



Starting Our Second Century:

Connecting People with Wildlife through –

- Angling,
- Boating,
- Education,
- Hunting, and
- Wildlife Watching

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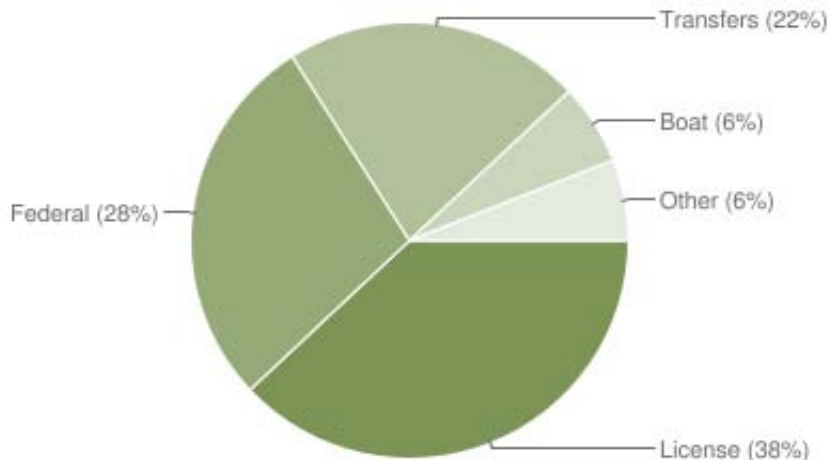
Introduction

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), also referred to as Agency, was authorized by the General Assembly in 1916. Agency powers and duties are currently outlined in the *Code of Virginia*, Title 29.1 Game, Inland Fisheries and Boating. The Agency is supervised by a citizen board, appointed to by the Governor, comprised of one member from each of the congressional districts in the Commonwealth. DGIF is an executive branch agency positioned within the Secretariat of Natural Resources.

DGIF is the primary state agency charged with the management of inland fish and wildlife and recreational boating. The Department is required to employ scientific principles and procedures in the management of the Commonwealth's wildlife and natural resources¹, as developed, researched, recognized and accepted within the bounds of comprehensive professional wildlife resource management. The Department is classified as a "special funded" Agency because it does not receive funding from state general fund tax revenues. Revenues are generated through five primary sources:

- License and permit sales required for hunting, fishing and trapping activities
- Federal grants and programs including Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program, Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program and special competitive grant awards
- Boat registration and titling for all watercraft powered by mechanical means
- Transfer of state revenue collected through watercraft sales and use taxes and from sales taxes collected on outdoor-related goods and equipment purchased by anglers, boaters, hunters, and wildlife enthusiasts
- Other revenue sources such as *Virginia Wildlife* magazine subscriptions, conservation license plates, merchandise sales, donations and other sources

Estimated Net Receipts by Source for FY 2011



Total FY 2011
Net Receipts:
\$56,982,217



Planning Process Overview

Executive Director Bob Duncan expressed strong commitment to soliciting employee input prior to initiating development of strategic plan goals, objectives and strategies. DGIF partnered with the Performance Management Group (PMG) at Virginia Commonwealth University to design and implement the strategic planning process.

A series of PMG-facilitated employee and stakeholder input sessions were conducted to gather information prior to beginning strategic plan deliberations. Information gathered through the input sessions was summarized by PMG staff and shared with senior Agency staff. A strategic planning team was then established and charged with drafting the plan document. Planning team members included representatives from all Agency divisions and regional offices. This planning team represented a wide range of seniority and employment classification. The planning team also included two DGIF Board members.

The planning team reviewed the results of the employee and stakeholder input sessions and completed a two-day planning retreat that built consensus on Agency goals and priorities. This information was captured by PMG staff and was reviewed and revised by senior Agency staff to produce a draft strategic plan which was then shared with employees, stakeholders, and Board members. The final strategic plan was a collaborative effort designed to enhance engagement by staff and customers so that success is more likely realized.

Employee and Stakeholder Input Session Process

A total of sixteen voluntary employee input sessions were conducted and included two sessions in each of the five regional offices as well as several at the Agency headquarters in Richmond. A mixture of staff representing various sections and functions were present at each session. An additional session was held in Richmond that included a variety of leaders from 36 local and national wildlife and conservation organizations known as the Agency Advisory Group. These leaders represented the interests of more than 300,000 Virginians and were joined by another two members of the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries. More than 340 people participated and shared their viewpoints and suggestions during these sessions.

