



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Annual Report 2025

CONSERVE, CONNECT, PROTECT IN ACTION



About DWR

There's no ordinary day for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

(DWR). At any given moment across the Commonwealth, DWR field employees could be capturing a bear for research, raising trout in a hatchery, enforcing Virginia's laws and regulations, igniting a prescribed fire, educating the public about wildlife, adding gravel to a road, evaluating a construction site's impact on an endangered species, or analyzing data gathered from tagged fish. And back at DWR headquarters in Henrico, staff supports those efforts with mapping, technology, procurement, finance, human resources, and customer service expertise.

It's all part of DWR's vision to lead wildlife conservation and inspire people to value the outdoors and their role in nature. The outdoors are better together, and DWR aspires to welcome all Virginians into outside spaces to recreate safely, knowledgeably, and successfully. The incredibly varied work done by DWR's approximately 450 full-time employees supports not only healthy habitats for wildlife, but also safe, accessible recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy wildlife and the outdoors.



THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES' MISSION IS TO:

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

EACH DIVISION WITHIN DWR WORKS TO CONSERVE, CONNECT, AND PROTECT IN THEIR OWN WAY. ANNUALLY, DWR WORKS TO:

- Maintain **78** Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and Wildlife Conservation Sites (WCS) that comprise nearly **250,000** acres of public land
- Manage fisheries in more than **25,000** miles of cold- and warm-water streams
- Maintain fishing and boating access to more than **175,000** acres of lakes and reservoirs
- Educate more than **30,000** students in safe boating and hunting
- Enforce hunting, trapping, fishing, and boating laws for both resource protection and public safety
- Invite extensive citizen participation in the crafting of wildlife, fishing, and boating regulations
- Offer technical support to the public for wildlife, fisheries, and their habitat
- Promote safe and informed boating, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching recreation

Annual Report 2025

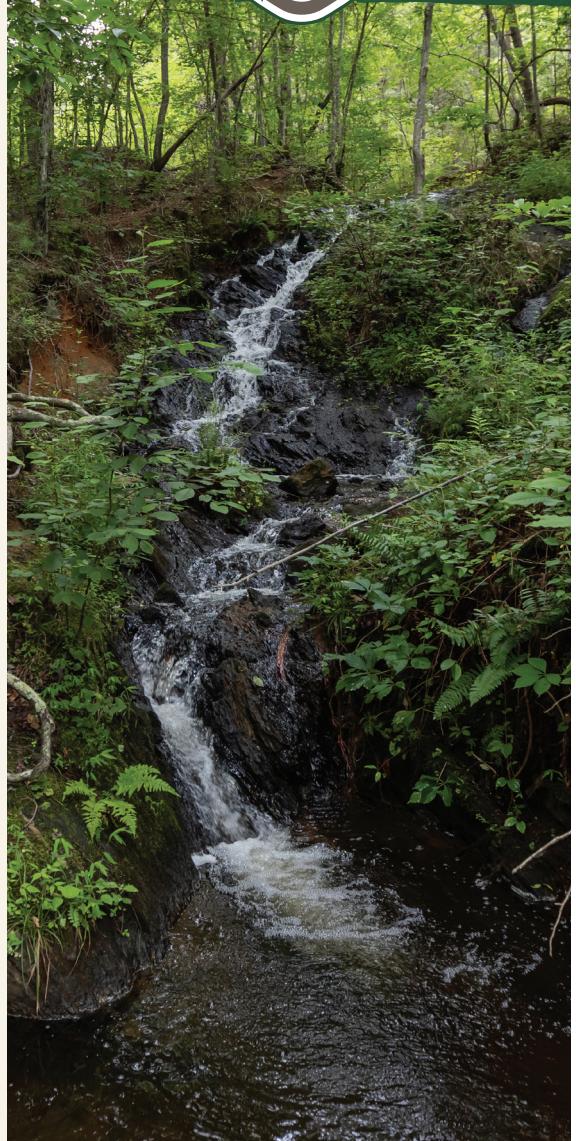
(Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)



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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Glenn Youngkin, Governor

SECRETARY OF NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Stefanie K. Taillon

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Ryan J. Brown, Executive Director

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Director's Letter

As always, I'm a bit awestruck at the scope and breadth of the work that DWR employees, partners, and volunteers accomplish in a year. A quick flip through these pages just scratches the surface of what gets done as we work for Virginia's wildlife, wild places, and people.

For this year's Annual Report, we decided to add a page recognizing some special partnerships that have enabled DWR to spread our message and work more effectively. They're just a few of the many, many partnerships that help DWR in our mission to conserve, connect, and protect. We work with federal, state, and local agencies and non-government organizations, volunteer groups, corporate partners large and small, and private citizens to accomplish mutual goals. From our Conservation Police working with local law enforcement on cases to wildlife biologists collaborating with nonprofit organizations for habitat work to the Outreach Division joining forces with a local hunting preserve to offer a unique and encouraging experience for new hunters—and many, many more examples—we rely on valuable partners.



One of our core operating principles is "The Outdoors Are Better Together," a sentiment that exemplifies our work with partners. They're force multipliers for all kinds of efforts. And every hunter, angler, boater, and wildlife viewer is also our partner in the work that we do. The projects detailed in this Annual Report have been funded—partially or fully—by revenue generated through the sale of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and stamps, sales tax on outdoor equipment and watercraft, and boat registration and titling fees. Anyone who's purchased a license, stamp, title, or piece of merchandise from us is our partner in all the good work that we do, as are those who chose to donate to our Restore the Wild initiative.

So, join us! We're always eager to connect with new partners, whether they're novice hunters, new boaters, local businesses, magazine subscribers, nonprofits, volunteers, or private citizens. The outdoors are always better together, and we look forward to seeing how we can work with you!

— Ryan J. Brown, Executive Director

Review our previous Annual Reports:

2023: dwr.virginia.gov/about/annual-report-2023

2024: dwr.virginia.gov/about/annual-report-2024





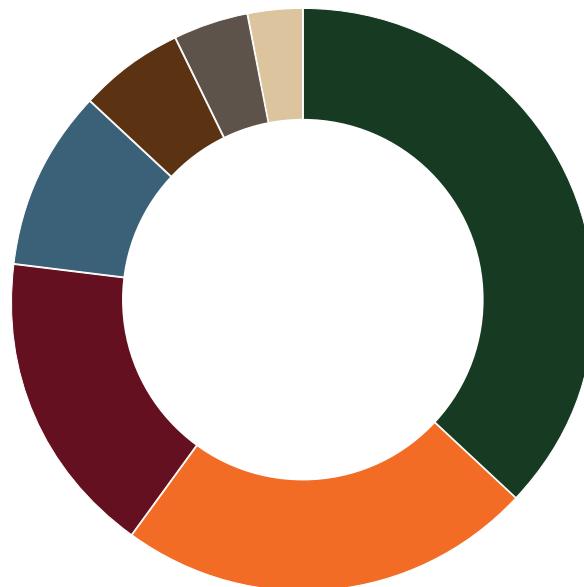
How We're Funded and How We Spend

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) largely exists through non-general fund revenues. We operate from within multiple restricted funds to support unique programs and responsibilities in Law Enforcement, Wildlife, Aquatics, Boating, Nongame and Endangered Species, Capital Programs, and Outreach, as well as administrative support functions in Human Resources, Planning and Finance, and the Executive Office.

