



STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

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December 2024 Progress Report

Serving People, Conserving Fish and Wildlife

Our final report for the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan was prepared to provide a window into the completed and ongoing conservation efforts that the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has made for our constituents and the commonwealth's fish and wildlife and their habitats over the last two calendar years.

This detailed plan has served to keep Kentucky Fish and Wildlife leadership and staff on target with strategies that were determined to be crucial for guiding the agency's management to safeguard our native fish and wildlife resources, and to provide for a framework for productive collaboration with the many stakeholders who value and enjoy those resources.

The following pages will provide you with updates on the original and supplementary initiatives advanced in the biennial plan. While this report concludes this particular plan cycle, many of these strategies will continue into the 2025-2026 Strategic Plan, subject to evaluation and adjustments based on our recent accomplishments, best available science, and current resource needs.

Our strategic plan outlines our five primary goals to:

- 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 my hope that this report will enhance public awareness of the department's most ambitious and pressing priorities, as well as strategic initiatives and actions led by the dedicated staff from all across Kentucky Fish and Wildlife to address those priorities head on.

Thank you for your continued support.

Rich Storm, Commissioner
January 2025



Strategic Plan Initiatives: 2023-2024

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	July - December 2024
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 3,446 acres of forest stand improvement to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and recreational users. Completed a cedar harvest contract at Taylorsville Lake WMA-Briar Ridge Unit. Working cooperatively with Finance Real Properties to advertise timber harvest bid packages for Yatesville Lake WMA and Clay WMA.
1.1.b.	Manage 10,000 acres of open lands on WMAs annually with prescribed fire, disking, herbicide treatments and other methods	Ongoing	Completed 7,225 acres of prescribed burning to benefit wildlife, their habitats, and recreational users. WMA agricultural practices including those that benefit wildlife totaled 9,754 acres, and approximately 2,500 acres of plantings or other vegetation management.
1.1.c.	Manage 4,500 acres of wetlands on WMAs annually using water management, disking, planting and other methods	Ongoing	Completed 3,815 acres of wetland creation/management to benefit wildlife and their habitats as well as recreational users.
1.1.d.	Update WMA management plans on WMAs with "High Management Level" designation by June 30, 2023	In Progress (annual)	WMA planning tool development was delayed due to high priority CWD response. The planning tool is in progress, with final development and implementation beginning in 2025.
1.1.e.	Update lake-specific management plans for all major public lakes and reservoirs (>500 acres) managed by the Department by June 30, 2023	In Progress	Plans continue to be submitted and reviewed.
Initiative 2	Expand research on species and habitat management efforts statewide.	Status	July - December 2024
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 (anticipated December 2022). Determine hunting and viewing goals by Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress (annual)	Data for the five year statistical population reconstruction model have been collected and are currently being analyzed. At the same time, additional data were collected during the fall 2024 elk hunting season to continue this model well into the future.
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 Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress (annual)	Bear population monitoring takes place annually with additional data included in the population model as applicable. With a significant increase in the annual harvest rates, we are not able to apply age-at-harvest variables to this model for 2025.



1.2.c.	Conduct research on non-game species to determine management needs and population trends for the states most at risk species	Ongoing	Ongoing qualitative and quantitative surveys for freshwater mussels, songbird monitoring at Shaker Village during the late breeding season and migration periods, and maternity emergence counts for Virginia big-eared bats (VBEB) were conducted. We conducted Monarch tagging opportunistically during fall migration. The Center For Mollusk Conservation (CMC) continued propagation and release of multiple SGCN mussel species. Cameras and light/sound recording devices were placed at known and suspected VBEB roosts to monitor conditions and document potential disturbance. Eastern hellbender conservation projects continued including the grow-out of 200 young hellbenders hatched from Kentucky eggs at the CMC in preparation for release as early as 2026. Kayak and in-stream surveys were conducted to assess potential release sites and to determine reproductive potential and population structure at hellbender eDNA-positive sites. Staff, volunteers, and partners assisted with an annual 'Bat Blitz' at Pine Mountain SRP and surrounding areas. Teams documented 272 bats during a single weekend, including federally endangered gray and northern long-eared bats.
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 by Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress (annual)	The turkey program conducts annual surveys of eligible license customers to develop estimates of spring turkey hunting participation, effort, success rate, harvest, and turkey hunting effort; data are also collected from successful hunters through the online telecheck process. For small game species, ongoing efforts for data collection include hangtags on Peabody WMA, Rockcastle River WMA, and Clay WMA, the statewide annual rural mail carrier survey, and voluntary hunter log surveys. Hunters and trappers of river otter and bobcat are surveyed annually to collect harvest effort data used for statistical population reconstruction models to estimate abundance, recruitment, survival, and harvest vulnerability of these two species in Kentucky. The deer program collects hunter effort data via our WMA quota hunt surveys for deer and the new CWD survey for hunters in the CWD surveillance zone. The elk program conducts a mandatory elk hunter survey at the conclusion of each elk hunting season to collect data that are foundational in the construction of a statistical population reconstruction model used to make inferences on elk abundance.
1.2.e.	Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of different fish habitat structures and materials	In Progress	Efforts are ongoing to deploy fish habitat and monitor usage and effectiveness. Staff evaluated Green River Lake habitat structures in September. The branch acquired a new livenesscope sonar and used it this year to evaluate usage of habitat in Guist Creek, Green River, and Rough River lakes.
1.2.f.	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	For the turkey banding/health study, the 4th of 4 field seasons is underway by KDFWR staff and the Tennessee Tech master's student. The student has presented preliminary analyses at 3 professional meetings and anticipates defending her thesis and providing a final project report by May 2025. For the turkey reproductive ecology study, the 3rd of 3 field seasons is underway by the Tennessee Tech PhD student. Her fieldwork will run through August 2025, with anticipated completion of her degree and final report to KDFWR in Summer 2026.
Initiative 3	Evaluate native fisheries species restoration efforts.	Status	July - December 2024
1.3.a.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing lake sturgeon restoration efforts	Ongoing	Staff stocked 4,095 lake sturgeon in the upper Cumberland River and Big South Fork between August and October. In October, 310 fish were pit-tagged and stocked in the upper Cumberland River. Trotline surveys were conducted in December but complete results were not completed due to weather. Surveys will continue in January if weather allows.
1.3.b.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing alligator gar restoration efforts	Ongoing	Staff stocked 1,192 alligator gar fitted with microwire tags in three locations - Clarks River, Bayou De Chien, and Obion Creek. Murray State University is continuing to track fish that were implanted with ultrasonic tags and released in Fish Lake (Boatwright WMA), Turner Lake (Ballard WMA), and the Clarks River.
1.3.c.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing native walleye restoration efforts	Completed	A final report and technical bulletin were completed; however, monitoring will continue to evaluate the population.

