DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

April 3-4, 2009

FISH AND WILDLIFE GOAL:

ACHIEVE HEALTHY, DIVERSE AND SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND THEIR SUPPORTING HABITATS

Hanford Cleanup and Fish and Wildlife Restoration: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staff is collaborating with other natural resource agencies and tribes to develop a Conceptual Site Model to help focus on a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) at Hanford. The NRDA will evaluate injuries to fish and wildlife and recreational resources from the contamination at the Hanford Military Facility and develop restoration projects to return those resources to baseline condition. It will also develop opportunities to conduct "restoration up front" which would begin restoration work immediately, while the agencies are collaboratively developing the legal NRDA case.

Navy Demonstration Hydrokinetic Project: Congress has directed the Navy to study the feasibility of hydrokinetic power development in the Puget Sound. The Navy proposes to design, install, operate, and remove up to three tidal kinetic hydropower turbines as a demonstration project in Admiralty Inlet, Puget Sound, near Marrowstone or Indian Island. The demonstration project is in keeping with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2007, which requires 25% of electrical power from renewable sources by 2025. Planning activities, including site selection, study development, and environmental permitting will continue through 2010. Deployment and operation will occur in 2011, and the facility will be removed in 2012. Major Projects staff is collaboratively consulting with the Navy, the state Office of Regulatory Assistance, and other agencies to develop baseline and environmental studies to evaluate potential fish and wildlife impacts. The study results will be used to develop protective and mitigation measures to prevent and offset potential impacts.

Golden Eagles at Potential Wind Power Site: Regional staff met with Klickitat County Planning staff and the project proponent of the Windy Point II Wind Power facility near the John Day Pool on the Columbia River. New information from telemetry research indicates high use of the area by golden eagles. One area of particular concern is Hartley Canyon, a known forage area for the eagles. The Windy Point II project has proposed turbine locations near the edge of the canyon. Staff are working through various site selection scenarios with the County and the project proponent to reconfigure the turbine string layout near Hartley Canyon. The project proponent has shown an interest in working collaboratively to minimize potential resource impacts. The Department has expressed concerns to the Klickitat County Planning Department about development within the proposed area through comments on the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements.

Windy Point II Wind Power Site Tour: Department staff also toured the proposed future site of the Windy Point II wind power development southeast of Goldendale. Habitat conditions varied across the site, from poor condition annual-dominated grasslands to excellent condition

lithosolic scablands. Staff expressed concern with the placement of wind turbines on quality habitat, and discussed micrositing turbines on poorer condition habitat where feasible. Wind Power Habitat Biologists will use information on habitat conditions gathered during this tour in mitigation negotiations.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Proposes Listing Pacific Smelt As Threatened Under the ESA: On March 12 NOAA Fisheries announced its decision to propose listing Pacific smelt (*Thaleichthys pacificus*) as threatened under ESA. The species is also known as Columbia River smelt, or eulachon. The Cowlitz Tribe petitioned to have the species ESA-listed in November 2007. The Department and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) submitted a joint data response to NOAA Fisheries in May 2008 and staff met with the Biological Review Team (BRT) in June 2008.

The proposed listing by NOAA covers eulachon from northern California north to the Skeena River in British Columbia, comprising the southern Distinct Population Segment. Eulachon are in decline throughout this range and NOAA Fisheries anticipates further declines as climate change impacts both the fresh water and marine environment. The BRT also concluded that eulachon were particularly vulnerable to being caught in coastal shrimp trawl fisheries in the United States and Canada. Commercial harvest of eulachon in the Columbia River was identified as a low to moderate threat and recreational harvest was assigned a very low to low severity threat by the BRT. In 2000, Washington and Oregon adopted a joint management plan for the Columbia River that incorporated conservation-based fishing seasons.

Region 5 staff is in the process of reviewing the announcement and the status review document and, as appropriate, will prepare a response to NOAA's solicitation for information on threats to the species and possible measures for its conservation within the 60-day comment period.

Lake Cle Elum Sockeye Reintroduction: The Yakama Nation (YN) and the Department are moving ahead with plans to begin implementation this year of a sockeye salmon reintroduction feasibility study for Lake Cle Elum in Kittitas County. Historically, sockeye were the most abundant salmon species with annual runs estimated at 200,000-250,000. However, sockeye were extirpated in the early 1900s when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) constructed timber crib dams, followed by large, earth-filled irrigation storage dams on the outlets of four lakes in the basin. The Cle Elum population is believed to have been the largest in the Yakima basin based on the size of Lake Cle Elum, abundant spawning habitat, and the presence of other nursery lakes in the upper watershed.

USBR recently completed a detailed planning report for Congress with a preferred design and cost estimates to construct permanent upstream and downstream fish passage facilities at Cle Elum Dam. Congress authorized construction of juvenile passage facilities at Cle Elum Dam in 1994, but did not provide construction funding. For several years, the co-managers and USBR have been testing the feasibility of passing salmon smolts over the dam utilizing a temporary passage flume constructed on the dam spillway, and using coho salmon smolts as a surrogate for sockeye. The results have been promising and indicate that a significant percentage of the test fish can locate and safely utilize the passage flume to exit the reservoir. Currently, USBR is developing a National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the

permanent fish facility construction and the state (with YN assistance) is beginning the State Environmental Policy Act EIS process for a fish reintroduction project to accompany the passage facility construction, that includes sockeye and other anadromous species, with the intent of "jump-starting" the anadromous recolonization of the habitat.

