

# A How-To Guide on Broadening Agency Constituencies

*A cooperative project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Colorado State University examining how state fish and wildlife agencies can broaden their base of support.*



# A How-To Guide on Broadening Agency Constituencies

*A cooperative project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Colorado State University  
examining how state  
fish and wildlife agencies can broaden their base of support.*

**By Cheryl Kolus**  
**Department of Journalism and Technical Communication**  
**Colorado State University**  
**Fort Collins, CO 80525**

*in conjunction with*

**Donald Zimmerman, Ph.D., Advisor**  
**Colorado State University**  
**and**  
**Verlyn Ebert and Dwight Guynn, Project Leaders**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Division of Federal Aid**  
**Management Assistance Team**  
**1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 300**  
**Fort Collins, CO 80525**  
**(970) 282-2000**

*So, you want to formulate and implement a program to help your agency reach out to new and more diverse publics? You want to develop a good relationship with your state legislature, or expand your endangered species program, or promote better relationships between consumptive and nonconsumptive users? With some knowledge, planning, and a lot of hard work, you CAN do all of the above! The following information was gathered as part of an academic partnership between Colorado State University and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Management Assistance Team. The recommendations contained in this guide are the result of a student master's project on state fish and wildlife agencies and their constituencies.*



## Background

Why should state fish and wildlife agencies be concerned about broadening their constituency base? Well, you probably already know why, since you're reading this. But let's talk about some of those reasons.

First, the American population is changing. More and more people are living in urban areas and are thus becoming more removed from the natural world. An increasing percentage of the population are senior citizens, perhaps no longer physically able to enjoy the great outdoors. Also, minority populations are becoming less in the minority. Because it's traditionally been the white race that is involved in hunting and fishing (Lapointe et al. 1993, Brown 1997), this means there is a smaller number of consumptive users, overall. And we all know that state fish and wildlife agencies have historically depended upon the loyal support, both financially and otherwise, of these consumptive users.

In recent years, however, not just consumptive, but also nonconsumptive uses of wildlife have been on the decline. Although statistics show only a 1 percent decrease in the number of hunters and anglers between 1991 and 1996, according to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U.S. Department of the Interior et al. 1997),

many agencies are feeling the pinch of fewer license sales (U.S. Department of the Interior 1997). And, even as the number of nonconsumptive users decreases, those that do exist are becoming more vocal and are demanding more products and services than ever before from their state fish and wildlife agencies (Lapointe et al. 1993, Thorne et al. 1992, Wright et al. 1991). Many of them appear willing to offer support (Decker et al. 1996, Hamilton 1989); however, in most cases they have yet to make significant financial contributions in return for these products and service.

A second factor in the need for agencies to broaden their constituencies is the possible passage of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), currently being considered by the U.S. Congress. The act includes what is popularly known as Teaming With Wildlife, a federal program that would dedicate hundreds of millions of dollars to the states annually for wildlife conservation, recreation and education. If CARA becomes law, it would mean that not only will many state

nonconsumptive and educational programs have a new lease on life, but also that states will have to provide the 10 to 25 percent matching funds required to access CARA funds. Another result will be the emergence of a host of new agency stakeholders, whose ideas and demands will need to be considered and met.

Third, *you* told us you need to reach out to new constituents! In a 1997 assessment of fish and wildlife management leaders nationwide, conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management Assistance Team (MAT), two major issues of concern to state agencies emerged: (1) the need for agencies to broaden their constituencies, and (2) the need for agencies to secure an adequate, stable funding source. Often, the two issues go hand-in-hand.

So, to help you address these issues, MAT conducted a study in cooperation with Colorado State University to determine just how agencies can reach more audiences and gather public support, and/or obtain alternative funding. We researched six states whose fish and wildlife agencies appeared to be successful in one or both of these areas. We studied seven programs in the six states that used public involvement in their formulation, their passage or implementation, and/or their operation. From August

1998 through June 1999, we conducted personal, in-depth interviews in each state with key people who were involved in or knowledgeable about the program in question. These people included not only agency employees, but also legislators, commissioners, nonprofit organization staff members, private business professionals, and others. More than 120 interviews were completed. The interview questions were designed to determine *how* the programs were developed and how public support was gathered (except in Missouri, as explained below).

***The seven programs we studied were:***

■ The *Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund*, which as of 1992 uses lottery revenues to provide funding for outdoor interests, including Colorado Division of Wildlife programs;

■ The Illinois Department of Natural Resources' *Conservation Congress*, a formal public participation process implemented in 1992, and *Conservation 2000 (C2000)*, a multi-agency funding initiative passed in 1995;

■ Missouri's *Conservation Tax*, a one-eighth of 1 percent state sales tax passed in 1976 that helps support Missouri Department of Conservation programs;

■ Virginia's *House Bill 38*, a

state code amendment passed in early 1998 providing the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with 2 percent of the state's 4.5 percent sales tax on hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related equipment;

■ Arizona's *Heritage Fund*, which was passed by voters in 1990 and uses lottery revenues to provide funds for the Arizona Game and Fish Department; and

■ The 1996 passage of Arkansas' *Conservation Tax*, also a one-eighth of 1 percent state sales tax, some proceeds of which go to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

More information on each program is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Program profiles.**

