

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

# **The Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission**

**Will Meet at 10:30 AM  
On Wed., November 19, 2025  
Department of Natural Resources**

**C-4 Conference Room  
Department of Natural Resources  
Tawes State Office Building**

**Meeting Agenda:**

**Presentation of the 2024 Conservationist of the Year Award – No Nominations Submitted**

**Approval for November 19, 2025, Meeting Agenda**

**Approval for Minutes from October 15, 2025, Meeting**

**WHS Administration Update (Kristen Fleming)**

**WHS Regional Operations Update (John Moulis)**

**2026 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda (WAC Discussion)**

**Maryland Farm Bureau Update (Tyler Hough)**

**Natural Resources Police Update (Lieutenant Brian Miller or Lieutenant Bill Davis)**

**Old Business:**

- **Sunday Hunting Discussion – (Group Discussion)**
- **Non-Lead Ammunition Discussion – (Group Discussion)**

**New Business:**

**Public Comment:**

**Adjourn**

***NOTE: Free Parking will be available on the Navy Stadium Parking Lot, which is the third entrance on right off of Taylor Avenue.***

**The Proposed Schedule for the 2025 Meetings  
Of the Wildlife Advisory Commission is as follows:**

<b>January 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>February 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>March 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>April 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>May 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>June 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-Person Meeting at the Tawes State Office Building</b>
<b>July 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No Meeting</b>
<b>August 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>September 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-Person Meeting at the Sideling Hill Training Center</b>
<b>October 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>November 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-Person Meeting at the Tawes State Office Building</b>
<b>December 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No Meeting</b>

***PLEASE NOTE THAT MEETING DATES ARE HELD  
ON THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH***

**Note:** Unless notified otherwise, all meetings will be held via Google Meet. When meeting in person, they will be held in the C-4 Conference Room of the Department of Natural Resources—Tawes State Office Building beginning at 10:30 a.m. Available parking is located at the Navy Stadium Parking Lot.

***NOTE: Free Parking will be available on the Navy Stadium Parking Lot, which is the third entrance on right off of Taylor Avenue.***

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 19, 2025

Chair Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m. This meeting was held by teleconference. Chair Wagner requested a roll call from individuals on by teleconference. Unfortunately, due to Google Meet's anonymous caller system, it was impossible to identify every participant.

**Introduction:**

- Mr. Daniel Duggan's microphone was not working; therefore, Vice Chair Schroyer provided the introductions.
- Vice Chair Schroyer mentioned that Daniel Duggan is going to run for the House of Representatives. Mr. Daniel Duggan is a retired law enforcement officer with the Garrett County Sheriff's Department.

**Presentation of the 2024 Conservationist of the Year Award – No Nominations Submitted.**

**Approval of November 19, 2025, Meeting Agenda**

- Chair Wagner added two items under new business, which were the power transmission line and R3.
- Commissioner Parks requested an update on the information related to hunting safety.
- Motion:
  1. Commissioner Parks moved to accept the agenda for the November 19, 2025, Wildlife Advisory Commission meeting with the additions.
  2. Commissioner Rossignuolo seconded.
  3. All in favor. Motion passed.

**Approval of October 15, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

- Motion:
  1. Commissioner Rossignuolo moved to approve the October 15, 2025, meeting minutes.
  2. Commissioner Parks seconded.
  3. All in favor. Motion passed.

**WHS Administration Program Update – Associate Director Kristen Fleming**

Associate Director Fleming presented an overview of the WHS Administration Program in a PowerPoint.

**[ATTACHMENT A]**

- Managing for Results is a budgeting exercise, which includes metrics to show where the money goes as a whole. It is very number-based.
- WHS manages over 128,000 acres of land, and the WHS Administration Program staff support that effort and ensure that our staff are fiscally organized to do the right job, since WHS does not have many staff to manage that amount of land.
- WHS was able to ramp up hiring in 2025, increasing staff from 80 to over 100 employees, which allowed WHS to fill almost all vacancies.
- There was a decrease in the WHS budget from FY25 to FY26. General Funds were reduced from \$375,000 (previous years) to \$100,000; WHS does not use General Funds for operations, so this does not really affect us. Special Funds revenue comes from permit licensing, which is relatively stable; it increased slightly in FY25 compared with FY24.
- Federal funding decreased for a couple of reasons.
  1. One reason is that WHS had several grants close at the end of FY25. Those grants were not renewable, and WHS was not competing for them again.
  2. Another reason is that WHS had the last large Pitman-Robertson (PR) Fund grant and had a lot of rollover money that was spent down. That grant closed on June 30th. WHS is now in a new 5-year PR grant cycle, and the funding has been extended, which is good news. WHS did not return federal funds.

3. The third reason, nationwide, is that the federal appropriations for the new grants have decreased.
- Special Funds revenue streams include hunting and licensing fees, which are the bulk. Last year, about 5.6 million came in.
  1. The other special fund streams include the Wildlife Management & Protection Fund and Chesapeake Bay & Endangered Species, which is a tax check-off. Revenue from the Chesapeake Bay & Endangered Species comes to the Department and, by law, is split with the Chesapeake Bay Trust. That is one fund for which WHS does not know the year-end balance until July or August. The Chesapeake Bay & Endangered Species tax check-off provides “match” money for the Natural Heritage Program federal fund portion, which is the state wildlife grants.
  2. That amount was around \$650,000, which has slowly increased and then leveled off over the past three years, which is pretty stable; that fund and the private donation account, which holds Marilyn Mause's bequest, all support the Natural Heritage Program.
  3. There is the Migratory Game Bird Fund that is included in the Special Funds.
  4. Operations do not spend 2 million dollars a year. It allows WHS to receive federal duck-stamp funds, which WHS then writes a quarterly check for and remits to the federal government.
  5. The highest fees are always the resident and non-resident full-season license. This year, resident license revenue was 1.6 million, and non-resident revenue was 2.5 million.
- Q&A Section
  1. Chair Wagner asked what the special funds number was last year.
    - a. It was around 7.3 million.
    - b. The recalculation of PR is mainly due to excise taxes on ammunition and firearms; overall, that number has decreased.
  2. Commissioner Kullberg asked about the federal appropriations that have decreased in Maryland and how that compares across the board to other states. Commissioner Kullberg also asked whether Maryland is being singled out specifically or targeted.
    - a. No, it is across the board.
    - b. Due to the federal shutdown, WHS is still waiting for a few grants to be awarded, but WHS expects to get full appropriations. It has been a slight delay, but it has not affected WHS operations. WHS is only in the second budget quarter.
    - c. There is a formula for PR funds that must be followed.
  3. Chair Wagner asked what the differences between land management and operations are.
    - a. Operations include the Administration Program.
    - b. The bulk of that “Operations” appropriation, which is 2 million dollars on slide 8, is just a holding space; it is money that Administration Program flows in and then passes back out to the federal government.
    - c. Salaries are incorporated into the different program budgets, so everybody in land management is included in salaries, vehicles, utilities, etc.
  4. Chair Wagner asked whether WHS has a comparison for last year, what that number was, the previous three fiscal years, and how much it has increased.
    - a. Chair Wagner wants to see where the shortfall ended up.
    - b. There was a reduction in purchases of items like heavy equipment and equipment replacements. We were able to do that in previous years because we had unspent funds during COVID, and that grant kept rolling over. That was purely a procurement business.
    - c. There was a backlog of back purchases and other items that needed to be addressed, and they were all completed last year.
    - d. Staff can provide an itemized comparison of the last three fiscal year budgets to the Commission, which will include land management allocations. Still, it may not accurately portray what happened on the ground.
    - e. The FY26 budget is a more realistic budget year for WHS.
    - f. WHS is not hurting as much as the reduction in those federal dollars; however, we are tightening up on some things, which is something that has been done statewide.
  5. Associate Director Fleming asked if any of the other Associate Directors would jump in about

their budget.

