

SFY 2027

Governor's Recommended Budget

Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jason Batchelder, Commissioner



Overview

- Mission and Department Structure
- Prior Fiscal Year Appropriation Update
- Department Budget Overview
- Proposed Budget Language
- Division Budgets
- Reports and Other Information



Department Mission:

The conservation of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.

What we conserve



Natural communities



Fish



Habitat



Invertebrates



Wildlife



Plants

Who we serve



Wildlife watchers



Future generations



Anglers



Hunters and trappers

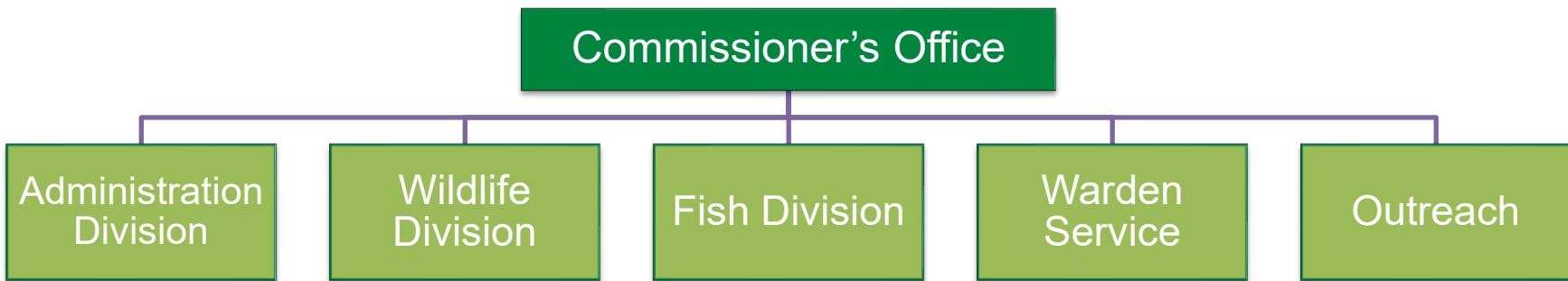


Communities



Landowners

Fish and Wildlife Organizational Structure



144 permanent positions
Approx 38 temporary/seasonal positions

Fish and Wildlife Divisions

Administration: Provides policy, planning, personnel, operations and financial management for the Department.

Warden Service: Enforces fish and wildlife conservation laws as well as recreational boating safety and snowmobile and ATV enforcement; lead state law enforcement agency in responding to animal cruelty concerns.

Wildlife Division: Supports protection and recovery of threatened and endangered amphibians, reptiles and plants, management of over 135,000 acres of land spread across 100 Wildlife Management Areas, and management of game species.

Fish Division: Ensures vibrant and healthy fish populations by protecting and restoring aquatic habitat, developing fishing regulations, producing and stocking of fish, as well as research regarding the overall health of fish and Vermont's rivers, streams and lakes.

Outreach Division: Educates and informs the public about the mission and work of the Department. Administers hunter education certification programs, Let's Go Fishing programs, and many other conservation education opportunities throughout Vermont for youth and adults, including Green Mountain Conservation Camp (GMCC) program.

Prior Fiscal Year Updates

SFY	Act # and Title	Section	Appropriation Description	Appropriation	Status
25	Act 113. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. B.1103	One-time appropriation for the Lake Champlain International Fishing Derby	\$30,000	LCI promoted recreational fishing opportunities in Vermont, Vermont's fishing tradition and Lake Champlain conservation. They provided editorial, advertising and promotional opportunities, biological data and disseminated information on the federal lampricide program, benefits and treatments.
26	Act 27. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. B.1100	One-time appropriation to the Fish and Wildlife Nondedicated Special Fund to sustain current operations as the Department undergoes a financial restructuring.	\$185,000	This one-time transfer to the Fish and Wildlife Fund was key to the Department presenting a balanced budget in SFY26. Benchmarking study and program evaluation are underway and the results will be used to implement recommendations toward financial restructuring. The "one-time" nature of the transfer and timing needed to make meaningful structural change presented a challenge in SFY27 budget preparation.
26	Act 27. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. B.1100	One-time appropriation for the purchase of mobile and portable radio equipment.	\$80,000	Radios have been ordered and delivered to the Warden Service. This appropriated amount covered the cost of 19 radios; 22 more radios are needed to ensure all Wardens are using current technology in the field.

Prior Fiscal Year Updates-cont.

