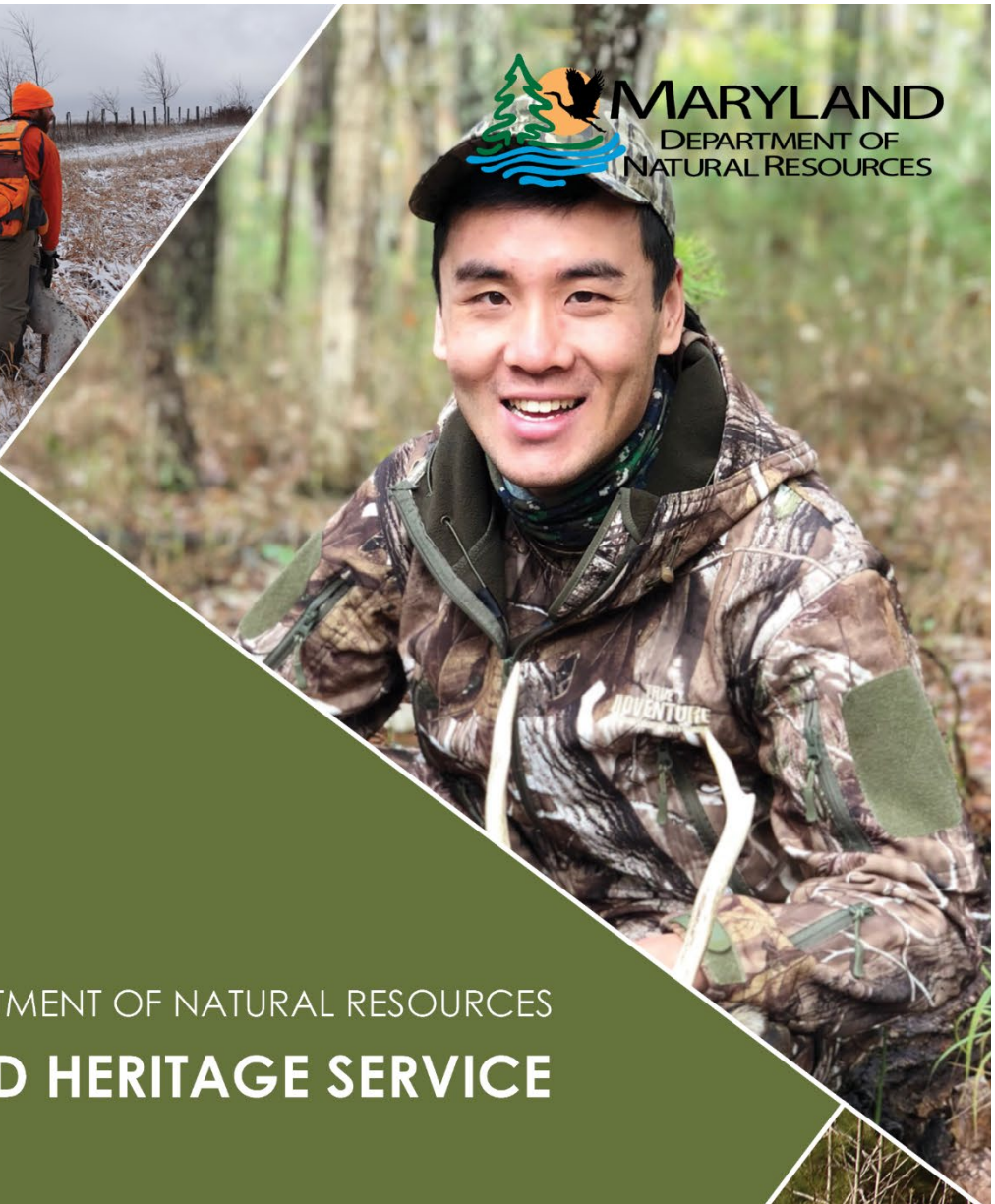
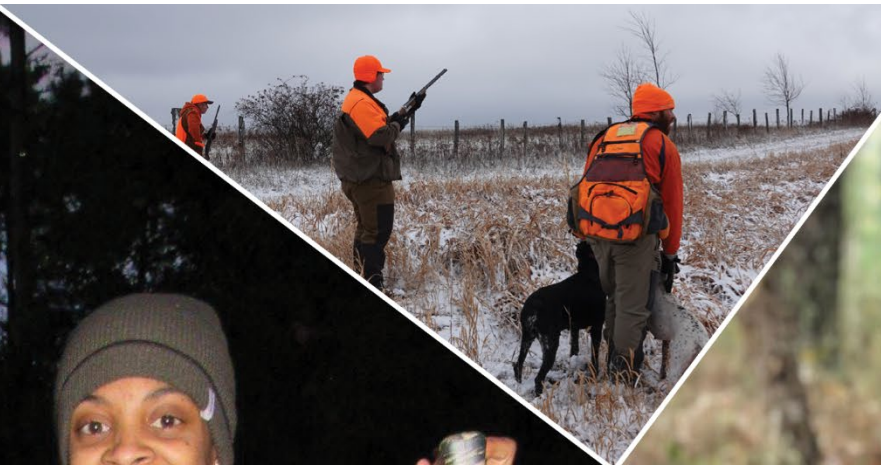


