

2023–2027



NEBRASKA

R3 PLAN

RECRUIT. RETAIN. REACTIVATE.

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

COLLABORATIVE PATHWAYS
TO OUTDOOR RECREATION



MOVING FORWARD

Every year, outdoor enthusiasts enjoy the time-honored traditions of boating, fishing, hunting, shooting and visiting state parks. They connect with the natural world, make memories, have fun and relax while taking in the rich diversity of Nebraska's land and waters. They find abundant opportunities for all types of outdoor recreation important to their quality of life.

Nebraska's fish, wildlife, park and outdoor recreation resources belong to everyone and must be conserved for current and future generations. The participants in outdoor recreation play a critical role in funding our agency work as stewards of those resources when they pay user fees or buy permits and stamps. They are part of the user-pay, public-benefit system that has powered fish and wildlife conservation, state parks and outdoor recreation in Nebraska for decades.

In 2007, Nebraska developed a 20-year Plan for Hunter/Angler Recruitment, Development and Retention. It was groundbreaking at the time as the nation's first state plan for what is now referred to as Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation. We learned by implementing that plan what worked and what didn't, have had many successes, and are harnessing that experience to write this updated version. This plan takes an agencywide, big-picture approach and expands our efforts beyond hunting and angling. We strive to remain innovative and progressive.

As we work to conserve our proud outdoor heritage in Nebraska, we must look to the future. We have passionate outdoor enthusiasts who introduce their family, friends, neighbors and communities to the great outdoors by asking them to join in their experiences. But we also need to focus on those who may have an interest in the outdoors but don't have anyone to show them how or where to start. How can we help them to find their place in outdoor recreation or find their place to connect with nature?

We benefit from a dedicated, passionate team who cares for the great natural and recreational resources we manage. They embrace public service and want those resources to remain available and enjoyed by all Nebraskans today, tomorrow and for future generations.

We are not alone, as we are collaborating with teams sharing our vision in Nebraska and across the nation. We are working with the best researchers, planners, conservation organizations, states, and outreach and education folks in the nation. We are learning from others, sharing successes and building upon best practices.

We know there is a place for everyone in outdoor recreation and in nature, and we want to help them find it. There's also a place for everyone in the Nebraska R3 Plan; join us as we move forward.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim McCoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Tim McCoy
Director

TIME OUTDOORS IS TIME WELL SPENT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The R3 Plan has been an agency-wide effort and the input and time spent by staff has created a more robust document. The agency thanks the team for their contributions.

CORE TEAM

Tim McCoy, *Director*
Jim Swenson, *Deputy Director*
Pat Cole, *Budget and Fiscal Division Administrator*
Jeff Fields, *Parks Division Administrator*
Christy Firestone, *Communications Division Administrator*
Alicia Hardin, *Wildlife Division Administrator*
Hannah Jones, *Planning and Programming*
Assistant Division Administrator
Larry Pape, *Fisheries Education Specialist*
Jeff Rawlinson, *Communications*
Assistant Division Administrator
Lindsay Rogers, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Division Administrator
Dean Rosenthal, *Fisheries Division Administrator*
Craig Stover, *Law Enforcement Division Administrator*
Michelle Stryker, *Planning and Programming*
Division Administrator, Facilitator of Plan

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Rena Blum, *Communications, Editing*
Shawna Richter-Ryerson, *Communications, Editing*
Mel Severin, *Communications, Graphic Design*
Michelle Stryker, *Planning and Programming*
Division Administrator, Facilitator of Plan

COMMISSIONERS

Dan Kreitman, *District 1, Wahoo*
Donna Kush, *District 2, Omaha*
Ken Curry, *District 3, Columbus*
John Hoggatt, *District 4, Kearney*
Robert Allen, *District 5, Eustis*
Pat Berggren, *District 6, Broken Bow*
Doug Zingula, *District 7, Sidney*
Rick Brandt, *District 8, Roca*
Scott Cassels, *At Large, Omaha*

We'd like to acknowledge Phil Seng from D.J. Case & Associates, Matt Dunfee from Wildlife Management Institute, and Stephanie Hussey from Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation for their assistance in this endeavor.

WRITING TEAMS

Boating

Larry Pape, *Fisheries, Facilitator*
Christy Christensen, *Parks/Communications*
Jeff Clauson, *Law Enforcement*
Brad Eifert, *Fisheries*
Grace Gaard, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Shawna Richter-Ryerson, *Communications*
Schuyler Sampson, *Planning and Programming*
Scott Wessel, *Wildlife*
Tyler Wulf, *Parks*

Fishing

Larry Pape, *Fisheries, Facilitator*
Daryl Bauer, *Fisheries*
Justin Bogue, *Parks*
Grace Gaard, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Jane Gustafson, *Communications*
Keith Koupal, *Fisheries*
Matthew Perrion, *Fisheries*
Jake Rodiek, *Parks*
TJ Walker, *Wildlife*

Hunting

Jeff Rawlinson, *Communications, Facilitator*
Aaron Hershberger, *Communications*
Kevin Holliday, *Parks*
Monica Macoubrie, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Hunter Nikolai, *Communications*
Dusty Schelbitzki, *Wildlife*

Parks

Hannah Jones, *Planning and Programming, Facilitator*
Amanda Filipi, *Parks*
Lori Howard, *Parks*
Jordan Katt, *Fisheries*
Alie Mayes, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Bill Oligmueller, *Parks*
Amber Schiltz, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Suzanne Schmidt, *Communications*

Shooting Sports

Jeff Rawlinson, *Communications, Facilitator*
Christy Christensen, *Parks/Communications*
Aaron Hershberger, *Communications*
Monica Macoubrie, *Fish and Wildlife Education*
Pat Molini, *Wildlife*
Hunter Nikolai, *Communications*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6	Introduction
10	Boating
16	Fishing
26	Hunting
34	Parks
44	Shooting Sports
52	Implementation
54	Evaluation
56	Glossary



Outdoor recreation is incredibly important to Nebraska's economy, creating

\$3.8 billion in revenue annually and almost

24,000 jobs.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its programs, activities, or employment. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, facility, or service, should contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-0641, the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-2024, TTY/TDD 800-642-6112; Director, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240. 2022-122093-MS-10/22



INTRODUCTION

The opportunity to pursue outdoor activities in Nebraska can spark a love for the outdoors that can lead people to take action to conserve our state’s natural resources. **To maintain support and funding for our agency, we must keep our customers engaged while actively recruiting new individuals to participate.**

Trends indicate some people are becoming less connected to various recreational activities or not participating at all.

Traditional activities, such as hunting and fishing, remain popular with our current customers. Some younger generations and diverse constituencies are less engaged with those activities, yet they care about conservation and have values closely aligned with many outdoor activity opportunities available in the state. Camping and hiking remain well-loved recreation opportunities. However, over the years, Nebraskans’ interests in outdoor pursuits have expanded, with more people seeking connections to nature through alternative activities, such as kayaking, trail use and wildlife viewing. This creates the potential for new stakeholders venturing deeper into their natural world. This plan shares a vision for engaging people in outdoor pursuits from a broad perspective reflecting today’s culture and values.

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has been a long-standing leader in the recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) of outdoor customers. This includes the development of the nation’s first state R3 Plan in 2007, as well as leading developments of several national hunting, fishing and shooting sports plans. Each of these successes has been the result of collaboration and creative partnerships. We have learned a lot along the way.

When creating this plan to engage outdoor participants, we looked beyond long-standing traditions to include emerging activities that introduce a larger audience to outdoor opportunities.

PLAN COMPONENTS

The Plan is categorized into five sections: Boating, Fishing, Hunting, Parks and Shooting Sports, with goals prioritized within. The Vision and Goals in this plan establish the framework for our direction. Introductions in each section include summaries of key opportunities and challenges, highlights from some of our successes, and details on where the focus area crosses over into others. This background sets the stage for the prioritized objectives and strategies. The actions needed to accomplish these objectives and strategies will be presented later in operational plans for each section.

The icons shown below identify each of the sections. Within each sections' objectives and strategies are opportunities to achieve shared desires that meet intended needs of more than one section. Look for these icons to identify those opportunities for collaboration.



Vision Statement

Create a future that inspires a diverse group of people to participate in outdoor recreational endeavors and become or remain advocates for conservation and a healthy, natural environment.

TOGETHER WE WILL ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Each of the five sections in this plan are unique. The strategies for success were developed with input from across the agency. They represent a collective focus, each critical to our ability to maintain and expand access, opportunity and stewardship of our natural resources now and for future generations. Working across sections to create enthusiastic outdoor recreationists is a primary driver of this plan.

The plan will face many challenges, not the least of which are factors outside of our control that can affect whether we reach our objectives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Weather
- Wildlife population dynamics
- Political climate
- National, regional and local economies
- Public sentiment
- Crop and livestock prices
- Supply chain issues
- Public health crises
- State and federal laws

Our future success starts with being fluid in our response to factors we cannot control and by enacting the strategies identified in this plan. Outdoor recreation will continue to be a large part of tourism in Nebraska and positively affect the population of the state into the future. An adaptive management approach to R3 by the entire staff and our partners will be necessary to ensure the people of Nebraska have access to quality outdoor recreational experiences that will lead to conservation of our resources.



Operational Plans

The five sections each have an operational plan that outlines specific steps needed to achieve the strategies. These operational documents are intended for the Commission staff implementing the plan.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

Each goal of each section includes the following elements:

Objectives are specific, measurable and timebound statements that outline ways we will work to achieve our goals.

Target Audiences are primary groups whom we must direct our efforts toward to achieve our objectives.

Metrics are the specific ways we measure whether, and to what degree, we are achieving our objectives.

