Game & Fish Protection Fund, Budget Overview Wildlife Division

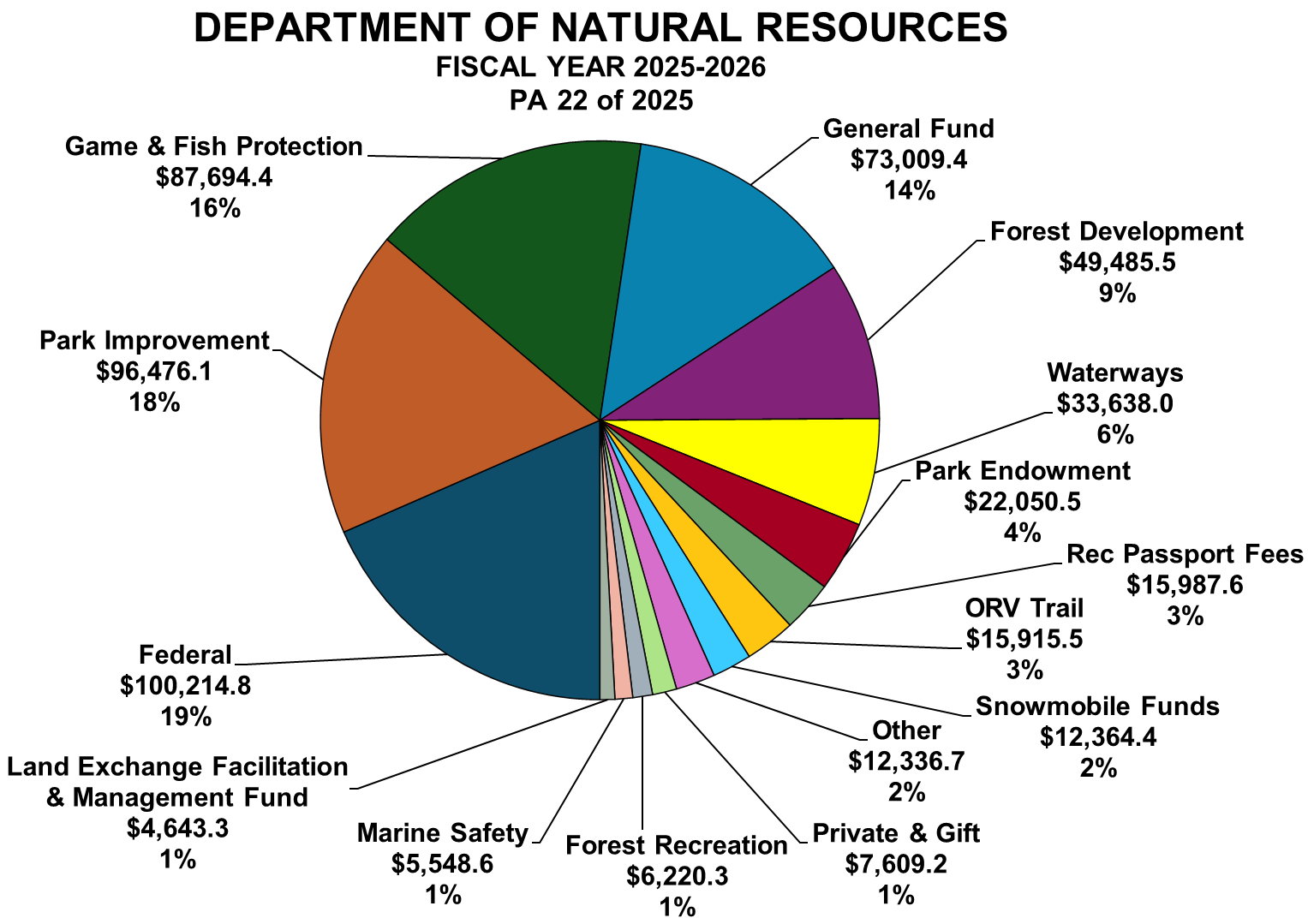
Natural Resources Commission, Finance Committee, January 14th, 2026

