

Fisheries Division Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

(June 28, 2022)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fisheries Division Strategic Plan 2022-2025

The Fisheries Division Strategic Plan (**FDSP**) was developed in addition to the Department’s Strategic Plan. The plan was developed to support staff in setting priorities to help achieve the Department’s overarching strategy in serving the public. The FDSP was built with input from staff representing a significant collaborative team approach in setting fisheries goals. Goals were established based on fisheries management needs, emerging issues, and adaptive planning for the future.

The FDSP sets five major goals:

- Goal 1: Manage for sustainable fish populations and habitats
- Goal 2: Increase opportunities for and participation in fisheries related recreation
- Goal 3: Increase public awareness, engagement, and partnerships
- Goal 4: Enhance the Division’s responsiveness and effectiveness
- Goal 5: Protect Kentucky’s fisheries and promote user safety

The FDSP establishes a sharp focus on the division’s priorities by providing specific objectives over the performance period to achieve its stated goals. Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-limited objectives were established under each goal for the time-period 2022-2025. This framework will be used to focus time, resources, and funds effectively in achieving these goals during this period.

Goal 1: Manage for sustainable fish populations and habitats

- 1.1 Develop fishery specific management plans
 - 1.1.1 Revise the content and style of lake specific management plans by end of **2022**.
 - 1.1.2 Update lake specific management plans for all major public lakes and reservoirs (> 500 acres) managed by the Department by end of **2023**.
 - 1.1.3 Create or update lake specific management plans for all state owned or managed lakes (< 500 acres), where data is consistently collected, by end of **2025**.
 - 1.1.4 Identify high-use stream fisheries and create stream specific management plans for **three** warmwater stream fisheries by end of **2024**.

- 1.2 Identify fisheries research needs and expand effort where feasible
 - 1.2.1 Evaluate trial bass tournament exemptions and propose recommendations for future exemptions to Commission by end of **2022**.
 - 1.2.2 Identify needs and means to assess the paddlefish population in Kentucky by end of **2023**.
 - 1.2.3 Create a prioritized list of statewide fisheries research needs by end of **2022**.
 - 1.2.4 Meet with representatives from Kentucky universities to discuss research interests, data sharing, and ways to work together by end of **2022**.
 - 1.2.5 Pursue the establishment of a Cooperative Fishery Research Unit beginning in **2022**.
 - 1.2.6 Meet annually with KY Division of Water regarding statewide sampling, research, and data cooperative efforts beginning in **2022**.

- 1.3 Advance fish habitat efforts
 - 1.3.1 Create and implement a 10-year Reservoir Habitat Improvement Plan by end of **2023**.
 - 1.3.2 Use the Reservoir Habitat Improvement Plan to coordinate projects at **two** reservoirs annually beginning in **2024**.
 - 1.3.3 Create a prioritized list of habitat program needs by end of **2022**.
 - 1.3.4 Evaluate the effectiveness of different fish habitat structures and materials by end of **2024**.
 - 1.3.5 Improve the efficiency of the Christmas tree recycling program through engagement with volunteer groups by end of **2023**.
 - 1.3.6 Produce downloadable files for in-lake fish habitat structure locations and make available online by end of **2022**.
 - 1.3.7 Revise the Fish Habitat page on the Department website by end of **2022**.

- 1.4 Advance management and education efforts regarding non-game and native aquatic species
 - 1.4.1 Create decision point criteria for each native species restoration project by end of **2025**.
 - 1.4.2 Develop a non-game/native fish species webpage with information on current survey, restoration, and monitoring efforts by end of **2024**.
 - 1.4.3 Work with Department staff to complete revisions of the State Wildlife Action Plan to reflect changes in fish species status by end of **2023**.
 - 1.4.4 Work with collaborators to finalize and publish Fishes of Kentucky book by end of **2024**.

