

## **AGENDA**

Board of Wildlife Resources  
7870 Villa Park Drive  
Henrico, Virginia 23228

January 22, 2026  
9:00 am

Call to Order and Welcome –

1. Recognition of Employees and Others
2. Approval of the October 23, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
3. Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items
4. Committee Meeting Reports:

**Final Action**

### **Wildlife and Boat Committee:**

- Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits Proposals
- Smallmouth Bass Management Plan

**Action**

**Final Action**

### **Finance, Audit & Compliance Committee:**

### **Law Enforcement Committee:**

### **Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee:**

- Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and Committee Charter Updates  
Mr. Aaron Proctor

**Final Action**

5. Director's Report
6. Chairman's Report
7. Additional Business/Comments
8. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, March 19, 2026
9. Closed Session
10. Adjournment

## Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Board of Wildlife Resources  
7870 Villa Park Drive  
Henrico, VA 23228

October 23, 2025  
9:00 am

**Present:** Mr. George Terwilliger, **Chair**; Mr. Michael Formica, **Vice Chair** (Virtual); **Board Members:** Mr. Lynwood Broadus, Mr. Will Wampler, Mr. Jon Cooper, Mr. James Edmunds, Mr. Parker Slaybaugh, Ms. Marlee Dance, Ms. Laura Walters, Mr. Woody Woodall, Mr. James Maclin; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan J. Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Darin Moore; **Director's Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Mr. Bob Smet, Mr. George Braxton, Mr. Michael Lipford, Ms. Stacey Brown, Ms. Rebecca Lane, Ms. Shelby Crouch, Mr. Paul Kugelman

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair noted for the record that a quorum was present.

The Chair called on Ms. Walters to read the Mission Statement.

The Chair led the Pledge to the Flag.

Ms. Kelci Block, Assistant Attorney General attended the Board meeting.

**Recognition of Employees and Others:** The Chair called on Mr. Ryan Brown for recognitions.

Director Brown called on Dr. Michael Bednarski to present the Biologist of the Year award to Mr. Jason Hallacher.

Director Brown called on Mr. Michael Lipford to present the Biologist of the Year award to Mr. Jordan Green.

Director Brown recognized past Board Member Mr. Brian Vincent and presented him with his Board Service award.

### **Approval of the August 21, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes:**

The minutes of the August 21, 2025, Board meeting minutes have been distributed and posted to website for review. The Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Edmunds made a motion to approve the August 21, 2025, Board Meeting minutes. It was seconded by Ms. Walters. Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, (virtual) Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

**Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items:** The Chair called for speakers on Non-Agenda Items.

- Mr. James Medeiros spoke regarding the hound hunting
- Mr. Gary Kimberlin spoke regarding hound hunting
- Ms. Amanda Savignano spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Lee McLaughlin spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Greg Austin spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Judge Charlton spoke regarding hound hunting (v)

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Wildlife and Boat Committee:**

The Chair called on Mr. Jon Cooper for an update of the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

Mr. Cooper gave a report on the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting from October 22, 2025.

- Turkey Regulation Proposal – Mr. Cooper gave the Turkey Regulation Proposal.

Mr. Cooper made a motion; I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the amendment to the wild turkey bag limit regulation as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

- Blue Catfish Regulation Proposal - Mr. Cooper gave the Blue Catfish Regulation Proposal

Speakers:

Mr. Brent Hunsinger spoke regarding Blue Catfish Regulation  
Mr. Tom Dunlap spoke regarding Blue Catfish Regulation (v)

Mr. Cooper made a motion, I move that the Board of Department of Wildlife Resources adopt staff's regulatory recommendations on Blue Catfish. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

- Regulatory Reform Proposals - Mr. Cooper gave the Regulatory Reform Proposals.

Mr. Cooper made a motion. I move that the Board of Department of Wildlife Resources adopt the staff recommendations to meet the Agency's goal of 25% regulatory reduction per Executive Order 19, It was seconded by Mr. Broaddus and Mr. Woodall.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Mr. Cooper presented the Black Bear Mange Management Plan and Response Protocol.

- Mr. Taylor Cuevas spoke regarding bears

Mr. Cooper made a motion. I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources Adopt the 2025-2029 Black Bear Mange Management Plan as presented by staff. It was seconded by Ms. Walters.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Mr. Cooper reported Ms. Amy Martin reported on Virginia Sea Turtle & Marine Mammal Conservation Plan, and Mr. Cale Godfrey reported on VPA-HIP Program Accomplishments. Division reports from Dr. Mike Bednarski, Fish Division, Mr. Michael Lipford, Wildlife Division, Ms. Stacey Brown, Boating Division, Ms. Amy Martin, Non-Game Program Update.

The Chair thanked Mr. Cooper for his report of the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

### **Finance, Audit, & Compliance Committee Report:**

The Chair called on Mr. Woody Woodall for an update on the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting from October 22, 2025.

Mr. Woodall gave an update on the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee meeting of October 22, 2025, that covered the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter FY26 Financial Report. Mr. Tim Springer, the new Budget Manager was introduced who spoke on the Federal Government shutdown and how it is affecting our agency at this time. The Chair thanked Mr. Woodall for his report of the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

### **Law Enforcement Committee Report:**

The Chair called on Mr. Will Wampler for an update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

Mr. Wampler gave an update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

Mr. Wampler reported on:

- VLEPSC First Re-Accreditation
- Operation Midnight Express (OME) Summary
- Recruitment for the 15<sup>th</sup> Basic Academy update
- W3 Natural Resources Training Academy
- NAWLEA (North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation) update

The Chair thanked Mr. Wampler for his update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

### **Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee Report:**

The Chair called on Ms. Laura Walters for an update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

Ms. Walters gave an update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee Report of October 22, 2025.

Ms. Walters reported on:

- Inclusive Excellence Report for 2025
- Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and Committee Charter Reviews
- DWR Archery LIVE
- State Fair and Outdoors Expo Events
- VACo Meeting to attend
  
- Ms. Walters had 1 Action Item – Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and Committee Charter Reviews

Ms. Walter made a motion to approve staff recommendations for the Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and five Committee Charter Reviews. It was seconded by Mr. Wampler and Mr. Parker. Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

The Chair thanked Ms. Walters for her update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting of October 22, 2025.

**Director's Report:** The Chair called on Director Ryan Brown for his report.

- Thanked the Board for a good and productive Board meeting
- Recognized and thanked Mr. Brian Vincent for attending today

**Chairman's Report:** The Chair, thanked the public who attended and welcomed their remarks. The Chair thanked DWR staff for all work they put in to make DWR a better place.

**Additional Business/Comments:** The Chair asked if any additional business or comments.

Mr. Edmunds, commented on wanting to see a report on the number of hunters and how many different exemptions we have and comparing with our federal funding match.

**Next Meeting Date:** The Chair announced that the next meeting date will be Thursday, January 22, 2026.

**Closed Session:** The Chair announced the Board would go into Close Session at 11:15 am.

Mr. Edmunds read the Close Session Motion; it was seconded by Mr. Wampler.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica (v), Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Closed Meeting Motion, October 23, 2025

Mr. Chairman,

I move that the Board go into a closed meeting:

*Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia for discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Department of Wildlife Resources, specifically regarding the performance of the Director.*

*This closed meeting will be attended only by members of the Board. However, pursuant to Section 2.2-3712(F), the Board requests the Department Director to also attend this meeting, as it believes his presence will reasonably aid the Board in its consideration of topics that are the subject of the meeting.*

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 1:20 pm

The Chair called on Mr. Edmunds to read the Certification of Closed Meeting. It was seconded by Ms. Walters.

*Certification of Closed Meeting*

*October 23, 2025*

*WHEREAS, the Board of Wildlife Resources conducted a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom Information Act; and*

*WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;*



*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Wildlife Resources hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Board.*

The Board Secretary took a roll call vote: Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus

Mr. Wampler had departed.

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments, hearing none, he adjourned the Board meeting at 1:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
/s/ Frances Boswell

# **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

**2026-27**

## **MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**



**Prepared by Wildlife Division  
January 2026**

## **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

### **PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2026-27 MIGRATORY GAMEBIRD SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS**

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Page**

---

Dove Background Information.....	3
Dove Federal Framework and Staff Recommendation.....	4
Rail Background Information.....	5
Rail and Gallinule Frameworks and Staff Recommendations .....	6
Woodcock Background Information.....	7
Woodcock Federal Framework and Staff Recommendation .....	8
Snipe Background Information.....	9
Snipe Federal Framework and Staff Recommendation.....	10
September Teal Facts .....	11
September Teal Federal Framework and Staff Recommendation.....	12
Fact Sheet – Waterfowl Hunters and Harvest.....	13
Fact Sheet – Status of Ducks .....	14
Youth and Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days.....	15
Duck Season.....	16
Merganser and Coot.....	17
Fact Sheet – Status of Resident Canada Geese.....	18
September Canada Goose Season Canada Geese .....	19
Fact Sheet – Status of Migrant Canada Geese .....	20
Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones .....	21
Canada Goose Seasons .....	22
Fact Sheet – Status of Light Geese .....	23
Light Goose Season .....	24
Light Goose Conservation Order Season .....	25
Fact Sheet – Status of Atlantic Brant &Tundra Swan .....	26
Atlantic Brant Season .....	27
Tundra Swan Season .....	28
Falconry .....	29

# Doves

## Mourning Dove Background Information and Population Status

There are three dove management units (or flyways) across the country, including the Eastern (EMU), Central (CMU) and Western (WMU) Management Units. Virginia is in the EMU.

- Population trends in the EMU:
  - 10-yr (2016-2025): Stabilized population trend.
  - Long term (1966-2025): Historically declining population trend.
- Dove Banding Project – Annual program since 2003 to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data used to provide estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates, and is the main monitoring program used to develop annual hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: Revised Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allows for a standard dove hunting season of 90 days with a bag limit of 15 birds/day when appropriate.
- Data from HIP (past 3-yr avg.): Hunters = 19,160    Harvest = 247,462

## Recent Seasons

Year	Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)		
2025-2026	Sept. 1 – Oct. 19	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 19
2024-2025	Sept. 2 – Oct. 20	Nov. 23 – Dec. 01	Dec. 20 – Jan. 20
2023-2024	Sept. 2 – Oct. 22	Nov. 18 – Nov. 26	Dec. 22 – Jan. 20
2022-2023	Sept. 3 – Oct. 23	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 23 – Jan. 21
2021-2022	Sept. 4 – Oct. 27	Nov. 20 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 17
2020-2021	Sept. 5 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 19
2019-2020	Sept. 2 – Oct. 27	Nov. 27 – Dec. 4	Dec. 24 – Jan. 18
2018-2019	Sept. 1 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 14
2017-2018	Sept. 2 – Oct. 29	Nov. 22 – Nov. 29	Dec. 23 – Jan. 15
2016-2017	Sept. 3 – Oct. 30	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2015-2016	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2014-2015	Sept. 1 – Oct. 31	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 15
2013-2014	Sept. 2 – Oct. 14	Oct. 19 – Nov. 2	Dec. 31 – Jan. 11
2012-2013	Sept. 1 – Oct. 13	Oct. 17 – Oct. 27	Dec. 28 – Jan. 12
2011-2012	Sept. 3 – Oct. 10	Oct. 25 – Nov. 5	Dec. 26 - Jan. 14
2010-2011	Sept. 4 – Oct. 11	Oct. 20 – Nov. 6	Dec. 27 – Jan. 8
2009-2010	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 7 – Nov. 7	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
2008-2009	Sept. 1 - 27	Oct. 4 – Oct. 31	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10
2007-2008	Sept. 1 – 29	Oct. 5 – Oct 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 12
2006-2007	Sept. 2 – 23	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2005-2006	Sept. 3 – 24	Oct. 8 – Nov. 5	Dec. 27 – Jan. 14
2004-2005	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 9 – Nov. 6	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2003-2004	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 8 – Nov. 8	Dec. 31 – Jan. 10
2002-2003	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 9 – Nov. 9	Jan. 1 – Jan. 11
2001-2002	Sept. 1 - 29	Oct 13 – Nov. 10	Dec. 29 – Jan. 9

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## DOVE

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027  
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

**SEASON LENGTH:** Not more than 90 days.

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

**SHOOTING HOURS:** Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

<b><u>SEASON DATES:</u></b>	September 5 - October 23	(49 days)
	November 21 - November 29	( 9 days)
	December 19 - January 18	(32 days)

<b><u>SHOOTING HOURS:</u></b>	September 1	Noon until sunset
	September 2 – October 23	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
	November 21 – November 29	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
	December 19 - January 18	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

# **Rails**

## **Background Information and Population Status**

- **Harvest** – Comprised predominantly of clapper rails (85%), some sora (14%), and small number of Virginia rails taken. Clappers are mostly local VA birds, some are migrants from NY, NJ, and other coastal states.
- **Nesting** - Clapper rails nest from May through June, with re-nesting in July/August. Late nesting rails have broods that do not reach flight stage until August or September. This occurs in years when 1<sup>st</sup> nests are flooded by spring storms/tides and re-nests contribute significantly to production. Therefore, we generally wait until the second week of September to open the hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 290, Avg. Harvest = 3,300 (HIP, past 5-yr avg.)

## **Past Seasons**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
2025	Sept. 6 – Oct. 25	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30
2024	Sept. 14 – Nov. 3	Nov. 13 – Dec. 1
2023	Sept. 11 – Nov. 5	Nov. 13 – Nov. 26
2022	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2021	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2020	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2019	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2018	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2017	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2016	Sept. 10 - Nov. 18	
2015	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2014	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2013	Sept. 7 - 28	Sept. 30 – Nov. 16
2012	Sept. 8 – 29	Oct. 1 – Nov. 17
2011	Sept. 10 – Oct. 1	Oct. 3 – Nov. 19
2010	Sept. 8 – Oct. 2	Oct. 4 – Nov. 17
2009	Sept. 8 – Oct. 3	Oct. 5 – Nov. 17
2008	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2007	Sept. 10 – Nov. 17	
2006	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2005	Sept. 12 – Nov. 19	
2004	Sept. 13 – Nov. 20	
2003	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2002	Sept. 9 - Nov. 16	
2001	Sept. 11 – Nov. 19	
2000	Sept. 13 – Oct. 2	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29

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## **RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia) & Gallinules (Common, Purple)**

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

**SEASON LENGTH:** 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

**DAILY BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King - 15, in aggregate.  
Sora/Virginia - 25, in aggregate.  
Gallinules - 15, in aggregate.

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 5 – October 24 (50 days)  
November 10 – November 29 (20 days)

**DAILY BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King: **10** - in aggregate, only 1 can be a King Rail.  
Sora/Virginia: 25 - in aggregate.  
Gallinules: 15 - in aggregate.

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

**NOTES:** - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.  
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail, Snipe and Gallinule hunting in Virginia.

# Woodcock

## Background Information and Population Status

- Harvest Strategy includes 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the call count survey. For 2026-27, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulations (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region from most recent survey:
  - 1 year trend (2024-2025): 0.72% decrease
  - 10 year trend (2015-2025): 0.05% decline per year.
  - Long-term (1968-2025): 0.74% decline per year.
- The 2024 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.14 jv/ad female) was 25% less than the 2023 index and 29.5% lower than the long-term index.
- Research suggests that habitat loss is the major factor of the long-term population decline.
- Virginia participated in a Flyway-wide study of woodcock movements and habitat use for the past several years. GPS transmitters are tracking woodcock migration routes and chronology, and this data is being used to better inform woodcock management strategies and hunting seasons.
- Federal regulations prohibit zones for woodcock hunting, however, we are permitted to split the season into two segments. In Virginia, this allows us to provide both early and late opportunities for hunters across the state.

### Recent Seasons (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
2025-2026	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 26 – Jan. 19	45
2024-2025	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 20	45
2023-2024	Nov. 10 – Nov. 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 21	45
2022-2023	Nov. 11 – Dec. 3	Dec. 27 – Jan. 17	45
2021-2022	Nov. 11 – Dec. 8	Dec. 27 – Jan. 12	45
2020-2021	Nov. 7 – Nov. 30	Dec. 24 – Jan. 13	45
2019-2020	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2018-2019	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 8 – Jan. 14	45
2017-2018	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2016-2017	Oct. 29 – Nov. 4	Dec. 9 – Jan. 15	45
2015-2016	Nov. 23 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2014-2015	Nov. 24 – Dec. 6	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2013-2014	Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Dec. 5 – Jan. 11	45
2012-2013	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 6 – Jan. 12	45
2011-2012	Oct. 29 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Jan. 14	45
2010-2011	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10	30
2009-2010	Nov. 7 – 21	Dec. 26 – Jan. 9	30
2008-2009	Nov. 8 – 22	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2007-2008	Oct. 27 – Nov. 10	Dec. 22 – Jan. 5	30
2006-2007	Nov. 4 – 18	Dec. 23 – Jan. 6	30
2005-2006	Nov. 12 – 26	Dec. 17 – Dec. 31	30

Avg. No. hunters = 3,200. Avg. Harvest = 5,500 (Estimates for 2024-2025 Season.)



