

Director's Report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
presented by Jeffrey Koenings, Ph.D., WDFW Director
February 10, 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.

GOAL I: HEALTHY AND DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND HABITATS DEVELOP, INTEGRATE AND DISSEMINATE SOUND FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT SCIENCE.

Ecological Functions of High Flows: Staff convened a workshop of experts from Washington, Oregon, and California to address the question of how much flow is needed for high flows to maintain channels and lateral channel areas as good habitat. The seminar was co-sponsored with the University of Washington and the Northwest Regional Floodplain Managers Association. The conference was full with about 40 attendees and a waiting list of over 90 who wished to attend. We are planning a follow-up session in early March to further the dialogue with interested participants. The session was videotaped for future distribution as an educational product. The seminar discussion included examples of the linkage of hydrology and streamflow characteristics to geomorphology, and physical processes to fish habitat and stream ecology. The results of the seminar are applicable to watershed planning (allocation limits), major project reviews (scheduled flow releases), and stream restoration projects for salmon recovery.

Sea Lion Captures: WDFW Marine Mammal Investigation staff collaborated with the University of British Columbia, the Department of Fisheries and Oceanography, and the National Marine Mammal Lab in the capture and tagging of 11 (8 California sea lions and 3 Steller sea lions) sea lions on WDFW's mobile trap, deployed just north of Nanaimo. Additional fieldwork was scheduled for the weeks of 1/23/06 and 2/6/06 to capture an additional 11 Steller sea lions for instrument deployments. During January and February, both sea lion species as well as harbor seals are concentrated in this area to feed on the largest remaining herring stock in the Strait of Georgia. A video team from The Discovery Channel-Canada was present, filming a segment for an upcoming Animal Planet "Extreme Animals" program. This program is about the world's largest sea lion, including research on sea lion energetics at the Vancouver Aquarium and ongoing foraging ecology work on Steller sea lions in northwest waters.

Reports and Publications: WDFW research scientist Steve Germaine is a coauthor of a recently accepted publication in the journal Restoration Ecology. The official citation is: C. S. Wightman and S. S. Germaine. In press. Forest stand characteristics altered by restoration affect western bluebird habitat quality. Restoration Ecology. Copies of the manuscript can be obtained from the Wildlife Science Division in Olympia.

Upcoming Meetings and Symposia: Matt Vander Haegen and Mike Schroeder will co-chair a symposium on Wildlife Response to Conservation Reserve Program Lands at the 2006 meeting of The Wildlife Society in Anchorage. Recently completed an ongoing research by WDFW that will be among 11 papers to be presented at the symposium.

Contracts Prepared: Contracts totaling \$27,000 were prepared with the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, North Olympic Salmon Coalition, and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe to fund analysis of otoliths collected from ESA-listed summer chum salmon in the Hood Canal and Strait of Juan de Fuca regions. Examination of otoliths is ongoing by WDFW Otolith Lab staff and will provide information needed to (1) estimate the number of hatchery-origin vs. wild-origin summer chum spawning in 14 streams, (2) estimate the survival rates of fry released from 6 supplementation and 3 reintroduction programs and their contribution to adult returns, and (3) estimate the level of "straying" of program-origin fish to other drainages. This analysis is a key monitoring and evaluation component of the Summer Chum Salmon Conservation Initiative, an implementation plan to recover summer chum salmon.

Decreasing Hatchery Mortality of Salmon Subyearlings: Henry Cheng is assisting Martin Chen in an investigation of using copper sulfate to decrease salmon subyearling mortality using the method outlined in their paper titled "Copper sulfate treatment decreases hatchery mortality of larval white seabass *Atractoscion nobilis*" which was accepted for publication in *Aquaculture*, November 2005.

