Director's Report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
August 8-9, 2008
"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

Wolf Follow-up and Capture - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) Biologists from Region 2 assisted a trapping crew from Idaho with what are likely, pending DNA analysis, the first two wolves ever radio-marked in Washington. They were successful in collaring the alpha pair, from what will be known as the Lookout Pack, with the female weighing in at 70 lbs. and the male at 85 lbs. Both are older animals, estimated at 5+ years. On the same day of the collaring, near what is considered to be the rendezvous site, a volunteer's camera documented that the pack includes at least six pups born this spring. Two days after capture, a picture was taken of the collared male at the same location. Those who assisted in this effort were Carter Neimeyer and Jim Holyan from Idaho Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe respectively, Wildlife Program's Endangered Species Program Manager Harriet Allen (who secured the trapping crew and helped on site with logistics), and Conservation Northwest volunteers (who offered continual support with camera site deployment and monitoring).

Introduced Crayfish Found in New Localities - The introduced Northern Crayfish, *Orconectes virilis*, previously known only in the upper Columbia basin as far downstream as the Methow, has been collected in two new locations. A professor at the University of Washington has recently collected specimens in Ballinger Lake, Snohomish County, the first report of this species in Western Washington. A commercial harvester sent us a picture of a specimen he caught in Moses Lake. Both these new collections indicate the species is much more widespread than we previously thought.

Kendall Creek Hatchery - Kendall Creek Hatchery is in the process of rearing captive brood Chinook from the South Fork Nooksack River. This stock is crucial to the recovery of the entire Puget Sound Chinook salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). Yearlings were captured last fall from 2006 wild spawners and zeros captured this spring from 2007 wild spawners. The Lummi and Nooksack tribes capture the fish. The fish are isolated at Skookum Hatchery, awaiting results from the Department's genetics lab. Fish that are determined to be S.F. Nooksack are sent to Kendall Creek for rearing. Initially, the yearlings were not interested in pellet feed and have been fed frozen krill and bloodworms. They take this feed well and are growing at a good rate. The first feeding in the morning is now exclusively pellet feed. The second is krill and bloodworm. All the zeros take to pellet feed without any hesitation and are growing well. Currently 51 zeros and 28 yearlings have been captured from the wild.

Recent Court Decision Clears Way for Hatchery - Last week Seattle Public Utilities sent an email to the Cedar River Anadromous Fish Committee to announce that on June 3, 2008, the State Supreme Court declined to review the appeal of previous court rulings that affirmed the adequacy of the Cedar River Hatchery EIS. That decision exhausts all legal remedies for appealing SEPA and we can proceed with the permitting and construction of the permanent sockeye hatchery. For more than a decade, the Department and the City of Seattle have operated an interim hatchery with a maximum production of about 17 million sockeye fry. The new hatchery will be capable of nearly double the production, to more than 34 million.

Invasive Tunicate Population Densities and Distribution at Alarming Levels - The Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Unit recommends that the Department raise the issue of invasive tunicates to an alarm or emergency level. The ANS Unit found that population densities and distribution of all three priority invasive tunicate species around Puget Sound have reached a stage where a concerted multi-agency rapid response may be required to maintain any hope of eradication. The ANS Unit convened an emergency meeting with DNR, Ecology, and Puget Sound Partnership representatives on the state ANS Committee in early June to better assess the issue and develop response recommendations. The group concurred that the concern level on this issue needs to be raised and recommendations will be sought at upcoming ANS Committee and Tunicate Response Advisory Group meetings later this month.

Sunset Falls - Operations have commenced at the Sunset Falls fishway on the S.F. Skykomish River. The fishway is a trap and haul operation. This year marks the facility's 50th year in operation. Each year, an average of 24,000 salmon, steelhead, and native char are trapped and hauled above a series of falls to afford the fish access to over 100 miles of habitat. The operations provide for over 20% of the natural coho and 13% of the natural chinook produced in the Snohomish basin.

The Columbia River Basin Water Management Bill - The Columbia River Basin Water Management Bill directs the Department of Ecology to "…aggressively pursue the development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream uses," including new storage, modifying existing storage, pursuing water conservation projects, and any other action that will create new water supplies. A recent update identified 13 projects. Three of the most significant are:

- Lake Roosevelt: The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Releases Project will provide additional water for municipal and industry uses, drought relief water for fish, and to replenish ground water in the Odessa Subarea. The draft SEIS was released in May 2008 and comments were provided to Ecology by June 30, 2008. The final SEIS is expected to be released in August 2008.
- Potholes Supplemental Feed Route: The Potholes Reservoir Supplemental Feed Route will reroute water from East Low Canal to Frenchman Hills waste-way and Middle Crab Creek. This opens up capacity in East Low Canal for additional water for the Odessa Subarea. The SEPA checklist was completed in January 2008 and a Mitigated Determination of Non-significance was issued for Frenchman Hills waste-way. Washington Department of Ecology will begin the SEPA checklist in October 2008 for Middle Crab Creek. Reclamation hopes to have Congressional funding for construction of the Middle Crab Creek route by 2010.

