

Georgia R3 Action Plan

Strategies for Recruiting, Retaining, and Reactivating
Hunters, Anglers and Target Shooters
Summer 2024



Developed by the Georgia R3 Initiative (2016) and revised 2017, 2023, 2024

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KEY TERMS/ACRONYMS

AFWA: Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

CAHSS: Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports

DJ: Dingle Johnson- Federal 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 Alpha: Anyone born between 2010 and 2024

Generation Z: Anyone born between 1997 and 2009

GA R3 Steering Committee: Representatives of organizations with financial and time commitments in support of the Initiative, 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 with profits going back to the mission

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, angling and shooting sports participants

RBFF: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

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

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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. This funding is distributed to states according to the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold plus state acreage. 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 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* prioritizing actions for increasing support and participation in hunting and shooting sports. 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. In 2024, The Council published an update to the 2016 National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan as an *R3 Practitioner's Guide* containing the most up to date research and recommendations. RBFF published their updates by contributing to AFWA's Angler R3 Task Force reports (2018 and 2024).

Chase and Dunfee of *The New Future of Hunting and Fishing*, published in 2022, have reaffirmed that nationally younger generations are not purchasing hunting and fishing licenses at the same rate as older generations regardless of the generation's age. See Figure 1 to understand the volume of resident angling license holders (as a percent of annual sales) at each age for each year over the past 20 years. See Figure 2 to understand the volume of resident hunting license holders (as a percent of annual sales) at each age for each year over the past 20 years. Chase and Dunfee identify age effects, period effects and cohort effects to explain peaks and valleys among trends. Findings reaffirm the importance of adult focused programming as seen with a significant valley in the Millennial generation purchase rates.

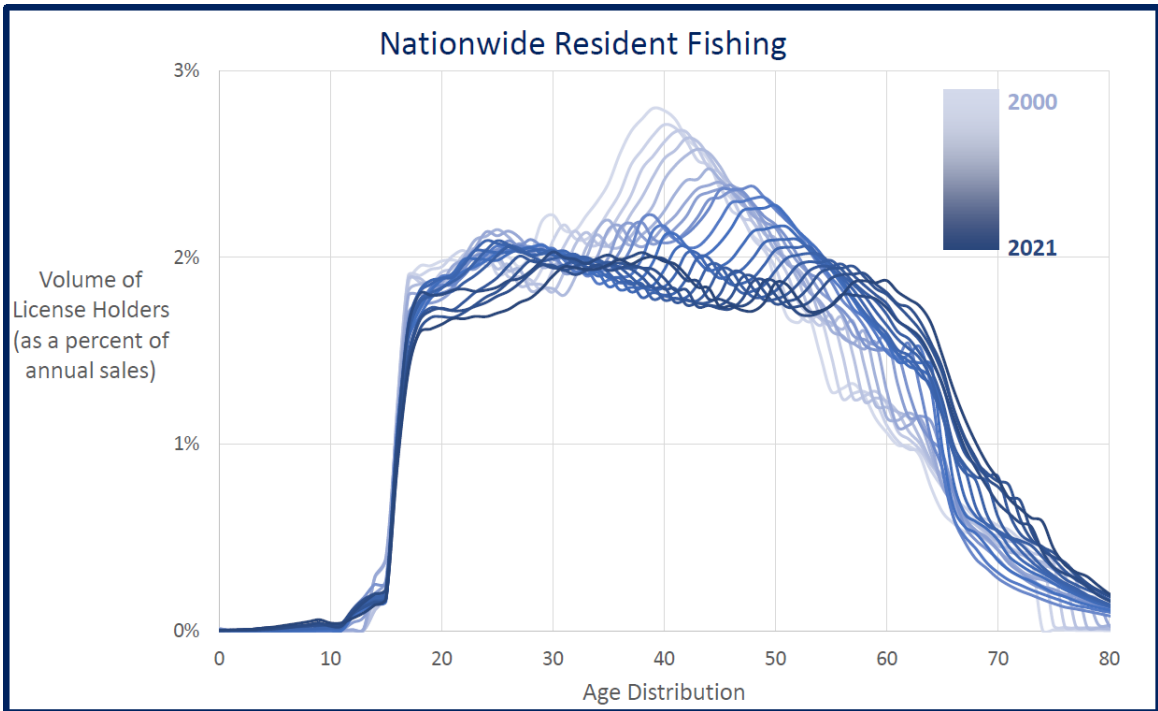


Figure 1: Chase and Dunfee, 2022. Volume of resident angling license holders (as a percent of annual sales) at each age for each year over the past 20 years

