

Georgia R3 Action Plan

Strategies for Recruiting, Retaining, and Reactivating
Hunters, Anglers and Target Shooters
Summer 2023



2023 Version

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KEY TERMS/ACRONYMS

AFWA: Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

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

CAHSS: Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports

DJ: Dingle Johnson- Federatil Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950

DU: Ducks Unlimited

GADNR-WRD: Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Resources Division

GASCI: Georgia Chapter of Safari Club International

Generation Z: Anyone born after 1997

GR3I: Georgia R3 Initiative-Collaboration of wildlife conservation organizations in GA

GR3I Steering Committee: Representatives of organizations with financial and time commitments in support of the GR3I, guiding and influencing the state R3 efforts

GWF: Georgia Wildlife Federation

Industry: For profit organizations who support hunting, angling 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 late 1990s

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

NWTF: National Wild Turkey Federation

ORAM: Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model

PR: Pittman-Robertson - Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937

R3: Recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunting and shooting sports participants

RBFF: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

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

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, wildlife and aquatic natural resource conservation funding stems primarily from the 1937 and 1950 Wildlife and Sport Fishing Restoration Acts. Funding for state-level conservation efforts is generated through the Federal excise tax on the equipment of hunters, anglers, target shooters and boaters. Decreased participation in these activities in the latter decades of the 20th century causes concerns over the sustainability of the conservation funding model. In response, industry, state agencies and non-profit organizations enhanced efforts to reverse negative participation trends.

Success varied nationally by recreational activity with various efforts, societal pressures and barriers differing among recreational activity and local. In 2016, leaders in the conservation community came together to publish national R3 plans (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) providing strategies and specific tools to improve the success of R3 efforts. The Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) released the *National Hunting & Shooting Sports Action Plan* (hereafter, “national plan”) prioritizing actions for increasing support and participation in hunting and shooting sports¹. Aquatic Resources Education Association (AREA) and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) released *Recommendations and Strategic Tools for Effective Angler R3 Efforts* in effort to stabilize interest in fishing.

The Georgia R3 Initiative (GR3I) established in December 2015 with the hiring of the first truly cooperative R3 Coordinator in the United States under the direction of the *National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan*. The position is housed within the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF), with additional sponsorship provided by Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division (GADNR-WRD), Georgia Chapter of Safari Club International (GASCI), Ducks Unlimited (DU), and National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF). While these five partners are the main players, the GR3I as a whole encompasses all stakeholders from agencies, NGOs, and industry with a vested interest in the future of hunting, angling and the shooting sports.

CURRENT STANDING

The objectives set forth are broad and will be challenging to achieve. To understand the actions needed to accomplish these objectives first requires an understanding of the current standing of the recreations and R3 efforts in Georgia, as well as what previous R3 research has shown. Highlights from the literature review and summaries of strategy status are incorporated in the [Changes and Updates Table](http://gwf.org/r3) at gwf.org/r3. This plan is regularly evolving and currently lacks an associated Work Plan necessary to ensure implementation and accountability.

PLAN OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To diversify and increase participation in hunting, fishing and shooting sports
- 2) To increase societal approval of hunting and shooting sports

STRATEGIES:

Strategy 1: Improve cooperation, direction and resources among and for R3 partners

Strategy 2: Improve societal support of hunting and target shooting

Strategy 3: Reduce lapse in participation (churn rate)

Strategy 4: Improve access to hunting, fishing and shooting areas

Strategy 5: Add evaluation and outcome tracking to all programs

Strategy 6: Redefine target audiences

Strategy 7: Improve pathways and support systems

Strategy 8: Increase Fish and Wildlife Relevancy to broader constituents

[Table of Strategies and Associated Actions](#) found at gwf.org/r3

ASSOCIATED ACTIONS AND TASKS:

