

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT



FORGING THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN





Mission

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

Vision

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is dedicated to conserving, enhancing and protecting Wyoming's exceptional fish and wildlife resources and the habitats that support them. We will work with and for the public to provide a wide array of fish and wildlife experiences.



'(Wildlife) means everything... You get the rolling hills and the beautiful sunsets, and you get beautiful wildlife that not everybody gets to see right in your backyard.'
—Gillette resident



The wild animals of Wyoming are woven into the fabric of the state. Our connection to wild places, fish and wildlife is fundamental to the quality of life. Perhaps it is seeing a herd of pronghorn dashing across the plains; catching a glimpse of a cutthroat trout breaching the surface of a clear, cool stream; knowing the elusive black-footed ferret is making a stand against extinction here; listening to the booming of male sage grouse in April announcing the Spring; or the bugling of bull elk in September calling the summer to a close. And 1/3 of our citizens hunt, 1/2 fish and 2/3 go wildlife watching – among the very highest rates in the nation - Wyoming is wildlife - it is who we are.

The people of Wyoming enjoy wildlife in a variety of ways. **Whether we hunt, fish, trap, view, photograph, eat wild game, own a business that serves wildlife users or perhaps all of the above, we in Wyoming share an intrinsic love of fish and wildlife.** Wyoming citizens demonstrate over and over that they care about preserving, perpetuating, and managing this natural resource.

In the research done for this plan, when Game and Fish asked residents why they valued fish and wildlife they used the words lifestyle, heritage, legacy, health, science, education, identity, and



'Wyoming is wildlife, whether you're hunting or out taking pictures or just going out to watch. ... That's just a big part of Wyoming and being here. It's not just the hunting and the killing. It's important that we conserve it all.'

—Rock Springs resident

fun. Residents also made it crystal clear that fish and wildlife add economic value. And they are right. Fish and wildlife is, roughly, a billion dollar industry supporting 9,600 jobs each year.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department manages more than 800 species for the benefit of all citizens of Wyoming. We inherited this outstanding conservation heritage from those who did the work before us and there have been many successes. We have realized the initial vision of abundant and diverse wildlife on Wyoming's wild landscapes. But, we have not done this work on our own. Credit goes to the effective partnership between citizens and employees. However, the desire to continually improve has not changed and, happily, we all share that aim. The legacy of conservation and the careful use of Wyoming's wildlife is as strong as ever. **We are grateful to the hundreds of Wyoming citizens and agency staff who helped create this plan by attending meetings, completing surveys, volunteering ideas, and importantly, by encouraging us to look forward into the future so we can make wise decisions today.** Now, it is everyone's chance to pass on the legacy to future generations.

CONSERVING WILDLIFE

We will work to ensure viable populations of Wyoming's fish and wildlife

GOAL

Protect fish and wildlife by providing effective and efficient management and law enforcement

Strategies

- Prevent, mitigate and research the impacts of fish and wildlife diseases.
- Expand and embrace the use of technology to increase effectiveness and efficiency in fish and wildlife management, law enforcement and forensic science.
- Expand the use of sound science and data as the foundation for fish and wildlife management planning.
- Enhance safety for those living, working and recreating around wildlife and on Wyoming's waterways.

