

Director's Report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
presented by Jeffrey Koenings, Ph.D., WDFW Director
April 7, 2006

A Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife

We serve Washington's citizens by protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities.

FISH AND WILDLIFE GOAL:

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

Forest Practices Board and Spotted Owls: The board re-adopted the emergency rule and also initiated permanent rule-making to address two issues: 1) Eliminate "decertification," whereby spotted owl sites that appear to not be occupied after three years of surveys could be downgraded to Status 5 and thus not receive any protection. This rule will sunset June 30, 2007, at which time it would be reevaluated in light of the federal recovery plan and a review of the spotted owl survey protocol; and 2) Eliminate the practice which counted suitable owl habitat covered by a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) at present, even if it was harvested. This was originally thought to prevent neighboring landowners without HCPs from rushing to cut down to the 40% threshold. Other owl work at the board level also continues.

Special Achievement Award: Mike Schroeder received a special recognition award from the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society for his contributions towards developing the "Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitats," a recent publication coauthored with several other sage grouse experts that is having a positive impact on sage-grouse conservation planning efforts in Idaho and across the West. Mike received the award at the joint conference with the Northwest Section of the Wildlife Society, the Northwest Scientific Society, and the Northwest Lichenologist's Society in Boise. Well done, Mike!

Wolf Documentation: Dana L. Base, Associate Wildlife Biologist, and Steve Zender, District Wildlife Biologist, carried out the last day of snow tracking for lynx and other carnivores as required by survey protocol within Lynx Analysis Units (LAU) 109, 110, and 209 in the south Selkirk Mountains on Monday, March 13, 2006. No lynx were encountered, but once again pine marten and bobcat were documented within this cluster of LAUs. In addition, we encountered and documented one set of gray wolf tracks in the Squaw Valley area near the Idaho-Washington state line, less than a mile into Washington. Dana completed memos summarizing snow tracking survey efforts from both March 10 and March 13, 2006, as well as an observation form package on the gray wolf tracks to route to Wildlife Resource Data System at Olympia headquarters.

Western Gray Squirrel Recovery Plan: Harriet Allen met with Klickitat, Okanogan, and Pierce County representatives to discuss their peer review comments on the preliminary draft of the Western Gray Squirrel Recovery Plan. Following the incorporation/addressing of the peer review comments, the draft Western Gray Squirrel Recovery Plan will be released in April for a 90-day public review. The western gray squirrel is a state threatened species, with three disjunct populations in the Puget Sound, Klickitat, and Okanogan regions of the state.

Lake Whatcom Cutthroat Trout Spawning Surveys: Mark Downen, Resident Fish Biologist for the Northern half of Region 4 is conducting comprehensive spawning surveys for Lake Whatcom cutthroat trout, one of the most unique populations of native inland fish in this area. One of several native fish that have evolved in isolation in Lake Whatcom for thousands of years, Lake Whatcom cutthroat trout, begin spawning in January and will finish in mid-June. Local WDFW personnel have been tracking the response of Lake Whatcom cutthroat trout to logging, development and introduction of invasive non-native species for nearly two decades.

In the late 1980's, WDFW biologists documented a dramatic decline in natural spawning of cutthroat and wild-origin native kokanee after Olson, Austin, Beaver, and Smith Creek sub-basins were logged to the water's edge. WDFW initiated an emergency supplementation program using its captive cutthroat brood stock since that brood stock had originally been collected from Lake Whatcom. In 2002, Mark surveyed the four major tributaries of Lake Whatcom and found increased cutthroat spawning activity and collected multiple age classes from the streams by way on electro-fishing. The supplementation program was subsequently suspended and surveys are now conducted every 4 years to assess the ability of these populations to be self-sustaining.

This information is being shared with Whatcom County, the Department of Natural Resources and the City of Bellingham to help identify risks to these populations and focus conservation efforts. These fish represent an index of biological integrity for these streams, which feed the drinking water source for the City of Bellingham and parts of Whatcom County.

New Approach to Fish Data Management Begins: An initiative to make strategic changes to the way key fish datasets are populated from the field began quietly with a recent meeting at the Natural Resource Building (NRB). Fish Science's Biological Data Systems Unit has been tasked to improve statewide data flow and reduce redundant work that occurs during the process of compiling and storing data critical to fish population management and recovery. Part of the vision entails deployment of Web-based "data funnel" programs to augment or replace the data entry field biologists now perform. Such programs could simultaneously populate local datasets and transmit key data to "corporate" data stores located in the NRB.

The first "target" will be the salmon and steelhead escapement estimates generated for pre-season planning and housed in the Fish Program's Salmonid Stock Inventory (SaSI) database. BDS and SaSI staff members are currently meeting with Fish Management Division biologists and Information Technology Services Division developers to identify data provider and data user

needs. This data category, only a small piece of the analytical puzzle for fish managers, forms a good test case for this application development effort, which will pair a developer from ITS with a developer from BDS. Look for delivery of this pilot application by June 30, 2006, to be followed by others, as we progress toward managing our corporate data with levels of care similar to those practiced by the field biologists that produce them.

Oil Spill Damage Assessment Money to Fund Restoration Projects: Money collected as compensation for oil spill impacts to public natural resources is deposited in the Resource Damage Assessment account and must be used to restore or enhance public natural resources. The Coastal Protection Fund Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from the Departments of Ecology, Natural Resources, State Parks, and Fish and Wildlife, met on March 16, 2006, and agreed to provide over \$260,000 for restoration and acquisition of critical fish and wildlife habitats in South Puget Sound and Hood Canal. For more information call Dan Doty at (360) 902-8120.