PMG staff facilitated each input session using a similar process to ensure comparability of responses across participant groups. Participants addressed several questions including:

- A. What are the most critical factors that will require DGIF to change during the next 10 years if the Agency wants to remain relevant and vital to the Commonwealth?



- B. If, 10 years from now, DGIF were one of the premier agencies of its kind in the United States, what would it look like? How would it be operating?
- C. What are the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that will likely impact DGIF's ability to attain the identified vision for the future?

Sessions were highly interactive and participatory to help ensure each participant had ample opportunity to share their ideas and opinions. Summary reports were prepared after each work session and posted on the DGIF intranet for employee access. A comprehensive summary was prepared by PMG and shared with the strategic planning team prior to their first meeting.²

Critical Factors Driving Agency Change

Several factors driving change were identified by DGIF employees. Responses were very consistent across the 17 input sessions. It is noteworthy that the Agency Advisory Group's input followed very similar thought processes as did Agency staff's. The change factors are highly interdependent and are not listed in order of priority.

1. Growing Disconnect with the Natural Environment

The majority of Virginia's population resides in urban and suburban locations. Residents are not as connected to the natural environment as they once were. Wildlife that traditionally had value as game species (such as deer and bear) are considered nuisance animals in many communities. Residents expect these populations to be controlled or eliminated in their areas.

Many individuals and families have extensive recreational options beyond traditional hunting and fishing activities. Steady reductions in the number of adults who hunt and fish have resulted in fewer individuals who can "pass along" knowledge and interest in traditional outdoor activities or mentor children and young adults who express a willingness to engage in those activities. Less time spent outdoors reduces understanding of and appreciation for the natural environment.

DGIF staff indicated that even avid hunters and anglers are reporting they have less time to pursue these activities due to time demands from work and families. Hunting and fishing are no longer necessary activities for obtaining food for the vast majority of residents.

An increasing number of residents are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with hunting activities. An increase in anti-hunting sentiment has been occurring, especially in cities and suburbs. DGIF must brand itself and its mission so that more Virginians understand the importance and impact

² Summary of Employee Input Sessions, July 2010. PMG report submitted to DGIF



wildlife and related activities have on the Commonwealth. DGIF must connect people with wildlife through angling, boating, hunting, and wildlife watching, through educational programs that demonstrate the values of these outdoor activities in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

2. Demographic Trends

Virginia's population growth is being generated in part by an increasing number of residents from other countries. Different cultures have different values regarding the natural environment and treatment of wildlife, waterfowl and fish. Species that are undesirable for harvest and consumption by American-born residents may be highly desirable to people from other cultures. Harvesting methods can differ as well. This contributes to wildlife violations and increases demands on law enforcement personnel. Communication and education can be difficult with those who may speak English as a second language.

Virginia's population profile mirrors the national baby boom population. The population is growing older, which also contributes to the reduction of the number of hunters and anglers. The 2000 Census indicated that Southwest, Southside, Central and the Eastern Shore of Virginia had the highest concentration of older Virginians. Virginia's Department of the Aging forecasts that by 2020, one in five Virginians will be over 60 years old and by 2030; one in four will be over 60 years old. The percentages are even higher if DGIF look specifically at regions of the state where its traditional consumptive customers live. This aging population was more closely tied to traditional wildlife values than the younger generation being raised in urban and suburban areas today.

3. Decline in Revenues

Virginia has experienced a gradual but steady decline in hunting and fishing license sales, the primary source of revenue. Continued heavy reliance on this traditional revenue stream is inadequate to support the Agency's mission and goals.

A United States Census Bureau Study in FY 2000 found that Virginia ranked 50th in the nation per capita and as a percentage of the state's budget spending on natural resources and parks. In fact, Virginia spent less than half the national average in these categories.

In FY2011, about 0.5% of general funds are dedicated to natural resources and less than 1% of the Commonwealth's annual operating budget including non-general funds is dedicated to natural resources. This low level of funding impacts DGIF's ability to deliver services and may also send an incorrect message that wildlife and related activities are not valued by the Commonwealth.



The table below shows that while DGIF’s operating budget has increased 28% over the last 10 years, it is now completely reliant on non-general funds and has shrunk as a relative portion of the state’s operating budget from 1/6th of 1% to 1/7th of 1%.

