final plan will set goals, objectives, strategies, and actions to sustain and enhance walleye populations and habitat throughout Wisconsin.
- Overall **fishing license sales increased** during the 2019-21 biennium.
 - Resident fishing license sales increased 14 percent during the spring and summer fishing season (March-July) in 2020;
 - Inland trout stamp sales increased 20 percent;
 - Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Stamp sales increased 15 percent; and
 - Nonresident first-time fishing license buyer sales increased 36 percent during this time period.
- **Improved 79 miles of trout stream habitat** to enhance trout fishing opportunities throughout the state.
- **Stocked 11,814,837 fish** to enhance fishing opportunities for anglers throughout the state.

Office of Applied Science (OAS)

- Celebrated the 75th anniversary of the **Northern Highland Fishery Research Area (NHFRA)** near Boulder Junction. The NHFRA is one of the longest-running fisheries research projects and serves as an umbrella project for multiple fisheries research initiatives. These projects collectively have contributed to the understanding of how fish communities respond to fishing regulations, environmental change and angler practices.
- Completed deer and predator tagging as part of the **Southwest Wisconsin CWD, Deer and Predator Study**, the largest deer research project ever undertaken in Wisconsin. Over 1,200 animals were captured and marked during the field phase of this groundbreaking project. The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that impact deer and deer populations and combine them into a single model.
- Continued **Snapshot Wisconsin** - a statewide network of trail cameras to monitor wildlife year-round. This project relies on the help of more than 2,000 volunteers and focuses on developing a cost-effective way to monitor all species of Wisconsin wildlife. Snapshot Wisconsin logged its 50 millionth photo in 2020 and launched a data dashboard—an interactive tool for the public to visualize the data.
- Launched a new **study to better understand panfish population trends** and their responses to angling and predator populations in Wisconsin lakes.
- Completed a **study examining factors impacting population growth of Ruffed Grouse** in the Upper Great Lakes Region.

Forestry Division

The Division of Forestry is responsible for developing and implementing programs to protect and sustainably manage the state's forest resources. The 16 million acres of forest land and the millions of urban trees in Wisconsin significantly contribute to our quality of life. It plans, coordinates and administers current and long-range programs for the protection, improvement, perpetuation and sustainable use of Wisconsin's forests, as well as the protection of life, property and resources from wildfire.

The purpose of the Division of Forestry is to work in partnership to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin's forest ecosystems to supply a wide range of ecological, economic and social benefits for present and future generations. It accomplishes its purpose through an organizational structure that is significantly decentralized, with less than ten percent of the staff located in the central office. The Division has found that this level of decentralization is the most successful for meeting the public's need for service and interaction.

The four sub-programs within the Division of Forestry are the Bureau of Applied Forestry, the Bureau of Field Operations, the Bureau of Forestry Business Services, and the Regional Forestry program. The Field Operations are dispersed across the State and are located within three Forestry Districts.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Total number acres enrolled in Managed Forest Law program.	3,373,400 acres	3,402,652 acres	3,388,400 acres	3,445,456 acres
Number of acres of private forestry outreach to previously unengaged forest landowners.	200,000 acres	227,948 acres	200,000 acres	215,204 acres
Wildland fire response time.	<30 minutes	15.2 minutes	<30 minutes	14.3 minutes

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Total number acres enrolled in Managed Forest Law program.	3,403,400 acres	3,418,400 acres	3,433,400 acres
Number of acres of private forestry outreach to previously unengaged forest landowners.	200,000 acres	200,000 acres	200,000 acres
Wildland fire response time.	<30 minutes	<30 minutes	<30 minutes

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)

The GNA is a collaborative agreement between the U.S. Forest Service and DNR to perform forest management and restoration activities on the **Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF)**. Many partners assist in implementation such as counties, private forestry consultants, contractors, associations, and other agencies. Primary goals of the agreement are to increase management and implementation of CNNF's land management plan, provide forest products to the local economy, and collaborate to improve health and resiliency of forestlands and watersheds within Wisconsin. During FY20 and FY21, the Division established **49 timber sales** in the national forest. In addition, a total of **14 restoration projects** were implemented that covered areas of catastrophic event response, wildlife and botany surveys to silviculture prescription writing and aspen stand assessments.

