

2025-26 WILDLIFE REGULATION REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

BOARD REGULATION PROPOSALS *Staff Final Recommendations*



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2025-26 WILDLIFE REGULATION PROCESS

Oct 7 – Dec 6, 2024 -- Public Scoping Period: public comments solicited via web-based input forms, staffs contact constituent groups and/or individuals to assess regulatory concerns

January 22 & 23, 2025 – Wildlife & Boat Committee/DWR Board Meetings: preliminary review of issues, solicit Board regulatory concepts

Dec 9, 2024 – February 2025: Staff committees review input, analyze data, and consult with constituent groups and individual stakeholders to develop proposal-stage regulation amendment recommendations

March 20, 2025 – DWR Board Meeting: Staffs present proposal-stage recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on staff recommendations and additional recommendations, Board deliberates and proposes regulation amendments (*Wildlife & Boat Committee Meeting – March 19th*)

April 9 – May 9, 2025: Regulation Proposal Comment Period: public input is solicited on the Board's proposed regulation amendments

May 22, 2025 – DWR Board Meeting: Staffs present final recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on proposed amendments, Board deliberates and votes on proposed regulation amendments (*Wildlife & Boat Committee Meeting – May 21st*)

August 1, 2025: Effective date for regulation amendments adopted by the Board



Public Comments

Online Public Comments – 1,461

Deer – 611	Elk – 33
Bear – 522	General – 110
Furbearer & Waterfowl – 50	Firearms – 135

Email/Hand-Written Public Comments – 682

Firearms – 663	Bear – 12	Deer – 7	Other – 2
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Total Public Comments – 2,143



REGULATIONS: BLOCK FORMAT

Elk Regulations

- 4VAC15-90-530 (elk hunt lottery)
- 4VAC15-90-540 (landowner program)
- 4VAC15-90-550 (Conservation License)

General Regulations

- 4VAC15-20-50 (pet fox renewal)
- 4VAC15-20-65 (license fees)
- 4VAC15-20-130 (T&E species list)
- 4VAC15-20-155 (camping)
- 4VAC15-30-40 (snakeheads/prairie dogs)
- 4VAC15-40-282 (bear feeding)

Furbearer & Waterfowl

Blind Regulations

- 4VAC15-160-31 (opossum trapping)
- 4VAC15-210-51 (raccoon trapping)
- 4VAC15-170-30 (otter tagging)
- 4VAC15-260-50 (Back Bay blinds)

Firearm Regulations

- 4VAC15-40-60 (cased gun law)
- 4VAC15-40-61 (hunting on public land)
- 4VAC15-40-62 (DWR shooting ranges)
- 4VAC15-40-70 (dog training season)
- 4VAC15-210-10 (raccoon chase season)
- 4VAC15-70-60 (bobcat archery season)
- 4VAC15-240-60 (turkey archery season)



QUESTIONS



REGULATIONS: BLOCK FORMAT

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the regulation amendments contained within the block format as presented by staff.



DEER REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-10. Open season; generally. (pg. 6)

- Establish 4-week firearms season on private lands in 20 counties WBR
- Establish 7-week season on private lands western Amherst, Bedford, Carroll, Floyd, Franklin, Montgomery, western Nelson, Page, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockingham (east of 613 & 731) Shenandoah, Warren, and Wythe counties
- Implement early and late antlerless only firearms season in Greene, Hanover, Henrico, and James City counties
- Make descriptions for public and private lands in Carroll and Roanoke consistent with other counties



DEER REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-70. Archery Hunting. (pg. 25)

- Clarify that the late archery deer season is only open where the firearms deer season ends prior to the first Saturday in January
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special archery seasons

Recommended Modifications

1. Start the late archery season the “day” after the general firearms season closes
2. Maintain the current late archery season in Alleghany, Bath, Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Highland, Lee, Rockingham (west of 613/731), Rockbridge, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise



