



Conservation Impact Plan





North Carolina

wildlife and





North Carolina is a special state filled with a diversity of wildlife and vibrant natural places. From the highest mountain peaks on the East Coast to the one-of-a-kind Outer Banks and everywhere in between, there is no place quite like North Carolina, particularly when it comes to wildlife and ecosystems.

North Carolina has the highest diversity of salamanders in the world. The Southern Appalachians alone are home to nearly four dozen different species. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park — the most visited national park in the country, due in part to its elk population — is known worldwide.

Black bears roam the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula in numbers higher than anywhere else in the world. Wildlife from the smallest and rarest of all North American turtles, the bog turtle, and the largest amphibian in North America, the endangered Eastern hellbender, call North Carolina home.

North Carolina is the northernmost state for species such as the American alligator and the river frog, and the southernmost state for wildlife such as Wehrle's salamander and the Southern ravine salamander.

habitat *make the state unique*

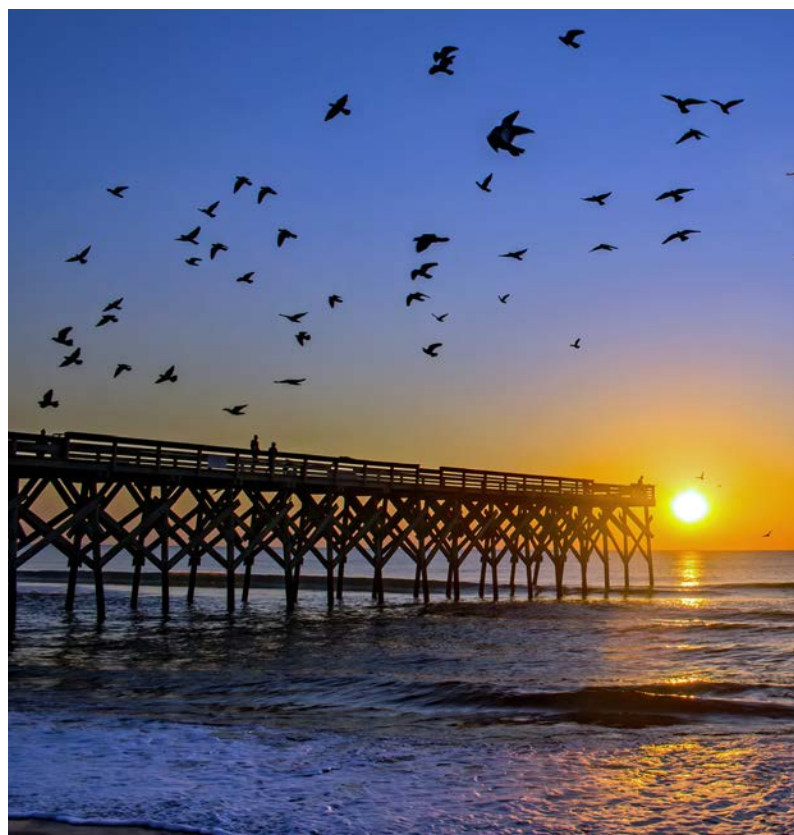


Nowhere else in the world will you find wild red wolves other than in North Carolina. The last remaining wild population roams the Albemarle Peninsula. Also called the “Yellowstone of the East,” the Albemarle Peninsula is migration ground for tens of thousands of snow geese and tundra swans that migrate from their breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska to over-winter.

No other state on the east coast has an estuarine ecosystem quite like that in North Carolina. It is also the second largest in the country and has some of the most diverse marine life on the entire east coast. Eastern North Carolina also counts rare carnivorous plants such as the Venus flytrap, found only within a 50-mile radius of Wilmington. Ancient bald cypress forests on The Black River in southeastern North Carolina hold root to some of the world's oldest living trees documented at thousands of years old.

Not only are these special wildlife, plants, and places valuable to the diversity and ecological services provided by the state, but they combine as a powerful economic engine. Outdoor recreation creates \$11.8 billion in added value for North Carolina and supports over 130,000 jobs. Mountain trout fishing alone contributes over \$1 billion annually to the state's economy.

North Carolina wildlife and habitats



face serious threats

Twenty-first century threats to our environment — including invasive species, diseases, habitat loss, pollution, and a warming climate — are putting wildlife populations at great risk around the world and right here in North Carolina.

North Carolina's rapid population growth, with an average of 100,000 new residents per year, is destroying, degrading, and fragmenting land for wildlife, causing many risks to their survival. Vehicle-wildlife collisions kill more than a million animals each day on roadways across America, including the approximate 80,000 miles of state-maintained highways in North Carolina. Development is causing a loss of 5.5 million acres of forested land by 2040. North Carolina is also losing farmland to development, ranking 2nd worst in the country.

