



STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

...

July 2023 Progress Report

Serving People, Conserving Fish and Wildlife

More than 500 Kentucky Fish and Wildlife employees make this commitment every day as they work to conserve our fish and wildlife resources across our Commonwealth's abundant woodlands, grasslands, and waterways.

The 2023-2024 Strategic Plan for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources serves as the framework to envision, execute and communicate the efforts of these dedicated staff to ensure that we are meeting the conservation challenges of our time, on behalf of both Kentucky's citizens and our precious natural resources.

On the following pages, we are pleased to provide you with updates on current programs and endeavors, and present new initiatives with thoughtful and measured planning. Guided by science-based decision making and best practices, these strategies guide our agency in making the necessary progress to address our most important conservation and recreational access challenges.

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

We hope this plan provides you with an overview of our agency's most fundamental objectives and allows you to appreciate the devotion exhibited by the many exceptional men and women of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Rich Storm
Commissioner



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	January - June 2023
1.1.a.	Manage 3,800 acres of forests annually on WMAs with the use of prescribed fire, selective harvest, and forest stand improvement	In progress	Ongoing timber harvest projects at Dewey Lake, Grayson Lake, and Taylorsville Lake WMAs.
1.1.b.	Manage 10,000 acres of open lands on WMAs annually with prescribed fire, disking, herbicide treatments and other methods	In progress	Completed prescribed burns on 10,104 acres. Average burn unit size was 98 acres. Accomplished WMA reporting is due at end of September
1.1.c.	Manage 4,500 acres of wetlands on WMAs annually using water management, disking, planting and other methods	In progress	Wetland management acres are completed annually at predominately Ballard, Boatwright, Doug Travis, and Sloughs WMAs in western Kentucky. Dry conditions allowed additional acreage to be disked to set back succession and stimulate native vegetation response
1.1.d.	Update WMA management plans on WMAs with "High Management Level" designation by June 30, 2023	Completed	Although this initiative is completed, staff will continue to assign management levels to new WMAs as they are acquired and managed for public use
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	District staff are still working on these plans. Anticipated completion date is December 31, 2023
Initiative 2	Expand research on species and habitat management efforts statewide.	Status	January - June 2023
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 (ongoing)	The calf project and the final, four-year SPR model were completed in late spring 2023. The SPR model will be updated with a fifth year of data acquired during 2023-2024. Results of the five-year model are expected in late spring 2024.
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)	Abundance estimates collected in the Big South Fork population were assimilated into the management recommendations used to provide recommendations for regulatory amendments to the 2022 bear season. At this point, our hunting strategy is well aligned with our management regime. Monitoring of reproduction and vital rates of female bears will continue into the future to allow for current population model inputs.

1.2.c.	Conduct research on non-game species to determine management needs and population trends for the states most at risk species	In progress (ongoing)	From January to June 2023, KDFWR employees started a new research project monitoring Virginia big-eared bat maternity colonies using remote technology. Thermal cameras and recorders were deployed at maternity sites to collect nightly emergence data. Data are being analyzed utilizing software that condenses many hours of video into files that can be viewed in minutes. For this proof-of-concept project, results have been promising. Utilization of remote technology has the potential to provide more, and higher quality, data with less time commitment. An outdoor breeding facility for eastern hellbenders is being constructed at Minor Clark with an anticipated completion of August 2023. We expect animals from multiple zoos to be donated to the facility for use in the captive breeding program. Additionally, a grow-out (egg to subadult) facility has been constructed at the Center for Mollusk Conservation in Frankfort. Qualitative and quantitative surveys for multiple freshwater mussels and monarch butterflies continue as do long term monitoring projects for songbirds at Shaker Village and herptofauna at Mammoth Cave National Park.
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 (ongoing)	The turkey program conducts annual surveys of eligible license customers to develop estimates of spring turkey hunting participation, effort, success rate, and 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 information 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 (SPR) 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 (ongoing)	This is an ongoing annual effort. Staff continue to add new or refurbish existing habitat sites. These sites are electrofished occasionally and the results are added to our habitat assessment database. Recent assessments include Taylorsville Lake, Elmer Davis Lake, Lake Reba, and Barren River Lake.
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 (ongoing)	For the first study, "A Multi-State Banding Project to Investigate Factors Affecting Gobbler Harvest Rates and Assess Population Health", two of four winter turkey trapping and banding seasons have been completed across the state. A master's level graduate student at Tennessee Technological University has begun her studies and preliminary analyses. For the second study, "Reproductive ecology of wild turkeys in Kentucky", the first of three research field seasons are underway. A PhD level graduate student at Tennessee Technological University began coursework in Fall 2022 and is coordinating fieldwork for winter capture and summer tracking of GPS-transmitted turkeys is currently underway.
Initiative 3	Evaluate native fisheries species restoration efforts.	Status	January - June 2023
1.3.a.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing lake sturgeon restoration efforts	In progress	Staff completed an annual survey of Lake Sturgeon in the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River which aired on KY Afield. Staff participated in the Southeast Lake Sturgeon Working Group annual meeting to discuss lake sturgeon restoration projects in several southeastern states. Lake Sturgeon eggs have been received at the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery for rearing in 2023.
1.3.b.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing alligator gar restoration efforts	In progress	Murray State University researchers implanted tags in Alligator Gar and 4 were released in the project areas for tracking movements. Staff met with the Alligator Gar Technical Committee member states and USFWS to discuss restoration efforts across the species' range. Alligator Gar fry have been received at the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery for the 2023 season.
1.3.c.	Continue to monitor and evaluate project success of ongoing native walleye restoration efforts	In progress	Working on Final Report: Restoration of Native Walleye in the Upper Barren River.