Table 1: Annual Operating Budgets

Unit	FY	GF	% of Total	NGF	% of Total	Total	% of Total
DGIF	2001	\$141,250	0.001%	\$41,545,164	0.376%	\$41,686,414	0.179%
	2011	\$0	0.000%	\$53,473,376	0.244%	\$53,473,376	0.141%
Natural Resources	2001	\$136,216,420	1.109%	\$152,183,491	1.379%	\$288,399,911	1.237%
	2011	\$86,801,029	0.542%	\$274,860,715	1.257%	\$361,661,744	0.954%
State	2001	\$12,283,610,813	100%	\$11,039,138,204	100%	\$23,322,749,018	100%
	2011	\$16,021,156,894	100%	\$21,872,912,349	100%	\$37,894,069,244	100%

4. Unfunded Mandates

DGIF is subject to demands from both state and federal legislators. Current mandates regarding the Chesapeake Bay Program and Dam Safety Act will likely be joined by others. It is unclear what demands the next decade may bring, but it is certain that the growing population in Virginia will more likely be disconnected with nature (suffering from a condition known as Nature Deficit Disorder) and not paying customers of DGIF although they will continue to expect services. DGIF must recognize that while it strives to exercise sound leadership of wildlife management and boating regulations based on sound science, science is trumped by economics, and economics is trumped by politics.³ DGIF must be actively engaged and respected in the political arenas if it is to protect the natural resources and deliver on its mission.

5. Habitat Loss, Fragmentation, and Land Use Policy

Virginia has been experiencing steady population growth during the past decades and is expected to do so during the next ten years. This has fueled increased development in many regions of the state, resulting in significant loss of habitat. Some undisturbed habitat areas are now so isolated by fragmentation that they can no longer support sustainable wildlife populations.

Undesirable habitat changes are also being attributed to environmental factors such as acid rain, climate change and pollution.

Introduction of exotic species and invasive plants are placing further pressure on natural habitats. The increase in residents who travel to other countries, overseas visitors entering

³ Dr. Jim Martin, Speech to DGIF Employees on September 17, 2010



Virginia, and extensive international trade makes it probable that additional nonnative plants and species will be introduced.

Land use decisions at the local level require DGIF to educate citizens and environmental partners.

6. Loss of Access

The accessibility of land for hunting is shrinking. It is not as easy as it once was to talk with a neighbor and get permission to hunt on their land. A growing number of farms and land tracts are being bought by people who do not hunt and do not wish to allow hunting on their property. DGIF must work to improve access for all outdoor enthusiasts to Virginia's wild resources.

Some property owners are now leasing their land to hunt clubs, restricting access to those who cannot pay the fees to join. A growing number of corporate landowners that once allowed hunting are restricting access due to liability concerns or are entering into lease agreements with hunting organizations to generate revenue. Some individuals have indicated they stopped hunting because it became too expensive and difficult to pursue.

Restricting access to waterways by property owners is also growing due to a variety of factors. Some landowners have experienced problems in the past with litter and property damage while others just do not want to be disturbed by anyone else. Some lands that used to be open for community access are now being posted.

7. Increased Demands for Use of Public Lands and Facilities

Loss of habitat and access are increasing the demand for use of public lands, especially the Agency's Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's). These areas have been set aside by the Department to protect wildlife habitat and to help manage wildlife populations for recreational use. An increasing number of individuals and groups are using these properties to pursue non-compatible interests. WMA's are experiencing requests ranging from mountain biking, ATV use and horseback riding to paintball competitions, weddings and triathlons. This trend is likely to strengthen as private property access continues to decrease and Virginia's population grows. Conflicts among competing users are likely to increase in the years ahead.

Increased demand is being experienced and is likely to grow along Virginia's waterways placing increased pressure on the public boat ramps and access points. A growing number of kayakers and canoeists are using these facilities and a growing number support the idea of helping to fund the Department's future if it means greater access for them. DGIF needs to encourage this inclusive strategy so that its Department is more relevant to a growing number of Virginians in its second century.



8. Complexity of Wildlife and Habitat Management

Many of the factors previously discussed contribute to the growing complexity and difficulty of adequately managing habitats and game and non-game populations. Conflicts with wildlife are increasing in developing areas of the state. Habitat is being lost or degraded across the Commonwealth due to a variety of factors. The number of agencies and organizations who wish to be involved in conservation and management decisions is increasing. DGIF must take a leadership role as the primary state Agency for wildlife conservation and recreational boating to coordinate efficient and effective information-sharing guidelines and processes.

