



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FISHING AND BOATING SERVICES

Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation Plan

RRP



Larry Hogan, Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building, B-2
580 Taylor Avenue Annapolis, MD 21401
410-260-8367
dnr.maryland.gov

Additional Telephone Contact Information:
Toll free in Maryland: 877-620-8DNR ext. 8367
OR Individual unit/program toll-free number
Out of state call: 410-260-8367
Text Telephone (TTY) users call via the Maryland Relay

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INTRODUCTION • *Why an R3 Plan?*

Maryland is a small state with an active and diverse population that is engaged in natural resources recreation, management, and conservation. Maryland's varied terrain and climate and 10,460 square miles of land and water provide ample opportunities for outdoor recreation. Across the state, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than a half-million acres of public lands, including state forests, wildlife management areas, and 75 state parks. Those lands feature more than 900 miles of trails for biking, hiking, and horseback riding, as well as unique water access and camping facilities. Maryland has over 500 public water access sites, more than any other jurisdiction in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

In Maryland, wildlife-associated recreation generated over \$1 billion in revenue in 2011 (U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011). Over 400,000 anglers and 88,000 hunters contributed nearly half that total, while the remainder of the revenue came from over 1.4 million participants in wildlife watching activities in Maryland. The U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce (2011) reported that 31 percent of Marylanders participated in wildlife-associated recreation in 2011.

Outdoor recreation and conservation are intertwined as fish and wildlife conservation funding is based on a [“user-pay, user-benefit” model](#) (Organ et al., 2012). In the U.S., dedicated funding for habitat conservation, harvest management, research, restoration, and monitoring initiatives by state agencies comes from license and permit fees for fishing, hunting, and trapping, as well as a motor boat fuels tax and excise taxes on angling, hunting, and shooting sports. Thus, participation in traditional outdoor activities like fishing and hunting are key to resource conservation and management.

Over time, changes in population, demographics, lifestyle, and leisure time have changed how people are enjoying natural resources and the outdoors. America is becoming more urban, more culturally diverse, and older ([RBFf infographic Determining Actionable Strategies for Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation](#), Sept. 2019). Involvement in traditional pastimes like fishing and hunting (that produce license revenues) has decreased, while involvement in wildlife viewing, hiking, cycling, and outdoor adventure (that do not produce license revenues) has increased. The traditional pathway for learning to fish is childhood fishing with a family member. The [2019 special report on fishing](#) found that nearly 78 percent of current adult participants were introduced to fishing during childhood and after the age of 12 it is much less likely for a person to try fishing. In today's world, the traditional pathway is no longer happening, and modern lifestyles, technology, and activities are competing for leisure time among families and younger generations.

In Maryland, revenue from sport anglers provides funding for almost half of all fisheries-related programs. The DNR would not be able to manage the state's diverse and high quality fishery resources without revenue from fishing licenses. We recognize the ongoing need to better understand industry information on demographics, barriers to fishing, and angler motivations to develop a strategic plan that will provide a roadmap for expanding participation, better serving customers, and bringing former anglers back to fishing. This inaugural recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) plan was developed through extensive conversations with staff and stakeholders and with support from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF). It will guide our activities and efforts to recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers over the next three years.



Sunset Lure by Laura Brown

2020-2021 R3 PLAN ROADMAP

Staff from Fishing and Boating Services (FABS) have attended RBFF Workshops for several years and have always come back inspired to try some of the R3 efforts in Maryland. Without an R3 Coordinator or dedicated R3 staff it is more challenging to implement these ideas; therefore, the R3 efforts were minimal. In 2019, the Director of FABS recognized the need to work with other programs and units in the Department to collectively recruit outdoor enthusiasts into fishing. Recognizing that integrated and coordinated R3 efforts would maximize efficiency and impact, an R3 Matrix Team was formed with a common objective to increase recreational and DNR outdoor users.

FABS began analyzing their R3 efforts and developed an inventory of activities across the unit and with the R3 Matrix Team partners. It became clear through this mapping exercise that staff conducted a lot of R3 activities, but with little measurement of success, awareness of partner opportunities, or coordination with Department units. FABS decided to kick off the planning process in a Workshop modeled from the DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service's recent efforts. The process unfolded as follows.



January 2020 - Two day R3 Workshop

Day 1: The R3 Workshop included a facilitated discussion and learning from an R3 expert, and was a chance to analyze our efforts and share ideas.

Day 2: The team of attendees discussed workshop findings, actions, and a framework for developing a Fishing and Boating Services R3 plan.

February 2020 - Fishing and Boating Services Staff Summit

The Summit attendees participated in a breakout group activity, which provided 66 actions and ideas in these areas:

- Increasing access to fishing opportunities
- Reaching new users/audiences.

Fall 2020 - The COVID-19 pandemic slowed progress on the plan, but the Steering Committee used this time to consolidate and organize the ideas from the previous meetings into the spreadsheet format developed for the Arkansas R3 Plan.

February-March 2021 - Created a Planning Team from the attendees at the January 2020 R3 Workshop. This team met six times over the course of the two months to review and revise the spreadsheet of ideas. The team also developed the R3 Plan guidelines and definitions.

April 2021 - An overview of the draft plan was presented to the [Sport Fish Advisory Commission](#) for feedback and partner engagement suggestions.

June 2021- Partner Engagement meeting to discuss the draft plan and opportunities to work on actions with fishing and activity clubs, conservation groups, federal and local government partners. Made additions and revision to the draft based on partner feedback.

