

Recommendations and Options: Operation and Performance of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

RECOMMENDATION 1

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending §29.1-200.B of the Code of Virginia to exempt the colonel position from the requirement to make a written determination that a sufficient pool of candidates does not exist within the department. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should appoint a colonel to lead the conservation police force no later than September 30, 2020. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should develop and implement a conservation police officer leadership development program to ensure it has enough qualified staff to fill vacant leadership positions. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should revise its conservation police force promotion process to incorporate a written examination to provide additional, objective information that will inform promotion decisions and ensure promotion decisions are based on merit. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should develop a non-supervisory career path for conservation police officers by creating a career ladder within the conservation police officer position. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should assess the feasibility and value of supplementing field training for CPOs to ensure new officers gain experience in each relevant enforcement season while under the supervision of a field training officer. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should conduct additional training and provide written guidance as needed to ensure all conservation police officers have a consistent understanding of which enforcement actions are most appropriate for given violations. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should annually analyze enforcement action data for each conservation police officer to identify officers who may need additional guidance or training on which enforcement actions are most appropriate for given violations (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should schedule a mock assessment by a certified Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission assessor 6 to 12 months before its formal accreditation assessment to assess progress towards accreditation requirements and ensure accreditation. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 10

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending §29.1-102.A of the Code of Virginia to require that at least one member of the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries be a current or former senior law enforcement official. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should adhere to its land acquisition process and seek approval from the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries before making any deviation from the process. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should strengthen its land acquisition process by providing guidance to field staff on how to assign ratings for each criteria when conducting the field review for potential properties. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries should direct the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to develop an updated land acquisition strategy that articulates the type of land it wishes to prioritize, the regions of the state where land is most needed, and how it will adequately maintain land acquired. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission should apply the same coordination approach used during holidays or large events to their regular patrol activities in the Tidewater region to ensure boats are not inspected by both police forces within a short period of time. (Chapter 5)

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission should revise as necessary their memorandum of understanding governing response to boat accidents in the Tidewater region and ensure its officers adhere to its protocols. (Chapter 5)

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should develop and implement a plan to gain the confidence of agency staff through (i) continued outreach to identify staff concerns, (ii) actions to meaningfully address staff concerns, and (iii) improved communication with staff about agency operations and major decisions affecting staff. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries should administer and assess the results of a survey of Department of Game and Inland Fisheries staff in 2021 to determine the level of staff confidence in the senior leadership team. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries should set a deadline by which the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should implement the measures necessary to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of its office of human resources. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should identify and implement practical, immediate solutions to help ensure its staff can access the information technology and systems necessary to be fully efficient and effective in their jobs. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should undertake a meaningful strategic planning effort that articulates (i) the agency's most substantial challenges; (ii) realistic strategies to effectively address those challenges; and (iii) the changes the agency will make to its revenue base, programs, and staffing to implement the strategies. (Chapter 6)

OPTION 1

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries could increase fees to register boats and use the additional revenue as needed to address future revenue shortfalls. (Chapter 2)

OPTION 2

The General Assembly could include language in the Appropriation Act granting the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries temporary authority to increase boat registration fees by more than the \$5 every three years specified in §29.1-701.1 of the Code of Virginia. (Chapter 2)

OPTION 3

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries could develop and implement web-based software that asks users what activities they wish to undertake and then suggests the various licenses, permits, or stamps they need. (Chapter 2)

OPTION 4

The General Assembly could amend §29.1-301 of the Code of Virginia to authorize the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries to charge exempt hunters and anglers a nominal registration fee of several dollars, thereby allowing Virginia to claim forgone federal revenue. (Chapter 2)

OPTION 5

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries could place more emphasis on its non-game species management by consolidating non-game species staff into a single division managed by a supervisor who reports to the deputy director. (Chapter 4)

OPTION 6

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries could place more emphasis on non-game species management activities by creating a committee to specifically focus on and oversee non-game species management activities. (Chapter 4)

OPTION 7

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission could create a workgroup to (i) assess how frequently boats are inspected by both police forces and (ii) coordinate their officer dispatch and other systems as necessary to allow officers on patrol to know which boats have already been inspected. (Chapter 5)