SFY	Act # and Title	Section	Appropriation Description	Appropriation	Status
26	Act 27. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. B.1100	One-time appropriation for the Lake Champlain International (LCI) Fishing Derby.	\$30,000	Subgrant agreement in process.
26	Act 27. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. B.1103	Cash fund for one-time capital appropriation to the Lake Champlain Walleye Association to upgrade and repair the walleye rearing, restoration and stocking infrastructure.	\$25,000	Subgrant agreement for funding has been executed. LCWA intends to purchase a larval fish counter that will be installed at the Ed Weed Fish Culture Station. In the future, funding requests will be part of the Department's biennium capital funds request.
26	Act 27. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government	Sec. E.100	One Fish and Wildlife Specialist position.	\$150,000	This position is under recruitment. Candidates are being interviewed in early February,

SFY27 F&W Budget Overview – by Program

Fish \$9,359,688	Warden Service \$8,645,267	Wildlife \$6,787,311 Outreach and Education \$2,233,965	Administration \$4,909,280 Land Acquisition (combined, all divisions) \$1,185,622
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SFY27 Governor's Recommended Budget

FY27 F&W Budget Overview – by Fund

	FY2025 Actuals	FY2026 Budget	FY2027 Gov Rec	FY26-FY27 Change \$\$\$	FY26-FY27 Change %%%
Major Object					
Personal Services	24,080,058	23,876,543	25,008,515	1,131,972	4.7%
Operating Expenses	6,583,822	6,738,504	7,287,815	549,311	8.2%
Grants	1,563,453	833,630	824,803	-8,827	-1.1%
Total	32,227,333	31,448,677	33,121,133	1,672,456	
Funds					
General Funds	8,909,207	9,532,865	10,263,811	730,946	7.7%
Special Fund	322,209	364,696	379,405	14,709	4.0%
Fish and Wildlife Funds	10,910,059	10,097,060	10,864,047	766,987	7.6%
Federal Funds	10,411,995	9,927,754	10,067,970	140,216	1.4%
IDT Funds	1,673,863	1,526,302	1,545,900	19,598	1.3%
Total	32,227,333	31,448,677	33,121,133	1,672,456	

Proposed Budget Language

- **Fish and Wildlife Area License** - New license in development that will create an additional funding source for the Department
 - Adoption by Commissioner rule, 10 App. V.S.A. § 15a
 - Effective date in 2027
 - Will require recreationists enjoying activities allowed at Fishing Access Areas, including paddling, sailing, and wildlife watching purchase a license from the Department unless participants currently hold a hunting, fishing, or trapping license or own a registered motorboat.
 - User-funded areas, asking all users to invest the longevity, conservation, and safety of these areas.
 - Revenues will help fund the administration, management, and the maintenance associated with infrastructure administration on DFW-owned lands
 - Acknowledging that full compliance and revenue will not be realized immediately, estimates generated based on data obtained from other states that have implemented this approach show that this license could generate \$50,000 in FY27 and up to \$290,000 in FY29
- **Reconciling Fish and Wildlife Board regulation changes with license fee schedule** - Proposed language change would allow the Department to reconcile regulation changes adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Board within fee schedule.

Proposed change to 10 V.S.A. § 4255: (m) If the Board determines that it is necessary to issue or require additional tags or permits not otherwise identified in this section to maintain the best health, population, and utilization levels of a regulated species, the Department may issue such tags and permits and may assess a fee for such tags of no more than \$40.

Federal Funds Update

The Department does not anticipate significant federal reductions or grant eliminations in SFY26 or SFY27.

Administration Division

Commissioner Jason Batchelder, jason.batchelder@vermont.gov

The Administration Division includes the Commissioner's Office, Business Office and Licensing.

- Provides policy, planning, personnel, and financial management for the Department and oversees daily operations.
- Administers the production, distribution, and sales of all hunting and fishing licenses and over fifteen types of other permits related to resource protection.
- Responsible for managing 42 federal grants totaling more than \$10 million annually through ensuring the funds are spent appropriately and that all reporting requirements are met.
- The budget for the Administration Division includes large Department-wide costs such as internal service fees, office space leases, PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) payments and ADS costs.

