

By: Representatives Bounds, Read, Anderson
(122nd), Clark, Eure, Hale, Jackson (11th),
Paden, Pigott

To: Appropriations B;
Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 1737

1 AN ACT MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE SUPPORT AND
2 MAINTENANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS FOR
3 THE FISCAL YEAR 2026.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

5 **SECTION 1.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
6 necessary, is appropriated out of any money in the State General
7 Fund not otherwise appropriated, for the support and maintenance
8 of the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks for the fiscal
9 year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.....
10\$ 17,322,192.00.

11 **SECTION 2.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
12 necessary, is appropriated out of any money in any special fund in
13 the State Treasury to the credit of the Department of Wildlife,
14 Fisheries and Parks which is comprised of special source funds
15 collected by or otherwise available to the department for the
16 support and maintenance of the department, including the Museum of
17 Natural Science and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, for the
18 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.....



19\$ 73,770,137.00.

20 The following sum, which is included in the sum appropriated
21 above in this section, is appropriated out of the state excise
22 taxes upon gasoline, oil and other petroleum products to the
23 Fisheries and Wildlife Fund for the fiscal year beginning
24 July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.....\$ 5,750,000.00.

25 The Department of Revenue is directed to set aside the amount
26 of this appropriation or any part thereof at any time it sees fit,
27 out of any collections of taxes upon gasoline, oil and other
28 petroleum products, and to deduct the amounts so set aside from
29 such funds before making distribution thereof. However,
30 provisions shall first be made for the Highway Bonds Sinking Fund,
31 as required under the provisions of Chapter 130, Laws of 1938, and
32 any amendments thereto, and Section 27-5-101, Mississippi Code of
33 1972.

34 Any funds available in the Wildlife Heritage Fund may be
35 expended by the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks as
36 authorized by law. The department shall make a detailed report to
37 the Legislature regarding the spending of the Wildlife Heritage
38 funds by September 1 for the preceding fiscal year.

39 **SECTION 3.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions of
40 Section 2 to the Bureau of Wildlife and Fisheries, funds in the
41 amount of One Hundred Twenty-five Thousand Three Hundred
42 Thirty-five Dollars (\$125,335.00) shall be derived from the
43 Education Enhancement Fund deposited pursuant to Sections 27-65-75



and 27-67-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of Project WILD for Fiscal Year 2026.

SECTION 4. Of the funds appropriated under the provisions of this act, the following positions are authorized:

AUTHORIZED HEADCOUNT:

Permanent: 518

Time-Limited: 42

With the funds herein appropriated, it shall be the agency's responsibility to make certain that funds required for Personal Services for Fiscal Year 2027 do not exceed Fiscal Year 2026 funds appropriated for that purpose unless programs or positions are added to the agency's Fiscal Year 2026 budget by the Mississippi Legislature. The Legislature shall determine the agency's personal services appropriation, which the State Personnel Board shall publish. The agency's personal services appropriation may consist of restricted funds for approved vacancies for Fiscal Year 2026 that may be utilized to fill vacant Fiscal Year 2025 headcount. It shall be the agency's responsibility to ensure that the funds provided for vacancies are used to increase headcount and not for promotions, title changes, in-range salary adjustments or any other mechanism for increasing salaries for current employees. It is the Legislature's intention that no employee salary falls below the minimum salary established by the Mississippi State Personnel Board.



68 Additionally, the State Personnel Board shall determine and
69 publish the projected annualized payroll costs based on current
70 employees. It shall be the responsibility of the agency head to
71 ensure that actual personnel expenditures for Fiscal Year 2026 do
72 not exceed the data provided by the Legislative Budget Office. If
73 the agency's Fiscal Year 2026 projected cost exceeds the
74 annualized costs, no salary actions shall be processed by the
75 State Personnel Board except for new hires determined to be
76 essential for the agency.

