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# Virginia Wildlife Action Plan

## From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

The Virginia wildlife action plan includes 925 species of greatest conservation need and focuses on the habitats that support them, such as caves, rivers, high elevation forests, coastal marshes, grasslands, and barrier islands. Most importantly, the action plan identifies the tasks needed to conserve these species and habitats on a regional basis. While many of these actions are direct on-the-ground activities, priorities for enhancing partnerships and increasing public awareness are also included.

### *Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas*

#### **Restoring Freshwater Mussels**

Most of the freshwater mussels in Virginia are listed as species of greatest conservation need in the state wildlife action plan. The health of freshwater mussels is often an early indicator for disease and pollution that affect us all. Half of Virginia's 81 species of mussels are endangered or threatened species and others are declining at an alarming

rate. These mussels are important food sources for other wildlife, filter the water they live in, and depend on good water quality. State Wildlife Grant funds are being used to raise mussels in a hatchery and then release them into streams to bolster and restore declining populations. Cooperation with private landowners also helps restore and enhance mussel habitat. This proactive and cost-effective approach will prevent more mussels from becoming endangered and benefit the health of wildlife and people.



Musselrama/Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

**Protecting Imperiled Land, Water,  
and Wildlife**  
**Conserving Wildlife Habitat**

Virginia's wildlife action plan identifies habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation caused by human development as the most serious threats to wildlife in the state. Using State Wildlife Grants and other funding, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries purchased 3,800 acres in southeastern Virginia to create the Cavalier Wildlife Management Area. This continues public and private efforts to safeguard the Great Dismal Swamp, which once covered more than 3,600 square miles. The area provides habitat to over a hundred different neotropical migratory bird species and many other wildlife. Plantings of Atlantic white cedar and long-leaf pine at Cavalier will expand these important habitats for many species found only in this part of Virginia. As Virginia's communities grow, this effort will help the state fulfill its responsibility to conserve wildlife and the places they live for future generations.

**Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife  
and People**  
**Eradicating Invasive  
Zebra Mussels**

The wildlife action plan identifies non-native zebra mussels as a serious conservation concern. Infestations of zebra mussels would result in costly impacts to water supply systems, power generating facilities, and other industries across the Commonwealth. In 2002, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries confirmed the only known occurrence of zebra mussels in a quarry in western Prince William County. Although zebra mussels affect a variety of wildlife species, the impacts to the state's native freshwater mussels would be catastrophic if the mussels spread elsewhere. Instead, all of the zebra mussels were eliminated,

completely removing zebra mussels from the Commonwealth. By eliminating this threat, Virginia not only ensures the health and survival of many wildlife species for the enjoyment of future generations, but also protects our commercial infrastructure from an expensive nuisance.

**Association of Fish &  
Wildlife Agencies**

444 North Capitol St, NW  
Suite 725  
Washington, DC 20001  
202.624.7890  
www.teaming.com  
www.wildlifeactionplans.org

**Virginia Department of Game  
and Inland Fisheries**

4010 W. Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23230  
<http://bewildvirginia.org/wildlifeplan/>



Cavalier Wildlife Management Area/Virginia  
Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

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Destructive zebra mussels/Virginia Department of  
Game and Inland Fisheries