Dan Lord, Chief of Finance and Operations Division

Sara Thompson, Chief of Wildlife Division

Keith Kintigh, Assistant Chief of Wildlife Division

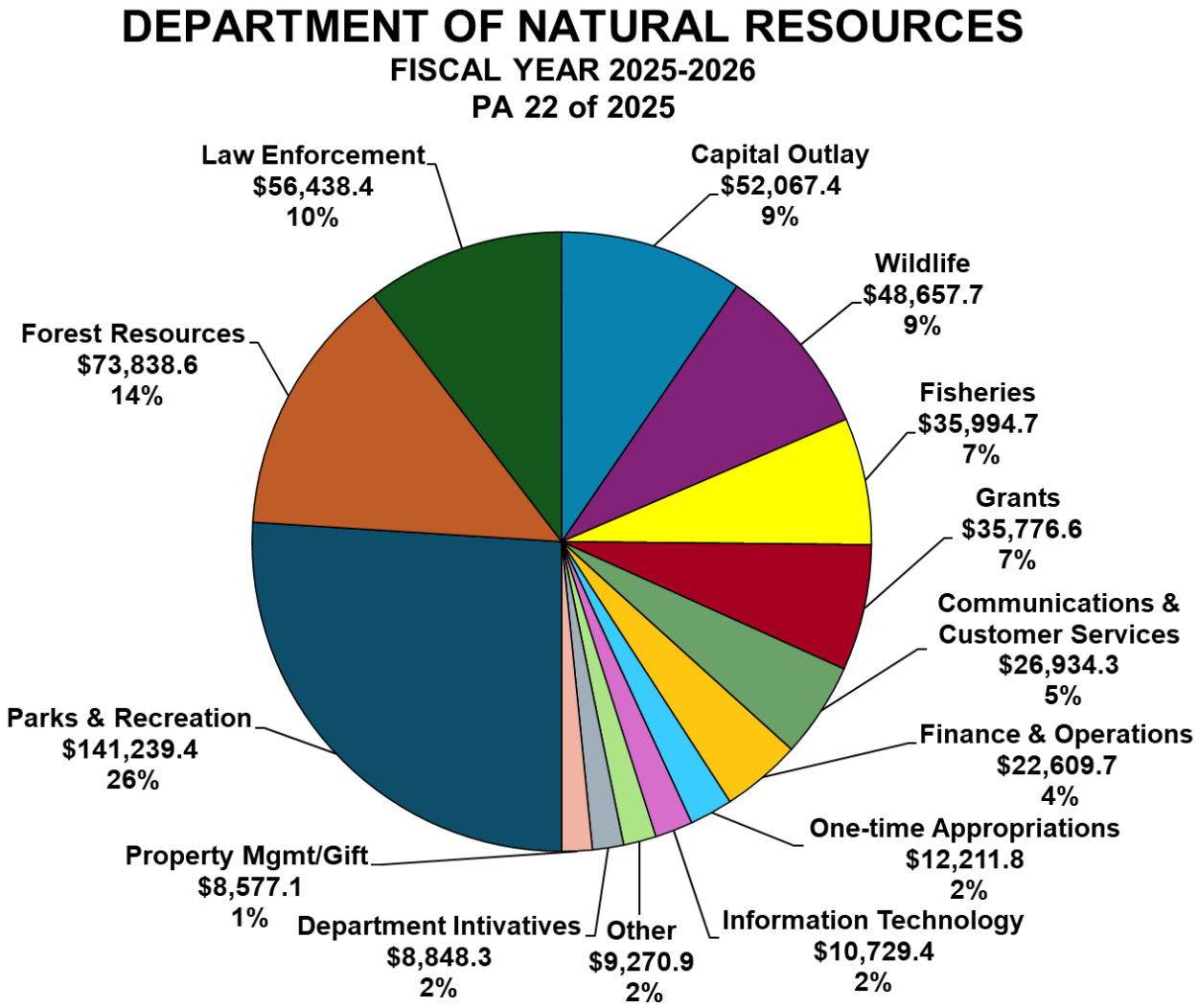
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget: Appropriations by Funding Source