PRIMARY REVENUE SOURCES THAT SUPPORT DWR

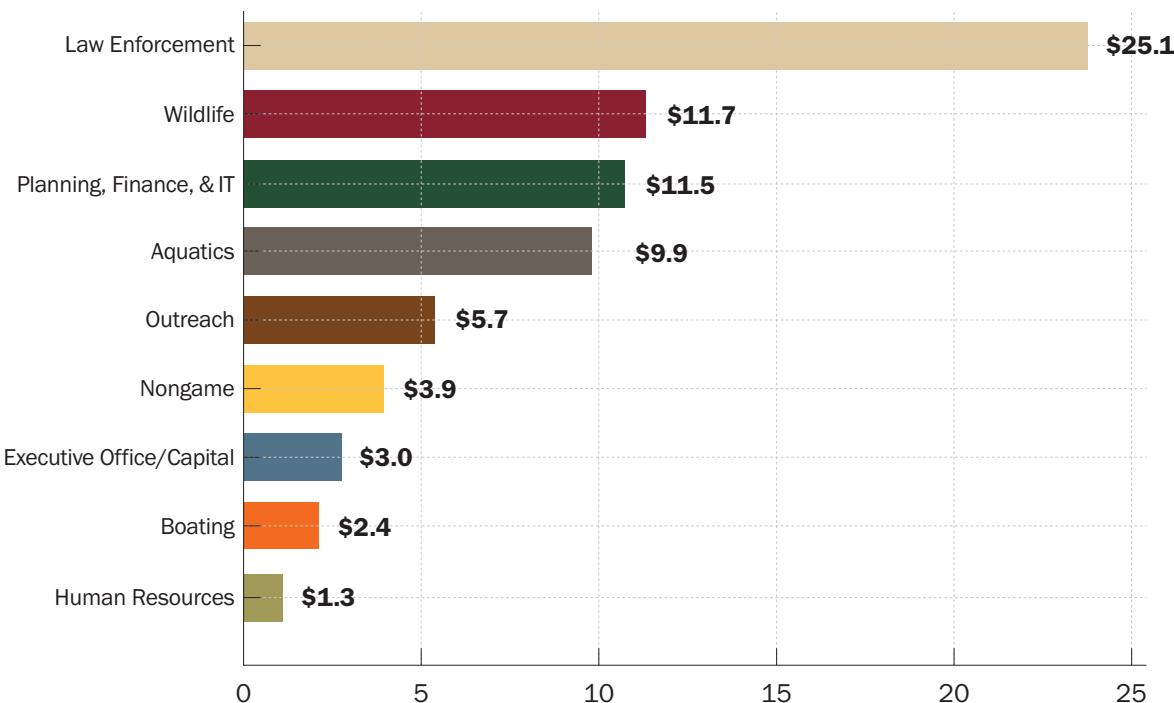
** as a percentage of annual revenue*

- Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Licenses, Permits, and Stamps **37%**
- Federal Grants for Wildlife and Aquatics Support **23%**
- Sales Tax on Outdoor Equipment for Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Watching (HB38) **17%**
- Watercraft Sales and Use Tax **10%**
- Boat Registration and Titling Fees **6%**
- Miscellaneous **4%**
- Federal Grants for Boating Support **3%**



DWR'S ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET FOR FY25 BY DIVISION

* *in millions*



■ Law Enforcement

\$25.1 million

Protect natural resources and citizens and visitors—enforcing wildlife and boating laws and regulations; providing dispatch services; training officers and recruits; effecting search-and-rescue/recovery operations; and promoting outreach.

■ Wildlife

\$11.7 million

Develop and manage healthy wildlife resources—providing healthy habitats; managing agency-owned public lands and public boating access sites; leading wildlife health and invasive species initiatives; and managing for human-wildlife conflict.

■ Planning, Finance, & IT

\$11.5 million

Oversees administrative functions—coordinating statewide procurement, grants management, payrolls, accounting, auditing, information management, and budgeting; and delivering online services through GoOutdoorsVirginia.

■ Aquatics

\$9.9 million

Develop and manage aquatic resources across the state—operating nine fish hatcheries; managing and promoting recreational fisheries; producing and stocking fish; and providing input into regulatory environmental permitting.

■ Outreach

\$5.7 million

Oversee agency messaging—managing communications, education, and messaging tools; informing media; fostering public-private partnerships; delivering educational programming; and implementing recreational outdoor opportunities.

■ Nongame

\$3.9 million

Protect, maintain, enhance, and restore native nongame wildlife—supporting target species and their habitats; planning and conducting research; operating two freshwater mussel propagation facilities; supporting law enforcement efforts; formulating regulations; and enhancing awareness and partnership.

■ Executive Office/Capital

\$3.0 million

Oversee all executive, regulatory, policy, administrative, and strategic planning decisions—working with the Board of Wildlife Resources; coordinating engagement and support; approving and coordinating property acquisition and capital infrastructure improvement and compliance efforts; and supporting diversity, opportunity, and inclusion initiatives.

■ Boating

\$2.4 million

Oversee boating safety and registration—delivering boating safety training and education; managing the waterways markers program; registering and titling boats; and managing the agency's Customer Service.

■ Human Resources

\$1.3 million

Oversee human resources policies—coordinating recruitment and training; and managing classification, compensation, and recognition initiatives.



Conserve. Connect. Protect.

DWR leads the conservation and management of all terrestrial and aquatic wildlife resources—birds, fish, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, freshwater mussels and other aquatic invertebrates, and terrestrial invertebrates—and healthy habitats for the benefit of current and future generations.



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Smallmouth Bass Production and Stocking Exceeds Expectations

Smallmouth bass are notoriously tricky to grow in a hatchery—the bass require perfect water and habitat requirements to feel comfortable enough to spawn. Then, staff have to carefully transfer the fry to grow-out ponds until they grow large enough to stock. Producing and stocking smallmouth bass has been a priority for DWR since many populations of the species in Virginia have been declining in numbers due to poor reproductive success, something that stocking directly addresses. So, the success that the DWR Aquatics Division and the Front Royal Fish Hatchery had in growing and stocking smallmouth in the summer of 2025 is truly remarkable.

Renovations completed in 2023 at the Front Royal Fish Hatchery were designed to prioritize the production of smallmouth bass, a species targeted by 60 percent of Virginia's

anglers. The year 2024 marked a huge success for the hatchery when staff raised just over 30,000 fingerlings from eight nests. Then, in 2025, they harvested fry from more than 60 nests! Through hard work and the integration of cutting-edge culture techniques, DWR produced and stocked 286,000 smallmouth bass, far exceeding the initial goal of 165,000, in 2025. The fish were stocked across the Commonwealth in the Shenandoah and James river systems, large impoundments such as Philpott and South Holston lakes, and small impoundments such as Lake Frederick and Lake Laura. DWR's hatchery system now has an effective tool for enhancing the populations of this popular fish. Moving forward, this work will help ensure that Virginia continues to support quality fishing opportunities for anglers seeking smallmouth bass.





CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Helene Recovery

Recovery and restoration efforts to help Southwest Virginia after the historic damage wrought by Hurricane Helene in September 2024 involved many different DWR divisions. The Law Enforcement Division helped maintain public safety during and after the storm. The Wildlife Division's Lands and Access unit cleared debris and repaired roads to restore access to public lands and waters. The Aquatics Division evaluated impacts to streams and rivers and surveyed fish populations. The Nongame and Endangered Species Program worked to construct and install dozens of artificial shelters for eastern hellbenders and reinstalled water quality sensors at 10 long-term study sites, as well as managed impacts to DWR's Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center, where imperiled freshwater mussels are grown. The Executive Office led the response and recovery through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (DEM) for funding reimbursements of impacts resulting from Hurricane Helene.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

DEER FIREARMS SEASONS EXPANDED

DWR staff proposed, and the Board of Directors approved, some of the most significant expansions of deer firearms seasons in the agency's history. To provide additional recreational opportunities and to address deer population objectives, the general firearms deer seasons on private lands were expanded from two to four weeks in all or portions of 20 counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In addition, the general firearms deer season was expanded from two or four weeks to seven weeks on private lands in 13 western counties. Firearms either-sex deer hunting days were increased in 29 counties across the Commonwealth.

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Wildlife Action Plan Updated

DWR staff and partners evaluated the status of thousands of Virginia fish and wildlife species and the habitats that support them for the 2025 revision of the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan. The plan is a Congressionally mandated effort that agencies must

complete and revise every 10 years to receive federal State Wildlife Grant funding. The plan assesses risks to the resources and the conservation actions that would address those risks. Approximately 1,900 Species of Greatest Conservation Need were defined in the 2025 Plan.

Ryan Mandelbaum

ACTION PLANNING FOR WMAS

A DWR summer intern assisted staff with creating an Action Plan for each of 13 Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Work Units. These plans include GIS maps of all habitat activity, an annual calendar of primary activities, and a reporting process to simplify activity reporting by staff. The plans will be updated each winter to inform planning for activities in the upcoming year to assist with workload management, budget development, and habitat/infrastructure management. This is just one of multiple impactful projects completed by DWR interns each year.

Acres with habitat activity reported in 2025 fiscal year:

• Forest Management	2,286
• Prescribed Fire	1,437
• Wetland Habitat Management	562
• Invasive Species Control	266



EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE OF BOG TURTLE DISTRIBUTION

The bog turtle is America's smallest turtle species, and in Virginia is only known in six counties. Availability of high-resolution, remotely sensed environmental data and more contemporary habitat modeling techniques have made it possible to work toward creating an updated habitat sustainability model for the bog turtle in Virginia. A robust new model of the range of this cryptic species across Southwest Virginia will help biologists have a much clearer sense of where bog turtles occur and the status of their habitats, which will help target more specific conservation actions. In 2025, visual encounter and habitat surveys at 50 sites resulted in the discovery of 12 previously unknown populations.