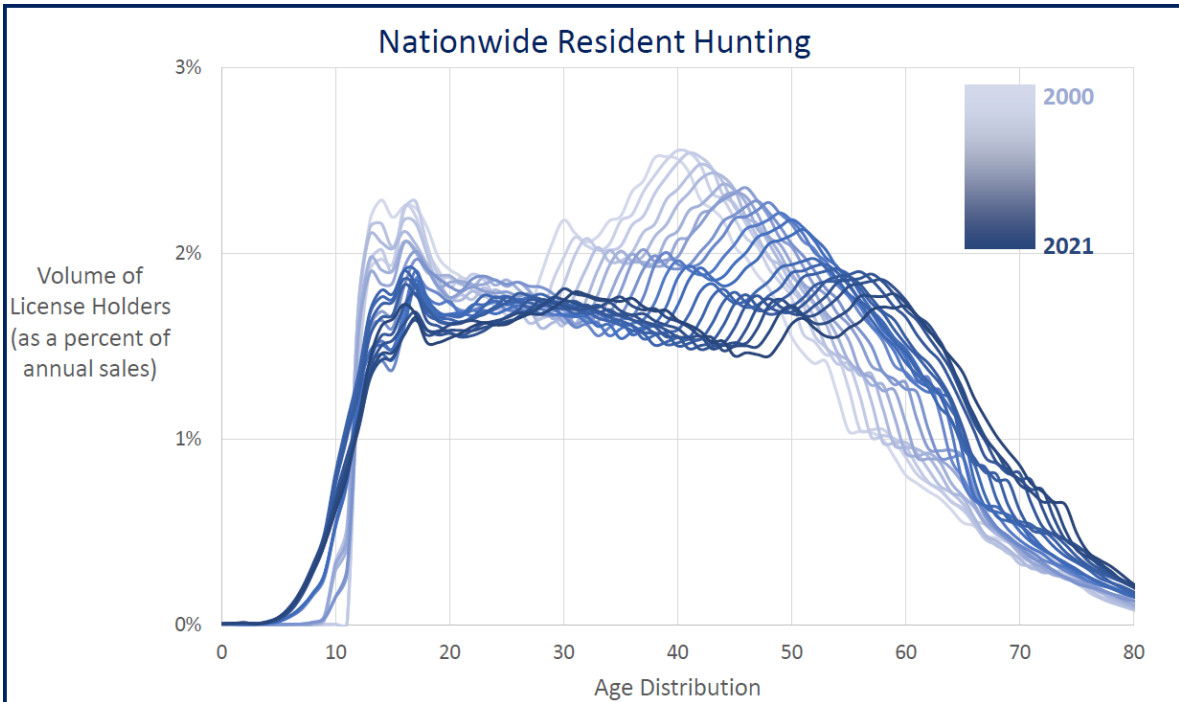


Figure 2: Chase and Dunfee, 2022. Volume of resident hunting license holders (as a percent of annual sales) at each age for each year over the past 20 years

A USFWS of 2016 analyzed the change in the number of hunters and anglers as compared to the change in population. Figure 3 demonstrates that relative to the United States population, the number of anglers is stable, but relative to the United States population, the number of hunters has decreased. There is great overlap between hunting and angling regarding the adoption of these outdoor recreations, program development and evaluation. Lessons can be learned between communities all striving to engage people in wildlife and the outdoors.

On the other hand, participation in shooting sports has increased ensuring continued excise tax generation. The National Shooting Sports Foundation published *Firearm Ownership and Sport Shooting Participation in the US* in 2022 and found that participation has been raising steadily over the last decade (Figure 4).

Indexed Change in the Number of Anglers, Hunters, and Total Population:
(Population 16 Years of Age and Older)