Initiative 4	Expand reservoir fish habitat initiatives.	Status	January - June 2023
1.4.a.	Conduct 1 large-scale reservoir fish habitat project annually	In progress	The Barren River Lake Large-Scale Habitat Project, a multi-year project, was completed. The Western Fisheries District has an on-going large scale project at Lake Barkley with numerous partners to improve largemouth bass spawning habitat and success.
1.4.b.	Enhance fish habitat sites on at least 1 reservoir in each fisheries district annually	In progress (annual)	The 7 fisheries districts continue to work on enhancing and placing new habitat sites in their reservoirs. We expect the total number of reservoir habitat projects to far exceed the goal of one per district by the end of the year.
1.4.c.	Create and implement a 10-year Reservoir Habitat Improvement Plan by Dec. 31, 2022	In progress	Draft started; a Fish Habitat Team was formed in 2023 to address habitat needs and develop a 10 year plan.
Initiative 5	Carefully prioritize projects, evaluate effectiveness and adaptively manage agency Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).	Status	January - June 2023
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 committee continues to work with GIS staff to develop planning tool and habitat story maps for high level WMAs. SWAP species planning is being incorporated into the planning for WMAs as well as creation of a reporting tool to improve tracking of accomplishments
1.5.b.	Evaluate additional forestry and open lands management through contracting to maximize wildlife habitat management objectives	In progress	Ongoing discussion with WMA Committee. Request For Proposal in draft version for contracting professional forestry services to complete habitat improvement project at Dewey Lake WMA. Discussions continue regarding handling of row crop, hay, and timber contracts on public lands. Committee is additionally investigating feasibility of utilizing contracting for parking lot maintenance
Initiative 6	Identify critical needs for enhancing fish and wildlife species diversity that is consistent with the State Wildlife Action Plan.	Status	January - June 2023
1.6.a.	Continue the review and revision to the State Wildlife Action Plan (fully complete by 2023)	In progress	The second revision to Kentucky's SWAP is almost complete, with a draft document currently under internal and partner review. Timeline is on track for a public comment period in August 2023 and final submission to USFWS for plan approval by September 30, 2023.
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)	In progress	Staff have provided input regarding species status for the plan revision and written sections.
1.6.c.	Collaborate with state partners to accomplish SWAP revision, development, and implementation by June 30, 2024	In progress	State partners participated in the the second review and revision of SWAP as members of scientific teams, data sharing, and collaboration to identify threats, actions, and conservation opportunity areas. Meetings were held individually with key partners during the summer of 2023 regarding implementation opportunities identified during the most recent revision, and to discuss approaches for tracking plan accomplishments. Follow up meetings with these and new/additional partners with regard to plan implementation opportunities will be ongoing.

Initiative 7	Improve facilities at fish hatcheries and WMAs to allow staff to better manage fish and wildlife populations.	Status	January - June 2023
1.7.a.	Renovate 1 office building by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed	Pfeiffer Hatchery Office renovation complete. Renovations included re-design and layout of office spaces, HVAC, electrical, plumbing and new finishes to both interior and exterior architectural features.
1.7.b.	Facilitate sediment removal from 2 hatchery ponds annually	In progress (ongoing)	Two ponds at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery were completed during this period. We continue to remove sediment from ponds as necessary.
1.7.c.	Repair 1 hatchery brood pond levee and outflow structure by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	Substantial repairs completed to brood pond #1 at Minor Clark Hatchery. Replaced pipe outflow system and mended potential leaks at Water Control Structure.
1.7.d.	Construct 1 new WMA office by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Design is nearly complete with construction soon to follow at Veterans WMA.
1.7.e.	Repair 2 Water Control Structures at WMAs by Dec. 31, 2023	Completed	KY River WMA-Boone Tract Water Control Structure installed. Barren River WMA structure installed. Collectively these allow seasonal flooding control of approximately 40 acres. Work performed by agency staff.
1.7.f.	Replace Ohio River Pump at Ballard WMA by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Design required to replace Big Pump at Ballard WMA is nearly complete and construction should initiate within calendar year 2023.
1.7.g.	Construct 2 new storage sheds on WMAs by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	One new storage facility/carport constructed at Lloyd WMA in spring of 2023. Developing feasible building alternatives for multiple other WMA sites.
Initiative 8	Revise and update species management plans.	Status	January - June 2023
1.8.a.	Review and update the 2030 Elk Management Plan and identify next step goals and objectives by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress	Work will begin on the 2025-2030 plan of work in the spring of 2024. Major accomplishments have been made in the 2020-2024 plan of work, including the completion of a calf survival project, the construction of a functional SPR model, and in habitat enhancement within the elk zone. This work will continue into the next plan-of-work phase.
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 (ongoing)	As of December 2022, approximately 450 acres of timber harvesting has been completed out of a total planned acreage of 1,096.
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.
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	January - June 2023
2.1.a.	Host an R3 event on one underutilized waters location annually	In progress (ongoing)	Facilitated a Kayak Fishing 101 on Gunpowder Creek in Boone County.

