

# **I. Introduction**

## **A. Purpose:**

### **1. WMA Description, History and Evolution of Purpose**

The Rapidan WMA consists of 10,326 acres in eight separate tracts, which were purchased between 1963 and 1993. It is located in western Madison and Greene counties. Eight compartments make up the area; each tract is considered a compartment. Approximately 25 miles of boundary is shared with Shenandoah National Park. The Rapidan WMA was established to provide habitat for forest wildlife species and provide recreational hunting, fishing and trapping activities to the general public. In the years since its establishment, the Rapidan WMA has been used for many wildlife related activities including hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife watching, nature photography, field trips, research, hiking, camping and trail riding. **Appendix A** depicts the location of the Rapidan WMA within Region 5.

### **2. Current Purpose of WMA**

The mission of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is to manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs off the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; and to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing. Adhering to the Agency's mission, the primary purpose of the Rapidan WMA is to provide opportunities to hunt, fish and trap. The secondary purpose of the WMA is to encourage a wide variety of wildlife related activities such as wildlife viewing, wildlife research, photography, hiking, camping, backpacking, trail rides and more.

### **3. Land Classification or Categories of Use**

The Rapidan WMA is located in rugged mountainous terrain in the Blue Ridge Province and is almost entirely forested. The forests are dominated by upland hardwood and/or mixed hardwood/pine stands, with much smaller acreage in pure conifer stands (< 5% of area). There are several small herbaceous and early successional openings (<1% of area). Wetland habitat is limited to perennial and intermittent streams, springs and seeps (<1% of area).

### **4. Justification of WMA Designation**

The Rapidan WMA with its rich heritage of forest habitat and associated forest wildlife species (game and non-game species) contains all of the

necessary components; habitat location, accessibility and availability to make a successful wildlife management area that meets the objectives and goals of the Agency's mission.

## **B. WMA Goal(s), Management and Policy:**

It is VDGIF's mission, and policy, to manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth. These needs include opportunities for all to learn about and enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating, and related outdoor recreation, while promoting safety in their pursuit of these activities. The goals of the Rapidan WMA are to develop and maintain a diversity of forested habitats to sustain optimum populations of all species and to develop and maintain land and facilities to provide opportunity for people to participate in and enjoy wildlife, fish, and related activities.

### **1. Management**

Habitat management objectives on the Rapidan WMA include the development and maintenance of quality wildlife habitat representative of typical Blue Ridge Mountain forests through an active timber management program, which promotes biodiversity. Additionally, vegetative species and age-class diversity is accomplished through the development and maintenance of herbaceous openings other wildlife habitat improvements. Timber management is guided by the VDGIF "Umbrella Forest Management Plan" and prescribed burning follows protocols established in Virginia's Certified Prescribed Burn Managers Program.

Facilities management objectives include the development and maintenance of facilities to provide for safe access to the Rapidan WMA for the public to enjoy wildlife and fish related recreational activities. Future facility development will be geared to increasing public use of the area for expanded fish and wildlife recreational pursuits (wildlife viewing rails, shooting ranges, kiosks, improved signage, etc.).

### **2. Policy**

#### **a. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act**

DGIF receives funding under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Federal Aid) for activities conducted on this WMA. Federal guidelines restrict the use of these funds to the restoration, conservation management, and enhancement of wild birds and wild mammals; the provision for public use of and benefits from these resources; and the education of hunters and archers in the skills,

knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be responsible hunters or archers.

Federal policy prohibits the use of Federal Aid for public relations activities promoting organizations or agencies; activities for the purpose of producing revenue that is not incidental to otherwise eligible activities; providing services or property of material value to individuals or groups for commercial purposes; enforcement of game and fish laws and regulations; and stocking of game animals without objectives for the restoration or establishment of self-sustaining populations.

**b. Forest Management Policy**

Forest management activities occur on state wildlife management areas only to improve wildlife habitat. VDGIF conducts these activities under a Forest Management Policy approved by the Board in 1990. Two forest management goals established in this policy: to utilize appropriate forest management practices to modify and improve wildlife habitat to meet state wildlife management area objectives, as outlined in each area's model habitat management plan; and to demonstrate the compatibility of forestry and wildlife management programs.

## II. Land

### A. Characteristics:

The Rapidan WMA is entirely mountainous, containing steep slopes, deep valleys, and high ridges. This wildlife management area is part of the upper Rappahannock River Watershed and is well drained through many intermittent and permanent streams. The largest and most notable streams include the Middle (Conway) River, the Rapidan River, and the South River. These three rivers eventually flow into the Rappahannock River.

Topography on the Rapidan WMA is rugged ranging from gentle and nearly level in the valleys and flood plains to high peaks and ridges with steep side slopes. Elevation ranges from 1,400 feet in the valleys to 3,840 feet at the highest mountaintop. There are numerous streams, both permanent and intermittent, which drain the management area.

