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S.321  
2/27/2002

**VWC asks that the Committee support the funding  
and governance sections of S.321.**

**This presentation is about the Legislative Working Group  
to review funding for the DFW**

## The two primary drivers of the funding section:

1. DFW has a funding crisis
2. VT's non-game wildlife species face significant threats

We can't address the wildlife crisis  
without addressing the funding crisis

## There Is an Industry-wide Funding Crisis

**“The amount of funds currently available for  
wildlife conservation is only capable of meeting  
a small fraction of the need.”**

National Wildlife Federation (2018)

## There Is a Vermont Funding Crisis

**“To remain financially stable long term, the department will need to address its funding crisis.”**

DFW Performance Based Budget Report - 2017

The crisis is partly about the DFW's capacity for routine functioning:

**“Further drops in licenses would pose a serious financial, administrative and bureaucratic threat.”**

DFW spokesperson in *Vermont Digger* - December 29, 2019

## There Is Also a Wildlife Crisis

**“Yet what is hidden from most Americans is another impending fish and wildlife crisis. For every game species that is thriving, hundreds of nongame species are in decline.... In the coming years, thousands of species could be added to the list of federal threatened and endangered species.”**

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (VT DFW is a member)

**“As many as one-third of America’s wildlife species are  
at increased risk of extinction.”**

Joint 2016 report by  
National Wildlife Federation,  
American Fisheries Society  
The Wildlife Society

## The Crisis Has Arrived in Vermont

**“A significant number of  
wildlife species need help.”**

VT's Wildlife Action Plan  
2015

# 976

# of SGCN\* species  
listed in Vermont's 2015  
Wildlife Action Plan

*\*SGCN: Species of Greatest Conservation Need*

# Why Is There a Wildlife Crisis?

## The Causes of the Wildlife Crisis:

- Climate Change
- Habitat Loss and Fragmentation
- Impacts of Roads and Transportation Systems
- Pollution
- Invasive Species
- Disease

Vermont's Wildlife Action Plan

**“Given the magnitude of climate impacts, rates of increasing variability, and the synergy between climate and non-climate stressors on wildlife and the habitats upon which they depend, there is an urgent need to prepare for and respond to these impacts.”**