Odessa Subarea Groundwater: The Odessa Subarea Special Study appraisal report identified the infrastructure and water source alternatives to replace ground water use with surface water. The infrastructure includes construction of East High Canal north of I-90, enlarging East Low Canal below I-90 and extending East Low Canal 2 ½ miles. Water sources include re-operation of Banks Lake and building a reservoir at Rocky Coulee. The Department will participate in data collection to assist in the preparation of the NEPA document. A draft EIS and draft Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report is scheduled for completion in September 2010.

Baker River Biological Opinion from NMFS - The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued their Biological Opinion for the Baker River Hydroelectric Project on June 30. This is a key step to bringing the relicensing of the Baker Project to closure. The owners will initiate a substantial number of mitigation activities once the license is issued. The Biological Opinion recommends: 1) real-time stream flow gage on the Baker River and modification of the lower powerhouse to provide better control over downstream flows; 2) modification of the lower dam power plant to provide better control over downstream flows and the rate change in flows; 3) substantive improvements to the downstream migrant fish trap on the upper dam; 4) improvements to adult upstream fish passage; and 5) salmon culture funding for Baker Lake sockeye, chinook and steelhead. Most of these conditions were previously negotiated as part of the multi-agency relicencing negotiations over the past six years.

Habitat Staff Met With Washington Department Of Transportation (WSDOT) Staff - WSDOT staff declared an emergency repair necessary to protect State Route 530 from the eroding forces of the Sauk River near Darrington in northeast Snohomish County. Region 4 Habitat staff met with WSDOT staff to evaluate bank protection designs that would provide the immediate protection necessary but still minimize the impacts to fish life. WSDOT considered the Department's input and came up with a bio-engineered log crib. Department staff are reviewing this proposal and will be issuing the Emergency HPA to complete the work this summer before adult salmon return in the fall along with winter storms.

Mill Creek Assessment - Staff attended an update on the Mill Creek Flood Channel Evaluation in Walla Walla. The Tri-State Steelheaders Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group in partnership with the Umatilla Tribe, the Department, and the Walla Walla County Flood Control District sponsored the project. This project is evaluating the concrete flood control channel through the town of Walla Walla to determine passage for ESA-listed steelhead and bull trout. The initial evaluation found only a limited amount of passage along the margins of the channel at a narrow band of flows. It does appear that the channel can be modified to greatly improve passage without compromising the ability of the channel to withstand flood events. Preliminary estimates put the cost at $5 to $6 million – less than was originally anticipated.

Public Goal:

Ensure sustainable fish and wildlife opportunities for social and economic benefit

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Hunting Coordination Meeting - Wildlife Program staff met with Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) staff to discuss the youth waterfowl hunt and the permit only elk hunt. The NWR will submit its rule package by January 2009, aligning well with the Department's timeline for the hunting season package.

We anticipate a two-day youth waterfowl hunt and the issuance of approximately 61 elk hunt permits, 60 antlerless and 1 bull. Permit distribution among weapon types has not yet been determined. Final arrangements will be made after upcoming U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service public meetings in the fall.

Oyster Enhancement - Staff planted 150 bags of hatchery-reared juvenile "seed" oysters at Sequim Bay State Park. This enhancement is expected to yield about 135,000 legal-sized Pacific oysters in 2 to 3 years. Sequim Bay State Park is one of the very few public tidelands offering oyster harvest in the Strait of Juan de Fuca-Admiralty Inlet area. All oysters at the beach are the result of our ongoing enhancement efforts and the park tidelands are now open year-round for recreational oyster harvest. Helping in the labor-intensive planting were citizen volunteers from Western Washington University's Clallam County Extension.

Public Outreach & Manila Clam Enhancement - Staff participated in the SeaGrant "Shellfish in Your Front Yard" presentation in Brinnon. Approximately 50 citizens attended this excellent presentation focused on culturing clams and oysters and including topics such as culture methods, permitting, tideland ownership, health certification, tribal notification, and shellfish diseases and pests. Following the presentation, 24 of the participants assisted Department staff with planting 500,000 Manila clam seed at nearby Dosewallips State Parks tidelands. On-site discussions included identification of appropriate habitat for Manila clam seeding, native and non-native species, recreational shellfish seasons, commercial and non-commercial harvest, oyster drills, and Varnish clams. The clam seed planting will produce approximately 125,000 harvestable clams in 2-3 years on this very popular recreational beach. Volunteers from SeaGrant and UW also assisted Department staff in planting 500,000 Manila clam seed on the Point Whitney tidelands. This effort should produce 125,000 harvestable clams in 2-3 years.

