
DEVELOPING A 10-POINT PLAN FOR FISH & WILDLIFE OPERATIONS

TASK FORCE REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Fish and Wildlife Department

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is one of three Departments in the Agency of Natural Resources. Fish & Wildlife has over 130 full time staff members committed to five divisions: Administration, Outreach, Law Enforcement, Fisheries, and Wildlife. The Department's **Mission** is: *the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*

The Department was born out of public concern for Vermont's fish and wildlife resources. Legislature appointed a Board of Fish Commissioners in 1866. A decade later this Board was given authority over game birds and mammals. In 1892 the Board of Fish Commissioners was renamed the Fish and Game Commission, which became the Fish & Game Department in 1904.

Since the state's settlement, many species had declined in abundance because of unrestricted harvests, poorly enforced laws and habitat loss. By the 1850's only 25% of Vermont was covered by forest due to extensive land clearing for farming. Today, almost 80% of the state is covered by forest, and many wildlife species have been restored.

The Department provides a broad range of services to the public including fisheries and wildlife management, law enforcement, search and rescue, habitat conservation, information on fish and wildlife, and educational programs for hunters, young people and teachers. The public also benefits from 192 fishing access areas, 85 wildlife management areas totaling more than 133,000 acres, five fish hatcheries, and two youth conservation camps – all managed by the Fish & Wildlife Department.

The Department's annual budget totals about \$15 million, still primarily funded by hunting and fishing license sales and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment and boating fuel.

Fishing and Hunting Participation

In recent years, a troubling trend has developed concerning fishing and hunting participation nation-wide. Results from the US Fish & Wildlife Service's 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation indicates that fishing participation fell from 35.6 million in 1991 to 34.1 million in 2001, and hunting participation fell from 14.1 million to 13.0 million. Although preliminary data from the same survey repeated in 2005 indicates that recruitment rates of young anglers and hunters have somewhat stabilized, retention rates are still in decline, particularly for fishing. For example, 1990 survey results indicated that 65% of anglers fished in the previous three years; however, in the 1995 survey, that number fell to 61% and has continued to fall (60% in the 2000 survey and 57% in the 2005 survey). Hunting retention rates have not declined as much as fishing, only losing 6% of hunters nationally from 1995 to 2005. For unknown reasons, participation, recruitment, and retention rates for Vermont anglers and hunters have been slightly worse than the national average. New initiatives such as expansion of trophy trout stocking and changes in deer hunting rules, however, may be helping. In 2006, license sales improved over 2005 as follows: resident hunting (+2.6%), nonresident hunting (+4.6%), resident fishing (+2.4%), and nonresident fishing (+3.5%).

The long-term decline in overall fishing and hunting participation is of great concern. Participation in fishing and hunting is critical for fish and wildlife conservation in the State, because the Department's funding relies heavily on the continuing purchases of fishing, hunting and trapping licenses. Anglers,

hunters, and trappers, through their license purchases, directly support the Department's conservation efforts, which in turn, ensure that the state's fish and wildlife remain public and sustainable resources. For these reasons, it is imperative that steps be taken to directly address the declines in fishing and hunting participation in the State of Vermont.

The Task Force

The original charge given by Secretary Crombie to the members of the 10-Point Plan Task Force was to *describe, develop and prioritize 10 recommendations that would bring a major benefit in reversing the decline in hunting [trapping] and fishing [participation].*

Individuals appointed to the 10-Point Plan Task Force were:

- James Ehlers, Chair
- Shawn Good, Co-Chair – Fisheries Biologist, VTDFW
- David Sausville, Co-Chair – Waterfowl Area Specialist, VTDFW
- John Hall, Outreach & Marketing Coordinator, VTDFW
- George Gay, Executive Director, National Forest Alliance
- Robert Helm, Vermont State Representative
- Sherb Lang, Hunters, Anglers & Trappers Association (HAT) President
- Chet Mackenzie, Fisheries Biologist, VTDFW
- Thomas Jones, Fish Health Biologist, VTDFW
- Forrest Hammond, Wildlife Biologist, VTDFW
- Cedric Sanborn, Proprietor, R&L Archery
- Bill Stritzler, Managing Director and Owner, Smugglers' Notch Resort and Chairman, Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy
- Tom Wiggins, Fish Culture Operations Manager, VTDFW
- Steve Wright, Regional Director, National Wildlife Federation

A total of 11 Business Plans were written to address the decline in fishing and hunting participation in Vermont. The reports, studies and documents used in support of the creation of these plans are listed on the Task Force website.

The business plans are not stand-alone plans and are not meant to operate independently. The goals, objectives and outcomes of all plans are intertwined and linked together in numerous ways, and in many cases, outcomes of one business plan may be strengthened through the successful implementation of another. Through the enhancement of fish and wildlife resources, opportunities, education, and user satisfaction throughout the state, the plans attempt to directly address declining fishing and hunting participation.

The expectation is that all plans will work in concert to ultimately reverse the decline in fishing and hunting participation in the State of Vermont. The 11 business plans contained in this Task Force Report are:

- Fishing Access Area Program Enhancement
- Addressing Angler "Churn Rate"
- Youth Fishing Education Program Enhancement

- Vermont Fishing Information Website
- Put-and-Take Trout Stocking Enhancement and Wild Trout Angling Outreach
- Developing a Communication and Education Division
- Expansion of Youth Hunting Participation
- Statewide Habitat Improvement Services Program
- Improving Department Education & Public Relations
- Increasing Land Access for Hunters and Trappers
- Shooting Range Expansion

We want to stress that many great ideas were generated by the Task Force, but not all of them were able to be included in the 10-Point Plan for a variety of reasons, and ideas or “business plans” not included should not be considered unimportant. For example, certain programs already being conducted by the Department, such as the immensely important sea lamprey control program, were discussed and ranked with a high priority, but not included in the report as a business plan because this highly complex program is currently being implemented cooperatively by the Department along with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, Lake Champlain International, Inc. is extremely interested in further exploring the concept of a lake-wide Lake Champlain Fisheries Recovery Plan, to include both game and non-game species, such as native lake trout, Atlantic Salmon, whitefish, sturgeon, walleye, musky and sauger. Due to the scope of this project, there was not adequate time nor resources to develop and include it in this report.

The various business plans and respective recommendations contained within this Fish & Wildlife Task Force report are not meant to replace existing core programs, services, or activities the Department currently conducts or provides. The plans in this report, in essence, work only towards addressing the decline in fishing and hunting participation in Vermont, and do not encompass other important conservation work the Department performs. While revenues generated from fishing and hunting activities form the primary funding for the Department, the Department’s overall conservation efforts benefits all those that enjoy and utilize Vermont’s natural resources.

It should also be noted that not all plans are fully developed. The Task Force recognizes this fact. With further time, however, Task Force members are willing to further develop the plans that the Secretary feels fall within the framework of his overall vision for the Agency. That being said, the plans, as presented, are sound and all serve as excellent reference points for focusing that discussion.

Special acknowledgements are due Shawn Good, John Hall and David Sausville of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, and Bill Stritzler of The Nature Conservancy for their leadership and dedication to this undertaking.

Many of the programs listed below, totaling more than \$3.4 million, will require only 25% (state match) of necessary funds to come from state resources. The remaining 75% of program costs will be covered by federal aid matching dollars.

The benefits to all Vermonters in promoting participation in regulated hunting and fishing are significant. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation reveals that hunters spend more than \$189 million and anglers more than \$62 million annually in Vermont. Most hunting seasons occur between fall foliage and ski seasons, and fishing is strong before summer tourism. In addition, hunters and anglers spend their money throughout the entire state, including the most rural areas, directly benefitting hundreds of small businesses.

Financial Summary of Business Plans

Program	New Positions	Total Cost
Fishing Access Area Enhancement	1	
Program Staff		\$70,000
Annual Access Area Budget		\$1,000,000
Angler Churn Rate	0	
RBFF Plan		\$50,000
Angler Reminder Letters		\$4,100
Marketing, Multi-Year Licenses, P.O.S System		TBD
Fishing Education (State Parks)	½	
Coordinator		\$9,000
Equipment & Materials		\$8,000
Fishing Education (State Hatcheries)	½	
Seasonal Coordinator		\$14,000
Equipment, Outreach		\$7,000
Website	2	
Web Programmer, Outreach Staff		\$110,000
Web Server Upgrades		TBD
Trout Stocking Enhancement	0	
Review & Outreach		\$12,000
Increasing Land Access for Hunters	2	
Contract Position, Land Acquisition Specialist		\$250,000
Materials, Outreach		\$65,000
Shooting Ranges	1	
Range Coordinator		\$75,000
Range Development & Improvement		\$130,000
Habitat Improvement Service Program	3	
Contract Position, Lands Biologists		\$225,000
Outreach		\$5,000
Improving Dept. Education & PR	1	
Marketing Specialist		\$75,000
Materials		\$60,000
Expand Youth Participation in Hunting	0	
Volunteer Hours		(\$8,000)
In-kind Material Donations		(\$4,900)
Build a Communication & Education Div.	19	
Communication Positions (9)		\$585,000
Education Positions (7)		\$455,000
Division Director & 2-Support Staff		\$205,000

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Vermont Fishing Access Area Program Enhancement

Shawn Good, VTDFW

Mission Statement

To increase fishing participation in Vermont by significantly increasing both the number and quality of public access area facilities on public waters around the state. To improve infrastructure at three existing access areas each year. To develop one existing undeveloped Department shoreline parcel into a public access area every two years. To purchase land and develop one new access area every three years in Vermont.