GOAL

Conserve and protect diverse and sustainable habitat for fish and wildlife

Strategies

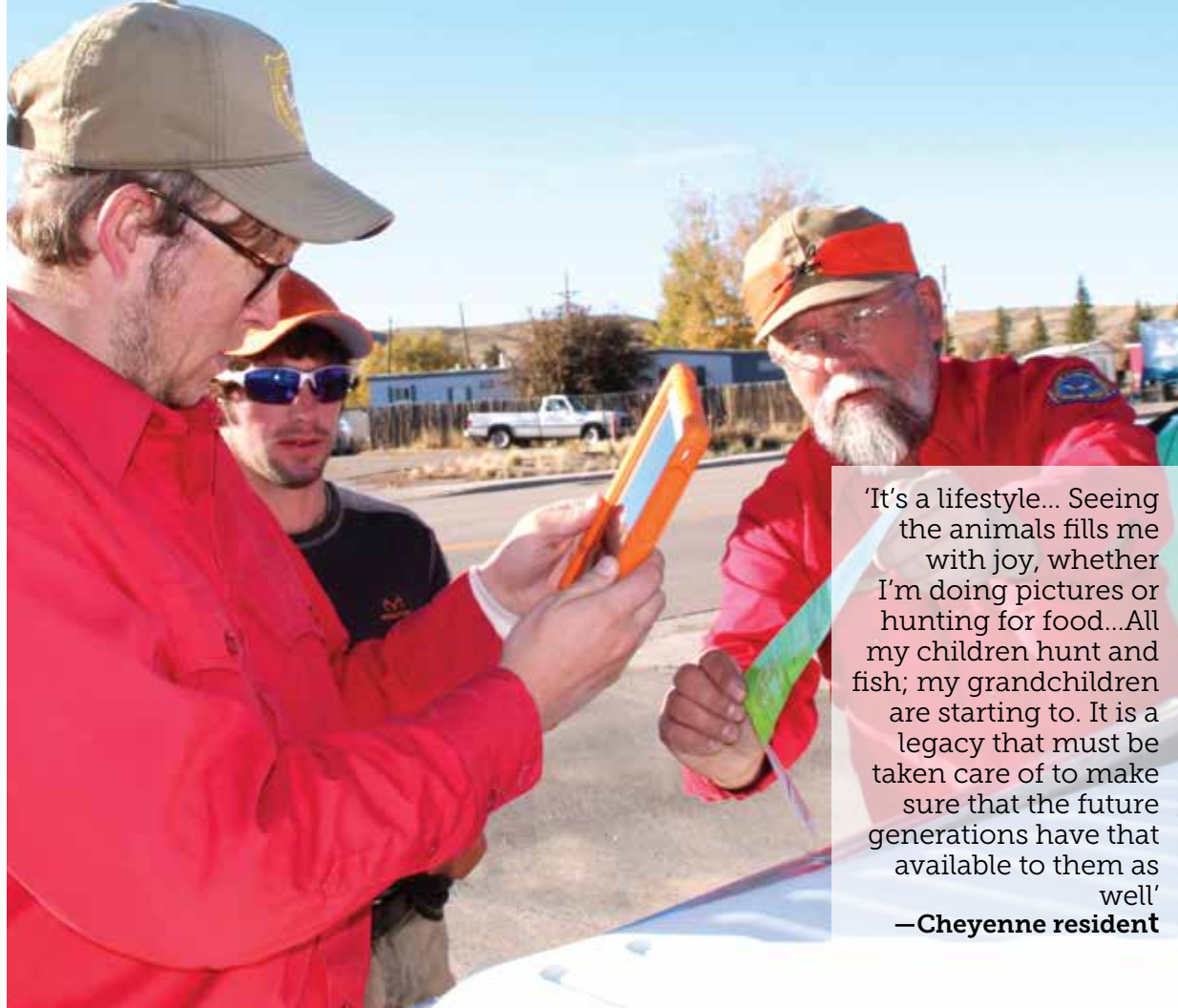
- Further habitat protection, enhancement and restoration on Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.
- Conserve, enhance and protect fish and wildlife migrations.
- Maintain, enhance and develop partnerships with private landowners and other stakeholders to benefit fish and wildlife conservation and sustainable use.
- Identify, secure, and enhance priority fish and wildlife habitats for native species.

GOAL

Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Wyoming

Strategies

- Seek opportunities to improve the efficiency and continuity of the state's aquatic invasive species program.
- Facilitate the development of coordinated responses to new invasive species.
- Establish partnerships to develop and implement comprehensive programs to prevent, decrease or eliminate invasive species while diversifying funding for these programs.
- Reduce dependence on importing fish.

