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VIRGINIA OUTDOOR WOMEN (VOW) PROGRAM



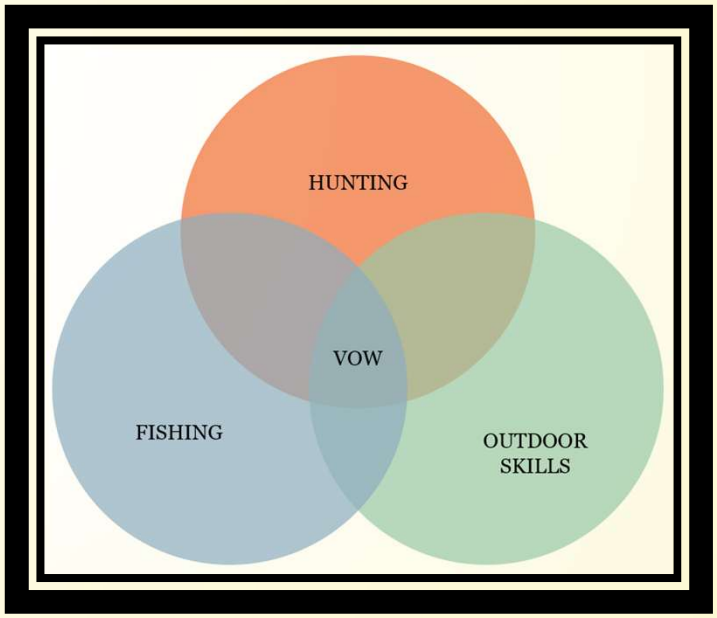
Revised: 9/24/26

Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW)

Launched in early 2025, VOW was specifically designed to create an inclusive, empowering, and community-driven space for women interested in outdoor recreation and conservation.

DWR is committed to developing a community of women who enjoy the outdoors, value the importance of conservation and outdoor recreation, and want to have opportunities for personal growth, independence, and empowerment.

This program is available to women of all skill levels and ages but is tailored for 16+. Events will focus on increasing competencies in the three focal areas: **hunting, fishing, and outdoor skills.**



Why VOW?

Women represent one of the fastest-growing segments of outdoor recreation and often drive participation decisions within family and social networks. Recognizing this trend, DWR sought to build a program specifically tailored to women's learning needs and motivations while enhancing representation within the state's growing R3 initiatives.

The VOW program emerged from a **comprehensive foundation** of focus-group data, human-dimension research, and prior program experience. Rather than simply offering isolated women-only events, DWR committed to **building a foundational, research-based program model that is sustainable, data-driven, and highly focused on long-term outcomes**.

Events are tailored for every type of woman, from those venturing outside for the first time to regular outdoor enthusiasts. The programs emphasize confidence building, hands-on skill proficiency, female mentorship, and long-term engagement. By fostering a **supportive community and creating clear learning pathways**, VOW strengthens Virginia's R3 (Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation) goals and builds a pipeline for future female educators, partnerships, and outdoor leaders.

Why VOW?

The primary objectives for VOW:

1. **Establish** a progressive and holistic **learning structure** for women exploring hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related outdoor skills.

2. Provide clear next steps and **incentives** for **continued engagement** through certification courses.

3. **Build a statewide female outdoor community** grounded in support, mentorship, and shared experience.

4. Increase competency, retention, and confidence through **hands-on instruction**.

5. **Establish a framework** for training future female instructors and recruiting female volunteers.

6. **Create and utilize systems** that support **robust data collection** from program launch onward and utilize adaptive management principles.

VOW Volunteers & Instructors



To ensure **sustainability**, VOW actively recruits and develops female instructors. Certification through the program is **a primary pathway** to becoming a VOW instructor, empowering participants to share their knowledge and serve as role models within their communities. The program relies heavily on these **partnerships and volunteers** to deliver high-quality, relatable instruction.

VOW Event Categories

1. **VOW Weekend Events**
   - Weekend Events are held over an entire weekend (Friday evenings through midday Sunday). The have a variety of outdoor recreation "sessions" that women can select from, community/skill building activities, and social activities that promote a sense of belonging and connectedness.

2. **VOW Virtual Events**
   - Virtual Events will be held online with topics ranging from backpacking basics, regulations, knife sharpening, habitat/biology, etc. We also have Virtual Series in a variety of outdoor recreation topics.

3. **VOW Social Events**
   - Social events are partnerships with breweries, wineries, distilleries or cideries. DWR provides 2-3 hours of instruction for an outdoor recreational activity (i.e., archery, camping, hiking etc.) followed by a social hour hosted by the partner.

4. **VOW Mentor Events (coming in 2027)**
   - These events will be a 1–2-day events focused on a specific outdoor skills/recreation activity where an experienced mentor will walk a small group through all the steps (putting learning into action).

5. **VOW Courses* (Certifications)**
   - See Certification slides. ALL events across categories (except virtual, social and weekend events) can count towards certifications.

