

Effective Date: 08/08/2017

POLICY 7021

Cancels:

See Also: PRO 7021; POL 1020

RCWs:

WACs:

Approved by: /s/ Joseph Stohr

POL-7021 Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems to Monitor Wildlife, Fish, Other Natural Resources and/or Department Infrastructure

This policy applies to all WDFW employees, volunteers, and contractors, except the Enforcement Program, which has a separate policy. However, if policies and procedures are in conflict with or are modified by a bargaining unit agreement, the bargaining unit language shall prevail.

Definitions:

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) - Any fixed-wing or rotor-wing aircraft without personnel on board that is remotely operated, including the operational equipment required for launching, piloting, and landing or retrieving the aircraft. Unmanned aircraft systems also include any equipment carried by the aircraft including still, video, and infrared cameras as well as any navigational equipment and safety/beacon equipment.

Department - The WDFW excluding the Enforcement Program. A separate policy guides Enforcement Program's UAS use.

Natural Resources - The natural environment including but not limited to air, water, land, along with mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

Commission - The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Intent:

This policy is intended to provide a framework for Department and contractor use of UAS to monitor wildlife, fish, and other natural resources as needed. This policy provides direction and guidance when UAS are used by Department staff to monitor natural resources.

This policy does not anticipate nor address the use of UAS for law enforcement activities or Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) regulatory activities. The use of

UAS for natural resource work addressed under this policy would not include law enforcement surveillance, criminal detection, or other law enforcement work.

1.	<p><u>When Appropriate, the Department May Use UAS to Monitor and Manage Washington’s Natural Resources and Agency Infrastructure</u> There are circumstances under which the Department would choose to use UAS rather than conventional aircraft or other survey techniques to monitor and manage natural resources and agency infrastructure. The rationale for those choices would include increasing safety, increasing capacity, increasing efficiency, reducing cost, and improving data quality.</p>
2.	<p><u>Executive Management Approval Required</u> All use of UAS shall be approved in writing at the Assistant Director level or by their designee.</p>
3.	<p><u>Compliance with all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Regulations and Requirements is Compulsory</u> The Department will ensure all operators (agency and vendor) abide by all FAA regulations and any additional stipulations specified in Certificate(s) of Authorization (COA) or Waiver.</p>
4.	<p><u>When Using UAS, the Department Will Respect the Right to Privacy</u> All use of UAS will comply with Washington’s privacy laws under Article 1, Section 7 of the Washington State Constitution.</p>
5.	<p><u>When Using UAS, Operators Will Minimize Impacts to Fish and Wildlife</u> Adequate separation distance from fish and wildlife will be maintained to avoid undue stress or harm and minimize disruption of natural behaviors.</p>
6.	<p><u>The Department Will Minimize the Collection of Data Unrelated to the Specific Project Involving UAS use, Including Minimizing the Collection of Personal Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) UAS operators and observers will minimize the use of sensors needed to safely operate the UAS en route to and returning from monitoring or operational areas/objectives (See PRO 7021). b) Imagery will only be recorded if such recording is a requirement of the monitoring activity or specific UAS operation (See PRO 7021). c) Retained imagery and derived data will be managed consistent with agency policies related to retaining public records (See POL 1020, PRO 7021) d) If data is to be retained, the department will engage with an appropriate Information Services representative prior to the collection of UAS recorded information to ensure that adequate storage and backup resources are available to satisfy the appropriate level of data retention needs for any given UAS operation.

7.	<u>The Department Will Develop and Follow a Project Plan</u> a) The Department will develop a Project Plan or similar document for each monitoring project that includes data collection with UAS.
8.	<u>The Department Will Provide the Following Information About UAS to the Public Through its Website and Other Communication Channels:</u> a) The Department's policies and procedures for UAS use, including procedures for minimizing the collection of information not directly required for individual projects, including personal information. b) Contact information for people who have questions or complaints about UAS use. c) Examples of the types of projects or activities for which UAS will be used. d) Information about upcoming projects that will involve the use of UAS, including the purpose, location and dates of planned UAS flights, the type of UAS, and the information that will be gathered for specific projects.
9.	<u>The Department Will Assess Public Outreach Needs Prior to Conducting Proposed Projects Using UAS</u> Before implementing a project that involves UAS, depending on the type of work and the location of the work, the Department will consider a mixture of the following outreach strategies directed toward the appropriate stakeholders and scale the effort to the profile of the project or the potential impact on stakeholders. a) Brief the Commission on planned projects that include the use of UAS. b) Brief local officials such as county commissioners and legislators in the districts where UAS work is proposed. c) Communicate with local citizens via mail, phone or open house public meetings to explain where, why, and how UAS are proposed to be used as part of a project. d) Describe the value and use of UAS on its website for each project.
10.	<u>When Using UAS, The Department Will Maintain Records Related to Each Project and Flight</u> The Department will maintain: a) The operator name for each use of UAS. b) The identity of all of the entities involved in each use of UAS. c) The date, time, and location of flights. d) The categories of information collected for each use. e) The purpose of using UAS for each mission. f) Whether a court order was required or obtained.

11.	<u>When Using UAS, the Department May Collaborate With Partners</u> The Department will cooperate and collaborate with other entities using UAS when appropriate. Collaborative entities may include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Other state and local agenciesb) Federal Agenciesc) Tribal natural resource agenciesd) Universitiese) Aircraft and aerospace industryf) Non-governmental organizations
12.	<u>Emergencies and Natural Disasters</u> The Department Director or Program AD can authorize UAS operations associated with an emergency or natural disaster (oil spill, fire, flood, landslide, earthquake, etc.) without following sections 2, 6, 7, or 8 of this document. The information and steps in these sections will be posted within 30 days after the emergency/natural disaster operations are complete.