Initiative 4	Expand reservoir fish habitat initiatives.	Status	July - December 2024
1.4.a.	Conduct 1 large-scale reservoir fish habitat project annually	Ongoing	During this period, the Barren River Lake large-scale project was completed and large-scale habitat work is now in progress on Lake Cumberland.
1.4.b.	Enhance fish habitat sites on at least 1 reservoir in each fisheries district annually	Complete for 2024	The 7 fisheries districts each enhanced habitat sites at more than one lake in their district during 2024. A total of 20 lakes received habitat enhancements.
1.4.c.	Create and implement a 10-year Reservoir Habitat Improvement Plan by Dec. 31, 2022	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.
Initiative 5	Carefully prioritize projects, evaluate effectiveness and adaptively manage agency Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).	Status	July - December 2024
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	WMA planning tool development was delayed, thus slowing progress to develop WMA Habitat story maps that will be available for online users. Further development is planned for 2025.
1.5.b.	Evaluate additional forestry and open lands management through contracting to maximize wildlife habitat management objectives	In Progress	Public lands staff developed bid packages for aerial spray applications for multiple projects throughout the state to treat invasives species and improve habitat at WMAs. Approximately 5,124 acres of invasive species control was completed. Additionally, public lands staff worked cooperatively with tenant farmers managing over 7,000 acres for row crops and haying.
Initiative 6	Identify critical needs for enhancing fish and wildlife species diversity that is consistent with the State Wildlife Action Plan.	Status	July - December 2024
1.6.a.	Continue the review and revision to the State Wildlife Action Plan (fully complete by 2023)	Completed	Revision of Kentucky's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was completed on time and submitted to USFWS for review and approval in September 2023. Approval is pending but can take up to 18 months. Considered enacted upon submission, the SWAP ensures eligibility for applicable federal grant funds. Agency staff and conservation partners are currently utilizing the SWAP to prioritize and guide conservation activities designed to stabilize and/or recover Kentucky's species of greatest conservation need.
1.6.b.	Ensure fish and wildlife species status changes are incorporated into final updated revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan (fully complete by 2023)	Completed	Any species status changes occurring since submission are being documented by team leads for particular species taxa and will be updated in the approved plan.
1.6.c.	Collaborate with state partners to accomplish SWAP revision, development, and implementation by June 30, 2024	Ongoing	Implementation of activities identified in the newly-revised plan are ongoing. Examples of collaborative partnerships to implement SWAP actions include: maintenance and data monitoring of Kentucky's 5 Motus towers to track movements of migrating and resident songbirds species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) including wood thrush and field sparrow, installation of drift fence/camera arrays to acquire new observational data for least weasel and other data deficient grassland SGCN, and surveillance/trapping/sampling for eastern hellbender salamander in historic streams as indicated by eDNA.

