



*2025-27*

# **STRATEGIC REPORT**

*2025* **BENCHMARK UPDATE**

## *Serving People, Conserving Fish and Wildlife*

The 2025–2027 Strategic Plan has been developed to promote transparency and enhance public awareness of the conservation efforts undertaken by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources on behalf of our constituents, partners, and the Commonwealth’s fish and wildlife resources and their habitats over the next three (3) years.

This comprehensive plan is designed to guide Kentucky Fish and Wildlife leadership and staff in implementing key strategies essential to the effective management and long-term sustainability of our native fish and wildlife populations. It also establishes a framework for meaningful collaboration with the many stakeholders who value, utilize, and support these resources.

The following pages outline the goals and initiatives that will direct our work over this three-year period, along with annual benchmarks to measure progress toward achieving these objectives.

Our strategic plan is centered on five primary goals:

- Manage for sustainable fish and wildlife populations and habitats
- Increase opportunities for and participation in fish and wildlife recreation
- Increase public awareness, engagement, and partnerships
- Enhance the department’s responsiveness and effectiveness
- Protect Kentucky’s fish and wildlife resources and promote user safety

It is our hope that this plan will provide greater insight into the department’s most significant priorities, as well as the strategic initiatives and actions led by the dedicated staff of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife and our valued partners to address them.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Rich Storm**, Commissioner

January 2025



# 2025-2027 Strategic Report

2025-2027 Strategic Report			
Goal 1			
Manage for sustainable fish and wildlife populations and habitats			
Initiative 1	Expand the use of 'active management' conservation practices on public lands and waters.	Status	2025 Update
1.1.a.	Manage 3,800 acres of forests annually on WMAs with the use of prescribed fire, selective harvest, and forest stand improvement.	Ongoing	Completed 10,171.5 acres of forest stand management to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and/or recreational users.
1.1.b.	Manage 10,000 acres of open lands on WMAs annually with prescribed fire, disking, herbicide treatments and other methods.	Ongoing	Completed 8,214.7 acres of Rx fire (acres burned) to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and/or recreational users. Completed 8,023.3 acres Biological, chemical, or physical manipulation of habitat (other than invasives) to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and/or recreational users. Completed 919.5 acres of propagating, planting or seeding to benefit wildlife, their habitats.
1.1.c.	Manage 4,500 acres of wetlands on WMAs annually using water management, disking, planting and other methods.	Ongoing	Completed 2,974 acres of wetland creation/management to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and/or recreational users. Staff maintained 206 water control structures, 41 water wells/pumps, 140 waterfowl blinds/pits.
1.1.d.	Update WMA management plans on WMAs with "High Management Level" designation by June 30, 2027.	Ongoing	Staff including experts from GIS and WMAs continue to work together to enter data into the WMA planning tool. To date staff have completed plans for Clay WMA, Grayson Lake WMA, Taylorsville Lake WMA, Green River Lake WMA, Sloughs WMA, and Big Rivers WMA. Plans are to release to the public prior to Spring turkey season 2026.
1.1.e.	Update management plans for all major public lakes and reservoirs (>500 acres) managed by the Department by December, 2025.	In Progress	District staff are continuing to work on and submit their management plans during periods when they are not conducting fieldwork.
1.1.f.	Create management plans for 3 high-use warmwater stream fisheries by December, 2026.	Completed	Management plans have been developed for Elkhorn Creek, Lower Barren River, and South Fork Kentucky River.
Initiative 2	Expand research on species and habitat management efforts statewide.	Status	2025 Update
1.2.a.	Conduct research on elk populations to better understand their population and management needs. Establish more precise population models, population estimates and long term growth rates using new population model developed by University of Kentucky. Determine hunting and viewing goals by December, 2025.	In Progress	Worked with the University of Kentucky to integrate camera survey data into our current Statistical Population Reconstruction (SPR) model. The student on this project is set to graduate in the spring of 2026 and results should be expected shortly after graduation.
1.2.b.	Conduct research on bear populations to monitor their population growth across the state and develop long term population goals, harvest strategies and objectives by December, 2025.	Ongoing	Data was prepared to support an expansion of hunting opportunity for the 2026 season that includes a new youth weekend, expanded Zone 1 hunting opportunity, and a reduction in chase on public land during the month of September. Bear population data will continually be monitored to ensure a sustainable level of harvest.



1.2.c.	Conduct research on non-game species to determine management needs and population trends for the states most at risk species.	Ongoing	Conducted annual surveys and monitoring to assess population trends and nest productivity for bald eagle and peregrine falcon, and multiple songbird species through breeding season and migration banding. Similarly, we assessed population size for known winter colonies of at-risk bat species, including Indiana bats, gray bats, little brown bats, northern long-eared bats, and tricolored bats. Staff at the Center for Mollusk Conservation conducted surveys at known mussel beds to monitor released individuals to document survivorship and potential reproduction. Research activities of note in 2025 include: the propagation and release of freshwater mussel species (tan riffleshell, catspaw, pheasant shell wavyrayed lampmussel, plain pocketbook, fanshell, fluted kidneyshell, Cumberland bean, Kentucky creekshell, dwarf rainbow, and creeper), primarily in the Licking and Green River systems. Staff continued to search for new populations of eastern hellbender outside known breeding areas. Target searches were in known eDNA positive areas, follow up to reports of capture by citizens, and in alternate locations with suitable habitat. Additional animals will allow tissue sampling to inform comparative genetic analyses of the current populations. Surveys for the northern long-eared bat were conducted in historic capture areas, to assess survivorship of populations post-WNS. Additionally, we continued traditional and camera surveys for many DDSGCN including least and long-tailed weasels and spotted skunk. Finally, 2025 saw planning and installation of two new Motus stations in strategic locations statewide to detect presence of tagged animals including Kentucky tagged wood thrush and field sparrow.
1.2.d.	Conduct research on hunter effort for various wildlife game species to index wildlife population change, parameterize population models, inform season dates and bag limits on hunted species. These efforts will continue into the future.	In Progress	The turkey program collected turkey hunting effort for Spring 2025 season via post-season survey and Telecheck, and analysis is ongoing. The turkey and small game programs worked with Engineering, Infrastructure & Technology staff to develop a 1-question survey instrument tied to the license buying process called "Game Species Hunted", which will collect hunting participation data for deer, turkey, coyote, furbearers, squirrel, rabbit, quail, and grouse.
1.2.e.	Conduct research on turkey populations to understand (1) spring harvest rates and survival of male turkeys and (2) reproductive ecology including gobbling chronology in relation to the timing of nesting, nest and hatching success, and survival and movements of hens and broods.	In Progress	A study of spring harvest rates and survival of male turkeys was completed in 2025; this involved analysis of 4 years of banding data by a Tennessee Tech University student who completed a master's degree, completed a thesis, and drafted a manuscript almost ready for submission to a journal. A study of the reproductive ecology of wild turkeys in western Kentucky is ongoing; the third and final field season of data collection concluded and data analysis toward a Tennessee Tech student's PhD degree is underway; A turkey health assessment study by KDFWR and SCWDS yielded biological sample data that is still being analyzed.
1.2.f.	Continue to pursue research efforts towards reducing the impacts of invasive carp.	In Progress	KDFWR contracted with Carp Solutions in 2025 to complete a feasibility study for the usage of a low voltage fish fence to harvest mass amounts on invasive carp in the Salt River. Subsidy incentives were increased for Kentucky and Barkley Lakes in 2025 to keep pressure on invasive carp populations. The Experimental Gear and Ohio River Contract Fishing programs were continued to allow for increase harvest efficiencies.
1.2.g.	Identify and validate genetic markers to improve the size potential of stocked Largemouth Bass.	In Progress	<p>"Kentucky fisheries biologists clipped fins from 300 bass statewide to use for genetic testing. The sampled fish included 150 fish weighing more than 5 pounds and 150 underperforming bass under 3.5 pounds. All samples were confirmed as pure Largemouth Bass before undergoing full genome sequencing. Geneticists at the Center for Aquaculture Technology then analyzed over 3 million markers per fish to identify the genetic markers common in trophy fish but rare in smaller individuals. The genetic analysis discovered a number of specific markers associated with enhanced size in native Largemouth Bass. Geneticists are now incorporating the trophy markers into a low-density testing panel. Testing hatchery broodfish for these genetic markers will allow Kentucky to selectively breed fish in department hatcheries with genetics that would be passed down to offspring to potentially increase the overall number of trophy Largemouth Bass in water bodies across Kentucky.</p> <p>A Thoroughbred Bass Program Interim Progress Report has been created and posted on the department's website that provides additional details of the program. Pages will be continually updated with the achievement of new milestones."</p>



