



# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES: BOATING ACCESS SITE AND FACILITY MANAGEMENT PLAN



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**Figure 1.** Virginia Boating Access Study research team: Dr. Faren R. Wolter (Project Manager, kneeling), Trey Howell, Shawn Johnson, Petrina Thomas, Dr. Doug Goldsmith, and Raymond Procopio. Not pictured: Joshua Walker.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF; hereafter also referred to as ‘agency’) owns or shares maintenance responsibilities for approximately 235 boating access (BA) sites and facilities across Virginia (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/access>). Lands and waters associated with BA sites, held in trust and managed by the DGIF, provide access to Virginia’s diverse aquatic resources for fishing, hunting, and wildlife-related recreation opportunities. Today, the social and economic demographics embodied in Virginia’s communities are changing and continue to evolve. As part of this evolution, the interests and desires expressed by citizens regarding access to the Commonwealth’s waters also change. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Survey (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018), in the five years since the previous National Survey was completed (i.e. 2011-2016), participation in hunting declined 16% and hunting-related spending is down 26%, whereas, the total number of people fishing increased by 8% and fishing-related spending is up by 3%. In contrast, participation in wildlife-watching activities increased by 20% over the same period (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018). Historically, Virginia license sales and participation in traditional hunting, fishing, and trapping activities have mirrored national trends. If Virginia continues to follow its previous pattern of mirroring the national trend, then it is fair to speculate that the Commonwealth will experience a decline in some state-issued license sales and grant-based monies collected as federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing related equipment, while, at the same time, interest and participation in non-traditional wildlife-related activities will grow.

As some activity-based funding resources are projected to shrink (e.g., hunting) or increase only modestly (e.g., fishing), the DGIF can expect demand for public access to water resources will increase, due, in part, to growing sales of recreational boats in Virginia. Sales of non-powered watercraft are difficult to quantify, yet numerous examples exist (e.g., growth in water trails and blueways, growth in water-based activities such as stand-up-paddle boards and pack rafting) that suggest participation in non-powered water-based recreational activities and other desired uses of BA sites will grow as well. Additionally, results from the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey found that “...70% consider it very important to have access to outdoor recreation,” which represents a 15% increase since the 2011 survey (Draft 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan, p. 11). In response to a survey conducted as a part of the Virginia Boating Access Study, participants, when asked to contrast their intended future use of BA sites in the coming year with that of the current year, 49% stated a likelihood of making ‘more’ visitations and 45% said ‘about the same’ rate (Wolter and Parkhurst, 2018). At the same time, a new, non-traditional, and growing constituency of users is bringing additional, and sometimes conflicting, management challenges to the agency as they seek use of BA sites. As a result, the ability of the agency to fulfill existing maintenance needs, while also trying to accommodate demands and expectations of new BA site users, presents unique issues. The DGIF should not expect less need for BA site maintenance, but rather should anticipate a concurrent, and likely increasing, need for an adaptive management response.

Given these facts, and to identify and gain better understanding of the emerging management challenges it faces, the DGIF in 2016 collaborated with researchers in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech to initiate the Virginia Boating Access Study

(hereafter referred to as ‘the study’) to examine boating access issues and concerns across the Commonwealth. Key tasks of the study, as defined by the DGIF, were to:

- conduct an assessment and characterization of current and potential future use of BA sites;
- assess users’ preferences and satisfaction with BA facilities;
- gather opinions and attitudes of users about issues related to accessing waters of the Commonwealth; and
- develop recommendations for consideration on policies and operational procedures on how best to allocate resources and management efforts to fulfill the agency’s obligations, as stated in its Mission.

## BOATING ACCESS STUDY SUMMARY FINDINGS

Across all survey instruments used, and regardless of demographic characteristics, activity interest, or geographic/regional differences, study participants expressed a sincere desire to access and use Virginia’s waters or associated shoreline settings in a variety of ways. Moreover, the public views BA sites as being much more than just a “boat ramp.” Users see BA sites and facilities as being analogous to trailhead parking sites to access blueways and, as such, the public currently is using, and desires to continue using, water access sites in ways that fulfill personal interests, regardless of the originally intended purpose for the BA site (i.e. water access for fishing, hunting, and/or trapping activities).

### *Boating Access Program Administration*

Virginia Code (Title 29.1, Chapter 7) authorizes the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries to register and title watercraft, provide educational programs for boating safety, and set forth rules and regulations controlling boating activities in Virginia. A portion of the funds collected through administration of these responsibilities supports the DGIF Boating Access Program (BAP) and contributes to the fulfillment of the agency’s three-part mission to **conserve, connect, and protect**. Data collected during this study from interactions with boating access users, as well as DGIF staffs, administrators, and Conservation Police Officers, identify several needs associated with BAP administration. Recommendations include:

- review of existing and development of uniform guiding policy regarding the maintenance and management of DGIF-owned and/or cooperatively managed BA sites;
- development of an up-to-date BA site and facility inventory database;
- standardization of language in and monitoring of cooperative agreements;
- development of policy that articulates acceptable use of BA sites;
- development of policy for the acquisition and closure/disposition of BA sites; and
- development of consistent terms and definitions to facilitate communications about the DGIF’s BAP’s purpose and scope.

This study’s investigations revealed that approximately 93% of existing users of DGIF-owned or cooperatively managed BA sites and facilities currently are “paying” or “contributing financially” to the BAP through a variety of mechanisms. Of these, approximately 51% of BA site users hold only a single license or DGIF Permit and approximately 35% hold two more licenses and/or DGIF Permit. Although a substantial proportion of BA users already pay through

existing mechanisms, opportunity exists for the public to further connect their water-based outdoor BA activities with the agency through voluntary funding programs and collaborative partnerships. For instance, approximately 44% of participants in the mail survey who use DGIF BA sites expressed a willingness to voluntarily purchase a “Virginia Conservation Stamp,” whereas approximately 30% of respondents expressed a willingness to voluntarily make a tax-deductible donation to support BA annual maintenance and acquisition of new sites (Wolter & Parkhurst, 2018).

Results of focus group discussions and open-ended survey questions indicate that members of the general public know little about DGIF — what it does, what its responsibilities are, how it is funded, or how it differs from other state entities. An opportunity exists to improve communication and raise awareness among citizens about the DGIF, particularly how it is funded and operates. Many BA users knew little about the limited BA maintenance staff nor the finite funding and other constraints that affect BA operations in Virginia. After learning about these limitations, participants became more understanding of the challenges the DGIF faces in managing BA sites. Participants offered ideas and suggestions about ways the DGIF could collaborate with municipalities, boating clubs, land trusts, conservation organizations, and businesses to help address financial and personnel resource gaps. It was evident from these interactions with BA users that they value collaborative approaches and view cooperative or supporting partnerships among communities, municipalities, and agencies as acceptable strategies to meet existing needs of BA users across the Commonwealth. Across all meetings, participants reiterated that no single entity alone has sufficient money or staffing to meet the ever-growing demand of Virginia’s citizens for water-access sites; participants encouraged the DGIF to investigate alternative collaborate partnerships as a strategy to satisfy mutual interests.

Finally, this study’s interactions with BA users underscore an inherent difficulty in teasing apart specific topics, issues, and/or concerns identified because they are linked so inextricably to one another. Attempts to address or resolve an identified issue in isolation from the full context within which that issue exists likely will not produce meaningful and desired outcomes. Many of the goals and objectives presented in this plan establish the necessary guidance framework and foundation and implementing actions that provide consistent administrative and operational follow-through on the most pressing needs identified during this study.

## **BOATING ACCESS SITE AND FACILITY MANAGEMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHTS**

### **OVERVIEW**

With facilitation services provided by Virginia Tech researchers, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of DGIF personnel with expertise relative to boating access and water-based recreation, constructed the *Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan*. This document serves multiple purposes related to boating access (BA) sites owned, leased, eased, and/or managed, in part, by the agency, including:

1. Describing the responsibilities and mission of DGIF and its Boating Access Program (BA Program);
2. Establishing a comprehensive baseline database of boating access parameters from which measures of progress and fulfillment of management goals can be assessed;

3. Outlining operational, maintenance, personnel, and administrative goals, objectives, strategies, and guidance policies related to the maintenance and management of BA sites owned and/or cooperatively-managed by DGIF;
4. Identifying communication and outreach opportunities with both traditional and non-traditional boating access constituents; and
5. Providing a planning and management policy guide to facilitate and improve efficiency within the agency's Boating Access Program.

Following is a brief summary of the overarching principles, goals, and primary objectives that will guide and shape the management of DGIF's BA sites over the next 10 years. A complete and detailed presentation of objectives and strategies is provided in Chapter 3 of this document.

### ***Overarching Principles***

1. **Water access:** to provide opportunities for Virginia's citizens and visitors to connect with natural resources through water-based wildlife recreation (e.g., fishing, hunting, trapping, water-based wildlife viewing).
2. **Safety:** to provide safe and secure opportunities for Virginia's citizens and visitors to access and enjoy the state's waters.
3. **Fiscal responsibility:** to manage and allocate the agency's funds and personnel resources in ways that comply with state and federal funding requirements and restrictions, and to do so in a manner that allows transparency with constituents.
4. **Communication:** to provide appropriate two-way communication between the agency and the public it serves.

### ***Goal Statements***

Goal 1: Conduct a Comprehensive Boating Access Site and Facility Inventory Assessment (pp. 32-34)

Objectives, with associated strategies, to:

- construct a comprehensive, up-to-date database that identifies and describes all *existing* DGIF wholly-owned and cooperatively managed sites and facilities for which it has management responsibility;
- conduct a comprehensive assessment of *future* demands and needs for BA sites and facilities management that shifts operational policy from opportunistic and/or reactive to transparent and strategic-based; and
- develop and adopt region-specific boating access site and facility management plans, based on the types of water bodies to which access is provided and in response to the specific boating access demands confronted that are unique to each region.

## Goal 2: Clarify DGIF’s Boating Access Site and Facilities Use and Activity Policies (pp. 34-37)

Objectives, with associated strategies, to:

- define and clarify what constitutes allowable activities at and acceptable use of each boating access site in the DGIF boating access inventory;
- formulate and adopt a definition to address the current uncertainty about what constitutes a “boat,” “vessel,” “watercraft,” or other “personal conveyance device” upon the waters of the state; and
- enforce the rules and regulations consistently at all BA sites.

## Goal 3: Establish Formal Boating Access Site and Facilities Maintenance Policies and Operational Protocols (pp. 37-39)

Objectives, with associated strategies, to:

- develop and implement a policy that defines and prioritizes maintenance responsibilities and needs at DGIF BA sites and facilities, taking into consideration issues relating to safety, water accessibility needs, site aesthetics, budget considerations, ownership/partnership agreements, and site physical and social limitations;
- develop and implement a formal process for evaluating and prioritizing needs and requests for BA site and facilities improvement and/or expansion; and
- complete an analysis of the current funds used to support the BA Program and effect actions that maximize cost-effective and fiscally responsible use of available funds.

## Goal 4: Create and Formalize a Sound and Fiscally Responsible Boating Access Site and Facility Acquisition and Closure Policy (pp. 39-42)

Objectives, with associated strategies, to:

- complete an examination of all property acquisitions and agreements into which DGIF has entered that provide boating access and evaluate whether and how those actions fulfill the agency’s mission of providing safe public boating access ;
- conduct a strategic evaluation of BA needs, by region and by water type, to identify and prioritize types and locations of critical unmet access need that may guide future acquisitions efforts;
- examine and update the Tiered Review Selection Protocol, then adopt this tool as the primary decision-making mechanism for use when evaluating potential sites for acquisition or entering into new collaborative boating access ventures; and
- develop and implement a formal policy on BA site closure and/or retirement.

## Goal 5: Improve Awareness and Understanding of DGIF’s Boating Access Program and Pertinent Laws, Regulations, and Restrictions (pp. 42-45)

Sub-goals, with objectives and associated strategies, to:

- implement communications that informs and clarifies understanding of the Boating Access Program among DGIF personnel;
- develop and implement a targeted outreach initiative for water-based recreational users about the DGIF Boating Access Program;

- revise and disseminate an accurate, up-to-date information database on the inventory of DGIF maintained BA sites across the Commonwealth; and
- assure that agency staffs convey a uniform and consistent presentation of agency policy on allowable uses and acceptable activities at BA sites.

## CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

### PART A. — THE BOATING ACCESS SITE AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

#### *Overview*

#### **What the *Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan* Is**

The Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan is the first comprehensive document that describes the historical background and current situation regarding the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Boating Access Program (BAP). Through its presentation of broad goals and specific objectives, the plan establishes the direction the DGIF seeks to take in its management of boating access (BA) facilities over the next decade. Although there is great diversity in the types of facilities and maintenance needs across the Commonwealth, this plan recommends necessary management guidance for all sites and facilities in Virginia for which the DGIF maintains responsibility for the next 10-year period.

#### **How the *Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan* Was Developed**

The BA study applied mixed-method strategies to gather information using 3 interrelated data-collection phases:

- Phase I: a series of 8 regional focus group meetings among key stakeholder groups
- Phase II: a yearlong engagement effort with BA users through on-site, face-to-face interviews (N=2,678) conducted at 20 BA sites selectively chosen to represent the breadth and diversity of BA facilities, coupled with making hourly observations (N=4,874) of demand and use activities at these sites. Additionally, a sub-sample of the face-to-face interview subjects (N=129) was asked to participate in a self-reply survey to gather greater depth of understanding about use and preferences, and
- Phase III: administration of statewide mail survey (N=242), respondents using a DGIF BA site (n=149).

With facilitation services provided by Virginia Tech researchers, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of DGIF personnel with expertise relative to boating access and water-based recreation, constructed the draft plan, relying heavily upon the findings of data collections efforts and input provided by the public. Additional public input, via a 30-day open solicitation for comments on the draft management plan, helped to refine the overarching guiding principles and specific goals contained in this draft plan. All research activities and data collection were conducted in compliance with Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board authorization (#16-041).

#### ***Plan Format***

Each chapter in this Boating Access Site and Facility Management Plan builds upon the previous one to lay a foundation for understanding the proposed BAP management goals, objectives, and strategies.

## Chapter 1

- Introduces readers to DGIF, including the agency’s mission and vision, how DGIF differs from other state agencies, particularly in terms of funding mechanisms.
- Introduces readers to the “Boating Access Program” (BAP) (as administered by the Wildlife Resources Division’s Lands and Facilities unit), including information on program funding, site use activity prioritization, and water bodies served. The chapter also covers types of ownership and maintenance agreements, along with infrastructure and facility characteristics the public can expect to see and why.
- Closes with a brief summary of agency protocols and policy related to acquiring new and closing underutilized BA sites and/or facilities.

## Chapter 2

- Provides a summary of synthesized data about management challenges and opportunities, as well as desires and expectations of users, derived from the data collection phases of the *Virginia Boating Access Study*. A more in-depth exploration of the data is provided in the study’s supplemental final report *Virginia Boating Access Study: Final Report* (Wolter & Parkhurst, 2018).

## Chapter 3

- Presents recommended draft management goals, objectives, and strategies as developed by the Boating Access Technical Advisory Committee.

## Appendices

- Provides additional supporting data and information to supplement that displayed in the plan’s main chapters.

