



DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE

TESTIMONY ON FY_{24/25} CAPITAL BILL

Christopher Herrick, Commissioner
Christopher.Herrick@vermont.gov
February 16, 2023

FY 2024-2025 Capital Bill; Section 9

ANR; Department of Fish & Wildlife

- Improving Public Access to Wildlife Management Areas and Maintaining critical management infrastructure (Section 9; Line 104) **\$354,150**
- Access Area Infrastructure Improvement (Section 9; :Line 105) **\$750,000**
- Infrastructure Maintenance/Improvement of Fish and Wildlife Buildings including Conservation Camps (Section 9, Line 106) **\$1,315,000**
- Hatchery Improvements (Section 9, Line 107) **\$1,977,500**
- Shooting Range Improvements (Section 9, Line 108) **\$226,132**

Wildlife Management Area Infrastructure

Section 9; Line 104

Improving Public Access to Wildlife Management Areas and Maintaining critical management infrastructure
\$354,150

Infrastructure maintenance and management for 100 WMAs and 130,000 acres throughout Vermont costs approximately \$100,000 in capital funds, on average, each year. Capital funds are used to match federal funds at a rate of \$3 of federal for every \$1 of capital funds. Capital funds are a critical part of supporting baseline infrastructure management and maintenance. The overall costs are relatively low considering the significant public benefits that are realized by providing effective access to WMAs to enjoy fish, wildlife, and Vermont's landscape.

Improved Access to State Lands

Section 9; Line 105

Access Area Infrastructure Improvement

\$750,000

The Department will continue to enhance and improve public access over the next 10 years as a means of increasing public participation in wildlife-based recreational activities.

Providing safe, effective access for hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife viewing, photography, boating, target shooting, and other recreation pursuits is an important element to the Department's long-term plans for increasing public participation in wildlife-based activities.

An increased investment in capital funds would allow the Department to provide better access to Department-owned land.

Conservation Camps

Section 9; Line 106

Infrastructure Maintenance/Improvement of Fish and Wildlife Buildings including Conservation Camps

\$1,315,000

Funds will be used to maintain infrastructure such as dining halls, bathrooms, camper, and staff cabins,. Conservation camps currently provide approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000 in revenue which offsets the costs to run and staff these facilities.

Because they certify 900 or more children in hunter education, they represent 20 percent of the students who complete certification annually and potentially a proportional number of resident hunting license holders.

Likewise, 90 percent of the children who attend camp have reported they feel they have become anglers at the end of the week and are apt to go on to become fishing license holders.

Hatchery Improvements

Section 9; Line 107

Hatchery Improvements

\$1,977,500

The Department operates five fish culture stations across Vermont.

The Department requests capital funds each biennium to fund numerous projects to maintain and improve fish culture stations and make strategic investments to lower operating costs. Projects include the upgrade of electrical systems, roofs, water pumps, heating, and cooling systems.

The Department will also need to address water quality infrastructure at the Salisbury Fish Culture Station.

Shooting Range Improvements

Section 9; Line 108

Shooting Range Improvements

\$226,132

Creating safe, public shooting ranges is a critical Department priority. By leveraging capital funds effectively, we can ensure every Vermonter has reasonable access to a publicly accessible shooting range.