- a. Associate Director Eyer mentioned that for several years, WHS was not using the full federal portions; however, now, WHS can do so with the fee increase.
  - b. From the Game Program perspective, staff have not seen any decrease in our funding. In fact, there are two major research projects underway with Dr. Bowman. In the past, staff would never have had two substantial projects simultaneously.
- Chair Wagner explained that WHS was lagging in the PR dollars, so with the price increase, WHS can do a lot more with PR funding on a lot of projects because we collect more license sales, which in turn gives WHS access to more PR funds to the State. When it takes 30 years to increase hunting license fees, Maryland got behind the eight-ball. Chair Wagner noted that it is encouraging to hear that WHS believes it is in a good place.

### **WHS Regional Operations Update – Associate Director John Moulis**

Associate Director Moulis gave an overview of the Regional Operations Program (ROP) Regulatory Process. [ATTACHMENT B]

- Regional Operations Program staff handle many well-known big game species that generate a lot of public interest. ROP staff also manage many other, less well-known species, from shorebirds to rare plants, including bald eagles and salamanders. Many of these species are brought to the ROP staff's attention for management purposes.
- There are three basic sub-programs or projects within the ROP, which are Wildlife Response, Land Management, and Research/Monitoring.
- Land Management involves posting boundaries, maintaining parking lots/buildings, overseeing hunting programs, and managing habitat work.
- Wildlife Response is another project that significant staff work on; there may be 13 to 16 staff who are primarily assigned wildlife response positions within the land management programs. These individuals assist with all the other projects as time permits.
- Research and monitoring efforts, assisting our Game Program and Natural Heritage Program with these items.
- Talbot County is the only county without a Wildlife Management Area. WHS is approaching 129,000 acres of statewide lands, everywhere from the mountain ridges of Western Maryland to ephemeral disappearing shorebird nesting sand islands in the Back Bays along the Atlantic Coast, and every kind of habitat in between.
- Some areas have rare habitats or some rare species occurrences. Obviously, they take on greater importance for that portion of the property, or for the entire property if it is a geographic area. Also, WHS has cleared traditional-farming land for active management hunting properties, where staff can establish early-successional grasslands, some annual food plots, and traditional species management.
- There are PowerPoint slides that demonstrate how to protect, restore, enhance, and modify wildlife habitat using many different tools. WHS does not own a helicopter; instead, WHS used a contractor to spray herbicide and perform early-successional tree work on some bumpers that had become too large for the bush hog.
- There are PowerPoint slides on when a wildlife concern requires a response from WHS staff. A response is needed when animals are in distress.
  1. There was a photo on slide 15 where a deer hit the window of the elementary school and ended up inside the building; staff received the phone call and went and removed the deer using immobilization drugs.
  2. Staff received reports of sick and incapacitated animals. We receive many calls about eagles on the ground. It is common for eagles to be on the ground foraging and eating, but occasionally one can't fly and needs to go to a rehabilitator. Many individuals are intimidated by larger raptors and hesitant to handle them independently.
  3. The other photo next to the eagle photo on slide 16 shows a farmer with a grain tower and a standing platform on top of it. The farmer had been trying to thwart the osprey from nesting there because it got in the way of the conveyors and some of the other hatches and stuff. The farmer

installed these sidebars and wires and thought that placing small tape flagging along the perimeter would deter the ospreys. Only the osprey hovered over it, dropped sticks to form a nest, then landed on it and turned it into a nest. The osprey became entangled in the wire and required rescue. The photo is of one of WHS's braver souls, now the Eastern Region Manager, who had no qualms about running to the top of the grain tank tower (probably 60-75 ft off the ground) to rescue the osprey.

4. Staff offer advice and guidance; it qualifies as a technical assistance grant. The moment we prepare to respond to a wildlife situation, it does not qualify for federal grants and is charged to our operations code.
  5. Staff manage deer management permits statewide; those activities are not eligible for federal aid. Individuals who have crop damage want the permit, and some want to list a large number of people, such as their hunters, hunt clubs, or family members, whoever is hunting the farm, on the permit. There are one or two people on the permits who will shoot the permitted deer, but the permittees insist on listing all names on the deer management permits. It becomes more of an administrative task to manage these many permits and names, and to handle phone calls about deleting and switching names on the permits. It takes a great deal of time.
  6. Staff help with research monitoring, for example, this year the staff goal is to collect 2,000 Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) statewide. This particular statewide sampling is done every three years. Also, staff work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on blood sampling of waterfowl.
  7. Staff spend time on habitat improvement opportunities, for example, waterfowl impoundment on a park property. On slide 25 is a picture of a hedge row removed at the Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary in October by Regional Operations staff. The hedge row had been planted several years ago in small, a few rows wide. The thought was to connect corridors. It was allowed to grow over time and expand over time to the point it was nearly as tall as the mature trees around the edge, and it reduced the size of the field and reduced the Canada goose use of these crop fields in the wintertime, just because of the trees and the size of the field. Staff agreed that this could be done to improve Canada goose wintering habitat at Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary.
  8. Staff also managed a property that was added to the Wellington Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in Somerset County. Staff knew this farm was wet at the back end and valuable for wintering waterfowl and eagles, as these fields would flood with surface water, typically in the wet season at the end of winter. The staff worked with Ducks Unlimited to design and fund a 40-acre wetland restoration and enhancement project across four cells on that property. It is a new, large-scale project undertaken by staff within the first four or five years of WHS's ownership of the property. This property will be one of the WHS keynote additions to that whole complex in the Wellington Wildlife Management Area. This property is about 180 acres of cleared ground and about 75-80 acres of woodlands.
  9. Two other big projects are coming online with the partnership of Ducks Unlimited on wildlife management areas on the Eastern Shore. One is Brown's Branch WMA; staff were moving equipment there to break ground during the week of November 17. All erosion-control sediment measures around the project area were in place. The other is slated for another wet field at LeCompte WMA and for renovating the water movement and structure in an adjacent cell, which were last renovated 20 years ago. Hoping to enhance another 40 acres at LeCompte WMA with assistance from Ducks Unlimited.
- Q&A Section
    1. Commissioner Kullberg asked if there are any species off limits for wildlife response that staff won't come out for.
      - a. WHS has policies that staff use for guidance.
      - b. One tricky species to consider is the pig. A pig is considered livestock under the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and from time to time, in certain parts of the State, staff would have contact with individuals who would go out to look for and work with animals that may have gotten away. Staff know that feral pigs that are not collected for a while can begin to

