

# Director's Report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission

## December 8-9, 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***

**Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHSV):** John Kerwin participated in a meeting held in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) offices. The meeting was convened to discuss the new and highly virulent strain of VHSV that has been isolated from seventeen species of fish, including Chinook and coho salmon, in the Great Lakes. This emerging strain is genotypically distinct from the West Coast strain and has caused mass mortalities effecting 15 species, across various genera that were not previously known to be susceptible to VHSV. APHIS has issued a Federal Order quarantining the interstate transportation of 37 species of fish from eight states and two Canadian provinces that surround the Great Lakes in an effort to stop the spread of the pathogen. Should this strain be transmitted to Washington State and other western states it would likely have a significant adverse impact to naturally produced and cultured species of fish throughout the region.

**Hanford:** WDFW participated in the Natural Resource Trustee Council's (NRTC) annual strategic planning meetings in Joseph, Oregon, where the Trustees identified top priorities for the next year (NRDA Planning, Action Plans For Governance and Strategy, and Assisting DOE with a Site-wide Long Term Stewardship Plan). WDFW provided strategy and input to the NRTC for the development of a “restoration now” approach and proposal to Department of Energy (DOE). The NRTC would like to present the proposal at the Senior Trustee Council for the buy-in by the Senior Designated Authorities in the hopes NRDA restoration can begin in 2007. However, legal actions against DOE by the Yakama Nation and the states of Oregon and Washington restrict some discussions and progress until DOE can formally agree to cooperation and funding. Additionally, the Yakama Nation has independently developed a preliminary assessment screen in support of completing a full-scale damage assessment. The NRTC will need to consider the pre-assessment screen and how to proceed collectively while some agencies proceed independently. This is the top agenda item for the December NRTC meeting, and Washington Department of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife are meeting internally this month to discuss the current events at the site and to develop a strategy for moving forward. WDFW is also developing comments on DOE's plans for the River Corridor Baseline Risk Assessment. WDFW has attended multiple meetings with DOE to address lack of site-wide integration on the risk assessment. As a result, DOE has promised that a strategic plan for site wide risk assessment is forthcoming.

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):** Environmental Policy staff met with members of the Washington State Conservation Commission, the Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to discuss possible amendments to the state's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) contract. Currently, the program pays agricultural producers to plant riparian buffers on sensitive aquatic sites, removing the sites from agricultural production. Since the program began in Washington State, there have been 640 contracts signed, 10,375 acres of riparian buffer planted - with the most frequent buffer width at 180 feet, and spanning a length of 603 miles throughout the state.

The proposal is to add additional types of conservation practices including hedgerows, grass filter strips, and wetland restoration activities. These additions would likely increase participation in the program which has leveled off after the initial implementation of the program in 1998. Environmental Policy and Regional staff are evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed changes and working collaboratively with the above agencies to address any necessary changes.

**Oil Spill Restoration:** Oil spill settlement funds were used to purchase 82 acres of tidelands in Fidalgo Bay. The Skagit Land Trust, using funds provided from the Texaco Restoration Fund, completed the purchase and transfer of 82 acres of forage fish spawning habitat in the bay. Together with 450 acres acquired in 1999 through a similar transaction, the total protected area in the southern part of the bay is 532 acres. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in the process of establishing the area as a state Aquatic Reserve. The lands were transferred to DNR and are protected from development through a long-term conservation easement. The tidelands are home to a variety of fish and wildlife species and are spawning grounds for herring, sandlance and surf smelt. The Texaco Trustees Restoration committee approved funding for the acquisition. The committee, chaired by WDFW Biologist Dan Doty, is comprised of representatives from the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, the Suquamish Tribe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington Department of Ecology and the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

**Buckhorn Mountain Gold Mine Wildlife Mitigation Agreement:** The Buckhorn Mountain underground gold mine located in Okanogan County is currently in the later stages of permitting through the Department of Ecology and the US Forest Service. Crown Resources/Kinross Gold USA, Inc. plans on removing about 4 million tons of gold ore and transporting the material for processing to their Kettle River mill in Republic, Washington, on a new Forest Service road. Concern with impacts to habitat associated with truck collisions of deer, reduced instream creek flows, wetlands, seeps and springs has been addressed through an aquatic mitigation and monitoring plan, as well as an adaptive management plan that will be used to address unforeseen ecological impacts in the future. The WDFW has negotiated a Wildlife Mitigation Agreement that will address the anticipated impacts to fish and wildlife. Under the state's Metal Mining law, all impacts to fish and wildlife must be mitigated as a condition to receiving the NPDES permit from Ecology. While WDFW has worked hard on reaching an agreement with the company over the past two years, project opponents are poised to appeal the permits in an attempt to stop the project.

**Forest Practices Board:** On November 1, the Forest Practices Board unanimously adopted the first rule change arising from the Adaptive Management Program for the Forests and Fish (F&F) Rules and subsequent Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The rule change removes the current default basin sizes, shown to be inaccurate, that had been used to determine the spatial extent of buffers for non-fish bearing streams. In addition to the rule was a Forest Practices Board Manual section that described how to identify a point on the ground (Perennial Initiation Point, or PIP) that is used to calculate the buffer length in the absence of the default. To date, 80% of landowners were identifying the PIP on the ground without a manual and 20% were using the default. The Board passed the rule (eliminating the defaults), but said the Manual was not implementable or enforceable due to variability on the ground. The Board then asked the Forest and Fish Policy committee to provide options to the Board in six months that provide equivalent protections for non-fish waters to those outlined in the F&F report and HCP, with or without identifying the PIP on the ground. Until then, PIPs will be identified on the ground and the extent of buffers for non-fish bearing waters will be calculated as identified in the Forest Practices Rules and HCP.

**Water Management Initiative:** The Walla Walla Water Management Initiative (WMI) Project Management Team partnered with the Watershed Management Council, the Walla Walla Watershed Alliance, and Walla Walla Community College to present the Walla Walla Watershed Conference which explored science and strategies that have been, and may be applied toward resolving current and future water allocation and watershed management issues in the western United States. Directors Jay Manning from Ecology and Phil Ward from Oregon Water Resources Department attended. Staff gave a presentation on “Integrating Fisheries Science into the Water Management Initiative.” The WMI and conference theme was collaboration.

**Forest Practices Compliance Monitoring:** As required by the Forest and Fish Report, DNR has completed the first year of fieldwork on forest practices compliance monitoring. Habitat staff has been involved with all aspects of the design and execution of the program, including participation in field reviews. WDFW Habitat staff participated in 89 of the 100 reviews of completed harvest units. Within these 100 units, evaluations were made of 47 fish-bearing Riparian Management Zones (RMZ), 56 non-fish-bearing RMZs, and approximately 120 road construction activities.