Initiative 7	Improve facilities at fish hatcheries and WMAs to allow staff to better manage fish and wildlife populations.	Status	July - December 2024
1.7.a.	Renovate 1 office building by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed	Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery office renovation was completed in late 2023.
1.7.b.	Facilitate sediment removal from 2 hatchery ponds annually	Completed, ongoing	Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery staff continues to remove sediment from hatchery ponds as weather conditions allow. Two ponds are being completed annually.
1.7.c.	Repair 1 hatchery brood pond levee and outflow structure by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	Repairs completed on the brood pond levee at Minor Clark Fish Hatchery.
1.7.d.	Construct 1 new WMA office by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	Construction is in progress. The anticipated completion date is 9/9/2025.
1.7.e.	Repair 2 Water Control Structures at WMAs by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	Staff completed the installation of a water control structure at Yellowbank WMA with assistance from League of KY Sportsmen funding to create a 25-acre shallow water impoundment. Replaced a 20-year-old pump that had failed at Doug Travis WMA that is critical for wetland management and hunter opportunity.
1.7.f.	Replace Ohio River Pump at Ballard WMA by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	Construction is in progress. The anticipated completion date is 5/4/2026.
1.7.g.	Construct 2 new storage sheds on WMAs by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	Lloyd WMA has received a new storage unit, while Veterans WMA's storage needs are being addressed through renovations to an existing but deteriorating shop rather than constructing a new building. This decision was based on a cost analysis, which determined that repairs would be more cost-effective than new construction.
Initiative 8	Revise and update species management plans.	Status	July - December 2024
1.8.a.	Review and update the 2030 Elk Management Plan and identify next step goals and objectives by Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress	The 2025-2030 plan of work is currently being developed and evaluated.
1.8.b.	Work to identify priority areas to achieve 5% of selected habitat goals set forth in the 2017 grouse plan by Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress	As of April 2024, accomplishments by the Ruffed Grouse Society forestry position co-funded by KDFWR included: (1) on the Daniel Boone National Forest: 221 acres of commercial timber harvest to create young and open forest conditions, 241 acres of noncommercial habitat improvements, 24 acres of tree planting, and a combined 81 days of timber sale harvest inspection and administration, monitoring, and timber cruising; (2) on the Kentucky Ridge State Forest WMA: 48 acres of noncommercial habitat improvements, 46 acres of silviculture prescription preparation, 46 acres of timber marking; and (3) on private lands: 728 landowners contacted by mailings, 138 landowners reached through education and outreach events, 5 events led or participated in, 28 landowners received forest technical assistance, 8 forest management plans completed covering 1,668 acres and \$41,521 in USDA EQIP contract funding.
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 Dec. 31, 2023	In Progress	The Fisheries Division's muskie, morone, percid, and trout internal management teams continue to work on their species management plans. The management teams meet regularly and staff have been assigned specific tasks to complete the plans. A draft muskie plan has been completed and is in review.

Goal 2	Increase opportunities for and participation in fish and wildlife recreation		
Initiative 1	Increase and promote boating and fishing opportunities on underutilized waters.	Status	July - December 2024
2.1.a.	Host an R3 event on one underutilized waters location annually	Completed	Staff partnered with Ft. Campbell to lead a flyfishing 101 course in July.
2.1.b.	Send out 3 eBlasts to existing anglers to promote the Reel World Fishing Forecast website in the Spring and Fall.	Completed, ongoing	Staff completed numerous eblasts to subscribers and customer segments to promote fishing and hunting license renewals and enhance participation with access and opportunity information.
Initiative 2	Expand our management efforts on public land in partnership with federal agencies and private landowners.	Status	July - December 2024
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	In Progress (annual)	KDFWR and Daniel Boone National Forest staff began discussions about new cooperative management opportunities, including potential grants. KDFWR continues to be actively involved on the Land Between the Lakes advisory board with its two appointees, and staff regularly work with LBL points of contact on cooperative projects and resolution of issues of mutual concern as they arise.
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	Staff continue to actively collaborate with the Corps of Engineers on maintenance and enhancements such as habitat improvement projects where feasible.
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	Completed	All 17 of the private lands biologist positions made possible in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service are currently filled; these staff support habitat management on private land across the commonwealth through technical guidance to landowners/groups and implementation of Farm Bill conservation project funding programs.
2.2.d.	Update WMA mapping to include habitat maps for minimum one High Management Level WMA* per Wildlife Region by June 30, 2023	In Progress	The WMA planning tool development was delayed this year due to limited staffing and other high priority projects; final development and implementation will occur in 2025.
Initiative 3	Enhance agency effectiveness by implementing the Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) plan for Kentucky.	Status	July - December 2024
2.3.a.	Conduct an annual R3 summit with agency staff and partners by Dec. 31 of each year.	Completed	The R3 Branch has moved to an annual report which was produced and shared within the department and to partners. The R3 summit will be a bi-annual in-person meeting.
2.3.b.	Make a presentation about Kentucky's R3 Initiative to the entire Law Enforcement Division during annual training(s)	Completed	All staff must now complete the "I am R3" training module when onboarding with the department.
2.3.c.	Exhibit at the Fish and Wildlife fair annually for the 22,000+ archers and spectators at the NASP Kentucky State Tournament through June 30, 2024.	Completed	Staff continue to attend and set up the KDFWR booth at the Kentucky State NASP Tournament to sell hunting and fishing licenses and permits, Elk Hunt Drawing entries, Kentucky Wild memberships, branded merchandise, and market and communicate upcoming R3 and conservation-related programs and events offered by the department and partners.

