



# Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Planning for Future Relevancy



February 28, 2020

*The mission of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*

**2000**

## *Vermont Congress I*

Attachment 1

The DFW brought together 80 Vermonters with disparate values to explore the concept of a Land Ethic for Vermont. Besides 4 prominent speakers who gave important background on Vermont land use history, economics, and the values related to a land ethic, there were 7 breakout groups that were charged with developing guiding principles and action items for implementing a land ethic in Vermont. Seven common themes and actions evolved from these discussions that have formed a basis for many of the Department's initiatives since then [pages 5-8].

**2012**

## *Update of DFW Guiding Principles*

Attachment 2

First developed in the 1990s with input from both leadership and staff to establish sideboards for employee behavior and motivation. Distributed to all district offices.

**2015**

## *Update Strategic Plan*

Attachment 3

The 2015-2025 strategic plan is the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's fourth iteration of a document that was originally based on a comprehensive effort first undertaken in 2001. It was initially developed by teams comprised of representatives from each of the major department programs and was reviewed by the public through meetings around the state. The updated plan generally follows the outline of the previous plans but incorporates critical changes that modernize the strategies to address new programs, initiatives, and challenges. Attached is a summary of the updated goals and strategies.

**2016**

## *Vermont Wildlife Congress II*

Attachment 4

The DFW held a second Wildlife Congress to bring together a wide variety of Vermonters with disparate values to discuss the future of conservation. We convened the one-day facilitated meeting at the Kehoe Conservation Camp on October 24, 2016. There, we began a conversation between a diverse group of stakeholders with deeply held values and conflicting interpretations of the challenges we face as a state. The hope was that through conversation and the "sipping of tea", people with often contradictory values could find some common ground and work together to create a shared purpose with regards to the future of fish and wildlife conservation in Vermont.

**2014-2020**

***Development of the Vermont Model***

- *2014 Management Team Retreat:*
  - Presentation by John Organ, prominent author of a paper on the North American Model.
  - Discussion of budgetary options given a prediction of declining revenues.
- *2016 Follow-up Management Team/staff Retreat* to drill into North American Model issues with the goal of exploring the following:
  - The North American Model (NAM) – what it has been and what it should be.
  - Integrating the NAM into the staff plan
  - Is the model a vehicle for maintaining Department credibility?
  - Does the model need tweaking to be relevant to the broader public?
  - Internalizing the model with staff and leadership
- DFW staff developed a Vermont Model based on the 7 tenets of the NAM of Wildlife Conservation.
- Department Day review and feedback on the draft model by all Department staff.
- **Final draft of the Vermont Model.**

Attachment 5

**2015**

***Public Input Survey to collect baseline information on public support for the Department mission***

Attachment 6

**2017-2020**

***Department Plan For Relevancy***

- *2015-2016 Staff Input:* Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner collected feedback from the central office and 5 district office staff related to Department relevancy and future threats to wildlife and Department mission.
- *2017 (September): Internal Department Relevancy Retreat*
- *2017 Develop a Plan for Relevancy* and create staff working groups to flesh out the 4 proposed categories: Broaden our Constituency, Build Connections to the Land, Build a Vermont Coalition, Be a Model State Agency. Provide recommendations to the Commissioner – in progress.
- *2019 Management Team Retreat:* Management Team retreat to discuss implementation of relevancy recommendations in the face of a declining budget as well as options for spending reductions.

Attachment 7

*Compiled by Kim Royar March 9, 2020*

Attachment 1

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*VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT*

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Wildlife Congress  
Proceedings

NOVEMBER 13, 2001



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# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The inaugural Vermont Wildlife Congress convened on September 13, 2000, bringing together 80 Vermonters from various backgrounds to explore the concept of a land ethic for Vermont.

Prior to the event, participants were prepped with a questionnaire that challenged them to identify a personal vision for Vermont's land ethic, as well as the impediments to achieving that vision. The Congress included addresses by Dr. Jan Albers, Dr. Frank Bryan, Dr. Richard Knight, and Dr. Eric Freyfogle.

The heart of the event consisted of seven breakout discussion groups which allowed participants to develop guiding principles for a land ethic in Vermont. Participants explored actions within the context of their individual knowledge and passions. Several common themes emerged that we believe form the framework for a land ethic vision for Vermont.

The groups also identified specific next action steps designed to fulfill the principles of a Vermont land ethic. The event concluded with an event evaluation, which identified major outcomes, suggestions, action items, challenges, and the effect of the Congress on participants' individual lives and perceptions.

# RESULTS IN A NUTSHELL

## Guiding Principles

We, the Fish and Wildlife Department hoped that one of the results of the day-long Wildlife Congress would be that participants might arrive at a shared understanding of what a land stewardship ethic would be for Vermont – admittedly a very tall order. Much to our pleasure, seven themes repeatedly surfaced in the breakout groups (as attested to by the quotes listed under each of the principles). We believe these guiding principles could actually form the framework for a land stewardship ethic in Vermont.

### **(1) Preserve Vermont's capacity for both healthy lands and communities.**

"Live lightly off the land," "preserve a variety of habitats," "maintain a strong community and a sense of place," "preserve Vermont's small community scale," "determine a model for ecological restoration."

### **(2) Foster cooperation, collaboration, and communication among all interested groups to find common ground.**

"Understand others fears, respect other people's differences," "foster communication and collaboration between all stakeholders," "sportsmen and environmentalists should collaborate regularly," "learn to evoke cooperation from those whose views differ from yours," "develop/communicate shared values," "foster cooperation between landowners based on respect for the land," "encourage positive dialog and resolutions," "recognize that partnerships help to create common ground."

### **(3) Recognize the value of education in inspiring a land ethic that enables informed decisions on wildlife resources of the state.**

"Every Vermonter age 0-100 should understand our connection to land," "develop and implement effective programs to foster a land stewardship ethic in young people," "publish and distribute accurate scientific information," "foster in Vermonters a connection and awareness of the diversity, complexity, mystery, and beauty of Vermont's wildlife and wild places," "guide and inspire us to live sustainably," "value the natural world as a whole, all its parts, and teach that value to the public," "mandatory conservation education in Vermont school systems."

### **(4) Recognize each individual's shared responsibility for minimizing impacts on natural resources.**

"Look in before we look out," "reexamine our own values and how we live our lives," "attain an understanding of privilege and responsibility," "act conservatively - limit [consumption]," "take responsibility for acquainting oneself with the immediate environment," "accept personal responsibility for acting to improve/preserve natural communities (including people)," "draw from the conviction that our relationship with land and the larger community of life must be grounded in ethical and ecological conservations and not be driven by economic goals," "do more with less."

**(5) Recognize the role and importance of the private landowner and promote programs and policies that provide fair incentive and rewards for preserving and promoting open space.**

"Promote fairness to landowners from a tax standpoint," "landowners contributions should be recognized and rewarded," "reduce reliance on property taxation," "reward [good] stewardship by private landowners," "cost should be shared by all users," "develop economic incentives to support continued maintenance of open space," "reduce the haves vs. the have-nots," "define where individual rights end and society/community rights begin," "include values beyond human use values in land use decisions," "recognize that use of private property is a privilege."

**(6) Think long term.**

"Recognize the responsibility to make this a better place for the next generation," "instill a sense of pride - provide hope and inspire dreams," "instill concern for future generations," "believe/accept that the land is worth saving," "whatever is best for the health of the land is ultimately best for the people and other creatures," "paint a vision for how Vermont should appear 50-100 years from now," "the well being of Vermonters should be consistent with the well-being of Vermont's natural environment," "insure that respect for the land continues in the future, pass on to children the places they will want to experience," "consider long-term implications of land use - integrate science with public process in resource decisions."

**(7) Promote ecologically sound, sustainable use of Vermont's natural resources.**

"Preserve sustainable agriculture and family farms," "promote sustainable working landscapes," "value those individuals who are good stewards of the open, working landscapes," "recognize that ecologically sound, sustainably managed natural resource use is appropriate and can provide numerous benefits to both people and wildlife conservation."

# *THEMES FOR ACTION*

The breakout sessions also worked toward identifying sets of action items designed to fulfill the principles of a land ethic. Groups proposed more than 110 action items to achieve this end. We encourage you to browse through the detailed results and draw your own conclusions. Although the actions ranged widely, here are the important recurring themes.