**Fifteen Hundred Foot Berm Rebuild, Near Jamestown Area, Sequim, WA:** Staff conducted a site visit to the 1,500-foot long berm rebuild in the Jamestown shoreline of Sequim. Homeowners decided against using traditional bulkhead methods (concrete or rock) to protect their single-family residences by restoring a berm that was greatly eroded during storm events of the winter of '05/'06. The design called for importation of appropriate sized sand and gravel and use of on-site and imported large woody debris to re-store to approximate pre-storm berm conditions. The berm was re-located landward of the historic OWHL to the new OWHL established by storm erosion of '05/'06. Existing status of construction include importation of sediment and large wood debris. Vegetative plantings consisting of native shoreline dune type grasses will be planted early November 2006.

**Snohomish River basin (WRIA 7) - Snohomish PUD Jackson Hydro FERC Relicensing** Staff reviewed and commented on the study plan for physical process studies to address instream flow issues for the project. The study plan was approved by parties to the negotiations and will provide essential information on sediment transport, river wood transport, and channel dynamics for decision-making.

**Culvert Replacement Project:** WDFW biologists worked with Conservation District Representatives, Lewis County Commissioner Hadaller, and Lewis County Commissioner candidates Norberg and Averill to review the Ron Allen culvert replacement project. Various agencies contributed funding, including WDFW's Landowner Incentive Program, to replace a culvert (which was a fish passage barrier) with a bridge. The project opened 3.5 miles of habitat at a cost of \$27,000 and therefore was a great success. The USDA was in danger of losing a federal grant due to a last minute submittal of applications for permits. However, WDFW was successful in guiding it through the Fish Enhancement process, and permits were issued prior to the end of the grant cycle.

**Snowy Plover:** Scott Pearson and Dave Hays met with State Parks staff at Leadbetter State Park to discuss the possibility of conducting snowy plover and streaked horned lark habitat restoration projects. The meeting was very positive with all agreeing it was a good idea and that State Park land could be used for this work. The main objectives will be to reduce the cover of the non-native beachgrasses (which have created unsuitable habitat for larks, plovers, and native plants), and to increase the non-vegetated habitat and habitat dominated by native dune plants. We are now moving forward with grant applications to fund this work and are identifying locations for restoration activities. We hope to design this restoration project as an experiment and measure the vegetation, lark, and plover responses to the treatments.

**Urban Mapping Project:** A final series of maps showing the increase (in acres) of land development and urbanization were submitted to Chris Drivdahl to be included in the "State of the Salmon Report." A time series (1972-2006) of Landsat data for WRIA 7 in Snohomish and King Counties was analyzed to estimate the amount of land that was converted from agriculture and forestlands into human development and impervious surface. Aerial photos were inspected to determine and digitize recognized agricultural areas. Higher elevation lands and forest-managed landscapes (lands generally above 600 feet) were excluded by visual inspection. Results of these analyses estimate that the amount of urban and residential development in WRIA 7 increased from approximately 13,000 acres to almost 50,000 acres from 1972 to 2006. Most (74 percent) of the lands within the urban growth boundaries were developed by 2006. Over 80 percent of the developed landscape in 1972 was within the urban growth boundaries, whereas 44 percent of the developed landscape in 2006 was within the urban growth boundaries.

**Wolves:** Staff received 52 applications for the Wolf Working Group. Fourteen participants have been selected to represent the wide range of perspectives and values regarding wolf conservation and management.

**California Sea Lions:** On November 30, a Section 120 application was submitted to the Secretary of Commerce requesting approval for lethal removal of California sea lions that are preying on ESA listed salmon and steelhead near Bonneville Dam. This was a joint application submitted by WDFW, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The application outlines a procedure leading to removal, which includes active non-lethal hazing, followed by removal of problem animals that do not respond to hazing attempts, and an evaluation period. The application emphasizes the need to address California sea lion predation as part of an overall recovery plan and to restore a balance between a growing and unmanageable source of mortality from an abundant California sea lion population and threatened salmon and steelhead populations.

The states Columbia River Treaty Indian Tribes, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers are meeting this week to coordinate hazing and data collection efforts for 2007. The plan is to increase hazing efforts to seven days per week. WDFW has submitted a Supplemental Budget Request to cover costs associated with 2007 hazing and data collection. The information collected in 2007 will be added to past years data and basic understanding of sea lion behavior. Continued and increased hazing and predation data collection will be required to proceed with a Section 120 process.

**Fish Passage Barrier Correction on State Highways:** WDFW completed a compliance inspection on a WSDOT fish passage barrier correction project on Bowman Creek (SR 142 @ Milepost 20.20). The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in WDFW Region 5 funded the project. The barrier culvert was initially identified during the WSDOT Fish Passage Inventory conducted by staff from the WDFW TAPPS Division. The project involved replacing the existing culvert with a concrete bridge and rebuilding the streambed. The project will provide coho, steelhead and resident trout access to over 30 miles of spawning and rearing habitat.

Bowman Creek (tributary to Little Klickitat River)

State Route 142 at Milepost 20.20

*Bowman Creek – barrier culvert prior to correction.*



*Bowman Creek – Completed project with fish passage restored.*



## Flooding, flood damage

**Crystal Mountain Oil Spill:** A diesel fuel spill near Crystal Mountain ski resort occurred on November 3 when a pump that pulls diesel from underground supply tanks malfunctioned and released 18,000 gallons of fuel. The leak came from tanks used to supply a backup Puget Sound Energy power generator on Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest land near the ski area. By Sunday, fuel was found in Silver Creek, which is approximately 1,200 feet from the spill site. Spill team members provided on-scene support to the Department of Ecology, particularly with regard to making a natural resources damage assessment of the area downstream of the spill site. Site work was complicated by the heavy rains and flooding. The spill team is now working with state, federal, and tribal trustees to evaluate the natural resource impacts from the spill.

**Flood Damages to WDFW Lands:** The recent record rainfall and resulting floods have caused significant damage to some WDFW lands, but by far the most significant damage appears to be on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. We are currently preparing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) damage assessments. Located in the middle of the Toutle River, the Mt. St Helens Wildlife Area is especially vulnerable to flood damage and is still in the process of fairly dynamic changes following the 1980 eruption. Nevertheless, the damage (change) here includes the loss of approximately three miles of erosion control plantings that had been completed over the past five years. This includes slopes that had been seeded with an erosion control mixture as well as trees (alder) that had been established at an average spacing of about 1 per every five linear feet. There were also untold thousands of planted willow cuttings that had been collected on-site.

**Granite Falls Fishway:** The recent flood events in Western Washington resulted in significant damage to the Granite Falls fishway. Extensive work will be required to rebuild over 550 feet of road leading to and along the fishway along with restoring power to the fishway control gate. In addition, sections of safety railing and walkway grates over the fishway will need to be replaced.