The Rapidan WMA is divided into eight separate tracts with various ways to access them. The northern portion of the WMA (the Rapidan Tract) can be accessed from Route 29 six miles south of Culpeper by taking State Route (SR) 609 west to SR 231. Travel north on SR 231 for .05 miles and turn left onto SR 670 at Banco. Follow SR 670 west and turn left on SR 649 (Quaker Run Road) and continue on this road to the Rapidan tract. Access to the southern portion of the WMA take SR 230 west from SR 29 in Madison. Follow SR 230 to Wolfstown, making a right on SR 662 toward Graves Mill. In Graves Mill continue on the main road, which turns into SR 615, and continue to the Middle River Tract. To access The South River Tract continue on SR 230 past Wolfstown. Take a right onto SR 621 near Hood. Follow SR 621 to SR 637 and make a left. Continue on SR 637 to the Taylor Mountain Road (SR 642). Follow the Taylor Mountain Road to access the northern portion of the tract (See **Appendix B** for map).

### B. Legal Information and Limitations:

The Rapidan Wildlife Management Area is Divided into 8 separate tracts, but purchased in 7 transactions. The following table lists the Legal information:

<b>GRANTOR</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>DEED BOOK/PAGE</b>
<b>Irma Rue et al.</b>	<b>809.48</b>	<b>36/101</b>
<b>C. D. Rue et al.</b>	<b>700.12</b>	<b>82/393</b>
<b>Irma Rue et al.</b>	<b>6,887.82</b>	<b>82/389</b>
<b>C. D. Rue</b>	<b>202.00</b>	<b>87/389</b>
<b>A. C. Andregg</b>		<b>Replace</b>
<b>\$187,200.00</b>		

<b>Raynor Snead</b>	<b>490.24</b>	<b>135/307</b>
<b>Bobby Southard</b>	<b>152.59</b>	<b>196/895</b>
<b>Conservation Fund</b>	<b>490.00</b>	

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*Any additional documents and legal instruments establishing land control, ownership, and agreements for land use can be found on file at VDGIF Central Headquarters, Real Property Management, in Richmond.*

**C. Adjacent Land Use: (Map - Appendix C)**

Land adjacent to the Rapidan WMA is forested land to the north, west and south with pastureland, hay, cropland and orchards generally to the east. Residential development has increased slightly in the area, but no commercial development has taken place.

Shenandoah National Park adjoins the Rapidan WMA along a significant (roughly 50%) portion of the WMA boundary (shared boundary) to the west. Shenandoah National Park is a "preservation only" landholder, meaning all natural resources within the park boundary are to be left alone, unmanaged, to allow nature to "take its course". Therefore, no hunting, herb gathering, or disturbance/development of any kind is permitted to occur within the adjacent lands. Hiking and backpacking are allowable activities and several trails run near and extend on the WMA (e.g., Devil's Ditch Access Trail).

**D. Utilities:**

There are several electrical lines that pass through the Rapidan WMA, primarily in the Rapidan Tract. They furnish electricity to a private inholding (Rapidan Camps, Inc.), Camp Hoover that lies in Shenandoah National Park, and to the communication towers on Fork Mountain.

The Transmission Towers on Fork Mountain are built on a small inholding of private property owned by Columbia Gas. Additionally, there is a small segment of VDGIF property leased to MCI for tower space. Additional information on legal documents pertaining to leases on Fork Mountain can be found on file at central headquarters' Lease and Asset Management.

### **III. Demographics**

#### **A. Jurisdictional:**

The Rapidan WMA is located in western Madison County and northern Greene County, 12 miles west of Madison (County Seat), 20 miles south of Culpeper and 25 miles north of Charlottesville.

#### **B. Statistics:**

Over the last decade, both Greene and Madison Counties have grown in numbers of residents. The 1990 population estimate for Greene County was 10,297 and for Madison was 11,949. Nine years later Greene County's population had grown by 42% for a 1999 total of 14,685 residents and Madison County's population had grown by 5.7% for a total of 12,627 people.

#### **C. DGIF Program and Constituent Use:**

Traditional use of the Rapidan WMA such as hunting, fishing, ginseng harvesting and camping has remained constant. However, there has been an increase in other wildlife-related activities including commercial and non-commercial horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hiking, and photography. The issue of commercial horseback riding needs to be addressed in the future. There is a greater focus on addressing constituent use of the Rapidan WMA by providing better and more controlled access. A recent (year 2002) addition of a number of informational kiosks has started the process of providing adequate signage and information for the WMA users. These kiosks will be maintained to provide current and updated information regarding rules and regulations as well as updated maps depicting any changes.

## IV. Facilities

### A. Transportation Facilities: (Standards - Appendix D)

#### 1. State Route 615

This road travels through the Middle River Tract and is 2 miles in length. Width is 20', graveled and meets VDOT standards.

- a. **Middle River Parking Area** - Located at the boundary of the tract. It is paved and is surrounded by grass and gravel. 100' X 50', bounded by trees with a 10 car capacity. Condition good.
- b. **Kiosk** - This is a standard kiosk built and erected at the Middle River Parking Area. It is a new kiosk and in excellent shape.