Strategies are specific methods used to accomplish our objectives.

PRIORITIZATION

The objectives within each component of this plan have been prioritized into immediate, primary, secondary and tertiary. This details what objectives must be achieved first within the five-year plan.

Immediate objectives are urgent and should be started or completed within the first year.

Primary objectives are items we should focus time, energy and resources on first and those things that must be done prior to doing anything else in the plan.

Secondary objectives are items that could be done within one to three years or that follow an immediate or primary objective.

Tertiary objectives will take five years to do or are dependent upon completion of immediate, primary or secondary objectives.



Considerations For This Plan

1. Engaging a larger base of partners
2. Increasing and diversifying the agency funding base
3. Engaging more diverse participants
4. Identifying the need to expand staff and operational resources to increase R3 capabilities



GOALS FOR THE PLAN

Our goals state what we want to achieve and help provide the roadmap for our R3 efforts. We have the same three goals for Boating, Fishing, Hunting, Parks and Shooting Sports.

GOAL 1
Increase and reactivate participants



GOAL 2
Retain participants



GOAL 3
Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation



OVERVIEW OF BOATING



PARTICIPANTS

80,000
average registered boats

As boat registrations are valid for three years, getting a precise number of boaters in the state is difficult to glean.

9%
of Nebraskans
have kayaked

13%
of Nebraskans
have canoed

RESOURCES

302 public
boat
launch
facilities

Game
and Parks
maintains
61% of
them

125

within state parks and
recreation areas

60

within wildlife
management areas

PROGRAMS

**Boater
Safety
Program**

5,523
participants
in 2020

**Aquatic
Invasive
Species
Checkpoints**

2,054
boats
decontaminated
in 2021

FUNDING

\$1.2 million

in boat registration fees goes toward
funding park improvements and repairs

\$1.1 million

spent in Boating Access Dollars in 2021

DID YOU KNOW?

18,000
river miles



10

featured river
and stream
water trails

equaling

550

river miles

456

public lakes and ponds

equaling

137,329 water acres



BOATING

Visit many lakes or water bodies in Nebraska, and you'll find a boater: those on traditional motorboats, sailboats, personal watercraft, kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, or some other floating vessel, including cattle tanks. Nebraska is home to hundreds of public-access lakes and hundreds of miles of rivers, from the Platte River to the Missouri River and a dozen rivers with trailways in between.

In 2021, Nebraska had 80,000 registered power- and sailboats through the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles. As boat registrations are valid for three years, getting a precise number of boaters in the state is difficult to glean. The Commission does not have direct access to this database, nor does it have information on paddlecraft users, as registration is not required for nonmotorized vessels in Nebraska. This information gap hinders our ability to set specific goals to recruit, retain and reactivate boaters.

We do know the number of registered boats over the past 10 years has averaged about 80,000. We also know interest and participation in paddlesports has increased. According to a 2019 Special Report on Paddlesports by the Outdoor Foundation, 7.6% of the U.S. population took to the water to paddle in 2018. That could translate to 148,960 Nebraskans paddling on our waterways each year, a number expected to continue to increase as regional interest grows.

Canoeing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding serve as an opportunity to engage more diverse demographics, including African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, and Asian-Americans (2019 Special Report on Paddlesports). These audiences are a priority for efforts to provide opportunities for all Nebraskans' interested in the outdoors.

We see other opportunities, as well. A fair percentage of all paddlers — 27% of recreational kayakers, 43% of canoers, and 42% of stand-up paddleboarders — rent vessels to participate in the activity (2019 Special Report on Paddlesports). Game and Parks or its partners currently provide rental services at 10 state park or recreation areas, a service that the Commission can expand as budgets and logistics allow.

Boaters and paddlers most likely are active in other outdoor pursuits, such as fishing and wildlife viewing, and are most likely long-term supporters of conservation efforts.

To successfully reach boaters and paddlers, we must first develop a way to identify who they are. Without specific, reliable data, we do not have a way to connect with our boating community, let alone recruit, retain or reengage them.

Our focus over the next five years — the first time boating has been included in a Nebraska R3 plan — will be to address this information gap, establish a relationship with boaters, evaluate the number of registered boating participants and assess boating resources across the state.



PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Immediate

- Assess current statewide boating infrastructure, users and resources (*Goal 1*)
- Research and outline a potential paddlesports registration program to assist in management of boating infrastructure (*Goal 1*)

Primary

- Establish or enhance relationships with boating community (*Goal 2*)
- Identify current boating users for access and resource needs (*Goal 2*)

Secondary

- Maintain customer relationship with boating community (*Goal 3*)

GOAL 1
**Increase and
reactivate
participants**

GOAL 2
Retain participants

GOAL 3
**Maintain support
for conservation and
outdoor recreation**



27% of recreational
kayakers,
43% of canoers, and
42% of stand-up
paddleboaters rent
vessels to participate in
the activity

— 2019 Special Report on
Paddlesports



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level
Immediate




Timeframe
Year 1

Target Audience
Commission staff

Metric
Results of associated surveys

1.1 Objective: Assess current statewide boating infrastructure, users and resources

STRATEGIES

-  1.1.1 Update 2013 inventory of all boating access infrastructure available to the public.
- 1.1.2 Update criteria on what qualifies as a current boating support resource to include nonmotorized amenities for inclusion in boating resources inventory.
-   1.1.3 Research and survey boaters regarding needs, their demographics and their preferences. Document recreational trends and barriers to participation.

Priority Level
Immediate




Timeframe
Year 1

Target Audience
Commission staff, paddlecraft owners and users

Metric
Results of research and associated surveys

1.2 Objective: Research and outline a potential paddlesports registration program to assist in management of boating infrastructure

STRATEGIES

- 1.2.1 Survey other states to gain an understanding of the different paddlecraft registration programs currently being used to draft a potential paddlecraft registration plan for Nebraska.
-  1.2.2 Develop mechanism and collect current data on paddlecraft use in Nebraska.
-   1.2.3 Engage paddlecraft users to gauge their support for a registration program.
- 1.2.4 Develop a draft proposal for legislation on the registration of paddlecraft.





GOAL 2

Retain participants

2.1 Objective: Establish or enhance relationships with boating community

STRATEGIES

-  2.1.1 Create an internal agency boating customer relations committee.
- 2.1.2 Connect potential audiences to boating information and opportunities through multimedia channels.
- 2.1.3 Share information about watersports in agency outreach efforts.
-  2.1.4 Create messaging that shares paddlecraft opportunities that exist.


Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience
Any identified current boating participant

Metric
Participation rates in program offerings; survey responses

2.2 Objective: Identify current boating users for access and resource needs

STRATEGIES

-  2.2.1 Research and catalog current audiences and their boating preferences. Document the preferences, expectations and barriers to participation of current and potential boaters.
- 2.2.2 Research the changes that occur with currently registered vessels that attribute to retention or recruitment of boaters.

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 3-5

Target Audience
Any identified current boating participants



Metric
Survey responses

GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.1 Objective: Maintain customer relationship with boating community

STRATEGIES

- 3.1.1 Continue internal agency boating customer relations committee created under Goal 2.
-  3.1.2 Continue connecting potential audiences to boating information and opportunities through multimedia channels.
-  3.1.3 Share information about watersports in agency outreach efforts.

Priority Level Secondary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
Any identified current boating participant

Metric
Participation rates in program offerings; survey responses



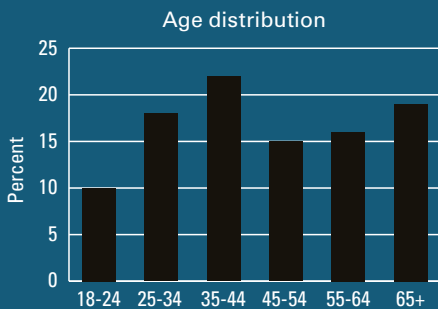
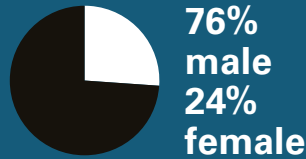


OVERVIEW OF FISHING



PARTICIPANTS

218,186
certified anglers



11%
of Nebraskans had a fishing license in 2021

RESOURCES

456 public lakes,
totaling
137,329 acres

38 streams and rivers

134 access points
both public and private

PROGRAMS

Aquatic
Habitat
Program

\$90 million
has been invested since 1997
137 lake projects

Over 100
partner
organizations

Angler
Access
Program

\$14 million
has been invested since 2010
91 water bodies

An
average
of **3,600**
anglers

participated in
the annual Take
'Em Fishing
campaign from
2019-2022

Education
and
Outreach
Programs

250 programs

FUNDING

\$7.5 million
in fishing permits/stamps

\$5.2 million
in federal aid

DID YOU KNOW?

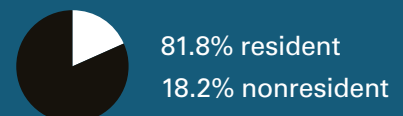
47 million fish
per year are stocked
in Nebraska waters



22 species

267 water bodies
across
the state

213,707
fishing permits
sold in 2021



FISHING

Nebraskans recognize time spent fishing is time well spent. Nebraska Game and Parks believes this, too, and has invested in improving resources statewide. The agency has improved aquatic habitat, angler access and urban fisheries; created and promoted angler recognition and recruitment programs; and altered its community fishing education programs to better serve the public.

Nebraska anglers now have access to lakes restored and improved with habitat for fish and features to make fishing more exciting. Pedestrian walkways, fishing jetties, docks and piers have been added. Small towns across Nebraska have restored city park ponds with thriving sportfish populations, and some are regularly stocked with trout, catfish and panfish. Staff and volunteers have taken advantage of these fishing venues, developing programs that have been heavily attended and sharing resources to help the public learn more about fishing.