*Photo showing damage to the road leading up to the Granite Falls fishway.*



*Photo showing flood damage on and along the Granite Falls fishway.*



**Sunset Falls Fishway:** The trap and haul fishway at Sunset Falls incurred significant damage during the November 6 record flood event on the S.F. Skykomish River. The resulting damage has temporarily terminated operations until key components (i.e., fishway entrance, intake and release site) can be repaired. Flows in the Skykomish River at Gold Bar (downstream of the fishway) crested on November 6 at 23.2 feet (114,000 cfs), which was 8 feet over flood stage. The Sunset Falls fishway operates up to 10,000 cfs. (river flow). The Sunset Falls fishway has been seasonally operated since 1958 and provides (on an average year) 23,000 adult salmon, steelhead (including a small number of native char) access to over 100 miles of spawning and rearing habitat. Approximately 20% of the naturally produced coho in the Snohomish Basin originates from above Sunset Falls.

*Photo showing damage to the Sunset Falls fishway entrance.*



*Photo showing damage to the Sunset Falls fishway intake.*



**Emergency HPA Responses:** From the Methow to the Wenatchee River, Region Two has responded to a variety of emergency HPA conditions after heavy rainfall and snow events occurred during the first two weeks of November. Landslides from previously burned forestland have caused landowners to scramble to remove mud from around homes and within creek beds. High river flows have also caught many people unprepared to deal with highly eroding shorelines and flooding of personal property. The flood risk to property results in emergency placement of riprap along swollen riverbanks that must be re-evaluated once the river returns to its lower flow. Our agency habitat biologists are working to ensure that as these emergencies situations occur, the actions taken don't result in long-term degradation of the habitat or of personal property.

**US Army Corps Of Engineers Emergency Response On Skagit River:** WDFW staff requested that the Corps of Engineers minimize impacts to fish life when placing a porous rock berm blocking the inlet to a side slough of the Skagit River near the city of Lyman in Skagit County during the recent flooding episode. The Corps exercised their authority to proceed as requested by local authorities. The WDFW staff will work with the Corps and County officials to negotiate and implement after-the-fact mitigation for the resulting impacts to fish life.

**Budget Review Meeting with Office of Financial Management Regarding Hatcheries:** Staff and Deputy Director Peck met with Jim Cahill, Jim Skalski and Sandy Triggs from OFM to walk through the detailed budget components of the agency's operating and capital budget requests. The items reviewed were identical to those distributed to the HSRG for their review and input, ensuring consistency as well as providing an opportunity to address questions pertinent to OFM. We also took the opportunity to walk through an overview of the state's hatchery system as well as show them a short video developed subsequent to the recent rains, swollen rivers and flood events that have influenced our most recent needs for facility maintenance and preservation. Staff will be developing a supplemental budget request to assist in repairing some of the more heavily damaged facilities, as well as enhancing protection to others that may have increased vulnerability.

**Hatchery Flooding:** For the most part, floodwaters have subsided at WDFW hatchery facilities. Besides extensive damage to buildings and equipment, heavy rains and resulting floods also washed away fish weirs and inundated holding and rearing ponds at some hatcheries, releasing juvenile and adult fish. Among the hardest hit facilities was the Voights Creek Hatchery. At one point during the storm, there was 2 feet of water in the hatchery buildings and the facility lost an undetermined number of juvenile coho salmon and steelhead. The hatchery's pumps and emergency generator were also damaged during the flood. Damage also occurred at the Cedar River Hatchery where the adult collection weir and traps were washed downstream, Soos Creek Hatchery where the potable water supply was temporarily cut off due to a landslide, and the SolDuc Hatchery where the pump house foundation was eroded. An undetermined number of juvenile fish were killed at the Issaquah Hatchery when an intake screen was temporarily blocked with debris and juvenile fish escaped from the Wallace River and Voights Creek hatcheries. Several thousand adult coho escaped from hatchery adult ponds at Soos Creek and Voights Creek when the facilities were inundated.

## **PUBLIC GOAL:**

### ***ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT***

**Cowlitz River Coho Surplus Accounting:** The Cowlitz coho run is projected to be about 50,000 to 60,000 adult fish to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery (CSH) – providing greater than usual benefits to Washington anglers. The Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee (FTC) – established by the FERC Settlement Agreement – decided to increase the number of coho transported into the upper watershed to about 35,000 adult fish, while work is underway to increase the coho smolt collection efficiency at Cowlitz Falls Dam. This level of adult supplementation into the upper watershed – at a ratio of 6 hatchery to one natural origin fish – is need to make progress towards successful coho reintroduction for natural spawning, while providing an upriver fishery on coho originating from the CSH. It is projected that approximately 10,000 additional hatchery origin coho adults will be transferred to Riffe Lake this year to provide more salmon fishing opportunity. Additional surplus hatchery coho will be provided to local and statewide food banks to provide nutritious salmon to citizens that otherwise would not have access to harvest.

As of November 18, 2006 the coho return to the CSH is about 46,388 fish (adults and jacks); it is estimated that about 70% of the run is completed. The abundant coho salmon return has contributed to the following beneficial uses:

- ≡ The entire run has been subject to sport fisheries in the lower Cowlitz River – providing fishing opportunity (the actual harvest will be determined post-season via catch cards);
- ≡ 2,100 fish (goal= 2,500) for broodstock – to sustain the CSH artificial production;
- ≡ 2,333 coho adults have been transported to the upper Tilton River to provide natural production and harvest;
- ≡ 13,948 hatchery origin coho adults have been transported to Riffe Lake to provide additional salmon fishing opportunity;
- ≡ 16,139 natural and hatchery origin coho adults have been transported to Lake Scanewa and upstream to provide natural production and salmon fishing opportunity;
- ≡ 978 adult coho and 122 jacks to local food banks; and
- ≡ 1,373 adult coho and 206 jacks to statewide food banks.

**Tribal Take Seized:** Officers made a stop at the Washougal Chevron where they noticed a truck in the parking lot with fish totes. It appeared to be a tribal member trying to sell fish to a group of people. As the Officers walked over to check what was going on they could see there were wet plastic bags inside the tote stacked close to the top. When the tribal member noticed our officers standing there, he quickly pulled the lid over the tote. The tribal member said he is selling salmon but is all sold out. After some interviewing and consent to search, three large chunks of sturgeon meat were found in the totes that were obviously from an oversized sturgeon. The tribal member said he was not selling it. He said it was from subsistence catch and did not think he had a size limit. He estimated the sturgeon was over 6 feet long. Officers seized the three sections of sturgeon meat and about one gallon of caviar. Charges were referred to the tribal police.

