

Duck River Agency

4-Year Strategic Plan

Prepared by TN Duck River Development Agency| November 2024

DRA mission statement:
"Develop, protect and sustain a clean and dependable water resource for all citizens of the Duck River Region".

Executive Summary

The Tennessee Duck River Development Agency (DRA) was created in 1965 by state legislation §64-1-601 *"for the purpose of developing and effectuating plans and programs for comprehensive development, including the control and development of the water resources of those portions of the Upper Duck River watershed lying in Coffee, Bedford, Hickman, Marshall and Maury counties, and integrating plans, programs and development activities with the overall economic development of the area described."*

In 2024, Governor Bill Lee signed an amendment to the DRA statute that the General Assembly unanimously passed. That amendment accomplished the following three objectives; 1) secured funding by placing a membership fee on water withdrawals from the Duck River, 2) recognizing the Duck River Agency Technical Advisory Committee as an entity form by legislation, and 3) adding a representative from each contributing member to the DRA Board.

The challenges the DRA faces with planning for long-term water supply and protecting the Duck River are extremely complicated and very controversial. The Duck River is known for its biological diversity and home to several endangered and threatened aquatic species. The growth (residential, commercial and industrial) is putting a strain on the Duck River particularly during extended dry periods and low flows. Developing regional water supply plans that provide for environmentally sustainable river flows and quality growth requires a partnership with all state and federal agencies, NGO's, water utilities, economic development councils and citizens of the Duck River watershed. The DRA is uniquely position at this time to facilitate and perhaps lead this partnership given its local presence, statutory purposes, and commitment to striking a balance between strategic economic development of the region and protection of the Duck River as a unique and valuable resource of the State of Tennessee.

For the DRA to be successful implementing its mission, it is very critical that a good clear strategic vision is developed. With the guidance of the Tennessee State Government "Customer Focus Government" organization and support from the DRA Board and the Duck River Agency Technical Advisory Committee, a four-year strategic plan has been developed to guide the DRA in regional water supply planning and implementation.

"Working Together Works"

Strategic Goals

- **Goal 1:** Outline and prioritize policy and project initiatives.
- **Goal 2:** Develop talent management practices.
- **Goal 3:** Enhance Duck River Agency communication strategies.
- **Goal 4:** Strengthen relationship with key stakeholders.
- **Goal 5:** Expand funding resources.

Goal 1: **Outline and prioritize policy and project initiatives.**

Objective 1.1: Foster strategic economic development that incorporates water availability and watershed planning.

To meet this objective:

- By October 31, 2025, have initial meeting with Duck River Region economic development committees/boards with focus on promoting quality growth that recognizes the environmental significance of the Duck River
- By July 2026, provide economic analysis for water supply if demands are not met: "No water, No coffee".

Objective 1.2: Develop plans for environmentally sustainable flows to sustain quality growth and maintain designated uses of the Duck River for water supply, aquatic habitat, recreation, agricultural, etc.

To meet this objective:

- In accordance with the Endanger Species Act support and partner with organizations developing a Habitat Conservation Plan for endangered and threatened species in the Duck River

Objective 1.3: Provide leadership for regional water supply planning by updating the 2011Duck River Comprehensive Regional Water Supply Plan in consultation and partnership with various government and non-government stakeholders

To meet this objective:

- By July 31, 2025, have updated regional water demand projections
- By October 2025, have consultant(s) hired to coordinate with TDEC to update the 2011 Duck River Comprehensive Regional Water Supply Plan including:
    - Update the Regional Drought Management Plan that can be approved
    - Completing a Water-Use Efficiency Program Plan
    - Initiate large scale engineering projects feasibility studies

Goal 2: **Develop talent management practices.**

Objective 2.1: Develop a succession plan for leadership that incorporates job definition and scope, based on market conditions by January 2025

To meet this objective:

- By January 31, 2025, have executive director succession plan outline
- By April 30, 2025, begin process to hire new executive director
- By January 31, 2026, complete compensation market analysis

Objective 2.2: Identify internal staffing needs based on prioritized projects/initiatives.

To meet this objective:

- By July 31, 2025, identify additional key expertise needed

Objective 2.3: Identify additional third-party contracting needs or opportunities by December 2025.

To meet this objective:

- By July 31, 2025, have list of project/program needs
- By October 31, 2025, have potential consultants identified

Goal 3: **Enhance Duck River Agency Communication Strategies.**

Objective 3.1: Identify key audiences in early 2025.