Habitat and wildlife declines are also occurring in NC's estuarine waters. Large-scale shrimp trawling destroys sea grass beds and kills millions of juvenile fish before they have a chance to spawn. For every pound of shrimp caught, four pounds of bycatch (dead fish) are thrown overboard. Surprisingly, North Carolina is the only state on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts that still allows this large-scale shrimp trawling in its sounds and estuaries.

Many North Carolina freshwater streams run coffee-like thick with sedimentation and runoff from development and poor agricultural practices upstream, choking aquatic wildlife and plants. Wetland loss in North Carolina tops the list among other states, increasing the risk of flooding and freshwater contamination, particularly in urban areas.

Climate change exacerbates the impacts of habitat loss, making North Carolina one of the most vulnerable states to flooding and hurricanes in the country.



North Carolina Wildlife Federation is



the voice for wildlife in North Carolina

Founded in 1945, NCWF was and still is rooted in science-based conservation by hunters and anglers to promote and improve wildlife and fishing conditions in North Carolina. Today, grounded by our roots, we are an all-encompassing and consensus-oriented federation for all wildlife and outdoor interests. NCWF pairs sporting issues with air, water, and land protection for birders, nature observers, and paddling and hiking enthusiasts alike. Our efforts are aimed at fundamental changes in policies, processes, relationships, and power structures that would damage our natural heritage and impair quality of life for all North Carolinians.



One of our key strengths has always been our ability to collaborate with diverse conservation stakeholders and rally multiple voices toward solutions for wildlife. We do not express our propensity for collaboration in the spirit of flaunting our strengths, but in demonstrating a realization of the conservation work that requires dedicated and united efforts.

NCWF believes the proof is in the pudding and points to its work for the restoration or reintroductions of iconic species including river otter, bald eagle, elk, turkey, white-tailed deer, red wolf, and osprey. No opposition or special interest is too intimidating for NCWF.

Reducing wildlife and habitat declines in NC is complicated and by no means an easy task. NCWF's approach is unique. We're the only state-based conservation organization working for NC wildlife by pushing for science-based conservation policy and restoring habitat in NC communities with thousands of volunteers annually. Often, conservation organizations are either policy or volunteer oriented. Fortunately, NCWF embraces both qualities, contributing to our commitment and effectiveness.

NCWF's top-notch team of policy experts, government affairs specialists, and lobbyists ensure wildlife interests are vocalized and advocated for in the General Assembly, both with our Congressional delegation and within the regulatory realm of our natural resource agencies.

NCWF champions the public trust resources of NC — and we champion them all. We remind decision-makers of their duties to uphold the laws that protect natural resources. The Public Trust Doctrine is the keystone legal component of fish and wildlife conservation.

NCWF works to ensure the commercialization of wildlife resources doesn't permeate North Carolina. We work for investments in water and land infrastructures and for conservation that pays a hefty dividend on returns.

Who we are and how we operate

OUR MISSION

To protect, conserve, and restore North Carolina wildlife and habitat for all.

OUR VISION

A North Carolina with healthy and diverse habitats and wildlife valued by all people and sustained for future generations.

OUR VALUES

Science-based decision making

Non-partisan approach to policy

Inclusive of broad interests and perspectives

Collaborative with diverse organizations and individuals

Committed to solutions and impact





How NCWF Works

The two key words in our mission are **wildlife** and **habitat**. They are inextricably linked as there can't be one without the other. To protect, conserve, and restore wildlife and habitat, there must be representation and recognition of issues and solutions at the policy level, a critical majority dedicated to ensuring wildlife and habitat are not taken for granted, and a cohesive network of community-based organizations working for wildlife and habitat conservation.



POLICY AND ADVOCACY

NCWF strongly influences local, state, and federal policy that affects wildlife and habitat in North Carolina using science-based, established conservation models to guide our positions.

EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

NCWF enhances and expands opportunities for youth and adults that foster awareness and appreciation of wildlife in North Carolina and the importance of biodiversity for healthy habitat and humanity.

COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION

NCWF restores habitat in North Carolina communities through cleanups and plantings in partnership with NCWF Wildlife Chapters and volunteers and organize community members to connect with nature through outdoor experiences.







Strategic Goals



WILDLIFE

Protect, conserve, and restore diverse sustainable fish and wildlife populations in North Carolina.

HABITAT

Protect, conserve, restore, and connect habitat for fish and wildlife.