Cooperative Mule Deer Project/Project Mule Deer: Four relocation flights were flown during mid-March; three mortality signals were received and investigated. One marked deer appears to have been poached while the cause of death of the others was undeterminable. Woody Myers met with the state chairpersons from the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) and Wenatchee Chapter of MDF. The Wenatchee Chapter will be providing funds from their banquet receipts to help cover capture costs in Chelan County. Dallas Reed, Project Mule Deer Coordinator, and Woody worked with student team members from Spokane City School, West Valley High School, and the Spokane Valley Project Based High School preparing equipment for up-coming spring captures.

Chimacum Beach Restoration Project: With removal of the log yard bulkhead, the restoration site is now connected to Port Townsend Bay. During the last week in February, juvenile chum salmon were observed in the restored intertidal area. Excavation activity may have been completed by the end of March.

In 2000 the Department purchased the 13-acre log yard expressly for the purpose of restoring nearshore habitat at the mouth of Chimacum Creek to support the recovery of Chimacum summer chum salmon. In 2001 the Watershed Stewardship Team secured SRFB funding for the habitat restoration project and has worked together with Business Services to implement the project.

Lake Aberdeen Water Diversion Facility: Habitat, Hatchery, and Habitat Engineering staff met with the City of Aberdeen Water Department to further discuss the Lake Aberdeen Water Diversion Facility located on the Wynoochee River. The City will lose approximately 70% of their industrial water usage revenue once Weyerhaeuser shuts down their large log and pulp mills in Cosmopolis. This will result in lost revenue to pay for on-site caretakers. The City is proactively seeking options to deal with the obvious reduction of the amount of water diverted in

order to make the current facility more fish friendly, maintain high water quality in Lake Aberdeen, and avoid impacts to hatchery operations at the lake. The current diversion does not meet requirements for fish exclusion screening or fish passage. The next step suggested by WDFW staff is that the City work on a proposal regarding how they might modify the existing structure, or how to remove it and create something more fish friendly. The overall goals are to increase fish protection, maintain attributes at Lake Aberdeen, and automate the facility as much as possible.

North Potholes Grazing Program: Region 2 reports that the Potholes Resource Management Plan requires a grazing lease as a "Key Management Action" with a specific season of use November 1 to March 15 in the reserve, and March 15 to April 15 in the west arm. An onsite meeting was conducted to relay that requirement to the lessee and to discuss the potential for the grazing program to improve Northern Leopard Frog habitat. Options were discussed that may lead to ponds with a better balance of open water and diverse shoreline vegetation. In attendance were WDFW Range Biologists Edd Bracken and Mel Asher, District Wildlife Biologist Jim Tabor, and Northern Leopard Frog Research Biologist Steve Germaine. Lessees Ray Dagnon, Jim Sizemore, and Mark Carlson represented the cattlemen's interest. WDFW will work on a multi-year grazing plan that hopefully will result in one of those elusive win-win situations.

Meseberg Hatchery Walleye Broodstock Capture: Walleye brood capture will soon begin at Moses Lake to fulfill the production goal of 2 million 5-day-old fry for Liberty Lake in Region 1. The Region 2 warmwater stock assessment team will work with Meseberg Hatchery staff (Greg Wolfe) to electroshock or net mature walleye migrating out of Moses Lake into Crab Creek. Greg will make the call on the numbers and which fish are kept each night of collection. The fish will be spawned and the eggs incubated in jars at the Meseberg incubation facility. A portion of the walleye fry (100,000) will be marked and reared on-station until September and then planted into Liberty Lake. Future sampling will compare survival of marked, extended-rear fry with unmarked 5-day-old fry.

Potholes Reservoir Habitat Enhancement Project: The Potholes Reservoir Habitat Enhancement Project recently received the BASS/ESPN's National Conservation Project of the Year Award and \$13,000 that goes with it. This was a well-deserved honor for the Meseberg family's considerable efforts to make this very challenging project a reality. The three generations of the Meseberg family have a long and successful history of significantly contributing to the management of Washington's fish and wildlife resources. The project is a cooperative effort with WDFW, Bureau of Reclamation, numerous bass and walleye clubs, Grant County Tourism, and many local and individual donors.

The project involves annually placing 632 engineered fish habitat units into Potholes Reservoir (24,000 surface acres) for a period of 20 years. The enhancement effort will cost \$127,847 annually and will depend on long-term volunteer labor and financial contributions. To date these

contributions have exceeded expectations due to the efforts made by all members of the Meseberg family.

The Habitat Enhancement Project is directed at replacing lost habitat for juvenile bluegill sunfish, black crappie, and yellow perch in an aging reservoir. Healthy populations of these fish species not only provide very popular panfish fisheries, but they also provide the forage base for the successful walleye and bass fisheries at Potholes Reservoir.

PEOPLE GOAL:

ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Meeting with Canadian Managers Regarding Plans for 2006 Fisheries: State and tribal fishery managers held a productive discussion with Canadian salmon fishery managers regarding issues of common concern to the Southern U.S. and Canada in 2006. The meeting was held on March 24. Forecasts of salmon stock abundance and fishery expectations were exchanged with the intention of providing as much information about likely outcomes of each nation's domestic fishery planning processes for the 2006 salmon fishing seasons. Canada's domestic planning process is approximately one month later than the U.S. North of Falcon/PFMC process, making it difficult to accurately plan for fishing impacts in British Columbia fisheries on our Washington-bound salmon stocks. The most important management tool for resolving the international differences in fishery planning is the Fishery Regulation and Assessment Model (FRAM). Thanks to the efforts of Jim Packer, Fish Program, and Larrie LaVoy, IRM, Canadian managers now have an excellent understanding of the U.S. technical basis for planning fisheries and accounting completely for stocks of concern. This meeting was successful at providing the most accurate information for planning our fisheries.