State Agencies Benefitting	Program Name	Date	Description
Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), Arizona State Parks Board (ASPB)	Heritage Fund	Passed on the ballot: 1990	Annually, \$10 million in state lottery revenues go to support five specific program areas of AGFD. Most of the money is allocated through internal or external granting processes; partnerships with outside organizations are common. Another \$10 million in lottery proceeds is dedicated annually to ASPB.
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), Arkansas Division of State Parks, Department of Arkansas Heritage, Keep Arkansas Beautiful	Conservation Tax	Passed on the ballot: 1996	<p>Revenues from a one-eighth of 1 percent state sales tax are allocated among four state agencies, with AGFC receiving 45 percent, or \$17 million a year. AGFC attempted four times to pass the Conservation Tax amendment on the ballot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·1984: voted down</li> <li>·1986: withdrawn from ballot due to conflict with Food Stamp program</li> <li>·1994: withdrawn due to legal technicality</li> <li>·1996: passed</li> </ul> <p>The first two attempts were through initiative petitions; the last two were put on the ballot by the legislature.</p>
Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (CDPOR), Local governments, Nonprofit conservation organizations	Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO)	Passed on the ballot: 1992	Fifty percent of state lottery revenues is dedicated to the GOCO Trust Fund, which is administered by a governor-appointed board. Annual allocations to GOCO are capped at \$35 million (in 1992 dollars). Four outdoor-related program areas benefit: wildlife, outdoor recreation, open space and natural areas, and local government outdoor projects. Most of the money is allocated through a granting process; matching fund partnerships are encouraged. Grants to CDOW provide money for habitat and species protection, watchable wildlife, and education. More than 100 grants have been awarded to CDOW since 1994.

State Agencies Benefitting	Program Name	Date	Description
Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)	Conservation Congress	Implemented: 1992	A mock Congress that encourages participation of constituents in the IDNR decision-making process. It has 118 regional and state delegates and a series of regional caucuses, and culminates in recommendations made to an Assembly of Delegates every three years. Although strictly advisory, most recommendations are implemented by the IDNR to some extent, at least.
IDNR, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	Conservation 2000 (C2000)	Passed through legislature: 1995	A 6-year, \$100 million program initiated by the governor. Money comes mostly from general revenue funds. It funds nine programs (four of IDNR) across three state natural resource agencies. Programs partner IDNR with other entities and use a regional, ecosystem-based approach to natural resource management.
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)	Conservation Tax	Passed on the ballot: 1976	A one-eighth of 1 percent state sales tax, now providing more than \$75 million annually to MDC, which amounts to approximately 60 percent of the agency's budget.
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)	House Bill 38 (HB 38)	Passed through legislature: 1998; First allocation: October 2000	Will provide VDGIF with \$12 million annually by allocating 2 percent of state sales tax revenue collected on sales of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching equipment. Qualifying purchases and figures used to determine the 2 percent allocation are based on information from the <i>National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation</i> .

## Missouri Conservation Tax

In Missouri, we took a different approach. The effort behind Missouri's conservation tax has been well-documented and is considered by many to be a model of success. The tax has been in effect for more than 20 years now; thus, we decided to find out what the Missouri Department of Conservation has done with all this money so far, and how the tax has helped the agency broaden its constituency. The results of the Missouri interviews can be found in the supplement provided at the end of this report. Our discussion here, therefore, is based solely on our results from Colorado, Illinois, Virginia, Arkansas, and Arizona.

## Recommendations

From the information we gathered in these five states, commonalities among the states' programs emerged, as did other factors that appeared to play major roles in the effectiveness of the programs. We also delved into communications research; specifically, we learned, based on previous studies, what factors are thought to contribute to the success of a public information campaign (Rogers et al. 1987). Such a campaign is really what we're talking about here, as agencies reach out to new and diverse publics to gather support for their programs.

Putting it all together, we've come up with a list of 21 recommendations that all state fish and wildlife agencies can use to develop their own success stories. Below are explanations of these recommendations, along with examples of how they were used in the programs we studied.

### ***Develop good relationships.***

Begin now to foster good relationships with constituents, legislatures, actual or potential opposition, civic groups, media, and other state agencies. Promote your agency and the work it's done; show everyone the quality services the agency is capable of. Doing so will develop a network of agency support available when you need it.

*"The Department had been doing its homework and began setting the stage for this a long time ago. They'd been building constituent support for several years."*

– Virginia citizen, in reference to VDGIF and HB 38

*"We'd had a supportive network already set up...so we had the constituent base there. And those people knew other people..."*

– VDGIF employee

*"Natural resource agencies need to think and operate in a more business-like manner. Actions and services should be market-based and they should engage more in self-promotion."*

– Missouri Department of Conservation employee

***Consider a multi-agency program.***

This can bring on board a wide range of supporters, and the costs and labors of the effort can be shared. Also, relationships among the agencies and their employees can develop that may prove useful down the road. Form a coalition among the agencies to reduce “turf wars”, and emphasize that each agency is tied to one another’s success.

■ Arkansas’ Conservation Tax supports the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Arkansas Division of State Parks, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and Keep Arkansas Beautiful.

■ Arizona’s Heritage Fund revenues are allocated equally to the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Arizona State Parks Board.

■ Colorado’s GOCO program provides grants to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, local governments, and some nonprofit land conservation organizations.

■ Illinois’ C2000 funds programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

***Encourage internal staff and board or commission involvement.***

Enlist the help of employees and commissioners from the beginning so they will be dedicated and motivated in their support throughout the process.

■ VDGIF assigned each of its board members specific legislators to talk to about HB 38. Senior staff members also trained other employees on how to give group presentations, and provided them with feedback forms so they could report back on how the presentations went.

■ In Arizona, Arkansas, and Colorado many employees helped collect petition signatures on their own time in order to get their initiatives on the ballot.