## **Define a land ethic and develop standards for one in Vermont**

The seven guiding principles developed by Congress participants provide the common foundation for a land ethic applied at every level - personal, organizational, and governmental. While these principles may be expanded upon to address individual needs and interests, we believe that, in their current form, they are a significant beginning toward open discussions about a land ethic in Vermont. These discussions need to continue and need to include a diversity of interests including state government leaders.

## **Address financial disincentives to landowners for maintaining habitat and keeping lands open**

Congress participants uniformly advocated for public policies that provide incentives and rewards for private landowners for conserving land and allowing public access. Inherent in this cry was a sincere interest in a fair way of reconciling private land ownership with the public benefits accrued from such lands. Existing state policy on land ownership (e.g. property tax structure) was deemed inadequate and in need of wholesale revision, and others such as the Use Value Appraisal program, need to be enhanced.

## **Incorporate a land ethic curriculum in Vermont schools that emphasizes a connection to the land**

Each breakout group identified education as central to helping Vermonters understand our place in the environment and our responsibilities as stewards. While most groups focused on educating Vermont's youth, the need for educational strategies for businesses, parents, and legislators was also recognized.

## **Provide technical assistance to local and regional organizations to help them conserve fish and wildlife habitat**

Groups identified existing land use patterns and trends (e.g., sprawl, fragmentation of the landscape) as major threats to their vision for Vermont. Programs that inform citizens, provide conservation models and tools, and promote conservation and decision-making to the local and regional levels were viewed as the most desired strategies.

## **Develop volunteerism and partnerships**

A land ethic requires promoting volunteerism among the citizenry and fostering partnerships that bring people together to work on issues of common concern. Examples included statewide conferences on specific land topics, programs promoting citizen participation at the town level, and partnerships surrounding business-natural resources and environmental education.

## **Recognize landowners**

Beyond the call for changes in public policy on property taxes, Congress participants advocated incentives for landowners to conserve and manage their lands as well as to provide public access. Landowners should also be recognized for providing various public benefits through awards/recognition programs, involvement in educational curricula, and land ethic conferences focusing on land ownership issues.



**The Fish & Wildlife Department/Agency of Natural Resources should continue to provide leadership on these issues, and to facilitate dialogue aimed at finding common ground**

The most effective land ethic initiative will involve a broad coalition of people and organizations, acting individually and in unison on each of the above themes. Perhaps for this reason, the Post-Congress evaluation clearly indicated that participants expect the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Agency of Natural Resources to be the primary facilitators of a land ethic dialogue in Vermont. The Department has developed a "Network Registry" of Congress participants interested in acting on the themes outline above.

# *WHERE DOES THE VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT GO FROM HERE?*

Many of the Wildlife Congress participants have asked, "So, what next? What are YOU going to do about these issues?" Our intent was to provide a forum for discussion, to bring people together, and to encourage them to explore their own modes of action. However, the mandate from our participants was clear: they expect us, the Fish and Wildlife Department, to provide ongoing leadership on a land ethic.

In that spirit, we reflect on our leadership role in working toward the themes for action. The department commits to the following actions and strategies that will foster the guiding principles for a land ethic both internally and throughout the state.

## **Formally establish a Department land ethic team.**

We intend to establish an internal land ethic team that fully represents the divisions within the department to continue the dialogue and work towards fostering a land ethic both in our own organization and Vermont. We will work on the most frequently raised themes from the Wildlife Congress as well as incorporate land ethic themes in our department outreach, promotional and educational materials.

## **Integrate the Guiding Principles and Themes for Action into our current and future planning initiatives.**

Two of the department's recent planning initiatives - the Strategic Plan, 2001-2005 and Conservation 2001 incorporate many of the themes identified during the Wildlife Congress. The stated objectives in these plans include to "[I]ncrease the public's support and understanding of land conservation issues, and promote and facilitate a land stewardship ethic in Vermont," and [I]mplement a conservation program that "fosters the expertise, energy, and existing structure of Vermont's citizen-based conservation interests."

## **The Fish & Wildlife Department/Agency of Natural Resources will continue to provide leadership on many of these issues, and facilitate dialogue aimed at finding common ground.**

We will continue to provide forums, facilitation services, promotion, outreach, and expertise wherever possible to further the dialogue, understanding, and positive efforts of Vermonters in dealing with the issues surrounding a land ethic. We will disseminate the Congress Proceedings to the Governor and his Development Cabinet as well as to the Secretary of Education and attempt to begin a dialogue regarding the incorporation of the guiding principles and land ethic education into other statewide programs.

## **The Fish & Wildlife Department will focus on technical assistance to local and regional planning commissions, and conservation commissions in conserving important wildlife habitat and addressing issues of sprawl and fragmentation in their towns.**

The Department is committed to working with town and regional planning commissions to conserve important wildlife habitats and minimize the effects of sprawl and fragmentation. We intend to produce a new set of guidelines and host workshops for town and regional planners for incorporation into planning documents and to intensify outreach efforts.

# THE EVENT

On September 13, 2000, we at the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department hosted the first Vermont Wildlife Congress. The Wildlife Congress brought together 80 Vermonters from diverse backgrounds for a day of learning and visioning focused on the concept of a land ethic for Vermont.

The Department used a modified "Search Conference" format to take participants along a path that led from our past, to our present, and ultimately to a vision for the future of Vermont. The day included nationally recognized speakers, opportunities for networking, and small breakout sessions where individuals could get their hands dirty wrestling with tough issues.

We hoped to provide a forum for discussion, sharing, and to set a new standard of leadership for state agencies, organizations, and individual Vermonters by truly empowering people to set and strive for their own goals.

The event took hundreds of hours of planning. Through advanced mailings, we challenged the participants with preliminary homework to make the experience more meaningful. We gave selected readings in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. Then we asked our attendees three questions:

- 
- 1) *What is it about Vermont that makes you want to live here?*
  - 2) *What is your ideal vision for how Vermont will look to your great-grandchildren?*
  - 3) *What challenges do we face in achieving the vision you outlined in Question 2?*
- 

We compiled the replies and fed them back to our participants as material for discussion during the Congress. We also used the feedback to group our attendees in their small work groups.

On the day of the Congress, our participants assembled at the Basin Harbor Club in Vergennes, Vermont. These proceedings are the result. We hope you will be as impressed as we are with the thoughtfulness, dedication, and passion our participants displayed.

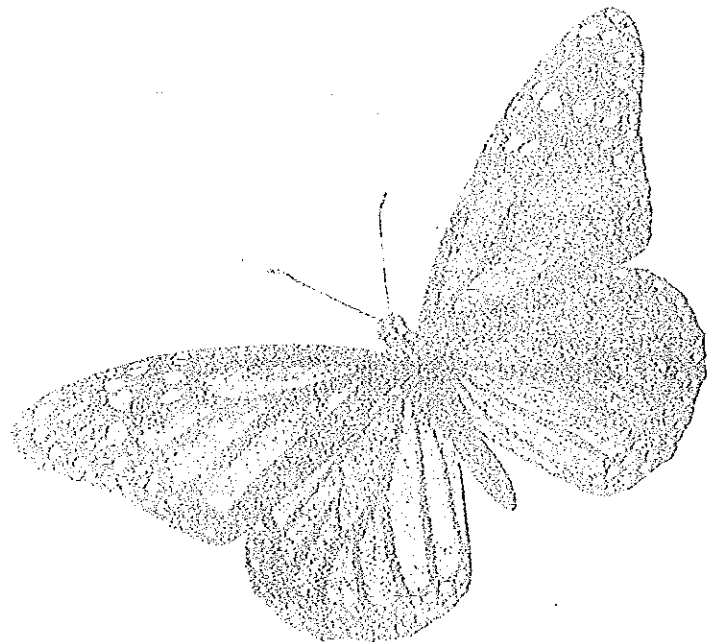
# THE VISION

The Wildlife Congress had its genesis in the Fish & Wildlife Department's strategic planning effort of 1998-99. During this effort, we identified the land ethic, particularly as espoused by Aldo Leopold, as a touchstone theme. We recognized that if Vermont is to maintain its abundant wildlife habitat, clean waters, and open landscape, that Vermonters must strengthen their connection to the land. We planned the Congress as a starting point, where Vermonters - not the Fish & Wildlife Department - could begin the process by establishing their vision for the future of our state.

## Our Land Ethic Vision

Part of our strategic planning process included coming up with our own land ethic vision. We provide our distilled vision statement here not as a recommendation, but as a benchmark of our own department's view.