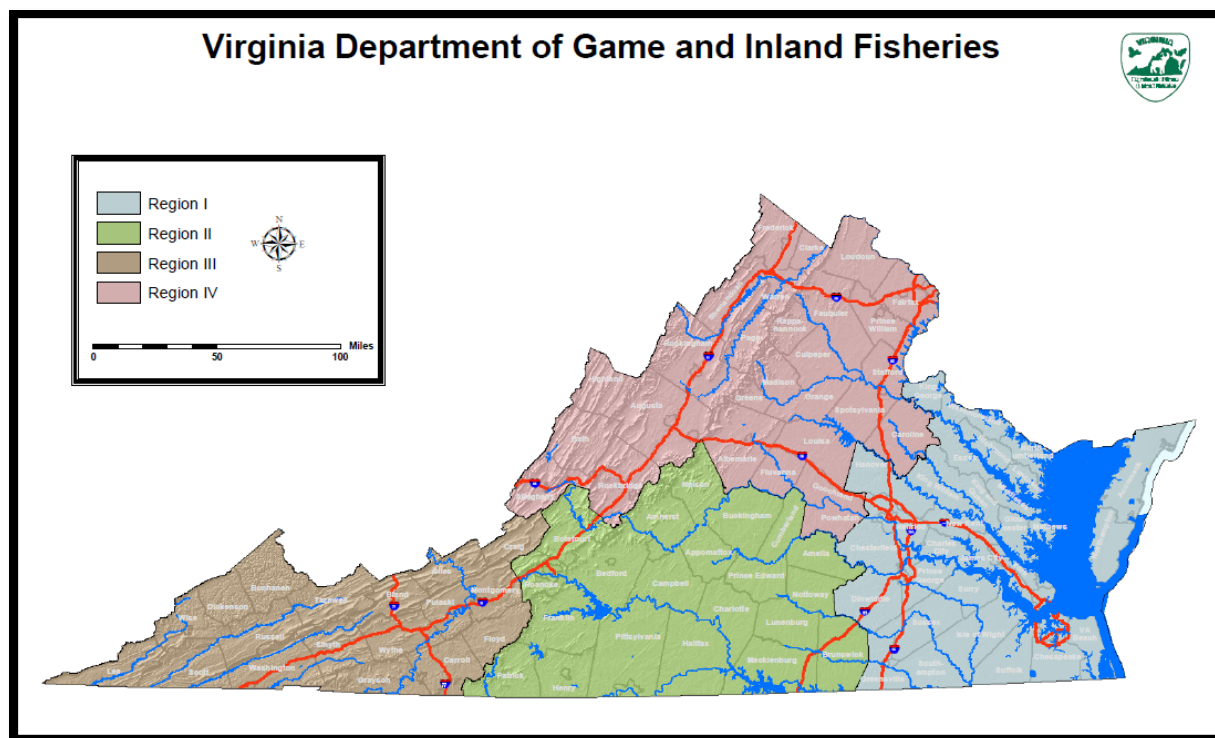
# PART B. — ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES

## Overview

Since 1916, Virginians have entrusted the DGIF with managing and conserving the Commonwealth’s terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and their habitats for the enjoyment and use by current and future generations. The agency uses cutting-edge science to conserve fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, as well as provides public information services and educational opportunities related to fish and wildlife. The agency also administers and enforces rules and regulations of the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries. The primary statutory authority for all DGIF activities is described in §29.1 of the Code of Virginia, which the agency implements through 4 administrative regions (Figure 2). The agency’s vision and mission statements solidify its commitment to Virginia’s citizens and its visitors, both now and in the future.

## Vision Statement:

- **Leading** wildlife conservation and **inspiring** people to value the outdoors and their role in nature.



**Figure 2.** Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' four administrative regions. (Credit: DGIF)

#### **Mission Statement:**

- **Conserve** and manage wildlife populations and habitat for the benefit of present and future generations.
- **Connect** people to Virginia's outdoors through boating, education, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife-related activities.
- **Protect** people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflicts.

#### **Agency Funding and Constituency**

According to the Public Trust Doctrine and reaffirmed through the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, fish and wildlife populations are held in trust and managed by the agency within each state charged with conserving those resources for current and future public use and enjoyment (Organ et al., 2012). Historically, state fish and wildlife agencies did this on behalf of citizens viewed as the agency's primary constituents, those who engaged in hunting, fishing, and trapping. Each of these wildlife-related activities has different program requirements and budget needs. Over the years, unique mechanisms to fund these programs emerged, often representing some form of cooperative state-federal relationship. For instance, most fish and wildlife agencies rely on the sale of state-issued licenses to fund their programs. At the federal level, the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (1937) and the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act (1950) authorize the collection of a federal excise tax on the sale of equipment related to fishing and hunting activities, the returns from which then are apportioned

back to individual states (via formula-driven metrics) to support fish and wildlife conservation efforts.

Like most state government agencies, DGIF is publicly funded; however, because of the long-standing link between wildlife-related activity-based funding and agency budgets, the origin of DGIF's "public funds" is quite different from its sister agencies (e.g., Department of Education, Department of Conservation and Recreation). The primary and most significant difference is that DGIF does **not** receive General Fund resources (i.e. monies collected from imposed employment or similar taxes). As such, DGIF is authorized to collect revenues through other sources, including the sale of hunting, angling, trapping, and other licenses or permits (VA Code Title 29 Chapter 3 §29-3), the titling and registration of watercraft (Title 29.1 Chapter 7), and several other mechanisms. These include Title 23 Chapter 100 §280 'Nongame Wildlife Voluntary Contribution' (§10-110-280), Title 23 Chapter 6 §230 'Watercraft Sales and Use Tax' (§10-230), and Title 58.1 Chapter 6 §638 (§58.1-638-D), which authorizes the allocation of funds collected from the sales of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching equipment. It is important to note that taxes generated from the sale of canoes and kayaks currently are exempt by legislation promulgated in Virginia.

. With declining revenue, activity-based funding will not be as a dependable mechanism moving into the future. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Survey (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018), in the 5-year period (i.e. 2011–2016) since the previous National Survey was conducted, participation in hunting declined 16% and hunting-related spending fell 26%. In contrast, the number of people who fished increased by 8% and fishing-related spending increased by 3%. At the same time, participation in wildlife-watching activities increased by 20% (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018). Historically, Virginia license sales and participation in traditional hunting, fishing, and trapping activities have mirrored national trends. Individual state reports derived from the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Survey are not yet available, so it is not possible to examine how recent participation and spending behaviors in Virginia may have changed. However, if Virginia continues to follow its pattern of mirroring the national trend, then DGIF could anticipate seeing declines in state-issued license sales and monies received from federal excise taxes collected on hunting- and fishing-related equipment. Funding represents a strategic planning challenge for the agency as it works to maintain the programs it administers.

At the same time certain activity-based funding resources are projected to shrink (i.e. hunting) or increase only modestly (i.e. fishing), public demand for access to water-based resources is increasing dramatically, for several reasons. First, according to the National Marine Manufacturer Association, "...*The close of 2017 marked our sixth consecutive year of growth in new boat sales and recreational boating expenditures, and we expect that trend to continue through 2018, and possibly beyond*" (<https://www.nmma.org/press/article/21678>). Second, sales of non-powered watercraft in Virginia are difficult to quantify directly, yet numerous examples exist (e.g., growth in water trails and blueways, growth in water-based activities such as stand-up-paddle boards and pack rafting) that suggest participation in non-powered water-based recreational activities and other desired uses of BA sites will grow as well. Additionally, results from the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey found that "...70% consider it very important

*to have access to outdoor recreation,”* which represents a 15% increase since the 2011 survey (Draft 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan, p. 11). As part of this Boating Access Study, participants in a survey were asked to contrast their intended future use of BA sites in the coming year with that of the current year, to which approximately 49% stated a likelihood of making ‘more’ visitations and approximately 45% said ‘about the same’ rate (Wolter & Parkhurst, 2018). Concurrently, a new, non-traditional, and growing constituency of users is bringing additional, and sometimes conflicting, management challenges to the agency as they seek use of BA sites. As a result, the ability of the agency to fulfill existing maintenance needs, while also trying to accommodate demands and expectations of new BA site users, presents unique issues.

### ***Lands and Facilities***

The DGIF’s Lands and Facilities Program (LFP) is administered by the Wildlife Resources Division. Its responsibilities include managing and maintaining safe public access to agency-owned, leased, or eased lands (e.g., Wildlife Management Areas) and BA sites and facilities. Currently, the LFP administers the Boating Access Program (BA Program), which provides maintenance and management of approximately 235 BA sites and facilities distributed throughout Virginia. Across the state, the BA Program is operationalized through the agency’s four administrative regions (Figure 2). Within each administrative region, at least one Boating Access Maintenance (BAM) staff person oversees the day-to-day operations and management of all BA sites and facilities in that region. Each BAM staff receives support from other Lands and Facility or agency staffs, when necessary.

### ***Types of Water Bodies Served***

The Commonwealth offers world-class fisheries and abundant opportunities for recreational boating and other water-based wildlife-related activities. DGIF fulfills its mission to **connect** the public to wildlife-related activities by providing multiple opportunities to access Virginia’s diverse aquatic resources. The types of waters in Virginia to which DGIF provides access are diverse and include:

- bay and tidal rivers and creeks
- large inland rivers
- small to medium inland rivers
- large lakes and reservoirs, and
- small to medium lakes and ponds (including DGIF Public Fishing Lakes).

The number and types of boating access facilities available in each DGIF administrative region reflect historic demands for water-based activities in that area, the types of water bodies present in the region, restrictions or limitations imposed by site-specific physical conditions, and the ability of the agency to fund proper care of these facilities.

While the agency strives to provide equitable opportunity across the Commonwealth, the geographic features of each region can dictate the opportunities that are available. The current distribution of facilities, by region and type, is as follows:

- **Region 1:** 71 BA sites and facilities, ~59% (n = 42) occur on Chesapeake Bay and tidal waters, ~20% (n = 14) on small to medium inland rivers, ~15% (n = 11) on small to medium lakes or ponds (Public Fishing Lakes = 9), and ~6% (n = 4) serve large inland rivers.
- **Region 2:** 54 BA sites and facilities, ~39% (n = 21) occur on large inland rivers, ~26% (n = 14) on large lakes or reservoirs, ~20% (n = 11) on small to medium lakes or ponds (Public Fishing Lakes = 8), and ~13% (n = 7) serve small to medium inland rivers.
- **Region 3:** 42 BA sites and facilities, ~48% (n = 20) occur on large inland rivers, ~26% (n = 11) on small to medium inland rivers, ~16% (n = 7) on small to medium lakes or ponds (Public Fishing Lakes = 6), and ~10% (n = 4) serve large lakes or reservoirs.
- **Region 4:** 66 BA sites and facilities, ~51% (n = 37) occur on small to medium inland rivers, ~14% (n = 12) on large inland rivers, ~14% (n = 11) on small to medium lakes or ponds (Public Fishing Lakes = 9), ~8% (n = 5) on Chesapeake Bay and tidal waters, and <1% (n = 1) on a large lake or reservoir.

## PART C. — THE BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM (BA PROGRAM)

### *Overview*

Virginia Code (Title 29.1, Chapter 7) authorizes the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries to register and title watercraft, provide educational programs for boating safety, and set forth rules and regulations controlling boating activities in Virginia. A portion of the funds collected through administration of these responsibilities supports the DGIF Boating Access Program (BA Program) and contributes to the fulfillment of the agency's 3-part mission to **conserve, connect, and protect**. The DGIF assures that BA site uses, activities, and maintenance practices are consistent with the ecological integrity and cultural carrying capacity of state waters, thereby supporting the agency's efforts to **conserve** and manage wildlife populations and habitat for the benefit of present and future generations. Maintaining a healthy natural environment simultaneously can contribute to fostering local and statewide economies. The BA Program also supports the agency's water-based efforts to **connect** people to Virginia's outdoors directly through boating, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife-related activities and indirectly through its varied education programs. Lastly, boating safety programs conducted by the BA Program support the agency's mission to **protect** people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife and human-human conflicts (e.g., via the Law Enforcement Division's efforts to enforce safety and user adherence to established regulations on and off the water).

### *Program Funding*

Many users of BA sites and facilities see these as convenient places to experience wildlife and aquatic habitats and enjoy site-based activities such as photography, swimming, picnicking, fishing, and launching or retrieving boats. However, not all BA facilities across the Commonwealth are the same. Unknowingly, users often do not distinguish differences that may exist among BA sites. Additionally, they are unaware that certain activities (e.g., photography,

swimming, picnicking) are deemed incompatible with the designated purpose of many DGIF facilities (which is the launching and retrieving boats for fishing and hunting) and therefore are restricted due to stipulations imposed by the federal source of funding used to build or maintain a site.

As noted earlier, activity-based funding mechanisms provide a substantial portion of the agency budget. For example, DGIF relies heavily upon federal grant programs (e.g., Dingell-Johnson, Wallop-Breaux programs administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]) to acquire land and/or build new BA sites. Federal grants reimburse the agency up to 75% of a project's costs. Given this economic advantage, DGIF acquired and built a large proportion of its current inventory of BA sites and now maintains those facilities using funds derived from the USFWS' Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program. The DGIF, in cooperation with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), also uses federal grant funds to build and maintain saltwater fishing BA sites. The caveat in using these funds is that **DGIF is required to maintain these facilities for the primary purposes of boating and fishing access, and to maintain the leases, if built on land owned by a third party, for the contractual life of the initial project** (i.e. 20 years for saltwater boating access and 25 years for freshwater boating access).

Most non-motorized watercraft are not required to be registered nor are they subject to current federal excise taxes. As a result, use and ownership of these types of boats typically do not contribute financially to the maintenance of existing BA sites and facilities or potential development of new water access sites specific to their use (e.g., hand-carry launch). For any BA sites that the agency develops and/or maintains solely for non-powered boat activities (i.e. facilities not accessible to or for use by motorized boat or watercraft), those costs are covered entirely from the agency's non-federal funding. Although non-powered boats and/or watercraft may use certain DGIF-owned and many cooperatively-managed facilities as means to access Virginia's waters, activities associated with these needs is less than for powered boat access sites.

### *Maintenance and Management Agreement Types*

#### Overview

Because no two BA sites are alike, the infrastructure present and the amenities provided vary widely, depending on a mix of factors. Consequently, it is difficult for users to understand why picnic tables, trash containers, and restrooms exist at some facilities, while other sites are rustic and provide only minimal infrastructure for launching and retrieving boats. What exists on-site typically is dictated by parcel size, water type, land topography, and perceived level of use. Differences in infrastructure and amenities among sites also arise from the source of funding, ownership and/or management agreements that may be in place, and the agency's ability to provide timely maintenance. From the agency's perspective, the minimum necessary elements required to provide safe, trailered boating access to Virginia's waters include a dock or pier, a ramp constructed of hardened or permeable materials, a place to park a vehicle safely, and appropriate signage to inform the public of important rules, regulations, and allowable activities. Other amenities are not necessary when providing users safe access.

In addition to confusion that exists among users about infrastructure and amenities, similar confusion exists about who owns or provides care and upkeep of access facilities. Data collected from regional focus groups and multiple surveys clearly illustrate that BA users often make no distinction between facilities managed by DGIF and those that others may provide or that differences in ownership and management agreements influence, on a site-by-site basis, what boating infrastructure and/or amenities are provided and for whom (e.g., anglers, recreational boaters, wildlife-based recreation).

The DGIF's current boating access database is out of date, incomplete, and in need of improvement to provide a centralized inventory of the resources under its management. Before the agency can **connect** effectively with users about water-based activities and opportunities, additional information should be cataloged, including accurate descriptions of the boat ramp and dock/pier types that exist, ownership designations, and cooperative maintenance agreements and responsibilities assumed. In addition to providing a descriptive database to help inform the public about all BA sites owned, leased, eased, and/or managed cooperatively by DGIF, this inventory would help track progress made in implementing the management goals and objectives proposed in this document.