<b>Initiative 3</b>	<b>Evaluate native fisheries species restoration efforts.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
1.3.a.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing Lake Sturgeon restoration efforts.	Ongoing	Lake Sturgeon were not produced in 2025 due to no eggs being available. Request to receive eggs in 2026 has been Wisconsin DNR. Lake Sturgeon sampling occurred in 2025 and will continue every other year to evaluate the restoration efforts.
1.3.b.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing Alligator Gar restoration efforts.	Ongoing	Received Final Report from Murray State University. Stocking has been discontinued at this time as it was determined that stocking goals have been met with what was outlined in the management plan. The project will continue to be evaluated. Hatchery space will now be utilized for Muskellunge advanced fry culture.
1.3.c.	Continue to monitor and evaluate success of propagation and reintroduction of Kentucky Arrow Darter and Cumberland Darter.	In Progress	Fish Sampling was conducted to monitor the success of Kentucky Arrow Darter and Cumberland Darter reintroduction efforts. These efforts will continue in 2026.
<b>Initiative 4</b>	<b>Expand reservoir fish habitat initiatives.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
1.4.a.	Habitat Branch coordinates with partners to conduct 1 large-scale reservoir fish habitat project annually.	Ongoing	During this period, the Lake Cumberland large-scale project was initiated. Staff utilized new techniques to secure existing large woody debris as fish attractors and reduce floating debris in Lake Cumberland.
1.4.b.	Improve fish habitat on at least 1 reservoir in each Fisheries district annually.	Ongoing	Fish habitat improvement projects were completed on multiple lakes in each Fisheries district utilizing donated Christmas trees, cut cedars, fallen trees, and PVC and gas pipe materials.
1.4.c.	Create and implement a Reservoir Habitat Improvement Plan by December, 2025.	In Progress	A rough draft plan has been prepared and will be circulated within the Fisheries Division for edits and additional input from districts and staff.
1.4.d.	Explore new funding avenues for reservoir fish habitat.	In Progress	Staff continue to be involved with the National Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership to collaborate with other states and identify funding avenues for future habitat improvement projects.
<b>Initiative 5</b>	<b>Carefully prioritize projects, evaluate effectiveness and adaptively manage agency Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
1.5.a.	Critically evaluate High Management Level WMA plans based on short term and long term goals, staffing levels and operational budgets.	In Progress	To date staff have completed plans for Clay WMA, Grayson Lake WMA, Taylorsville Lake WMA, Green River Lake WMA, Sloughs WMA, and Big Rivers WMA. Additional planning for the remaining High Level Management WMAs will be completed in 2026.
1.5.b.	Evaluate additional forestry and open lands management through contracting to maximize wildlife habitat management objectives.	Ongoing	Staff contracted with multiple vendors to complete invasive species control at Clay WMA, Rockcastle River WMA, Yellowbank WMA, Peabody WMA and MW-Central Kentucky WMA by means of helicopter and drone. In addition staff have utilized drone vendors to assist with herbicide application for dove field preparation and management.