- behave differently, and it is in our best interest, for native wildlife, for habitat, for farming, and other uses, to get the feral pigs collected as quickly as possible. Many of the escapes have been pets, potbelly pigs, again, more of a gray area.
- c. WHS has policies. One of the previous directors noted that policies are in place. Still, there will always be exceptions to hard-and-fast rules, especially when we receive an inquiry for assistance from another agency.
  - d. It all depends on the scenarios and all the different sorts of outcomes. Staff generally do not respond to exotic species and species outside of the WHS jurisdiction. However, occasionally our staff may need to assist.
  - e. WHS depends on our partners, such as wildlife rehabilitation facilities, for orphaned animals like birds and small animals. Staff aim to empower as many people as possible to handle smaller animals safely. The number to refer people to is the USDA Wildlife Hotline at 1-877-463-6497. The staff who manage that line know when they need to send us an email or other information.
2. Chair Wagner thanked Regional Operations for the staff's efforts and noted that hunters frequently ask, "Where is my money going?" He proposed posting this information on the DNR website to clarify for the hunting community how their funds are being used.
- a. WHS can do better in communicating what we are doing.
  - b. There is a minimal number of staff who are doing this type of work.

#### **2026 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda [ATTACHMENT C] – WAC Discussion**

- Chair Wagner shared his personal opinion that the Commission has three months off, but he believes it's better to meet more often than less. Chair Wagner asked for a field trip on September 16, 2026. He told the Commission he had visited Myrtle Grove and was genuinely impressed by the variety and scale of the work staff are undertaking there.
- Commissioner Kullberg and Commissioner Rossignuolo agreed that a field trip is a great idea. Commissioner Kullberg noted that the Commission did not have a field trip.
- Director Stonesifer replied that the Commission met at the NRP Hunter Safety Building in 2025.
- Staff will brainstorm and report back to the Commission.
- Motion:
  1. Vice Chair Schroyer moved to accept the 2026 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda.
  2. Commissioner Rossignuolo seconded.
  3. All in favor. Motion passed.

#### **Maryland Farm Bureau Update (MFB) – Tyler Hough, Director,**

- MFB Director Hough informed the Commission that the MFB is planning for the legislative session.
- The MFB is looking forward to the MFB Convention, which will be held from the first Saturday through Tuesday in December at the Hyatt in Cambridge, Maryland. MFB Director Hough invited the Commission members and staff to attend the 110<sup>th</sup> Maryland Farm Bureau Convention.
- Chair Wagner requested that MFB Director Hough send the invitation to Ms. Tracey Spencer so she can email it to the Commission. MFB Director Hough agreed to do so.

#### **Natural Resources Police Update (NRP) – Lieutenant Brian Miller gave an update.**

- Lieutenant Miller reported that for October 2025, NRP officers contacted 1,894 hunters.
- Lieutenant Miller indicated that NRP officers patrolled public lands approximately 4939 hours. NRP officers responded to 5,884 calls for service; 76 of those calls generated reports, and 14 follow-up reports. NRP issued 260 citations and 756 warnings.

#### **Old Business**

- Sunday Hunting Discussion—The Commission should have received the Sunday hunting proposal, which was developed from stakeholder meetings. Chair Wagner summarized the Environmental

Committee's request to resolve the issue of Sunday hunting in Maryland once and for all.

1. MFB Director Hough noted that the first proposal, which focused on creating hotspots, was well received by the board and members because it started to address the agricultural perspective. Regarding the second proposal, he considered it a reasonable compromise, based on discussions of early and late hours rather than the 10:30 am restriction. The MFB will refrain from involvement in any matter related to Sunday waterfowl hunting. Currently, MFB has no policy on Sunday waterfowl hunting, and no submitted policies have advanced to the convention for consideration. However, MFB supports expanding opportunities for Sunday deer hunting on private land, and both proposals contribute to that goal.
  2. Chair Wagner replied that he will take that as a favorable report from the MFB about the Sunday hunting proposals.
  3. MFB Director Hough agreed.
  4. Commissioner Rasche noted that feedback from the MFB wildlife committee, which formed the core of the response, showed support for dividing Sunday hunting hours in counties without established Sunday hunting. The proposed schedule includes two and a half hours in the morning and two and a half hours in the evening, freeing up the remaining hours for recreational activities. Commissioner Rasche added that the MFB currently has no policy on Sunday waterfowl hunting because of significant differences between the Eastern and Western Shores. The Western Shore has resident Canada geese, making hunting there different from the migratory Atlantic Canada geese on the Eastern Shore. Wildlife will be a topic of discussion at the upcoming MFB convention, providing clearer insight into how the Eastern Shore counties primarily view waterfowl hunting.
  5. Chair Wagner asked if it would be premature to request a letter of support for the two proposals from the MFB, because it may help the legislative process down the road to see MFB support on these two proposals.
  6. MFB Director Hough agreed to discuss it with the board. As the MFB convention approaches, the 2026 policy book will be finalized. At times, it can be challenging to work through things, and a key point with the proposals is that they are not in policy because they are new. There are new solutions that MFB Director Hough believes are a good step forward. If the board supports them, MFB Director Hough will get something over to DNR and the Commission.
  7. Commissioner Smith suggested extending the 10:30 am due to weather conditions because hunters are afield in different weather conditions, but other recreational users are not.
  8. Chair Wagner commented that Commissioner Smith made a fair point. Chair Wagner added that it will likely receive significant discussion as the process moves from proposal to legislation.
  9. Chair Wagner emphasized that he thinks the three proposals are an eloquent solution to a long-standing issue in the state.
- Non-Lead Ammunition Discussion – Chair Wagner indicated to leave it on the agenda.
    1. Commissioner Rasche added that he brought up the non-lead ammunition to other hunters and people in his area gave their feedback on it, and the fact that the ammunition manufacturers are not up to speed with that situation, and everybody that Commissioner Rasche talked to said that if the ammunition were available, reloading would be an easier transition. But it is not feasible at this point.
    2. Chair Wagner recalled that Vice Chair Schroyer and he had numerous discussions about non-lead ammunition, and he agrees with them. Chair Wagner emphasized that the partnership for a lead-free America is built entirely on volunteerism. Chair Wagner expressed concern about potential measures that might harm the hunting community and reduce participation. Chair Wagner acknowledged supply issues and highlighted the importance of education, beginning in Maryland, to encourage hunters to switch to lead-free options. Some preserve events already require the use of non-lead ammunition, and the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge mandates it. Chair Wagner emphasized the need to avoid forcing hunters and shooters into a corner with mandates that could abruptly phase out lead ammunition, which would be damaging to the Maryland Farm Bureau and the hunting community, especially given manufacturing limitations. Most manufacturers offer

- nearly every caliber, but some gaps remain. Chair Wagner recognized that lead-free ammunition is inevitable and suggested that the Commission consider solutions or alternatives, as Maryland may face a ban in the future—whether a gradual five-year plan, a one-year mandate, or a voluntary program—given that this issue consistently arises during legislative sessions.
3. Commissioner Rasche noted that if the opposition is based on factual science or genuine concern from a small segment of the public, it is understandable. However, if their opposition is due solely to a personal dislike of lead ammunition, that is a different matter.
  4. Chair Wagner mentioned the Non-Lead Ammunition Workshop that several previous Commission members attended, including Commissioner Rossignuolo's father. The workshop was highly informative and science-based, and it would be beneficial for DNR to host more similar sessions.
  5. Commissioner Rossignuolo mentioned that her father is a traditional hunter and told her he gained a lot from the Non-Lead Ammunition Workshop. He was also surprised by the findings and demonstrations presented at the workshop.
  6. Chair Wagner reminded the Commission that other states are moving toward non-lead ammunition. The Commission should consider addressing this issue, if not during this legislative session, at a later date.