**Park Lake Rehabilitation Project:** After much delay due to a relatively small contingent of opposition, Park Lake was rehabilitated on November 16-19, 2006. The lake was treated with 23,100 lbs of rotenone for a total concentration of 1 ppm to eradicate perch, bass, bullheads, and sunfish. The actual treatment went very well, despite some interference from protesters, and the trout fishery should once again attain its former glory. Park Lake generally supports some 10-20,000 angler trips per year, 2-4,000 on opening weekend alone, when the trout fishing is good. Many agency personnel contributed to the accomplishment of this project, from the Regions and Olympia staff, and including Fish and Enforcement Programs, the AG's office, and the upper echelons of the Administration.

**Upper Columbia Mainstem Steelhead Fishery:** Anglers have been successful catching steelhead above Wells Dam. The success rate has translated into a relatively high accumulation of "take" where 53% of allowable take occurred in the first four weeks of the fishery. The fishery is allowed under Permit 1395 issued by NOAA fisheries. The mainstem will remain open until anglers reach the allowable "take" limit of three (3) wild steelhead. The main objectives of the fishery are: 1) to remove hatchery origin steelhead while, 2) providing a recreational opportunity for citizens of Washington.

**Game Farm Fallow Escapes:** Officers attempted to overtake and immobilize a fallow deer that had escaped from a game farmer near Battle Ground. The deer eluded the officers after being chased in the early morning only to reappear twelve miles east of where it was earlier in the day. It became clear during additional attempts to immobilize the animal that it had grown wise to the program and would avoid any future attempts by officers to get close to it. Officers drafted a written waiver for the landowner's signature verifying that all parties were in agreement that WDFW needed to secure the animal by use of any (discrete and humane) means necessary to prevent its further escape into the wild. The owner was equally concerned about his liability for the animal running out into traffic, and wanted it removed if for no other reason. Officers monitored its movements making one attempt to immobilize the illusive animal without success. Subsequently, local news cameras took interest including: [KGW Ch8](#), [KOIN Ch6](#), [KATU Ch2](#), and [KREM 2](#). Incident reports were submitted to staff and Public Affairs updated. Officers contacted the local humane society and WDFW's licensed area rehabilitator to determine if they would have a short term holding area for the fallow deer if needed. WDFW's Veterinarian was contacted as well. To date, the deer is still on the loose.

**Wire Theft in Progress:** WDFW Officers responded to a burglary in progress and were the first on the scene. A female lookout was detained while the buildings were checked. Several of the abandoned buildings had been illegally entered for the purpose of stealing wire. Unfortunately, wire theft has been on the rise as it is easily stolen by drug addicts and turned into quick cash to satisfy drug habits. While setting a perimeter for one building, a suspect was seen coming out of another. Containment was quickly set up and a search began, resulting in two male suspects barricading themselves in a small room. After deployment of pepper spray by one Officer, one suspect was successfully TASERED, rendering him very compliant. The second suspect refused to come out. Several tense minutes passed as the suspect brandished a large caliber handgun. While pepper spray was deployed, it had no effect on this particular individual. He eventually gave up and a fully loaded .44 magnum handgun was recovered. Both male suspects are convicted felons and the handgun was stolen. A second firearm was recovered from the vehicle the female was in.

**Green Dot Roads:** Road closures have become an issue recently with DNR issuing wood permits for subjects to go into the road closure with their vehicles to cut and retrieve firewood, while passing by hunters who have walked all morning to get into their favorite areas behind (what they thought to be) locked gates. DNR apologized for the need to get woodcutters into the area after a letter appeared to the editor in a local paper. Other road closures have been plagued by private ownerships being sold by timber companies (recreational cabin home sites) that are now being developed. This is creating holes and uncontrollable access into the backside of some road closures. Road Closure (Green Dot) managed areas will need to be evaluated prior to next season.

**Enforcement Holds “Town Meeting” in Gig Harbor:** An informal public meeting was held at the Gig Harbor Sportsmen Club. About twenty members of the community participated and were given a presentation on the Enforcement Program and had the opportunity to meet and discuss fish and wildlife issues with the Officers working in their communities. Agency employees assisted the officers in this meeting by representing the Fish Program and the Marine Mammal Investigations Team.

**Fish and Wildlife Cases Ignored:** The willingness of the Spokane County Prosecutor’s office to pursue fish and wildlife prosecutions has become increasingly worse. The head of District Court prosecutions asserts a variety of rationalizations to support his total indifference to fish and wildlife cases. He has apparently imparted his values on all his deputy prosecutors. They fail to communicate with our officers on cases, they are failing to file our complex investigative cases and now appear to dismiss any case that a defendant pleads not guilty on. WDFW has spoken to the prosecutor and been provided broken commitments for improvement. WDFW will make additional efforts to contact the county prosecutor. Short of any improvement, we will be working through the Inland Empire Wildlife Council for possible media coverage.

**Statewide Elk and Deer Hunting Investigations:**

- 1) Officers responded to a report of a 3x2 bull that had been killed in the Tampico area. Officers found a subject field dressing the bull and he had attached his un-notched tag to an antler. Investigation revealed that a tine had been cut off making it a legal 3x1. Officers obtained written statements from the subjects that they cut the antler off. Charges were filed.
- 2) Officers assisted with a late night closed season deer investigation. The deer was killed by a Sedro-Woolley resident who was doing construction work on Whidbey Island. He shot a buck deer with archery equipment and hung it in the woods at his father’s house on the Island. The suspect was tracked down at his residence in Sedro Woolley where he confessed to shooting the deer and another deer earlier in the year. The violator was also a convicted felon with several rifles in his possession, which were seized as evidence. The violator accompanied the Officers to Whidbey Island where one fresh deer was seized and remains of the first deer were photographed. The seized deer was donated to the Swinomish Tribe.
- 3) Evening Deer Decoy Successful – Region Four Sergeants planned and executed a decoy patrol on Highway 20 in the Marblemount area and apprehended a successful businessman from Mt. Vernon who was returning from an unsuccessful deer-hunting trip in eastern Washington with his wife. His comments after being stopped were, “Oh no, I shot robo deer.”