Luca Pfeiffer/DWR

SEA TURTLE AND MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION PLANS DEVELOPED

DWR staff completed a revision of the Virginia Sea Turtle Conservation Plan and developed a Virginia Marine Mammal Conservation Plan. Both plans identified key goals as to maintain a permanent stranding rescue network in Virginia; identify, assess, and mitigate risks to populations and habitats through cost-effective monitoring, research, and best practices; and promote conservation in Virginia through social marketing and information dissemination. These plans will be used to guide conservation actions in the state, particularly through the updated Wildlife Action Plan and the new Virginia Ocean Plan (led by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program).

WILD TURKEY PLAN REVISED

Public stakeholders and managers of turkeys in Virginia contributed to the creation of the DWR 2025-2034

Virginia Wild Turkey Plan, a revision of the original Turkey Plan that was completed in 2014. The plan describes the history of wild turkey management in Virginia, the status of turkeys and turkey management programs, and the future of turkey management in Virginia. The plan's authors identified four goal areas to address: populations, habitat, recreation, and human-turkey conflict. They also developed specific objectives to help guide the achievement of each goal and suggest ways that the objectives might be achieved.



Ron Messina/DWR



Brian Watson/DWR

BIG SANDY CRAYFISH PROPAGATED

Since the Big Sandy crayfish was designated as federally threatened in 2016, DWR and partners have been seeking to understand what's needed to recover and delist the species. Research helped biologists develop a predictive model for streams with appropriate habitat that could support Big Sandy crayfish. Then, they developed techniques for the propagation and release of propagated individuals to augment and reintroduce populations where habitat and water quality seem to be suitable. DWR is working with West Liberty University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on this effort, with the propagation taking place at the USFWS White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery.



Starla Wood/DWR

STUDYING WATERFOWL MIGRATION

DWR biologists captured and equipped black ducks, mallards, and Atlantic Population Canada geese with solar-powered GPS/GSM transmitters. The devices allow researchers to track the annual movements of these waterfowl for multiple years, recording changes in migration movements and data about smaller-scale movements. This information gives insight into key activities such as nesting and brood-rearing. Data from these devices will provide valuable information for the long-term management and conservation of these species.

DID YOU KNOW?

Annually, hunters collectively spend more than five million days afield pursuing game species in Virginia, with approximately three million of those focused on hunting deer.

GOING ELECTRONIC

The Planning & Finance Division rolled out a new budgeting platform that's designed to enhance efficiency and deliver more dynamic, transparent financial reporting. Division staff also collaborated with the Department of Treasury to implement advanced cash procedures, reducing the need for daily bank deposits and saving staff time. Electronic check readers were also implemented to streamline paper check processing, minimize errors, and further reduce physical deposit requirements.

SECOND BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPLETED

Following up on the first **Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (1985-1989)**, the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas seeks to improve understanding of where all of Virginia's breeding bird species occur, in what numbers, and how their distribution has changed since the first Atlas. DWR worked with the Virginia Society of Ornithology and the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech to produce the second Atlas. This information will help DWR and partners more effectively target conservation planning and efforts to geographic areas where they're most needed. Data collection by more than 1,400 volunteers took place between 2016 and 2020, and data review and analysis and content production were completed in 2020 through 2025. The project resulted in 203 species accounts, which feature maps of breeding distribution, breeding evidence and abundance, and interpretive narratives highlighting the status and conservation needs of individual species.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR



Ron Messina/DWR

RESEARCHING STRIPED BASS MORTALITY

Striped bass, one of Virginia's most popular game fish, support inland fisheries that are utilized by more than 25 percent of Virginia's anglers on an annual basis. Many of these fisheries, particularly those on Smith Mountain Lake, support a vibrant guiding industry that hosts anglers from across the country. DWR supports these fisheries by stocking them with fish and maintaining size and creel limits. One major concern in striped bass management is mortality after release, which can result in more fish than expected being removed from the system. To address this, DWR tagged more than 100 striped bass with transmitters

and more than 300 with tags to be reported by anglers. Fish were captured using the same methods that anglers would be using to better mimic the impacts of catch and release mortality. Analysis of the data indicates that summer mortality of striped bass in Smith Mountain Lake is lower than in other large reservoirs. This provides critical information for setting size and creel limits that encourage a quality fishery, maximize angler opportunity, and reduce release mortality. DWR plans to use these results to underpin an informational campaign to anglers about best practices to minimize release mortality.



MAKING WAY FOR PIPING PLOVER

DWR staff, together with The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, conducted a pilot study to address the declining breeding population of the piping plover in Virginia.

The breeding population has been in decline since 2016, with no clear cause identified. The pilot study removed vegetation to create wide corridors between nesting areas and backside mudflats, which expands access to foraging habitat for breeding birds. Project staff created two corridors and installed trail cameras to document corridor use. DWR technicians monitored piping plover breeding success and collected prey samples. Adult piping plovers and other nesting shorebird species were documented foraging in the corridors.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the most recent National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR):

- Hunting in Virginia supports almost 10,000 Virginia jobs and generates \$1.4 billion in total economic impact to the Commonwealth.
- Fishing in Virginia supports nearly 20,000 jobs in Virginia and generates \$3.2 billion in total economic impact to the Commonwealth.
- Wildlife watching in Virginia supports 22,000 jobs in Virginia and generates \$4 billion in total economic impact to the Commonwealth.
- Recreational boating in Virginia supports nearly 17,000 jobs in Virginia and generates \$4.4 billion in total economic impact to the Commonwealth.

Millions of Fish Stocked

DWR's Aquatics Division operates nine fish hatcheries that produce millions of fish each year to stock into streams, rivers, lakes, and urban waterbodies for anglers to pursue.

Coldwater

- **470,000** Rainbow Trout
- **137,000** Brook Trout
- **137,000** Brown Trout
- **40,000** Tiger Trout

Warmwater

- **935,000** Walleye
- **870,000** Striped Bass
- **675,000** Bluegill
- **286,000** Smallmouth Bass
- **87,000** Channel Catfish
- **74,000** F1 Bass
- **58,000** Hybrid Striped Bass
- **56,000** Black Crappie



Meghan Marchetti/DWR



Maddie Cogar/DWR

TENNESSEE DACE FOUND

The Tennessee dace, a state endangered fish species, lives in Abrams Creek, a tributary of the North Fork Holston River where a 75-foot waterfall creates a natural barrier to fish passage. Recently, the Mendota Trail—a hiking and biking route—was built alongside and crossing Abrams Creek. Biologists determined it was a priority to conduct a watershed-side fish survey of Abrams Creek because of the presence of rare species and potential impacts from the trail. The survey detected the first observation of Tennessee dace above the falls, a population isolated from all other Tennessee dace populations.

FIRST BEAR MANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN ADOPTED

DWR combined existing guidance with stakeholder engagement, the latest scientific information, and experiences in other states to create the first 2025-2029 Black Bear Mange Management Plan with the goal of long-term bear population viability. The plan aims to implement science-based surveillance and management techniques, manage resilient populations of black bears affected by sarcoptic mange, identify and address critical knowledge gaps, communicate effectively with constituents, and foster citizen-science opportunities.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCHED

DWR Aquatics staff continue to research key invasive aquatics species such as Alabama bass, northern snakehead, and blue catfish. Annual monitoring and educational campaigns have been used to keep an eye on invasive species populations and help slow their spread. DWR staff continue to participate on working groups like the Chesapeake Bay Program's Invasive Catfish Work Group and assist with final recommendations from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Science's Blue Catfish Work Group. DWR's efforts have helped inform other states on their approaches to invasive species management, specifically the education, advancement of policy and legislation pertaining to Alabama bass, and technical expertise on controlling northern snakehead.



MUSSEL PROPAGATION AND RELEASE

DWR propagates freshwater mussels, including threatened and endangered species, at both DWR's Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) in Southwest Virginia and in a cooperative effort with USFWS at the Virginia Fisheries and Aquatic Wildlife Center (VFAWC) at USFWS' Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery in Charles City County.