October 2021- The plan is reviewed by department leadership and sent to all FABS staff. A prioritized action plan will be developed in the fall to begin plan implementation in 2022.



WITH GRATITUDE...

Involvement and contributions from the Planning Team were critical to the development of this plan. These are DNR staff from FABS and other units that voluntarily answered the call for help. The discussions were long and thoughtful, and we could not have made this strategic plan without this type of team involvement. Thank you.

Timothy D'Adamo

Sara Dawes

Kevin Ensor

Lynn Fegley

Paul Genovese

Angela Giuliano

Daniel Goetz

Letha Grimes

Pamela Haas

Timothy Hamilton

Jacob Holtz

Harry Hornick

Gina Hunt

Barbara Johnston

Carrie Kennedy

Annalise Kenney

Karen Knotts

Joseph Love

Michael Luisi

Christopher Markin

Chelsea C. Miller

Donna Morrow

Tamara O'Connell

Tony Prochaska

Michelle Ramirez

Stephanie Richards

Brian Richardson

Matt Sell

Michael Simonsen

Beth Versak

Craig Weedon

Sarah E. Widman

Angel Willey

Eric G. Wilson

Erik Zlokovitz

PLAN DEFINITIONS • *We want to make sure we are clear! This is a list of definitions for acronyms and terms as used in the context of this plan.*

ACRONYMS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

ARE: Aquatic Resources Education Program

AFWA: Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

BOW: Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program

CAHSS: Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports

CRM: Customer Relationship Management System

DNR: Maryland Department of Natural Resources

FABS: Fishing and Boating Services

MARI: Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative

MVA: Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

ORAM: Outdoor Recreation Adoption Mode

QR: Quick Response Code

R3: Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation

RBFF: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

GLOSSARY

Aquatic Resources Education Program: The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Resources Education program has fishing related equipment available to loan to organizations, youth groups, and community groups.

Backyard Fishing Program: The [Backyard Fishing Program](#) supports the Project Green Classroom initiative to promote outdoor activities and environmental education through schools, in communities, and on public lands.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program: Offers [outdoor skills workshops](#) specifically for women 18 years of age and older, although men are welcome to participate. The workshops enable women to learn about a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in a casual, non-threatening environment. The classes are designed to be as hands-on as possible, giving participants enough knowledge to further pursue their interests once the workshop is over.

Churn Rate: The percentage of anglers who held a license in one year but did not repurchase in the following year.

COMPASS: Maryland Department of Natural Resources' online license portal which provides 24/7 self-service access to our product catalog of recreational licenses, permits and stamps; off-road vehicle registrations; magazine subscriptions; and donations.

Community Organization: A group located within a specific geographic area that shares similar goals and/or interests.

Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports: A nonprofit organization with a mission to facilitate the promotion and growth of hunting and shooting sports and to educate the public on the contributions that hunters and recreational shooters make towards wildlife conservation.

Current License Holder: An individual who has purchased a fishing license and it has not expired.

Customer Relationship Management System: Technology to administer interactions with Department customers, typically using data analysis. The system can be used to track buying behavior and communicate with all agency customers. This system includes event attendees and license customers, and can be used to cross promote events to different customer bases.

Department: Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Diversity: The practice of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds in fishing and outdoor activities. A portion of the plan focuses on age, gender, racial and ethnic diversity.

Family: A group of people related by birth or affinity, or living together in the same household.

FABS Fisheries mission: Assess, protect, conserve, fairly allocate and promote the sustainable utilization of wild and farm-raised fish resources of Maryland for balanced ecological and socio-economic benefits.

New Fishing Recruit: An individual who has purchased a fishing license, but did not purchase a fishing license in the five previous years.

Fishing and Boating Services: The unit within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources which manages the state's fish resources and boating regulations, buoys, and navigation.

FishMaryland: Maryland Department of Natural Resources recreational [fishing award program](#).

Geofence: A virtual boundary around an area, using global positioning system (GPS) or radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, that enables software to trigger a response when a mobile device enters or leaves the area.

Inclusion: The act of developing programming to welcome and maintain a diverse population of anglers.

Lapsed angler: An individual that purchased a fishing license within the past three years, but whose license is expired in the current year.

Locavore: A person whose diet consists of food that is grown, raised, produced or harvested locally.

Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative: The [Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative](#) is a program dedicated to preserving, restoring and creating fish habitat in tidewater Maryland through the work of state, federal, and private partners.

Maryland Fishing Roundtable: Maryland Department of Natural Resources [webinar](#) that discusses fishing topics.

Master Naturalist Program: Program engages individuals as [stewards of Maryland's natural ecosystems and resources](#) through science-based education and volunteer service in their communities.

MORE Commission - The Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission established in 2017 through [Executive Order](#). The commission is responsible for developing strategies and making recommendations to the Governor to strengthen the state's outdoor recreation industry and help ensure increased investment in outdoor recreation resources.

Non-governmental organization: An independent organization whose mission is focused on conservation of aquatic resources or promotion of fishing activities.

Outdoor enthusiast: An individual who enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, wildlife watching, or boating.

Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model: The [Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model](#) illustrates, in a linear fashion, the steps an individual moves through as they learn about, tries and then adopts a new activity or behavior, and can be used to understand the difference between recruitment, retention, and reactivation.

Partner: Business, community, government, organization, or individual working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to implement the DNR R3 plan.

Park Quest: A [Maryland Department of Natural Resources program](#) designed to engage families/teams to explore Maryland State Parks.

