

# WILD TURKEY BAG LIMIT REGULATION AMENDMENT

---

MIKE DYE— FOREST GAMEBIRD BIOLOGIST,  
WILDLIFE DIVISION



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

# REGULATION AMENDMENT

## 4VAC15-240-70. Turkey. Bag Limit.

The bag limit for hunting turkeys shall be one a day, three a license year, no more than ~~two~~ one of which may be ~~taken in the fall~~ beardless.

### Rationale

- Public concern over lower than desired populations in some regions of Virginia
- Reducing bag limit on “beardless” turkeys (i.e., hens) is intended to protect females
  - Enhance potential reproductive output
  - Facilitate increase in turkey population
- Expand fall hunting bag limit for those desiring to take birds during the fall seasons

Anticipated Effective Date: February 1, 2026



# REGULATION AMENDMENT – PUBLIC COMMENTS

- **Public Comment period September 8 – October 7, 2025**
- **74 Individuals Commented**
- **Majority of comments were in support of the proposal**
  - **Largest portion were in direct support**
  - **Some suggested the regulation does not go far enough**
- **Only 2 commenters openly opposed the regulation**





# Questions?



# WILD TURKEY REGULATION AMENDMENT

## Motion

I move that the Wildlife & Boat Committee recommend that the Board adopt the amendment to the wild turkey bag limit regulation as presented by staff.



# TURKEY PROGRAM NEXT STEPS

- Re-evaluation of current surveys and monitoring programs
- Evaluation of potential new surveys
- Expanding and improving habitat information and education on the website
- Development of a Work-Group to improve the Fall Turkey hunting season structure



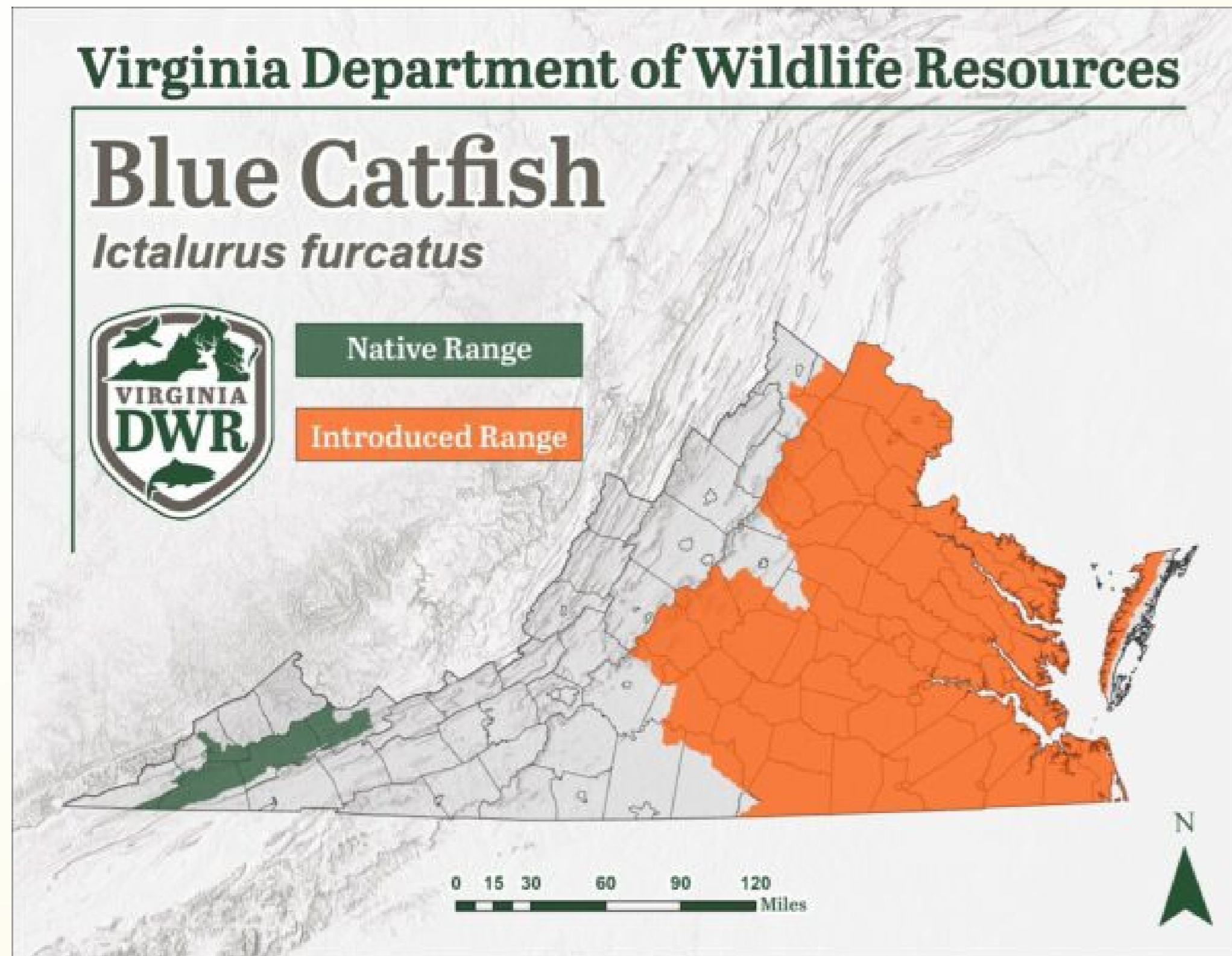
# Blue Catfish Regulatory Changes



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

# Background

- DWR regulation only allows 1 fish >32” – reflective of VDH consumption advisories
- Experimental commercial electrofishing
- Efforts to lessen USDA inspection requirements
- Incentives to encourage harvest
- General Assembly – 2024 – Workgroup to create market
- General Assembly – 2025 – Remove DWR size limit



# Current Regulation

## Current Regulation – 4VAC15-320-25

20/day, No statewide limit

### Exceptions

Kerr Reservoir – 20/day, only one >32”

