

South Carolina
Department of Natural Resources

**THE NATURAL RESOURCES AGENDA:
A Strategy for Managing
South Carolina's Natural Wealth**

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INTRODUCTION

South Carolina's natural resources -- its waters, land, air, minerals, plants and animals --are inextricably linked to the quality of life of the state's citizens and visitors. These resources provide an enviable quality of life for our citizens, attracting and sustaining the businesses and tourism that translate into economic wealth.

Facing the twenty-first century, South Carolina's natural resources are healthy, abundant, and support multiple uses. However, the job of maintaining our quality of life requires a reasonable balance between conserving our resources for future generations, sustaining traditional uses, increasing support for other user demands and accommodating economic development. This balancing act is becoming increasingly difficult.

Ensuring the continued abundance of these resources will require partnerships among all interests within the public and private sectors. All those with interests in the quality of our natural resources must work from a common approach toward natural resources conservation and stewardship. Through such partnerships potential natural resource problems can be addressed before our quality of life suffers.

DNR Vision (where we want to go)

An enhanced quality of life through management and protection of natural resources.

DNR Mission (our core business)

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SC DNR) is the advocate for and steward of the state's natural resources.

DNR Agenda (how we accomplish our mission and reach our vision)

1. Places the resource first through the permanent protection and management of habitat and cultural (archaeological) resources of special significance.
2. Protects human life, property natural resources and the safety of the persons using those resources.
3. Manages natural resources under its jurisdiction sustainably and as a system insuring their long-term integrity and diversity.

4. Uses the best available sound scientific and technical information in making natural resources decisions.
5. Conducts applied research to improve the base of scientific knowledge upon which natural resource management decisions are based.
6. Protects, manages and enhances the current and future public's use and enjoyment of South Carolina's fish wildlife, aquatic, soil, water, geological and cultural resources
7. Educates and effectively communicates with the public about South Carolina's natural resources and environment, and provides accountability by routinely involving the public in the department's decision-making processes.
8. Speaks for the state's natural resources in commenting on proposed alteration to the environment.
9. Maintains an agency culture that continuously seeks to improve operations and effectiveness in a professional manner for its employees and customers.

The DNR Agenda items, based on the agency's values and vision, are consistent with the DNR mission and provides the touchstone of all agency programs and efforts. The Action Items that follow each strategic goal provide more specific detail and guidance for implementation of the Natural Resources Agenda.

Strategy 1: Management

Protect, manage and sustain the public's enjoyment of natural resources through programs which support hunting, recreational boating, fishing, wildlife watching, soil and water conservation, land and water planning and management, public access, and technical assistance. Continuously refine these and other programs based upon current and anticipated future needs.

Action Items:

1. Establish an environmental baseline and identify trends by assessing the condition of the state's natural resources and periodically reporting on their status including recommendations to manage, improve or restore ecosystems lands, waters, habitats and species.
2. Identify and provide for recovery, restoration of threatened resources and for needed research in this area.
3. Ensure the protection of life, property and natural resources through maintenance of a well-trained, professional natural resources law enforcement force appropriately distributed throughout the state.
4. Develop, implement and encourage multi-objective management plans for sustainable use of natural resources with appropriate public involvement.

5. Acquire and incorporate social and economic, as well as biological and physical, data into policies and processes to manage the state's natural resources and provide information on the social, cultural, economic as well as ecological significance of natural resources to the public.

Strategy 2: Science and Technology

Develop and apply resource management technologies to foster sustainable levels of natural resources.

Action Items:

1. Obtain information required to support science-based decision making and management for the state's natural resources through applied research, monitoring, surveys, and cooperative partnerships with other resource/research agencies, academic institutions, and conservation organizations.
2. Collect and integrate scientific information and data into the agency's decision making process for all issues and actions.
3. Maintain, develop and implement technologies to enhance natural resources stewardship and conservation (including, but not limited to, fish hatchery, aquaculture and aquatic population restoration and rebuilding technologies).

Strategy 3: Education and Public Involvement

Educate the public about natural resources issues and involve them in resource management decisions.