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# WOODCOCK

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

OUTSIDE DATES: September 13, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until  
sunset daily.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

SEASON DATES: November 10 – November 30 (21 days)  
December 24 – January 18 (24 days)

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

# **Snipe**

## **Background Information**

- Season generally set to overlap duck season. There are relatively few snipe hunters in VA and most snipe are taken opportunistically by other migratory bird hunters.
- Harvest Data (HIP, past 5-yr avg.): No. hunters = 225, Harvest = 550

## **Recent Seasons**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
2025-2026	Sept. 29 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2024-2025	Sept. 30 – Dec. 1	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2023-2024	Sept. 25 – Nov. 26	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2022-2023	Sept. 26 – Nov. 27	Dec. 17 – Jan. 29
2021-2022	Oct. 8 – Oct. 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2020-2021	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2019-2020	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2018-2019	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2017-2018	Oct. 6 – Oct. 9	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2016-2017	Oct. 7 – Oct. 10	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2015-2016	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2014-2015	Oct. 10 – Oct. 13	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2013-2014	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2012-2013	Oct. 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2011-2012	Oct. 6 – Oct. 10	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2010-2011	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2009-2010	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 30
2008-2009	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13	Oct. 22 – Jan.31
2007-2008	Oct 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2006-2007	Oct 4 – Oct. 9	Oct. 23 – Jan. 31
2005-2006	Oct 5 – Oct.10	Oct. 24 – Jan. 31
2004-2005	Oct 7 – Oct 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2003-2004	Oct. 8 – Oct 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2002-2003	Oct 9 – Oct 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2001-2002	Oct. 10 - Oct. 13	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2000-2001	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1999-2000	Oct. 6 - Oct. 9	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1998-1999	Oct. 7 - Oct. 10	Oct. 20 - Jan. 30
1997-1998	Oct. 8 - Oct. 11	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1996-1997	Oct. 9 - Oct. 12	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1995-1996	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31

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# SNIFE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

SEASON DATES: September 28 – November 29 (63 days)  
December 19 – January 31 (44 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

# SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2026

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered. The blue-winged teal BPOP estimate for 2025 is 4.4 million which corresponds to a 9-day teal season for the 2026-2027 hunting season.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>
	<u>East of I-95</u>	<u>West of I-95</u>
2025	Sept. 20 – 28	Sept. 23 - 28
2024	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2023	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2022	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2021	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2020	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2019	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na

Average Annual Harvest: 600 teal

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## SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 30, 2026

SEASON LENGTH: Up to 9 days

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

SEASON DATES: September 19 – September 27  
HUNT AREA: East of I – 95

September 22 – September 27  
HUNT AREA: West of I – 95

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

## **FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests – 2026**

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- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6 bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~151,993 ducks and ~41,855 Canada geese from 2022-2024, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 16,800 and 10,555 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2024-2025 season were colder for most of the season but puddle duck harvest was lower than the previous year. Buffleheads were the most harvested duck in Virginia, followed by mallards, green-winged teal, black ducks and gadwall.

## FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2026

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- Waterfowl harvest in the Atlantic flyway is managed by the stocks of four different species of eastern waterfowl populations (wood ducks, American green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and goldeneyes). In 2025 estimated breeding population size for wood ducks was 0.95 million (SE = 0.12 million), 0.34 million (SE = 0.08 million) for American green-winged teal, 0.76 million (SE = 0.18 million) for ring-necked ducks and 0.72 million (SE = 0.24 million) for goldeneyes.
- The total 2025 mid-continent mallard breeding population is predicted to be 6.56 million (SE = 0.26 million)

**Virginia:** Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2025 were average with slightly drier conditions towards the end of the breeding season that could have potentially impacted brood rearing habitat.

- The 2025 Virginia breeding pair estimate for mallards (15,100) was lower than last year (21,033). Estimated black duck pairs (64) decreased from last year (629). The number of Wood duck pairs (6,245) was lower than last year (9,259). The breeding pair estimate for Canada geese (25,230) was also lower than the 2023 estimate (44,516).

### **Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway**

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, mallard numbers in the Northeastern U.S. declined about 40% from the late 1990's through around 2019. About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states, and around 80% of those harvested in Virginia, are derived from the Northeastern U.S. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada were stable or slightly increasing during this same time period, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America had declined. This decline prompted waterfowl managers to enact harvest restriction on mallards in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019. The bag limit was reduced from 4 to 2 mallards daily, with a limit of 1 hen mallard. Those restrictions were in place for the past 4 hunting seasons.

Since 2019, Eastern Mallard numbers have increase 15%. In addition, a new Eastern Mallard Harvest Strategy and Population Model was developed based on recent population dynamics. This Strategy was put in place for 2023-2024 hunting season regulation process, and allows for a return to a 4-mallard bag limit (2 hens). Projections from the new harvest strategy indicate that under current conditions, Atlantic Flyway regulations should allow for a liberal mallard bag limit (4 mallards total, only 2 hens) around 80% of the time.

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## YOUTH and VETERANS WATERFOWL DAYS

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### Guidelines for the Youth Days and Veterans Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons. States may also select 2 days per duck-hunting zone designated as "Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days" in addition to their regular duck seasons. The Youth and Veterans days could be combined and held on the same day or could be held separately.
2. Youth Days must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. Youth and Veterans Days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the hunter possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany youth hunters into the field. This adult may not duck hunt but may participate in other open seasons.
6. Those allowed to participate in the special **Veterans Days** include Veterans (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than for training).



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## DUCKS

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

**Outside Dates:** September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunt Days.

**Bag Limits:** **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**  
Can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasbacks, scaup: 1/day for 40 days and 2/day for 20 days, 2 redheads, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin duck. Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

**Split Season Options:** 3-way split season, no zones

**Shooting Hours:** 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Day

**Season Dates:** October 9 - 12 (Black Duck closed) (4 Days)  
November 18 – November 29 (12 Days)  
December 19 – January 31 (44 Days)  
October 24, February 6 – Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Days

**Bag Limit:** **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:** can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 11–14), 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, scaup: 1/day from October 9-12, November 18-November 29, December 19 - January 11, and 2/day from January 12-31. Sea Ducks: 4 total sea ducks to include no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks. Closed season on harlequin ducks. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

**Shooting Hours:** 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

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## MERGANSER AND COOT

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### MERGANSER

#### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

##### Option A

<u>Season Length:</u>	60 hunting days.
<u>Outside Date:</u>	September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027.
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds daily. 15 in possession.

##### Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Option A

<u>Season Dates:</u>	To coincide with general duck season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds daily, 15 in possession.

### AMERICAN COOT

#### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	60 hunting days
<u>Outside Date:</u>	September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	15 birds daily (45 in possession)

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	To coincide with general duck season.
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	15 daily (45 in possession)

## **FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2026**

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 260,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 158,605 (+/- 25%) in Virginia and over 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portion of Virginia, and special "Goose Hunting Zones" have been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with a greater percentage of resident geese.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet our statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including special Depredation Orders for Airports, Agricultural areas, and Nest and Egg removal have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population Estimate *</b>	<b>September Harvest</b>
2024	143,529 +/- 29%	n/a
2023	161,747 +/- 24%	n/a
2022	170,540 +/-26%	3,300
2021	177,056 +/-29%	6,300
2020	163,198 +/- 24%	13,000
2019	125,966 +/-20%	6,300
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	5,600
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	900
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400

\*3-year running average

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# SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2025

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options \*)

\* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when **no other** waterfowl seasons are open.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING HOURS:

East of I-95  
September 1 – 18: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr **after** sunset.  
September 19 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

West of I-95  
September 1 – 21: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr **after** sunset.  
September 22 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

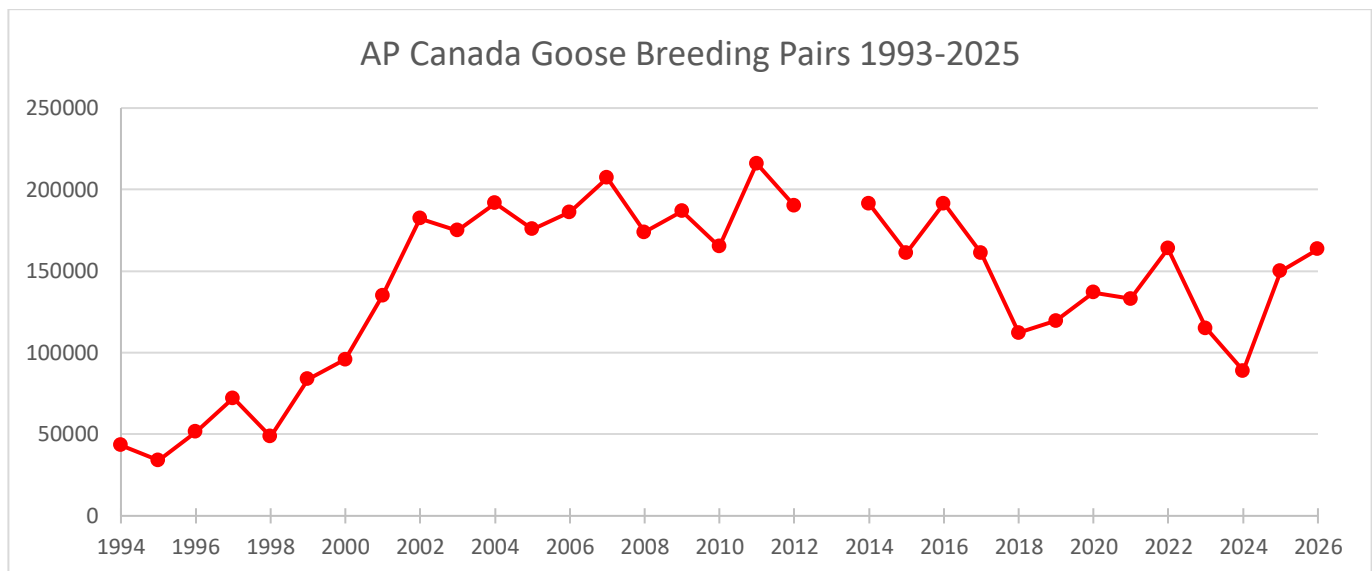
NOTE: Shotguns capable of holding more than 3 shells may be used when no other waterfowl seasons are open (September 1-18 East of I-95 and September 1-21 West of I-95).

Staff is **not** recommending the options of using electronic calls.

## FACT SHEET- History and Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2026

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000. As the population increased, the season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days from 2012-2018.
- As the population increased, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The AP bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004. In 2019 the AP bag limit was again reduced to 1 per day with a 30-day season. This was the result of several years of poor conditions on the arctic breeding grounds.
- After several years of below average productivity, two concurrent above average breeding seasons led to an increase in AP Canada goose production. This led to liberal harvest regulations for the 2022-2023 hunting season. Unfortunately, this was followed by a poor production year in 2023 and 2024 where the observed pair estimates (115,300 in 2023) and (89,000 in 2024) were down significantly from 2022 (164,000). The 2026 predicted number of breeding pairs based on the integrated population model was 163,500 which is above the 160k pair threshold for which liberal harvest regulations are recommended in the AP Canada goose Harvest Strategy. The 2026-2027 harvest recommendation is the liberal package which is a 45-day season and a 2 bird bag limit in the AP zone.

**Figure 1.** Atlantic Population Canada Goose Breeding Pair survey estimates 1993-2025.

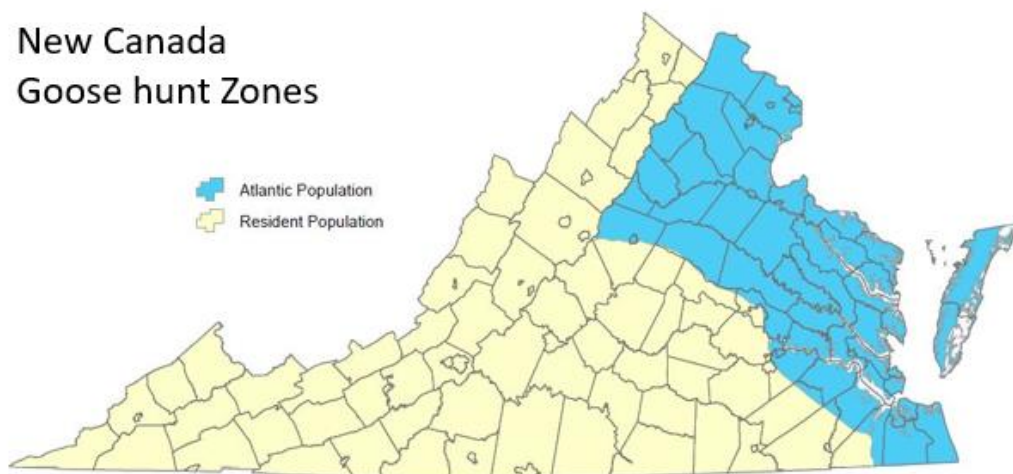


# **Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones**

- In 2020 there was a change in the way the Atlantic Flyway, the Mississippi Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are defining and managing the different “Migrant” Canada goose populations in the Eastern United States. The Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) is no longer recognized as a separate population, and the eastern portion of this population is now considered part of the Atlantic Population (AP). The Atlantic Population along with the North Atlantic Population (NAP) are now the only recognized subpopulations of “migrant” Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway. Nearly all the migrant geese that winter in Virginia are from the Atlantic Population, with only ~1% from the NAP.
- Due to this change, during the 2023-2024 season Virginia had to eliminate the SJBP Hunting Zone in Virginia. Some of this former zone (predominantly the northern portion) has been placed in the AP Zone, while the remainder of the area, where fewer migrant geese are located, has been included in the Resident Population Zone (RP).
- The hunting regulations for those areas that are now part of a different zone have changed significantly, so hunters need to make sure they are aware of the new zone boundaries. The description and map of these new Canada geese hunt zones is shown below.

**Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone** – The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

**Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone** – The portion of the state west of the above AP Zone boundary.



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# CANADA GOOSE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):**

**Outside Dates:**

November 15, 2026 – February 5, 2027

**Season Length:**

45 hunting days

**Bag Limit:**

2 birds daily (6 in possession)

### **RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):**

**Outside Dates:**

November 15, 2026 – March 10, 2027

**Season Length:**

80 hunting days

**Bag Limit:**

5 birds daily (15 in possession)

**NOTE** – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)**

**Season Dates:**

November 24 – November 29 (6 days)

December 24 – January 31 (39 days)

**Bag Limit:**

2 geese per day (6 in possession)

**Shooting Hours:**

1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)**

**Season Dates:**

November 18 – November 29

December 19 - February 21

**Bag Limit:**

5 geese daily (15 in possession)

**Shooting Hours:**

1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

**NOTE** – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

## **FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2026**

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- The majority (95%) of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross's Geese.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2025 population estimate was 428,000 geese. This estimate was lower than the population objective of 500,000 for the first time since the early 1990's.
- Banding crews at the major snow goose breeding colony on Bylot Island reported above average nest densities and low levels of nest predation.
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations increased nearly ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population has generally stabilized over the past 5 year, however concerns about habitat degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas still remain. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation. Snow geese can also cause conflicts with agricultural interest by pulling up green grains including wheat and barley.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, and the population has recently dropped below the population objective of 500,000.
- In addition to the regular hunting season, a Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009 that authorizes additional snow goose hunting after the end of the regular season frameworks. The CO allows the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese. The snow goose harvest in Virginia has averaged around 300 birds during the regular season and 600 birds during the Conservation Order over the past 5 years. A decision on the future of the CO will be made in the fall of 2026.