James River and its tributaries below the fall line, Rappahannock River and its tributaries below the fall line, and York River and its tributaries (including the Pamunkey and Mattaponi River) below the fall line – No daily limit, only one >32”

All rivers below the fall line other than the James River and its tributaries, the Rappahannock River and its tributaries, and the York River and its tributaries – No daily limit



# Staff Recommendation

## Current Regulations – 4VAC15-320-25

20/day, No statewide limit

Exceptions

Kerr Reservoir – 20/day, only one >32”

James River and its tributaries below the fall line **downstream to a line connecting Hog Point on Hog Island (Surry County) and the downstream point of the mouth of College Creek (James City County)** ~~Rappahannock River and its tributaries below the fall line, and York River and its tributaries (including the Pamunkey and Mattaponi River) below the fall line~~ – No daily limit, only one >32”

All rivers below the fall line other than the James River and its tributaries **downstream to a line connecting Hog Point on Hog Island (Surry County) and the downstream point of the mouth of College Creek (James City County),** ~~the Rappahannock River and its tributaries, and the York River and its tributaries~~ – No daily limit



# Schedule

- August 21<sup>st</sup> – Board proposed regulation for public comment
- Went to 30-day public comment period
- October 22<sup>nd</sup> – Staff presentation on public comments received to Wildlife and Boat Committee. Any recommended changes are identified and described.
- October 23<sup>rd</sup> – Full Board Meeting  
Board will vote to adopt/reject recommendation
- January 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 – Any adopted regulation goes into effect



# Comments Received

Total – 349

22 – Pro catfish

327 – Pro environment



# Comments Received

Total – 349

22 – Pro catfish

- Guides, serious anglers
- Do not support further restrictions on blue catfish



# Comments Received

## 327 – Pro environment

- Most support changes but critical that they do not do enough
- Many suggested no limits on James or no limits statewide
- Majority were form letters
- Formal responses from James River Association, Waterkeepers, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Choose Clean Water Coalition



# Staff Recommendation

## Current Regulations – 4VAC15-320-25

20/day, No statewide limit

Exceptions

Kerr Reservoir – 20/day, only one >32”

James River and its tributaries below the fall line **downstream to a line connecting Hog Point on Hog Island (Surry County) and the downstream point of the mouth of College Creek (James City County)** ~~Rappahannock River and its tributaries below the fall line, and York River and its tributaries (including the Pamunkey and Mattaponi River) below the fall line~~ – No daily limit, only one >32”

All rivers below the fall line other than the James River and its tributaries **downstream to a line connecting Hog Point on Hog Island (Surry County) and the downstream point of the mouth of College Creek (James City County),** ~~the Rappahannock River and its tributaries, and the York River and its tributaries~~ – No daily limit



# Schedule

- August 21<sup>st</sup> – Board proposed regulation for public comment
- Went to 30-day public comment period
- October 22<sup>nd</sup> – Staff presentation on public comments received to Wildlife and Boat Committee. Any recommended changes are identified and described.
- October 23<sup>rd</sup> – Full Board Meeting  
Board will vote to adopt/reject recommendation
- January 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 – Any adopted regulation goes into effect



# Motion

**I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources put forward staff's regulatory recommendations on blue catfish to the full Board for adoption**



# Regulatory Reform Final Amendments

Aaron Proctor, Policy Manager



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

# Regulatory Reform – Governor Youngkin’s EO 19

- Goal: reduce regulatory mandates by 25%
- Measure: actual mandates on regulated community
- Office of Regulatory Management
- Began efforts summer 2023 within normal reg cycles



# Regulatory Reform

- Opportunity for housekeeping of regulatory catalog
- Unnecessary or otherwise could be handled administratively to reduce procedural burdens (e.g., a permit application)
- Not affecting opportunity or resource management
- Currently sitting at 21% (1193 baseline, ~895 is goal)



# Regulations Identified

- 4VAC15-20-100
- 4VAC15-20-110 (repeal)
- 4VAC15-20-155
- 4VAC15-20-160
- 4VAC15-20-210
- 4VAC15-30-10 (repeal)
- 4VAC15-30-40
- 4VAC15-35-80
- 4VAC15-40-200
- 4VAC15-40-260
- 4VAC15-40-280
- 4VAC15-40-290
- 4VAC15-90-280
- 4VAC15-200-60

- 4VAC15-275-10
- 4VAC15-275-20
- 4VAC15-275-30
- 4VAC15-275-40
- 4VAC15-275-60
- 4VAC15-275-70 (repeal)
- 4VAC15-275-80
- 4VAC15-275-90 (repeal)
- 4VAC15-275-100 (repeal)
- 4VAC15-290-80
- 4VAC15-290-140
- 4VAC15-330-180
- 4VAC15-330-190
- 4VAC15-340-20
- 4VAC15-340-40
- 4VAC15-360-20



# Summary of Public Comments Received

- **23 comments received: 13 support, 10 opposed/issue**
- **4 VAC 15-20-100**: Two opposed comments incorrectly believed change would open WMAs to ATVs and remove existing ability to use class 1 & 2 electric bikes.
- **4 VAC 15-20-155**: Two comments discuss 14 consecutive night (or 14 out of 28 days) rule which is not changed with this amendment process.
- **4 VAC 15-40-200**: One comment related to the difficulty of staking boxed body gripping traps to the ground; issue not related to proposed amendments before the Board.



# Summary of Public Comments Received

- **4VAC15-200-60**: Two negative comments; not understanding need for burial and asking why not applicable to all rabbits, not just wild.
- **4VAC15-275 (multiple sections) – Game: Hunter Education:**
  - **Section 10**: One comment saying that “*provide proof of completion*” would be a clearer wording of the change.
- **4VAC15-330-190**: Two comments – one discussing other trout species not originally addressed in language (not specific to proposed amendments), one comment discussing how proposed removed text will reduce information received by Department that will aid in disease prevention and enhance fish health, including invasive species prevention.