### **New Business**

- **Transmission Power Lines** – Commissioner Rossignuolo sent a communication to Chair Wagner stating that an injunction had been filed to stop hunting on any lands that were to be surveyed for the installation of power lines. There was some pushback. The Safari Club came back to stop the power company from eliminating or restricting hunting. It became a property-rights issue, and it remains ongoing. Chair Wagner encouraged the Commission to get familiar with the Piedmont Reliability Project.
  1. Commissioner Rossignuolo explained that the Piedmont Reliability Project originates in Pennsylvania, crossing through Maryland to supply energy to data centers in Virginia and Maryland. The project plans to continue all its activities, including other power-related developments, which will impact farmland and surrounding areas. The company has filed a motion in federal court to prevent hunting while surveyors are on-site. It's frustrating because many people are already losing so much, and now, at this time of year, the company decides to have surveyors on private properties. They argue that, for safety reasons, surveyors should be able to access the land without hunters present, affecting Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties.
  2. Natural Heritage Program staff review many projects, and in many situations, the public deals with them. Many of the surveyors wear fluorescent orange clothing while conducting their work.
  3. MFB Director Hough stated that he can elucidate the current circumstances surrounding the Piedmont Reliability Project. The Maryland Farm Bureau is thoroughly familiar with this project and has formally intervened in the related case. The federal court filing on the source of the protests by hunters indicates that threats have been communicated directly to surveyors, both in person and via social media, and that these threats are explicitly referenced in the case. Consequently, Public Service Enterprise Group Inc. (PSEG) has chosen to file in federal court to prohibit hunting activities during the surveying process. This specific issue stems directly from such threats, reflecting a notably hostile environment. Opposition to the project has been substantial, and some of their objections are now being formally documented in legal proceedings. It is important to note that the Maryland Farm Bureau does not necessarily endorse the project; it provided contextual information explaining why PSEG ultimately decided to file.
  4. Chair Wagner noted that a lack of compromise in certain areas has led to issues. People are already upset because surveyors are on their land, and now they are told they cannot hunt on their property. He acknowledged that the Commission will not resolve the matter. Still, he emphasized that the Commission should be informed of the situation, as it involves individual and property rights, as well as eminent domain.
- **NRP Hunter Safety Homework Assignment** – Commissioner Parks stated he has been in contact with

Bill Dixon, the NRP Hunter Safety Supervisor, following his presentation in September in Western Maryland. Commissioner Parks mentioned that he has been trying to understand the numbers, as he's naturally a numbers enthusiast, because the figures didn't align with what he observed and heard. He sought to grasp better what the program is doing, how it functions, and how the Commission can more effectively support the Hunter Safety Education Program. Ultimately, if there aren't enough teachers to run the necessary courses and attract new hunters, funding will continue to decline. Commissioner Parks also reminded the Commission that funding has already decreased, and if guns and ammunition sales drop, it indicates a lack of education on the subject. He is still waiting for the background information from Bill Dixon.

1. Chair Wagner told the Commission he discussed with Director Stonesifer the possibility of Bill Dixon and/or Chris Markin providing R3 (Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation) updates. The focus would be on R3 activities, NRP hunting education efforts, and licensing initiatives.
2. Chair Wagner suggested that the Commission review R3 activities, especially in light of the decline in hunting license sales. It would be beneficial to see Maryland's numbers improve as more people are recruited and licensed through the NRP and R3 programs.
3. Chair Wagner requested an R3 monthly update and a Hunter Safety Education Program update.
4. Lieutenant Miller will request that Lieutenant have Bill Dixon start attending the WAC meetings monthly and provide monthly updates to the Commission.
5. Director Stonesifer replied that Chris Markin is usually in attendance for the WAC meetings, and he can provide an R3 monthly update.
6. Commissioner Parks described that the hunter safety component is a big part of the R3, and since the hunter safety receives almost a million dollars a year in its budget, which is a sizable amount of money.
7. Chair Wagner requested an update on the eight new positions.
8. Director Stonesifer replied that all but three positions have been filed. WHS has more education staff, and some staff have been converted.
9. Chair Wagner provided background on the increase in licensing fees that occurred about three years ago. One condition for the eight new positions in the R3 was that part of the funding would be used to hire staff for the R3 program, to boost hunter numbers and licensing sales.
10. Chair Wagner requested the following information from the R3 program:
  - a. What are the results?
  - b. How many new people?
11. Chair Wagner mentioned that it seems the most critical jobs are R3 and licensing, so that there is a new generation of hunters, and the numbers are increasing.
12. Director Stonesifer raised that Commissioner Parks is still waiting on basic hunting safety data from Bill Dixon that Commissioner Parks requested about a month ago.
13. Lieutenant Miller pointed out that there were probably at least 5,000 classes since January, which is a lowball estimate, and that at least 2,500 new hunters since January received their hunter safety certificates, with classes held throughout the state.
14. Lieutenant Miller clarified that the statistics were inaccurate because the parties responsible for providing them have changed, leading to some outdated data. In September, the Hunter Safety 217 program issued certificates and held 707 classes statewide. However, the October Hunter Safety statistics were missing.
15. Chair Wagner hoped for a thorough update from Bill Dixon and Chris Markin at the January 21, 2026, meeting.
16. Commissioner Rossignuolo asked about the hunter education class breakdown and whether those numbers count the trapper education test-out.
  - a. Lieutenant Miller could not answer that question because it is not under his wheelhouse.

**Public Comment –**

- Mr. Duggan summarized his background and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to join, listen, and learn from the meeting. He also appreciated the efforts of the Commission and staff.

- There were no other public comments.
- The public may contact the Members of the Commission at [wac.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:wac.dnr@maryland.gov).

### Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2026, and will be held via Google Meet at 10:30 am.

### Attendance

Members:	J. Bowman, E. Cohen, D. Herrera, K. Kullberg, J. Parks, W. Rasche, K. Rossignuolo, J. Schroyer, M. Smith, and C. Wagner
Absent:	
Guest:	D. Duggan, T. Hough, J. Seigler, and K. Thompson
Staff:	G. Brewer, C. Coriell, H. Devine, B. Eyler, K. Fleming, K. Harvey, J. Homyack, B. Long, C. Markin, B. Miller, J. Moulis, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, K. Stonesifer, J. Tabora, J. Trudeau, and A. Ward



FY26 Administration Overview

# Wildlife and Heritage Services

**Wildlife Advisory Commission**  
**November 19, 2025**



## WHS Administration - Our Job

To provide dependable administrative, fiscal, operational, and comprehensive licensing and permitting support to the Wildlife and Heritage Service. We achieve this through strong fiscal stewardship, streamlined operations, and exceptional customer service for staff, partners, and the public.