Vermont's Wildlife Action Plan



# Current Funding Is Not Working

## License Fees Decreasing

- Since 1970's
- Demographic trends  
Aging out  
Youth not interested



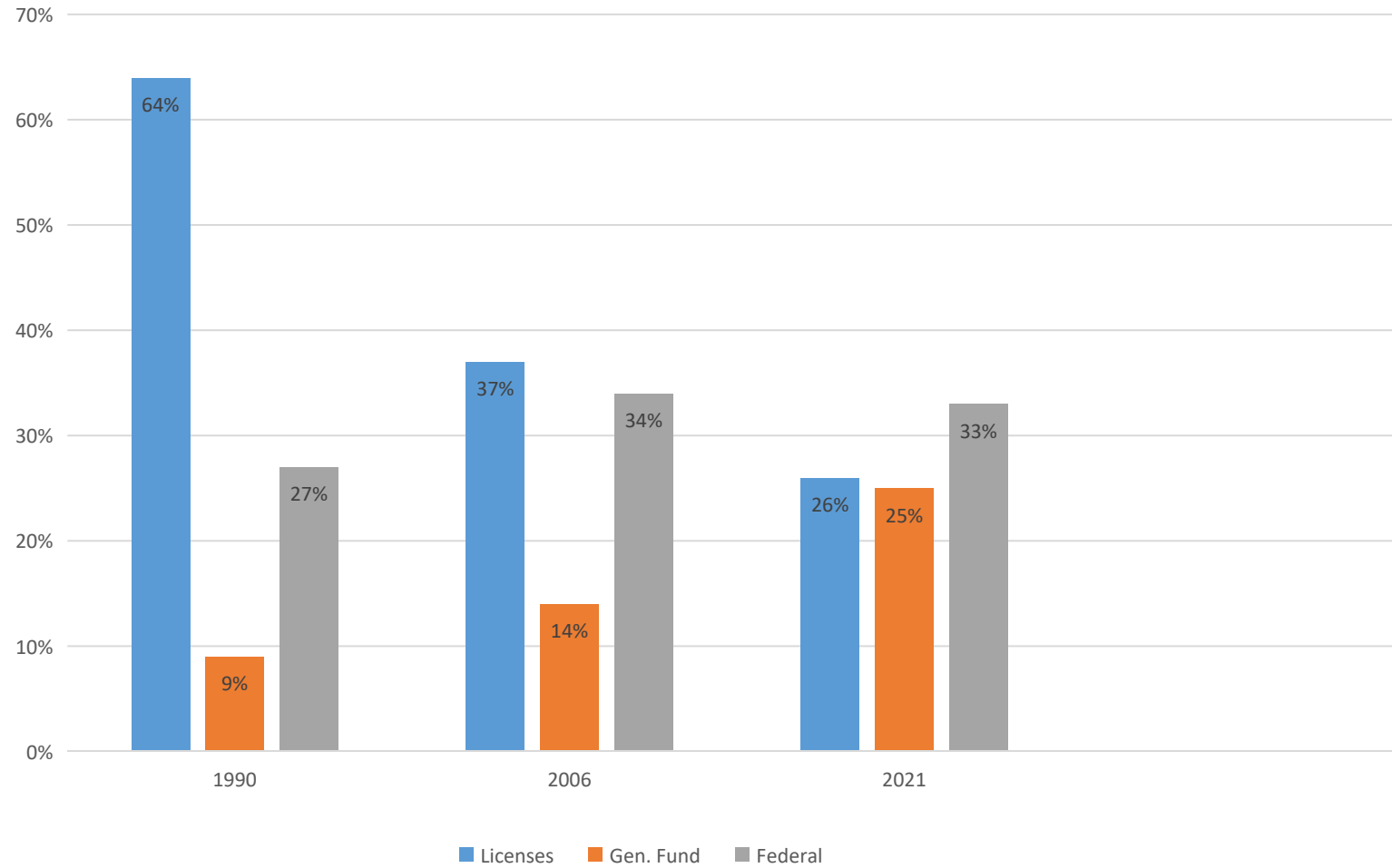
## Federal Grants Decreasing

- Requires match from fees
- Politically Unstable

## General Fund Increasing

- Filling the gap
- Politically Unstable

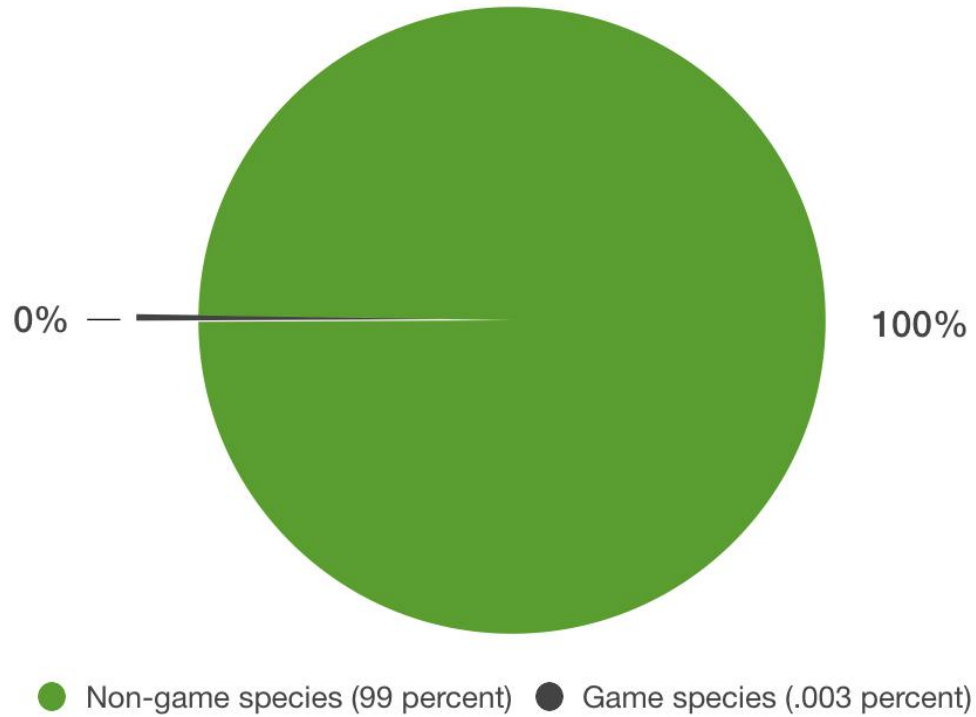
# Budget Trends: 1990 to 2021



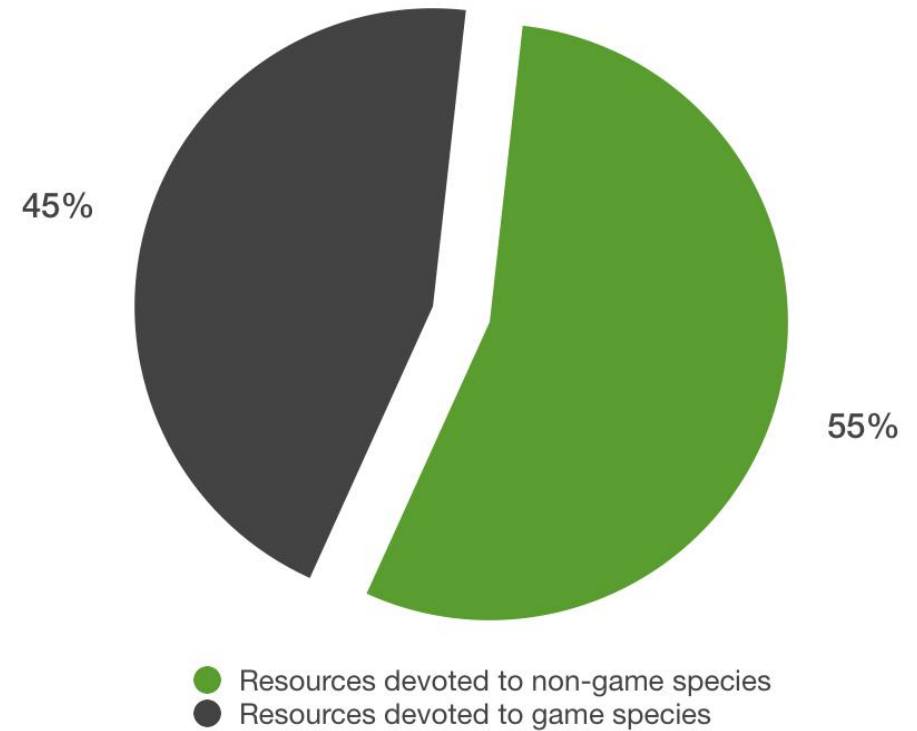
2021 data from governor's projected budget

# Distribution of Species and Dept. Resources

Game vs non-game species



Game vs non-game funding



# The Trend of Historical Funding

Historically, funding has been oriented to game species

But... 99%+ of all VT species are non-game  
99%+ of SGCN\* are non-game

*\*SGCN: Species of Greatest Conservation Need*

# The Future of DFW Funding

- Funding must increase
- Funding must be stable
- Funding must be diversified
- Funding must target contemporary needs

# Why a Legislative Working Group?

Only legislators can step outside of the status quo

## **The DFW is between a rock and a hard place**

- Funding and wildlife crises are at the front door
- Ever-expanding responsibilities, including more unfunded mandates
- Caught between 100 years of tradition and rapid social/ecological change
- Pulled by political tides (ex., governor opposes increased taxes or fees)

# Why a Legislative Working Group?

- 1. To access the expertise and records**
- 2. Legislators understand the nuances of creating funding mechanisms**

“A long-lasting remedy to these issues [decline in license sales and associated revenue] will likely require other changes beyond those controlled by the department.”

(2018 DFW Budget Performance Report)

## Why a Legislative Working Group?

Only a legislative working group  
can embrace and act on  
the **urgency** of the situation



# Oversight of Game Versus Non-Game: A Comparison

## Fish & Wildlife Board

- Focus is game = 70 Species
- 14 members from from all counties
- Meet 12 times a year
- Minutes available
- Meetings open to the public
- Very visible
- Conduct hearings; set regs. and policy
- Work closely/regularly with various DFW staff

## Endangered Species Committee

- Focus is non-game = 976 SGCN\*?
- 6 members (2 represent “agriculture”)
- Meet 3 times a year
- No minutes or reports available
- Meetings closed to the public
- Very invisible
- “Advise” the ANR secretary
- Work with DFW staff?

\*Committee focus is species classified as threatened or endangered. Not clear what they cover beyond that, or what they do about that.

We ask the legislature  
to fulfill its role

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