

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, February 5, 2020 9:30am-4pm

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1111 Washington St SE, Olympia WA 98501 - Room 537

Attendance

BPAG

Andy Marks, Coastal Conservation Association
Butch Smith, Ilwaco Charter Association
Charley Wilkinson, Audubon Washington
Dick Wallace, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups
Eric Johnson, WA State Assoc. of Counties
George Harris, NW Marine Trade Association
Jen Syrowitz, Washington Outdoor Women
Tom O'Keefe, American Whitewater

Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center
Kevin Van Bueren, Methow Valley Fly Fishers
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest
Mike Petersen, The Lands Council
Rachel Voss, Mule Deer Foundation
Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
Jason Callahan, WA Forest Protection Association

Public

Greg King, Friends of the Cowlitz

WDFW Staff

Kelly Susewind, Nate Pamplin, Jeff Davis, Tom McBride, Nelson Falkenburg, Rob Geddis, Joel Sisolak, Kevin Wharton, Lynn Helbrecht, Kathy Backman, and Commissioner Barbara Baker

Welcome, Introductions, Agency Update

Nate Pamplin and Kelly Susewind welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group members and thanked members for their support for the Department's 2020 supplemental budget request. Advisory Group members noted the large number of additional groups that came together to support the Department and set-aside some of their differences on various policy issues in support of a common position to fully fund the Department.

Kelly updated the BPAG on several high-profile Department issues, some of which will be addressed at the February Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting.

- Columbia River fisheries policy – Kelly is working with the Oregon Director of Fish and Wildlife Curt Melcher to achieve concurrency on recreational and commercial fisheries in 2020.

- Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan – The Department continues to work with treaty tribes and have reached agreement on the technical details of the plan with the exception of exploitation rates for mid-Hood Canal Chinook. Advisory group members had questions about possible resolutions and timing to reach an agreement.
- Hatchery Reform – In response to an assignment from the Commission, the Department will hold a workshop on Thursday, February 6, to present a hatchery reform science review report. On Saturday, February 8, the Commission will discuss the process and work schedule to review and update their policy.
- Hunting Contests - The Department will present the legal status of hunting contests at the Commission meeting, along with summary of regulations in other states. The Commission will take public comment for this agenda item.
- Cougars – The plan for recreational harvest framework for cougars will be presented to the Commission in March. The Department continues to explore changes to the framework that are possible within the scope of the current game management plan.
- Wolves – WDFW is investigating one depredation in Grouse Flats in Asotin County.
- Cooke Aquaculture Net Pen Permit – The Department recently approved an application from Cooke Aquaculture to farm all female, sterile rainbow trout/steelhead at an existing net pen facilities in Puget Sound. On February 4, a small group protested at the Natural Resources Building the Department’s action of approving the application.

BPAG members asked about fish passage policy initiatives for the 2021-23 biennium, particularly the coordination of fish passage barrier removal to comply with the court injunction and having the ability to coordinate with other barrier owners to provide connectivity.

Members also asked about the possibility of expediting the permit to remove sea lions. The permit application was submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service in May 2019 and will cover both California and Stellar sea lions in the Columbia River and its tributaries. The NMFS is convening a pinniped management task force as part of the permit approval process and conducting an environmental analysis under NEPA.

BPAG members discussed the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson (PR) Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act and the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA). The passage of the PR modernization act would allow PR funds to be used for outreach and education and RAWA would provide funding for state wildlife action plans.

Nate Pamplin updated the BPAG on the discussions with treaty tribes about hunting in traditional areas. The Department is currently responding to a federal lawsuit filed by the Snoqualmie Tribe for recognition of their asserted treaty hunting rights.

The Lands 20/20 proposals will be presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Public comment was received with support on many of the acquisitions, but based on feedback from Garfield and Asotin counties, the Department will not seek funding for four acquisitions in southeast WA at this time.

Legislative Session Update

Tom McBride provided an update on the 2020 legislative session and shared a high-level overview of a variety of bills.

SB 6072/HB 2238- Transparency in the State Wildlife Account -This bill separates the State Wildlife Account into two funds; one for restricted and one for non-restricted funds. The effect of this change would be to increase transparency regarding the financial health of the Department. Both bills are in the Rules Committees.

HB 2571 and SB 6071- Fish and Wildlife Enforcement - This bill allows certain low-level, first-time offenders to receive an infraction, rather than a misdemeanor. The bill also aligns Department recruitment practices with most other civil services and law enforcement agencies by allowing recruitment of lawful permanent residents to serve as enforcement officers. Both bills are in Rules Committees.