<p>Strategy 1: Improve cooperation and direction among R3 partners</p> <p>Action 1.1: <i>Maintain a statewide GA R3 Initiative influence.</i></p> <p>Implementation: Cooperative funding from all</p> <p>Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund a R3 Coordinator• Fund a R3 Team• Expand Community Partner Roles• Serve community stakeholders on the design, implementation, and evaluation of R3 strategies and programs.• Facilitate stakeholder partnerships• Maintain presence and contribute to state, regional, and national meetings.
<p>Action 1.2: <i>Maintain the statewide R3 Action Plan</i></p> <p>Implementation: Georgia R3 Initiative</p> <p>Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drive innovative and dynamic action• Maintain a record of state R3 achievements and challenges• Maintain a SMART work plan to facilitate progress on agreed upon Action Plan• Utilize Summit meetings to request community feedback and share progress on plans

- Ensure strategies are up-to-date
- R3 Coordinator contributes to all efforts

Action 1.3: *Host the annual Georgia R3 Summit for agency, NGO, industry and other stakeholders.*

Implementation: Georgia R3 Initiative

Tasks:

- Expand the stakeholder base to include more partners
- Disseminate current terminology, information, goals, direction, and successes for R3 in Georgia.
- Request community feedback on plans
- Share state progress on plans
- Encourage implementation of the strategies and evaluation processes detailed in the R3 Action Plan.
- Increase partnerships among R3 stakeholders and remove organizational silos.
- Use the feedback and information about evolving efforts shared at this meeting to keep an annually updated version of this plan which will be hosted on the National R3 Community website and Georgia Wildlife Federation [R3 page](#).

Action 1.4: *Establish a Georgia R3 Grant Program*

Implementation: Georgia R3 Initiative

Tasks:

- Identify a funding source
- Encourage community contribution by awarding financial support
- Require grant proposals or funding requests include integrated evaluation, defined target audiences, and outcome tracking.

Strategy 2: Improve societal support of hunting and target shooting

Action 2.1: *Incorporate conservation and hunting/fishing through community education.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Promote license sales as a conservation tool
 - WRD- Launch Be Georgia Wild Campaign
 - WRD- Understand other state’s large scale education efforts (e.g. Colorado Wildlife Council) and evaluate practicality for GA
- Develop or Identify R3 Educational Modules (any in the STEAM modules? Or mirror off of AA Welcome Presentation?)

- Distribute to accessible groups to offer R3 education modules (e.g., home schooling associations, summer camps, garden clubs, Boy Scouts of America, Georgia Independent School Association) and methods of implementation).
- Include the history of conservation, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, and the role of hunters and shooters in wildlife conservation.
- Consider improving current HE instructor certification system

Action 2.2: *Marketing campaigns for both hunters and non-hunters targeted at increasing positive exposure to and support of hunting and shooting sports.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Include mainstream media on contact lists for hunting and shooting sports events.
- Produce marketing that may include:
 - **Targeting general public:** Mainstream video clips, commercials, and social media campaigns to increase awareness of the benefits of hunting and shooting.
 - **Targeting hunters:** Articles and media blasts aimed at hunters to educate them on how conservation is funded, advocate for the responsible use of public lands by hunters and shooters, and encourage understanding of nontraditional demographics to create a more inclusive culture.
- Improve media relations efforts

Action 2.3: *Engage and support educational shooting programs*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Recognize when a program is fostering shooting sport participation and when it is fostering a “gateway to hunting.” Both programs have merits and the distinctions need to be recognized, understood and evaluated. Refer to additional actions.
- Support shotgun, archery and rifle programs in school systems and at public and private ranges

Strategy 3: Reduce lapse in participation (churn rate)

Action 3.1: *Identify what assistance lapsed Georgia hunters need in order to continue hunting on yearly basis.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Conduct GA focus groups made up of lapsed hunters to identify what actions (not already included in this plan) may serve to mitigate lapse in the future.