77 Any transfers or escalations shall be made in accordance with
78 the terms, conditions, and procedures established by law or
79 allowable under the terms set forth within this act. The State
80 Personnel Board shall not escalate positions without written
81 approval from the Department of Finance and Administration. The
82 Department of Finance and Administration shall not provide written
83 approval to escalate any funds for salaries and/or positions
84 without proof of availability of new or additional funds above the
85 appropriated level.

86 No general funds authorized to be expended herein shall be
87 used to replace federal funds and/or other special funds used for
88 salaries authorized under the provisions of this act and which are
89 withdrawn and no longer available.

90 None of the funds herein appropriated shall be used in
91 violation of the Internal Revenue Service's Publication 15-A



relating to the reporting of income paid to contract employees, as interpreted by the Office of the State Auditor.

SECTION 5. Each conservation officer and supervisor shall be furnished an allowance for uniforms not to exceed Five Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$550.00) per annum.

Provided further, when any personnel of the Bureau of Wildlife and Fisheries are transferred from one (1) county to another on a permanent assignment, the expense monies now paid on out-of-county duty shall not be applicable.

SECTION 6. It is the intention of the Legislature that the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall maintain complete accounting and personnel records related to the expenditure of all funds appropriated under this act and that such records shall be in the same format and level of detail as maintained for Fiscal Year 2025. It is further the intention of the Legislature that the agency's budget request for Fiscal Year 2027 shall be submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee in a format and level of detail comparable to the format and level of detail provided during the Fiscal Year 2026 budget request process.

SECTION 7. In compliance with the "Mississippi Performance Budget and Strategic Planning Act of 1994," it is the intent of the Legislature that the funds provided herein shall be utilized in the most efficient and effective manner possible to achieve the intended mission of this agency. Based on the funding authorized,



117 this agency shall make every effort to attain the targeted
118 performance measures provided below:

119		FY2026
120	<u>Performance Measures</u>	<u>Target</u>
121	Support Services	
122	Number of Hunting and Fishing Licenses Sold	480,000
123	Number of Registrations of Boats	65,000
124	Percent Change in License Sales	0.01
125	Percent Change in Boat Registration	0.08
126	Fisheries	
127	Number of Fish Stocked for Public Waters	1,500,000
128	Number of Customers of DWFP Lakes	80,000
129	Number of Participants in Aquatic Education	5,500
130	Number of Access Facilities Built or	
131	Maintained (Boat Ramps)	37
132	Wildlife	
133	MDWFP Management for Hunters and	
134	Non-Consumptive Users (Man-Days)	125,000
135	Research Projects Conducted to Sustain	
136	Healthy and Abundant Wildlife	
137	Populations	6
138	Acres of Forest Inventory	1,000
139	Acres of Prescribed Burning, Waterfowl	
140	Management, and Timber Management on	
141	WMA's to Sustain Healthy & Abundant	



142	Wildlife	25,000
143	Percent Change in Number of Research	
144	Projects Conducted to Sustain Healthy	
145	and Abundant Wildlife Populations	-33.00
146	Percent Change in Number of Private Land	
147	Acres Influenced	0.00
148	Percent Change in the Number of Forest	
149	Inventories Conducted	-80.00
150	Law Enforcement	
151	Number of Hunter Education Participants	11,000
152	Number of Hours Patrolled on Land	181,500
153	Number of Hours Patrolled on Water	32,500
154	Number of Criminal Investigations Conducted	8,000
155	Number of Shooting Sport Programs	1,600
156	Number of Boating Accidents	40
157	Number of Boating Fatalities	7
158	Cost per Student for Hunter Education	51.00
159	Cost per Sports Program	550.00
160	Percent Change in Number of Boating	
161	Accidents	0.00
162	Percent Change in Boating Related Fatalities	0.00
163	Percent Change in Public Contacts per	
164	Officer/per Day	15.00
165	Special Projects	
166	Percent Increase in Improved Use of	