Market Plan

Public access to public waters should be a fundamental right for the people of Vermont, and for those who vacation and recreate on the state's public waters. However, the availability of formal, dedicated boat and shoreline public access sites and facilities around Vermont's public waters is currently limiting the public's ability to fully utilize and enjoy recreational angling opportunities on these waters. The opportunities to increase the number and quality of public access areas are also dwindling as private shoreline development continues and waterfront property values rise. Historically, funding in Vermont for access area development and improvements has come from federal Wallop-Breaux funds and state motorboat registration fees. However, as angler numbers decrease nationwide, less money is generated through these traditional programs, resulting in fewer dollars available for fishing access improvements. At the same time, demand for public access to Vermont waters is expected to increase with further population growth and the diverse interests of various user groups. In recent years, public use of Fish & Wildlife access areas by non-traditional users (canoeists, kayakers, swimmers etc) has increased, even though these access areas are paid for and maintained primarily by money generated by anglers. In order to provide, improve, and maintain access facilities to Vermont's public waters for all users, increased funding beyond traditional sources and levels are necessary.

The Department currently owns 192 fishing access areas around the state; all but 17 are developed to some degree or another. These existing access area sites were generally purchased with very limited funds and as a result are typically located in less desirable locations on the body of water and often lack suitable room for parking. Poor water depth in the boat launch area is a common problem, and the lack of docks and shoreline fishing facilities are always important issues to users. Unfortunately, the money to address these issues is lacking. Of the approximately \$850,000 annual budget for the Departments Access Area Program, \$600,000 is spent on "maintenance," which includes all work performed in the access area program outside of major construction projects. These "maintenance" expenses include portalet rentals & service, trash removal, lawn care, snow removal, ramp and parking lot maintenance and property tax payments. The remaining \$250,000 is all that is available to work on access area improvements to infrastructure and facilities (docks, parking, handicapped access), and to seek and purchase

land, and develop additional access that is lacking in Vermont. This small amount of funding is inadequate to provide improved public access to waters around the state.

As an example of access area improvement costs, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources recently completed improvements to a public boat launch facility on a 1,200-acre lake. Improvements included a new concrete double boat ramp, expanded parking for 40 vehicles with trailers, enhanced lighting, floating docks, shoreline stabilization and seawalls, and a handicapped-accessible boarding dock and fishing platform. Total cost of this single project was \$810,000.

Similarly, in recent years the Governor of New York, recognizing the need for improved access to the State's waterways, announced a \$9-million dollar plan to improve fishing access in two Finger Lakes Region counties. The goal of their plan was to make it easier for New York residents and visitors to take advantage of the State's waterways by improving access for anglers of all ages and abilities to enjoy fishing. Improvements included more and better boat ramps, docks, increased parking, handicapped accessible fishing platforms and paved shoreline paths, and shoreline stabilization.

Statewide improvements to existing access area facilities as well as the addition of new access areas will benefit Vermont resident anglers, work to attract more non-resident anglers, and directly address the decline in fishing participation. A recent study in Florida found that marine fishing participation was directly correlated with the availability of boat and shoreline access to coastal waters. Fishing access improvements have been shown to address past losses in fishing participation by enhancing the quality of the fishing experience.

The benefits of such improvements are scalable. That is, the more funds that are made available, the more access improvements and developments can be implemented, and ultimately increased fishing participation (residents and by attracting non-residents) will be realized.

Product Plan

1. Seek new sources of funding beyond motorboat registration fees and federal aid in sportfish restoration funding. A new Department employee should be hired to work in the Access Area program and assist in identifying and securing potential new funding sources. New state dollars should be sought at the legislative level as well, similar to the New York example above. Cooperative funding projects with VT AOT could be considered.
2. Identify priorities and make infrastructure improvements to existing Department fishing access areas. Improvements needed include shoreline stabilization projects & accompanying shoreline & handicapped-accessible fishing platforms, breakwalls, dredging for improved water depths for boat launching, concrete boat launch additions and repairs, temporary docking facilities, and expanded parking spaces. Fisheries biologists and access area program staff would coordinate on identifying priorities and local needs.

3. Develop new public access areas on existing Department waterfront properties. Recent land inventory updates have highlighted many shoreline parcels owned by the Department that have never been developed into formal access areas. Most of these parcels exist on smaller public water bodies that currently have no public access at all, but do contain desirable fishing populations and opportunities. Developing these shoreline parcels should be a priority.
4. Actively seek and purchase land on larger state water bodies lacking sufficient access and smaller water bodies where public access currently does not exist. The Department's access area program currently has a Land Acquisition Plan that outlines priority waters around the state on which to acquire land and provide public access. The existing Plan began in 1995 and goes through 2025. There are 29 properties identified in this 30-year plan, yet with nearly half of the time span passed, only five of the properties have been acquired. Additionally, other desirable properties and land acquisition needs have been recently identified. Additional staff and funding is necessary to expedite the land acquisition and access development process in order to meet the needs of the public. The Land Acquisition Plan needs to be reviewed and amended by Department fisheries biologists and access area program staff.

Possible Impediments

An extreme lack of funding currently exists with respect to access area improvement and development. Additional dedicated staff is also needed to fully implement all access area needs around Vermont.

Time Line

- Winter 2008 - hire an additional access area program staff
All of 2008 - seek and secure additional sources of funding
- work with other Department staff to identify & prioritize needs, rewrite plans
2009 - begin implementing prioritized needs with new staff & funding sources

Money and Resources

- New access area program staff - \$70,000
- Additional funding of ~\$1,000,000 per year until the program catches up on the current access area improvement, development, and land acquisition backlog

*This is one of five Fishing Business Plans written to address the decline in fishing participation in Vermont. These plans are part of the 10-Point Plan for Fish and Wildlife Operations as set out in the ANR Secretary's **Vermont Way Forward** initiative. These five fishing business plans are not stand-alone plans and are not meant to operate independently. The goals, objectives and outcomes of all plans are intertwined and linked together in numerous ways, and in many cases, outcomes of one business plan may be strengthened through the successful implementation of another. For example, the Vermont Angler Education & Fishing Information Website will be a tool by which information on Youth Fishing Education programs, Fishing Access facilities, and Put-and-Take Stocking fishing opportunities can be easily disseminated to a wide audience with an abundance of additional follow-up material. Similarly, implementing methods designed to address Angler Churn Rate could be facilitated through such a website. Improving angler access to state waters, or enhancing put-and-take stocking, both separate plans, may very well work to address angler churn rate. The expectation is that all plans will work in concert to ultimately reverse the decline in fishing participation in the State of Vermont.*

Addressing Vermont Angler “Churn Rate”

Shawn Good, VTDFW

Mission Statement

To implement marketing methods designed to increase recurrent license purchases by resident and non-resident anglers. To increase fishing participation of resident anglers and non-resident anglers by 10% in the first year of plan implementation.

Market Plan

Angler “churn rate” refers to the rate of anglers that enter and drop out of the customer base in terms of purchasing or not purchasing fishing licenses from year to year. Vermont currently has one of the highest rates of “angler churn” in the country. A study conducted by Southwick & Associates found that from 2001 through 2005, 56% of Vermont’s resident anglers purchased a license only once in that five-year period, whereas only 10% of resident anglers bought a fishing license each of the five years. Unfortunately, this indicates that a good percentage of Vermont anglers are not loyal license buyers, and do not routinely participate in angling in Vermont.

In the business world, market research indicates that it is easier to keep a customer than it is to create a new one. The same holds true for angling. Increasing fishing participation by recruiting new anglers may not always be the most appropriate course of action. People who have fished in the past, and are already equipped and skilled to do so, are easier to draw back into the sport. Efforts that encourage past anglers to renew fishing licenses will likely have a greater potential to increase angling participation and consequently license sales.

Much research has been conducted on angling and hunting churn rate, and good information exists on approaches and techniques that “market” to the lapsed angler and attempt to address some of the reasons why anglers do not purchase licenses on a regular basis. For example, improving access, or minimizing the hassles of angling, could encourage greater participation rates. Encouraging existing anglers to fish more often or adding convenience and simplicity to the license buying and renewal process could also result in increased license sales. Simply sending renewal reminders to previous license holder has proven effective. Electronic license databases are an excellent source of information, as they can be mined to identify and provide the names and direct contact information of infrequent fishing license purchasers.

Many States are starting to implement such marketing practices to increase angler recruitment and retention. For example, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) hired a marketing professional to “sell” the outdoor experience component of fishing and hunting. TWRA discovered, as in the business world, that natural resource agencies must actively pursue customer sales. To maximize participation, and sales, agencies cannot wait for customers to

come to them. Single attempts are not effective either. If customers do not respond, agencies must continue pursuing them. Advertising is the most effective way, and TWRA has successfully used strategies such as radio and television advertisements, reminder card inserts in telephone and electric bills, and e-mail reminders generated through their license sales database.