# About Us



## Our Team

- Kristen Fleming ~ Associate Director
- Hannah Devine ~ Federal Aid Coordinator
- Ivonne Montañez ~ Chief Fiscal Officer
- Georgia Johnson ~ Wildlife Permits (2 vacancies)
- Tina Jarvis ~ Offshore Blind and Shoreline License
- Alex Talbot ~ Offshore Blind and Shoreline License
- Joe Bulls ~ Offshore Blind and Shoreline License



## Supportive Services

- Budget/Fiscal Management
- Federal Aid Coordination
- Procurement
- HR/Personnel



## Permitting and Licensing

- Wildlife Permits
- Offshore Blinds
- Shoreline Licenses



## FY 25 Highlights

- ▶ Collaborated with federal and state partners to produce new falconry inspection guide .
- ▶ Integrated OBSL and shoreline license issuance by incorporating with MD Outdoors .
- ▶ Leveraged state and federal funding to restore an additional 2697 acres of habitat .
- ▶ Ensure adequate federal and state funding is in place to maintain and manage 128,000+ acres of wildlife management area .
- ▶ Provide personnel, procurement, and administrative support to over 100 employees across the state .

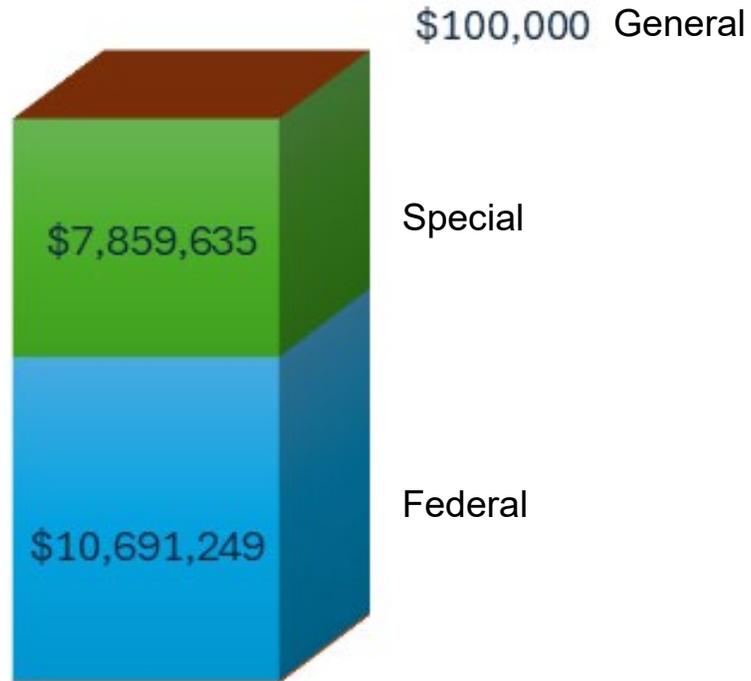


FISCAL YEAR 26

# REVENUE



FY 26 Budget  
**\$18,650,884**



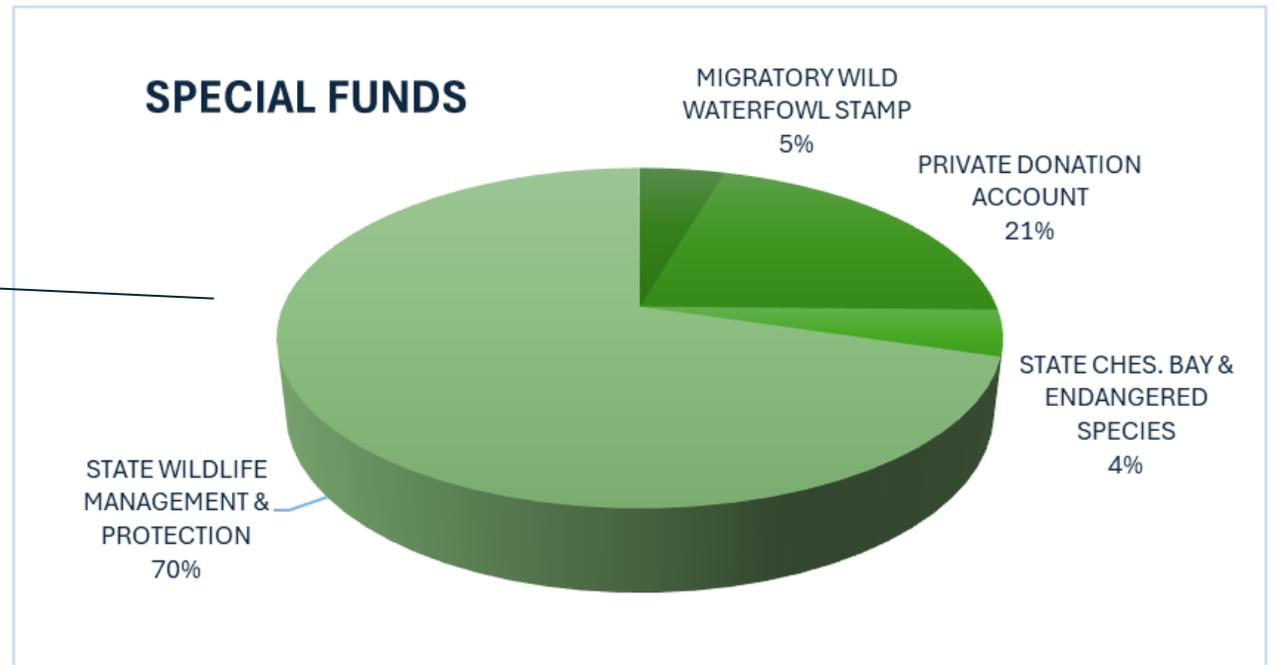
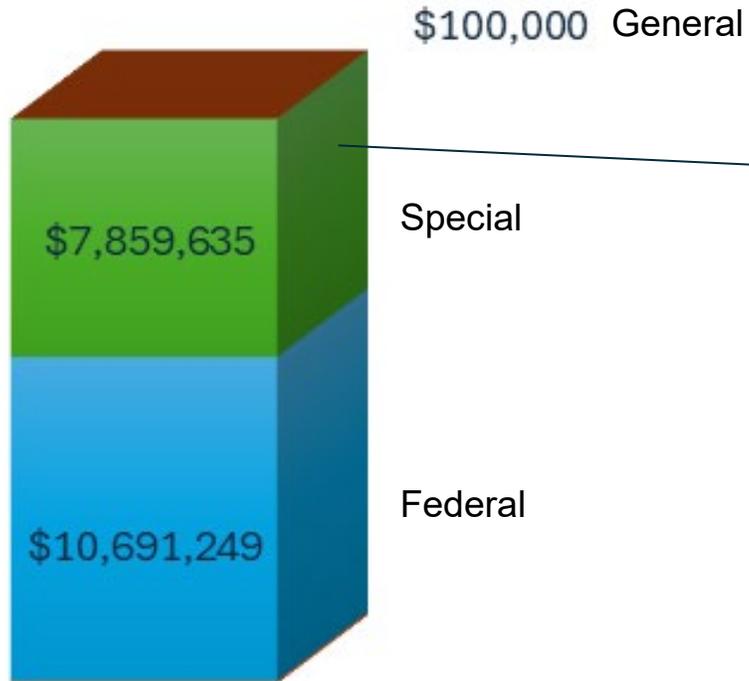
- ▶ Decrease in General Funds of 73% from FY24
- ▶ Special Fund Revenues increased 9% from FY24
- ▶ Decrease in Federal Funds of 32% from FY24

