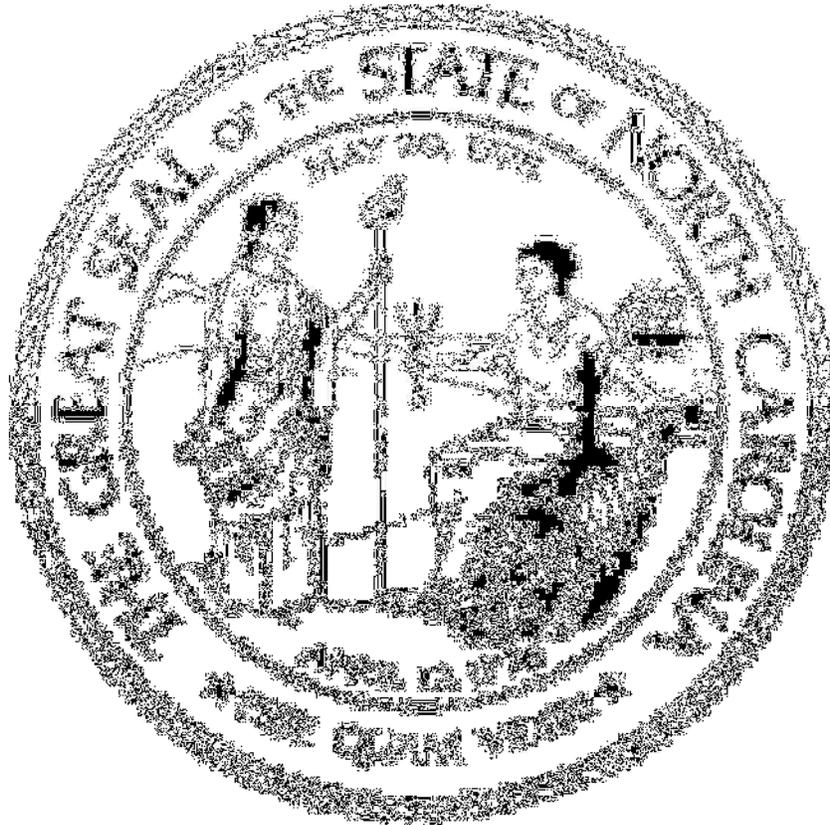


North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2023



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1. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

Two key factors affecting the future of diverse and abundant wildlife in North Carolina are brought to light in the strategic plan. First is acceptance that, as urbanization and development continue across the state, wildlife habitats and populations are placed under increasing stress. Second is acknowledgement of the changing demographics of the state's citizenry; most of our human population now live in urban centers, well isolated from daily contact with wildlife and the outdoors. Recognition of these factors drives our strategic plan's themes of wildlife sustainability through conservation and relevancy of wildlife to a broader segment of citizens. The strategic plan identifies seven broad goals for the Commission that will support wildlife conservation efforts and provide sustainable opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating and other wildlife-related activities for all North Carolina citizens. Strategic objectives within each goal direct the actions required to achieve the vision of the strategic plan. These directed actions form the basis for divisions and programs within the Commission to deliver effective wildlife conservation to every corner of the State.

The Commission is primarily receipt supported and relies on a sound funding model for a successful future. The three main sources of revenue for the agency are federal funds, license and vessel fees, and appropriations from the legislature. We expect a robust return on license and vessel receipts over the next several years, as well as federal funds, due to the increase in outdoor recreation tied to the COVID pandemic. The agency will invest in marketing and R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) efforts in an effort to retain these new hunters, shooters and anglers. We also work closely with OSBM and the legislature each year to ensure we maintain the appropriate support and level of appropriations. The agency is also the beneficiary of a healthy endowment fund balance which does not support regular operations, but does assist with non-recurring large purchases of equipment, research studies and capital projects. With sound management and collaboration, the agency is in a position to meet the needs of wildlife and citizenry of the state in carrying out the Mission of the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

2. Mission, Vision, and Values

Agency Mission Statement

To conserve North Carolina's wildlife resources and their habitats and provide programs and opportunities that allow hunters, anglers, boaters, and other outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy wildlife-associated recreation.