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# LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

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## REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	107 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	October 1, 2026 - March 10, 2027
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	3-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	November 24 – March 10, 2027	(106 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

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# LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

### Outside Dates:

When no other waterfowl seasons are open

### Bag Limit:

No daily or possession limit

### Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset **only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.**

### Special Requirements:

States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**Conservation Order Zone:** The same as the new AP Canada Goose Zone - The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

### Season Dates:

**TBD**

### Bag Limit:

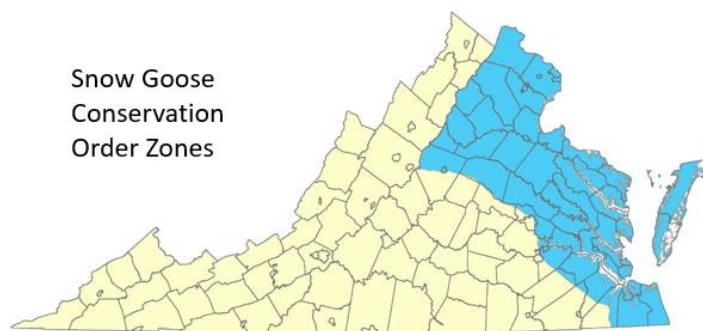
No daily or possession limit

### Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.

### Special Requirements:

Hunters participating in the Conservation Order **must register with DWR**, keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.



## FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2026

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- **BRANT.** The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2025 mid-winter survey count for brant was 132,306, which was higher than the previous year's count (121,000) and higher than the previous 3-year average (122,736). The Atlantic brant productivity estimate was 8.6%. Which was higher than the previous year estimate (16.7%) but still lower than the long-term average.
- The annual brant hunting regulation is now based on the Atlantic Brant Integrated Population Model (IPM) that was adopted by the Atlantic Flyway in 2021 and provides an index to the brant population. The model prediction for 2026 is 115,000. As per the Brant Harvest Strategy, this estimate calls for a 2024-2025 harvest regulation of 30 days with a 1-bird daily limit.
- **TUNDRA SWANS.** The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- Estimated productivity of eastern population tundra swans in 2024 was 11% immature birds. This estimate is higher than the 2023 estimate (10%) and similar to the long-term average (11%).
- There were 66,528 eastern population tundra swans counted in the Atlantic Flyway on the 2025 Mid-Winter Survey. This count was 36% higher than last year, but still below the past 10-year average (2016-2025: 87,226)
- Nine states in the U.S. hunt tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and Delaware, Virginia and North Carolina in the Atlantic Flyway.
- There are no changes in the total number of hunting permits allowed for EP tundra swans this year (9,600 across the U.S., with 5,600 of those in the Atlantic Flyway) as the population estimate is still within the 70,000 to 110,000 range. In the Atlantic Flyway, the allocation of hunt permits is split between the 3 states in approximate proportion to the number of swans in each state. The 5,600 permits available in the Atlantic Flyway for the 2026-2027 season will be distributed as follows: NC- 4,853, VA-475, and DE-272.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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# ATLANTIC BRANT

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	30 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	September 23, 2026 - January 31, 2027
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	2-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	December 19 – December 31 (13 days)
	January 15 – January 31 (17 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

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# TUNDRA SWAN

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

**Season Length:** 90 hunting days

**Outside Dates:** October 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Virginia may issue up to 475 permits and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

**Bag Limit:** One per permittee per season

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Season Dates:** November 15 - January 31

**Bag Limit:** One per permittee per season

**Hunt Area:** All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

**NOTE:** VDWR will issue no more than 475 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2026-2027 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDWR shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDWR is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2027.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

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# FALCONRY

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined)
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	September 1 - March 10
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	3 daily (9 in possession)
<b><u>Hawking Hours:</u></b>	½ hour before sunrise until sunset.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b><u>Dove:</u></b>	September 5 – October 23 November 21 – November 29 December 19 – January 31
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<b><u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u></b>	September 5 – December 20
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<b><u>Woodcock:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31
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<b><u>Snipe:</u></b>	October 1 – December 2 December 19 – January 31
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<b><u>Canada Goose:</u></b>	September 1 - September 25 November 18 – November 29 December 19 - February 21
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<b><u>September Teal:</u></b>	September 16 - September 30
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<b><u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u></b>	October 10 - 13 November 18 – February 7
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<b><u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31
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**NOTE:** Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.

# Virginia's Smallmouth Bass Management Plan

## FINAL DRAFT



John Copeland, Jason Hallacher, Johnathan Harris, Hunter Hatcher, Justin Heflin, Mike Isel, Dan Michaelson, John Odenkirk, George Palmer, Steve Reeser, Scott Smith, Jeff Williams, and Tyler Young

VDWR Warmwater Streams Committee

2024



## Background info

### *Introduction*

Smallmouth bass *Micropterus dolomieu* are an incredibly important sportfish throughout Virginia. According to an angler survey conducted in 2020, smallmouth bass are the second most popular target species among anglers in the Commonwealth trailing only largemouth bass (DWR Unpublished).

Smallmouth bass are native to the Tennessee and Big Sandy River drainages in the southwest portion of the state. Targeted introductions in warmwater rivers and lakes throughout other portions of the state have created naturalized populations. Records indicate that smallmouth bass were stocked throughout most Virginia waters during the 19th century around the time of the American Civil War.

Historically Virginia has supported a number of high-quality smallmouth bass fisheries, with some fisheries receiving frequent regional and even national recognition. Riverine smallmouth bass populations can experience high variability as a result of a number of biotic and abiotic factors. This variability affects population parameters and angler success.

Fisheries management staff within the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) developed the following management plan in an effort to facilitate effective management of smallmouth bass in Virginia. This plan incorporates our existing knowledge base and management practices while also establishing a framework for future research projects and management actions that best address agency goals.

### *Biology*

Smallmouth bass exhibit a preference for clear creeks, streams, and rivers with rocky substrate and regular interchanges of riffles, runs, and pools (Leonard et al. 1986). Smallmouth are prevalent in reservoirs with tributaries which have similar characteristics. In general, smallmouth do not persist in soft bottomed ponds and reservoirs. These characteristics lead to decreased prevalence of smallmouth bass as you move east from the Blue Ridge Mountains and into the piedmont and coastal plains of Virginia.

Smallmouth bass are top predators in most systems where they occur and feed on a variety of prey items. Juvenile smallmouth feed primarily on invertebrates but graduate to crayfish, fish, and larger insects as they grow (Woolcott et al. 1974; Coble 1975; Carlander 1977; Miner 1978; Pavol and Davis 1982; Probst et al. 1984). Smallmouth are opportunistic predators and will feed on most anything they can swallow.

Smallmouth bass spawn in the mid to late spring at water temperatures of 16-22°C, typically between late April and early June throughout most of the state (Surber 1970). Similar to other black bass species, males exhibit parental care of nests, eggs, and fry up to several days post-hatch (Pflieger 1966). Smallmouth bass have routinely been known to koppelhybridize with other black bass species, specifically spotted bass *Micropterus punctulatus* and Alabama bass *Micropterus henshalli* (Koppelman 1994; Pierce and Van Den Avyle 1997).

Smallmouth are widely distributed throughout North America with significant expansion beyond their native range. However, local extirpations, commonly attributed to changes in hydrology and habitat, have been observed (Brewer and Orth 2015).

### *Monitoring*



The importance and value of smallmouth bass fisheries to the anglers of Virginia paired with a high degree of annual variability necessitate routine monitoring by DWR fisheries staff. Monitoring serves to assess population trends and vital rates, gauge angler use and harvest, and identify key research needs.

All major riverine smallmouth bass fisheries in the state are assessed annually in the spring or fall (dependent on system specific flow dynamics) using boat or raft electrofishing. During these surveys all smallmouth bass are collected, measured to the nearest millimeter and released. In some cases, a subsample of fish are retained for use in age and growth analysis to assess growth and mortality rates. Targeted sampling for juvenile smallmouth using raft or backpack electrofishing occurs in the summer on select fisheries to assess year class strength. Depletion samples are also conducted on key riverine systems at regular intervals. Depletion samples allow for a better approximation of the density of smallmouth bass in specific river reaches (fish per mile). Smallmouth bass populations in reservoirs are more difficult to effectively quantify. Reservoirs are monitored in the spring using boat electrofishing methods similar to those utilized for riverine populations.

Angler surveys are also conducted at routine intervals on key smallmouth fisheries. These surveys aim to gauge angler use, harvest, and satisfaction pertaining to specific resources. In riverine fisheries angler surveys are often conducted during the same year as depletion samples to allow for comparisons of results, estimation of exploitation rates, and a more in depth look at a particular resource.

### *Regulations*

The regulation of angler harvest provides fisheries managers with one of their most valuable tools in managing fish populations. In black bass fisheries, catch and release practices have largely supplanted harvest. However, exploitation rates have been found to be high for larger fish relative to abundance. High size specific exploitation combined with natural mortality rates, particularly in riverine smallmouth populations, necessitate the use of restrictive harvest regulations to meet certain management objectives. Nearly every major smallmouth bass fishery in Virginia is managed with harvest regulations that are more prohibitive than the statewide black bass regulation which consists of no minimum length limit and a five fish daily limit (Table 1).

### *Production & Stocking*

Supplemental stocking serves as a valuable tool for managing fish populations. Stockings can help to establish new fish populations, restore extirpated fish populations, maintain genetic integrity, or improve the overall quality of a fishery. Virginia DWR readily utilizes supplemental stocking as a tool to manage key sportfish populations. However, smallmouth bass are not frequently cultured within the DWR hatchery system.

In Virginia supplemental stocking of smallmouth bass was attempted on a trial basis from 2005-2008. Over the 4 years smallmouth bass stocking was attempted in Virginia annual stocking requests totaled approximately 20,000-30,000 fingerlings. On average hatchery production could only meet around 70% of these requests. A formal evaluation found year class contribution from stocked fish to be low (0-15%) with some limited success (44%) from the 2005 stocking in the Staunton River (DWR unpublished). Smallmouth bass stockings ceased due

to minimal hatchery yields and poor returns in year class contribution of stocked fish. Fish kills as a result of chemical spills, population declines, and the introduction of new congeners to specific systems all necessitate further investigation of smallmouth bass culture.

In recent years improved success in smallmouth bass production has been documented (Sparrow and Barkoh 2002). Although smallmouth have long been considered a difficult species to culture (Clark 1905), recent advancements in aquaculture technology and facility improvements may lead to increased yields in Virginia's smallmouth bass hatchery production. Though poorly documented, recent studies also indicate limited success in smallmouth bass stocking program efficacy (Bettinger 2020). A great deal remains to be learned about smallmouth bass culture and stocking and its place as a potential management tool in Virginia.

### *Previous Studies in Virginia*

As a result of their value and popularity amongst anglers, smallmouth bass have been studied extensively throughout their range. Smallmouth in Virginia are no different with a number of studies dedicated toward the species.

Numerous studies conducted within Virginia have yielded key findings with major implications for smallmouth bass management in the state. Odenkirk and Smith (2005) generated estimates for densities of smallmouth bass at specific life stages in Virginia rivers, providing context for management targets and objectives. Smith et al. (2005) identified the importance of environmental factors like flow and their impact on year class strength, providing some insight on recruitment variability. Humston et al. (2010) quantified movements within river systems at specific life stages, providing insight on the relationship and exchange between mainstem and tributary smallmouth bass populations. Blazer et al. (2010) and Walsh et al. (2018) assessed the root cause of acute fish health issues in major river drainages and identified future research needs to address continued issues. Hallerman et al. (2015) evaluated genetic variations amongst native and naturalized Virginia smallmouth bass populations to better understand management units and inform potential stockings. These studies represent a select few of many conducted on smallmouth bass in Virginia (Appendix A). Despite extensive research, much remains unknown about the smallmouth in Virginia.

### *Marketing*

A significant effort is put forth by DWR to recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers (R3). Virginia's smallmouth bass fisheries provide an excellent opportunity to implement the agency's R3 plan and support the agency's mission, "to connect people to the outdoors through fishing."

Due to the smallmouth bass' aggressive nature, and relative ease of capture, they serve as a valuable option for new anglers to have a successful day of fishing. Messaging and advertising designed to recruit or retain anglers should emphasize how simple and fun it is to catch smallmouth bass, how relaxing a day on the water can be, and the opportunities fishing provides to experience the outdoors with others (Responsive Management and Southwick and Associates 2012). Targeting smallmouth bass can be done with little knowledge of the resource and with inexpensive fishing gear, which are both attractive drivers for new anglers. As an example, wade fishing during the summer months provides a unique connection to the environment and serves as a foundation for a strong aquatic conservation ethic. Furthermore, Virginia's rivers are already

heavily utilized by paddle craft, non-anglers who readily paddle rivers provide an excellent opportunity for angler recruitment.

While DWR focuses substantial effort toward recruiting new anglers through events like free fishing weekends and kids fishing days, there are few programs devoted to retaining current anglers. DWR boasts a considerable number of boat ramps and paddle craft launches on rivers and streams which make river access easy. Float trips targeting smallmouth bass should be leveraged to retain novice anglers by offering an adventurous next step within their journey in becoming an experienced angler. Not only do float trips offer a new challenge, but they also combine other popular outdoors activities like camping, paddling, and wildlife watching. The top three reasons people fish are to: spend time with family and friends, relax, and for sport or recreation. For new anglers, the opportunity for relaxation is a strong driver while avid anglers tend to be in it for the excitement (Aquatic Resource Education Association 2016). Smallmouth bass angling perfectly encapsulates these interests and supports the agency's current outreach effort, "The Outdoors are Better Together."

## **Goals and Objectives**

*Goal 1:* Management and Monitoring - Maintain and enhance recreational fishing opportunities for smallmouth bass in Virginia.

*Objective 1:* Identify smallmouth bass waters across the Commonwealth and utilize best available information to manage for quality angling experiences, within the biological limitations of specific resources, in a prompt and responsive manner.

- *Strategy 1:* Evaluate and classify smallmouth bass waters across Virginia. All established or potential smallmouth bass fisheries, including rivers, streams, and lakes, should be sampled to collect smallmouth bass population data. Data collected should be used to examine dynamic rate functions (recruitment, mortality, immigration, and emigration) and classify the water into one of three categories (Table 1).
  - Tier 1 Waters – Warmwater streams resources that have exceptional smallmouth bass populations and/or existing popular fisheries with adequate public access. Reservoir/small impoundment resources with exceptional smallmouth bass populations that serve as the primary component of the systems black bass fishery. These fisheries are sometimes referred to as 'Blue Ribbon Fisheries'. All management techniques and resources should be implemented to help maintain, and potentially improve, fisheries in these waters. Native smallmouth bass populations in this category should incorporate management techniques that enhance the fishery while conserving genetic integrity.
  - Tier 2 Waters – Warmwater streams resources that have exceptional smallmouth bass populations or ample public access, but not both. Reservoir/small impoundment resources that have high numbers of smallmouth bass but black bass fisheries are dominated by other species. All management techniques and resources should be implemented to help maintain, and potentially improve, fisheries in these waters. Native smallmouth bass populations in this category should incorporate

management techniques that enhance the fishery while conserving genetic integrity.

- Tier 3 Waters – Warmwater streams resources with smallmouth bass populations that have a limited potential fishery due to lack of access, habitat constraints, or other exclusionary variables. Reservoir/small impoundment resources with limited smallmouth bass numbers and black bass fisheries dominated by other species. No management techniques would likely be needed for these waters. Conservation efforts will be warranted in these waters to identify and maintain native smallmouth bass populations.
- *Strategy 2: Set management priorities for individual waters based on water classification goals and individual fishery needs.*
  - Tier 1: Waters should be managed to maintain overall goals for smallmouth bass populations of  $RSD280 \geq 25$  and  $RSD380 \geq 3$  when samples are large enough to examine stock density estimates (at least 30 smallmouth bass  $\geq 8$  inches needed for evaluation). These fisheries should be managed for overall catch rates within one standard deviation of the long-term average. Extensive public access should be obtained for these waters (desired minimum of two access sites every 10 river miles for streams and rivers). Additional management goals other than these minimums (i.e. trophy waters) can be added on a waterbody basis. Any additional goals that utilize statewide resources (i.e. stocking) should be prioritized through the Warmwater Streams Committee.
  - Tier 2 Waters should be managed to maintain self-sustaining smallmouth bass populations with overall electrofishing catch rates within one standard deviation of the long-term average and multiple public access locations (desired minimum of two access sites every 15 river miles for streams and rivers). These fisheries should have balanced size structures but can lack trophy potential.
  - Tier 3 Waters should be managed to maintain self-sustaining smallmouth bass populations and have at least one public access.
- *Strategy 3: Routinely monitor smallmouth bass waters, which are subject to high variability, to evaluate population dynamics, fish health, and overall effectiveness in meeting management goals.*
  - Tier 1 Waters should be monitored annually with spring or fall electrofishing. Data collections should include information to evaluate population size structure and recruitment. Data for more in-depth growth and mortality should be collected on a routine basis as supported by the population size and/or management need (i.e. once every 5 years). Fish health monitoring should be performed every 1-3 years in the late-Spring (May-June). Additionally, Tier 1 warmwater streams should be rotationally sampled with depletion electrofishing surveys to collect more extensive data for management purposes.
  - Tier 2 Waters should be monitored every 2-3 years depending on size. Data collections should include information to evaluate population size

structure. Data for more in-depth growth, mortality, and recruitment should be collected if needed to address specific fishery issues. Depletion electrofishing surveys may be warranted occasionally for special projects where more in-depth data is needed for management purposes. Fish health monitoring should be performed every 3-5 years in the late-Spring (May-June).