Spring Fish Marking and Tagging Big Success - Cool temperatures helped mass marking and coded-wire tagging crews complete all projects this spring. Approximately 65 million chinook and 9 million coho were mass marked (by means of an adipose fin clip) at hatchery facilities across the state. In addition, 10 million chinook were coded-wire tagged. This was the first year of an interagency project to tag and mass mark the Yakama Tribe's Klickitat Hatchery chinook production at Bonneville Hatchery in Oregon. This was Bonneville's first year of chinook mass marking and our Department had one of four marking trailers operating concurrently at the hatchery. Mass marking fall chinook production at Grays Harbor Hatchery facilities was also added to the mix this year. With mass marking already fully implemented for hatchery coho and steelhead production, 4.8 million chinook at Priest Rapids Hatchery is all that remains unmarked and that production may be marked next spring.

"High Lakes" Triploid Trout Stocking - After a long delay caused by the record snowpack in the Cascades, large triploid rainbow trout purchased from Trout Lodge in Soap Lake were stocked into Dog Lake and Leech Lake on White Pass on June 24...about a month later than normal. Dog Lake and Leech Lake received 435 and 739 fish, respectively. The extra rearing time increased the average size to 1.6 lbs. The access road gates at both lakes are still closed to the public until the USFS-Naches Ranger District can assess and clear any dangerous "hazard trees." Anglers have been fishing both of these popular "high lakes" (Leech: elev. 4400', Dog: 4200'), that are accessed from U.S. Hwy 12, for several weeks by walking in and dragging a car-topper boat or float tube across the snow. The Department was able to stock these two lakes before the end of June because with permission from the

Naches Ranger District, the Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff plowed the access roads. The final 2008 triploid trout plant in the state occurred at Lost Lake in Kittitas County near Snoqualmie Pass.

2008 Coldwater Kid's Fishing Event - A non-typical kid's fishing event was held the end of May on Coldwater Lake in the Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. The U.S. Forest Service, the Department, and many fly fishing volunteers staffed the event. This 766-acre lake was formed in 1980 when Mt. St. Helens erupted. It is managed for blue ribbon wild trout.

This event involved 32 inner city kids, 7 to 17 years old, from the Vancouver area. What made this event unusual was that the kids were part of an effort to collect biological data (lengths, genetic and scale samples) on the fish they caught, learn about what trout eat, learn about the lake and how it was formed, and try their hand at fly fishing. All fish caught were released.

Volunteers brought eight boats and all fishing equipment needed to get these kids on the water. Many, or most, of these kids had never fished or been in a boat. It was a lot of fun to bring the anglers and kids together and we are thinking we will make this an annual event.

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

Soos Creek Hatchery - On June 27th, Region 4 hatchery staff provided a tour of the Soos Creek Hatchery for John Hutchins, Engineer with Harbor Consultants, and Karen Keiser, Senator from the 33rd district. The tour included the intake, adult pond, incubation building, rearing ponds, pollution abatement ponds, and the marking trailer. The Senator was interested in discussing the age, condition, and limitations of the facility, the marking process, and how marking ties into selective fisheries. Staff explained about the challenges presented by flooding and the amount of cleanup required, as well as how the two new round ponds will allow the hatchery to meet its H-integration goals, by incorporating natural origin fish from Howard Hanson Dam into the spawning population.

Science Goal

Promote development and responsible use of sound and objective science to inform decision-making

Western Gray Squirrel Project - The two radio-collared gray squirrels that died earlier in June on Fort Lewis were sent to the Washington State University (WSU) Pathology Lab for analysis. Both individuals (one a native western gray, the other a non-native eastern) were found to have indications of exposure to tularemia, a bacterial infection that was determined to have killed a western gray squirrel on the Fort earlier this year. Neither of the two more recent mortalities had the physical characteristics typical of animals that succumb to the disease; additional tests may help determine the ultimate cause of death. Biologists are currently tracking 27 radio-collared squirrels as part of the western gray squirrel project on

Fort Lewis. All non-predation mortalities will be sent to the WSU Pathology Lab in a focused effort to monitor for this disease.

Grant Proposal for Creation of a West Coast Marine Fish Habitat Partnership - The Department submitted a proposal to the Multistate Conservation Grants Program of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for creation of a tri-state (Washington, Oregon, and California) Marine Fish Habitat Partnership. If funded, the proposal will provide the Department with $250,000 over two years to develop the partnership, with the goal of being fully recognized at the end of those two years as a formal Fish Habitat Partnership under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Funds will be used to hire a coordinator who will bring together key people from the three states to form the partnership, and to defray travel costs associated with the necessary meetings. The partners identified at this point are the Department, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Deparment of Fish and Game, and the North West Indian Fisheries Commission, but the hope is to acquire to acquire many more partners, including federal agencies and universities. We will find out in mid-September if our proposal has been accepted.