*"The land connects Vermont's landscape, animals, and plants-our natural communities-and its people-our social community-into a single tapestry of life. By living in harmony with the land, Vermont's people gain many benefits. Some are visible, and others ephemeral. In turn, all Vermonters are bound to keep the land in trust, both for its intrinsic ecological value, and for its value as a resource for those who follow us. We at the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department share with all Vermonters the responsibility to actively promote the conservation of the land and to continually seek ways for Vermonters to live on, use, and enjoy it ethically and sustainably."*



# THE GOALS

We began our planning process by setting goals for the Congress. We knew our goals were ambitious, but the mission required us to expand our role to one of leadership.

**GOAL 1:** *Bring together disparate stakeholder organizations under the 'big tent' of a land stewardship vision.*

*OUTCOME A:* Participants shall develop a better appreciation and understanding for one another's interest relating to fish and wildlife.

*OUTCOME B:* Stakeholder groups that might not normally work together shall forge new channels of communication.

**GOAL 2:** *Increase participants' association of a land stewardship ethic with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.*

*OUTCOME A:* The Department shall convey to participants its vision for broad conservation goals that includes both harvest and non-harvest opportunities.

*OUTCOME B:* Participants shall better understand the complexities of the issues associated with implementing a land stewardship ethic.

**GOAL 3:** *Increase awareness of a land ethic message and develop a common vision for Vermont.*

*OUTCOME A:* Arrive at a shared understanding of what a land stewardship ethic is.

*OUTCOME B:* Participants shall develop tangible action items for 'on-the-ground' implementation of land stewardship activities by a variety of stakeholders.



## Attachment 2



### VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT: Guiding Principles



*The mission of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*

As **conservation professionals**, we will:

- **Protect and conserve** the fish, wildlife, and plants and the natural communities and habitats on which they depend.
- **Teach, promote, and practice** resource stewardship as well as inspire a land and water conservation ethic in the public.
- **Collaborate** with each other as well as with public and private institutions to accomplish our mission.
- **Advocate** the right to reasonably use and enjoy the state's natural resources including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing.
- **Recognize that** natural resources are functioning parts of complex and interconnected systems.

As **public servants** for the State of Vermont, we will:

- **Acknowledge** that our every power is derived from law, and our only authority is that given to us by the people of Vermont.
- **Act**, recommend, and base laws on sound biological information and principles.
- **Make** responsible, informed, and accountable decisions that we communicate both internally and externally.
- **Inform** all our constituents in an open and courteous manner our recommendations and decisions in prompt, accurate, and understandable formats.

As **colleagues** in the Fish & Wildlife Department, we will:

- **Adhere** to the highest principles of professionalism and integrity and expect no less from each other.
- **Promote** innovative thinking and value alternative viewpoints.
- **Treat** one another with respect and honesty, encouraging each of us to contribute fully to meeting the mission and to enjoy working within our department.
- **Value and support** professional and personal development opportunities.







# Attachment 3

## VERMONT STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2025

### 2015-2025 Summary of Vermont Fish and Wildlife Strategic Plan Update

**GOAL A: *Conservation.* Conserve, enhance, and restore Vermont's natural communities, habitats, and plant and wildlife species along with the ecological processes that sustain them as informed by the Vermont Conservation Design.**

- **Outcome I:** Conserve, restore, and enhance habitats, natural plant and animal communities, and ecosystem integrity to maintain wildlife and ecological values in Vermont.
- **Outcome II:** Conserve and restore Vermont's fish, wildlife and plant species to maintain ecosystem integrity for the benefit of the public.

**GOAL B: *Recreation.* Provide a diversity of fish and wildlife-based activities, opportunities, and access that allow hunting, fishing, trapping, and viewing consistent with the public trust.**

- **Outcome III:** Provide hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities consistent with resource management goals and within ecological limits.
- **Outcome IV:** Provide access for viewing, photographing, and the enjoyment of fish and wildlife consistent with resource management goals while ensuring the protection of observed species.

**GOAL C: *Education.* Increase public understanding and support for natural resource conservation issues and promote and facilitate a land stewardship ethic in Vermont that includes the safe and ethical utilization of wildlife. Maintain department relevancy with the public and our traditional constituents.**

- **Outcome V:** Maintain a department that is relevant to all of Vermont's citizens, their fish and wildlife values, interests, and expectations for us as a state agency.
- **Outcome VI:** Maintain and improve collaboration with partners and stakeholders (NGOs, universities, other local, state and federal agencies).
- **Outcome VII:** Increase Vermonters connection with, and appreciation for, the land and the fish and wildlife habitat it supports.
- **Outcome VIII:** Increase public support for the department's mission/policies/public trust/land ethic.

**GOAL D: *Safety.* Maintain safe and lawful fish and wildlife-based activities to protect species and their habitats and, to limit harmful human encounters.**

- **Outcome IX:** Limit the number of human conflicts, injuries, and fatalities that result from encounters with wildlife or participation in fish and wildlife recreational activities.
- **Outcome X:** Enforce all fish and wildlife-related regulations to ensure the mission of the department.

**GOAL E: *Efficiency.* Strengthen the framework of fish and wildlife conservation through efficient operations and effective and adaptive management to better accomplish the mission.**

- **Outcome XI:** Achieve financial sustainability.
- **Outcome XII:** Improve facilities and business processes to maximize efficiency and reduce costs.
- **Outcome XIII:** Develop a workforce of dedicated and knowledgeable staff to meet current and emerging conservation objectives.



# Attachment 4

## Fish and Wildlife Congress II Notes

**(All ideas presented are captured below and do not represent a consensus of all in attendance)**

**October 24, 2016**

### Shared Group Purpose Statements

*A wide variety of Vermonters met for the Fish and Wildlife Congress II at the Kehoe Conservation Camp on October 24, 2016 to discuss the future of Conservation. The original Draft purpose of the Congress was:*

*“To begin a dialogue to figure out if all of us, a diverse group of stakeholders with deeply held values and conflicting interpretations of the challenges we face, can work together to create a shared purpose with regards to the future of fish and wildlife conservation in Vermont.”*

*There were multiple modifications to the purpose statement by many of the members of the group but in general the statement above represented the general goal of the meeting.*

### General Themes

Shared value of conserving wildlife

Shared concerns about being left out of the process or denied access to the Department, land, wildlife, and/or the decision-making process.

#### ***Summary of Threats/Concerns/Challenges (from flip charts):***

- **Loss of habitat/fragmentation/connectivity**
  - Protection of contiguous forests and biodiversity in the face of change
  - Sustainability
  - Invasive species impact on native species
  - Increasing human development/population
- **People’s increasing disconnection from the natural world**
  - Access to land for outdoor pursuits
  - Children’s nature deficit disorder
  - Loss of appreciation and knowledge regarding conservation
  - Difficult to generate a purpose around conservation initiatives
  - Vermonters becoming complacent about what we have here

- Differing values regarding wildlife
  - Multiple interpretations of wildlife and nature
  - Concern about reliance on opinion rather than fact
  - Potential split between ‘urban’ vs. ‘rural’ values
  - Conservation means different things to different people.
  - Can we find common ground?
  - Disenfranchised versus a fear of becoming so.
  - More diverse representation on F&W Board
  - Changing social values in the state
  - Diminishing public support for wildlife conservation
- Climate Change
  - Planning for the future unknown
  - Energy needs in the face of climate change
- Funding
  - How do we pay for conservation?
  - Share the financial burden
  - Future funding decline as Vermonters grow older and less connected

### **Next Steps**

The group elected to form a subcommittee to survey the Congress participants regarding potential “thorny issues” that may benefit from further discussion to determine if we can find common ground. The sub-committee could also prioritize the threats list compiled at the close of the Congress to determine if there is any agreement (see Appendix A below). The members of the subgroup include:

James Ehlers	Heather Furman
Frank Stanley	Brenna Galdenzi
Mollie Matteson	Bruce Martin
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Representative	John Lloyd

### **Congress Participants**

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Eric Palmer	Jamey Fidel	Jared Carpenter	Mollie Matteson	Mark Scott	Walter Medwid
John Lloyd	Mark Nelson	Heather Furman	Tom Rogers	Sharon McNair	Steve Gomez
Brenna Galdenzi	Peggy Struhsacker	Evan Hughes	Kevin Lawrence	Chris Rimmer	Jason Batchelder
Tovar Cerulli	James Ehlers	Barry Londeree	Butch Speer	Frank Stanley	Theresa Elmer
Louis Porter	Fred Pogmore	Adam Miller	Steve Wright	Jim Shallow	Bruce Martin
	Kim Royar	Susan Warner	Alan Strong	Bob Sampson	Donna Parish

## **Appendix A**

### **What are the 3 biggest threats to conservation moving forward?**

- Habitat/ corridors, pollution, etc.
- Update wildlife rehab program
- More diverse representation of philosophical mindsets on the fish and wildlife board to better serve all Vermonters.
  