At the AWCC

- **212** broodstock mussels collected from wild
- **14** species of mussels produced
- **99,079** mussels produced
- **3,843** mussels released
- **6,275** mussels provided to partners
- **26,917** mussels received from partners

At the VFAWC

- **6** species of mussels produced
- **375,636** mussels produced
- **675,000** mussels released
- **81,867** mussels provided to partners



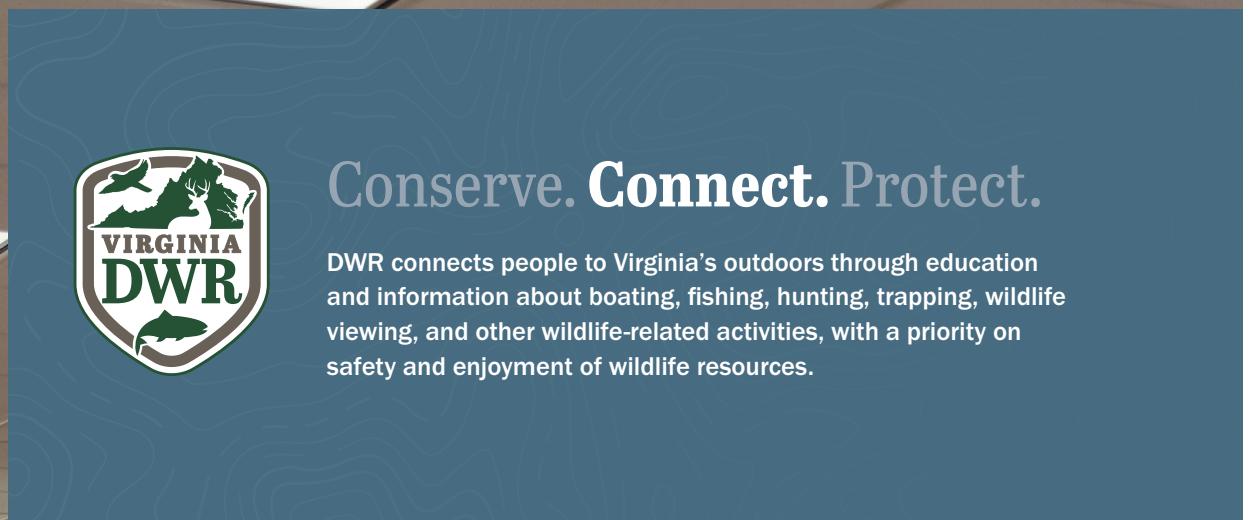
HARVEST NUMBERS

In the 2025 fiscal year, Virginia hunters harvested:

• Deer	205,759
• Turkey	21,988
• Bear	2,702
• Migratory Birds	400,000
• Small Game	400,000
• Furbearers	50,000



Meghan Marchetti/DWR





Meghan Marchetti/DWR

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Virginia Outdoor Women Program Launches

The Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) program held its first events in 2025.

Aimed at developing a community of women who enjoy the outdoors, value the importance of conservation and outdoor recreation, and want to have opportunities for personal growth, independence, and empowerment, the VOW program offers a variety of workshops in hunting, shooting, archery, hiking, fishing, outdoor skills, and wildlife viewing along with social events. The program's goal is to help women feel comfortable and confident in the outdoors no matter their experience level. The VOW program leverages partnerships with Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Richmond Fly Women, Flyfishers of Virginia, American Daughters of Conservation, Girls Scouts of the USA, Girls Who Hike VA, Quail Forever/ Pheasants Forever, Virginia Shooting Sports, Green Top, Izaak Walton Leagues of America, Stable Craft Brewery & Cidery, Widewater State Park, and others.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

EXPANDING ACCESS

Construction of a barrier-free trail in Tazewell County, funded through a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) agreement, provides and enhances access to wildlife viewing. Barrier-free trails on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) were expanded; there are currently 2,500 linear feet of barrier-free trails and at least one barrier-free trail is now available in each of DWR's four regions. Universally accessible fishing piers are also available at DWR-managed lakes such as Laurel Bed Lake and Rural Retreat Lake. Public access maps were revised to improve usability for individuals with color vision impairments.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

DWR Archery Open Debuts

The first annual DWR Archery Open, an event encouraging participation in archery for all age groups and skill levels, was a success. More than 150 archers from across the state participated in a premier tournament supported by a variety of sponsors and exhibitors. The second Archery Open is scheduled for January 2026 and DWR looks forward to expanding this event in the future.

PASEOS EN BOTE EN VIRGINIA

Registro de embarcaciones

- Todas las embarcaciones propulsadas por motores de gasolina, diesel y eléctricos incluidos los motores de arrastre deben estar registradas para operar en las aguas públicas de Virginia.
- El Certificado de Número debe llevarse a bordo de la embarcación y la calcomanía de validación debe estar visible.
- Los números de registro asignados deberán estar expuestos en ambos lados de la embarcación.

Educación Náutica

- Todos los operadores de embarcaciones con motores de caballos de fuerza o más (incluidas las motos acuáticas o PWC) deben completar un curso de seguridad en la embarcación.
- Los cursos de seguridad en la navegación están disponibles en persona o en línea ofrecido en Español.

Equipo requerido

- Toda persona a bordo de una embarcación debe llevar un chaleco salvavidas, punto de la talla adecuada, aprobado por la Guardia Costera de EE. UU., y en buen estado. Esto también aplica a kayaks, canoas y tablas de remo.
- Se requieren silbatos o bocinas de alta en todas las embarcaciones, incluidos kayaks. Los tablas de remo no requieren un extintor de incendios en la mayoría de las embarcaciones.
- La mayoría de las embarcaciones requieren señales de socorro visuales cuando operan su embarcación en aguas costeras.
- Se requieren luces de navegación cuando se opera su embarcación durante la noche.
- Se requiere un dispositivo arrojablendembarcaciones de más de 16 pies.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION

The Boating Division approved an online boating course in Spanish and also developed a Spanish-language handout for Conservation Police Officers to use when interacting with Spanish-speaking constituents on the water.

FINDING OUT ABOUT FURBEARERS

The Furbearer program in the Wildlife Division focused on outreach initiatives with 11 public presentations, seven media interviews, 10 social media posts, and two articles. Topics covered included coyote and fox behavior and conflict mitigation, otter ecology and conservation, nutria reporting, red fox mange, and the gray fox research project.



CONSERVE. **CONNECT.** PROTECT.

Communications Center Upgraded



The DWR Law Division Communications Center used the federal award of a \$55,000 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant to modernize its dispatch infrastructure. The Communications Center's layout was redesigned and the technology upgraded to provide greater efficiency in workflow. The new configuration enhances communication between dispatch officers, while the improved monitors reduce eye strain and support faster response times. The project was a coordinated effort in collaboration with DWR's Planning and Finance Division Grants team.

VPA-HIP GRANT OPENS PUBLIC ACCESS

DWR concluded a five-year, grant-funded Public Opportunities for Wildlife-Related Recreation (POWRR) project that opened private lands to public access for hunting, fishing, paddling, and wildlife viewing. Funding for the POWRR program came through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). DWR focused on POWRR properties in Southwest Virginia, offering monetary incentives to landowners who allowed the public to access their property for wildlife-related recreation and also providing funding for wildlife habitat enhancements and access infrastructure. The grant funds were used to establish management agreements on 43 properties totaling 28,509 acres, providing a wide variety of opportunities for the public to hunt, fish, paddle, and view wildlife. The properties are key to the success of the DWR elk hunts and public elk viewing tours. Another major accomplishment of the project was the relationships with the landowners, conservation partners, and constituents who enjoyed the properties. These relationships will pave the way for future collaborations, agreements, and opportunities.



INCLUDING ANGLERS IN PLANNING

Every 10 years, DWR revises the Stocked Trout Management Plan to best determine how the stocked trout resources are being utilized and how to best allocate hatchery production. As part of this effort, DWR sends out a targeted survey to stocked trout anglers; this effort took place most recently in fiscal year 2025. DWR's Human Dimensions Program developed the survey in collaboration with Aquatics Division staff, asking questions about satisfaction, preferences, and economic impact. After anglers returned 1,453 surveys, Human Dimensions staff summarized the results, which will be incorporated into the Stocked Trout Management Plan revision, expected to be completed in early 2026. The plan will guide future stocked trout management in Virginia and address issues such as information sharing, stocking practices, and managing around increasing costs.



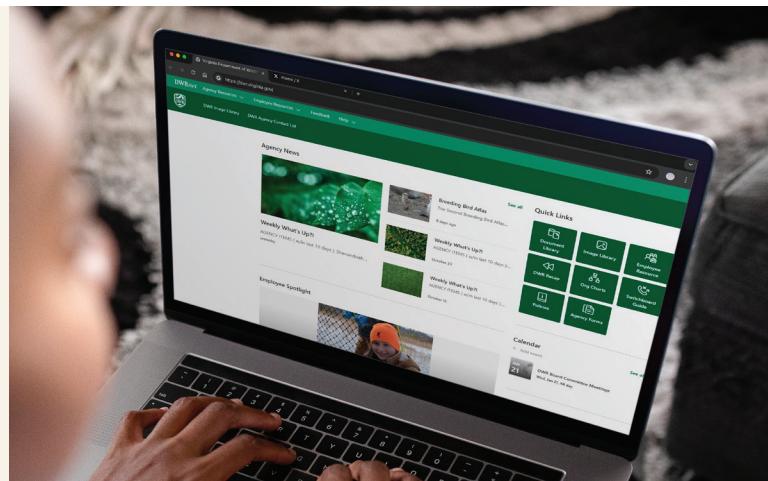
Meghan Marchetti/DWR

SERVING THE CUSTOMERS

During the fiscal year 2025, DWR's Customer Service section answered more than 90,000 calls, responded to more than 8,000 emails, and assisted more than 8,000 walk-in customers and visitors.

