The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), authorized in 1937 by an initiative process and statewide vote to amend the Missouri Constitution, was created by public demand for better management of the state’s fish, forest, and wildlife resources. The department is headed by the Conservation Commission, whose four members, no more than two of whom may belong to the same political party, are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. They serve with no compensation for staggered six-year terms.

The commissioners appoint the department director who, along with three assistant directors, directs programs and activities through the divisions of administrative services, design and development, fisheries, forestry, human resources, outreach and education, private land services, protection, resource science, and wildlife. The general counsel and internal auditor report to the Commission and are supervised by the director. The general counsel also supervises a realty services unit. In addition to division assignments, the three assistant directors provide leadership for projects and initiatives assigned by the director, legislative liaison, federal aid coordination, partnerships, and a policy coordination unit, which provides intra- and inter-agency coordination in the areas of environmental and resource management policy, river basin coordination, public involvement, planning, and environmental and cultural resource compliance.

The department’s principal sources of revenue are receipts from the sale of hunting and fishing permits and the one-eighth of one percent conservation sales tax. The conservation sales tax was approved as a constitutional amendment through a citizen initiative process and statewide vote in 1976. Funds are also received from contracts and grants, primarily on a matching basis, from federal aid provisions of the Wildlife Restoration, Sport Fish Restoration, and Cooperative Forestry Assistance Acts.

The department’s mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about fish, forest, and wildlife resources. The mission is accomplished using a set of belief statements which include: excellent public service is what we will provide; all citizens are important, we value their trust and their point of view; Missourians are our partners to achieve conservation success; employees are the department’s most important resource; and fairness, objectivity, sound science, integrity, and accountability will guide our actions.

Conservation Commission
Bedell, Don C., (R), Sikeston, July 1, 2015; Johnson, Don R., (D), Festus, July 1, 2013; McGeehan, William F. (Chip), (R), Marshfield, July 1, 2011; Plattner, Becky L., (D), Grand Pass, July 1, 2013.

Administrative Services Division

The administrative services division is made up of two sections responsible for information technology and financial services and four units responsible for fleet services, flight services, general services and permit services.

The information technology section provides strategic direction for the department’s information technology assets. It is responsible for managing those assets; defining technology solutions to meet business needs; and supporting use of those assets, which include all computer hardware and software systems, telephone systems, two-way radio and other telecommunications
The Design and Development Division is responsible for providing engineering, architectural, surveying, and construction/maintenance services for the department.

Design and Development Division
The Design and Development Division is responsible for providing engineering, architectural, surveying, and construction/maintenance services for the department.

The staff consists of professional engineering, architecture, land surveying, construction and support staff in the areas of construction quality control, computer-aided design and drafting (CADD), and cartography.

The division’s engineering and architectural design and development program includes design and construction of engineering and architectural projects. Projects include boat accesses, docks, roads, parking areas, office and storage buildings, fish hatcheries, fishing lakes and ponds, nature centers, shooting ranges, trails, wetlands, and other miscellaneous projects.

Design and Development Division staff take pride in the practice of conservation engineering: the application of sound engineering principles in development of conservation projects and public use facilities that are in harmony with the environment and that enhance our natural resources.

The division’s maintenance of department facilities program includes the renovation and repair of department infrastructure and maintenance of department areas and facilities.

The division also provides engineering surveying for construction development projects and land surveying for property boundary delineation.

Design and Development Division administers the department’s County Aid Road Trust (CART) Program which involves cost sharing of roadway maintenance with counties and other governmental subdivisions to help assure that roads accessing department areas are properly maintained and that the public has adequate access to department lands.

Fisheries Division
Missouri has about 1,163,000 surface acres of water comprised of nearly 900 public lakes (24 percent of surface acres), 486 miles of Mississippi River and 553 miles of Missouri River (22 percent combined), almost 16,000 miles of other permanent streams (eight percent), over 39,000 miles of intermittent streams (three percent) and about 500,000 private lakes (43 percent). These waters support rich and diverse aquatic communities that are used, enjoyed and appreciated by millions of people each year. Fishing is one of the most popular and economically important uses of these waters. Each year, Missouri’s 1.2 million sport anglers (16 years of age and older) make about 11.8 million fishing trips and generate more than 1.6 billion dollars in economic activity.