Initiative 6	Identify critical needs for enhancing fish and wildlife species diversity that is consistent with the State Wildlife Action Plan.	Status	2025 Update
1.6.a.	Collaborate with state partners to accomplish SWAP implementation by June 30, 2027.	Ongoing	SWAP is a living document; thus, implementation is ongoing and has no completion date. Staff in the Nongame branch collaborate regularly with multiple state conservation partners regarding surveys, monitoring, research and conservation actions and in the SWAP. Partnerships of note in 2025 include universities: University of Cincinnati is investigating causes of decline for federally endangered Virginia big-eared bats; ECU is conducting a population status assessment for the federally petitioned yellow-spotted woodland salamander, which has resulted in three new county records- Perry, Letcher and Leslie Counties; UK is documenting the migratory ecology of eastern whip-poor-will to inform future land management and conservation; and WKU is sampling for karst stonefly to clarify the species in Kentucky . Annual hibernacula surveys for federally listed bats continued in 2025 with state, federal, and private conservation partners. Collaborative projects with OKNP include camera trap surveys at historic sites of the Allegheny woodrat to check for continued presence, camera trap surveys for the eastern pine snake to determine if the species can still be found in Kentucky, and wetland sampling for aquatic SGCN in western Kentucky. Additional partnerships of note include ongoing monitoring at Shaker Village for breeding and migrating songbirds, regional collaboration with Purdue University for hellbender surveys and egg collection, and establishment of a satellite rearing facility for eastern hellbender at the Louisville Zoo.
Initiative 7	Improve facilities at fish hatcheries and WMAs to allow staff to better manage fish and wildlife populations.	Status	2025 Update
1.7.a.	Construct one new Lakes and Streams Branch building on headquarters property by June 30, 2026.	In Progress	Construction underway with completion expected late 3rd quarter or early 4th.
1.7.b.	Construct one new Critical Species Investigation Branch building on headquarters property by June 30, 2026.	In Progress	Construction underway with completion expected late 3rd quarter or early 4th.
1.7.c.	Address at least one major hatchery need from the capital improvements list annually.	Ongoing	Liner replacement investigation underway for Minor Clark Hatchery.
1.7.d.	Renovate 1 office building by December, 2027.	Ongoing	Multiple locations are being evaluated and compared, informing the decision for next office renovation.
1.7.e.	Facilitate sediment removal from 2 hatchery ponds annually.	Ongoing	Hatchery ponds continue to be renovated annually.
1.7.f.	Repair 1 hatchery brood pond levee and outflow structure by December, 2027.	Ongoing	Installed new pipe within Minor Clark brood pond, and regraded area to prevent leaks.
1.7.g.	Construct 1 new WMA office by December, 2025.	Completed	New Veterans Memorial WMA office building completed in February 2026.
1.7.h.	Repair or replace 2 Water Control Structures or pumps at WMAs by December, 2027.	Ongoing	Completed installation of a new water control structure at Big Rivers WMA and Sloughs WMA in 2025. Evaluating using row crop bid process to address long term maintenance and well replacement at Sloughs WMA.
1.7.i.	Replace Ohio River Pump at Ballard WMA by December 31, 2026.	In Progress	Construction underway with completion expected late this year.
1.7.j.	Construct or renovate two new storage sheds on WMAs by December, 2027	In Progress	One storage shed renovated and one new added at Veterans Memorial WMA.



<b>Initiative 8</b>	<b>Revise and update species management plans.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
1.8.a.	Review and update the 2030 Elk Management Plan and identify next step goals and objectives by December, 2025.	In Progress	Completion of the plan of work for 2026-2030 is pending the inclusion of results from a recent habitat analysis study that will allow us to tailor specific habitat-related objectives and found them on solid, science-based metrics. Completion of the habitat project is expected in the summer of 2026.
1.8.b.	Work to identify priority areas to achieve 5% of selected habitat goals set forth in the 2017 grouse plan by December, 2027.	In Progress	Habitat work in Southeast KY grouse zone was facilitated by a KDFWR-funded RGS forester consisting of 307 acres of commercial timber harvest, 241 acres of noncommercial habitat improvements, and 189 acres of forest inventory on the London and Redbird Ranger Districts of the Daniel Boone National Forest; 46 acres of timber harvest and 62 acres of noncommercial forest habitat improvements on KY Ridge Forest WMA; and 18 forest management plans covering 2,800 acres of private lands along with 464 acres marked for treatments and 8 education/outreach events.
1.8.c.	Create species management plans for major hatchery-reared species and develop procedures for evaluating the success of all current stocking efforts by December, 2026.	In Progress	Muskellunge, Trout, and Morones management plans are all being developed.

<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Increase opportunities for and participation in fish and wildlife recreation</b>
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<b>Initiative 1</b>	<b>Increase and promote boating and fishing opportunities on underutilized waters.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
2.1.a.	Host an R3 event on one underutilized waters location annually.	Ongoing	Aquatic Education staff delivers programming across multiple locations, prioritizing sites that are accessible by foot, allowing staff to focus on expanding educational opportunities for urban communities and increasing equitable access to water-based learning.
2.1.b.	Hold no fewer than one (1) mentored event annually at a conservation camp property.	Ongoing	Hosted mentored hunts on camp properties, including squirrel hunts at Camp Currie (in conjunction with the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program) and Camp Wallace, as well as a deer hunt at Camp Currie. In addition, youth hunts have been organized and conducted at Camp Webb (dove) and Camp Currie (duck), further expanding opportunities for beginner and young hunters to gain hands-on experience in a supportive environment.
2.1.c.	Send out 4 marketing eBlasts each spring and fall to promote license and permit sales, Kentucky Wild memberships, and additional opportunities to existing anglers and hunters.	Ongoing	Executed seasonal email strategy, deploying eBlasts across key campaigns and peak seasons. Targeting segmented audiences (lapsed customers, species-specific users, current license holders) to promote license sales, elk applications, and key programs. Campaigns were timed to align with peak seasons and deadlines, improving engagement and conversion.
2.1.d.	Identify and develop new stream access sites.	Ongoing	Staff are in planning stages of utilizing the existing Fishing Boating Access database to identify streams in need of additional access.