Project Green Classroom: An [initiative](#) that promotes outdoor experiential activities and environmental education through Maryland's schools, communities and public lands.

QR Code: A type of barcode that can be read easily by a digital device, such as a smartphone camera, and which stores information as a series of pixels in a square-shaped grid.

Tracking pixel: Snippets of code that allow the gathering of information about visitors on a website such as how they browse and the type of ads on which they click. This behavior data is helpful in terms of sending the user paid ads that are likely to be most interesting to them.

R3: Recruitment, retention, and reactivation of fishing participants

Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation: A nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase participation in recreational fishing and boating and thereby increase public awareness and appreciation of the need for protecting, conserving and restoring the nation's aquatic natural resources.

Reactivated Angler: An individual who purchased a fishing license in the previous five years, and purchased in the current year after having not purchased a license the previous year.

Retained License Holder: An individual who purchased a fishing license during both the previous and current calendar years.

Retention Rate: The rate at which anglers purchase licenses in back-to-back years. The opposite of churn.

Maryland Saltwater Angler Registration: Free saltwater registration that is required for anglers who are not required to hold a Maryland Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing license and want to fish the Atlantic Ocean, Coastal Bays, Chesapeake Bay or tidal tributaries.

Target Audience: A person or a group of people that an event, program or effort is intended to reach.

Underrepresented audience: A demographic group that is statistically not represented in license-buying customers. Based on license data and a 2020 DNR Customer Outdoor Survey, the most common fishing license group is caucasian men over the age of 54. The underrepresented audience for purposes of this plan are people that are a race or ethnic background other than caucasian, do not identify as male, or are under the age of 55.

Underserved audience: A demographic population group that has not received equitable resources in a geographic area.

Under-utilized Fishing Opportunities: Fish resources that are less familiar to the public, or less popular with recreational anglers, but potentially more abundant than well known or popular fisheries resources.

Urban Area: A city with a population of 50,000 or more people (from [MD. 2010 census definition](#)).

Voluntary Angler Surveys: A group of eight [fisheries surveys](#) administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources where people can contribute catch, trip or sightings data for fisheries management.

Youth Fishing Club: A free Maryland Department of Natural Resources [club open to youth anglers](#) ages 5-15. Members can find out where youth events are being held, share their fishing stories and photos, and learn new things about fishing.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION • *How Do We Get It Done?*

This plan is intended to be a living document to guide angler recruitment, retention, and reactivation activities over the next three years. We recognize that there are challenges to implementing an Angler R3 Plan. Changes will be ongoing, and alignment of resources will take time. R3 is a practice not a program and both research and practical experience show that R3 success is organization dependent. The Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) Action Plan concluded that for R3 efforts to be effective, an organization's capacity should include:

- A dedicated R3 coordinator or team
- Coordination and partnership with other R3 efforts
- An understanding and application of R3 models, pathways, and best practices
- Evaluation systems that can track participant behaviors and provide data that can prove and improve R3 efforts



While this plan will help FABS to begin prioritizing angler R3 activities, it is just a first step in fully realizing R3 success as an agency. FABS R3 efforts are currently implemented by various staff and coordinated by two unrelated positions. These positions also lead the Department R3 Matrix Team. This team has bridged communication and coordination gaps between the units; however an agency R3 coordinator is needed to improve the functionality of this team and overall R3 impact.

It will take internal agency reorganization of some financial and staff resources to increase R3 capacity. There is potential in the next three years to develop a new license purchase system that will improve the customer buying experience, purchase tracking, and marketing to address R3 challenges.

During the three-year scope of this plan, agency leadership, the FABS planning team, and active partners will work to prioritize, implement and measure the strategies and actions outlined in the plan. This plan is a living document. There will be an annual evaluation of strategies, development of new priorities, and potential modifications to the plan.

THE PLAN ORGANIZATION

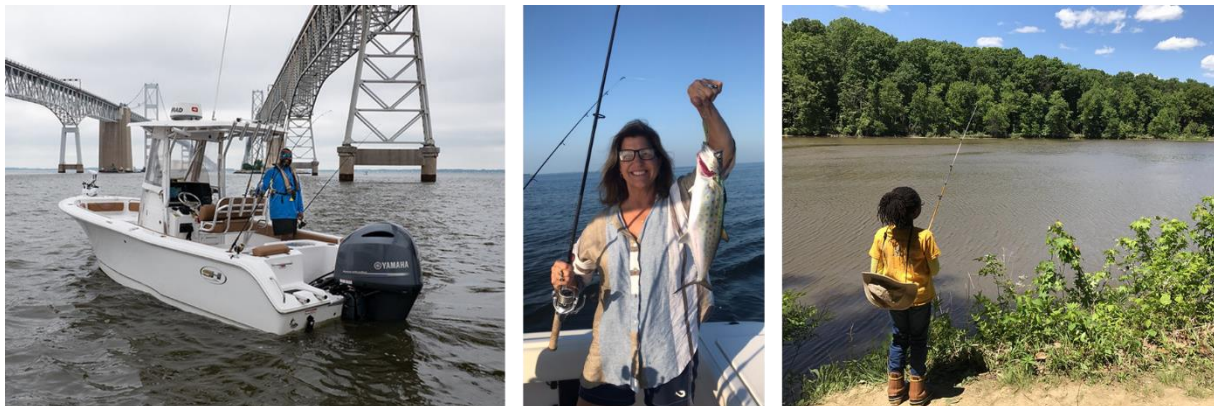
To build this plan, we grouped the content into two major subject areas and goals: fishing participation and an agency cross-functional goal that supports or connects with other units in the department.