### Facility Ownership and Partnerships

DGIF currently provides water access via 2 distinctly different approaches:

- access sites and facilities that are wholly-owned, leased, or eased by DGIF and are maintained and managed entirely by the agency, or
- access sites and facilities that may or may not be wholly-owned, leased, or eased property by DGIF, but nonetheless are cooperatively maintained and managed.

Differentiating between the two maintenance and management types is important because funding sources and legal agreements may dictate what on-site activities are permissible, how the partners allocate budget and personnel resources, as well as what types of boating infrastructure and amenities are provided, if any. Agreements typically contain language that establishes long-term maintenance expectations and provides legal recourse should any partner to the agreement not uphold their contractual obligation. Entering into a collaborative maintenance and management agreement with an external partner can bring benefits in that land acquisition or site development costs and/or maintenance responsibilities often are shared among the partners, reducing the burden on a single entity.

### DGIF-Managed Sites and Facilities

The simplest form of ownership that provides clear maintenance expectations and establishes definitive property boundaries are BA sites that are owned, leased, or eased by DGIF alone and are managed and maintained only by the agency. Examples include BA sites on DGIF Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Public Fishing Lakes (e.g., the Palmyra boat ramp [Figure 3]). Due to limits imposed by agency funding and personnel constraints, these BA sites and facilities often provide only minimal infrastructure and few additional amenities. However, the agency endeavors to **protect** the public by providing a personally and physically safe and secure

experience for Virginia’s citizens and visitors. To that end, at a *minimum*, DGIF provides at its own boating access sites the following infrastructure:

- *Water access*: a ramp and/or shoreline water access to launch and/or retrieve boats on all water body types in Virginia (a full description of ramp types is found in the “Types of Boating Access and Facilities” heading in this section of the document).
- *Parking*: a place to park a vehicle while launching and/or retrieving a boat. The minimal surface material provided typically will be grass, soil, or gravel; however, larger properties designed for trailered boat activities and/or high-volume use may provide asphalt or concrete parking surfaces and designated parking spaces. Decisions about whether to designate parking spaces (e.g., trailered boat vs. car spaces) are influenced by the type of parking lot surface (i.e., gravel lots requiring frequent regrading are difficult to maintain marked spaces). The minimum number of parking spaces and other design considerations (such as trailer turn-around space) are determined by the parcel size and land topography.
- *Signs*: signage with the agency logo and a brief description of permitted site use activities. BA site signage is important to communicate with users and to meet law enforcement needs. Details regarding sign size, material, and placement is guided by the DGIF “*Boating Access Maintenance Manual*.”
- *ADA compliance*: barrier free use, as accommodated by the physical and topographic features of the BA site.

### Cooperatively Managed Sites and Facilities

A more complex form of ownership, with varying degrees of clarity regarding maintenance and management agreement execution, are BA sites that may or may not be wholly-owned by DGIF, but are cooperatively maintained and managed in some capacity. The most common form of cooperative partnership is an agreement to manage and/or maintain a BA site with a local government or municipality. Partners commit to a legally binding “Cooperative Agreement” that lays out maintenance and management responsibilities for each party, the duration of agreement, and a process for dissolving the partnership, if necessary.

During the development of some large facilities, partner(s) may be required to provide matching funds (e.g., in-kind, local funds) to agency-provided federal grant funds, which reduces the agency’s fiscal burden. The BA sites that are managed cooperatively generally provide at least one hardened boat ramp, lighted parking, and courtesy piers; some of these sites also may have running water, bathrooms, trash cans, and picnic tables. As an example, Osborne Pike Landing (Figure 4) is a wholly DGIF-owned property that operates under a cooperative maintenance agreement in which the partner provides trash can service in the DGIF “trailered boat only” parking area. Though property management at Osborne Pike is governed by a land use and maintenance agreement with Henrico County Parks and Recreation, the public likely does see any outward difference in why certain activities are permitted in the yellow-outlined area (e.g.,

courtesy pier fishing provided by Henrico County Parks and Recreation) versus the red-outlined area (e.g., no fishing off courtesy boat docks provided by DGIF) (Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** Aerial view of Palmyra, a wholly DGIF-owned and maintained BA site on the Rivanna River.



**Figure 4.** Aerial view of Osborne Pike Landing, Henrico, VA, a DGIF-owned BA facility that operates under a cooperative management agreement with Henrico Parks and Recreation to provide trash services in the DGIF “boat trailer only” parking area.

### *Types of Boating Access Sites and Facilities*

Given the diverse factors that can influence the design and development of agency-owned and/or managed BA sites and facilities, each BA site is somewhat unique. Facilities range from rustic boat launch sites that provide only unimproved access to the water (i.e. single ramp constructed of permeable material, limited parking, and no additional amenities) to boat launch sites with improved ‘facilities’ (i.e. one or more ramps constructed of hardened material, larger parking area, and may include amenities such as trash cans and bathrooms). At a *minimum*, DGIF endeavors to provide Virginia residents and visitors safe water-access through three types of sites or facilities:

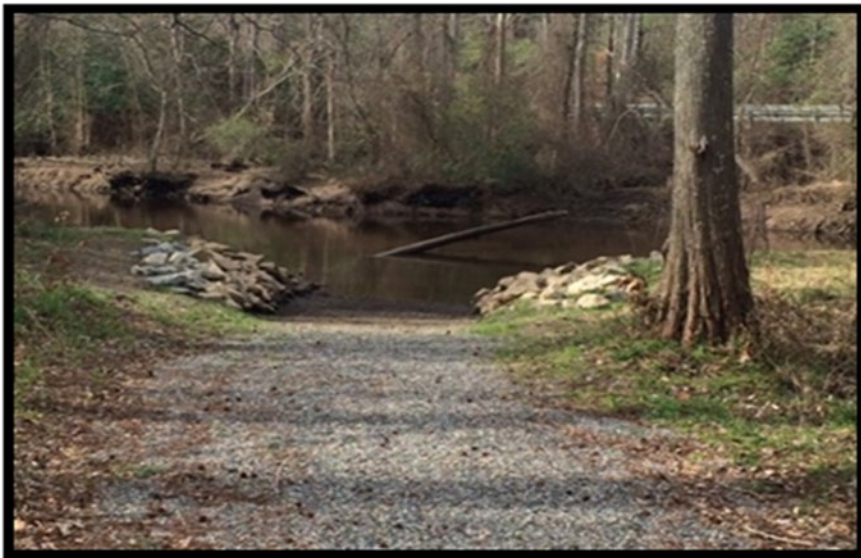
- hand-carry boat access sites,
- trailered boat access sites and facilities, and
- hybrid water-access sites and facilities.

#### Hand-Carry Boat Access Site

If it is possible to float a “boat” on a body of water, someone likely will try to do so. To provide safe water-access opportunities to launch or retrieve non-powered and small motorized boats, the DGIF maintains rustic or unimproved “hand-carry boat access sites” for low-impact shoreline water access. Because the locations of where these types of access are provided often are limited in size or the level of intended use is low, infrastructure typically is minimal and amenities (i.e. trash cans, bathrooms, changing areas) are not provided. These sites generally consist of a small, permeable surface parking area (i.e. no designated parking spaces) and a hand-carry boat ramp. Hand-carry ramps facilitate launching and retrieving small, motorized watercraft (e.g., John boat) and non-motorized watercraft. Depending on site conditions, access may be via a constructed slide (Figure 5), a ramp surface consisting of a permeable material (e.g., gravel, natural river stones, landscape matting, dirt) (Figure 6), and/or a short, concrete slab extended into the water (Figure 7). At larger “improved” facilities that also include a separate hand-carry ramp (e.g., West Point), water access via the hand-carry facilities may include a constructed steel barrier (Figure 9b) to prevent the launch or retrieval of trailered boats.



**Figure 5.** Water access provided via reinforced steps on either side of a wooden boat slide to facilitate launching and retrieving hand-carry boats (Little Page Bridge, Pamunkey River, Virginia). (Credit: John Kirk)



**Figure 6.** A narrow, pervious surface (e.g., gravel, dirt) water access site designed primarily for hand-carry boats (Morris Creek, Virginia). (Credit: John Kirk)



**Figure 7.** A wider boat launch constructed of pervious surface (e.g., gravel, dirt) with a short concrete slab at the water's edge. This example is primarily designed for hand-carry boats; however, if water levels are appropriate, small, motorized trailered boats also could use this ramp (Baywood on New River, Virginia). (Credit: Toby McClanahan)

### Trailer Boat Access Facility

In the past, a simple 12-foot wide concrete or wood ramp was sufficient to launch or retrieve most trailered boats; however, larger ramps often are needed to safely and efficiently launch and retrieve watercraft used in today's diverse boat-based recreation. As noted previously, the type of infrastructure and amenities provided at an individual trailered BA site depends on ownership, restrictions on permissible on-site activities (due to funding mechanism), and/or the type of water body accessed. For instance, among some of the newer and recently renovated cooperatively-managed BA facilities on popular bodies of water, a dock or pier (Figures 8 and 9b), a large parking area, and more than 1 hardened boat ramp (e.g., concrete or asphalt) may be present to accommodate more boats and vehicles. In contrast, a trailered facility adequate to launch or retrieve small, motorized, trailered boats may consist of only a gently sloped water-access constructed of tamped-down gravel, which also would be ideal for any boats that can be hand-carried to the water, where allowed (Figure 6 above).



**Figure 8.** Hardened water-access primarily for trailered boat use, although non-powered boats also might be allowed to use this ramp (Deep Point, Piankatank River, Virginia). (Credit: John Kirk)

### Hybrid Boat Access Facility

To facilitate the quick and safe movement of people and boats on and off the water, especially at some of the larger, busier BA sites, the DGIF provides separate activity-specific ramps and facilities (e.g., hardened ramps intended for trailered boats and hand-carry ramps for non-powered boats and small, motorized boats). The West Point BA access facility (Figures 9a and 9b) is an example of a recently updated DGIF-owned hybrid facility that is cooperatively managed with the local municipality.



**Figures 9a and 9b.** West Point BA access facility provides a hardened hand-carry boat ramp (9a) and multiple hardened trailered boat ramps (9b) (West Point River, Virginia). (Credit: John Kirk)

## ***Boating Access Site and Facility Acquisition and Closure***

### Overview

In addition to maintaining and managing approximately 235 BA sites, the Lands and Facilities Program oversees the acquisition of new BA sites and, where necessary or appropriate, the closure of existing BA sites or termination of cooperative agreements. As water-based wildlife-related recreation needs and demands change over time, the DGIF likely will face situations that require difficult decisions regarding trade-offs in how to prioritize meeting its mission. In its effort to provide safe and cost-effective public boating access, the DGIF should conduct periodic cost-benefit analyses of managing and maintaining the BA sites and facilities in its inventory, especially those that may be unused or underutilized.

### Existing Acquisition Policy

Acquiring land to develop future BA sites should be dependent on meeting defined agency and BA Program needs, addressing unserved spatial locations on important bodies of water, and aligned with funding sources and their associated restrictions. Currently, DGIF uses two processes through which the public may request a new BA site: (1) tiered review selection process, and (2) grants to localities.

#### *Tiered review selection process*

To better meet wildlife conservation goals and outdoor recreation opportunities desired by the public, the DGIF should work to conduct an appraisal of public access needs and water-based resources that support wildlife-based recreation in Virginia. Based on such an assessment, where needs to acquire new DGIF-owned and/or cooperatively managed BA sites have been identified, the “Tiered Review Selection Process” should guide decision-making. This system evaluates and selects water-access opportunities that meet agency strategic need and fulfill the DGIF’s vision and mission using four levels or tiers. The process also ensures equal consideration among new BA site requests, which begin with the submission of a “Boating Access Request and Selection” form. Additionally, the tiered review process evaluates justifications offered for developing a new BA site and suggests a prioritization of use of funds derived from user contributions. Of special note, boating access project requests that cost more than \$30,000 are tracked through a separate “Capital Planning and Facilities” review process.

In the past, a less structured process served agency operational needs; however, given the changing demographics, desires, and needs of the BA constituency in Virginia a new approach is recommended. As such, an opportunity exists for the DGIF BA Program to align or incorporate the existing “Tiered Review Selection Process” into the existing land acquisition processes and to develop an agency-wide policy that guides the purchase, lease, and/or easement of land with boating and water access potential. This effort will minimize duplication of internal acquisition review processes. Moreover, seeking land acquisition opportunities that meet multiple agency mission needs, results in more efficient use of agency funds.

### *Grants to Localities*

The Grants to Localities program was designed to provide financial grants and consulting expertise to municipalities or local governments wishing to develop public boating access. While the program has not been funded for several years, communities still express interest in participating in this type of collaborative engagement as a potential means to meet growing public demand for access. Given that interest, the agency should conduct an evaluation of the program to assess whether the program actually contributes effectively in meeting targeted access needs identified by the agency (i.e. rather than adding only opportunistic, but not priority, access). If financial and personnel resources again become available, guidance is needed to assure that DGIF enters into future agreements under such a program only in ways that facilitate meeting critically defined priority needs.

### Existing Closure Policy

The DGIF manages the land and water resources entrusted to its care using transparent processes, by engaging with the public, and identifying priority needs. The DGIF also has a fiduciary responsibility to use the funding it receives from public sources wisely and to allocate those resources to priority needs. To meet this obligation, a periodic review of the BA site inventory is needed to assess whether each facility continues to fulfill strategic need. Currently, the Boating Access Program uses the “Boat Access Separation Document” to guide decision-making on whether to close or retire a BA site. The agency, in several instances, has transferred ownership and management responsibilities to another partner or let a standing agreement lapse without renewal. Opportunities exist to revisit this guidance and ensure its alignment with other land-use decision-making policies of the agency.

## CHAPTER 2: THE VIRGINIA BOATING ACCESS STUDY

### OVERVIEW

Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) owns or shares maintenance responsibilities for approximately 235 BA sites and facilities across the Commonwealth. The lands and waters associated with BA sites, held in trust, are managed to provide public access to Virginia's diverse aquatic resources for fishing, hunting, and wildlife-related recreation. As the social, demographic, and economic make-up of Virginia's citizenry changes and continues to evolve, so do the interests of citizens in how they wish to access and use the Commonwealth's waters. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation survey (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018), in 5 years since the previous National Survey was conducted (i.e. 2011 – 2016), participation in hunting declined 16% and hunting-related spending was down 26%, whereas, the total number of people fishing increased by 8% and fishing-related spending was up by 3%. In contrast, participation in wildlife-watching activities increased by 20% over that same period (US Fish and Wildlife Service 2018). Historically, Virginia license sales and the number of persons participating in traditional hunting, fishing, and trapping activities mirrored the national trend. If Virginia follows its previous pattern of mirroring the national trend, then it is fair to speculate that the Commonwealth will experience a decline in some state-issued license sales and grant-based monies from collected federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing related equipment. This presents a strategic planning challenge for the agency to address increasing BA maintenance and management costs while activity-based funding is primed to decline.