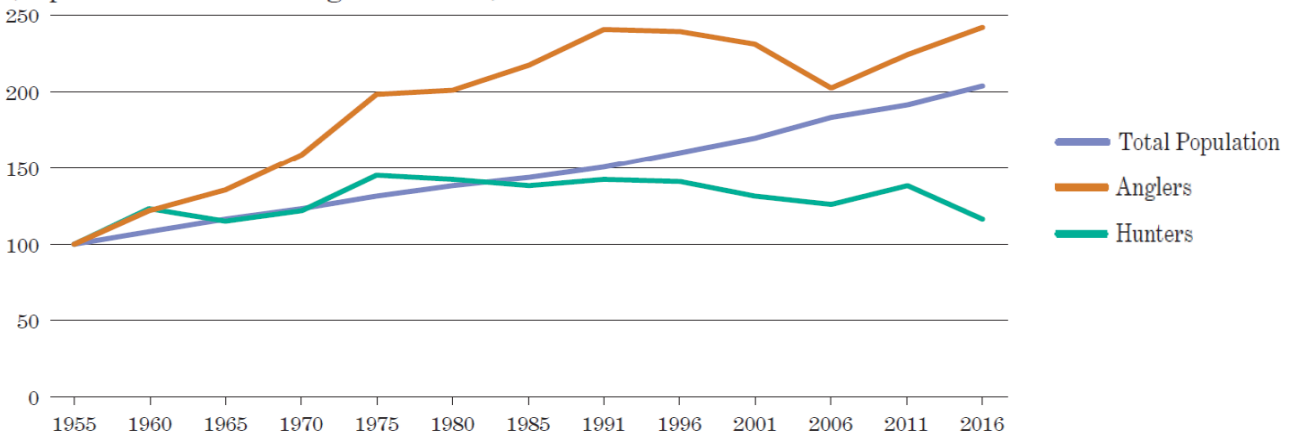


Figure 3: USFWS, 2016. The number of anglers relative to the US population has stayed stable, but the number of hunters relative to the US population has decreased.

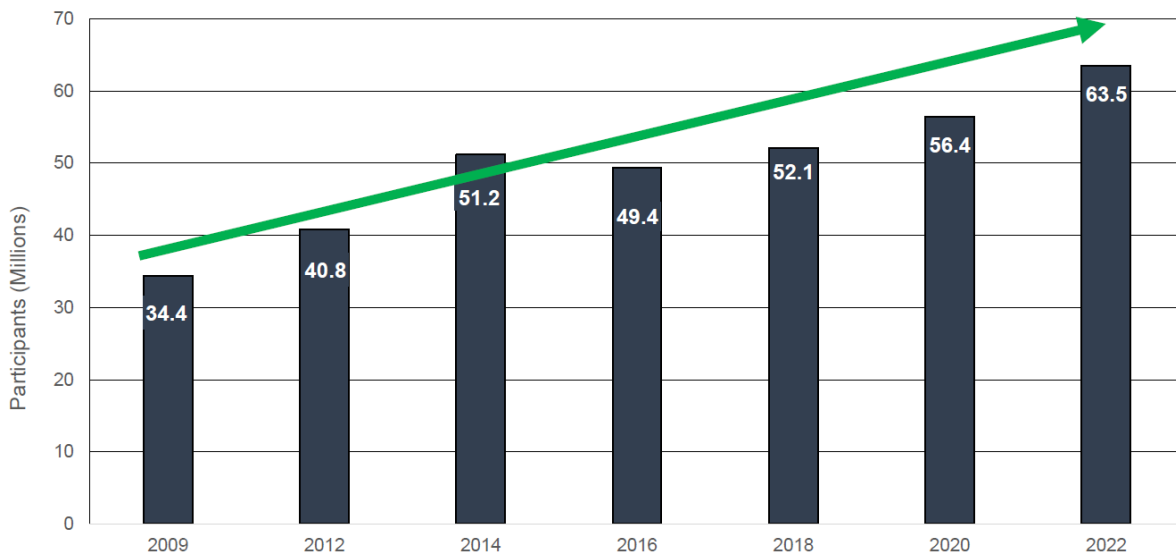


Figure 4: NSSF, 2022. Shooting Sports participation through time

GEORGIA EFFORTS

The Georgia R3 Initiative established in 2015, based on the directive of the National R3 Plans, hired a State R3 Coordinator to focus R3 efforts. The position is currently housed within the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF), with sponsorship also by the 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). The R3 Coordinator is the primary resource for R3 efforts across the state. While these five partners are the main players, the Georgia R3 Initiative encompasses all stakeholders including governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and industry with a vested interest in the future of hunting, angling and shooting sports.

In 2016, the Georgia R3 Initiative drafted a Georgia Hunting Action Plan to guide the Initiative's local efforts. The Plan has seen revisions in 2017, 2023 and now in 2024 in its current format as the R3 Action Plan, taking angling into consideration. As with all innovative efforts, there have been successes and challenges. Since their inception, some recommended Actions have been completed, yet most are ongoing or have seen changes as the research has evolved. The Plan's objectives are broad and not likely to be completed without an associated work plan.