#### 2. Conway River Road

This Class A road begins at the end of State Route 615, ending at the Shenandoah National Park (SNP) boundary and gate. The road is 2 miles long and 15' wide and graveled. Does not meet VDOT standards. Fair condition.

#### 3. Rapidan River Road

This Class A road begins 2.5 miles from the end of State Route 649 and ends at the SNP boundary and gate. It is 2 miles in length, 16' wide and graveled. Does not meet VDOT standards. Fair to good condition.

- a. **Rapidan River Parking Area** - This lot has dimensions of 100' X 75', has a 15-car capacity, and has a dirt surface. Bounded by trees. Condition good.
- b. **Kiosk** - This is a standard kiosk built and erected at the Rapidan River Parking Area. It is a new kiosk and in excellent shape.

#### 4. Garth Run Road

This Class A road begins at the intersection of Route 615 and ends at the Lost Valley subdivision boundary. It is .03 miles in length, 15' wide, and graveled. Does not meet VDOT standards. Good condition.

#### 5. Kirtley Mountain Road

This Class C road is .50 miles in length, dirt, 12' wide, and does not meet VDOT standards. It begins at Kirtley Mountain Parking Area and ends in the interior. Fair condition.

- a. **Kirtley Mountain Parking Area** - Located at the beginning of the Kirtley Mountain Road. This lot has dimensions of 75' X 75', has a capacity of 10 vehicles, and has a gravel surface. It is bounded by trees. Good condition.
- b. **Gate** - Located at beginning of Kirtley Mountain Road. It is a standard metal pole gate. Is not opened to hunter access but is used for administrative purposes only. It is in good condition.
- c. **Kiosk** - This is a standard kiosk built and erected at the Kirtley Mountain Parking Area. It is a new kiosk and in excellent shape.

#### 6. **Fork Mountain Road**

This Class B road begins at the Rapidan River Road and ends at SNP boundary. It is 1.75 miles in length, graveled, and is 15' wide. This road is the access road to the Fork Mountain Tower complex. Does not meet VDOT standards. Good condition.

- a. **Gate** - Located at beginning of Rapidan River Road. It is a metal pole type gate, not standard. Is opened seasonally to hunting and has several locks on it for different agencies including Columbia Gas and SNP.

#### 7. **Goodall Orchard Road**

This Class C road is .50 miles in length, 12' wide, dirt, and does not meet VDOT standards. It Begins at State Route 615 and ends in the interior of the Middle River Tract. *Poor condition.*

- a. **Gate** - Located at the beginning of the road, just about 0.10 mile from the intersection with Middle River Road. It is a standard pole gate and is opened seasonally.

#### 8. **Booten's Field Road**

This Class C road is .75 miles in length, 12' wide, dirt surfaced, and does not meet VDOT standards. It begins at the Conway River Road and ends in the interior. *Poor condition and needs a pole gate to limit vehicular access.*

- a. **Gate**



*Pole gate needed to be erected at the beginning of the Booten's Field Road to close road seasonally to limit vehicular traffic and to eliminate any vehicular use of the Booten Field.*

**9. Taylor Mountain Road (SR 642)**

- a. South River Parking Area** - This is an undeveloped parking area that is located at the beginning of VDGIF property and adjoins the property boundary. It consists of a pull-off from the Taylor Mountain Road. This parking area has a soil surface and is bounded by forest. Capacity is 3 vehicles. It is in very poor shape and needs to be upgraded and expanded. This is the parking area for the Taylor Mountain Access Trail.
  
- b. Kiosk**  
*A proposed standard kiosk site is located at the South River Parking Area.*
  
- c. Point Parking Area** - This parking area is located at just before VDGIF property line near the Laurel Ridge Bear Club property. It is 50' x 20' with a soil surface. On three sides it is bounded by trees and fourth side is bounded by the Taylor Mountain Road. Four vehicle capacity. *It is in poor condition and should be expanded and upgraded to gravel surface.*
  
- d. Sign Board** - There is a sign board erected at this parking area. It consists of a 4' x 4' plywood board supported by two 4" x 4" posts. A small roof made from two 2" x 6" boards covers the plywood board.

**B. Trails:**

**1. Devils Ditch Access Trail**

This foot trail provides foot access to the Devil's Ditch portion of the Middle River Tract through a small piece of Shenandoah National Park (SNP) property. This trail was a cooperative project between VDGIF and SNP. A permit is required to cross SNP property with an unloaded and cased firearm. Trail is cleared and well marked and is approximately 1/8 mile long. Good condition.

**2. Taylor Mountain Access Trail**

This foot trail provides access to the backside of the property that is currently inaccessible by vehicle. The trail circumvents a segment of private property that cuts off vehicular access to the backside of the WMA, making possible foot travel to this segment of the South River

Tract. The trail starts at the South River Parking Area and traverses fairly rugged terrain and ends back on the Taylor Mountain Road to the west of the private property. It is km in length and is in good condition.