As certain activity-based funding resources are projected to shrink (e.g., hunting) or only increase modestly (e.g., fishing), DGIF expects demand for public water access will increase for multiple reasons. According to the National Marine Manufacturer Association, *"The close of 2017 marked our sixth consecutive year of growth in new boat sales and recreational boating expenditures, and we expect that trend to continue through 2018, and possibly beyond"* (<https://www.nmma.org/press/article/21678>). Sales of non-powered watercraft are difficult to quantify, yet numerous examples exist (e.g., growth in water trails and blueways, growth in water-based activities such as stand-up-paddle boards and pack rafting) that suggest participation in non-powered water-based recreational activities and other uses of BA sites will grow as well. Additionally, results from the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey found that "... 70% consider it very important to have access to outdoor recreation," which represents a 15% increase since the 2011 survey (Draft 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan, pg. 11). As a part of this Boating Access Study, participants in a survey were asked to contrast their intended future use of BA sites in the coming year with that of the current year, to which approximately 49% stated a likelihood of making 'more' visitations and ~45% said 'about the same' rate (Wolter & Parkhurst, 2018). At the same time, a new, non-traditional, and growing constituency of users is bringing additional, and sometimes conflicting, management challenges to the agency as they seek use of BA sites. As a result, the ability of the agency to fulfill existing maintenance needs, while also trying to accommodate demands and expectations of new BA site users, presents unique issues. Clearly, DGIF should not expect less need for BA site maintenance, but rather should anticipate a concurrent, and likely increasing, need for an adaptive management response.

To better understand emerging management challenges, DGIF initiated a 3-year study to examine boating access issues across Virginia, including an assessment and characterization of current and potential future use of BA sites, users' preferences and satisfaction with facilities, and opinions and attitudes about issues related to accessing the state's waters. All research activities and data collection were conducted in compliance with Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board authorization (#16-041).

The Virginia Boating Access Study (hereafter referred to as 'the study') makes use of mixed-method strategies to gather information through three interrelated data-collection phases:

- Phase I: a series of 8 regional focus group meetings among key stakeholder groups
- Phase II: a yearlong engagement effort with BA users through on-site, face-to-face interviews (N=2,678) conducted at 20 BA sites selectively chosen to represent the breadth and diversity of BA facilities, coupled with making hourly observations (N=4,874) of demand and use activities at these sites. Additionally, a sub-sample of the face-to-face interview subjects (N=129) was asked to participate in a self-reply survey to gather greater depth of understanding about use and preferences, and
- Phase III: administration of statewide mail survey (N=242), respondents using a DGIF BA site (n=149).

Note: due to the sampling framework, analytical emphasis is on the data collected during Phase II (May 2016 – April 2017). At the time of this writing, this is the only known statewide, comprehensive study of boating access management and, as such, establishes a baseline of information relevant to the project's maintenance and management goals. Study methodology and data should be reassessed, in preparation for the management plan review process (i.e., every 10 years).

Based on the integrated findings obtained from all three phases, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) constructed this boating access plan, which sets forth and prioritizes management goals, objectives, strategies, and operational guidance policies for DGIF-owned and/or cooperatively-managed BA sites and facilities across the Commonwealth. Data and findings presented in this chapter are not exhaustive. Detailed information on data and statistical analysis, syntheses of findings, and recommendations is contained in the *Virginia Boating Access Study: Final Report* (Wolter & Parkhurst, 2018).

## CHAPTER 3: DGIF BOATING ACCESS GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND MANAGEMENT GOALS

The guiding principles and management goals, objectives, and strategies presented in this boating access management plan are developed from data collected as a part of the *Virginia Boating Access Study (2015 – 2018)*. Information that helped shape these plan elements came from survey work conducted during that study, input the DGIF Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other agency staff, public comments gathered via open regional public meetings, and a 30-day online open public comment period. A summary report of the public comments is in Appendix A.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Overarching guiding principles are broad and apply to all DGIF-owned and/or cooperatively-managed BA sites and facilities in Virginia. The following statements of principle will guide the DGIF as it implements this Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan.

- **Water access:** to provide opportunities for Virginia’s citizens and visitors to connect with natural resources through water-based wildlife recreation (e.g., fishing, hunting, trapping, water-based wildlife viewing) and, where compatible with the aforementioned priority uses, other boat-based recreational activities. Water access principles include:
  - Activities permitted at BA sites and facilities must be consistent with maintaining and enhancing aquatic habitat and water quality.
  - Priority will continue to be given to wildlife-based recreational pursuits. Connecting constituents to Virginia’s outdoor water resources via other non-wildlife-related recreational boating activities may be allowed, provided these forms of water-based recreation do not interfere with or preclude traditional wildlife-based recreation activities.
- **Safety:** to provide safe and secure opportunities for Virginia’s citizens and visitors to access and enjoy the state’s waters. A safe and enjoyable experience will be supported by enforcement of all applicable laws and regulations, on both land and waters, by Virginia’s Conservation Police Officers and other law enforcement entities.
- **Fiscal responsibility:** to manage and allocate the agency’s funds and personnel resources in ways that comply with state and federal funding requirements and restrictions, and to do so in a manner that allows transparency with constituents.
- **Communication:** to provide appropriate two-way communication between the agency and the public it serves. Communication principles include:
  - Communicate primarily in English but make efforts to include secondary languages where appropriate.
  - Clearly communicate information about laws and regulations, including allowable activities and uses, to facilitate the publics’ understanding of differences that exist

among types of BA sites and facilities that DGIF provides vs. those the others may provide.

- Explore and identify mechanisms and technology platforms for information dissemination that effectively target both traditional water-based wildlife recreation constituents as well as other recreational boating users.
- Provide up-to-date information in electronic or on-line formats for each DGIF-owned or cooperatively-managed BA site.



**Figure 10.** Fishing tournament at Whitethorne boating access facility on the New River (Credit: Doug Goldsmith).

## MANAGEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

For the purposes of this plan, goals are broad, visionary statements that capture and define issues of importance about boating access maintenance and management or offer guidance on how specific aspects of the Boating Access Program should be administered over the next 10 years. Each goal has one or more objectives that spell out in specific, measurable, and time-sensitive ways *what specifically needs to be accomplished* to attain that goal and *when it will be done*, assuming funding availability and consistency with agency priorities. While not all aspects of a goal may be attained within the 10-year framework of the plan, objectives represent the agency's intent in terms of what it wants to accomplish, and by when during the 10-year life of the plan. Under each objective are actionable strategies that represent a suggested means, method, approach, or defined technique to achieve the preceding objective (i.e. *how an objective can be accomplished*). Although strategies identify acceptable ways to accomplish what is stated in an objective, the agency is not committing itself to implement all that may be listed. Rather, listed strategies represent a comprehensive summary of what the agency deems to be feasible, biologically and/or engineering sound (in terms of science), and fiscally responsible options at its disposal. By exclusion (i.e. items not in the list), it also defines what the agency will not consider or accept as reasonable means to achieve the objective, given the criteria noted above. The work outlined herein can only be accomplished with the collaboration and participation of units from across the DGIF. The Wildlife Resources Division's Lands and Facilities unit will take primary responsibility for advancing the strategies, objectives and goals of this plan, with input and engagement from other divisions to ensure full consideration of needs and opportunities.

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### ***Goal 1: Conduct a Comprehensive Boating Access Site and Facility Inventory Assessment***

Under its mission statement, the DGIF has expressed its commitment to conserve the state's aquatic resources, which are held in trust by the agency for current and future generations, to connect the public to nature through wildlife-related water-based activities, and to protect Virginia's citizens, visitors, and their property by providing safe water-access opportunities. To facilitate fulfilling these responsibilities, having an accurate, up-to-date database of facilities, the type of infrastructure present, an assessment of current condition, and other pertinent information is a critical starting point. Further, developing and adopting consistent terminology regarding BA sites and facilities will promote better communication, increase understanding of the agency's boating access inventory, and help assess whether the agency is meeting constituent needs. An up-to-date database also supports fiscal responsibility through the prioritization of maintenance activities and personnel duties, helps inform decision-making on the acquisition of new water-access sites and/or the closure of under-utilized sites, and facilitates tracking, measuring, and evaluating outcomes of policies, communication efforts, or outreach and education programs.

At this time, the agency's existing boating access inventory database requires updating, revision, and perhaps restructuring to account for necessary categories of information currently not found in the database (such as complete descriptions of boat ramp types, ownership designations, and

maintenance agreement responsibilities). Finally, having a comprehensive database for all BA sites and facilities owned, leased, accessed by easement, and/or cooperatively-managed by DGIF facilitates measuring progress as management goals and objectives proposed in this document are implemented.

- **Objective 1: Within 5 years, construct a comprehensive, up-to-date database that identifies and describes all existing DGIF wholly-owned and cooperatively-managed sites and facilities for which it has management responsibility.**
  - **Strategy 1A:** Identify the critical BA maintenance and management information and assessment metrics needed to accurately establish the current state of conditions for all BA site and facilities and create/populate an effective database that incorporates said metrics.
  - **Strategy 1B:** Within the agency, locate and evaluate the usefulness of data currently residing in existing databases or other spreadsheets that can be consolidated into a single, readily accessible database that serves the needs of the Boating Access Program.
  - **Strategy 1C:** By Administrative Region, record and cross-check (i.e. conduct field-based spot checks to ground-truth inventory information) the current status/condition and physical characteristics of each BA site and facility, its ownership status, whether a maintenance agreement exists (and has defined effective dates), the type of water body served, and the type(s) of boat ramp provided for every access in the inventory.
  - **Strategy 1D:** Examine and assess the existing cooperative maintenance and management agreement process and recommend changes, as necessary, to improve functionality and monitoring (e.g., establish consistent language, terms, length of agreement/duration of contract, mutual expectations, provisions for enforcing agreement breeches and terminating agreements).
  - **Strategy 1E:** Fully characterize the agency's current BA inventory according to spatial distribution (i.e. where it exists on the landscape) and type of water body accessed, including an evaluation of a site's usefulness in relation to all other public water-access provided regionally by other entities (e.g., DCR, USFWS, Army Corps, private marinas).
  - **Strategy 1F:** Develop and implement a functional evaluation rubric that accurately assesses the current condition of and/or maintenance needs at all BA sites as means to facilitate prioritization of personnel time, budget allocations, and capital improvement requests.
  - **Strategy 1G:** Characterize the current ecological and social carrying capacity of DGIF BA sites in each of the primary types of water bodies in Virginia as means to assess the health of aquatic systems and whether users' experiences will be affected negatively by changes in the level of activity and future water-access demands.

- **Objective 2: Within 5 years, conduct a comprehensive assessment of *future* demands and needs for BA sites and facilities with an eye toward adopting a forward-looking view about BA site and facility management that shifts operational policy from opportunistic and/or reactive to transparent and strategic-based.**
  - **Strategy 2A:** Utilize census data, the Chesapeake Bay Study, DCR's Outdoors Plan, and DGIF's Recreation Plan or any other relevant sources of information to identify the types of need and recreational demands that currently exist for boating access.
  - **Strategy 2B:** Fully characterize and predict future BA site and facility inventory demand by water-based activity type. This information is particularly important for identifying target stakeholder groups and communications needs.
  - **Strategy 2C:** Fully characterize and predict future BA site and facility inventory demand by water body type. This information is particularly important for communicating trip planning and water-access details with the public (e.g., connecting greenways to blueways).
- **Objective 3: Within the tenure of this plan, develop and adopt region-specific boating access site and facility management plans, based on the types of water bodies to which access is provided and in response to the specific boating access demands confronted that are unique to each region.**
  - **Strategy 3A:** Using information provided from the updated inventory database (Objective 1) and the knowledge and expertise of personnel assigned to each administrative region, identify and prioritize or rank routine maintenance tasks to be performed, facility replacements and/or improvement needs, and capital projects anticipated for existing BA sites within each region. This effort should account for the specific characteristics inherent in providing access across the diversity of water types and user demands in that region.
  - **Strategy 3B:** Incorporate data from the analysis of future needs and demands (Objective 2), including location (by water type) and type of facilities desired or deemed necessary to meet demand, into the regional management plan. Each entry should provide a ranking or importance assessment to guide decision-making on allocation of personnel and funds as resources become available.

### ***Goal 2: Clarify DGIF's Boating Access Site and Facilities Use and Activity Policies***

The DGIF has much to be proud of given the public's current satisfaction and high ratings of services provided at BA sites and facilities across the Commonwealth (as revealed in data obtained from the Virginia Boating Access Study). However, that study also revealed that public participation in water-based recreation activities is likely to increase in the future, and in ways that could differ from traditional uses of sites, thereby placing greater demands on a program already under stress (in terms of funding, personnel, and resources available to maintain the current level of service). On one hand, this is a positive finding because the agency's mission to

connect the public to nature through wildlife-related water-based activities is being attained; by having safe access to the waters of the state, users are forming positive memories through experiences that likely will keep the person actively participating through time. In contrast, expected increases in water-based recreation activities may represent an area of concern. As the frequency-of-use intensification of water-based activities occurs, maintenance needs at existing sites and facilities increase proportionally. Changes in intensity of use of existing sites are likely to differ across administrative regions, necessitating differential increases and/or shifts in maintenance frequency, human resource allocations, and funding among regions. Moreover, an increase in water-based activity participation also may affect the public's perceptions and negatively impact user experience (i.e. satisfaction with fishing or wildlife-watching expectations). If satisfaction declines or conditions become crowded, demand for expanded or additional new water-access sites can be anticipated.

Boating access site users view water-access sites as being much more than just a "boat ramp." In fact, users see BA sites as being analogous to trailheads and, as such, many among the public are currently using and want to continue using these public access spaces in ways that are not compatible with established allowable or priority activity at certain sites. Few participants recognized or demonstrated understanding of distinctions about who (public versus private, and among public entities) provided the access they were using or that policy and/or operational differences exist among the entities who provide water access. A large proportion of BA site users were not aware that certain activities or uses of a BA site are permitted, whereas others are restricted or prohibited. Because of this knowledge gap, many users were surprised that an activity they wished to pursue may not be allowed universally by those who provide access to the state's waters. Inconsistent interpretation of the policies that define allowable activities and variable enforcement of said policies or regulations across and within DGIF administrative regions exacerbates uncertainty. More importantly, a large proportion of agency personnel themselves were not aware of the fact that many commonly observed activities or uses of the DGIF BA sites are not authorized at certain sites. Need exists to improve understanding of policy, both internally and externally, and to clarify what constitutes acceptable public use of BA sites and facilities (particularly in the context of grant funding restrictions).

- **Objective 1: Within 5 years, define and clarify what constitutes the suite of allowable activities (e.g., primary, secondary) at and acceptable uses of each boating access site in the DGIF boating access inventory.**
  - **Strategy 1A:** Examine all deeds, easements, cooperative agreements, and site-specific grant fund documentation to identify language and directed statements that may impose use restrictions or establish policy on allowable activities at BA sites.
  - **Strategy 1B:** Evaluate the findings of the social and ecological assessments (Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 1G) in terms of the potential need to impose restriction on use or activities to protect or assure the continued sustainability of aquatic or other ecologic resources associated with or affected by a BA site.
    - Identify known and emerging concerns about the potential impacts of water-based recreational activities on the health and sustainability of aquatic resources and evaluate techniques to monitor for, avoid, or remediate said concerns.

