Virginia’s Wildlife Action Plan and Climate Change

Keeping Habitats Healthy in a Changing World

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While I Have You Here...

• I want to discuss:
  – Historic climate change planning
  – Stance towards climate change
  – How we integrated climate change into our new Wildlife Action Plan (keep species from becoming endangered)
Climate Change Planning

- Considering climate change since 2008
- Created an initial strategy, downscaled modeling, threats assessment, incorporating new data,…
- We’ve learned a lot from these efforts
Climate Change Will Make Things Worse

Climate Change isn’t a threat in and of itself.

Climate Change will intensify all other threats:

• Habitat Loss;
• Habitat Fragmentation;
• Disease/Invasive Species;
• Water Quality;
• Water Quantity;
• etc.
Healthy Populations in Healthy Habitats will have the best chance of adapting to changing climatic conditions.

Our new Wildlife Action Plan prioritizes efforts that:
- Conserve high quality habitats;
- Restore degraded habitats; and
- Connect habitats.

Climate – Smart Terminology
Aquatic and Riparian Habitats

Identified Priority Places to:
- Conserve/Protect
- Increase riparian buffers
- Maintain and/or restore connectivity
- Eliminate animal runoff, sediment, and fertilizers
Wetland Habitats

Identified Priority Areas To:

• Create/Maintain vegetative buffers around existing wetlands.
• Improve water quality upstream.
• Restore degraded wetlands.
• Targeted acquisition to allow coastal wetland migration.
Implementation?

- Identify Viable Projects w/ Willing Landowner
  - Involve Partners

- Funding & Experts
  - SWG as seed money
  - Budgeted
  - Opportunity Fund

- Document and Promote Success
Major Criticisms

Criticism

• We aren’t “climate change-y” enough
  – We aren’t sufficiently technical

• We don’t address phenology concerns

• We don’t go after anybody.
  – Coal
  – Cars
  – Etc.

Response

• Action oriented – we need people to understand what we want them to do.

• Not much we can do

• We can’t afford to alienate potential partners
  – Long-standing communication guidelines