## Motion:

I move that the Board approve staff regulatory reduction recommendations to meet the Agency's goal of 25% regulatory reduction per Executive Order 19 for final adoption.



# MANGE IN VIRGINIA BLACK BEARS

## UPDATE ON THE MANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND MANGE RESEARCH PROJECTS

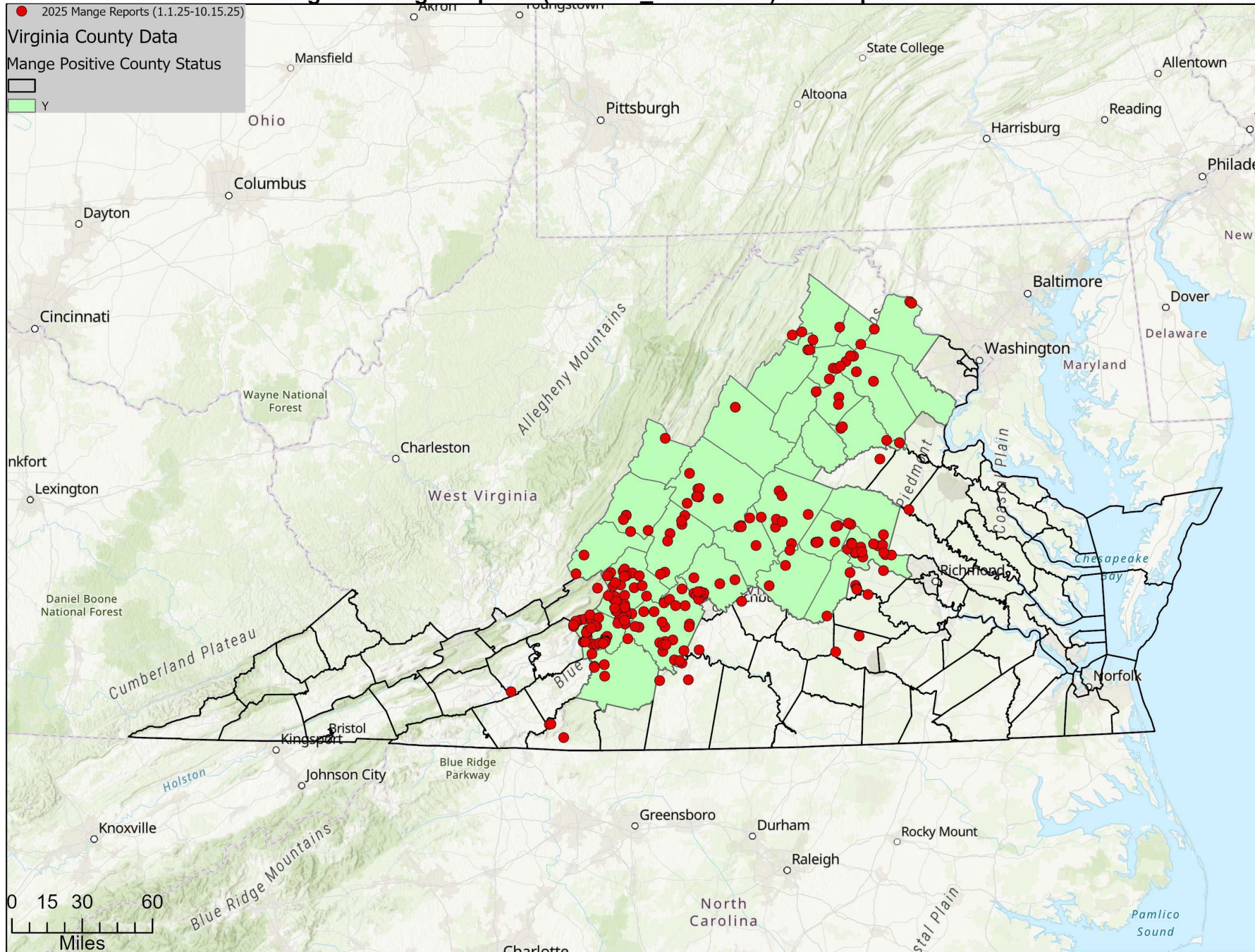
---

JOHN TRACEY- WILDLIFE VETERINARIAN



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

# Virginia Mange Reports (1.1.2025 - 10.15.2025)-236 Reports



# DWR COMMITMENTS TO MANGE

1. Improve the public mange reporting system
2. Enhance options for response to mange reports
3. Expand involvement of bear hunters in sample/data collection
4. Reduce hunting mortality to assist natural recovery of bear populations
5. Increase public awareness about mange in Virginia and DWR actions toward it
- 6. Develop a more comprehensive bear sarcoptic mange management plan**



# PLAN REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

- Draft plan was distributed for review the week of September 8<sup>th</sup>  
Shared with committee chair, interested stakeholder groups, and external experts
- Written feedback was received by the following:
  - One committee member (Mr. Cooper)
  - One constituent organization (Virginia Property Rights Association)
  - One rehabilitation center (Blue Ridge Wildlife Center)
  - Two state fish and wildlife agencies (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and Pennsylvania Game Commission)
  - One federal agency (US Fish & Wildlife Service)
  - Three universities (University of Pennsylvania, University of Georgia, and Virginia Tech)



# COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN

Executive Summary

Introduction

Goals

Surveillance & Monitoring

Management & Response

Research

Communication & Outreach

Conclusion

Appendices and Accessory Information



# PLAN GOALS

1. Implement science-based surveillance and management techniques and continually adapt as more is learned.
2. Manage for resilient populations of black bears affected by sarcoptic mange to ensure sustained use and conservation of the resource.
3. Identify critical knowledge gaps and address them through professional networks and research efforts.
4. Communicate broadly and effectively with constituents and foster citizen science opportunities.