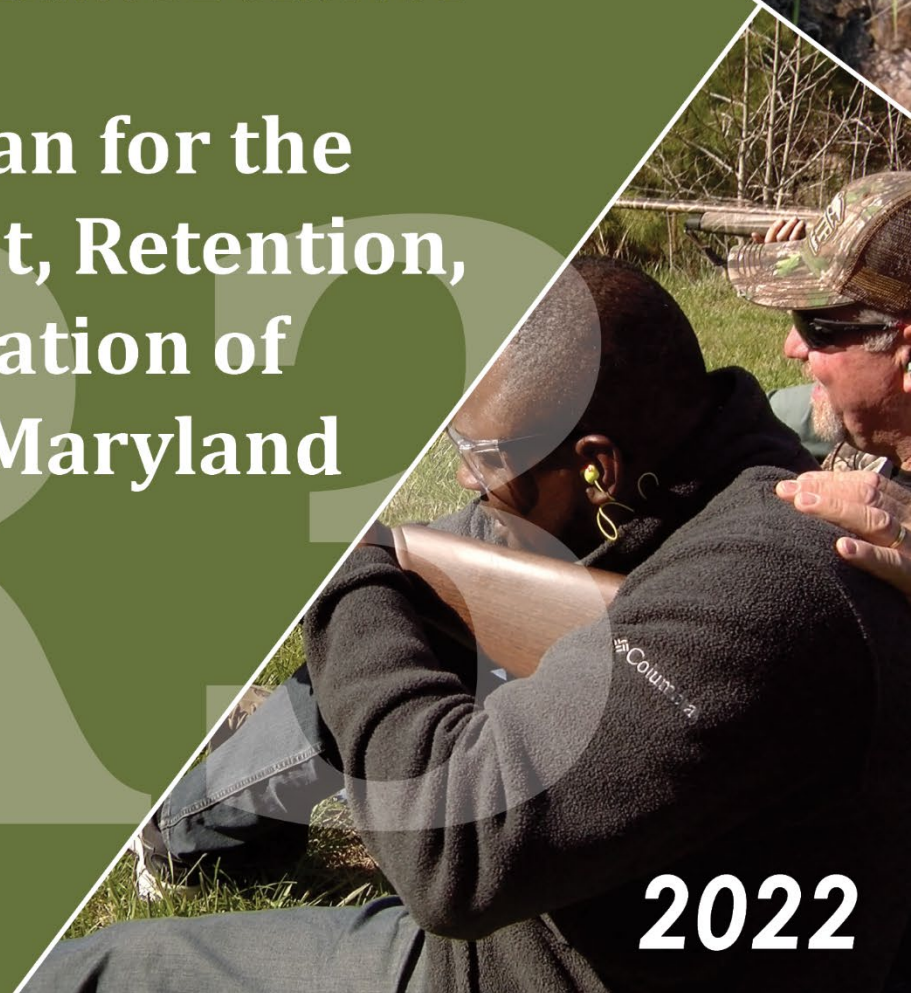


MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE SERVICE

Strategic Plan for the Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation of Hunters in Maryland



2022



Larry Hogan, Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building, E-1
580 Taylor Avenue Annapolis, MD 21401
410-260-8564
dnr.maryland.gov

Additional Telephone Contact Information:
Toll free in Maryland: 877-620-8DNR ext. 8564
OR Individual unit/program toll-free number
Out of state call: 410-260-8564
Text Telephone (TTY) users call via the Maryland Relay

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Canada Goose by Scott Moody for Maryland DNR photo

INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Maryland DNR) is dedicated to ensuring all Marylanders and our non-resident guests are afforded the opportunity to enjoy Maryland's great outdoors. Foremost among those outdoor pursuits are the opportunities available to those who pursue wild game in our forests, fields, and marshes. The department relies on a strong scientific foundation and informed public input to guide the development of hunting programs and is proud to offer world-class hunting across the state.