Commissioner's Office
3 FTEs

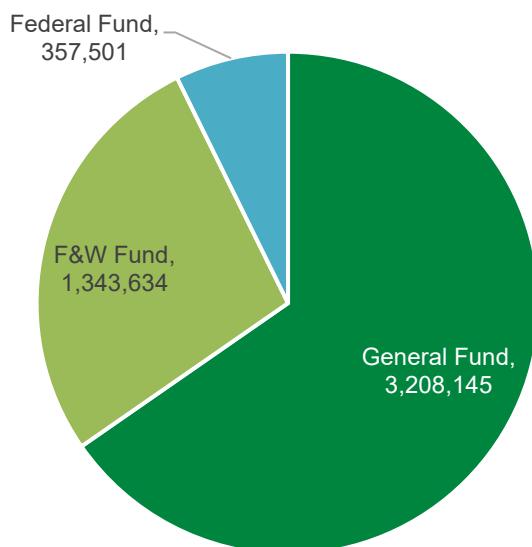
Business Office
4 FTEs

Licensing
2 FTEs

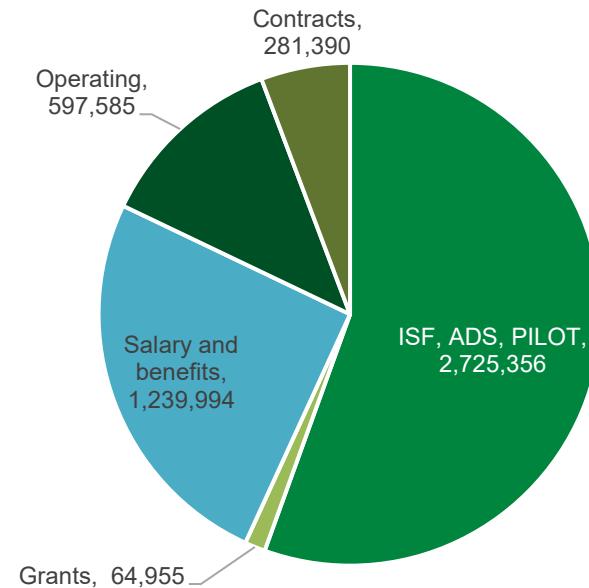
Administration Division

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Key budget changes:

- \$111,608 one-time funding (F&W fund balance) for implementation of new point of sale system
- \$73,197 increase in internal service funds
- \$178,710 ADS increase

Wildlife Division

John Austin, Division Director, john.austin@vermont.gov

- Supports the protection, conservation, and recovery of threatened and endangered species, State Wildlife Action Plan
- Manages over 135,000 acres of public land spread over 100 Wildlife Management Areas
- Provides direct technical assistance to private landowners and communities, free of charge
- Houses state's botanist, ecologist, and natural community scientists
- Addresses growing conflicts between wildlife and people and wildlife disease issues
- Reviews all development projects under Act 250 and Section 248 (10-year average of 366 permits) to assess and advise on impacts to fish, wildlife, rare, threatened or endangered species, necessary wildlife habitat, riparian and aquatic systems, wildlife travel corridors, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, and habitat connectivity
- Manages for healthy and sustainable big and small game and furbearer populations, including deer and moose herds.



38 Permanent
FTE's

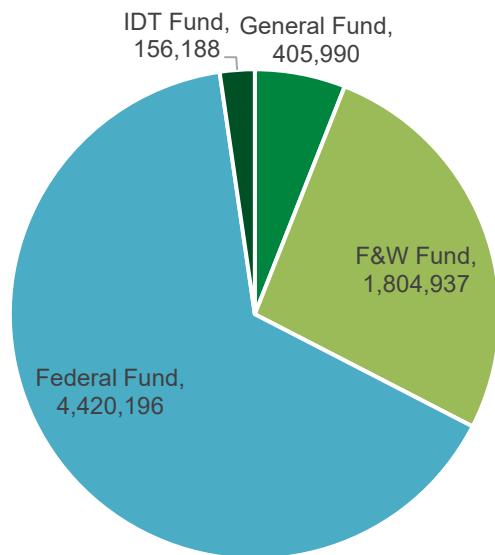
Approx 8 temporary
employees

\$55,738 Proposed
vacancy savings
target

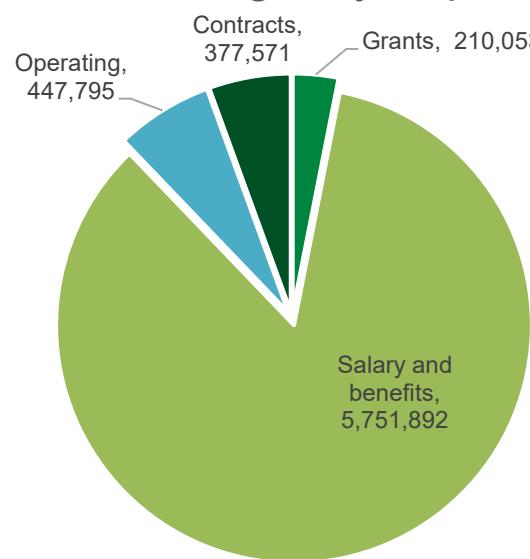
Wildlife Division

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Key budget changes:

- \$27,869 increase vacancy savings target
- \$70,000 for increase payment to Big Game Reporting Stations
- \$71,264 reduction in one-time contracts

Grant programs include: State Wildlife Grant pass thru for work related to species of greatest conservation need and monitoring of non-game birds

Fisheries Division

Eric Palmer, Division Director,

eric.palmer@vermont.gov

- Ensures vibrant and healthy fish populations for many different species, many of which contribute to the overall state economy
- Responsible for producing and stocking trout, walleye, and landlocked Atlantic salmon
- Provides aquatic habitat protection, acquisition, and restoration
- Develops fishing regulations
- Monitors and performs research on the overall health of the fish in rivers, lakes and streams at VAEI
- Oversees and maintains hundreds of fishing and boating access areas providing critical public access for motorized and non-motorized recreation on Vermont's public waters, including 14 universally accessible structures
- Regulatory review to protect fish, fish habitat, water quality and natural flows. Provides technical assistance on numerous permitting programs including Act 250, Section 248, DEC aquatic nuisance control, shoreland encroachment, lake encroachment, stream alteration, direct discharge, wetlands, dam safety, stream flow, AOT transportation projects, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permits, and 401 water quality reviews.