- Greater regulation/oversight. Data collection from nuisance wildlife trapped out of season and support for non-lethal alternatives
- Regulated season on coyotes
- Support for wildlife rehabbers
- Expand public awareness of FWD conservation programs and activities.
  
- Posted land and land use-my taxes but can't hunt
- Deer herd isn't the same state wide and where they're the most it is all posted. Antlerless permits.
  
- Protecting contiguous forests to provide healthy habitat for fish and wildlife
- Recognizing declining populations and pressures on certain wildlife and building that into hunting plans.
- Invasive species and impact on indigenous species.
  
- Habitat destruction and Fragmentation
- Climate change
- Detachment from Nature
  
- The changing social and ethical values of the state.
- The railroading of government. Not allowing citizens to approach the Department with social issues without being screened first.
- Managing wildlife for social issues only.
- Creating more divisiveness between citizens.
  
- Would like to see a discussion on the process of going from technical to the adaptive challenges. We want to include science where it is important which is the basis for natural resource management. The following steps of social values are critical as well.
- Workgroups where reading the seminal and most recent literature provides a firm grounding for changing thoughts- especially those based on little or misinformation.
  
- Land use change from exurban sprawl that causes loss of forest cover and connectivity.
- Declining water quality due to impervious surface and poor storm water management.
- Diminishing public support for wildlife conservation.
  
- The development of a more inclusive process for engaging all Vermonters in participation in policy development, including service on Fish and Wildlife Board.
- Development and expansion of a broader and sustainable funding base, making all citizens more responsible for support of wildlife.
- Expansion of efforts on large scale habitat issues to address climate change/resilience, and fragmentation.

- Fragmentation from development (thinking 1 terrestrial)
  - Climate change-my biggest concern is not so much directional change in temp or ppt., but large events- flooding, drought, no snow, etc.
  - Habitat alteration in function from invasive.
- 
- Climate change impacts on ecosystem integrity
  - Invasive species
  - Lack of connections (especial among youth) to natural world, and lack of sense of stewardship.
- 
- Addressing / incorporation
  - Cultural change into DFW Culture.
- 
- Trapping Predators and managing effects of climate change.
- 
- Forest Fragmentation
  - River floodplain management and restoration to address water quality.
- 
- Water Quality
  - Habitat Loss
  - Funding
- 
- Habitat loss
  - Maintaining Public/Political Support
  - Climate Change
- 
- Habitat fragmentation and the need for \$ to conserve habitat
  - Increasing Vermonters connection to wildlife and habitat
  - Climate Change and all its attendant issues.
- 
- The Lack of knowledge other groups have regarding biological factors and how population control by regulated methods can ensure a healthier animal population.
- 
- Habitat loss and Fragmentation
  - Publics disconnection to the land
  - Invasives
  - Climate change
  - Changing demographics/funding
- 
- Connecting adults and youth alike to nature through education events and opportunity
  - Access to public and private land for hunting, fishing and trapping.
  - Continue efforts to improve water quality.
- 
- Effective, respectful collaboration among diverse stakeholders.
  - Sustainable funding (broad-based)
  - Habitat Health, integrity and connectivity.

# Attachment 5

## The Vermont Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

KEY: North American Model tenant  
Proposed Vermont Model tenant

1. Wildlife resources are a public trust

**1. Fish, wildlife, and their habitats are a public trust and a shared responsibility**

Maintain the public trust doctrine as the central focus of the model but also point out that conservation doesn't just happen through government action. Conservation organizations, educational institutions, communities, policy makers, and sporting partners play an equally large role. The larger public also benefits when it plays an active role through financial support and pro-conservation behaviors.

Include landscapes and natural communities in the definition of habitats.

2. Markets for game are eliminated

**2. Markets for wild products should be sustainable, well-regulated, and align with conservation goals**

We acknowledge widely held practices such as markets for wild fish, fur, game meat, fish/wildlife outfitters and guides, and the economic and cultural values these markets create. We strive not to eliminate these markets, but to regulate them in a way that is sustainable and that doesn't inhibit, and may enhance, conservation of the affected species. Markets for wild products also includes forest products, which can impact wildlife and their habitats and should thus also follow these principles. Wildlife watching and ecotourism can also be a wildlife market and should also held to these standards.

3. Allocation of wildlife is by law

**3. The intrinsic values and direct benefits of a healthy ecosystem should be protected by law**

Focus on the ecosystem services that benefit people from healthy, functioning, natural systems, and recognize that nature has intrinsic value beyond basic utilization. Because of these values and benefits, it should be protected by law from degradation or destruction.

4. Wildlife can be killed only for a legitimate purpose

**4. Fish and wildlife can be killed when it is managed sustainably, promotes conservation, and is done for a legitimate purpose**

All uses of wildlife should focus on promoting a conservation ethic. Legitimate purpose is defined as utilization of the animal for food, fiber, or other purposes, animals taken in defense of property (once non-lethal methods have been explored), connecting people to the outdoors, or research or management activities that benefit conservation such as elimination of invasive species or population control. Wildlife watching should be done in a way that minimizes impacts to the species and that also promotes conservation. Wildlife cannot be removed from the wild to be kept as pets.

5. Wildlife is considered an international resource

**5. Conservation of species and habitats transcends political boundaries**

Regions have a responsibility to the global community to protect their fish and wildlife, but they also have a responsibility to protect their habitats as well. Focus on jointly managing, studying, or conserving species (fish, lynx, moose, bats), and engaging in regional and global species and habitat protection measures (RAMSAR, CITES, Staying Connected, VT Conservation Design, partner with USFWS Conte refuge, ACT 250, other land acquisition and private lands conservation).

6. Science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy

**6. Biological and social sciences are the proper tools to inform conservation policy**

Biological science should continue to inform conservation policy, but a scientific approach should also be taken when gathering public input on preferences, communicating science to the public, or promoting pro-conservation behaviors. Clearly define what social sciences are, including economics, gathering public input, and behavioral sciences to promote pro-conservation behavior. Include information about the importance of informed and educated public that supports conservation to this tenant.

7. Democracy of hunting is standard

**7. Ensure democracy of access to fish and wildlife, wild lands and waters**

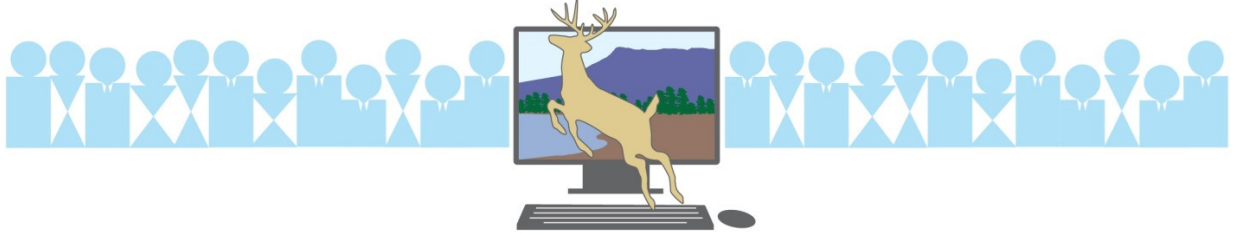
Access to wildlife comes in many forms including consumptive uses, viewing opportunities, and just knowing that wildlife is out there and healthy. Access to wild lands includes access to natural settings, and access to wild lands and waters for wildlife-based recreation. These opportunities should be available equally to all. Access to land that is not enclosed for hunters, birders, hikers.

DRAFT



# Attachment 6

## Responsive Management™



### **OPINIONS ON FISH, WILDLIFE, AND LAND USE AMONG VERMONT RESIDENTS, HUNTERS, AND ANGLERS**

**Conducted for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department**

**by Responsive Management**

**2015**

# **OPINIONS ON FISH, WILDLIFE, AND LAND USE AMONG VERMONT RESIDENTS, HUNTERS, AND ANGLERS**

**2015**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (hereinafter referred to as the Department) to determine the opinions of residents, hunters, and anglers on issues pertaining to the intersection of land use and the management of fish and wildlife. The study entailed three scientific telephone surveys of Vermont residents, hunters, and anglers.