- Tier 3 Waters do not need regular monitoring but should be evaluated occasionally (i.e. once every 10 years) to evaluate potential fishery or if additional public access is acquired. Fish health monitoring should be performed as needed.
- *Strategy 4:* Quantify recreational use, economic value of fisheries, and exploitation within smallmouth bass fisheries.
  - Tier 1 Waters should have comprehensive creel surveys (collecting data on use, economics, catch, harvest, etc.) conducted every 5-8 years depending on staffing and funding availability. More extensive angler utilizations and exploitation studies should be used as warranted due to high pressure. Creel surveys should be coordinated to take place in the same time frame as depletion surveys if possible.
  - Tier 2 Waters should have creel surveys conducted once every 10-12 years depending on staffing and funding availability.
  - Tier 3 Waters should only need creel surveys if there is potential for reclassification.
- *Strategy 5:* Use regulatory methods to achieve management goals at certain waters. Methods include minimum size limits, slot limits, creel limits, and fishery closures (Table 1).
  - Special regulations should be routinely evaluated to determine effectiveness.

*Objective 2:* Actively enhance and protect critical smallmouth bass habitat through agency initiatives, management partnerships, and regulatory options.

- *Strategy 1:* Foster partnerships with other State Agencies, River keepers, NGOs, and citizens groups that dedicate funding and resources to stream and riparian restoration projects.
- *Strategy 2:* Environmental reviews in smallmouth bass waters should include special reviews examining effects on smallmouth bass fisheries, especially projects that involve tier 1 and 2 waters. These reviews should include suggestions/restrictions to reduce sedimentation and altered flows, and to stop work during sensitive times of the year (i.e. spawning).
- *Strategy 3:* Work to dedicate annual funding for stream restoration projects in waters/watersheds that contain valuable smallmouth bass fisheries.
- *Strategy 4:* Work to establish more temperature monitoring stations in sensitive smallmouth bass watersheds. This may be accomplished through agency purchased equipment and monitoring or with citizen group and NGO partnerships.

- *Strategy 5:* Create media and published content on the importance of fish habitat, how to enhance habitat, and habitat projects across the state that relate to smallmouth bass and other riverine fishes.

*Objective 3:* Protect the genetic integrity of native smallmouth bass populations and maintain the coarse genetic integrity of naturalized populations within the bounds of management strategies in Virginia.

- *Strategy 1:* Conduct routine genetic surveillance of smallmouth bass populations to establish genetic baselines and monitor hybridization with congeners. Fin clip samples of at least 30 fish every 5-8 years or if the presence of a new black bass species or a hybrid is detected. Other waters should have genetic surveillance if a new black bass species or hybrid is detected or if the water body has a high potential to affect a priority water. In that case, the waterbody should have similar surveillance as the priority water.
- *Strategy 2:* The agency rapid response protocol for invasive species should be implemented when a new black bass species or its hybrid is collected in an agency managed smallmouth bass water.
- *Strategy 3:* Use authentic brood stock for supplemental stocking. Genetic testing of brood stock should be conducted if not verified by the producer.
- *Strategy 4:* The agency should support a technician position stationed at genetics lab to run broodstock genetic marker analysis for quick turnaround times, and for Alabama bass/hybrid black bass genetic analysis.
- *Strategy 5:* The agency should continue and expand efforts through social media, publications, and signage about genetic integrity of naturalized populations and educate about potential negative outcomes of illegal stocking.

*Objective 4:* Develop methods/protocol to prioritize smallmouth bass waters for potential supplemental stocking on a routine basis consistent with hatchery space/production.

- *Strategy 1:* The Warmwater Streams Committee will annually prioritize smallmouth bass stocking needs across all resources (warmwater streams and impoundments), based on need and/or the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes. All stocking efforts are dependent upon the availability of reliable and genetically pure brood source as well as effective culture methods.
  - *Notes for committee:* The South River has first priority for all smallmouth bass produced out of Front Royal Fish Hatchery due to the renovation funded from the DuPont settlement funds.

*Objective 5:* Improve the accessibility of smallmouth bass fisheries throughout the Commonwealth.

- *Strategy 1:* Maintain and enhance existing access sites on smallmouth bass fisheries.
- *Strategy 2:* Identify the desired density of public access points needed for Tier 1-3 waters (e.g., miles/access point or acres/access point).

- *Strategy 3:* Catalog existing public access on smallmouth bass waters and identify existing or potential fisheries in need of additional access. Develop a prioritized list (updated every 3 years) of access needs for smallmouth bass fisheries.
- *Strategy 4:* Utilize partnerships with localities and private groups/partners to create new access sites on smallmouth bass fisheries based on prioritized needs.
- *Strategy 5:* Dedicate funding to create new agency operated access sites on sections of waters with the highest need. River access needs should be incorporated and prioritized with larger agency infrastructure goals.

*Goal 2: Research - Develop a more complete understanding of causative mechanisms impacting smallmouth bass population dynamics in Virginia.*

*Objective 1:* Evaluate statewide population trend data as compared to potential causative factors (e.g. environmental and anthropogenic) to identify potential trends every 3 years, at minimum.

- *Strategy 1:* Continue annual monitoring efforts to retain the utility of long term data sets and capture system specific variation.
- *Strategy 2:* Store all warmwater streams data in a centralized data storage system.
- *Strategy 3:* Develop best practices and discuss data standardization at the annual Warmwater Streams committee meeting.
- *Strategy 4:* Investigate development of correction factors for sampling variability (dipper number, all species vs sportfish, etc.) and reassess on a 3-5 year basis.
- *Strategy 5:* Collect and store all environmental data from outside sources every 3 years, or as needed.
- *Strategy 6:* Designate a working group within the Warmwater Streams committee to conduct data mining and analysis every 3 years.

*Objective 2:* Work within the appropriate DWR technical committee (warmwater streams, reservoirs, or small impoundments) to identify and prioritize research questions of integral importance to smallmouth bass management in Virginia on an annual basis and meet research needs in a timely manner.

- *Strategy 1:* Annually solicit research needs from committee membership and prioritize within the appropriate DWR technical committee (warmwater streams, reservoirs, or small impoundments).
- *Strategy 2:* Advocate for in-house and external smallmouth bass research needs and opportunities at all Aquatic Resource Science Team (ARST) and warmwater streams meetings.
- *Strategy 3:* Participate in and facilitate worthwhile opportunities for research collaboration with other agencies and institutions as they occur to improve sample size and statistical power.
- *Strategy 4:* Utilize the Warmwater Streams Science Team to distribute information and foster discussion of relevant research in a timely manner.

*Objective 3:* Annually communicate with other state management agencies and research institutions on ongoing smallmouth bass research.

- *Strategy 1:* Form an ad-hoc group of regional state agencies (VA, WV, MD, NC, TN, PA, etc.) to meet annually and discuss smallmouth bass research and trends.
- *Strategy 2:* Maintain active participation in the Southern Division American Fisheries Society Warmwater Streams Technical Committee.
- *Strategy 3:* Prioritize and advocate for annual attendance of relevant professional conferences and workshops by committee members.

*Goal 3:* Culture - Investigate the feasibility of smallmouth bass production in-house to facilitate the potential use of supplemental stocking or population restoration as a management tool.

*Objective 1:* Research and utilize best practices to develop and refine agency smallmouth bass production methods while limiting impacts to the production of other species within Division-identified production priorities.

- *Strategy 1:* Identify the desired number of fingerlings for stocking, size of fingerlings, and timing of stockings. Select a minimum and maximum size range.
- *Strategy 2:* Establish plans for brood fish management, fry production, and fingerling production in coordination with the hatchery section.
- *Strategy 3:* Work with hatchery staff to address the infrastructure and logistics of rearing and stocking smallmouth bass.
- *Strategy 4:* Connect with neighboring natural resource agencies to collaborate and share ideas and resources.

*Objective 2:* Routinely assess in-house production capabilities relative to stocking requests and assess feasibility of external sources.

- *Strategy 1:* Develop a 3-year plan (updated annually) for smallmouth bass stocking priorities (number, location, size, timing), and communicate this with the hatchery section.
- *Strategy 2:* Coordinate with the hatchery section to identify existing smallmouth bass production capabilities and possible bottlenecks to enhanced production. Compare the existing production capacity with the desired production capacity.
- *Strategy 3:* Identify and assess the feasibility of external sources of smallmouth bass for supplemental stocking with careful consideration of genetics and fish health implications.

*Objective 3:* Obtain meaningful numbers of smallmouth bass through in-house production or external sources annually for use in supplemental stocking.

- *Strategy 1:* Identify resources capable of supplying broodstock for production purposes.
- *Strategy 2:* Leverage newly renovated Front Royal FCS and additional / other resources to produce desired numbers of smallmouth bass within Division production priorities.
- *Strategy 3:* Investigate the feasibility of raising smallmouth intensively.



- *Strategy 4:* Identify potential external sources for smallmouth bass production and investigate options for utilizing these sources to supplement in-house production.

*Objective 4:* Evaluate the effectiveness of all smallmouth bass stockings in meeting management objectives and utilize findings to inform future stockings.

- *Strategy 1:* Establish protocols for assessing the effectiveness of supplemental stockings in meeting previously established system specific management objectives.
- *Strategy 2:* Analyze and report findings within the warmwater streams technical committee to inform the future use of supplemental stocking as a management tool.

*Goal 4:* Outreach - Facilitate the effective flow of information between fisheries management staff and stakeholder groups and increase the use of the smallmouth bass resource in Virginia.

*Objective 1:* Utilize smallmouth bass fisheries to recruit new anglers based on ease of capture, limited specialized equipment, and angling opportunities near urban centers (Lynchburg and Richmond).

- *Strategy 1:* Promote smallmouth bass to new anglers during and after Free Fishing Day events.
- *Strategy 2:* Integrate smallmouth bass information in beginner Angler Education workshops and clinics including future fishing events and online education.
- *Strategy 3:* Connect bass angler clubs to DWR recruitment events to encourage mentorship and increase resources for new anglers.
- *Strategy 4:* Identify paddler groups and direct outreach efforts toward the incorporation of smallmouth bass fishing into their excursions.

*Objective 2:* Utilize smallmouth bass fisheries to increase participation and retention of current anglers through the promotion of quality fishing opportunities

- *Strategy 1:* Promote smallmouth bass fishing opportunities to a targeted group of anglers (e.g. trout anglers) specifically during warm water months.
- *Strategy 2:* Coordinate between Outreach and Fisheries Divisions to improve available information related to the biological and recreational components of smallmouth bass fishing.

*Objective 3:* Utilize smallmouth bass fisheries to reactivate lapsed angler groups.

- *Strategy 1:* Promote smallmouth bass fishing opportunities to a targeted group of lapsed anglers.

*Objective 4:* Regularly prepare and release information/media on the status and outlook of smallmouth bass fishing in Virginia to manage angler expectations.

- *Strategy 1:* Coordinate with DWR's outreach division to provide up to date resource specific information to manage angler expectations.
  - Promote access using the resource pages on the agency website, update resource pages on a regular basis.

- *Strategy 2:* Continually update smallmouth bass species page on agency website with current information reflective of new research and findings to promote transparency and public trust.
- *Strategy 3:* Utilize all available marketing options (website, social media, etc.) to provide timely and relevant information to the angling public regarding smallmouth bass population status/trends in specific water bodies, angling techniques, access facilities, etc.

## Tables and Figures

**Table 1. List of smallmouth bass fisheries in Virginia with size, management classification, stocking request/rate, and current regulation.**

Resource	Size (acres/river miles)	Management Classification	Stocking Request	Regulation
Staunton River	80 mi	Tier 1	N/A	1 > 20"
Upper James River	90 mi	Tier 1		14-22" Protected Slot, 1 > 22"
Middle James River	130 mi	Tier 1		14-22" Protected Slot, 1 > 22"
Fall-line James River	9 mi	Tier 2		14-22" Protected Slot, 1 > 22"
Jackson River	96 mi	Tier 2	N/A	None
Maury River	43 mi	Tier 1	N/A	None
Clinch River	135 mi	Tier 2	N/A	1 > 20"
Powell River	80 mi	Tier 2	N/A	None
Levisa Fork River	30 mi	Tier 2	N/A	1 > 20"
North Fork Holston River	100 mi	Tier 2	N/A	1 > 20"
Middle Fork Holston River	56 mi	Tier 2	N/A	None
Upper New River	80	Tier 1	N/A	14-22" Protected Slot, 1 > 22"
Lower New River	63	Tier 1	N/A	14-22" Protected Slot, 1 > 22"
North Fork Shenandoah River	116 mi	Tier 2		No LMB or SMB 11-14"
South Fork Shenandoah River	97 mi	Tier 1		No LMB or SMB 11-14"
Shenandoah River	35 mi	Tier 2		No LMB or SMB 11-14"
Rappahannock River	195 mi	Tier 1	N/A	None
Rapidan River	88 mi	Tier 1	N/A	None
Nottoway River	155 mi	Tier 3	N/A	None
Appomattox River	157 mi	Tier 3	N/A	None

Hardware River	23 mi	Tier 3	N/A	None
Dan River	70 mi	Tier 3	N/A	Only 2 of 5 <14"
Tye River	35 mi	Tier 2	N/A	None
Rockfish River	29 mi	Tier 3	N/A	None
Rivanna River	42 mi	Tier 2	N/A	None
Philpott Reservoir	2,880 ac	Tier 2	N/A	None
Flanagan Reservoir	1,143 ac	Tier 2	N/A	15" minimum
South Holston Lake	7,580 ac	Tier 1	N/A	15" minimum
Smith Mountain Lake	20,600 ac	Tier 2	N/A	Only 2 of 5 <14"
Claytor Lake	4,363 ac	Tier 2	N/A	14" minimum
Lake Moomaw	2,530 ac	Tier 1	N/A	12" minimum
Laurel Bed Lake	330 ac	Tier 1	N/A	Catch and Release

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A:**

#### *Smallmouth Bass Research Conducted in Virginia*

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# BOARD OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

## GOVERNANCE MANUAL

Revised ~~March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

### I. PURPOSE

The Board of Wildlife Resources for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has established this Governance Manual in accordance with §29.1-102, Paragraph B, of the Code of Virginia to provide guidance and structure for the deliberations and decisions necessary for it to fulfill its statutory responsibilities and to accomplish its mission. It fully recognizes that the General Assembly has given stewardship responsibilities for the Commonwealth's wildlife and boating resources to the Department on behalf of Virginia's citizens and has entrusted the Board with the moral ownership of the Department on behalf of the public. Therefore, the Board will strive to understand the public's values regarding wildlife and boating resources and shall govern its actions based on those values.

### II. AUTHORITY

Section 29.1-102 of the Code establishes the Board of Wildlife Resources, delineates the composition and selection of its members, and provides basic instructions regarding the structure and function of the Board. Section 2.2-2100 of the Code defines a supervisory board as one that is responsible for agency operations, including approval of appropriations requests, appointment of the agency Director, and compliance by the agency Director with all Board and statutory directives. The responsibilities and authorities of the Board are set forth in §29.1-103 and in other sections of Title 29.1. The Board is accountable to the purposes and provisions of Title

29.1 of the Code of Virginia and has specific authorities as summarized below:

A. Administration

The Board shall:

Serve as trustee of the Lifetime Hunting and Fishing Endowment Fund (§29.1-101.1).