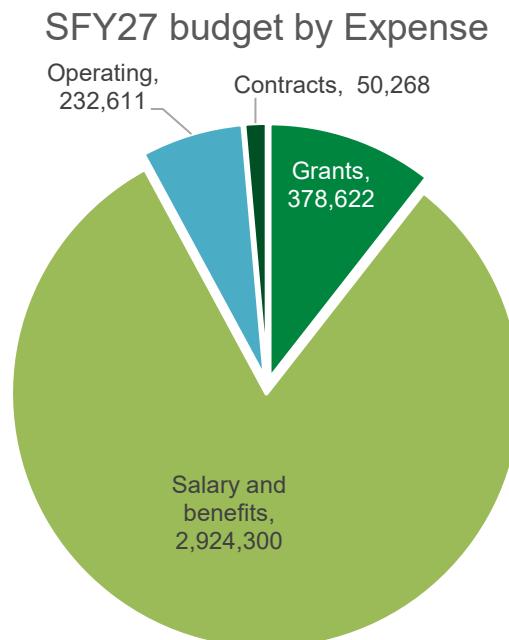
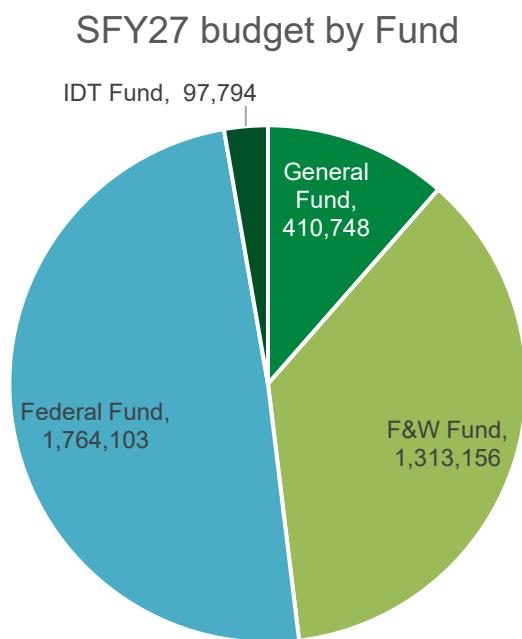
46 Permanent
FTE's

Approx 11 temporary
employees

\$206,595 Proposed
vacancy savings
target

Fisheries Division – *Fish Management*

Budget information



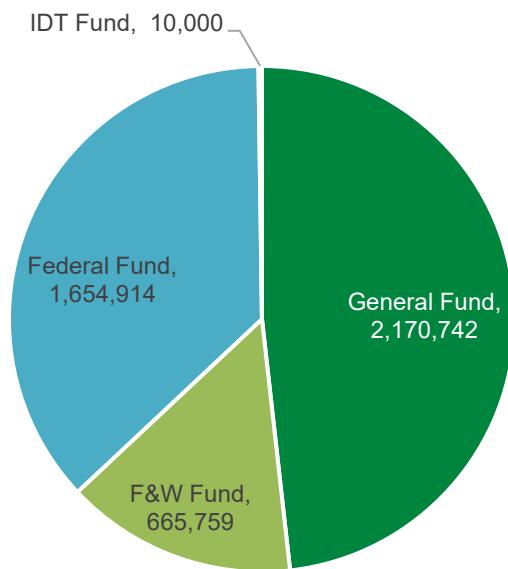
Key budget changes: \$36,854 increase vacancy savings target

Grant programs include: Great Lakes Fisheries Commission funded grants for work in the Memphremagog basin and Aquatic Organism Passage grants.