- 4) King County (Detachment 10) Officers worked an emphasis on GMU 653 for the opening of the rifle elk season. This unit went to only 23 permits this year as opposed to being open for everyone as in the past. Numerous verbal warnings were given for closed season elk hunting in the unit by individuals who hadn't read their current regulations. Along with this change in regulations came the ever increasingly hard to swallow explanation of "Oh, I'm hunting bear and cougar today," when told that the elk season was only open to permit holders. Hopefully we can work to eliminate this loophole in the future.
- 5) Officers put together a very successful enforcement check station on the Green River for the opening day of elk season. Officers made 244 hunter contacts and checked 14 elk. They made 19 arrests for deer closed season, loaded gun in motor vehicle, possessing wildlife found dead, obstructing, fail to comply with check station field inspection, and misdemeanor warrants. The deer case started with Officers keying in on fresh blood and the smell in the back of a pickup and ended with 3 arrests for obstructing and the closed season deer that the subjects had quickly dumped just short of the check station. Forfeiture notice was served on the subject for the rifle and the pickup.
- 6) Trophy Elk Investigation – An Officer followed up on her investigation reference the 6x6 elk that was illegally killed in the Ellensburg area. With the help of fellow Officers, two search warrants were obtained for the seizure of two vehicles believed to have been used in the crime and that will subsequently be seized for forfeiture.
- 7) Fatal Hunt Accident – A fatal hunting accident occurred near Monroe involving three young men hunting on farmland adjacent to the department's Crescent Lake release area. The shooter told sheriff's detectives he heard brush crack and saw "a shadow" of movement, so he fired his 30-30 twice into the brush, killing his friend. The victim wore no hunter orange and both the victim and the shooter were unlicensed. Our Officer will be the primary contact, working with the Sheriff's office on her end of the investigation.
- 8) Wildlife Shot and Left – Officers located two poached elk along Highway 410. The reporting parties had called the poaching hotline an hour and a half earlier and the report had not gotten to the field. Both elk were shot the night before and the suspects had taken the backstraps and a hindquarter off an adult cow. A spike bull was shot and left.
- 9) Unlawful Deer Harvest – Officers worked an undercover operation reference a year long case. A subject from Texas avoided officers after reports of the unlawful harvest of a deer last elk season. Officers conducted surveillance on a camp. A Sergeant, acting as a hunter, was able to make friends with the subject and gathered information on the case. Officers returned to the camp and two subjects confessed to multiple poached deer over the past three years. Great work by all officers involved.

**Major Bust Result of Informants:** Officers received information that a known poacher was up to his old ways in Whatcom County. Officers took written statements from two informants and obtained a telephonic search warrant. With the help of Detachment 13 (North Puget Sound), Officers served the search warrant at the suspect's house. The suspect was skinning an illegal black tail doe that he had poached the night before when the Officers served the warrant. Two firearms and the suspect's truck were seized for forfeiture. Several illegal black tail racks, one of which being trophy caliber, meat, and other items were seized for evidence.

**Gillnet Case Leads to Chase:** While investigation illegal gillnetting on the lower Cowlitz a WDFW Officer noticed a small aluminum boat that had a gillnet in the bow and eventually a male subject got into the boat. He explained that he and his friend pulled the gillnet because they were good people and didn't believe in netting. The "good person" was booked into jail with three outstanding warrants. After booking the suspect, the Officer went back to the boat and saw another male trying to leave with the boat. He could not get the motor started and was anchored about eight feet off the shoreline. Once introduced to the Officer and asked to come to shore with some ID, the male suspect said, "come get me," and pulled anchor and began floating down river. The Officer believed he was a known suspect with warrants and called for back up. Many local law enforcement officers responded knowing the assaultive history of the suspect. The Officer pursued the suspect from the shore by foot while other Officers pursued him by car on the other side of the river. Another Officer responded by boat. The pursuit lasted for several hours and several miles down river. The suspect was either verbally abusing the officer or on his cell the whole time. Well after dark, Officers saw a small flashlight from across the river signaling the violator. The violator boat went to shore and then right back out again. In less than 3 minutes the violator got out of the boat and another person jumped in and started down stream. Officers took down the boat with one male subject dressed similar to the violator.

**Potential Shooting Zone Situation:** Officers responded to several complaints from the residents of "Millerville" in Moses Lake in regards to waterfowl hunters on Crab Creek shooting toward houses. This has been a chronic problem area for the past several years and our Officers continually encourage the local property owners to petition the County Commission to enact a no shooting zone around the homes.

**Fir Island Initiative:** Our increased patrol plan (an Officer on Fir Island 7 days per week for the entire snow goose season) is well under way and operating successfully, likely due to the excellent planning by staff and the willingness of the participating Officers to make sure this works. Hunters participating in the quality snow goose hunting program continue to be successful and very complimentary of the program and agency staff coordinating this effort.

Fir Island resident/land owner meeting were held over the last month to discuss the progress of the collaborative effort in developing the comprehensive snow goose hunting plan. Officers followed up the general meeting with an "Eyes in the Woods" class that was well attended by volunteers of the Western Washington Waterfowl Association and the local residents. Those that attended the CORT class have begun developing a working relationship with local hunters willing to volunteer their time to resolve reported problems. The meeting was well attended by landowners, residents, hunters, tribal representatives, Commissioner Solomon and bird watchers. Participants helped form a smaller working group. It appears that we have turned the corner and the various parties are now focusing on developing solutions that work for everyone rather than concentrating on differences.

**Public Safety Hazard:** Officers live-trapped another bear from the Snow Creek Ranch area near Discovery Bay. The source of the problem is a resident who insists upon feeding the raccoons. Despite warnings from Officers to discontinue the practice, the resident throws restaurant scraps onto his front porch so he can photograph the wildlife that appear. Unfortunately for the neighbors (and bears), the cold greasy French fries have become an enormous attractant for the neighboring bear population. The absence of prohibitions on feeding wildlife allows the individual to continue this dangerous and tragic hobby. An army of raccoons, and adjacent bears and cougars will remain a public safety problem in the neighborhood.

**Black Bear Threatens Olympia Neighborhood:** Officers responded to a complaint of a Black Bear roaming a neighborhood near Black Lake in Olympia just prior to dusk on Halloween night. When the officers arrived, they learned that the bear had been seen regularly over the past week and had showed little or no fear of humans. Officers spotted the bear after a search of the area, considering that the area would soon be inundated with small children carrying bags of candy, the decision was made in the interest of public safety to lethally remove the bear from the area.

**Wild Coho:** Officers responded to a report that a fisherman was in possession of a wild Coho on the North Fork Lewis River and had also refused to let the fish checker remove a snout to retrieve a coded wire tag. Officers were able to find the suspect, the wild Coho, and issue the citation. The failing to allow the removal of the snout case is pending a statement from the fish checker.

**Cougar Attack on Dog:** Officers responded to a cougar attack on a dog on the WDFW access on the Humptulips River. Officers received the call approximately 4 hours after the attack. According to the reporting party, her son was fishing when the cougar came after him and subsequently the dog got between the boy and the cougar. The dog suffered injuries and is at a Tacoma veterinarian. Hounds were used, but were unable to locate the cougar.

**Investigation of Clam Thefts:** Officers secured four search warrants related to a theft of thousands of pounds of hard shell clams from a state beach. The suspect had leased some very unproductive clam growing area adjacent to the state beach. Officers developed cause to believe that clams were harvested from the public land and then certification tags were falsified in an effort to represent them as legally harvested from the clam-poor leased area. A search team consisting of Officers and special agents served the four warrants at two businesses, a residence, and the harvest grounds. A special thanks goes to Biologist Bruce Kauffman who provided critical assistance to evaluating the clam growing potential of the leased ground. It was a race against time as the survey had to be completed before the tide came in – or the next opportunity would have been in the dark. Navigating the deep and sucking mud was not for the faint hearted.