# SURVEILLANCE & MONITORING

- Objective 1: Standardize and objectify manage data collection and response protocols.
  - Consistent case definitions, sample & data collection, etc.
- Objective 2: Perform comprehensive statewide manage surveillance in bears using a combination of active and passive methods.
  - Public reporting, citizen science, & strategic projects
- Objective 3: Perform adequate surveillance for manage in other wildlife species.



# MANAGEMENT & RESPONSE

- Objective 1: Implement appropriate, welfare focused interventional strategies.
  - Dispatch severely affected, emaciated bears
- Objective 2: Reduce mange transmission and prevent human-assisted movement of mange mites.
  - Carcass management, movement protocols, recreational BMP's, limit artificial congregation
- Objective 3: Incorporate disease effects into bear population models and population management.
  - Develop new models, adjust harvest mortality



# RESEARCH

- Objective 1: Identify future research opportunities, limitations, and hurdles.
  - Prioritize critical projects, advocate for adequate funding, build collaborator network



# COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

- Objective 1: Increase public awareness and transparency about mange in Virginia's bear population and VDWR's management of the disease.
  - Centralize website info, expand outreach methods, provide adequate updates
- Objective 2: Engage constituents to maximize reporting of bears with mange, collection of data associated with the disease, and efficiency of implementing measures to reduce transmission or impacts of mange.
- Objective 3: Ensure that staff across VDWR and partner agencies understand management of bear mange and can provide consistent messaging to constituents.



# APPENDICES AND ACCESSORY INFORMATION

- History of Mange in Bears and Other Wildlife in North America
- Mange Mites in Black Bears
- Mange Pathogenesis and Other Causes of Skin Disease
- Management Strategies Not Recommended for Adoption at This Time
- Past and Current VDWR Research Project Contributions
- Human Health Considerations
- Population Monitoring Glossary
- Glossary of Terms
- Literature References





# Questions?



# MANAGE MANAGEMENT REGULATION AMENDMENT

## Motion

I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee recommend that the Board endorse the 2025-2029 Bear Mange Management Plan as presented by staff.



# RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATES



VDWR: Katie Martin, Carl Tugend, John Tracey

Virginia Tech: Marcella Kelly, Brett Jesmer, Fang Chen, Madison Thurber, Brogan Holcombe, Isabella Sciarrino

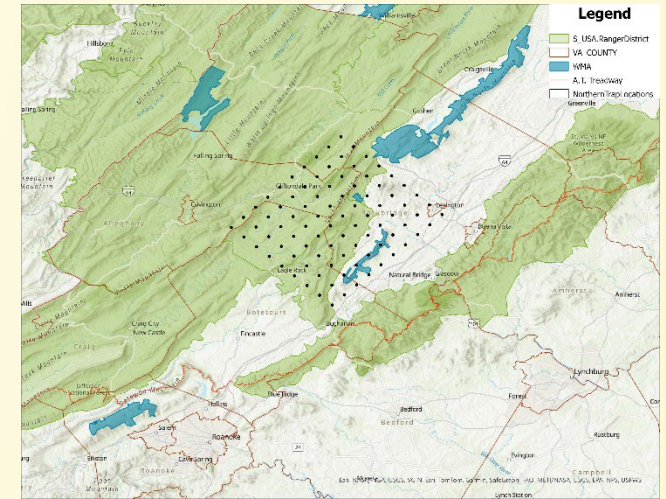


<https://vabearmangestudy.wixsite.com/va-bear-mange-study>

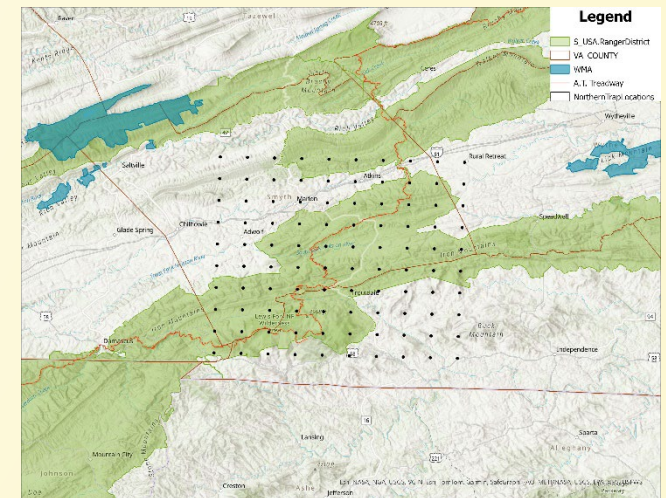


# SPATIALLY EXPLICIT CAPTURE-RECAPTURE

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Season (Summer 2025)
  - Collected ~700 hair samples from northern site, ~1000 from southern site
  - DNA extraction & analysis on-going through the winter
- Paired camera grids in northern site also being used for occupancy modeling and mange prevalence estimation
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Season will be performed in north



Northern Study Sites (Mange Endemic)  
\*Botetourt, Rockbridge, Augusta, Alleghany, Bath