As the Georgia R3 Initiative is structured with multiple partners at different levels of engagement in R3, we can accomplish a lot, but we are limited in our ability to create R3 work plans with SMART goals. Thus, the Coordinator will keep The R3 Action Plan updated for the continuity of R3 direction, but the communication of desired R3 actions will also be disseminated in a much smaller and focused body of work, titled the GA R3 Vision. This one-page reference document breaks R3 Action into three implementation categories: 1) all partners, 2) R3 Practitioners, and 3) Wildlife Resources Division. Regardless of implementation category, all stakeholders should, "strive to provide direct education, public outreach, and supportive communities." Concise recommendations for each objective are listed as well (Figure 5).

Fortunately, in Georgia license sales rates since the early 2010s have remained relatively steady with 774,910 individuals holding a hunting license and 1,290,038 individuals holding an angling license in 2023. We have seen an increase in sales revenue, license sales, and hunter/angler participation since 2020-2022 likely caused by COVID. This increase has levelled off though and numbers published Fall of 2024 will influence our understanding of Georgia trends.

The Georgia R3 Initiative's objectives set forth are broad. To understand the actions needed to accomplish our objectives first requires an understanding of previous and current 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 a Changes and Updates Table at <https://gwf.org/r3>. Some Actions have projects-refer to the GA R3 Working Group for more information.

To preserve our conservation funding system and conserve our wildlife and wild places, Georgia must maintain momentum in the recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters, anglers and target shooters. The community is encouraged to keep the R3 best practices in mind as they pursue this mission.



GEORGIA R3 VISION

Recruitment
Retention
Reactivation

BEST PRACTICES FOR DIRECT EDUCATION

- Provide adult only or family events to empower adults who can immediately adopt the activity and help teach others
- Develop relationships and invite attendees from diverse backgrounds and experiences
- Create first timer experiences and walk them to next steps
- Collect GA Outdoor Customer ID #s of participants
- Measure changes in participant's attitudes and behaviors

BEST PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC OUTREACH

community
ecosystem health
family excise tax hunter image
security stewardship
meat hunter ethics relaxation
wildlife and sport fish restoration program
connection fun advocacy
awareness of learning opportunities
safe gun ownership

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

- Understand specific target audience's needs, but generally:
- Provide a clear understanding of what to expect in advance
- Focus on their motivations not yours
- Utilize diverse instructors that match the audience
- Focus locally wherever possible
- Embed opportunities for Q&A allowing time for reflection
- Provide opportunity for social interactions during and after
- Help them build and cultivate relationships



GA R3 Initiative - www.gwf.org/r3

everyone should strive to provide direct education, public outreach and supportive communities

ALL PARTNERS

- Attend the GA R3 Summit and meetings
- Register on learnhunting.org and mentor
- Display GA R3 Vision Poster
- Communicate planned R3 Events to R3 Coordinator to help advertise
- Implement all three "Best Practices"

R3 PRACTITIONERS

- Maintain partnerships and grow capacity
- Maintain Vision and Action Plan
- Host Summit and team meetings
- Help partners develop robust programs
- Help identify evaluation data points

WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION

- Leverage Federal funding
- Provide centralized location for events and resources
- Reduce lapse in participation through marketing strategies
- Communicate license trends to partners
- Analyze license buying behavior of audiences and program participants
- Understand agency relevancy to public
- Diversify staff perspectives

Figure 5: Georgia R3 Vision, 2024 – summary of the Action Plan

GEORGIA R3 ACTION PLAN

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 long-term tracking to all programs

Strategy 6: Redefine target audiences and provide skills trainings addressing their barriers

Strategy 7: Improve educational support systems and learning pathways

Strategy 8: Increase Fish and Wildlife Relevancy to broader constituents

Table of Strategies and Associated Actions for quick reference found at <https://gwf.org/r3>

ACTIONS AND TASKS:

Strategy 1: Improve cooperation, direction and resources among and for R3 partners
Action 1.1: <i>Maintain a statewide GA R3 Initiative influence.</i> Implementation: Cooperative funding from all
Tasks: <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
Action 1.2: <i>Maintain the statewide R3 Action Plan</i> Implementation: Georgia R3 Initiative

Tasks:

- Drive innovative and dynamic action
- Ensure strategies are up-to-date
- Maintain a state R3 Action Plan with Strategies and Tasks
- Maintain a state R3 Vision to better explain Action Plan
- Maintain an Updates and Changes table to track R3 Initiative Efforts
- Utilize Summit meetings to request community feedback and share progress on plans
- Host plans/materials on the National R3 Community website and Georgia Wildlife Federation [R3 page](#).
- 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 GA R3 Vision made by the Plan
- Increase partnerships among R3 stakeholders and remove organizational silos.
- Collect community information.