167	Special Funds	0.00
168	Parks	
169	Overnight Accommodation (Cabins/Motels)	300,000
170	Overnight Accommodations (Camping)	650,000
171	Day Use Services	400,000
172	Percent Change in Day Use Services	0.00
173	Percent Change in the Prior Year of	
174	Occupancy Rate of Cabins	20.00
175	Museum	
176	Statewide Education Programming	145,000
177	Total Public Programming	250,000
178	Number of Visitors to Exhibits	90,000
179	Number of Natural Heritage Records Entered	85,000
180	Percent Change of Students that	
181	Understand the Importance of Natural	
182	Resource Conservation	5.00
183	Percent Change of Visitors to Exhibits	3.00
184	A reporting of the degree to which the performance targets	
185	set above have been or are being achieved shall be provided in the	
186	agency's budget request submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget	
187	Committee for Fiscal Year 2027.	

188 **SECTION 8.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 2, the
189 following amount shall be derived from the Department of Wildlife,
190 Fisheries and Parks Special Pearl River Timber Fund No. 3465, for



the purpose of making improvements to the Pearl River Wildlife
Management Area.....\$ 50,000.00.

SECTION 9. Of the funds appropriated within this act, the
Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks may enter into
cooperative agreements with the board of supervisors of any county
or any group or combination of counties for the purpose of
creating, improving or restoring parks, public game and fish
habitat lying or to be situated wholly or partially within such
county or in an adjoining county; and each county is empowered and
authorized, in its discretion, to expend funds from the general
county fund for such purposes from which fund they shall reimburse
to the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks the actual cost
of all surveying and engineering projects incurred by the
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks incidental thereto.
Such boards of supervisors are further authorized and empowered,
in their discretion, to enter into agreements necessary to carry
out the purposes of this act with any other county, the United
States Forest Service or any other agency if same should be
necessary for the acquisition of land by lease or otherwise for
such purposes.

SECTION 10. It shall be unlawful for any officer, employee
or other person whatsoever to use or permit or authorize the use
of any automobile or any other motor vehicle owned by the State of
Mississippi or any department, agency or institution thereof for



any purpose other than upon the official business of the State of Mississippi or any agency, department or institution thereof.

It is the intent of the Legislature that motor vehicles authorized to be owned and operated by this agency shall comply with Sections 25-1-77 through 25-1-93, Mississippi Code of 1972.

SECTION 11. In order to be in compliance with Section 63-1-201 et seq., funds are herein provided and may be expended by the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to pay the costs of commercial driver's licenses for specific employees and/or to reimburse such costs for specific employees who, in the course of their duties and responsibilities, are required to hold a valid Mississippi Commercial Driver's License.

SECTION 12. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks is authorized to provide financial support of One Hundred Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$175,000.00) and to enter into an agreement with the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service for a project specialist and related supportive cost.

SECTION 13. The department is authorized to spend up to sixty percent (60%) of revenue in the State Park Timber Endowment Fund, as needed, to operate and maintain the state parks.

SECTION 14. It is the intention of the Legislature that whenever two (2) or more bids are received by this agency for the purchase of commodities or equipment, and whenever all things stated in such received bids are equal with respect to price, quality and service, the Mississippi Industries for the Blind



shall be given preference. A similar preference shall be given to the Mississippi Industries for the Blind whenever purchases are made without competitive bids.

SECTION 15. Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is the intention of the Legislature that Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000.00) is allocated for the detection and prevention of Chronic Wasting Disease in deer populations across the state.

SECTION 16. Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is the intention of the Legislature that Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00) is allocated for LeFleur's Bluff State Park for playground security expenses.

SECTION 17. Of the funds appropriated herein, Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000.00) may be provided to fund the Youth Participation Initiative for the purpose of educating children in the areas of hunting, fishing, conservation, and safety.