Next, we built our objectives toward achieving these goals. These objectives are intended to be measurable and all of the strategies and actions are intended to help reach the goals. The strategies break down the objectives into different related activities, and the actions specify the tasks to accomplish over the next three years.

Some actions were pulled from RBFF workshops, other states' experiences, the FABS R3 workshop, or the FABS Staff Summit. The plan also includes some existing programs. There were many great ideas and actions, but we do not have the resources to do everything. Criteria or guidelines were developed by the planning team in order to prioritize the actions. In order to be included in the plan, **actions must meet the following plan guidelines:**

1. **Feasible in a three year timeframe;**
2. **Able to be evaluated or measured;**
3. **Support movement along the pathway of the [Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model](#);**
and
4. **Fit FABS fisheries mission and/or capability.**

Each page of this plan features an objective. Each objective page includes the target audience, the resources and partners we need to accomplish the actions, and the metrics we will use to measure if we are making progress. For some objectives, we developed evaluation questions to help determine if we are taking the right actions. There are many efforts going on nationally that support or relate to our R3 plan. If there are known connections with other programs, efforts, or R3 strategies to the objective, they are included on the page to remind us to connect with these efforts.



OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

- Objective 1.** Increase the number of new fishing recruits.
- Objective 2.** Promote the inclusion of all Maryland anglers.
- Objective 3.** Increase family participation.
- Objective 4.** Increase retention of current license holders.
- Objective 5.** Increase annual reactivation of lapsed anglers.

AGENCY GOAL: Encourage Participation in Maryland Outdoor Recreation

- Objective 1.** Improve customer relationship management and the customer buying experience.
- Objective 2.** Connect audiences to outdoor recreational activities.
- Objective 3.** Develop programs and content focused on how Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) customers contribute to conservation and management.



Photo by Kolter Gunn

THE ACTIONS AND DETAILS

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

Objective 1. Increase the number of new fishing recruits.

A. Develop marketing and communication tools to increase angler recruitment.

1. Develop tracking pixel retargeting program to remind website visitors of Maryland fishing licenses after they leave the DNR website without buying.
2. Develop “how to” materials and videos that encourage family fishing and provide fishing basics to help new anglers.
3. Provide helpful and informative signage at fishing locations and state parks. Print licensing rules signs that include quick response (QR) codes to DNR’s [English](#) and [Spanish](#) language recreational fishing pages.
4. Develop license buying incentive programs. For example: license referral program, vendor coupons, or apprentice fishing license.
5. Add fishing information to Maryland county park guides and welcome packets at vacation rentals/homes.
6. Promote how easy it is to get a fishing license. There is no waiting period - you can purchase and immediately begin fishing.

B. Engage new target audiences with positive messages about angling and the DNR.

1. Discuss/coordinate opportunities with conservation or angling groups to increase angler recruitment (i.e. mentoring opportunities or fishing events).
2. Use social media to interact with the public. Raise awareness of fishing opportunities, with exciting and informative posts that move people to action.
3. Develop brochures for placement at Maryland Visitor Centers to encourage visitors to purchase a fishing license.
4. Post information on Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) screens to get messages out to potential new anglers.
5. Create YouTube videos on how to fish for specific species or in different areas. For example: how to catch black bass; how to fish in ponds or streams. Promote videos in conjunction with free fishing days, and run them on MVA screens to help audiences know where they can go to fish and how to fish once they get there.
6. Identify and learn how to communicate with outdoor lifestyle groups.

C. Identify easy and accessible fishing opportunities and access points that provide successful trial events for new anglers.

1. Increase tackle loaner opportunities. Select sites to loan out tackle across the state based on proximity to easily fishable waters and demand for equipment. Follow up with users to provide information on beginner programs and/or highlight easy and accessible fishing opportunities and access points to try fishing.
2. Expand the DNR [Backyard Fishing Program](#) to host beginner fishing seminars/clinics; connect participants in these events to other fishing opportunities provided by DNR or partners.
3. Partner with the Maryland Park Service. Expand the variety of fishing programs offered at state parks; add fishing to [Maryland Park Quest](#); provide a package deal during camping registration.

D. Increase outreach and promotion to outdoor enthusiasts and locavores.

1. Encourage invasive species angling by creating a full cycle to capture angler interest. "Eat blue catfish at this location with this gear." Incorporate messages of sustainability and farm-to-table sourcing.
2. Market angling experiences as gifts.
3. Use Maryland Waterway Updates and Alerts mass email list, RBFF boat registration campaign, and DNR's boat registration letter to encourage boaters to buy fishing licenses.

E. Expand partnerships with schools and colleges.

1. Establish a pilot college fishing club program (modeled after Georgia's [Academics Afield program](#)) at a Maryland college. The program will introduce college students to fishing, and a college student intern will receive credit for running the program.
2. Establish high school fishing clubs or use existing natural resource elective classes to develop interest in fishing.
3. Use marketing classes or projects (for example Consult your Community) in Maryland college(s) to develop new marketing ideas to specific age demographic.
4. Create and share support materials with teachers and school/college outdoor recreation clubs or organizations to remove barriers to fishing.
5. Collect angler information at events and follow up by email with support materials (information on how to go fishing after the event/program.)
6. Develop messaging targeted to [Maryland Youth Fishing Club](#) members to point them to easy and accessible fishing opportunities and access points, including trial events, and encourage them to keep fishing and purchase their first fishing license at age 16.