Southern Boundary Funding: Fish Science/Conservation Biology Unit staff received notification that two Pacific Salmon Commission Southern Panel proposals submitted were funded for the next year. One of the proposals for \$108,000 will allow the Genetics Lab to continue work on a coastwide chinook micro satellite baseline. The other \$24,500 will allow Brad Thompson to complete the EDT sensitivity analysis for Puget Sound chinook populations that begun last year.

Project Black Bear: Watchable Wildlife staff helped organize and lead a field trip of twenty-three students and three teachers from Tumwater's Secondary Options Program to the Capitol Forest to study and collect data to help evaluate black bear tree damage to commercial forest plantations. This fieldtrip is a small part of a long-term, collaborative citizen science project called Project Black Bear. The black bear serves as a species-vehicle or vector through which students, teachers, and resource scientists learn about ecological systems, processes, other associated species, and socio/political issues of managing natural resources within the human context. Later this spring, WDFW biologists will be trapping and affixing radio collars to multiple bears to study their movements and habitat use within the Capitol Forest boundaries.

Fish Passage Database Modernized: The Fish Passage and Diversion Screening Inventory database tables were migrated from MS Access to SQL server, the new agency standard. As part of the migration, the data model and table structures were modernized and enhanced. This migration will improve access to the highly sought fish passage database by external sources.

Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) Database: A PHS data review and update session was held for Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Ferry counties in the Region 1 office. The 2-day session had good turnouts and included Habitat and Wildlife Program staff. Existing species and habitat information was reviewed. Many winter ranges of white-tailed deer were expanded, plus moose concentration areas were mapped from 10 years of helicopter survey data.

Skagit and Stillaguamish River Off-Channel Habitat: TAPPS staff finalized and distributed the Skagit and Stillaguamish Rivers Off-Channel Habitat Database CD that contains all of the WDFW off-channel habitat survey data collected from 1989 through 2002, in a GIS map coverage and Microsoft Access database. This effort is considered a significant achievement for the WDFW staff that worked on this for more than a year. It represents a tremendous amount of work on the part of WDFW's North Sound field staff, making data readily available to other watershed partners that otherwise would have been lost in file drawers.

PROTECT, RESTORE, AND ENHANCE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND THEIR HABITATS.

Governor's Puget Sound Initiative: On December 19, 2005, Governor Christine Gregoire announced a revitalized effort to conserve and restore Puget Sound. The initiative includes supplemental budget priorities and the launch of the Puget Sound Partnership - a public/private partnership created to safeguard the health and productivity of Puget Sound and the rivers that feed into it.

The Governor believes a new, broadly-based public/private partnership is needed to better engage citizens, the private sector, tribes, and local, state, and federal government agencies in a unified effort and, in doing so, bring needed increases in public support, resources, and accountability to get the job done.

The Governor is enlisting some of the region's leading citizens to help her build the Puget Sound Partnership. Serving with Governor Gregoire on the Partnership are: Salmon Recovery Fund Board Chair William Ruckelshaus; U.S. Representative Norm Dicks; Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Chair Billy Frank, Jr.; Colin Moseley, President, Green Diamond Company and Chair of Simpson Resource Company; King County Executive Ron Sims; University of Washington President Mark Emmert, Ph.D.; Western Washington Agricultural Association Executive Director Mike Shelby; Taylor Shellfish Farms Vice President Bill Taylor; and People for Puget Sound Executive Director Kathy Fletcher.

The Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT): The Governor has agreed to include \$175,000 dollars in the 2006 supplemental, and has made \$75,000 available from the Governor's emergency fund for WDFW to implement a rapid response to the introduction of two invasive tunicate species into marinas in Puget Sound (Pleasant Harbor in Hood Canal, Neah Bay and Blaine). WDFW and PSAT will be working together on an implementation plan. It is anticipated that funds would be contracted to clean tunicates off boats in these infested marinas, removing them from vessels and docks, educating boaters on how to be a part of the solution, and conducting additional research and monitoring efforts. This is a bold and

cutting edge effort that could provide our state and other jurisdictions around the world with new methods to combat invasive species. The effort is certain to attract national and international attention.