DEER REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-80. Muzzleloading gun hunting. (pg. 28)

- Clarifying that the late muzzleloading season is only open where the firearms deer season ends prior to the first Saturday in January
- Provide 2 either-sex hunting days in Buchanan County (1 early season, 1 late season)
- Provide 1 either-sex hunting day during the late season on federal lands in Dickenson County
- Update definitions of muzzleloading rifles and revolvers
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special muzzleloading seasons

Recommended Modifications

1. Increase the early and late muzzleloader season in Rockbridge to full season, either-sex
2. Correct oversight in regulation language by adding Rockbridge to the list of counties WBR that allow either-sex deer hunting on National Forest and Department-owned lands on the last day of the late muzzleloader season



DEER REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-89. Earn a buck. (pg. 33)

- Establish EAB on private lands in Chesterfield, Craig, Giles, and Spotsylvania
- Clarify that antlerless deer taken on kill permits do not fulfill the EAB requirement

4VAC15-90-91. General firearms season either-sex deer hunting days. (pg. 35)

- Increase either-sex hunting days in 29 counties/cities
- Modify text to maintain the current 3 either-sex days in Lee County
- Increase either-sex hunting days on 4 WMAs and Cumberland State Forest
- Add references to federal lands in Dickenson and Wise counties to maintain antlered deer only hunting on these lands

Recommended Modifications

1. Increase the either-sex hunting days in Caroline County from 8 to 15 days
2. Amend the increase in either-sex hunting days in Rockbridge County to increase from 3 to 8 days



QUESTIONS



DEER REGULATIONS

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed deer regulation amendments as presented by staff.



BEAR REGULATIONS

4VAC15-50-11. Open season; generally. (pg. 58)

- Decrease the length of the firearms season by 25 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Add an additional week of firearms hunting in Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Prince Edward counties
- Create consistent, county-wide bear firearms seasons in the counties Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe to reflect the current bear firearms seasons north/west of I-81

Recommended Modifications

1. Remove the 3-day early season from Bland, Craig, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, Roanoke, Smyth, Tazewell, and Wythe counties
2. Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season



BEAR REGULATIONS

4VAC15-50-70. Archery hunting. (pg. 67)

- Decrease the length of the archery season by 14 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special archery seasons

Recommended Modifications

Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season

4VAC15-50-71. Muzzleloading gun hunting. (pg. 69)

- Decrease the length of the muzzleloading season by 3 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Update definitions of muzzleloading rifles and revolvers
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special muzzleloading seasons

Recommended Modifications

Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season



BEAR REGULATIONS

4VAC15-50-120. Bear hound training season. (pg. 72)

- Provide 18 days of opportunity to chase bears without harvesting in 23 counties where bear harvest with hounds during the firearms season was removed due to the impact of mange
- Modify the dates for bear hound training in Appomattox and Buckingham so they don't conflict with changes to recommended bear firearms season dates
- Clarify language regarding "possession" of firearms during the bear hound training season

Recommended Modifications

Remove 7 days from the November/December bear hound training season in Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Prince Edward counties that would overlap the additional week of bear firearms hunting in this area



QUESTIONS



BEAR REGULATIONS

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the bear regulations as presented by staff.



GENERAL REGULATIONS

DISPATCH OF GAME AND FURBEARERS

4VAC15-40-310 (New). Dispatch of game and furbearers by authorized persons. (pg. 101)

- Establish that the Director or his designee may authorize citizens to dispatch severely injured or diseased game, furbearers, and non-migratory game birds

Recommended Modifications

Add explicit assurance that this new regulation will not authorize a person dispatching an animal to circumvent trespass or firearms use laws.

Mange Response Update

- Adoption of this regulation is a major step in enhancing mange response
- Human-Wildlife Conflict Specialist
 - Approved for hiring
 - Included in FY26 budget
- August 2025 (?) for implementation of enhanced response capabilities



QUESTIONS



GENERAL REGULATIONS

DISPATCH OF GAME AND FURBEARERS

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the dispatch of game and furbearer regulation as presented by staff.