2.1.b.	Send out 3 eBlasts to existing anglers to promote the Reel World Fishing Forecast website in the Spring and Fall.	Completed	Got your Kentucky Fishing License? Don't get caught without one! - Spring Fishing Renewal Reminder eBlast sent in February to 563,176 subscribers and customers yet to purchase or renew license with 152,597 Total Opens and 23,131 Total Clicks. Coordinated with R3 for 2 additional eBlasts sent in May and June to include promotions of the Fishing Forecast for Retention and Reactivation customers.
Initiative 2	Expand our management efforts on public land in partnership with federal agencies and private landowners.	Status	January - June 2023
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	A draft of the cooperative agreement has been finalized and a signing ceremony is being planned.
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	In progress (ongoing)	KDFWR continues to coordinate annually with USACOE by maintaining license and lease agreements for public access throughout the state. Staff has worked with USACOE Planning Division to streamline the time it takes to review development plans by adjusting annual compliance reports submittal dates.
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 private lands biologist positions made possible through the partnership with NRCS are either currently filled or in the process of being filled, and will continue to be maintained to support habitat management on private land across the Commonwealth.
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	Currently WMA Committee is working with GIS staff to develop mapping and reporting applications for Taylorsville Lake and Green River Lake WMAs
Initiative 3	Enhance agency effectiveness by implementing the Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) plan for Kentucky.	Status	January - June 2023
2.3.a.	Conduct an annual R3 summit with agency staff and partners by Dec. 31 of each year.	Completed	The annual R3 Summit was conducted on June 12th. Conducted R3 Summit Post Survey.
2.3.b.	Make a presentation about Kentucky's R3 Initiative to the entire Law Enforcement Division during annual training(s)	Completed	All employees conduct mandatory annual R3 training through the I am R3 course on MyPurpose.
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.	In progress	Attended and set up KDFWR booth at the KY State NASP Tournament to sell hunting and fishing licenses, permits, KY Elk Hunt Drawing entries, Kentucky Wild memberships, branded merchandise as well as market and communicate upcoming R3 and conservation-related programs and events offered by the department.
Initiative 4	Improve mentor, coach and instructor development to strengthen R3 efforts.	Status	January - June 2023
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	In progress	Meetings were conducted with the Program Coordinators for 4-H Shooting Sports. We need to finalize plans to implement the program.