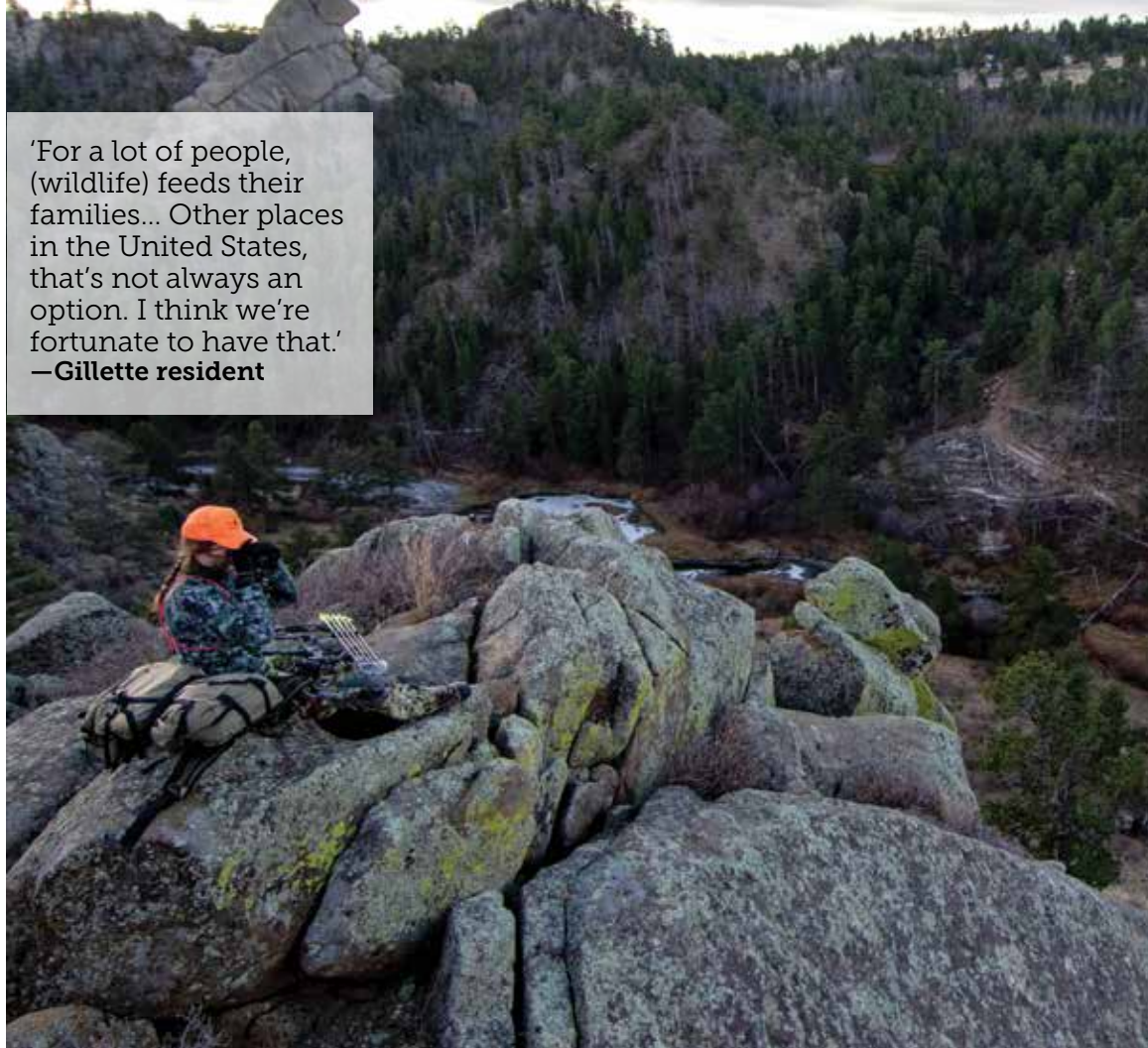


'It's a lifestyle... Seeing the animals fills me with joy, whether I'm doing pictures or hunting for food...All my children hunt and fish; my grandchildren are starting to. It is a legacy that must be taken care of to make sure that the future generations have that available to them as well'
—Cheyenne resident





'For a lot of people, (wildlife) feeds their families... Other places in the United States, that's not always an option. I think we're fortunate to have that.'
—Gillette resident



SERVING PEOPLE

We will work to enhance, maintain, and develop partnerships by engaging, informing and listening to those that enjoy Wyoming's fish and wildlife

GOAL

Improve communications, outreach and education to foster appreciation, engagement and understanding of fish and wildlife conservation

Strategies

- Facilitate advancements in communicating with the public, partners and stakeholders using email and social media as well as other new techniques in the future.
- Use education to improve public understanding of the role we all play in conservation and management of all fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- Embrace processes to improve citizen participation, build relationships and partnerships.
- Enhance the department's ability to quantify and utilize public input when making management decisions.

GOAL

Encourage and promote diverse fish and wildlife-based experiences for all users

Strategies

- Secure and enhance access to Wyoming's fish and wildlife resources.
- Support and facilitate activities and opportunities for hunting, angling, and trapping.
- Promote quality and diverse fish and wildlife-based experiences other than hunting, fishing and trapping.

GOAL

Ensure the long-term effectiveness of the agency by inspiring and empowering a highly motivated workforce and securing sustainable funding.