⊗ *Most respondents from all programs noted the existence of some internal concern. Some employees feared dealing with nonconsumptive user demands or public input into and criticism of how they do their jobs. Others were concerned that the effort or the program itself was too time-consuming and stressful. Still others wondered how the new money would be managed and spent, and how this would change the agency.*

***Follow a written plan.***

Specify objectives, individual responsibilities, time lines, targeted audiences, media use, and messages. Be flexible. Evaluate your progress throughout the plan's implementation and make changes to the plan as needed.

■ Nearly all respondents from all states said having some type of plan -- whether they called it a campaign plan, a communications plan, an action plan, or whatever -- was key to their successes.

■ Ongoing polls measured public support and showed agencies how they were progressing in Colorado, Arkansas, and Arizona.

***Be aware of the law.***

Enlist the advice of your state attorney general to be sure of what your agency and its employees, as public servants, can and can't do legally. Also, knowing the law in advance can ward off legal technicalities that could otherwise slow down your effort.

■ Most of the state agencies made sure their employees understood the laws prohibiting them from lobbying.

■ VDGIF and AGFC both consulted often with their state attorney generals to be sure that agency employees' actions and promotional materials met legal requirements. VDGIF also confirmed the legality of spending agency money on the HB 38 effort.

⊗ *Arkansas' 1994 Conservation Tax amendment was withdrawn from the ballot (as were all of the amendments that election year) due to a legal technicality: the amendments were not published for public review in the manner required by the state constitution. Although not the fault of AGFC, the withdrawals perhaps could have been avoided.*

***Solicit public input in the development phase.***

Gather input from constituent groups and the general public about what they want from your agency and what types of programs or funding sources they would support.

■ All of the states held public hearings or conducted surveys early on to collect input on funding options or to determine what the public wanted from the agencies.

■ Citizens committees ran the ballot campaigns in Arkansas, Arizona, and Colorado.

***Solicit the support of your state government.***

Educate legislators and the governor in advance about services your agency provides, how it operates, and what its funding sources are. Approach the legislature with a documented need and ask for a financial audit or a task force or committee to study the problems and issues facing your agency. At the least, go to them with your written program plan, define your need and why this plan will work, and ask for their support.

■ Five of the six programs studied used a legislative committee or task force to study the agencies' funding situation, funding options, or the states' natural resource needs.

■ Virginia relied heavily on a State Auditor's report that confirmed VDGIF would go broke by 2000 if nothing was done. Having this outside, credible verification of the agency's need really helped gather support for HB 38, respondents said. And HB 38 passed unanimously in the legislature.

■ In 1994 and 1996, the Arkansas state legislature, after coming to understand the dire straits of the agencies involved, chose the Conservation Tax amendment as one of the three amendments the legislature can choose itself to have placed on the ballot.

⊗ *Sometimes it's tough to get the legislature's support. Arizona's Heritage Fund and Colorado's GOCO initiatives both passed in spite of their legislatures' unfavorable attitudes. In each instance, however, at least a few legislators were supportive.*

***Involve non-agency individuals or organizations.***

State chapters of conservation, hunting, or fishing groups may be able to provide financial support and expertise for your effort. As non-public entities, they have more freedom than do public agencies in soliciting donations and support. Consider hiring an independent campaign manager and enlisting the help of someone familiar with the political system. An individual who is well-respected and has good relations with both consumptive and nonconsumptive groups can be of help, also.

■ The Nature Conservancy was a major player in Arizona's, Arkansas', and Colorado's efforts.

■ Independent consultants or public relations firms were hired to help run the campaigns in Arizona, Arkansas, and Colorado.

■ Arizona respondents often described the benefit of having on board a particular wildlife commissioner, because of his great rapport

with both the consumptive and nonconsumptive user communities.

***Do research.***

Conduct surveys and focus groups to gather facts on audiences' awareness of issues and their media use. Use the results to determine your messages and the channels used to distribute them. Continue to do polls throughout your campaign to find out how the public is supporting your effort, and if any changes to your plan are necessary. Check into what other states have done.

■ IDNR researched other states' natural resource congresses when formulating its Conservation Congress.

■ IDNR also conducted a survey through its newsletter to determine what types of information audiences wanted to learn about, and what methods should be used to disseminate that information. Results were used to develop recommendations for the Congress.

■ Arkansas used Missouri's Conservation Tax as a model.

■ The Arkansas Nature Conservancy funded two public surveys whose results were used to determine the messages for the 1994 and 1996 campaigns, as well as AGFC's spending plan should the tax pass.

■ Results of Arizona's public surveys were helpful in formulating the five project areas within AGFD that the Heritage Fund would support. They also showed that the public supported the lottery as a funding source, and that "Heritage" was a popular choice for the name of their program.

■ Arkansas and Colorado both had media use surveys conducted by their consultants; these helped determine which communication channels to use to disseminate information effectively.

■ Colorado, Arizona, and Arkansas all continued public polling and surveys throughout their campaigns to determine current support for their initiatives.

***Use supporting documentation.***

Consider an outside source to document the agency's financial need. Use previous studies, conducted by either your agency or outside sources, as well as other relevant information and statistics to support your cause.

■ The State Auditor report on VDGIF was extremely helpful in verifying the agency's financial woes.

■ Virginia also used a U.S. Census Bureau report citing the state's per capita wildlife expenditures (and promoted the fact that Virginia fell behind its arch rival, West Virginia!).

■ Arkansas' campaign coalition compiled a background report on the economic impact of state conservation agencies.

■ Colorado made use of a previous Colorado Department of Natural Resources report on the state of Colorado's environment.

***Draft legislative language carefully.***

If at all possible, *do not* include a substitution clause (which will allow the legislature to reallocate your money if deemed necessary). Try to allow for revenue enhancement down the road; i.e. instead of your agency receiving a lump sum, use a method that will allow for inflation.