Foremost among those programs is our commitment to supporting new hunters and wildlife conservation stewards borne of that community. Hunters are often part of a multi-generational family where each new generation hands down the tradition and ethic to the next. For decades, new programs have been developed to ensure access to the next generation of enthusiasts and to ensure they too would pass along the passion for hunting to others.

In the recent past, the department identified subtle shifts in hunter participation and flagged key indicators suggesting there are new participants who are otherwise unable to become part of the community. To that end, we expanded efforts to recruit new participants and help guide them down the path to safe and successful experiences as new hunters. Specific efforts included the adoption of programs such as [Becoming an Outdoors-Woman \(BOW\)](#), [National Archery in the Schools Program \(NASP\)](#), [Growing Up WILD, Project WILD](#), [Maryland Master Naturalist Training](#), and various other hunting and outdoor stewardship programs.

As the landscape of hunting in Maryland, and nationally, has changed, Maryland DNR and our partners evolved our programming, efforts, and direction to continue to add value and opportunity to our future and existing hunters. An [Apprenticeship License](#) was established to remove some of the traditional barriers and encourage new individuals to 'try' hunting; Sunday hunting provides school-aged youth and those who work six days per week an additional opportunity to get afield; and [Mentored Hunt programs](#) have been created to help bridge the gap for individuals who do not have access to the traditional path of learning from a friend or family member.

These programs, and others, demonstrate the commitment by Maryland DNR to provide opportunities for any interested individual to begin their journey into hunting, as well as providing continued support to its current customer base. Through the establishment of a formal Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) initiative, and the hiring of a fulltime R3 Coordinator to oversee and implement a focused approach to increase participation in hunting in Maryland, the agency continues to refine its approach and leap forward into an

even greater realm of support for future, current, and long-standing hunters. We believe that our continued efforts and our willingness to step out of our comfort zone in pursuit of better practices, along with key partnerships and a common mission, will ultimately lead to success.

The plan that follows describes the key elements in our efforts to move forward and evolve a revolutionary R3 hunting program in Maryland. We are ready to deliver on this plan and hope you will join us as we embark on this new effort and recognize that this is just the beginning of a successful strategy to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters in Maryland.



White-tailed Deer - Photo Courtesy of

PLAN DEFINITIONS

ACRONYMS

BOW: Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program

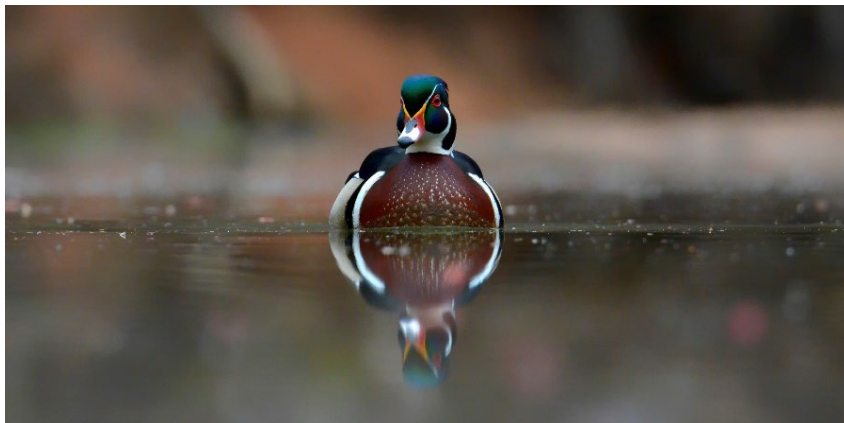
GIS: Geographic Information Systems

MARYLAND DNR: Maryland Department of Natural Resources

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

ORAM: Outdoor Recreation Adoption Mode

R3: Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation of hunting and shooting sports participants



Wood Duck by Duane Tucker for Maryland DNR photo contest

GLOSSARY

Agency: State and federal wildlife or natural resources management governmental organizations

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program: Offers [outdoor skills workshops](#) specifically for women 18 years of age and older, although men are welcome to participate. The workshops enable women to learn about a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in a casual, non-threatening environment. The classes are designed to be as hands-on as possible, giving participants enough knowledge to further pursue their interests once the workshop is over.