9. Wildlife Diseases

Chronic Wasting Disease in deer, White-Nose Syndrome in bats and other wildlife diseases have the potential to spread across Virginia. The introduction of additional diseases, such as avian flu, is possible. The Department must maintain its vigilance to react quickly to these public health threats and continue its monitoring activities so that outbreaks are detected early.

10. Attracting and Retaining Quality Staff

Increased demand for services is already stretching available staff resources. Strategic decisions need to be made about what services DGIF provides and what services it will not provide to avoid staff burnout and departure from the Agency. Limited financial resources will continue to be a challenge unless a fundamental funding transformation occurs and the general public becomes directly invested in wildlife conservation and its related activities.

Wildlife biologists and other conservation professionals now entering the field may have different motivations for pursuing their professions than their counterparts a generation ago. It was frequently remarked that it once was likely that almost everyone employed by DGIF either hunted, fished, or both. That no longer holds true. This contributed to an ongoing culture shift within the Agency that is not as focused on traditional hunting and fishing activities.

11. Changing Technology

Technology will continue to evolve at a rapid pace and has already changed expectations among young adults about access to, and speed of obtaining, information. Traditional ways of marketing the Agency and providing educational services are not likely to be as effective with this age cohort. An aspiration is to be able to provide information at the speed of thought.

Maintaining pace with technological changes will also present challenges for law enforcement personnel. Individuals with intentions to violate conservation and game laws can be expected to use the latest available technology to their advantage. This sophistication of technology will require greater investments from future budgets.



Analysis of Current Conditions

Employees identified current Agency strengths and weaknesses that they believed would hinder the ability to achieve operational excellence. External opportunities and threats were also identified that require consideration when crafting strategies for achieving future goals.

Strengths	
<p>Efficient Operations Do more with less Work together as needed Improved QA/QC Good fiscal management</p> <p>Generally Well Equipped Law enforcement Field operations</p> <p>Self-Funded Generate own money Not General Fund dependent Some dedicated funding stream</p> <p>Satisfied Customers Long history of service Statewide presence and service Loyal constituent base Customer service ethic Good public image</p> <p>Good Leadership Open to new ideas Commitment to mission Leadership Development Program</p> <p>Great Natural Resources Biologically diverse state Abundant game and non-game wildlife Healthy populations Abundant public lands</p>	<p>Good Facilities Largest public landowner Award-winning boat ramps Improving fish hatcheries Provide access throughout state</p> <p>Outreach and Education Presence at many events Hunter and boater education programs Publications</p> <p>Needed and Supported Constitutionally protected consumptive recreation People want its services Good relationship with legislators Strong conservation partner relationships Solid national reputation Extensive volunteer network</p> <p>Knowledgeable Staff Highly experienced and educated staff Dedication to mission Highly trained law enforcement personnel Desire to change and improve Recognized expertise</p> <p>Strong Programs and Services Technical assistance to landowners Research and action plans History of management success Volunteer engagement</p>



Weaknesses	
<p>Recreation Access Not enough access to land and water Few handicapped facilities</p> <p>Administrative Processes SWAM and VITA requirements Too many layers of approval Inconsistent policies across the Agency Procurement delays</p> <p>Management Support Some managers resistant to new ideas and change Reactive instead of proactive Comfortable with the status quo Micro-managing Disconnect with field staff Not holding people accountable</p> <p>Maintenance Aging equipment and buildings Renting versus owning office space Out of date hatcheries Deteriorating infrastructure (dams, bridges, roads, etc.)</p> <p>Communication Poor communication between divisions and from Richmond to field staff Unproductive practices regarding email Unrealistic expectation of response time Few opportunities for employees to interact</p> <p>Internal Cooperation Lacking team focus Lack of cohesive work environment</p> <p>Land Use Local government land use decisions are not fully-informed of wildlife impacts</p>	<p>Focus Unclear Agency priorities Inability to say “No” to requests Crisis decision-making and priority setting No strategic vision Trying to do too much with available staff and financial resources</p> <p>Funding Decrease in traditional constituency Too many “give aways” Federal aid with strings attached</p> <p>Marketing Lack of public awareness of Agency and its value Inability to capture public support</p> <p>Staff Retention and Development Inadequate staffing levels, especially field staff Lower pay and benefits compared to federal agencies Inadequate career tracks and advancement opportunities Inadequate computer training Asking more and more from same staff Little cross-training and backup Little diversity</p> <p>Regulations Complicated laws and regulations – difficult to communicate to public and enforce</p> <p>Technology Cumbersome and inefficient VITA processes and support Outdated equipment and software Poor computer support in the field</p>