Initiative 2	Expand our management efforts on public land in partnership with federal agencies and private landowners.	Status	2025 Update
2.2.a.	Work closely with the U.S. Forest Service to execute a state cooperative management agreement to better conserve and enhance resources on both the Daniel Boone National Forest and the Land Between the Lakes Recreation Area and to enhance services to our mutual constituents.	Ongoing	Strengthen and implement a comprehensive state cooperative management agreement with the US Forest Service to enhance conservation and sustainable resource management across the Daniel Boone National Forest. Expand and formalize coordinated management efforts on Beaver Creek WMA, Cane Creek WMA, Mill Creek WMA, and Redbird WMA to ensure alignment of wildlife management objectives, habitat management priorities, and forest health strategies.  Through joint strategic planning, shared implementation of habitat improvement projects, and coordinated wildlife management actions, this partnership will promote healthy ecosystems, improve game and non-game species conservation outcomes, and enhance public wildlife related recreational opportunities. Emphasis will be placed on landscape-scale habitat restoration, prescribed fire, forest stand improvement, access enhancement, and adaptive management guided by science based decision making. Two staff members are members of LBL Advisory Board and attended their annual meeting.
2.2.b.	Continue to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage areas around some of the major lakes throughout the state.	Ongoing	KDFWR continues to coordinate with USACOE by maintaining license and lease agreements for public access throughout the state. Wildlife and Fisheries Divisions complete annual accomplishment and planning reports as required. Over 162,000 acres are open to public recreation due to long term USACOE license or lease agreements.
2.2.c.	Expand our partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help landowners take advantage of the conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill Program.	Ongoing	The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) Private Lands Program continues to expand and strengthen its partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to ensure private landowners are well-positioned to access and fully utilize conservation provisions within the federal Farm Bill programs. Through ongoing coordination, technical guidance, and outreach, KDFWR works closely with NRCS staff to provide landowners with clear information, wildlife-focused recommendations, and implementation support. This collaborative approach enhances conservation delivery on private lands, improves habitat outcomes, and maximizes the effectiveness of Farm Bill investments across the state.
2.2.d.	Update WMA mapping to include habitat maps for a minimum of one High Management Level WMA per Wildlife Region by June 30, 2027.	Completed	One per Region is completed and will be released to the public Spring 2026.
Initiative 3	Enhance agency effectiveness by implementing the Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) plan for Kentucky.	Status	2025 Update
2.3.a.	Complete a comprehensive revision to R3 Strategic Plan by June 30, 2025 and achieve benchmark goals through June 30, 2027.	Ongoing	A comprehensive revision of the R3 Strategic Plan has been completed; A forward-facing document is slated for release in 2026. In parallel, staff have begun implementation of year one initiatives and are actively advancing associated goals to ensure progress toward 2027 benchmarks.
2.3.b.	Conduct an annual R3 summit with agency staff and partners by December of each year.	Ongoing	R3 Strategic Plan has been updated to reflect a more structured approach to coordination and reporting. An annual report will outline progress on R3 initiatives and goals, and host an R3 summit every other year to engage agency staff and partners.
2.3.c.	Make a presentation about Kentucky's R3 Initiative to the entire Law Enforcement Division during annual training(s).	Completed	All employees now complete mandatory annual R3 training through the "I Am R3" course within the state employee MyPurpose website.
2.3.d.	Exhibit at the Fish and Wildlife fair annually for the 22,000+ archers and spectators at the NASP Kentucky State Tournament.	Ongoing	Attended and set up booth at the 2025 KY State Fair in August and NASP in March.



Initiative 4	Improve mentor, coach and instructor development to strengthen R3 efforts.	Status	2025 Update
2.4.a.	Certify staff at Kentucky's 4-H camps as hunter education volunteers so they can teach hunter education as part of the 4-H camp experience.	Ongoing	Hunter Education staff collaborated with 4-H educators and agricultural teachers to expand delivery of hunter education programming. In addition, staff actively support 4-H camp experiences and partner with 4-H Shooting Sports to provide integrated, hands-on outdoor education opportunities. Efforts to further formalize staff certification pathways within 4-H camps remain part of our ongoing coordination with partners.
2.4.b.	Continue promotion of online hunter education curriculum to high school agriculture and FFA programs.	Ongoing	Hunter Education staff collaborated with 4-H educators and agricultural teachers to expand delivery of hunter education programming. In addition, staff actively support 4-H camp experiences and partner with 4-H Shooting Sports to provide integrated, hands-on outdoor education opportunities. Efforts to further formalize staff certification pathways within 4-H camps remain part of our ongoing coordination with partners.
Initiative 5	Improve access to quality areas for hunting, fishing and other wildlife related recreation.	Status	2025 Update
2.5.a.	Modernize digital mapping of fish habitat and fishing and boating access sites.	Ongoing	Staff collaborated with the GIS branch to create an ArcGIS online interactive database for mapping of fish habitat sites. All of the current habitat sites have been incorporate into the ArcGIS Online platform. Work will continue to improve the database map features before replacing the Google Maps version.
2.5.b.	Convert two previously trailerable ramps to bank and paddle craft access by December, 2026.	Ongoing	Great Crossing site is nearly complete and others are being considered along the Green River.
2.5.c.	Construct 2 new boat ramps by December, 2027.	Ongoing	Renovations complete at Dewey Lake and Lake Linville.
2.5.d.	Build relationships with large landholders in the east to develop 2 new hunting access areas by December 31, 2027.	Ongoing	We continued to refine a number of access agreements initiated in 2024, but did not add any new agreements in 2025. Work continues to find and onboard new landowners.
2.5.e.	Develop a prioritized list of public fishing and hunting access improvement opportunities by December, 2026.	Ongoing	The Fisheries Division utilizes an application process to evaluate access improvement opportunities and prioritizes projects based on funding and need. Clifton and Camp Nelson boat ramps on the Kentucky River were selected for renovation in 2026. Excessive flooding in 2025 caused damage to several existing access facilities. Therefore, the Committee decided to not select new sites for 2027 to allow for crews to complete maintenance repairs to the existing 180 boat ramps across Kentucky.
2.5.f.	Rebuild 3 boat ramps by December 31, 2027.	Ongoing	Rebuild at Lake Linville is complete.
2.5.g.	Pave 3 gravel boat trailer parking areas at existing boat ramps by December 31, 2027.	Ongoing	Evaluating multiple sites for asphalt improvements.
2.5.h.	Install 2 new courtesy docks at existing boat ramps by December 31, 2027.	Ongoing	Evaluating multiple sites for dock improvements. Jonathan Creek at KY Lake is in design.



Initiative 6	Develop new public facilities that provide additional hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities.	Status	2025 Update
2.6.a.	Increase recreational shooting opportunities through the completion of a plan and design for upgrades to existing rifle range berms and facilities by December, 2025.	Ongoing	Lloyd WMA to be 1st range retrofit from tube to baffle. Renovations to be complete late 2026 or early 2027.
2.6.b.	Establish a shooting range development grant program to develop or improve recreational shooting opportunities in the state.	In progress	Dedicated funding for a shooting range development grant program is allocated, so implementation will begin once additional funding becomes available to support partner grants. In the interim, R3 Branch staff will maintain and update the statewide shooting range map to ensure constituents have access to accurate information on available shooting locations. Staff are also developing grant guidance materials to assist partners in identifying and pursuing external funding opportunities for shooting range development and improvement.
2.6.c.	Apply for 2 grants for the creation of a public archery range by December, 2027.	In progress	Additional guidance will help determine alignment, feasibility, and potential next steps for pursuing grant opportunities related to public archery range development.
2.6.d.	Make improvements to 2 existing WMA rifle ranges, including renovation of shooting berms and shooting facilities by December, 2026.	Ongoing	Lloyd WMA will be first range retrofit and should be completed late year 2026 or early 2027.
2.6.e.	Complete design and construction of a new shooting facility at Veteran's Memorial WMA by December, 2025.	Completed	Construction complete and range open at Veterans.
2.6.f.	Partner with 2 existing private shooting range facilities to secure new public recreational shooting access.	Delayed	Staff have explored partnerships, but no formal agreements have been reached to date.
2.6.g.	Remove one agency owned low-head dam by September 30, 2026.	Completed	Great Crossing dam removed from North Elkhorn creek.
2.6.h.	Develop at least 3 ADA-accessible facilities by June 30, 2026.	Completed	Veterans Range complete with ADA provisions and Lloyd range with ADA provisions will be constructed this year, Salato Center ADA doors repaired and improved, Salato center walking path improved to meet and maintain ADA compliance.
Initiative 7	Evaluate and improve all aspects of the customer experience.	Status	2025 Update
2.7.a.	Update agency website(s) to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA compliant by April 2026.	In Progress	Training materials have been distributed to staff to review proper procedures and begin implementing guidelines prior to deadline. Webmaster modified numerous web pages with this in mind.
2.7.b.	Improve facilities at camps through replacing dated materials and equipment by December, 2027.	Ongoing	Repairs to Camp Currie pool planned to start in Spring 2026. Repair of roads at Camp Currie scheduled Spring 26. Replacement of wastewater treatment plant at Camp Currie scheduled to occur Fall 26. With ACA accreditation, materials and equipment were replaced to meet standards.



