



Fishing and Boating Services

2025 - 2027

Strategic Plan

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Introduction

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a government agency in the state of Maryland charged with maintaining natural resources including state parks, public lands, state forests, state waterways, wildlife, aquatic resources and recreation areas. Fishing and Boating Services (FABS) is a unit in the Department's Aquatic Resources section. FABS fishery-related responsibilities include assessing, protecting, conserving, fairly allocating, and promoting the sustainable utilization of the wild and farm-raised fish resources of Maryland, for balanced ecological and economic benefits. This is accomplished through scientific investigation, application of data, and proactive involvement with an informed citizenry. In addition, the Unit also oversees the State-owned Somers Cove Marina; places regulatory markers and navigation aids in support of sustainable development, use, and enjoyment of Maryland waterways for the general boating public.

DNR Vision

Inspired by nature and rooted in science to improve and grow stewardship for Maryland's natural resources.

DNR Mission

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources leads the state toward a resilient future by using data, partnerships, and an innovative spirit to improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all Marylanders.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility Statement

Maryland DNR commits to fostering a culture and workforce that is inclusive, equitable, and representative of the State's diversity. We are committed to increasing accessibility to our public lands, waterways, and natural resources for all communities to enjoy. By engaging and understanding communities that have historically been left behind, we strive to address and remove systematic barriers that perpetuate environmental injustices. Through this work, we celebrate these values within nature, our partnerships, and the communities we serve.

DNR/FABS Organization

Maryland DNR is a cabinet level agency divided functionally into the Office of the Secretary (Mission Support/Enterprise Services, Communications, Outdoor Recreation, Legislative and Constituent Services, Environmental Justice/Resilient Systems), Office of the Attorney General, Natural Resources Police, Land Resources and Aquatic Resources.

[Click for Organizational Chart](#)

Fishing and Boating Services is a Unit in the department's Aquatic Resources section led by Assistant Secretary Katherine Charbonneau. Aquatic Resources comprises 4 Units; 1) Chesapeake and Coastal Service; 2) Fishing and Boating Services; 3) Resource Assessment Service; and 4) Critical Area Commission.

Fishing and Boating Services Leadership:

Director, Lynn Waller Fegley

- *Associate Branch Directors:*
 - **Michael Luisi** (*Tidal & Coastal Management and Science*)
 - **Tony Prochaska** (*Freshwater, Hatcheries, Ecosystem Assessment & Health Services*)
 - **Sarah Widman** (*Unit Operations and Aquaculture*)
 - **Gina Hunt** (*Shellfish and Aquaculture*)
 - **Ken Choi - acting** (*Boating Services*)



FABS Vision

Sustainable and safe use of Maryland's aquatic natural resources and waterways for present and future generations



FABS Mission



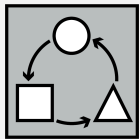





To sustainably and safely manage Maryland's aquatic natural resources and waterways for the benefit of present and future generations by:

- Developing management frameworks for the conservation and equitable use of fishery resources
- Managing fisheries in balance with the ecosystem using best available science
- Monitoring and assessing the status and trends of fisheries resources
- Providing high quality, diverse, accessible fishing opportunities
- Fostering boating safety through the removal of in-water hazards and by marking dangers



FABS Core Values

FABS Goals, Objectives and Strategies are guided by the following values:

Stewardship	Managing Maryland's public trust resources in a manner that is responsible, culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable while bearing in mind healthy ecosystems and benefits to Maryland's economy.	
Professionalism	Fostering a workforce of educated, knowledgeable and experienced staff with the skills to identify, develop, and implement appropriate fisheries management practices and boating safety measures.	
Adaptability	Acting deliberately within complex socio-ecological systems by considering consequences of management actions and improving future management through iterative learning.	
Integrity	Maintaining honest, ethical, and accountable management processes based on a set of core principles that prioritize the greater good over individual gain.	
Collaboration	Developing and strengthening partnerships for the purpose of implementing management strategies for an informed, participatory public.	
Transparency	Promoting public trust through open communication, accessibility to data, and frequent engagement with stakeholders.	
Accountability	Taking ownership of work products and decisions related to the management of the resources for which we are responsible.	
Fairness	Considering all forms of input and treating people equitably and impartially, regardless of their background or circumstances.	

FABS Strategic Goals

The following strategic goals have been identified to guide FABS toward the agency's vision while meeting the Unit's established mission and values.