**C. Shop and Storage Facilities:**

There are no shop and storage facilities on the Rapidan WMA. All equipment and materials are stored at the Phelps WMA work center.

**D. Residential Facilities:**

There are no residential facilities on the Rapidan WMA.

**E. Public-Use Facilities:**

**Camping**

Primitive camping is permitted on the Rapidan WMA; however, there are no developed campsites on the WMA.

**F. Utilities:**

There are no utilities serving the Rapidan WMA.

**G. Equipment:**

Refer to Phelps WMA Site Master Plan, **Section IV-G**.

**H. WMA Signage:**

Outdoor and boundary line signage is consistent with the DGIF Office of Capital Programs (OCP) standards for signage. Refer to Chapters 6 and 13 in the OCP Procedures Manual. There is a need for updating and remarking much of the boundary lines as well as sufficient maintenance of them. A Management Area Rules sign and location map are posted on the sign board.

**I. Environmental Status:**

No known environmental assessments have been performed on the Rapidan WMA.

## **V. Resource Inventory**

### **A. Physical/Abiotic Features of WMA: (Map - Appendix E)**

#### **1. Topography**

The Rapidan WMA lies on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Elevations range from 1,400 feet to 3,820 feet with an average of 2,610 feet. The WMA is divided into eight (8) separate tracts, falling on several distinguished mountains that include Double Top, Fork Mountain, Bluff Mountain, Kirtley Mountain, and Saddleback Mountain. These mountains have moderate to steep side slopes (~ 30% or more) and have relatively narrow ridges or come to rounded pinnacles. There are very few areas of exposed rock (cliff faces) or outcropping formations. The valleys are narrow with swift-running cold-water streams flowing through them.

#### **2. Geology**

The Rapidan WMA is part of the Blue Ridge Physiographic Province, which is made up of ancient igneous rock as well as overlying metamorphic rock. The principal rock foundation consists of resistant granites, greenstones and quartzites and forms a terrain of high relief. Many boulders litter the forest throughout most of the WMA giving it a very rocky and rugged demeanor.

#### **3. Soils**

The soils of the Rapidan WMA consist of the Porters-Rock land associations and the Tusquitee-Colluvial Land-Unison association. These are moderately to well- drained and sometimes excessively drained and deep soils. The Porters-Rock associations are found on slopes and mountaintops whereas the Tusquitee-Colluvial Land-Unison associations are found in the valleys and drainage basins.

#### **4. Climatic Conditions**

The Rapidan WMA experiences a temperate climate with cold but not severe winters and generally warm summers. Topography and elevation greatly affect the climate and precipitation on the WMA with cooler temperatures and greater precipitation than the surrounding lowlands and foothills to the east.

#### **5. Hydrology**

There are numerous permanent and intermittent streams flowing through the Rapidan WMA as well as numerous springs and spring seeps on some of the slopes. Three notable trout streams exist on the Rapidan namely Rapidan River, the Middle (Conway) River, and the South River. These streams contain healthy and stable brook trout populations and are never stocked. There are no swamps or marshes on the area.

## **B. Terrestrial and Aquatic Communities:**

Upland hardwood forests with some cove hardwood and cove hemlock/hardwood sites dominate the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area. The upland hardwood communities vary in species composition. Many of the slopes and ridgetops are comprised of several forest types including mixed red oak/scarlet oak/hickory, chestnut oak, and white oak/tulip poplar. The cove forests are dominated by tulip poplar and mixed with some northern hardwood species such as sugar maple and yellow and black birch. Umbrella-leaf magnolia can be found along the permanent streams. There are a number of old home sites containing a variety of hardwood and domestic fruit species such as black walnut, black locust, sassafras, mulberry, apple, pear and persimmon. The habitat inventory for the Rapidan WMA is out dated but should be brought up to date in the near future. In addition, a wildlife species inventory should be conducted on the Rapidan WMA. A species inventory will allow for better habitat and wildlife management decisions to be made.

The aquatic communities present on the Rapidan include swift-flowing cold water streams typical of the Blue Ridge Mountains. There are healthy and stable brook trout populations in most of the permanent streams. There are a number of small springs and spring seeps known to contain a diversity of salamander species (based on field observation only). There is little information on the habitat, species accounts or inventories that occur in the aquatic communities. This information will need to be accumulated over time through work of the biologist and other wildlife and fisheries personnel. A detailed description of the

Other communities include gaps and small open areas with early to mid-successional forests that should be sustained in their present state to maintain habitat diversity. These areas typically contain a dense understory and high plant diversity; thus, promote a greater diversity of wildlife species, particularly neotropical migrants. These communities are slowly being lost due to succession and the lack of gaps and clearings being created and/or maintained.

No unique, rare, endangered, or threatened plant communities or animal species are known to occur on the Rapidan WMA (**Appendix F**). A comprehensive list of wildlife species known to occur in Madison County, and

quite possibly on the Rapidan WMA can be found in **Appendix G**. It is important that an effort is made to inventory the plant and animal species/communities on the Rapidan WMA so unique, rare, or endangered plants, animals and associated communities are identified and considered in future management.