<b>Goal 3</b>			
<b>Increase public awareness, engagement and partnerships</b>			
<b>Initiative 1</b>	<b>Increase transparency of management and finances.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.1.a.	Publish before and after pictures of construction projects in the agency newsletter, GREAT Outdoors NEWS posts, and agency website whenever appropriate.	Ongoing	All projects are documented during construction, enabling shareability in all platforms.
3.1.b.	Maintain 3-step process for proposed regulation amendments to optimize public awareness and engagement and to provide adequate time for research and communications between staff and commission members about proposed changes.	Ongoing	All normal business items consistently go through the 3-step process to allow for ample time for public input and feedback. Exceptions are only made for time sensitive matters normally related to disease outbreaks when emergency actions are needed.
<b>Initiative 2</b>	<b>Expand participation in Kentucky Wild and opportunities for other wildlife-related activities.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.2.a.	Create monthly Kentucky Wild mobile education events throughout the state.	Ongoing	Staff attended various community events monthly and throughout the state. Kentucky Wild also hosted member experiences monthly from April to October.
3.2.b.	Create weekly content for department social media to bring awareness to species impacted by Kentucky Wild with a direct hyperlink to join.	Ongoing	Staff continued "Wild Wednesday" posts and supplemental posts about Kentucky Wild and non-game conservation.
3.2.c.	Partner with another agency to create a Kentucky Wild event by June 30, 2025.	Completed	Staff tabled at four Kentucky State Resort Parks in July 2025 to promote memberships and merchandise.
3.2.d.	Increase annual memberships and sponsorships by 5% year over year (Calendar Year).	In Progress	5% increase in membership dollars from 2024 to 2025. Sponsorships with Dever Golf Car and Shady Rays helped drive upper level (\$50 and above) memberships as part of special promotions.
<b>Initiative 3</b>	<b>Broaden and strengthen project management collaboration with governmental, private and corporate partnerships on public and private lands.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.3.a.	Schedule meetings with each reservoir managing authority annually to facilitate communication and collaboration.	Ongoing	Meetings with Army Corps, Tennessee Valley Authority, and U.S. Forest service managers were held across all districts to discuss fish management and habitat efforts to be conducted in 2025. Best practices for water level management, erosion control, and reduction of nuisance aquatic vegetation were also discussed.
3.3.b.	Broaden, strengthen communications, and connect local government with agency resources.	Ongoing	Meet with County Judge Executives, Magistrates, Mayors, County Clerks on monthly basis.
3.3.c.	Serve as agency resource broker connecting local government, with agency specialist, and programs that promote conservation, and economic benefit to the commonwealth.	Ongoing	Meet with Area Development District Members monthly, and through coordination with staff have increased understanding, participation and support of agency initiatives.



<b>Initiative 4</b>	<b>Grow our base by expanding our education and outreach approach to reflect a changing society.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.4.a.	Research and try new or emerging techniques to deliver information efficiently and effectively to constituents.	Ongoing	I&E and Marketing staff spearheaded an overhaul of the agency's social media efforts to better deliver department news and other information to constituents across the state; Informational emails were distributed to customers ahead of key seasons or deadlines.
3.4.b.	Complete and field a Request for Proposal for a license delivery system featuring a robust app and customer relationship management functions by June 30, 2026.	Ongoing	RFP process underway. The selection committee and agency have not yet decided on a vendor, if any.
3.4.c.	Create a webpage cataloging how-to videos to explain fishing, hunting and boating techniques for public use, with all major species groups, fishing techniques, with meat preparation and cooking instruction, by December, 2027.	Ongoing	New content added to the catalog on an annual basis. In 2025, completed significant updates to the Hunter Education video series, including modules on tree stand safety, the importance of hunter orange, safe firearm handling, and muzzleloader safety. Plan to continue to expand and refine this resource to support anglers, hunters, and boaters with accessible, high-quality instructional content through 2027.
3.4.d.	Continue to actively incorporate diverse participants into agency publications, website, videos and other media to communicate that everyone is welcome in Kentucky's outdoors.	Ongoing	Conscious effort by all staff to include diverse participants in all public communications. Examples include the cover of the 2026-27 Fishing and Boating Guide, website homepage and on social media promoting fishing, hunting and shooting ranges.
3.4.e.	Expand, evaluate and report on annually our use of GovDelivery to capture and activate contacts to improve communications and increase sales.	Ongoing	Used GovDelivery to send targeted communications and capture new opt-ins (2), expanding the agency's contact database. Supported email execution for the WMI R3 "Come With" campaign, which reached hundreds of thousands of users and generated significant engagement and revenue (400K+ emails and \$3.2M+ in spring campaign revenue).
3.4.f.	Conduct a minimum of two family-friendly R3 events annually.	Ongoing	We continue to meet and exceed this objective through a variety of program offerings. While our Hook and Cook and Field to Fork programs are primarily marketed to adults, they consistently attract family participation. In addition, we host multiple events statewide during Free Fishing Weekend that are specifically designed to engage families, providing accessible, hands-on opportunities to introduce participants of all ages to fishing and outdoor recreation.
3.4.g.	Attain ACA accreditation for the three conservation camps by June 30, 2027.	In Progress	ACA Accreditation attained for Camp Currie and Camp Webb.
3.4.h.	Work with state ag teachers through FFA or similar student organizations to enhance reach of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife information and conservation education.	In Progress	Multiple meetings and presentations delivered to this group.
3.4.i.	Engage with local communities to expand knowledge of KDFWR.	Ongoing	Meet and present to the 15 Kentucky Area Development Districts (ADDs) throughout the year.
<b>Initiative 5</b>	<b>Continue to develop and expand agency sponsorship programs.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.5.a.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Fisheries Division by December 2025.	Ongoing	Connected Fisheries with local government representatives which led to a new FINS Lake for Spring 27 in Rowen County.
3.5.b.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Wildlife Division by December 30, 2025.	Completed	Rut Report Sponsorship for the Wildlife Division went live March 15, 2026.