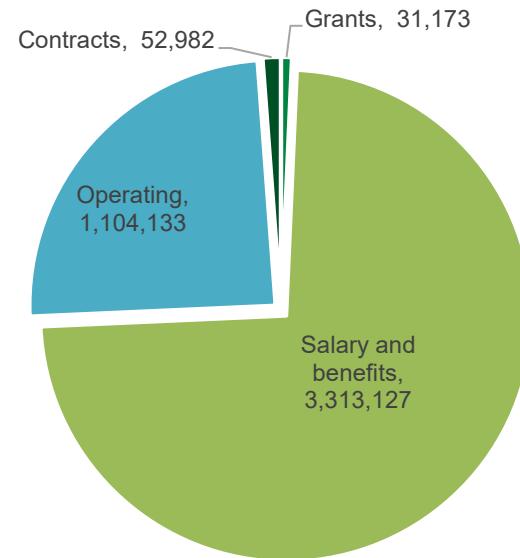
Fisheries Division – *Fish Culture*

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Key budget changes:

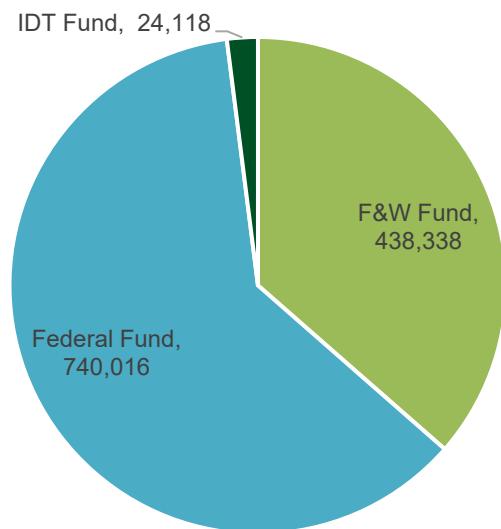
- \$97,042 increase vacancy savings target
- \$65,997 proposed RIF Limited Service Specialist position
- \$77,500 increase cost of operations (fish food, electricity, propane, oxygen)

Grant programs include: Agreement with Town of Grand Isle to defray road maintenance cost and development and maintenance of a cooperative fire prevention program

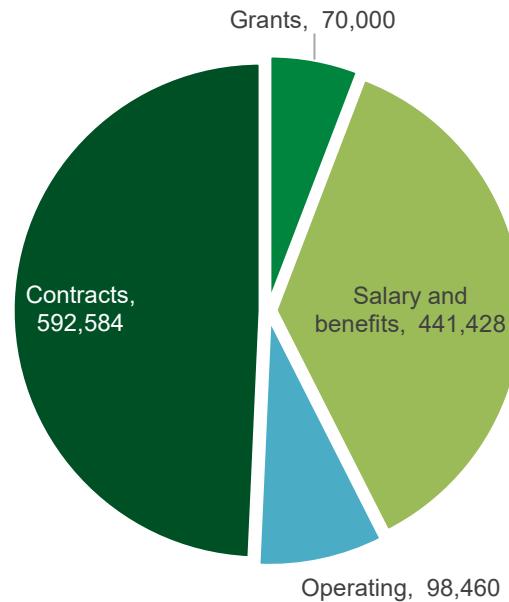
Fisheries Division – Access Areas

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Grant programs include: Clean Vessel Act funds for construction, renovation, operation and maintenance of pump-out stations and waste reception facilities to meet the needs of recreational boaters.

Fisheries Division – *Watershed Grant Program*

- Revenue from the sale of conservation license plates
- Competitive grant program supporting the protection, restoration, enhancement and public appreciation of Vermont's lakes, ponds, rivers and streams

Approx \$70,000
granted annually

10+ grantees
awarded funds
annually

Covers all areas
of the state

Watershed Grants

Warden Service

Justin Stedman, Colonel, justin.stedman@vermont.gov

- Enforces hunting, trapping, fishing and conservation laws
- Utilizes four K9 teams for education, search and rescue, and enforcement
- Responds to human-wildlife conflicts, including incidents relating to bear intrusions, potential rabies exposures, and injured wildlife calls
- Provides enforcement and education for the Recreational Boating Safety program
- Provides snowmobile and ATV enforcement
- Assists in search and rescue operations
- Assists various agencies in investigations and calls across the state
- Performs virtually all accident investigations on the VAST and VASA trail systems
- Serves as the sole state law enforcement agency responding to animal cruelty investigations

44 Permanent
FTEs

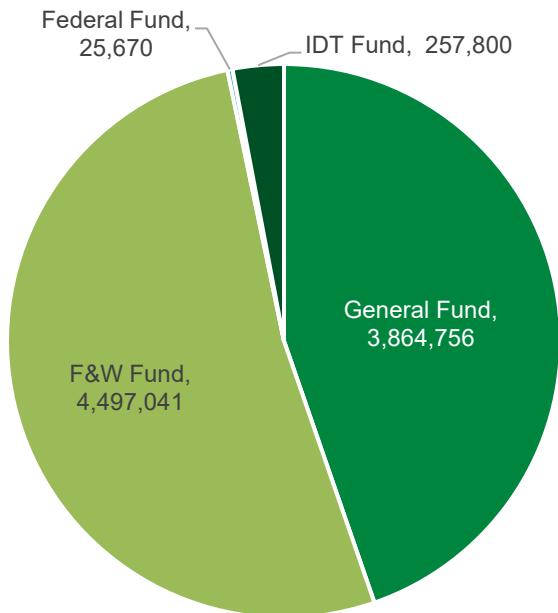
\$127,602
Proposed vacancy
savings target