**C. Cultural Resources: (Map Appendix F)**

**1. Archaeological**

Although there are likely many archaeological sites on the Rapidan WMA, none have been reported.

**2. Historical Structures**

The Civilian Conservation Corp in the 1930's constructed the Hood Fire Trail, which crosses the Kirtley Mountain tract. Part of the trail was destroyed by floods and is inaccessible at present. There are a number old house sites, partial structures, and cemeteries on the WMA, but no historical designation has yet to be made.

**D. ADA / Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act site evaluation:**

There are no handicapped accessible areas or facilities developed on the Rapidan WMA.

## VI. Management and Development Plan

### A. Wildlife Population Management Objectives:

#### 1. Wildlife Regulations

##### a. General Regulations

All State, Federal, and County wildlife regulations apply to the management area except for the bear hunting season. All regulations are subject to evaluation and change as needed on a biannual basis.

##### b. Special Management Area Rules/Regulations

*Bear* Dogs may not be used to hunt bear on the Rapidan WMA during the first 12 hunting days of the General Firearms Deer season.

*Crow/Groundhog* May only be hunted when the season is open for deer, bears, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, turkeys, and migratory game birds.

*Vehicles* Motorized vehicles are not allowed behind any closed and locked gates; thus, they are restricted to main road or hunter access trails. No ATV's are allowed.

*Firearms* Firearms not permitted on the adjacent Shenandoah National Park. No firearm can be discharged on the WMA unless during open hunting seasons. Target shooting is not permitted.

#### 2. Wildlife Species Management Objectives

*Game Species* White-tailed deer, eastern wild turkey, black bear, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit, ruffed grouse, raccoon, red fox, gray fox, coyote, mink, weasels, bobcat, opossum, striped skunk, groundhog, crow, woodcock.

*Threatened and Endangered* No Threatened or Endangered species are known to occur on the area. However, several are listed as potential residents.

*Other Significant*

*Species*

*Allegheny woodrat* - This species has the potential to exist on the Rapidan WMA. It is listed as a Federal Species of Concern, but no state designation has been assigned. Allegheny woodrats have been captured in Big Meadows of Shendandoah National Park not far from the Rapidan WMA. This species prefers rocky cliffs, caves, and fissures or tumble boulder fields. Currently there exist a few isolated rocky cliff areas that will not be impacted by any proposed management. No record of this species has been reported on or near the Rapidan WMA.

*Cerulean warbler* - This Neotropical migrant is currently a Federal Species of Concern, but not designated in the state of Virginia. There are known populations inhabiting the Rapidan WMA and a few individuals have been captured and banded on the Middle River Tract. The habitat required by this species...

**B. Wildlife Habitat Management Objectives:**

Open land Agricultural or grasslands over one acre are nonexistent on the Rapidan. The major floods that occurred in 1995 and 1996 created numerous rockslides and debris flows that should be considered natural open lands. Natural regeneration is occurring on these sites; thus, they will soon become mid-successional habitat. Herbaceous openings should be developed on suitable sites where they presently exist or consider reclaiming some that have moved into mid- to late-successional stages. A prescribed burning regime will be implemented for forest understory habitat management.

**1. Open Land Management Objectives**

**a. Current Management**

<b>TYPE ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<i>Forb and Grass</i>	2	Mow annually and set back woody regeneration.

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**TOTAL**                    2

**b. Proposed Management**

<b>TYPE ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<i>Forb and Grass</i>	5	Establish additional orchardgrass/clover openings on woods roads and through reclaiming abandoned fields. Maintain annually through mowing.
<b>TOTAL</b>	5	

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**2. Forest Management Objectives**

Provide forest wildlife habitat diversity through timber management practices. Harvest small blocks of accessible timber and allow the areas to regenerate naturally. Apply prescribed fire in some blocks to promote a diversity of forested habitats. Manage logging decks and haul roads as forage and brood habitat.

**a. Current Management**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Mixed Hardwoods</i>	?	Past silvicultural activities for managing hardwoods have included regeneration cuts, salvage harvests, and firewood cutting. Currently primary consideration will be given to clear-cut regeneration harvest techniques of small blocks of accessible sawtimber. Access to timber stands is very limited in all of the WMA;



thus, timber harvesting will be limited to select areas.

*Poplar*

2

No activity has occurred over the last 12 years. One sale that was proposed was abandoned after flooding destroyed the access road. Small blocks of poplar have been identified in 2003 and will be considered for harvesting in the near future.

*Paulonia*

1 - 2

During previous years this forest product has been harvested in some areas of the WMA. It is not abundant on the WMA and is know to have been poached off the area.

*All Types*

10,326

Monitor forest pests. Conduct observations for reoccurring gypsy moth outbreaks, pine bark beetle, and others as necessary.