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Boating and Administrative Regulations

Final Recommendations



Boating Regulations - Issue

4VAC15-410. Watercraft: Boating Safety Education

Summary: The proposed amendments are to simplify the regulations regarding the requirement for boaters to have boating safety in Virginia. In this section the following code sections are recommended to be amended or repealed:

- 4VAC15-410-30 – **REPEAL** – Phase in is complete and schedule is now obsolete
- 4VAC15-410-40 - B – **AMEND** to clarify the minimum standards for boating safety education course competency
- 4VAC15-410-50 A-D – **REPEAL** current section A, amend Section B, and renumber sections to clarify responsibilities of course providers
- 4VAC15-410-70 – **AMEND** to combine 4VAC15-410-80 into this section and reduce redundant language found in sections regarding course certificates and student records
- 4VAC15-410-80 – **REPEAL** – necessary pieces to be incorporated into section 70
- 4VAC15-410-90 – **AMEND** section on Instructor Certification to simplify section eliminate redundant language in regulation
- 4VAC15-410-100-B – **REPEAL** section B regarding the specific requirements of an open-book test. This can be managed through internal policy.
- 4VAC15-410-110 A and C – **AMEND** – Eliminate redundant language in regulation that is already included in definition of equivalency exam. **REPEAL** section C as this re-iterates what is already in the definitions.
- 4VAC15-410-130 – **AMEND** Section A to include one sentence from section B. Section B will be **REPEALED**
- 4VAC15-410-140 – **AMEND** Section B to eliminate unnecessary specifications on the contents of an application or the documentation required. **REPEAL** section D as that is no longer the process for obtaining a replacement card.



Boating Regulations - Issue

4VAC15-430. Watercraft: Safety Equipment Requirements

Summary: The proposed amendments are to simplify the regulations regarding the requirement for boaters to have boating safety in Virginia. In this section the following code sections are recommended to be amended or repealed:

- 4VAC15-430-60 – **AMEND** – Remove section 4 as it is already stated in 4VAC-15-430-30 Section 3.
- 4VAC15-430-150 – **AMEND** to clarify the requirement. Existing regulation is related to the building of a vessel.
- 4VAC15-430-160 – **AMEND** to provide correct web address.
- 4VAC15-430-170 – **AMEND** to remove section D which is not required by CFR
- 4VAC15-430-210 – **AMEND** to clarify the requirement. Existing regulation is related to the building of a vessel.

4VAC15-400. Watercraft: Accident and Casualty Reporting

- 4VAC15-400 (Forms) – **AMEND** to remove all except the Virginia Boating Incident Report form



Administrative Regulations - Issue

4VAC15-20. Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General

Summary: The proposed repeal is to simplify the regulations removing a regulation that is no longer in use by the agency regarding license sales:

- 4VAC15-20-120 – **REPEAL** – Regulation refers to a practice that is obsolete.





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Questions?

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Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources



DWR Board Motion:

Mr. Chair,

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed regulation amendments related to Boating and Administration as presented by staff.



2025-34 Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan: An Overview

DWR Board Meeting



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22 May 2025

Wild Turkey Management Plan Snapshot

- Yesterday the W&B Committee voted to move the plan to the full board with a few wording suggestions per Dr. Parker's request
- The planning model integrates the public's values with the technical expertise of DWR staff to generate a plan for managing turkeys over the next 10 years.
- Through 2024-2025, staff worked with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Committee to develop goals, objectives and potential strategies



Wild Turkey Management Plan Snapshot

- Wild Turkey Management Plan contains 4 main goal areas:
 - Populations,
 - Habitat,
 - Recreation,
 - Conflict
 - The Objectives and Strategies clarify how to achieve the goals
- Public input was received through the Turkey Hunter Survey (2023) and public review of the turkey plan in March and early April of 2025
- Areas of focus in the near term include improving monitoring, population monitoring, and expanding outreach efforts



Questions?