Aeronautics Team

- Acquired and stationed two drones at each DNR hangar. One drone for **high resolution work** and one for **thermal imaging searches and surveys**. Drones were used successfully on forest health missions and invasive species detection and monitoring.
- Completed 4 months of flying in **support of wildland fire detection and suppression** support. The Team was able to complete most forestry, wildlife, and survey missions despite Covid-19 restrictions.
- Worked closely with Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), on numerous **search and locate missions** over 2019 and 2020.
- Flew **reconnaissance for several natural disasters**: severe flooding in southcentral Wisconsin and high wind/tornado damage across central and northern Wisconsin. Photographically documented damage which was incorporated into the WEM data base for use by both governmental and civilian agencies.
- Continued to fly extensively for the **Gypsy Moth** program to control populations.

LeMay Forestry Center

The LeMay Forestry Center designed, fabricated and assembled a new group of heavy-duty trucks and vehicle to update aging equipment, including fourteen new three-ton fire engines to serve on the front lines of wildland firefighting technology. The center also built and modified twenty-four smaller three quarter-ton and one-ton trucks to address **fire suppression and prescribed burning needs**. Five new squad vehicles were modified and outfitted for the WDNR's Bureau of Law Enforcement. In addition, the Center newly designed, built and outfitted twelve tracked utility vehicles (UTV's) to provide a **quick response vehicle** for remote wildland fire suppression needs.

Prescribed Burning Technology Integration

- Used the WisFIRS Public Lands application and the Individual Forest Fire Reporting System (IFFRS) for creating prescribed burn plans, dispatching resources, and fire reporting. These applications let the public know when they can use their **burning permit**, when prescribed burns and wildfires are happening, assessing habitat after a burn, etc.
- In 2020 and 2021, the Division **coordinated 367 prescribed burns** on nearly 40,000 acres.

Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The Division saw **increased participation by private forest landowners** in the state's MFL Program over the past biennium. During 2020 and 2021, more than 72,600 acres were enrolled to become **sustainably managed forest lands**. Research into the impact of MFL enrollment on harvest yields show that small account MFL harvests generate 33% more wood per acre than individually or family-owned lands that are not enrolled.

Public Safety and Resource Protection Division

The Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection (PSRP) provides public safety, resource protection and promotion of the safe and responsible use of Wisconsin's natural resources. PSRP's primary objective is to achieve voluntary compliance by the public through a three-pronged approach of enforcement, education, and community-based warden practices to ensure fair and equal treatment.

PSRP responsibilities include:

- Public engagement through directed patrols and complaint response to address specific issues and problematic activities.
 - PSRP directed patrols (vehicle and foot patrols) emphasize observations of a specific activity or issue and encourages contacts (warden initiated) with the user public.
 - Patrol efforts are directed to the following: sport fishing (trout, walleye, sturgeon and fish runs); commercial fishing on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River; hunting (deer, turkey, waterfowl, small game, bear); night hunting; safe firearm use; boating; snowmobiling; off-highway vehicle use; state lands, state parks, and state forest use; habitat protection; environmental protection; and forest protection.
- Support of department-wide law enforcement regulatory and managerial activities.
- Administration of safety education programs for hunting, boating, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and snowmobiles in partnership with volunteer instructors and web-based learning.
- Outreach and educational presentations to the public on the responsible use and the application of both environmental and natural resource recreational laws and regulations.
- Timely investigation of all violation complaints, and if warranted, referral to the attention of the judicial system.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Maintain or reduce the average number of recreational fatalities; off-highway vehicle (snowmobile, motorcycle and UTV/ATV), and boating and hunting related fatalities per 100,000 combined users. ¹	4.3 per 100,000	3.80 per 100,000 ²	4.3 per 100,000	5.17 per 100,000 ²

¹Data collected on calendar year basis

²Revised from what had previously been reported in September 2020.

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Maintain or reduce the average number of recreational fatalities; off-highway vehicle (snowmobile, motorcycle and UTV/ATV), and boating and hunting related fatalities per 100,000 combined users. ¹	4.53 per 100,000	4.53 per 100,000	4.53 per 100,000

¹Data collected on calendar year basis

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Environmental Protection:** Staff continued to ensure public health and safety by resolving environmental complaints and violations through the **stepped enforcement civil process**, which is a series of incremental actions designed to resolve violations at the lowest level appropriate for the circumstances.