Shellfish Wastage At Wolfe Property State Park: A recreational shellfish harvester notified WDFW shellfish biologists visiting Wolfe Property State Park that several large bags full of oysters had been left to rot above the grass line on the beach. The harvester said he had been watching the bags for several days, and all the shellfish were dead and buzzing with flies. He said he had tried to contact WDFW Enforcement. The biologists subsequently located ten 50-pound potato sacks full of oysters, and one 50-pound sack with approximately 40 pounds of Manila clams. Six of the oyster bags contained tribal shellfish tags indicating they had been harvested the previous Monday during a night opener. Amazingly, the clams and oysters were still alive despite having been out of the water for four days. The flies seen by the harvester were attracted to the dead barnacles and mussels attached to the oyster shells. Staff scattered the oysters on the outer tidelands and spread the clams in the lagoon. After about an hour the vast majority of the clams had dug back into the substrate. Many of the clams were re-planted by pushing them into the substrate. Initial mortality estimates were about 2%, but could be even

lower than that. Only one moribund clam was seen when they were dumped out of the potato sack. Camille Speck visited the site the following day (Saturday) and was happy to report that all the clams appeared to have dug back into the substrate and no empty shells were seen in the vicinity of the re-plant. Oyster survival also appeared very good.

A statement, photos of the bags, and the tribal shellfish tags were provided to Port Gamble Tribal Enforcement officers for follow-up. Tribal Enforcement Officer Doug Lux indicated that citations would be written. Additional follow-up was done with Chris Dunagan, a reporter with the Bremerton Sun, which had been alerted to the situation by sport harvesters. Camille Speck told Dunagan that wastage occurs at times in both the tribal and sport fisheries, and the public can always contact WDFW Enforcement officers by calling the State Patrol. Mr. Dunagan plans to write an article about this event, and the P-I oyster story will also mention the wastage issue.

2006 Spring Bear Special Permit Drawing: The spring black bear permit drawing occurred as scheduled on March 15, 2006. Over 1,300 people applied for 305 permits. Spring bear hunts will occur in seven Game Management Units (GMU) in the Blue Mountains and two GMUs in Western Washington. The two areas in Western Washington are part of a pilot program to determine if spring bear hunts can be used to help reduce tree damage on industrial timberlands. The season starts April 15, and closes May 31 in Eastern Washington and June 15 in Western Washington.

Commercial Razor Clam Meeting: A public preseason-planning meeting was held March 22, 2006 at Raymond for the commercial razor clam fishery at the Willapa spits. Attendance was good (about 20% of licensed diggers) and discussion for season options lively and productive. By longstanding practice, the commercial fishery is only opened in the period between the spring and fall recreational seasons. The commercial fishery operates on a fixed schedule (6 weeks +/-) anytime from May through August. Most diggers prefer an earlier start (May), although many would support starting the season as late as mid-July. Various factors weighed included the likelihood of a spike in domoic acid, poor spring weather versus generally better summer weather, and clam quality. No specific date was selected for a proposed starting date, as that depends on the success of the recreational fishery during the next two digs and how much, if any TAC, would remain for additional opportunity in May. Monitoring for domoic acid at the spits will begin in April. As planning progresses, updates will be posted to the website.

Willapa Bay Oyster Reserves: Staff at the Willapa Bay Field Station met with the Oyster Reserve Advisory Board to finalize plans for the 2006 Reserve sale. Six oyster-picking tracts will be offered at a minimum bid of \$1.50 per bushel. It is estimated that 63,500 bushels of oysters will be sold. Two subtidal oyster-dredging tracts will also be offered. Interest among growers for reserve oysters is high this year due to hurricane Katrina's impact on the gulf coast oyster industry, which increased demand for Pacific NW oysters. Many local growers have depleted their inventory of oysters to meet the increased demand and desire reserve oysters to fill the void. Staff is currently waiting for local clam growers to finish evaluating manila clam

harvest sites for inclusion into this year's sale. When that information is received the bid package will be sent to Olympia for processing, which should occur by the end of March. The bid openings will occur the last week of April or first week of May.

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

Wooten Fire Fencing Follow-up: As a follow-up to Mr. Don Jackson's discussions with the Commission on March 10-11, 2006 in Pasco regarding the Wooten Fire fence replacement, the Capital Projects and Engineering Division issued a Request For Information (RFI) on March 23, 2006. The RFI requests cost information to replace the fence in two methods. The first method is to follow the current specifications of the agency for elk fencing and provide a cost. The second method is to follow the specification changes Mr. Jackson suggested and provide a cost. The RFI was sent to Mr. Jackson and Cascade Fencing Company. The responses are due close of business on Wednesday April 5, 2006, and will be evaluated. The results will be reported.

WILD Automated Licensing System: The Licensing Division is now processing and fulfilling all Internet and telephone recreation license sales orders in the new WILD automated licensing system from Outdoor central. Starting in mid-February 2006, the Licensing Division processed and fulfilled over \$300,000 telephone and Internet sales orders with the new WILD system. Additionally, WDFW customers are now receiving their telephone or Internet sales orders within five-to-seven business from their order date.

Previously, telephone sales orders were processed by MCI Call Center in Phoenix, AZ, while Internet sales orders were processed and fulfilled with an MCI subcontractor in Monroe, Louisiana. Centralizing the order and fulfillment process in Washington creates efficiencies and timely delivery of license orders to our WDFW customers. Additionally, approximately \$2 million recreation license sales orders are immediately deposited in Washington banks, instead of California banks.

March 2006 was the first real test of the Internet sales channel with the public. A good indicator of acceptance can be determined by the number of complaints received from the public (which has been minimal) and the volume of sales orders processed at this site. Internet license sales for March 2006 increased 33% over Internet license sales for March 2005. To put the March 2006 sales orders in perspective, Licensing usually has these types of Internet sales volumes during the months of April and May. For example, in April 2005, Internet license sales were approximately \$223,340 compared to \$228,856 in Internet license sales for March 2006. The increase

demonstrates there is a high satisfaction and comfort from customers with the new Internet sales site developed by Outdoor Central.

