

**2024-2025 Report on the DWR Inclusive Excellence
Strategic Plan**



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Background

- Launched 2022–2026 Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan
- Built on 4 Core Principles: Recruiting, Culture, Awareness, Connecting
- Each includes measurable goals, initiatives, and progress indicators
- 2024–25 Report assesses progress and next steps



DWR Inclusive Excellence Vision Statement

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) will strive to create a work environment that provides all employees equal access to information, development, and opportunity. By building an inclusive work environment, we will promote, then leverage, the diversity of people, talent, and ideas. As a public agency, our ability to understand, embrace and operate in a multicultural Commonwealth — both among our stakeholders and employees — is critical to our long-term sustainability and specifically impacts our ability to meet DWR's mission.



Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan Review

IEC Plan Vision Statement

RECRUITING

- Using a broad spectrum of talent acquisition best practices to attract a diverse and highly skilled applicant pool.
- To manage a process free from bias and artificial barriers that would discourage the hiring of underrepresented candidates.

GOALS:

- Complete transparency with the recruitment and selection process.
- Elimination of artificial barriers to hiring.

CULTURE

- To promote and sustain a workplace that is inclusive of all people, talents, and ideas so that members of the workforce may achieve their highest level of engagement and full occupational potential.

GOALS:

- Develop a workforce that resemble diverse racial, gender, and cultural differences of the Commonwealth.
- Value non-traditional approaches and skillsets that can further the Agency's mission.
- Adopt a "best idea wins" approach to decision-making.
- Treat others as THEY wish to be treated and not as YOU wish to be treated.

AWARENESS

- To develop learning opportunities to equip members of the workforce with the ability to promote inclusive excellence and be active and accountable in building an inclusive work environment.

GOALS:

- Initiate Agency-wide, mandatory DEI.
- Integrate DEI principles in all policies, practices and procedures going forward.
- Build training to accommodate diverse learning styles.

CONNECTING

- Utilizing resources and strategies to make the outdoors available, accessible, and safe for all Virginians.

GOALS:

- Increase education about, and access to, Virginia's wild spaces
- Provide targeted, direct outreach to underrepresented and underserved populations.
- Expand Affinity partnership participation.



Core Principle 1: Recruiting

Goal: Attract and hire a diverse, highly skilled workforce free from artificial barriers.

Challenges:

- Underrepresentation in biological sciences and rural stationing
- Limited entry-level conservation positions
- Attrition due to better opportunities or culture concerns



DRW Demographics, 2021-2024

	DEC. 31, 2021	DEC. 31, 2023	DELTA '21-'23	DEC. 31, 2024	DELTA '23-'24
Total	472	503	31 (6.5%)	516	13 (2.5%)
Male	344 (72.9%)	351 (69.8%)	7 (2.0%)	358 (69.4%)	7 (1.3%)
Female	128 (27.1%)	152 (30.2%)	24 (18.8%)	158 (30.6%)	6 (1.2%)
White	402 (85.2%)	436 (86.7%)	34 (8.5%)	443 (86.9%)	7 (1.3%)
Black/Afr. Am.	30 (6.4%)	29 (5.8%)	(1)(-3.3%)	26 (5.0%)	(3) (-.6%)
Hispanic/Latino	9 (1.9%)	11 (2.2%)	2 (2.2%)	7 (1.9%)	(4) (-.8%)
Asian/Pac. Isl.	2 (0.4%)	4 (0.8%)	2 (50.0%)	6 (1.2%)	2 (.4%)
Alaskan Native/American Indian	6 (1.3%)	7 (1.4%)	1 (16.7%)	6 (1.2%)	(1) (-.2%)
Two or more race	3 (0.6%)	4 (0.8%)	1 (33.3%)	7 (1.9%)	3 (.6%)
Not applicable/No response	20 (4.2%)	12 (2.4%)	(8) (-40%)	21 (4.1%)	9 (1.7%)



Law Enforcement Division

- Audit (2019) cited lack of diversity
- Actions:
 - Retained consulting firm for barrier analysis
 - Performed review of applicant flow data
- Findings:
 - Subjectivity in background checks and interviews need be addressed
 - Need to modernize screening and job task analysis
 - Applicant flow did not reveal any chokepoints that aren't being addressed in reviews of application process



Recruiting Recommendations

1. Adopt audit findings—modernize background checks
2. Compile and analyze exit interview data
3. Expand internship pipeline and diverse outreach
4. Continue salary equity studies



Core Principle 2: Culture

Goal: Build an inclusive workplace valuing all people and ideas.

Employee Climate Survey conducted every 18 months. (77% participation):

Some results from 2024

- 79% satisfied with DWR as workplace (↓1%)
- 72% feel contributions are valued (↑2%)
- Concerns over merit-based promotions and transparency



Culture Comments

Themes from employee feedback:

- Concerns about fairness in promotions
- Perceived overemphasis or 'box checking' in DOI efforts
- Reports of microaggressions and exclusionary comments
- Some praise for DWR's DOI progress despite challenges



Culture Recommendations

1. Continue mentoring pilot (Commonwealth Mentoring Program)
2. Create Ombuds and Employee Appreciation Programs
3. Prioritize cultural awareness and inclusive onboarding
4. Link DOI efforts to merit and mission outcomes



Core Principle 3: Awareness

Goal: Equip workforce to actively promote inclusion.

Actions:

- Inclusive Excellence training for Law Enforcement
- Autism training for new officers (expanding in FY26)

Challenges:

- Remote participation limits engagement
- Some resistance during virtual sessions



Awareness Recommendations

- Continue regional in-person training
- Use 360° reviews to hold leaders accountable
- Tailor training by role and integrate third-party facilitators
- Require management training within 1 year of promotion



Core Principle 4: Connecting

Goal: Make the outdoors accessible and welcoming for all Virginians.

Highlights:

- Inclusive outdoor programs (Outdoor Women, Outdoor Afro, MLK Youth Experience)
- Partnerships with Blue Sky Fund, 'Rivah Sistah'
- New accessible trails, piers, and Spanish language boating course



Connecting Results & Next Steps

- Expanded accessible infrastructure statewide
- Increased collaboration with tribal and community groups
- Broader communications through diverse media

Recommendation: Explore new uses of DWR lands for diverse recreation interests



Conclusion

DWR remains committed to:

- Recruiting diverse, qualified talent
- Cultivating an inclusive, high-performing workplace
- Expanding equitable access to Virginia's outdoors

Progress is steady but incremental—requires continued leadership accountability and culture change.



QUESTIONS?