Environmental Enforcement Data Summary			
Enforcement Action	2019	2020	2021*
Cases Accepted	203	162	94
Notices of Violations	221	154	95
Enforcement Conferences	176	135	77
Citations	72	51	38
Consent Orders	22	19	15
Referrals	21	20	34
Cases Closed	184	161	114
<i>*2021 data as of September 2021</i>			

- **Recreational Incidents** – As the use of recreational vehicles continues to increase, staff have continued proactive efforts to **protect recreational vehicle users** through a combination of enforcement activities, education (outreach and safety programs) and community-based warden practices.
- **Parks and Forest Enforcement** – Finalized the migration of **law enforcement services to state park, state forest, and forest properties**. Law enforcement services have been fully integrated with these properties and provide a **consistent level of services** to the public through standardized hiring, training, and supervision of law enforcement professionals.
- **Recruit, Retention, and Reactivation (R3)** – Awarded grants to promote R3 partnership opportunities – Shooting Range Grant Program (13 grants = \$471,158), Angler Grant Program (7 grants = \$56,086.62) and Hunter Grant Program (6 grants = \$65,970). In addition, the R3 program implemented an email marketing campaign to **re-engage lapsed hunters and anglers**.
- **Emergency Response** – During the biennium, PSPR provided search, rescue, and general emergency response services for several statewide or regional **COVID-19 support activities, weather events and civil unrest events**. COVID-19 activities include helping to secure and distribute personal protective equipment and other medical items needed for pandemic response efforts. Weather events include floods, windstorms, and snow events. Civil unrest events include those that took place in Racine and at the State Capitol in 2020 and 2021.
- **Radio Upgrade Project** – Utilized earmarked funding from the 2019-21 budget to acquire, deploy, and update modernized Motorola radios for conversation wardens and other credentialed division personnel. This successful project provides high-quality and secured radios to law enforcement staff, which provides a **higher degree of officer and public safety** and allows for radio programming efficiencies.

- Think Before you Start (Sled Safe Initiative)** – Partnered with the County Sheriff’s Departments around the state, the Department of Tourism, and the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs to launch Wisconsin’s first annual Think Smart Before You Start campaign on January 22, 2021. The campaign was a weekend-long effort directed at **snowmobile safety messaging, heightened enforcement and increasing visibility** to the public. Together, over 100 DNR wardens and local law enforcement staff patrolled over 2,400 miles of public snowmobile trails and 248 frozen waterbodies. There were zero fatal snowmobile incidents in Wisconsin during the campaign weekend.

Div. Public Safety & Resource Protection Sled Safe Effort Summary	
Wardens Participating	84
Snowmobilers contacted	1,388
Media Contacts	6
Snowmobiles assisted	4
Miles of trails patrolled	2,058
Frozen lakes patrolled	230
Citations Issued	32
Top citation issued	trail pass/registration
Warnings Issued	337
Top warning issued	trail pass/registration
OWI Arrests	2 (one UTV)

Environmental Management Division

The Environmental Management Division protects human health, safety and the environment by working in partnership with citizens, communities, businesses and advocacy groups. The Division recognizes the interrelationships between air, land and water resources, and relies on environmental indicators, feedback from others, and self-evaluation to continually improve services. The Division's programs include:

Drinking Water and Groundwater – Protects the quality and quantity of the state's groundwater resources and ensures the safety of drinking water.

Water Quality – Manages activities and land uses that affect water quality and public health and safety. Its primary objective is to provide an integrated watershed approach to managing these activities that includes policy development, watershed planning, point source regulation, water quality assessment, and water resource protection and restoration.

Air Management – Protects human health and the environment while accommodating economic growth by developing air quality implementation plans and collaborating with local, state, regional and international partners to meet state and federal air quality standards.

Waste & Materials Management – Protects public health and the environment by encouraging recycling, waste minimization, and pollution prevention, proper management of solid and hazardous wastes, and voluntary compliance and participation in preferred waste management practices

Remediation and Redevelopment -- Supports the remediation and beneficial reuse of contaminated sites across Wisconsin.

Office of Great Waters – Implements a comprehensive program to protect Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, the Mississippi River, and their watersheds, identify problems and solutions and serve as a contact point for the Great Lakes community in Wisconsin.

Office of Emerging Contaminants – Supports division programs identification, research, and policy and program development into chemicals that have recently been identified as potentially posing human health and environmental concerns.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Processing time to issue an individual air construction permit (from completed application to permit decision).	58 days	56 days	58 days	58 days
Acres of abandoned/contaminated property cleaned and made available for redevelopment.	800 acres	913.1 acres	800 acres	1,105.6 acres
Maintain Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (majors) water permit backlog at under 10 percent. ¹	<10%	11.1%	<10%	12.3% ²
Number of wells inspected during construction.	1,000	1,061	1,000	751 ³
Percentage of community public drinking water systems inspected at least once in the past three years. ¹	100%	100%	100%	98.6% ²
Percentage of noncommunity public drinking water systems inspected at least once in the past five years. ¹	100%	99.83%	100%	99.2% ²

¹Data collected on calendar year basis.

²Updated from the partial year % percentage that had previously been reported in September 2020.