FISHING OBJECTIVE 1 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number or percentage of fishing related programs or events for which department/partners collect angler information.
- Number of recruited (resident or non-resident) license buyers January 1, 2022-December 31, 2022.
- Engagement rates of fishing content online from January 1, 2022-December 31, 2022.

3-Year Metrics *(How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)*

- Number or percentage of fishing related programs or events for which department/partners collect angler information.
- Three year accumulated total of new license buyers.
- Engagement rates of fishing content online from January 1, 2022-December 30, 2024.
- Increase the number of tackle loaner sites by 5.

Evaluation Questions

- Who did we think we would engage that we didn't? Why didn't we? What values did we misunderstand about that target group?
- What percentage of registered boaters have a fishing license?
- Did folks that participate in tackle loaner try fishing again or buy a license?

Target Audience: MVA customers, students, tourists, Maryland Youth Fishing Club members, teens aging into license requirement, outdoor enthusiasts and existing DNR customers that have not bought a fishing license, state park users.

Resources:

DNR Staff - Aquatic Education, FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services, Maryland Park Service, Wildlife and Heritage Service, Information Technology Service, Office of Communications.

Budget - For social and digital marketing tools and advertisements.

Partners: County parks and recreation departments, Maryland Office of Tourism Development, county libraries, MVA, fishing equipment vendors.

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

Objective 2. Promote the inclusion of all Maryland anglers

A. Increase promotion of angling opportunities and events in urban areas.

1. Expand DNR [Backyard Fishing Program](#) to include urban fishing locations.
2. Increase fishing access or opportunities in urban environments through fish stocking, promoting invasive species angling opportunities, access ramps, and tackle loaner program.
3. Engage and build relationships with urban community organizations that have a diverse membership.
4. Develop an awareness campaign to reach existing and new anglers about urban and underutilized fishing opportunities in Maryland.
5. Partner with recreation and fitness centers and clubs to promote opportunities for fishing and programming with young adults.
6. Add fishing information (for example, locations, tackle loaner programs) to local community/city recreation and park guides.

B. Increase the cultural and demographic diversity of the Maryland angler population.

1. Develop an angler marketing image database that includes underrepresented demographics and non-traditional participants.
2. Promote awareness that the DNR webpages, including the Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing, can be viewed in other languages with the translate toggle button.
3. Leverage [RBFF Vamos a Pescar grants](#) to fund family-focused and ethnically inclusive community programs.
4. Use the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies [Relevancy Roadmap](#) to identify the top three barriers impacting our ability to engage and serve a diverse demographic.

FISHING OBJECTIVE 2 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number of fishing related events or programs in areas defined as urban between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
- Analytics (open rates, reach, frequency, engagement) for advertising campaigns between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

- Number of local community organizations and interest groups with whom we are actively engaged in some way in areas defined as urban (outreach, partnering, focus groups) between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

3-Year Metrics (*How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?*)

- Increase the percentage of licensed buyers age 16 – 45 years old as compared to the time period of January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
- Increase the percentage of licensed buyers in areas defined as urban compared to the time period January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
- Increase the percentage of female licensed buyers as compared to the time period January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
- Narrow the gap between the demographic (age and ethnic) by the census data when compared to engaged fishing participants (may use the 2020-2021 DNR survey as a benchmark for engagement with a diverse demographic).

Target Audience: Underrepresented and underserved audience and community groups.

Resources needed: *DNR Staff* - Office of Fair Practice, Office of Communications, FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services.

Partners: RBFF, reservoir managers, local parks and recreation departments, community organizations.

Connections with other programs, efforts, and/or R3 strategies: [AFWA Relevancy Roadmap](#). A Maryland Water Access Equity Mapper tool is being developed similar to this [MD Park Equity Mapper tool](#).



Left: DNR's Tackle Loaner Program supplies fishing kits that patrons may borrow at select state parks and county libraries.

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

Objective 3. Increase family participation.

A. Promote fishing as a family activity.

1. Leverage DNR [Becoming an Outdoors-Woman \(BOW\)](#) Program with an outreach campaign to their participants encouraging them to take their family fishing.
2. Promote license free fishing areas as places where families can try fishing together as a family time activity.
3. Conduct promotions on license free fishing days, including hosting fishing clinics at some locations and/or loaning tackle at these locations.
4. Run a digital marketing campaign/promotion that promotes fishing as a multi-generational family activity.
5. Partner with Maryland Office of Tourism Development to promote family fishing and increase awareness of fishing opportunities available in Maryland for destination travel, and vacations.
6. Reach out to participants of youth-oriented DNR programs to invite them to fish with their family.
7. Market to parent groups or organizations to promote fishing as a family activity.

B. Maximize effectiveness of fishing programs/events in terms of education and license sales.

1. Partner with Maryland Park Service to expand family fishing programs offered at state parks; collect email addresses of participants and follow up with messages about fishing opportunities and encouraging license purchase.
2. Work with DNR Aquatic Resources Education to identify opportunities to expand their Hooked on Fishing adult/family programs; collect email addresses of adult participants and follow up with email messages about fishing opportunities and encouraging license purchase.
3. Establish a fishing skills class directed at families.
4. Evaluate the skill stations at events, including fishing rodeos, and increase the number of fishing skills stations if needed.
5. Contact [Maryland Park Quest](#) participants with fishing access, opportunities, and license information.
6. Encourage and support partner organizations in hosting family fishing events as a follow-up to a DNR fishing event.
7. Partner with scouting organizations to expand opportunities for children to earn fishing badges and have older scouts volunteer at family fishing events.