- Incorporate information from the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan to locate and assess impacts of use of BA sites on species of concern.
  - Involve agency personnel who have special knowledge or familiarity with at-risk species and/or habitats that may not be well-represented in the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan or other databases of ecologically sensitive areas.
- **Strategy 1C:** Examine the Special Use Permits program to assess how permits have been used and currently are being used and determine whether or not activities occurring via this mechanism are consistent with DGIF's standards of acceptable or allowable use.
  - Determine what activities or uses, such as organized fishing tournaments, photography, and land-based wildlife watching, should be allowable with a DGIF Special Use Permit (i.e. time bound event-based permit for a fee) or Access Permit (i.e. day or annual use of WMAs and DGIF Public Fishing Lakes for activities other than stated primary uses and is fee-based).
  - Engage with agency personnel in appropriate Divisions to assure that allowable uses identified above are not in conflict stated primary uses nor violate funding requirements and constraints.
- **Strategy 1D:** Based on findings of the assessments above, establish a formal policy that defines the list of acceptable activities and uses for different types of BA sites and facilities to be applied consistently across the DGIF inventory, ensuring that the needs of different agency units are understood and that conditions imposed by the policy do not limit the functioning of the agency.
- **Strategy 1E:** Develop a position statement that is consistent with the policy established for sites and facilities of a similar type and function (i.e. Bay or tidal rivers vs. DGIF Public Fishing Lakes) that defines any limitations or restrictions imposed for each type of site in the inventory.
- **Objective 2: Within 2 years, formulate and adopt a definition to address the current uncertainty about what constitutes a “boat,” “vessel,” “watercraft,” or other “personal conveyance device” upon the waters of the Commonwealth.**
  - **Strategy 2A:** Examine all extant rules and regulations adopted by the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries and the DGIF to identify language and current usage relative to devices and/or craft used to convey people on the waters of the Commonwealth.
  - **Strategy 2B:** Research the Code of Virginia and the Administrative Code to identify and establish how current statutes define devices and/or craft used to convey people on the waters of the Commonwealth.
  - **Strategy 2C:** Identify situations of conflict and/or where inconsistency exists in current terminology or use among regulations and statutes; establish areas of commonality and disparity, especially with reference to existing U.S. Coast Guard policy and regulation, and identify areas in need of modification to alleviate said disparity and provide consistent, legally appropriate language.

- **Strategy 2D:** Attempt, as accurately as possible, to anticipate how future trends and new technologies may influence what potentially should be included under a revised definition.
- **Strategy 2E:** Evaluate the implications that a new or revised definition may have on users and the DGIF, with specific reference to issues such as registration and titling, regulations related to boating safety, and other “on the water” requirements.
- **Objective 3: After successfully addressing Objectives 1 and 2, and thereafter throughout the tenure of this plan, enforce the rules and regulations, as adopted, consistently at all BA sites.**
  - **Strategy 3A:** Involve personnel from the Enforcement Division in the development of policy (Objective 1) and definitions (Objective 2) to assure outcomes are enforceable.
  - **Strategy 3B:** Assure that information disseminated to users (the public) provides the necessary language to properly inform them of policy on allowable use and acceptable activities and facilitate proper enforcement.

### ***Goal 3: Establish Formal Boating Access Site and Facilities Maintenance Policies and Operational Protocols***

Currently, the DGIF lacks a comprehensive BA site and facilities infrastructure maintenance policy that would prioritize maintenance needs and responsibilities (see Appendix D), which, in turn, would facilitate decision-making and cost-efficient allocation of funding and personnel resources. Establishing such a policy would define, for the agency and for users, what tasks, maintenance priorities, and operational responsibilities are most important and distinguish those from other considerations that might be aesthetic, but not essential. Secondly, it would establish the minimum level of maintenance services users can expect from the agency across all sites and facilities. Existing DGIF BA Program maintenance specialists unanimously identified “maintaining user safety” as the most important and overriding factor that currently takes precedent over all other maintenance operations; however, after safety, guidance on what defines maintenance priorities was lacking. As a result, decision-making on personnel and monetary allocations, especially when resources become strained, likely will be inhibited by the lack of an effective prioritization, and may lead to inefficient optimization. Operationalizing a standardized policy statewide also would help ensure consistent messaging with the public and empower staff to facilitate the agency’s mission to conserve, connect, and protect while providing Virginia’s citizens and visitors with safe water-access opportunities.

- **Objective 1: Within 2 year of plan adoption, develop and implement a policy that defines and prioritizes maintenance responsibilities and needs at DGIF BA sites and facilities, taking into consideration issues relating to safety, water accessibility needs, site aesthetics, budget considerations, ownership/partnership agreements, and site physical and social limitations.**

- **Strategy 1A:** Examine and evaluate all maintenance tasks and responsibilities (Appendix B) and establish a prioritized hierarchy of said activities, by type of access provided and/or water type served.
  - Tasks/responsibilities should be ranked as critically essential, important, less important, or potentially non-essential in terms of meeting the agency's obligation of providing access to the waters of the Commonwealth.
  - A rationale for each ranking, as assigned, should be provided.
  - An assessment of the effect the ranked prioritization may have on compromising user safety and satisfaction should be completed.
- **Strategy 1B:** Establish estimated relative costs associated with the performance of routine maintenance tasks and administrative responsibilities (Appendix B).
  - Estimate labor investment as cost/hour of performance.
  - Estimate equipment investment as operational cost/hour of use
  - Estimate materials and supplies investment, in general terms, as cost/item, cost/ton, cost/sq. ft., cost/board ft., etc.
  - Generate an estimate of depreciation, where appropriate.
  - Identify differences and/or disparities between agency-performed activities vs. contractual or bid work.
  - Determine whether maintenance items classified as less important or potentially non-essential would compromise or be in violation of conditions of any standing agreements or other legal obligations if left unattended.
  - Adjust rankings to address compromising factors.
- **Strategy 1C:** Based on the output from above strategies, develop a framework to prioritize, with explanation, all maintenance tasks and establish an appropriate generalized schedule of the frequency with which each task should be performed, by type of access and/or water type served.
- **Objective 2: Within 3 years, develop and implement a formal process for evaluating and prioritizing needs and requests for BA site and facilities improvement and/or expansion.**
  - **Strategy 2A:** Establish an estimated repair and/or replacement schedule for the various types of infrastructure maintained at BA sites.
    - Incorporate knowledge of site specific or environmental conditions that might influence or alter estimated repair/replacement frequencies (e.g., coastal [tides, salt] vs. freshwater, high vs. low current waters, excessive frequency or level of use).
    - Incorporate maintenance costs/economic information from Objective 1, Strategy 1B, to further clarify the scope of repair/replacement conditions, trade-offs or alternative options, and other factors that may influence decision-making on whether to repair or replace infrastructure (i.e., allow for a cost/benefit type of analysis).

- **Strategy 2B:** Utilizing data on future demand (collected under Goal 1), identify BA sites currently in the DGIF inventory that would benefit most from improvement or expansion, thereby enhancing the agency's ability to meet anticipated access needs
  - Identify and evaluate particular types of infrastructure to be added to or modified at a particular site, relevant to the type of anticipated demand (e.g., adding a separate or supplemental hand carry ramp, adding another trailered ramp, extending or adding piers) that brings greatest enhancement.
  - Incorporate consideration of meeting and improving ADA compliant access.
- **Strategy 2C:** From among potential improvements and/or expansions identified above, distinguish those that can be performed by current DGIF staff from those that require outside/private contractual assistance.
- **Strategy 2D:** Within each administrative region, develop and periodically re-evaluate/update a prioritized list of potential large-scale capital projects for consideration and initiation should necessary resources become available.
- **Objective 3: Within 2 years, complete an analysis of the current funds used to support the Boating Access Program, and effect actions that maximize cost-effective and fiscally responsible use of available funds.**
  - **Strategy 3A:** Review the current use and allocation of existing funds to assure that said use maximizes efforts to fulfill relevant priority needs of the Boating Access Program mission.
  - **Strategy 3B:** Evaluate the merits of modifying or adjusting existing revenue sources (i.e. licenses, permits, registrations) before pursuing and instituting new fees and/or assessments.

#### ***Goal 4: Formalize a Boating Access Site and Facility Acquisition and Closure Policy***

In addition to maintaining and performing management duties for approximately 235 BA sites, the Wildlife Resources Division's Lands and Facilities unit also assumes responsibility for providing administrative oversight for the acquisition of new BA sites and potential closure of existing, but underutilized or no longer functional, BA sites. In some cases, the DGIF acquires desirable parcels through direct real estate transactions on the open market, which then are developed into new BA sites. In other cases, the DGIF works with other entities to acquire right of use (i.e. easement) to properties that provide opportunity to gain access to waters otherwise unavailable. Although typically small in number, the DGIF also receives land via donation, bequeath requests, or other similar actions of benefactors (which sometimes come with specific instructions or imposed limitations on desired use). Finally, a large number of BA sites now in the DGIF's inventory are managed under Cooperative Agreements with local municipalities or other parties and display an array of shared commitments by signatory partners.

Historically, acquisitions generally have been the result of opportunistic events rather than from a strategic process that targets specific regional needs or attempts to fill identified voids in access to particular stretches of water. Presently, the Boating Access Program uses the Tiered Review Selection Process to evaluate the merits of potential acquisitions. This system uses a defined set of criteria that ranks physical site characteristics, anticipated infrastructure development needs, and anticipated post-construction maintenance needs and costs to produce a ranked assessment for a tract or potential site. This system does not evaluate or rate sites in terms of addressing strategic regional needs, but instead emphasizes engineering and construction parameters. It remains unclear whether output from the Tier Review system becomes a critical factor in all BA site acquisition decisions.

Similarly, standardized guidance is lacking for when (or if) the agency should terminate an existing cooperative agreement or easement relationship, or de-authorize and close out an existing BA site. Closing a BA site and/or transferring ownership may be justified when sites are (1) underutilized, (2) no longer meet DGIF strategic need, or (3) costs to maintain safe water-access exceed benefits to the public. Language exists in most cooperative agreements regarding conditions under which a relationship may be terminated; however, these criteria have rarely been implemented or, when applied, are done so inconsistently. Regarding closure, agency records reveal very few instances where de-authorization has been considered or implemented, regardless of the level of use a site receives or the costs incurred in maintaining the site.

Finally, the Boating Access Program's acquisition/closure decision process currently operates in isolation from or without coordination with other land acquisition protocols within the agency, most notably, those associated with the Wildlife Resources Division's acquisition of terrestrial lands. At the time of this document, that program was undergoing a re-evaluation, presenting an opportunity to evaluate whether a single, agency-wide policy to guide acquisitions and closures merits consideration rather than maintaining separate and potentially inconsistent systems.

- **Objective 1: Within 5 years, complete an examination of all property acquisitions and agreements into which the DGIF has entered that provide boating access and evaluate whether and how those actions fulfill the agency's mission of providing safe public boating access.**
  - **Strategy 1A:** Examine all cooperative agreements in the DGIF inventory (Goal 1) for relevant contributions to the Boating Access Program.
    - As much as possible, determine why the agreement was completed and whether justifications have been realized (i.e. what benefits were anticipated, have they been achieved).
    - Analyze and critically assess the true costs (in personnel and direct expenditures) incurred individually by all parties to an agreement in maintaining that agreement.
    - Assess the current status of agreements (i.e. is the agreement current and legally valid, have stipulations of the agreement been upheld by all parties, etc.) and evaluate whether justification exists to renew or terminate the relationship.

- **Strategy 1B:** Review all property acquisitions or purchases by and land transfers to the DGIF that now exist in the DGIF inventory for their contribution to the Boating Access Program.
  - Ascertain the justification for why the acquisition was made.
  - Determine whether the acquisition filled a strategic need or a regional need.
  - Ascertain whether results from the Tier Review Selection Protocol were applied to or factored into the decision to acquire BA sites.
- **Strategy 1C:** Review current easement agreements in the DGIF inventory to assess whether these agreements are meeting defined BA needs and priorities. In cases where easements may not be providing outcomes in keeping with defined BA policy and desired outcomes, identify the reason(s) and evaluate whether or not to continue, modify, or terminate the agreement
- **Objective 2: Within 5 years, conduct a strategic evaluation of BA needs, by region and by water type, to identify and prioritize types and locations of critical unmet access need that will guide future acquisitions efforts.**
  - **Strategy 2A:** Examine all BA sites currently in the DGIF inventory and assess spatially the waters currently served by each site.
  - **Strategy 2B:** By water type and by administrative region, identify and locate all other existing BA sites (public and private, non-DGIF) to waters of the state.
  - **Strategy 2C:** Using findings from the above noted assessment and information from the intra-agency and interagency analyses of strategic boating needs (e.g., Virginia Outdoors Plan, Chesapeake Bay Boating Access Study), evaluate the spatial distribution of and projected BA needs (unserved and/or underserved waters) by water type and administrative region.
  - **Strategy 2D:** Rank identified waters for which BA need exists within each administrative region that represent highest acquisition desire.
  - **Strategy 2E:** Identify other entities and potential partners (public and/or private) with whom DGIF might collaborate to acquire and maintain BA to fulfill an identified need within a region or specific water type.
- **Objective 3: Within 2 years, examine and update the Tiered Review Selection Protocol, then adopt this tool as the primary decision-making mechanism for use when evaluating potential sites for acquisition or entering into new collaborative boating access ventures.**
  - **Strategy 3A:** Review and evaluate the metrics currently incorporated in the Tiered Review Selection protocol to determine their efficacy and identify potential metrics for consideration to include that would provide better assessment and discrimination in site selection.

- Examples of evaluation metrics to include:
  - technical and/or engineering criteria based on the physical and topographic features of the site (e.g., slope/grade, water current or wave action, drainage, size of area available for parking/turning vs. anticipated demand/needs);
  - assessment of strategic value gained within a region and among water types (i.e. fulfillment of an identified need; proximity to other nearby access sites);
  - estimate of projected maintenance costs incurred should the site be developed;
  - other metrics as deemed appropriate.
- **Strategy 3B:** Apply the revised/enhanced Tiered Review Selection Protocol in all cases where acquisition of property for new access is being considered and in situations where the DGIF is considering entering into a new cooperative management or easement agreement.
- **Objective 4: Within 2 years, develop and implement a policy on BA site closure and/or retirement.**
  - **Strategy 4A:** Define criteria for what constitutes “unused,” “underutilized,” and “not meeting strategic need” in relation to BA sites and facilities.
  - **Strategy 4B:** Monitor and evaluate existing BA sites and facilities in the DGIF inventory to identify those that are underutilized and/or not meeting identified DGIF strategic need. Identify BA sites where maintenance and operational costs incurred in keeping the site open and functional significantly exceed the benefits obtained in doing so.
  - **Strategy 4C:** Based on the findings from Objective 1, identify BA site agreements for which contractual stipulations currently are not or historically have not been met and that may be considered candidates for closure or termination.
  - **Strategy 4D:** In cases where an assessment reveals that established criteria for “unused,” “underutilized,” and “not meeting strategic need” have been met; costs incurred to continue maintaining and operating a BA site are prohibitive relative to the benefits received, or stipulations of a cooperative agreement have not been upheld, and where efforts to correct or bring conditions into compliance have failed, initiate proceedings to close, terminate, or transfer ownership of said facility, wherever reasonable to do so.

***Goal 5: Improve Awareness and Understanding of DGIF’s Boating Access Program and Pertinent Laws, Regulations, and Restrictions***

As noted earlier in this document, a substantial proportion of BA site users made no distinction between and among access providers, knew little about the DGIF or its mission, and were unaware of restrictions or constraints imposed upon uses and/or activities at certain BA sites (or the reasons for why such restrictions existed). Even among users who stated some degree of familiarity with the DGIF, many knew little about differences in how the agency provided access or the agreements (and the attached conditions) the agency had entered into in providing access. This lack of knowledge and awareness leads to significant confusion among users about the

types of facilities and amenities offered and what constitutes an “allowable” use or activity at a particular BA site. In addition, numerous examples exist of inconsistent, incomplete, or erroneous information being disseminated to the public on boating access issues. Given the ever-changing demographics of users, as well as their differing levels of experience, the potential of conflict among users appears to be increasing.

The same can be said even within the agency, as personnel outside the BA Program demonstrated little knowledge or familiarity with the activities and mission of this unit. In fact, many agency personnel who participated in various components of the Boating Access Study expressed a lack of awareness about prioritized uses of and restrictions imposed on activities at BA sites, details of organizational funding, and demands placed on BA Program staffs in maintaining these facilities. There is also a significant level of inconsistency in existing messaging going out to staff and a general lack of communication and interaction between other divisions within the agency and the BA Program. Efficient and cost-effective enforcement of regulations may be hampered by the lack of formal operational policies or consistent application of existing protocols.