FISCAL YEAR 26

# REVENUE



FY 26 Budget  
**\$18,650,884**

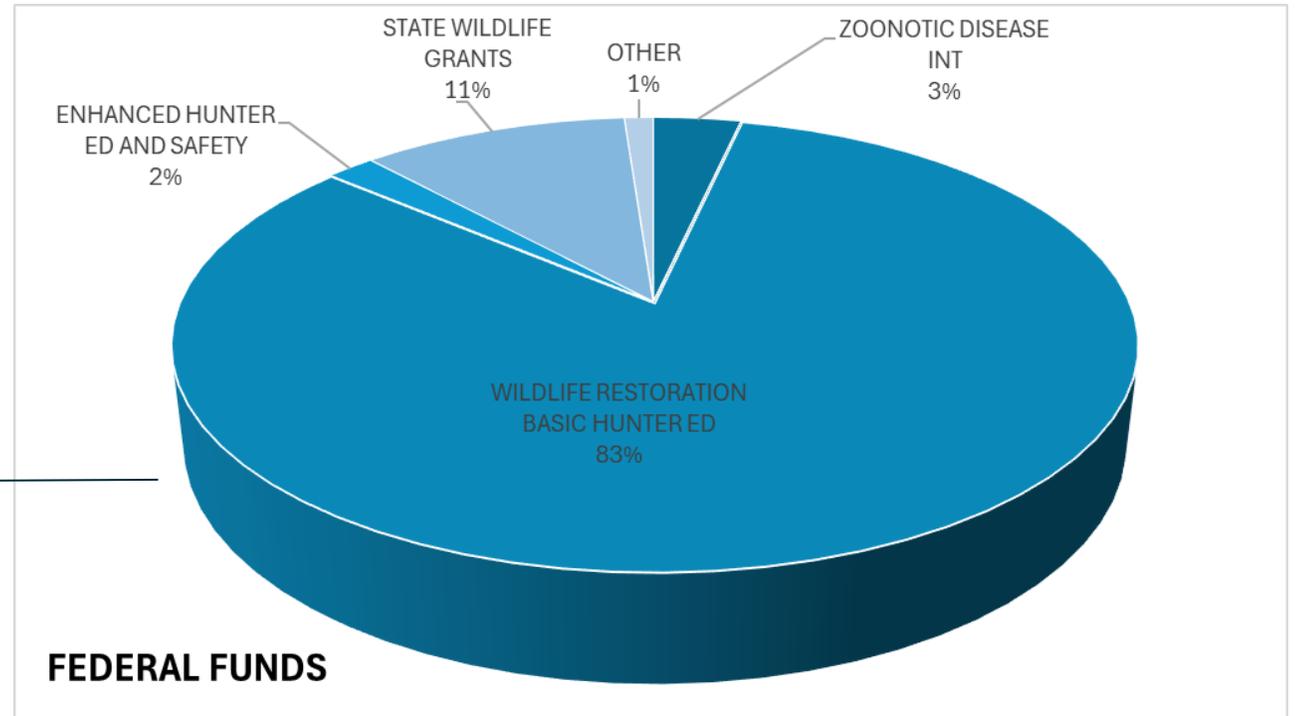
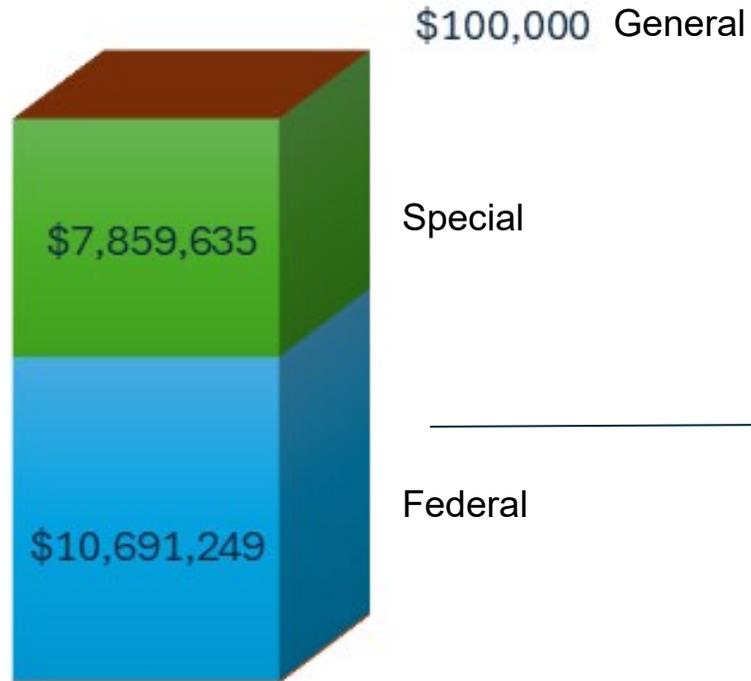