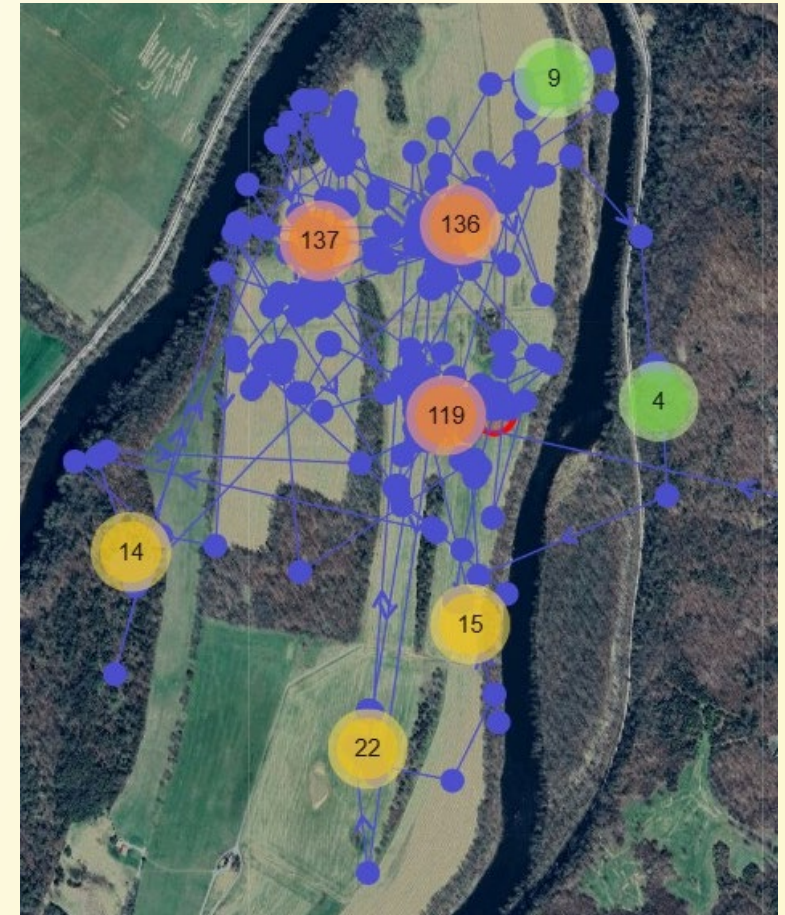


Southern Study Sites (Non-Mange)  
\*Grayson, Smyth, Wythe



# CAPTURE AND MOVEMENT MODELING

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Season (Summer 2025)
  - 78 bears captured between northern and southern sites
  - 8 mange-affected bears confirmed and either GPS collared or vhf ear tagged
  - Data from movements being analyzed for resource selection, home range, and activity pattern differences
- Winter den work will begin in January
- 3<sup>rd</sup> field season will be performed at both sites





# Questions?



# Virginia's Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Conservation Plans

Amy Martin  
Nongame and Endangered Species Program

DWR Wildlife and Boat Committee  
October 22, 2025

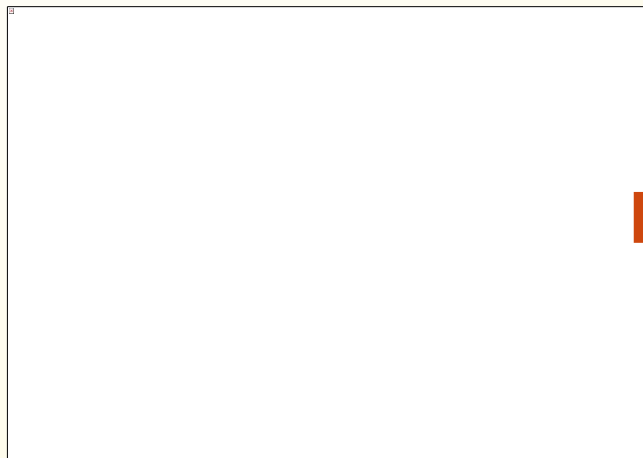
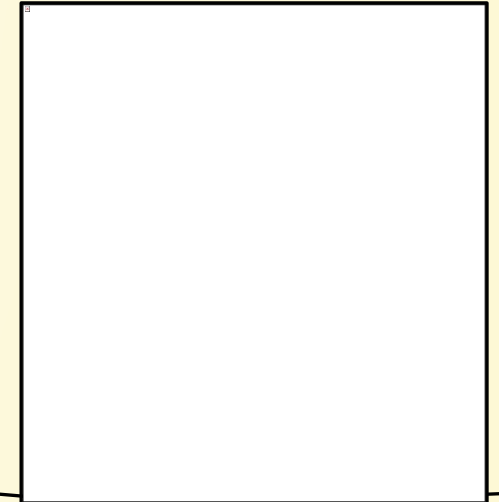


CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

# Virginia Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Conservation Plans

## Conservation of Virginia's Biodiversity

- Restoring and protecting wildlife habitats.
- Recovering species whose populations have declined or are declining.
- Planning and conducting research.
- Providing expertise and technical assistance.
- Outreach and education.
- Formulating regulations.
- Engaging stakeholders and partners.
- Supporting law enforcement efforts.



### Conservation Plans:

- Outline the strategy to recover a species
- Identify threats to the species and its habitats
- Identify relevant federal recovery goals for the species
- Identify strategies and actionable and measurable conservation actions that support recovery
- Identify and engage stakeholders and partners for developing, implementing and evaluating collaborative conservation actions
- Identify completion timelines for conservation actions



# VA Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Conservation Plans

## Sea Turtles and Marine Mammals in Virginia

### Sea Turtles

- Four species of sea turtle are known from Chesapeake Bay and lower reaches of tributaries as well as Atlantic Ocean in Virginia.
- Loggerhead turtle is the most common to nest in VA.
- All species are listed threatened or endangered by state and federal endangered species acts.
- Only occur in Virginia's waters seasonally.
- Share responsibility with VMRC, in addition to FWS and NOAA.



### Marine Mammals

- About 20 species of marine mammals have been documented from Chesapeake Bay and lower tributaries as well as Atlantic Ocean.
- Only bottlenose dolphins are here year-round.
- Many species are designated threatened or endangered by state and/or federal endangered species acts.
- Marine Mammal Protection Act offers additional federal protection.
- Share responsibility with VMRC, in addition to NOAA and FWS.