For the surveys, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the almost universal ownership of telephones among all three samples in Vermont. Note that both landlines and cell phones were called in their proper proportions for the sample of Vermont residents; landlines and cell phones were called for the samples of hunters and anglers depending on the telephone that was associated with their license. Note that telephone surveys, relative to mail or Internet surveys, allow for more scientific sampling and data collection, provide higher quality data, obtain higher response rates, are more timely, and are more cost-effective for general population surveys such as the survey of residents. Telephone surveys also have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of reduced use of paper and reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires.

The telephone survey questionnaire (the same questionnaire was used for all three surveys) was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Department.

The sample of Vermont residents comprised a random landline sample and a random cell phone sample. This is called a dual-frame sample of residents because it consists of these two separate samples. Both the landline sample and the cell phone sample were obtained from SSI, a firm that specializes in providing scientifically valid samples for survey research. The two parts of the dual-frame sample were called in their proper proportions to be representative of Vermont residents, including those with landlines only, those with cell phones only, and those with both.

The samples of hunters and anglers were obtained from the Department; it consisted of those who held a hunting and/or fishing license.

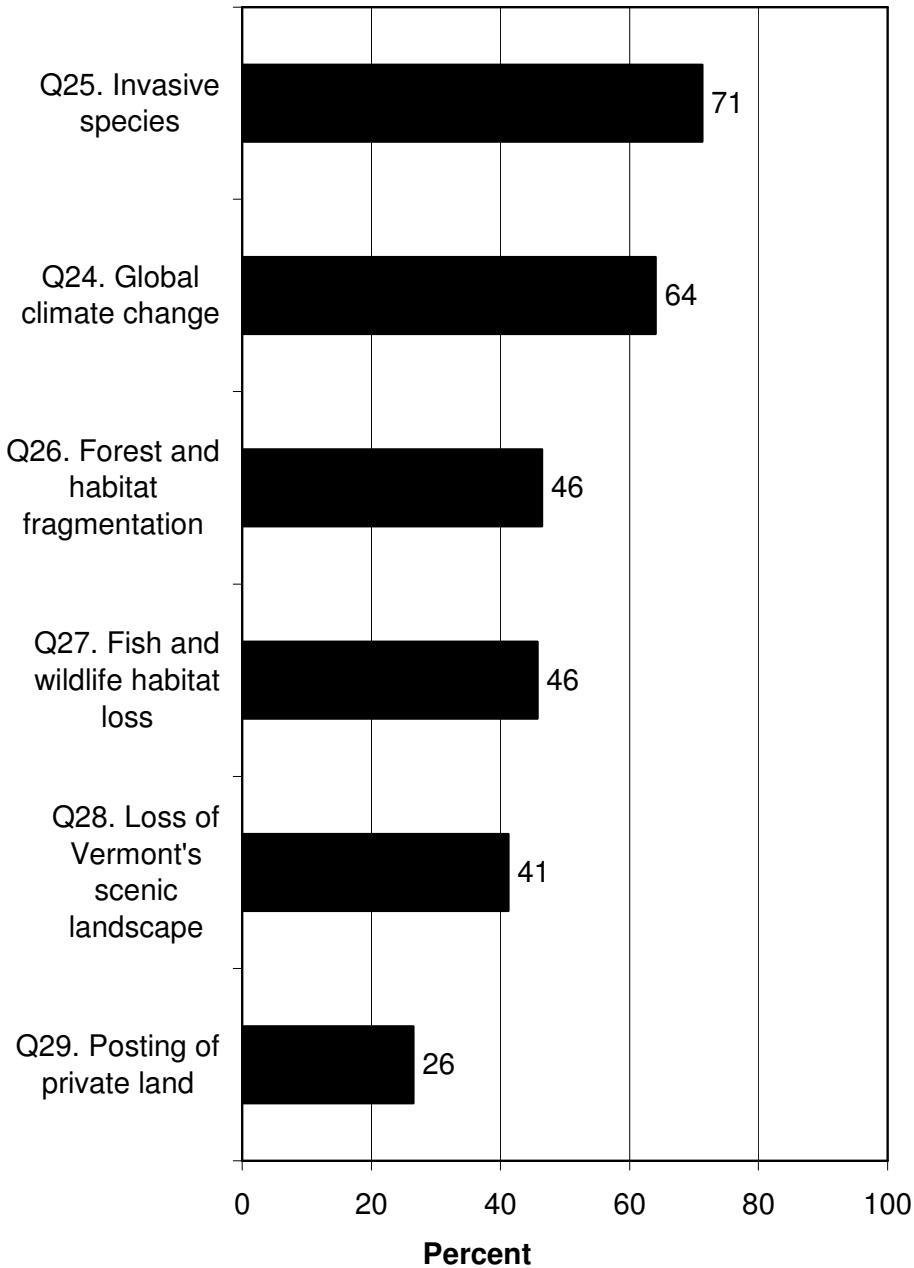
The surveys were conducted in June and July 2015. The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language. Responsive Management obtained a total of 802 completed interviews with residents, 200 completed interviews with hunters, and 203 completed interviews with anglers.

The analysis of data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

## PROBLEMS THAT VERMONT FACES

- The survey asked about the most important issues/factors that negatively affect the *quality of life*. This was open-ended and allowed multiple issues/factors to be named.
  - Among residents, the top responses relate to pollution/environmental degradation (21%), financial issues (17%), and poor health/age (14%).
  - Among hunters and anglers, the same responses that residents give are prominent: pollution/environmental degradation (11% of hunters, 15% of anglers), financial issues (17% and 18%), and poor health/age (14% and 12%)
- The survey presented six potential problems to respondents. For each potential problem, they were asked to rate it as a big problem, a small problem, or no problem.
  - Among residents, the problem of *invasive species* has the most saying it is a big problem (71% say it is a big problem), followed by *global climate change* (64% say it is a big problem).
    - A similar study in 1992 showed only 57% of respondents stating that *invasive species* is a big problem; however, note that the 1992 study referred to “nuisance aquatic plants” rather than “invasive species.”
  - Among hunters, two problems are at the top: *invasive species* (70% say it is a big problem) and the *posting of private land* (55%). Among anglers, the top problems are *invasive species* (68%) and *forest/habitat fragmentation* (48%).

**Q24-29: Percent of residents who believe each of the following is a big problem:**



- The survey directly asked about another potential problem: suburban sprawl. The statement was made that “suburban sprawl is *not* yet a problem in Vermont,” and respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement.
  - A slight majority of residents think this is a problem, with 52% disagreeing with the statement. On the other hand, 39% agree that it is *not* yet a problem.
    - A similar survey in 1998 showed 29% of respondents agreeing with the statement that suburban sprawl is *not* yet a problem.
  - Among hunters, 48% disagree (i.e., think suburban sprawl is a problem), while 44% agree. Among anglers, 49% disagree, while 44% agree.
  
- The survey directly asked about another potential problem, somewhat related to the above problem: forest fragmentation and loss. Again, respondents were asked if they agree or disagree that “forest fragmentation and loss is a problem in Vermont.”
  - The large majority of residents agree with this statement (i.e., think it is a problem): 61% agree, while 18% disagree.
  - Hunters and anglers are more likely than the general population to agree. Among hunters, 68% agree, while 23% disagree. Among anglers, 67% agree, and 21% disagree.

## **PARTICIPATION IN WILDLIFE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION**

- The survey asked about participation in a dozen wildlife-associated activities.
  - Very large majorities of residents have participated in the past 12 months in wildlife viewing (81% did so within 1 mile of home; 74% did so greater than 1 mile from home). Large majorities also visited a state or national park (63%) or went hiking (61%). A majority participated in birdwatching (55%).
    - The trend graph shows substantial increases in participation, since 2003, in wildlife viewing more than one mile from home (74% in 2015 compared to 53% in 2003), visiting state or national parks (63% in 2015 versus 49% in 2003), and canoeing/kayaking (40% in 2015 versus 27% in 2003).
  - Among hunters, top activities are hunting (86%—note that the sample is from licenses, so the hunter need not have hunted in the past year to be in the sample), viewing wildlife



within a mile of home (86%), viewing wildlife more than a mile from home (79%), fishing (79%), and hiking (51%).

- Among anglers, top activities are fishing (85%), wildlife viewing within a mile of home (78%), wildlife viewing more than a mile from home (76%), hiking (60%), hunting (52%), and camping (50%).

➤ In follow-up to the above question, the survey asked about the importance that *people have the opportunity in Vermont to participate in wildlife-related outdoor recreation*.