Multi-Season Special Permit Applications: Hunters have purchased over \$127,095 multi-season deer and elk special permit applications as of April 3, 2006. Multi-Season Special Permit Applications are a result of new legislation allowing the Department to offer a multi-season deer and elk tag through a drawing process. Multi-season deer and elk special permit applications are available for purchase until April 9, 2006.

COMPETENCE GOAL:

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

Aquatic Habitat Guidelines: WDFW staffed an Aquatic Habitat Guidelines (AHG) booth and provided a poster at the River Restoration Northwest Symposium. The WDFW booth provided an opportunity to promote responsible practices in the design of river restoration projects using AHG products. Currently available AHG documents, CDs, and handouts were showcased as tools for technology transfer from research to practice to the 300+ symposium attendees. The Aquatic Habitat Guidelines are proving to be a vehicle for enhancing discussion and the exchange of ideas between river restoration professionals with different disciplinary backgrounds.

Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) Summit: Staff represented WDFW's view on stream simulation culvert design at the FHWA Fish Passage Summit in Denver. Engineers and biologists from around the country met to discuss fish passage assessment, design, and monitoring. Because the US Forest Service (USFS) is currently developing aquatic organism passage guidelines and giving frequent training sessions, they gave a number of presentations on assessment and stream simulation design. Fortunately, USFS and WDFW find common ground on many levels and appear to very strongly support geomorphically based stream simulation crossing design (as opposed to hydraulic, species-specific design). For a long time, Washington was considered a leader in fish passage, mostly due to a lack of competition, but this summit clearly showed that many states (notably the northeast) are rapidly developing very sophisticated programs. Some interesting developments: 1) behavioral barriers may be just as limiting as those based on swimming or jumping ability; 2) the role of errors in assessment and design are poorly understood and may jeopardize the validity of some programs; and 3) stream simulation (in its various forms) is reaching general acceptance across the nation. Digital recordings of the presentations will soon be available on the web.

Pacific Coast Steelhead Management Meeting: The "10th Pacific Coast Steelhead Management Meeting" was held at Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, March 7-9, 2006. This meeting is held every two years to allow exchange of the latest information on steelhead management and biology. Participants included representatives for Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, California, British Columbia, tribes, colleges and universities and interested public. WDFW was well represented at the meeting. Excellent presentations were given by: Heather Bartlett, Ann Blakley, Anne Marshall, Hal Michael, Dan Rawding, and Cameron Sharpe. Patrick Hulett served as a session chair. Bob Leland is the chair of the "Pacific Coast Steelhead Management Meeting" steering committee. PSMFC will be producing a summary of the meeting within the next several months.

Spartina B-Designate Support Letter: Dave Heimer wrote a letter to the Pacific County Noxious Weed Board in support of changing *Spartina alterniflora*'s designation to a B-Designate in Pacific County. This would give the weed board the legal authority to mandate control in areas where there may be absentee or reticent landowners. This would more closely coincide with state agencies' legal requirement to control *Spartina* on state property.

Lower Snake River Compensation Program Annual Meeting: Region 1 Fish Program staff attended the annual Lower Snake River Compensation Program (LSRCP) coordination meeting in Boise, sponsored by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on March 14-16, 2006. Presentations were given by Snake River Lab and Lyons Ferry Complex staff on SE WA endemic steelhead programs, and on-going monitoring and evaluation projects associated with fish production within the Lyons Ferry Hatchery Complex. The Tucannon Hatchery was awarded the LSRCP 2005 Facility of the Year Award for an outstanding operations record and for personnel actions taken during the School Fire this past fall, which significantly contributed to saving the facility from being destroyed by fire.

Ocean Policy Working Group: IRM staff attended the Ocean Policy Working Group meeting during the week of March 20, 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to develop the outline for the final report (due December 31, 2006), identify the lead agencies for the list of topics to be addressed in the final report, and discuss the proposed outreach effort.

Working off the requirements in the budget proviso, the structure of the final report will include: 1) a summarization of the current condition of the ocean, including a description of Washington's coastal fisheries and the status of fish resources; 2) a discussion of the recommendations in the report by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy that the state is currently implementing; 3) a review of state agency and jurisdiction coordination needs; 4) a list of recommendations to implement policies to protect and manage ocean resources; 5) a description of financial needs and opportunities; and 6) recommendations for legislative action.

The Governor's Office has decided not to hire an outreach consultant, but rather will be relying on working group members to assist with the outreach effort. The plan is to have a series of full-

day town meetings in the coastal communities to solicit input from the public on the current status of the ocean, ocean management issues, and recommendations to address them. These meetings will occur sometime between mid-May to mid-June in the following areas: Ilwaco or Chinook, Westport and/or Ocean Shores, Forks, Port Angeles, Seattle, and Friday Harbor.

Enforcement Obtains Re-recognition: Enforcement's Accreditation Manager and Chief represented the WDFW Enforcement Program for CALEA re-recognition on March 25, 2006 before the CALEA Commissioners in Jacksonville, Florida. Due to all Program employees' attention to detail, evidence handling, proof development and presentations at the on-sight inspection, the review went very well. We were able to showcase WDFW Enforcement before a large number of other law enforcement agencies present for their review. Commissioners were very impressed with our professionalism, commitment to the resource and public, the direction of the program, and improvements from our last on-site review. They were also excited about us reaching full accreditation in three years. We will have the full review of our assessment report on the Enforcement Intranet page. The report highlights many of our activities and leads us to areas for improvement. Our assessor states in the report that we have not only complied with all applicable recognition standards but have also met many of the standards for accreditation. In addition, the assessor stated that this was one of the best assessments he has conducted. He praised Enforcement for our professional and dedicated personnel, improvements in our evidence process, and our cooperation with other agencies. Our Accreditation Committee is working hard at re-writing our regulation manual and adding standards for us to achieve.

Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan: The City of Ellensburg is working on an update of their Comprehensive Plan. Staff attended several "packed house" evening meetings with the Ellensburg Planning Commission and the City Council. Citizens expressed their concerns regarding the comprehensive plan update process and conveyed their dissatisfaction with some of the language of the comprehensive plan, plan maps, and wetland delineations. Because of widespread citizen dissatisfaction, the City Council has decided to appoint a commission made up of developers, citizens and resource agencies. Region 3 may be asked to serve on the commission.

Emphasis Patrol on Colockum Wildlife Area: Officers worked an ORV emphasis patrol in the Colockum Wildlife Area for illegal off-road travel by ORVs. We've had a lot of calls about shed hunters going way off road to look for antlers, but the Colockum is so vast that there's no way to patrol by vehicle. Wildlife Area Manager funded a helicopter flight, and he and Officers spent two hours flying the Colockum. Officers were transported by landing craft to West Bar with two all-terrain vehicles, and they worked the east side of the Colockum. This emphasis patrol was useful to help determine the ORV usage, and the violator rate. One large group of motorcyclists, jeepers and quad folks were observed at Quilomene Bay, but they were all in camp having lunch (bad timing). They seemed very surprised to have an enforcement officer watching them from a helicopter that was hovering overhead. Another vehicle was observed driving way off the road, and the helicopter landed nearby in an effort to make contact, but the jeep turned around and

attempted to leave the area. The helicopter simply lifted off, and landed a second time in front of the vehicle, at which time the driver finally stopped. He advised the officer, "I've never been pulled over by a helicopter before". Another flight is planned for next month. One citation was issued for Failure to Obey the Posted Regulations.

WDFW / WCA Pilot Livestock Grazing Project: Edd Bracken and Bob Dice attended a meeting in Asotin that was organized by the Washington Cattlemen's Association (WCA). The purpose of the meeting was to explain the WDFW/WCA pilot livestock-grazing program to approximately 25-30 local ranchers in attendance, and to describe the three pilot sites identified in Asotin County. Bob and Edd teamed up on a presentation showing maps and photos of the Shumaker Creek, Smoothing Iron, and Pintler Creek sites. They discussed the overall purpose of the project, as well as the goals for each site and the monitoring that we feel is necessary to adequately document results of the livestock grazing trial. We explained that although grazing would occur only on the Pintler Creek site in 2006, collection of baseline monitoring would begin on all sites as soon as possible. Edd sent soil survey GIS layers from Natural Resource Conservation Service to Matt Vander Haegen to use in setting up breeding bird survey locations for Pintler Creek. Edd also began preparing data forms for the vegetation inventory work.

Commercial Crab Violation: Officers responded to citizen's complaints of commercial crab gear deployed in one of the San Juan commercial exclusion zones. Officers found twenty-five pots, from seven different fishers, well within the closed area. The twenty-five pots were seized and Officers interviewed each of the seven violators over the next several days. All seven of the fishers admitted to being aware of the areas boundaries and were cited for the violation. Though most provided some form of excuse, the best was probably one fisher who stated, "I knew it was wrong and that we were in violation, but I just didn't want to miss out on the possible catch from the area."

March 25-26, 2006, a Festival Weekend:

Watchable Wildlife participated in the 9th Annual Othello Sand Hill Crane Festival, which on several accounts was a tremendous success. The new specialty plate exhibit and Region 2 wildlife area displays caught the public's attention in the main auditorium. Well-attended presentations by Howard Ferguson, Chuck Gibilisco, Mike Schroeder, Mike Livingston, and Ken Bevis, and field trips by Laura Cook and Jim Tabor also gave WDFW a heightened presence for discussing a wide range of species and topics. Other WDFW staff worked behind the scenes to make this one of the best Sand Hill Crane Festivals ever. The local county education school districts were so impressed with the quality of wildlife information and conservation issues presented at the festival, they encouraged teachers to attend and get education clock hours for documented attendance at the specific activities.

Dave Nysewander and Don Kraege made presentations at the Northwest Birding Festival near Blaine. Dave presented results of Puget Sound Action Team monitoring and scoter tracking,

while Don showed recent trends and management issues associated with Wrangel Island snow geese. The festival raised funds for the Washington Brant Foundation, and has been a collaborative effort with the city of Blaine.

Other wildlife viewing festivals held this weekend in Blaine (Wings Over Water) and Lake Quinalt (Roosevelt Elk Festival) had regional wildlife program staff participating and staffing exhibits.

Regional Meetings with Tribes on 2006 Salmon Fishery Issues: Following our initial round of North of Falcon and PFMC (Pacific Fishery Management Council) salmon fishery discussions held in early March, regional and Olympia IRM and Fish Program staffs met with individual Puget Sound area tribes for further talks with the intent of reaching agreement on 2006 fishing schedules. Meetings were held with the Puyallup Tribe, Tulalip Tribes, Skagit Tribes (Swinomish, Upper Skagit, and Sauk-Suiattle), Skokomish Tribe, and the Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes. All discussions were productive for resolving technical issues, clarifying potential agreement on fisheries, and identifying fishery issues needing more discussion during North of Falcon discussions the last week of March. The most serious issues facing the Puget Sound co-managers for the 2006 season are the high exploitation rate on Puyallup fall chinook and the low escapement of Skokomish River chinook.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) Program/Quarterly Advisory Board Meeting: RFEG representatives and the RFEG Advisory Board met March 17 & 18 in Lyle, WA (Mid-Columbia RFEG) for their quarterly meeting. Friday's field trip included visiting the site of an old logging mill on Snyder Creek, a major tributary of the Klickitat River. Through a partnership with WDFW, the Yakama Nation, Salmon Recovery Fund Board, and Mid-Columbia, a check dam and two culverts were removed, the pond area was re-channeled and roughly 120 concrete and log weirs were installed to provide steelhead passage. While touring the site, several steelhead were seen resting under woody debris that had been placed as a part of the project.