Initiative 4	Improve mentor, coach and instructor development to strengthen R3 efforts.	Status	July - December 2024
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	I&E continues to partner with 4H on our Cook Wild Kentucky recipe cards, Field to Fork, and Hook n Cook programs across the commonwealth.
2.4.b.	Continue promotion of online hunter education curriculum to high school agriculture and FFA programs.	Ongoing	I&E continues conversations with FFA leadership on the best way to approach this partnership.
2.4.c.	Evaluate the potential for providing online hunter education curriculum through school resource officer (SRO) safety programs by December 31, 2022	Completed	I&E has developed partnerships with local Sheriff's Offices to offer hunter education.
Initiative 5	Improve access to quality areas for hunting, fishing and other wildlife related recreation.	Status	July - December 2024
2.5.a.	Construct 2 new boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2024	Completed	The Hinkston Creek Boat Ramp was completed by the end of 2024, marking the third new ramp built as part of this two-year strategic plan.
2.5.b.	Construct 1 fixed wooden fishing pier by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed	The Green River Lake fishing pier was completed and is in use.
2.5.c.	Build relationships with large landholders in the east to develop 2 new hunting access areas by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed, ongoing	Pocahontas Surface Interests, LLC enrolled 60,000 acres into a WMA agreement in August 2024. Additionally, 40,000 acres was added to our voucher system for elk hunting access within the elk zone by Kentucky River Properties.
2.5.d.	Develop a prioritized list of public fishing and hunting access improvement opportunities by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed, ongoing	The Fisheries Division utilizes an application process to evaluate access improvement opportunities and prioritizes projects based on funding and need. Lake Linville boat ramp was selected for renovation in 2025. Existing sites on the Green River and the Mississippi River were added in 2024 due to damage and water level changes.
2.5.e.	Evaluate WMA mobile app options by Dec. 31, 2022	Delayed	Status of this initiative was unchanged during this reporting period, awaiting outcome of the licensing/IT services RFP process that may yield a department-level app.
2.5.f.	Rebuild 3 boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	Boat ramps at Wilgreen Lake, Beaver Lake, and West Point have been completed and are in service.
2.5.g.	Pave 4 gravel boat trailer parking areas at existing boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	The Wilgreen Lake and West Point ramps have been paved. Wildcat Ramp access road is being evaluated for potential improvements in 2025.
2.5.h.	Install 2 new courtesy docks at existing boat ramps	Completed	Carpenter Lake and Greenup County courtesy docks have been completed and are in service.
Initiative 6	Develop new public facilities that provide additional hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities.	Status	July - December 2024
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 June 30, 2022	Ongoing	A contracted firm has delivered preliminary drawings for the redesign of all seven tubed rifle ranges. The project will begin with Kleber, Taylorsville, and Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMAs, where civil surveys of existing conditions have been completed. The designer is now developing Phase A designs for each site, with internal review expected in early 2025.



2.6.b.	Apply for 2 grants for the creation of a public archery range by Dec. 31, 2021	Completed	The KDFWR Headquarters archery range was completed and opened to the public in 2023. It is regularly used by the public, and has been likewise used for hunter education and related events.
2.6.c.	Make improvements to 2 existing WMA rifle ranges, including renovation of shooting berms and shooting facilities by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	The shooting range impact berm at Kleber WMA was re-faced and its height increased. Otter Creek pistol range berm was re-faced with fine grade aggregate.
2.6.d.	Complete design and construction of a new shooting facility at Veteran's Memorial WMA by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	Construction is underway. The civil work has been nearly completed. Work is expected to complete by 9/5/2025.
2.6.e.	Partner with 2 existing private shooting range facilities to secure new public recreational shooting access	Delayed	The I&E Division has partnered with WMI, RBFF, and DJ Case & Associates to update the R3 Strategic Plan. A component of the plan addresses shooting sports and assessing the best manner to proceed with recreational shooters.
2.6.f.	Develop at least 2 ADA-accessible facilities by June 30, 2024	Completed	The Wilgreen Lake kayak launch and HQ archery range have been completed, both offering ADA accessibility.

Initiative 7	Evaluate and improve all aspects of the customer experience.	Status	July - December 2024
2.7.a.	Improve facilities at camps through replacing dated materials and equipment by Dec. 31, 2023	Ongoing	With aging infrastructure, needs always arise. The Camp Currie wastewater treatment plan is in the design phase. The Camp Wallace dining hall bids were just received and the project is awaiting approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers to begin demolition and construction.
2.7.b.	Include customer satisfaction rating questions and opportunities for open-ended feedback in all customer surveys and distribute results to applicable program staff to facilitate additional public input.	Ongoing	Both satisfaction rating and open-ended comment questions continue to be a standard feature in surveys of agency customers and stakeholders to allow for feedback.

Goal 3	Increase public awareness, engagement and partnerships
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Initiative 1	Increase transparency of management and finances.	Status	July - December 2024
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	Divisional team leadership and staff have documented projects with photos capturing their progress from start to completion. This practice will continue for both record-keeping and outreach purposes.
3.1.b.	Maintain 3-step process for proposed regulation amendments to optimize public awareness and engagement.	Ongoing	The 3-step process is used for all normal regulation amendments proposed on the commission meeting agendas. There are a few exemptions for emergent issues or amendments to conform with other regulation language previously approved by the commission.