Action 3.2: *Implement national retention strategies for high lapse in participation in women*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Map all existing programs for women
- Identify and implement strategies to help women overcome barriers and incorporate strategies to achieve recommended elements

Strategy 4: Improve access to hunting, fishing and shooting areas

Action 4.1: *Increase shooting sports opportunities on public and private land.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Update private/public shooting opportunities map and/or link WRD website to wheretoshoot.org. Identify gaps in access and address.
 - Not listed on hunting homepage
- Increase range marketing.
- Increase awareness and availability of multi-disciplinary ranges to include archery and shotgun ranges.
- Distribute [NSSF Safety/Liability Sheet](#)
- Increase access to and number of available shooting coaches.
- Host (or link to) “Shooting Coach/Shooting Class Locator” tool on the WRD website. (e.g., USA Archery, National Sporting Clays Association, NRA, etc.)
- Support legislation that reduces restrictions on discharge of firearms and archery equipment in urban areas. Support legislation that reduces restrictions on range development and availability of silencers.
- Partner with WRD on range development
- Advertise DNR- PRHSD opportunities in DNR-WRD calendars and vice versa
- Improve access to WRD interactive map as public shooting opportunities is not easily obtained

Action 4.2: *Identify public lands that do not provide adequate hunting and fishing opportunities and work with land managers to allow opportunities or supplement opportunities with additional acreage.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Identify underutilized public land that could offer hunting or fishing opportunities and help them improve access (e.g., UGA and Fort Valley State University’s forestry and agricultural properties; local municipality and county land especially in urban/suburban areas; USFWS Wildlife Refuges).
 - Track efforts
- Enhance Voluntary Public Access program
- Utilize GOSA, federal funds etc. to open up additional public lands for hunting.
- Consider addressing the most common criticism of public land hunting-never knowing when you might stumble upon another hunter
 - Ex: Alabama quota applications have 150 acre “daily blocks”
- There is a need to ensure lands are not crowded by understanding the availability and mobility aspect of access on properties.

Action 4.3: *Promote private hunting opportunities.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Improve awareness and distribution
- Track use
- WRD Publish list of private land hunting opportunities/outfitters/commercial shooting preserve licenses
- Ensure all stakeholders and program participants are aware of existing opportunities (e.g. R3 Dove Field at Clybel Wildlife Management Area)

Strategy 5: Add evaluation and long-term tracking to all programs

Action 5.1: *Communicate trends of hunting and fishing participation metrics to stakeholders*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Regularly update the Dashboard View of Hunting and Fishing Metrics in Georgia to NSSF and Southwick to contribute to national research.
- Provide license sales trends to GA R3 Initiative Community annually at Summit

Action 5.2: *Implement participant tracking into every R3 program.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Use GA DNR-WRD online event system as a marketing resource for all R3 programs as a first step
 - This system will facilitate tracking the license buying behaviors of program participants (via their GA DNR Customer ID#), but system needs improvement.
 - Eventually, encourage all organizations with R3 programs to complete registration for their events through the online event tracking system.
 - Use evaluation of program effectiveness to improve structure and design of R3 programs.
 - Create a database of R3 participants to use for follow up surveys and offer future programs based on their interests.
 - Maintain a master list of programs that have been designated R3.
- Dedicate financial resources to the management of this system and the analysis of the data.

Action 5.3: *Integrate participant surveys into every R3 program.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Electronic, editable templates of pre-, post-, and follow-up questionnaires are available at GWF.org/r3.
- Incorporate specific steps to improve program delivery and content based on the questionnaires to fulfill participant needs.
- Long-term – integrate surveys into the WRD online event system.
- Assess methods of ensuring high questionnaire response rates (especially the follow up 10 to 12 months after the program).

Strategy 6: Redefine target audiences

Action 6.1: *Shift current recruitment programs that target a youth-centered audience to a family-centered audience.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Restructure current youth programs to engage the adults in the family unit which will ultimately facilitate the transportation, financials, and social support needed for youth to continue hunting without the aid of programs.
- Change the title and the terminology used in the program to reflect that it is a family program as opposed to a youth program.

- Assess goals and audience on family-centered programs and ask if you are accomplishing your goals. Coordinate with R3 Coordinator for guidance.