*Note: Figures in thousands

Total Funding: $543,194.3 *

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget: Appropriations by Program Area



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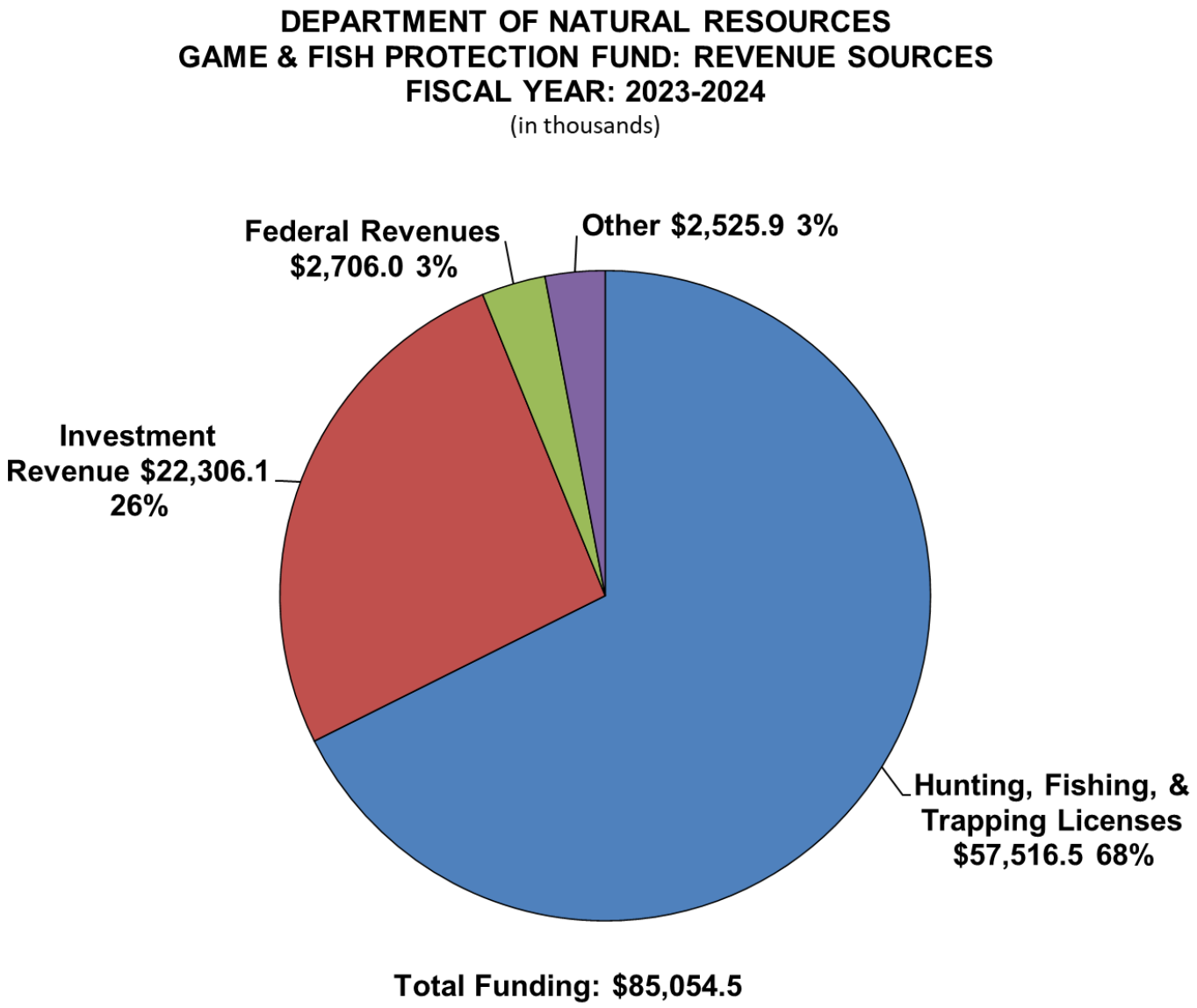