Goal 1: Management	Apply analyses of the best available data, community input and professional judgment to effective and equitable management of the harvest and use of Maryland's fishery resources while balancing economic opportunity and sustainability.
Goal 2: Science and Data	Consistently implement scientifically accepted methods of data collection and analysis in support of state, interjurisdictional, interagency, and all other resource and policy development decisions.
Goal 3: Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration	Implement visionary and proactive strategies to conserve, enhance and restore aquatic habitat while considering the impacts of land use and climate change as well as the importance of rare, threatened and endangered species to ecosystem health.
Goal 4: Stakeholder Outreach	Provide the citizens of Maryland with timely information, utilizing state of the art tools to answer questions, educate, raise awareness or engage for sustainable boating and fisheries-related resources.
Goal 5: Fiscal Responsibility	Maintain proper records that provide accurate and transparent accounting of our Unit's monetary resources to meet staffing and operating costs to achieve our goals.
Goal 6: Safety & Accessibility	Protect the boating public by removing marine hazards and marking navigation channels and provide information regarding boating and fishing access and opportunities throughout Maryland.
Goal 7: Workforce	Promote equity for all Maryland residents through a diverse, effective, and professional workforce.

Objectives

FABS will pursue the goals identified in this plan through the specific objectives and strategies. FABS will create an annual Work Plan with tasking laid out to follow each strategy in order to achieve objectives and meet the goals. Throughout the year, FABS staff will monitor progress toward meeting our goals and evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies. An annual review of the Work Plan with Fishing and Boating Services advisory bodies will guide the subsequent years activities.

Goal 1: Management

Apply analyses of the best available data, community input and professional judgment to effective and equitable management of the harvest and use of Maryland's fishery resources while balancing economic opportunity and sustainability.

Managing the sustainable harvest and use of Maryland's fishery and aquatic resources is one of the core functions of Fishing and Boating services. Ensuring sustainable harvest of fishery resources while balancing critical factors such as economic opportunity and equitable access requires robust science, rigorous analyses, thorough community engagement, and fiscal responsibility. The management process is perpetual, iterative and adaptive, requiring consistent communication with an array of management partners at all stages of the rule-making process. Once rules are developed and implemented to ensure sustainability, Fisheries staff work with constituents to minimize impacts to socio-economic opportunity in the implementation of management action. As many of Maryland's fishery resources are managed by multi-state entities, FABS strives to maintain the highest level of training, preparedness, and attention to ensure optimal outcomes for Maryland.

Objective 1.1 Develop management actions for the conservation of Maryland's fishery and aquatic resources through collaboration and engagement with state, regional, and federal management partners, as well as advisory bodies and the public.

Strategy 1.1.1: Provide leadership and an informed presence at interjurisdictional / intergovernmental arenas that create regulation or policy that is impactful to Maryland.

Strategy 1.1.2: Foster strong relationships with Maryland partner agencies and advisory bodies to inform our management decisions.

Strategy 1.1.3: Promulgate rules, regulations, and policies to achieve desired management actions.

Objective 1.2 Maximize compliance with established rules and develop appropriate authority to implement management actions necessary to conserve fishery and aquatic resources.

Strategy 1.2.1: Ensure current and future Fishery Management Plans adhere to the requirements of Maryland statute, provide adequate authority to manage species, and allow for necessary flexibility to be adaptive in the face of changing environmental, ecological and climatic conditions.

Strategy 1.2.2: Strengthen regulatory compliance through collaboration with enforcement partners, the Office of the Attorney General, the Maryland court system, and advisory bodies.

Strategy 1.2.3: Ensure protection of wild stocks of fish by issuing permits in accordance with Maryland statutes and regulations.

Objective 1.3 Manage oyster populations for growth and for economic opportunity..

Strategy 1.3.1: Develop efficient and innovative methods to streamline aquaculture leasing including mechanisms to incorporate Best Management Practice (BMP) credits.

Strategy 1.3.2: Engage with county oyster committees to implement planting and sustainable harvest on public fishery areas.

Objective 1.4 Efficiently administer commercial fisheries while balancing conservation with economic opportunity.

Strategy 1.4.1: Administer quotas in a timely and transparent manner.

Strategy 1.4.2: Develop pilot programs for new fisheries or gears.

Objective 1.5 Develop management actions for the use of Maryland's hatcheries to support recreational fishing, fish population enhancement and reintroductions to support conservation projects.