³Field work was halted between March-June due to COVID-19.

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Processing time to issue an individual air construction permit (from completed application to permit decision).	58 days	58 days	58 days
Acres of abandoned/contaminated property cleaned and made available for redevelopment.	800 acres	800 acres	800 acres
Maintain Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (majors) water permit backlog at under 10 percent.	<10%	<10%	<10%
Number of wells inspected during construction.	1,000	1,000	1,000
Percentage of community public drinking water systems inspected at least once in the past three calendar years.	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of noncommunity public drinking water systems inspected at least once in the past five calendar years.	100%	100%	100%

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Environmental Management Division publishes an online quarterly digest of highlighted news and accomplishments. The *EM Insight* can be viewed at the website below and can be subscribed to for ongoing updates.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/about/divisions/EM/Insight.html>

Drinking Water & Groundwater

- In June 2021 the DNR completed a **three-year Central Sands Lakes Study** (2017 Wisconsin Act 10) to define and study the relationship between groundwater withdrawals, lake levels, and its impact on three Central Sands lakes. While the three study lakes fluctuate naturally, DNR determined that current groundwater withdrawals for irrigated agriculture significantly reduce water levels on two of three study lakes: Long and Plainfield. The study shows that the three lakes' levels are being reduced as a result of the collective impact from many high-capacity wells rather than any one high capacity well. For example, over 200 high-capacity wells around Long Lake collectively result in significant impacts to the lake's ecosystem and recreational uses. As a result of the study, DNR recommended creating and implementing a water-use district to manage Central Sands water use at a regional level. More information can be found at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wells/HighCap/CSLStudy.html>
- DNR launched a new **internet-based resource page for owners and operators of public water systems** serving small businesses. The resource page provides quality "real-time" information for these systems with the goal of increasing compliance, increasing efficiency and consistency of work completed by department and county staff, increasing customer satisfaction for small business owners when navigating state and federal drinking water regulations, and providing better health protection for consumers.
- The Drinking Water & Groundwater program implements the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act which requires small public water systems that operate seasonally to submit a certification of their water system start-up procedure and drinking water samples via mail or email. In FY21, DG piloted a program for those public water systems to submit their certification online. The **Seasonal Start-up Online Reporting Tool (SSORT) saved time and money for thousands of small business owners** and saved a time for DNR staff who used to stuff envelopes and mail out brochures.

Water Quality

- Water Quality received approval for site specific criteria (SSC) for three impoundments on the Wisconsin River. The **cost savings (economic benefit) for facilities** that will be associated with establishing SSC for the three waterbodies is estimated to be \$11.5 million per year.
- The Water Quality program coordinated with other programs on the **Milwaukee Dredged Material Management Facility (DMMF)**, resulting in on-schedule project advancement of 60% and 90% design phases. This effort is led by the Remediation and Redevelopment and OGW programs with supporting technical review provided by Water Quality and Waste and Materials Management.
- The Water Quality program continued **monitoring surface waters and fish for PFAS compounds** and collected paired fish and water samples to support protection of public health and development of PFAS standards.
- The wastewater program conducted **compliance assistance** and development of program instructions for wastewater (and others) operators on how to maintain certification while focusing on their primary duty of safely running their facilities during the pandemic. This effort is leading DNR to

plan for the transformation of the examination component of the Operator Certification Program such that **examinations will be administered remotely** instead of in-person.

- The Water Quality program developed and finalized, with public participation, the TMDL Implementation Guidance document. One of the underlying goals of the Clean Water Act is to **restore all impaired waters** so they meet applicable water quality standards. One of the key tools to meet this goal is the **development of a total maximum daily load (TMDL)**. A TMDL is developed after consideration of all sources of pollution to an impaired waterbody and is stated as the amount of a pollutant that the waterbody can assimilate and not exceed water quality standards. Water quality targets used during TMDL development may be promulgated using numeric water quality criteria or calculated based on promulgated narrative water quality criteria in consideration of local data and/or nearby reference sites.