The Fisheries Division’s mission is “to professionally manage the fish and associated aquatic plants and animals of Missouri for the use and enjoyment of the people.” The division accomplishes this mission through fisheries management staff in the department’s eight regions. Management efforts are supported by five coldwater fish hatcheries, five warmwater fish hatcheries, a Stream Unit and central office staff. Division employees and varying numbers of temporary employees are responsible for monitoring and maintaining the quality of the aquatic resources, managing the public fisheries resources for quality fish stocks, providing technical stream and lake management advice to private landowners and other public agencies, providing and assisting with public information and education programs, assisting with other department programs and representing the division and department.

The five coldwater hatcheries (Blind Pony, Chesapeake, Hunnewell, Indian Trail and Lost Valley) rear and coordinate the stocking of about eight million fish in public waters, suitable private lakes, waters used for special fishing events and aquatic resources education. Their staff also develop methods of rearing endangered species. The five warmwater hatcheries (Bennett Spring, Maramec Spring, Montauk, Roaring River and Shepherd of the Hills) rear and coordinate the stocking of about two million trout in public waters. Their staff is also responsible for stocking and managing the popular trout parks at Bennett Spring, Montauk and Roaring River State Parks and at Maramec Spring Park.

The Stream Unit is responsible for working cooperatively with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources on administering the work of 3,223 Stream Teams, producing and distributing “Stash Your Trash” litter bags to canoe liveries, and providing stream training and technical services to regional division and department staff and other agencies.

The division’s central office staff direct and administer division programs, develop and refine regulations, work on the acquisition and development of public fishing and boat access areas, administer the Community Assistance Program and Corporate and Agency Partnership Program, administer Federal Aid grants, coordinate angler recognition programs, develop and revise technical and popular written materials, distribute a weekly fishing report during the fishing season, and provide administrative support for division and department staff.

Forestry Division
The Forestry Division is responsible for management and protection of the state’s forest resources. Major program objectives are to educate and assist forest landowners and forest industries; to adopt practices designed to ensure healthy and sustainable forests; to ensure the proper management and sustainability of public forest lands; to cooperate with public and private agencies in the control and abatement of major infestations of forest insects and diseases; to work with communities to develop sustainable community forestry programs; and to improve rural fire protection throughout the state.

Some forestry facts: About 14.6 million acres, or 33 percent of the land area of Missouri, are covered by forest land and 84 percent are owned by about 200,000 individual owners. Approximately 75 percent of this forest land is oak-birch type, five percent is shortleaf pine and oak-pine and the remainder is in cedar and bottomland hardwoods. Missouri’s forests support a large forest products industry with about 1,000 manufacturing plants producing lumber, railroad ties, cooperage, cedar and walnut items (including gunstocks and veneer), charcoal and other products. Over four billion dollars per year is generated from processing forest products. Missouri leads the nation in...
the production of charcoal, cooperage barrels, cedar novelties, gunstocks, walnut bowls and walnut furniture.

Division personnel and volunteer rural fire departments annually suppress approximately 3,000 wildfires, which burn 60,000 acres of forest and grassland. Technical assistance, training and federal excess equipment are available at no cost to cooperating rural fire departments. Grants, in part supported by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), are also available to rural fire departments on a competitive basis. A rural forest fire equipment center is located in Lebanon. The center acquires and distributes federal excess property to rural fire departments for use in fire suppression activities.

“Operation Forest Arson” is a program to combat the high number of arson-caused wildfires. This program is combined with the Smokey Bear fire prevention campaign to educate school children.

Through a cooperative program with the USFS, technical assistance is provided to private woodland owners. This service is available statewide and includes tree selection and planting advice, forest management plans and recommendations, forest火 weed utilization, marketing assistance and wildlife management recommendations. More than 3,000 Missouri landowners are assisted each year by division foresters.

The forest health protection program ensures the continuing health of the forest resources through survey and detection, pest and control activities; administer salary and fringe benefits. Staff assist with recruitment and selection activities; oversee a comprehensive group life, medical, accidental death and dismemberment and dependent life insurance program; maintain official employee documents and records; and manage a safety program (including workers’ compensation).