Initiative 2	Expand participation in Kentucky Wild and opportunities for other wildlife-related activities.	Status	July - December 2024
3.2.a.	Create monthly Kentucky Wild mobile education events throughout the state.	Ongoing	Staff hosted Kentucky Wild member experiences or tabled at community events to sell memberships and merchandise. These included: "Kentucky Wild Day" at the Salato Wildlife Education Center; The Woodlands Nature Station Hummingbird Festival; Camp John W. Currie Anniversary Event; Kentucky State Fair; Monarch tagging event at Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site; Kentucky Wild 6th Birthday Event at Country Boy Brewing in Georgetown; Songbird banding event at KDFWR headquarters; Cave Hill Fall Festival; Fall Bazaar at Country Boy Brewing; Georgetown; ColorFest at Bernheim Forest; Crafted Social Winter Market; and Holiday Market at Wise Bird Cider Co.
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	Content is created weekly for the KDFWR Facebook page to promote Kentucky Wild memberships and to highlight projects supported by Kentucky Wild memberships.
3.2.c.	Partner with another agency to create a Kentucky Wild event by June 30, 2023.	Completed	Kentucky Wild partnered with Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site for a Monarch tagging event in October of 2024.
3.2.d.	Increase annual memberships and sponsorships by 5% year over year (Calendar Year).	Ongoing	4,189 members joined in 2024, yielding \$153,350 in membership funds. A Country Boy Brewing sponsorship for 2024 yielded \$20,000 of retail value and included 2 additional co-hosted events.
Initiative 3	Broaden and strengthen project management collaboration with governmental, private and corporate partnerships on public and private lands.	Status	July - December 2024
3.3.a.	Schedule meetings with each reservoir managing authority annually to facilitate communication and collaboration	Completed, ongoing	Each of the 7 fisheries districts met with their major reservoir managing authorities during this reporting period. They discussed fish management, habitat work, and other reservoir management topics.
Initiative 4	Grow our base by expanding our education and outreach approach to reflect a changing society.	Status	July - December 2024
3.4.a.	Work with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation to publish and promote the grant-funded Kentucky fishing and boating app by summer 2023.	Completed, ongoing	The department and partners continue to promote the FishBoatKY app, and downloads and usage continues to grow.
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, 2023	Delayed, in progress	Administrative Services and EIT staff are working on updating the Request for Proposals (RFP) for licensing and related IT services.
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 June 30, 2023	Completed, ongoing	The I&E Division continues to update webpages as needed and looks for opportunities to enhance the content and effectiveness of the agency website.
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	Completed, ongoing	Diverse participants have been featured on the website, in targeted email campaigns, through publications such as the hunting and fishing guides, Kentucky Afield Magazine, and Kentucky Afield TV, to enhance relevancy of the department's programs to all audiences and to increase participation and sales.

3.4.e.	Expand, evaluate and report on annually our use of GovDelivery to capture and activate contacts to improve communications and increase sales	Completed, Ongoing	Staff worked with GovDelivery to design and deploy a pop-up on the website that allows visitors to input their email address to receive information about specific topics the agency communicates to the public. Staff continues to develop efficient ways to utilize GovDelivery to connect with our constituents.
3.4.f.	Facilitate at least 2 fishing and 2 hunting events for new/novice adult participants annually	Completed, ongoing	The R3 Branch hosted a mentored deer hunt at Camp John Currie and a mentored squirrel hunt at Camp Earl Wallace.
Initiative 5	Continue to develop and expand agency sponsorship programs.	Status	July - December 2024
3.5.a.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Fisheries Division by June 30, 2023	Completed	This was completed in 2023. Marketing staff obtained fishing products as part of consumer register-to-win giveaway for promoting fishing license sales, and to help build and refine angler lists for marketing purposes (update lists of current license buyers, lapsed anglers and potential new license prospects).
3.5.b.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Wildlife Division by June 30, 2023	Completed	This was completed in 2023. Marketing secured sponsorships to promote spring turkey hunting opportunities in Kentucky.
3.5.c.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Information and Education Division by June 30, 2023	Completed	This was completed in 2023. Marketing and I&E Division staffs worked together to communicate needs and receive important supplies from a sponsor for use at summer conservation camps.
Initiative 6	Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy.	Status	July - December 2024
3.6.a.	Continue collaboration among marketing, communications, Commissioner's office, and divisional staff liaisons through weekly meetings and outreach planning activities of the communications coordination team.	Completed, ongoing	Communications staff and division representatives continue to meet on a bi-weekly basis to coordinate and enhance delivery of key messages from the department. The division liaisons bring topics needing internal and external communication to the core team for further discussion. The core communications team meets weekly. A meeting recap is provided for the Commissioner's Office.
3.6.b.	Work collaboratively across multiple divisions to create a plan that outlines all groups working on public relations, defines their roles and establishes annual communication priorities.	Completed, ongoing	Multiple divisions are active within our communications team, offering suggestions on communications priorities. We continue to streamline our process and develop more efficient ways to communicate internally and externally. The survey of staff provided important feedback about status and potential enhancements to internal communications.
3.6.c.	Continue weekly meetings of the communications team including division liaisons to maintain efficient, consistent messaging across all agency communication platforms.	Completed, ongoing	The core communications team meets weekly and the entire communications team (with division liaisons) meets weekly to coordinate communications internally and plan for external communications strategies.
3.6.d.	Share news releases and updates across multiple communications platforms.	Completed, ongoing	GovDelivery is our main tool for issuing press releases. An up-to-date mailing list is utilized. News releases, Kentucky Afield Outdoors columns, and other messaging is delivered in this manner, and is also uploaded to the agency website and utilized in social media posts.
3.6.e.	Promote the work of staff in multiple media platforms and increase our total reach by 10% by Dec. 31, 2023.	Completed	We reached our goal of increasing our total reach by 10% by Dec. 31, 2023 with ease. Over the past two years, the total reach was increased by about 10% each year. We continue to promote agency accomplishments and spotlight staff on regular basis.
3.6.f.	Review and update agency uniform policy by Dec. 31, 2022 to ensure optimal branding in all staff-public interactions.	Delayed, In Progress	Staff are currently drafting updated clothing and uniform policies.