Office of Great Waters

The Office coordinated several projects that addressed polluted areas on the Great Lakes, otherwise known as Areas of Concern (AOC). Some of the more notable accomplishments were as follows:

- **Lower Menominee River AOC:** After 30 years of pollution cleanup and restoration projects, it became the first of five AOCs to be **removed from a list of polluted places** on the Great Lakes. The DNR and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) provided the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office with a [final delisting report](#) summarizing the cleanup and restoration actions. As part of the delisting process, Wisconsin and Michigan held a public comment period from March 9 - April 24, 2020 and hosted a public meeting on April 9, 2020. The EPA has taken the final step with the U.S. and Canadian governments to officially remove the AOC designation.
- **Lower Green Bay & Fox River AOC:** Removed the Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor AOC impairment in April 2020. Completion of the Fox River contaminated sediment remediation enabled habitat restoration projects to move forward: initiated planning for the Duck Creek Delta, Long Tail Point and De Pere Dam habitat restoration projects.
- **St. Louis River AOC:** Removed the Excessive Loading of Sediment and Nutrients to Lake Superior AOC impairment in April 2020. Continued or completed the following projects: Avian habitat restoration at Interstate Island, Piping Plover Habitat Restoration, Wild Rice Restoration and Little Balsam Creek Fish Passage. Agreements are in place and design is agreed on for the Pickle Pond habitat restoration project, and work has begun on the Howards Bay sediment remediation project.

Beneficial use of dredge materials:

- Worked with permits staff and **City of Kenosha** to advance beneficial use of dredge materials from Kenosha Harbor for nourishing shoreline sediments. As a result of this project, Kenosha was able to host, for the first time, The Tall Ships Festival in August 2019.
- Working with the US Army Corps of Engineers, conducted additional beneficial use projects to improve public beaches in **Two Rivers and at Kenosha Dunes State Natural Area**, and restored Piping Plover habitat in **Allouez Bay** and Tern nesting habitat at Interstate Island in the **St. Louis River estuary**.

Lower Fox River Cleanup

The 2019-21 biennium marked the end of a successful **17 year-long cleanup in the Lower Fox River** through a collaboration between the DNR, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), tribal groups and many private organizations.

In 2004, the DNR began oversight of the project in partnership with EPA when the cleanup started along 39 miles of the Lower Fox River to address massive amounts of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contaminated sediment. The project **removed 6.5 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment** through hydraulic dredging, installing engineered caps spanning over 275 acres of riverbed to contain PCBs. Sand was also installed to cover 780 acres. Approximately 10 billion gallons of river water was restored in what is one of the largest sediment cleanups worldwide.

Air Management

- Counties along the Lake Michigan shoreline, an area historically impacted by elevated ozone concentrations have seen a 25% average **reduction in ozone concentrations** since 2001.
- All counties in Wisconsin monitor concentrations of fine particles well below the federal air quality standards and are “**in attainment**”, according to EPA Concentrations of this pollutant in the air has dropped 35% statewide since 2001.
- **Sulfur dioxide emissions have decreased** statewide by over 95% over the last 20 years.

Waste & Materials Management

- Moved waste transporter licensing to an **online renewal and payment system** and implemented digital signatures for annual reporting by some 1700 hazardous waste generators and by companies beneficially reusing high-volume industrial byproducts.
- Protected the residents of a small Wisconsin village by securing some \$2.5 million in EPA funding and an emergency response by federal onsite waste removal personnel to **abate a potentially catastrophic fire and explosion hazard** posed by a large abandoned warehouse containing more than 400,000 pounds of unstable and toxic used batteries.
- Completed a major statewide characterization of municipal solid waste disposed of in Wisconsin landfills. The study estimated the relative proportions of more than 80 types of materials, providing a foundation for **improving Wisconsin’s management of the recyclable materials and wastes** its residents and businesses generate.
- Staff engineers and specialists conducted 1,108 **on-site solid and hazardous waste inspections** across the state to ensure safe and nuisance-free operations to protect public health and the environment.
- Together with the DNR’s Air Management program, staff worked to ensure the **cleanup of a significant release of mercury** to the environment from a licensed mercury recycling and recovery facility, while prompting substantial equipment upgrades, engineering controls and monitoring changes to prevent further mercury releases and protect public health and the environment.

Remediation & Redevelopment

- Approved completion of cleanups at 612 contaminated sites between July 2019 and July 2021.

- Evaluated a total of 2,496 spills reported to DNR between July 2019 and June 2021, with DNR responding to and closing 2,012 of these spills.
- [Petroleum Environmental Cleanup Fund Act \(PECFA\)](#)--Oversaw the sunset of the PECFA program on June 30, 2020, as prescribed in s. 292.63(3)(ac), Wis. Stat. The PECFA program previously provided reimbursement of eligible expenses for the **investigation and cleanup of petroleum contamination** from product storage systems. Since August 1987, over 13,000 sites have been granted case closure under the program.

Brownfield Redevelopment

- At approximately 110 acres, the **Menomonee Valley Industrial Center (MVIC)** site once stood as the one of the largest of Wisconsin's environmentally challenged areas. For more than 125 years, the property was a heavily used manufacturing site known as the Milwaukee Road Shops. Trains and rail cars were built and serviced there as part of the Industrial Revolution that began in the mid-1800s. By the 1960s, the site was underutilized. It was eventually abandoned and remained unused for two decades. There were six miles of underground clay-lined sewers, an on-site wastewater treatment plant and contaminants were found ubiquitously throughout the site.

