

Executive Summary of the Situation Analysis

For the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

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Executive Summary of the Situation Analysis for VDGIF

This report summarizes the situation analysis prepared for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 2009/2010. A situation analysis is a snapshot of the current situation and an evaluation of what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats exist that may impact efforts to market hunting to those who purchased a hunting license in either 2006 or 2007 but not in 2008.

From a marketing perspective, it's effective to work at re-recruiting lapsed hunters because they already possess the interest, skills and equipment necessary to enjoy hunting.

As this document is a synopsis of the situation analysis, it's recommended the full report be read for a more complete picture of the factors associated with lapsed hunters, hunter satisfaction, recruitment and retention, license buying trends, results from the focus groups and telephone survey and the agency's efforts to service its license buying customers.

Hunter Numbers/License Buying Trends

- While Virginia's population has increased 45% from 5.3 million to 7.7 million since 1980, the number of Virginia hunters decreased 38%. Hunters represent a smaller segment of the population. 6.7% of Virginians purchased a license in 1980, 2.9% did in 2006.
- In Virginia in 1980 about 374,000 individuals bought hunting licenses. In 1991, 309,000 individuals bought hunting licenses. In 2008, 242,434 people bought hunting licenses. (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries 1992).

Lapsed Hunter Information

- A telephone survey of Virginia's lapsed hunters revealed nearly half of the "lapsed" hunters in the sample (46%) had hunted on private land in Virginia during the 2008-2009 season and thus did not require a license. A third of those who said they were not at all likely to buy a hunting license in 2009/2010 said it was because they planned to hunt private land.
- Other reasons Virginia hunters did not buy a license were lack of time, work obligations, family obligations and personal health.

Hunting License Promotion/Marketing Efforts

- The VDGIF has worked on many fronts to inform hunters about opportunities in Virginia and make licenses readily available. License availability is promoted through annual regulation booklets, VVDGIF website, the customer service phone bank, bi-weekly newsletter, monthly four-color wildlife magazine, more than 650 VDGIF license agents located statewide, VDGIF headquarters, and various trade shows, fairs, county and state tourism centers, educational and outdoor events.

Factors Affecting License Sales

- According to the Future of Hunting and Shooting Sports Phase 1 Literature Review (2006), one important reason that hunters increasingly report as a cause of dissatisfaction is poor hunting access.
- 2009 telephone survey results support that not having enough places to hunt and not having enough access to places to hunt were among the top four factors that strongly took away from lapsed hunters' enjoyment of hunting in Virginia.
- While there are several polarizing issues in Virginia including Sunday hunting and deer hunting with dogs, it is not expected they will dramatically affect 2010 license sales. The results of the recent discovery of CWD in Virginia are unknown.

Results from Other Lapsed Hunter Campaigns

- Other lapsed hunter marketing communications campaigns were conducted in Tennessee, Indiana and Florida with mixed results. Telephone surveys were not conducted in any of these efforts, which may have affected their success. The quantitative information gained from random telephone surveys is critical in testing information obtained in focus groups and through other means.

Recommendations

- A telephone survey of Virginia's lapsed hunters suggested using messages and outreach materials that appeal to passing on the hunting heritage, connecting, making memories, and bonding with someone special.
- It was also recommended that VDGIF should address availability and quality of hunting opportunities on public land in messages and outreach materials. Also consider focusing some Department resources, if necessary, on improving hunting opportunities on public lands (e.g., acquiring more land, adjusting regulations, attempting to reduce crowding).