**TOTAL**

10,326

**b. Proposed Management**

**TYPE**

**ACRES**

**MANAGEMENT  
ACTIVITY**

*Hardwood*

2

Selectively thin hardwood stands to improve stand quality. Conduct clear-cut regeneration harvest as necessary to create stand diversity, regenerate mast-producing species, and promote/improve forest health and vigor. Small blocks of timber should be

identified and harvested in accessible areas only.

<i>Poplar</i>	2	Selectively thin poplar stands to improve stand quality. Conduct clear-cut regeneration harvesting as necessary to create stand diversity and to improve stand vigor and forest health.
<i>Paulonia</i>	1 - 2	Protect from poaching. Release identified trees as necessary for optimum growth. Harvest when at highest market potential.
<i>All Types</i>	10,326	Monitor forest pests.

**TOTAL** 10,326

### 3. Wetland Management Objectives

Protect and enhance all wetland habitats. Maintain appropriate buffer zones along streams and rivers.

#### a. Current Management

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>MILES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Streams</i>	3.0 miles	Riparian buffer zones identified and maintained
<i>Rivers</i>	8.0 miles	Riparian buffers along Rapidan, Conway, South River and Garth Run is maintained.
<i>Springs/Seeps</i>	N/A	No current management is currently considered for seeps and springs.
<b>TOTAL</b>	11.0 miles	

**b. Proposed Management**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>MILES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Streams</i>	3.0 miles	Maintain current activities.
<i>Rivers</i>	8.0 miles	Maintain current activities.
<i>Springs/Seeps</i>	N/A	Considerations should be given to springs and seeps if and when timber-harvesting operations are planned around these areas. Inventorying springs and seeps should be carried out to identify unique sensitive areas, plan future management needs and considerations.
<b>TOTAL</b>	11.0 miles	

**C. Wildlife Recreation Management Objectives:**

**1. Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing Recreation Management Objectives**

Provide suitable access to the management area to encourage use of the WMA for hunting, trapping, and fishing. Primary management objectives are to maintain a diversity of game and furbearer wildlife species as well as healthy trout fisheries and provide recreational opportunities to pursue those species.

**a. Current Recreation Management Activity**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>USE</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Hunting</i>	H	Maintain habitats to attract and sustain optimum populations of game species. Develop and maintain facilities necessary for hunter access including roads, access trails, parking lots, and gates. Erect and maintain kiosks and signs that provide WMA regulations, public information, and guidance to accessible areas.

<i>Trapping</i>	L	Maintain habitats to attract and sustain optimum populations of furbearer species. Develop and maintain facilities necessary for trapper access including roads, trails, parking lots, and gates. Erect and maintain signs that provide WMA regulations, public information, and guidance to accessible areas.
<i>Fishing</i>	M	Develop and maintain facilities necessary for fishing access including roads, trails, parking lots, and gates. Erect and maintain signs that provide WMA regulations, public information, and guidance to accessible areas.
<i>Herb Gathering</i>	M	Authorize herb gathering to individuals requesting permission to dig herbaceous plants. <b><i>This focuses primarily on ginseng gathering.</i></b>

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H - High; M - Medium; L - Low

**b. Proposed Consumptive Recreation Management Activity**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>USE</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Hunting</i>	H	Maintain current management activities to provide continued and improved access and information to constituents.
<i>Trapping</i>	L	Maintain current management activities to provide continued and improved access and information to constituents.
<i>Fishing</i>	M	Maintain current management activities to provide continued and improved access and information to constituents.

<i>Herb Gathering</i>	M	Close monitoring of ginseng gathering and increasing awareness of gathering of other herbs. Tighten constraints for gathering ginseng to lessen pressure on existing populations. <i>Investigate the possibility of eliminating gathering of ginseng in the future as there is mounting concern among Natural Resource Specialist of the status and health of current ginseng populations.</i>
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H - High; M - Medium; L - Low

## 2. Non-consumptive Recreation Management Objectives

Provide access for non-consumptive uses such as horseback riding, hiking, cycling, bird watching, nature photography, and camping.

### a. Current Non-consumptive Recreation Management Activity

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>USE</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Camping</i>	M	Periodically litter is removed from primitive camping sites (created and well-established camping sites that were created by the public).
<i>Horseback Riding</i>	M	Horseback riding does occur on a frequent basis, but no specific activity undertaken to develop this recreational opportunity (not a primary constituent base). Organized (group) trail rides are not permitted.
<i>Bird Watching</i>	L	No specific activity has been undertaken to develop this recreational opportunity at present time.
<i>Hiking</i>	L	No specific activity has been undertaken to develop this

recreational opportunity at present time.

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H - High; M - Medium; L - Low

**b. Proposed Non-consumptive Recreation Management Activity**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>USE</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<i>Camping</i>	M	Continue current campsite litter control maintenance.
<i>Horseback Riding</i>	M	No specific management activity required.
<i>Bird Watching</i>	L	The Rapidan WMA has been added to the Virginia Birding Trail mountain segment. The future will entail establishing access trails for all constituents — birders fall into this category. Once trails are established, periodic inspections and maintenance will occur.
<i>Hiking</i>	L	Create additional access trails. Improve current trails by establishing visible blazes and signage for trail designation.