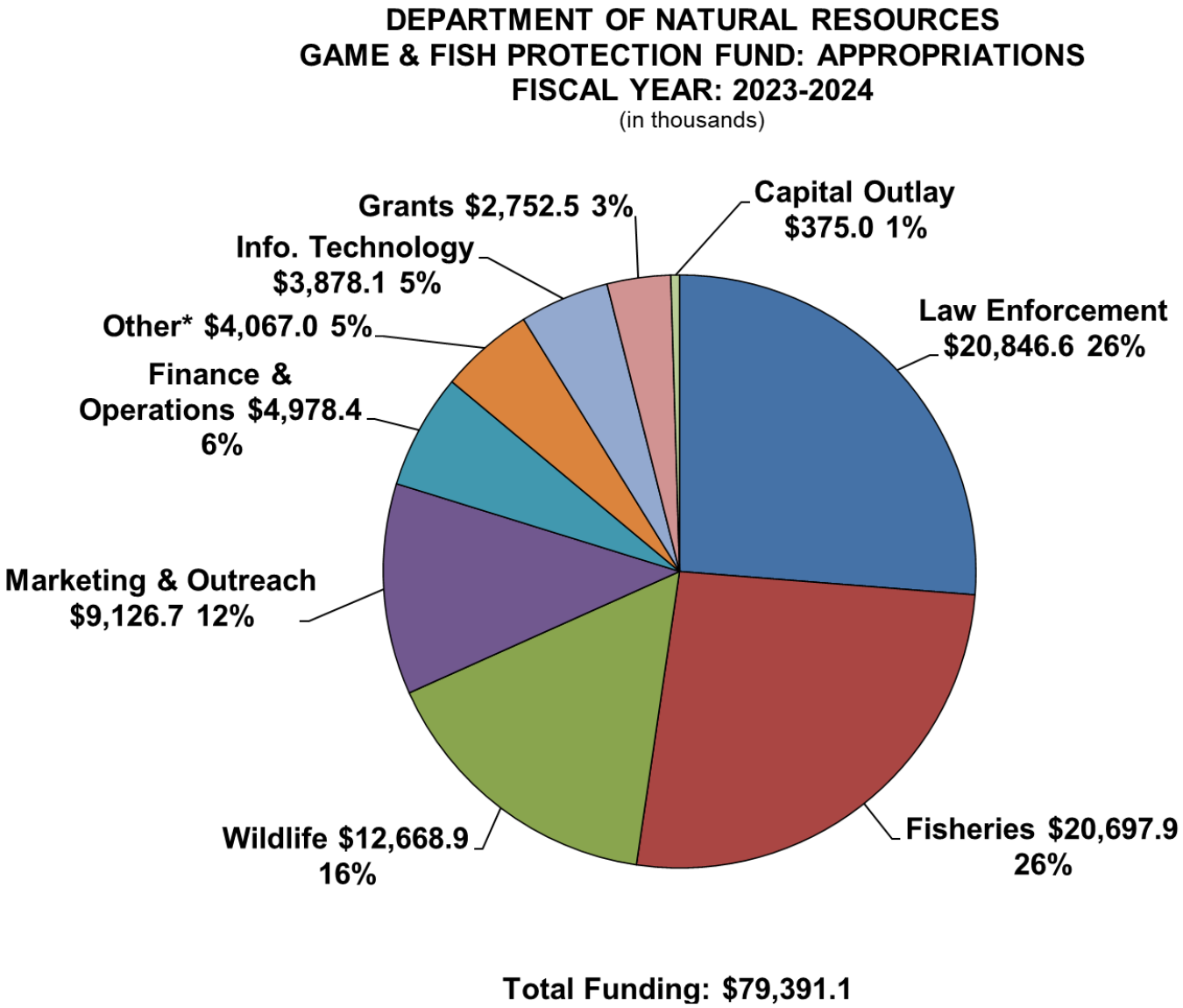
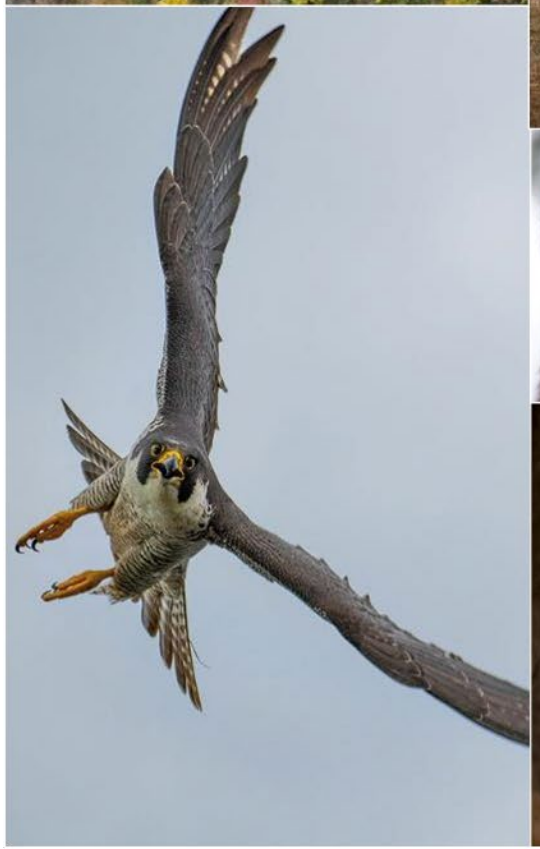
Game & Fish Protection Fund: Revenue Sources