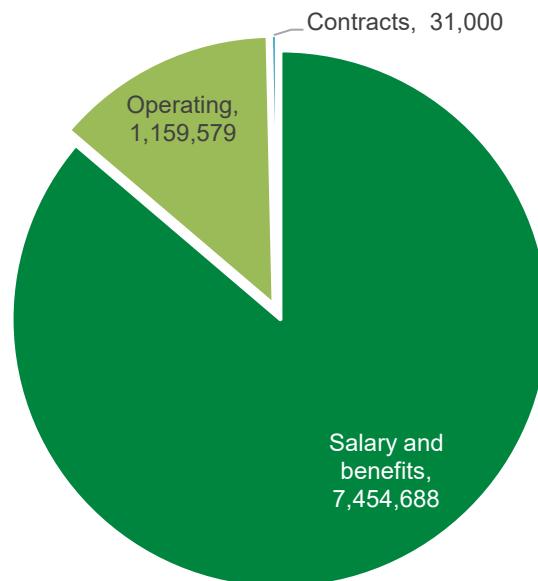
Warden Service

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Key budget changes:

- \$15,200 increase vacancy savings
- \$36,000 increase for Warden physical fitness test, required by the collective bargaining agreement (previously unbudgeted)

Outreach Division

Alison Thomas, Director, alison.thomas@vermont.gov

- Educates and informs the public about the mission and work of the Department
- Creates formal publications and press releases
- Coordinates media requests with local and national press outlets
- Manages and moderates social media channels
- Administers hunter education certification programs, Let's Go Fishing programs, and other conservation education opportunities for adults, children, and families
- Administers the Green Mountain Conservation camp program, serving 900 Vermont youth annually

9 Permanent
FTEs

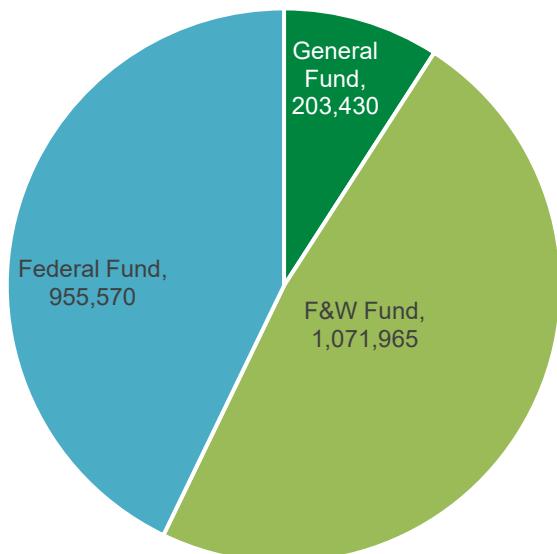
Approx 19 temporary
employees



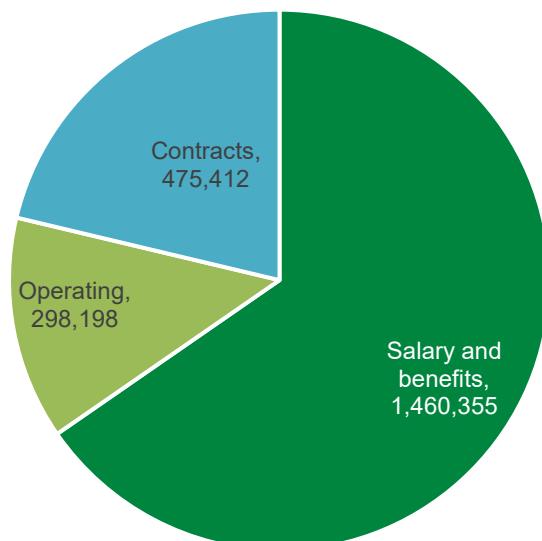
Outreach Division

Budget information

SFY27 budget by Fund



SFY27 budget by Expense



Key budget changes:

- Increase food budget at GMCC

Financial Restructuring Update

- Benchmarking Study
 - Began in Fall 2025; Contract with Wildlife Management Institute and DJ Case to demonstrate how the DFW compares to analogous state agencies in terms of conservation programs offered and funding allocations to those programs. This will be accomplished by comparing VFWD with Maine's Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife, New Hampshire's Department of Fish and Game, and eight other states using benchmarking metrics for programs and services, operational effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and emerging challenges.
 - Report will be finished in March 2026
- Fish Culture Modernization Project
 - Began in December 2025; Contracted with McMillan, an aquatic engineering and environmental firm specializing in aquaculture and fish culture. The study is looking at alternatives to the current fish culture system to identify the most effective and efficient ways the system can meet our management request for fish, meet our environmental regulatory standards, maximize fish health, and minimize operating and infrastructure costs.
 - On-site visits occurred week of January 5, 2026
 - Report will be finished in June 2026.
- Revenue generating strategies to reflect use:
 - Fish and Wildlife Area License
 - Updating POS and offering different licenses (365-day fishing, 2nd buck tag)
- Next steps:
 - State Lands Infrastructure Inventory, capital asset list, and forecast of future capital needs
 - Relevancy working group