FISCAL YEAR 26

# REVENUE

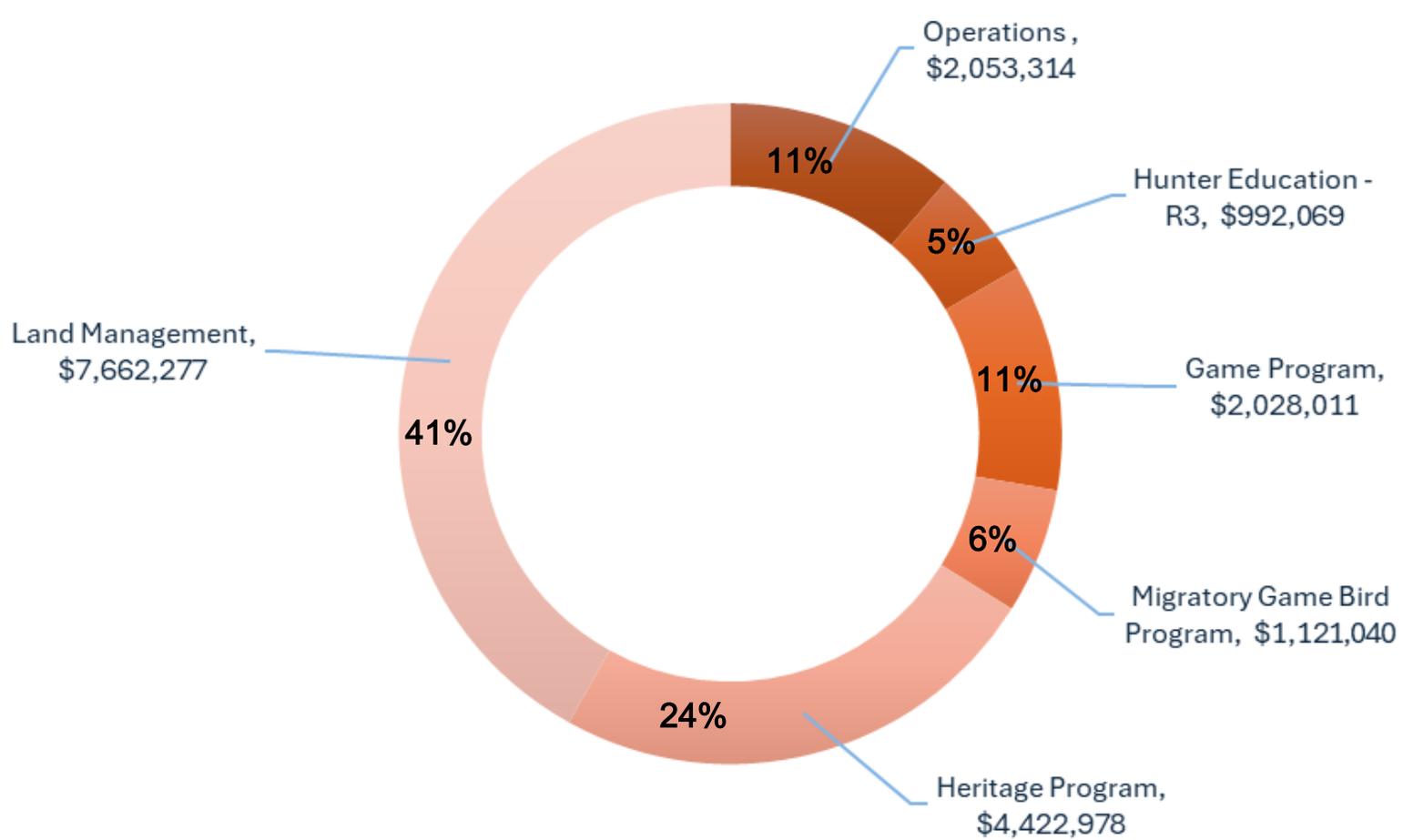


FY 26 Budget  
**\$18,650,884**



FISCAL YEAR 26

# ALLOCATIONS





[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife)

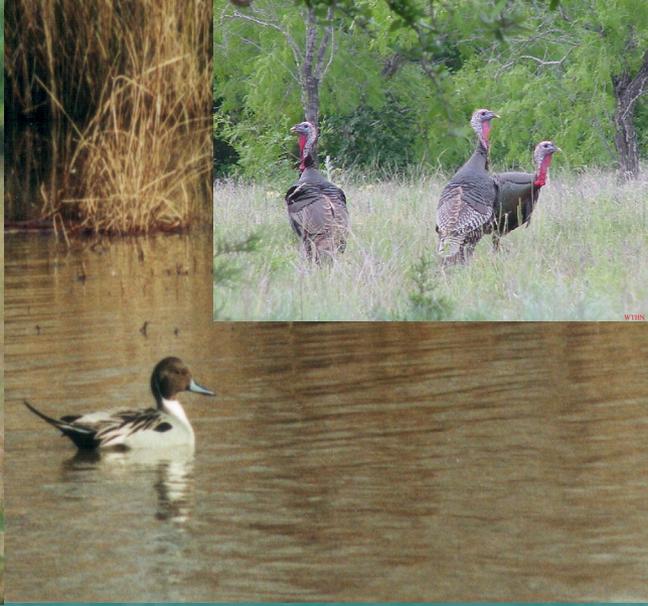
**Thank You**



# Wildlife Advisory Commission

## November 19, 2025

Wildlife & Heritage Service  
Regional Ops Program



*Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
Wildlife and Heritage Service*



# Regional Operations Program

## Land Management

Fishing Bay  
Wildlife Management Area



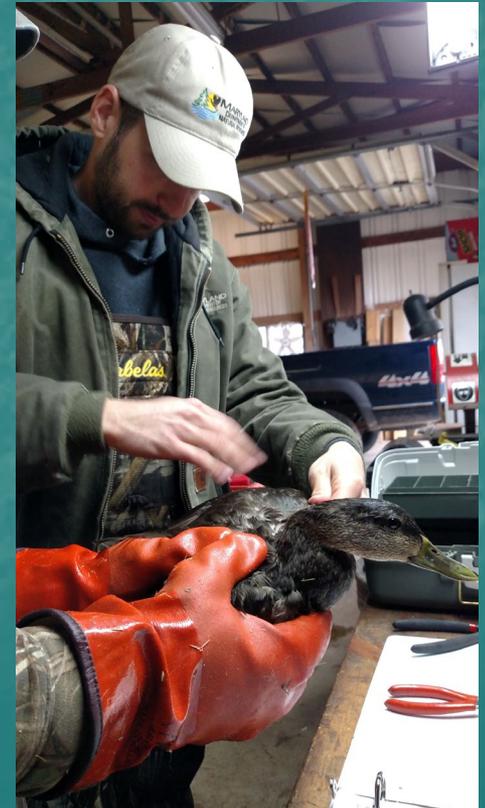
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES



## Wildlife Response



## Research / Monitoring



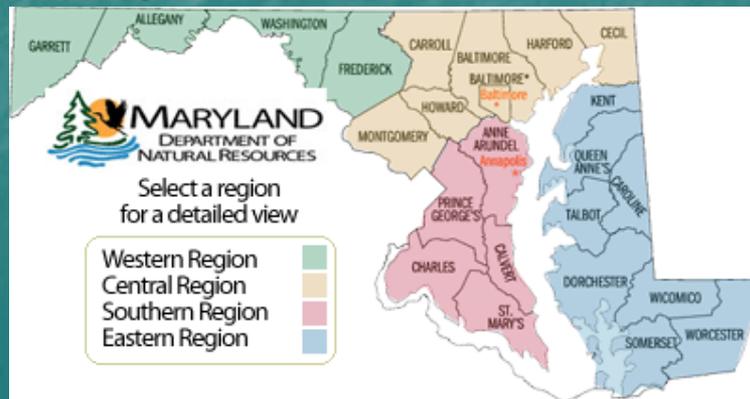
# Regional Operations Program

Largest Program in WHS -

Recent tally accounted for nearly 1/2 of all WHS employees:  
(49 out of 103 total, with 7 vacancies);

Staff organized administratively into four DNR  
Regions –

Work daily out of 13 different offices statewide;