VOW Courses*

VOW @ the…

1. Range (Shooting; Shotgun, Rifle, Pistol, Muzzleloader)
2. Archery Range (Archery)
3. Field 1; General Workshop (any species)
4. Field 2; General Workshop with Live Fire (any species)
5. Field 3; Hunting Workshop (any species/active hunt)
6. Table (Food Prep/Processing)
7. Pond – General Intro to Fishing Course
8. Lake – Flyfishing
9. River – Catfish
10. Tackle Shop – (Skills course: Knot Tying, Casting, etc.)
11. Outdoor Adventure (Variable Course)
12. Camp I, II, or III (Intro to Camping (I), Advanced Camping (II), Outdoor Cooking (III))
13. Trail I, II, or III (Intro to Hiking (I), Backpacking/Advanced Hiking (II), Wildlife Viewing (III))
14. Backcountry I OR II (Intro to Outdoor Survival (I), Orienteering (II))
15. Classroom (Learning the Regulations)

VOW Events are designed to encourage participants to become instructors! By completing a certificate option, a participant can use that as a requirement to become an instructor for the VOW Program through Galaxy.

NOTE: Not all courses will be offered every year!!!

Certificates


INDIVIDUAL MASTERY CERTIFICATION

This Certificate is awarded to:

FIRST NAME, LAST NAME

In recognition of completing the necessary requirements for the
DWR Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) Program
in the focal area of:

Virginia Outdoor Women

BLANK

Ciera Strickland
Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) Program Manager


VOW MASTERY CERTIFICATION

This Certificate is awarded to:

FIRST NAME, LAST NAME

In recognition of completing the necessary requirements for the
DWR Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) Program
in all three focal areas and the classroom course.

Virginia Outdoor Women

HUNTING, FISHING,
&
OUTDOOR SKILLS

Ciera Strickland
Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) Program Manager

VOW Partners

- The underlying foundation for the VOW Program is **building strong relationships with like-minded organizations** and other women-centered programming.
- One of the core principles for the VOW Program is **building a community of women** who have a passion for conservation and outdoor recreation, but that isn't just for those who participate in the VOW Program – it's a community of partners too.
- Having similar goals, DWR has integrated a **focus on creating a network** of organizations, agencies, non-profits, private businesses' etc. that all support getting more women outdoors, with VOW being the center of that network.
- VOW currently has **over 30 active partner organizations** that share a similar mission or have established women's programming. During 2027, we plan to continue to increase our partnerships and our overall network so we can expand opportunities to more women in the Commonwealth.
- VOW relies on **robust partnerships** for its execution. **DWR collaborates closely with community stakeholders** to expand program relevancy and reach, while also helping promote other conservation focused organizations and **women-centered programming.**

VOW Data Management

The VOW program was designed to **utilize adaptive management to enhance and monitor success**, in coordination with DWR's Human Dimensions, Licensing, and Marketing teams. Data, which is largely gathered from **both pre-event surveys and post-event surveys**, are analyzed quarterly and reviewed annually to **assess program effectiveness** regarding license purchases, overall engagement, and demographics.

Since its launch, VOW has held **38 events**, **20 virtual sessions**, **worked with over 30 different partner organizations**, and reached nearly **1000 women**. The data underscores strong statewide demand and highlights the critical impact of female-focused programming.

VOW Event registrations are through **DWR's licensing system (GoOutdoorsVA)**, which allows us to maintain streamlined data acquisitions, but also provides a centralized data authority location for the program.

VOW Survey Data

98.7% overall satisfaction rating for VOW.

100% of participants were interested in attending future VOW events.

100% of participants would recommend a VOW event to others.

87% of participants felt either very capable or extremely capable of applying the skills they learned in the future.

Prior to the start of the VOW program in early 2025*, roughly **67%** of participants who participated in at least one VOW event had never bought a fishing or hunting license before. After the start of the VOW program, roughly **50%** of VOW participants had purchased a hunting or fishing license.

**Dataset begins in 2016 when new database was launched. Data prior to 2016 is not utilized for these statistics.*

What is the Future for VOW?

Future strategic plans for VOW include:

- **Expanding** educational/outreach opportunities
- **Fostering new partnerships** while maintaining/promoting existing relationships
- **Increasing geographic reach** across Virginia
- **Developing incentives** to decrease event "no-show" rates
- Continuing to **advance data management initiatives** through existing IT processes (further integration into GoOutdoorsVA)
- **Further developing the sense of "community"** by offering consistent, AND new engaging opportunities

VOW Weekend Event

- **DATE:** August 21-23, 2026
- **LOCATION:** Holiday Lake 4H Educational Center, Appomattox VA
- Open to **100 women**
  - Cost **$235** (meals, lodging, t-shirt)
  - Planned total revenue for the event (not including costs) - ~$23,500
  - Agenda:
    - Friday
      - Registration
      - Partner Social
    - Saturday
      - Sessions (All day)
      - Bonfire (Evening)
    - Sunday
      - Community/Team Building Activity
      - Storytime/Sharing

VOW Webpages & Information

Virginia Outdoor Women | Virginia DWR

VOW Interest Form and General Information

Virginia Outdoor Women | Event Types | Virginia DWR

VOW Certifications

Program Contact Information

Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW) Contact Information

1. For general questions and/or information about the Virginia Outdoor Women (VOW), please email VOW@dwr.virginia.gov. Please allow 48-72 hours for a response.

2. For other information or specific questions, please reach out directly to:

Ciera Strickland
Virginia Outdoor Women Program Manager
Email: Ciera.Strickland@dwr.virginia.gov
Cell: 804-845-0596

QUESTIONS?



Outreach Division

Director's Update

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American Woodcock Chosen as Focus of the 2027 Restore the Wild Artwork Competition

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) invites artists and aspiring artists



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Archery/Open 2027







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STATEWIDE SEPTEMBER 25 - 27, 2026





