

Unified Regulatory Plan of the Department of Wildlife Resources for State Fiscal Year 2026

Prepared on June 23, 2025
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Description of Agency or Boards

The Department of Wildlife Resources is the Commonwealth's lead agency for matters of terrestrial wildlife management, freshwater fisheries, and boating regulation. The Department is overseen by the Board of Wildlife Resources, which is a supervisory board. Regulations relevant to the aforementioned subject areas are promulgated by the Board; enabling legislation for all the Board's regulations is found in Title 29.1 of the Code of Virginia. Regulatory actions are exempt from the Administrative Process Act, but through combination of basic law requirements, ORM process, and agency procedures and practice, follow a public input and review structure that is similar to the APA in several respects. The Department operates under the supervision of the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources.

Action/Stage or Guidance Document Forum ID: Stage 10721, Action 6721 / Stage 10720, Action 6720 / Stage 10719, Action 6719 / Stage 10712, Action 6712 / Stage 10714, Action 6714 / Stage 10722, Action 6722 / Stage 10718, 6718 / Stage 10717, Action 6717 / Stage 10715, Action 6715 / Stage 10713, Action 6713 / Stage 10716, Action 6716 / Stage 10724, Action 6724 / Stage 10723, Action 6723	
Title of Proposed Regulatory Action or Guidance Document Biennial Review of Wildlife Regulations	
Brief Overview At its May 22, 2025 meeting, the Board of Wildlife Resources approved final regulations for its Biennial Review of Wildlife Regulations, pertaining to primarily hunting and trapping regulations, in addition to other regulation chapters where mandate reduction efforts could be taken. These final regulations will move forward to ORM review (June/July) and subsequent Register publication. This regulatory action affects 4VAC15-20, 4VAC15-30, 4VAC15-40, 4VAC15-50, 4VAC15-70, 4VAC15-90, 4VAC15-160, 4VAC15-170, 4VAC15-210, 4VAC15-240, 4VAC15-260, 4VAC15-410, and 4VAC15-430. Expected Registrar publication will occur in August/September with an effective date of September/October.	
Regulatory Stage (check one box)	☐ NOIRA ☐ Proposed Rule ☒ Final Rule ☐ Emergency Rule ☐ Fast-Track Rule
Additional Description	☐ Expedited Rule ☒ Exempt Rule ☐ Guidance Document
Legal Authority	☐ Action required by federal statute ☐ Action required by state statute ☒ Discretionary action
Deregulatory Component	Reduces boating education mandates required by students of boating safety classes; reduces mandates on boating safety class administrators; reduces redundant boating regulations already covered by Code of Federal Regulations; clarifies second amendment rights to carry certain weapons during special hunting seasons; reduces mandates on applying for elk license lottery and special license applications; removes 5-year reporting requirements for possession of domestic fox or European rabbits held before July 1, 2017; removes reporting requirements for prairie dogs held in possession; removes mandatory reporting of harvested snakehead fish; and repealed regulation over license consignment agents.
Expected Date	Finals to be sent to ORM/Governor's office between June 27 and July 3. Effective date expected late summer 2025.

Action/Stage or Guidance Document Forum ID: TBD	
Title of Proposed Regulatory Action or Guidance Document Special Regulatory Reduction Cycle (upcoming)	
Brief Overview Per planning calls with ORM staff in April, the Department currently sits at a 21% regulatory requirement reduction as of the May 22 Board meeting, once the above regulatory actions become effective. To meet the Governor's requirement of a 25% regulatory requirement reduction outlined in EO 19, we will be conducting a special regulatory amendment cycle (separate from our regularly-scheduled biennial cycles) to locate and remove 49 additional regulatory mandates that will meet this goal by December 31, 2025. Preliminary plans include a proposal stage occurring in August and a subsequent final stage in October.	
Regulatory Stage (check one box)	☐ NOIRA ☐ Proposed Rule ☒ Final Rule ☐ Emergency Rule ☐ Fast-Track Rule
Additional Description	☐ Expedited Rule ☒ Exempt Rule ☐ Guidance Document
Legal Authority	☐ Action required by federal statute ☐ Action required by state statute ☒ Discretionary action
Deregulatory Component	Staff is currently working to identify at least 49 more mandates to eliminate from our regulatory catalog. Proposals will be brought forward at our August Board meeting.
Expected Date	Effective dates on or before 12/31/25.