COMPASS: Maryland Department of Natural Resources' online license portal which provides 24/7 self-service access to our product catalog of recreational licenses, permits and stamps; off-road vehicle registrations; magazine subscriptions; and donations.

Industry: For-profit organizations who support hunting and the shooting sports and who have a vested interest in the excise tax conservation funding model

Millennial: Person in the generation born between the early 1980s and 2000s

Non-governmental organization: Non-governmental organization whose mission is focused on conservation, shooting sports or both

Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model: The [Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model](#) illustrates, in a linear fashion, the steps an individual moves through as they learn about, try and then adopt a new activity or behavior and can be used to understand the difference between recruitment, retention and reactivation.

Partner: Organization/individual with a role in hunting or shooting sports

Underrepresented audience: A demographic group that is statistically not represented in license-buying customers

Stakeholder: Organization/individual with a vested interest in hunting or shooting sports



Top from left: Maryland DNR from BOW, Maryland DNR First Shot Turkey Hunt '20 Department Photo, Maryland DNR from NFHD
Bottom from left: Maryland DNR from NFHD, Maryland DNR from BOW

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This plan is intended to be a living document to guide hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation activities over the next three years. We recognize that there are challenges to implementing a hunter R3 Plan. Changes will be ongoing, and alignment of resources will take time. R3 is a practice not a program and both research and practical experience show that R3 success is organization dependent.



White-tailed Deer by Syd Phillips Flickr CC by NC 2.0

OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Develop new partnerships and expand existing ones

- Action 1.** Identify potential partners and stakeholders.
- Action 2.** Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation.
- Action 3.** Host Maryland R3 Summit for agency, NGO and industry stakeholders, and partners.

Objective 2: Define our target audience

- Action 1.** Identify trends to determine priority target audiences.

Objective 3: Assess and prioritize programming and marketing with a targeted approach.

- Action 1.** Analyze current Maryland DNR programs to determine current impact and effectiveness.
- Action 2.** Review R3 programs and efforts from partners and stakeholders.
- Action 3.** Clearly define goals and objectives for programming, using S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) methods.

Action 4. Modernize marketing efforts.

Objective 4: Formulate a standardized evaluation method in order to evaluate programs.

Action 1. Utilize COMPASS licensing system to maximize data analysis.

Objective 5: Define mechanisms to increase public awareness regarding hunting access, opportunity and programming.

Action 1. Analyze current public land use.

Action 2. Determine underrepresented locations throughout the state to target efforts.

Action 3. Update current outreach tools (e.g. website, public land maps, etc.).



Mentored Deer Hunt Mentor and Participant by Maryland DNR

THE OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop new partnerships and expand existing ones

PURPOSE

Develop new partnerships and expand existing ones by improving communication and direction for a more uniform collaborative approach. Clearly define what a partnership entails and define roles, communication channels, and avenues for collaboration.

Reasoning: R3 efforts have become standard operating procedure for many agencies, NGOs and industry partners. However, much of this effort has been done internally with limited coordination and cooperation across partner boundaries. The value of partnerships is becoming more apparent as efforts become duplicated and resources become limited. Coordination between stakeholders must become targeted and strategic to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. This coordination must include a standard operating procedure to ensure that outcomes are measurable and can be applied across the entirety of each organization's structure and geographic reach. These shared efforts also ensure that limited resources are used efficiently amongst stakeholders and that efforts are not duplicated.

Action 1: Identify potential partners and stakeholders.

Tasks:

1. Contact NGOs and industry representatives to clarify their interest and intentions with R3 strategies and programming in Maryland.
2. Facilitate partnerships by serving as the central point of contact for agency, NGOs and industry R3 representatives.

Action 2: Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation.