Action 6.2: *Diversify participation in R3 programs*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Intentionally provide programs that overcome specific barriers of underrepresented populations
 - Host events in their communities
 - Invite “Bridge Builders” to foster trust between R3 practitioners and new participants
- Imagery (people of color and women)
- Increase awareness of R3 access and opportunities that may appeal to women recognizing their barriers
- Provide diverse instructors
- Track racial make up in WRD customers
- Market in different languages and recall people may not learn well with text, but do better with imagery (clear regulations)
- Utilize social media influencers to help promote awareness (Ex: My sister’s keeper)

Action 6.3: *Increase opportunities to learn game processing, butchering and meal preparation.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Resources and a complete guide for conducting a program for locavores can be found here: [Locavore.Guide](#).
- Enhance existing learn to hunt opportunities through additional instruction
- Establish skills workshops focusing on the processing and preparation of game meat
- Facilitate partnerships between NGOs and agencies to ensure a spectrum of R3 style programming is being offered (recruit, retain and reactivate) accommodating for different learning needs (skills-based vs weekend long hunt and learns)

Action 6.4: Expand learn to hunt opportunities for adult “first timers”

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Provide resources for college aged audiences as it is an efficient model for reaching diverse non-traditional audiences
 - Maintain [Academics Afield](#)
 - Toolkit published Aug. 2022
- Host first time hunting skills training or one-on-one instruction
- Identify additional methods of reaching non-traditional adults in ages 25-50

Strategy 7: Improve pathways and support systems

Action 7.1: *Create targeted approaches to promote pathways and next-steps.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Provide retention programs
 - Potentially pull participants from the database of people that have previously participated in a recruitment program to provide multiple contact opportunities (pending completion of Action 12).
- Provide reactivation programs that will pull lapsed hunters back into the fold (e.g., college or family friendly programs).
- Provide next steps at the end of every R3 program (e.g., learnhunting.org, information about locations, direct links to other in-person programs in their area).
- Provide self-learning tools at the end of every program (e.g., how-to videos, online information sources, one-to-one instructor databases (ex: learnhunting.org)).
- Develop and implement advanced fishing classes for those possessing basic fishing skills but limited experience

Action 7.2: *Create a database of available volunteer instructors.*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Drive recruitment of volunteers to IHEA Learnhunting.org

Market “invite someone hunting.” Incentives aren’t necessary to energize mentorship

- Encourage R3 program participants to become instructors in future years

Action 7.3: *Provide shooting sport audiences and fishing audiences learn to hunt opportunities*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- If the program is considered a “gateway to hunting,” provide information regarding additional opportunities or next steps
 - Hunter Education
 - 3D Archery

- Consider methods of tracking “gateway to hunting” shooting program participants to better understand impacts and outcomes
 - Gift them or sell them apprentice hunting licenses to assign a Go Number for tracking
 - Adjust paperwork protocols to collect names and birthdates

Action 7.4: *Increase educational and informational support for Fishing*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Develop print and digital resources/videos to offer on the WRD and Go Fish Center websites
- Work with Public Affairs Section to initiate an email campaign introducing new anglers (fishing license holder for less than 2 years) to fishing events and opportunities nearby
 - provide resources and tips to equip anglers with tools needed to increase the chance of success (where to go, what baits to use, species to target, equipment tutorials, etc.).

Action 7.5: *Convert single sport license holders into multi-sport license holders*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Communicate and collaborate with the Public Affairs, Marketing and Communications Unit
- Communicate and collaborate with the License and Boat Registration Unit

Strategy 8: Increase Fish and Wildlife Relevancy to broader constituates

Action 8.1: *Establish a WRD agency working group to evaluate relevancy*

Implementation: GA DNR-WRD

Tasks:

- Participate in a multi-state relevancy study launching in 2023
- Understand the Relevancy Roadmap and consider implementation of components

Action 8.2: *Diversify perspectives and cultural values of conservation professionals*

Implementation:

Tasks:

- Recognize that new professionals bring creative ideas, unconsidered perspectives and unidentified challenges to be overcome. The conservation community needs to relate to all people.
- Hire individuals who are best suited for the position description and
 - Support community outreach to minority populations to improve awareness of career opportunities
 - Foster pathways for minority populations into conservation careers