The improvements at lakes have provided new opportunities to recruit, retain and reactivate anglers throughout Nebraska. Important opportunities include the need to better understand and communicate with anglers, including potential, novice and avid ones. Continuing to actively upgrade the permit and event records system gives us the opportunity to better document, track and understand our users and the products and events they enjoy. With recently developed communication and marketing best management practices, we can now identify and engage a community of angling customers. We have built the resources, and now letting anglers know about opportunities will hopefully encourage them to go fishing more and/or invite someone for their first time.

Understanding anglers' motivations to participate in angling is a primary challenge. The more immediate challenge is building the data and informational capacity to understand anglers. Investment in understanding angler behavior through creel surveys and human dimensions research has been substantial, but more work needs to be done. This may require an increase in staffing.

Many angler activities are companion and complimentary to other agency R3 components. For example, angler access projects within state parks can create incentive for anglers to visit parks or can entice park guests to fish. Creative permit bundling of fishing permits with hunting and/or park access permits has the potential to increase the sales of each. Community fishing activities can become integrated into Parks Division educational activities where resources are available.

The immediate need to facilitate recruitment, retention and reactivation of anglers is to look forward and build the staff capacity required to implement a successful R3 plan. Current staff is sufficient to implement existing programs, but adding additional programs or the tasks of R3 research will require increased staff resources. Immediate attention also should be directed to the data-support systems used to track anglers and their activities. Fortunately, many of the program activities of this plan are currently operational and can continue, but evaluation and adaptation can make them more effective.



PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Immediate

- Provide and enhance educational programs for youth and new anglers *(Goal 1)*

Primary

- Strengthen relationships with communities to improve fisheries and access *(Goal 1)*
- Increase angler access projects by one to three projects annually. Angler access includes fishing piers, trails, jetties and associated amenities *(Goal 1)*
- Connect diverse groups of people to fishing by using partnerships and experiential events to serve demographics outside our current customers *(Goal 1)*
- Retain 80% or more of permit purchasing anglers annually *(Goal 2)*
- Establish or enhance training programs for active anglers *(Goal 2)*
- Identify fishing R3 program and staffing gaps in relation to angler demographics, diversity, desires, trends and programming *(Goal 3)*

Secondary

- Establish and enhance recognition programs and opportunities for active anglers. *(Goal 2)*
- Establish or enhance customer relations with anglers and potential anglers *(Goal 3)*
- Explore the tie-in between state parks and fishing; collaborate with Parks Division to promote fishing as something to do while in the park. *(Goal 3)*

Tertiary

- Develop and enhance outreach efforts to grow interest and excitement about fishing *(Goal 1)*
- Promote/advertise fishing to boaters in Nebraska who do not currently fish *(Goal 3)*

GOAL 1
Increase and
reactivate
participants

GOAL 2
Retain participants

GOAL 3
Maintain support
for conservation and
outdoor recreation



In 2021, 52.4 million Americans ages 6 and older took to the nation's waterways to enjoy recreational fishing.

— 2022 Special Report on Fishing, Outdoor Foundation and Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Immediate Years 1-5

Target Audience

New to novice anglers who want to learn basic fishing techniques

Metric

Attendance, participation and survey results

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Primary Years 1-2

Target Audience

Urban community park managers

Metric

Buy-in and support

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Primary Year 1 to 5

Target Audience


Current active and potential anglers

Metric

Determined by the number of completed projects

1.1 Objective: Provide and enhance educational programs for youth and new anglers

STRATEGIES

-  1.1.1 Educate novice anglers on basic fishing techniques through experiential events.
- 1.1.2 Certify and maintain a volunteer program of individuals who are interested in teaching others how to fish and about aquatic resources through the Volunteer Youth Fishing Instructor Program.





1.2 Objective: Strengthen relationships with communities to improve fisheries and access

STRATEGIES

- 1.2.1 Develop a working relationship with community park managers for support of efforts.
- 1.2.2 Provide the opportunity for consistent communication and allow for feedback from community park managers.
- 1.2.3 Investigate opportunities to partner with and help fund enhancement opportunities on local community park ponds.

1.3 Objective: Increase angler access projects by one to three projects annually. Angler access includes fishing piers, trails, jetties and associated amenities

STRATEGIES

-   1.3.1 Inventory current angler access to establish a baseline of available resources.
-   1.3.2 Communicate with target audiences about access and availability.



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

1.4 Objective: Connect diverse groups of people to fishing by using partnerships and experiential events to serve demographics outside our current customers

STRATEGIES

- 1.4.1 Assess which communities have lower participation in fishing.
- 1.4.2 Identify angler demographics, desires and needs.
- 1.4.3 Partner with organizations that serve diverse groups of people, communities outside of the usual demographics involved in fishing, and/or urbanized areas throughout Nebraska.
- 1.4.4 Build partnerships with organizations that engage communities that don't usually participate in our fishing programming through shared community-focused events.
- 1.4.5 Host fishing events in partnership with these community organizations, inviting their participants to where we bring fishing opportunities to the community instead of hoping they will come to us
- 1.4.6 Craft and share invites for event opportunities.

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience


Partner organizations that serve diverse groups of people in urbanized areas throughout Nebraska

Metric

Post-program surveys, comparison of baseline data gathered from licensed angler surveys

1.5 Objective: Develop and enhance outreach efforts to grow interest and excitement about fishing

STRATEGIES

- 1.5.1 Develop targeted marketing approaches and promotional messaging to attract potential anglers.
-  1.5.2 Implement innovative approaches to get people outdoors to enjoy fishing.
- 1.5.3 Enhance fisheries and aquatic resources information communication to meet potential angler preferences.

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience

Current active and potential anglers

Metric

Number of individuals reached by outreach communication and engagement



GOAL 2

Retain participants

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
All current licensed anglers

Metric
Permit sales and associated churn rate measures

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
Advanced anglers who want to learn higher level fishing techniques

Metric
Attendance, participation and survey results

Priority Level Secondary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
All current licensed anglers

Metric
Program participation rates; angler feedback



2.1 Objective: Retain 80% or more of permit-purchasing anglers annually

STRATEGIES

- 2.1.1 Offer fishing permit auto-renewal in permit system.
- 2.1.2 Continue to investigate the root causes for license-holder churn and implement actions to retain lapsing anglers.
- 2.1.3 Develop a strategy for communications with fishing permit holders.

2.2 Objective: Establish or enhance training programs for active anglers

STRATEGIES

-  2.2.1 Educate through experiential events open to the public where loaner tackle, bait and assistance are provided.
-  2.2.2 Conduct seminars and experiential classes to teach advanced fishing-related topics and techniques.

2.3 Objective: Establish and enhance recognition programs and opportunities for active anglers

STRATEGIES

- 2.3.1 Evaluate and enhance current recognition programs to better suit angler desires.
- 2.3.2 Develop new creative recognition avenues.



GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.1 Objective: Identify fishing R3 program and staffing gaps in relation to angler demographics, diversity, desires, trends and programming

STRATEGIES

- 3.1.1 Identify gaps in current demographics to identify focused future recruitment efforts.
- 3.1.2 Determine appropriate R3 staff needs to facilitate programming and research.
- 3.1.3 If the need is there, hire a fishing R3 coordinator solely dedicated to conducting research, working with data, looking for trends and assisting with angler communications and outreach to reach audiences.

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
Staff, all current and potential anglers

Metric
Results of research and surveys



GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

Priority Level
Secondary

Timeframe
Years 1-3

Target Audience

Fishing permit purchasers

Metric

Response rates of participation in programs and surveys

Priority Level
Secondary

Timeframe
Years 1-3

Target Audience



Current active park visitors

Metric

Response rates of participation in programs and surveys






3.2 Objective: Establish or enhance customer relations with anglers and potential anglers

STRATEGIES

-  3.2.1 Communicate fishing and aquatic resource information, ideas, education, information and opportunities to anglers, potential anglers and partners.
-  3.2.2 Maintain partnerships with individuals and organizations that share interests in recruiting, retaining and reactivating anglers.
- 3.2.3 Develop a Fisheries Partners Program that brings together groups and organizations with the common interest in promoting fishing and aquatic resources.
- 3.2.4 Identify communication best practices, use new CRM communication tools and find partners that can help communicate with anglers.
- 3.2.5 Share online resources that support the education of anglers.

3.3 Objective: Explore the tie-in between state parks and fishing; collaborate with Parks Division to promote fishing as something to do while in the park

STRATEGIES

-  3.3.1 Identify and promote park areas that provide good fishing access and fishing amenities.
-  3.3.2 Identify parks that currently lack amenities but have great potential and develop plans for access and enhancements.
-  3.3.3 Promote fishing as an activity at parks with good fishing amenities — and encourage park staff to upsell fishing permits when checking people into lodging or interacting with park guests.
-  3.3.4 Have a branded tackle loaner program at state park areas with good fishing amenities, so people who don't have tackle can still enjoy fishing.
-  3.3.5 Have fishing events at parks.





GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.4 Objective: Promote/advertise fishing to boaters in Nebraska who do not currently fish

STRATEGIES

-  3.4.1 Identify and target those who own boats, come to Nebraska to boat, or enjoy water sports with messages about fishing.
-  3.4.2 Survey boat owners about why they do or do not fish. Gather more information on who fishes from a boat and who does not.
- 3.4.3 Find strategic partners to help with messaging, such as Natural Resource Districts, local communities and bait shops.