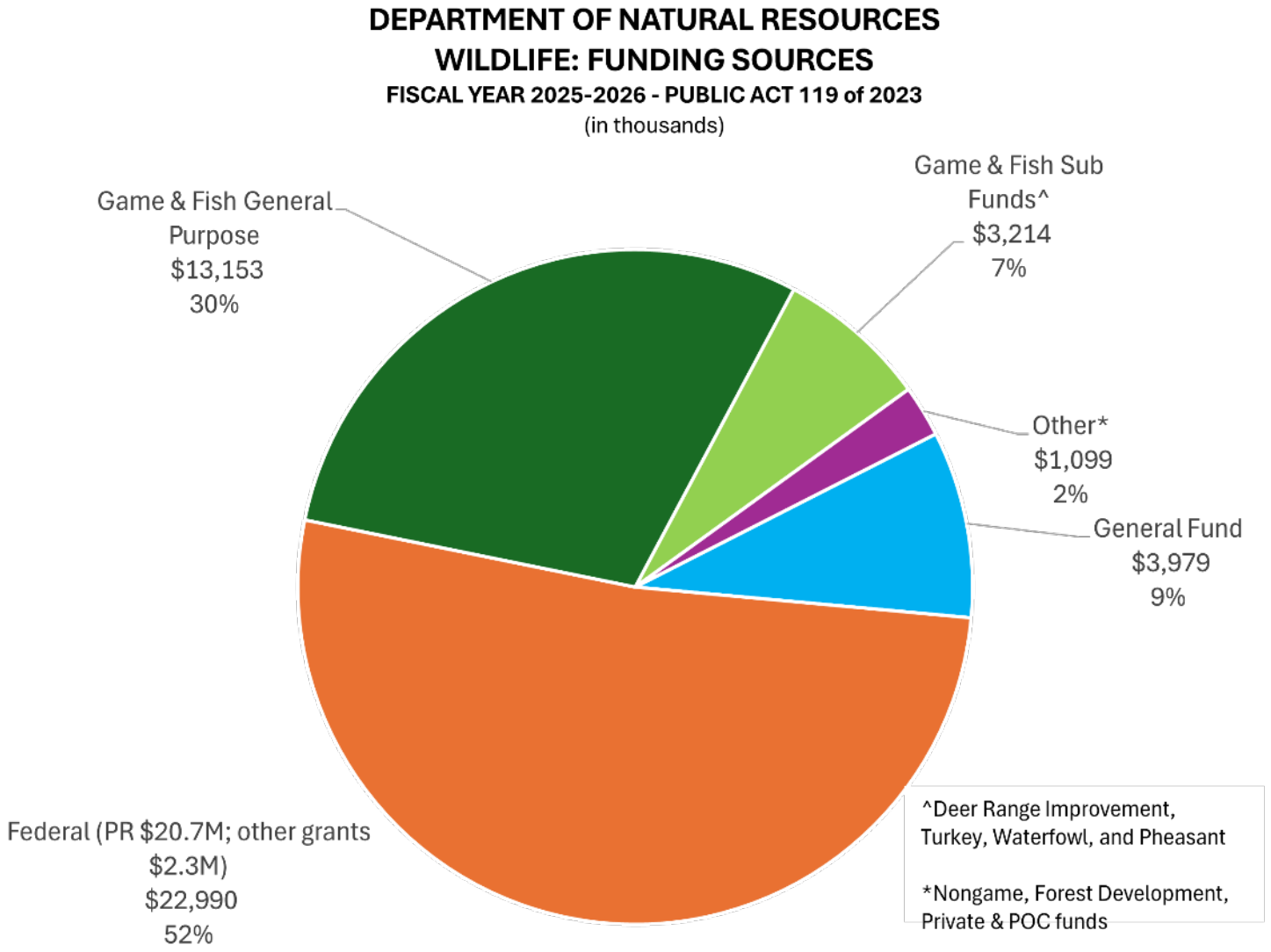


Game & Fish Protection Fund: Appropriations



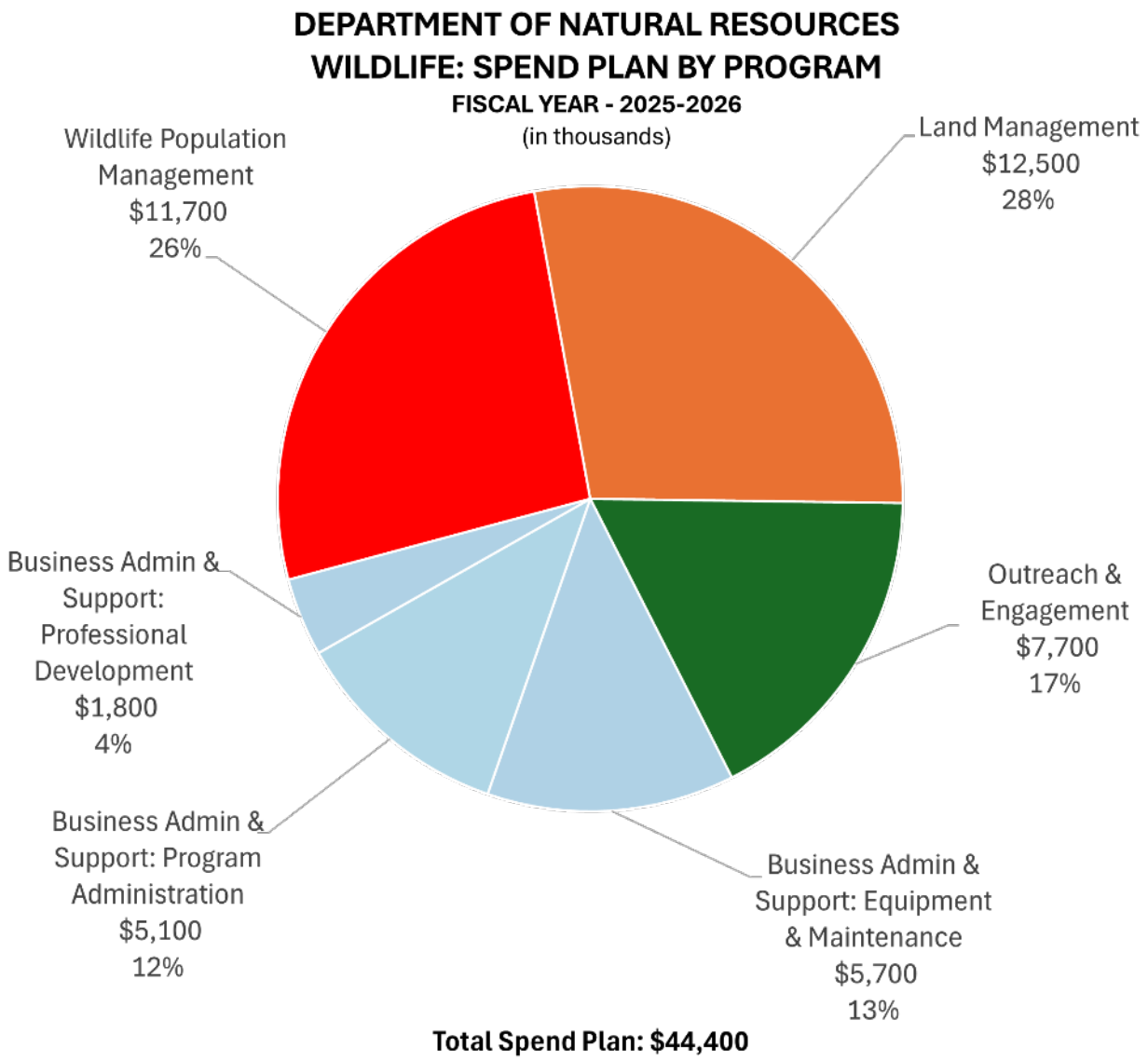


Wildlife Division: Where the money comes from



Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Total - $48,700 (-$4,400 unearned revenue) = $44,400 Available

Wildlife Division: Where the money goes



The Problem

- Full time staff **down nearly 20%** since 2005.
- Aged (**>50 years old**) offices and storage buildings - **$20M Need**.
- Aged (**>60 years old**) managed wetland infrastructure - **$40-60M Need.**
- Old equipment – **$10M Need**.
- Skyrocketing costs.

Our Response

- Holding Vacancies
- Temporary Employees
- Vehicle Fleet
- Out of State Travel
- Overtime
- Research and Private Lands