Budget Development Form

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Development Form: Department of Fish and Wildlife

	General \$\$	Transp \$\$	Educat \$\$	Clean Water \$\$	Special \$\$	Glob Commit \$\$	Federal \$\$	Int. Service \$\$	Interdept'l Transfer \$\$	All other \$\$	Total \$\$	NOTES
Approp #1 (612000000): Support and Field Services FY 2026 Approp	9,532,865	0	0	0	10,461,756	0	9,927,754	0	1,526,302	0	31,448,677	
Other Changes: (Please insert changes to your base appropriation that occurred after the passage of the FY 2026 budget)											0	
FY 2026 Other Changes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total Approp. After FY 2026 Other Changes	9,532,865	0	0	0	10,461,756	0	9,927,754	0	1,526,302	0	31,448,677	
CURRENT SERVICE LEVEL/CURRENT LAW	730,946	0	0	0	781,696	0	140,216	0	19,598	0	1,672,456	
<i>Personal Services</i>	540,077	0	0	0	492,946	0	38,672	0	60,277	0	1,131,972	
500000: Salary & Wages: Classified Employees	417,793				163,887		90,271		16,929		688,880	Includes RIF of a Specialist position
500010: Salary & Wages: Exempt Employees												
501500: Health Insurance: Classified Employees	174,171				109,423		58,711		31,382		373,687	
501510: Health Insurance: Exempt Employees												
502000: Retirement: Classified Employees	109,019				47,198		26,006		4,876		187,099	
502010: Retirement: Exempt Employees												
All Other Employee Payroll Related Fringe Benefits	16,725				(14,508)		(19,253)		486		(16,550)	
504040: VT Family & Medical Leave Insurance Premium	2,854				1,749		300		227		5,130	
504045: Child Care Contribution	3,485				3,062		958		320		7,825	
505200: Workers' Compensation Insurance Premium	8,599				27,231						35,830	
508000: Vacancy Turnover Savings					(142,975)		(33,990)				(176,965)	
OT/Shift Diff/Temp increase					20,145		2,135				22,280	
Misc personal services changes	(120,478)				(64,427)		93,825				(91,080)	
Warden physical fitness test					36,000						36,000	
Expenses transitioning from contractual to grants and operating account codes	(31,173)				23,552						(7,621)	
Increase credit card fee expense					67,457						67,457	
Misc personal services fund source adjustment	(40,918)				215,152		(180,291)		6,057		0	
Operating Expenses	199,696	0	0	0	288,750	0	101,544	0	(40,679)	0	549,311	
515010: Fee-for-Space Charge	7,421				23,458						30,879	
516000: Insurance Other Than Employee Benefits	(11,171)				(21,865)						(33,036)	
516010: Insurance - General Liability	2,646				11,742						14,388	
516671: VISION/ISD	2,406				10,417						12,823	
516685: ADS Allocated Charge	311,712				102,638						414,350	
519006: Human Resources Services	2,609				9,704						12,313	
523620: Single Audit Allocation											0	
IT equipment needs					22,400						22,400	
One-time licensing point-of-sale system implementation					111,608						111,608	
East Barre storage facility cost					14,500						14,500	
National Life lease					14,295						14,295	
ADS-service level agreement	(115,406)										(115,406)	
ADS-timesheet billing	(120,234)										(120,234)	
Attorney fee increase					15,945						15,945	
Increase payment to big game reporting stations					17,800		52,200				70,000	
Misc operating changes	6,437				101,601						108,038	
Misc operating fund source adjustment	113,276				(121,941)		49,344		(40,679)		0	
Expenses transitioning to operating account codes from contractual					(23,552)						(23,552)	
Grants	(8,827)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(8,827)	
Corporant work transition from grant to personal services	(40,000)										(40,000)	
Expense transitioning from contractual account code to grant account code	31,173										31,173	
											0	
Subtotal of Increases/Decreases	730,946	0	0	0	781,696	0	140,216	0	19,598	0	1,672,456	
FY 2027 Governor Recommend	10,263,811	0	0	0	11,243,452	0	10,067,970	0	1,545,900	0	33,121,133	
Department of Fish and Wildlife FY 2026 Appropriation	9,532,865	0	0	0	10,461,756	0	9,927,754	0	1,526,302	0	31,448,677	
Reductions and Other Changes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
FY 2026 Total After Other Changes	9,532,865	0	0	0	10,461,756	0	9,927,754	0	1,526,302	0	31,448,677	
TOTAL INCREASES/DECREASES	730,946	0	0	0	781,696	0	140,216	0	19,598	0	1,672,456	
Department of Fish and Wildlife FY 2027 Governor Recommend	10,263,811	0	0	0	11,243,452	0	10,067,970	0	1,545,900	0	33,121,133	

Reports

Single Audit Findings

Fish and Wildlife had no findings in the last single audit (for SFY24).