- 1.5 Utilize internal committees and working groups to review and address statewide fisheries concerns
 - 1.5.1 Form **six** internal fisheries management Teams by end of **2022**.
 - 1.5.2 Create species management plans for major hatchery-reared species and develop procedures for evaluating the success of all current stocking efforts by end of **2023**.
 - 1.5.3 Use ad hoc intra-division working groups to produce content and/or provide recommendations to the Division and Commission beginning in **2022**.

Goal 2: Increase opportunities for and participation in fisheries related recreation

- 2.1 Improve access for fishing and boating opportunities
 - 2.1.1 Develop a prioritized list of statewide access improvement needs by end of **2022**.
 - 2.1.2 Work with Engineering to develop **three** new ADA accessible facilities by end of **2024**.
 - 2.1.3 Renovate **two** state owned or managed lakes to improve fishing opportunity and angler access by end of **2025**.
 - 2.1.4 Work with Engineering to develop **25** new bank fishing access sites by end of **2025**.
 - 2.1.5 Work with Engineering to build, renovate or improve at least **ten** boat ramps or associated facilities by end of **2025**.
 - 2.1.6 Work with Wildlife Division to create or improve **10** fishing opportunities on Department owned Wildlife Management Areas by end of **2025**.
 - 2.1.7 Explore the feasibility of a stream access sponsorship program by end of **2025**.
- 2.2 Improve mentor, coach and instructor development to strengthen recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts
 - 2.2.1 Conduct semi-annual meetings with I&E to establish goals and objectives and evaluate progress on fishing & boating related programs beginning in **2022**.
 - 2.2.2 Participate in Department R3 working groups for fishing-related programming beginning in **2022**.

Goal 3: Increase public awareness, engagement and partnerships

- 3.1 Broaden and strengthen collaboration with outside partners
 - 3.1.1 Annually review lake MOAs for compliance, necessary revisions, and expirations beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.1.2 Implement annual meetings with each reservoir managing authority to facilitate communication and collaboration beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.1.3 Schedule annual meetings with tournament organizers, industry partners, and representatives from affiliated organizations to promote open communication and discuss needs and partnership opportunities beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.1.4 Send a Division representative to each B.A.S.S. Conservation Summit beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.1.5 Evaluate the feasibility and utility of hosting a Kentucky Fishing Summit by end of **2025**.

- 3.2 Promote boating and fishing opportunities on underutilized waters
 - 3.2.1 Work with other divisions to promote the use of underutilized waters and fisheries beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.2.2 Publish a Fishing and Boating Access mobile app by end of **2022**.
 - 3.2.3 Upload pictures and update site information for **all** Department owned/leased fishing and boating access sites to the website by end of **2023**.
- 3.3 Expand our education and outreach approach to reflect a changing society
 - 3.3.1 Review and update Fisheries Division information on the website quarterly, beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.3.2 Maintain at least **eight** social media accounts for the Fisheries Division with ≥ 1 post per calendar week, on average, by end of **2022**.
 - 3.3.3 Update content and add informational videos to the Pond Management section of the website by end of **2023**.
- 3.4 Enhance the Division's ability to facilitate and quantify public input when making fisheries management decisions
 - 3.4.1 Fisheries Division representatives will attend at least **20** public events annually that are hosted by sportsman's groups, NGOs, or Department affiliated entities beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.4.2 Explore effective strategies for delivery of District fishery updates to the public by end of **2024**.
 - 3.4.3 Convert **all** KDFWR management districts to iPad-driven creel data collection by end of **2022**.
- 3.5 Actively seek new and sustainable funding sources
 - 3.5.1 Collaborate with partners to identify and apply for fisheries project support funding from **at least one** non-KDFWR entity annually, beginning in **2022**.
 - 3.5.2 Explore means to accommodate outside funding (fish kill monies, special grant funds, etc.) without affecting the Division's annual budget authorization by end of **2023**.