Tasks:

1. Partners and stakeholders to meet in an annual Maryland R3 Summit hosted by Maryland DNR
2. Maintain an updated version of this plan and ensure information and strategies are up-to-date and constantly evolving to stay current with new findings and information.
3. Form an advisory group from existing partner and stakeholder groups to design, implement, and evaluate R3 strategies and programs.

Action 3: Host Maryland R3 Summit for agency, NGO and industry stakeholders, and partners.

Tasks:

1. Disseminate current research, information, goals, direction, and successes and failures for R3 in Maryland.
2. Round-table discussions for new strategies and processes, as well as evaluation of existing programs.
3. Enable face to face meetings with partners, stakeholders and committee members.
4. Use the findings from these meetings to regularly update this plan.

OBJECTIVE 2: Define our target audience.



Mentored Deer Hunt Participant by Maryland DNR

Reasoning: R3 programming has typically targeted individuals who were already part of a hunting culture. Those individuals include children and spouses of others who are already engaged in hunting. Children and spouses of existing hunters are more likely to hunt without the help of outside sources, therefore programming for those individuals must be focused on retaining them as lifelong hunters. To grow hunting in Maryland, it is imperative that the department and our partners redefine our target audience to include reaching individuals from non-traditional hunting backgrounds. We would also do well to broaden our focus from youth-oriented programming to adolescents and adults from non-traditional backgrounds. These audiences have recently proven to be a more effective cohort in that they have decision-making authority, a means of transportation, financial resources and are more likely to pass on hunting to either spouses, children and/or their friends.

Action 1: Identify potential partners and stakeholders.

Tasks:

1. Analyze license sales data to determine trends in demographics.
2. Survey existing and potential customer base to determine priority needs.

OBJECTIVE 3: Assess and prioritize programming and marketing with a targeted approach

PURPOSE

Clearly define goals and objectives for programming. Use these goals to evaluate current efforts and design future programming.

Reasoning: Much of the programming that currently exists was designed solely for participation numbers versus a clearly defined outcome and goal. Recent research has shown that in order to “make a hunter,” programming and resources that span the full process of an individual’s path to becoming a hunter are crucial to the longevity of that individual’s participation. The Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model (ORAM) should be used as a guide to create a targeted approach that promotes next-step programming. By giving the individual the ability to have multiple opportunities while moving through the ORAM, they are more likely to continue on their own.

Action 1: Analyze current MARYLAND DNR programs to determine current impact and effectiveness.

Tasks:

1. Map all current programs onto the ORAM.
2. Identify barriers and opportunities within each program/activity.
3. Determine how to quantify and evaluate program outcomes (e.g. number of licenses purchased post-program, participant surveys, etc.)



Dog Demo by Maryland DNR Staff

Action 2: Review R3 programs and efforts from partners and stakeholders.

Tasks:

1. Create and maintain a database of R3 efforts throughout the state.
2. Analyze efforts to determine how Maryland DNR can best assist partners and increase participation and awareness.

Action 3: Clearly define goals and objectives for programming, using S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) methods.

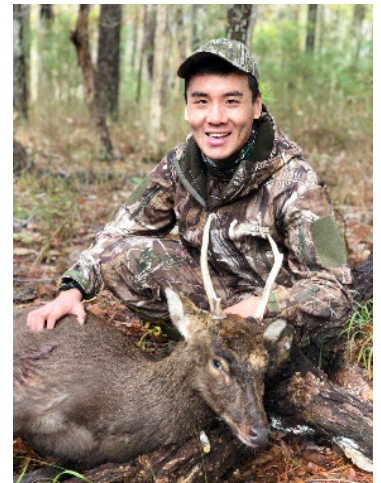
Tasks:

1. Utilize license data and other trends to provide insight into more measurable program outcomes.
2. Determine methods to most effectively reach customer base.

Action 4: Modernize marketing efforts.

Tasks:

1. Explore new methods of social media in order to better reach the millennial and younger customer base.



*From left to right top: BOW by Maryland DNR, Workshop by Maryland DNR, and Mentored Hunt by Maryland DNR
From left to right bottom: BOW by Maryland DNR, Hunting workshop by Maryland DNR*

OBJECTIVE 4: Formulate a standardized evaluation method in order to evaluate programs.

PURPOSE

Formulate a standardized evaluation method in order to evaluate programs. Standard methods of evaluation include, but are not limited to, license sales, participant tracking, revenue generated, etc. Use these results to maximize efficiency in programming, both current and future.