**Watchable Wildlife:** Ten travel providers and specialists from Minsk, Belarus (located between Poland and Russia), sought consultation with the State Tourism Office and WDFW Watchable Wildlife staff on ways to stimulate “green” travel to Belarus. The country boasts of seven greenways, which are trails connecting rural communities throughout the country for non-motorized use (bike, foot, equestrian and small boat). Tips on attracting eco-tourists to visit their wildlife and cultural attractions were provided.

The economics of wildlife viewing and the resulting protection of wildlife habitat form a central concept in the newly released “Puget Sound Georgia Basin Ecosystem Indicators”:  
[www.epa.gov/region10/psgb/indicators/](http://www.epa.gov/region10/psgb/indicators/). The economic data cited came from WDFW’s website.

**Citizen Science:** Watchable Wildlife staff is helping to develop a Wild About Birds Workshop for 50 teachers of grade levels K-12 in the Yakima area. Staff from WDFW have met with education consultants from the Pacific Education Institute to develop WASL-like questions and activities as a part of the workshop, which may have statewide application and use beyond the Yakima workshop.

**Fir Island Snow Goose Hunt:** Scientific Technician Doug Huddle gave a presentation on the Fir Island snow goose hunt to the Stanwood Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association. Biologist Mike Davison also attended the meeting. The snow goose hunt website is up and running and can be accessed at: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/water/snow\\_goose/index.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/water/snow_goose/index.htm)

**Marine Mammal Stranding Response:** Dyanna Lambourn and Steve Jeffries attended a marine mammal coordination meeting on November 7, 2006, with representatives of the Northwest Marine Mammal Stranding Network including NMFS NW Region (Brent Norberg and Kristin Wilkerson), WDFW Enforcement (Officer Chadwick), Cascadia Research (John Calambokidiis and Jesse Huggins), and Portland State University (Debbie Duffield) to discuss stranding response on the Long Beach Peninsula. Debbie has primary response duties and will coordinate with Cape Disappointment State Park for notification and signage. The WDFW marine mammal group and Cascadia Research will provide additional support as needed for live strandings and fresh cetaceans. WDFW Enforcement will respond on a case-by-case basis as needed. Coincidental to the meeting, a dead 50-foot fin whale washed into the Port of Everett. Cascadia Research, The Whale Museum, and University of Washington's Burke Museum worked with the Port of Everett to move the carcass to Griffin Bay to establish a "whale-fall" to document carcass decomposition. Once "flensed" clean by creatures, the plan is to recover the skeleton for acquisition to the Burke's collection as a centerpiece to their whale collection.

**California Sea Lions in the Columbia River:** Steve Jeffries worked with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff to finalize a joint Section 120 application for the lethal removal of sea lions in the Columbia River at Bonneville Dam. The only significant change was to add Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) to the application. Guy Norman is circulating the final application for signatures from the respective agency directors (IDFG, ODFW and WDFW) for submission to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as soon as possible. WDFW, NMFS, ODFW, IDFG, PSMFC, and USACOE have a meeting scheduled in Portland for December 5, 2006, to develop interagency sea lion plans and budget for 2007 hazing and Section 120 activities. Guy Norman, Murray Schlenker, Brian Calkins, and Craig Burley have been invited to attend to coordinate with regional activities and priorities. Currently, no new funding is available to conduct this work although a supplemental budget request has been submitted to the Office of Financial Management for sea lion related activities.

**Swans:** Region 4 Wildlife Biologist Jennifer Bohannon worked with Public Affairs on a swan hotline (360-466-4345, Ext. 266) news release for sick and dead swans in Whatcom and Skagit Counties. The news release went out this week and the hotline is starting to receive calls. Jennifer and Scientific Technicians Brad Otto and Doug Huddle picked up a total of seven sick and dead trumpeter swans, five in Whatcom County and two in Skagit County. Three of the Whatcom County bird mortalities were caused by power line strikes and two were likely caused by lead poisoning. In Skagit County, one mortality was due to a power line strike and the other was possibly due to lead poisoning. Strong winds likely contributed to the high number of power line strikes this week. All birds were sampled for avian influenza, in addition to liver and gizzard sampling for lead poisoning determination.

**Lynx Project:** Gary Koehler was invited to participate in a field trip and discussion on lynx occupancy and use of habitats in northeast Washington and northern Idaho. The discussion centered on use of the Western Hemlock/Western Red Cedar habitat types in those areas. Gary also met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Washington Department of Natural Resources personnel to discuss objectives, methods, and logistic support necessary to conduct surveys for lynx during the upcoming winter season within the area burned during the Tripod Peak fire. Gary Koehler and Ben Maletzke completed draft manuscripts for submission to the Journal of Wildlife Management. The drafts are currently being reviewed by WDFW for compliance with publication policy.

**Project Black Bear Environmental Symposium Invitation:** This year's symposium will feature students in a debate over feeding programs as a means to manage black bears in Capitol Forest. It promises to be an interesting discussion! After the debate, breakout sessions will include presentations concerning a wide variety of environmental issues. It will take place on Monday, November 27, 2006, at 7 p.m., in Pod C at Black Hills High School.

**Deleterious Wildlife:** Region 2 Wildlife Biologist Beau Patterson and Enforcement Officer Graham Grant investigated a reported bighorn sheep in captivity in the Swakane Unit. The sheep was actually a mouflon (*Ovis gmelini*). Its captivity is a violation of the deleterious exotic wildlife law and, even more pertinently, a direct threat to the Swakane bighorns, as the pen is adjacent to shrub-steppe used by native bighorns. Old World sheep like the mouflon carry *Pasteurella*, which causes lethal disease outbreaks in bighorns. Beau will continue working with Enforcement staff and the owners to eliminate the disease threat.

**Project CAT:** Dr. Robert Wielgus, Ph. D. Washington State University student Ben Maletzke, and Gary Koehler met to discuss Ph. D. objectives and methodology for Maletzke's Ph.D. dissertation on Project CAT. The overall objectives are to compare spatial and habitat use patterns between a lightly hunted cougar population in the Cle Elum study area and patterns in northern Washington where hunter harvest rates are high. The goal is to assess whether there are differences in how cougars select habitats and space among a relative stable age population as compared to a heavily exploited population, which may relate to differences in age structure and encounter rates with humans. Gary Koehler participated in the annual KEEN (Kittitas Environmental Education Network) workshop at Central Washington University. He attended to a booth exhibit for Project CAT and discussed Project CAT objectives and observations from research on cougars. This event focuses on Environmental Education topics in the county and is attended by parents and elementary and middle school aged students.