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-3

Target Audience
Potential anglers who are currently active boaters, including kayakers and canoers

Metric
Response rates of participation in programs and surveys





OVERVIEW OF

HUNTING



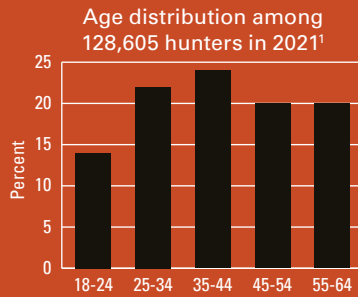
PARTICIPANTS

180,000
certified hunters



91%
male
9%
female¹

Female participation up
3,300 over past 10 years



9%
of Nebraskans
hunt²

RESOURCES

1.3
million

acres of publicly
accessible lands

PROGRAMS



30+
skills programs
for beginners



11,485
hunter education
certificates issued

FUNDING

\$19.2 million
hunting permit and stamp
revenue in 2021

\$17.8 million
Nebraska Wildlife Restoration
Funds Apportionment in 2022

DID YOU KNOW?

2021 hunters by permit type:

Deer – 97,972

Small game – 86,877

Spring turkey – 27,536

Total resident and
non-resident hunter numbers
are up 3% since 2012

While hunter numbers have been steady
over the past 10 years, the number of
Nebraskans that hunt has dropped from

13% to 9% since 1960

**28% of hunters don't
hunt every year¹**

16% of hunters each
year are new¹

¹Southwick Associates License Dashboard, only includes hunters ages 18-64. ²USFWS National Hunting License Report/U.S. Census Bureau.



HUNTING

Though hunting remains a time-honored outdoor pursuit for many Nebraskans, the hunting landscape has evolved since 1901 when the Commission began regulating it. Hunting participation has declined in Nebraska since its peak in 1996. To address this, Nebraska developed its first hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation plan in 2007.

Since then, the Commission has worked with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, multiple AFWA committees and non-governmental partners to develop tools to monitor Nebraska's hunting participation and trends. In addition, the Commission has participated in the development of national research and the National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan that have helped guide the development of R3 initiatives and this plan.

Mentoring has been identified as a priority item in both Nebraska's 2007 R3 Plan and the National R3 Plan. Since this time, Nebraska along with several partners, has led the implementation of mentoring efforts including programs for big and small game, as well as the newer "Take 'Em Hunting" challenge, an outreach effort that encourages hunters to take beginners with them for a chance to win prizes, resulting in several thousand mentored hunts.

Recent advancements in permitting systems, communication and marketing, and mentoring programs have opened new doors for state fish and wildlife agencies to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters. Updating the permit and event management system will provide customers with a streamlined and intuitive platform to purchase hunting permits and attend programs, while agency staff will have capabilities to track and interpret trends.

The primary challenge in Nebraska's hunting landscape is recruiting new hunters to the activity. We have a concerning decline in recruitment of new deer, turkey and small game hunters — particularly among youth. Historically, parents, grandparents and other family members have mentored new youth hunters, but recent declines suggest the hunter's journey is changing. Identifying and addressing the barriers to new hunting participation, particularly in youth, is an important component of this plan.

The immediate recommendations to facilitate the next phase of hunting R3 efforts in Nebraska are to maintain the current number of certified hunters. While many barriers presented to new and current hunters can and are being addressed, high-level barriers may take time to recognize and address, may compete with traditional viewpoints, and must be revisited regularly if we want to maintain and grow hunting.



PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Immediate

- Maintain or increase the number of unique hunters in Nebraska at or above 180,000 annually (*Goal 1*)
- Enhance consideration of R3 impacts of rules and regulations, permit structures and Commission actions on new and existing customers by expanding engagement with staff and external stakeholders (*Goal 2*)

Primary

- Increase the percentage of Nebraska Hunter Education graduates who purchase a hunting permit to 80% by 2027 (*Goal 1*)
- Increase the percentage of public hunting access acres by 15% by 2027 (*Goal 1*)
- Assess the current percentage of Nebraska hunters by race and ethnicity by 2024 (*Goal 1*)
- Increase the number of hunters who purchase more than one hunting permit type by 10% by 2027 (*Goal 2*)

Secondary

- Maintain public support for hunting in Nebraska and its impact on conservation by 2027 (*Goal 3*)

GOAL 1
Increase and reactivate participants

GOAL 2
Retain participants

GOAL 3
Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation



The Commission's Mentored Youth Archer Program was evaluated as #1 in the nation for youth who continue bowhunting after the program has ended.

— Effectiveness of Hunting, Shooting and Fishing Recruitment and Retention Program, Responsive Management, 2014



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level
Immediate

Timeframe
Years 1-5

Target Audience




New hunters, current hunters, and lapsed hunters

Metric

USFWS Nebraska paid hunting license holders

1.1 Objective: Maintain or increase the number of unique hunters in Nebraska at or above 180,000 annually

STRATEGIES

- 1.1.1 Establish recurring, targeted reminders to lapsed hunters.
- 1.1.2 Establish permit auto-renewal options where appropriate in permit system.
-  1.1.3 Enhance communications on hunting access opportunities, such as public lands, special regulated hunts and asking permission to hunt on private lands
-  1.1.4 Expand the capacity for mentored hunting in Nebraska by continuing evaluated programs and providing new opportunities.
- 1.1.5 Provide online resources for hunters to locate public access areas, purchase permits, and enhance skills.
- 1.1.6 Explore possibilities of developing a permit system application and/or permit access and display through mobile devices.
-  1.1.7 Expand advanced hunter education, Learn to Hunt, and game-processing workshops (both online and in-person).

Priority Level
Primary

Timeframe
Years 1-5

Target Audience

Nebraska Hunter Education graduates who have not purchased a hunting permit

Metric

Percentage of 2022 Nebraska Hunter Education graduates who purchased at least one hunting permit between 2023-2027

1.2 Objective: Increase the percentage of Nebraska Hunter Education graduates who purchase a hunting permit to 80% by 2027

STRATEGIES

- 1.2.1 Create evaluation criteria and surveys to understand how to increase/reactivate participants.
- 1.2.2 Expand engagement and provide timely, advanced education and communications to Hunter Education graduates.





GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

1.3 Objective: Increase the percentage of public hunting access acres by 15% by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  1.3.1 Update and implement the Open Fields and Waters access plan.
-  1.3.2 Develop a decision-support tool to aid Commission staff in prioritizing and acquiring new access opportunities for hunting access.

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience
New hunters, current hunters and lapsed hunters

Metric
Public hunting access acres increase 200,000 acres

1.4 Objective: Assess the current percentage of Nebraska hunters by race and ethnicity by 2024

STRATEGIES

- 1.4.1 Include optional race and ethnicity questions and reporting capabilities in the new permitting system.
- 1.4.2 Develop a survey and/or focus groups to understand the representation of hunting, perceptions of hunting and needs of diverse audiences.

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience
Current hunters and lapsed hunters

Metric
Survey and assessment of Nebraska hunters by race and ethnicity by 2024



GOAL 2

Retain participants

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Immediate Years 1-2

Target Audience

New hunters, current hunters, lapsed hunters, Game and Parks staff and stakeholders

Metric

Documentation of engagement (ongoing)

2.1 Objective: Enhance consideration of R3 impacts of rules and regulations, permit structures and Commission actions on new and existing customers by expanding engagement with staff and external stakeholders

STRATEGIES

- 2.1.1 Review current input procedures
- 2.1.2 Identify new opportunities for determining R3 impacts from regulations and permit structures in cooperation with division leadership.

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Primary Years 1-5

Target Audience

Current hunters who purchase only one permit type

Metric

Number of hunters who purchase more than one hunting permit in 2027

2.2 Objective: Increase the number of hunters who purchase more than one hunting permit type by 10% by 2027

STRATEGIES

- 2.2.1 Determine the needs and barriers of current hunters interested in hunting other species but haven't tried or have tried and lapsed.
- 2.2.2 Utilize existing data to identify cross-permit purchase behavior and develop a communication strategy to increase cross-permit purchase rates.



GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.1 Objective: Maintain public support for hunting in Nebraska and its impact on conservation by 2027

Priority Level Secondary
Timeframe Years 1-5


STRATEGIES

Target Audience
Nebraska residents

3.1.1 Investigate the possibilities of developing a public information campaign with partners that identifies the benefits hunting provides to game and nongame wildlife management, as well as to Nebraskans themselves.

Metric
Campaigns, formation of Council, implementation of Education Plan

3.1.2 Investigate the possibilities of developing a Nebraska Wildlife Council.

 3.1.3 Continue to implement the Education Plan and expand hunting skills programs in state parks.





OVERVIEW OF PARKS



PARTICIPANTS

580,024

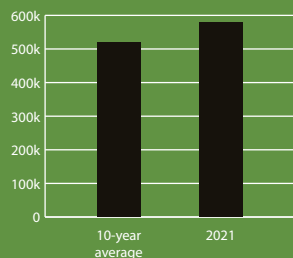
park entry permits sold in 2021¹



70% resident
30% nonresident

Approximately

Park entry permits sold



AMENITIES



8,519
campsites



243
cabins

62

lodge rooms



346
restrooms



66
shower houses



125
boat launch
facilities



ADA upgrades

have been made to campgrounds, vault latrines, shower houses, and playground equipment at various park areas across the state

RESOURCES

58 state recreation areas

10 state historical parks

78 state park areas

8 state parks

2 state
recreation
trails

Totaling 105,366 acres and 324 trail miles



151
full-time
employees



900
seasonal
employees

FUNDING

\$9.8
million
in camping
revenue

\$8.6
million
in park permits
revenue

\$7.4
million
in cabin
revenue

\$2
million
in activity
revenue

\$1.5
million
in resale and food
service revenue

\$1
million
in federal aid

DID YOU KNOW?