#### **SUBGOAL 5A: IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE DGIF BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM INTERNALLY AMONG AGENCY STAFF AND PERSONNEL**

- **Objective 1: Within 2 years, implement communications that informs and clarifies understanding of the Boating Access Program among DGIF personnel.**
  - *Strategy 1A:* Enhance communication across all divisions to assure that agency personnel have a consistent understanding of the BA Program, its operational responsibilities, and restrictions within which it must function; assure that all sectors are working collaboratively toward a common mission.
  - *Strategy 1B:* Enhance opportunities to share information in agency inventories and other databases across divisions to avoid duplication of effort and to improve the accuracy and quality of data.

#### **SUBGOAL 5B: IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE DGIF BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM AMONG TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL WATER-BASED BOATING AND RECREATIONAL USERS**

- **Objective 1: Within 2 years, and continuing thereafter throughout the tenure of this plan, develop and implement a targeted outreach initiative for water-based recreational users about the DGIF Boating Access Program.**
  - *Strategy 1A:* Develop appropriate messages for diverse water-based recreational user audiences to address the following identified needs:
    - Introduce and clarify what DGIF is, what its mission and vision are, and how it differs from other state agencies.
    - Describe agency funding, and any imposed constraints or restrictions associated with the use of said funds relative to creating and maintaining BA sites.

- Describe and clarify the different types of water access DGIF maintains (hand-carry, trailered, hybrid), distinctions between wholly-owned and maintained vs. cooperative arrangements, and the facilities and amenities typically provided at each site type.
  - Distinguish priority uses and/or applicable restrictions that are imposed on activities at different DGIF BA sites.
- **Strategy 1B:** Evaluate outreach methods best suited for disseminating information to stakeholders from different demographic and recreational interest sectors.
- **Strategy 1C:** Incorporate information about the Boating Access Program (i.e. types of accesses, restrictions/permitted activities, facilities provided) into the Boating Safety and Education Training Program.
- **Strategy 1D:** Include information about the Boating Access Program, with specific reference to allowable use and acceptable activities at DGIF BA sites, as part of the material received when anyone registers or titles a boat in Virginia.
- **Strategy 1E:** Conduct an evaluation of need and anticipated costs for producing information and materials in secondary languages appropriate to user audiences, recognizing the demographic make-up within each administrative region; where feasible, implement and monitor a pilot program for information delivery in a secondary language relevant to a region and evaluate its effect on user compliance and satisfaction.
- **Objective 2: Within 3 years, revise and disseminate an accurate, up-to-date information database on the inventory of DGIF maintained BA sites across the Commonwealth.**
  - **Strategy 2A:** Assure that any listing of BA sites presented in the Fishing and Boating Digest is accurate, current, and represents the entire inventory of facilities provided and/or maintained by DGIF
  - **Strategy 2B:** Produce and maintain an up-to-date map and information resource on the agency's web site as means to quickly and visually disseminate information on BA site availability and facilities.
  - **Strategy 2C:** As much as possible, clearly distinguish in the information being disseminated the type of access provided (e.g., hand carry, trailered, hybrid), amenities provided, and prohibitions imposed as means to properly set user expectation.
  - **Strategy 2D:** Provide timely updates to users of any operational or policy changes that may affect use of a BA site.
    - Use DGIF web site, Facebook, email blast, or other suitable and efficient method(s) of communication to notify users of closures, intended repair work, unsafe conditions, changes in allowable use, or other situations affecting use of a BA site.

- **Objective 3: During the tenure of the plan, assure that agency staffs whose job responsibilities bring them into frequent contact with the public convey a uniform and consistent presentation of agency policy on allowable uses and acceptable activities at BA sites.**
  - ***Strategy 3A:*** Conduct training to improve knowledge and understanding of employees on prohibited or restricted activities or uses, conveying a consistent rationale for why restrictions are in place, and assuring that a uniform interpretation and/or statement of policy is delivered whenever engaging with the public.
  - ***Strategy 3B:*** Provide timely informational updates to agency staffs on changes of policy and additions or closures of BA sites to enhance interactions with the public.

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## APPENDIX A: DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENTS

From November 6 – December 7, 2018, a summary and draft copy of this management plan was posted on DGIF's website for the public to review and provide comments and feedback electronically. Below are all comments received through the website and email communications. The comments are exactly as submitted and to ensure anonymity any identifying information is not included here. All comments are considered equally and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final draft BA management plan. For illustrative purposes, the comments are grouped by overarching theme categories; however, like most things related to BA sites, themes are often intertwined which makes it difficult to separate comments into neat categories.

### BOATING ACCESS PROGRAM FUNDING

1. Hello, these comments are from [a commercial outfitter]. As we read Virginia Boating Access Site and Facility Management Plan - DRAFT, pages 54 - 56 illustrate that the department is considering charging some sort of user access fees. First, we are all for DGIF getting dedicated funding stream like VA Parks or other state agencies. When appropriate we will help lobby for that. However, we are very concerned that DGIF would implement a per boat or per person fee to use the river access points. If implemented poorly without consideration for commercial outfitters it could end our tourism focused business.
2. I'm really glad you guys are taking-on this project. As an avid boater and fisherman, I want to see that Virginia's waterways, both flowing and still, are protected and accessible. This may not be the most coherent set of comments from the public, but here are few suggestions. 1. Implement a more comprehensive program to generate funds through boat launch permits to be displayed on watercraft (mainly the non-motor kind), similar to Pennsylvania. Offer a yearly, weekly, and daily permit at a easy-to-digest amount: \$25, \$10, \$5. It'll help keep track of who or where folks will be, generate conservation and maintenance funds, and offer the ability to ensure folks know the regulations to ensure their safety and safety of first responders.
3. Hunters, fishermen, and registered boaters have consistently footed the bill for public access on our waterways and afield and are often interrupted in their lawful activities by other recreational users (who don't pay for the privilege). It is time for there to be a user fee for other recreational interests. This fee should be consistent with at least the cost of a hunting or fishing license on an annual basis. It should apply to all users of the properties whether for kayaking/tubing, bird watching, hiking, etc. Any plan that does not immediately address this obvious discrepancy is unsatisfactory.
4. I am forwarding my friends' comment because I concur with his opinion. There is a vast population of recreational users of waterways, parks, preserves, WMA's and natural areas that do not have interest in hunting or fishing, but they are your indirect "customers", just the same. It is time they pay excise tax for their specialized equipment just like your traditional users. All folks who enjoy our outdoors should help support the essential work that the DGIF and relating state and federal agencies do for us. It's fair, ethical and will not depress the demand for the products that make their days in the field and water worthwhile.

5. Although funding is not the only aspect of the study, it sounds like money is an important issue with declining DGIF revenue due to lower #s of hunters. Interest in fishing is rising but no mention in the summary telling how much the shortfall is currently and what an extrapolation might forecast about the future. If money is a significant current problem that the I'd say it's time for the General Assembly to step up and consider a modest state excise tax on outdoor recreational items other than firearms and fishing equipment, similar to the Pittman Robertson and Dingell Johnson Acts do federally. That's my two cents.

## EMERGING BOATING ACCESS SITE CHALLENGES

### *Parking*

1. I just wanted to address the shortage of parking due to the closure of the overflow railroad parking lot across the tracks from the Whitethorn Boat Ramp on the New River. When the face to face study was going on there was plenty of parking but due to recent closure there is only room for 8 trucks with trailers. This boat launch is very important because it is the only public access on the New river for over 25 miles. The parking is full most of the time and it is causing problems for recreational boating and fishing programs. There is enough space to double the size of parking using DGIF land by extending the parking lot up to the Toms Creek confluence. Please take this into consideration and relook at the study with the new closure.
2. Increase space for parking of vehicles and trailers at the public boat ramp at Lynnhaven. When bridge project is finished it should provide more space for fishermen to use the facility, so we don't see a ramp closed no parking sign at peak usage times.
3. I would like to also speak up about the conditions at Whitethorn boat ramp. I have used the ramp for the last 40 years. The parking situation at the facility is a joke. 8 trucks and trailers is not sufficient parking for this area. The restricted access is very disappointing and frustrating!!!! I have seen as many as 40 vehicles down there before the railroad decided to not let people park on their property. Please take a look at this site again and please ask boaters their opinions. Thank you for your time!

### *Rules & Regulations, Law Enforcement, and Safety*

1. I recently have witnessed a lot of law enforcement agencies training canine teams at the boat ramp in Franklin Va. I think this is a terrible idea. it intimidates patrons using the facility and there is a risk of injury to the public if one of these dogs targeted a citizen launching a boat. Talk about bad PR and a huge lawsuit. Please stop.
2. I split my time between VA and NJ. When I am in NJ I routinely fish from my canoe in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania requires a launch permit for all unregistered watercraft. I suggest Virginia do the same. NJ had a problem with non-hunters and non-fisherman using Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). I believe they required users of WMAs to place a copy of their fishing or hunting license on their dashboards to show they should be allowed there. NJ also discussed a plan for a non-hunters and non-fisherman to buy a decal for their car to allow use of a WMA. I am not sure if this was instituted, but I suggest this as a way to get non-boaters in VA who use the BA sites to help fund the sites. Finally, you must enforce the rules you develop.
3. I have a home and boat on Hawtree Creek and there is a boat ramp access on the creek. The problem of safety on our creek is a grave concern. We have numerous boaters and personal

watercraft that speed up the creek and out on to Lake Gaston. Our creek is narrow in places and has many swimmers, paddleboarders, kayakers and these speeding crafts disregard safety, come close to docks and create wakes that are impacting our shoreline, which is designated a "sensitive environment". Residents on the creek are doing a survey to gather data in hopes of changing our area to a slow or no wake water access to the main lake. We have had little success to taking to Mecklenburg County and Dominion Power. We have also talked to local VA Fishery people.

4. Please ensure that all applicable laws are followed.
5. Under "Boating Access Program Administration" the draft states that DGIF experiences "...inconsistent monitoring and /or enforcement of ... agreements...". We agree there is inconsistent and often inappropriate enforcement. In Roanoke, three fishermen received tickets for trespassing from DGIF for accessing the river under a railroad trestle. The three went to court on the same day. The judge tossed the tickets out and told DGIF not to bring such "violations" into his court again. What we have is too many DGIF police with too little to do. Here is room for cost reduction. Here is a way to stop infuriating DGIF customers.
6. At the Alpine landing on the James River, three DGIF wardens were looking for violators when some boaters drove down to the water's edge to pick up their boats. The wardens tried to prevent this because a county sign at the access said no driving down to the water. The sign allowed for commercial outfitters to drive down, but not for handicapped boaters. After some words with boaters, the wardens allowed the handicapped boaters to load their boats and leave. This should not be a DGIF issue. It is a county issue, which in fact is now under review for changing. Again, DGIF is only aggravating its customers.
7. Elsewhere on the James River near Glasgow, DGIF police have been threatening boaters with tickets if they exit the river by crossing the railroad tracks. Exiting the river this way is due to the lack of legal crossings allowed by CSX railroad. CSX should be policing the tracks, not DGIF. Again, DGIF is alienating its own constituents.

### ***Communication and Outreach & Education***

1. The Purposes for boat access should be clearly listed to prevent loitering and non-boaters from crowding the access. It would also help minimize litter and help lower maintenance needs.
2. This perhaps should go out to our members to give them a heads up on public water access and opportunity to make a comment during the public commentary period.
3. Please find comments of [large statewide river advocacy group] regarding the DGIF Draft Boating Access Plan. We were disappointed to receive the request for comments second-hand from a fellow boater and not directly as a major stakeholder using access to the rivers of Virginia.
4. Other disputes have arisen between DGIF and county officials that have created anger and distrust between them, resulting in access site problems.

### ***User Conflicts***

1. I do not think our ramps should be used for activities other than launching and retrieving boats. Shore fishing from these ramps only produces trash and litter and conflicts between boaters and shore/pier fisher people.

## BOATING ACCESS SITE AMENITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

1. As an avid river fisherman who spends over 175-200 days a year on the river. I'm disappointed at the ramp access we have. I use rafts and jet boats. Looks like the new ramps being put in only cater to kayaks and canoes. It would be nice to be able to gain access to the river by launching my rafts or drift boat. These style boat have been gaining popularity in the last several years. Plus, they draft less water and are safer than most personal watercraft. I wouldn't have a problem having to pay extra if I could benefit and get use out of accessibility of the put ins that are in place. Heck some of the new ones are even cabled off! What's up w/that?
2. It would be great if at every bridge over floatable water there was reasonable access, parking and simple take in take out.
3. Every Va. boat ramp I have ever been to has a port-a-potti, except one, GOSNOLDS HOPE PARK. The park has restrooms, but it closes at sunset, so fisherman have no access to a bathroom at night. Plus, the surrounding bathrooms are not close to the boat ramp. Thank You.

## BOATING ACCESS PLANNING AND COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

1. I am [removed for anonymity] of the [a fishing club], which is associated with the Center in Charlottesville (formerly the Senior Center). We have worked with the Albemarle County Department of Parks and Recreation to get improvements to BA sites on the Rivanna Reservoir and the Rivanna River. There are many more potential sites. Our members are keenly interested in this issue in general and in several BA sites in particular. Can you recommend someone we could meet with to discuss this?
2. Constructing public river access sites at vehicular bridge crossings is a strategy for expanding boating access to the rivers of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In July 2015, Governor Terry McAuliffe executed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and DGIF to expand public access to state waters. The intention of the MOU is to evaluate the feasibility of public access adjacent to bridges included in VDOT's six-year plan. The James River Association encourages DGIF to expand boating access to rivers in the James River watershed and across the Commonwealth via bridge crossings in coordination with VDOT and DCR.
3. DGIF boating access sites could accommodate additional outdoor recreation activities in some instances. Paddle-in camping, for example, is a desired recreational activity on the James River. DGIF boating access sites present opportunities for primitive camping. Additional management capacity of boating access sites with potential to accommodate additional outdoor recreation activities can be achieved through partnerships with local governments and other organizations. DGIF should pursue partnerships with local governments and organizations to adequately manage access sites. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.
4. This survey done by DGIF is reminiscent of a survey done back in 1990 when DGIF was also in need of additional funding. At that time DGIF was looking at paddlers for additional money and was considering paddle boat registration. Boaters demanded that a study be done of the return on such a program and the result showed that the administrative costs would exceed the income. The idea was dropped. At that point DGIF agreed to do several stakeholder meetings across the

state to consider alternate funding ideas. The upshot of that process was a bill in 1994 that dedicated the 2% watercraft sales tax to DGIF instead of the general fund. Vic Thomas introduced the bill which resulted in about \$10 million for DGIF programs. We believe such a process is called for again, if DGIF wants to locate additional funding.

5. The draft Boating Access Site...Plan was put together by DGIF personnel. That process has not included input from major constituents like river and boating organizations.
6. Back in 1990, DGIF had a boating advisory committee. It functioned for about 8 years but then was dissolved under a new administration. This advisory committee performed an excellent service for all kinds of boater constituents. Such a committee or one similar could once again provide help and service to DGIF to resolve boat site issues.
7. DGIF has stated that in the Va Tech survey, "...participants eagerly offered ideas and suggestions about ways DGIF could collaborate with municipalities, boating clubs, land trusts, conservation organization and businesses to help address financial... resource gaps." This is very similar to the previous outreach by DGIF for funds back in 1990. It provides a direction for DGIF to move toward. The draft plan ends with 5 Goal Statements. They are fine goals, but they do not address how the "...participants" would be able to provide their input, ideas and suggestions to the DGIF process. The model is already available. DGIF should put together an advisory group that would go on the road around the state, meeting with and listening to its constituents, who are very willing and able to help support DGIF in a fiscally responsible way. We [24+ affiliate organizations] encourage DGIF to look back at that model and look forward to something similar for today.
5. The access at Howardsville on the James is another example of DGIF not working with its constituents. In this case, DGIF would not listen to local boaters who showed how DGIF could open up a closed access by making improvements to the access site. Instead, DGIF ended up paying a nearby property holder \$10,000 per year for use of the owner's property for parking. This was a waste of good DGIF dollars.