**Mazama Pocket Gopher:** The Mazama pocket gopher translocation, from the Kaufman development to Wolf Haven, has been going very well. Seventy-four gophers have been released at Wolf Haven. Gophers are also being released on Mima mounds that have been pre-drilled with holes to provide immediate cover. The gophers are placed in a hole and a hardware cloth cap is put over them to provide short-term protection and discourage the gophers from moving overland in their first few hours at the new location. Carrots are also placed in the artificial burrows as a supplement to natural foods. Each mound receives one gopher, which approximates typical natural densities.

**Shelton Career Expo Fair:** Steve Sherlock, Gina Correa and Patrick Kelly participated in the Shelton High School Career Expo on November 8, 2006. Thirteen hundred high school kids participated in the program. Specifically, Steve, Gina and Pat hosted a WDFW display booth and answered hundreds of questions educating junior high, high school, and college age students about potential career and volunteer opportunities within WDFW. The Career Expo was a definite success. WDFW's booth was one of the most highly visited booths of the sixty participating groups that had displays at the fair.

## **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***

**Liquidated Damages for Non-Compliance:** To date, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has made several attempts to obtain a working schedule with Outdoor Central that would result in a completed automated Hunting and Fishing Licensing System and Database for WDFW and its stakeholders. Following Outdoor Central's inability to get the system and database deployed by July 1, 2006, WDFW agreed to amend the terms and conditions to provide Outdoor Central with additional time.

Despite the additional time, Outdoor Central has failed to timely complete several key system features specified in the working schedule, including the accounting module, system defects in its work product that are critical to license issuance, fee collection and revenue reconciliation. Additionally, Outdoor Central has also failed to meet the September 22, 2006, delivery dates for WDFW's hunter reporting tool.

Collectively, this lack of performance is having a direct negative impact on WDFW's ability to reconcile license revenue, adequately service its dealers, and preserve a positive relationship with its customers. WDFW has informed Outdoor Central that it relies on this system and database for many of its business and revenue collection processes.

Considering these failures by Outdoor Central, WDFW is sending notification to them of our intentions to assess liquidated damages for failing to comply with the contract requirements. Outdoor Central has left WDFW with the hardship of working with an incomplete system and database, despite Outdoor Central's clear obligations under the contract.

**Hatchery Reform and HSRG Review of Budget:** Staff provided the Hatchery Scientific Review Group with the agency's 2007 – 09 capital and operating biennial budget requests associated with the current and future operations of our state's hatchery system. The package provided, which included three operating budget packages (Keep Hatcheries Open, Essential Hatchery Facility Maintenance, and Hatchery Reform) and ten capital budget requests (Facility Preservation and Minor Works, Hatchery Reform and Compliance and the Deschutes Watershed Center stand alone project) were sent in an electronic format as well as hard copies provided. A follow-up meeting with the HSRG to walk through the packages and provide additional detail as required is scheduled for November 21, 2006.

**Interagency Non-Point Source Water Quality Work Group:** IRM represented the Department at the fall meeting of this group. Revisions to the current non-point action plan for 2007 were introduced, including the Department's request to add stream flow protection and enhancement as a work element. That, for the first time, makes stream flow projects eligible to compete for Direct Implementation Funding (DIF). That fund provides grants of up to \$50,000 to member state agencies for projects that implement strategies in the work plan. In recent years, the Department has been very successful in competing for these funds. Currently, we have four active projects supplemented by \$138,000 in DIF funding. Project proposals for the next grant application cycle will be solicited from staff beginning in January 2007.

**Bald Eagle License Plate Promotion:** Promotion of the Bald Eagle license plate to members of the Fraternal Order of Eagles was implemented. A specific, unique poster/advertisement directed at the interests of the Eagles' membership was developed and a mailing to all 97 Aeries in Washington is underway.

**Northwest Power and Conservation Council Coordination Funding:** IRM staff attended the Northwest Power and Conservation Council meeting on November 14-15, 2006. The Council recommended coordination funding for the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, Spokane and Kalispell Indian Tribes, and Upper Columbia United Tribes, and the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission to participate in Columbia Basin management. The Council recommended a two-year summary report of the Comparative Survival Study be funded, as well as continue with tagging efforts. The Council also recommended that \$1 million per year is used to fund innovative projects (i.e., new technology or new methods), with solicitation beginning in 2007. Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) staff presented a review of wildlife mitigation project operation and maintenance (O&M) costs, which will be useful in developing a long-term O&M, plan for these areas. Cindy LeFleur, IRM, briefed the Council on harvest management activity, returns, and forecast accuracies for the 2006 Columbia chinook runs. The meeting provided a good opportunity to discuss with Council staff and BPA possible funding solutions for some of the 2007-09 budget shortfalls that will affect some Department projects.

**Federal Assistance Training:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a training course for land acquisition using federal assistance funds. WDFW staff attended the two-day course, which provided an excellent overall perspective of the requirements and the process for the use of federal assistance funds.

**Landowner Incentives Program:** WDFW staff attended a conservation focus group meeting to discuss ways to improve the effectiveness, credibility, and funding levels for programs that provide conservation stewardship incentives for private farm and forest landowners. Much of the meeting centered on the need for a coordinated approach to assist private landowners' work through the various funding opportunities, bureaucracies, and permitting constraints. The American Farmland Trust sponsored the meeting.

**WDFW/DNR Land Exchange:** Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is conducting public meetings (open houses - with public hearings scheduled for spring) around the state to provide information on five proposed lands exchanges with which they are involved, including the one with WDFW. Eleven meetings have been scheduled, and so far, two have attracted large crowds; one in northeast Washington attended by about 200 people and one in Okanogan attended by about 60. The opposition/concern with the WDFW exchange has been limited to current DNR leaseholders that fear WDFW will not honor the existing DNR grazing leases. Only about 5% of the lands scheduled to be transferred to WDFW from DNR have existing leases. WDFW has committed that if these lands are transferred to WDFW, we will accept assignment of the DNR leases through their lease terms, after which they would be converted to WDFW permits and could be subject to change.

**Grazing Permit Fees for 2006:** The seasonal grazing permit fee has been computed and the current permit holders have been sent letters notifying them that the Animal Unit Month (AUM) fee for the 2006 season is \$8.25. The WDFW grazing permit fees are determined by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's annual survey of private grazing fees for the state of Washington. WDFW sets its rate at the USDA private rate less 15 percent in consideration of more stringent fish and wildlife requirements placed on the permits by WDFW.

## COMPETENCE GOAL:

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

**Pacific Salmon Treaty Negotiations:** The U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission met for two days on October 31 and November 1 to advance discussions aimed at defining positions regarding changes needed to improve effectiveness of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The two-day session was preceded by a full day meeting of technical advisors to the Commission delegation and ten members of the Department's Pacific Salmon Treaty Team were in attendance, representing issues ranging from fishery management to stock assessment and applications of genetic methods. The U.S. Section Commissioners convened again on November 20-21, with the intention of refining a U.S. position in preparation for initial bilateral meetings on renegotiation that will begin in January.