To meet this objective:

- By July 31, 2025, examine DRA's stakeholders to identify the "who" and "why"

Objective 3.2: Establish public relations practices and assign roles and responsibilities by January 2026.

To meet this objective:

- By July 1, 2025, identify communicators for DRA (internal, contract, etc.)

Objective 3.3: Develop communication plan/strategy with media and public (social media, website, etc.) by April 30, 2026.

To meet this objective:

- By October 2025, retain public relations firm to develop:
    - Success stories
    - Crisis management strategy
    - Routine information sharing

Goal 4: Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders.

Objective 4.1: Using the information developed as part of Goal 3, establish a regular cadence for stakeholder updates and outreach by December 2025.

To meet this objective:

- By October 1 each year work with Duck River Annual Symposium Committee to have agenda planned
    - Determine key topics/themes
- By October 31, 2025, identify methods of outreach (in-person, virtual, e-mail, newsletter, etc.)

Objective 4.2: Encourage and provide opportunities for external perspectives to inform DRA work by January 2026.

To meet this objective:

- By July 31, 2025, identify public meetings, town halls (open-door policy)
- By July 31, 2025, establish a process for recording/documenting comments

Objective 4.3: Establish outline for stakeholder continuity practices.

To meet this objective:

- By October 31, 2025, complete survey with stakeholders for best communication practices

Goal 5: **Expand funding resources.**

Objective 5.1: Define parameters and utilize new funding resources from new statutory provisions.

To meet this objective:

- Identify new projects that support DRA members by July 2026.

Objective 5.2: Identify funding opportunities that align with state and federal objectives.

To meet this objective:

- By December 31, 2025, develop a partnership with state (TDEC) to identify funding for large scale regional water supply projects
- By January 31, 2028, reach out to federal organizations to develop a list of potential funding sources

Objective 5.3: Leverage economic growth of the region to support the mission of the DRA to minimize rate-paying burden.

To meet this objective:

- By January 31, 2026, develop and approve program for new system development charges
    - Fees on new meters

Objective 5.4: Research and implement best practices for watershed funding models

To meet this objective:

- Staying up to date on federal requirements on an annual schedule
    - Attend conferences if needed
    - Develop contact information

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Timeline

Goal 1: Outline and prioritize policy and project initiatives.

Objective #	Objective Statement	Completion Date
1.1	By January 2026 foster strategic economic development that incorporates water availability and watershed plan.	January 2026
1.2	By 2030 develop plans for environmentally sustainable flows to sustain quality growth and maintain designated uses.	January 2031
1.3	Be the leadership for regional water supply planning by completing an update to the 2011Duck River Comprehensive Regional Water Supply Plan by December 2027	December 2027

Goal 2: Develop talent management practices

Objective #	Objective Statement	Completion Date
2.1	Develop a succession plan for leadership that incorporates job definition and scope, based on market conditions by January 2025	January 2025
2.2	By July 2025 identify internal staffing needs based on prioritized projects/initiatives.	July 2025
2.3	Identify additional third-party contracting needs or opportunities by December 2025.	December 2025

Goal 3: Enhance Duck River Agency Communication Strategies

Objective #	Objective Statement	Completion Date
3.1	Identify key audiences in early 2025.	July 2025
3.2	Establish public relations practices and assign roles and responsibilities by January 2026.	January 2026

3.3	Develop communication plan/strategy with media and public (social media, website, etc.) by April 2026.	April 2026

Goal 4: Strengthen relationship with key stakeholders

Objective #	Objective Statement	Completion Date
4.1	Establish a regular cadence for stakeholder updates and outreach by December 2025.	December 2025
4.2	Encourage and provide opportunities for external perspectives to inform DRA work by January 2026.	January 2026
4.3	Establish outline for stakeholder continuity practices by January 2026.	January 2026

Goal 5: Expand funding resources

Objective #	Objective Statement	Completion Date
5.1	By July 2027 define parameters and utilize new funding resources from new statutory provisions.	July 2027
5.2	Identify funding opportunities that align with state and federal objectives by January 2028.	January 2028
5.3	Leverage economic growth of the region to support the mission of the DRA to minimize rate-paying burden by July 2026.	July 2026
5.4	Research and implement best practices for watershed funding models by January 2027	January 2027