Opportunities	
<p>Improving Access Acquiring more land while prices are low Conservation easements that allow hunting and fishing Cooperative agreements for access to private property</p> <p>Conservation Movement Growing awareness of conservation needs “Green” buildings and low impact development Locavore movement – potential market for game</p> <p>Public Demand Increased public demand for access to natural areas (non-consumptive users) Desire for local and low-cost outdoor recreation Specialty users – fly-fishing; spring turkey; etc. growing Increased urban programs</p> <p>Renewed Focus Creation of a shared vision and strategic plan of action</p> <p>Increased Funding Streams Increase in sales tax revenues WMA user fee, license or stamp Reduced license exemptions Fees for issuance of permits Charge for technical assistance to private and corporate landowners Seek more federal and corporate grants Expand DGIF retail sales Bring back traditional constituents Multi-year license Forever license Automatic renewals/alerts Update lifetime license structure Implement an annual CPI adjustment</p>	<p>Consolidation Addition of staff and services from other state agencies through reform initiative</p> <p>Strengthened Partnerships Educate legislators on needs and benefits Strategic partnerships with other conservation organizations for funding and program development and support</p> <p>Expanded Marketing Potential name change to reflect comprehensive Agency mission New Richmond office could include interpretation and education center Marketing messages in different languages Increased marketing to draw visitors from out of state</p> <p>High Quality Natural Resources Diverse wildlife, land and water resources for public use Increased use of WMA’s by non-consumptive users</p> <p>Increased Outreach and Education Web-based education programs Increased presence in schools by providing materials that meet SOL requirements Strategic partnerships with conservation organizations to provide education programs Increased use of social media Development of Law K-9 Units</p> <p>Expanded Volunteer Base Growing volunteer network Create intern pipeline</p> <p>Technology Leverage customer-centric business efficiencies</p>



Threats	
<p>Loss of Access Increased privatization of hunting and fishing Loss of cooperative agreements</p> <p>Anti-Hunting Movement Animal rights groups Actions of irresponsible sportsmen Changing attitudes about firearms</p> <p>Environmental Changes Pollution Climate change Diseases Invasive species and exotic plants Natural disasters</p> <p>Economic Pressures Increased costs for fuel and materials Slow economic recovery</p> <p>Decreased Demand and Support Public apathy toward natural resources Too many competing interests and options for leisure time (e.g. video games and organized sports) Different wildlife ethics among various cultures Continued decrease in hunters and anglers Public ignorance about DGIF and lack of support Growing Nature Deficit Disorder</p>	<p>Decreased Funding Failure to secure alternative funding Decrease in federal support Reductions in license fees and sales tax receipts State encroachment on DGIF funding</p> <p>Legislative Decisions Consolidation and loss of core mission Changing political priorities and mandates beyond Agency mission Composition of future DGIF Boards Decisions not based upon science Changes in VITA and other central support agencies New federal regulations and mandates</p> <p>Habitat Loss Continued loss of habitat to development Poor land use planning and sprawl Increase in human/wildlife conflicts</p> <p>Competing Interests Growing incompatible uses on public lands Competing agendas of special interest groups</p> <p>Decreased Capacity Loss of institutional knowledge and expertise through retirements Inability to compete for quality employees</p>



Seven Standards for Excellence

DGIF employees provided a clear picture of Agency characteristics and qualities that, if fully achieved, would result in superior organizational performance. These principles should be used to assess and prioritize Agency activities, policies and processes.

1. Access to High Quality Outdoor Experiences

A variety of wildlife and boating outdoor recreational opportunities are provided that meet a wide range of customer needs and interests. DGIF will see continuous improvement in its customer satisfaction scores during its annual surveys.

2. Positive Image, Outreach, and Customer Focus

People know who DGIF is, what it does, and how it benefits them. DGIF partners with its customers and stakeholders to first listen, then respond. The public will recognize that DGIF “connects people with wildlife.”

Agency outreach and education programs help residents and visitors better understand, appreciate, respect and enjoy Virginia’s natural wildlife and boating resources. DGIF will take every opportunity to educate public administrators on the impact their decisions may have on wildlife from a scientific basis.