PEOPLE

Mobilize people and communities to achieve local and statewide wildlife and habitat goals.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Build and maintain an internal infrastructure that grows organizational capacity, impact, resiliency, and sustainability.

Wildlife Goal

Protect, conserve, and restore diverse, sustainable fish and wildlife populations.

KEY CONCEPTS

Focus on improving populations of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), creating sustainable fisheries, habitat connectivity and safe passage for wildlife, and addressing disease threats.





OUR STRATEGIES

Target imperiled NC wildlife and their habitats to prevent extinction by:

- ▶ Focusing on species identified and recognized as needing conservation measures by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) and Federal Agencies. The NC General Statute refers to this list as the “Protected Animal List”.
- ▶ Using NC’s Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) and federal resource agencies’ designated species lists and guidance documents as comprehensive planning tools developed to conserve and enhance fish species of highest priority and wildlife species and habitats.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Secure annual, dedicated funding through Recovering America’s Wildlife Act to fully implement state wildlife action plans.

Sustain marine species through:

- ▶ Habitat: Strengthen protection of the ecosystems that comprise NC’s estuary and broader coastal system.
- ▶ Management: Improve the way NC’s marine fisheries and habitats are managed and regulated.
- ▶ Gear: Stop use of destructive fishing gear and unsustainable harvest methods.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Ban the use of otter trawling for the taking of shrimp in estuarine waters.
- ▶ Reform coastal fishing licenses; Define and codify commercial fishing licenses.
- ▶ Consolidate NC Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) into the NCWRC so marine resources are scientifically managed for sustainability by one agency.

Provide safe passage for fish and wildlife by increasing aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity by:

- ▶ Reducing wildlife mortality on roads through wildlife crossings and education.
- ▶ Increasing fish and aquatic connectivity through dam removals and bottomless culvert replacements statewide in alignment with NCWRC and NC Department of Transportation (DOT).
- ▶ Establishing a model and best practices through an inter-agency and non-governmental organizations (NGO) coalition in the Pigeon River Gorge.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Codify agency cooperation between DOT and NCWRC.
- ▶ Secure funding appropriations to match federal infrastructure investments to fund projects that increase habitat connectivity.

Reduce current and emerging threats to wildlife from disease, toxins, and invasive species by:

- ▶ Promoting science-based policies and practices that reduce negative impacts of wildlife diseases.
- ▶ Removal of known wildlife toxins from the environment.
- ▶ Management of invasive animal species.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Advocate for policies to better regulate, manage, and enforce sale, removal, and transport of native and invasive species.
- ▶ Strengthen regulatory oversight of agencies tasked with managing free-ranging wildlife, commercial animal production, and regulatory enforcement.
- ▶ Advocate for alternatives to lead in ammunition and angling tackle.
- ▶ Secure funding for natural resource agencies to implement national, state, and local policies to manage and regulate invasive animal species.

Habitat Goal

Protect, conserve, restore, and connect habitat for fish and wildlife.

KEY CONCEPTS

Actively restore and reconnect fragmented, imperiled, and degraded aquatic and terrestrial habitats across protected public lands, private working lands, and waterways (trust resources).

Defend public trust resources (public lands, waterways, and wildlife [on private lands]).

Control/manage habitat-degrading invasive plant species.





OUR STRATEGIES

Protect and restore the natural function and quality of the state's waters, wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Advocate for stream buffers and access impacting designated trout waters.
- ▶ Reduce lead use on federal wildlife refuges.
- ▶ Increase dedicated annual funding for the NC Land and Water Fund.
- ▶ Increase funding for the NC Flood Mitigation Fund.
- ▶ Secure, through the federal budget and appropriations process, funding for robust programs to sustain the safeguards that protect wetlands, headwaters, and riparian areas in the Clean Water Act and the Farm Bill.
- ▶ Defend and strengthen regulation of sedimentation/storm water pollution discharge and control laws.
- ▶ Defend waterways as public trust resources.

Improve wildlife habitat on privately held lands across the state.

- ▶ Secure sufficient resources to enable resource management agencies — federal, regional, and state — and their partners to engage in proactive, collaborative, landscape-scale conservation efforts.
- ▶ Promote a full range of voluntary incentives and cost-share programs available to landowners that benefit habitat.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Re-establish NC Conservation Tax Credit.
- ▶ Increase NC Land and Water Fund.
- ▶ Expansion and funding of Farm Bill conservation title programs and policies, Heirs Property, and Farmland Preservation Fund.
- ▶ Advance various current and developing bills related to energy exploration that limit negative impact on wildlife habitat.

Advance public ownership of, and access to, public lands and waters.