Customer Interactions

• Boat Registration/Titling	43,230
• License Sales	21,346
• Information	20,524
• Outbound	8,350



STREAMLINING INFORMATION

DWR's Human Resources Division and Executive Office have made progress in centralizing and digitizing employee information and forms. Staff created an internal SharePoint site that contains all the documents and online resources required for new-hire onboarding. This allows the new hire to complete many forms before their first day. With help from all divisions, the Executive Office led a separate effort to launch "DWRNet," a central SharePoint site that hosts all forms, policies, contact information, employee achievements, Lunch & Learn training videos, weekly announcements, reports, and an image library. In addition, Employee Work Profiles were successfully transferred to the Commonwealth's online Performance Management system.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMES TO VIRGINIA

The DWR Marketing team organized the 2024 Association for Conservation Information (ACI) National Conference, which brought together 135 natural resource professionals who work in the information and education sections of fish and wildlife state agencies and industry organizations across the country.

HUNTING MADE ACCESSIBLE

R3 (Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation) staff collaborated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Deer Association, Quail Forever, Special Ops Xcursions, Backwoods Warriors Foundation, First Hunts Foundation, The Preserve at Dundee, and Cumberland Estates to host more than 20 hunts for over 400 youth and new hunters in an effort to build participation.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

RECRUITING AND REWARDING VOLUNTEERS

A refresh of the volunteer page on the DWR website made it more engaging and user-friendly for prospective applicants, while a digital marketing campaign was aimed at recruiting a pool of volunteers that better reflects the communities that DWR serves. A Restore the Wild Trash Pickup Day within each region promoted volunteerism during National Volunteer Week. A total of 568 new volunteers were added to the volunteer workforce team, while the volunteers program provided 7,663 work hours throughout the last year to DWR (an impact value of \$137,934). The Statewide Volunteer Administrator also began a quarterly newsletter for volunteers, with important reminders, a volunteer spotlight, and other content. Incentive gifts for volunteer of the year and of the quarter were also instituted.



Thomas Goldston/DWR



SHARING WILDLIFE

Virginia Wildlife magazine and calendar keep outdoor enthusiasts informed and entertained about DWR's work and Virginia's wildlife. Reaching around 19,000 subscribers, the magazine generates more than \$200,000 in annual revenue for DWR. Issues included articles on topics such as the restoration of water quality in the North Fork Holston River, the unique challenges and skills of female Conservation Police Officers, and how the state duck stamp has contributed to conservation. The magazine also includes the widely popular Photography Showcase Issue, which features images submitted by readers. The Virginia Wildlife calendar celebrates wildlife species in Virginia each month. Calendar sales provide more than \$100,000 in revenue for DWR, and the calendar is also a valued gift to important agency partners. The hunting, trapping, fishing, and boating regulations—available in print and online—provide the rules and guidance necessary for a safe, ethical day in the outdoors. More than 500,000 copies of the Hunting and Trapping, Migratory Game Bird, and Fishing and Boating regulations books are distributed across the state.



VOLUNTEER WORK FORCE IN ACTION

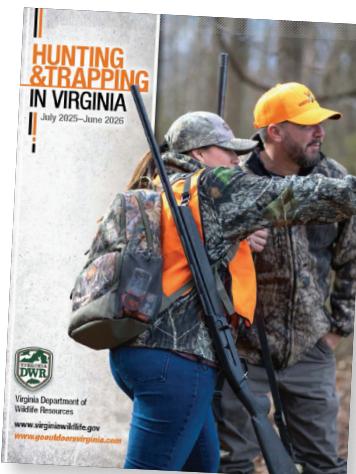
DWR volunteers participate in a wide variety of activities, assisting with DWR programs and events. Volunteers contributed a total of 7,663 hours to DWR, with an impact value of \$137,934.

Impact in Work Hours

• Fish Stocking	1,703
• Exhibits/Shows	1,173
• Data Collection	868
• Call Center	844
• WMA Maintenance	573
• Training	547
• Angling Instruction	526
• Facilities Maintenance	384
• Biologist Assistance	323
• Administrative	283
• Disease Investigation	152
• Habitat Work	100
• Invasive Species Monitoring	95
• Boat Ramp Inspection	92

PUBLIC INPUT INCORPORATED FOR HUNTING REGULATIONS

During the biennial review of hunting and trapping regulations (in advance of the 2025-26 seasons), the Wildlife Division staff compiled, read, and summarized 4,171 comment submissions from the public regarding proposed regulation amendments. These comments were used by Wildlife staff to develop wildlife regulation amendment recommendations that were presented to the DWR Board of Directors in spring 2025. Based on those recommendations, the Board voted to release 30 regulation amendments for another public comment period, where they received 2,143 public comments. Wildlife staff compiled, read, and summarized those comments for the Board's consideration prior to the adoption of the final regulations amendments.



INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE REPORT

A comprehensive report measuring progress in the areas of recruitment, culture, awareness, and connecting was submitted to the Governor's office and General Assembly.

The report highlighted DWR's efforts to build a workplace free from artificial barriers, where motivated employees can reach their full potential. It also detailed agency-wide initiatives to connect all Virginians to angling, boating, hunting, recreational shooting, and wildlife viewing.

INTRODUCING FISHING TO NEW AUDIENCES

The Aquatic Education Coordinator conducted 13 Introduction to Fishing workshops along with educational sessions covering more advanced fishing topics. A "train the trainer" approach resulted in angling instructor training with 13 partner organizations, including Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) State Parks, local parks and recreation organizations, and nonprofit organizations. Those trained angling instructors then conducted workshops and trainings for anglers. State Parks conducted 109 fishing programs that were attended by 1,725 people last year.



RECORD YEAR FOR VIRGINIA NATURALLY SCHOOLS

The Virginia Naturally (VAN) School Recognition Program is the official environmental education school recognition program of the Commonwealth and is administered by DWR. The goal of the Virginia Naturally School Recognition Program is to recognize the exemplary efforts undertaken by Virginia schools to increase the environmental literacy of their students. In the last year, DWR recognized more schools for their environmental education efforts, 91, than any other year in the program's 25-year history. Schools recognized were in 31 school systems across the state and enroll more than 61,700 students. Of the 91, 37 schools were recognized for the first time and 39 were Title 1 schools.



SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH FORESTERS

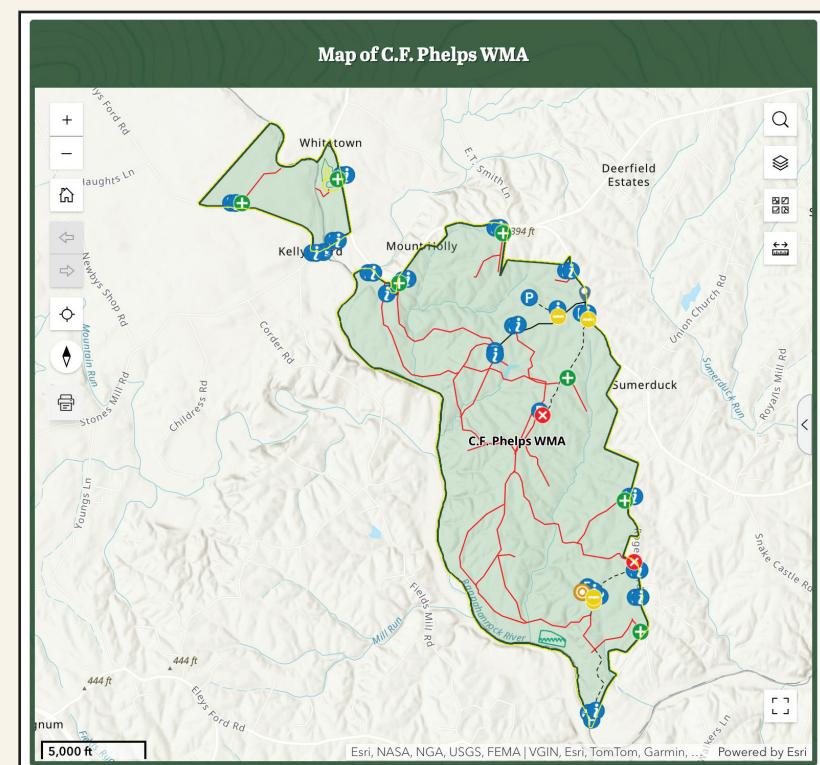
The DWR Habitat Education Coordinator taught an in-depth session on Forestry and Wildlife Management at the Forest Management Academy, which provides training for a variety of topics for Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) staff. DOF foresters are often a first point of contact for landowners and land managers engaged in forest management. This training ensures that DWR's habitat and wildlife priorities are incorporated into planning and implementation of forestry practices on private lands.