■ Colorado made sure GOCO's amendment language prohibited the legislature from reallocating GOCO's share of lottery proceeds, as had happened before (lottery revenues were originally intended to provide funding for outdoor interests but had been redirected by the legislature to pay for capital construction needs).

■ GOCO's share of lottery revenues is capped, but the amount will be adjusted each year to allow for inflation.

■ Arizona also included language in the Heritage Fund proposal to prohibit the legislature from redistributing the Fund's share of lottery revenues.

■ Illinois deleted the word "macrosite" from the language of its C2000 legislation, because the term implied large areas of restricted-use lands and made some opposing groups nervous.

Ⓢ *Arizona's Heritage Fund revenue is capped at \$10 million annually, regardless of inflation, for each state agency. In addition, after the Fund's passage, the legislature withdrew the general revenue funds that were being allocated to the Arizona State Parks Board. In Virginia, HB 38 states that VDGIF can receive no more than \$13 million*

*annually from the tax revenue. Although the agency does not see this as a problem presently, it may need to be addressed in the future.*

***Develop messages wisely.***

Be sure your messages relate to the targeted audience members; show them how your program will affect them. Messages should not focus on what the agency needs, but rather on how the program will meet the needs of the wildlife or the users. Be consistent when referring to your program; choose one name and stick to it.

■ Many respondents from all states noted that a broad, overall theme was used, but that messages were tailored to different groups to emphasize the direct benefits the program would provide them.

■ Based on research into public attitudes and awareness, Arkansas' original message focus in 1994 was on crisis situations: state parks' facilities were not well-maintained, historic buildings were in disrepair, wildlife research and public access would be discontinued or cut back due to lack of funding, and litter was destroying the landscapes. Then in 1996, since the public was more aware of these crises, the message focus changed to "Save one for the kids!" and

"Keep Arkansas natural forever."

■ With the cry of "Take back the lottery," GOCO promoted the fact that the original intent of the lottery - to provide revenues for outdoor interests - was not being met. Also, the campaign emphasized the loss of open space and natural resources due to the rapid growth and development of Colorado, and how GOCO funds could help preserve natural areas for future generations.

■ Illinois promoted public participation in IDNR's decision-making process as the prime benefit of the Conservation Congress.

■ Illinois' C2000 effort emphasized the partnership aspect and multi-user benefits that could result from C2000 projects.

***Use your existing contacts.***

Use the network of support your agency has developed to help spread the word about the program. Constituent group leaders can enlist their members' support, quickly increasing the exposure of your program.

■ Virginia solicited the support of a pre-existing Teaming With Wildlife network.

■ Illinois' C2000 initiative benefitted from Conservation Congress

participants.

■ In Colorado, the governor and the members of the citizens committee personally solicited support from among their own networks.

***Choose communication channels carefully.*** Use a wide variety of channels to distribute your message. Although television and radio can be expensive, pitching yourself to news or talk shows as interesting interview material can get you free publicity, as can media coverage of special events. Interpersonal communications, such as telephone calls, public meetings, and booths at county fairs put a face or a voice to your agency and the program you're promoting to which people can relate.

■ Media use analyses in Arizona, Arkansas, and Colorado helped the campaign teams in these states make decisions on the best channels to use to get the word out.

■ Respondents thought the most effective methods of disseminating information were personal contacts, such as public meetings, presentations, and phone calls; newspapers, via outdoor writers' columns, editorials, and press releases; and television ads broadcast shortly before election time (in the case of ballot initiatives).

■ Arkansas' governor showed his support for the Conservation Tax by taking a four-day fishing trip, which received a lot of media coverage.

■ Virginia used well-

organized slide presentations, complete with feedback forms. And VDGIF employees followed up with those groups who, after the presentation, still appeared neutral or opposed to HB 38.

***Don't take traditional constituents for granted.***

Reaching out to nontraditional users is extremely important, but you should work hard to include the traditional users, as well. Always be honest and open with them and be sure to address any concerns they may have. Emphasize the overlap among consumptive and nonconsumptive uses; according to the 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U.S. Department of the Interior et al. 1997), the majority of hunters and anglers also engage in wildlife-watching activities, and almost half of the wildlife-watchers hunt or fish.

■ Virginia, Arizona, and Colorado respondents said their agencies emphasized the multiple benefits of increased public access and better-quality habitat that would result from their programs.

■ VDGIF also emphasized the user-pay aspect of HB 38.

■ AGFD pointed out that license fees would no longer be used for nonconsumptive needs once the Heritage Fund was in place.

⊗ *Most respondents agreed the majority of traditional users were supportive of the programs, but they also noted some concern among these users that the agencies would neglect their needs in favor of nonconsumptive users' needs.*

***Reach out to urban areas.***

This should be done regardless of the type of program you are developing; however, soliciting support from urban areas is especially important if you are working on a ballot initiative, since these areas are where most of the votes are.

*“It would have been helpful to have had more urban and minority involvement...”*

– Arkansas respondent

*“You should appeal to urban populations; saturate your metro areas...”*

– Arkansas respondent

*“We tried to involve those areas of the state with strong voting districts.”*

– Colorado respondent

***Don't ignore the opposition.***

Talk to them early on, educate them about your program, learn from them, and perhaps make some changes in your program to accommodate their concerns. Take them seriously!

■ IDNR changed some wording of the C2000 legislative language to address some concerns of the Farm Bureau.

■ GOCO addressed some of the capital construction interests' opposition by having GOCO funds endure a phase-in period, allowing lottery revenues to pay off pre-existing construction debts. GOCO legislation also provided language requiring the state agencies involved to provide payment in lieu of taxes to local governments for land acquisitions, thus helping alleviate some municipalities' concerns. And it tackled water rights interests' concerns by specifically stating that GOCO would have no effect on Colorado water laws.