Adopt rules and procedures for the conduct of its business that shall be set forth in a Governance Manual. The Board may establish committees to assist with its duties and responsibilities. All decisions by a committee shall be reviewed by the Board, and shall only take effect if approved by the Board (§29.1-102.B).

Elect one of its members as its chair whose duties shall be limited to (i) presiding at all regular and called meetings of the Board; (ii) serving as Board liaison to the Director, other Board members, and the Secretary of Natural Resources; and (iii) the other duties set forth in the Governance Manual as approved by a majority of the Board. The Board shall also elect a vice-chair to preside in the absence of the chair. Any additional duties of the vice-chair shall be set forth in the Governance Manual. The Board shall annually elect one of its members as chair and one of its members as vice-chair (§29.1-102.C).

Meet at least once every quarter of the calendar year for the transaction of its business, and other meetings may be called if necessary by the chair or at the request of any three members. The majority of the members shall constitute a quorum (§29.1-102.D).

Meet in Richmond or at such other places within the Commonwealth as may be necessary (§29.1-102.D).

Appoint the Director, subject to confirmation and reconfirmation every four years by the General Assembly, to head the Department and to act as principal administrative officer and ensure his compliance with statutory and Board directives. The Director is subordinate to the Board (§§2.2-2100, 29.1-109.B, and 29.1-103.1).

Approve requests for appropriations (§2.2-2100).

Manage gifts of property or money in such a way as to maximize their value to the citizens of Virginia (§29.1-104).

Reduce all rules, resolutions, regulations, and policies of the Board to writing for the Director; these writings shall be public documents and shall be available to the public on request (§29.1-107).

Open minute books and other records of the Board to examination by the Governor, members of the General Assembly, and Auditor of Public Accounts, or their representatives, at all times. The accounts of the Board shall be audited in the manner provided for the audit of other state agencies. In addition, the Board shall ensure that the Auditor of Public Accounts, or an entity approved by him, conducts an annual audit of a fiscal and compliance nature of the accounts and transactions of the Department. The Board may order such other audits as it deems necessary and desirable (§29.1-108).

Pay twenty-five percent of the proceeds from timber sales on lands owned by the Board to the locality in which the timber was located (§29.1-111).

Enter into a cooperative agreement with the United States Forest Service to define the means and methods to improve the fish and wildlife resources of the national forests in Virginia and shall program the expenditure of all funds derived from the sale of the national forest stamp (§29.1-411).

Designate (Board Chair) a Motorboat Committee with three members from the Board (§29.1-701).

The Board is authorized to:

Designate funds to the Capital Improvement Fund and may transfer an amount equal to fifty percent or less of the revenue generated annually from the sales and use tax which has been deposited in the Game Protection Fund pursuant to subsection E of § 58.1-638 (§29.1-101.01).

Adopt resolutions or regulations conferring upon the Director all such powers, authorities, and duties as the Board possesses and deems necessary or proper to carry out the purposes of Title 29.1 (§29.1-103.12).

Administer and manage the Virginia Fish Passage Grant and Revolving Loan Fund pursuant to Article 1.1 (§29.1-101.2 et seq.) of Chapter One of this title (§29.1-103.13).

Receive gifts, grants, bequests, and devises of property, real or personal, and money, which, if accepted, shall be taken and

held for any uses prescribed by the donor, grantor, or testator and in accord with the purposes of Title 29.1 (§29.1-104).

Enter into contracts, with the approval of the Governor, for the lease of lands or buildings owned by the Board (§29.1-105).

Enter into reciprocal agreements for sport-fishing licenses with adjoining jurisdictions having inland waters adjacent to Virginia (§29.1-535).

Perform all such acts as may be necessary for the establishment and implementation of cooperative wildlife restoration projects and fish restoration and management projects, as defined in the provisions of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of September 2, 1937 (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.), as amended, and to the provisions of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of August 9, 1950 (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.), as amended, and the implementing regulations promulgated thereunder. Revenues derived from license fees paid by hunters and fishermen, as well as interest, dividends, or other income earned on such revenues, shall not be diverted and shall be used solely for the administration of the Department's fish and wildlife programs (§29.1-103.2.)

B. Acquisition

The Board is authorized to:

Acquire by purchase, lease, or otherwise lands and waters in the Commonwealth and to establish buildings, structures, dams, lakes, and ponds on such lakes and waters (§29.1-103.2); lands and waters for game and fish refuges, preserves or public

shooting and fishing, and establish such lands and waters under appropriate regulations (§29.1-103.4); lands and structures for use as public landings, wharves, or docks, to improve such lands and structures, and to control the use of all such public landings, wharves, or docks by regulation (§29.1-103.5).

Pursuant to Chapter 906 of the 2007 Virginia Acts of Assembly, the Board shall act in accordance with the policy of the Commonwealth that there shall be no net loss of those public lands managed by the Department that are available for hunting in Virginia (§29.1-103.2).

C. Conservation of Wildlife

The Board is authorized to:

In consultation with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the State Veterinarian, and representatives of appropriate agriculture agencies and organizations, to promulgate regulations pertaining to diseases in wildlife populations (§29.1-103.1.).

Conduct operations for the preservation and propagation of game birds, game animals, fish and other wildlife in order to increase, replenish, and restock the lands and inland waters of the Commonwealth (§29.1-103.3).

Acquire and introduce any new species of game birds, game animals, or fish on the lands and within the waters of the Commonwealth, with the authorization and cooperation of the local government for the locality where the introduction occurs (§29.1-103.6).

Restock, replenish, and increase any depleted native species of game birds, game animals, or fish (§29.1-103.7).

Control land owned by and under control of the Commonwealth in Back Bay, its tributaries, and the North Landing River from the North Carolina line to the North Landing Bridge (§29.1103.10).

Exercise powers it may deem advisable for conserving, protecting, replenishing, propagating, and increasing the supply of game birds, game animals, fish, and other wildlife in the Commonwealth (§29.1-103.11).

Determine when dams or other obstructions interfere with the free passage of anadromous and other fish within the streams of the Commonwealth and also to determine “suitable fishways” (§29.1-532).

Take such regulatory or other action as it may determine to be necessary to enable the Commonwealth to become a party to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, as authorized in Article 2.1 (§ 29.1-530.5) of Chapter 5, and to implement the Compact in the Commonwealth (§29.1-103.17).

D. Education

The Board shall:

Establish regulations and rules to administer and enforce a hunter education program (§ 29.1-300.2)

~~Establish one full-time hunter education coordinator position per administrative region of the Department~~ Staff the hunter education program with appropriate personnel to ensure that



hunter education, training, workshops, and volunteer management are carried out across the Commonwealth (§29.1-300.2).

The Board is authorized to:

Have educational matter pertaining to wildlife published and distributed (§29.1-103.8).

Hold exhibits throughout the Commonwealth for the purpose of educating school children, agriculturists, and other persons in the preservation and propagation of wildlife in the Commonwealth (§29.1-103.9).

E. Regulations and Rules

The Board shall:

Regulate or prohibit by regulation any drilling, dredging, or other operation designed to recover or obtain shells, minerals, or other substances on land owned by and under control of the Commonwealth in Back Bay, its tributaries and the North Landing River from the North Carolina line to North Landing Bridge to prevent practices and operations which would harm the area for fish and wildlife (§29.1-103.10).

Conform its regulations regarding the hunting of migratory game birds with the regulations of the United States government in regards to open seasons and bag limits (§29.1-515).

Promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of Chapter 6 of Title 29.1 pertaining to the licensing and operation of shooting preserves (§29.1-600.1).

The Board is authorized to:

Promulgate regulations pertaining to the hunting, taking, capture, killing, possession, sale, purchase, and transportation of any wild bird, wild animal, or inland water fish and the feeding of any game, game animals, or fur-bearing animals as defined in § 29.1-100, or the feeding of any wildlife that results in property damage, endangers any person or wildlife, or creates a public health concern. (§29.1-501).

Prescribe the seasons and bag limits for hunting, fishing, trapping, or otherwise taking such wild birds, animals, and fish in the Commonwealth (§29.1-506) and on lands and waters owned or controlled by the Board (§29.1-508).

Close or shorten open seasons under certain conditions by giving public notice (§29.1-507).

Promulgate regulations to change the shotgun shell capacity (§29.1-519).

Adopt regulations permitting trappers to visit traps less frequently than at least once every 72 hours under specified conditions (§29.1-521).

Promulgate regulations establishing model ordinances for hunting with firearms that may be adopted by counties or cities (§29.1-528).

Promulgate regulations establishing model ordinances for hunting with bow and arrow that may be adopted by counties or cities (§29.1-528.1).

Prescribe distances less than 500 yards between waterfowl hunting blinds and the use of such blinds with restrictions (§29.1-351).

Establish a practical system of identification of trout offered for sale for table or other uses that it prescribes (§29.1-531).

Declare endangered and threatened species of fish and wildlife and to prohibit the taking, transportation, processing, sale, or offer of sale within the Commonwealth (§29.1-566).

Declare birds and animals as predatory and undesirable or nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species and control the importation and possession of such animals (§§29.1-542, 29.1573).

E. Fees, Licenses, and Permits

The Board shall:

Establish by regulation a procedure for selling bonus deer permits and set the fee for this permit according to some restrictions (29.1-305.1).

The Board is authorized to:

Establish and collect admittance, parking or other use fees at certain Department-owned facilities according to certain restrictions (§29.1-103.14).

Establish and collect a use fee through the issuance of an annual hunting stamp required to hunt on private lands managed by the department with certain requirements (~~§29.1-403.15~~ 29.1-113).

Revise, as it deems appropriate, through the promulgation of regulations, the fees charged for hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses with certain restrictions (§29.1-103.16).

Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of the apprentice hunting license statute (§29.1-300.4.)

Designate agents for the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and appoint agents for the sale of licenses and permits via telephone and electronic media (§§29.1-323 and 29.1-337).

Create a separate special license for the hunting of bear in the Commonwealth according to fees and requirements (§29.1-305).

Impose daily use fees and issue permits to fish in specially stocked trout streams (§29.1-318).

Administer a permit system to allow certain privileges for the collection, holding, etc. of wildlife according to regulations, reports, and fees as it may prescribe (§29.1-413).

Grant permits to bona fide field trial clubs and associations to hold field trials with dogs under regulations and fees that it establishes (§29.1-422).

Issue permits to raise, purchase, release, and hunt pheasant on private lands under rules, regulations, and seasons that it may require (§29.1-514).

Recognize persons, companies, or corporations with canneries or processing plants in other states that are duly licensed to operate such facilities in those states so that those entities can possess, transport, sell, etc. wild animals, birds, fish that are

packaged in a can, tin, pot or other receptacle outside of the Commonwealth (§29.1-543).

Permit the taking and possession, etc. of endangered or threatened (§29.1-568), predatory and undesirable (§29.1-542), and nonindigenous aquatic nuisance (§29.1-575) species under special conditions.

Adopt revisions to the fees charged for motorboat registration and title certificates (§29.1-701.1).

F. Boating

The Board shall:

Promote the interest of retail buyers of watercraft and may prevent unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices (§29.1-802).

The Board is authorized to:

Make rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper for the effective administration of Chapter 7 of Title 29.1 concerning boating laws (§29.1-701.E).

Allow exceptions to the requirement to display decals showing the expiration date of motorboat registrations on the side of motorboats (§29.1-703).

Adopt regulations as it deems appropriate for the safe and reasonable operation of vessels and for proper equipment (§29.1-735).

Promulgate regulations to implement a boating safety education program for all motorboat and personal watercraft operators to meet boating safety education requirements (§29.1-735.2).

Promulgate regulations applicable to the commercial operations of parasail operators on waters of the Commonwealth (Acts of Assembly Chapter 625 of the 2007 Session).

Promulgate regulations governing the takeoff, landing, and taxi of seaplanes on impoundments located on the inland waters of the Commonwealth (§29.1-735.1).

Establish special or general rules regarding safe and reasonable operation of vessels on any waters within any political subdivisions of the Commonwealth upon application from that subdivision or on its own motion (§29.1-744).

Promulgate regulations within the provisions of the Watercraft Dealer Licensing Act (§29.1-805).

### III. PRINCIPLES

#### A. COMMITMENT

The Board is devoted to accomplishing the Department's mission and fulfilling its vision, as follows:

Mission: To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth;

To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating, and related recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia;

To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting, and fishing;

To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

Vision: The Board of Wildlife Resources seeks to provide long-term direction and resources to the Department to firmly establish and maintain it as a leader among wildlife and boating agencies within the ~~Nation~~ country. The Board's deliberations and decisions will be based on sound scientific principles and procedures, as developed, researched, recognized, and accepted within the bounds of comprehensive professional wildlife resource management, and will focus on excellence in service to the citizens of Virginia. The Board will strive to provide an environment that fosters ethical behavior, teamwork, professional development, and distinction in performance among its members and the employees of the Department. The Board is fully committed to excellence in governance and in fulfilling its responsibilities as stewards of these most valuable resources.

B. APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE

1. To achieve its vision for the Department, the Board will govern according to the following values:
  - a. An outward vision;
  - b. A long-term perspective;
  - c. A proactive approach to governance;
  - d. Strategic leadership;
  - e. Consideration of multiple viewpoints during deliberations, integration of ideas or consensus building in decision-making, and accord following decisions; and
  - f. Clear distinction between the roles and actions of the Board and those of the staff, particularly in regards to the role of the Director.
2. The Board will be guided by the following principles in all of its deliberations, decisions and actions:
  - a. The Board will convey its organizational values and perspectives to the Department with the development of broad policies that are founded on the principles of openness, integrity, and accountability.
  - b. The Board's focus will be on long-term goals, expressed as "Ends" statements, that address the Department's mission, and not on the operational approaches or "means" of attaining those goals.



- c. The Board will develop policies in four areas as follows:
- Ends – properly targeted, mission-related goals, results, impacts or outcomes;
  - Executive Limitations – articulation of limits and boundaries for staff actions;
  - Board-Executive Relationship – delegation of authority to the Director and evaluation of how that delegated authority is used within the context of the Department’s mission and the Board’s policies; and
  - Board Process – the way that the Board governs itself and provides leadership and direction to the organization.
- d. While the Board expects staff recommendations regarding Board policy requirements, the Board will initiate policy development according to its needs. Additionally, the Board will review and update its policies as a part of its three-year review of the Governance Manual or at any other time it determines to be necessary. The Board will be responsible for excellence in governing.
- e. The Board will apply self-discipline as necessary to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to all aspects of Board activities, such as preparation

for meetings, interactions with the public and staff, behavior and attendance at Board events, policy development principles, and adherence to Board processes as established in Board policies. Board members will interact with staff to enhance their understanding of Department programs and their ability to perform their duties, but will provide direction to the Department via Board actions to the Director.

- f. The Board recognizes that it is ultimately accountable for all aspects of the Department and will conscientiously strive to accomplish its obligations to the citizens of the Commonwealth. It will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the Board to usurp this role or hinder this commitment.
- g. Officers and committees will be established to assist the Board with its responsibilities. Major decisions and actions of the Board will occur at the Board level, and when appropriate, by a vote of the entire Board.
- h. The Board will monitor and regularly assess its own policies and performance and will make adjustments as necessary to maintain and/or improve its governance of the Department.

- i. Furthermore, it will ensure the continuity and advancement of its governance skills through training and development of all Board members and through thorough orientation of new Board members.

#### IV. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE BOARD

##### A. COMPOSITION

- 1. The members of the Board are appointed and serve in accordance with §29.1-102 of the Code of Virginia, which provides, inter alia:
  - a. The Board shall consist of 11 members. The members appointed shall be citizens of the Commonwealth and shall be knowledgeable about wildlife conservation, hunting, fishing, boating, agriculture, forestry, or habitat. Each Department region, as constituted on July 1, 2014, shall be represented by two members, and three members shall be members-at-large, each representing a different Department region. Members shall be appointed for terms of one to four years; however, appointments shall be made in a manner whereby no more than three members shall have terms which expire in the same year. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be made in the same manner, but only for the unexpired term. No person shall

be eligible to serve more than two consecutive four-year terms.

- b. The Governor appoints Board members, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly.
- c. The Governor may remove Board members from office during their respective terms.