Equally important to the department are other Human Resources Division activities. These include monitoring the department’s compliance with employment practices relating to affirmative action, ADA and drug testing; providing employee training and development programs; administering employee assistance and wellness activities; and facilitating the disciplinary and grievance processes.

Outreach and Education Division

The Outreach and Education Division is dedicated to helping Missourians connect with nature in our state in a variety of ways. The goal is to educate young and old how to sustain a healthy environment, make good use of fish, forest and wildlife resources and also enjoy nature-based outdoor recreation.

One of the division’s most popular works is the Missouri Conservationist magazine, a source of conservation ideas for adult Missourians since 1938. The monthly circulation is about 500,000. A new children’s magazine is planned for 2010.

The web site at www.missourioutdoors.org is the primary source of conservation information. Highlights include maps and tips for getting outdoors, hunting and fishing reports, conservation videos, the Missouri Conservationist and news online, a calendar of events, and links to special programs such as “Grow Native!” and “No M.O.R.E Trash!”

Through many free publications, Missourians can also learn about subjects as diverse as how to fish, follow hunting regulations, or identify snakes. The annual Missouri Outdoors Calendar, Outdoor Heritage Calendar, books and DVDs are available at our nature centers, through our catalog or online.

As more Missourians grow up in urban landscapes, they have less contact with the natural world. An outstanding network of conservation centers helps bring people and nature together across the state. Nature and education centers in Blue Springs, Jefferson City, Kirkwood, Springfield, Cape Girardeau, and Winona, and visitor centers in Taney, St. Charles and St. Louis counties offer unique nature exploration programs. The Discovery Center, located in the heart of Kansas City, features workshops offering hands-on instruction to school groups and individuals in a building that highlights energy-efficient design.

A new conservation education program, “Discover Nature–Schools,” helps students get outside and learning in nature close to home. Free instructional units that meet testing needs combined with grants for field trips and instructional materials form the basic education program, which complements the national “No Child Left Inside” effort. A unit for sixth to eighth graders, “Conserving Missouri’s Aquatic Resources,” includes fishing and stream exploration as hands-on activities. An upper elementary unit, Nature Unleashed, will focus on wildlife and habitat. A unit for high school biology and agriculture classes will focus on ecology and resource management. Conservation education will work with private and parochial schools and colleges, as well as youth leaders and community leaders.

“Missouri Master Naturalists” is a community-based, adult natural resource education and volunteer program sponsored by the Department of Conservation, the University of Missouri Extension and MU School of Natural Resources. The mission is to engage Missourians in the stewardship of our fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Another important part of the outreach and education effort focuses on teaching people the skills to work more safely and responsibly. The division’s outdoor skills specialists work to give Missourians of all ages direct experience in nature-based activities such as fishing, hunting, and archery. The “Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP)” is supported by the Department of Conservation with the help of the Missouri Conservation Federation to bring archery to schools statewide. Programs called “Discover Nature-Families” and “Discover Nature-Women” help Missourians learn a variety of skills to enjoy the outdoors.

The outdoor skills staff also work with conservation agents to coordinate the volunteers who provide hunter education training—which is mandatory for all persons born on or after January 1, 1967—before one can receive a hunting license or purchase firearms. The division’s outreach and education center, located in the heart of the state, is designed to equip Missourians with opportunities to practice their skills using firearms and archery equipment. Discovery Hunting programs offered at the staffed ranges help new hunters get started.

Private Land Services Division

The mission of the Private Land Services programs is to “help landowners meet their land management objectives in ways that enhance fish, forest, and wildlife conservation.” Private landowners play a crucial role in the management of the land and wildlife resources in Missouri. Landowners who are responsible for managing resources on their property are encouraged to improve forest, fish, and wildlife resources. The private land services division provides technical assistance and funding to private landowners to help them achieve their goals of improving forest, fish, and wildlife resources.

Private Land Services Division personnel strive to provide prompt, professional assistance to landowners in the evaluation of fish, forest and wildlife resources and management recommendations. Private land conservationists provide one-on-one assistance and tailor management recommendations to the goals of the landowner and site-specific natural resource needs. Experts in various aspects of fish, forest and wildlife conservation are available as needed to help address particularly difficult conservation challenges. Community Conserva-
tions promulgated by the Conservation Commission. Agents are licensed as peace officers to enforce all state laws on lands owned, managed or leased by the department. Many agents are also commissioned by the U.S. Department of the Interior to enforce federal fish and wildlife laws.