3.5.c.	Pursue sponsorships and donations for conservation education, conservation camps, R3 efforts, Kentucky Afield TV, Kentucky Afield magazine, Kentucky Afield podcast.	Ongoing	The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation donated equipment and furnishings from the former Camp Kentahten to support conservation education, conservation camp programming and R3 initiatives. Efforts will continue in 2026 to secure additional sponsorships and donations to further enhance these programs and facilities.
<b>Initiative 6</b>	<b>Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.6.a.	Collaborate with all divisions through weekly meetings to develop communication priorities, ensure short-term and long-term communication goals are being met, develop communication strategies utilizing multiple communication platforms, and report efforts to the Commissioner's Office.	Ongoing	Bi-weekly meetings continued with communications team liaisons and weekly with the core communications team. Reporting to the Commissioner's office has not been consistent in 2026 but efforts will be made to remedy that.
3.6.b.	Work collaboratively across multiple divisions to create a plan that outlines all groups working in communications, defines their roles and establishes annual communication priorities.	Ongoing	The communications team includes liaisons selected by division directors; Core communications team developed annual content calendar for strategic communications.
3.6.c.	Continue weekly meetings of the communications team including division liaisons to maintain efficient, consistent messaging across all agency communication platforms.	Ongoing	This continued on a weekly basis, enabling us to maintain consistent communication across all platforms.
3.6.d.	Share news releases and updates across multiple communications platforms.	Ongoing	News releases are placed on the website and sent to media outlets. Depending on the content, they will also be utilized on social media.
3.6.e.	Maintain at least eight social media accounts for the Fisheries Division with at least weekly posts submitted for each account.	Ongoing	All 7 fisheries management districts maintain a Twitter (X) account, as well as contribute to the 5 new KDFWR regional Facebook pages. Posts by Fisheries Division staff increased substantially in 2025.
3.6.f.	Implement a web-based electronic delivery platform for Kentucky Afield magazine to expand its audience using a web-based platform.	Delayed	Continued to explore potential solutions, but implementation was not achieved.
3.6.g.	Secure an OTT provider to serve as the video host in order to offer Kentucky Afield TV through streaming services by June 30, 2027.	Delayed	Discussions continued but no solution was secured. Plan to pursue and achieve implementation in 2026.
<b>Initiative 7</b>	<b>Enhance the Department's ability to facilitate and quantify public input when making management decisions.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
3.7.a.	Continue the new email platform for facilitating public input on Commission business by promptly distributing to members emails received on agenda items.	Ongoing	All business items that come into the dedicated public comments inbox are promptly forwarded to all commission members and KDFWR staff provide answers to any pertinent questions that are posed by members of the public.
3.7.b.	Increase the use of customer survey question(s) at the end of transaction purchases as constructed by various shows where the agency exhibits and sells licenses, permits and Kentucky Wild memberships.	Ongoing	Implemented customer data collection through surveys, opt-ins, and campaign touchpoints to better understand acquisition sources and customer behavior. Applied these insights to improve targeting and segmentation in marketing campaigns.



3.7.c.	Fisheries Division representatives will attend at least 20 public events annually that are hosted by sportsmen's groups, NGOs or department-affiliated entities to promote two-way communications and receive public input.	Ongoing	In 2025, Fisheries Division representatives continued to exceed the goal of 20 public events attended annually. Staff participated in multiple kids fishing events, provided educational presentations to students across the state, attended farm day events, Sportsman's group meetings, outdoor expos, the state fair and multiple boat shows.
<b>Goal 4</b>			
<b>Enhance the Department's responsiveness and effectiveness</b>			
<b>Initiative 1</b>	<b>Enhance recruitment to ensure a diverse, inclusive, well-suited workforce that relates to all customers.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
4.1.a.	Uniformed officers and other staff will attend a minimum of 2 career fairs each year and work closely with area universities and increase social media footprint to attract diverse applicants.	Ongoing	The law enforcement recruitment section worked diligently to visit multiple universities and attend numerous career affairs across the Commonwealth. These efforts were rewarded with a great increase in our social media footprint and record game warden recruit applications for academy classes 29 and 30.
4.1.b.	Human Resources will research needs related to an internship and cooperative education program by December, 2026, and communicate opportunities for selected majors/disciplines to all state universities in Kentucky by December, 2027.	Delayed	Initial research has been conducted, but plan to pursue in 2026.
4.1.c.	Human Resources will collaborate with the Information and Education Division to enhance and keep updated the career opportunities page on the Department's website.	Ongoing	As positions are posted to fill, Human Resources works with the Information and Education Division to ensure all positions are posted on the Department's website.
<b>Initiative 2</b>	<b>Offer opportunities for professional development to ensure operational effectiveness.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
4.2.a.	Identify suitable customer service training and require of all staff develop better responsiveness and communication to the public.	In Progress	Investigations into training options have been conducted, but no formal training has been implemented at this time.
4.2.b.	Provide media relations training to pertinent personnel.	In Progress	No formal trainings; Agency PIO and other communications team members coordinated with and advised staff who were requested by media to be interviewed for news stories.
<b>Initiative 3</b>	<b>Improve private lands, water conservation and stream and wetland restoration programs.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
4.3.a.	Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help landowners take advantage of the conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill.	Ongoing	Worked closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist landowners in accessing and implementing conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill. Contributed to the obligation of approximately \$1.7 million in funding for wildlife management practices, developed and delivered wildlife management plans for nearly 600 landowners, and supported NRCS staff by assisting with prescribed fire training to enhance conservation delivery and on-the-ground habitat implementation.
4.3.b.	Implement communications about the WMA Management Levels by December, 2026.	Ongoing	The WMA Experience that users can access live data including the locations of completed wildlife practices and current habitat conditions will be released to the public in Spring 2026.
4.3.c.	Update content and add informational videos to the Pond Management section of the website by December, 2025.	Delayed	No information was provided to allow for content updates or development of informational videos.