Possible Impediments

Impediments to implementing this plan include lack of necessary funding and staff time, and difficulty obtaining legislative approval for some of the approaches. However, the potential economic benefits to the Department are large with comparatively little effort. The cost-benefit ratio is highly favorable to the Department.

Product Plan

The first priority recommendation is Product Plan #1 below. If #1 is not implemented, then the Department may attempt #2. Product Plans 3 and 4 are independent of the first two and can be pursued separately.

1. Partner with the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF). The RBFF recently announced the development of a program to address the lapsed angler (angler churn rate) issue. Their plan will be officially unveiled in December of 2007, ready for implementation in early 2008 by participating states. The RBFF plans to partner with up to 30 interested states in 2008 by providing \$25,000 (at a 1:1 match), and pre-developed materials to implement a direct-mail campaign. As part of the plan, RBFF has also contracted with Southwick & Associates to help work with license sales databases to identify target markets, and conduct follow-up surveys and assess results. The one criteria is that states wishing to participate must currently have an electronic database to help target market. It is recommended that the Fish & Wildlife Department partner with RBFF to take advantage of this excellent opportunity that has already laid the groundwork and will provide essential support, guidance, and assessment.

OR

2. Angler Reminders. Pursue a variety of angler reminder techniques to increase fishing license renewal rates. The methods below should include fishing promotion efforts. Such license reminder and marketing efforts have been shown to fare poorly when a simple mailing was the only step taken. Successful efforts used larger promotions and messaging efforts, combined with the direct mailings and other types of contact.
 - a) Reminder Letters - random. Using information generated from Fish & Wildlife's electronic license database, a letter would be sent to random anglers who purchased a license in 2007 reminding them to renew their license in 2008. Initially, it would be unnecessary to do so for all 81,000 resident fishing license purchasers. It is

recommended that 10,000 randomly generated past license holders be contacted. This reminder letter could include a special online website where successful renewals via this method could be tracked and success could be assessed.

- b) Reminder Letters – lapsed anglers. Using information generated from Fish & Wildlife’s electronic license database, a letter would be sent to anglers who purchased a license in 2006 but **did not** purchase one in 2007. These anglers would be sent a reminder letter to renew their license, as well as a brief survey asking well-designed questions about why they did not renew in 2007. It is recommended that 10,000 lapsed anglers be contacted. This reminder letter could include a special online website where successful renewals via this method could be tracked and success could be assessed.

For method comparison for a) and b) above, it would be beneficial to contact an equal number of anglers through both letter mailings and via e-mail addresses to compare the rate of return and success by contact method.

- c) Utility Bill Inserts. Contact the various power companies (25 companies), telephone service providers (10 companies), and cable television companies (13 companies) in Vermont to explore sending a fishing license reminder insert in the respective utility bills. These reminder inserts could include a special online website where successful renewals via this method could be tracked and success could be assessed.
3. Multi-year fishing licenses. An investigation into the implementation of a multi-year fishing license suggested this may somewhat alleviate economic impacts from angler churn rates. Such a license would act to capture license revenues from anglers who otherwise may not have purchased a fishing license in consecutive years. To increase effectiveness, a potential approach could include direct marketing to specific Vermont population segments. For example, the electronic license database could be used to identify individuals from Vermont regions with higher-than-average incomes who would be more likely to respond to multi-year license promotions.
 4. Point-of-Sale Licensing. Although there are a number of societal reasons many anglers do not renew fishing licenses on an annual basis, one simple reason is that many “just don’t get around to it,” and part of that reason is the inconvenience often associated with purchasing a license. A point-of-sale system would simplify the license purchasing process and increase customer convenience, both in the immediate sense and in the long term. Using the model from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, a POS system would allow anglers to simply swipe their driver’s license through a magnetic reader and all of their personal information would be filled in on the application automatically. After the first time an angler purchases a license using the system, a permanent number would be assigned and stored so that in future years, the angler would only need to enter changes to personal information and the type of license wanted. This system would make auditing and report generating far easier and eliminate large amounts of paperwork for license agents. It would prove to be beneficial

to the Department by automatically generating a database of license buyers and increase the ability to conduct surveys. It would also allow the tracking of angler churn rate and allow the Department to contact lapsed anglers, identify reasons for non-renewals, and take steps to address those.

Time Line

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------|--|
| Part 1 | January 2008 | - partner with RBFF and implement their plan
- timeline as per their plan outline, unknown at this time |
| Part 2 | January 2008 | - mine database, generate distribution list |
| | February 2008 | - write reminder letters, design survey |
| | March-April 2008 | - send out letters
- contact utility companies to work out logistics of bill inserts |
| | May-June 2008 | - design inserts, distribute through bill mailings |
| | July-December 2008 | - assess success |
| Part 3 | January 2008 | - Investigate & initiate legislation needed to implement multi-year licenses |
| | July-December 2008 | - Conduct data mining to focus marketing & advertisement efforts |
| | January 2009 | - Offer multi-year licenses for sale for the first time |
| Part 4 | 2008-2009 ? | - this is a long-term project and timing is unknown at this time |

Money and Resources

1. RBFF Partner Plan. \$25,000 on a 1:1 match to participate in this direct-marketing plan already designed.
2. Angler Reminders

Letters - It would cost \$4,100 ($\$0.41 \times 10,000$) plus staff time and material costs to send the reminder letters out. Conversely, if these 10,000 letters generated just 250 additional fishing license sales at \$20.00 each, it would cover these costs.

Utility Bill Inserts – The cost for this is unknown at this time. Costs would be incurred for the design and printing of the inserts, and any possible costs associated with combining this mailing with the utility bills.

3. Multi-Year Fishing Licenses. It is unknown at this time how much it would cost to implement a multi-year fishing license. However, a recent report on funding the Department suggested that over \$1.5 million dollars in license revenue could be generated over a 5-year

period by capturing revenue lost to anglers who might not have purchased 5 consecutive annual fishing licenses.

4. Point-of-Sale System. The cost of implementing such a system is unknown at this time. However, annual cost savings to the Department could be significant since the POS system would eliminate the need to manually enter license sales information into the database. The Department typically spends approximately \$66,000 per year outsourcing data-entry.

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Enhanced Youth Fishing Education Program

Tom Wiggins, VTDFW

Mission Statement

To increase the number of children annually who are introduced to fishing and fishing techniques by: 1) annually introducing 200 new youth campers at State Parks to fishing through on-site education programs, and 2) providing educational fishing opportunities for 650 children annually at Department fishing festivals and 400 anglers annually at weekly fishing education and training seminars at state hatchery facilities. Research show that 70% of the children that fish will fish as adults. These programs could create as many as 735 lifetime anglers annually.

Market Plan

To develop a life-long angler, introduction to the sport at an early age is essential. Studies have shown that approximately two-thirds of existing anglers began fishing by the age of 15. Additionally, over 70% of youths that learn to fish will continue to fish as adults. To capture children's' interest and convert them to life-long anglers, they require positive introductory experiences at a young age, and this must include training in skills and equipment use, and most importantly catching fish and having fun. Most often, the effectiveness is highest when an older family member is involved, but mentor programs also work very well.

History – the Department has a number of existing programs aimed at introducing youth to fishing, and giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to continue as anglers into adulthood. For example, over 90 children's fishing events serving nearly 6,500 children are held annually around the state. Almost 70% of these fishing events provide an educational component and 66% of the children are accompanied by a parent or guardian. The Let's Go Fishing Program holds 45 to 50 clinics that introduce 1500 to 2500 children to angling. This program also includes almost 1,000 participating parents. The Department of Fish and Wildlife currently hosts two Fishing Festivals on Free Fishing Day at state hatcheries. These educational family events are attended by approximately 500 children and their parents. Finally, the Department operates programs at summer camps, schools, and the two conservation camps, reaching nearly 1,500 children and adults. Altogether, the Department reaches an estimated 9,000 youth annually through existing educational programs and fishing events.

Potential Markets – areas identified to increase the reach of existing programs, and to create new fishing education programs include: a) State Parks – family fishing education and equipment loaner programs, b) Increase the number of Children Fishing Events and Let's Go Fishing Programs, c) Partner with youth organizations, d) Partner with schools to incorporate angling as part of their Physical Education Program.

This business plan has two Product Plans:

- 1) State Parks Family Fishing Programs
- 2) Children Fishing Events at State Hatcheries.

Product Plan 1 – Vermont State Parks Family Fishing Programs

Goal: To increase the percentage of youth campers at State Parks who are introduced to fishing and fishing techniques, and to introduce 200 new children annually to fishing in an effort to create life-long anglers.

Fishing is one of the activities often associated with the camping experience, yet many families and children do not have the skills, knowledge or equipment to participate in the sport while camping at Vermont State Parks. Developing and implementing educational and instructional programs designed to teach angling to children and families at State Parks, and providing basic fishing equipment will provide an opportunity by which campers can gain the skills and interest necessary to continue angling in the future.