# Virginia Sea Turtle Conservation Plan

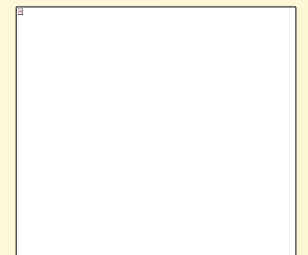
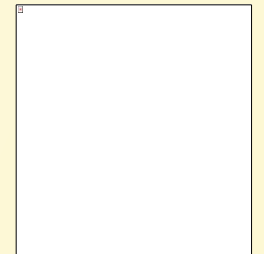
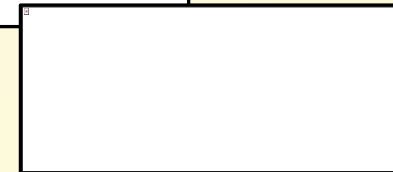
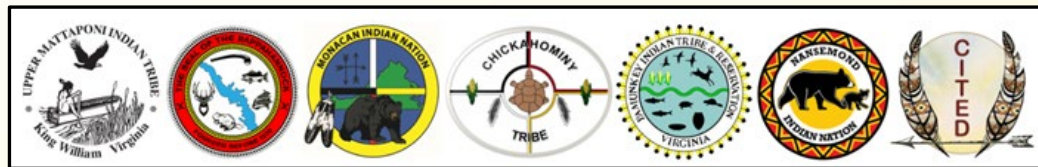
## Background and Collaboration

### Background

- Planning has occurred a couple times over the last couple of decades with no plan formally approved or implemented.
- Grant from the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program in FY 2022 to complete the conservation plan.
  - Previous drafts of a plan were leveraged as the foundation of the new plan.
  - Information gathered during a 2015 stakeholder meeting was also utilized.

### Collaboration

- During development of the new plan, personnel representing our partners were invited to a planning workshop and reviewed a draft of the plan.



# Virginia Sea Turtle Conservation Plan

## Key Takeaways

**Goal of Conservation Plan:** Enhance the survival and conserve the habitats of sea turtles in Virginia

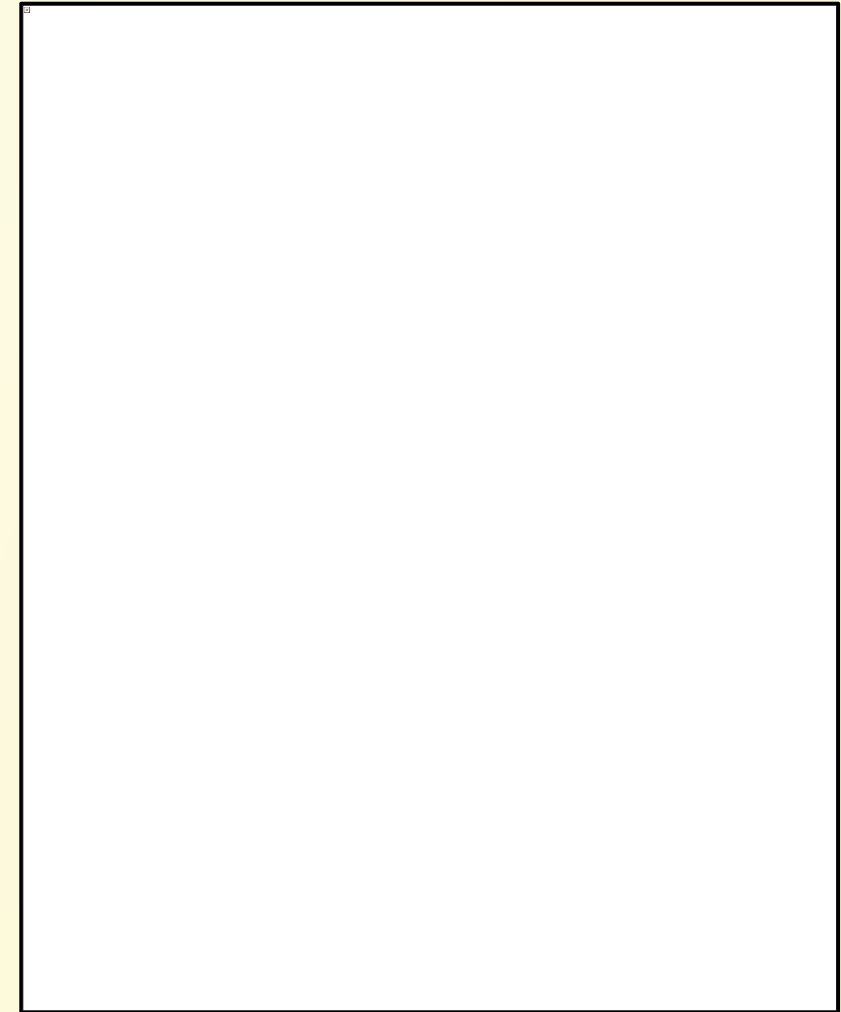
**Identified Threats to Conservation:** fishery interactions, hopper dredges, vessel collisions

### Conservation Goals:

- Maintain a permanent and effective *Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network* (4 strategies; 13 actions)
- Mitigate risks to populations and habitats (5 strategies; 27 actions).
- Promote sea turtle conservation through *social marketing and information dissemination* (3 strategies; 10 actions).

### Implementation:

- Requires significant collaboration with identified partners.
- Meant to complement ongoing regional and federal efforts
- Included as addendum to VA SWAP and VA Ocean Plan.

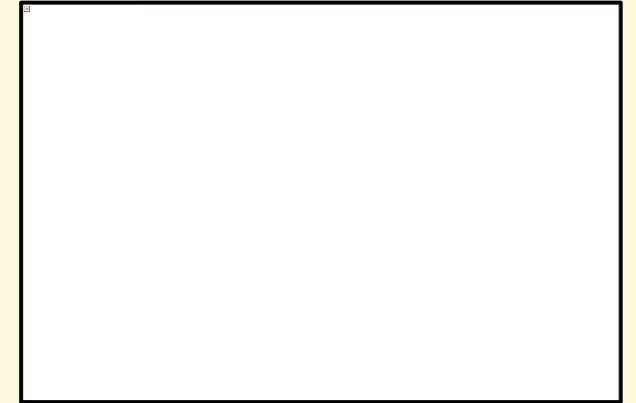


# Virginia Marine Mammal Conservation Plan

## Background and Collaboration

### Conservation Planning Workshop –

- 2 days; Virginia Beach – Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Total of 41 participants from industry associations, state and federal partners, NGO's, etc.
- Goal was to provide background information on the issue, understand varied perspectives and needs, and find common ground upon which to collaborate.