Initiative 4	Enhance revenue streams and operating budget to adequately address fish and wildlife conservation and recreation needs of the Commonwealth.	Status	2025 Update
4.4.a.	Increase operating budget to accommodate more FILO projects being implemented operationally via contracting, implementation of federal Recovering America's Wildlife Act (if passed by U.S. Congress), and other changes necessitated by statutory or other requirements.	In Progress	Increased FILO project pool in the capital budget to allow for more projects on the ground. Have worked with OSBD (Office of State Budget Director) to allow full delivery payments within the operating budget annually.
4.4.b.	Identify and evaluate feasible new revenue sources (both immediate and additional) to meet budgetary needs.	In Progress	Implemented an inflation-based system to adjust license, permit and boat registration fees during even-numbered years. Pricing is based on the existing cost, plus the combined inflation rate (based on the Consumer Price Index) of the previous two years. The new system adds transparency and avoids sudden and substantial rate increases.
4.4.c.	Begin implementing new immediate revenue sources and initiate steps required to implement additional new revenue sources.	Ongoing	Staff continuously evaluate new potential revenue sources.

<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Protect Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and promote user safety</b>
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Initiative 1	Control, reduce and eradicate invasive species.	Status	2025 Update
5.1.a.	Work to identify locations of and eradicate invasive species on WMAs, beginning with "high management level" areas in this biennium.	Ongoing	Staff completed 6,102.3 acres of invasive species control (plants) through chemical and physical control to benefit wildlife and their habitats.
5.1.b.	Work with 5 private/public landowners in each region through partnerships to control and reduce invasive species to an acceptable level by June 30, 2027.	Ongoing	Worked with private landowners across the state to control invasive plant species and improve wildlife habitat. Through targeted management efforts, landowners implemented treatments focused on herbaceous invasive plants and invasive shrubs that threaten native plant communities and reduce habitat quality for wildlife. 83 landowners participated in invasive species management activities. These efforts resulted in the treatment of 1,752.5 acres of invasive plants and habitat management practices designed to restore native vegetation and improve habitat conditions for wildlife.
5.1.c.	Update the Statewide Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan for Kentucky by December, 2025.	In Progress	Work is ongoing with the revision of the 2008 Kentucky ANS Management Plan (KANSP). The revision includes new content on pathways, updated species tables, trends in introductions, history of introductions, a crosswalk of Kentucky's prohibited species list with federal and state lists, identifies threats listed in the 2024 Kentucky State Wildlife Action Plan, and editorial review of the KANSP. Work continues on the KDFWR ANS database and incorporating USGS queries to augment ANS reporting.
5.1.d.	Continue to work with private industry to increase removal of invasive carp to 20 million pounds annually by December, 2025.	In Progress	Statewide harvest was down in 2025 at 7.9 million pounds. This is mainly due to decreasing populations of invasive carp in Kentucky and Barkley Lakes. Commercial fisher efforts have increased but the lack of large schools of invasive carp have produced less harvest. Subsidy incentives were increased in 2025 to keep pressure on invasive carp populations. The Experimental Gear and Ohio River Contract Fishing programs were continued to allow for increase harvest efficiencies.



<b>Initiative 2</b>	<b>Increase public safety for hunting, fishing, boating and recreational shooting.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
5.2.a.	Conservation officers will routinely patrol public hunting and fishing areas and the public waterways of the state each year, observing for unsafe conditions and illegal activity.	Ongoing	Game Wardens across the state actively patrolled our lands and waters throughout the year. Their presence and deterrence efforts greatly impacted our resources and the safety of our citizens.
5.2.b.	Establish 5 additional life jacket loaner stations across the state by December, 2027.	Ongoing	In 2025, three (3) Life Jacket Loaner Stations were opened.
5.2.c.	Ensure safety and improve access to public waters by maintaining statewide boat ramps, launch sites, dams and fishing sites, and informational signage to educate the public and promote safe use.	Ongoing	New signs with updated info to be installed later in the quarter for many boating and fishing access sites. Several ramps have been improved during 2025.
<b>Initiative 3</b>	<b>Protect fish and wildlife resources through increased regulation compliance.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
5.3.a.	Conservation officers will increase the annual number of compliance checks conducted by 10% by June 30, 2026.	Ongoing	Our campaign for the past three years has been clear, contact as many sportsmen and women across the state as possible. Even with low LE personnel numbers, our team has exceeded expectations and our compliance checks continue to increase annually.
5.3.b.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance by offering 24-hour dispatch service through Kentucky State Police referral system.	Ongoing	Coordinated efforts with our Agency and the Kentucky State Police Telecommunications Branch has continued to be a success. During 2025, our teams have worked together and have continued to be proactive and creative to work together to better serve Kentuckians.
5.3.c.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance by offering Tip411.	Ongoing	In 2024, we started an internal campaign which revamped and reassigned responsibility over the Tip411 program to a Regional Captain. This move has proven to be a success, as public usage and complaint numbers have both increased dramatically.
5.3.d.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance through social media channels.	Ongoing	The Law Enforcement Division social media footprint has been vital to our success. Daily, our following numbers grow and the innovation of the social media branch evolves and improves.
<b>Initiative 4</b>	<b>Provide professional conservation law enforcement services to the Commonwealth through mission-focused policing.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
5.4.a.	Maintain all levels of supervision across the Law Enforcement Division by promptly filling any supervisor vacancies that occur.	Ongoing	The Law Enforcement Division has set a precedent in recent years that changed the expectation of our promotional vacancies in a positive way. In an effort to ensure adequate leadership, encourage promotional change, and increase moral we strive to feel vacant ranking positions in a smooth and efficient manner and have been consistent in doing so.
5.4.b.	Require a minimum of 6 detailed and organized Law Enforcement operations from each district during peak seasons to ensure mission-focused efforts.	Ongoing	During 2025 the Law Enforcement Division exceeded this goal and is continuing our efforts to work a minimum of 6 mission-focused details during peak seasons and times of the year.
5.4.c.	Increase sworn Game Warden personnel numbers 30% by year 2027.	Ongoing	The Law Enforcement Division is actively working toward this goal. We currently have 112 sworn and recruit game warden personnel. In 2026, we plan to hire for 12 new sworn positions.



