

Review of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

WHEREAS, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) interacts with many Virginians each year through its natural resource service, conservation, and enforcement responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, DGIF issues hunting and recreational fishing licenses, and administers all titles and registrations of recreational boats in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, DGIF owns and maintains over 200,000 acres of land across the state, including nearly 6,000 acres acquired over the past two years; and

WHEREAS, DGIF employs approximately 450 full-time-equivalent staff, including 160 conservation police officers who are vested with similar law-enforcement authority as sheriffs and other law-enforcement officers in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, DGIF was appropriated \$63 million in FY18 from entirely non-general fund revenue sources, including revenue from the sales of hunting and fishing licenses, federal funds, and a portion of the sales and use tax derived from watercraft and outdoor-related goods and equipment; and

WHEREAS, DGIF retains substantial end-of-year fund balances; and

WHEREAS, DGIF relocated its headquarters to Henrico County in 2015 after initial plans to relocate to Hanover County were unsuccessful; and

WHEREAS, in its 1996 report, *Feasibility of Consolidating Virginia's Wildlife Resource Functions*, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission determined that overlap existed and consolidation could be considered among DGIF and other state agencies with natural resource missions, including the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and

WHEREAS, DGIF is overseen by the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries, which is a supervisory board responsible for, among other things, appointing the director; acquiring public lands; managing game bird, game animal, fish and other wildlife populations in the Commonwealth; establishing and revising various fees, including fees charged for hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the operations, performance, and management of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. In conducting its study, staff shall (i) determine whether DGIF's revenue sources, including balances retained at year end, are appropriate to support its mission; (ii) evaluate the effectiveness of DGIF's customer service operations, including the use of technology in customer-facing operations; (iii) examine DGIF's land acquisitions; (iv) examine the powers and authorities of conservation police officers; (v) assess the organizational structure DGIF uses for its conservation police officer force; (vi)

determine whether efficiencies could be gained by consolidating DGIF's functions and those of other agencies with similar missions; (vii) evaluate the role of and representation on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries; (viii) compare how Virginia organizes DGIF functions to how other states organize their functions; (ix) make recommendations as necessary; and (x) review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Department of Planning and Budget shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of state agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia, including all documents related to proceedings or actions of the board. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to this statutory authority.

JLARC staff shall complete their work and submit a report of findings and recommendations to the Commission by December 10, 2019.