2.4.b.	Continue promotion of online hunter education curriculum to high school agriculture and FFA programs.	In progress	Several high school agriculture teachers are teaching hunter education as a result KDFWR outreach efforts.
2.4.c.	Evaluate the potential for providing online hunter education curriculum through school resource officer (SRO) safety programs by December 31, 2022	Completed	Reached out to SROs but they are not interested in pursuing this opportunity.
Initiative 5	Improve access to quality areas for hunting, fishing and other wildlife related recreation.	Status	January - June 2023
2.5.a.	Construct 2 new boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2024	Completed	Pond River Ramp at Harris Dickerson WMA completed in March of 2023. Camp Earl Wallace Ramp completed in February of 2023.
2.5.b.	Construct 1 fixed wooden fishing pier by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed	Green River Lake fixed wooden fishing pier completed spring of 2022. Work performed by agency staff.
2.5.c.	Build relationships with large landholders in the east to develop 2 new hunting access areas by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress	Hoskins WMA was recently finalized and included 5,000 acres of important land within the elk zone. Additionally, in the fall of 2022, 3,000 acres were added to the Betterment HAA. Work continues to find willing landowners.
2.5.d.	Develop a prioritized list of public fishing and hunting access improvement opportunities by Dec. 31, 2023.	In progress	The Wildlife Division has 2 current land or easement acquisition projects in process and completed a 795 acre purchase in Breckinridge County that adjoined Yellowbank WMA. Additionally, the Wildlife Division has 2 land donation opportunities working its way through the process to become a new WMA. The Fisheries Division is in the process of evaluating several access site projects that were submitted through the boating access application process.
2.5.e.	Evaluate WMA mobile app options by Dec. 31, 2022.	Delayed	Work on this initiative was begun but has not been completed, pending some other IT-related actions.
2.5.f.	Rebuild 3 boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Beaver Lake ramp construction complete, Wilgreen Lake ramp reconstruction currently underway and West Point is scheduled to follow Wilgreen and should be complete in next reporting term.
2.5.g.	Pave 4 gravel boat trailer parking areas at existing boat ramps by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Multiple sites are being considered for parking updates. Wilgreen parking under construction and will be expanded and paved in asphalt. West Point will also be constructed in the next reporting term and transition from rock to asphalt finish.
2.5.h.	Install 2 new courtesy docks at existing boat ramps	In progress (ongoing)	Docks received for installation at Carpenter's Lake and on the Big Sandy River in Greenup county.
Initiative 6	Develop new public facilities that provide additional hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities.	Status	January - June 2023
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	In progress (ongoing)	Designs and constructability considerations are being made for all existing rifle tube ranges.
2.6.b.	Apply for 2 grants for the creation of a public archery range by Dec. 31, 2021	Completed	The range at KDFWR headquarters is currently under construction.
2.6.c.	Make improvements to 2 existing WMA rifle ranges, including renovation of shooting berms and shooting facilities by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Impact berm upgrades are underway at the Otter Creek Pistol pit, where soil is being regraded and adding a more resilient impact surface. Work being performed by agency staff. Contract has been issued to complete upgrades at the Kleber Rifle Range. Detail will regrade soil at impact berm and replace drainage conveyance pipe at the facility.

2.6.d.	Complete design and construction of a new shooting facility at Veteran's Memorial WMA by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	Design for Veterans Shooting is nearing completion and construction will soon follow. Construction will not be complete by end of 2023.
2.6.e.	Partner with 2 existing private shooting range facilities to secure new public recreational shooting access	Delayed	Focus on public ranges including intensive time required has precluded exploring options with private ranges.
2.6.f.	Develop at least 2 ADA-accessible facilities by June 30, 2024	In progress (ongoing)	Wilgreen Lake Boat Ramp and Courtesy/Kayak Dock is currently being upgraded to facilitate ADA accessibility. Construction expected to be complete in September. Greenup County Courtesy Dock was procured during 1st term of 2023 and expected to be installed within calendar year. Construction of an ADA Archery Facility at agency headquarters began construction within reportable term and expected to be complete in September.
Initiative 7	Evaluate and improve all aspects of the customer experience.	Status	January - June 2023
2.7.a.	Improve facilities at camps through replacing dated materials and equipment by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress (ongoing)	EIT staff upgraded siding on two cabins and painted interior of two cabins in May of 2023. Four new metal roofs were installed at Camp Earl Wallace.
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.	In progress (ongoing)	These questions have been incorporated in customer surveys as a standard practice.
Goal 3	Increase public awareness, engagement and partnerships		
Initiative 1	Increase transparency of management and finances.	Status	January - June 2023
3.1.a.	Publish before and after pictures of construction projects in the agency newsletter, GREAT Outdoors NEWS posts, and agency website whenever appropriate.	In progress (ongoing)	Each substantive construction or upgrade that occurs within EIT is photo documented and made available for publication. Most recently featured project was Beaver Lake Boat Ramp Expansion.
3.1.b.	Maintain 3-step process for proposed regulation amendments to optimize public awareness and engagement.	In progress (ongoing)	As a rule the 3-step process has been used for introducing, discussing and acting on business by the Department and our Commission, except in very time-sensitive cases or to comport as required with changes to other state or federal law.
Initiative 2	Expand participation in Kentucky Wild and opportunities for other wildlife-related activities.	Status	January - June 2023
3.2.a.	Create monthly Kentucky Wild mobile education events throughout the state.	Completed	Staff hosted Kentucky Wild member experiences or tabled community events to promote the sale of memberships and merchandise. These included: January: tabling at Kentucky Dam Village Eagle Watch Weekend in Gilbertsville, KY; Tabling at Louisville Boat Show. February: Lexington Boat Show. March: Songbird Box Build member experience in Frankfort (6 participants); Tabling at NASP State Tournament in Louisville. April: Tabling at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery's Earth Day event in Jamestown, KY. May: Monarch Larval Monitoring Project member experience in Lexington (20+ participants); American Kestrel Box Check member experience in Carlisle (7 participants); Peregrine Falcon Banding member experience (1 participant). June: Tabled at WiseBird Cider Birthday event in Lexington, KY; Tabled at Craft Bash event in Louisville, KY.