- The large majority of residents (91%) say it is *very* important, and another 8% say it is *somewhat* important, which is nearly all the respondents.
  - This is an increase compared to a similar study in 2000, in which 80% of respondents stated it is *very* important.
- This is even more important for hunters and anglers: 96% (hunters) and 95% (anglers) say it is *very* important, and nearly all say it is *very* or *somewhat* important.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND OPINION OF THE VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT**

➤ The amount of knowledge that respondents have of the Department was assessed (self-professed knowledge, no “test” was given). Not surprisingly, hunters and anglers claim more knowledge of the Department, compared to residents.

- Most commonly, residents say that they know *a moderate amount* about the Department (41% give this response) or they know *a little* (40%). Only 14% claim to know *a great deal*.
- Hunters appear to be the most knowledgeable. Half of hunters claim to know *a moderate amount* (50%), and another 29% claim to know *a great deal*. Among anglers, 37% claim to know *a moderate amount*, and 28% claim to know *a great deal*.

➤ The survey asked about satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Department as a government agency.

- The large majority of residents are satisfied with the Department (76%, including 44% being *very* satisfied). Only 3% are dissatisfied (the remainder giving a neutral response).

- Those who went fishing in the previous 12 months are most often *very* satisfied with the Department (52% stated this), whereas those who did not do any wildlife viewing or birdwatching in the previous 12 months are least often *very* satisfied (37%).
- The percent of residents who are *very* satisfied with the Department (44%) increased substantially since 2003 (25%).
- Large majorities of hunters and anglers are satisfied: 76% of hunters and 80% of anglers are satisfied (40% and 47%, respectively, are *very* satisfied).
- The survey asked about how the Department does at *effectively balancing the interests of anglers, hunters, conservation groups, and the general public*.
  - Most residents agree that the Department achieves this balance (76% agree); meanwhile, a small percentage disagree (7%).
    - Residents who most often *strongly* agree are those with an income less than \$50,000 per year (54% stated this) and those who indicated they are satisfied with the Department in general (53%).
    - Residents who *strongly* agree that the Department achieves this balance increased from 33% in 2003 to 42% in 2015.
  - While hunters and anglers agree at about the same rate as does the general population, their rate of disagreement is higher (at the expense of “don’t know” responses): 77% of hunters and 75% of anglers agree; however, 17% of hunters and 11% of anglers disagree.

## IMPORTANCE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

- One question directly compared wildlife with economic development. Wildlife is favored by survey respondents by a large amount in these general questions.
  - The large majority of Vermont residents (75%) disagree that *economic development is more important than wildlife*. Most of that is *strong* disagreement (49%). Only 12% agree, the rest being neutral.
  - Likewise, the large majority of hunters (81%) and anglers (76%) disagree, with most of that being *strong* disagreement (55% of hunters, 57% of anglers). The percentages that agree are 8% of hunters and 11% of anglers.

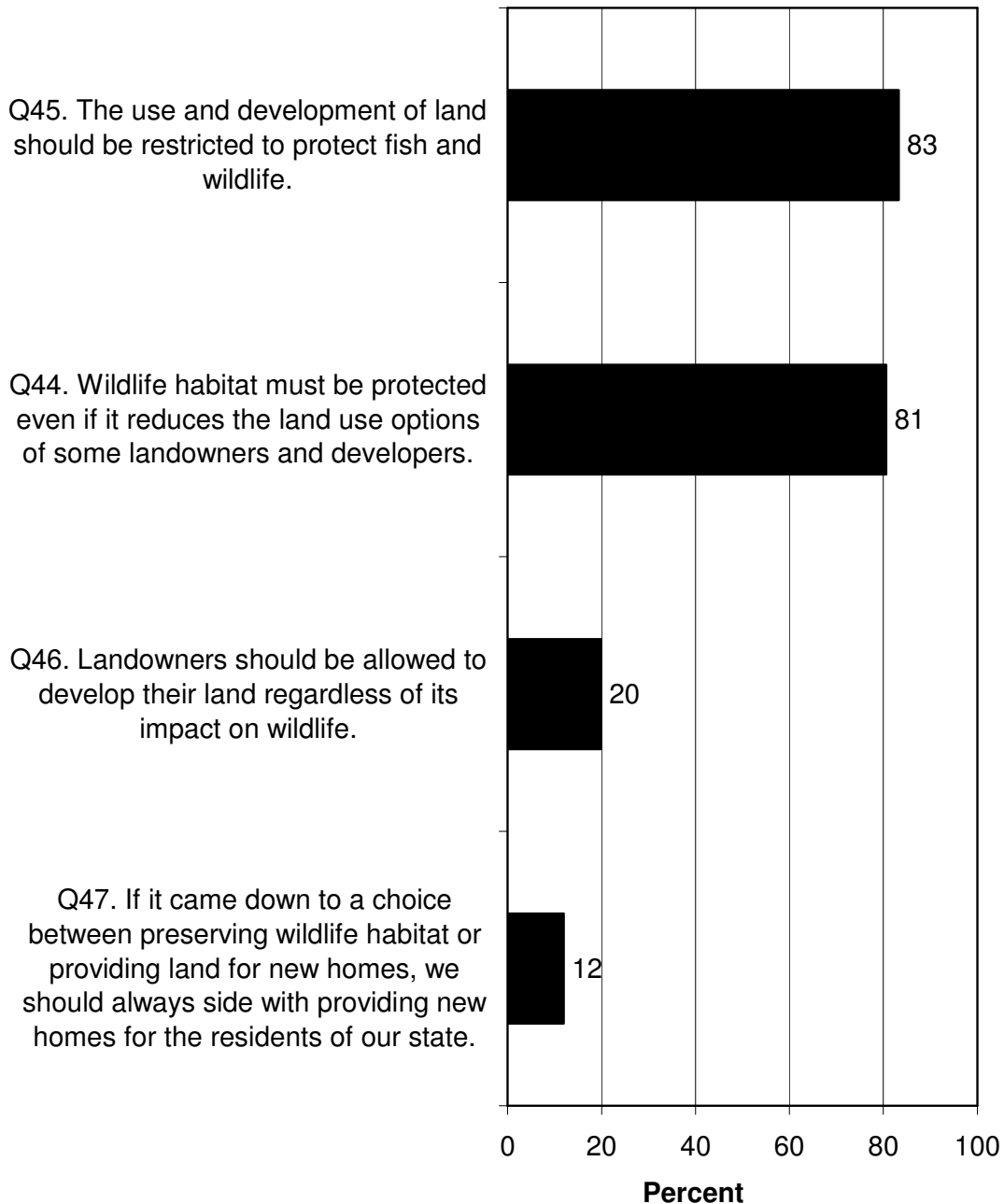
- The survey asked about agreement or disagreement with this statement: *Threatened and endangered species must be protected*. Agreement is overwhelming. Agreement is also overwhelming with this statement: *Knowing that Vermont's native fish and wildlife populations are healthy and surviving well is very important to me even if I don't get to see them*.

## OPINIONS ON LAND USE IN VERMONT

- The survey asked for opinions on the *amount of state-owned land* in Vermont: should it be increased, decreased, or stay the same? It is roughly split between stay the same and increased; very few want it decreased.
  - Most commonly, residents think that the amount of state-owned land should stay the same (47% give this response). Otherwise, residents are much more likely to say that they want it increased (39%) than decreased (5%).
    - Since 1997, the percent of residents who want the amount of state-owned land to increase has declined (61% in 1997 compared to 39% in 2015), with more residents now wanting the amount to stay the same (28% in 1997 versus 47% in 2015).
  - Responses are similar among hunters and anglers. The most common response is stay the same (45% of hunters, 48% of anglers), and those wanting an increase (44% of hunters, 40% of anglers) far outnumber those wanting a decrease (5% of hunters, 6% of anglers).
- Respondents generally think that *state ownership of land is important to maintain biological diversity*.
  - The overwhelming majority of residents (89%) think that state ownership of land is important to maintain biological diversity, most of that being in the *very important* response.
  - Hunters and anglers are similar to residents on this question: 90% of hunters think it is important (62% thinking it is *very important*), and 87% of anglers think it is important (61% saying *very important*).

- Respondents overwhelmingly think it is important that *ecologically important habitats and land in Vermont are being protected and preserved*.
  - Among residents, 97% think this is important, including 75% who say it is *very* important. There is little change since 2000.
    - Residents who most often think this is *very* important are those who live in a large city, urban area, or suburban area (87% stated this) and those with an income less than \$50,000 per year (82%).
  - Hunters and anglers, as with residents, also overwhelmingly think it is important.
  