FISHING OBJECTIVE 3 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number of, and analytics/engagement for, marketing and promotion campaigns featuring family-centric messages and images.
- Percentage of events that meet preferred criteria for skills stations and education.
- Collect participant information for tracking and follow-up survey on participation and skills assessment.

Target Audience: Families - all ages, parent groups

Resources needed: *DNR Staff-* Wildlife and Heritage Service, BOW Leadership Committee, Aquatic Resources Education, Office of Communications, Maryland Park Service State Parks staff, FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services

Partners: Scouting groups, Maryland Office of Tourism Development



Family programming opportunities, clockwise from top left: BOW fishing trip; Park Quest logo and family team, successful young angler at a fishing rodeo at Fort Frederick State Park's Beaver Pond.

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

Objective 4. Increase the retention of current license holders.

A. Develop marketing and communication tools that increase angler retention.

1. Provide renewing angler incentive.
2. Provide support to the University of Maryland Extension Service on the fishing component of the [Master Naturalists Program](#).
3. Send email renewal notices; send quarterly newsletter to license holders with seasonal fishing highlights; encourage license holders to follow us on social media and/or sign up for recreational email lists so they receive the fishing report throughout the year.
4. Utilize RBFF [First-Time Buyers Retention Email Campaign Toolkit](#) to retain new anglers.
5. Promote [FishMaryland](#) recreational fishing award program. Consider incentivizing the program with a drawing similar to the [Volunteer Angler Survey](#) for prizes at different levels of accomplishment.
6. Increase retention rate of non-resident license holders by working with Maryland Office of Tourism Development to highlight the full suite of angler opportunities in Maryland.
7. Partner with county parks and recreation departments to hold short fishing workshops focused on fishing skills.
8. Implement an email campaign targeting customers who obtain a free Maryland saltwater angler registration or have only purchased a short term (3 or 7 day) license. Encourage them to purchase an annual license.

B. Increase awareness of and engagement in varied angling opportunities available in Maryland.

1. Develop advertising/education tools to reach existing anglers about under-utilized fishing opportunities in Maryland. Focus on variety in terms of geography, species, angling type, difficulty levels, different gears, etc. Utilize [Maryland Fishing Roundtable](#) and develop YouTube videos on how to fish in different areas (bay, ponds, streams).
2. Partner with retailers to provide store displays and angling information on other species.
3. Identify anglers who have bought one type of license for two years and cross-market by email another type of license (ie. nontidal licenses to tidal licensees).

4. Increase FABS participation or information at boat shows. Present information to the public and plan incentive drawings to collect email addresses of interested people.
 5. Highlight [Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative](#). Increase awareness of these fishing locations. Reach out to the DNR Maryland Waterway Updates and Alerts Users mass email list with this information.
- C. Simplify and increase understanding of fishing regulations.**
1. Use existing communication platforms to raise awareness that anglers do not need a paper license.
 2. Evaluate simplifying trout fishing regulations. Some streams have a patchwork of different rules, which can be a barrier.
 3. Plan monthly social media posts highlighting a species/fishery. Provide helpful information on that species/fishery including location, gear, and regulation links.
- D. Create an education campaign to encourage existing anglers to engage in angler mentoring efforts.**
1. Evaluate mentoring programs in other states, identify our capacity to support a program, and implement if feasible.

FISHING OBJECTIVE 4 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number of anglers who purchased a fishing license in 2021 and 2022 and number who purchased in 2022 and 2023.
- Trend in 3 year annual running average churn rates from 2017-2023.
- Analytics on renewal email reminder messages.

3-Year Metrics *(How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)*

- Decreasing annual trend in the churn rate.
- Number of anglers enrolled in autorenewal.
- Number of customers who purchase an annual license within 365 days of obtaining a Maryland saltwater angler registration or purchasing a short term license.

Target Audience: Current license holders, customers who have obtained a free Maryland saltwater angler registration or purchased a short term fishing license.

Resources Needed: DNR Staff - Information Technology Service, Office of Communications, FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services.

Partners: University of Maryland Extension Service, retailers, Maryland Office of Tourism Development, county parks and recreation departments.



Photo by Evan Jones

FISHING GOAL: Increase Angler Participation in Maryland

Objective 5. Increase annual reactivation of lapsed anglers.

A. Develop marketing and communication tools that increase angler reactivation.

1. Increase email engagement with lapsed anglers - promote videos, master fishing program, mentoring opportunities, fishing events, and [FishMaryland program](#). Encourage lapsed anglers to renew their licenses.
2. Utilize RBFF direct mail and email toolkit to conduct campaigns to invite lapsed anglers back.
3. Reach out to FABS '16 in 2016' campaign anglers to suggest purchasing a license again. Highlight past program and current opportunities.
4. Evaluate the feasibility of creating a Refer a Friend program and/or a fishing buddy program to promote and support the social aspect of fishing.

B. Increase awareness and use of the full suite of angling opportunities available in Maryland.

1. Develop advertising/education campaigns to reach lapsed anglers about new and under-utilized fishing opportunities in Maryland.

FISHING OBJECTIVE 5 | METRICS

Metrics 1-Year *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Define pool of lapsed anglers in 2022 who did not buy that year but bought at least one fishing license in 2019-2021.
- Number of reactivated anglers between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

Metrics 3- Year *(How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)*

- Determine number of license buyers who did not buy in 2021 but had bought at least one license in 2018-2020, and then purchased again at least once in 2022-2024.
- Number of reactivated anglers annually in 2022-2024.