Discovery Bay Habitat Restoration: An old lumber mill structure near the head of Discovery Bay collapsed earlier this month during a storm and will likely be removed or stabilized as part of the ongoing habitat restoration work at Snow and Salmon Creeks. This past summer, intertidal shellfish staff surveyed the nearby millpond lagoon and discovered that portions of it contained large numbers of native Olympia oysters. WDFW shellfish and habitat biologists will work with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition and the Jefferson County Marine Resource Committee to ensure that the lumber mill removal and cleanup does not negatively affect Olympia oyster populations in the lagoon. If the cleanup is to include removal of the lumber mill pilings or any other work that would significantly disturb the ground, recommendations will be made to relocate the Olympia oysters in the seep to the north of the collapsed structure. No recommendations will be made to "rescue" the Olympia oysters beneath the fallen structure, due to the obvious safety risks involved.

Oil Spill Damage Restoration Projects: Restoration funds are currently available from the Washington State Coastal Protection Fund South Puget Sound/Hood Canal sub-account. About \$115,000 is available for freshwater or marine restoration projects in this area, which includes portions of WDFW regions 4 and 6. Project proposals are due by February 28, 2006. Call or email Dan Doty (360.902.8120, dotydc@dfw.wa.gov) if you are interested in submitting a proposal.

Greater Protection Negotiated for Broodstock White Sturgeon: Negotiations between Director Koenings and Roy Elicker, interim director for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, concluded in an agreement between the two states that increases the lower Columbia River white sturgeon spawning sanctuary by two miles. This culminates efforts begun in 2004 to provide greater protection to broodstock white sturgeon. The decision was announced at the January 26, 2006 Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing by Bill Tweit.

Upper Columbia Spring Chinook: With the recent delay in implementing the Chewuch weir, Region 2 staff are evaluating alternative broodstock collection methods for tributary-based supplementation of upper Columbia spring chinook. The primary concern is obtaining enough natural origin fish in tributary areas to ensure that broodstock are: (1) representative of their natal habitat -at a tributary level, and (2) hatchery origin fish are not over-represented in supplementation production.

McDowell Lake Eurasian Milfoil Eradication: Fish Management staff and Watershed Stewardship biologist Sandy Dotts met with local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff to discuss a cooperative project proposal to remove milfoil from McDowell Lake, a popular fly fishing lake, on the Little Pend Oreille Wildlife Refuge. As envisioned, the Department would apply for State grant funding from the Department of Ecology to cover a portion of this project and provide cost share time to assist with the project. The Service would follow up with assistance to WDFW for a follow-up project to treat the lake with rotenone to remove tench, and restore the trout fishery.

Waterfowl Emphasis Patrol:

An early January waterfowl emphasis patrol was conducted in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Fish and Wildlife Officer's (FWOs) patrolled the last weekend of snow goose hunting on Fir Island. Past years have included numerous calls for service for trespassing and shooting from the roadways in the highly visible hunt. Officers concentrated on Whatcom County. Heavy enforcement presence resulted in fewer violations and calls for service even though the population of snow geese is increasing as well as hunter success rates. Officers utilized both marked and undercover vehicles to observe hunters. Violators were cited for failing to record snow geese, no waterfowl validation, over 15-shotshell limit, lead shot, shooting after hours, unplugged shotgun, and no small game license. During the waterfowl emphasis patrol a Fish and Wildlife Commissioner called to report snow goose hunters shooting near the road by her Fir Island home and she shortly had several officers at her house. She was very pleased with the fast response and impressed that we had scheduled the emphasis patrol anticipating problems. Officers patrolled the area until the season closed.