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H - High; M - Medium; L - Low

**D. Site-Wide Issues:**

There is very little commercial or private development occurring near the Rapidan WMA, however the area is experiencing increase usage by the public in terms of horseback riding, hiking, camping and wildlife viewing. Hunting and fishing usage remains somewhat constant. There is some concern regarding horseback riding taking place during legal hunting seasons. Restrictions in the form of posted rules should be imposed to eliminate this activity and increase the awareness of the safety. There are several tracts of the Rapidan WMA that have no public access, and some access has been lost recently due to flood damage to roads or road blockage from private landowners. Efforts should be made to negotiate agreements or obtain right-of-ways to these areas to increase and secure additional public access.

The increase in public use of the WMA by our new constituent base will create a need for upgraded and better-maintained roads and trails, as well as providing more vehicle parking. Additional gates will need to be constructed to limit/eliminate vehicular access into places that are currently open but not maintained. A better trail system — signed and marked — should be undertaken to provide easier access to many remote parts of the WMA.

## E. Action Plans: (Projected Expenditures Spreadsheet - Appendix H)

### 1. Facilities

#### a. Maintenance

##### ***BOUNDARIES***

**Current conditions:** Currently, boundary maintenance is on a 7-year rotation. It is feasible to have the boundary clearly delineated and perhaps resurveyed in places where disputes may be an issue. *The new Gore Tract (latest acquisition) has not been surveyed or marked since it was acquired in 1993.*

**Assessment of problem:** Not having clear boundaries delineated could pose problems with conflicts and disputes. VDGIF could experience problems with trespass or claims of adverse possession from adjoining landowners or Shenandoah National Park. Also, there is the possibility of trespass by hunters hunting the Rapidan WMA moving onto adjoining private lands or loss of WMA timber from adjoining landowners.

**Objectives:** Have boundary lines clearly marked, following VDGIF boundary-line standards, and surveyed/resurveyed if need be.

**Prescription for addressing problem:** Area Manager will solicit 3 local bids for having the work done.

**Estimated Cost:** \$100 - \$200/mile

##### ***BRIDGES***

**Current Conditions:** The two bridges located in the Rapidan Tract of the WMA are fairly new and in very good shape, having been reconstructed after the major floods of the mid-nineties.

**Assessment of Problem:** The bridges in this tract are very important for access into the area. Without the bridges being well maintained and passable, the access into the WMA will be severely impeded as well as human safety being jeopardized.

**Objectives:** To continue bridge inspections on an annual basis.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** Area manager will coordinate inspection of bridges with a private consultant in order to keep bridges at VDOT Standards.

**Estimated Cost:** \$1073.35 (based on 1998 figure)

**b. Improvements**

***COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE INVENTORY***

**Current Condition:** All tracts of the Rapidan WMA have not had a recent habitat inventory completed for them. In addition, there has not been any comprehensive inventory of the plants, animals, and associated communities that exist on the WMA.

**Assessment of Problem:** The habitat inventory is important resource data for VDGIF, which assesses existing habitats and their conditions for future management of both wildlife and habitat. A comprehensive inventory is invaluable to Resource Managers in guiding the management decisions to be made for wildlife habitat on our WMA's. In the absence of good habitat data more time must be spent in the field checking compartments for possible timber sales or other habitat development projects. Also, there is a need for all resources to be inventoried on each WMA to develop a complete and comprehensive database of all terrestrial and aquatic communities with species accounts. Future goals of the Wildlife Diversity Division are to incorporate all VDGIF WMA's into the Watchable Wildlife Birding Trail system.

**Objectives:** Complete the habitat inventory for the Rapidan WMA. Coordinate with the Wildlife Diversity Division to assist in inventorying all species and communities on the WMA (no projected time frame).

**Prescription for addressing problem:** District Biologist will determine status of habitat inventory for the Rapidan WMA. Efforts will be made to update habitat inventory and to work with Wildlife Diversity Biologist with WMA species and community inventories.

**Estimated cost:** Cost not certain.

**c. New Construction**

***SHOOTING RANGE***

**Current Condition:** Presently no public range exists for sighting in rifles or for target practicing in the surrounding area including Greene, Rappahannock, and Culpeper Counties.



**Assessment of Problem:** Throughout the Commonwealth, available locations for the general public to sight-in shotguns, rifles, handguns and bows are dwindling. Also, the population increase of the Northern Virginia area has ultimately increased the need to develop a safe place for the public to target shoot on the Rapidan WMA. Additionally, there is a growing need to provide areas for young and beginning hunters, to learn how to shoot and to practice shooting, in reasonably close proximity to the fastest growing (population) area in Virginia.