■ AGFD will also provide payment in lieu of taxes to local governments for lands acquired through Heritage Funds.

■ In Virginia, some

legislators who were originally opposed to HB 38 changed their minds after receiving an overwhelming amount of phone calls and letters from constituents who supported the bill.

⊗ *A group of disgruntled hunters in Arkansas opposed the Conservation Tax because of a disagreement they'd had with AGFC. Also, a radical property-rights group who thought the tax was a plot by the federal government to turn land over to the United Nations (no kidding!) became very vocal in its opposition during the two weeks prior to the election. The agency chose to ignore these two groups (who would blame them?) but in retrospect perhaps should not have. One of the disgruntled hunters was instrumental in knocking the tax amendment off the ballot due to a legal technicality in 1994, and the property-rights group appears to be the cause of the 1996 amendment passing by a much smaller margin than polls predicted.*

**Plan ahead for implementation.** Have a written plan specifying exactly what you will do with additional funding. Decide beforehand how money will be administered and allocated. Will you use a granting process? Will the money be allocated only to specific program areas, and if so, by certain set percentages? Or will the new money become a part of the agency's budget and not be earmarked?

■ AGFC put together *Plan for Conservation*, a spending plan that outlined exactly how the agency's extra revenue would be spent if the Conservation Tax passed. This report was available to anyone interested.

■ Arizona uses a habitat-based approach to distribute Heritage Fund revenues within AGFD. Doing so helps decrease the amount of internal fighting over the money.

■ The GOCO amendment specifically stated how the lottery revenues would be managed. It thoroughly described the governor-appointed board responsible for the funds, the granting process, the specific areas to which money would be allocated, and what organizations or agencies could be considered for grants.

⊗ *Immediately after the Heritage Fund passed, a group of select AGFD employees worked diligently together for more than a week to determine how the agency should implement the Fund. According to several*

*respondents, however, it took a full three years before implementation began running smoothly.*

**Don't forget your supporters.** Once you are successful and your program has been implemented, keep your promises! Follow your spending plan, and do what you said you were going to do. Not only should you thank your supporters in some way, but also keep them involved in and updated on the projects your program supports or creates. Keep communication channels open between the agency and the consumptive and nonconsumptive users. Encourage communication between those two user groups, as well. Emphasize their common goals by bringing them together in habitat projects, for example.

■ In Illinois, IDNR responds to each Conservation Congress recommendation; if the recommendation is not to be implemented, the agency explains why not.

■ The C2000 program provides a means for participant feedback.

■ In Arkansas, AGFC continues to publish *Plan for Conservation* each year to show anyone interested how the additional revenues are being spent, and how closely they are meeting the goals outlined in the original *Plan*.

■ The GOCO Board conducted statewide public hearings after the amendment's passage to allow public input into the way GOCO would be structured. The Board continues to invite public comment and has stakeholder groups for each of the four benefitting areas to provide recommendations into how the money should be allocated.

■ VDGIF provided its supporters with decals, and some received personal thank you letters and phone calls. In addition, the agency hired a group of consultants to conduct an extensive stakeholder analysis to determine the directions the agency should take over the next several years.

■ In Arizona, AGFD holds a yearly weekend retreat at which consumptive and nonconsumptive constituent group leaders get together.

***Provide visible, statewide results.***

After implementation, be sure to constantly remind constituents and the public of the program's results. Complete projects in a wide variety of geographic regions. Develop a logo that provides an association with the program and display it on each project.

■ When the Assembly of Delegates of Illinois' Conservation Congress meets every three years, it receives great media attention. C2000 projects are covered well by the press, also, as are Colorado's GOCO projects.

■ Illinois' C2000 program makes sure to complete projects in all regions of the state, according to respondents.

■ Arizona and Arkansas each have logos that relate projects to the Heritage Fund or the Conservation Tax, respectively.

⊗ *The Arizona Heritage Fund logo provides an association between AGFD projects and the Heritage Fund, which is great. One respondent, however, astutely noted that a link between the Fund and the state lottery should also be illustrated by the logo.*

***Most of all DON'T PUT IT OFF- START NOW!***

Then your agency, too, can reap the benefits of a broader constituency and/or a bigger budget, as did the five state fish and wildlife agencies depicted in this report. For instance, you can enjoy:

- Increased visibility of your agency and more public awareness of its programs and services
- Better relationships between your agency and its users, as well as between consumptive and nonconsumptive user groups
- A spirit of cooperation between your agency and other state agencies, organizations, and the legislature
- A network of public support when your agency faces opposition
- Expanded programs and services in the areas of endangered and nongame species, nonconsumptive and youth services, and outreach and education.
- Increased public input, resulting in more buy-in for your agency from various audiences

- Partnerships with and support from local businesses and industries, private landowners, local communities, civic groups, and others

- More opportunities for good publicity for your agency

- Increased agency presence in schools

- Development of more urban and minority programs and services

## Final Thoughts

To grow and survive in a changing world, any business or industry must be adaptable; fish and wildlife agencies are no different. The successful agencies will embrace change and help their constituents do the same.

It's not always easy, but it can be done, as Colorado, Illinois, Virginia, Arkansas, and Arizona proved.

So where will your agency be by the year 2010?

Perhaps more importantly, what will your state's fish and wildlife resources look like by then?