Strategy 1.5.1: Support put and take youth rodeo programs

Strategy 1.5.2: Support warm and coldwater sportfish population enhancement and restoration

Strategy 1.5.3: Reintroduce brook trout to suitable habitats using hatchery production from wild gametes.

Goal 2: Science and Data

Consistently implement scientifically accepted methods of data collection and analysis in support of state, interjurisdictional, interagency, and all other resource and policy development decisions.

Science provides the boundaries within which we can sustainably manage the harvest of Maryland's fishery resources and allows the exploration of management impacts to the larger ecosystem. Science also guides the development of best practices for the conservation and protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species, and the restoration of essential aquatic habitats. FABS engages in all manner of scientific endeavors independently and in collaboration with partners in order to best understand how Maryland's fishery resources and ecosystems will respond to the interacting pressures of fishing, habitat degradation, disease, climate change, and many other factors.

Objective 2.1 Provide high quality sampling data that informs management at the state, regional, and coastwide level.

Strategy 2.1.1: Maintain rigor and consistency for long term biological monitoring programs while incorporating periodic review of survey efficiency and relevancy.

Strategy 2.1.2: Collaborate with academic and research institutions and other partners to proactively design and implement studies to address current and emerging issues.

Objective 2.2 Provide expert analyses of available data to support the development of management recommendations.

Strategy 2.2.1: Provide leadership and an informed presence at technical meetings with our state, interstate/regional, and federal science partners.

Strategy 2.2.2: Provide scientific analyses to inform state-specific management and emerging issues.

Objective 2.3 Curate state of the art data systems to acquire, house and share data to increase transparency of Maryland fishery statistics.

Strategy 2.3.1: Develop improvements to aquaculture and commercial harvest reporting systems and reporting compliance.

Strategy 2.3.2: Employ state of the art technology to streamline data management and collection in the field to enable new investigations.

Strategy 2.3.3: Seek opportunities to improve recreational harvest data collection.

Strategy 2.3.4: Increase public awareness of Maryland's commercial and recreational fishery statistics.

Strategy 2.3.5: Maintain, develop and curate databases to facilitate data sharing, power collaborative analyses and increase functionality across platforms.

Objective 2.4 Maintain state of the art laboratories to monitor fish and shellfish health in all of Maryland's aquatic habitats and Maryland DNR hatcheries.

Strategy 2.4.1: Invest in technology and laboratory equipment upgrades to ensure the most accurate and efficient testing for monitoring fish and wildlife health.

Goal 3: Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration

Implement visionary and proactive strategies to conserve, enhance and restore aquatic habitat while considering the impacts of land use and climate change as well as the importance of rare, threatened and endangered species to ecosystem health.

Sustainably managing and conserving fishery resources into the future requires acknowledgment and study of the interacting drivers of land use, climate change, species interactions, and distribution on fish populations. FABS recognizes that our aquatic ecosystems and our communities benefit from the enhancement and restoration of essential habitats such as oyster reefs and the conservation and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species including sturgeon, shad, river herring, freshwater mussels, marine mammals and sea turtles.

Objective 3.1 Pursue opportunities and resources for large scale habitat restoration and conservation to achieve enhanced ecosystem services and improved aquatic habitats.

Strategy 3.1.1: Work with the Oyster Advisory Commission and all partners to further Maryland's efforts to restore oysters in sanctuary areas and beyond.

Strategy 3.1.2: Leverage partnerships and pursue opportunities to restore and conserve upstream aquatic habitats.

Strategy 3.1.3: Foster public participation and commercial involvement to create large-scale artificial reefs in Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Objective 3.2 Increase understanding of threats and mechanisms to control invasive aquatic organisms through collaboration with DNR units and external partners.

Strategy 3.2.1: Maximize opportunities through collaboration and the sharing of information and resources with other DNR Units and partner agencies.

Strategy 3.2.2: Identify and implement actions that reduce the spread and existing biomass of invasive fishes.

Objective 3.3 Ensure that the management of our fishery resources considers the interconnection of land and water, importance of aquatic habitat and the impacts of climate change.

Strategy 3.3.1: Expand an ecosystem approach to management by engaging other DNR Units (i.e. Wildlife and Heritage, Land Acquisition and Planning, Outdoor Recreation/Access) and other state agencies.