Quarterly meeting topics included: future funding concerns for the RFEG Program, current monitoring activity and protocols, and RFEG education programs being utilized in local school districts.

Sauk River Catch and Release: All members of Detachment 11 (Snohomish County) worked the first of several, planned emphasis patrols of the Sauk River catch and release fishery. Numerous contacts were made from Darrington downstream with a total of seven citations issued for two-poling (3), illegal terminal gear (3), and possession of marijuana (1) <40 grams. Most of the anglers contacted were glad to see us. Officers observed a local man fishing out of his drift boat in an isolated area, enjoying the sunny day on the beautiful Sauk River. He was using two poles and upon contact also had treble hooks on the hot shots. Officers cited two others for two poling in the lower river. Officers also observed two young men fishing who had waded out a ways and

decided to enjoy some reefer. The culprits were contacted and cited for that and using illegal gear.

Water Rights: Duane Phinney continues to work on water rights assessments for all of the wildlife areas. Over the years, WDFW has acquired hundreds of water rights associated with various land purchases. Unfortunately, the Department of Ecology's database on water rights, upon which we would normally depend to verify these property rights, is not easily interpreted and not guaranteed by Ecology.

In-Service Held in Moses Lake: Enforcement Program staff gathered in two training sessions the week of March 6-10, 2006. The first group met Monday and Tuesday and the second group met Thursday and Friday, with a combined all-day training at Big Bend Community College on Wednesday. The Attorney General's Office conducted training on tribal issues, other legal updates, and the status of current court cases. The officers were trained in the Incident Command System (ICS), accreditation, communications, consular notification, Forensic Entomology, respirator use, and lessons learned from recent incidents. Chief Bjork presented program-wide information on enforcement activity, strategic planning, and legislative issues. Chief Bjork also honored several award winners and Chief's Coin recipients.

Nutrient Enhancement Meeting Region 5: Region 5 Fish and Habitat staff met on Wednesday, March 16, 2006, with the local volunteer groups involved in nutrient enhancement activities throughout Southwest Washington. The purpose of the meeting was to plan activities for 2006 and to coordinate efforts to make the best use of people and equipment available. All groups agreed that the program has gone very well this past fall and winter with excellent cooperation between hatchery staff and volunteers.

Elysa Ray, Fish Pathologist, gave an excellent presentation on fish health concerns and proper nutrient enhancement protocols. Her presentation was well received by the groups and will be incorporated into future activities.

Currently, nutrient enhancement is done annually on the Washougal, Lewis, Kalama, and Elochoman Rivers, and the Toutle River and Monahan Creek of the Cowlitz River. This program is large and labor intensive and is contributing significantly to restoring wild fish production in these watersheds.

Frequent volunteers at our events are Cascades Job Corps and local school and scout groups. RFEG will hold two more plantings this season on Day Creek, a major tributary to the Skagit River, and another nursery potting day.

Volunteer Services / Volunteer Opportunities: Calls are coming in from people around the state interested in volunteering for fish and wildlife-related activities. In addition to recruiting opportunities within WDFW, staff also encourage those wanting to volunteer to call their local RFEG and city and county stream teams.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Program/Streamside Plantings:

Saturday, February 25, 2006

Sixteen volunteers collected willow and cottonwood cuttings for use on a riparian revegetation project along the Klickitat River. The volunteers included middle school students from the nearby Klickitat School as well as community volunteers. The group gathered nearly 1,000 cuttings.

Community volunteers potted 900 plants at Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group's native plant holding facility, to be used in future restoration efforts.

Saturday, March 4, 2006

Fourteen volunteers planted 350 native trees and shrubs at a riparian restoration site on the Skagit River, in partnership with Seattle City Light and the Skagit Land Trust.

Citizen Science: WDFW staff participated in the 6th Annual Environmental Symposium at Black Hills High School in Tumwater. The theme this year was focused on Project Black Bear. High school students thoroughly researched the management and conservation of black bears, as well as the forestry/bear issue of tree-bark stripping by bears in the Capitol Forest. Posters, PowerPoint presentations, and brochures created by the students were displayed and presented to about 100 attendees including students and representatives from the sponsoring and supporting organizations of WDFW, the Pacific Education Institute, and Department of Natural Resources. Keynote speaker Donny Martorello provided opening comments and a summary presentation on black bears and the topic of tree damage by bears.

Meseberg Hatchery Tour: Officers from the Moses Lake Walleye Club (Dave Smith, Gary Mains, Dave & Mike Meseberg) toured the Meseberg Warmwater Hatchery with staff recently (February 28) to get a first hand look at the current state of the facility, view/discuss in-progress and pending capital improvements, and get an overall assessment of the warmwater hatchery program. Recent successes measured in terms of increased quality and quantity of fish produced (tiger muskie, crappie and walleye) were showcased. Likewise, constraints that are hindering further performance improvements were reviewed and plans/timelines for correcting problems were discussed. These warmwater hatchery constituents/advocates came away from the site visit with a better understanding of the current program. Two-way lines of communication between club officers and hatchery staff have also been improved.