- ▶ Expand and connect protected areas to sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations and to allow for seasonal migrations and climate-driven range shifts.
- ▶ Defend public interests on public lands (resource-based recreation and access).
- ▶ Support and work for new protected lands by expansion of the Roanoke River, Pocosin Lakes, and Southern Appalachian Bog National Wildlife Refuges.
- ▶ Advocate for wildlife conservation in management decisions/policies on state and federal public lands.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Robust funding of NC Land and Water Fund and NC State Park Fund.
- ▶ Secure funding for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- ▶ Ensure wildlife is defended in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes.

Advocate for national, state, and local legislation and policies to manage and regulate invasive species for the benefit of native species diversity.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Pass into law the NC Native Plant Act.
- ▶ Increase species codified on NC Noxious Plant List to Ban the Transport and Sale of Non-native Invasive Plants.

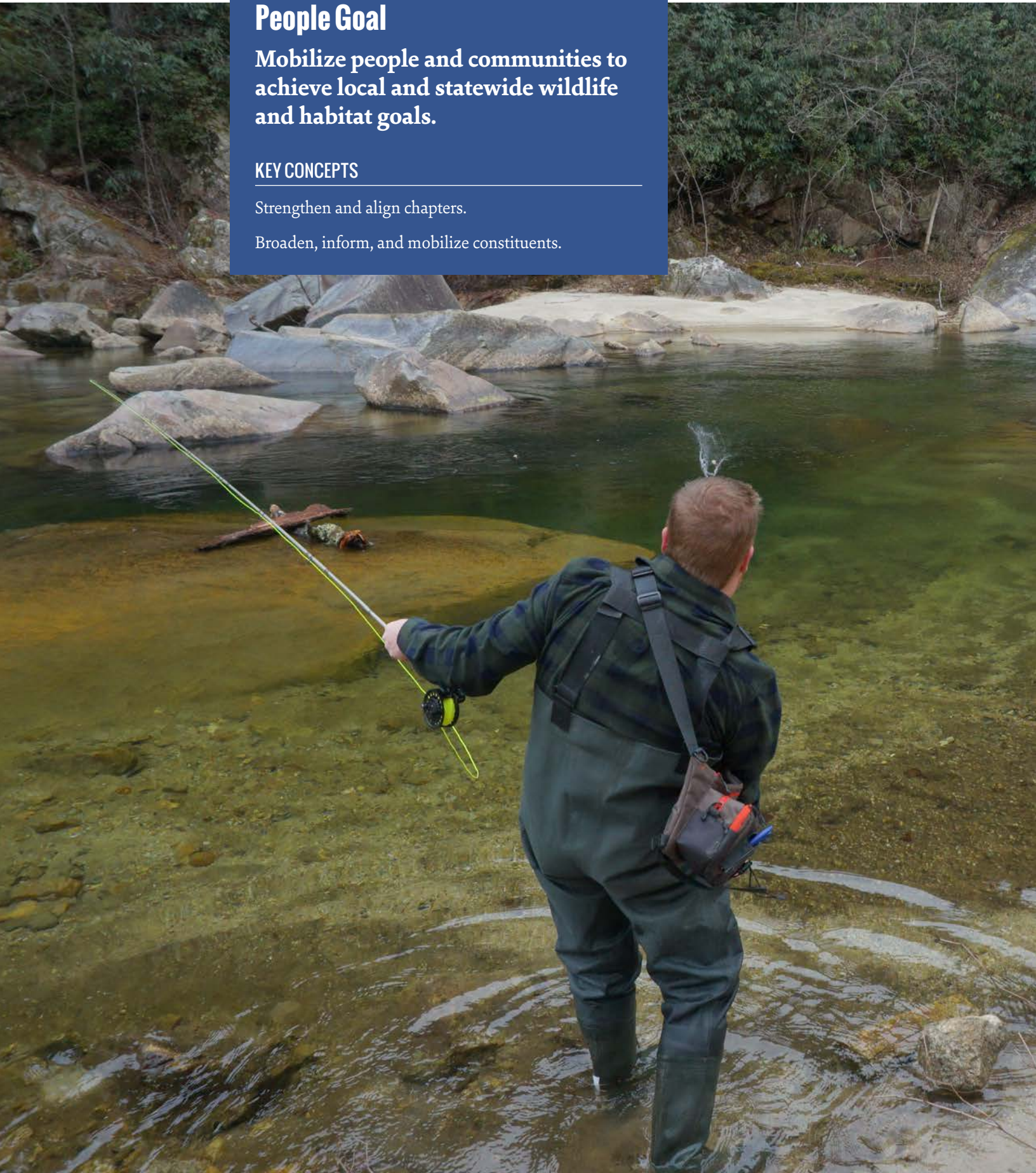
People Goal

Mobilize people and communities to achieve local and statewide wildlife and habitat goals.