In May 2020, following almost 30 years of planning, investigation, and cleanup, the MVIC obtained case closure. The Industrial Center now stands as a shining example of what can become of a brownfields property when a community applies vision and determination to a project. A dozen businesses call the Center home, providing more than 1,400 living-wage jobs at places like Palermo's Pizza, JF Ahern and Charter Wire. A section of the Hank Aaron State Trail cuts through the heart of the property, and a world-class sustainable stormwater treatment system dots the landscape. There's also greenspace, with roughly 45 acres of native prairie and woodland, and a restored riverbank for the Menomonee River.

Office of Emerging Contaminants

- In 2019, the **Wisconsin PFAS Action Council (WisPAC)** was established in response to Executive Order #40 and calls for the establishment of an interagency council to coordinate the work on PFAS in Wisconsin. WisPAC convened 9 times during this period, received more than 500 comments from the public and hosted three public listening sessions regarding PFAS work, and delivered the **Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan** to the Governor and the people of Wisconsin in December 2020.
- The DNR **manages more than 35 active PFAS sites** in Wisconsin. Staff continued to work to build tools to help identify and prioritize potential sites – including expanded GIS tools and leveraging databases for various media and programs.
- One of the more high-profile sites is near the JCI Tyco facilities in Marinette and Peshtigo. DNR continues to **host regular public listening sessions** with the communities. Private well sampling has been conducted of over 400 private water supply wells. DNR continues to oversee the implementation of work plans and coordination with the community and responsible parties. The Fish and Wildlife Program and Department of Health Services helped with **deer tissue sampling** in 2020, which resulted in a “do not eat” consumption advisory for deer liver tissue.

In Fall 2020, La Crosse identified PFAS contamination near its regional airport. DNR worked with the **City of La Crosse and the Town of Campbell on French Island**, where more than 1200 residences rely upon private wells for their drinking water. Multiple DNR programs worked in partnership with the Department of Health Services to help **sample 200 private residences**, ultimately leading to an interim health advisory for the entire island and for the DNR to provide temporary emergency in-home water for any private residence not already receiving water from the city of La Crosse. DNR staff have worked in partnership with local government leaders, hosted multiple public listening and information sessions, and continues to work with the Town of Campbell as they work toward **long-term water solutions**.

- DNR continues to **sample and monitor for PFAS** across bodies of water and media to better identify its location and how it behaves. All surface water sampling data is available on the website, which includes long-term trend data. More than 100 waterbodies have been sampled for PFAS in surface water and 55 waterbodies for PFAS in fish; 17 consumption advisories have been issued for fish because of PFAS contamination.
- Worked in partnership with Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) and the firefighting community to **conduct a survey of fire departments** in the state to help inform the development of resources like FAQs, posters, and best management practices to support the firefighting community with the prohibition on the use of PFAS-containing class B firefighting foam.

Internal Services Division

The Division of Internal Services (Division) provides support and services to WDNR staff throughout the state to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. The Division's programs include:

Facilities & Lands – Provides professional technical services related to planning, development, and maintenance of WDNR facilities, with responsibility for the acquisition, disposal and maintenance of the Department's vehicles and heavy equipment.

Finance – Administers and manages the Department's fiscal and procurement functions.

Human Resources (HR) – Recruits, develops, and maintains a diverse, qualified and productive workforce, and coordinates payroll and benefits functions.

Technology Services – Provides information management consulting, systems development and computer processing to best meet the Department's business needs.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Percent of simple open records requests fulfilled within 10 business days. ¹	95%	91.2%	95%	91.1%
Number of lost workdays per 100 employees resulting from worker's compensation claims.	2.5 days	6.0 days	2.5 days	5.5 days
Percent of department-managed property under an approved master plan.	70%	40%	75%	42%

¹Data collected on calendar year basis

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Percent of simple open records requests fulfilled within 10 business days.	95%	95%	95%
Number of lost workdays per 100 employees resulting from worker's compensation claims.	4.0 days	3.5 days	3.5 days
Percent of department-managed property under an approved master plan.	45%	55%	65%