Possible Impediments

Lack of staff and financial resources. Successful implementation of such a program would require staff and money to hire and train fishing educators at State Parks as well as to purchase basic fishing gear such as rods, reels and tackle.

Product Plan

1. Implement a test program in five State Parks that have waters suitable for introducing children and families to angling. Use park interpreters to teach a family fishing program. Park interpreters are experienced with natural resource education programs and have experience working with children. Fish & Wildlife would identify species of fish and appropriate techniques suitable for catching those species at each host park.
2. The Fish & Wildlife Department would develop and provide basic lesson plans for a State Park fishing education program that includes teaching materials that could be taught by the park interpreters to families and children. A shortened version of the Department's "Let's Go Fishing" instructor training program would be utilized to train park staff.
3. The Fish & Wildlife Department would purchase (or pursue corporate donations) of fishing equipment and tackle to provide to the parks. Each State Park fishing educator would utilize the equipment for the education programs, and administer a lending program for the gear during non-program hours. State Parks could also investigate the logistics of selling worms or basic terminal tackle.

Time Line

- Winter 2008 – Work with State Parks to select five parks for initial program implementation
– Have “Let’s Go Fishing” Coordinator develop shortened training program
– Train park interpreters
- Summer 2008 – Implement program at selected parks
- Summer 2009 – Expand program as per resource availability

Money and Resources

- Fish & Wildlife seasonal - \$9,000
- Fishing Equipment
 - Rod & Reel combos - \$5,000 (5 parks × 20 combos)
 - Terminal Tackle - \$3,000 (5 parks × \$600 per park for lures)

Product Plan 2 – Expand the Fishing Festivals and Education Programs at the Hatcheries

Goal: To increase the number of youth introduced to fishing at Fish & Wildlife Department hatchery fishing festivals. Provide educational fishing opportunities for 650 children annually. Each summer provide weekly fishing education and training opportunities for 400 anglers annually.

The Department operates four hatchery facilities around the state that have ponds suitable for hosting fishing events. Currently both the Ed Weed (Grand Isle) and Bennington fish culture facilities host single yearly fishing events that incorporate both repeat and new participants. Similar programs could be initiated at the Roxbury and Salisbury hatcheries, which could act to double the number of children being introduced to fishing through these statewide events. Additionally, weekly fishing seminars could be implemented at all four hatcheries to increase children and family educational fishing opportunities.

Product Plan

1. Weekly fishing seminars. Partner with angler groups such as Trout Unlimited, B.A.S.S., the Lake Champlain Walleye Association, etc. to develop and implement weekly instructional fishing seminars on the weekends at the Ed Weed and Salisbury hatcheries. If successful, this could be expanded to the other two hatcheries.
2. Expansion of Fishing Festivals. Host four “Fishing Festivals” on Free Fishing Day by adding programs at the Salisbury and Roxbury hatcheries. Hire a seasonal staff member to:
 - a) administer the program, b) develop and provide training, c) recruit volunteers and angler

groups, d) acquire necessary equipment and materials, e) conduct outreach and advertising of events.

Possible Impediments

Currently, Department hatchery staff primarily host the fishing festival programs on Vermont's "Free Fishing Day." Additional staff and money would be required to coordinate the expansion of the Fishing Festivals and the additional of weekly fishing seminars. Trained volunteers would be integral to the program's success. Fishing equipment would also be required at each of the four hatcheries.

Time Line

Winter 2008	– Hire coordinator
	– acquire equipment and supplies
May – June 2008	– Recruit Volunteers
June – August 2008	– Conduct outreach & advertising
July – August 2008	– Set up and host each event

Money and Resources

- Seasonal employee (coordinator) – \$14,000
- Initial fishing equipment purchases – \$5,000
- Other annual equipment and materials expenditures – \$1,000
- Outreach & advertising – \$1,000

*This is one of five Fishing Business Plans written to address the decline in fishing participation in Vermont. These plans are part of the 10-Point Plan for Fish and Wildlife Operations as set out in the ANR Secretary's **Vermont Way Forward** initiative. These five fishing business plans are not stand-alone plans and are not meant to operate independently. The goals, objectives and outcomes of all plans are intertwined and linked together in numerous ways, and in many cases, outcomes of one business plan may be strengthened through the successful implementation of another. For example, the Vermont Angler Education & Fishing Information Website will be a tool by which information on Youth Fishing Education programs, Fishing Access facilities, and Put-and-Take Stocking fishing opportunities can be easily disseminated to a wide audience with an abundance of additional follow-up material. Similarly, implementing methods designed to address Angler Churn Rate could be facilitated through such a website. Improving angler access to state waters, or enhancing put-and-take stocking, both separate plans, may very well work to address angler churn rate. The expectation is that all plans will work in concert to ultimately reverse the decline in fishing participation in the State of Vermont.*

Vermont Fishing Information Website

Shawn Good, VTDFW

Mission Statement

To provide a content-rich educational website to aid in the participation and enjoyment of angling in Vermont. To assemble and provide online a wealth of fishing educational, instructional, informational and interactive material to Vermont's angling community. To have an average of 250 website hits per month over the first 12-month period.

Market Plan

The fishing website would give new anglers the knowledge and skill sets needed to become interested and confident anglers, and become and remain license-purchasing anglers in the future. The website will focus heavily on family participation. It will also contain information such as fisheries news and fishing reports, and a message board forum that is fun and exciting for anglers of all skill levels and age. The development of interactive online fishing communities has been successful in maintaining interest and participation in angling.

Product Plan

This new component to Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website will assemble and provide a multitude of educational, instructional and interactive information. New and seasoned fishing enthusiasts will regularly visit the site for its wealth of regularly-updated fishing information, and to talk with others who share their passion for fishing on the message boards.

Possible Website Features

- List of family-friendly fishing sites across the state (from shore and by boat)
- Access areas lists, maps, directions with a list of fish species present
- Fish identification section. Game & non-game species.
- Database of instructional fishing tips and techniques for successful angling for a wide variety of fish species.
- Tackle education: instructional information regarding the use of a wide variety of fishing equipment. For example, how to tie fishing knots, applications of different categories of lures, how to rig and use them correctly (i.e. Texas-rigged plastics, spinnerbaits, crankbaits, top water lures etc), how to cast baitcasters, spinning rods, fly rods, types of fishing line, casting vs. trolling etc.
- Fishing news and reports for species and water bodies, including tips and conditions, around the state from Fisheries employees
- Fish weight calculator tool

- Online submission forms to enter annual and all time record fish catches
- Adult & Kids Bragging Board: Photo submissions & albums from anglers of their catches.
- Interactive moderated fishing forum and message boards designed to develop an online community for Vermont's anglers to gather to share stories, tips and other information.
- Ask an Expert: A question and answer forum concerning fishing, fish biology and fish habitat/behavior, answered by Department experts.
- Quarterly online fishing magazine containing fisheries and/or fishing articles provided by Fisheries staff
- Adopt-a-Fishing program. Kids' section where schools or classes can adopt a fish i.e. lake sturgeon, anadromous Atlantic salmon, muskellunge.
- Calendar of Events: National/local fishing event, tournament, and fishing club meeting calendar.
- Moon Charts: Moon Phase chart to calculate the major and minor fish feeding periods.

Additional Website Resources:

- Information on Let's Go Fishing programs
- Information on Department fish stocking activities
- Information on Fishing Clinics
- Information on Tackle Share/Loaner Program (if started)
- List of Fishing Clubs around the state people can join if they want to.
- List of fishing shows and events around the state

Possible Impediments

Lack of necessary money, staff, and time to develop the material and design the website.

Time Line

January 2008	– Post job ad for webmaster/programmer & outreach staff person
April 2008	– Interviews, hire successful applicants
April – September 2008	– Fishing website design & layout work
May – December 2008	– Material development and review, graphics & artwork etc
January 2009	– Put website online, conduct media campaign, fishing magazine etc. to announce new website
Ongoing in years beyond	– Monitor use, conduct online surveys, poll users about needs, continue to develop and improve material as needed

Money and Resources

- Full-time Fish & Wildlife dedicated webmaster/programmer – \$70,000/year
- Additional I&E (Outreach) employee staff member that can devote the time to coordinate the development of content for the website – \$40,000/year
- Website server infrastructure improvements and upgrades – unknown at this time

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Increasing fishing participation by enhancing Vermont's put-and-take trout stocking program and increasing the public's awareness of the abundant wild trout resources available in Vermont.

Chet Mackenzie, VTDFW

Mission Statement

Within two years, increase participation in angling in Vermont by 500 licensed anglers by increasing the public's awareness of trout fishing opportunities provided by Vermont's put-and-take stocking program and developing additional fisheries using cultured trout near urban centers.

Market Plan

Results from the most recent statewide Vermont Angler Survey of fishing activity in the year 2000 indicated that around 75% of Vermont's resident anglers fish for brook, brown or rainbow trout. Around 40% of the days spent fishing during the open-water season were spent fishing for trout while 45% of the days were spent fishing for warm water species such as black bass, northern pike and panfish. Anglers in Vermont have an abundance of trout fishing opportunities including both wild fisheries and those supported by stocking cultured trout.