The answers to these questions depend on *you!*

## References

- Decker, D.J., C.C. Krueger, R.A. Baer, Jr., B.A. Knuth, and M.E. Richmond. 1996. From clients to stakeholders: A philosophical shift for fish and wildlife management. *Human Dimensions of Wildl.* 1:70-82.
- Hamilton, C. 1989. Developing a comprehensive private sector support system: An emerging model. *Proc. Western Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies* 69:180-186.
- Lapointe, G.D. and T. Race Thompson. 1993. Marketing wildlife to a new constituency. *Trans. No. Am. Wildl. and Nat. Resour. Conf.* 58:170-173.
- Rogers, E.M. and J.D. Storey. 1987. Communication campaigns. Pages 817-846 in C.R. Berger and S.H. Chaffee, eds., *Handbook of communication science*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA. 946 pp.
- Thorne, D.H., E.K. Brown, and D.J. Witter. 1992. Market information: Matching management with constituent demands. *Trans. No. Am. Wildl. and Natur. Resour. Conf.* 57:164-173.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Management Assistance Team. 1997. Evaluation of major issues facing fish and wildlife agency management. Unpublished manuscript. Fort Collins, CO. 67 pp.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1997. 1996 national survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. 115 pp.
- Wright, B.A., S.J. Backman, and B.E. Wicks. 1991. Operating at the "Wildlife-Human Interface": A marketing approach to wildlife planning. Pages 39-52 in W.R. Mangun, ed., *Public policy issues in wildlife management*. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT. 196 pp.

*Supplement:*

**A Model of Success: The Missouri Story**

## Supplement

### A Model of Success: The Missouri Story

Missouri's Conservation Tax – a one-eighth of 1 percent state sales tax whose revenues help fund the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) – passed as a constitutional amendment in 1976. Originally designed to yield approximately \$20 million annually for the agency, the tax now provides MDC with more than \$75 million a year, roughly 60 percent of MDC's budget.

So, does money really buy happiness for the Department? For Missouri citizens? For the state's fish and wildlife resources? To find out, we interviewed 28 individuals involved with natural resource management in Missouri. Twenty-seven were MDC employees (so readers should be aware of possible personal biases) and one was involved in the leadership of a nonprofit state conservation organization. In the following pages, we discuss what we learned from these interviews.

#### *The future is now!*

In 1971, MDC published a long-range plan called *Design for Conservation* in response to a report compiled by a committee of nationally recognized conservation professionals that indicated the need for MDC to focus more on nongame and outdoor recreation programs. In *Design*, MDC pledged to increase land acquisition, conservation services to the public, research into forestry and nongame species, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. The plan listed several objectives the agency hoped to achieve within 20 years. Now, twenty-two years later, how close has MDC come to achieving them?

Respondents thought, overall, the agency has met these original objectives rather well, although in some cases, it still has more to do. For instance, MDC has met its goal of acquiring new lands, but needs to do more in developing some of these lands (in fact, a \$95 million backlog of capital improvement projects currently exists). And although conservation curricula are available to all schools, some respondents noted that high school students are not being reached well.

### Some Original MDC Objectives

#### Achieved (or well on its way)

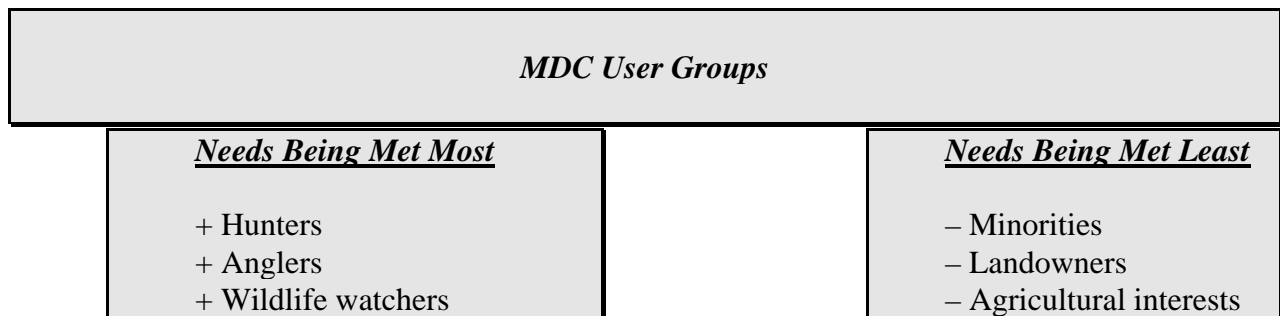
- + land acquisition
- + assistance to rural volunteer fire departments
- + acquisition of new waterfowl areas
- + access to floatable streams

#### Still a way to go

- land development
- 4-H and FFA programs
- development of aquatic demonstration areas
- urban programs and services

*Design* also emphasized the need for MDC to conserve all wildlife, including nongame species, and provide for the development of nonconsumptive programs. Thus, MDC today addresses the desires of a wide variety of constituents. In the opinions of the respondents, MDC best meets the needs of hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers. Minorities', landowners', and agricultural interests' needs are being met the least.

Overwhelmingly obvious by respondents' comments was the notion that efforts really need to be focused more on involving minorities in MDC programs. Doing so, however, was described as a challenge, and a better understanding of minorities' needs and barriers to participation is necessary. Two interviewees described the internal culture and structure of the agency as not accepting of and not representative of minorities.



The Conservation Tax has definitely, however, resulted in a broadening of the agency's constituency, according to the majority of respondents. The significant funding from the tax has allowed for more public involvement, human dimensions work, and natural history and educational programs, as well as the construction and operation of four urban nature centers. New constituent groups are being addressed now that perhaps weren't prior to the tax. These groups include equestrians, bikers, target shooters, families, people with disabilities, wildlife watchers and school children.