**100+ partner
organizations**

19 areas have a shooting
sports facility

45 areas allow hunting

63 areas have fishing
opportunities

**Over 300
programs annually**

including immersive community science and historical experiences, experiential classes and activities, and family entertainment including music, art, theater and food

¹Includes annual, duplicate and daily.



PARKS

This is the first time parks have been included as a component of the R3 plan in Nebraska. Parks have been added because of their importance as public gateways to the outdoors. They provide safe and diverse recreational and educational outdoor opportunities. They also are accessible and affordable and help build lifelong memories that perpetuate outdoor family traditions.

Recreational and educational opportunities available at parks related to the R3 effort include fishing, hunting, boating and shooting sports. These opportunities range from introductory to advanced. Facilities, amenities and activities/events that support or complement R3 efforts include boat ramps, fishing accesses, campgrounds, cabins, shooting ranges, outdoor skill activities, mentored hunts, public hunting blinds and more.

The parks component is starting from a different place than the hunting, fishing and shooting sports components of this R3 plan. A baseline understanding of our park visitors in Nebraska is important in order to move forward with R3 initiatives within our park system. Industry reports and recent park user survey results will provide some clarity to visitor participation, satisfaction, expectations, demographics and use patterns. In the future, more targeted data collection can be done to fill information gaps. This information will be a critical first step as we move forward with improving existing services and developing opportunities for measured growth.

Developing ambitious but realizable ways to improve diversity, equity and inclusion related to R3 efforts in our parks is important. Demographic data from our park users will be critical in fulfilling our commitment to provide access, outreach and opportunities for all.

The second immediate need is upgrading existing infrastructure to meet the current and future expectations of our visitors. A measured growth approach should be used when determining opportunities for new development. This approach should identify staffing needs and include a cost-benefit analysis, visitor capacity and short- and long-term management needs.

Retaining our new and returning participants in the outdoors is a great challenge. With the 2020 global pandemic, there was a national increase in outdoor participants in parks, with 53 percent of Americans ages 6 and older participating in outdoor recreation at least once. That is the highest percentage on record (2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report). In Nebraska, we saw an influx in our visitation and demand for outdoor recreation across the state. As participants return to pre-pandemic habits, we will work to retain those who chose to go outdoors and use our park spaces.

In the 2021 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Park User Survey, 88% of the visitors were likely to return for another visit. As park users revisit areas, we can further their knowledge, appreciation and skills in outdoor recreation. The parks section of this plan overlaps with every other component of the plan because there are elements in fishing, hunting, boating and shooting sports that are directly affected by our parks being accessible, functional spaces to recreate.



PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Immediate

- Develop and execute a baseline framework to understand who our parkgoers are, as well as their preferences and what they are looking for. *(Goal 1)*
- Invest in existing infrastructure to meet the needs of increased use within our park system through 2027. *(Goal 2)*

Primary

- Create and/or modify programming and activities that focus on stewardship of natural park environment and cultural resources. *(Goal 1)*
- Assess funding opportunities for parks to support recreational facilities and resources by 2027. *(Goal 3)*

Secondary

- Make efforts to ensure a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere for all visitors. *(Goal 1)*

Tertiary

- Diversify, expand and market camping and day-use opportunities to recruit new parkgoers by 2027. *(Goal 1)*
- Expand new and existing partnerships with public and private entities to provide measured growth of development of parks by 2027. *(Goal 1)*
- Expand our communication and outreach efforts to reach new parkgoers by 2027. *(Goal 3)*

GOAL 1
Increase and
reactivate
participants

GOAL 2
Retain participants

GOAL 3
Maintain support
for conservation and
outdoor recreation



With the 2020 global pandemic, there was a national increase in outdoor participants in parks, with 53% of Americans ages 6 and older participating in outdoor recreation at least once.

— 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report

GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Immediate Years 1-2

Target Audience

Resident and nonresident visitors of our parks

Metric

Permit system, park-user surveys, SCORP generalized survey, day-user reports

Priority Level **Timeframe**
Primary Years 2-3

Target Audience

Resident and nonresident users of all ages

Metric

Permit/reservation system, outreach tactics, Parks Relevancy Report

1.1 Objective: Develop and execute a baseline framework to understand who our parkgoers are, as well as preferences and what they are looking for

STRATEGIES



- 1.1.1 Develop and enhance existing processes for determining who our parkgoers are and what motivates them to visit our park areas.
- 1.1.2 Utilize agency survey efforts and the permit system to develop the baseline framework of outreach efforts in our parks through activities, programs, use, etc.

1.2 Objective: Create and/or modify programming and activities that focus on stewardship of natural park environment and cultural resources

STRATEGIES

- 1.2.1 Evaluate and prioritize educational efforts (environmental and recreation), natural- and cultural-interpretation programs, and related resources to measure impact of current offerings and determine the need for altered or additional programming.
- 1.2.2 Establish consistent education and interpretation training schedule for staff.
- 1.2.3 Target program needs for identified audiences.
- 1.2.4 Establish guest feedback system to identify educational impact and needs not being met.
- 1.2.5 Determine baseline programming needs for Parks.



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

1.3 Objective: Make efforts to ensure a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere for all visitors

STRATEGIES

- 1.3.1 Collaborate with internal and external workgroups to move forward in promoting our parks and services to broad audiences.
- 1.3.2 Continue to address Americans with Disabilities Act needs within the parks with new development and, whenever feasible, with existing amenities/services

Priority Level Secondary
Timeframe Years 3-4

Target Audience
Resident and nonresident visitors of our parks and ethnically and physically diverse groups ages 19+

Metric
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Education and other workgroup programming strategies; staff and public surveys; complaints regarding discrimination



GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience

Resident and nonresident campers ages 19+ by park type (state historical park, state recreation area, state park)

Metric

Use permit and reservation systems and evaluate difference in park permits in 2023 vs. 2027

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience






Community organizations/ members, concessionaires, and parkgoers — those who would be affected by those organizations and concessionaires

Metric

Partnership matrix, evaluation of events/level of involvement, assessment of new and existing partnerships and annual evaluation of concessionaire agreements




1.4 Objective: Diversify, expand and market camping and day-use opportunities to recruit new parkgoers by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  1.4.1 Inventory existing camping and day-use opportunities.
-  1.4.2 Establish guest feedback system to identify camping needs (use reservation system to pilot this).
-  1.4.3 Research industry reports and existing surveys regarding camping and day-use opportunities for perceptions of what our parkgoers want and are using within our state park system.
- 1.4.4 Identify up to four parks annually to develop new camping opportunities or improve existing services in a balanced statewide approach.
-  1.4.5 Assess fee structures to provide a balance of recreational opportunities for park visitors.
-  1.4.6 Create a plan for future development in target areas of the state to entice new visitors; this includes identifying under- and over-utilized park areas.

1.5 Objective: Expand new and existing partnerships with public and private entities to provide measured growth of development of parks by 2027

STRATEGIES

- 1.5.1 Create a matrix with specific criterion to measure successful partnerships.
- 1.5.2 Identify partners to include marginalized, excluded or historically ignored groups.
-  1.5.3 Increase partnership programming that occurs in and for state parks, including events outside of state parks to drive people to state parks.
-  1.5.4 Evaluate concessionaire agreements on an annual basis to ensure compliance with contracts and the ability to meet the Commission's operational standards.
-  1.5.5 Share successful partnership examples with staff to show how partnerships are established, created and maintained.



GOAL 2

Retain participants

2.1 Objective: Invest in existing infrastructure to meet the needs of increased use within our parks through 2027

STRATEGIES

2.1.1 Implement auto-renewal options for park permit customers in permit system.



2.1.2 Identify priority projects and an action plan for project infrastructure upgrades in every region within our park system.

2.1.3 Update or upgrade current campsites to proper design needed for new RVs entering the camping market, including ADA accessibility.

2.1.4 Identify staffing matrix throughout the state to adequately operate and maintain the parks and enhanced amenities.

Priority Level
Immediate

Timeframe
Years 2-5

Target Audience
New and existing parkgoers

Metric
Utilize results from SCORP, park-user surveys, industry reports and infrastructure assessments to determine upgrades;
evaluate percentage of upgrades completed and those that are planned by 2027



GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

Priority Level
Primary

Timeframe
Years 3-4

Target Audience
New and existing parkgoers

Metric
Marketing platforms, reservation system, permit system, park events, expos and community events

3.1 Objective: Assess funding opportunities for parks to support recreational facilities and resources by 2027

STRATEGIES

- 3.1.1 Assess current and potential funding sources.
- 3.1.2 Increase overall annual and daily park permit sales by 2% for residents and nonresidents by 2027.
- 3.1.3 Identify which projects need additional funding sources, such as infrastructure or staffing.
- 3.1.4 Identify new funding sources to provide needed match on enhanced federal funding by 2027.
- 3.1.5 Determine feasibility of hiring additional staff to assist with successful implementation of R3 efforts by 2027.



- 3.1.6 Work to gain legislative support for continuation of Capital Maintenance Fund.






GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.2 Objective: Expand our communication and outreach efforts to reach new parkgoers by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  3.2.1 Identify our current audience. Develop method for collecting information, including contact information, through permit and reservation systems and surveys to understand demographics, preferences, expectations and motivations of our visitors.
- 3.2.2 Develop messaging for specific areas of the state to provide information about the opportunities that exist within our outdoor spaces and historical parks inclusive of diverse communities.
-  3.2.3 Conduct or review existing marketing research study to identify user needs, values and preferences.
- 3.2.4 Focus on meeting the communication needs of existing audiences through offering information in multiple languages and determining the needs of existing audiences to address.
- 3.2.5 Diversify how camping and day-use activities are marketed to different demographics to identified target audiences we are not reaching now.
-  3.2.6 Develop guidance/training for staff about how to market events on multiple platforms.
- 3.2.7 Communicate programs and activities to formal and informal educators, such as volunteers, civic groups, public schools and student teachers.
- 3.2.8 Increase online access to park entry permit purchase opportunities.