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: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Promote license sales as a conservation tool
- Promote existing R3 Educational Materials (e.g., home schooling associations, summer camps, garden clubs, Boy Scouts of America, Georgia Independent School Association) and methods of implementation
 - 1) Academics Afield Toolkit
 - 2) WRD K-12 STEAM standards

- 3) Wildlife ID 101
- 4) Archery 101

- Include the history of conservation, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, and the role of hunters and shooters in wildlife conservation.
- Create more Hunter Education Instructors
- Increase impact

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: All Stakeholders

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: All Stakeholders

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: All Stakeholders

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: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Map all existing programs for women
- Address nationally identified strategies

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

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

- Project 4.1.1 - Identify gaps in availability of actual location for shooting
- Project 4.1.2 - Support range development and pro-shooting legislation to address availability of shooting locations
- Project 4.1.3 - Identify already existing gun safety strategy to pair with all GA R3 Initiative firearm access work to address public safety concerns
- Project 4.1.4 Encourage WRD to improve their communication of information to address issues of awareness of access

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: All Stakeholders

- Project 4.2.1 - Improve underperforming public lands
- Project 4.2.2 - Supplement hunting opportunity by providing more public land

Action 4.3: *Promote private hunting opportunities.*

Implementation: All Stakeholders

- Project 4.3.1 - WRD Communicate private opportunities available through outfitters
- Project 4.3.2 - Communicate location of resources regarding where private leases and hunt clubs advertise opportunities <https://gadnr.org/hunting-permissions>
- Project 4.3.3 - Communicate learn to hunt opportunities that occur on private lands

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: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Maintain participation in the [Hunting and Fishing License Dashboard](#) with the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports
- Provide license sales trends to GA R3 Initiative Community annually at Summit

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Currently: Every R3 program needs to collect DNR Customer ID # of participants to measure whether a hunter was actually created. In at least one year after program participation, ask DNR how many of these customers purchased a license a following year. This will give you a program success rate. Your data could be skewed if you allowed existing hunters into your program.
- Programmers can 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 or offer future programs based on their interests.
- Eventually, WRD could dedicate financial resources to the management of this system and the analysis of the data.
- Eventually, all R3 programs could use GA WRD online event system as a marketing resource and a tracking resource for all R3 programs

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

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.
- Implement pre-program surveys digitally prior, implement surveys via QR codes day of if they didn't do it prior
- Implement QR codes day of before they depart for post-surveys
- Utilize raffles and giveaways for 1 year post event surveying to ask how their behavior has changed IF you don't have access to long term license buying behaviors

Strategy 6: Redefine target audiences and provide skills trainings addressing their barriers

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

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: All Stakeholders

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
- Increase awareness of R3 learning opportunities
- Provide diverse instructors
- Track racial makeup in WRD customers
- Market in different languages and recall people may not learn well with text, but do better with imagery (clear regulations)
- Imagery (people of color and women)

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: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Enhance existing learn to hunt opportunities through additional instruction after the shot
- Establish skills workshops focusing on the processing, preparation and cooking of game meat

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Provide resources for college aged audiences as it is an efficient model for reaching diverse non-traditional audiences
 - Maintain [Academics Afield](#)
 - Toolkit published January 2024
- Host first time hunting skills training or one-on-one instruction
- Identify additional methods of reaching non-traditional adults

Strategy 7: Improve educational support systems and learning pathways

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Provide retention programs for those who have ALREADY expressed interest as opposed to only recruitment 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 reactivation programs that will pull lapsed participants back into the fold (e.g., college or family friendly programs).
- Develop and implement advanced classes for those possessing basic skills but limited experience

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

Tasks:

- Encourage R3 program participants to become instructors in future years
- Market “invite someone hunting.” Incentives aren’t necessary to energize mentorship.
- Drive recruitment of volunteers to a common database (Ex: IHEA’s Learnhunting.org)
- Consider brokering relationships between coaches and new participants

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

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 DNR Customer ID #s

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

Implementation: All Stakeholders

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: All Stakeholders

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 constituents

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: All Stakeholders

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

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