**Fir Island Initiative:** Environmental Policy and Region 4 staff held the first in a series of public meetings to launch the development of the Fir Island Initiative. The initiative is needed to provide a management plan for hunting snow geese on Fir Island in the Skagit Delta. Last August, the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a new 100-foot no-shoot buffer from roads on Fir Island due to resident safety issues. After years of declines, snow geese populations have dramatically increased, resulting in increased hunting and agricultural crop damage on Fir Island. The public meeting announced the development of the plan and invited participants to join a working group that will assist the Department in the plan's development. Over 75 people attended the meeting. The final plan is scheduled to be complete by June 2007.

**Interagency Climate Change Committee:** IRM participated in the third meeting of the Interagency Climate Change Committee, chaired by the Governor's Office. We announced that the Department is the first state fish and wildlife agency to sign on as amicus in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts/ National Wildlife Federation suit currently in the U.S. Supreme Court against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for non-regulation of greenhouse gases. This announcement was well received by the committee. We expect that climate change and greenhouse gas emissions will become one of the Governor's issues during the coming year, including the possible establishment of a cabinet or senior level Climate Action Team.

**Guidance For Local Appeals:** In response to a regional habitat biologist's inquiry about how to go about appealing a local government's project decision, a new guidance memo covering the protocol for local project permit appeals was created. The memo, which was sent by Peter Birch to all RHPMs, covers the steps in making a decision to appeal a local project or permit decision. It includes suggestions for alternatives to appeal, and it spells out the need to involve Olympia in making a decision to appeal.

**Draft Wildlife Area Plans Status:** Twenty-five plans have been posted on the Internet and are available for review and comment at:

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/index.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm)

**Don Larsen Appointed to Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council:** Governor Gregoire has appointed Don Larsen to the Bureau of Land Management's Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council as a representative of Washington State Government. The council provides advice to Bureau and Forest Service managers regarding the management of public land resources within the council's jurisdiction.

## SCIENCE GOAL:

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

**Shared Strategy – Water:** IRM and Habitat Program staff continues to participate in work of the Stream Flow Subcommittee. This includes development of a state-funded (\$40K) pilot study to test and refine the Department and Ecology’s draft watershed-based stream ranking methodology for flow enhancement. We have also been tasked with developing a strategy to advance the science around the relationship of flow enhancement to Puget Sound salmon recovery goals. We can expect this committee to integrate into the Puget Sound Partnership process as that effort continues to evolve.

**Updates to Nationwide Permits:** Staff has been closely coordinating with Ecology, National Marine Fisheries, USFWS, and others to coordinate response to the US Army Corps of Engineers’ proposed changes to Nationwide Permits for the next 4-5 year federal cycle. We are working to provide consistency with federal and state guidelines, and to ensure that resource protection levels do not “slip” in this important programmatic effort.

**Seabird and Forage Fish Research:** Julia Parrish, Scott Pearson, Peter Hodum and Tom Good submitted a grant proposal to the SeaDoc Society last week titled, “Testing the Limits of Diet – Short-term Climate Effects on Seabird-Forage Fish Linkages in Puget Sound.” They proposed to extend and intensify the dietary sampling begun in 2006, focusing on the Rhinoceros Auklet. Their research in 2006 documented differences in the diet of Puget Sound breeders (Protection Island) versus outer coast breeders (Tatoosh Island), suggesting that Puget Sound breeders must work harder (more fish captures per trip) for a lower return to their chicks (lower bill load weights, lower energy content). In addition, comparison with historic diet from Puget Sound suggests these birds currently favor sandlance at the expense of salmon, a richer forage resource. However suggestive, this data should be interpreted with caution, as interannual variability can be large as a consequence of chronic and cumulative human activities and as a function of natural climate forcing. Because current oceanographic conditions are moderate (El Niño) and this climate event is predicted to continue through summer of 2007, an additional year of data will provide the perfect “natural experiment” to test the degree to which Puget Sound top predators, exemplified by Rhinoceros Auklets, are diet limited.

**Avian Influenza Activities:** Between July 14 and November 7, 2006, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) submitted 594 live surveillance swabs, 62 hunter-harvested swabs, and 30 fecal samples for avian influenza (AI) testing. Swabs were collected over 18 individual sample sites, from 15 avian species. In addition, 29 avian carcasses have been submitted for post-mortem examinations.

As of November 7, 2006, lab results for 508 swab samples have been received. To date, 1 sample from a western sandpiper, 7 samples from American green-winged teals, and 34 samples from mallard ducks have tested positive for an AI virus. Five of the 34 mallards were positive for an H5 strain of avian influenza virus, but negative for N1. The remaining 466 samples have returned negative results for AI viruses.

**Pacific Scientific Review Group:** This NMFS-sponsored advisory panel met in Seattle on November 15-17, 2006, to review the status of various marine mammal stocks in the Pacific relative to fishery interactions and marine mammal stock issues, as required under Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Washington fisheries covered under Section 120 with incidental mortality issues include all drift gillnet fisheries, purse seine, commercial crab and shrimp, and salmon net pen operations. The panel reviewed updated revisions to about thirty 2006 draft Stock Assessment Reports (SARs) for various cetacean, pinniped and sea otter stocks with changes. SARs of interest included a draft SAR from USFWS on Washington sea otter stock, Oregon/Washington coastal harbor seal stock, and California sea lion stock. USFWS still has not provided a final Washington sea otter SAR since 2000. New data now shows both the Oregon/Washington coastal harbor seal stock and the California sea lion stock to be at or near carrying capacity and within their Optimum Sustainable (O.P.) range. Additional issues of interest for Washington fisheries are proposals to split coastal and inland Washington harbor porpoise stocks into multiple stocks based on genetic differences. The effect would be to lower Potential Biological Removal (PBR) levels and could have impacts on various gillnet fisheries with incidental mortality of harbor porpoise. If take exceeds the PBR, NMFS may restrict fisheries to reduce takes. The issue was not resolved and is pending further genetic and movement information.

## **EMPLOYEE GOAL:**

*CREATE AN AGENCY ENVIRONMENT THAT NURTURES PROFESSIONALISM, ACCOUNTABILITY, ENTHUSIASM, AND DEDICATION IN ORDER TO ATTRACT, DEVELOP, AND RETAIN A WORKFORCE THAT CAN SUCCESSFULLY CARRY OUT THE MANDATE OF THE AGENCY.*

**Wildlife Handling and Chemical Immobilization:** Biologists Dana Base, David Volsen, and Paul Wik attended the "Wildlife Handling and Chemical Immobilization" course at Wolf Haven International. The course focused on the selection and properties of available immobilization drugs and proper wildlife handling techniques. The final lab entailed the immobilization and workup of Mexican gray wolves and a coyote.



*Washington Department of*  
**FISH and WILDLIFE**