MAPPING IMPROVED FOR THE PUBLIC

Public-facing maps for each DWR property on DWR's webpage are being upgraded and improved. Outdated and difficult-to-replicate PDFs are being replaced with dynamically loaded maps that DWR property managers can update in real time, complete with the ability to add public alerts. This shift will allow DWR to more accurately provide information about its properties to the public and streamline information updating internally.

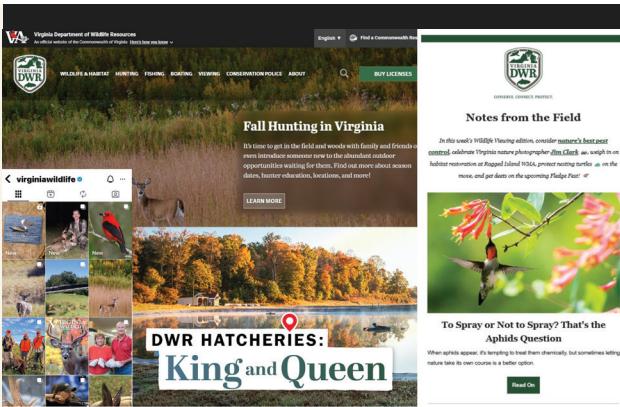
DID YOU KNOW?

DWR's Conservation Police officers (CPOs) make it a priority to communicate with communities, stakeholders, educational institutions, and youth groups. In fiscal year 2025, CPOs attended 763 events where they encountered more than 79,000 individuals.



TRUE WILDLIFE CRIME SERIES DEBUTS

A new DWR video podcast series, **True Wildlife Crime**, highlights captivating and historic stories from its Law Enforcement Division. This “true crime” style video podcast includes interviews with dedicated Conservation Police Officers (and even a K9 or two!). The podcasts produced last year included cases of poaching and boat theft and also profiled the K9 partnerships that serve in DWR Law Enforcement. The first five episodes had a collective 697,191 views and generated 8,686,948 impressions.



KEEPING VIRGINIA INFORMED

DWR's Outreach Division communicates with the public via multiple platforms—website, social media, press releases, email newsletters, videos, and a magazine. The DWR website was accessed more than 16 million times in the 2025 fiscal year by more than 3.5 million constituents and customers. The website referred traffic that generated more than \$7.8 million in revenue. DWR biologists and Conservation Police Officers also made appearances on podcasts on a variety of topics. The DWR Facebook page has 117,000 followers, with more than 30,000 followers on Instagram and 22,000 subscribers on YouTube. The five topical email newsletters, Notes from the Field, go out monthly to more than 890,000 subscribers.

DWR's Outreach Division produced:



50 press releases



55 media requests fulfilled



52 videos



56 email newsletters



69 photo shoots



OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE UNDERSERVED

The Virginia Wildlife Grant Program, in coordination with the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia, awards grants to organizations with a common mission of connecting people to the outdoors and supports activities such as archery, boating/paddling, fishing, hunting/recreational shooting, and wildlife viewing. The grant prioritizes programs that are aligned with DWR's R3 Plan as well as the Inclusive Excellence Plan.

2025 Grant Program

• Number of Applications	185
• Total Funding Requested	\$1.26 million
• Percentage New Applicants	57%
• Finalists	25
• Percentage New Awardees	76%
• Total Funding	\$163,400
• Number of Participants	5,135
• Programs/Events Supported	374



RESTORE THE WILD ARTWORK EXHIBITION EXPANDS

The Restore the Wild Artwork Competition invites the public to creatively depict an imperiled Virginia species in a way that highlights the species' habitat, drawing attention to DWR's wildlife habitat work and promoting donations to the Restore the Wild initiative. For the fifth year of the Restore the Wild Artwork Competition, the exhibition of entries moved to downtown Richmond at Main Street Station during the month of March. Winners were chosen in six categories; 97 entries were received and displayed. An opening night reception hosted a silent auction, speeches, and a raffle, raising more than \$3,000 for Restore the Wild.



Conserve. Connect. Protect.

DWR protects people, property, and natural resources by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflicts through both law enforcement and education efforts. We also enforce the Commonwealth's wildlife and boating laws and regulations.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

CONSERVE. CONNECT. **PROTECT.**

Operation Midnight Express

In an effort to align their enforcement efforts with times of peak outdoor activity, DWR's Conservation Police dedicated at least 40 percent of their workdays to evening or night patrols during July and August, an initiative named **Operation Midnight Express**. In addition to routine patrols, Operation Midnight Express included directed patrols, saturation patrols on DWR properties, K9 team coordination, boating safety checkpoints, and bait boat operations. These efforts ensured a visible and proactive enforcement presence during peak summer recreational hours and bolstered compliance with natural resource laws.



2,334 patrols conducted



1,954 arrests or summonses issued



899 warnings provided



48 arrests for reckless operation of a vessel



29 arrests for operating a vessel under the influence



Meghan Marchetti/DWR

EDUCATING ON BOATING SAFETY

More than 23,000 boaters attended a boating safety education course—either classroom or online—in fiscal year 2025.

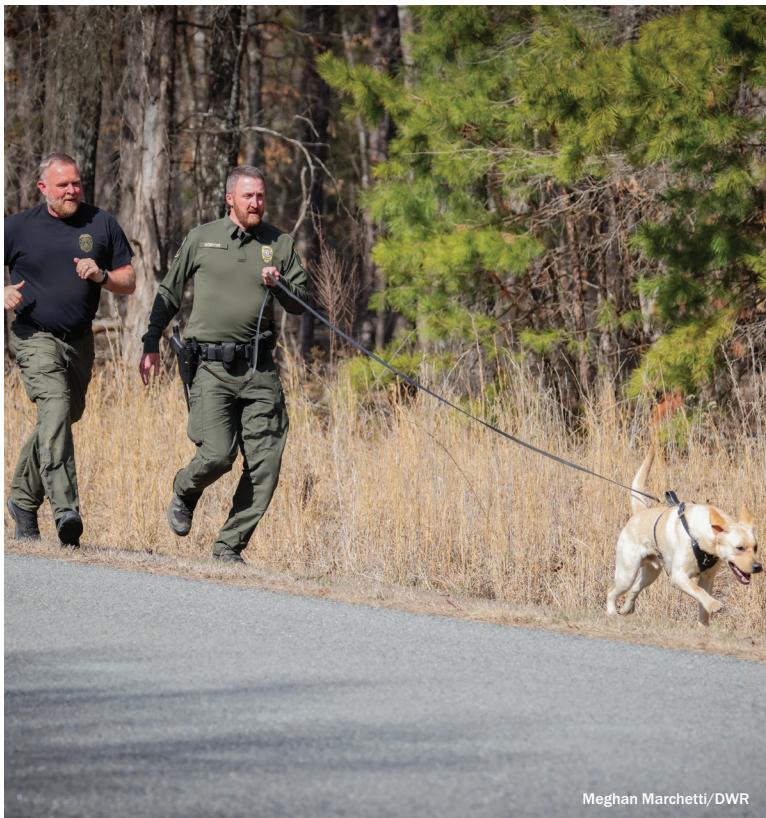
The Boating Safety Program continued to provide National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)-approved virtual classroom courses and free home-study courses, as well as revising the classroom boating safety course curriculum to provide hands-on and interactive learning for public boating classes. DWR Boating Safety also served as a pilot program for NASBLA's new Guide to Paddlesport Safety program.



CONSERVE. CONNECT. **PROTECT.**

Bog Turtle Poaching Prevention

DWR Nongame, Outreach, and Law Enforcement staff met with representatives from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy in Floyd County to create a training video focused on what to look for when identifying the poaching of bog turtles. The video provides internal training for state and federal wildlife law enforcement officers on how to identify the signs of bog turtle poaching, recognize the species and its habitat, and understand proper reporting protocols. The bog turtle is North America's rarest and smallest turtle. They're federally protected, but also at high risk of poaching.