Strategy 3.3.2: Engage with local government agencies and watershed partners to conserve critical habitat and limit impacts to Maryland's watersheds including impacts of invasive species.

Strategy 3.3.3: Explore potential management strategies that sustain services of multiple resources while recognizing environmental and ecological constraints.

Objective 3.4 Coordinate with management partners and the public to conserve, protect and monitor the status of rare, threatened and endangered (RTE) aquatic species.

Strategy 3.4.1: Collaborative conservation through stranding response and public engagement.

Strategy 3.4.2: Restore freshwater mussel populations and assess freshwater mussel health.

Goal 4: Stakeholder Outreach

Provide the citizens of Maryland with timely information, utilizing state of the art tools to answer questions, educate, raise awareness or engage for sustainable boating and fisheries-related resources.

While adhering to the Unit's values, the goal aims to respond to public inquiries in a straightforward and transparent manner, engage the public in order to carry out the Unit's mission, and facilitate communications on Unit-related subjects that could affect its constituents.

Objective 4.1 Maintain an engaged and informed constituency through excellent public service, strong internal communications and an array of public outreach techniques including multiple technology platforms.

Strategy 4.1.1: Proactively establish and communicate a consistent message from the agency to foster an engaged, informed and interactive public.

Strategy 4.1.2: Maintain FABS web presence with relevant information while using the most up-to-date and approved technologies.

Strategy 4.1.3: Create and maintain public facing signage with clear, understandable, and informative messaging.

Strategy 4.1.4 Create and distribute messaging of important information to constituents through a bulk email system.

Strategy 4.1.5 Create and distribute messaging and interact with communities through state-approved social media platforms.

Objective 4.2 Administer Governor and Secretary-appointed advisory bodies to reflect the diversity of Maryland's commercial and recreational fishing communities and cultures.

Strategy 4.2.1: Administer and maintain commissions and committees; build relationships with members.

Strategy 4.2.2: Engage in the recruitment of advisory body members.

Objective 4.3 Build and maintain relationships with communities to maximize their engagement with management of Maryland's fishery resources and maintenance of its waterways.

Strategy 4.3.1: Develop and maintain relationships with relevant organizations to educate, seek engagement, and build consent around emerging fishery management issues.

Strategy 4.3.2: Collaborate with other units to implement the Fisheries Recruit, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Plan and develop initiatives to engage the public as active stewards of Maryland's fishery resources.

Goal 5: Fiscal Responsibility

Maintain proper records that provide accurate and transparent accounting of our Unit's monetary resources to meet staffing and operating costs to achieve our goals. Engage with opportunities to balance revenue with mission-critical tasking.

Fishing and Boating Services is funded by a mix of taxpayer dollars and license fees. For the 2025 fiscal year, the fisheries component of the FABS budget was made up of approximately 17% general, 60% special (license fees), 17% federal and 6% reimbursable funds. It is critical for the Unit to properly maintain its use of funds, while being transparent to the public and licensees on how those funds are used. Additionally, the Unit must balance scientific needs and management within the confines of its budget, while providing the critical services, management, and science.

Objective 5.1 Ensure fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Unit.

Strategy 5.1.1: Provide ongoing support and services to FABS staff for all fiscal operations.

Strategy 5.1.2: Provide clear and transparent reports to our management partners and the public regarding the use of our monetary resources to achieve our mission.

Strategy 5.1.3: Work to ensure that annual state budget proposals are reflective of the work characterized in the FABS Annual Work Plan.

Strategy 5.1.4: Work collaboratively across the Agency and with our advisory bodies, and constituents to develop strategies to maintain license revenue to support our mission.

Objective 5.2 Provide FABS staff with education and training related to procurement, budget, and grants management.

Strategy 5.2.1: Work with DNR's Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to provide staff with updated policies relevant to project/program budget management.

Strategy 5.2.2: Provide clear instructions for FABS staff on budget management tools and practices.

Goal 6: Safety & Accessibility

Protect the boating public by removing marine hazards and marking navigation channels and provide information regarding boating and fishing access and opportunities throughout Maryland.

Experiencing the best of Maryland's waterways begins with water safety, clear navigable channels, and accessibility to fishing and water recreation. Removal of dangerous debris and providing boaters with aids to navigation (i.e. speed zones, hazards, fishery areas, etc.) and other regulatory markers are critical in support of natural resource areas and to protect the boating public. Essential information on boating and fishing access and opportunity also creates a vibrant and thriving water community.