Board Motion – May 22, 2025

Recommended Motion:

Mr. Chairman,

I move that the DWR Board endorse the 2025-2034 Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan as presented by staff.



Board of Wildlife Resources



May 22, 2025



FY 2026 Budget Process

1. **Program & Personnel Review (PPR):** 2 facilitated meetings to define efficiencies, ROI, mandates, areas of emphasis and future focus, shared/support services, and other priorities.
2. **PPR Results shared with Budget Team** as guidance, along with instructions to budget by Program, to include 2-3 annual objectives per program, incorporate approved efficiencies, and justify staffing/vacancies (personnel cap consideration).
3. **Follow up meetings/discussions among DWG/Budget Team:** 2 meetings with presentations by Budget Team member/divisions with focus on:
 - a. Year over Year comparisons,
 - b. Alignment of budget requests with PPR results,
 - c. Alignment of budget requests with projected revenues (including a “proposed” 15% reduction from requests) and funding source alignment, and
 - d. Justifications and Consequences of ultimate operating budget levels.



FY 2026 Budget Proposal

\$72.99M
FY26 Budget

\$53.49M
FY26 Personnel Budget

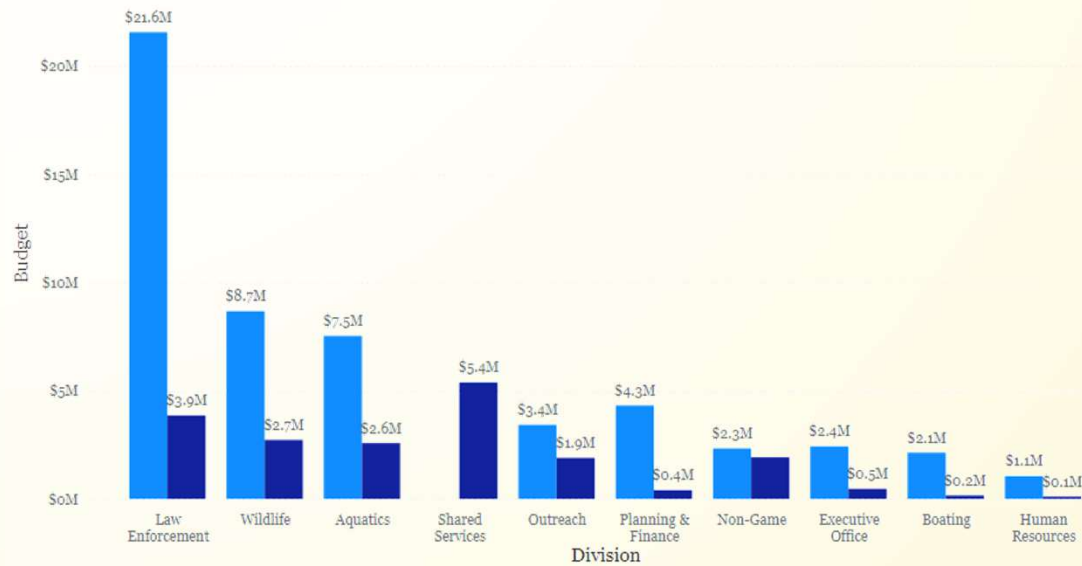
\$19.5M
FY26 Non-Personnel Budget

-3.16%
% Decrease

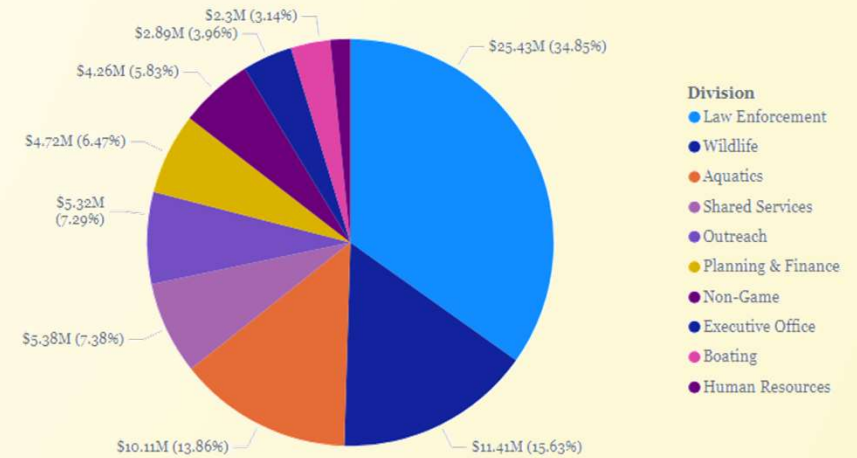
(\$2.38M)
\$ Decrease

Budget by Division and Src

