

WDFW Advisory Member Handbook



Washington
Department of
FISH and
WILDLIFE



WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE



“Thank you for your service. The challenges we face are real – divided perspectives and limited resources are not easily overcome. However, your perspective - in combination with others’ - will help us to find strong solutions and create new opportunities. I invite you to embrace your role and lean into this meaningful work, so we can go forward, together.”

- Kelly Sussewind, Director
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Welcome

Thank you for your willingness to serve on one of the advisory groups that helps the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fulfill its mission and legal responsibilities as state government’s principal steward of fish and wildlife resources.

Washington residents can choose to contribute their time and energy to many worthy groups and causes, so we are honored that you have volunteered to assist WDFW.

This booklet explains the role of advisory groups, your responsibilities and how the Department will support you. It also contains information about two state laws that pertain to advisory groups, the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act.

If you’ve been newly appointed to an advisory group, please register with the Department as a volunteer at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/get-involved/volunteer>.

Thank you for being willing to share your time, knowledge, and the perspectives of the communities who you engage with.

How WDFW will support you

We will work to optimize group effectiveness by supporting you and colleagues serving on the committee. Each group or committee also has an official charter that spells out the group's responsibilities and method of operation (such as ground rules, work requirements, etc.). WDFW will appoint a staff member to lead the group and:

- Schedule meetings, develop agendas, post public notices, conduct meetings, set up conference calls, and develop a written record, as needed.
- Provide timely communication on emerging issues.
- Provide opportunities for the group to share in time to influence decisions.
- Provide relevant background and briefing material.
- Facilitate written recommendations using clear and concise language.
- Help to incorporate open public meeting practices.
- Maintain a public web page with current materials, membership list, and staff contact information.
- Create a welcoming, inclusive environment that respects and carefully considers the views of others.

About WDFW advisory groups and committees

About 54 advisory groups provide suggestions to the Department and to the state Fish and Wildlife Commission on many topics, including game management, habitat restoration, law enforcement, fisheries management, wildlife conservation, and serving people with disabilities.

State government advisory groups are created by the Governor, the Legislature, or individual agencies and commissions. Unless specifically authorized, advisory groups do not have the authority to create rules or adopt policies. These groups offer Washington residents an opportunity to have significant impact on the state's actions and policies.

In some cases, state law or WDFW will direct an advisory group to elect one of the members to serve as the chairperson. In those cases, meetings and discussions are governed by Roberts Rules of Order. Other committees operate less formally, with WDFW staff members coordinating the discussions.

WDFW advisory group meetings are open to the public, and the [Department's website](#) has a section for groups and committees that includes membership rosters, schedules and agendas, and meeting-related documents.

Advisory group members' terms of service generally do not exceed three years, and members may be reappointed at the Department's discretion. Most advisory groups contain fewer than 20 members.

Generally, advisors are responsible for their own travel and meal expenses, but members may be reimbursed in some cases, such as when overnight accommodations are required.

Our expectations of you:

In this role, you have the important opportunity to influence the suggestions of your group or committee, and WDFW decisions. While the group does not have the authority to create rules or adopt policies, we do give the group or committee's collective recommendations substantial weight in making decisions. We therefore have the following expectations of you:

- Attend all meetings.
- Prepare in advance for meetings and other activities, to ensure they effectively present their perspectives and those of the organizations they represent.
- Fully participate in meetings, group discussions, and work group activities.
- Recognize that the group must operate openly and transparently. Your name and affiliations will be posted online and we ask you to include your designated WDFW staff member in any communication related to the business of the advisory group.
- Inform staff of opportunities, policy options that could be considered, and emerging issues.
- Avoid situations that undermine group efforts.
- If your group permits a member to be represented by an alternate, coordinate with WDFW staff in advance for that person to attend in the rare occurrence that you can not be at a meeting.
- Help to create an inclusive, welcoming environment that respects and carefully considers the views of others.
- Place high value upon the use of accurate information and best available science.
- Understand that the authority to advise the Department is granted to the advisory group as a whole, not to individual members.

Demonstrating WDFW Values

Department of Fish and Wildlife staff A.S.P.I.R.E. to reflect the values of our agency. As advisory members, we invite you to explore how these values apply to your role, as well:

ACCOUNTABILITY – We perform our duties in ways that are consistent with WDFW's values and mission.

SERVICE – We seek solutions that add value to Washington communities and the public's experience.

PROFESSIONALISM – We serve in a manner that reflects positively on each other.

INTEGRITY – We are consistently open, honest, ethical and genuine in our actions.

RESPECT – We treat each other, staff, and the public with dignity.