Strategies

- Continually improve communications within the agency.
- Provide opportunities for professional and leadership development, continuing education, mentoring and formal job sharing/cross training to ensure workforce effectiveness and succession planning.
- Maintain fiscal stewardship, efficiency, and accountability and ensure budgets support priority programs.
- Develop innovative ideas and engage stakeholders in a broad conversation about new fish and wildlife funding.
- Evaluate and facilitate balanced workloads across the agency, which provide both adequate coverage for public service priorities and workloads that allow employees to reach maximum performance.

Forging the Future

People who care and good ideas: A winning combination

This plan builds upon Wyoming's long partnership between inspiring conservationists, the recreation community and agency employees in Wyoming. Here is how our department used this foundation to build this plan.

First, there was an extensive look at what is working well for Wyoming's fish and wildlife management and what can be improved. This preparation work involved ten focus groups, a scientifically rigorous telephone survey of over 3,000 stakeholders, a survey of over 300 employees, an Internet discussion group, and



'When I think about the importance of wildlife, it's very important. It's one of the reasons we moved to Wyoming... I think it's a huge part of the healthy living in Wyoming.'
—Riverton resident

ten public meetings hosted throughout the state. In short, before a word was written for this plan hundreds of stakeholders had their say about aspirations and concerns.

A team of Game and Fish staff combined the results from the public with their own real-world, on-the-ground practical experience to draft this plan for submission to the Game and Fish Commission. After taking in their own public comments the Commission voted to approve the plan. What you are reading is the combined wisdom of citizens, agency professionals, and the department's leadership team to answer the question, "Where should we prioritize our work to ensure a sustainable future for a fish and wildlife resource that benefits all Wyoming citizens?"

What we heard from you

Substantial research supported development of this plan. Providing insight about what is on the minds of Wyoming people, here are some key insights from the research.

Research Question: How many Wyoming citizens hunt and fish and do other kinds of outdoor recreation?

Answer: A lot! Wyoming is blessed with citizens who use and appreciate the state's outdoor recreation opportunities.

In the last five years:

- 30% of our citizens hunted
- 48% went fishing
- 21% went canoeing or kayaking
- 65% went wildlife viewing
- 74% went hiking
- 67% went camping

It is clear, Wyoming citizens like to play in the outdoors!

Research Question: How satisfied are our customers with the Department?

Answer: Quite satisfied. 90% say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the Department. Wyoming citizens are pleased with the agency's performance.



Research Question: What do citizens think about the need for a discussion on funding the future of fish and wildlife?

Answer: Most would like to have that discussion. 78% say this is a discussion they would like elected officials to have. Citizens view fish and wildlife as a good investment.

Research Question: What functions of Game and Fish do citizens think are most important?

Answer: The top six are:

- Law enforcement
- Aquatic invasive species
- Wildlife habitat management areas
- Managing hunted species
- Hunter education
- Improving habitats

Research Question: What else did the research tell us?

Answer: Here are other key conclusions from the public opinion research:

- “Game and Fish enjoys high levels of support and satisfaction among residents and also has high credibility ratings among the Wyoming public.”
- “In general, the main outputs of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department—healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitat, and quality fish and wildlife-related recreational opportunities—are regarded by Wyoming residents as extremely important.”
- “...there is much evidence to suggest that the health of the state's fish and wildlife resources and the continued availability of unique wildlife-related outdoor recreational opportunities contribute substantially to the overall quality of life in Wyoming.”
- “With strong ratings from residents in terms of credibility, program priorities, and current performance, there is no overwhelming mandate for Game and Fish to drastically veer from its present course. However, the research also makes clear that residents want Game and Fish to go even further in the fulfillment of its mission—the challenge over the next 5 to 10 years will be in determining the extent to which Game and Fish expands the scope of its priorities.”
- “...the obligation for Game and Fish over the next 5 to 10 years will be to balance priorities by widening, but not shifting, the scope of its management efforts.”



Where are you in this future?

Stay involved! Wyoming's conservation journey continues but Game and Fish staff are not taking this trip alone. To better manage Wyoming's fish and wildlife resources we are committed to implementing the plan with involvement of citizens, stakeholders, and partners. Everyone moving together toward the same destination together will make sure the legacy of conservation success we inherited will be passed on to the future. This plan lays out the next leg of that journey.

'I think the strength for them [Game and Fish] is their people... that's what resonates. They're part of the community...'

—Riverton resident



Thanks to the dozens of Wyoming Game and Fish Department employees who helped craft the strategic plan as well as the thousands of members of the public who gave input.



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DEPARTMENT**

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