Management requests for salmonid stocking in 2007 totaled about 894,000 fish. Requests for yearling or 2-year-old brook, brown, or rainbow trout totaled about 352,000 fish. Some of these fish are used in maintenance or restoration programs but about 223,000 (63%) trout are used in put-and-take stocking programs. Put-and-take stocking programs are designed to provide recreation where a trout fishery is desired but suitable habitat is not available to sustain trout for the whole year or where wild stocks cannot sustain fishing because of high fishing pressure. These fish are not expected to survive beyond the year of stocking. Over 80% of both resident and nonresident anglers responding to the 2000 Vermont angler survey supported put-and-take management programs. A high number (74%) of anglers also supported management programs focused on wild trout. While the stocking of hatchery reared trout is an important fisheries management tool, this practice poses several risks to wild trout populations including direct competition, displacement, genetic alteration and the introduction of diseases, which must be considered before initiating any new stocking program.

Decreasing angling participation in many states has raised concern among groups and has led to research concerning angler motivations, constraints to participation, and angler satisfaction. A recent review of the literature pertaining to angler motivations and constraints to participation indicated that programs that focus solely on more fish will likely not increase angler participation. Programs that focus on the social dimensions of fishing (e.g. relaxation, being outside and close to nature, spending time with family and friends) may be more likely to succeed in increasing participation in fishing.

Previous research in California, Colorado, and Pennsylvania found no statistical relationships between stocking levels and statewide license sales. However a recent study of the large scale stocking reduction (28%) in 2002 in Pennsylvania suggests that the reduction may have led to a 4% decline in license sales. However license sales continued to decline even though stocking levels increased the following year.

In 1994, Vermont began a Trophy Trout Program that stocked larger (up to 18 inches long) 2 year old rainbow and brown trout in sections of the Black, Winooski, and Lamoille rivers and Otter Creek. These areas were selected based on the following criteria: larger rivers with good public access, habitat to hold larger fish through June, and waters which support limited wild trout populations. Angler effort, catch, and harvest rates in these trophy trout sections increased due to these stockings. The Trophy Trout Program was expanded in 2007 by adding sections of three additional rivers and stocking 2-year old fish into 33 ponds managed as put-and-take waters. Anecdotal reports indicate angler interest was high. While these areas support high fishing effort, it is unclear if new license sales are generated or if angler effort is redistributed to these areas.

Put-and-take stocking programs, particularly the Trophy Trout Program, have generated interest among some Vermont anglers. Although it is unclear how the recent increase in this program has impacted license sales, developing more of these programs at suitable locations near or in population centers may provide access to these fisheries for a larger number of anglers, particularly young anglers without transportation.

Increasing public awareness of current stocking efforts and the opportunities to fish for both stocked and wild trout may increase fishing participation. Strategies to increase public awareness could include involving more volunteers in stocking efforts and a larger public outreach effort.

Product Plan

- 1) Review ongoing stocking program and district waters to identify at least two potential stocking sites near or in urban areas by the end of March 2008.
- 2) Identify current stockings, which result in limited angler use and redirect these resources to more effective stockings or the sites identified in #1 above.
- 3) Utilize volunteers for stocking when possible. Contact local schools, media, and sportsmen clubs for assistance in stocking.
- 4) Increase public outreach related to current put-and-take stocking program and opportunities to fish for wild trout by spring, 2008.
- 5) Evaluate the impacts of put-and-take stocking and Trophy Trout programs on license buying behavior of Vermont angler during the next statewide angler survey.

Time Line

Review ongoing put-and-take stocking programs and district waters to identify potential stocking sites near urban areas by the end of March 2008.

Increase public involvement in current stocking efforts by spring 2008.

Money and Resources

10 staff days per district for reviewing existing program, identifying new opportunities and coordinating stocking efforts. 50 staff days total. \$10,000

Increased Public Outreach: Contact local media, statewide new releases, website information – some of this is ongoing effort but additional effort may be required to contact local media. One or two days per district. 10 district staff days plus I&E Division efforts

No additional equipment.

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Build a Communication and Education Division

George Gay, Executive Director, National Forest Alliance
Robert Helm, Vermont State Representative

Mission Statement

Build a successful marketing, outreach and education program (Communication and Education Division) that enables the Department to select and achieve goals valued by both it and its constituencies, including a reversal in the decline of hunting, trapping, and fishing activities in Vermont.

Market Plan

Vermont has experienced a 22% decline in resident hunting license sales since 1987 and this percentage likely applies throughout all market sectors including youth. (Interview w/Chris Sanders, VFW). Experts believe that this downward trend will continue unless dramatic shifts in social factors or social perceptions occur. The only real way to reverse the ongoing decline in hunting and fishing activities is to build an adequately staffed and funded Communication and Education Division within the Department. (*C.f. Wildlife and the American Mind*). This will enable the Department to successfully pursue its mission and, as a consequence, promote hunting, trapping and fishing.

We need to make a significant investment in our Communication and Education Division in order to realize sustainable increases in hunting, trapping, and fishing activities throughout the state. The communication “arm” of our present division has three staff. This “arm” has no dedicated marketing staff, no dedicated website design and maintenance staff, and no dedicated story and copy writing staff. The education “arm” of our Communication and Education Division is also under staffed. Our very successful conservation camps do not have a director, there is no management level staff for either skills education or public education work, there is no dedicated staff for aquatic education activities, and there is no dedicated staff for our outreach to and interaction with schools. Our present division does not have a director. We can no longer accept this condition because, as directed by the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources, we can no longer accept the statewide decline in interest in our outdoor heritage.

“It’s not what it costs. It’s what it pays.” And, the payoff is huge. It is the long-term sustainability of Vermont’s outdoor heritage. If we fail to take this bold step, our children will liken us to the legendary leader of the Roman Empire and say, like Nero, they fiddled while Rome burned. It is time to go big or go home.

Proactive. Continue the following activities: 1) broadcast and print advertising; 2) press releases; 3) direct mail; 4) camps, courses, and clinics; and 5) maintain website. Initiate the following enhancements: 1) produce own print stories, “B” roll film, and television shows to build

credibility around and awareness of Department's work; 2) create an aggressive "on line" sales option within an upgraded, feature driven website; 3) develop an enhanced state-wide public message: "Vermont Means Fish and Wildlife"; 4) showcase wildlife viewing and other non-consumptive uses around the state; and 5) create an "in school" hunter/trapper/angle education model. We will convince every day Vermonters that hunting, trapping, and angling activities are as fundamental to Vermont as maple sugaring and foliage. Vermonters of all ages will appreciate hunting, trapping, and angling as wholesome, essential components of what makes Vermont special. Non-consumptive users of the resources such as bird watchers will come to value the interests of hunters, trappers, and anglers. People who participate in these traditional activities will be celebrated. In two years, the decline in hunting license sales will stop. In five years, hunting license sales will have increased by 750 over 2009 numbers.

Product Plans

Currently, our Communications and Education Division has three staff on the communications side. As indicated by the attached organization chart, 12 communications positions are needed. On the education side, we have six staff on the education side, and as indicated by the attached organization chart, 13 positions are needed. The Division does not have a leadership team in place. There is no Director and associated support staff to manage/guide the current staff. As a result, the Division currently operates with 1/3 of the needed capacity and no leadership. The entire Department suffers from this shortfall. Eighteen essential positions are vacant. Our plan is to fill these positions within the Department as noted on the attached Communication and Education organization chart. It is vital that the marketing and education aspects of such a division remain within the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The individuals filling these positions must be intimate with fish and wildlife issues and be able to work closely with field staff.

Possible Impediments

Funding: We are led to believe that the Vermont Legislature will not initiate a new program that costs taxpayer dollars to build and operate. We are told that there is not enough money. Yet, time and time again, the legislature finds the money to fund programs that are supported by a vociferous majority of Vermonters. The recent \$3.2 million bail out of Vermont's dairy industry is a prime example. There is a growing, statewide call for adequate state funding to support the Department. An informal survey conducted by the Department in 2000 indicates that more than 80% of Vermonters support a redistribution of existing sales tax to support the Department.

Positions need to be approved.

Time Line

Feb. 2009 - VFW in consultation with other Northeastern states, writes necessary position descriptions.

Apr. 2009 - VFW publicizes management level positions in targeted publications, the web, and other outlets.

July 2009 - VFW fills all management level positions in the enhanced Communication and Education Division.

Oct. 2009 - VFW publicizes support level positions in targeted publications, the web, and other outlets.