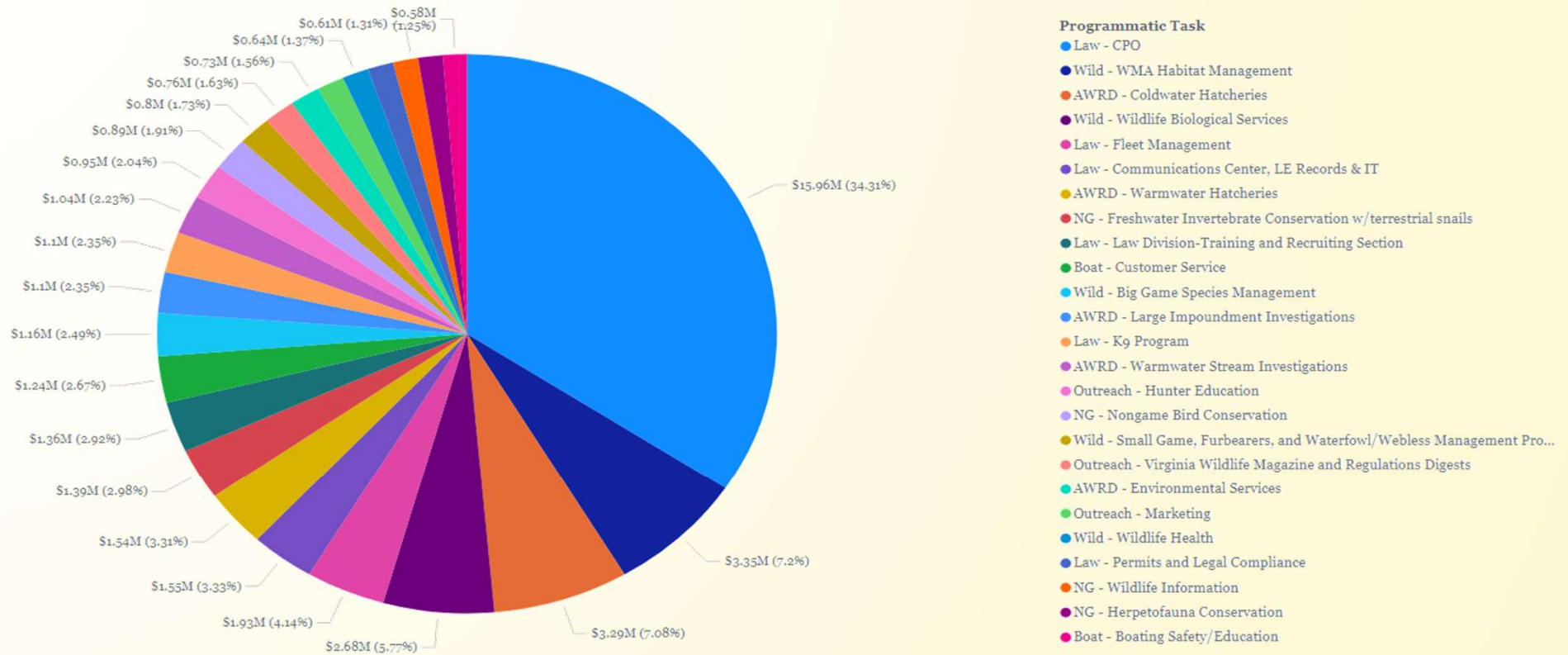
Src ● 1) Personnel ● 2) Nonpersonnel



% of Agency Budget by Division



Top 25 Programs

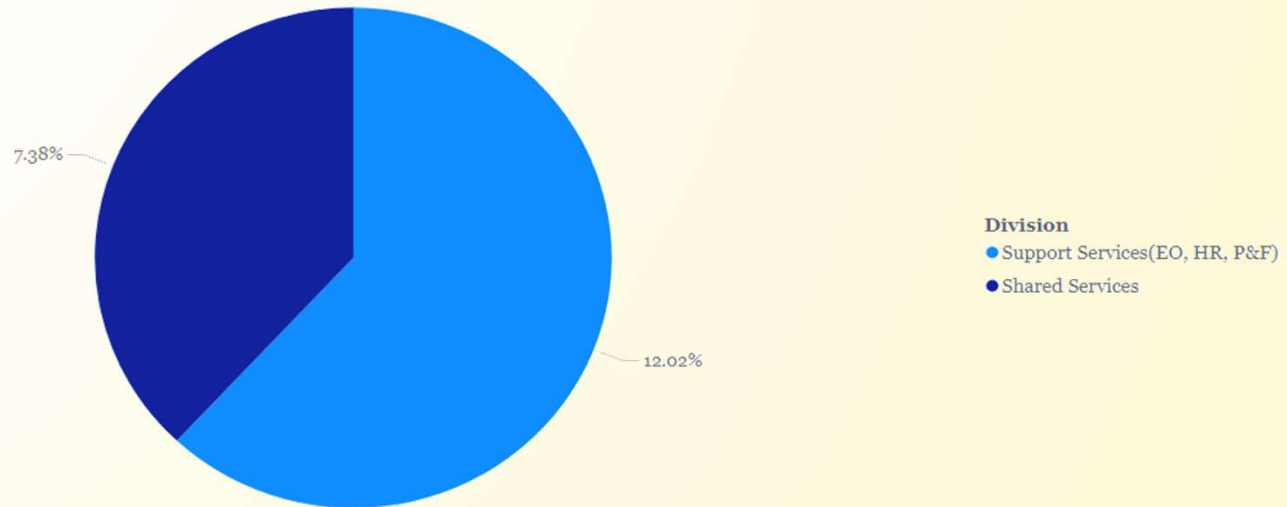


FY 2026 Support Services

\$14.16M
Total Budget

19.39%
% of Total Budget

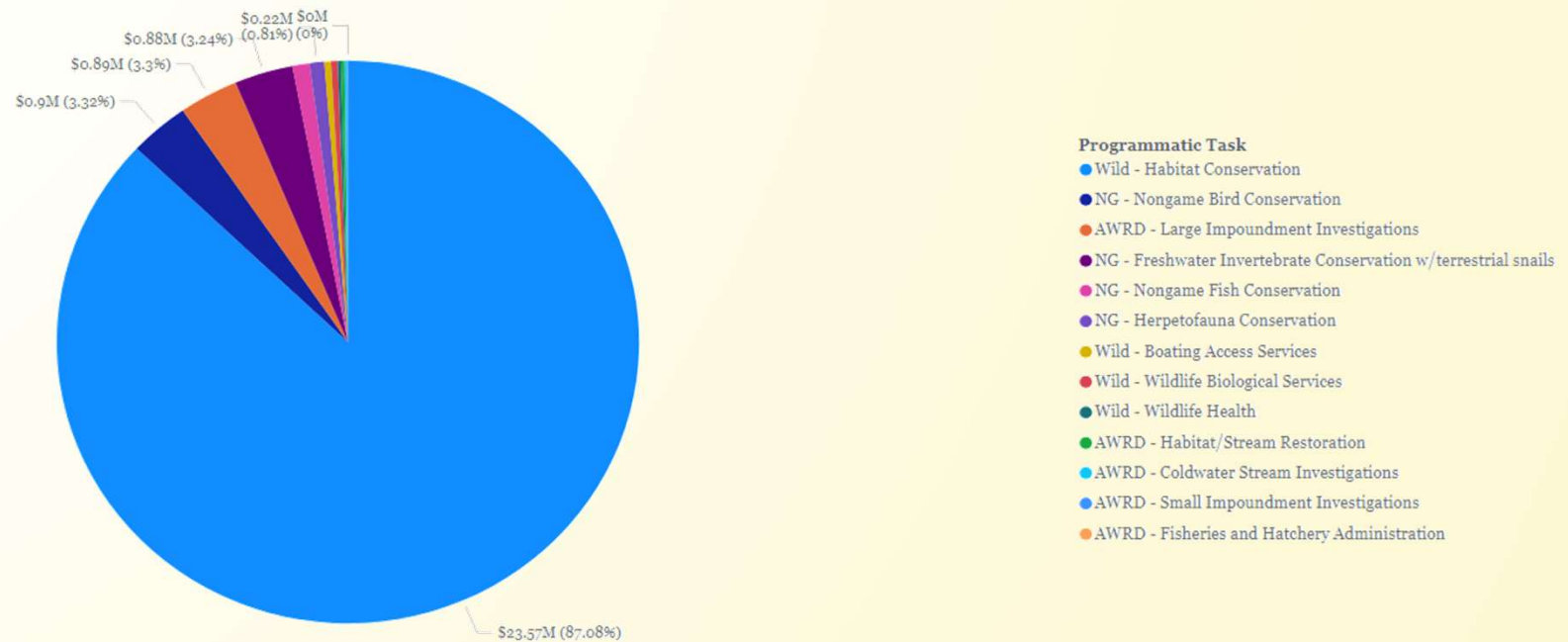
% of Division Budget by Total Budget



FY 2026 Mitigation & Special Funding

\$27.07M
Mitigation Budget

% of Mitigation Budget by Programmatic Task



FY 2026 Agency Personnel Counts by Division

464
FTE Count

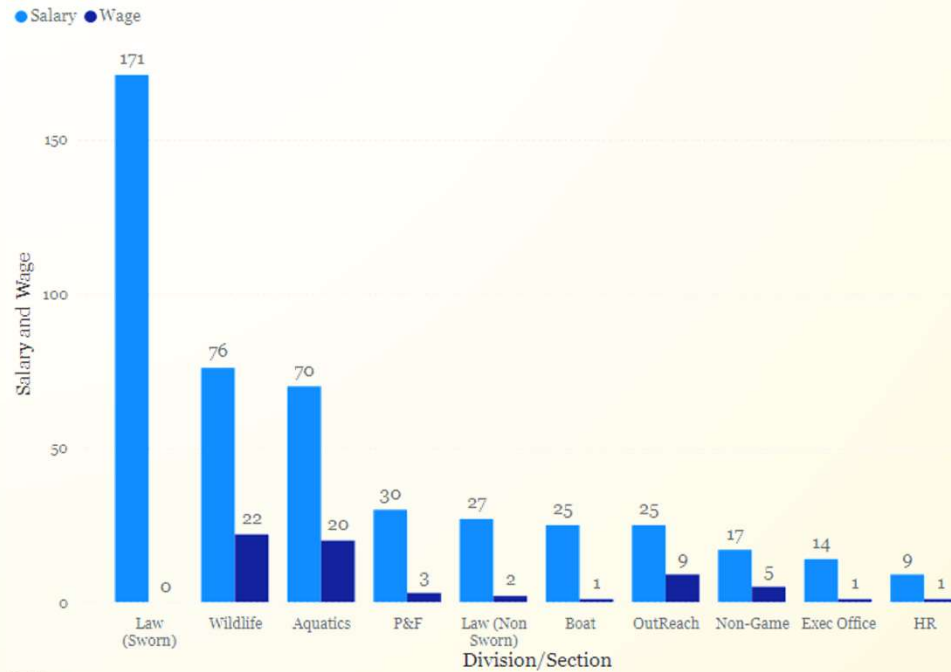
64
Wage Count

73.29%
% of Total Budget

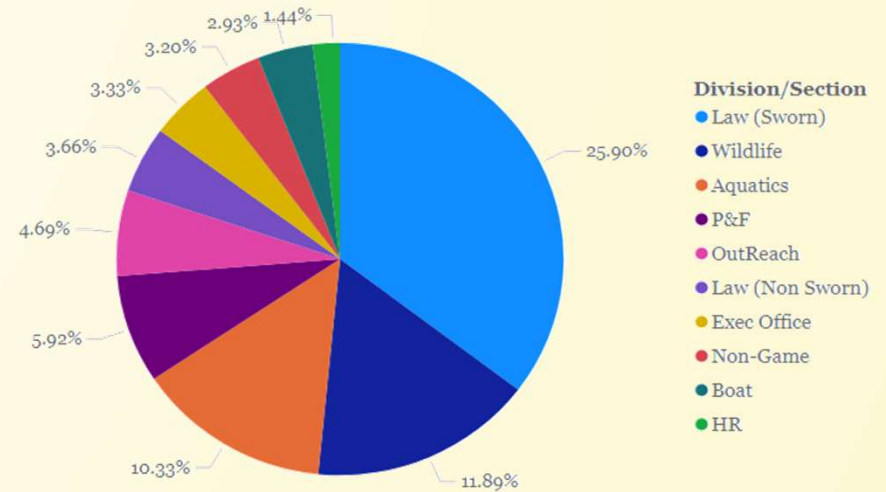
\$111.42K
Average Total Compensation - FTE

\$26.34K
Average Total Compensation - Wage