SCIENCE GOAL:

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

Sea Lion Predation of White Sturgeon: Staff from Region 5 continues to document predation of sturgeon and salmonids in the lower Columbia River by sea lions. Region 5 sturgeon staff organized a limited monitoring program with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife utilizing personnel from various projects who happen to be out on the river for other purposes. Data summaries are being provided to policy staff. Results indicate predation of adult white sturgeon is currently the most serious issue and this information has been useful in formulating plans for sea lion hazing scheduled to start in April.

Concentrations of the mammals are heaviest within a seven-mile stretch of the river downstream from Bonneville Dam and from Longview to the mouth. Steller sea lions dominate near the dam with California sea lions distributed throughout the rest of the river.

About 50 hours of monitoring has documented predation of at least 34 adult white sturgeon since late December 2005. Not all data has been turned in so this is only a partial estimate of what has been observed. Staff observations represent only a partial estimate of sturgeon losses. The area surveyed at any one time is small, typically a mile or so, and the time spent observing is also short, generally less than an hour. Total impacts cannot be quantified with the existing program; however, it appears sea lions may be killing an adult white sturgeon every few hours in the area near the dam, possible even more frequently.

Details of the hazing program are still being worked out but efforts will focus on the Bonneville Dam area with the intent of clearing mammals from a seven-mile stretch of the river immediately downstream from the dam. Hazing is scheduled to begin in April when listed spring chinook start to show up in significant numbers. This effort will also benefit adult white sturgeon that concentrate in this same area.

Sea Lion Concerns on North Fork Lewis River: Sea lions have been seen for many years in the Columbia River at the mouth of the Lewis River. This year, for the first time, sea lions have traveled 20 miles up the Lewis River and were observed and photographed in the tailrace of Merwin Dam by Merwin Hatchery personnel. Fish First, a local fish enhancement group has been rearing 65 thousand spring chinook smolts for two months in net pens. Sea lions were also viewed in the vicinity of these net pens during the week prior.

WDFW staff identified the need to protect these vulnerable spring chinook during and after their release from the nets from potential pinniped predation on March 11, 2006. Fish, Wildlife and Enforcement Program staff participated in this effort. Steve Jeffries, WDFW's marine mammal biologist, participated and provided the necessary hazing equipment. Region Five Fish Program staff provided one jet sled and Enforcement provided an additional boat to monitor the Lewis from its mouth to the confluence with the East Fork Lewis. Anglers were contacted concerning their observations of pinnipeds. Anglers observed no sea lions that day, although they indicated pinnipeds were seen the previous two weeks. No pinnipeds were observed Saturday throughout the entire lower 20 miles of the Lewis.

Hatchery Reform - Managing for Success Conference Report: A presentation on the supplementation (hatchery) approaches taken to help recover the ESA-listed Hood Canal/Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) is now available as part of the proceedings of the conference, Hatchery Reform: Managing for Success. Information includes summaries of hatchery program standards and reporting under the Summer Chum Salmon Conservation Initiative (SCSCI), reviews of the SCSCI hatchery programs by the Hatchery Scientific Reform Group and the NOAA Fisheries Salmon Recovery Science Review Panel, examples of supplementation and reintroduction programs, monitoring and evaluation, the current outlook for the ESU, and next steps needed towards recovery. Ken Currens, Hatchery Genetics Section Manager of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and a Puget Sound Technical Review Team member, noted that the SCSCI monitoring program is one of the best he has seen, that it provides the kind of data needed to manage supplementation programs, and, most importantly, shows that if we can do it for summer chum, we should be able to do it with other species as well. The conference proceedings are available from the publications page at: <http://www.hatcheryreform.org>

Steelhead Listing: On March 29, 2006 NOAA Fisheries proposed listing Puget Sound steelhead as threatened under the federal ESA. They have one year to make a final determination. Central features of the listing include habitat and hatcheries as key factors affecting overall viability. Poor abundance and productivity pose high risks to the distinct population segment, whereas spatial structure and diversity pose moderate risks. Over-utilization (harvest) is not a principle factor now, although past harvest practices likely contributed to the declines in wild fish abundance.

The federal register notice acknowledged the contribution that resident form of *O. mykiss* can make to the anadromous form, however, steelhead were only included as part of the proposed listing by virtue of its distinct population segment (DPS)...this means that although resident contribute to anadromous the two forms exist in principally separate habitat segments and not enough overlap exists that the resident form can offset the loss in productivity experienced by the anadromous form.

The final determination will be based upon the best scientific and commercial data available, taking into account efforts being made to protect the species. The Shared Strategy process was applauded, but the recovery plan was developed to meet objectives for chinook and has not been evaluated for its benefits to steelhead. The recommendations provided by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) were identified as a sound framework for consideration of hatchery programs into the future. However, additional research and data will be necessary before implementation of certain HSRG recommendations e.g. establishment of wild steelhead management zones, development of locally adapted broodstock as part of hatchery reform since the HSRG also noted many wild steelhead populations were not abundant enough to facilitate local broodstock development.

WDFW will complete the Steelhead Science Paper (May 2006), and begin development of a Statewide Steelhead Management Plan with an initial focus on Puget Sound. The objective is to meet address some of the listing factor gaps and provide some of the certainty identified as necessary for the "Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions", as well as implement hatchery changes consistent with the HSRG recommendations. Certainty for funding to meet monitoring and hatchery reform actions will be key.

Pacific Salmon Commission Funds Statistical Review and Refinement of Escapement Estimates of ESA Listed Snake River Fall Chinook: WDFW recently received funding from the Pacific Salmon Commission to conduct a collaborative review of methodologies used to estimate the escapement of Snake River fall chinook to above Lower Granite Dam. WDFW staff members at the Snake River Lab will work with Nez Perce Tribal staff members, a University of Idaho Biometrician and members of the US v Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to evaluate data quality and statistical expansion techniques, and to estimate run size and composition and place confidence intervals around those estimates. These data are used to help establish sport and commercial fishing seasons as part of the US v Oregon process, and to track recovery status of the natural fall chinook population above Lower Granite Dam.