EMPATHY – We take time to understand and appreciate differing perspectives.

- Recognize that individual members often will have to compromise to enable the advisory group to reach a recommendation.
- Stay informed on key issues, legislative activity, and the state laws and administrative rules that relate to your responsibilities.
- Recognize and step down when your circumstances have changed, and you may not be able to continue as an effective member.
- When interacting with the public and other organizations, refrain from using your membership as a way to build individual credibility. If participants are likely to already be aware of your status, you may wish to clarify that you are not speaking on behalf of the group. There may also be

further specific guidance in your group's charter.

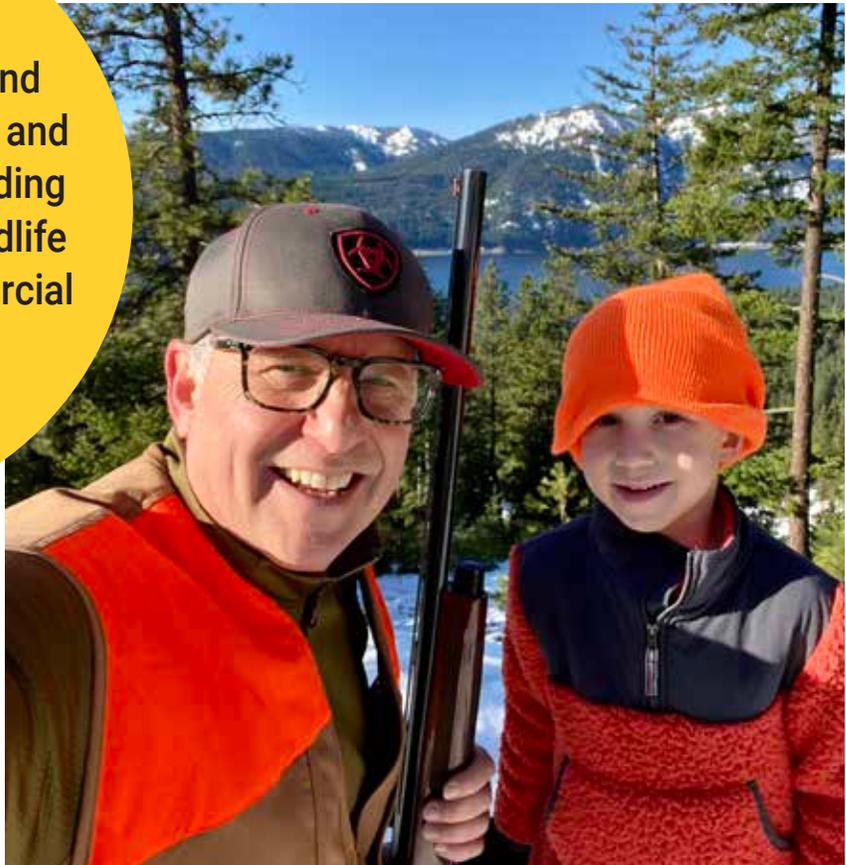
- Do not portray or speak on behalf of WDFW to the media or others without prior approval from your staff coordinator and WDFW Public Affairs.

When you accept an advisory group appointment, you assume certain responsibilities as outlined by the advisory group charter. Some responsibilities are common to all groups and committees; others reflect the specific focus of the individual group. Members who repeatedly or notably fall short of their responsibilities, behave in ways inconsistent with our values, or fail to meet the above expectations, may be removed from their position to give another member of the public the opportunity to serve.

OUR MISSION

To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

[View WDFW Mandate 77.04](#)



Maximizing group effectiveness

To provide guidance that has lasting benefit to the State of Washington, we ask that you please:

- Consider potential impacts on:
 - Local communities and their economies.
 - Constituent groups and their priorities for fish and wildlife management.
 - User groups that sometimes have strongly opposing views.
 - The Department’s ability to effectively enforce state natural resource laws.
- Include discussion of alternate viewpoints.
- Help WDFW staff to develop the written record by suggesting clear, concise, language changes to help non-experts understand key ideas.
- Propose solutions that are feasible and cost-effective.



Make the Most of Your Experience

As a member of a WDFW advisory group, you are privy to an incredible learning opportunity and will participate in interesting and important discussions. You may be inspired to also expand your understanding of the breadth of WDFW aspirations and responsibilities.

As an advisory member, your staff liaison will share bi-monthly e-mail updates from the Director. These updates synthesize the Department's most pressing issues and notable efforts, and we hope you find them informative.