MDC has implemented a variety of programs and services over the years. A sampling of those mentioned include: (1) forestry programs, such as Branch Out Missouri, Tree Resource Improvement and Management (TRIM), seedling nurseries, and an urban forestry program; (2) family- or youth-oriented programs, such as Outdoor Classrooms in schools, family fishing fairs, kids' fishing days, a youth waterfowl program, and Conservation on Frontiers (designed to involve families in conservation activities); (3) programs for landowners, such as the L.A.W.S. program (through which farmers are compensated for leaving a fringe of wildlife habitat intact), nature scaping, and wildlife damage workshops; and (4) urban programs, including urban fishing and urban forestry.

Some MDC programs, such as the Conservation Natural Resource Education program (a GED training program that targets mostly urbanites), would likely have existed even without the Conservation Tax. Others, like the endangered species program, would have existed, but not to the same extent. And several more programs – for instance, the Stream Team program, which involves volunteers in the monitoring and restoration of streams and stream habitats; and the Community Assistance Program, through which MDC cooperates with reservoirs to provide

professional fisheries management in return for maintenance and public fishing access – probably would never have made it past the front door if it weren't for the additional tax revenue.

<i>A Small Sampling of MDC Programs and Services</i>			
<u>Forestry</u>	<u>Family/Youth</u>	<u>Landowners</u>	<u>Urban</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Branch Out Missouri</li> <li>· TRIM</li> <li>· Seedling nurseries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Outdoor Classrooms</li> <li>· Family fishing fairs</li> <li>· Youth waterfowl programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· L.A.W.S.</li> <li>· Nature scaping</li> <li>· Wildlife damage workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Urban fishing</li> <li>· Nature centers</li> <li>· Urban forestry programs</li> </ul>

*A sure thing?*

But is the Conservation Tax here to stay? Although most respondents didn't want to go so far as to say the tax is in *no* danger of being cut back or completely eliminated, the majority believe it is unlikely. To discontinue the tax, which was made part of the state constitution, would require a vote by the people; thus, the feeling is that this would happen only if MDC made some major mistakes.

Conservation Tax revenue is constitutionally earmarked to support MDC; however, other state agencies and some legislators do try for "a piece of the pie" periodically. For instance, more than one attempt has been made to combine the one-eighth cent Conservation Tax with the one-tenth cent sales tax whose revenue currently goes to the Division of State Parks and the Soil and Water Conservation program. The result would have been a one-fifth cent sales tax, the revenue of which would fund these agencies, as well as local programs. Consequently, MDC would have lost about 50 percent of its tax revenue. Thus far, all such attempts have failed.

The Hancock amendment recently provided another source of conflict. This amendment provides limitations on government spending, and it was unclear whether or not the Conservation Tax fell under these limitations. Just this year, however, the courts ruled that the Hancock amendment did not affect the tax. But as of June 1999, the state is appealing the decision; if the decision is reversed and a ruling made in the state's favor, MDC would owe taxpayers approximately \$15 million.

Keys to reducing the chance of the tax being cut back or discontinued are MDC's responsiveness to the public, as well as the agency simply being responsible and providing good customer service. Having a legislative liaison within the agency keeps staff and other natural resource interests abreast of relevant political dealings, as well as helps MDC address legislative concerns.

Also important to the continuation of the Conservation Tax is the visibility of results of MDC

programs and services, although some respondents said the agency needs to promote itself better. MDC should emphasize that Conservation Tax revenue is just a “drop in the bucket” in relation to the state’s overall budget. One interviewee noted that, as a portion of the entire state budget, the total budgets of MDC, the state agricultural department and the state insurance department *combined* are equal to only \$.01 out of every \$1.00.

In addition, MDC can often ward off threats to the tax by respectfully addressing the concerns of opposing individuals and groups early on. The Conservation Federation of Missouri, a non-profit organization formed in 1935 to take politics out of conservation, is a strong ally of MDC, and rallies support for the agency when needed.

***Keys to Ensuring the Continuation of the Conservation Tax***

- ✓ Responding to public input
- ✓ Showing results of programs/services
- ✓ Addressing the opposition’s concerns

- ✓ Providing good customer service
- ✓ Having a legislative liaison
- ✓ Emphasizing its relation to the entire state budget

Although MDC doesn’t operate on the premise that the tax could be lost, a Revenue Enhancement Task Force was put together in 1997 to study other funding sources. Perhaps one of the agency’s main sources of additional revenues, the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, was begun in October 1997. The Foundation acts as a nonprofit arm of the agency and accepts corporate and individual donations, some of which are earmarked for particular projects or programs.

revenue sources currently in place but expandable. In addition, a “cushion” of one month’s operating budget is kept in reserve (although, one respondent noted the agency must be careful not to have too much cash in reserve or the legislature will think MDC is too wealthy or fiscally irresponsible). The agency also solicits grants from private foundations, sells timber and crops, and is considering increasing license fees. And environmental license plates, vetoed recently by the governor, will likely be attempted again by MDC.

Product sales and partnerships with organizations and businesses are other

***Mirror, mirror...***

MDC is considered by many nationwide to be a model state fish and wildlife agency. It has a well-endowed budget, enjoys citizen support, and offers a wide variety of programs and services.