Reardan Twin Buttes Windpower Project Mitigation: Staff finished the revision of mitigation agreement with Energy NW. This agreement represents the end of a 6-month negotiation. Staff worked closely with Howard Ferguson (District Wildlife Biologist, Spokane) in developing an agreement that allows the project to go forward in a productive manner but also provides important protective measures for wildlife. Highlights of the agreement include: mitigation for temporary and permanent habitat loss; access to site during monitoring by WDFW personnel (monitor the monitors); review of turbine siting; mortality thresholds for bats, raptors and passerines; a "zero" mortality for State Listed species; and formation of TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) to review problems and recommend solutions associated with the mitigation agreement. The Memorandum of Agreement will be submitted by next week for final agency review.

White River Spring Chinook Meeting: Dennis Beich and Joe Miller attended a meeting with representatives from Grant PUD (Public Utility District), NOAA Fisheries, Yakima Indian Nation, and USFS (US Forest Service) to discuss the progress of the White River spring chinook acclimation facility. Grant PUD had submitted a proposal to construct the facility on USFS lands and received negative feedback from USFS managers. The USFS was specifically concerned about design elements (e.g., concrete ponds and raceways, road construction, and installation of electrical systems) that were inconsistent with current land use policies and, subsequently, would trigger years of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) review. WDFW and the other co-managers have asked Grant PUD to revise their proposal to minimize environmental impacts and incorporate features more consistent with the USFS land use policies.

Poisoning in Detachment 16 (Grant County): Officers responded to several calls that pets and wildlife were being intentionally poisoned at two separate sites in Grant County. The first case occurred in an area north of Moses Lake on Stratford Road near Road 10. Officers walked a portion of the Gloyd Seeps Wildlife Area near the suspect's property looking for any carcasses. Several dead critters have been found and will be tested. Officers obtained a good taped statement from the reporting party who has found numerous carcasses and suspected poisoned meatballs. Their dog found and ate one of these meatballs while on a recent walk. The animal was rushed to a local veterinarian, and the stomach pumped. The vet recovered the meatball, and the reporting party sent it to the University of Idaho's lab, which confirmed that the animal had been poisoned by a very lethal substance known as Aldicarb, a substance rated with a scheduled 1 toxicity level. The second incident occurred near Ephrata. Officers observed what appeared to be a tainted carcass of a cow lying in a pasture. Officers also collected 24 dead ravens that were in the area and will attempt to obtain two search warrants. Investigation continues.

Coyote Nuisance in Region Four: Officers received and investigated a call reporting that a coyote in the Eastgate neighborhood of Bellevue had bitten a woman. Apparently the attack was unprovoked and the coyote sneaked up on the lady as she was walking up the sidewalk to pick up her child from school at the Temple De Hirsch Sinai. The woman wasn't sure if she had been bitten or not and initially thought that it was just a scratch. A witness said it appeared that the coyote did bite the lady on the leg. After consulting King County Health Department officials, the lady decided that it was in her best interest to start the rabies shot series. A search of the area failed to turn up any coyotes but there is a ravine at the back of the property that is ideal coyote habitat. Information on Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator options was given to the school as well as the reporting party.

Cooperative Crab Study in Hood Canal: WDFW staff reviewed and provided comments and revisions to a joint proposal between the Skokomish Tribe and WDFW to collect additional population and density data, as well as baseline information about movements of Dungeness crab in the southern Hood Canal. All crab caught will be sexed, weighed, measured, tagged and released. Water quality will be tested at the same sites where crab sampling will be conducted. The short-term goal of the study is to observe density and distribution of Dungeness crab and associated water quality parameters through a one-year period. The long-term goal is to collect this information for several years, if funding is available. Of primary concern, is to assess how low dissolved oxygen events may affect the distribution, abundance and movements of Dungeness crabs.

Unlicensed Guides Lose Boats: Officers received a complaint from a licensed steelhead guide who was threatened by another fishing guide. Officers investigated the suspect and found he did not have a valid 2006-steelhead guide license. Our Officers are very familiar with steelhead/salmon guides and their activities on the local rivers. Officers contacted the agencies Statewide Investigations Unit (SIU) for assistance. The Department's Detectives and Officers contacted the unlicensed guide and booked an undercover fishing trip on the Humptulips River.

Officers had information about another guide who was also unlicensed that handled the suspect's overflow bookings. Officers prepared a search warrant for the suspect's vehicle and boat to look for fishing records and supporting documents. Officers and Department Detectives, fished undercover with both guides in two boats. Officers organized and coordinated two tactical teams for the contact. Twelve officers conducted the contact, search, and interviews. Both subjects were cooperative after they found out who had been fishing in their boats. Both gave written statements outlining their illegal activities. Two drift boats, trailers, and multiple rods/gear were seized for forfeiture. Officers and Detectives worked long hours on the case and did an outstanding job. This case was a classic example of SIU and the regional field officers working together to catch bad guys. Everyone did a professional job.

Invasive Tunicate Response: WDFW staff organized a one day test of a video system designed to survey boat hulls and the bottom of docks for the presence of the invasive tunicate, *Styela clava*. The survey was conducted in Pleasant Harbor Marina on March 14. The video system provided a very clear image and tunicates could easily be identified. Only 4 out of 15 boats inspected had tunicates present, and only one of those had a high tunicate population that would require removing the boat from the water for cleaning. Various methods are being considered to remove tunicates including: hand removal, exposure to freshwater or various biocides and wrapping with plastic. The Puget Sound Action Team and WDFW held the first Tunicate Response Advisory Committee (TRAC) meeting on March 23, 2006. The meeting was well attended and steps were taken to develop a response plan that has broad stakeholder support.