K9S EXPAND CAPABILITY

DWR's K9 Conservation Police unit consists of nine K9 teams of CPOs and canines. The K9 teams specialize in human tracking and evidence recovery, assist fellow CPOs and other law enforcement agencies by locating and recovering evidence at crime scenes and hunting incident investigations, tracking suspects involved in criminal activity, and locating missing or critically endangered persons. K9s are also extremely effective at outreach events such as demonstrations or presentations for schools, community groups, or the media. DWR conducts the Conservation Law Enforcement Canine Academy, which has trained K9s and handlers from DWR and the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

K9 Activity:

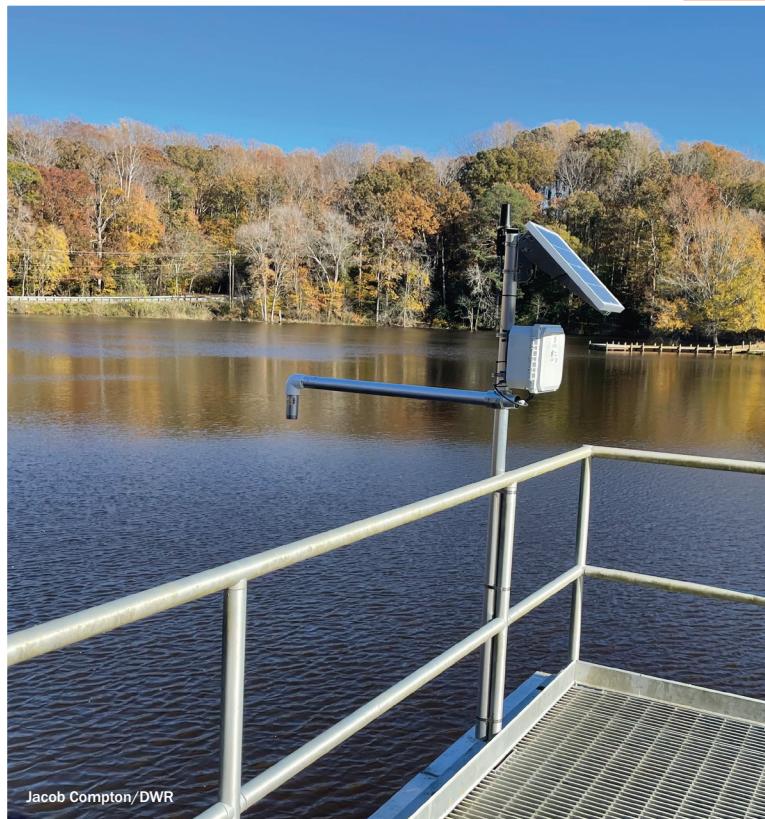
• Calls for Service	2,317
• Area Search	204
• Public Appearance	196
• Tracks	81
• Other Use	51

New Technology for Dam Safety

Dam safety staff completed operation and maintenance certificates, emergency action plans, and inspections for DWR-owned and maintained dams. Dam safety staff also partnered with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Flood Intel unit to install four remote monitoring systems at Laurel Bed, Briery Creek, Chandlers Mill Pond, and Burke Lake dams. Installation of these monitoring units allows DWR to see water height data in real time remotely, allowing for a better understanding of what safety actions may be needed and reducing employee risk in monitoring during high-flow periods.

DID YOU KNOW?

DWR's Capital Budget for the maintenance and improvement of agency infrastructure totals **\$6.1 million**.



DEDICATED HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT SPECIALIST HIRED

A new position designed to supplement existing staff in delivering off-site technical assistance to citizens statewide for wildlife disease and injury response and management and human-wildlife conflict management joined DWR's roster. The position assists with bear mange management by improving public reporting of mange and enhancing response to severe mange reports. It also expands capacity for responding to public calls about wildlife conflicts and sick and injured wildlife.

BUILDING RESILIENCY

The Executive Office began to develop a DWR Resilience Plan with the goal of ensuring that agency programs consider and incorporate activities that address changing environmental conditions and their resulting impacts on fish, wildlife, habitats, wildlife-related recreational opportunities, and DWR assets. The DWR Resilience Coordinator represents the agency on the Commonwealth's new Interagency Resilience Management Team.





Meghan Marchetti/DWR

CONSERVE. CONNECT. **PROTECT.**

Hound Hunting Enforcement

The Law Enforcement Division conducted a directed enforcement effort during the 2024/25 hunting season, targeting areas with a higher-than-average number of hound hunting complaints. It required some deployment of Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) from other regions to augment efforts in hot spots and careful development and deployment of operational plans. Overall, these efforts were successful in detecting violations and serving as a deterrent.



2,934 Total Work Hours



33 Redeployed CPOs



59 Warnings Given



51 Summons Issued



1,210 Total Calls for Service



3,017 Hunters Contacted



137 Total Violations Detected



10 Hunting Incidents Investigated

TWO COMMAND TRAILERS PUT INTO SERVICE

Two towable incident command trailers were fully incorporated into the Law Enforcement Division. Custom-designed for CPOs' unique work environment, the trailers are outfitted with solar and generator power, multiple workstations, internal and external screens, crime scene processing equipment and supplies, and room to carry an ATV into remote areas. These trailers prove beneficial when conducting multi-day operations and provide a dedicated incident command center.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR



EVALUATING IMPACTS ON WILDLIFE

DWR's Environmental Services Section (ESS) provides comments on infrastructure and development projects in Virginia as a consulting agency for the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Transportation, as well as other agencies. The ESS evaluates potential impacts to game and nongame wildlife species and consults with biologists across the resource units to determine which species and DWR assets may be impacted and how those impacts might be mitigated or minimized. During the 2025 fiscal year, the ESS reviewed and provided comment on 1,316 projects.



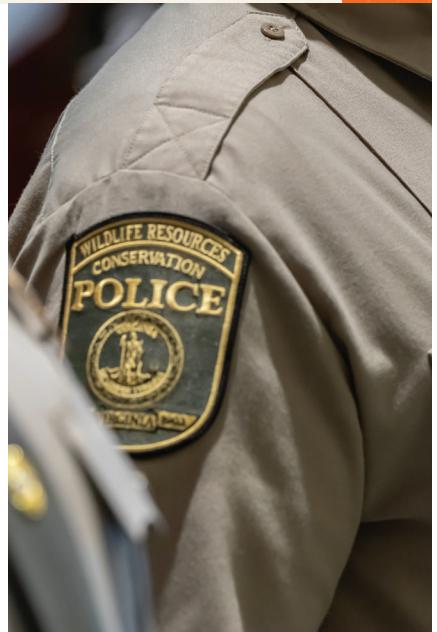
LANDS AND ACCESS SAFETY REVIEWED

Region 4 DWR staff hosted the third annual Safety and Operations Meeting, which provides DWR Lands and Access staff from across the state with a forum for peer-to-peer knowledge transfer on a variety of Wildlife Management Area (WMA) operational needs. Safety speakers educated participants on specialized subjects. Topics addressed included sprayer calibration for safe and cost-effective chemical application, downed powerline safety, emergency action plans, fire extinguisher maintenance, small engine troubleshooting, and habitat and forest management.

MAINTAINING STANDARDS

DWR's Law Enforcement Division received its initial Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards (VLEPSC) accreditation in 2021 and successfully completed reaccreditation in 2024.

Assessors reviewed 192 standards for compliance across each year of the four-year cycle, ensuring that policies, practices, and documentation met VLEPSC standards. The division's completion of the assessment without any file returns or findings of non-compliance demonstrates a strong culture of accountability and excellence. By promoting the adoption of best practices within their communities, DWR continues to advance law enforcement standards, contributing to the overall betterment of the field. DWR continues to actively participate in the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) accreditation program by meeting or exceeding the program requirements as well as implementing training standards and performance tasks based upon NASBLA guidelines. DWR's Law Enforcement Division also assisted in Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's successful accreditation effort through the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) program. DWR contributed expertise and resources to help shape the standards and process, and Colonel John J. Cobb of DWR volunteers as the chair of the NAWLEA board.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR



WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ACTION PLAN PROGRESSES

Funded by a grant and a recent General Fund appropriation from the 2025 General Assembly, DWR is working with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to conduct multiple studies and initiatives to conserve wildlife habitat corridors, preserve corridor connectivity, and reduce wildlife-vehicle conflicts as identified in Virginia's Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP). The projects include creating a large mammal road-risk model; identifying wildlife corridors for 12 species of amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals; prioritizing road-stream culvert improvements for aquatic species passage; and identifying smaller-scale wildlife corridors in addition to the large-scale corridors already included.

DWR Wins National Awards

DWR Elk Project Leader Jackie Rosenberger (center) celebrated her Mark J. Reeff Award with her mother, Paige (second right), Colonel John Cobb (left) of DWR Conservation Police, DWR Executive Director Ryan Brown (second left), and DWR Deputy Director of Administration and Outreach Darin Moore (right).



Jackie Rosenberger, elk project leader with DWR, received the **Mark J. Reeff Award** for a distinguished early career professional with great potential to rise through the ranks of their agency into a more senior leadership role at the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) annual awards ceremony. Rosenberger is growing the Virginia elk program with passion, dedication, and persistence. She has exceptional problem-solving skills and abilities, embraces a team approach, and makes each team member feel they are a vitally important part of the delivery of elk management. Rosenberger's approach provides enormous benefits to the resource, the agency and its constituents.