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.	Completed	33 Kentucky Wild posts have been published since January to social media accounts. For Facebook, those posts totaled 428,900 in reach, 17,381 in reach and 900 shares.
3.2.c.	Partner with another agency to create a Kentucky Wild event by June 30, 2023.	Completed	Completed Oct. 2022
3.2.d.	Increase annual memberships and sponsorships by 5% year over year (Calendar Year).	Completed	Memberships for Calendar Year 2021 = 3,407 Memberships for Calendar Year 2022 = 4,100 For ~ 20% increase in memberships. Memberships for Calendar Year 2023 to date = 2,324.
Initiative 3	Broaden and strengthen project management collaboration with governmental, private and corporate partnerships on public and private lands.	Status	January - June 2023
3.3.a.	Schedule meetings with each reservoir managing authority annually to facilitate communication and collaboration	In progress (annual)	Each of the 7 fisheries districts is in the process of meeting with their major reservoir managing authorities for 2023. They will discuss fish management, habitat work, and other reservoir management topics. All meetings will be completed by the end of the year.
Initiative 4	Grow our base by expanding our education and outreach approach to reflect a changing society.	Status	January - June 2023
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	The "FishBoatKY" app was released in 2023 and has 11,460 downloads as of June 21, 2023. Promotions of the app were made on KY Afield TV and card/stickers with a QR code distributed to the public.
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	In progress	Staff are currently completing the drafting process for the RFP.
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	In progress	Learn to Fish and Learn to Hunt (squirrel, dove, deer and turkey) pages have been completed and are online. Two additional pages are being developed; Learn to Fly Fish and Learn to Bow Fish.
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	In progress	Diverse participants have been included on the website, in targeted email campaigns, through publications such as the hunting and fishing guides, Kentucky Afield Magazine, and Kentucky Afield TV.
3.4.e.	Expand, evaluate and report on annually our use of GovDelivery to capture and activate contacts to improve communications and increase sales	In progress	GovDelivery continues to be a key conduit for delivery of agency communications, whether to news outlets or specific groups of customers. Delivery has been in the form of email and text message. Additional measures venues to capture and activate contacts are being explored for potential implementation across the website.
3.4.f.	Facilitate at least 2 fishing and 2 hunting events for new/novice adult participants annually	Completed	Annually exceed this program goal.

Initiative 5	Continue to develop and expand agency sponsorship programs.	Status	January - June 2023
3.5.a.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Fisheries Division by June 30, 2023	In progress	Brian Blank will be traveling to International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST) to meet with tackle manufacturers, distributors, and fisheries non-governmental organizations who help financially support the mission and strategic planning goals of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. This event allows the agency to meet with multiple companies over four days at one location, and save on the Commonwealth's resources.
3.5.b.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Wildlife Division by June 30, 2023	Completed	Swagger BiPods sponsors the Elk Program for \$7,500. Whitetail Institute sponsors the Deer Program for \$7,500. Mossy Oak sponsors the Deer Program for \$7,500. Country Boy Brewing sponsors the Kentucky Wild Program for \$20,000.
3.5.c.	Expand sponsorships to include at least 1 sponsorship for the Information and Education Division by June 30, 2023	In progress	Pursuing sponsorship opportunities with Canoe KY for co-hosting float fishing events and programs.
Initiative 6	Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy.	Status	January - June 2023
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.	In progress	Our core communications team meets weekly to discuss communications strategies that outline the best methods of outreach regarding aspects of our agency. Division liaisons meet with the core communications team bi-weekly to keep us informed of important topics.
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.	In progress	Communications priorities are continually discussed in weekly meetings of the core communications team with input and feedback from division liaisons.
3.6.c.	Continue weekly meetings of the communications team including division liaisons to maintain efficient, consistent messaging across all agency communication platforms.	In progress (ongoing)	Completed and ongoing - both a core communications team or expanded communications team with division liaisons meets weekly to communicate internally and plan for external communications strategies.
3.6.d.	Share news releases and updates across multiple communications platforms.	In progress	News releases and updates continue to be shared primarily via GovDelivery and the agency newsfeed. Emerging social media platforms will be explored for possible use going forward.
3.6.e.	Promote the work of staff in multiple media platforms and increase our total reach by 10% by Dec. 31, 2023.	In progress (ongoing)	Using the Staff Spotlight and other means, we have increasingly highlighted our staff expertise and accomplishments using social media, which has resulted in very positive engagement with channel followers and contributed to increased reach.
3.6.f.	Review and update agency uniform policy by Dec. 31, 2022 to ensure optimal branding in all staff-public interactions.	Delayed	Due to a changes in staffing and an initiative to review and updated as needed all agency policies systematically, this item is being addressed as part of that larger initiative.
3.6.g.	Maintain at least eight social media accounts for the Fisheries Division with at least weekly posts submitted for each account.	In progress (ongoing)	The Fisheries Division currently has 9 active social media accounts. Improvements have been made in the posting regularity and full compliance is expected by the end of the year.