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Facilities & Lands

- Completed all major construction of the **Kettle Moraine Springs Fish Hatchery**. The new hatchery addresses much of the cold-water stocking gap in the Great Lakes while meeting new phosphorus discharge requirements in the Milwaukee River watershed. Additionally, the design of the facility allows for the continued and expanded delivery of fry (juvenile fish) to private growers and includes a modular design concept that allows for private partnership expansion and use of the facility.
- Coordinated with other WDNR programs to facilitate **planning processes for department-managed lands**. This included the preparation of final master plan documents for the following ecological regions: Northeast Sands, Western Prairie, and Blue Mounds State Park. All plans were developed through an extensive public input process.
- Completed the construction of capital development projects for **improving outdoor recreation, customer service, and property experiences**, including:
 - Little Falls Dam – Willow River State Park;
 - Eagle Tower – Peninsula State Park;
 - Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Processing Center – Poynette; and
 - DNR Southeastern Regional Headquarters – Milwaukee.

External Services Division

The Division of External Services (Division) serves as a primary entry point to DNR for the public, businesses, and local government; facilitates cross-divisional integration and project management; and invests in sustainable infrastructure projects.

The Division's programs include:

Watershed Management – Manages activities and land uses that affect water quality and public health and safety. Its primary objective is to provide an integrated watershed approach which encompasses policy development, watershed planning and regulation, habitat protection, and water quality assessment.

Waterways – Manages activities and land uses that affect wetlands, Public Trust and public health and safety. Its primary objective is to provide regulatory oversight for dam safety and land use planning and activities in and near waterways and wetlands including wetland fill, water withdrawal, waterway structure placement, grading, floodplain zoning and shoreland zoning, among other things.

Office of Communication -- 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.

Community Financial Assistance – Administers grant and loan programs and works closely with local governments and interested organizations to develop and support projects that protect public health; natural resources; the environment; and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Environmental Analysis and Sustainability (EAS) – Provides a single point of contact to businesses and governmental agencies that enhances their ability to meet and exceed environmental and economic objectives. It facilitates cross-agency coordination on important project and policy proposals, leads social science research for internal programs, provides laboratory services and certification, and ensures proactive and clear WDNR engagement and communication with business, internal and government customers.

Customer and Outreach Services (COS) – Serves as a first point of contact for many public inquiries regarding the interpretation of regulations pertaining to natural resources use and management; sale of outdoor recreational licenses and permits; registration of boats, snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles and off-highway motorcycles; and the titling of boats. It manages license and registration sales and general information service delivery at DNR Service Centers, online sales and statewide DNR call center operations. It is responsible for the development and implementation of Go Wild, which is used to issue license and off highway recreational vehicle privileges for natural resources users. Finally, COS manages business outreach services for contracted DNR sales agents.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020	Actual 2020
Number of small business contacts made through Small Business Environmental Assistance Program.	85,000	137,150	85,000	128,628
Processing time to issue waterway individual permit decisions (measured from the date of receipt of a completed permit application to issuance of the permit decision).	70 days	65 days	70 days	65 days
Processing time to issue wetland individual permit decisions (measured from the date of receipt of a completed permit application to issuance of the permit decision).	70 days	65 days	70 days	65 days
Processing time to issue stormwater construction site permit decisions.	30 days	19 days	30 days	18 days
Percent of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses purchases on-line.	45%	45%	50%	56%

2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
Number of small business contacts made through Small Business Environmental Assistance Program.	95,000	95,500	96,000
Processing time to issue waterway individual permit decisions (measured from the date of receipt of a completed permit application to issuance of the permit decision).	70 days	70 days	70 days
Processing time to issue wetland individual permit decisions (measured from the date of receipt of a completed permit application to issuance of the permit decision).	70 days	70 days	70 days
Processing time to issue storm water construction site permit decisions.	30 days	30 days	30 days
Percent of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses purchases on-line.	50%	50%	50%

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Watershed Management & Waterways

Water E-Permitting System

- The Department continues to implement **improvements to electronic permitting** to provide customers the ability to apply for permits online, submit permit compliance documents, and to check the status of their permit application. The system includes the following:
 - Electronic payment;
 - Electronic signature;
 - Improved online application functions and clearer understanding of required attachments;
 - Dashboard features to search and track the status of submittals and public notices; and
 - Mapping features to improve identification of project areas.

Wetland Mitigation

- Launched a new website to share the status and location of all wetland banks and Wetland In Lieu Fee Program projects. This website is available at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wetlands/wwct>.
- A wetland mitigation biennial report is also available at https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Wetlands/2021_Biennial_Mitigation_Report_Final.pdf

Dam Safety and Floodplain Zoning

- A final draft action plan for dam modernization has been developed to strategically evaluate options to **streamline and improve the dam safety program**.