To learn more about the Department's long-range vision and goals, review the [WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan](#). The plan is available online and serves to guide Department priorities – both existing critical work, as well as four areas of strategic importance. These are to:

- Proactively address conservation challenges,
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship,
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, and
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

To further your understanding of the Department's daily work, you may also wish to:

- Follow WDFW's [Facebook](#), [Police Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and/or [Medium](#) blog accounts.
- Sign up for WDFW email lists: wdfw.wa.gov/about/lists
- Become familiar with Department administration structures – including the [Fish and Wildlife Commission](#), [Office of the Director](#), and the director's [leadership team](#).
- Periodically review our web [event calendar](#) and your region's [local updates](#)
- Tune into relevant [Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings](#) via live video stream.

As your understanding of Washington's fish, wildlife, people, and their needs grows, we hope you continue your journey of service with the Department.



Two important state laws affect the operation of WDFW groups and committees

Many laws guide state government operations, but the following statutes are especially important to WDFW advisory groups.

Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30)

While the [Open Public Meetings Act](#) does not apply to advisory groups, as they are not a formal decision-making body of the WDFW, we encourage groups to follow the act's goal of conducting business in view of the public as much as possible. Staff will therefore help advisory groups to incorporate open public meeting practices to the extent practicable.

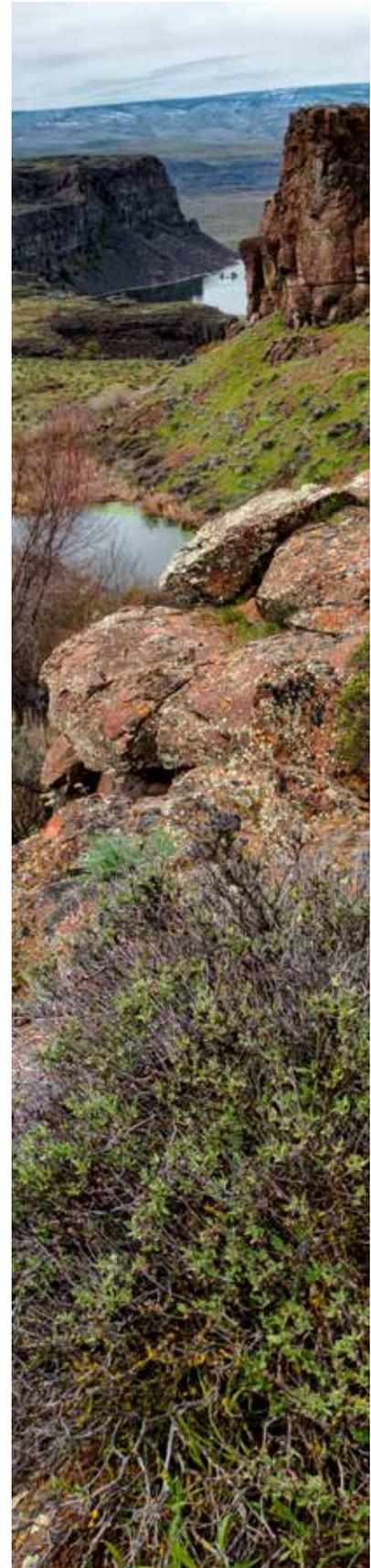
Following these standards has the additional advantages of helping to prepare group members for future leadership roles, while also preparing members of the public for successful participation in Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings. Finally, aligning with the Open Public Meetings Act practices can also go a long way towards building public trust.

Public Records Act (RCW 42.56)

The [Public Records Act](#) ensures access to most public records created by state and local governments, unless a specific law applies for exempting the public record (in whole or part). "Public records" includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used or retained by any state agency. The public may inspect or obtain copies of most public records by filing a public disclosure request with the agency.

WDFW takes the position that all advisory group records are public, and therefore subject to disclosure. The Department's public disclosure specialists will respond to all requests for the records of its advisory groups. To ensure that all relevant records are available for disclosure, individual members should include their WDFW staff point-of-contact in any communication related to the business of the advisory group.

In addition, WDFW staff will post advisory group meeting materials to the wdfw.wa.gov website so that members and the public have ready access to information.



Supporting inclusive participation

WDFW is committed to providing both safe access and increased communication on all WDFW programs, activities, and events to underrepresented and marginalized communities. It is our intention to create inclusive environments for all to engage or enjoy.

If you or someone you know needs to receive this information in an alternative format or needs reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities, please contact the **Title VI Compliance Coordinator** by phone (360-995-3305 or 360-870-6175), TTY (360-902-2207), or email to Title6@dfw.wa.gov.

More information is available on the WDFW website at wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/.