- Finally in this section, the survey presented four statements to respondents that pertain to the tradeoff between land development and habitat protection. For each, respondents indicated if they agree or disagree with it. In general, they side with habitat protection over unfettered use of land.
  - Among residents, agreement is high that *the use and development of land should be restricted to protect fish and wildlife* (83%) and that *wildlife habitat must be protected even if it reduces the land use options of some landowners and developers* (81%), as shown on the graph. However, statements favoring development are *not* well received: disagreement ranges from 74% to 77% on the two statements that favor development over wildlife. There is little marked change since 2003.
  - Hunters and anglers are much the same as residents.

**Q44-47: Percent of residents who strongly or moderately agree with the following:**

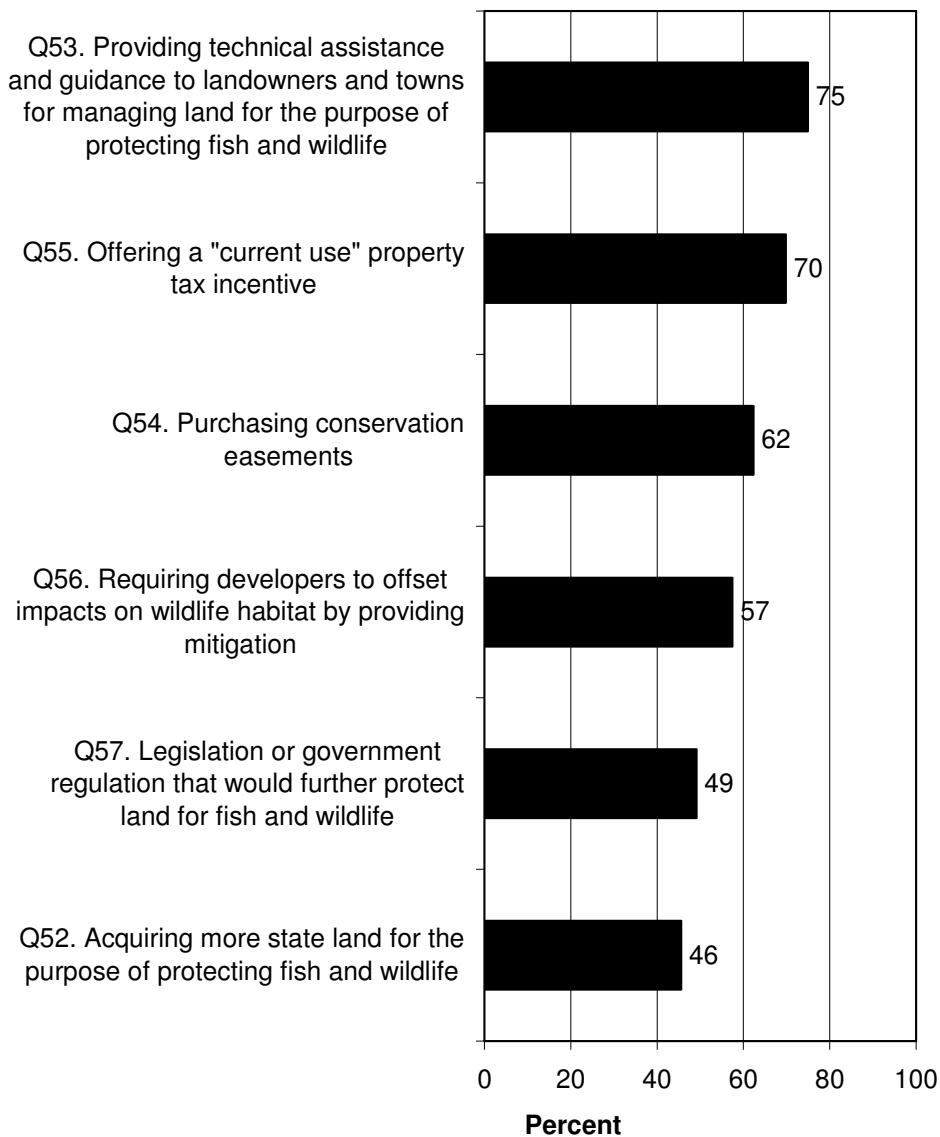


## OPINIONS ON DEPARTMENT ACTIONS AS THEY RELATE TO BOTH LAND USE AND FISH/WILDLIFE

- Respondents overwhelmingly agree that *hunting and fishing are part of scientific management of healthy fish and wildlife populations*.
  - Among residents, 91% agree, with 67% *strongly* agreeing. There is little change since 2003.
  - Among recreationists, hunters are almost unanimous (98% agree); with anglers just under that (93% agree).
  
- Respondents generally place much importance on *protecting endangered species*.
  - The huge majority of residents (95%) think protecting endangered species is *very* or *somewhat* important (with 76% saying *very* important). There is little change since 2003.
  - Hunters and anglers are like the general population: 95% of hunters and 97% of anglers place importance on this.
  
- There is much support for having the Department protect important wildlife habitat by purchasing land.
  - The large majority of residents support (83%); opposition is low (9%). There is little change since 2003.
  - Hunters and anglers generally support (85% and 87%, respectively).
  
- The survey presented six possible strategies for protecting land for fish and wildlife. For each strategy, respondents rated their level of support for it or opposition to it.
  - Residents most favor the provision of technical assistance/guidance (75% strongly support) and tax incentives (70%). Furthermore, the purchase of conservation easements (62%) is favored over outright purchase of land (46%). (Note that when looking at strong or moderate support, the percentages are very high—from 78% to 95%.) In the middle are two strategies that entail more regulation.
  - Hunters and anglers also show the most support for technical assistance/guidance and tax incentives. In the middle are requiring developers to provide mitigation actions and the

purchase of conservation easements. At the bottom for hunters and anglers are purchasing more state land and more government regulations.

**Q52-57: Percent of residents who strongly support each of the following strategies for protecting land for fish and wildlife:**



## FUNDING OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

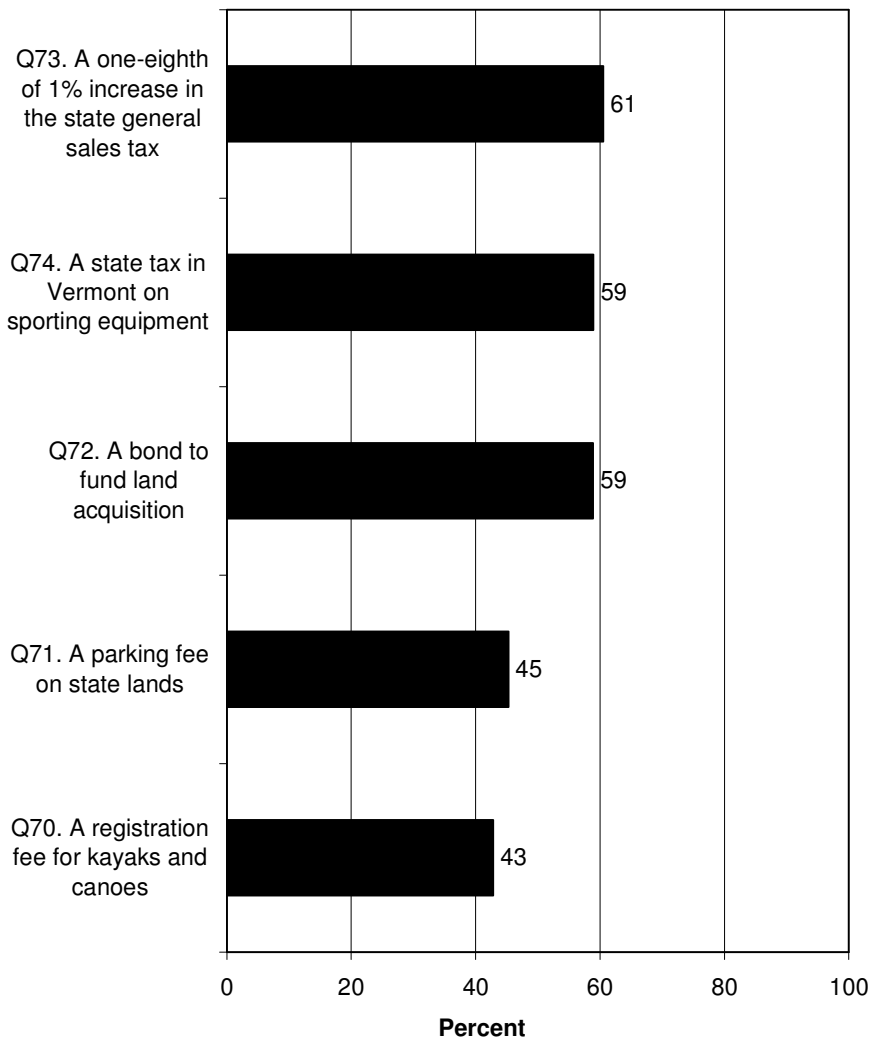
- The survey listed four items to see where *open land* falls on the spectrum (the other items were police/fire services, roads, and schools). Respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay an extra percentage in taxes for each.
  - The top of the list among residents is roads (61% would pay extra in taxes for them) and police/fire services (56%). These are both slightly above open land (52%) and schools (51%).
    - Similar surveys were conducted in 1990, 1995, and 2000. Respondents' willingness to pay extra taxes for open land has remained relatively stable over the years, while it has steadily increased for roads and police and fire services.
  - While the percentage of hunters saying that they would pay extra taxes for open land is about the same as among residents, their ranking of it is higher than the ranking among residents. Anglers also say open land at about the same rate as do residents, but they rank open land last in the items for which they would pay more taxes.
- Respondents are split between wanting funding for fish and wildlife conservation programs to be *increased* or *kept the same* (with very few wanting funding to be *decreased*).
  - Among residents, 44% want funding to *stay the same* (the most common response), while 38% want it *increased*; only 2% want it *decreased*. There is little change since 1995.
    - Residents most likely to want funding *increased* are those who went canoeing or kayaking in the past 12 months (45% stated this) and those who went camping (43%).
  - Hunters and anglers are even more in the conservationist camp: 48% of hunters and 49% of anglers want funding to *stay the same*; meanwhile, 44% of hunters and 41% of anglers want funding *increased* (the *decreased* responses are at 2% and 3%).
- Finally, five funding options were presented in the survey. Respondents were told that the funding would be used for *a land conservation initiative to ensure the future of fish and wildlife populations, habitat, and public access to lands for recreation*. For each, respondents were asked if they would support or oppose it.
  - A majority of residents strongly or moderately support three of the five taxes: a one-eighth of 1% increase in the state general sales tax, a state tax on sporting equipment, and