3.6.h.	Produce video and instructions to train all staff on the importance of agency branding and ambassadorship by June 30, 2023.	Delayed	A draft script was produced by the deadline but further work on the video was temporarily postponed to determine whether it should await the updated uniform policy.
3.6.i.	Conduct media outreach and facilitate interviews prior to key hunting/fishing/boating timeframes.	In progress	Communications team continues to plan in advance of key timeframes to time delivery of news releases and social media posts for media pick-up and to allow time to coordinate interviews with subject-matter experts.
3.6.j.	Complete update to all signage at headquarters by June 30, 2023	Completed	Signage at headquarters has been updated to incorporate a consistent and attractive new design scheme; we have received numerous compliments from visitors to headquarters and the public.
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 (ongoing)	Staff have designed a webpage to host an online magazine. Information & Education Division staff are working with Information Technology staff to determine how to implement the subscription feature for an online version.
Initiative 7	Enhance the Department's ability to facilitate and quantify public input when making management decisions.	Status	January - June 2023
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.	In progress (ongoing)	The addition of email as a vehicle for stakeholders to communicate their input to the Commission regarding meeting business items has been effective at allowing more people representing a variety of perspectives the opportunity to provide input. Commission members are actively using the added public input to better understand and consider the full range of stakeholder concerns in their decision making process.
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	The communications team developed and implemented a multi-pronged plan to notify disability authorization holders of the change from printed cards to authorization numbers.
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.	In progress	Continue to survey customers in-person at shows in events (January and February in Louisville and Lexington KY) and have continued to incorporate QR code email opt-in options at any tabling event.
3.7.d.	Activate opt-in opportunity for email subscriptions on the department's home page by June 30, 2023.	Delayed	This type of sign-up feature has been added to the news media contacts page to grow the agency's distribution list. Communications staff will request a meeting with I&E and EIT webpage experts to determine next steps in a plan for implementation.
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.	In progress	FILO staff made presentations to 3 groups. Ichthyology Branch staff presented the Lake Sturgeon restoration project to the League of Kentucky Sportsmen

Goal 4			
Enhance the Department's responsiveness and effectiveness			
Initiative 1	Provide effective employee management and a positive work environment.	Status	January - June 2023
4.1.a.	Initiate an employee communications and morale survey by June 30, 2023.	Delayed	Planning was begun on this initiative but due to other time-sensitive agency surveys and communications needs this item was temporarily postponed. Implementation is anticipated in late summer-fall 2023.
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	EMP Program launched on October 7, 2021. Developed EMP Step by Step Guide, EMP FAQ, Mentoring Best Practices, and EMP Survey. I am R3 course developed and submitted to HR on 1/3/2023 to post in MyPurpose.
Initiative 2	Enhance recruitment to ensure a diverse, inclusive, well-suited workforce that relates to all customers.	Status	January - June 2023
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	Completed - Updated programs to align with current academic standards.
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	Officers are actively interacting with the public and increasing recruitment efforts. Our recruitment program is under review and planning for a more diverse approach to attract a wider range of candidates.
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.	In progress	Human resources is verifying opportunities currently available through the Personnel Cabinet and a communications plan will be subsequently developed.
4.2.d.	Human resources will enhance and keep updated the career opportunities page on the Department's website.	In progress (ongoing)	Human Resources staff have proactively and systematically posted job opportunities on the agency website in addition to all usual state requirements.
Initiative 3	Offer opportunities for professional development to ensure operational effectiveness.	Status	January - June 2023
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.	Delayed	Staff are researching available online training resources through Personnel and other avenues.
4.3.b.	Provide media relations training to Law Enforcement and other pertinent personnel by June 30, 2023.	In progress	Discussions are ongoing about a media training opportunity on KDFWR's headquarter campus. Agency communications staff are prepared to coordinate with law enforcement for PAO media training to formalize plans, book meeting space and guest speakers. One guest speaker has been contacted and expressed willingness to assist. Staffing changes in late spring delayed progress.
4.3.c.	Evaluate and expand employee cross training across workstations to increase operational effectiveness by June 30, 2023.	In progress	Many staff are cross-training in practice, but a formal process for facilitating it systemically has not been developed to date.