Officers responded to a complaint of birdshot hitting a vehicle at the Kalama chemical plant building. Subsequently, FWOs, Kalama Police Department Officers and Cowlitz County Sheriff's Officers contacted the subjects and found that the goose hunters responsible were hunting too close to the chemical plant. As a result of the investigation, officers found 55 ducks and geese dumped along the Cowlitz River and approximately half of the birds were cleaned with the rest left whole.

New Land Management Grant Opportunities: Mark Quinn and Paul Dahmer met with IAC and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff to finalize criteria for the two new grant categories in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP). These grants for habitat restoration and enhancement, and for recreational development and renovation, are only available to WDFW and DNR. In response to criticism about lack of stewardship on state lands, these two grant programs were created specifically to allow both agencies to better manage lands for fish and wildlife and for recreational opportunities. The new programs were primarily the work of Senator Parlette and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition in the 2005 Legislature.

Yakima Storage Dams Fish Passage: The Yakima Storage Dams Fish Passage Core Team (Team) is proceeding with planning and studies with the ultimate goal of reestablishing anadromous salmonids upstream of the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) irrigation storage dams. Work on conceptual designs for permanent upstream and downstream passage facilities continues for Cle Elum and Bumping dams, the initial focus of the Team. Last year's drought disrupted plans to test the effectiveness of the interim downstream passage facility constructed on the Cle Elum Dam spillway in 2004-05. Cle Elum Reservoir never reached the elevation necessary to test our ability to attract and safely pass salmon smolts over the dam. Instead, late in the spring we were able to calibrate the dual-antenna positive identification tag (PIT) detection system installed in the spillway passage flume at 80 cfs (20% of the flume's 400 cfs capacity). In 2006 the Team will try again to test the facility with PIT-tagged coho salmon smolts acquired by the Yakama Nation for the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP) coho reintroduction feasibility study.

Cougar Pilot Hunt Project: Officers contacted two groups of hound hunters that included a notorious poacher from Idaho, who was the apparent hound owner and handler. The cougar permit holder, who was an M.D. from Spokane, claimed he owned the dogs, although they were in the vehicle of the Idahoan. A follow-up by Spokane officers found no dogs at the M.D.'s home or any facilities to housedogs. Fortunately, the pilot project rules preclude out-of-state handlers, so Officers cited the Idaho gentleman and charges will also be filed on the M.D. from Spokane for rule violations. We suspect that the Idaho hunter is guiding folks that he has pre-arranged to apply for the cougar hound permits. Another hunter, purportedly part owner of the same hounds, came into the Spokane office to seal a cougar. Fish and Wildlife Officer's (FWOs) interviewed him and the investigation continues. Great work by Officers in catching the Idaho hunter and his entourage in a clear violation. FWOs will be calling the feds for assistance to hopefully wrap up more parties in what appears to be a well-organized effort to manipulate the pilot hound hunting project and turn it into cougar guided hunts.

ENSURE WDFW ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS, FACILITIES, AND LANDS ARE CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS THAT PROTECT AND RECOVER FISH, WILDLIFE, AND THEIR HABITATS.

Pend Oreille River Bass Tournaments: Contact was made with Bill Newsome from Pend Oreille County about complaints he and other residents have voiced regarding bass tournaments on the Pend Oreille River. Steve Jackson, statewide Warm Water Program Manager, and Regional Fish Program Manager Whalen independently spoke with Mr. Newsome on this matter. Speeding within river sloughs and close to residential docks in river slough areas were a primary concern, along with rumored wastage of northern pike. Jackson followed up with contacts to all clubs permitted to hold tournaments on the river in 2006. Regional Fish Program staff coordinated with Enforcement Program to have officers available to monitor activities during tournaments scheduled on the Pend Oreille River this year. Two tournaments around Memorial Day will be targeted for Enforcement presence. Contact will also be made with the Pend Oreille County Sheriff's Office.