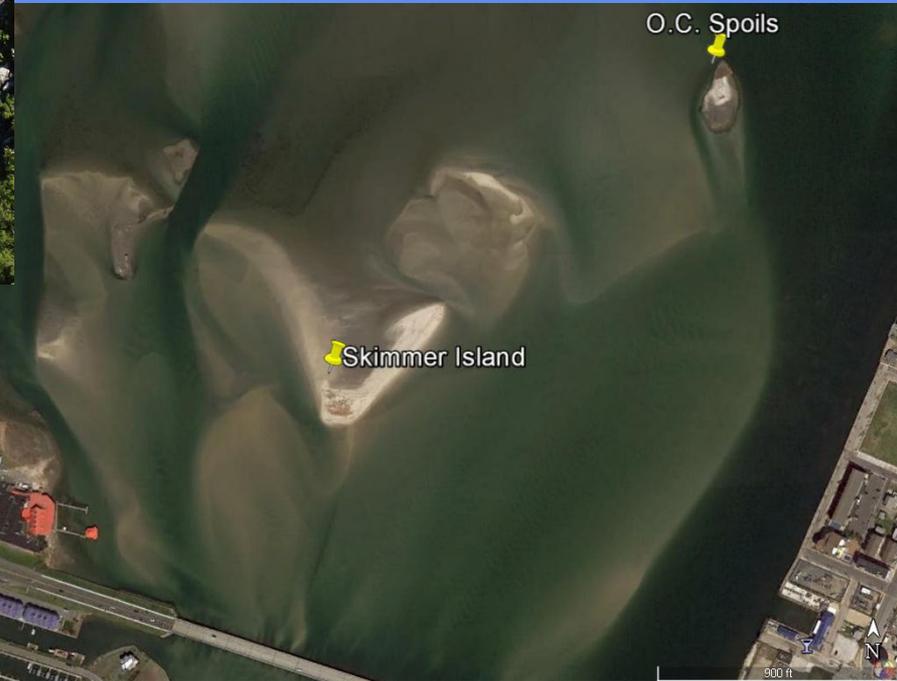


# Land Management

- Private Lands:
  - Habitat management / technical assistance;
- Public Lands:
  - 65 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's);
  - Located in 22 of 23 counties (missing?);
  - Range in size from around 1-acre to 30,000+ acres;
  - Total approximately 128,600 acres statewide;



# WMA's



# WMA's

- What do we do?
  - Manage properties to provide public hunting / wildlife dependent recreational opportunities, caring for and enhancing quality natural areas, for the long-term benefit of many species.



Protect...



# Restore...



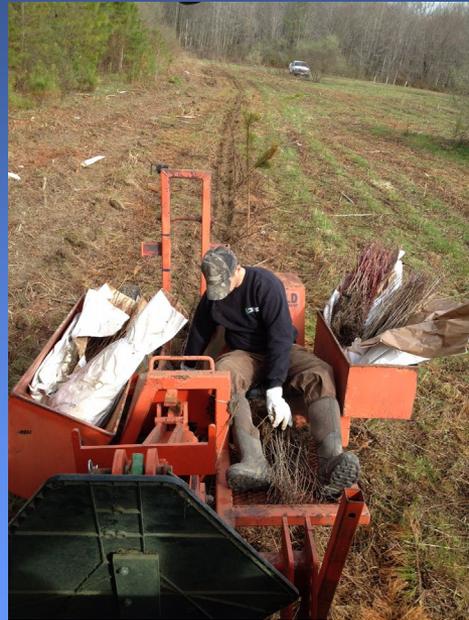
# Enhance...



# Modify...



# Using many different tools...



99% of our constituents are great fans and very appreciative, but ...



# Wildlife Response

- Activities / projects through which we provide technical assistance to citizens having animal concerns or experiencing animal issues.
  - Phone calls;
  - USDA Hotline: 1-877-463-6497;
  - Customer service email responses;
  - Social media posts;
  - Community group meetings or training workshops;

# Wildlife Response

- Animals in duress:



# Wildlife Response

- Reports of sick or incapacitated animals:



# Wildlife Response

- Human health concerns:



# Wildlife Response

- In 2024, WHS staff reported responding to approximately 1,260 reported wildlife issues.
- 635 incidents involved deer; and 118 incidents involved bears. About 17% of the cases (n=210) were handled after normal business hours.



# Wildlife Response

- Animal damage to crops / livestock:



# Deer Management Permits

- 2024-2025 Statewide DMP stats:
  - 1,967 permits issued;
  - Authorized the harvest of 37,500+ deer;
  - 11,501 deer reported harvested (31%);
  - 13,951 “agents” listed on the permits;
  - 2,781 “agents” reported harvests (20%);



# Research & Monitoring

- ◆ Regional Operations staff provide assistance to other programs with the implementation of research and monitoring projects;
- ◆ Data / sample quotas are often required from each county, or other study region: geographic distribution aids in developing statewide assessments / decisions;

# Research & Monitoring

- ◆ Annual statewide projects include deer data collection, pre-season duck, dove, and resident goose banding;





# Research & Monitoring

- ◆ Other projects are more localized such as the work on bears or wintering waterfowl;



# New Initiatives?

- Habitat improvement opportunities:



# New Initiatives?

- Habitat improvement opportunities:



# New Initiatives?

- Improved infrastructure



# New Initiatives?

- More land?



# Questions?



**2026 WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
ANNUAL SCHEDULE AND DRAFT MONTHLY AGENDA**

**JANUARY 21, 2026 - VIRTUAL**

- Annual Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair (Group)
- 2026-2028 Hunting Regulations Concepts Update (Brian Eyler)
- Proposed Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits (Josh Homyack)
- 2026 Legislative Session Update (Brian Eyler)

**FEBRUARY 18, 2026 - VIRTUAL**

- 2026 Legislative Session Update (Brian Eyler)
- 2026-2028 Hunting Regulations Concepts Update (Brian Eyler)

**MARCH 18, 2026 – IN PERSON**

- 2026-2028 Hunting Regulation Proposals – Commission’s Vote Required (Brian Eyler)
- Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee Report (Josh Homyack)
- Migratory Game Bird Proposals – Commission’s Vote Required (Josh Homyack)
- 2026 Legislative Session Update (Brian Eyler)
- Call for Conservationist, Employee, and Farmer of the Year Nominations (Group Discussion)

**APRIL 15, 2026 - VIRTUAL**

- 2026 Legislative Session Outcome (Brian Eyler)
- WAC Legislative Concepts Review (Group Discussion)
- Outreach and Community Engagement Program Update (Chris Markin)

**MAY 20, 2026- NO MEETING SCHEDULED****JUNE 17, 2026 – VIRTUAL**

- Game Program Update (Brian Eyler)
- September 16, 2026, WAC Meeting Discussion (Group Discussion)

**JULY 15, 2026 - NO MEETING SCHEDULED****AUGUST 19, 2026 - VIRTUAL**

- Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee (Gwen Brewer)
- Natural Heritage Program Update (Gwen Brewer)

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2026 – NO MEETING OR IN PERSON OR VIRTUAL****OCTOBER 21, 2026 - VIRTUAL**

- WHS Regional Operations Program Update (John Moulis)
- Waterfowl Population Update (Josh Homyack)

**NOVEMBER 18, 2026 – IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL**

- Presentation of the 2025 Conservationist of the Year Award
- WHS Administration Update (Kristen Fleming)
- 2027 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda – WAC Review

**DECEMBER 16, 2026 – NO MEETING SCHEDULED**