3.6.g.	Maintain at least eight social media accounts for the Fisheries Division with at least weekly posts submitted for each account.	Completed, ongoing	The Fisheries Division currently has nine active social media accounts.
3.6.h.	Produce video and instructions to train all staff on the importance of agency branding and ambassadorship by June 30, 2023.	Delayed, in progress	A draft script has been produced, and will be finalized pending completion of the clothing and related policies.
3.6.i.	Conduct media outreach and facilitate interviews prior to key hunting/fishing/boating timeframes.	Completed, ongoing	Communications team continues to develop news releases on mission focused topics and be responsive to media outlets that inquire for follow-up, to enhance audience reach, awareness and support.
3.6.j.	Complete update to all signage at headquarters by June 30, 2023	Completed	Headquarters signage was updated in 2023. After completion of the archery range at headquarters, a new "Public Archery Range" sign was added.
3.6.k.	Implement a web-based electronic delivery platform for Kentucky Afield magazine to greatly expand its audience using a web-based platform and sponsorships	In Progress	The service was put out for bid two times with no response from a vendor; the last time being in December 2024. Staff are now in the process of determining potential vendors to reach out to for obtaining quotes for this service.

Initiative 7	Enhance the Department's ability to facilitate and quantify public input when making management decisions.	Status	July - December 2024
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	The addition of email as a mode of submitting public comments for commission business has allowed many stakeholders to comment when unable to attend the meeting in person; the department has received numerous "thank you's" and positive feedback in general about facilitating and distributing emailed comments to commission members.
3.7.b.	Develop and deploy a communications strategy to disability license customers regarding the transition from disability authorization cards to use of only numbers within My Profile by June 30, 2023.	Completed	This initiative was completed in summer 2023. Staff reviewed information conveyed on the website and in hunting and fishing guides (regulations booklets) to clarify and simplify communications about the disability authorization as much as possible.
3.7.c.	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	Marketing staff routinely receive feedback from customers in-person at shows and events during the early spring. A survey of past and present Kentucky Wild members is being developed for deployment in January 2025.
3.7.d.	Activate opt-in opportunity for email subscriptions on the department's home page by June 30, 2023.	Completed	Working with GovDelivery, we created a pop-up for the agency website, allowing visitors to opt-in to emails on topics of interest from the agency.
3.7.e.	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.	Completed, ongoing	Fisheries Division representatives continued to attend meetings and shows with these entities. During this segment, staff attended the Kentucky State Fair, several farm field days, worked with several local governments on lake renovation planning and fishing events, and attended/presented at several sportsmen's group and school functions.

Goal 4			
Enhance the Department's responsiveness and effectiveness			
Initiative 1	Provide effective employee management and a positive work environment.	Status	July - December 2024
4.1.a.	Initiate an employee communications and morale survey by June 30, 2023.	Completed	The staff communications survey was completed in fall-winter 2023-24 and results were shared with executive staff and managers; the agency communications team formulated recommendations to enhance internal communications based on staff feedback and those have been or are currently being implemented.
4.1.b.	Evaluate and enhance opportunities for staff to mentor or mentee as hunters or anglers as part of their official job duties by December 31, 2023.	Completed	Information and Education Division continues to promote the Employee Mentor Program to all department employees. The I&E Division remains the program contact and record keeper.
Initiative 2	Enhance recruitment to ensure a diverse, inclusive, well-suited workforce that relates to all customers.	Status	July - December 2024
4.2.a.	Improve programs at the camps and in the schools that will appeal to a broader range of children while maintaining our mission focus	Completed	Kentucky Association of Environmental Education facilitated a session on Kentucky Academic Standards at the conservation educators annual staff meeting at Camp Robert Webb.
4.2.b.	Uniformed officers and other staff will attend a minimum of 2 career fairs each year and work closely with area universities to attract diverse applicants	Completed, ongoing	Game Wardens continue to be pro-active with this initiative and are doing an excellent job, exceeding standards in this area.
4.2.c.	Human resources will research needs related to an internship and cooperative education program by Dec. 31, 2023, and communicate opportunities for selected majors/disciplines to all state universities in Kentucky by June 30, 2024.	Completed	HR staff provided scoping for formal internship and co-operative education programs in conjunction with state universities in Kentucky. Based on current work demands and staffing level, HR does not have the capacity to set up these programs for the department at present.
4.2.d.	Human resources will enhance and keep updated the career opportunities page on the Department's website.	Ongoing	HR staff have continuously kept the careers page updated with job postings as they are available.
Initiative 3	Offer opportunities for professional development to ensure operational effectiveness.	Status	July - December 2024
4.3.a.	Identify suitable customer service training and require of all staff beginning Jan. 1, 2023 to develop better responsiveness and communication to the public.	Completed, in progress	HR staff have identified available customer service training within the state training portal and have continued to identify other potentially relevant training to enhance service to agency customers.
4.3.b.	Provide media relations training to Law Enforcement and other pertinent personnel by June 30, 2023.	Ongoing	KDFWR staff continue to work with subject matter experts and division liaisons on responses to media inquiries. A forthcoming policy regarding media inquiries and interview requests is expected to specify that communications team members can assist with preparation for media interviews.
4.3.c.	Evaluate and expand employee cross training across workstations to increase operational effectiveness by June 30, 2023.	Ongoing	HR continues to identify cross training methods that will be suitable for KDFWR, and continues to explore wants and needs for the Department.
4.3.d.	Increase measurably the use of on-line trainings available through My Purpose by Dec. 31, 2023.	Ongoing	HR staff continues to share MyPurpose online trainings with employees. HR continues to add online trainings to MyPurpose when requested by divisions. We continue to find ways to utilize these trainings and to better understand usage rates.