Elwha Dam Removal Workgroup Meeting: Central Shellfish staff member Don Rothaus participated in the Elwha River Nearshore Restoration Workshop, held January 10, 2006 at Peninsula College. Numerous Local, State, Federal Agencies, along with Tribal representatives, were present at this workshop. Don gave a presentation on a project the WDFW Central Shellfish Dive Team has undertaken that will monitor the effects of Elwha River Dam Removal on nearshore subtidal shellfish habitat. Physical and biological changes are to be documented at a number of fixed study sites in the vicinity of the Elwha River Delta, prior to and post-dam removal. WDFW Habitat Biologist, Anne Shaffer, coordinated the workshop.

Big Game Poaching:

Deer Poacher: While patrolling the Bickleton/Dot Road area, an Officer observed a truck parked in the roadway. After watching an occupant of the vehicle shoot a high-powered rifle, the Officer drove towards the subject. The subject immediately jumped in the vehicle and took off. Our FWO stopped the

vehicle, which had four tribal members inside. The private property is clearly posted with no trespassing and safety zone signs. The property owner's ranch is up on the hill in the direction where the subject shot. The Officer interviewed the subject who stated that he was just target shooting. The subject later admitted he had shot at a two-point buck, but said he did not hit it as it ran away. A search of the vehicle revealed a yearling fawn in the bed of the truck. The Officer and the subject looked for the deer, but darkness prevented locating it. The next day, the Officer and the landowner searched the area and located the remains of the still warm doe deer, which was within thirty yards of where the FWO had searched the night before. A criminal history revealed two of the subjects were prohibited to possess firearms. The Officer will be filing multiple charges in this case and the landowner was very pleased with the investigation.

Elk Poachers Interrupted: An Officer received a complaint of persons involved in the poaching of elk between Randle and Packwood. The poaching was interrupted. Two backpacks were located containing boned out elk meat, a cell phone, methamphetamine, stolen drugs, and a variety of knives. The Officer was able to make positive identification of the suspects. He obtained a statement from an eyewitness to the crime that can identify the suspects and is waiting to obtain additional information from the cell phone before making any arrests. It's believed that additional subjects are involved with this and other poaching activity.

Gillnet Activity:

Officers located an illegal gillnet in the Skagit River and returned early the next morning to set up surveillance. Shortly after officers pulled the net at midday (and freed several hatchery steelhead) the Upper Skagit Natural Resource Office called to report one of his members reported a stolen net. The net, with unmarked buoys (some of which had been spray-painted black), was returned to the tribe.

An anonymous cell caller reported an illegal gill net that was set in the Nooksack River just east of Deming. Officers worked surveillance with Nooksack Police Department in an attempt to identify the suspects who had set the net. The net was targeting steelhead or early spring Chinook and it contained several fish that were still alive. After several hours of observation, an individual was seen pulling the net while another suspect stayed in the vehicle to act as the "pick up" and lookout man. The suspect who pulled the net removed six large steelhead and was found hiding with the fish in some thick brush. The man who pulled the net was booked into Whatcom County Jail for unlawful use of a net; the other was issued a citation for possession of marijuana and was released. Six of the seven steelhead were unmarked. It is unclear whether the suspects were the ones who set the net.

INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS OF OTHERS THAT AFFECT FISH, WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITATS.

Federal Court Shellfish Density Case: Intertidal shellfish managers from the Point Whitney Shellfish Laboratory met with Attorneys General from our agency and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare for upcoming depositions in the upcoming U.S. District Court trial that will determine minimum densities of shellfish that define a "natural bed." The definitions would apply to intertidal "staked and

cultivated" private tidelands, public leased tidelands, and subtidal leases. The case, which involves commercial clam and oyster growers, treaty tribes, and DNR, is slated to begin in the fall.

Ocean Policy Working Group: Intergovernmental Resource Management (IRM) staff attended the Ocean Policy Working Group meeting during the week of January 16, 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to review the interim report that the group completed in December, develop the list of topics to be addressed in the second report due at the end of 2006, identify the leads for those topics, and discuss the implementation of the recommendations from the first report with a focus on the proposed outreach effort.