Goal 4: Enhance the Division's responsiveness and effectiveness

- 4.1 Ensure operational effectiveness through employee management and professional development opportunities
 - 4.1.1 Conduct semi-annual webinars consisting of fisheries research updates, project updates, funding mechanisms, grant opportunities, and additional topics, as needed, beginning in **2022**.
 - 4.1.2 Identify opportunities for, and encourage, professional meeting attendance, as budget allows, beginning in **2022**.
 - 4.1.3 Facilitate training and offer opportunities, where feasible, for staff to work across workstations by end of **2023**.
 - 4.1.4 Host educational workshops/webinars, as available, to promote the understanding and use of resource management tools by end of **2023**.
- 4.2 Ensure operational effectiveness through survey gear and data standardization

- 4.2.1 Complete a division-wide survey of sampling gear use and methodology by end of **2022**.
 - 4.2.2 Evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of all electrofishing equipment using standardized methods developed by USFWS by end of **2023**.
 - 4.2.3 Explore options and feasibility of a statewide fisheries survey data storage system by end of **2025**.
 - 4.2.4 Assess and standardize Annual Performance Report format and data inclusion by end of **2022**.
- 4.3 Improve fisheries infrastructure
- 4.3.1 Develop a prioritized list of infrastructure (replacement, improvement, and maintenance) needs at each fisheries facility by end of **2022**.
 - 4.3.2 Continue working with Engineering Division to initiate at least **two** projects from the prioritized infrastructure list annually, beginning in **2022**.
 - 4.3.3 Develop a prioritized list of vehicle and equipment (\geq \$5,000) needs at each fisheries workstation by end of **2022**.
 - 4.3.4 Facilitate sediment removal from at least **two** hatchery ponds annually, beginning in **2022**.
- 4.4 Evaluate fish production efforts
- 4.4.1 Complete a comprehensive review of Fish Production Program operations and needs by end of **2025**.
- 4.5 Improve efficiency of Division mitigation programs
- 4.5.1 Work with Finance Cabinet and other state partners to improve mitigation program processes and cut project initiation and acquisition timelines by **50%** by end of **2022**.
 - 4.5.2 Explore ways to enhance fish kill response and recovery and update fish kill regulations by end of **2023**.

Goal 5: Protect Kentucky’s fisheries and promote user safety

- 5.1 Enact proactive measures in response to existing and emerging fisheries threats
- 5.1.1 Update the statewide Aquatic Nuisance Species plan by end of **2022**.
 - 5.1.2 Continue to work with private industry to increase removal of invasive carp to **10 million pounds** annually, by end of **2022**, and **20 million pounds** annually by end of **2024**.
 - 5.1.3 Review existing, and establish pertinent definitions and regulations relating to introductions, husbandry, or sheltering of aquatic nuisance species by end of **2024**.
 - 5.1.4 Work with Wildlife Division to establish a system for documenting locations of exotic aquatic species using KFWIS by end of **2023**.
- 5.2 Promote safe and enjoyable experiences for all anglers and recreational boaters
- 5.2.1 Collaborate with Law Enforcement to establish criteria and standardized markings for **all** safety zones at Department owned or managed lakes by end of **2022**.

- 5.2.2 Work with Law Enforcement to develop cooperative purchase and deployment procedures for boating safety buoys on Department owned or managed lakes by end of **2023**.
 - 5.2.3 Collaborate with Law Enforcement to create and disseminate a video to educate recreational boaters about commercial fishing practices to promote boater safety by end of **2023**.
- 5.3 Promulgate clear and concise regulations for anglers and boaters
- 5.3.1 Implement a schedule for annual review of fisheries regulations for additions or revisions beginning in **2022**.
 - 5.3.2 Involve Law Enforcement in the internal review of all proposed regulation changes and addition of new regulations beginning in **2022**.
 - 5.3.3 Review signage at **all** Department owned or managed fishing/boating access points and request necessary replacements/revisions by end of **2022**.