SECTION 18. It is the intention of the Legislature that no more than One Million Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,300,000.00) be expended from the Motor Vehicle Fund for the purchase of any type of motor vehicle.

SECTION 19. The executive director of the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks is authorized to enter into an agreement with any public or private entities to manage any park or parks within the state park system.



264 **SECTION 20.** It is the intent of the Legislature that no
265 state-owned wildlife management area be closed and that to the
266 greatest practicable extent, department land management decisions
267 and actions may not result in any net loss of any acreage
268 available for hunting opportunities that existed on July 1, 2006,
269 as provided in Section 49-5-99(4). It is the intention of the
270 Legislature that no state park be closed without legislative
271 approval.

272 **SECTION 21.** It is the intent of the Legislature that the
273 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall have
274 the authority to enter into multi-year contracts for the purpose
275 of placing a sign on such state park property under the
276 department's domain, in accordance with any applicable rules and
277 regulations. All proceeds generated from these activities shall
278 remain with the department and shall be deposited into the proper
279 special fund.

280 **SECTION 22.** It is the intent of the Legislature that from
281 the funds available to the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and
282 Parks, the department may purchase and pay premium(s) on property
283 damage insurance on its motor vehicles, boats, trailers, real
284 property improvements, buildings, furnishings, and such other
285 assets as may be appropriate or practical, and/or as required by a
286 granting entity.

287 **SECTION 23.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions
288 of Section 2, One Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars



289 (\$1,750,000.00) shall be designated for the purpose of defraying
290 the operational expenses of Special Projects. None of these funds
291 shall be used for "Personal Services."

292 **SECTION 24.** It is the intention of the Legislature that the
293 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall have the
294 authority to receive, budget and expend funds from the Gulf and
295 Wildlife Protection Fund, not to exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars
296 (\$50,000.00) for the purpose of preservation, protection,
297 conservation, and acquisition of waters, land and wildlife of this
298 state.

299 **SECTION 25.** It is the intention of the Legislature that the
300 funds herein appropriated shall be expended in compliance with
301 Section 27-104-25, Mississippi Code of 1972, that no state agency
302 shall incur obligations or indebtedness in excess of their
303 appropriation and that the responsible officers, either personally
304 or upon their official bonds, shall be held responsible for
305 actions contrary to this provision.

306 **SECTION 26.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is
307 the intention of the Legislature that Fifty-eight Thousand Five
308 Hundred Ninety-three Dollars (\$58,593.00) may be allocated for the
309 Hunter Education program supported from the General Fund court
310 assessments.

311 **SECTION 27.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
312 necessary, is reappropriated out of any money in the Capital
313 Expense Fund not otherwise appropriated for the Mississippi



314 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for the purpose of
315 reauthorizing the expenditure of Capital Expense Funds, as
316 authorized in House Bill 1791, 2024 Regular Session, to defray
317 expenses of the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for
318 the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026..
319\$ 3,800,000.00.

320 This appropriation is made for the purpose of reauthorizing
321 the expenditure of funds as allocated herein:

322 (a) Projects on the Parks Improvement Plan....\$ 2,300,000.00

323 (b) Museum Admissions Area Renovations.....\$ 1,500,000.00

324 Notwithstanding the amount reappropriated under this section,
325 the amount that may be expended under the authority of this
326 section, shall not exceed the unexpended balance of the funds
327 remaining as of June 30, 2025, from the amount authorized for the
328 previous fiscal year. In addition, this reappropriation shall not
329 change the purpose for which the funds were originally authorized.

330 **SECTION 28.** The money herein appropriated shall be paid by
331 the State Treasurer out of any money in the State Treasury to the
332 credit of the proper fund or funds as set forth in this act, upon
333 warrants issued by the State Fiscal Officer; and the State Fiscal
334 Officer shall issue his warrants upon requisitions signed by the
335 proper person, officer or officers, in the manner provided by law.

336 **SECTION 29.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
337 and after July 1, 2025.