Resource law enforcement is very important in managing Missouri’s fish, forestry and wildlife resources. Conservation agents are assigned to each county in the state and are responsible for carrying out a wide range of wildlife-related law enforcement duties. Patrols by vehicle, boat and foot are routine. Agents depend heavily on help from local citizens to report violations.

Although law enforcement is the division’s primary function, only about half of an agent’s time is devoted to that activity. Other duties include hunter education, resource management assistance to landowners, media contacts, and educational and informational programs to youth and adult groups, as well as surveys and special field studies.

Many special programs require personal contact with individual landowners. Preliminary contacts with landowners and arrangements for wildlife management projects, lake development and other large-scale department projects are delegated to agents. Frequently, community interest and participation in department projects depend to provide or increase local recreational opportunities result from encouragement or initiation by agents.

Agents present regularly scheduled informational or educational programs on radio and television. A number of newspapers in the state carry weekly outdoor columns prepared by conservation agents.

Protection Division

The Protection Division is composed of uniformed conservation education and support staff.

Conservation agents, by official designation, serve as department representatives in their assigned areas and must be well-versed on all department programs. They have responsibility for enforcing all statutory enactments related to fish, wildlife and forestry, and rules and regulations promulgated by the Conservation Commission. Agents are licensed as peace officers to enforce all state laws on lands owned, managed or leased by the department. Many agents are also commissioned by the U.S. Department of the Interior to enforce federal fish and wildlife laws.

The Protection Division personnel work closely with Outreach and Education staff to ensure the education and health of the state’s fish, wildlife and natural resources. This agency educates the public about wildlife issues and helps citizens understand and appreciate their natural environment. The division distributes information through five field stations.

The Resource Science Division

The mission of the Resource Science Division is to provide the science-based information needed to conserve, appreciate and effectively manage the living resources of Missouri. Natural resource management is based on sound biological and sociological information. The Resource Science Division utilizes a structured decision-making approach in determining the highest priority information needs by collaborating with universities and other agencies.

A thorough review of each project is conducted before studies begin.

An integrated focus in the Resource Science Division is organized around six systems and functions rather than traditional disciplines, and is dedicated to delivery of management assistance through five field stations.


Terrestrial Systems staff study plant and animal relationships, monitor population status, and develop harvest and species management recommendations. The staff is involved with special projects to monitor wildlife and plant diversity, population changes and forest silviculture.

Aquatic and Wetland Systems scientists conduct research and surveys involving fisheries management, wetland and waterfowl management, fish communities, watersheds, stream-riparian floodplain systems, in-stream flow, stream bank stabilization and interactions among predators and prey, and species of concern. Harvest management recommendations for statewide fish populations, waterfowl and other migratory birds are developed by unit staff.

Science and policy support staff link and improve access to databases documenting Missouri’s rich biodiversity through a web-based archival and retrieval system. Post-season harvest and angler surveys, attitude surveys and public-use surveys are conducted to understand the opinions and attitudes of Missourians and to ensure that human dimensions information is integrated with biological information and natural resource economics data to inform management decisions. Biometricians ensure statistically sound study designs and the use of appropriate statistical techniques to analyze and interpret complex natural resource questions.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will continue to play an ever-increasing role in the natural resources management, planning and evaluation. The goal of the GIS program is to fully use geospatial technology and products to support natural resource decisions, archive the processes and evaluate the results. Training courses are conducted to help train new ArcGIS users and improve the skills of existing users.

The Environmental Health unit primary functions include protecting aquatic biodiversity such as mussel conservation and genetics research, water quality, forest health, and providing responsive service to agency staff, the public and other agencies and entities. Staff coordinates pollution and fish kill investigations, televises. A number of agencies within the department, and monitors contaminants in fish with the Department of Health.