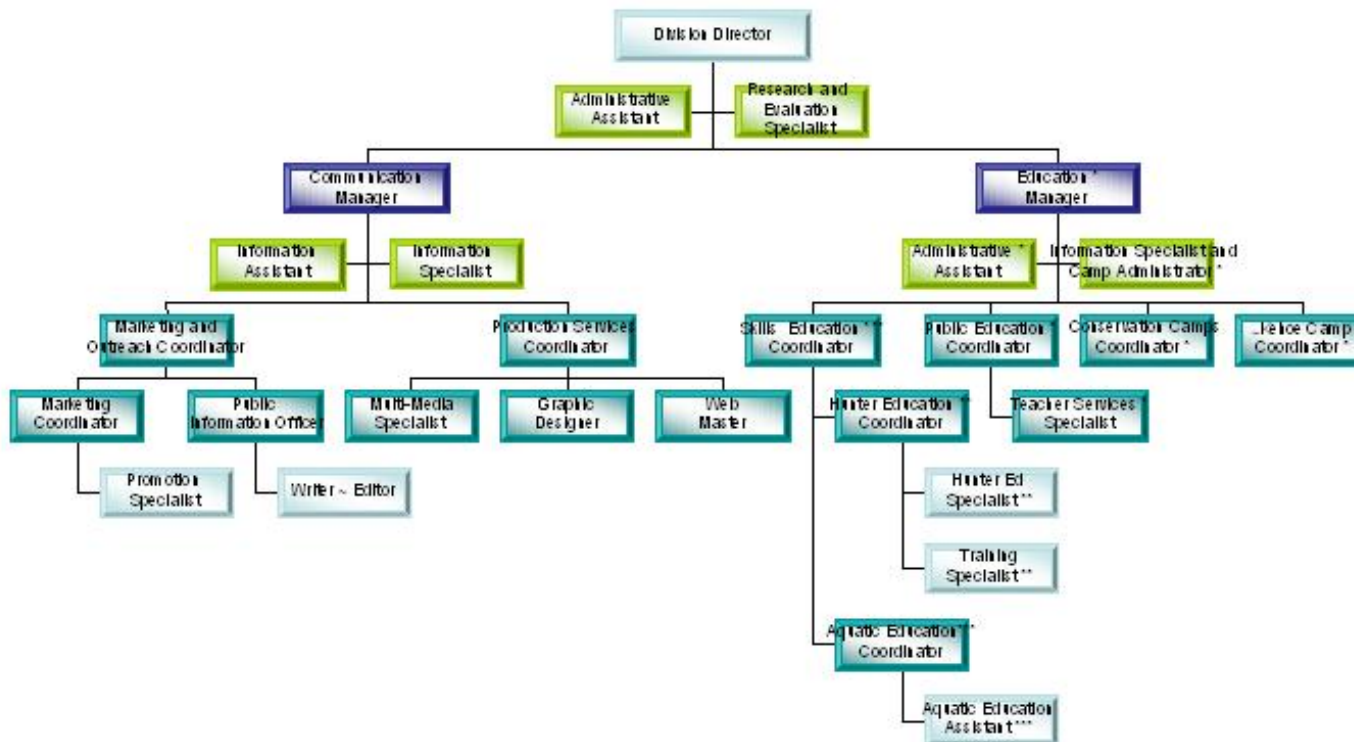
Dec. 2009 - VFW fills all management level positions in the enhanced public affairs division.

Money and Resources

- The cost in state funds of nine communications positions is approximately \$585,000 (9 x 65k).
- The cost in state funds of seven education positions is \$113,750 (7 x 65k /4). Education positions are paid with 75% federal funds and 25% state funds.
- The cost in state funds of a Division Director and direct support staff is \$205,000 (1 x 75 k plus 2 x 65 k). \$903,750

The Legislative Funding Committee Report released in 2007 supplies a variety of potential funding mechanisms that could supply the additional funds needed for the positions.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department ~ Communication and Education Division ~



Expand Youth Participation in Hunting

George Gay, Executive Director, National Forest Alliance

Mission Statement

Introduce more Vermont youth to hunting. Increasing the number of resident youth hunting licenses sold in Vermont by 1% per year over a three-year period.

Market Plan

Vermont first sold resident youth hunting licenses in 1993. Sales of such licenses peaked at 10,053 in 2000. Since then, the number of resident youth hunting licenses sold in Vermont has decreased an average of 4% per year. Amazingly, just 7,561 resident youth hunting licenses were sold in Vermont last year, an overall decrease from the year 2000 of 25%.

As noted in a 2003 report issued by Responsive Management, Factors Related to Hunting and Fishing Participation Among the Nation's Youth, "The key to active participation in and commitment to hunting and fishing by future generations is fostering this commitment and participation among today's youth." ("hereinafter referred to as "Factors"). Unfortunately, several major demographic trends are working against hunting: 1) older population; 2) smaller percentage of population is white; 3) more urban population; and 4) an increase of number of hours worked by parents (Factors). Vermont has experienced a 22% decline in resident license sales since 1987 and this percentage likely applies throughout all market sectors including youth. (Interview w/Chris Sanders, VFW).

Those youth interested in going hunting are likely to live or have grown up in a rural area and be white males (Factors). Unfortunately, few youth (15%) hear anything about hunting in schools (Factors). This is key since the mean age at which youth hunters start hunting is 10 years old (Factors). The top reason why a youth would want to hunt more, excluding those related to family dynamics, is if he/she could learn more at a hunter education class (Factors). We do know that mentoring is very important in attracting youth to the sport (Factors).

Product Plans

Implement a model hunter education program for elementary schools. The National Archery in the Schools program provides guidance. We will implement the program in the following steps in 2008:

1. Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFW) staff designs a hunter education course that can be easily implemented in Vermont's public and private schools as part of a school's existing physical education curriculum, targeting grades 5-12.

2. VFW staff identifies a lead private partner that will implement, coordinate, and oversee project implementation and assessment over a five-year trial period.
3. Private Partner evaluates and picks five schools to work with that have the following traits: geographically dispersed; located in rural area; a Town Forest or Municipal Forest is adjacent to the school; a local liaison interested in the program is connected to the school.
4. Private Partner manages process to get formal program approval from necessary public officials.
5. VFW trains one or more physical education instructors from each Partner School at a coordinated School Instructor training day and, as a result, these School Instructors become certified hunter education volunteers.
6. Private Partners provide/procure all necessary supplies for each school program.
7. The five Partner Schools roll out the program w/support from Private Partners and VFW. Seven kids are enrolled in and complete the program in each Partner School.
8. Each kid that successfully completes the program is given, if they want, a Vermont hunting license. These licenses are paid for by the Private Partner or Private Partner associate groups. Additional Project Partners such as Ruffed Grouse Society, Vermont Trappers Association, Ducks Unlimited, and National Wild Turkey Federation give out free memberships to program graduates and subscriptions to partner publications such as Fur, Fish & Game Magazine, Northern Woodlands Magazine, and Outdoors Magazine.
9. The local liaison will identify interested parents or local residents who will take all interested program graduates on a mentored hunt into the Town Forest located adjacent to Partner School. VFW will address and ameliorate any liability issues associated w/mentored hunts.
10. In the spring of the following year, the Private Partner, with the support of VFW, will host a Game Dinner in the Town Forest at which the program will be celebrated, key implementation partners will be thanked, and the new hunters will be encouraged.

Our program will hit the following recruitment targets for first time youth license sales: 70 in 2008, 140 in 2009, and 210 in 2010.

Possible Impediments

Society's Opposition to Hunting: We are sometimes paralyzed by a belief that a large number of Vermonters do not support hunting. In truth, a large majority (88% ~ Future of Hunting Conference Report) of Vermonters approve of hunting and a majority of youth approve of hunting (58% ~ Factors). Increased pro-hunting message in media is helpful but not essential.

Lack of Partner Schools: We are led to believe that it is almost impossible to change a school curriculum. Historical precedent for this program exists in Vermont schools (Interview w/Major David LaCours). Programs similar to this one but somewhat less organized are currently underway in a few schools throughout the state. Somehow those schools were

flexible (Interview w/Chris Sanders, VFW). Unfortunately, these programs are not networked so, as a result, they are unable to build momentum and encourage duplication.

VFW Staff Resources: VFW is short staffed. We know this. However, the hunter education program is, in fact, relatively well staffed and well funded due to its easy qualification for matching Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Funding.

Game Suppers: Restrictions on the sale or public consumption of game may make this difficult. VFW issues a permit for nonprofits entities to sell or distribute game free of charge. A game supper for this project would be an appropriate, permitted activity (Interview w/Major La Cours, VFW)

Time Line

Feb. 2008 - VFW, using existing programs in other states, designs the program.

Feb. 2008 - VFW staff identify a lead private partner.

Feb. 2008 - Private Partner (50 volunteer hours per year) evaluates and picks ten possible schools to work with that have the following traits: geographically dispersed; located in rural area; a Town Forest is adjacent to the school; a local liaison interested in the program is connected to the school.

Apr. 2008 - Private Partner (50 VHs) manages process to get formal program approval from necessary public officials overseeing five Private Partner Schools.

July 2008 - VFW trains one or more physical education instructors from each Partner School at a coordinated School Instructor training day and, as a result, these School Instructors become certified hunter education volunteers.

July 2008 - Private Partners (50 VHs) provide/procure all necessary supplies for each school program.

Oct. 2008 - The five Partner Schools roll out the program w/support from Private Partners (100 VHs) and VFW. Seven kids are enrolled in and complete the program in each Partner School.