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 4-5

Target Audience
Existing and potential parkgoers

Metric
Marketing platforms, reservation system, sport shows, expos, permit system, park-user surveys, community surveys, SCORP, etc.; incorporate demographic information into permit and reservation systems to analyze the number of ethnically diverse populations we're serving through reservations/permits



OVERVIEW OF SHOOTING SPORTS

PARTICIPANTS

126,000

average number of target shooting participants¹

RESOURCES

39 target shooting ranges

Game and Parks manages 28 of them

12 firearm ranges

27 archery ranges

PROGRAMS



290

schools with over 25,000 students participated in 2021

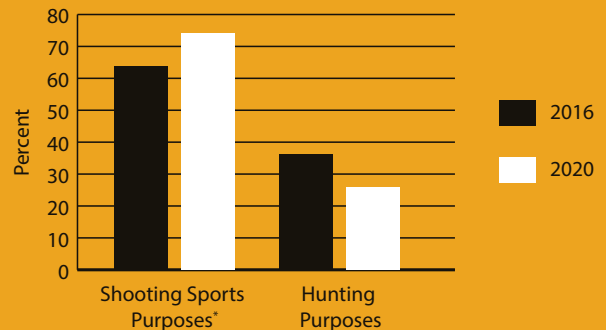


2,451

Cornhusker Trap Shoot participants on average²

FUNDING

Proportions of Excise Taxes Generated by Hunting and Shooting Sports Activities



*These purchases are meant for target shooting, nonmilitary or law enforcement work-related purposes, collectors, gifts (some of which might be intended for hunting) and self- and home-protection purposes.

DID YOU KNOW?

29%

of Black and Hispanic target shooters are new to target shooting³

44%

of recreational shooters do not hunt

45%

of adult Nebraskans live in a household with a firearm⁴

¹2016-2020 NSGA Shooting Sports Participation Reports ²NGPC News Archives ³2020 NSSF Shooting Participation Report ⁴Rand Corporation State-level estimates of household firearm ownership



SHOOTING SPORTS

Shooting sports and recreational target shooting have become increasingly popular in Nebraska and across the country. More Americans participated in recreational target shooting than in the sports of golf, soccer, baseball or tackle football, individually, in 2019 (National Sporting Goods Association, 2021).

Nebraska Game and Parks recognizes its role in shooting range development as important supporting this sport, as well as hunting, and in 2012, developed “A Plan for Meeting the Shooting Range Needs of Nebraska.”

Since 2012, Game and Parks has opened new range facilities in Lincoln, Ponca State Park, Platte River SP, Wildcat Hills SRA, Chadron SP, Killdeer Wildlife Management Area and several other areas. The focus at these facilities has been on education, as well as public recreation opportunities; thousands of recreational target shooting and shooting sports participants have used them. Over the next five years, several more shooting ranges are planned, including at Cedar Valley WMA, Buffalo Bill SRA, Indian Cave SP and Calamus SRA.

Key challenges to providing recreational target shooting opportunities for hunters and recreational participants in Nebraska are the inability to communicate with customers and to track participation. To better understand participation, we rely on National Shooting Sports Foundation survey estimates for Nebraska. To help determine the demand of recreational target shooting and the needs of Nebraska’s outdoorsmen and women, we need to better track key information on shooting sports participants at Commission archery and shooting ranges.

Another key challenge is providing safe and convenient shooting range facilities for our hunters and recreational target shooters. Research provided by Southwick and Associates suggests recreational target shooters stop participating once the distance to shooting range facilities exceeds 50 miles. A focus on further determining the needs of Nebraska hunters and recreational target shooters is paramount to supporting the growth of these activities.

A secondary challenge to advancing the shooting sports and recreational target shooting participation in Nebraska is funding. While federal Pittman-Robertson funds can now provide a 90% match for the development of new and enhancement of existing shooting ranges, there is not a sustainable state funding framework that supports the match needed to access federal funds for shooting range development. The exploration and establishment of a funding framework to access these federal dollars is a pivotal component of this plan.

An immediate need is analyzing the need for a statewide shooting range coordinator to determine current shooting range needs and amend the Nebraska Shooting Range Plan. While the Commission has made great progress in developing new firearm and archery shooting ranges in areas across Nebraska, we recognize this is not a sustainable model to achieve the objectives outlined in this plan without additional staff to increase our capacity.

Several shooting sports objectives outlined in this plan require collaboration and consideration of the hunting and parks components. Hunters require shooting ranges to practice skills to ethically and confidently harvest game, and some hunters begin their journeys through participation in shooting sports. State parks have served as a functional and ideal location for the development of new shooting ranges, and we foresee their involvement in shooting range development and educational programming as important in achieving many components of this plan.



PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Immediate

- Analyze the need for hiring a statewide shooting range/shooting sports coordinator position to manage, develop and expand public archery and shooting ranges in Nebraska. *(Goal 1)*

Primary

- Determine the recreational target shooting demand and needs of Nebraska's hunters, anglers and parkgoers by 2027. *(Goal 1)*
- Implement a method for tracking key information on recreational target shooters and shooting sports participants at Commission facilities by 2024. *(Goal 2)*
- Increase target shooting range access for Nebraska hunters in all Commission districts by 2027. *(Goal 2)*

Secondary

- Increase the number of schools that participate in the National Archery in Schools Program by 25% by 2027. *(Goal 1)*

Tertiary

- Increase the number of annual archery target shooters by 10% by 2027. *(Goal 1)*
- Educate the target audiences on the benefits of recreational shooting and shooting sports to conservation. *(Goal 3)*

GOAL 1
Increase and reactivate participants

GOAL 2
Retain participants

GOAL 3
Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation



Across the country, more Americans participated in recreational target shooting than in the sports of golf, soccer, baseball or tackle football, individually, in 2019.

— National Sporting Goods Association, 2021

GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

Priority Level
Immediate

Timeframe
Year 1

Target Audience
Administration

Metric
Current staffing and shooting range objectives evaluation

Priority Level
Primary

Timeframe
Years 1-5

Target Audience
Nebraska hunters, Nebraska anglers, Nebraska parkgoers, and underserved populations

Metric
Survey results of strategy 1.2.1







1.1 Objective: Analyze the need for hiring a statewide shooting range/shooting sports coordinator position to manage, develop and expand public archery and shooting ranges in Nebraska

STRATEGIES

1.1.1 Work with Administration to review priorities, current staff capacity and budget priorities to determine the potential for additional staff support.

1.2 Objective: Determine the recreational target shooting demand and needs of Nebraska's hunters, anglers and parkgoers by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  1.2.1 Survey Nebraska's outdoor recreationists, including underserved populations, to understand their needs and barriers to recreational target shooting and shooting sports participation.
-  1.2.2 Review and revise the Nebraska shooting range plan.
-  1.2.3 Identify public shooting range facility staff needs and expand where possible to manage, operate and implement programming at new and existing shooting ranges.
-  1.2.4 Assess what we have and identify the need to create additional information resources for target shooters.
-  1.2.5 Enhance introductory to mid-level shooting sports programs and resources across Commission facilities and its website.
- 1.2.6 Develop new industry partners to promote and provide opportunities to their customers through Commission facilities.
-  1.2.7 Expand educational shotgun hunting sports programming.




GOAL 1

Increase and reactivate participants

1.3 Objective: Increase the number of schools that participate in NASP by 25% by 2027

STRATEGIES

- 1.3.1 Identify regional archery liaisons to recruit and train teachers and schools, including staff and/or volunteers.
- 1.3.2 Assist archery clubs and NASP schools and clubs in providing archery shooting opportunities outside of the NASP curriculum.
-  1.3.3 Establish NASP archery standards targets and opportunities at current and new Commission archery ranges.





Priority Level Secondary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience
Nebraska schools that do not currently participate in NASP

Metric
Number of NASP schools 2027

1.4 Objective: Increase the number of annual archery target shooters by 10% by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  1.4.1 Develop up to six new archery ranges or educational archery range facilities in key state parks, recreation areas and urban locations to be operated by Commission staff and/or partner organizations.
- 1.4.2 Establish an archery range grant program to fund archery range enhancement and public access at club-style ranges.
-  1.4.3 Increase the capacity for developing trained archery instructors at all skill levels.
-  1.4.4 Create procedures and guidelines for Commission staff training to establish consistency and efficacy in educational archery programming.
-  1.4.5 Promote existing archery ranges and expand archery education and outreach programs for women and underserved audiences where evaluation suggests successes.
- 1.4.6 Provide prioritized partners with archery equipment and coach training for public use within communities, including recreation centers, nongovernmental organizations and 4-H.
- 1.4.7 Develop relationships with and provide resources to Nebraska colleges to develop USA Archery Collegiate Archery Programs.

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience
Current archery target shooters, new archery target shooters, and Nebraska bowhunters

Metric
Mean number of archery target shooters from 2023 to 2027

GOAL 2

Retain participants

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-2

Target Audience

Recreational target shooters and shooting sports participants

Metric

Evaluation: Achievement of strategy 2.1.1

Priority Level Primary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience


Nebraska hunters

Metric

Baseline: Current target shooting ranges;
Evaluation: Target shooting ranges in 2027





2.1 Objective: Implement a method for tracking key information on recreational target shooters and shooting sports participants at Commission facilities by 2024

STRATEGIES

-  2.1.1 Develop a uniform method for tracking recreational target shooting and shooting sports participation at Commission archery and shooting range facilities.