Evaluation Questions:

- What actions had the greatest impact on license sales?
- What method did they use to purchase the license? When did they purchase it?
- What are the demographics of the anglers who were reactivated?
- Did we meet the objective? If not, how do we adapt for the following year?

Target Audience: Customers who purchased a fishing license within the past 3 years, but whose license is expired in the current year.

Resources Needed: DNR Staff - FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services, Office of Communications.

Partners: RBFF

Connections with other programs, efforts, and/or R3 strategies: [RBFF toolkit](#)



Northern pike caught in Deep Creek Lake (photo courtesy of Sean Kline)

AGENCY GOAL: Encourage Participation in Maryland Outdoor Recreation

Objective 1. Improve customer relationship management and the customer buying experience.

A. Develop a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

1. Improve license sales system to implement customer tracking with data dashboards.
2. Add autorenewal of licenses as a capability, by which the customer allows DNR to automatically renew their license on their expiration date.
3. Implement automatically generated license renewal reminder emails for customers with licenses expiring within 90 days (currently sent manually via GovDelivery mass email system).
4. Implement an event management system that is integrated with the licensing system and CRM. Send post-event follow-up emails to attendees and track event attendee purchase histories and event registration.

B. Update systems and platforms with changes that facilitate purchase and minimize abandoned purchases.

1. Move license purchase button to the front of the DNR homepage. Use specific action language: "Buy your fishing or hunting license here!"
2. Modify sales system to provide the ability to configure product upsells. Product upsells display a pop-up message (for example customer purchasing a nontidal fishing license gets a pop-up message encouraging purchase of a trout stamp).
3. Provide for family license management in license sales system (licensee and family manager can access and manage accounts and purchases for all family members).
4. Develop the capability to purchase a fishing license as a gift.
5. Develop how-to videos about buying a license in the [COMPASS system](#) in English and Spanish.

C. Develop marketing tools that increase angler recruitment and retention.

1. Add license combining capability to bundle license types into convenient packages. Consider providing a retailer coupon with purchase of license bundle or autorenewal.
2. Make it easier in the license system to get the Maryland saltwater angler registration and promote this update. Streamline the user experience by decreasing log-in requirements.
3. Explore additional features and promote the DNR [Alexa skill](#).

AGENCY OBJECTIVE 1 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number of Alexa DNR skill users.
- Annual Maryland saltwater angler registration number and percentage compared to Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license number.
- Evaluate RBFF secret shopper recommendations and metrics.
- Number of customers with more than one paid DNR product.

3- Year Metrics *(How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)*

- Annually increase the number of Maryland saltwater angler registrations. At a minimum, the number of angler registrations should match the number of Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat licenses sold.

Target Audience: DNR customers

Resources Needed: DNR Staff - FABS Stakeholder Outreach and Services, Office of Communications, Information Technology Service, FABS Policy and Planning.

Connections with other programs, efforts, and/or R3 strategies: NOAA state report on unlicensed anglers.



Sunset fishing in Chaptico Bay by Nicki Strickland

AGENCY GOAL: Encourage Participation in Maryland Outdoor Recreation.**Objective 2. Connect audiences to outdoor recreational activities.**

- A. Take DNR messages and marketing to the customer audience in order to raise awareness of outdoor opportunities in Maryland.**
1. Evaluate agency programs to determine where users can be recruited to another recreation activity.
- B. Purposefully invite recreationists active in one type of outdoor recreation to another type of outdoor recreation.**
1. Build and promote a targeted list of DNR-managed locations that can provide multiple recreation opportunities in one place. Train and provide information to Maryland state park naturalists to support their ability to highlight all the diverse recreational opportunities at DNR locations.
 2. Cross-promote programs (i.e. [ARE](#), [Park Quest](#), [BOW](#)) by providing program participants opportunities to receive information about easy and accessible fishing opportunities.
 3. Evaluate R3 strategies in Wildlife and Heritage Service's R3 Strategic Plan for opportunities to coordinate with FABS R3 Plan.
 4. Provide bowfishing information at bowhunting events with fishing information for target species.
 5. Evaluate DNR guidelines for sharing partners' conservation messages or programs. Share messages as appropriate and allowed by guidelines.
- C. Actively seek diversity and inclusion.**
1. Obtain professional photos and create a photo and video database that prioritizes diversity in subjects, to be used in agency publications and outreach efforts.
 2. Educate DNR staff about the importance of diversity and how to be inclusive in DNR programing.
 3. Promote Americans with Disability Act (ADA) access to potential anglers and boaters.
- D. Educate staff for the purpose of creating a team of DNR ambassadors for R3.**
1. Add customer surveys and white papers to the [National R3 Clearinghouse](#).
 2. Encourage staff to participate in RBFF or CAHSS webinars.
 3. Connect employees to cross-unit outdoor opportunities.
 4. Encourage DNR staff to mentor others to participate in outdoor activities.

AGENCY OBJECTIVE 2 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics *(How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)*

- Number of participant lists shared across programs or total number of participants in a shared cross-program database.
- Number of photos and videos with diverse subjects.
- Number of, and analytics/engagement for, messages and promotion campaigns that feature inclusive images and are purposefully invitational in messaging.
- Number of DNR staff participating in RBFF or CAHSS webinars focused on topics related to the strategies.