**Objectives:** Develop a shooting range complex containing six 100-yard rifle stations, six 30-yard pistol / 22cal stations, two informal clay bird shooting stations, and an area for archery practice. The site will be handicapped assessable. The facility will be used for informal target shooting of rifles, pistols and shotguns. It will also have an archery practice trail.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** Region 5 personnel will locate a suitable location for the shooting range in the Middle River Tract. A contractor will be selected by DGIF to develop a concept plan. A public meeting process will be used to inform the public and obtained their input. Detailed construction plans, which will conform to state and federal standards will be made by the contractor. A construction firm will be located to construct the project under the supervision of the Contractor. The work is anticipated to begin in FY 2003, with an anticipated completion date of September 2004.

**Estimated cost:** \$200,000

## 2. Roads, Trails and Parking Areas

### a. Maintenance

#### *ROADS*

**Current Condition:** There are a number of different roads on the Rapidan WMA, most of which provide primary access into them. These roads are in good to fair shape and should be adequately maintained to maximize public access.

**Assessment of Problem:** Roads need to be graded, have gravel put down annually to keep them in a safe, passable condition for public access, as well as accommodate timber hauling and equipment for other habitat development activities. In addition, the growing number of constituents using the Rapidan WMA will require additional time and materials in keep up with general maintenance of the roads and trails.

**Objectives:** Maintain the existing road system on the Rapidan WMA at a level conducive to heavy public use to provide access for hunters, trappers, fishermen and other members of the public to pursue outdoor/wildlife recreational activities.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** All roads on the Rapidan WMA will be placed on an annual maintenance schedule, depending on level of use and historical maintenance requirements. Roads will be graded, culverts replaced periodically, and gravel spread, as needed, to ensure proper maintenance of all roads and trails.  
**Estimated cost** = \$5,000 annually.

**b. Improvements**

***ROADS***

**Current Condition:** The section of the Middle River Tract access road that extends from Bootens Field to the Shenandoah National Park Gate is in poor condition, in much need of improvement.

**Assessment of Problem:** The access to the portion of the Middle River Tract above Bootens Field is somewhat hampered by the rough condition of the road. Grading and adding gravel to this section will greatly improve the road, thus providing better access to this portion of the management area.

**Objectives:** Grade and gravel the section of road in the Middle River Tract above Bootens Field to improve road surface and access into the area by spring of 2002.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** The Area Manager will utilize VDGIF Purchase Procedures to select vendors that will complete the work.

**Estimated Cost:** \$5,000.00.

**Current Condition:** The portion of Route 642 (Taylor's Mountain Road) from the end of state maintenance on the South River Tract access road is in very poor shape. No BMP's or other water diversion tactics exist on this road. Thus, erosion of and washing out of the road is continuous.

**Assessment of Problem:** Route 642 is the only public access road to the South River Tract of the Rapidan WMA. The only vehicles that can currently access the tract are four-wheel drives; a two-wheel drive vehicle would not make it. This significantly limits the amount of WMA users accessing this tract.

**Objectives:** To improve Rt. 642 after state maintenance ends to provide better access to the South River Tract of the Rapidan WMA.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** The Area Manager and District Biologist will utilize the VDGIF IPR procedures for getting bids on grading, construction, and gravel.

**Estimated Cost:** \$55,000.

## ***GATES***

**Current Condition:** The gates on the Rapidan WMA range from poor to good. A slow replacement of the old cable gates is occurring, but there still are a few. There also exist sites that need gates installed that do not have them currently.

**Assessment of Problem:** Many secondary roads (Class B and C) on the Rapidan do not have any vehicle control on them. Many hunters and 4x4 enthusiasts venture all the possible roads that could get them to more interior and remote sites. This "exploration" results in deterioration of good roads and destruction of fair and poor roads. And, little time and money exists to maintain the good roads annually.

**Objectives:** All existing cable gates should be replaced with standard steel pole gates, and a number of gates on new sites need to be installed. This will ultimately prolong maintenance and costs associated with many of the existing secondary roads by offsetting the amount of vehicles traveling them.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** Area Manager and District Biologist will identify replacement gates and identify sites for new gates. Materials will be purchased and gates will be made and installed by VDGIF employees.

**Estimated Cost:** \$150 per gate.

## ***TRAILS***

**Current Condition:** There is an elaborate system of old roads and logging trails in the Rapidan WMA that are essentially unused because they are not identified or marked. There are a few places that are in need of a trail to permit WMA users to access a large portion of the Rapidan, especially the South River Tract. Currently only one road allows for access to the South River Tract.

**Assessment of Problem:** There is continuing problems with hunter access in the South River Tract due to a hunt club that leases surrounding private property. A gate has been legally placed on a section of the access road in the South River Tract that shuts off direct access to a majority of the tract. Also, there exists a network of trails and old roads scattered throughout the other tracts of the Rapidan WMA, which improved would allow more public access by foot to many of the more remote sections of the area.

**Objectives:** To develop a system of trails that would permit hunters, anglers, and other wildlife enthusiasts to gain access to remote and currently inaccessible portions of the Rapidan WMA.

**Prescription for Addressing Problem:** Area Manager and District Wildlife Biologist will choose locations of desired trails and assess current trail and old road system. Contractual work or using volunteer

labor will be considered. If contracted work is to be used then VDGIF IPR procedures will be used.