3. Comprehensive Approach to Wildlife Management

Appropriate state services should be consolidated under DGIF to implement a comprehensive, holistic approach to wildlife conservation. It must be recognized that just as no single species can be isolated from its landscape, no management effort impacts just one species. The suite of species dependent on a particular habitat must be considered when making management decisions. DGIF must evolve to this broader view of wildlife management.

4. Diversified and Reliable Funding Base

Funding comes from a variety of sources and is sufficient for the Agency to provide needed programs and services in order to fulfill its mission. Senior leaders must maintain a list of current programs which would be cut if revenue comes in 5% below forecast and a list of opportunities to pursue if revenue comes in 5% above forecast.

5. Highly Efficient Structure and Operations

DGIF exemplifies best practices for efficient and effective management of financial and staff resources. DGIF will maintain its outstanding audit record through continued education and emphasis from the most senior levels. DGIF will implement an annual All-Hands Survey to assess



its Agency policies, operational practices, alignment with values, achievement of goals, engagement of employees, and areas for improvement.

6. Highest Quality Leaders, Staff, and Work Environment

The Agency has strong leadership that maintains a clear and unwavering focus on its mission. DGIF's facilities, programs and practices reflect its commitment to environmental stewardship. Its leaders will epitomize the values to which DGIF ascribes.

DGIF attracts and supports the best and the brightest and is viewed as an employer of choice for conservation professionals and support staff. DGIF will continue to recognize superior performance through the Employee Awards and Recognition Program and Career Track Advancement Program. DGIF will enable its staff to present research and program reviews at national forums and submit nominations to every professional organization to which DGIF subscribes for national recognition.

7. Effective Use of Technology

Technology is creatively used to help maximize efficiency and to better serve customers and staff. DGIF will enhance modes of electronic communication for its employees to better convey and transfer information, to connect with each other and constituents, and to work remotely. Customers will benefit from electronic processes that bring services and information to them where and when they want them.

DGIF Core Values and Commitments

DGIF employees are clearly passionate about the work they perform. Harnessing this passion will enable the Agency to achieve superior performance and help ensure it is meeting the needs of Virginia residents today and well into the future.

Core Values

- **Respect** for wildlife resources and those that DGIF serves
- **Responsiveness** to customer needs
- **Integrity** with honest application of science
- **Accountability** through transparency of operations



Core Commitments

1. Provide increased and innovative opportunities for individuals to personally experience and enjoy Virginia’s wildlife and boating resources today and in the future.
2. Create a deeper understanding by legislators and the general public of, and appreciation for, the diversity of Virginia’s wildlife, the importance of maintaining healthy wildlife populations, and the multiple benefits provided by these actions.
3. Manage and conserve Virginia’s wildlife through the application of sound science and the enhancement and protection of critical habitats.

DGIF will be THE best at:

Connecting people with wildlife, through:

- angling,
- boating,
- education,
- hunting, and
- wildlife watching.

Seven Goals for 2020

Seven goals are identified for the next decade. Delivering these goals will enable DGIF to effectively pursue its mission. Pursuit of these goals will capture the passions and talents of DGIF employees and help focus Agency efforts and the establishment of priorities. Once these goals are achieved, we will define new milestones for the following years.

1. Increase the Quality of Wildlife Related Experiences

DGIF will connect people to wildlife. Managing for optimum populations of game and fish species will help hunters and anglers enjoy their experiences and return for more. Maintaining and enhancing a diversity of non-game species and their habitats will increase enjoyment of the outdoors by anglers, hunters, and those who do not hunt or fish.



2. Increase Access to Public and Private Lands and Waterways

Anglers, boaters, hunters, watchers and other wildlife enthusiasts need access to land and waterways to achieve a high quality recreational experience. DGIF needs to provide increased accessibility to meet future demands.

3. Deliver High Quality Customer Service

Virginia’s population is growing in both number of residents and their cultural diversity. DGIF must continue to be responsive to public needs for information and assistance to ensure quality outdoor recreational experiences and appreciation of wildlife resources. Its services will be delivered in ways convenient to the user. Appropriate use of technology will allow its customers to get what they need from us in a more automated and less time-consuming way. Simplification of hunting, fishing and boating regulations will help encourage individuals to pursue outdoor activities in a safer and more informed manner. DGIF will employ appropriate technology to encourage customer self-service.

