

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) Charter

Introduction

The Cowlitz Wildlife Area is one of 33 wildlife areas (WLA) owned and/or managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Each of these areas is guided by a Wildlife Area Management Plan. Over the next 10 years, management plans will be revised to reflect current conditions and updated goals and objectives to support the agency's mission: *To preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.*

The plans will be developed with input from the public and interested stakeholders, including a Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC). This charter includes the purpose and responsibilities of the Cowlitz WAAC, and agency staff in the development of the Wildlife Area Management Plan.

Purpose

The purpose of the advisory committee is to provide input for the development of the new Cowlitz Wildlife Area Management Plan.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) Membership

WAAC Role & Responsibilities

The role of the advisory committee is to provide public and other stakeholders' perspectives in WDFW wildlife area planning and management activities.

Responsibilities include:

- Review information, discuss issues with staff and other committee members, and provide input during development of the wildlife area plan and biannual updates.
- Share information and collect feedback from the larger groups they represent, to share with the rest of the committee.
- Attend all WAAC meetings (Note: the staff will work with the committee to identify times/dates that work best for committee members). Communicate about agency goals and wildlife area activities outside of WAAC meetings.
- Act in an advisory capacity, providing input to staff that will be considered in the department's decision-making process.
- Engage in opportunities to obtain recent, on-site awareness of Wildlife Area Units, the resources present, prospective compatible uses associated with each site, and any challenges to meeting site-based objectives.
- In addition to the plan, the WAAC can be used as a forum to discuss on-going wildlife area issues
- Acknowledge and accept that the process will provide only limited time to delve into all wildlife area issues.

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- Participate in other WLA planning public outreach opportunities such as public meetings about this process.
- Recognize that this is an advisory role and each member will be most effective when they provide soundly developed and reasonably stated viewpoints that WDFW staff can use during Management Plan composition and review.
- Advisory group members will not portray or speak on behalf of WDFW in their media interactions without prior approval from WDFW Public Affairs (Policy 1010).
- Register on the WDFW Volunteer website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/get-involved/volunteer>

WDFW Wildlife Area Planning Team Role & Responsibilities

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Wildlife Area (WLA) Planning Team consists of staff from the regional Yakima WDFW offices, the Cowlitz Wildlife Area, and from the headquarters office in Olympia.

The role of WDFW staff relative to the advisory committee is to facilitate effective WAAC input in wildlife area planning and management activities. WDFW will develop the new Cowlitz Wildlife Area Management Plan and will seek the committee's advice and guidance about plan objectives, proposed actions, potential options to enhance conservation opportunities, and planned management activities.

Responsibilities include:

- Develop productive agendas that clearly outline the purpose and goals for the discussion.
- Facilitate effective meetings and dialogue with advisory committee members.
- Develop materials and work products for WAAC review.
- Distribute materials at least one week in advance of WAAC meetings.
- Develop and distribute WAAC meeting summaries.
- Engage in discussion, answer questions and be transparent about department processes, policies, and decision-making, as applicable and appropriate.
- Post agendas and meeting materials on the Cowlitz Wildlife Area Advisory Committee webpage .
- Consider and utilize WAAC input in making sound and informed decisions

WAAC Operating Guidelines

The following guidelines are recommended for productive discussion and forward progress.

Committee members are expected to:

- Attend all WAAC meetings
- In addition to local views, bring a regional perspective to the table.
- When discussing WAAC topics outside of WAAC meetings, represent your personal views and/or views of your respective agency or organization, not views of entire WAAC.
- As necessary, coordinate the participation of WAAC alternate members when not able to attend meetings, briefing and prep alternates in advance.
- At WAAC meetings, discuss issues and concerns in a productive manner
 - All members are expected and encouraged to participate.
 - Everyone's perspective is valuable .

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- One person talks at a time.
- Refrain from side conversations.
- Stay focused on meeting purpose.
- Keep comments short – 30 second big ideas.
- Keep an open mind.
- Mute cell phones.

Public Comment

The purpose of WAAC meetings is primarily for committee discussion. This can be supplemented and enhanced with input from other members of the public and interested parties. WAAC meetings are open to the public and an opportunity for brief public input will be provided at each meeting.

WAAC Decision-Making

While not a voting group, the WAAC will provide valuable input to the process. Through facilitation, the project team will solicit and listen to input, identify and understand the root of divergent opinions, and work toward group agreement. While consensus is not required, the group will have more impact on shaping the plan if they are able to reach agreement.

Meeting Schedule

The advisory committee is expected to meet quarterly, or as needed, to complete the new plan.