Initiative 4	Improve private lands, water conservation and stream and wetland restoration programs.	Status	July - December 2024
4.4.a.	Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help landowners take advantage of the conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill	Ongoing	The Wildlife Division's Private Lands Program (PLP) continues to work with landowners to take advantage of NRCS and other cost share programs that help landowners improve habitat on their properties. Over the past 6 months, \$2.5 million has been obligated through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to improve 10,000+ acres of wildlife habitat across the commonwealth.
4.4.b.	Implement communications about the WMA Management Levels by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed, ongoing	Efforts to communicate about WMA management levels are ongoing and include WMA signage, hunting and trapping guides, and webpages.
4.4.c.	Update content and add informational videos to the Pond Management section of the website by Dec. 31, 2023	Delayed, in progress	The Fisheries Division is working on scripts for videos on multiple pond management topics.
Initiative 5	Enhance revenue streams and operating budget to adequately address fish and wildlife conservation and recreation needs of the Commonwealth.	Status	July - December 2024
4.5.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	The department's budget office is actively preparing for two critical financial cycles: ** FY26 Annual Budget Process – Beginning January 2025, with a targeted completion date before July 1, 2025. ** FY26-28 Biennial Budget Process – Launching in July 2025 and scheduled for completion before the October 2025 deadline.
4.5.b.	Identify and evaluate feasible new revenue sources (both immediate and additional) to meet budgetary needs through an internal Alternative Income Working Group by June 30, 2023	Completed	The "round up" for conservation feature and 3% agent commission are providing additional revenue as envisioned by the alternative income working group. An interdivisional team led by Commissioner's Office staff also developed recommendations for use of the consumer price index (CPI) for incremental increases to user fees to help keep revenues on pace with increased costs over time.
4.5.c.	Begin implementing new immediate revenue sources by June 30, 2024 and initiate steps required to implement additional new revenue sources.	In Progress	The regulation promulgated to support special agency fundraising permits was approved by legislative committees in fall 2024. Agency staff are currently developing necessary infrastructural capacity to market and sell applications for the special big game packages beginning in August 2025 for the drawing to be conducted in spring 2026.
Goal 5	Protect Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and promote user safety		
Initiative 1	Control, reduce and eradicate invasive species.	Status	July - December 2024
5.1.a.	Work to identify locations of and eradicate invasive species on WMAs, beginning with "high management level" areas in this biennium.	Completed, ongoing	Staff completed 7,000 plus acres of invasive species control on autumn olive, sericia and bicolor lespedeza at WMAs across the state. Public lands managers also used drones through contractor servies to treat phragmites at selected sites.
5.1.b.	Work with 5 private/public landowners in each region through partnerships to control and reduce invasive species in to an acceptable level by Dec. 31, 2024.	Completed, ongoing	Private lands staff have surpassed this goal and continue to work with private landowners in their service areas to identify and address invasive plant issues.

5.1.c.	Update the Statewide Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan for Kentucky by June 30, 2023	In Progress	The Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Coordinator has finalized the ANS Task Force to guide the revision of the statewide ANS management plan. The ANS Task Force members represent various non-profit organizations, universities, and state agencies. A recommendation document has been drafted that outlines necessary updates and revisions required for the current statewide ANS management plan.
5.1.d.	Continue to work with private industry to increase removal of invasive carp to 20 million pounds annually by Dec. 31, 2023.	In Progress	Staff met routinely with the Murray State University Center for Economic Development to discuss invasive carp harvest and processing. The Experimental Gear Program was expanded to allow for increased harvest efficiencies. Staff are researching ways to provide ice to commercial fishers to boost the potential for food-grade invasive carp usage. Statewide harvest was over 15 million pounds of invasive carp for 2024.
Initiative 2	Increase public safety for hunting, fishing, boating and recreational shooting.	Status	July - December 2024
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	Completed, ongoing	Game Wardens continue to proactively patrol public access areas during peak times. Our law enforcement team has been very successful in these areas at deterring criminal activity, educating the public, and ensuring users have a memorable experience.
5.2.b.	Establish 5 additional life jacket loaner stations across the state by June 30, 2023	Completed, ongoing	We continue to market and add new lifejacket loaner stations each year, with a focus during the months of April through October. In 2024, we added 1 new station with the possibility of 7 more in 2025. Addition of 3 to 5 stations per year is a realistic goal for the future.
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	Completed, ongoing	EIT staff continuously monitor ramps and signage while traveling across the state, addressing public notifications as issues arise.
Initiative 3	Protect fish and wildlife resources through increased regulation compliance.	Status	July - December 2024
5.3.a.	Conservation officers will increase the annual number of compliance checks conducted by 10% by June 30, 2023	Completed, ongoing	Game Wardens have steadily increased public contacts in striving to provide the utmost warden availability and presence in the public eye.
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.	Completed, ongoing	Law Enforcement (LE) is continuing to update and educate our Kentucky State Police Dispatch partners about internal staff changes, needs and problems, and any additional concerns we may have. Our teamwork has continued to evolve and grow and our LE partnership is very positive.
5.3.c.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance by offering Tip411	Completed, ongoing	The LE Division has continued its public campaign initiative to promote the usage of Tip411. We are also adding Survey123 to our initiative to improve our ability to be at the right places at the right times. The combination of these programs will greatly increase our ability to maximize public and resource protection. We are also considering additional tip reporting options.
5.3.d.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance through social media channels	Completed, ongoing	The LE Division has excelled in this initiative by utilizing a strategic approach that has maximized outreach. Our division Facebook page has reached 16,000 followers in a very short time and our social media teams are proving to be innovative, and the future is bright. We plan to continue to expand this initiative and are confident in its growth.