Action Items:

1. Educate the public about the state's natural resources and encourage them to make more informed contributions to the management, use, stewardship and enjoyment of our natural resources.
2. Assess and communicate public interests, needs and knowledge as it relates to natural resources.
3. Promote safe, ethical and responsible use of the state's natural resources.
4. Promote awareness of natural hazards and educate the public in ways to mitigate loss or injury.
5. Emphasize the importance of education as a portion of every DNR employee's work responsibilities.

6. Utilize public opinion surveys and the talents of the Department's Advisory Committees to gauge public opinion and educate the public on important natural resources issues.

Strategy 4: Landscape Conservation

Advance a habitat stewardship and management program to provide for the long-term conservation of the state's natural resources. Prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy to protect, understand, manage and restore terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including farm and forest lands, that are necessary for the long-term conservation of the state's natural resources.

Action Items:

1. Expand habitat protection, restoration and conservation programs, emphasizing expanded acquisition and conservation easements for properties with high ecological value.
2. Support local, regional and state efforts to conserve and sustain natural resources through comprehensive land use planning.
3. Advocate environmentally sound approaches to economic development planning, permitting and other decision-making in order to maintain and sustain the state's natural resources.

Strategy 5: Internal Management and Operations

Continuously review the agency infrastructure, human resources and funding sources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

Action Items:

1. Provide for effective staff development and training in natural resources management, planning and customer service, including continuing education, leadership training, and formal education.
2. Explore and develop applicable technological innovations to improve natural resources management, planning and customer service.
3. Continually evaluate efficient use of present funding and pursue new sources of funding for management, conservation and protection for the state's natural resources.
4. Maintain and enhance facilities and infrastructure to continually improve management and stewardship of the state's natural resources and customer service.

5. Develop opportunities to promote diversity both within the agency and in its constituents to enhance participation in nature-related activities by all citizens of South Carolina.
6. Continue to attract and retain talented employees available to carry out the Agency's mission in a manner that includes career development and competitive compensation for staff.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Natural Resources Agenda is implemented with the development and execution of annual objectives developed by each of the divisions of the DNR. These objectives are developed prior to the beginning of the state fiscal year and are in effect from July 1 of a given year through June 30 of the following year. These objectives are based on the Natural Resources Agenda action items spelled out herein. Reports on annual accomplishments are presented to the DNR Board at the end of each fiscal year to help ensure that consistent and measurable progress is made in each area. The South Carolina General Assembly, DNR Board, and DNR staff help establish annual priorities based on feedback the agency receives from its constituents, as well as issues and problems identified by DNR staff.

The DNR continuously updates its strategic direction, actively seeking exchange of information with citizens, other public agencies, and the private sector. This dialogue ensures that the DNR is actively engaged in responding to the needs of our state's resources and citizens. The resulting strategic plan provides a compass for the services the agency provides for its customers and the issues the agency will tackle in the future.

Through this process, the DNR seeks to sustain an on-going, action-oriented management agenda, capable of maintaining the integrity, health, productivity and diversity of our natural resources for future generations, yet fully integrated with our state's vision for social and economic development.

CONCLUSION

A scenic, aesthetically pleasing, robust environment and a strong economic opportunity go hand in hand with a high quality of life. To sustain South Carolina's wealth of natural resources and the ecological, social and economic services they provide for present and future generations, natural resource issues and demands must be identified and understood, and the technical information and management tools required to resolve resource-related issues must be developed.

Armed with scientifically sound information and staffed with natural resource professionals providing expertise in research, enforcement, management and communications, the DNR offers resource management solutions and programs benefiting the State by ensuring its wealth of natural resources in perpetuity.

The DNR must also develop a framework to encourage exchange of information and ideas among regulatory and resource management agencies, economic developers, and other users of our state's natural resources. This framework will facilitate informed decision-making that balances conservation of natural resources and the impacts associated with economic development and human population growth. Only through such cooperation can sustained use of our state's natural wealth be guaranteed.

Through this publication, we invite all citizens to participate in the creation of South Carolina's heritage to ensure that our wealth of natural resources will be sustainable into the future.