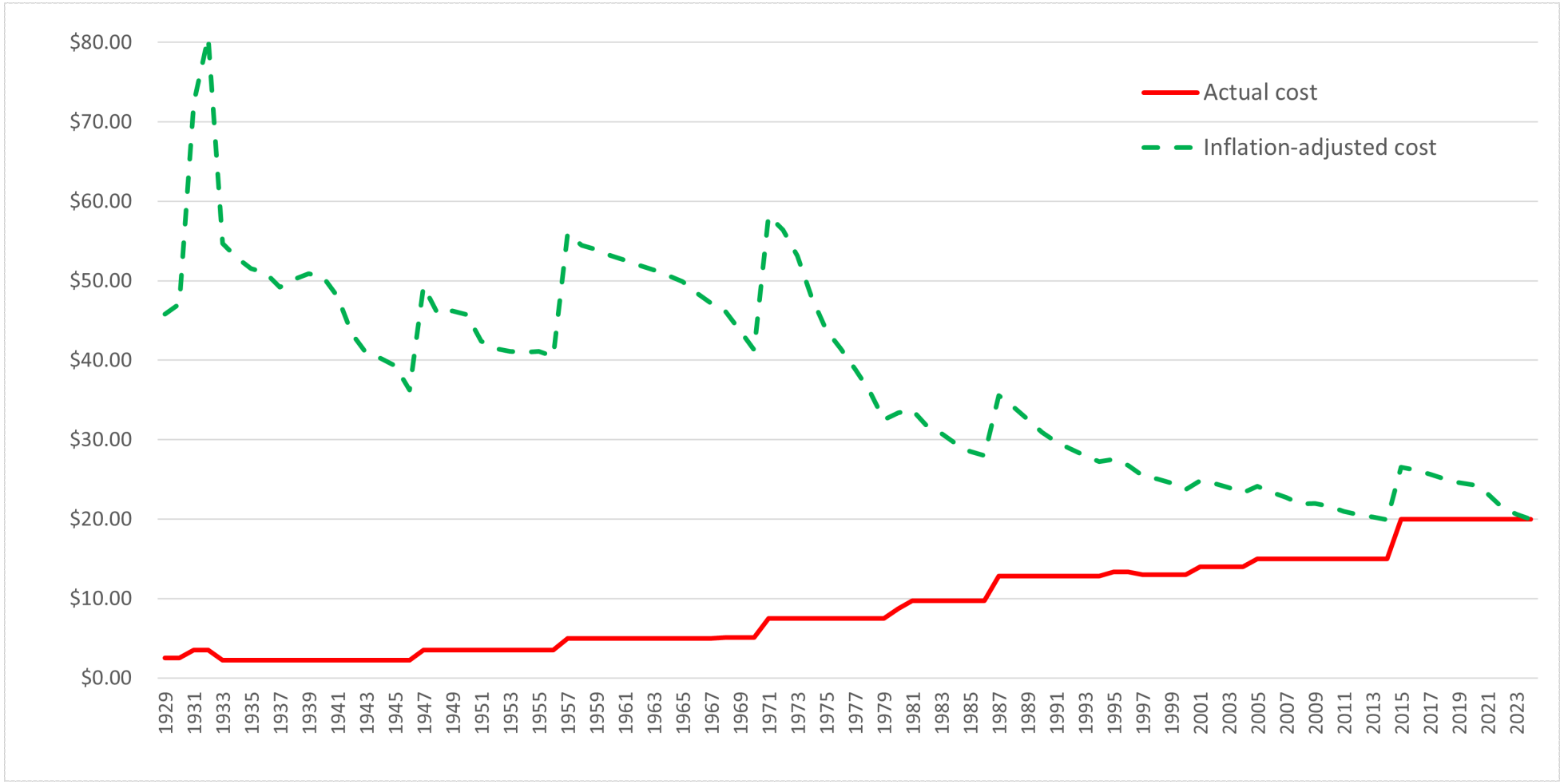
Inflation Eroding our Capacity

- $12.5M lost in purchasing power over 7 years (21% of total budget)
- Game & Fish down 16%
- Federal Funds down 34% (incl. Pittman-Robertson)
- Operating budget hit hardest: ~40% less for habitat, species monitoring, repairs.

Should Hunters and Anglers Pay More?

- Fish and Wildlife and wild woods and waters are worthy of investment.
- Without broader funding, hunters and anglers must continue to carry responsibility.
- Our hunting and fishing licenses are dramatically undervalued.

Annual Cost & 2024 Inflation Adjusted Cost of Michigan Resident Deer License , 1929-2024.



Michigan’s Deer “Product”

- #2 in antlered buck harvest
- 50% deer hunter success
- 85% - 6+ points & 66% - 8+ points
- Most land open to public hunting

Other Budget Items of Note for Fiscal Year 2026

- Fiscal year 2026 supplemental requests submitted to the State Budget Office on 1/9:
  - Alignment of gas tax increase = $11,500,000
  - Wildlife infrastructure = $10,000,000
  - Fisheries infrastructure = $7,000,000
  - Multi-year, multi-state deer overabundance research = $3,221,400
- $45,000,000 in Natural Resources Trust Fund Board recommended grants, potential House challenges
  - Acquisition = $25.9M, 10 local and 5 state
  - Development = $19.1M, 55 local and 5 state