The Outreach Division team of DWR won six awards at the 2025 Association for Conservation Information (ACI) National Conference.

DWR's 2024 Annual Report print publication won first place in the One-time Publication: Book/Report category, while two *Virginia Wildlife* magazine articles were also recognized. "Snakes on the Water," Ron Messina's story about northern snakeheads in the November/December 2024 issue claimed second place in the Magazine Article: Fisheries category and third place in the Graphics: Layout category. Andrea Naccarato's article "Clinton Mooney Captures a Calendar-Worthy Moment" in the September/October 2024 issue claimed second place in the Magazine: General Interest Article category.

DWR's marketing team took second place in the Communication Campaign: Marketing category for its Explore the Wild campaign in 2024, while Meghan Marchetti captured third place in the Video: PSA and Marketing category for the video "The Story Behind the Virginia Wildlife 2025 Calendar Cover."



Doug Huegel/PA Game Commission Photo

DWR Creative Content Manager Molly Kirk (right) and DWR Senior Graphic Designer Maria LaLima (left) picked up the Outreach Division's ACI awards.



DWR Wildlife Division Assistant Chief Jenn Allen (left) and DWR Wildlife Division Chief Michael Lipford (right) helped David Norris (center) celebrate his William T. Hesselton Award.

David Norris was presented the **William T. Hesselton Award** at the 2025 Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting. The only award issued by Northeastern Wildlife Chiefs, the Hesselton Award is presented to an individual that has demonstrated initiative and made significant contributions to wildlife restoration. A 32-year veteran of DWR, Norris has been a Regional Wildlife Manager and recently was named the Coastal Habitat Grants Manager. Michael Lipford, Wildlife Division Director said, "David's knowledge of wetlands and wildlife, coupled with his can-do, up-for-the-challenge attitude, has created a lasting impact on restoration of tens of thousands of acres of wetlands in Virginia."

Norris was instrumental in creating new temporary nesting solutions for Virginia's largest seabird colony, which had been displaced by Virginia's single largest transportation project at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. In 2024, he was a key member of the team that secured the largest grants ever received by DWR: an \$8 million grant from the NOAA to restore living shorelines along Ragged Island Wildlife Management Area and a \$44.5 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to protect and restore wetlands, shorelines, forest habitats and wildlife resources on coastal Wildlife Management Areas.

The Outdoors are Better Together

DWR has actively been seeking out community and corporate collaborations to help amplify the agency's message and impact. Among a number of partnerships that proved mutually effective and productive were those with Triple Crossing Beer and Devils Backbone Brewing Company.

TRIPLE CROSSING BEER

Triple Crossing Beer, located in Richmond, Virginia, partnered with DWR on multiple events and opportunities to promote conservation through the lens of the Richmond Falcon Cam. In the Falcon Banding Raffle, DWR and Triple Crossing invited the public to enter a raffle; the winners were able to have an exclusive brewery experience at Triple Crossing and also observe the banding of juvenile peregrine falcons of Falcon Cam fame. Triple Crossing developed a special beer—Fledgling IPA—to draw attention to the Falcon Cam. Funds raised through the raffle and a portion of the beer proceeds went to the Restore the Wild initiative. The collaboration was celebrated at the inaugural Fledge Fest at Triple Crossing, where the public attended a family-friendly event featuring an educational raptor show, kids' activities, the Falcon Cam livestream, and live music.



Meghan Marchetti/DWR



DEVILS BACKBONE BREWING COMPANY

Devils Backbone Brewing Company, located in Nelson County, Virginia, and DWR established a three-year, \$33,000 partnership to support habitat restoration at DWR's James River Wildlife Management Area. The funds donated by Devils Backbone assisted with the clearing of autumn olive, a fast-growing, invasive shrub that poses a threat to other native plant species in the region, at the 1,213-acre WMA. The first steps of mechanical spraying and treating of the area and a prescribed fire to get rid of invasive plants and allow new growth have been completed. Native wildflower plantings are planned for Spring 2026. In addition to the habitat work, DWR has been engaged with multiple events at Base Camp, including co-sponsoring the Lumberjack Classic.

Funding our Future

DWR depends on sustainable revenue from a number of sources. These include hunting and fishing licenses and permits, boat registrations and titles, and federal funds—some of which are based in part on the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold and the number of boats registered each year.

The department's conservation and outdoor recreation efforts also benefit from the sale of Virginia Conservation License Plates, branded merchandise, *Virginia Wildlife* magazine subscriptions and calendars, and Restore the Wild donations.

Just as importantly, DWR increasingly depends on the transfer by the Virginia General Assembly of funds associated with the Virginia sales and use taxes on watercraft, as well as the sales tax on hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching equipment (commonly referred to as HB38), purchased in the Commonwealth.

DWR is constantly seeking ways to increase these existing funding sources and to develop new funding sources through partnerships with other state agencies, nonprofits, and private businesses.

THE POWER OF YOUR PURCHASE: LICENSE SALES & FEDERAL MATCHES

When it comes to our federal grants, DWR receives its monies each year based in part on the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold and the number of boats registered each year. Fun fact: for each hunting or fishing license issued, DWR receives a proportional “matching” fund from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. For each registered boat in Virginia, DWR receives a proportional amount of federal funding from the U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety Program.

- Wildlife Restoration grant funds are specific to game and nongame wildlife (birds and mammals). **The revenue funds projects to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and mammals and their habitats. Allowable projects include providing public use and access to wildlife resources, wildlife area acquisition and management, research, hunter education, and development and management of shooting ranges.**
- The Recreational Boating Safety State Grant Program funds are specific to state recreational boating safety programs. **Revenue funds projects like state numbering programs (boat registration), boating education programs, boat incident reporting, and enforcement of state boating laws and regulations.**
- Sportfish Restoration grant funds are specific to fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education. **The revenue funds sport fisheries research and management activities, boating access development and maintenance, aquatic resource education projects, lake construction and maintenance, land acquisition, technical assistance, habitat enhancement, administration/planning, and hatchery construction are all allowable types of projects.**

	2023	2024	2025
Number of Licensed Hunters	253,650	248,951	248,993
Number of Licensed Anglers	595,755	559,013	559,158
Number of Registered Boats	231,055	225,281	224,855
State Hunting Revenue	\$13,120,975	\$13,245,966	\$13,321,249
State Fishing Revenue	\$9,672,045	\$9,959,775	\$10,431,321
State Boat Title & Registration Revenue	\$3,520,439	\$3,474,931	\$3,307,707
PR/Wildlife Restoration Apportionment (Federal Revenue)	\$20,474,229	\$16,664,004	\$15,322,198
DJ/Sportfish Restoration Apportionment (Federal Revenue)	\$6,226,128	\$5,521,997	\$6,215,243
USCG RBS Funding (Federal Revenue)	\$2,154,326	\$2,182,276	\$2,481,534



How You Can Help

- By purchasing hunting and fishing licenses and permits, which supports DWR twice!
- By donating to our Restore the Wild program, you're directly supporting critical habitat restoration that helps wildlife thrive. Even better, your gift is used to match federal funds in support of habitat projects, matched 3-to-1 by federal funds—turning every dollar donated into four—allowing your donation to have three times the impact.
- By purchasing a firearm or ammunition, or equipment for fishing, archery, or wildlife watching, or watercraft and boat fuel. The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration and Boating programs are funded through the collection of excise taxes and import duties paid by the manufacturers of sport fishing equipment, archery and boating equipment, firearms and ammunition, and from the tax collected on the sale of fuel used in recreational powerboats. By making such purchases in Virginia, you will also be contributing two additional funding sources for DWR: Watercraft Sales and Use Tax and Sales and Use Tax on Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Watching Equipment.
- By maintaining your boat and registering it every three years.
- By subscribing to *Virginia Wildlife* magazine and purchasing a *Virginia Wildlife* calendar every year.
- By purchasing DWR-branded merchandise to support the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program.
- By purchasing one of nine unique Conservation License Plates through DMV.
- By donating to DWR and the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia Partnership Fund.
- By engaging DWR through sponsorships and public-private partnership opportunities.
- By donating to the Nongame tax checkoff on Virginia state tax returns, which is used to match Federal Funds from the State & Tribal Wildlife Grant (STWG) program and the Cooperative Endangered Species Grant program. DWR receives more than \$1 million annually from the STWG program.



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

dwr.virginia.gov

General
Information
804-367-1000

License Sales
Customer Service
1-866-721-6911

Boat Registration
& Titling
1-866-721-6911

Wildlife
Conflict Helpline
1-855-571-9003

Report a
Wildlife Crime
1-800-237-5712

Wildlife
Damage Permit
804-367-1000