Tom also updated BPAG on discussions around the supplemental budget. The state's revenue forecast is expected about February 20. We likely will see the House and Senate budget proposals around the same time.

Other bills that the Department is following:

HB 2550 – Would task OFM with writing a report to assess how to incorporate a “net ecological gain” standard into land use, development, and environmental laws.

SB 6613 – Concerning the inspection of marine aquatic farming locations. This bill allows the Department to recoup actual costs for inspecting, monitoring, and testing for net pens.

HB 2503 Removal of fish passage barriers – this bill had a first reading and was referred to the Transportation Committee.

HB 2906 – Radio collars on gray wolves. This bill would prioritize the Department's effort to radio-mark wolves in packs that have previously had livestock conflicts.

SB 6494 – Water Trust Rights – This bill has to do with water transfers and donations to a water bank.

SB 6509 – Increasing the abundance of salmonids in Washington waters by emulating fish hatchery policies in the state of Alaska on Bellingham Bay. This bill had a public hearing in January and has been turned into a study.

HB 2504 – Creating the southwest Washington salmon restoration act – the bill has been referred to Appropriations.

HB 2557 – Simplifying hunting regulations – This bill would require the Department to offer a streamlined hunting pamphlet, inspired by the pamphlet produced in 1969.

SB 6093 – Free public access to state parks and land.

HB 2705 – Special antlerless deer hunting seasons.

Friday, February 7 is the last day to pass bills out of policy committee; Tuesday, February 11 is the fiscal committee cut-off.

Recreation on WDFW Lands

Joel Sisolak presented the BPAG with information about how recreation on WDFW lands benefits people, affects wildlife and habitats, and influences relevancy for the Department. WDFW is developing a strategy that continues to welcome people to recreate on our lands while simultaneously conserving wildlife and habitat.

Joel asked BPAG members the following questions:

- 1. How does outdoor recreation on WDFW lands relate to the topic of relevancy?**
 - Recreation is a primary activity that makes WDFW relevant.
 - Relevancy is already there for consumptive users, need to work to build it with other recreationists

- 2. What recreation planning could make WDFW more relevant?**

PLANNING

- Strike a balance between conservation and recreation access
- Manage access to reduce conflict among recreation groups
- Partner with private and other public landowners to improve access
- Look for underutilized land where recreation opportunities might be provided

COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION AND MARKETING

- People need to know:
 - where they can go for various opportunities
 - when they are on WDFW land
 - why there may be a closure
- Provide mentoring for younger generations of recreationists
- Figure out what you do and do it well
- Work on establishing WDFW niche and brand, develop story and elevator pitch

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Be ready to receive visitors
- Keep up with maintenance of facilities

Joel shared principles for advancing outdoor recreation and conservation.

1. Outdoor recreation and conservation require that a diversity of lands and waters be publicly owned, available for public access, and well-stewarded.
2. Recreation and conservation need each other.
3. The future of our public lands depends on support from all Americans.
4. Outdoor users are responsible for avoiding and minimizing the impacts of their use across the places they recreate and the larger landscape.
5. Proactive, professional planning and management, combined with public education, is necessary to care for the land and provide a diversity of quality recreation opportunities.
6. Physical, biological and social science must inform the management of recreation.
7. Stable long-term funding and creative management solutions are essential to protect the environment and support outdoor recreation.

The Department's recreation vision is:

Washington residents and visitors enjoy diverse opportunities to experience Washington's iconic landscapes and cultivate strong connections to WDFW lands and the WDFW mission.

With goals to:

- Protect Wildlife and Habitat
- Enhance Recreation
- Build Constituencies

Joel will keep BPAG abreast as the plan evolves.

Strategic Plan Workshop

Jeff Davis and Rob Geddis presented an update on the strategic plan. They shared a synthesis of the planning ideas/guidance they received from BPAG members, other external stakeholders, and staff over the past few months. The planning team also drew and talked through a diagram showing the logic-of-thought to identify the initial work needed for the 25-year plan.

Jeff and Rob thanked the BPAG members for their input into the strategic planning process and updated them on progress. Input was collected from staff and external partners and the team reviewed the input to identify themes and determine direction.

The plan will be focused on work that will significantly change and move the Department towards its vision for the future, rather than encompass and describe all of the Department's work.

Next Steps

Nate would like to schedule a teleconference call in mid-March, after the Legislature adjourns, to provide a re-cap of the 2020 session and update BPAG on the Department's budget. He would also like to schedule an in-person meeting in late-April or early-May to review draft proposals for the 2021 legislative session and review the strategic plan. Nate will circulate a scheduling poll in mid-February for the next BPAG meeting.