2. All new Board members must complete an orientation program in conjunction with the first regularly scheduled Board meeting following the announcement of their first appointment to the Board or as soon as practicable following the announcement of their first appointment to the Board if orientation cannot be completed in association with the first Board meeting. The Executive Director shall be responsible for developing and presenting the orientation program, and the Board Secretary will distribute an extensive orientation manual to new Board members upon announcement of the appointments.

3. All Board members shall be required to sign an affirmation pledging to uphold both the letter and spirit of The Board of Wildlife Resources' Code of Ethics and Conduct within ninety (90) days of the date of their appointment to the Board or within thirty (30) days of the adoption of these policies, whichever comes later.

## B. OFFICERS

Officers of the Board will consist of a Chair and a Vice-

Chair (§29.1-102.C). The Chair will appoint a Nominations Committee that will develop a slate of candidates for both positions and present it to the Board at a Board meeting in the last quarter of the fiscal year. The Chair will entertain a motion to accept the Committee report and open the floor for additional nominations. After the membership has had ample opportunity to make nominations, the Chair will accept a motion to close the nominations. The Board will elect officers from the candidates for both positions by majority vote during its meeting in the last quarter of the fiscal year. New officers will assume the responsibilities of their positions on July 1 and will serve through June of the next year. The term of office is one year for both positions. The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be eligible to be re-elected to their respective positions and no person shall serve more than one year as Chair and one year as Vice Chair during a four-year term. The Vice Chair does not assume the Chair's position; however, the Vice Chair can be nominated for and elected to become the Chair.

In the case of unexpected vacancies, the Board may install duly elected officers by majority vote at its next meeting. If incoming officers have not been selected, the Board may nominate and elect a member to fill the vacant position by a majority vote. Installation of the officer will occur immediately after he/she is elected by vote of the Board.

#### C. CHAIR

The Chair is charged with ensuring the openness, integrity, and accountability of the Board's process, motivating the Board members to focus on the long-term, mission-related "Ends" for

the Department and to fulfill their responsibilities and duties toward those Ends; and to oversee the operation of Board meetings to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of those meetings. Towards these ends, the Chair:

1. Works with the Director to develop agendas for Board meetings;
2. Presides over meetings of the Board;
3. Votes on motions as other members, except that the Chair shall not be required to cast his or her vote before hearing or counting the votes from the other members (Note: Robert's Rules of Order, which the Board has adopted, normally requires that the Chair does not vote, except in certain situations. However, since each member represents an administrative region, all should cast their votes on the public's behalf.)
4. When required, certifies actions taken by the Board;
5. Communicates to outside interests on behalf of the Board regarding specific decisions or actions made by the Board;
6. Appoints members to standing committees including a Motorboat Committee (§29.1-701) and to ad hoc committees created by the Board, subject to confirmation by the Board. The Chair may serve on standing committees, but shall not serve as a chair of a standing committee;
7. Communicates regularly, but at least quarterly, with the Secretary of Natural Resources to inform him/her regarding activities and programs of the Board and

Department and to receive information on initiatives by the Administration;

8. Designates one member of the Board, who may include the Board Chair or Vice Chair, to serve as liaison to the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia; and
9. Performs such additional duties as prescribed within this policy or as may be established by resolution of the Board.

D. VICE-CHAIR

The Vice Chair is a member of the Board, elected by a majority vote of the Board according to the procedures for the election of officers. The duties of the Vice Chair are as follows:

1. Preside over Board meetings if the Chair is unable to do so as per §29.1-102.C;
2. Serves on standing committees as appointed by the Chair;
3. Provide guidance and interpretation on Board meeting procedures according to the rules (§29.1-102) within the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, The Modern Edition.
4. Perform such additional duties as prescribed within this policy or as may be established by resolution of the Board.

E. SECRETARY

The Board instructs the Director to designate a staff member with acceptable credentials to serve as the Board Secretary. Following the Board's appointment of this individual as Board Secretary, this person shall serve in this capacity until such time as he or she is unable or unwilling to continue to do so, or until such time as the Board terminates the appointment. The Secretary to the Board has the following duties and responsibilities:

1. To maintain a current list of the membership of the Board and of each committee;
2. To notify Board members of Board and committee meetings;
3. To coordinate and disseminate information to the members of the Board;
4. To prepare correspondence for the Chair when he/she is communicating on behalf of the Board;
5. To maintain official minutes and records of all proceedings of the Board;
6. To coordinate the response to requests received by the Board under the Freedom of Information Act;
7. To ensure timely filing of reports with the Secretary of the Commonwealth under the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act;
8. To prepare, prior to each meeting of the Board and its committees, advertisements of the meeting and to place them in the appropriate media outlets, in accordance with the requirements of the Administrative Process Act.



9. To prepare, prior to each meeting and in coordination with the Board or committee Chair and the Director, an order of business (agenda) that lists all known issues to be addressed at the meeting, in their exact order of presentation;
10. To coordinate agendas and presentations for the Board;
11. To prepare a calendar of events for the Board to insure compliance with all Board requirements and deadlines; and,
12. Perform such additional duties as provided herein or as may be set by resolution of the Board.

F. MEETINGS/ATTENDANCE

The Board drafts and approves a regular meeting schedule in advance of each calendar year. Meetings will occur at least once every quarter in accordance with §29.1-102.D. The schedule may be amended by agreement of a majority of the Board. The Board may schedule additional meetings, if deemed necessary, after giving appropriate notice to all members of the Board and to the public. The Chair will schedule a meeting upon the request of three members of the Board and will notify the Director of the called meeting. The request may be made verbally during a duly convened Board meeting or in writing to the Board Chair at other times. In all cases, the purpose of the meeting must be clearly stated, and those three or more members making the request must be clearly identified.

Members are expected to attend all meetings unless there are mitigating conditions that preclude a member's presence. In

such cases, the member must notify the Board Chair and Board Secretary in advance of the meeting and give the reason for his/her absence.

G. PROCEDURAL STANDARDS

1. The Board will use the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, The Modern Edition, to govern the proceedings of all of its Board and committee meetings insofar as they are applicable and not inconsistent with law or any of the policies adopted by the Board. All meetings of the Board and its committees shall comply with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Title 2.2, Chapter 37 of the Code of Virginia).
2. Voting by proxy is prohibited by law.
3. A majority of members of the Board shall constitute a quorum at Board meetings (§29.1-102.D).
4. Approval of an action or decision shall be by a majority of a quorum of the Board.

H. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD

To accomplish its trustee and administrative duties, the Board shall perform the following duties:

1. The Board shall establish the strategy for and approve all actions regarding the following policy-related items:

a. General Duties

1. Ends policies
2. Decision-making structure
3. Governance Manual
4. Annual budget
5. Wildlife and boating regulations
5. Financial reporting system
6. Internal control system

b. Administration-Related Duties

1. Agency mission and vision
2. Strategic plan and objectives
3. Executive limitations policies
4. Board/Secretary of Natural  
Resources/Director relationships
5. Board/Director relationship policies
6. Director selection and performance  
evaluation processes

2. The Board shall approve all actions and decisions regarding the following areas of policy implementation and Department operations:

a. General Duties

1. Creation and appointments to Standing, Advisory, and Ad Hoc Committees
2. Mandate and appointment of the Director
3. Audit function

- b. Administration-Related Duties
  - 1. Educate constituents regarding Board policies and strategic plans for the Department
- 3. The Board shall monitor the following elements to ensure compliance with, and continued appropriateness of, Board policies and guidelines:
  - a. General Duties
    - 1. Ends policies
    - 2. Decision-making structure and governance manual
    - 3. Financial reporting system
    - 4. Budget
    - 5. Internal control system
    - 6. Legislation
    - 7. Audit function
  - b. Administration-Related Duties
    - 1. Plan vision and mission
    - 2. Strategic Plan and objectives
    - 3. Executive limitations policies
    - 4. Board/Secretary of Natural Resources/Director relationship
    - 5. Board/Director relationship policies
    - 6. Director performance evaluation processes

4. The Board shall oversee each of the following and take such action as is necessary and/or appropriate:
  - a. General Duties
    1. Implementation of Ends policies
    2. Effectiveness of governance policies
  - b. Administration-related Duties
    1. Effectiveness of executive limitations policies
    2. Effectiveness of Board/Secretary of Natural Resources/Director relationship
    3. Effectiveness of board/director relationship policies
    4. Performance of the Director

#### V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Board recognizes that the Department is an agency within the Natural Resources Secretariat and understands that the governance structure of the Department is unique for this cabinet of state government. While this structure is different, the Board is committed to insuring that the Department operates effectively and appropriately within this important unit of state government. Therefore, the Board will focus on its statutorily-mandated responsibilities as expressed within its mission statement and will also seek to establish and maintain regular communications and coordination of efforts with the

Secretary of Natural Resources in regards to initiatives of the Administration and government-wide procedural and process-related requirements. The Board will pursue the following actions to ensure compliance with initiatives of the Administration and government-wide requirements.

- A. The Board directs the Chair via this governance manual to communicate regularly with the Secretary of Natural Resources to keep him/her informed of Board initiatives and to receive updates on issues and directives from the Administration and the requirements of government-wide procedures.
- B. The Board will solicit input from the Secretary of Natural Resources when it develops performance plans for the Director and as it evaluates the Director's performance. The Board will specifically request that the Secretary of Natural Resources forward information regarding special initiatives or performance measures required by the Governor so that they can be incorporated into the Director's performance plan.
- C. The Board will place requirements upon the Director to meet regularly with the Secretary of Natural Resources to discuss issues relative to the Department and to provide regular, written updates to the Secretary of Natural Resources regarding initiatives, programs, and activities of the Department. The Director will provide summaries of those reports to the Board,

and the Board will solicit feedback from the Secretary of Natural Resources as to the Director's performance in this regard.

## VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

All authority delegated from the Board to the staff will be delegated through the Director; thus, all authority and accountability of Department operations and staff performance rests with the Director.

- A. The Board will instruct the Director to achieve certain results for its constituents through the development of Ends policies. The Board will institute limitations on the Director's latitude for accomplishing these Ends via the establishment of Executive Limitations policies. These policies will spell out the practices, methods, conduct, and other "means" that are available to the Director as he directs the operations of the department.
- B. As long as the Director adheres to a reasonable interpretation of the Ends and Executive Limitations policies, he/she is authorized to create additional policies, make all decisions, take all actions, establish all practices, and develop all activities.
- C. The Board recognizes that changes to its Ends and Executive Limitations policies will shift the boundary between the Board and the Director as well as the Director's latitude in executing the Department's operations. The Board will recognize delegations that

are in place at such times and will respect and support the Director's choices.

- D. The Director is bound only to decisions of the Board acting as a body.
- E. Decisions or instructions of individual Board members, officers, or committee are not binding on the Director except in rare occasions when the Board has specifically authorized such exercise of authority.
- F. The Board will routinely monitor the Department's performance relative to the Ends and Executive Limitations policies and will consider the results in the evaluation of the Director's performance.

G. DIRECTOR

Pursuant to §§29.1-103, 2.2-2100, and 29.1-109.B, the Board shall appoint a Director to head the Department and to act as principal administrative officer. The Director shall have the following powers as defined in the Code of Virginia or by regulations and policies of the Board:

1. Administration

The Director shall:



Regularly brief the Secretary of Natural Resources on initiatives, programs, and activities of the Department. The Director shall meet with the Secretary of Natural Resources or his/her representative at least once every month and shall submit written reports to the Secretary on significant Department activities as requested by the Secretary. He/she shall seek guidance from the Board on mission-related matters and obtain counsel from the Secretary in regards to government-wide procedural and process-related matters and on initiatives of the Administration. The Director shall brief the Board on interactions and issues with the Secretary of Natural Resources at each of the Board's regularly scheduled meetings.

Accept service of process on behalf of the Board.

The Director is authorized to:

Employ persons necessary for the administrative requirements of the Board and to designate the official position and duties of each (§29.1-109.B.3).

Perform such acts as may be necessary to the conduct and establishment of cooperative fish and wildlife projects with the federal government as prescribed by Congress and in compliance with rules and regulations promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior (§~~29.1-109.B.4~~ 29.1-109.B.5).

Make and enter into all contracts and agreements necessary or incidental to the performance of his/her duties and the execution of his/her powers, including, but not limited to, contracts with the United States, other state agencies, and governmental subdivisions of the Commonwealth (§~~29.1-109.B.5~~ 29.1-109.B.6).

Sign on its behalf, documents, leases, and conveyances previously approved by the Board (via Board policy).

Employ special counsel approved by the Governor to defend any Conservation Police Officer appointed by the Director who is prosecuted on any criminal charge arising out of any act committed in the performance of his official duties (§29.1-218).

Grant and acquire interests in land and water through minor land leases, easements, and contracts subject to the necessary state approvals. For the purposes of this policy only, minor land leases, easements, and contracts include utility crossings, access to properties, administrative buildings, antenna sites, boat landings, and wildlife lands; and furthermore, the value of each such minor lease, easement, or contract shall not exceed \$5,000 or a total of \$200,000 per fiscal year for all such leases, easements and contracts (via Board policy).

Recommend to the Board any policy changes that should be made (via Board policy).

Enter into agreements with individuals and entities regarding the commercial use of ~~DGIF~~ DWR facilities and to establish a fee schedule for such use (via Board policy).

2. Conservation of Wildlife

The Director shall:

Appoint regular and special Conservation Police Officers as he may deem necessary to enforce the game and inland fish laws and shall issue a certificate of appointment to each Conservation Police Officer (§29.1-200).

The Director is authorized to:

Enforce or cause to be enforced all laws for the protection, propagation, and preservation of game birds and game animals in the Commonwealth and all fish in the inland waters thereof (§29.1-109.B.1).

Initiate prosecution of all persons who violate such laws, and seize and confiscate wild birds, wild animals, and fish that have been illegally killed, caught, transported, or shipped (§29.1-109.B.2).

On request of any employer owning more than 500 acres, the Director may appoint as special Conservation Police Officers persons employed by the owner. On request of two or more adjoining landowners who own 1,000 or

more contiguous acres, the Director may appoint as special Conservation Police Officers persons employed by one or more of the landowners (§29.1-217).

When practicable, consult with, and keep informed, wildlife and boating constituent organizations so as to benefit Virginia's wildlife and natural resources, and accomplish the Department's mission (§~~29.1-109.B.6~~ 29.1-109.B.7).

Manage, harvest, and sell timber on lands owned by the Board in accordance with the best timber and game management practices (§29.1-111).

Approve the use of drugs on vertebrate wildlife (§29.1-508.1).

Allow employees of federal, state, and local government agencies, and persons holding a valid Commercial Nuisance Animal Permit issued by the Department, to visit conibear-style body-gripping traps that are completely submerged at least once every 72 hours or as otherwise permitted by regulation (§29.1-521 A.9).

Register deer enclosures in certain instances (§29.1-525.1.D).

Authorize the feeding of bear, deer, or turkey on national forest lands and department-owned lands (4VAC15-40-281).

Approve nontoxic shot for waterfowl hunting

(4VAC15-260-140).

Designate waters as “designated stocked trout waters” (4VAC15-20-190) and Trout Heritage Waters (4VAC15-330-10).

Designate waters to be included within the Urban Fishing Program (4VAC15-330-200).

3. Regulations and Rules

The Director is authorized to:

Propose adoption of modifications and amendments to the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species List in accordance with the procedures of §§29.1-501 and 29.1-502 of the Code of Virginia (4VAC15-20-130).

Establish and post rules governing certain activities on Department-owned or controlled lands (4 VAC15-40-280).

Develop rules necessary for the enforcement of the Board’s policy concerning the use of boat ramps (via Board policy).

4. Fees, Licenses, and Permits

The Director shall:

~~Deliver licensing materials to license agents or clerks before the first day of the license year, must account for unused, annually-expiring material and unsold licenses,~~

~~and shall~~ Shall determine and supply equipment and materials needs for suppliers of electronic license sales outlets (§29.1-330).

Approve all permits for threatened and endangered species issued on behalf of the Board according to Board policy.

The Director is authorized to:

Authorize the acceptance of methods of payment of licenses and permit fees (§29.1-112).

Enter into an agreement with the State Forester (Department of Forestry) so the Department can sell permits for hunting and trapping in state forests (§10.1-1152).

Permit special fishing permits for certain veterans (§29.1-312).

Issue at a regular fee up to 25 state resident fishing licenses in the name of any state institution operated by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services for use by patients of the institution (§29.1-313).