Community Financial Assistance

- Awarded a total of **5,414 grants** to local governments, tribes, lake districts, lake and river associations, fire departments, dry cleaners, nonprofit conservation organizations, and individuals through forty-one distinct grant programs totaling over \$144 million.
- Awarded eighty **Clean Water Fund loans** totaling over \$587 million; forty-one **Safe Drinking Water loans** totaling over \$148 million; and sixteen **Private Lead Service Line Replacement** Funding Program awards totaling over \$12 million. In total, awards were made to 103 different Wisconsin communities.

Environmental Analysis & Sustainability

Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act

- Completed a strategic analysis of wild rice to inform the development of a **comprehensive statewide wild rice management plan**. This was the culmination of a 5-year interdisciplinary effort that included close collaboration with a wide variety of wild rice stakeholders, including tribal governments and GLIFWC.

Flood Response

- Major rain events in southern and western Wisconsin led to flood disaster declarations. DNR across many programs including Environmental Analysis spent dedicated hours **assisting County Highway and County Emergency Managers** serving as primary contacts for local government, WisDOT, WEM, and FEMA as impacts to road and bridge infrastructure were quantified and repaired after these significant flood disasters.

Transportation Policy

- Secretary Cole and his Wisconsin Department of Transportation counterpart, Craig Thompson, signed an updated and revised **interagency cooperative agreement**, reaffirming the collaborative agreement

to minimize the environmental impacts of constructing and maintaining highways, roads, bridges, culverts, airports, railways and harbors.

Virtual Project Site Reviews

- In the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the department's energy, utility and transportation liaison programs rapidly developed and implemented a **virtual desktop project site review process** that enabled essential infrastructure construction to continue when pandemic hygiene restrictions did not allow for in-person site visits.

Hunter, Angler and Property User Surveys

- The department's social science team conducted a number of studies and surveys to inform department policy regarding season structures and harvest goals. Particularly noteworthy achievements include:
 - A detailed **evaluation of crossbow use and season structure** in Wisconsin and other states requested by the Natural Resources Board
 - A survey aimed at identifying the influences driving Wisconsin gun deer hunters to drop out or "lapse" from license buying requested by the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board as part of a larger directive to explore the impacts of crossbow use on deer hunting in the state.
 - A **comprehensive study of state park and forest visitors**.
 - A statewide survey of Wisconsin residents regarding their **awareness of and attitudes towards elk** that examined public tolerance for various elk behaviors, preferences for management actions in response to potential human conflicts with elk, and preferences related to the elk hunting in Wisconsin.
 - A **statewide survey of Wisconsin resident waterfowl hunters** and Conservation Patron License holders regarding their waterfowl hunting behaviors and opinions on various aspects of waterfowl hunting and regulations in Wisconsin.
 - An online input form requested by the Natural Resources Board to **allow the public an opportunity to comment on wolf management issues** prior to drafting an updated wolf management plan. The information provided through the input form is most relevant to identify issues and concerns, and to find commonalities and points of difference within the range of attitudes and opinions reported by commenters.

Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP)

- SBEAP continued to **help small businesses** across the state navigate the state's environmental regulatory framework. Through webinars, one-on-one assistance, webpages, and the small business assistance help line, the program recorded over 260,000 small business contacts.

Green Tier Auditor Training

- The Green Tier program worked to **develop and implement an online professional auditor training course**. The 9-module course includes a history of the program and the state's Green Tier law, how the program measures success, an overview of participation requirements, and the similarities and differences between ISO 14001 certified systems and Green Tier's Functionally Equivalent environmental management systems (EMSeS).

Customer & Outreach Services

- Transitioned all hunting and fishing license sales to online or via licensing agents during the Safer at Home stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policy On Flexible Work Schedules (in accordance with s. 230.215(4), Wis. Stats.)

The Department of Natural Resources recognizes the benefit for employees and Department operations to have a variety of work schedules and alternative work patterns. Further, the Wisconsin legislature finds and declares under Section 230.215, Wis. Stats., *That employment practices which provide flexibility in scheduling hours of work often result in increased worker productivity, reduced absenteeism, improved employee morale and a more economical and efficient use of energy, highways and other transit systems.*

Alternative Work Schedules include flexible schedule variations and telework options. Many factors are considered prior to the approval of an alternative work schedule, or to offer these benefits as part of a recruitment strategy. At the same time, it is important to review and consider these options as there are business benefits for the Department and employees.

Alternative Work Schedules allow the Department to accommodate employees with varying scheduling needs and provides an incentive to employees, yet it allows the Department to maximize efficiency of agency operations, maintain and improve its level of services to the public, and facilitate energy conservation and employee productivity.