4.3.d.	Increase measurably the use of on-line trainings available through My Purpose by Dec. 31, 2023.	Completed	Several state- and department-required online annual trainings have been added to employees' training profiles.
Initiative 4	Improve private lands, water conservation and stream and wetland restoration programs.	Status	January - June 2023
4.4.a.	Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help landowners take advantage of the conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill	Completed	This item was completed previously but is also ongoing, with private lands biologists and NRCS liaisons stationed around the state to enhance program delivery to landowners.
4.4.b.	Implement communications about the WMA Management Levels by Dec. 31, 2022	Completed	This item was completed previously but communications about the management levels will be ongoing through publications, websites and WMA signs.
4.4.c.	Update content and add informational videos to the Pond Management section of the website by Dec. 31, 2023	In progress	A communications request was previously loaded in the Trello Communications Board: online content is currently available. A script and videography is needed to complete video segments.
Initiative 5	Enhance revenue streams and operating budget to adequately address fish and wildlife conservation and recreation needs of the Commonwealth.	Status	January - June 2023
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	Completed	Administration staff worked to ensure that sufficient spending authority was budgeted for FILO needs and that some contingency funding was included in the event that some additional spending authority was needed to accommodate other short-notice funding opportunities such as RAWA became available.
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	In progress	An agency alternative income working group with representatives from the Commission have been meeting to discuss new revenue-generating options and have identified some promising options for further investigation or implementation.
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	Staff are implementing the changes from an agent commission to a 3% license issuance fee approved by the Commission in 2022 and that completed the legislative review process in mid-2023; this will allow all license agents (including the Department) to collect a 3% fee for the sale of licenses to help offset issuance costs such as credit card fees, IT costs, etc. Another initiative is creation of big game
Goal 5	Protect Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and promote user safety		
Initiative 1	Control, reduce and eradicate invasive species.	Status	January - June 2023
5.1.a.	Work to identify locations of and eradicate invasive species on WMAs, beginning with "high management level" areas in this biennium.	In progress	Ongoing evaluation of the aerial application on 600 acres at Clay WMA. Staff are in planning phase to treat additional acreage November 2023. FILO staff removed/treated invasive species on approximately 710 acres on 6 FILO acquired WMAs.

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	Through our private lands program, we have successfully worked with 5 private landowners in each region to control and/or reduce invasive species to an acceptable level.
5.1.c.	Update the Statewide Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan for Kentucky by June 30, 2023	In progress	ANS Coordinator was hired. Fisheries Division formed the ANS Team, who made minor changes to the ANS Plan. ANS Plan revisions will need to be finalized and sent to USFWS for review before adoption.
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	Established partnership with MSU Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business to advance invasive carp removal efforts. Held Invasive Carp Listening Session with industry partners to discuss challenges and areas for improvement.
Initiative 2	Increase public safety for hunting, fishing, boating and recreational shooting.	Status	January - June 2023
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	Officers are patrolling peak activity public access areas at peak times each shift. These efforts coincide with our mission and are ongoing.
5.2.b.	Establish 5 additional life jacket loaner stations across the state by June 30, 2023	Completed	Completed - 11 Life jacket loaners stations have been constructed at various water access points around the state.
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	In progress (ongoing)	EIT staff perform annual or as needed maintenance to agency owned ramps, dams, fishing sites and associated signage.
Initiative 3	Protect fish and wildlife resources through increased regulation compliance.	Status	January - June 2023
5.3.a.	Conservation officers will increase the annual number of compliance checks conducted by 10% by June 30, 2023	Completed	Officer contacts are increasing steadily and this will continue to be an LE priority.
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.	In progress (ongoing)	This is an ongoing effort with anticipated additional KSP Dispatch training.
5.3.c.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance by offering Tip411	In progress	Tip411 is continuing to increase in popularity and public usage. LE will continue to promote and educate constituents about Tip411.
5.3.d.	The Law Enforcement Division will continue to promote public assistance with regulation compliance through social media channels	Completed	Ongoing - LE Staff launched a division specific Facebook page to assist LE division with regulation compliance and public outreach on LE specific topics.