Initiative 4	Provide professional conservation law enforcement services to the Commonwealth through mission-focused policing.	Status	July - December 2024
5.4.a.	Maintain all levels of supervision across the Law Enforcement Division by promptly filling any supervisor vacancies that occur	Completed, ongoing	All LE Division promotions for Major, Captain, Lieutenant, and Sergeant have been completed as of June 2024. We are committed to continuing to be thorough and efficient in filling promotional vacancies as they become available. An additional Sergeant position promotional process is currently underway and it should be filled by January 2025.
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	Completed, ongoing	This LE initiative is steadily growing and the numbered goal of district organized details has been outstanding. Our field supervisors are continuing to answer the call to lead and we are excited to continue to develop and grow in this area.
Initiative 5	Promulgate clear and concise fish and wildlife regulations for anglers, hunters, trappers and boaters.	Status	July - December 2024
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	The agency's regulations coordinator continues to work closely with legal staff, division leadership and program staff members as applicable to promulgate all regulations in a timely fashion.
5.5.b.	Provide the Commission with clear and concise regulation recommendations for the take of fish and wildlife species	Ongoing	Commissioner's office staff works with division directors to develop recommendations that are straightforward and actionable.
Initiative 6	Enact proactive measures in response to existing and emerging fish and wildlife health threats.	Status	July - December 2024
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 continues to conduct passive tick surveillance on wildlife collected for mortality investigations across the state. Additionally, the Wildlife Health Program completed the first year of a 3-year tick surveillance project being conducted on 5 WMAs across the state.
5.6.b.	Continue Chronic Wasting Disease prevention and surveillance activities	Ongoing	In October of 2024, the department was notified of CWD detection from a captive cervid facility in Breckinridge County. This initiated the establishment of a second CWD Surveillance Zone around the facility including Breckinridge, Meade, and Hardin counties. Sampling goals for within 3 miles of the facility and county wide were calculated and provided to staff. As of December 2024 the county goal was met, but the sampling goal around the facility to determine if the disease is present at a prevalence of >1% with a 95% confidence has not been met. Within the first year (Nov. 2023- Nov. 2024) of detecting CWD in a wild deer from Ballard County an insufficient sample size was calculated to determine prevalence at 1% with a 95% confidence. The second year of sampling post detection is underway. At the conclusion of the 2024-2025 deer season there is still a deficit of 186 samples from around the known positive in Ballard Co to calculate a statistically significant prevalence.
5.6.c.	Continue ongoing elk surveillance and health assessments	Ongoing	All elk livers have been collected and submitted to the lab for diagnostics. The analysis portion of this project is currently underway.
5.6.d.	Continue review and response of wildlife to COVID-19	Completed	USDA concluded the final year of this study and will provide an analysis to participating states. There is a potential to look retrospectively at banked samples during the height of the pandemic years as detections in deer appear to correspond with peak of detections in humans.
5.6.e.	Continue monitoring and surveillance of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease	Ongoing	The Wildlife Health Program continues to investigate suspicious mortalities in wild rabbits. No additional RHDV-2 detections have been documented since the initial detection in a domestic rabbit in December 2021.

5.6.f.	Pursue federal grants or other sources of funding for increasing capacity of disease monitoring and abatement	Completed, ongoing	The Wildlife Health Program has received funding from two federal grants, the USFWS Zoonotic Disease Initiative and USDA CWD Cooperative Agreements. There are no new grants at this time, but will continue to pursue any available funding sources to increase capacity for disease monitoring.
5.6.g.	Initiate deer dispersal study in CWD Surveillance Zone by Dec. 31, 2024	Ongoing	This project was approved by the Commission in the summer of 2024. A contract is now in place with the University of Kentucky and field work will begin in early 2025.
Initiative 7	Promote safe and enjoyable experiences for all recreational boaters.	Status	July - December 2024
5.7.a.	Conservation officers will spend a minimum of 30% of their patrol hours on public waterways surveilling for violations and unsafe conditions	Completed, ongoing	This reporting period included a portion of the peak boating season and LE staff actively provided relevant public services on waterways across the state. Supervisors ensured that waterways, ranging from small creeks to large lakes, were patrolled by game wardens. We are committed to public safety and resource protection on the waters of the commonwealth.
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	Completed, ongoing	The LE Division has exceeded the goals of this initiative. Due to the work of excellent staff and the teamwork of other police agencies across the state, game wardens lead the charge of the "Don't be the "U" in BUI/DUI" campaign that launched in the summer of 2024. Our designated Boating Law Administrator (BLA) and Boating Educator Coordinator have both done an excellent job and we are excited to get to be a part of what they have in store for the future of boating safety public awareness in Kentucky.
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 annually.	Completed, ongoing	Boating Education Coordinator warden Marcus Bowling completed 27 boater education courses during this reporting period – more than double our goal – and continues to do excellent work at promoting boater safety across the Commonwealth.

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