Oct. 2008 - Each child that successfully completes the program is given, if they want, a Vermont hunting license. These licenses are paid for by the Private Partner (\$40 per membership and \$30 per subscription for each of 210 program graduates or a total of \$14,700) or Private Partner associate groups. Additional Project Partners such as Ruffed Grouse Society, Vermont Trappers Association, Ducks Unlimited, and National Wild Turkey Federation give out free memberships to program graduates and subscriptions to partner publications

such as Fur, Fish & Game Magazine, Northern Woodlands Magazine, and Outdoors Magazine.

Dec. 2008 - The local liaison will identify interested parents or local residents who will take all interested program graduates on a mentored hunt into the Town Forest located adjacent to Partner School (100 VHs). VFW will address and ameliorate any liability issues associated w/mentored hunts.

Mar. 2009 - In the spring of the following year, the Private Partner, with the support of VFW, will host a Game Dinner in the Town Forest at which the program will be celebrated, key implementation partners will be thanked, and the new hunters will be encouraged (50 VHs).

Money and Resources

This project will generate net revenues for the VFW in the following ways:

- License sales revenues: \$2,520 total with a per year average = \$840
- Volunteer hours to be used as match: 400 VHs at \$20 per hour leveraging 3:1 match dollars = \$8,000 per year leveraged by a factor of 3 = \$32,000
- In kind donations to be used as a match: \$4,900 per year average leveraging 3:1 match dollars = \$19,600.
- Existing staff: there will be some additional impact on staff due to increased structure added to existing program.

We anticipate an average annual boost in VFW funds \$52,440 and an average annual boost in sales of resident youth hunting licenses of 70. *Over a three-year period, we anticipate \$157,320 in additional funds for VFW and an increase of resident youth hunting licenses sold of 210.*

Statewide Habitat Improvement Services Program

David Sausville, VTDFW

Mission Statement

Provide varied wildlife habitat stages on private and municipal lands for the enhancement of wildlife populations and hunting opportunities.

Within five years have assisted 125 of Vermont's large private and municipal property owners (with 25-acres or more) with management activities on their lands to improve wildlife habitat.

It is anticipated through this habitat management program that hunter success will increase and assist with retention and recruitment of hunters. The goal of the program is to have all of the participants to permit hunting access.

Market Plan

Interested landowners (private and municipal), with 25-acres or more, working from largest to smallest land holdings, will be broken down by physiographic regions of the state. Landowners will be assisted with the development of habitat management plans that are designed to take the landowners goals into account in concert with sound wildlife habitat management practices.

Product Plans

Over 80% of Vermont's land is privately owned. For maximum benefits for a diversity of wildlife, private landowners must be actively engaged in habitat management. A key concept of the plan is to bring owners of contiguous parcels of land together to improve habitat on a larger scale. As part of the program, all current and future town forest management plans will be encouraged to incorporate wildlife management activities.

Within six months hire a five-year contractual position to conduct a landowner inventory and assist 125 property owners in the development of habitat management plans.

Partnerships will be developed with non-government organizations to conduct landowner contacts and management-oriented workshops to assist landowners. In addition, partnerships will be investigated to provide habitat workshops. Examples of potential partners include but are not limited to: rod and gun clubs, municipalities, and NGOs.

The program will assist landowners to investigate various incentives (easement, financial, etc.) and advise them to retain and protect critical habitats, (wintering areas, wetlands, stream banks, etc.).

The project will develop educational tours for public officials on management programs and program needs.

Possible Impediments

Private landowner concerns may include the following: lack of funds to complete non-commercial activities, fear of active management responsibilities, fear of state involvement, lack of inter-departmental coordination (ex. use value program), and county foresters workload with use value, etc.

Town officials may have concerns that include: town laws, lack of conservation commissions, lack of town forest management plans, and lack of personnel.

Currently the Department of Fish and Wildlife's private landowner assistance program is at risk of being eliminated due to funding.

Time Line

June 2008 - Provide permanent funding for the two current private lands biologists that are funded under soft money from W.H.I.P. Federal funds currently used to pay for positions are targeted for elimination.

June 2008 - Create and hire a five-year contractual landowner assistance specialist position within the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Dec. 2008 - Complete a statewide landowner contact list for use in prioritizing contacts and targeting regions within the State.

Dec. 2012 - Have assisted 100 landowners and 25 towns develop management plans for their private and municipal properties.

2009-12 - Host five workshops/public tours per year, for a combined total of 20-workshops/tours.

Money and Resources

- Five-year Contractual Position: \$75,000 annually (\$75,000 is base salary and benefits)
- 20 -Tours/Workshops: \$20,000 (\$1,000 per event)
- Two Private Land Biologist Positions: \$150,000 annually (\$75,000 per position for salary and benefits) Funded at 25% State match or \$37,500 annually.

Improving Department's Education & Public Relations

Cedric Sanborn, R&L Archery

Mission Statement

Increase publicity of the Department's current and future activities, highlighting accomplishments for Vermont's wildlife and public, thereby increasing participation, awareness and acceptance of trapping and hunting. A ten percent increase in media coverage, web site use, and hunter education courses each year for two years.

Market Plan

Media plays a significant role in how the Fish and Wildlife Department, hunting, and trapping are viewed by the public. This program will contact general managers, editors, and sports editors of the various forms (television, radio, and newsprint) of media coverage. The Department's website will be enhanced and developed into the premier location for hunting and trapping information. The State's heavily used rest areas and state parks will have hunting, fishing, trapping, and conservation kiosks developed and installed throughout the State. The hunter education courses will be expanded by offering additional hunter education classes at convenient and peak interest times, with the use of new and current volunteer instructors.

Product Plans

1. Media Coverage:

Department Marketing Specialist will meet with all Vermont news media within 24 months, requesting an increased coverage of fish and wildlife issues, and the format information needs to be in for their individual needs. The Department will provide the media with good materials to use and show them the support for featured stories. Pilot projects will be developed from a sample of each media type to demonstrate the value of hunting and trapping programs to the remaining media outlets. Hunting, trapping, fishing, and conservation efforts will be promoted in a positive light. Public interest and enthusiasm will be created and maintained by keeping hunting, trapping, and fishing activities in the public eye, through timely media events on upcoming seasons and statuses, sporting events, etc. The Department also needs to encourage sports groups to submit articles and invite media coverage of ongoing events.

Meetings will be with general managers/editors/sports editors. Information shared will include hunting, trapping, and fishing demographics within their coverage area. We currently have a huge media market that includes 80,000 active resident hunters, 44,000 resident anglers, spouses, children, and non-active hunters and fishermen. Most editors may not be aware of how large that viewing interest is.

There are numerous radio stations, newspapers, and television stations serving the state. There are also Vermont outdoor writers and New England sports writers and editors that could promote Vermont's wildlife and activities. Success will be measured by the number of newspaper, television stations, and radio channels that carry Department of Fish and Wildlife articles.

2. Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Web Site:

Enhance and maintain the Fish and Wildlife Department's web site to make it user friendly for dial-up users and make it the premier location for hunting, trapping, and fishing related issues. The web site should and must be a major component of how the Department communicates with existing and potential new customers. Information must be pertinent and easy to locate and use. Dial up user data needs to be input, not scanned for printing, and pictures should be of low resolution, with little or no shading.

The current site is very well laid out and easy to navigate through, but information is out of date, current reports are few, and the format is not user friendly for dial-up. The site has no information related to upcoming events or statewide resources (such as hunting and fishing clubs, etc). Items to add would include leashed dog handlers, fishing derbies, gun clubs, banquets, biathlons, seminars, archery tournaments, chicken shoots, meat cutters, nuisance trappers, taxidermists, access areas, guides, sighting forms of rare and endangered species.

3. Hunting/Fishing/Trapping/Conservation Kiosks:

Many new rest area buildings and most state parks and forests have space to display material related to hunting, trapping, fishing, and the importance of creating and maintaining habitat. Brochures of fishing and hunting access areas, gun clubs, types of game available and where, etc., will be provided. Educational program ideas can be borrowed from Conservation Camp presentations. Materials will put hunting, trapping, and fishing in a positive light, explaining their part in resource management and traditional uses. Values of natural/native meats and fish can also be promoted. Other uses of this material would be at state fairs and sportsmen's shows.

If 50,000 people annually pass through the rest areas involved, and 10% of them take the time to look and take home materials and 1% actually get involved that would be 5,000 new participants per year. The target for state parks will be the same percentage results.

4. Additional hunter education opportunities.

Currently there is a severe shortage of bow hunter education courses being offered which prohibits growth of bow and arrow hunting participants. Hunter education courses need to be offered at times convenient to the public and additional targeted courses offered just prior to the major hunting seasons to eliminate a perceived shortage of courses.

Additional courses to be offered include; a) Conservation Camps expands hunter education courses to include the bow hunter education course during regular camp weeks, b) work with and encourage current and future volunteers to become certified in the combined hunter/bow safety education classes, to make it more convenient for new hunters, c) offer both courses in the school

system as part of a physical education program, d) have the Boy Scouts offer both courses as part of their summer camp programs, e) have the education courses offered by 4-H clubs.

Possible Impediments

Individual media groups will not meet or choose not to enhance or add coverage of F&W issues.

Agency opts not to allocate resources to create marketing position.

If task needs to be done by current staff then the time line will be longer.

Lack of personnel to maintain and enhance the web site.

Interagency politics over program development and placement of kiosks.