With a run of 184,000 sockeye forecasted to return to the upper Columbia River in 2009, we have a golden opportunity to test the feasibility of reintroducing sockeye using donor broodstock captured at one of the Columbia River PUD dams (either Priest Rapids or Wells). If in-season updates at Bonneville and Priest Rapids show the forecast is correct, the co-managers propose to collect 1,000 adult sockeye, transport and release them into Lake. Approximately 20 fish will be fitted with radio-telemetry tags so they can be tracked in the lake and to the spawning grounds in September. Spawning surveys will be conducted to determine the location and total number of redds constructed. If the collection occurs at Priest Rapids Dam, DNA samples will be collected to determine the proportion of Wenatchee vs. Okanogan basin sockeye. We want to test the suitability of both potential donor sources for future use in a production-scale reintroduction program. Sockeye smolt production, resulting from the adult release and passage success over Cle Elum Dam, will be determined at existing juvenile salmon collection facilities at Roza and Prosser diversion dams downstream. Any returning adults will be collected at Roza Dam, transported, and released into Lake Cle Elum to complete the cycle. The ultimate objective is to begin to develop a locally-adapted broodstock source that returns to the Yakima River.

Bonneville Sea Lion Update: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) observers at Bonneville have seen an increase in the number of California sea lions present at the dam, with as many as 15 California sea lions and 20 Steller sea lions on any given day. On average this year, there are more California and Steller sea lions present per day than in previous years. There have been at least 21 different California sea lions, 20 Steller sea lions, and two harbor seals (Phoca vitulina) since full-time monitoring began. Four of the California sea lions appear to be new visitors to Bonneville Dam, with the remainder as repeats from previous years.

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Regional staff and U.S. Forest Service staff successfully radio-marked the first wolverine of this season for an ongoing project. The new study animal is a young female and in excellent condition. Early indications are that her home range may include a significant portion of the Chelan-Sawtooth range south of the core areas of other study animals. The project continues to expand our knowledge of wolverine status and ecology in this ecosystem.

Pilot Project Grazing Plan: Department staff completed a draft version of the Pilot Project Grazing Plan. This draft improves upon former plans, as the 1) roles and responsibilities of all parties are clearly defined; 2) utilization targets and use monitoring methods are specific; and 3) contingency planning is required. Draft components of the plan were presented to the Washington Cattleman’s Association and the Blue Mt. District Team, as well as other interested parties.

PUBLIC GOAL:

ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Coastal Dungeness Crab Management: Coastal Dungeness crab license holders have landed just over six million pounds coastwide as of February 28. Compliance rates for logbooks have much improved from a year ago - with roughly a 35% increase in compliance. Fishers who decide not to turn in logbooks for the months of December and January can expect to receive citations.

Currently, the Quinault Tribe has caught 55% of the available crab harvest in the Quinault usual and accustomed fishing areas. We are currently evaluating modifying the Quinault special management areas in catch area 60A1 and 59A2 in order to provide state fishers with increased opportunity to catch 50% of the crab by September 15.

EcoTourism and Watchable Wildlife: Geovative Solutions staff provided a live web demo of their Premier Web and Global Positioning System (GPS) Touring Solutions. This is one of several ways that Geographic Information System (GIS) and Watchable Wildlife staff are exploring to evaluate the requirements and potential feasibility of implementing Department tailored wildlife tours. Geovative technology takes advantage of common, more affordable auto GPS devices, such as Garmin and TomTom. It also supports custom audio and video feeds which can be accessed from their hosted web-site.

Heron Viewing: Department staff activated the new pan/tilt and zoom (PTZ) heron camera developed in collaboration with Heron Habitat Helpers, Crest High School, Canopy Conservation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and local landowners. The streaming video and sound are of excellent quality. Great blue herons are present and available for public viewing. The PTZ cam will also be operated for heron monitoring by the Department, partnering biologists, and field technicians. The great blue herons can be viewed at- http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/heroncam/index.html

FUNDING GOAL:

ENSURE EFFECTIVE USE OF CURRENT AND FUTURE FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF WASHINGTON STATE'S FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Working Group: Department staff participated in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies CRP Working Group teleconference to prepare for a meeting scheduled with the Farm Service Agency national CRP managers during the upcoming North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Several national issues relevant to Washington will be discussed, including the reallocation of CRP State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) acres.

Many states have already used their allocated SAFE acres and are requesting more. They would like to utilize states' acres from those who were unable to get their SAFE programs off the ground. The Department's SAFE program currently has no signups. Staff have made the case

that the Department requires additional time before relinquishing state acres to the more successful states. The Department's current allocation of 8,200 acres of SAFE represents over $10 million in federal funding available for priority habitat in Washington.

