

MDC Touches on Effects of Flooding

Heavy rains have caused historic flooding for much of Missouri, impacting homes, neighborhoods, roads, and even entire towns throughout the state. Flood waters have also caused damage at some Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conservation areas, particularly to roads, boat ramps, buildings, and other infrastructure.

Wildlife, however, is well adapted to extreme weather conditions. Regarding wildlife and flooding, MDC Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee explained most wild animals move to higher ground when areas begin to flood.

“Many species have the ability to move to higher ground and can avoid flooding and high waters,” she said. “Although there are likely to be localized negative impacts, wildlife populations generally recover over time from these types of extreme natural events.”

MDC Deer Biologist Barb Keller echoed the same message.

“Deer and elk are pretty resilient to these types of events because they’re mobile, and in most cases, move to high ground as flood waters rise,” Keller explained. “Deer and elk are also strong swimmers and are occasionally sighted swimming across rivers as large as the Mississippi and Missouri.”

Keller added that deer fawns and elk calves would certainly be more vulnerable to extreme weather events such as flooding, but the peak timing for elk calving and deer fawning is still a few weeks away.

"Anytime we have a big rainfall event during spring, it's never a good thing for turkey nesting success," said MDC Turkey Biologist Jason Isabelle.

“That being said, this spring’s flooding does not necessarily mean that we’re in for a poor hatch this year,” Isabelle said. “Weather over the next 4-6 weeks will still have a big influence on the success of this year’s hatch.”

Missouri fish are well adapted to flooding and MDC Fisheries Division Chief Brian Canaday noted the state’s fish populations are resilient.

“During floods, some fish move long distances, while others find refuge in local habitat such as root wads, logs, boulders, and flooded back waters,” he said.

Canaday added that fishing in Missouri will continue to be good.

“Your favorite fishing spot may look different after the flood, but the fish are still there and fishing will still be good in Missouri’s lakes, rivers, and streams,” he said.

As waters recede over the next few days, MDC staff will continue to assess impacts of flooding at MDC facilities, conservation areas, hatcheries, and accesses.

Before visiting conservation areas around state, check the MDC website for area closures due to flooding under CHECK FOR CLOSINGS at mdc.mo.gov.