Issue special fishing permits for certain handicapped persons (§29.1-314), school classes (§29.1-315), youth camps (§29.1-316), and juveniles (§29.1-317).

Issue complimentary hunting and fishing licenses to certain representatives from federal, state, and nongovernmental organizations (§29.1-339).

Determine an electronic or computerized means for the submission of applications for waterfowl blind licenses (§29.1-348).

Require fur permit holders to submit detailed activity reports (§29.1-405).

Issue permits for the killing of deer or bear when damaging crops, livestock, etc. This authority includes the killing of deer over bait within the political boundaries of any city or town, or any county with a special late antlerless season; this authority also includes the option of using non-lethal control measures for bear and elk (§29.1-529).

Permit the importation, possession, purchase, receipt, or transportation of a nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species and to obtain warrants if necessary to enter and inspect property for the presence, seizure, or eradication of such species (§29.1-574 through 29.1-577).

Issue and revoke licenses for shooting preserves under certain conditions (§§29.1-600 and 29.1-609).

Obtain licenses, permits, stamps, or records from license agents as necessary to administer the Department's licensing program (4VAC15-20-110).

~~Appoint new consignment agents based on provisions of 4VAC15-20-120. [Repealed 9/1/2025]~~

~~Administer the Department's license agent program via 4VAC15-20-120. [Repealed 9/1/2025]~~

Set permit schedules, permit conditions, delegate signature authority, establish protocols for handling appeals to permit decisions, and for establishing policy for re-issuance of permits to individuals whose previous permits have been revoked or denied (4VAC15-30-5).

Issue special permits to reduce or control animal populations by licensed hunters or licensed trappers on areas designated by department wildlife biologists (4VAC15-40-240).

~~Issue permits and establish special rules according to procedures in 4VAC15-320-140. [Repealed 1/1/2019]~~

Authorize or renew permits to allow existing boat docks and piers on the Department's public fishing lakes (via Board policy).



5. Boating

The Director shall:

Furnish annual lists of boat registrations to commissioners of revenue (§29.1-707).

Insure that the Department has an enhanced enforcement effort from Memorial Day through Labor Day at Smith Mountain Lake that is commensurate with the level of boating activity (§29.1-739.2).

The Director is authorized to:

Designate agents for temporary boat registration agents (§29.1-703.2).

Award certificate of boat registration numbers directly or to authorize others to act as agents and award certificates of numbers (§29.1-706).

Approve or disapprove requests for placement of “no wake” buoys or other markers for private individuals upon application from a local governing body (§29.1-744.E).

Require and approve materials provided to individuals renting a personal watercraft (§29.1-749.3).

Conduct hearings, inspect records of a licensed watercraft dealer, and to take action in the name of the Commonwealth regarding complaints and violations of

the Virginia Watercraft Dealer Licensing Act (§§29.1-803, 29.1-804, and 29.1-806).

Administer the watercraft dealer licensing system pursuant to provisions of Article 2, Chapter 8, in Title 29.1 of the Code of Virginia.

To allow exemptions to the requirement that decals signifying the last month and year during which the certificate of number is valid must be displayed on each side of a motorboat as per §29.1-703. (Board Resolution, November 29, 2005).

The Director may delegate other responsibilities, duties and authority, not specified above, to members of the administrative staff of the Department to improve or advance the efficiency of the Department's operations.

## VII. COMMITTEES

### A. STANDING COMMITTEES

The Board may establish standing committees that it deems necessary to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities and fulfilling its mission. The purpose of a standing committee must be clearly stated to avoid overlap in responsibilities with other Board committees, the Board's officers, and the Director.

After it is instituted, a standing committee shall remain in existence until dissolved by appropriate action of the Board.

Additionally upon establishment, a standing committee shall develop a committee charter that will include a purpose statement, an overview of the committee's responsibilities and duties, its operating procedures, and its composition. The committee charter will be presented to the Board for review and approval. Committee Charters shall be reviewed as a part of the Board's three-year review of the Governance Manual or at any other time the Board or the committees determine necessary and will be attached to the Board's Governance Manual.

All standing committees of the Board are subject to the following principles and guidelines, unless specifically given other guidance by vote of the Board:

1. Standing committees are to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities, and in doing so, will frequently interact with the Department's staff. In those interactions, the committees may offer advice or suggestions to staff, but will not provide specific instructions or directions to staff.
2. A standing committee may not act or speak for the Board, unless the Board specifically authorizes such representation for specific purposes.
3. Standing committees will normally focus on the development of policy within specific topical areas and will provide policy alternatives and associated implications to the Board for deliberation and action. These committees will not intrude into operational issues

or decision-making that are in the Director's realm of responsibilities.

4. All standing committees shall notify all members of the Board regarding the time and place of all committee meetings. Any Board member may attend the meeting of any standing committee and participate in its discussions; however, only members of the committee may vote on items under consideration by that body.

The Board has established standing committees as follows:

1. **FINANCE, AUDIT, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

The purpose of the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee is to conduct initial and continuing reviews of issues regarding internal and external audits, and the financial conditions, both short- and long-term, of the Department. While financial expertise is not a requirement for appointment to the Board, the Board Chair shall consider the financial background of members in making appointments to the Committee. Audit reviews will include compliance with Board policies, accounting practices and auditing procedures, adequacy of financial reports and disclosures, the Director's expenses, and violations of law. Financial evaluations will focus on implementation of the Department's annual budgets as approved by the Board as well as the Department's long-term funding needs. The Committee will develop and submit reports, draft policies, and/or

recommendations regarding audits and the finances of the Department to the full Board for its consideration.

## 2. EDUCATION, PLANNING, AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee is to evaluate its educational, planning, and outreach needs relative to the statutory mandates, mission, and strategic plans of the Board, and to develop and submit reports, draft policies, and recommendations regarding those needs, as necessary, to the full Board for its consideration. The Committee will regularly evaluate the Department's mission, the Board's policies, its long-term planning requirements, and Governance Manual and develop recommendations regarding mission and vision statements, policy and governance changes, and strategic planning for the Board. The Committee will also investigate reported breaches of The Board's Code of Ethics and Conduct and report its findings to the Board.

## 3. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Nominations Committee will interact with the membership of the Board to develop candidates for the officers of the Board for consideration by the full Board. The Committee will report its slate of candidates at a Board meeting in the last quarter of the fiscal year.

## 4. WILDLIFE AND BOAT COMMITTEE

The purpose for the Wildlife and Boat Committee is to evaluate the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's wildlife and boating resources, and to draft recommendations and/or policies addressing those needs for consideration by the entire Board and to serve as the Motorboat Committee in accordance with §29.1-701 of the Code of Virginia. This Committee will also assess the needs, desires, and impacts of the users of these resources and provide guidance to the full Board as described above.

#### 5. LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

The purpose for the Law Enforcement Committee is to evaluate the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's and the Department's Law Enforcement resources, and to draft recommendations and/or policies addressing those needs for consideration by the entire Board. This Committee will also assess the needs, desires, and impacts of the users of the law enforcement resources and provide guidance to the full Board as described above.

#### B. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Board may appoint advisory committees as it deems necessary to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth for the proper

stewardship of the state's wildlife and boating resources and the operation of the Department. The Board will establish the purpose, composition, and qualifications for membership of each advisory committee prior to its creation. The recommendations of an advisory committee are not binding upon the Board. The Board may instruct the Director to provide staff support to an advisory committee, but the committee will provide its reports and/or recommendations directly to the Board for its consideration.

C. SPECIAL (AD HOC) COMMITTEES

The Board may establish special (ad hoc) committees, as needed to carry out specified tasks. A special committee shall cease to exist upon completion of its assignment and presentation of its final report and/or recommendations to the Board. A special committee may not be established to carry out an assignment that overlaps existing functions of any standing or advisory committee.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC

The General Assembly established the Board of Wildlife Resources to represent the public's interest in the wildlife and boating resources of the Commonwealth and to oversee the operations of the Department of Wildlife Resources. The Governor appoints the members of the Board to serve as stewards of those resources and the Department. As the public's trustee in these matters, the Board will conduct its business in an environment that not only allows, but also invites, public scrutiny. The Board of Wildlife Resources shall operate in full

compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA) and the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act.

A. PRINCIPLES

1. The Board and the Department shall maintain open communications with the public, its constituent groups and partners in wildlife conservation, and the news media.
2. The Board and the Department will disseminate information, as appropriate, to the public through appropriate channels in an expeditious manner and will, when justified, protect the confidentiality of its transactions on the public's behalf.
3. All meetings and records of such meetings of the Board shall be open to the public except for such meetings that are closed pursuant to, and in accordance with, the provisions of Title 2.2, Chapter 37 of the Code of Virginia.
4. Board members will not engage in discussions with the public or the press about investigations or litigation. All attempts to pursue such contacts, oral or written, shall be strongly discouraged. Each member shall keep a record of any such occurrences and shall forward notice of them to the Director, who will seek guidance from the Office of the Attorney General when appropriate.



5. Because its regulatory actions are subject to review, Board members receiving ex parte contacts during official, public comment periods for pending regulatory actions will encourage the contacting party to place his or her comments into the public record and shall refer all such contacts, in writing, to the Director for inclusion in the public record.

B. COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

1. The Board speaks through its resolutions, and Board members are free to communicate with the media regarding those decisions.
2. The Board may designate the Chair or other member to be the spokesperson for specific issues or resolutions and will refer the media to the designated spokesperson in those cases. The Board herewith authorizes the following delegation:
  - i. The Director is authorized to act as spokesperson regarding administrative and operational matters.
3. The Board Chair shall review all official press releases regarding Board policy, activities, or other Board-related matters prior to release.

IX. OPINIONS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

According to §2.2-505.A of the Code of Virginia, The Board Chair or the Director shall make written requests for official advisory opinions from the Attorney General. The Director shall notify the Board Chair upon requesting an official opinion from the Office of the Attorney General and shall notify the full Board at its next meeting.

#### X. AMENDMENT OF GOVERNANCE MANUAL

The Governance Manual of the Board of Wildlife Resources may be amended by a majority vote of the Board as long as the proposed amendment is provided to the Board at its preceding, regular meeting.

If urgent and/or extraordinary circumstances warrant immediate action by the Board, the Board may amend an element or provision at the meeting when the proposed amendment is introduced, provided that the Board approves such action prior to consideration of the proposed amendment.

In addition to the foregoing provisions, the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee shall evaluate the Governance Manual every three years to ascertain whether refinements or changes are needed. The Committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the Board, which will take action on the recommendations at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

#### XI. VALIDITY OF GOVERNANCE MANUAL

If any of the policies or provisions of the Governance Manual are found to be in conflict with any provisions of the Code of Virginia, the

statutory provisions of the Code shall apply instead of the policy or provision in the Governance Manual. In the event that any element or provision of the Governance Manual is invalid due to a conflict with the Code of Virginia, the remaining provisions of the Governance Manual shall continue in full force and effect. The Board will initiate its process to amend its Governance Manual to conform to the provisions of the Code at its next regularly scheduled meeting according to the provisions in article IX above.

Reviewed for posting to the ~~VDGIF Web Site~~ DWR website - ~~July 31, 2008~~ February 1, 2026 [pending final Board approval at January 2026 meetings]

Reviewed for presentation to the Education, Planning and Outreach Committee per the required 3-year review and evaluation – ~~September 4, 2008~~ January 21, 2026.

#### DOCUMENT HISTORY:

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on September 16, 2008 and the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries on October 23, 2008 (first action) and February 27, 2009 (final action). These amendments were the result of the required 3 – year review and evaluation

Reviewed for presentation to the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee per the required 3-year review and evaluation—April 2, 2012

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on May 16, 2012 and the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries on June 12, 2012. These amendments were the result of the required 3 – year review and evaluation

Reviewed for presentation to the Education, Planning and Outreach Committee per the required 3-year review and evaluation—February 10, 2015

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on March 3, 2015 and the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries on March 17, 2015. These amendments were the result of the required 3 – year review and evaluation

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on October 18, 2017 and the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries on October 19, 2017. These amendments were the result of some administrative wording changes and a change to ensure that board meetings were held once per quarter as required. These amendments were the result of the required 3-year review and evaluation.

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on October 23, 2019 and the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries on October 24, 2019. These amendments were the result of administrative wording changes regarding the Chair and Vice Chair and create two committees from the Wildlife, Boat, and Law Enforcement Committees consisting of the Wildlife and Boat Committee and the Law Enforcement Committee. These amendments were the result of the required 3-year review and evaluation.

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on January 20, 2021 and by the Board of Wildlife Resources on January 21, 2021 with final approval of the Board on March 18, 2021. These amendments were the result of the agency 51

name change from Game and Inland Fisheries to Wildlife Resources.

Amendments approved by the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee on January 21, 2026 and by the Board of Wildlife Resources on January 22, 2026 with final approval of the Board on January 22, 2026. These amendments were clerical and technical in nature and did not alter any authorities or responsibilities of the Board, Director, or Department.

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT**

**~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026**

## **I. PURPOSE**

The Board of Wildlife Resources, a supervisory board of gubernatorial appointees to represent the public's trust for wildlife and boating resources, must be self-governing, self-policing, and have consistent guidelines for its operations. The Board of Directors hereby establishes its Code of Ethics and Conduct to provide guidance to its members regarding ethical and behavioral considerations and/or actions as they address their duties and obligations during their appointment.

Compliance with the provisions of this Code will allow the Board to fully implement its Governance Manual; to enhance relationships and foster teamwork among Board members and also with staff; and to build respect, confidence, and credibility with the citizens of the Commonwealth.

## **II. CODE OF ETHICS**

Each Board member shall adhere to the following Code of Ethics:

- A. Board members shall act with integrity and in an ethical and professional manner in their interactions with each other, the Director, the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Administration, members of the General Assembly, Department employees, consultants, advisors, and the public.
- B. Board members shall maintain high ethical and moral character, both professionally and personally, so that their behavior will reflect positively upon the Board of Wildlife Resources and the Department.
- C. Board members shall act with competence and shall strive to maintain and enhance their competence and that of their fellow Board members.
- D. Board members shall use proper care and exercise independent professional judgment in the performance of their duties.
- E. Board members shall maintain confidentiality about all matters that are considered in closed meetings.
- F. Board members shall follow the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act in regards to public records, owned, prepared, or in possession of the Department.

G. Board members are required to be familiar and comply with the provisions of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, §§ 2.2-3100 et.seq. of the Code (the Conflict Act). In addition to such compliance, and beyond the definition of “conflict of interest” contained in the Conflict Act, Board members will meet the following criteria in order to avoid even the appearance of impropriety:

1. Board members will have no private contracts or business dealings with the Department.

2. Board members will recuse themselves and will not participate in the consideration of any matter or attempt to affect the outcome of any issue before the Board when to do so might result in even the appearance of a conflict of interest as defined by the Conflict Act.

3. Board members will not abuse their authority by using their offices to obtain favorable treatment by the Department for any person.

4. Board members shall receive no payments from the Department or from any funds or transactions of the Department except for appropriate compensation for their services and reimbursement for expenses as provided by law under §2.2-2813 of the Code.

H. Board members shall exercise due diligence to avoid breaches of duty via negligence, intentional action or omission, and unauthorized communications with individuals trying to influence by improper means or seeking to receive personal gains through Board decisions.

I. Board members recognize that all Board decisions and actions are to be based on integrity, competence, and independent judgment on the merits and benefits to the wildlife and boating resources and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

### **III. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Board members shall comply with the following standards of conduct:

A. Board members shall not engage in conduct that would compromise, discredit, or diminish the integrity of the Board and/or the Department.

B. The Board will respect the authority of the Director and will provide instruction and direction only to the Director. The Board will not instruct the Director in regards to specific operational decisions.