The Heritage Program Unit provides expertise for management and research on priority taxa and organizations the Heritage Database. Scientists work on amphibians and reptiles, bats, corals, mammals, and plants and provide liaison support to local managers and facilitate the transfer of information within and across regions through workshops and individual con-
This division manages Missouri’s Natural Heritage Program, which tracks the status and location of 1,116 species of conservation concern and natural communities, and ensures that they are carefully documented, mapped, and updated. These data are used by staff throughout the department for managing these resources and by federal and state agencies for recovery efforts, environmental reviews, and providing cost-share to landowners. In addition, this unit supports the Missouri Fish and Wildlife Information System (MoFWIS), a searchable database of habitat, management and distribution data on more than 700 species.

The Field Unit of the Resource Science Division is leading regional management evaluations by developing protocols and study designs working closely with managers. Field stations, actively integrated with the division’s centralized functions, focus on improving understanding of ecological systems, functions and processes by working with regional staff throughout the state.

The Grasslands Systems Field Station in Clinton focuses on ecological processes and management implications for cool and warm season grass pastures and haylands, native prairie, savannas and glades and grassland-associated fish, invertebrate, wildlife species of conservation concern and all streams and impoundments fed by grassland watersheds.

The Forest Systems Field Station in West Plains focuses on ecological processes and management implications for native and introduced animals and plants. Erosion and deposition through water, wind and fire are the natural disturbance and renewal processes that are essential to maintaining healthy systems and functions. The division focuses investigations on how to effectively re-establish or mimic these processes in Missouri’s contemporary landscape to restore plant and animal communities.

Management evaluations—link results of management and policy actions to resource-related outcomes, budgets and staff time. Resource Science Division promotes “learning by doing” to improve resource management programs and to ensure accountability of staff and budget resources.

Human dimensions—provide and promote the use of human dimensions information in the management decision process. Resource Science Division collaborates with other divisions to ensure that human dimensions information is acquired and used in policy and management decisions. This information tracks changing public expectations and demographic trends.

Large-scale planning—ensure that all planning and program efforts are well coordinated within and outside the agency, are based on sound science and include evaluative measures.

Advances in GIS and associated ecological and geospatial applications are used to inventory, plan, assess and monitor resource condition and management results at appropriate scales.

Wildlife Division

The Wildlife Division’s mission is to conserve for long term public benefit Missouri’s wildlife resources and the landscapes on which wildlife depend, and to manage public lands to conserve and enhance their natural resources, provide vital ecosystem services, and invite public use and enjoyment. The Wildlife Division uses the best possible information, expertise, and judgment to manage game and furbearer species and to conserve all native plants, animals and natural communities. While this commitment is widespread, there is a special responsibility for exemplary management on public conservation lands. The division manages over 525,000 acres of land on 357 conservation areas, considering both the needs of wildlife and the needs of citizens to use and enjoy public lands. Hiking, hunting, birding, fishing, mushroom gathering, camping, canoeing and nature viewing are examples of activities on conservation lands. In recent years, the Wildlife Division has made a special effort to increase opportunities for youth, disabled, and new hunters to experience dove, deer, turkey and waterfowl hunting around the state. Additional efforts have been made to acquaint more people with nature viewing, especially birding, on conservation areas.

Good conservation management of public lands provides general environmental benefits to all citizens by maintaining the ecological health of our forests, prairies, glades, wetlands and streams. Healthy ecosystems produce fish, forest and wildlife resources. They also contribute to high water quality, groundwater recharge, air quality, soil erosion control and watershed protection. The division also provides technical advice on resource management to other agencies, organizations, industry, private landowners and other citizens.

The division also administers the Department’s “Natural Areas”, “Endangered Species” and “Landowner Incentive” Programs. It provides department-wide coordination of trails, public outdoor recreation opportunities. Restoration continues to promote healthy populations of wildlife, plant species and diverse natural communities for the enjoyment of Missouri citizens.

General Counsel

The general counsel is appointed by the director of the Department of Conservation, with the consent of the Conservation Commission, to provide legal advice and representation to the commission and the department. The Office of General Counsel handles litigation, works with prosecutors and staff to enforce statutes and regulations, provides legal advice and opinions, drafts and reviews documents, oversees real estate transactions and reviews administrative regulations.

Internal Auditor

The Internal Auditor assists the commission and director by independently analyzing MDC operations, policies, procedures, records and compliance with laws and regulations to ensure effectiveness and accountability. The internal audit function also serves the Department of Conservation as custodian of records and hearing officer for revocation of hunting and fishing privileges.