New Research Proposals: Department staff submitted a Department of Energy grant proposal to develop a landscape model of the potential risk to the marbled murrelet associated with the placement of coastal wind power facilities. Two Sea Grant pre-proposals were submitted. One supports Seattle Audubon's citizen science effort to monitor seabirds in the inner marine waters of Washington. The other supports ongoing research between the Department, University of Washington, University of Puget Sound, and NOAA Fisheries using seabirds as indicators of coastal environmental health. This research examines both bottom up (climate forcing) and top down (predation) as potential mechanisms for changes in seabird populations on Washington's coast and in Puget Sound.

Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV): Department staff prepared a rough draft of an IWJV capacity grant proposal that will accelerate delivery of SAFE and other Farm Bill programs in eastern Washington. Staff have presented the proposal to the IWJV state steering committee for ranking. It involves partnerships with the Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation District and Pheasants Forever.

COMPETENCE GOAL:

IMPLEMENT PROCESSES THAT PRODUCE SOUND AND PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS, CULTIVATE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND BUILD PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND AGENCY CREDIBILITY

One of the Benefits of Having a Karelian Bear Dog (KDB): Enforcement Officers free-ranged a bear sow near Sultan. This is the first bear Officers have had to physically handle this season. Having Colter (KDB) along allowed us to immediately confirm, find, dart, track, process, hard release, and track again. The sow was emaciated and had a wound to her right, rear leg. By feeding on large quantities of garbage, she was getting too close to neighbors. It is estimated that at least 20 hours were saved by not having to set a trap for this bear.

Bonneville Dam Sea Lion Update: Region 5 Officers worked sea lion security details. Enforcement Officers, along with Oregon State Police and Region 6 staff, provided an escort for the biologists transporting the captured sea lions to the zoo. No problems were encountered during the escort. Officers also spent some extra time patrolling Bonneville Dam for sea lion security.

Trumpeter Swan Issues: Officers received a call from scientific technicians stating they hazed two free-ranging Mute swans off of Wiser Lake and the swans were in a field just west of the lake. Martha Jordan of the Trumpeter Swan Society has repeatedly reported these two free-flying Mute swans that frequent Wiser Lake and the effects these deleterious exotic species pose to our native wildlife. Officers responded immediately to the report and found that the two Mute swans were in a field with an ideal shooting background. Officers shot both birds without incident. It effectively removed the two deleterious birds from reproducing and starting a free-flying population of Mute swans in northern Whatcom County where they would compete with native migratory waterfowl. This is one of several successful actions by Enforcement Officers in our ongoing effort to prevent these species from becoming established in Washington State.

Methow Cougar Captured: Officers responded to a cougar kill in the Libby Creek area. An alpaca was killed, partially consumed, and buried. A live trap was set using the alpaca for bait. The cougar was caught, immobilized, radio collared, and relocated. The cougar will be part of the cougar study in the Methow. Nearly all residents of Libby Creek witnessed the entire immobilization process. They watched as a Department biologist worked on the cougar taking DNA samples, collecting the necessary biological data, and placing the radio collar on the cat.

Local Habitat Assessment (LHA) Web Site Launched: With great help from the Department's web site managers, Habitat staff have designed and implemented Local Habitat Assessment (LHA) pages on the agency web site. The LHA site, located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/habitat/lha/, describes the LHA process, documents all completed LHAs, and provides links to supporting information.

New Species: A new species of marine diatom, originally found and photographed by WDFW's Harmful Algae Specialist has been described and named by experts at the University of Copenhagen and the University of Oslo. This unusual species was initially observed in one of the regular plankton samples taken from the surf off of Twin Harbors beach in October 2006. It was referred to a marine micro-algae expert at the University of Washington for help in identifying it. The University was unable to provide a species identity and sent samples to the Scandinavian experts who finally determined it to be previously undescribed. The new species has been named *Fragilariopsis pacifica.*

Sunnyside Ecosystem Project: Department interns met with regional staff to participate in a shrub-planting operation conducted at the Headquarters (Sunnyside) Unit. As part of an ongoing Outreach and Education program, Department staff coordinated with Sunnyside's Chief Kamiakin Elementary School for the fifth year of a reforestation effort. One-hundred-and-fifty students assisted with the planting of 400 shrubs. Other habitat enhancement efforts at this site included installation of bird boxes.

SCIENCE GOAL:

PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOUND AND OBJECTIVE SCIENCE TO INFORM DECISION-MAKING

Sharp-tailed Grouse Translocation Progress Report: A 2008 progress report for the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse translocation project was completed by Department staff, and will be on the website. This is an ongoing cooperative project with the Colville Confederated Tribes. Since 2005, 177 birds from Idaho and Utah have been released in three locations in Lincoln, Douglas, and Okanogan counties.

Bighorn Research: The bighorns at Washington State University that were placed in pens with domestic sheep have died. These sheep were dye tagged with *Mannheimia haemolytica*, so that the transfer of the bacteria from domestics to bighorns could be established. Quite a bit more research will need to be completed before the connection is clearly established.