Schools and scouts are not receptive to hunting based programs.

Parents of scouts already have issues with not wanting their sons shooting archery at animal targets.

Not enough combined hunter/bow education instructors available.

Time Line

1. Media Coverage:

Jan. 2008 - Compile a list of media contacts and develop a breakdown of demographics by county or geographic area.

Mar. 2008 - Start meetings with the major media sources in each region or set up meetings at regional sites with multiple media groups. Complete media meetings within 2 years. We are assuming a maximum time invested in each meeting at one day (travel time, meeting time etc) for a total of 114 days for a media sources.

Dec. 2008 - Complete a presentation at an outdoor writers conference detailing the market and number of topics available to them.

2. Vermont Fish and Wildlife State Web Site:

Jan. 2008 - Assign a person or persons to be in overall charge of the web site.

Jan. 2008 - Set a department policy on staff getting timely information (annual reports, species reports, etc) to the site managers.

Jan. 2008 - Immediately start updating the information on the site. Success of the enhancements will be measured by installing a visit counter and tracking both number of hits and where they originated (in state or out of state).

Feb. 2008 - Assign additional personnel resources from each division to spend 4 hours per week on the web site, collecting information listed above.

3. Hunting/Fishing/Trapping/Conservation Kiosks:

Dec. 2008 - Complete a proto type display for kiosks.

Dec. 2009 - Install 8-12 kiosks in higher traffic rest areas and state parks, (ex. Williston, Sharon, Brattleboro rest areas and Grand Isle, Green River Reservoir State Parks).

4. Additional hunter education opportunities:

Feb. 2008 – Encourage volunteer instructors to offer a combined general hunter education and bow hunter education courses. For the standard hunter safety courses the goal is to have 15% of the classes offer the bow hunter component in 2008 with an end goal of 50% participation by 2011.

June 2008 - Offer the merged general hunter and bow hunter education course at the general Conservation Camp weeks starting in 2008.

June 2008 - Investigate schools offering hunter education programs.

June 2008 - Work with the 4-H program to offer hunter education courses starting in 2008.

Dec. 2008 - Work with scouts to design programs for the 2009 camp year.

Dec. 2010 - Have physical education programs offer hunter and bow hunting education classes as part of the school curriculum. Our goal is to have five schools enrolled by 2010, and 50% of the schools by 2015. These courses would be appropriate for grades 6 – 12.

Money and Resources

- Marketing Specialist Position: \$75,000 per year (\$75,000 for salary and benefits)
- Kiosks Development: \$40,000 to \$60,000 (\$5,000 per display for materials and labor)

- Website: Use existing personnel to manage the site as part of a job description, 4–8 hours per week, with each division responsible for maintaining their section of the site.
- Expanded Hunter Education Courses: Costs of offering additional programs are basically free as it is done with certified volunteer instructors. Coordination will be done by the department’s hunter education coordinators.

Program for Increasing Land Access for Hunters and Trappers

Forrest Hammond, VTDFW

Mission Statement

Provide additional and improved access to private and public lands for hunters and trappers in Vermont. Provide town lands maps on Department website. Fifty percent of maps will be posted the first year with the reminder posted the second year. Increasing the number of parking areas on public lands by 10% annually over five years and reducing the amount of acres legally posted on private lands with “No Trespassing” signs. Increased access will assist with hunter retention by providing them local areas for quick evening or morning hunts. We anticipate increased hunting license sales by 2% (1,600 licenses) over five years for an annual return of \$25,600.00, using a basic resident license priced at \$16.00 per year.

Market Plan

Decreased access to lands for hunting and trapping has been cited as a primary reason for the declines in participation in these activities in recent years (Responsive Management 2006). This program will improve access. Managers of both private and public lands will receive assistance and incentives for allowing improved access to the public for hunting, trapping and fishing.

Product Plans

1. A two year contractual position should be created to assess and prioritize a state wide program of improved access area development.
2. Public Land Managers:
 - a. Vermont has hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands available for hunting in the form of hundreds of individual land parcels, but most of them have inadequate access. To reverse this trend we propose increasing public access to public lands by increased advertising of the availability of state WMA’s, state forests and parks, fishing access areas and town forests for hunting and by increasing signs and the number of parking areas. Large blocks of public lands that do not currently have public access will be identified for other management strategies such as acquisition of additional rights of way. All lands will be surveyed for the current status of public access.
 - b. A priority system will be developed for purchasing high quality habitat for hunting purposes.

c. To increase the public's awareness of the availability of town lands to hunting and trapping. A strategy will be developed to list all town forests, water supply lands, as well as federal lands within the state that are open to public hunting and trapping on the Fish and Wildlife Department's Website.

3. Private Landowners:

The majority of land in Vermont is privately owned. Public access will be improved by:

- a. Including access for hunting as a primary component of the Department's "Landowner Welcome" Program. The current program promotes open space and traditional values but does not specifically include hunting. Welcome "package" should include a brochure on the importance of hunting, a wild game recipe book, and Safety Zone and/or "Hunting by Permission Only" signs to replace the more restrictive no trespassing signs. Local sportsmen clubs should be informed of new landowners within their towns.
- b. Promote the law (Chapter 203) that exempts landowners from liability.
- c. Promote "Hunting by Permission Only" signs rather than "No Trespassing" signs. This concept may foster new relationships between landowners and hunters thereby providing more access.
- d. Work with County Foresters to identify areas of the state over browsed by deer and develop landowner/sportsmen strategies for getting improved access for hunters on private land. Work with NGOs to promote and provide assistance.
- e. Assist Sportsmen's Clubs in creating "Landowner Appreciation" programs.

Possible Impediments

Lack of positions

Lack of money

Lack of public interest (town officials potentially oppose)

Currently, the State does not recognize "Hunting by Permission Only" signs as an acceptable form of legal posting.

Time Line

- June 2008 - Hire a two year contractual position to assess and prioritize a statewide program of improved access area development.
- June 2008 - Develop a hunting and trapping message for the Welcome Wagon Program and begin distribution.
- Dec. 2008 - Create a position of land acquisition specialist within the Fish and Wildlife Department to purchase high quality habitat for hunting purposes.
- Dec. 2008 - Make changes to the Department website.
- Dec. 2008 - Have legislative approval of a new rule to accept “Hunting By Permission Only” signs as legal form of posting.
- Dec. 2012 - Increase the number of parking areas on public lands by 10% annually.

Money and Resources

- Two year contractual position: \$150,000 (includes salary, vehicle, benefits, and incidentals for two years)
- Land Acquisition Specialist: \$100,000 (includes salary, vehicle, benefits, and incidentals) per year
- Parking area development: \$50,000
- Supplies for “Welcome Wagon Program” (2 – years worth) \$15,000

Shooting Ranges

Thomas Jones, VTDFW

Mission Statement

Increase the number of skilled hunters shooting in the state of Vermont, by providing every hunter in the state a safe range to shoot at. Increase the number of persons shooting at public and private shooting ranges by 10 percent annually for 10 years. It is anticipated that through this program hunters will be retained with the potential of increasing license sales.

Market Plan

Shooting ranges play an integral role in hunting management through the provision of shooting skills development and firearm safety instruction. A study done in 2005 by Responsive Management in Minnesota identified “distance traveled to ranges” as a common constraint for shooting range utilization. Several well distributed ranges throughout the State will provide all hunters and shooters that do not have access to shooting ranges with locations to practice their skills.

Product Plans

1. Within one year create a position of Shooting Range Coordinator within the Fish and Wildlife Department to be responsible for all aspects of public shooting ranges in Vermont. Position will also be responsible for developing and maintaining partnerships with private shooting ranges, local rod and gun clubs, 4H Shooting Sports program, Boy Scouts, and others. The Department currently has an MOA with the University of Vermont Extension Service supporting 4H Shooting Sports and hunter education programs.
2. Enhance the two existing shooting ranges at Buck Lake and Edward Kehoe Conservation Camps for safety concerns and increase public utilization.
3. Enhance the two public shooting areas located at the Wenlock WMA (Island Pond, VT), and Hammond Fishing Access Area (Hartland, VT) to correct existing safety and environmental problems. With the addition of the shooting range coordinator additional shooting programs could be developed on ranges, thereby increasing public utilization and retention of hunters into the future.
4. Investigate cost sharing with fish and game clubs who in turn will allow public shooting at certain times of the week or year. An example is the recent memorandum of agreement between the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Included in this MOA are provisions for providing increased shooting range opportunities in Vermont.

Possible Impediments

Currently there is a lack of personnel to conduct operations management to help insure public shooting range safety and appearance and investigate potential new range locations.

Negative attitudes toward shooting.

Currently there is a lack of funding.

Time Line

Dec. 2008 - Create a position of Shooting Range Coordinator within the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Dec. 2009 - Enhance four existing ranges.

Money and Resources

- Shooting Range Coordinator: \$75,000 annually (base salary and benefits)
- Enhancement of Existing Ranges:

Costs associated:

Buck Lake (Woodbury) - \$50,000
Kehoe (Castleton) - \$25,000
Wenlock (Ferdinard) - \$25,000
Hartland - \$30,000