2.2 Objective: Increase target shooting range access for Nebraska hunters in all Commission districts by 2027

STRATEGIES

-  2.2.1 Review and revise the Nebraska shooting range plan.
-  2.2.2 Identify public shooting range facility staff needs and expand where possible to manage, operate and implement programming at new and existing shooting ranges.
-  2.2.3 Develop up to six new archery ranges or educational archery range facilities in key state parks, recreation areas and urban locations to be operated by Commission staff and/or partner organizations.
- 2.2.4 Establish a shooting range grant program to fund shooting range enhancement and public access at club-style ranges.
- 2.2.5 Partner with private ranges to provide greater hunter access opportunities before season openings, including shotgun patterning, clay shooting and rifle/pistol sight-in.
-  2.2.6 Assess what we have and identify the need to create additional information resources for target shooters.



GOAL 3

Maintain support for conservation and outdoor recreation

3.1 Objective: Educate the target audiences on the benefits of recreational shooting and shooting sports to conservation

STRATEGIES

3.1.1 In cooperation with partners, develop messages that educate the public on our funding model and the benefits that hunters and target shooters provide for conservation.

Priority Level Tertiary
Timeframe Years 1-5

Target Audience
General public and target shooters

Metric
Achievement of strategy 3.1.1



IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is key to the success of Nebraska’s R3 initiatives. It is important to create an annual implementation strategy to ensure actions are taken. Without it, the strategic goals remain unactionable and unobtainable. Focusing on the immediate recommendations and priorities of the plan will move R3 efforts forward in a manner consistent of the desired outcomes identified in the goals created for the plan. The first step is to implement the objectives and strategies and then evaluate them to determine if the target audiences and metrics identified in the plan are met. To implement this plan, the objectives and strategies will be turned into a step-by-step process that is evaluated on an annual basis. This does not need to be lengthy and can be a group of spreadsheets and charts that outline the information on the next page. It should be concise and to the point covering the strategies of focus for that given year.

Annual implementation has several steps:

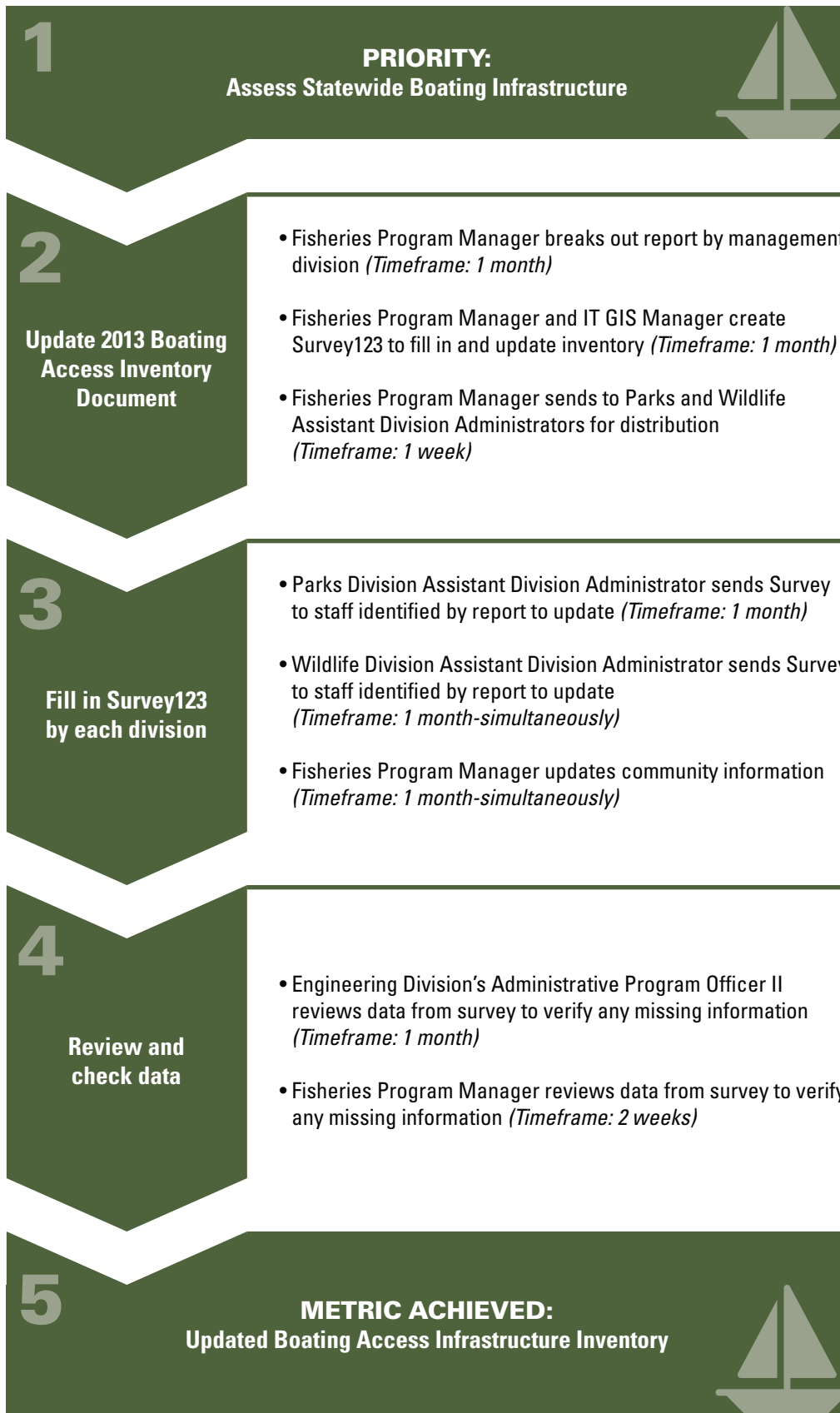
1. Understand the work. Identify the priorities that will be addressed for that year.
2. Identify the specific tasks and subtasks from the operational planning document that will allow us to reach the identified priorities for that year. Assign roles and responsibilities to staff and/or partners to ensure a clear picture of what needs to be done and by whom.
3. Identify **all** the resources that need to be allocated for the plan to make sure it can be executed. This includes financial resources, materials and staffing and the details of how materials will be procured, etc.
4. Create a schedule to track progress for the objectives/strategies that keeps all stakeholders in the loop. The milestones identified will ensure that forward movement is occurring.
5. Reiterate the metrics that were determined in the plan that identify success.
6. Include a contingency plan to ensure staff knows how to deal with the issues that could come up, such as budgetary increases, not enough resources or deadlines that cannot be met. This allows for staff to ensure they won’t get off-track when the challenges arise.

To ensure success of R3 efforts, the Commission must be ready to support implementation and provide the necessary tools and resources to complete annual implementation. It will be important to make an annual plan, but it will be just as important to know how to take actions to adapt and, if necessary, change. There could be factors outside of the control of staff or the agency that can significantly alter the schedule or success of objectives, strategies and actions outlined. Creating emergent strategies ahead of time to ensure derailment does not occur will build a culture of flexibility, agility and fast action to meet the R3 goals of Nebraska.



Operational plans for each section of the plan will outline action items and tasks that must be completed to accomplish the objectives and strategies of the R3 Plan.

Example of Annual Implementation



EVALUATION

Evaluation should be a component of all programs, initiatives, strategies, objectives and goals regarding R3 efforts in Nebraska. Currently, attempts to quantify the efforts made have focused primarily around evaluations directly after a program or event. This can provide a bias due to the timing of the evaluation, most likely a positive response because the program/event is still fresh in the mind of the participant. Efforts must go beyond this to determine if the agency is moving the needle forward with recruiting, retaining and reactivating recreationists.

It's as important to study and compare recreationists that are actively participating in the programs and people who are not participating to determine if R3 programs are having a positive impact. Recent research suggests the agency should consider factors like churn and license/permit sales of individuals who have taken part in the R3 program/event against a similar ("look-alike") group that did not participate in the program/event, to identify the impact of the program/event generated on the program/event participants. Evaluation takes time and resources (staff and financial), but it is invaluable in determining the effectiveness of efforts being made. Also, some programs may have a long-term goal that cannot be evaluated after one year of programs or efforts.

A study done through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), which Nebraska participated in, identified that the majority of R3 efforts were not designed to overcome the barriers to participation influencing a target audience. Instead, the efforts were designed according to perceptions, expectations or personal experiences of the program administrator and not by the target audience's needs, desires or preferences. It is important, then, for the agency to research why a target audience is not participating and then use this information to develop tactics and education elements that can be evaluated to determine effectiveness.

The outcomes the agency wants should be what is evaluated. While satisfaction levels of the program provide information about the specific program and the experience the participant had, it doesn't necessarily indicate that the participant will continue with that activity now that a program is done.