Objective 6.1 Provide Maryland's boating/fishing public, industry communities, and federal and local partners with timely hydrographic operations assistance to promote safe navigation on Maryland's waters.

Strategy 6.1.1: Maximize boating safety by installing and maintaining required navigational and regulatory buoys, markers, and signs.

Strategy 6.1.2: Maximize marine safety and minimize environmental harm by removing or preventing abandoned vessels and hazardous debris.

Strategy 6.1.3: Provide efficient and accurate hydrographic surveys for public notice.

Objective 6.2 Develop and maintain accurate, web-based tools to identify fishing and boating access.

Strategy 6.2.1: Provide timely public access to programs such as: Marine Law Enforcement Information Network (MLEIN), iShellfish, Gear Lines Map, Maryland Speed Zone App, and Maryland's Shellfish Harvesting and Closure Area Mapping.

Strategy 6.2.2: Provide GIS data in a timely manner for existing, newly installed, relocated, or removed buoys and markers as a vital component of access and safety.

Objective 6.3 Proactively coordinate with the boating/fishing public, industry communities, and federal and local partners to ensure navigational safety and enjoyable access opportunities.

Strategy 6.3.1: Support programs conducted by our management partners regarding regulations, waterway safety, and enforcement.

Strategy 6.3.2: Provide timely customer service to our boating, recreational fishing, and commercial industries.

Goal 7: Workforce

Promote equity for all Maryland residents through a diverse, effective, and professional workforce.

Fishing and Boating Services, as part of the Department of Natural Resources, is a steward for aquatic resources in Maryland. As a steward, the Unit strives to provide services to every citizen and visitor to our great state. In order to do our jobs effectively, the Unit must aim to have a workforce that is representative of all the different residents in the state and also must aim to include effective and inclusive outreach and discussions with all residents across the state who use our resources and enjoy them.

Objective 7.1 Maintain a competent and credible workforce through staff training, career development, and participation in professional committees and conferences.

Strategy 7.1.1: Provide FABS specific Human Resources support to liaise with the Human Resources Service.

Strategy 7.1.2: Provide staff with career development, leadership and supervisory training to develop a cohesive workforce and prepare staff for leadership roles.

Strategy 7.1.3: Provide opportunities for, and encourage staff to participate in, robust intra-agency diversity discussions and activities.

Management Partners

Federal Government

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOAA NOS)

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

United States Coast Guard (USCG)

United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)

United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA)

National Park Service (NPS)

Interstate / Regional

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)

11-state Initiative on Offshore Wind

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)

Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NAEFWA)

Northeast Fisheries Administrators Association

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Program (NCBO)

Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC)

Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC)

Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative (SRAFRFC)

Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB)

Upper Potomac River Commission

Northeast Fish Health Committee

Shellfish Health Advisory Council

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)

Intrastate Agencies / Groups

Invasive Species Matrix Team

Department of Commerce (Office of Tourism)

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Maryland Department of the Environment

Maryland Energy Administration

Maryland Department of Health

Maryland Coastal Bays Program

Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation

Maryland Environmental Service

Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species

Scientific Working Groups / Academic Institutions

ASMFC Technical Committees

ASMFC Ecosystem Reference Point Subcommittee

Auburn University Aquatic Diagnostics Program

MAFMC Monitoring Committee

MAFMC Science and Statistical Committee

Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee

Chesapeake Bay Program Scientific and Technical Advisory Committees

Chesapeake Bay Program Goal Implementation Teams

Cornell University Aquatic Animal Health Program

George Mason University

Morgan State University PEARL Laboratory

Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program

University of Maryland College Park, Eastern Shore

Salisbury State University

Frostburg State University

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science:

Chesapeake Biological Laboratory
Horn Point Laboratory

Governor and Secretary-Appointed Advisory Commissions and Committees

Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission and subcommittees:

Striped Bass, Blue Crab, American Eel and Yellow Perch Industry Advisory Committees

Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission and subcommittees:

Black Bass, Coldwater Fisheries and Invasive Catfish Advisory Committees

Oyster Advisory Commission and subcommittees

Statewide Oyster Committee

County Oyster Committees

Boat Act Advisory Committee

Somers Cove Marina Commission

Aquaculture Coordinating Council

Other Partners

Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations

Port of Baltimore Harbor Safety and Coordination Committee

RiverKeepers and River Associations