The last federal audit was completed in 2024 and was for SFY21 and SFY22. Two notices of potential findings were issued and an approved corrective action plan was in place prior to receipt of the final audit report.

Special Fund Operating Statement

FISH AND WILDLIFE FUND	
FY25 beginning balance	6,256,538
FY25 revenue	10,222,883
FY25 expenditures	(10,626,890)
FY25 dedicated	(2,164,452)
FY25 year-end non-dedicated	3,688,079
FY25 encumbrances/earmarks	(860,293)
FY25 YE adjusted	2,827,786
5% contingency	(1,656,057)
SFY26 Available	1,171,729

Carryforward Funds

SFY25 Carryforward: Total request of \$651,525

- **\$54,550** - FY25 incurred cost that was obligated and encumbered but not paid by 6/30/25.
- **\$350,000** - Earmarked for two RFP's; one RFP for a fish culture evaluation and the other is for a benchmarking study, both related to Department financial restructuring efforts. Additional information on slide 27.
- **\$246,975** - To cover upward pressure resulting from the class RFR for law enforcement officers statewide. Given that the RFR approval occurred late in the fiscal year, the department will realize most of the expenditure pressure in SFY26 when retroactive adjustments are processed. Funds were appropriated through Section C.101 of Act 27 of 2025.

No estimated carryforward in SFY26

Legislative Reports

- [Mentored Hunting License Report](#) (will be posted soon)
- [Fishing Access Area Program Report](#)
- [Report on Management of the Vermont Moose and Deer Populations](#)
- [Report on Waterfowl Seasons](#)
- [Report on Non-Target Animal Captures During Trapping Season](#)
- [Report on Lost Revenue Associated with the Issuance of Free Licenses](#) (will be posted soon)

2025 Performance Report

Program Name	Measure	Measure Type	Unit Type	Polarity	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Target
Fish - Fish Culture	Amount of financial savings over time (dollars)	Quantity	Currency	Higher is Better	869,819	1,113,613	1,209,939	1,306,284	1,402,629	1,400,000
Fish - Fish Culture	Amount of greenhouse gas abated over time (mega tons of CO2)	Quantity	Decimal	Higher is Better	16,484	16,642	19,457	22483	25,404	25,000
Fish - Fish Culture	Amount of energy savings over time (million BTUs)	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	326,677	386,554	454,447	525117	594,399	580,000
Fish - Fish Management	Miles of stream habitat improved through strategic wood addition	Quantity	Decimal	Higher is Better	6	9	5	6	3	6
Fish - Fish Management	Number of dams removed to improve aquatic connectivity and fish habitat	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	3	4	4	3	5	4
Fish - Fishing Access Areas	Number of new ADA docks and parking areas	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	14	0	11	16	12	11
Fish - Fishing Access Areas	Number of ramp upgrades to improve site usability	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	13	5	14	9	1	8

2025 Performance Report-cont.

Program Name	Measure	Measure Type	Unit Type	Polarity	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Target
Outreach And Education	Number of people participating in an in-person Department sponsored education program or event	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	4,950	6,157	7,654	9,563	7,430	7,151
Outreach And Education	Number of people participating in a virtual Department sponsored education program or event	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	85,919	4,770	2,747	2,423	4,676	3,654
Warden Service	Number of biological, mutual assistance and enforcement calls	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	8,190	7,007	7,699	8,047	8,057	7,800
Warden Service	Pounds of deer, moose and bear meat directly processed or handled by wardens and donated to food banks	Quantity	Number	Lower is Better	3,500	2,567	1,076	902	1,451	2,011
Wildlife - Lands & Habitat	Number of projects affecting significant wildlife habitat	Quantity	Number	No Polarity	239	249	292	337	219	267
Wildlife - Lands & Habitat	Acres of habitat impacted by regulated development	Quantity	Number	No Polarity	1,234	179	564	471	368	563
Wildlife - Lands & Habitat	Habitat conserved or otherwise positively influenced through department efforts in regulating development	Quantity	Number	Higher is Better	7,470	4,754	6,540	2,762	2,486	4,803

Adaptive Reports

- [F&W Governor Recommend Budget Rollup](#)
- [F&W Governor Recommend Budget Detail](#)
- [F&W Governor Recommend Position Summary](#)
- [F&W Governor Recommend Federal Receipts Inventory](#)
- [F&W Governor Recommend Grants Inventory](#)
- [F&W Governor Recommend IDT Inventory](#)