Initiative 5	Promulgate clear and concise fish and wildlife regulations for anglers, hunters, trappers and boaters.	Status	2025 Update
5.5.a.	Work closely with the Commission and internally across applicable division lines to ensure the regulations are concise, not in conflict with Kentucky Revised Statutes, and enforceable.	Ongoing	Staff continue to work through the Trello software program to organize and track regulations continuously as they are passed by the commission, drafted within pertinent divisions and then filed with the LRC through the administrative regulation process.
5.5.b.	Provide the Commission with clear and concise regulation recommendations for the take of fish and wildlife species.	Ongoing	Division directors in conjunction with department leadership continue to work with program staff to provide relevant data in their area of expertise for consideration to be amended in applicable regulations.
Initiative 6	Enact proactive measures in response to existing and emerging fish and wildlife health threats.	Status	2025 Update
5.6.a.	Continue surveillance efforts for the Asian longhorned tick ( <i>Haemaphysalis longicornis</i> ), particularly in high-risk counties.	Ongoing	The Wildlife Health Program opportunistically collects ticks from wildlife during mortality investigations and captures. As part of an ongoing 3-year tick surveillance project funded by the USFWS Zoonotic Disease Initiative grant (awarded in Fall 2023), ticks are collected from 5 WMAs across Kentucky for species identification and pathogen surveillance. Tick collection and analysis are ongoing. The Wildlife Health Program also participates in a KY tick working group made up of state and federal partners including KY Department of Public Health, KY Department of Agriculture, USDA Veterinary Services, and University researchers. Wildlife Health Program participates in monthly National USDA Asian Longhorned Tick Situational Report Update meeting.
5.6.b.	Continue Chronic Wasting Disease prevention and surveillance activities.	Ongoing	KDFWR does annual surveillance for the early detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in wild cervids across Kentucky and monitors CWD in wild cervids following detections in either wild or captive cervids, using both passive and active surveillance techniques. Samples are collected from hunter-harvested cervids, roadkill, and sick or target animals. The Wildlife Health Program maintains a professional service contract for CWD testing with a veterinary diagnostic laboratory accredited by USDA National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) in CWD diagnostics. Prior to the start of the 2025-2026 hunting season, 11 counties were in the CWD Surveillance Zone with 1 detection in a wild cervid (Ballard County) and 9 detections in 1 captive cervid facility (Breckinridge County). KDFWR actively and passively surveyed wild cervids for CWD during the hunting season, collecting samples via CWD sample drop-off sites, CWD sample mail-in kits, quota hunts, mandatory check stations during the first weekend of modern gun season in Henderson, Union and Webster counties, and voluntary check stations in the remaining CWD Surveillance Zone counties. In 2025, KDFWR detected 2 new cases of CWD in wild cervids (Ballard and Pulaski counties). An additional 9 counties were added to the CWD Surveillance Zone in December 2025. KDFWR's CWD Response Team also reviewed/revised the CWD Response Plan.
5.6.c.	Continue ongoing elk surveillance and health assessments.	Ongoing	Elk mortality events are investigated as available, with samples collected and analyzed based on all potential causative factors. This effort is ongoing and will continue into the future and evolve as necessary to monitor the health of our elk population.
5.6.d.	Continue review and response of wildlife to COVID-19.	In Progress	KDFWR participated in the USDA's multistate white-tailed deer SARS-CoV-2 surveillance project, collecting >350 samples opportunistically across Kentucky during white-tailed deer mortality investigations and from hunter-harvested deer. KDFWR previously participated in this multi-year project, collecting samples in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, there were 23 presumptive positives and no detections in 2023. The USDA published results from this study in July 2023 ( <a href="https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-39782-x">https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-39782-x</a> ). Samples collected in 2025 have been sent to USDA for testing, results and analyses are pending.



5.6.e.	Continue monitoring and surveillance of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease.	Ongoing	The Wildlife Health Program continues to investigate suspicious wild rabbit mortalities. To date, RHDV-2 has not been detected in wild rabbits in Kentucky and there have been no new domestic rabbit cases since the initial detection in December 2021.
5.6.f.	Pursue federal grants or other sources of funding for increasing capacity of disease monitoring and abatement.	Ongoing	The Wildlife Health Program applied for and was awarded a USFWS Zoonotic Disease Initiative Grant in Fall 2023 with an award amount of \$683,697 across a 3-year project period. This funding is for a wildlife health database, a wildlife health communication specialist, wildlife disease trainings, various disease surveillance projects, and a fish health contract. The wildlife health database has been developed, and historical data is being entered. The wildlife health communications specialist has been hired and regularly creates wildlife health-related materials for KDFWR staff, partners, and the public and has/is working on developing wildlife disease training materials. Various disease surveillance projects, including tick, amphibian disease, and PFAS surveillance are ongoing. The Wildlife Health Program also applied for and was awarded a Wild Cervid Chronic Wasting Disease Management and Response Activities Cooperative Agreement in Fall 2024 with an award amount of \$98,620 across a 1-year project period. This funding was to expand KDFWR's voluntary self-service mail-in CWD sampling kits program and develop a complementary CWD mobile app to provide hunters with updated CWD information to promote stakeholder engagement. The complementary CWD mobile app was a tremendous success. With approximately 14,000 downloads since its launch in September of 2025, the app was able to deliver pertinent CWD testing information right to the phones of many Kentucky hunters. Results from a voluntary in-app survey showed that over 94% of those surveyed were at least somewhat satisfied with the app, and over 70% of users would recommend the app to other hunters.
5.6.g.	Conduct a deer dispersal study in the CWD Surveillance Zone.	Ongoing	The collaborative research project between KDFWR and University of Kentucky was initiated on time. Staff are currently in the second of a 2-year project aimed at studying deer dispersal and demographic rates in far western KY. Staff have deployed > 75 GPS radio-collars over the study period with more deployments anticipated prior to the closing of the capture portion of the project in spring 2026. Analyses are ongoing.
<b>Initiative 7</b>	<b>Promote safe and enjoyable experiences for all recreational boaters.</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>2025 Update</b>
5.7.a.	Conservation officers will spend a minimum of 30% of their patrol hours on public waterways surveilling for violations and unsafe conditions.	Ongoing	Officers continue to spend substantial time patrolling waterways to ensure public safety and opportunities for all on Kentucky waters. We continue our dedication to waterway safety and intend to expand our initiatives.
5.7.b.	A minimum of 3 public safety announcements will be produced or activated each year to focus on the most dangerous aspects of boating to increase public awareness and safety compliance.	Ongoing	Currently our team has provided multiple boating-safety related public service announcements, some of which include operation dry water impaired boating, effects of cold water entry, and hot weather on the water awareness concerns. We work closely with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to enhance our outreach efforts.
5.7.c.	The boating education coordinator will teach a minimum of 10 boating education classes annually in multiple locations (or virtually) across the state.	Ongoing	Eighteen (18) in-person classes were taught across the state in 2025.





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Rolling Fork Wildlife Management Area / Obie Williams photo