3-Year Metrics *(How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)*

- Tracking of participants shows an increase in demographic diversity.
- Tracking of customers participating in multiple licensed activities.
- Number of programs that were enhanced or modified consistent with the strategies.

Evaluation Questions: Are participants attending multiple events or programs?

Target Audience: Underserved audiences, urban audiences, outdoor enthusiasts, outdoor recreation related excise tax payers.

Resources Needed: *DNR Staff* - Office of Fair Practices, Wildlife and Heritage Service, Maryland Park Service, Office of Communications.

Partners: Chesapeake Conservancy, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Chesapeake Bay Trust, MORE Commission Partners.

Connections with other programs, efforts, and/or R3 strategies: DNR Wildlife R3 Plan, [Clearinghouse](#), [MORE Commission Report](#).



AGENCY GOAL: Encourage participation in Maryland outdoor recreation.**Objective 3. Develop programs and content focused on how DNR customers contribute to conservation and management.****A. Build a campaign that shows how DNR customers fund and impact conservation and management.**

1. Create infographics and videos that show how anglers and hunters fund programs and activities (utilize Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies [Making It Last](#) toolkit).
2. Request that staff include a standard slide on where fishing, hunting, and boating license or registration fees and excise taxes go in all public presentations.
3. Promote awareness of how certain responsible outdoor recreational actions can positively influence the health of our environment, including lands, water, and species.
4. Evaluate feasibility and identify a process to develop a conservation permit (purchasable permit that conveys no fishing or hunting privilege but provides funds for conservation and management activities).

B. Engage with outdoor enthusiasts to help them understand how they fund conservation.

1. Target angling and hunting groups to offer presentations about their role in conservation.
2. Set up booths with targeted messages about angling/hunting contributions at sporting events and expos.
3. Include an infographic about how anglers and hunters support conservation in fishing and hunting guides and other relevant publications.
4. Include information in license purchase thank you email on how fishing, hunting, and boating license and registration fees and excise taxes are spent.
5. Add information on how license and registration fees and excise taxes work for conservation to a prominent location on select DNR websites.
6. Post an infographic and related videos on social media sites.

C. Promote natural resource stewardship.

1. Create a stewardship campaign focusing on mentoring (replace yourself with a mentee, leave your legacy to wildlife).
2. Promote volunteer surveys and citizen science monitoring opportunities and raise awareness of how these actions assist in supporting conservation and management activities.

3. Highlight habitat areas that are funded partially with partner contributions, such as [Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative \(MARI\)](#).

AGENCY OBJECTIVE 3 | METRICS

1-Year Metrics (How will we know we are accomplishing what we say we are?)

- Initiate evaluation of a conservation permit (see [Pennsylvania example](#)).
- Develop an informational template that includes infographic and information on where license dollars go (see [Minnesota example](#)).
- Number of people engaged in agency social media platforms (engagement analytics).

3- Year Metrics (How do we measure if we accomplished this objective?)

- Increased number of venues and platforms where this conservation dollar messaging is offered.
- Identify the process to develop and implement a conservation permit .

Target Audience: General public

Resources Needed: *DNR Staff:* Office of Communications, R3 Matrix team, Volunteer Angler Survey leads

Partners: MARI



Savage River Fly Fishing by Stephan Farrand

Appendix A. Current R3 Activities and Programs

Aquatic Resource Education Tackle Loaner

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Resources Education program has fishing related equipment available to loan to organizations and groups. Summer camps, scout troops, 4-H clubs, YMCAs and other education-based organizations are eligible to borrow equipment for free. [More information.](#)

Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Offers outdoor skills workshops specifically for women 18 years of age and older, although men are welcome to participate. The workshops enable women to learn about a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in a casual, non-threatening environment. The classes are designed to be as hands-on as possible, giving participants enough knowledge to further pursue their interests once the workshop is over. [More information.](#)

Youth Fishing Rodeos

The Youth Fishing Rodeo Program partners with local community organizations to introduce children to fishing. Each year, thousands of children get their first fishing experience at a rodeo event. Fishing rodeos are typically held at small ponds or lakes. Events are sponsored by community and non-profit organizations and the department works with these organizations to provide support and assistance. Rodeos are held throughout the state between March and October and are generally open to participants from 3 to 15 years of age. [More information.](#)

FishMaryland

FishMaryland is Maryland's recreational fishing award program. It is a fun way to explore year-round recreational fishing and enjoy Maryland's diverse fishing opportunities. FishMaryland features awards for individual fish species as well as awards for catching and removing specific invasive species. There are also milestone awards for catching 3, 5, or 10 trophy size fish of different species. [More information.](#)

Maryland Youth Fishing Club

This club is open to youth between the ages of 5 and 15. Membership is free and each new member receives two Maryland Youth Fishing Club Stickers. Members find out where special youth events are being held, share their fishing stories and photos on the online [Youth Angler's Log](#) and learn new things about fishing. [More information.](#)

Appendix B. Partners • *A dynamic and growing list*

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Local Agencies

- Local parks and city recreation
- County libraries with Tackle Loaner programs

State Agencies

- Maryland Office of Tourism Development
- Motor Vehicle Administration

Federal Agencies

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 - Blackwater Refuge
 - Patuxent Refuge

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic (MORE) Commission Partners

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports
- Coastal Conservation Association
- Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative

OUTDOOR RECREATION GROUPS

- Ellis Outdoors

COMPANIES

- Cabelas and Bass Pro Shops