### Collaboration

- Speakers on various topics.
- Break-out sessions to focus on identified risks.
- Break-out sessions to identify conservation actions.
- Identified opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.
- Partners were asked to review a draft of the CP.



# Virginia Marine Mammal Conservation Plan

## Key Takeaways

**Goal of Conservation Plan:** Enhance the survival and conserve the habitats of marine mammals in Virginia

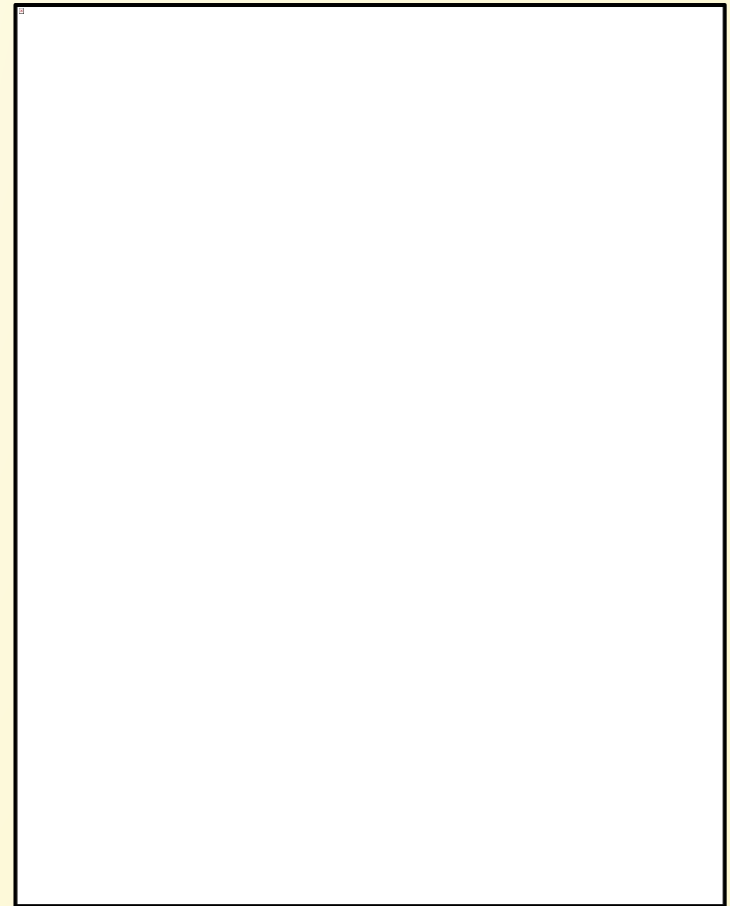
**Identified Threats to Conservation:** fishery interactions, vessel collisions

### Conservation Goals:

- A permanent and effective *Marine Mammal Stranding and Salvage Network* (2 strategies; 11 actions).
- Identify, assess, and mitigate risks to marine mammal populations (7 strategies; 23 actions).
- Promote marine mammal conservation through *social marketing and information dissemination* (3 strategies; 9 actions).

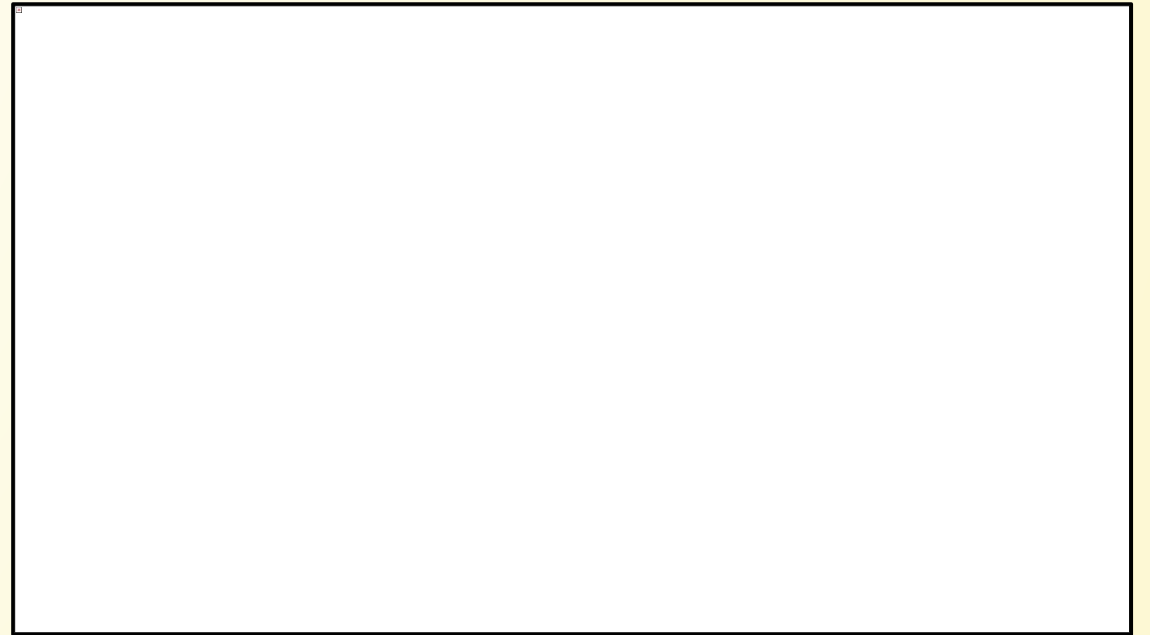
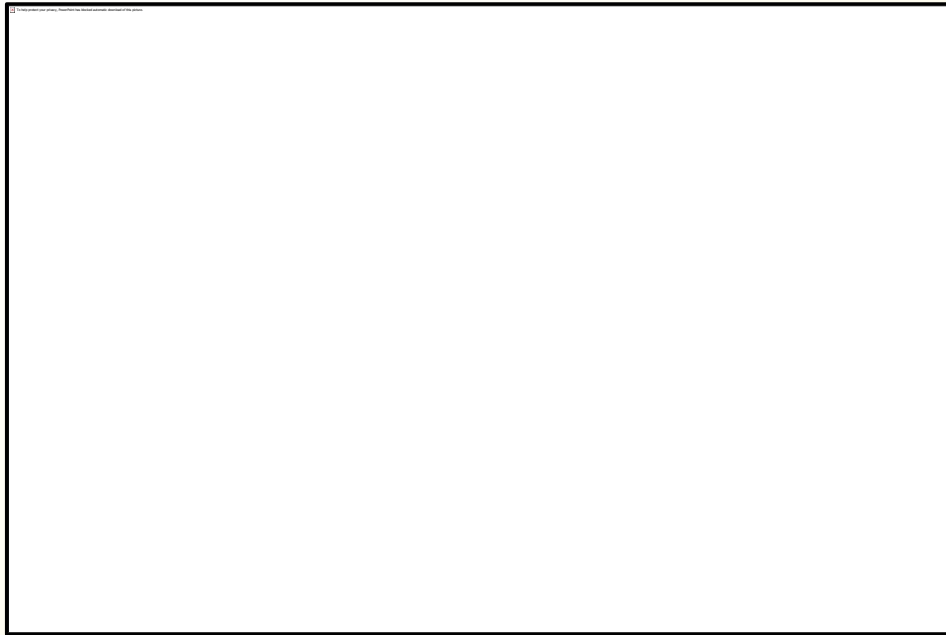
### Implementation:

- Requires significant collaboration with identified partners.
- Meant to complement ongoing regional and federal efforts.
- Included as addendum to VA SWAP and VA Ocean Plan.



Thank you to the CZM program at DEQ for funding this effort!

Thank you to Ruth Boettcher, Dr. Sue Barco, and Megan Purdue who worked tirelessly to accomplish this planning feat!



# Questions?

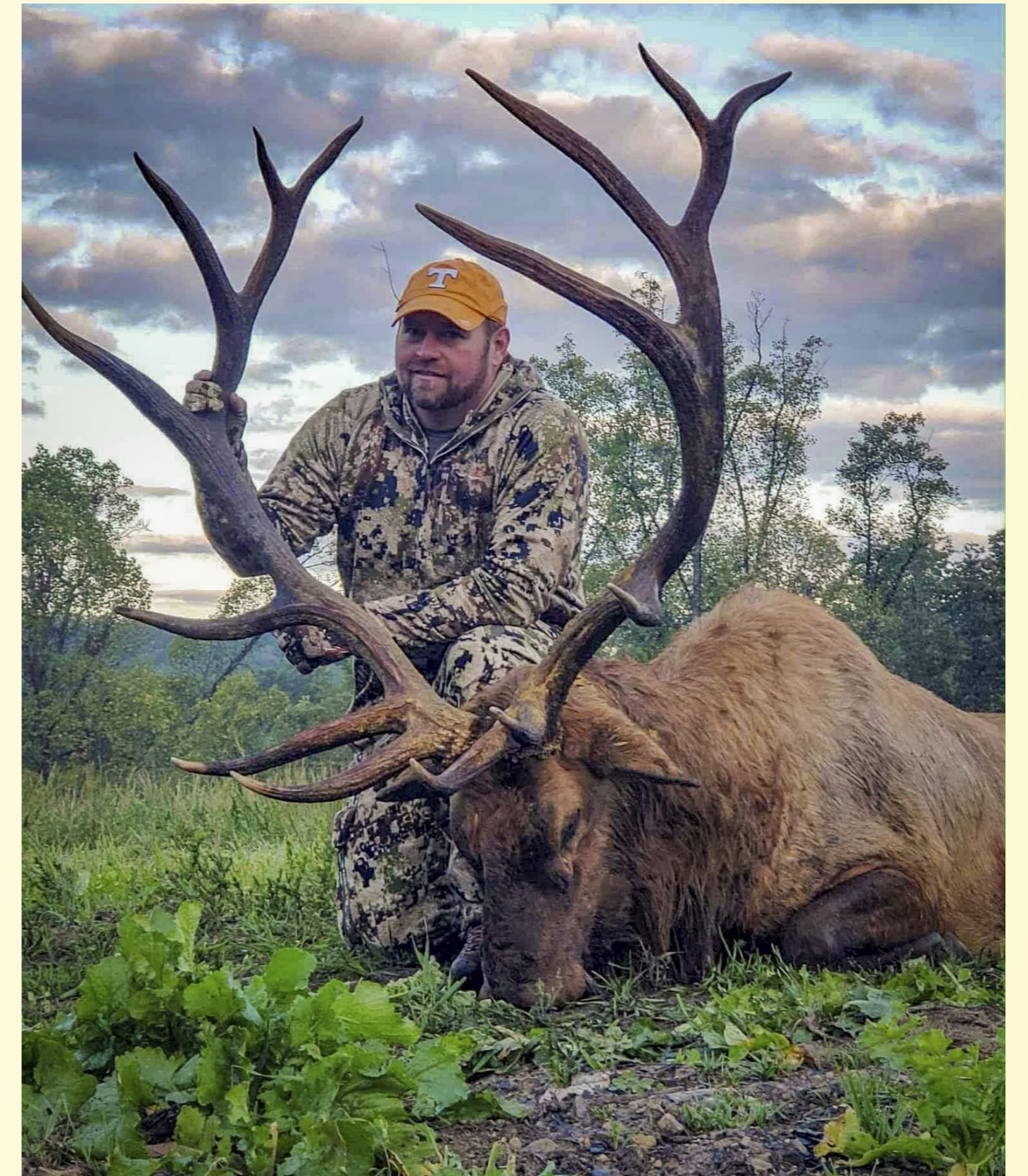


**Executive Director's Update**



**CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.**

# 2025 Elk Hunt



# 2025 Elk Hunt