Reasoning: In general, much of the existing programming in the R3 community lacks a sound process to evaluate the effectiveness of efforts. This results in unknown and limited program effectiveness, as well as a lack of innovation. Programming easily becomes stuck in a rut and agencies take an approach to ‘doing things they’ve always done’. It is essential that a standardized method of evaluation practices becomes an integrated part of all programming. Likewise, evaluation must be present throughout the entire programming process, not merely the conclusion. The key to effectively evaluate programs relies on the design and integration of measurable objectives and outcomes. These measures must be integrated at the outset and captured throughout the design flow. By making the outcomes measurable, it is possible to produce an evaluation system that will allow us to document a program’s effectiveness. Most importantly, the results will determine our success toward expanding hunting participation and moving participants through the ORAM while effectively identifying areas for improvement.



Top to Bottom: Maryland DNR

Action 1: Utilize COMPASS licensing system to maximize data analysis.

Tasks:

1. Familiarize staff with COMPASS licensing system’s capabilities.
2. Explore additional methods to analyze data (e.g. Tableau, data dashboards, etc.).

OBJECTIVE 5: Define mechanisms to increase public awareness regarding hunting access, opportunity and programming

Reasoning: The most common answer to the question about hunting participation ends with “I did not have a place to go hunting”. Maryland offers over 125,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas and approximately 500,000 acres of public hunting across all land designations, including State Forests, State Parks and cooperatively managed lands. We also have many programs that offer opportunities for individuals to learn to hunt, as well as progress to more advanced stages of the ORAM. It is our responsibility to become more effective communicators of these opportunities and to engage other partners and stakeholders to do the same. By targeting audiences through license buying trends, we can effectively promote access and opportunity to both existing license buyers and target those underutilized areas in both demographics and land use.

Action 1: Analyze current public land use.

Tasks:

1. Use license sales data to determine spatial distribution of current license holders.
2. Utilize surveys and available permit data to determine where current license holders hunt and any potential barriers to public land use.

Action 2: Determine underrepresented locations throughout the state to target efforts.

Tasks:

1. Use license sales data and population data to determine areas that are underrepresented. These areas and groups will be determined using available demographic and census information, as well as general trend data on the national level.

Action 3: Update current outreach tools (e.g. website, public land maps, etc.).

Tasks:

1. Utilize surveys to determine barriers in current technology.
2. Update website to make it more user friendly.
3. Update maps on the website to make them more precise, interactive, and user friendly
4. Better utilization and editing of the existing hunting tools in the DNR App to make them more user-friendly and optimize customer experience.



New Hunter by Maryland DNR

Appendix: Current R3 Activities and Programs

Maryland Mentored Hunt Program

The Mentored Hunt Program aims to teach first-time hunters and lapsed hunters a new set of skills, whether it be hunting techniques or how to hunt specific species. The program pairs skilled veteran hunters with first-time or lapsed hunters (mentees) and walks them through a series of technical lectures that cover a range of topics including firearm safety, hunting tips and hunting techniques and strategies, as well as providing range time to help the mentee begin their journey into hunting. [More information.](#)

Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Offers outdoor skills workshops specifically for women 18 years of age and older, although men are welcome to participate. The workshops enable women to learn about a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in a casual, non-threatening environment. The classes are designed to be as hands-on as possible, giving participants enough knowledge to further pursue their interests once the workshop is over. [More information.](#)

Stocked Pheasant Hunts

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources will be offering “do-it-yourself” hunts for stocked pheasants. Apprentice license holders, junior license holders, new hunters and hunters who have previously held a Maryland hunting license, but have let it lapse are eligible to apply. The pheasant hunts will take place on public lands across the state. [More information.](#)

Hunting and Shooting 101 Workshops

The primary goal of this program is to provide the ‘next step’ for novice hunters and shooters such that they will feel comfortable moving forward in the shooting and hunting sports as a result of their experience in the workshop. The program will be a series of ‘mini-workshops’ in partnership with public shooting ranges and other appropriate venues. [More information.](#)

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.

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Office of Fair Practice
Department of Natural Resources
580 Taylor Ave., C-3
Annapolis MD 21401
Telephone: (410)260-8058
Email: ndc.dnr@maryland.gov

The Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: WSFR-4020
Arlington, Virginia 22203