## **BOATING ACCESS SITE-SPECIFIC**

1. The Barrett's landing boat launch in the city of Franklin Virginia. The city of Franklin has decided to install two yellow Gates to access the boat launch and they close the Gates when it snows, I am an avid duck Hunter and use the launch allot and was wondering how they can close off a state funded and maintained launch. Thanks.
2. It is of concern that the city of Franklin closes Barrett's landing boat ramp at any time they please. They have installed a locked gate that they control as they wish. The ramp was built by taxpayer money, state funds and the Pittman Robertson tax. They have locked us out during duck season with no other ramp to access our blinds. We have asked the city for a compromise of letting us know before they lock it to no avail. The gate should not even exist. I'm available for further discussion or a compromise so we can access the ramp when needed.
3. I think that it is unfair that the city of Franklin has decided to lock access to a state public boat ramp by closing a gate whenever they feel like it at Barrett's landing. I understand the gate being closed when the property is flooded. However, it shouldn't be closed all the time. There are many of us who use this boat ramp to launch our boats during duck hunting season. I think an acceptable alternative would be to close it but not lock it. They could put a sign up in inclement

weather that states you may access at your own risk. Then allow us to open and close the gate behind us.

4. I launch a boat allot at the city of Franklin Virginia, Barrett's landing boat ramp. How is the city able to put up Gates to close the ramp, why is this allowed? I'm an avid fisherman and duck Hunter and the best time to hunt the rivers is when it snows and in two instances the city closed the ramp on us when it snowed. I could maybe understand high water but snow. How do y'all allow to do this I'm sure this ramp was funded by hunters and this is not right to take away a water access from us because of snow... Thanks.
5. Tried to fish out of the Howardsville boat landing numerous times this season when the water gets low the ramp needs to be dugout. Seems like ramp cleaner pushes the mud straight out into river. Other times. Weeks after high water ramp will have 2ft plus of mud. Seems like it's the forgotten spot for maintenance Very frustrating. Thanks.

## **BOATING ACCESS SITE OWNERSHIP TYPES**

1. I truly hope it is not the Depts direction to do away with partnership owned ramps like at Rt 611 Joyners Br. Rd on the Blackwater river as that is the only access on that part of the river.

## **BOATING ACCESS SITES ON UNDERSERVED WATERS**

1. I believe boating access is crucial to the public as a whole, not just the sportsmen community but also for those who wish to just go for a leisurely paddle or boat ride. It is also important for youth, especially Boy scouts who do various activities and trips on the water. While there are numerous boat access points throughout Fauquier and the surrounding counties, access to the Rappahannock river is lacking with Kelly's Ford being the only place to launch other than pulling off the side of the road or asking for permission from private land owners.
2. Need a public ramp on the Pamunkey River in Eastern Hanover County. Close down all Public Ramps in Counties or Cities like Newport News if hunting is not allowed in their waters. No Duck blinds to be issued within four miles of a public boat ramp. These can be floating waterfowl blind zones which would give hunters with floating blind tags an area to hunt.
3. I strongly support fair public access to all rivers, lakes and waterways in our country. I own both power and paddle crafts. I take friends and family often on the water and we all enjoy being out there. We all just wish there was more access in our area.
4. Sirs, I appreciate the fact that you are looking for ideas on how to improve boating access in our waters. I live in Smithfield, and while we have ready access to a wide range of water and fishing opportunities, one local body of water has basically no easy access. I'm talking about the Nansemond River. There is a small, very poor private ramp in a creek near Suffolk, and I refuse to use it. The next closest ramp is well up Bennett Creek. From talking to other boaters, it's at least two miles to open water in a shallow creek that is unmarked, and no wake the entire way. Nansemond River should be a great fishery but would be a long run from any existing boat ramp. I urge you to give serious consideration to changing this situation.
5. More public boating access is needed on the Potomac River below Quantico, Va. Leesylvania is too expensive, (even for Virginia residents who pay the same price as non-residents), it is also a

major hassle to get home from Leesylvania State Park because of the tremendous traffic issues always present on I-95. The facilities down river on Aquia Creek are a major rip-off due to price they charge to launch your boat, and they have no decent facilities (no restroom, other than a lousy port-a-Jon leaning on uneven ground). I not aware of any boat launch access in Potomac Creek, and it may not be feasible due to the shallow water in that area. Fairview Beach has a ramp, but they rip you off as well in the price to launch, we need access down River!

6. We need a boat ramp near key bridge to reduce congestion at Gravelly point during the summer months.
7. I would like to see the DGIF take over the Currioman Landing on the Potomac River, which is currently unusable due to heavy sand intrusion. In addition, I would like to see public accesses on the Corrotoman River, the main body of Mobjack Bay, and on the North side of the Piankatank River. Also, this is probably a moot point due to the lack of cooperation from the city of Manassas, but the public is owed an access site on Lake Manassas.
8. We need a DGIF boat ramp on the Potomac either inside Aquia creek or inside Potomac creek. The current fees being charged by Hope Springs on Aquia is obscene but we have no other options currently. The opening of the Tidewater state park ramp in 2019 will not change this need as they are putting this access on the end of Brent point facing directly into the E/SE winds. It will be unusable for most folks with any wind 10 mph+ and navigating the unmarked wrecks in that area is going to prove deadly for the average boater. Then the fact you have almost 10 miles to travel off HWY1 on twisting roadways to get there makes it even more unsafe.

## BOATING ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN-SPECIFIC

1. Goal 1 looks like someone is looking for an expensive computer database management system. Microsoft office contains a database called access, anyone with a 2-day class should be able to develop a database to enter all parameters to manage boat ramps. What I am saying is do not waste money on a contract to develop this database. Write it in-house, you will be required to tell the contractor what you want in it anyway. It can print out a form to go to each boat ramp to report on its condition. This is really simple stuff, please do not waste our money on a contractor.
2. I agree with the goals as stated. In the "Overarching Principles" it is imperative that the plan recognize the many years of funding contributions that fishers and hunters have made to establish the foundation for all BA access and management, and that the plan's focus and 1st principal guarantee that fishing, hunting, trapping and recreational boating (those paying boat registration fees) are considered "protected users" of all DGIF and partner BA sites--- that is these groups cannot ever be excluded from using current or future agency and agency/partner BA sites.
3. This document entirely fails to mention ecological responsibility or stewardship obligations with regard to these natural locations. Desire for use is a reason to allow access to BA sites only anticipated use is sustainable. While it is the role of citizens to express their desires in this matter, it is not the role of citizens to—nor are they capable of—accurately assessing ecological sustainability. This is among the fundamental obligations of VDGIF. In fact, as a citizen, I'm not even capable of expressing my view unless fully informed on these matters. I urge you to fulfill this vital obligation so that I and my fellow citizens can responsibly and democratically participate in this process.
4. In determining the plan, please ensure that all applicable laws are followed, and all efforts are made to ensure that wildlife and their environment is not threatened by the plan. - Thank you.

5. The draft states that "...hunting spending is down 26%...". Then it proceeds to direct new funding efforts towards boat sites. There is a mis-connect here. If funding is down due to hunter declines in spending, then the focus should start with a look at what reductions in hunter programs can be made to reduce expenses. This has not been done from what we know. There is no appropriate connection from hunting to boat sites.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

1. I have used dozens of water access sites in Virginia and have been pleased with those maintained by VDGIIF.
2. I am writing you on behalf of the James River Association regarding the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' draft boating access site and facility management plan. The James River Association is a champion of public river access and advocates for the creation of new boating access sites, parks, and public spaces along the James River and its tributaries. Publicly accessible boat ramps, canoe slides, and shoreline access sites managed by DGIF and other agencies provide important motorized and non-motorized boating access to the James River and its tributaries for many Virginians and visitors. Additionally, these sites generate economic activity important to local economies. My colleagues and I appreciate the role DGIF plays in ensuring people have opportunities to enjoy their waterways.
3. On behalf of our 24+ affiliate organizations, thank you for listening.

## MISCELLANEOUS AND NON-DGIF BOATING ACCESS SITES

1. There needs to be change in Dickenson county with the buck harvest...you need to only allow one buck tag per hunter and put a restriction on antlers...3 points on one side or something to that extent. It is honestly not worth hunting here anymore...way to many small bucks are being killed. It would also be nice if all the land that is leased could become P.A.L.S land...a small percentage of people has access to a large percentage of land in the county...that has caused over-crowding for everyone else to contend with...THINGS NEED TO CHANGE! Maybe when you start losing license sales you will rethink things...
2. I annually stay at Staunton River State Park and launch my boat from the main park launch to fish John H. Kerr reservoir. I have commented several times on the park surveys that the lighting needs improved at the boat ramp. It is difficult to say the least to locate the ramp at night when returning from up or down the lake and the parking lot is dark with typically only a few lights working which makes it difficult to see in order to secure your boat. While I understand by the layout that the trees block the light from the lake side; I do think a bright light could be installed at the ramp in order to provide a visual focal point when returning to the ramp at night. Thank you for any considerations you may have.
3. In addition to the planned kayak ramps, Pocahontas State Park would really benefit from a dock constructed next to the trailer-compatible boat ramp. This would allow putting in and taking out to move much more efficiently (today, I tie off at the floating docks near the rental area and walk back to the ramp). Also, I have found that the parking area designated for the ramp is typically filled by non-boaters (cyclists and hikers who want closer access to the bridge). This makes parking difficult, especially as trailer-sized spots are frequently taken by non-trailer vehicles.

4. Concerning boating access to Virginia waters, it would be helpful to boaters if DGIF or the state of Virginia provided financial assistance to marinas that have boat ramps available for public use, to help them maintain the ramps. Many boaters use marinas rather than state-maintained ramps because they are more convenient to the boater's destination. Many of those ramps, especially around the Chesapeake Bay, are in poor condition, making it difficult to launch and retrieve boats. Many of the marinas seem reluctant to properly maintain their boat ramps. Perhaps some financial incentive from the state would help.

## APPENDIX B: VIRGINIA'S BOATING ACCESS SITE AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE: TECHNICAL REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Virginia owns a statewide system of lands and facilities located on diverse waterbodies from the Chesapeake Bay and tidal rivers to inland freshwater lakes, ponds, and rivers. At the time of this writing, the lands and waters associated with approximately 235 boating access (BA) sites and facilities are held in public trust by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and managed with the goal to provide present and future generations of residents and visitors of this state water-access to enjoy wildlife-based recreation opportunities that are consistent with the ecological and cultural carrying capacity of state waters. On-the-ground practices used to achieve these goals are supported through funds generated from hunting, fishing, and trapping license sales and Federal grant programs, especially those administered by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). These grant programs require DGIF to establish the purpose (e.g., aquatic habitat conservation, provide access for fishing, hunting, and trapping opportunities, water-based wildlife watching) for which the property is to be purchased and establish management intent in perpetuity or until such time that the original purpose for purchase is achieved.

As indicated within Virginia's Boating Access Site and Facility Management Plan, the primary overarching management goal is to provide safe opportunities for Virginia's citizens and visitors to connect with natural resources through wildlife-based recreation (e.g., fishing, hunting, trapping, water-based wildlife viewing) and recreational boating consistent with maintaining and enhancing aquatic habitat and water quality by not exceeding ecological and social carrying capacities. **All other uses and other human activities are secondary and must not conflict with the primary intended use.** The current management practices described below support the agency's overarching management goal as outlined in this plan.

This Technical Report presents the variety of BA site and facility management practices regularly utilized on DGIF-owned and/or cooperatively-managed BA sites and facilities and serve as a reference and guide for DGIF staff in the future. However, it is important to recognize that special circumstances or extreme events may require implementation of special management techniques. For example, extreme weather events (e.g., tornadoes hurricanes, ice storms, flooding) or severe infestations of nonnative or invasive pests (e.g., fire ants) and/or invasive plants (e.g., kudzu) may require a site-specific management plan to address issues caused by these events.

In addition to providing regular maintenance service, BAM staff often interact frequently with the public, and therefore, are the first source of BA-related information. BAMs also spend a portion of their time meeting customer service needs by responding public complaints and other boating and/or fishing related information needs.

Approximately once per month Boating Access Maintenance (BAM) staff visually inspect each BA site to assess maintenance needs to ensure public safety. Note that DGIF managed BA sites and facilities are “launch at your own risk”. There is an inherent risk associated with launching and retrieving boats, and therefore, it is the responsibility of the user to evaluate current conditions for use. The specific BA site and facility management techniques used to maintain a safe access to the Commonwealth’s waters are defined and described using the following format:

- 1) **Definition** – what it is, description of the tool/implement or the specifics of the technique;
- 2) **Application** – how is it used, description of conditions under which it would be used;
- 3) **Management Goal or Desired Outcome** – why it is used, description of the end-product;
- 4) **Implications** – the advantages and/or disadvantages associated with this technique; and,
- 5) **Alternatives** – a list of other techniques that may create similar outcomes.

It is important to recognize that in performing maintenance activities, like any other landowner, DGIF is obligated to procure appropriate permits and approvals before disturbing soils or conducting work on structures. The agency cooperates with other state and federal agencies to ensure compliance with regulations and permitting processes. Individual project leaders and land managers are responsible for determining which permits or reviews may be needed and securing these permits or reviews from the appropriate agency or entity.

## BOATING ACCESS SITE AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE TECHNIQUES

### *Bulldozing or Excavating*

**Definition:** Bulldozing and/or excavating is the use of a bulldozer, front-end loader, track-hoe or similar heavy equipment used to move dirt, soil, debris, and other material.

**Application:** These techniques are used to maintain a safe and unobstructed access to water and the site or facility itself. Excavators are used to armor shorelines, push slabs, excavate soil for constructing boat ramps, and install culverts. Roads and parking lots are constructed and maintained with bulldozers, tractors, and other heavy equipment. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain and enhance boating access to Virginia’s waters.

**Implications:** The operation of heavy equipment is relatively expensive and can also cause soil displacement if Best Management Practices (BMPs) are not implemented.

**Alternatives:** The prime alternative is to replace heavy equipment use with shovels, picks, and other hand tools.

### *Surface Grading*

**Definition:** Surface grading is the use of a tractor with a grade box attachment or similar earth-leveling equipment.

**Application:** This technique is used to level a parking area, road, or boat ramp surface to remove ruts and potholes to prevent soil erosion and run-off into aquatic systems. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain and enhance entrances and parking lots on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** The operation of heavy equipment is relatively expensive and can also cause soil displacement if Best Management Practices (BMPs) are not implemented.

**Alternatives** One alternative is to replace heavy equipment use with shovels, picks, and other hand tools. Another alternative is to pave, concrete, or install semi-permeable pavers the BA site and facility entrances and parking areas; however, the topography of some BA sites and facilities are not amenable to paving or concrete application.

### ***Stone or Gravel Application (entrance and parking)***

**Definition:** Applying and/or transporting stone or gravel to BA sites and facilities requires a dump truck, bulldozer, front-end loader, track-hoe or similar earth-moving equipment to transport and move material on-site.