KEY CONCEPTS

Strengthen and align chapters.

Broaden, inform, and mobilize constituents.





OUR STRATEGIES

Strengthen, empower, and align the chapter network with the strategic plan.

- ▶ Identify geographic gaps in members, donors and chapters and overlay with wildlife and habitat needs and under-resourced communities for new chapter development.
- ▶ Develop and disseminate a menu of chapter initiatives that align with NCWF priorities and are supported by staff and outreach materials.
- ▶ Develop and implement a chapter training plan that includes a manual, mentorship, and training (policy, fundraising, etc.).
- ▶ Develop and implement a structure to support chapter leaders and inspire sustainable leadership

Inspire and grow the next generation of conservationists.

- ▶ Grow youth engagement statewide through alignment with chapters and partners through year-round outings.
- ▶ Increase award amounts through the Scholarship program to support tuition expenses for selected students and young conservationists attending a NC accredited college or university.
- ▶ Celebrate youth conservationists at awards banquet and through photo contest.

Broaden and diversify constituency.

- ▶ Refresh affiliate program to activate organizations and align with strategic plan.
- ▶ Expand collaborative partnerships to achieve common goals.
- ▶ Partner with NC American Indian Tribes to leverage their conservation goals.
- ▶ Grow Habitat Steward Trainings to activate volunteers and community conservation through education.
- ▶ Create a Habitat Stewards Training committee to develop a training template based on community conservation needs and volunteer feedback.

Infrastructure Goal

Build and maintain an internal infrastructure that grows organizational capacity, impact, resiliency, and sustainability.

KEY CONCEPTS

Invest in resources that support an effective, informed, and motivated Board and staff.

Develop and execute plans to ensure sustainable funding and impactful communications.





OUR STRATEGIES

Build an engaged, diverse, and philanthropic Board.

- ▶ Adopt board recruitment and development policy and procedures to enhance board qualifications and ensure an informed, engaged, and accountable board.

Develop and implement a multi-year comprehensive fundraising program to fund the strategic plan.

- ▶ Create case statement in alignment with strategic plan to inspire 6-figure gifts.
- ▶ Activate an ad-hoc development committee made up of board members and philanthropic leaders.
- ▶ Expand and implement tailored donor steward programs to deepen relationships and engage donors in ways that are valuable to them.
- ▶ Develop and implement a robust corporate sponsorship program.

Increase awareness, engagement, revenue through an integrated and strategic communications plan.

- ▶ Conduct communications and branding audit to ensure alignment across all chapters and programs.
- ▶ Grow opportunities for member, donor and partner engagement and education through webinars and field experiences.
- ▶ Launch action alert system and plan that engages NC voters to advocate for conservation policies and management practices.
- ▶ Strengthen and expand relationships with strategic media partners, journalists, and influencers.
- ▶ Create a branding and messaging manual to ensure consistency among local communities, organizations, and partners.

Establish organizational policies and best practices to ensure strong internal communications and collaboration, efficiency, staff retention, and staff empowerment.

- ▶ Identify priority staff functions and build a leadership team responsible for executing the strategic plan.
- ▶ Conduct a compensation and benefits analysis.
- ▶ Evaluate staff capacity against workload and make necessary adjustments to titles, roles, organizational chart, and contracted services.
- ▶ Collect outcomes quarterly to assess impact, evaluate program structure and effectiveness, and review alignment with strategic plan.

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NCWF spends 4 out of every
5 dollars on programming

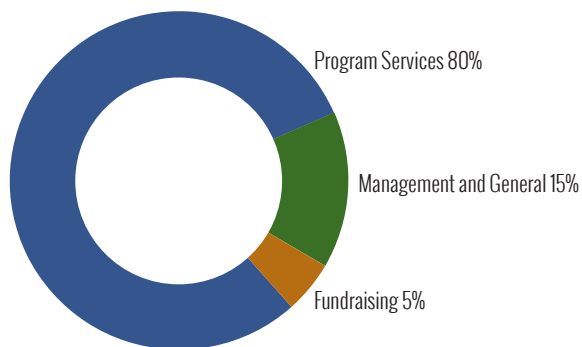


PHOTO CREDITS

COVER

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Raccoons-Christopher Austin

PAGES 4-5

Doe-Amber Parler
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Lighthouse-Ginger Barger

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Cardinal-Rohan Yadav