Salary and Wage by Division/Section



% of Total Budget by Division



Revenue vs Expenditure Trends

Amount by Fiscal Year, Month and Account Type

Account Type ● Expenditure ● Revenue



FY 2026 Capital Budget

**Overall Proposal for FY 2026:
\$7.9 Million***

*** Includes 3 Million in Bond Money For Lake Shenandoah Dam**



FY 2026 Capital Budget Proposal

Project	Grand/Fund	Estimated Budget	DWR Portion
Buller Helene	FEMA	\$1,000,000	\$250,000
Big Survey Building	48D	\$700,000	\$175,000
Buller Water Line	ATB	\$1,000,000	\$0
Lake Shenandoah	09403	\$3,000,000	\$0
King & Queen Icehouse Dam	09403	\$495,000	\$400,000
Lower Powhatan Dam	09403	\$495,000	\$400,000
Dam Safety Projects (DCR, Engineering, Match)	09403/DCR	\$350,000	\$87,500
Gardy's Mill Pond Emergency Repair	09403	TBD	TBD
Coles Point (Placeholder)	F107D / 07BAR	\$500,000	\$0
Toms 3 Landing	ATB	\$400,000	\$0
TOTAL		\$7,940,000	\$1,137,500



What's Next?

- Budget team to meet monthly
- DWG to review budget quarterly
- Variance > 3% reported to Board
- Mid-year re-allocation as needed
- DWG comprehensive review and evaluation of vacancies
- Ongoing reviews of offices, equipment, vehicles, telecom, laptops
- Explore credit/debit card fee recovery
- Quarterly FAC updates to include progress toward objectives and efficiencies



Questions?



DWR Board Motion

Motion to approve the **FY 2026 Operating Budget and FY 2026 Capital Budget** proposals as presented.