Agency Vision Statement

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is providing safe, comprehensive, effective and efficient fisheries, wildlife and boating programs that:

- Conserve the diversity and abundance of the State's wildlife resources.
- Provide diverse opportunities for all citizens regardless of age or physical abilities to access and enjoy hunting, angling, boating and other wildlife-associated experiences.
- Demonstrate to the citizens of North Carolina through education and communication the critical role of wildlife management in sustaining the quality of our wildlife resources and their habitats.
- Sustain working lands and their associated wildlife communities.
- Have a strong and unequivocal statutory base that supports constituent needs and agency sustainability.
- Feature strong partnerships with other natural resource entities to complement the mission of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and leverage resources to achieve that mission.
- Are financially secure through diverse, dedicated and ample funding.
- Are based on sound science.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

Goal 1 - All North Carolina citizens have the opportunity for safe and readily available participation in hunting, fishing, boating and other wildlife-related activities.
<i>Objective 1.1 - Advocate for legislation that supports wildlife conservation.</i>
<i>Objective 1.2 - Increase public access to private lands and waterways.</i>
<i>Objective 1.3 - Partner with other agencies, organizations, and local governments to incorporate wildlife resources in land planning, tourism and agritourism initiatives.</i>
<i>Objective 1.4 - Reduce wildlife-related hunting and boating incidents and violations.</i>
<i>Performance Measures- Evaluate the number of access areas to determine an increase or decrease, review and evaluate net effect of any legislation, review green growth toolbox and other partnerships with local governments and organizations, perform analysis of incidents and violations.</i>
Goal 2 - Expand the constituency base by providing and promoting opportunities for every adult and child, regardless of physical abilities, to experience North Carolina’s wildlife resources.
<i>Objective 2.1 - Provide expanded hunting, shooting, angling, and wildlife conservation courses in the elementary schools.</i>
<i>Objective 2.2 - Increase the public’s and various stakeholders’ understanding of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and its conservation programs.</i>
<i>Objective 2.3 - Expand opportunities for all wildlife-associated recreation.</i>
<i>Objective 2.4 - Increase opportunities for disabled sportsmen and women to participate in all forms of wildlife-associated recreation.</i>
<i>Objective 2.5 - Utilize a customer-service model to administer and deliver the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission programs and services.</i>
<i>Performance Measures- Perform surveys and evaluate programs based on recruitment, retention, and reactivation indicators.</i>
Goal 3 - Conserve and enhance the abundance and diversity of the fish and wildlife resources of North Carolina.
<i>Objective 3.1 - Implement the recommendations of the NC Wildlife Action Plan.</i>
<i>Objective 3.2 - Emphasize best available science in the application of fish and wildlife management programs.</i>
<i>Objective 3.3 - Promote habitat protection through land acquisition and preservation, impact assessment and mitigation, restoration and enhancement, regulation, and conservation-based development.</i>
<i>Objective 3.4 - Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of regulatory programs designed to promote wildlife conservation.</i>
<i>Objective 3.5 - Establish a comprehensive framework to ensure sustainable wildlife resources within changing climatic conditions and expanding human populations.</i>
<i>Performance Measures- Evaluate web-based assessment tools, project results, species name and listing status changes, and revisions to the Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) list.</i>
Goal 4 - The WRC is recognized as a leader in sustaining working lands, conserving wildlife habitats and species diversity, and maintaining the hunting and fishing heritage of North Carolina.
<i>Objective 4.1 - Enhance partnerships with land-funding agencies/organizations and other land-management agencies.</i>