1. Board members will be sensitive to the considerable workload of the staff when making requests for assistance, and all requests for assistance will be made through the Director.
  2. The Board will respect the Director's authority in all personnel matters.
  3. Board members will reorient staff that attempt to use Board members as their representatives or use Board members as an avenue for input to the Department or the Director.
- C.** No individual member shall give orders or instructions to any employee of the Department. This does not preclude an individual member from offering his or her opinion, based upon his or her expertise and/or experience, when an employee of the Department requests such an opinion.
1. Board members must recognize that, as individuals or as subgroups, they lack the authority to give orders or direction to the Director except when such instruction is given according to the Board's Governance Manual or specific delegation.
  2. Individual Board members are not to become involved in operational management of the Department.
- D.** Board members will operate with the understanding that they represent both the citizenry of the Commonwealth as well as constituents from a particular Congressional District.
- E.** Board members will give due consideration in receiving professional and scientific input from staff, realizing that staff proposals represent the current biological thinking (§29.1-109) usually over large geographical areas.
- F.** Board members will strive to establish sound working relationships with each other by taking time to know and appreciate each other as individuals.
1. Board members will be respectful of each other and will not utilize Board meetings to upstage or embarrass colleagues.
  2. Board members will respectfully consider the opinions of others during deliberations, strive for integration of viewpoints or consensus building in decision-making, and will respect the corporate judgment of the Board in regards to its decisions.
- G.** Board members will refrain from using Board meetings or regulation approval processes to advance their personal agenda.



- H.** Board members will strive to cultivate and maintain good relations with the public, press, and constituent groups; however, they will recognize their limitations to speak for the Board as set forth in the Board's Governance Manual.
- I.** Individual Board members shall refer all proposals or other communications regarding potential or existing programs, contracts, or services to the Director.
- J.** Board members shall not communicate with persons under consideration for selection by the Board and/or the Director for contracts, acquisitions, etc. while the procurement process is in progress.
- K.** A Board member shall not participate in a breach of this Code of Ethics and Conduct by another member, contribute to the concealment of such breach, or knowingly or negligently allow such breach to occur.

#### **IV. GIFTS**

- A.** A Board member shall not solicit or receive a gift or favor from any person, company, or organization, or from any intermediary interest, that may compromise or appear to compromise the independent judgment of the member regarding his or her obligations to the Board. All gifts will be reported in accordance with the State and Local Government Conflicts Act (§§2.2-3100 et seq.).
- B.** Any gift received by a Board member that is prohibited by this policy shall immediately be returned to its source. If a gift is immediately returned to the sender or donated to a suitable charitable organization, it will not be necessary to report the gift.

#### **V. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- A.** The provisions of this policy do not excuse any Board member from other restrictions of state or federal law regarding conflicts of interest.
- B.** Any breach of this Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be reported to the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee. The Committee will investigate, as appropriate, and report its findings and recommendations to the Board.
- C.** All Board members will sign an affirmation pledging to honor and follow, according to both the letter and the spirit, this Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## **Charter of the Wildlife and Boat Committee**

~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

The Board of Wildlife Resources hereby constitutes and establishes a Wildlife and Boat Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) with responsibility and specific duties as described below.

### **Purpose:**

As presented in the Board's Governance Manual, the Wildlife and Boat Committee is to evaluate the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's wildlife and boating resources and to draft recommendations and/or policies addressing those needs for consideration by the entire Board and to serve as the Motorboat Committee in accordance with § 29.1-701 of the Code of Virginia. This Committee will also assess the needs, desires, and impacts of the users of these resources and provide guidance to the full Board as described above.

### **Composition:**

The Committee shall be comprised of three (3) members of the Board of Wildlife Resources. Two alternate members may additionally be appointed; however, the alternate members shall be counted for quorum purposes and vote only in the absence of regular members. Committee members shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Board with each member to serve a term as determined by the Board Chair at the time of Committee appointment. A quorum of the Committee shall consist of two members entitled to vote at a meeting.

### **Responsibility:**

The Committee is to serve as the Board's primary workgroup to address such issues as, but not necessarily limited to, Boating Safety and Boating Safety Education Programs, The Wildlife Action Plan, the Department's Wildlife Diversity, Fisheries and Wildlife Management Programs, Land Acquisition and Facilities Development needs, Wildlife and Boating Regulatory and legislative initiatives, and Wildlife and Fisheries health issues.

### **Meetings:**

The Committee generally meets at least four (4) times each fiscal year, with additional meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee. Fewer meetings may be approved by the Board under extenuating circumstances. The Chair may request the Director to have Department staff members be present at meetings of the Committee to provide information and/or expertise regarding the business matters, issues, and discussion topics of the Committee.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of each Committee meeting are to be prepared and distributed for review to Committee members. Minutes will be approved at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

**Specific Duties:**

1. Serve as a forum for discussion of specific legislative initiatives for the Wildlife and Boat Program areas and make recommendations to the full Board for consideration and/or action.
2. Review and periodically assess the Department's Wildlife and Boating Programs to determine that these programs continue to be aligned with the agency's mission and strategic vision/plan. Recommend changes if needed.
3. Consider and make recommendations on the Capital Program needs of the Department as it relates to the potential for enhanced conservation and recreational opportunities.
4. Conduct assessments of the needs, desires and impacts of various resource users and Department constituents and provide guidance to the full Board.

## **Charter of the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee**

~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

The Board of Wildlife Resources hereby constitutes and establishes a Finance Audit and Compliance Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) with authority, responsibility, and specific duties as described below.

### **Purpose:**

The Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee is to conduct initial and continuing reviews of issues regarding internal and external audits, and the financial conditions, both short- and long-term, of the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Audit reviews will include compliance with Board policies, accounting practices and auditing procedures, adequacy of financial reports and disclosures, the Director's expenses, and violations of law. Financial evaluations will focus on implementation of the Department's annual budgets as approved by the Board as well as the Department's long-term funding needs. The Committee will develop and submit reports, draft policies, and/or recommendations regarding audits and the finances of the Department to the full Board for its consideration.

### **Composition:**

The Committee shall be comprised of not less than three or more than five members appointed by the Chair of the Board. The Chair may also appoint alternate members, who shall be counted for quorum purposes and vote only in the absence of regular members. These members are to be independent of management and operating executives. The majority of the members must be financially literate. One of the members shall be appointed by the Board Chairman to Chair the Committee. A quorum of the committee shall consist of a majority of the members.

### **Authority:**

The Committee is granted the authority to investigate any activity of DWR, and all employees are directed to cooperate as requested by members of the Committee. The Committee with the approval of the Board is empowered to seek assistance from persons having special competence in these areas, as necessary, to assist the Committee in fulfilling its responsibility.

### **Responsibility:**

The Committee is to serve as a focal point for the communication between the Board of Directors, the Chief Compliance Review Officer, the external auditors, and DWR management as their duties relate to financial accounting, reporting, risk management, and controls. The Committee is to assist the Board of Directors in fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities as to accounting policies and reporting practices of DWR and all subsidiaries and the sufficiency of auditing relative thereto. It is to be the Board's principal agent in assuring the quality of Compliance Review, the integrity of management, and the adequacy and transparency of

financial and operating disclosures. The opportunity for the Chief Compliance Review Officer, any external auditors or people with expertise in these areas to meet with the entire Board of Directors, as needed, however, is not to be restricted.

**Meetings:**

The Committee generally meets at least four times each fiscal year, and as many times as the Committee deems necessary. Fewer meetings may be approved by the Board under extenuating circumstances. As necessary or desirable, the chair may request that members of management, the Chief Compliance Review Officer, and the representatives of external auditors be present at meetings of the Committee. The Chief Compliance Review Officer shall be requested to attend any meeting of the committee related to its oversight responsibilities for auditing, financial reporting, risk management or internal control structure issues.

**Minutes:**

The minutes of each meeting are to be prepared and sent to Committee members and approved at subsequent meetings.

**Specific Duties:**

The Committee is to be informed and vigilant in fulfilling the following duties:

1. Review the budgetary and financial implications of management's tactical and strategic plans submitted to the full board.
2. Review any report by DWR's Finance, Audit and Compliance ~~Review~~ Committee. Review any recommendations, implementations, and follow-up with the Chief Compliance Review Officer
3. The Committee chair or designee will serve as the Board's point of contact with the external auditors and will meet with the external auditors during the entrance and exit conferences and at other times as needed or upon request of the external auditors.
4. The Committee chair or designee will review with management and the external auditors if necessary or desirable, upon completion of their audit, financial results for the year or for the period under audit.
5. Review any deficiencies noted by the external auditors in the agency's electronic data processing procedures and controls, any serious difficulties the external auditors encountered with management in performing the audit, and any deficiencies noted by the external auditors in the internal control structure.
6. Review any activity reports from the Chief Compliance Review Officer.
7. Review with the agency's management, the Chief Compliance Review Officer and any other entity or person, it deems necessary, the agency's general policies and procedures

to reasonably assure the adequacy of internal accounting and financial reporting controls, including such controls related to the Executive Director's expenses and any use of agency assets.

8. Review with Chief Compliance Review Officer, the significant findings, current status, and management's corrective action as a result of any compliance reviews.
9. Manage the Department's internal audit function including review and approval of the internal audit's charter, annual audit work plan, reports and recommendations. The internal auditor shall report functionally to the Chair of the committee and administratively to the Department's Director or designee. The Committee shall create performance and evaluation criteria for the internal auditor, and shall conduct annual evaluations of the auditor's performance with the Director. The Committee Chairman shall participate with the Director in decisions regarding the appointment of the internal auditor, and the Committee's approval shall be obtained by the Director prior to the appointment or removal of the internal auditor.
10. Initiate any special investigations of breach of the Board's Code of Ethics and Conduct; conflict of interest; and non-compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
11. Evaluate audits and reviews conducted by any other governmental entities that involve financial or compliance matters.
12. Review with the Attorney General's Office at least on an annual basis, the status of legal matters that may have a significant impact on the agency's financial status.
13. Meet privately with the Chief Compliance Review Officer and the Department's Internal Auditor annually as deemed appropriate.
14. Submit to the Board of Directors the results of performing the foregoing duties, and submit to the Board of Directors any findings or recommendations that the Committee may have.

## **Charter of the Law Enforcement Committee**

~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

The Board of Wildlife Resources hereby constitutes and establishes a Law Enforcement Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) with responsibility and specific duties as described below.

### **Purpose:**

As presented in the Board's Governance Manual, the Law Enforcement Committee is to evaluate the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's and the Department's law enforcement resources, and to draft recommendations and/or policies addressing those needs for consideration by the entire Board. This Committee will also assess the needs, desires, and impacts of the users of these resources and provide guidance to the full Board as described above.

### **Composition:**

The Committee shall be comprised of not fewer than three (3) members of the Board of Wildlife Resources consisting of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and one other member. Committee members shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Board with each member to serve a term as determined by the Board Chair at the time of Committee appointment. A quorum of the Committee shall consist of two members entitled to vote at a meeting.

### **Responsibility:**

The Committee is to serve as the Board's primary workgroup to address such issues as, but not necessarily limited to law enforcement and its function within the Department and the Commonwealth as it relates to the agency's overall missions.

### **Meetings:**

The Committee generally meets at least four (4) times each fiscal year, with additional meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee. Fewer meetings may be approved by the Board under extenuating circumstances. The Chair may request the Director to have Department staff members be present at meetings of the Committee to provide information and/or expertise regarding the business matters, issues, and discussion topics of the Committee.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of each Committee meeting are to be prepared and distributed for review to Committee members. Minutes will be approved at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

### **Specific Duties:**

1. Serve as a forum for discussion of specific legislative initiatives for the Law Enforcement Program areas and make recommendations to the full Board for consideration and/or action.
2. Review and periodically assess the Department's Law Enforcement Programs to determine that these programs continue to be aligned with the agency's mission and strategic vision/plan. Recommend changes if needed.
3. Consider and make recommendations on the Capital Program needs of the Department as it relates to the potential for law enforcement services and function.
4. Conduct assessments of the needs, desires and impacts of various resource users and Department constituents and provide guidance to the full Board.



## **Charter of the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee**

~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

The Board of Wildlife Resources hereby constitutes and establishes an Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) with responsibility and specific duties as described below.

### **Purpose:**

As presented in the Board's Governance Manual, the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee is to evaluate its educational, planning, and outreach needs relative to the statutory mandates, mission, and strategic plans of the Board, and to develop and submit reports, draft policies, and recommendations regarding those needs, as necessary, to the full Board for its consideration. The Committee will regularly evaluate the Department's mission, the Board's policies, its long-term planning requirements, and Governance Manual and develop recommendations regarding mission and vision statements, policy and governance changes, and strategic planning for the Board. The Committee will also investigate reported breaches of The Board's Code of Ethics and Conduct and report its findings to the Board.

### **Composition:**

The Committee shall be comprised of no less than three (3) members of the Board of Wildlife Resources. Chair of the Board shall appoint the Committee Chair and the remaining members to each serve a term as determined by the Board Chair at the time of Committee appointment. A quorum of the Committee shall consist of a majority of the members.

### **Responsibility:**

The Committee is to serve as the Board's primary work group to address such issues as, but not necessarily limited to, Board member orientation and training programs, Executive Director's performance plan and evaluation, legislative and/or regulatory initiatives, strategic vision and planning, agency mission, agency education programs, and agency outreach programs.

### **Meetings:**

The Committee generally meets at least two (2) times each fiscal year, with additional meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee. Fewer meetings may be approved by the Board under extenuating circumstances. The Chair may request the Executive Director to have Department staff members be present at meetings of the Committee to provide information and/or expertise regarding the business matters, issues, and discussion topics of the Committee.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of each Committee meeting are to be prepared and distributed for review to Committee members. Minutes will be approved at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

**Specific Duties:**

1. Provide guidance to the Director for the development of an orientation program for new members appointed to the Board of Wildlife Resources. Orientation for new members shall be conducted as soon as practicable following their appointment.
2. Coordinate with the agency Director, the Secretary of Natural Resources, and the Governor's Office (as necessary) to develop the job elements and performance expectations that will comprise the annual performance plan for the agency Director.
3. Develop the performance evaluation instrument to annually conduct the Director's performance evaluation. This evaluation shall be conducted in October of each year.
4. Solicit recommendations from the Board and the Director regarding specific legislative initiatives for the agency to submit for consideration by the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Governor.
5. Review and periodically assess the agency's mission statement and provide recommendations regarding needed changes, updates, or other modifications.
6. Coordinate the development and implementation of an operational strategic vision and planning document for the Department that will serve as the foundation to establish program priorities and resource allocations.
7. Review and periodically assess the Department's educational programs to determine that these programs continue to be aligned with the agency's mission and strategic vision/plan. Recommend changes if needed.
8. Review and periodically assess the Department's outreach programs (to constituents and other aspects of the general public) to determine that these programs continue to be aligned with the agency's mission and strategic vision/plan. Recommend changes if needed.
9. Recommend, as needed, additional training/continuing education for all members of the Board to ensure that the Board is well-positioned to meet its obligations (fiduciary responsibility) and its expectations (loyalty to mission).
10. Review all Board policies and recommend changes to the full Board.

## **Charter of the Law Enforcement Committee**

~~Revised March 18, 2021~~ January 22, 2026

The Board of Wildlife Resources hereby constitutes and establishes a Law Enforcement Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) with responsibility and specific duties as described below.

### **Purpose:**

As presented in the Board's Governance Manual, the Law Enforcement Committee is to evaluate the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's and the Department's law enforcement resources, and to draft recommendations and/or policies addressing those needs for consideration by the entire Board. This Committee will also assess the needs, desires, and impacts of the users of these resources and provide guidance to the full Board as described above.

### **Composition:**

The Committee shall be comprised of not fewer than three (3) members of the Board of Wildlife Resources consisting of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and one other member. Committee members shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Board with each member to serve a term as determined by the Board Chair at the time of Committee appointment. A quorum of the Committee shall consist of two members entitled to vote at a meeting.

### **Responsibility:**

The Committee is to serve as the Board's primary workgroup to address such issues as, but not necessarily limited to law enforcement and its function within the Department and the Commonwealth as it relates to the agency's overall missions.

### **Meetings:**

The Committee generally meets at least four (4) times each fiscal year, with additional meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee. Fewer meetings may be approved by the Board under extenuating circumstances. The Chair may request the Director to have Department staff members be present at meetings of the Committee to provide information and/or expertise regarding the business matters, issues, and discussion topics of the Committee.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of each Committee meeting are to be prepared and distributed for review to Committee members. Minutes will be approved at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

### **Specific Duties:**

1. Serve as a forum for discussion of specific legislative initiatives for the Law Enforcement Program areas and make recommendations to the full Board for consideration and/or action.
2. Review and periodically assess the Department's Law Enforcement Programs to determine that these programs continue to be aligned with the agency's mission and strategic vision/plan. Recommend changes if needed.
3. Consider and make recommendations on the Capital Program needs of the Department as it relates to the potential for law enforcement services and function.
4. Conduct assessments of the needs, desires and impacts of various resource users and Department constituents and provide guidance to the full Board.