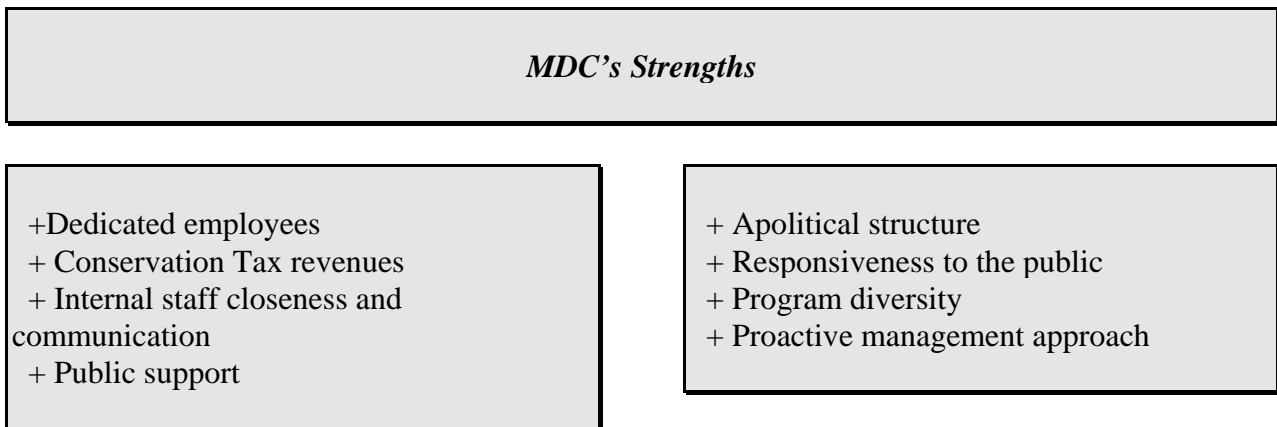
We talked with respondents to find out what *they* think about how well the agency solicits and uses public input, what MDC’s strengths and weaknesses are, and what else the agency should be doing to broaden its constituency.

Overall, respondents think MDC achieves a great deal of citizen input, yet some believe it could

do better. More one-to-one personal contacts take place than does formal input. Methods of soliciting public comment include public meetings, forums, and focus groups, although none of these methods are used extensively. Also, public comment is gathered via MDC's publications and television and radio shows. In addition, the agency has an open door policy in which employees are easily accessible to the public, and citizens are encouraged to write the director.

When discussing MDC's strengths, the agency's dedicated employees and the diversity of their backgrounds were mentioned a great deal. Obviously, the tax revenue was cited as a major advantage of MDC, and the agency's apolitical structure is extremely helpful to its effectiveness. Although MDC is overseen by a 4-person governor-appointed commission, the agency's director is not appointed by the governor; thus, MDC doesn't need to be concerned about changes in government administration. This provides several benefits: stability and continuity in planning and programs, long-term thinking, science-based rather than politically based decision-making, and management versus regulatory responsibilities.

Several other strengths were pointed out, as well, and are included in the boxes below.



Ironically, although responsiveness to the public was mentioned as an agency strength, it was also MDC's most often cited weakness. The same conflicting responses were received in reference to internal communications; described as a strength by some, other interviewees viewed it as a weakness, specifically communications between field and office staff. In addition, the domination of traditional uses within the agency may weaken its effectiveness. Other areas in which the agency could improve are listed on the following page.

### *MDC's Weaknesses*

- Lack of responsiveness to the public
- Dominance of traditional uses internally
- Lack of self-promotion
- Internal strife between traditional and nontraditional interests

- Poor communication between field and office staff
- Not enough public meetings
- Lack of internal ethnic diversity

Respondents suggested several ways in which MDC could further broaden its constituency. Working from the inside out, the agency should strive for greater internal diversity and cross-train its employees to promote an appreciation of programs and services outside of their own divisions. Also, increasing market research and engaging in more self-promotion could help. MDC should focus more on urbanites and their needs, find ways to better reach minorities, and work more with private landowners, said some respondents. Yet another idea was to tap into the ecotourism market.

### ***Conclusion***

Missouri's story truly is one of success, and it can provide other states' fish and wildlife agencies with insights for developing their own success stories. Even with a department budget of more than \$100 million, however, limitations exist, and mistakes can happen. Wise agencies will take advantage of MDC's willingness to share its experiences. Whether your agency is considering a statewide sales tax or some other program, knowing the process and what to expect after implementation can help your agency become the next model of success.

**Appendix A:**  
**Contact Information for the Programs Studied**

## Contact Information for the Programs Studied

### *Arizona: The Heritage Fund*

Arizona Game and Fish Department  
2221 W. Greenway Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85023-4312  
(602) 942-3000

Arizona State Parks Board  
1300 W. Washington Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85007  
(602) 542-4174

### *Arkansas: the Conservation Tax*

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
2 Natural Resources Dr.  
Little Rock, AR 72205  
(501) 223-6300

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism  
One Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
(501) 682-7777

### *Colorado: Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund*

Great Outdoors Colorado  
1600 Broadway  
Suite 1650  
Denver, CO 80202  
(303) 863-7522

Colorado Division of Wildlife  
6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80216  
(303) 297-1192

Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
1313 Sherman St.  
Room 618  
Denver, CO 80203  
(303) 866-3437

*Illinois: Conservation Congress*

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Constituency Services  
524 S. Second St.  
Springfield, IL 62701-1787  
(217) 782-4963

*Illinois: Conservation 2000*

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Office of Realty and Environmental Planning  
524 S. Second St.  
Springfield, IL 62701-1787  
(217) 782-7940

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
2200 Churchill Rd.  
Springfield, IL 62794  
(217) 782-3397

Illinois Department of Agriculture  
State Fairgrounds  
PO Box 19281  
Springfield, IL 62706  
(217) 782-2172

*Missouri: the Conservation Tax*

Missouri Department of Conservation  
PO Box 180  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
(573) 751-4115

*Virginia: House Bill 38*

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
4010 W. Broad St.  
PO Box 11104  
Richmond, VA 23230  
(804) 367-1000