a bond (support ranges from 59% to 61%). There is less than a majority who support a parking fee on state lands or a registration fee for kayaks and canoes.

- Hunters’ and anglers’ opinions mirror those of residents. At the top is the bond, followed by the one-eighth of 1% sales tax and the tax on sporting equipment. At the bottom are the registration fee for kayaks/canoes and the parking fee.

**Q70-74: Percent of residents who strongly or moderately support each of the following to provide funding for a land conservation initiative:**



# Attachment 7

## Relevancy 2017 Action Plan

**The goal for these teams as they assess each action area:** *To maintain the department's relevancy statewide where it's high, to increase relevancy where low, and to ensure the department's ability to meet its strategic goals in the years ahead.*

**Principle Key Take Home Messages: (analyze what's realistic and practical, set priorities based on those listed below or develop new ones—commitment to action deadline: May 1, 2018)**

1. **Broaden our constituency**
2. **Build connections to the land**
3. **Build a Vermont coalition**
4. **Be a model state agency**

**Broaden our constituency (Vermonters have shared values around conservation and a land ethic)—  
[Communication]**

Strategies:

1. Make sure Vermonters understand the key role and commitment the Department plays in Conservation.
  - a. Create consistent messaging that goes beyond delivering the basics: "We care..." (must be the first priority)
  - b. Create more in-depth information/resources on habitat and nongame resources for the public and birders in particular. (WMA birder blog/
  - c. Continue to develop key messages that emphasize our conservation mission and its impact on Vermonters' quality of life.
  - d. Develop and showcase examples of conservation providing economic benefits to individuals, businesses, and towns.
  - e. Promote staff speaking engagements on our websites. (in progress)
  - f. Make sure the website reflects the interests of all Vermonters.
  - g. Develop the tools and strategies that demonstrate the shared values between staff and the public.
2. Communicate to a broader audience.
  - a. Develop a suite of key messages that reflect our habitat-based work (i.e., Habitat is Essential to Conservation)— these should be part of the staff awareness across division.
3. Increase the presence of the VFWD in urban areas. (absolutely essential)
4. Promote the value of habitat conservation and management.
5. Promote a renewed Conservation ethic among traditional users (have each staff adopt a local fish and game club to help with the conservation mission outreach/recruitment)
  - a. Conduct a master hunter/naturalist program.
  - b. Develop strategies for finding common ground among disparate views, understanding via Bleiker that it may be better to gain informed consent among the undecided middle

- c. Ensure that outreach includes examples that illustrate the values of conservation to hunters, anglers, and trappers, wildlife and plant enthusiasts, and the general public.

## **II. Build Vermonters connections to the land—[experiential]**

### Strategies:

1. Expand our promotion of non-traditional fish and wildlife-based activities.
  - a. Develop programs that encourage responsible outdoor recreation, including birding and wildlife watching, particularly at WMAs such as Dead Creek.
    - i. Host more bird, plant, herp, fish events to show people what other parts of our work look like.
  - b. Create a Department blog and/or podcast series
2. Offer outdoor-based activities for urban residents.
  - a. Develop an urban fishing program and better guides to fishing in Vermont and work with local populations in urban areas to identify opportunities for participation (e.g, New Americans, CCTA).
  - b. Develop urban birding and outdoor recreation programs
3. Make it easier for citizens to participate in outdoor wildlife based activities.
  - a. Simplify regulations on outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing, WMA uses.
  - b. Develop better guide to open lands and incentivize landowners to open properties for hunters and anglers
4. Promote the sustainable use of natural resources for food, fiber, energy, and nature's services.
  - a. Promote and build a localvore movement to provide protein-rich foods for Vermonters. This can include media to teach people how to care for meat, cook game /fish etc..
5. Expand the community-based outreach strategy that focuses on the local level.
  - a. Partner with communities on conservation projects that involve local volunteers to build stronger, more direct relationships.
  - b. Develop less formal opportunities for staff to connect with the Community they serve (e.g., "get to know the biologist or warden") and host one in each county.

## **III. Build a Vermont Coalition around Conservation —[policy]**

### Strategies:

1. Seek common ground on issues of concern to all of Vermont's natural resource-based organizations.
  - a. Support the Wildlife Congress and share information/results with staff and public
  - b. Bring disparate groups together under the umbrella of conservation and a stewardship ethic.
  - c. Develop Economics of Conservation messages with partners to amplify the understanding.
2. Investigate strategies to enhance partnerships and communication to achieve programs of mutual interest.

- a. Talk to partners so we better understand what their perceptions of us are.
  - b. Work to coordinate with partners to improve relationships.
  - c. Consider developing partnerships with other outreach centers to broaden the scope and influence of the participating organizations.
  - d. Assign particular individuals as liaisons with particular organizations
3. Discuss changes in outreach focus with traditional stakeholders and enlist their support
- a. Work with Fish and Game Clubs and other groups so they can remain relevant in changing times.

#### **IV. Be a model state agency—[internal/governance]**

##### Strategies:

1. Promote effective melding of natural resource-based and social sciences.
2. Promote transparency in our deliberations and decisions.
3. Promote the Vermont Conservation Design (VCD) as a science based plan for land and habitat conservation.
  - a. Employ the VCD to help determine when we have met our conservation goals
4. Evaluate policies and regulations that are not consistent with the Vermont Model and promote activities that are or create messages about why we've decided to continue those that don't.
  - a. Perform an internal review of policies and regulations to evaluate adherence to the Vermont Model: (Make this a high priority/focus)
    - i. Either clearly and compellingly articulate the Department's position or develop plans for modifying the regulation.
    - ii. Work closely with the appropriate user groups to build trust and communicate risks.
    - iii. Create messages/perspectives that communicate around difficult topics that staff can share.
5. Provide exemplary customer service to Vermonters.
6. Promote the role of science in all the work we undertake and explain its value so Vermonters will support and understand what we do.
  - a. Provide staff training in communicating science to the public.
  - b. Utilize skills of a biometrician
  - c. Create key messages on science and the major initiatives we are engaged in that will translate to all audiences.
7. Create financial and partnership stability through outreach.
  - a. Set up a non-profit 501c3 "Friends of Vermont Fish and Wildlife Foundation"
  - b. Developing a marketing plan to support the various donation platforms.
8. Develop key messages for law enforcement and help foster a better understanding among the warden force of what other parts of the department do.