<i>Objective 4.2 - Establish a broad conservation vision within state government agencies and among an expanded constituency base.</i>
<i>Objective 4.3 - Foster partnerships among constituency groups to support the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission mission.</i>
<i>Performance Measures- Increase the level of partnership programs, monitor land funding levels, survey partner agencies.</i>
Goal 5 - Communicate, educate, and market wildlife conservation and the role of hunting and fishing in effective wildlife management programs.
<i>Objective 5.1 - Develop a legislative agenda that communicates a common message to legislators regarding issues critical to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.</i>
<i>Objective 5.2 - Enhance and expand existing school programs that promote awareness of wildlife resources and conservation.</i>
<i>Objective 5.3 - Develop and employ marketing strategies to secure broad public support and an expanding constituency base for the agency mission.</i>
<i>Performance Measures – Develop, implement, and monitor an agency marketing plan, review and improve school programs, Chief level review of legislative initiatives and agenda.</i>
Goal 6 - WRC operates under a sound funding model that meets resource and constituent needs and supports current and future programs and new populations’ needs.
<i>Objective 6.1 - Leverage and diversify cooperative funding programs through expanded and innovative partnerships.</i>
<i>Objective 6.2 - Review and revise fees and fee-based programs to complement the vision of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.</i>
<i>Objective 6.3 - Develop and implement an endowment program with the focus on non-game programs and conservation.</i>
<i>Performance Measures - Review and evaluate programs and individual funding models. Monthly cash balance meetings to discuss opportunities and shortfalls.</i>
Goal 7 - Create a work environment where priorities are clear; the decision-making process is efficient and effective; and employees feel a sense of creativity, accountability, value and satisfaction in their achievements and their contributions to the agency’s mission.
<i>Objective 7.1 - Improve internal coordination/communications to provide transparency in decision making and program implementation.</i>
<i>Objective 7.2 - Identify and review core processes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness and evaluate how rules and processes are supporting the needs of the resources.</i>
<i>Objective 7.3 - Provide opportunities and support programs for employee development.</i>
<i>Performance Measures – Survey staff to assess satisfaction, implementation and review of policies that support a healthy work environment. Measure training and career growth opportunities within the agency.</i>

4. Highlights and Opportunities

Agency Highlights and Best Practices

The outdoor industry has seen the silver lining of the pandemic, as the number of people seeking opportunities for outdoor recreation has grown by leaps and bounds, with many North Carolinians taking advantage of the great outdoors for the first time. This has reinforced the importance of our mission, lands and wildlife resources. NCWRC has worked through the pandemic challenges with the focus on providing quality outdoor recreational experiences to our residents while maintaining our high standards for wildlife conservation.

Telling the story of our agency, its staff and the mission-focused work has been an essential element in educating the citizens about the importance of wildlife and outdoor opportunities during the pandemic.

Potential Initiatives

-The agency has been instrumental in developing a partnership between private organizations and state agencies such as Division of Marine Fisheries, Coastal Management and NC Coastal Federation to develop a plan to address abandoned and derelict Vessels. Through thoughtful collaboration, legislation has been introduced to create the authority and process for disposition of vessels that have been abandoned or left derelict in state waters due to hurricanes or direct neglect from vessel owners. However, funding is not currently included in the legislation which makes this task very difficult to carry out.

-ALVIN, the agency's licensing and vessel registration application, was developed in 2003-2004 and went live in January 2005. It has been stable, available, secure, and scalable for more than 16 years. Its operational costs are very low though significant revenue for WRC, DMF, and DOT dredging funds flows through the system. In fact, it is ALVIN's reliability that has caused it to be largely unnoticed by state legislators and board members. From a functional perspective, ALVIN serves its purpose. However, because the application has not been completely refreshed from a technology perspective since its creation, the application architecture and design have become outdated and somewhat cumbersome to maintain. The challenge for the agency is to determine if an ALVIN refresh and modernization project is in order or if it is more advantageous for the agency to convert to a third-party licensing vendor. Any modernization or conversion will likely take several years to commit to and complete. The agency has begun this process but has not made a commitment either way.

-The number of wildlife law enforcement officers in the agency has not changed since the 1970's. An increasing population and a recent increase in license holders, primarily due to the pandemic, has reignited this topic. There are many hurdles facing the agency with any effort to increase the number of law enforcement officers. Funding continues to be the primary hurdle, since the WRC is primarily a receipt supported agency.

Collaborative Opportunities

The impact and reach of the NC Wildlife Commission is greatly compounded by and through the partnerships and collaboration with its partners. From boating access area partnerships with local municipalities, land acquisition and management with many conservation organizations, and habitat management and diversity projects to sharing human resources with other state agencies – this agency simply would not be as efficient and effective without these partnerships. We continuously look for and seek out these types of partnerships.