Initiative 4	Provide professional conservation law enforcement services to the Commonwealth through mission-focused policing.	Status	January - June 2023
5.4.a.	Maintain all levels of supervision across the Law Enforcement Division by promptly filling any supervisor vacancies that occur	Completed	Completed - Promotions to the ranks of Major, CPT, and LT occurred during 2022. SGT promotions were completed in spring 2023.
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	This is an ongoing approach to mission focused LE strategy to maximize enforcement and teamwork. With seasonal guided planning, field supervisors will continue to organize effective operational plans to enhance officer resource protection and public education.
Initiative 5	Promulgate clear and concise fish and wildlife regulations for anglers, hunters, trappers and boaters.	Status	January - June 2023
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	In progress (ongoing)	The Department has an ongoing procedure for tracking regulation amendments following Commission action. This has ensured an efficient method for drafting language, involving staff from multiple divisions for input and ensuring the amendment is consistent with Commission action on the topic. The tracking process also involves cooperation with staff to communicate regulation changes to the Commission and the public via emails and website updates. The department is currently up-to-date on filed amendments in relation to commission action.
5.5.b.	Provide the Commission with clear and concise regulation recommendations for the take of fish and wildlife species	In progress (ongoing)	Commissioner's office and divisional staff have been intentional about making recommendations that are as clear as possible for the Commission's consideration and to facilitate stakeholder awareness and input. The Commission chair invests considerable time reviewing language in proposed business items to help further ensure clarity before items are published on a Commission meeting agenda.
Initiative 6	Enact proactive measures in response to existing and emerging fish and wildlife health threats.	Status	January - June 2023
5.6.a.	Continue surveillance efforts for the Asian longhorned tick (<i>Haemaphysalis longicornis</i>), particularly in high-risk counties	In progress	Ongoing opportunistic collection of ticks from Wildlife. Provided an Asian Longhorned tick update the Wildlife Division Meeting in May 2023 highlighting priority counties and distributed additional tick collection supplies. The Wildlife Health Program 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 Meetings. The recent USFWS Zoonotic Disease Initiative Grant will fund a 3 year tick surveillance project on Wildlife Management Areas starting in fiscal year 2024.
5.6.b.	Continue Chronic Wasting Disease prevention and surveillance activities	In progress	The Department has ongoing Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance in wild cervids in the Commonwealth using both passive and active surveillance techniques. Samples are collected from hunter-harvested samples, roadkill, and sick or target animals. The Wildlife Health Department maintains a veterinary diagnostic service contract with Murray State University's Breathitt Veterinary Center. The CWD Incident Command Team has finalized sampling plans for the CWD Surveillance Zone in Western Kentucky. Mandatory check will be the first weekend of modern gun in November. There will be freezers placed at check stations for the remainder of the deer season. The Incident Command Team is in the progress of reviewing and updating the CWD Response Plan.

5.6.c.	Continue ongoing elk surveillance and health assessments	In progress	<p>The Wildlife Health Program in collaboration with the Elk Program has been collecting livers from hunter-harvested and elk mortalities for the past 3 years. There have been over 100 liver samples collected to date which will be used to develop a reference range for elk in Eastern Kentucky. In addition to the livers collected from Kentucky elk, 28 reference liver samples from elk harvested in Pennsylvania. Liver samples have been submitted to University of Kentucky Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for trace mineral and sulfur testing. The data is currently being compiled for analysis. This year we will continue to collect KY hunter-harvest livers, additional PA liver samples, and VA liver samples.</p> <p>Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is supportive of this effort and interested in collaboration and potentially funding future work aim at investigating an association between Parelaphostrongylus tenuis infections in elk (Cervus elaphus) in Eastern Kentucky and dietary trace mineral deficiencies.</p>
5.6.d.	Continue review and response of wildlife to COVID-19	In progress	<p>Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) has participated in the USDA's multistate White-tailed deer SARS-CoV-2 Surveillance project for the past two years. In 2022, there were 23 presumptive positives compared to no detections in the hunter-harvested samples in 2023. USDA published the results of this study in July 2023. The article can be found here (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-39782-x). The study demonstrates that SARS-CoV-2 has a wide geographic distribution in the U.S. white-tailed deer population. Their evolutionary analysis showed that SARS-CoV-2 spilled over into humans at least 109 times, mutated, and there were at three was potentially spillovers from white-tailed deer back to humans. While this research is wrapping ongoing monitoring of SARs-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer to understand the risk of continued circulation in wildlife. The State Wildlife Veterinarian continues to participate in the AFWA SARs-CoV-2 Working group focused on providing guidance to fish and wildlife agencies.</p>
5.6.e.	Continue monitoring and surveillance of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease	In progress	<p>The Wildlife Health program continues to investigate suspicious wild rabbit mortalities. To date, RHDV-2 has not been detected in wild rabbits in Kentucky. There have been no new domestic rabbit cases since the initial detection in December of 2021.</p>
5.6.f.	Pursue federal grants or other sources of funding for increasing capacity of disease monitoring and abatement	In progress	<p>The Wildlife Health Program applied to and was awarded a USFWS Zoonotic Disease Initiative Grant. The award amount is for \$683,697.000 across a 3 year project period. The funding is for a wildlife health database, a wildlife health communication specialist, wildlife disease trainings, other various disease surveillance projects, and a fish health contract.</p>
Initiative 7	Promote safe and enjoyable experiences for all recreational boaters.	Status	January - June 2023
5.7.a.	Conservation officers will spend a minimum of 30% of their patrol hours on public waterways surveilling for violations and unsafe conditions	In progress (ongoing)	<p>Officers continue to spend substantial time patrolling waterways to ensure public safety and opportunities for all on Kentucky waters.</p>
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	<p>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.</p>
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 in 2022 and 2023.	Completed	<p>Boating Education Coordinator Officer Bowling has completed more than 15 boating education classes in 2023.</p>

1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601
800-858-1549



FW.KY.GOV