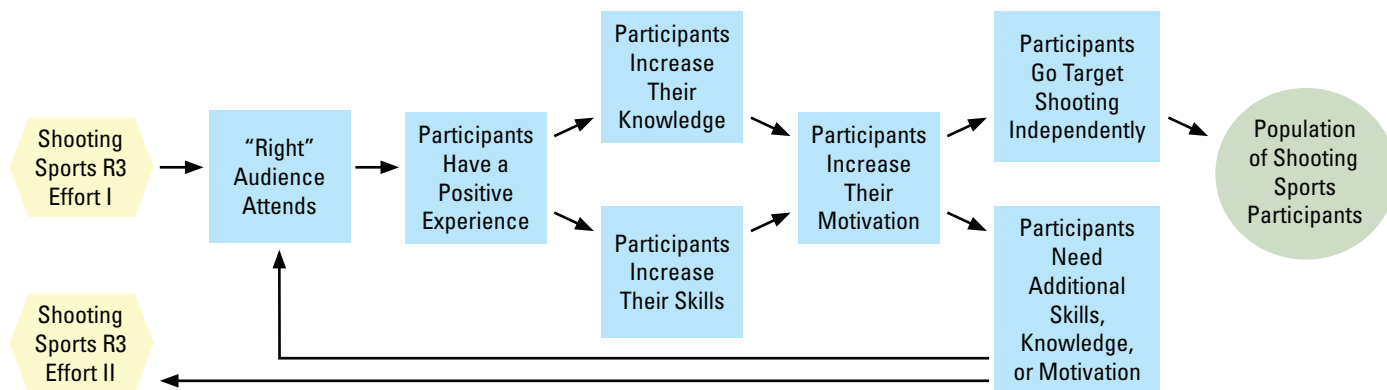


'If an R3 effort/strategy is created without understanding the audience and their barriers to participation, it may deliver an experience that is enjoyable, but one that does not ultimately address the audience's needs and may not motivate them to become independent participants.'

— Natural Pathways; A project of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies North American Conservation Education Strategy

The AFWA study provides an excellent resource on how to gauge R3 efforts that shows that each step of the process of a program/event has a result due to the step before it. Results-based logic models (result chains) are something the agency should consider employing when developing programs/events and the outcomes to be achieved. Looking at a program/event in an “if, then” chain allows the agency to determine if the program/event is achieving the desired outcome. If one of these steps is not successful or is missing, the results will be less likely achievable and the opportunity of increasing an audience’s participation could remain unrealized. The basic result chain can serve as a starting point for R3 implementers to design, plan and evaluate numerous types of R3 efforts.

Basic shooting sports R3 effort results chain



Source: “Natural Pathways, A Project of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies North American Conservation Education Strategy”

A good evaluation method starts at the design of the R3 activity/strategy. The following steps should be considered as the evaluation method:

1. Identify target audiences (once you’ve looked at participants/nonparticipants).
2. Determine barriers to the target audience.
3. Develop result chain.
4. Identify results desired (e.g., target audience attendance, participants have positive experience, participants increase their knowledge and skills, etc.).
5. Create objectives for the desired results (e.g., X% of participants who attended class represent the target audience, X% indicated they had a positive experience, X% indicates their skills increased, etc.).
6. Create a survey that asks questions that are related to the objectives created for the activity/event/strategy.
7. Analyze data to determine if activity/strategy should continue, be modified or remain the same.
8. Evaluate methods annually and modify as necessary.

GLOSSARY

Activity: Participation in a defined outdoor recreational opportunity.

Active User: An individual who currently participates in one of the five sections of this plan.

Aquatic Habitat Program: Fee added to each fishing permit to improve in-lake habitat and access across the state.

Auto-renewal: A voluntary option that allows individuals to automatically renew select permits and stamps on an annual basis.

Avidity: Person who purchased a permit three or more times in four years.

BOW: Becoming an Outdoors-Woman programs

Campers: Overnight guests at our park areas.

Churn Rate: The percentage/proportion of hunters, anglers, park visitors or recreational shooters that do not renew licenses/permits each year.

Communications Strategy: An organized plan for communicating a targeted message to a specific group of people.

Community Fishing Education: Program that centers around inviting the general public to water bodies to learn about aquatic resources and fishing.

Day-users: Users who visit the park for a particular period of time, but do not stay overnight.

DJ: Dingell-Johnson federal funding provided by purchasers of fishing equipment that is collected through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and distributed back to the states in a controlled and deliberate grant framework often referenced as the Sport Fish Restoration program.

Diversity: The inclusion of different demographics of people in outdoor activities in an equitable way.

Ethnically and Physically Diverse: Ability to serve the outdoor interests of a variety of cultural groups, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, mobility and sensory limitations, language, age, disability, gender, and sexual orientation.

Event: Scheduled activity that targets a specific group of people for a measured outcome.

Full-service Campgrounds: Campgrounds that have enhanced or additional amenities and facilities nearby (e.g., marina, food, programs, activities, water, trash, dog park, electrical, pull-through sites, playgrounds, internet access, shower house, restrooms, etc.).

Hunter Education: A legislatively mandated education program required for any hunter, ages 12-29, who hunts any game with a firearm or air gun, or hunts for deer, elk, antelope or mountain sheep with bow and arrow or crossbow.

Inclusion: Managing programming to ensure a diverse representation of outdoor enthusiasts.

Interpretative Programs: Programs using a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.

Lapsed Participant: An individual who purchased a license the previous year but did not purchase one the following year.

Lapse Rate: The rate at which outdoor enthusiasts purchase a license/permit one year and do not purchase a license/permit the following year.

Lost License Holder: An individual whose license has lapsed for more than one year.

Marketing Campaign: A combined communication effort that may include some or all: marketing (advertising, email, direct mail, web), social media, education/outreach, media (newspaper, magazine, TV, radio, online) to a targeted group for a specific outcome.

Marketing Effort: A singular action to inform and/or educate a targeted group regarding an activity, event, program or key message that may or may not be part of a marketing campaign.

Metric: Form of measurement of success (goals accomplished) of activity, event or program.

New License Holder: An individual who has purchased a license/permit in the current year but had not purchased a license in the five previous years from the timeframe being referenced.

NGO: Nongovernmental organization

Nonresident: Any individual who is not a permanent resident of Nebraska.

Nontraditional Audience: A demographic group that has not been a large part of the traditional participant demographic.

Operational Plan: An action plan that outlines the steps to be taken to meet the strategies, objectives and goals outlined in the R3 Plan.

Outdoor Discovery Programs (ODP): A scholastic program designed to provide schools in grades 4-6, outdoor education opportunities regionally at a state park, historical park or recreation area.

Outdoor Skills Programs: A program that offers knowledge, skills and/or hands-on experience to learn or improve skills in a variety of outdoor pursuits.

Parks Relevancy Report: A report created to inform programming needs and barriers.

Paddlecraft: A general term for manual-powered watercraft such as canoes, kayaks and paddle boards.

PR: Pittman-Robertson federal funding provided by purchasers of firearms, ammunition and archery equipment that is collected through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and distributed back to the states in a controlled and deliberate grant framework commonly referred to as Wildlife Restoration funding.

Program: A series of scheduled educational events that targets a specific group of people for a measured outcome.

Public Access: Private or public lands that are publicly accessible, including state, federal, conservation partner and Open Fields and Waters program lands.

R3 - Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation of outdoor users.

Recruitment: First time participating in an outdoor activity spanning awareness, interest and trial.

Retention: Individuals who have experienced a trial, made the decision to continue pursuing the activity and/or may have been participating in the activity for some time.

Reactivation: Describes a process in which an individual who has lapsed in their participation for a period of time due to a variety of reasons starts the activity again.

R3 Task Force: A working group made up of Commission, nongovernmental organizations and University of Nebraska-Lincoln representatives tasked with assisting and advising the Commission's hunter, angler and shooting sports recruitment, retention and reactivation efforts.

Resident: Any individual that has lived in Nebraska continuously for 30 days and intends to permanently live in the state.

Reactivated Participant: An individual who, after lapsing for some period of time, participates again.

Recruitment Rate: The number of new participants of an outdoor activity in a given year.

Retained License Holder: An individual who purchased a license during the previous and current years.

Retention Rate: The rate at which outdoor enthusiasts purchase licenses/permits in back-to-back years.

SCORP: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Shooting Range: A staffed or unstaffed facility designed with the specific intention of safely allowing recreational target shooting.

Shooting Sports: Activities that engage shooters in an organized manner for the purpose of shooting recreation, competition or skill building.

Recreational Shooting: Shooting activities, such as general target shooting, hunting practice, etc., that are not organized

SHP: State Historical Park

SP: State Park

SRA: State Recreation Area

Target Audience: A group of people that an event, program or effort is intended to reach to meet an objective.

Underrepresented Groups: A demographic group with representation in an activity lower than their representation in the overall population.

Underserved Population: A demographic that has not received services in proportion to its representation in a geographic area.

Urban Fisheries Improvements: Program that addresses enhancement needs of lakes and ponds located within urban areas (greater than 20,000 population).

USFWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

WMA: Wildlife Management Area

WSFR: Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. A bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act to enhance the funds available for grants to states for fish and wildlife conservation projects, and to increase opportunities for recreational hunting, bow hunting, trapping, archery and fishing by eliminating chances for waste, fraud, abuse, maladministration, unauthorized expenditures for administration and implementation of those acts, and for other purposes.



NEXT STEPS

The endeavor to remain relevant with Nebraska's public and guests is a priority for us. To ensure that future generations have opportunities to discover and enjoy the outdoors is paramount in meeting the mission of our organization. Outlining the major objectives to recruit, retain and reactivate outdoor enthusiasts and the strategies to meet those priorities will improve the quality of life of our citizens.

Once this plan is adopted, operational plans will be written that provide the more detailed task list of actions that will be taken to meet the priorities outlined for the next five years. Different actions will then start to move forward within the daily operations of the agency. Annual evaluation will take place and be reported to the Commission. Success will only occur if all staff engage in implementing this plan. We will move forward and take action guided by this plan. We may make mistakes, but we will learn from our experiences which will get us closer to our goal of providing outdoor opportunities that embrace the beauty and wonder of Nebraska's natural resources to a large part of the public.

OutdoorNebraska.org