**Application:** This technique is used to maintain a parking area, road, or boat ramp surface by filling-in ruts and potholes to prevent soil erosion and run-off into aquatic systems. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain and enhance parking lots and unimproved hand-launch boat ramps on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** The operation of heavy equipment is relatively expensive and can also cause soil displacement if Best Management Practices (BMPs) are not implemented.

**Alternatives:** One alternative is to contract third-party delivery of materials and replace heavy equipment use for moving material on-site with shovels, picks, and other hand tools. Another alternative is to pave the BA site and facility entrances and parking areas; however, the topography of some BA sites and facilities are not amenable to paving or concrete application.

### ***Asphalt Application (entrance and parking)***

**Definition:** Applying or transporting asphalt to BA sites and facilities requires a dump truck, bulldozer, front-end loader, track-hoe or similar earth-moving equipment to transport and move material on-site.

**Application:** This technique is used to maintain a parking area, road, or boat ramp surface by filling-in ruts and potholes to prevent soil erosion and run-off into aquatic systems. This practice is applicable statewide; however, the topography of some BA sites does not allow the application of asphalt.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain and enhance parking lots on BA sites and facilities. Use of this maintenance technique is driven, primarily, by costs such as the expense of continuous grading and gravel replacement.

**Implications:** The operation of heavy equipment is relatively expensive and can also cause soil displacement if Best Management Practices (BMPs) are not implemented.

**Alternatives:** One alternative is to contract third-party delivery of materials and replace heavy equipment use for moving material on-site with shovels, picks, and other hand tools. Another alternative is to *not* pave the BA site and facility entrances and parking areas; however, the topography of some BA sites and facilities are not amenable to using stone or gravel surfaces. Another alternative is to pave, concrete, or install semi-permeable pavers

### ***Mowing or Brush Hogging***

**Definition:** Mowing and/or brush hogging is the use of a grass mower (e.g., push and ride/zero-turn) or a tractor with a PTO-driven brush-hog attachment.

**Application:** This technique is used to manage the growth of undesired vegetation. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain safety and enhance our constituents experience on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** On BA sites and facilities with grassy parking areas and/or gravel and paved parking areas ringed by vegetation, not controlling plant growth may create a fire safety issue for vehicles due to hot mufflers on long, dry grasses. Excessive vegetation may attract natural populations of ticks, snakes, and other wildlife, which may present a health safety issue. Excessive vegetation may prevent shoreline anglers, crabbers, and/or clammers from accessing the water.

**Alternatives:** The primary alternative is to pave the parking area; however, the topography of some BA sites and facilities are not amenable to paving. A secondary alternative is to not mow or mow less frequently. Another alternative is herbicide application.

### ***Weed-Eating***

**Definition:** Weed-eating is the use of a hand-held weed-eater/trimmer.

**Application:** This technique is used to manage the growth of undesired vegetation. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain safety and enhance our constituents experience on BA sites and facilities.

Implications: On BA sites and facilities with grassy parking areas and/or gravel and paved parking areas ringed by vegetation, not controlling plant growth may create a fire safety issue for vehicles due to hot mufflers on long, dry grasses. Excessive vegetation may attract natural populations of ticks, snakes, and other wildlife, which may present a health safety issue. Excessive vegetation may prevent shoreline anglers, crabbers, and/or clammers from accessing the water.

Alternatives: The primary alternative is herbicide application. A secondary alternative is to not weed-eat or do it less frequently.

### ***Tree and Shrub Trimming and Removal***

Definition: Tree and shrub trimming is the use of a hand-held lopper, pole saw, and/or chain saw to remove undesired wood vegetation.

Application: This technique is used to manage the growth of undesired woody vegetation. This practice is applicable statewide.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: The goal of this application is to maintain safety and enhance our constituents experience on BA sites and facilities. Maintain adequate line of sight for law enforcement.

Implications: Manage height clearance for launching and retrieving boats, minimize parking hazards, and to keep boat ramp accessible. Aging woody vegetation may present an overhead safety hazard. Excessive vegetation may attract natural populations of ticks, snakes, and other wildlife, which may present a health safety issue. Excessive vegetation may prevent shoreline anglers, crabbers, and/or clammers from accessing the water.

Alternatives: None.

### ***Herbicide Application***

Definition: Application of herbicides controls undesirable vegetation (e.g., woody vegetation and phragmites) to promote desirable habitat enhancements and aesthetics.

Application: Herbicides can be applied to control undesirable vegetation and to create conditions favorable for desired vegetation and conditions. The application of herbicides to control vegetation is applicable statewide.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: Regular use of herbicides can reduce the need for mowing or other mechanical applications to manipulate vegetation.

Implications: Use of herbicides is often confused with the use of insecticides, which are generally considered more toxic to humans and therefore less desirable. Modern herbicides are safe and effective, can be expensive to purchase but are generally inexpensive in effect due to the reduced use of machinery and staff. Unintended application to desired vegetation cannot be

reversed and often must be applied more than once to achieve the desired effect. A pesticide applicators license is required by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to purchase and apply herbicides.

Alternatives: Mechanical control of vegetation (e.g., mow, weed-eat) and/or none.

### ***Mud Removal***

Definition: Mud removal requires the use of a bulldozer, front-end loader, track-hoe or similar earth-moving equipment.

Application: This technique is used to ensure safe access to BA sites and facilities after significant weather events. This practice is applicable statewide.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access on BA sites and facilities after inclement weather.

Implications: The operation of heavy equipment is relatively expensive and can also cause soil displacement if Best Management Practices (BMPs) are not implemented. Not removing mud prevent users from accessing a BA site or facility for their intended activity.

Alternatives: None.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND WATER-ACCESS MAINTENANCE TECHNIQUES**

### ***Boat Dock or Fishing Pier Construction, Maintenance, and Repair (Fixed-Height)***

Definition: Fixed-height boat docks or fishing pier construction and repair requires pressure treated lumber or synthetic lumber (e.g., AZEK, TREX, plastic composite).

Application: This technique is used to construct and repair fixed-height boat docks and fishing piers. This practice is applicable statewide; however, water type and cost-benefit analyses on a site by site basis dictates use of synthetic wood material (e.g., saltwater).

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

Implications: Not constructing or repairing fixed-height docks with the appropriate materials leads to deterioration that creates a safety issue for BA site and facility users. Additionally, depending on the aquatic environment (e.g., freshwater versus saltwater) some materials may weather those environments better. For instance, while pressure treated wood is more cost-effective it may require replacement sooner in saltwater environments.

Alternatives: None.

### ***Boat Dock or Fishing Pier Construction, Maintenance, and Repair (Floating-Height)***

**Definition:** Floating-height boat docks or fishing pier construction and repair requires aluminum materials, pressure treated lumber or synthetic lumber (e.g., AZEK, TREX, plastic composite).

**Application:** This technique is used to construct and repair floating-height boat docks and fishing piers. This practice is applicable statewide. This practice is applicable statewide; however, water type and cost-benefit analyses on a site by site basis dictates use of synthetic wood material (e.g., saltwater).

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** Not constructing or repairing floating-height docks with the appropriate materials leads to deterioration that creates a safety issue for BA site and facility users. Additionally, depending on the aquatic environment (e.g., freshwater versus saltwater) some materials may weather those environments better. For instance, while pressure treated wood is more cost-effective it may require replacement sooner in saltwater environments.

**Alternatives:** None.

### ***Trailer Boat Ramp Construction, Maintenance, and Repair***

**Definition:** Boat ramp materials used to construct and/or repair trailer boat ramps are concrete (e.g., poured, pre-formed slabs, articulated concrete block) or compacted gravel substrate that extends into the water to facilitate the launching or retrieving of motorized and trailer boats.

**Application:** This technique is used to reduce soil erosion and provide safe water access on BA sites and facilities for trailer boats. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** Not constructing a boat ramp designed for trailer boats results in potentially unsafe access.

**Alternatives:** Unimproved boat access only.

### ***Hand-Carry Boat Ramp Construction, Maintenance, and Repair***

**Definition:** Boat ramp materials used to construct and/or repair hand-carry boat ramps are concrete (e.g., poured, pre-formed slabs, articulated concrete block), compacted gravel substrate, and/or dirt that extends into the water to facilitate the launching or retrieving of small motorized (e.g., John boat) and hand-carry boats.

**Application:** This technique is used to reduce soil erosion and provide safe water access on BA sites and facilities. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** Non-permanent, may be safety issue, hard to clean, potential for getting stuck.

**Alternatives:** Use boat ramps designed for trailered boats.

### ***Parking Lot Construction, Maintenance, and Repair***

**Definition:** Materials used to construct and/or repair parking lots are grass/dirt, compacted gravel substrate, concrete slabs, and/or asphalt.

**Application:** This technique is used to reduce soil erosion and provide safe water access on BA sites and facilities. This practice is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to provide and maintain safe parking for water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

**Implications:** There aren't any alternatives to not having a parking area. Shuttle bus?

**Alternatives:** None.

## **SHORELINE STABILIZATION AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

### ***Shoreline Stabilization: Hardening***

**Definition:** Hardening a shoreline or bank requires installing rip-rap, gabion stone, and/or articulated concrete block.

**Application:** Using a tractor or excavator, rip-rap or other hard structure is placed along the shoreline or bank. Hand placement of materials is sometimes used.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to stabilize shorelines and banks to prevent soil erosion; thus, maintaining water and aquatic habitat quality.

**Implications:** Not using hard or rock-like materials to stabilize shorelines or banks may lead to soil erosion, which compromises water quality and aquatic habitat. Soil erosion that is not managed may also present a safety issues such as shoreline anglers could slip and fall into the water.

**Alternatives:** The prime alternative to hardening shorelines and banks is planting trees and shrubs.

### ***Shoreline Stabilization: Planting Trees and Shrubs***

**Definition:** Planting trees and shrubs is defined as planting seedlings in a defined area to establish a specific woody or shrubby vegetative cover.

**Application:** Tree and shrub planting occurs on BA sites where an enhanced diversity of tree and shrub species is desired. This process is applicable statewide.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** The goal of this application is to plant trees and shrubs to maintain and enhance water quality and aquatic habitats. Planting tree seedlings and shrubs will eventually provide shade for shoreline anglers, course organic material for aquatic habitats, and help lower water temperatures, which in turn, increases dissolved oxygen in certain water bodies (e.g., freshwater streams, rivers, and small fishing lakes).

**Implications:** Planting trees and shrubs is relatively labor-intensive and expensive. Site preparation and maintenance with herbicide is required to reduce competition and promote planting success. Tree shelters and ground-cover mats are sometimes used to reduce browsing and competition, but such processes are expensive and prone to failure.

**Alternatives:** The prime alternative to planting trees and shrubs is to allow the area to regenerate naturally from existing tree seeds and sprouts. Tree species composition and competition is often managed through herbicide applications.

## **OTHER MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***Signage***

**Definition:** Post signs to notify all BA site and facility users, as well as visitors, the intended purpose of the water-access and allowable land-based uses.

**Application:** All signage is constructed of durable material, secured to posts sunk into the ground, and placed in an area viable to all users and visitors.

**Management Goal or Desired Outcome:** To clearly communicate allowable uses at each BA site and facility.

**Implications:** People not being able to find the ramp and not understanding permitted uses.

**Alternatives:** None.

### ***Site and Facility Cleanliness***

**Definition:** When present at BA sites and facilities, staff will remove miscellaneous refuse (e.g., public litter, items washed ashore during storms/floods, used fishing line).

Application: The agency does not provide trash receptacles nor regular trash removal service. The BA site and facility cleanliness checks occur in conjunction with regular maintenance checks.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: The goal of this application is to maintain safe water access and enhance the users experience on BA sites and facilities.

Implications: Unhealthy and unsafe conditions for the public, which may result in decline of user satisfaction and experience on BA sites and facilities.

Alternatives: Collaborate with the public and boating groups (e.g., other municipalities, advocacy groups, community service needs, etc.) to provide free trash pick-up and general site cleaning. Develop a program such as “Adopt-A-Ramp” to provide this service.

### ***Maintenance Sub-Contractor Administration***

Definition: Overseeing of sub-contractors for maintenance needs at boating access sites and facilities.

Application: Grass Mowing, trash pick-up, port-a-John service, and/or dock and ramp repairs.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: Supplement the allocation of financial and staff resources.

Implications: May be costly, get varying degrees of service, and additional staff time not used for on-site maintenance and management.

Alternatives: Hire additional wage positions and/or other DGIF staff. Not use contractors for BA site maintenance.

### ***Cooperative Maintenance Agreement Administration***

Definition: Ensure compliance of cooperative agreement by grantee and takes action if necessary to enforce contractual obligations.

Application: Through in-person site checks, staff ensures that grantee is adhering to terms of agreement with DGIF.

Management Goal or Desired Outcome: Ensures oversight that grantee complies with cooperative agreement and funding requirements or restrictions.

Implications: Loss of site, loss of funds, grantee may have to pay back funds. Partner or other entity controls BA site with no DGIF involvement, which may result in loss of access site and cannot maintain DGIF’s high safety standards.

Alternatives: Do not enter into cooperative maintenance agreements or exercise ownership control through the “Boating Access Separation Document.”

## APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS AS CURRENTLY DEFINED

### Boat/Vessel Types:

- **Virginia Code Title 29.1-700:**
  - **"Motorboat"** means any vessel propelled by machinery whether or not the machinery is the principal source of propulsion.
  - **"No wake"** means operation of a motorboat at the slowest possible speed required to maintain steerage and headway.
  - **"Operate"** means to navigate or otherwise control the movement of a motorboat or a vessel.
  - **"Owner"** means a person, other than a lien holder, having the property in or title to a motorboat. The term includes a person entitled to the use or possession of a motorboat subject to an interest in another person, reserved or created by agreement and securing payment of performance of an obligation, but the term excludes a lessee under a lease not intended as security.
  - **"Personal watercraft"** means a motorboat less than sixteen feet in length which uses an inboard motor powering a jet pump, as its primary motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside, the vessel.
  - **"Vessel"** means every description of watercraft, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.
  - **"Waters of the Commonwealth"** means any public waters within the territorial limits of the Commonwealth, the adjacent marginal sea and the high seas when navigated as a part of a journey or ride to or from the Virginia shore.
- **Non-Powered:** boats that are non-motorized and do not require registration in Virginia. Examples include, stand-up paddle boards, canoes, kayaks, and inflatable vessels that float on a navigable waterway and are steerable.

### Water Types:

- **Lakes and reservoirs:** Bodies of fresh water surrounded by land and are large enough to accommodate the largest of freshwater boats.
- **Ponds:** bodies of fresh water surrounded by land and are restricted to the size of boats they can accommodate.
- **Public Fishing Lakes:** Manmade reservoirs of fresh water which are owned by DGIF and built with fishing license dollars. These boating access sites are managed for the exclusive purpose of recreational fishing.
- **Inland Rivers (non-tidal):** bodies of freshwater vary from shallow and narrow flowing water that are restricted to paddle-sports, to very deep and wide bodies of flowing or tidal waters that can accommodate the largest boats.
- **Tidal Rivers:** Rivers, Bays and Oceans can be Tidal. Rivers change to non-tidal waters at the "fall-line". This is the point where the rivers start to become restrictive for use. These waters can be either salt-water, Fresh-water or Brackish.

- **Bays:** In Virginia are typically salt-water and tidal rivers that can accommodate the larger boats.
- **Ocean or Marine:** Salt-water and tidal and can accommodate the largest of water vessels.

**Allowable BA Site and Facility Uses:**

- Water-based activities defined through agency policy and in accordance with funding mechanisms and restrictions.

**Non-Allowable BA Site and Facility Uses:**

- All activities out of compliance according to agency policy and associated funding restrictions.