4. Strengthen Financial Sustainability

This is a top priority. DGIF’s past revenue model consisting of roughly 40% from license sales, 30% from federal grants, 20% from special designated-fund transfers, and 10% from boating and other funds is unsustainable. As consumptive users shrink in number, DGIF needs to find new and broader revenue streams. Working with administration, legislative, and constituent groups, DGIF will foster general public support for its mission and programs.

5. Increase Angling, Boating, hunting, and Wildlife Watching Education Programs

Education programs are invaluable in helping ensure that outdoor recreational opportunities are pursued in a safe and lawful manner. Wildlife education programs build appreciation for Virginia’s diverse wildlife and natural resources and promote stewardship. Recreational boating education better ensures the safety of both the operators and passengers.

6. Increase Enforcement Effectiveness

DGIF Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) are essential in helping ensure Virginia’s wildlife resources are protected and outdoor enthusiasts pursue their activities appropriately. Enforcement capabilities should be uniform and consistent throughout the state using the latest tools such as K-9 units, geospatial information systems, tracking techniques, and thermal imaging.



7. Protect and Enhance Virginia's Biologic Diversity

A diversity of wildlife and habitats exist in Virginia and must be protected to ensure environmental integrity. The biologic diversity of the state also offers a multitude of opportunities for recreational use and enjoyment. Protection of Virginia's biologic diversity also requires effective response to threats from disease, invasive species and other threats. It is imperative that DGIF monitors, anticipates and responds to these threats.

Seven Strategies for Success

The following strategies must be pursued for DGIF to achieve the 2020 goals. The strategies represent a holistic systems approach to goal achievement.

1. Increase Access to Wildlife

Convenient access to varied landscapes and waterways is essential for quality outdoor experiences. The Agency must continue being innovative and creative in helping individuals gain access to Agency facilities. DGIF must first ensure that Virginia's wildlife resources are managed effectively and that access is provided in a safe and responsible manner. Superior customer service demands that regulations and permit processes are as simple to understand and access as possible. This will encourage more people to enjoy the state's natural resources appropriately.

2. Diversify and Increase Funding

The current funding mechanism is inadequate to meet future needs. A more diversified and sustainable funding base will be proposed to ensure DGIF has adequate staff and resources to fulfill its mission.

3. Clarify Agency Image and Branding

DGIF must inspire a shared vision both internally and externally. A statewide marketing plan will help residents better understand the Agency's mission and services. A new Agency name and logo may be needed to better reflect the Agency mission and help DGIF transform itself from the "Game Commission".

4. Work the Plan

Agency programs and operations will be reviewed to determine "fit" with the 2020 goals and Agency strategies. Programs and operations that do not provide a clear benefit to goal attainment will be modified or eliminated. Agency funding decisions should be driven by plan goals and potential new programs or initiatives should be assessed for degree of fit with those goals. The Agency must build its capacity to prioritize programs according to this plan.



Employee understanding and support is critical for successful plan implementation. Each employee should be clear on how their job duties support the achievement of plan goals and reflect Agency commitment and values. It is also essential that Agency partners understand the strategic plan and how they can contribute to its implementation.

5. Manage Talent

The Agency needs to ensure that current job descriptions and performance expectations are in alignment with plan goals. A succession management plan will help the Agency build its capacity to sustain excellence in operations. Hiring decisions should focus on achieving the skills, talent and dedication needed to fulfill Agency goals.

6. Improve Internal and External Communication

Frequent and effective communication is critical to helping employees, stakeholders and Agency customers understand Agency goals, priorities and services. Communications will emphasize Agency priorities and initiatives and opportunities for engagement.

7. Streamline Administrative Processes and Procedures

The Agency will complete a comprehensive review of administrative processes and procedures to identify opportunities for time and cost savings. Reducing duplication of effort, ensuring tasks are assigned to appropriate personnel to complete, and effective use of technology will help Agency staff be more effective in pursuing Agency goals.

Next Steps

The cross-Agency strategic planning team was an effective mechanism for increasing understanding and trust across organizational units and building consensus on Agency goals and priorities for action. This approach can continue to be useful as the Agency establishes operational plans to implement strategic plan priorities.

A twelve month action plan is needed for each strategy. The action plans should include quarterly benchmarks or progress milestones, responsibility for carrying out actions, and resources needed.

Senior Agency leaders should review plan progress at least every three months. Progress assessments should be shared with Agency staff members and the Board's Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee every six months.