The topics identified for the second report are: 1) governance - develop and select preferred alternatives for creation of a longer-term Ocean Policy Committee with options for the Committee's role and authority; 2) ocean education, observation, and research - includes research priorities and outreach activities; 3) coastal vulnerabilities from marine sources - provide broad overview of marine impacts of climate change on Washington State and include sections on hazard preparedness and sediment management and erosion; 4) marine resource stewardship - provide description of current status of Washington's coastal fisheries, discussion on ecosystem-based management, sustainable fisheries, and the roles of aquaculture and marine protected areas; and 5) sustainable and resilient communities - include economic development opportunities and a characterization of the coastal resources, demographics, and economics.

The Governor's Office is planning to hire an outreach consultant to assist the working group. The concept is to have a series of town meetings in the coastal communities to communicate the current status of Washington's ocean resources and to solicit input from the public on the topics listed above. The Department is the lead for Topic 4 and a participant on the sub-committee to address Topic 1. IRM staff will work with Fish Program and regional staff to address these issues, as appropriate.

The Yakima Basin System Operations Advisory Committee: The "SOAC" met with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) staff on January 19 to continue work on written guidelines for hydropower and irrigation diversion operations during spring-time natural freshets that are critically important for migrating salmon and steelhead smolts. SOAC and USBR fish biologists want to provide clear guidance to Yakima Field Office river operators concerning what constitutes a "freshet" (a rapid increase in natural river flow from rain or snowmelt). Additionally, the guidelines will specify how long the USBR and irrigation districts should wait during or immediately following a freshet to maximize benefits to migrating smolts before increasing diversions for power or irrigation. An incentive to let natural flow events pass and move smolts out of the basin is that this reduces the probability that SOAC will be forced to request an "artificial freshet" or pulse flow that must be released from the storage reservoirs.

Comprehensive Watershed Characterization Model: WDFW staff is working with Ecology, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Community, Trade and Economic Development staff to explore development of a watershed characterization model, which integrates the Ecology and

WSDOT models and includes elements of WDFW's landscape characterization for wildlife. The intention is to engage a county government as partner in developing a pilot project for the integration.

Bank Full Width Training: Staff is working with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hydrologist and the Olympic DNR Region to develop training for cooperators and landowners identifying bank full width (BFW) on stream systems. BFW is used as the designating boundary in which forest practice prescriptions are enforced. The goal of the training is to establish consistent methods to better protect public resources and to foster better working relationships among cooperators and landowners.

Multi-Agency Permit Team (MAPT), 2-Year Status Report: In 2003 the departments of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, and Transportation, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and later King County, initiated a new approach to coordinate environmental permits for a selected set of WSDOT transportation projects; the approach was the MAPT. The MAPT model is based on developing a foundation of trust and open communication between a diverse group of decision makers from the five agencies of government. Funding for the two WDFW MAPT positions (HPA permit biologist and environmental engineer) is provided by WSDOT. The pilot phase of the program concluded in June 2005. Based on the success of the pilot program, the legislature and WSDOT refunded the MAPT through June 2007.

Most of the MAPT projects are in WDFW Region 4. The MAPT Charter stresses that the MAPT members coordinate closely internally and with their regional counterparts to ensure all staff are knowledgeable and mitigation is well coordinated. Benefits to WDFW MAPT include time to do early project coordination with WSDOT designers and engineers, direct communication between members to help ensure efficient acceptance of environmental mitigation, and collaboration provided by having the habitat biologist and environmental engineer working together on each proposed transportation project.

A typical MAPT project is being set for 6 to 18 months prior to issuance of the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA). Some projects do not have an HPA requirement, but most have wetland and storm water issues. The MAPT is also responsible for construction mitigation compliance inspection. From November 2003 through December 2005, the MAPT has reviewed 40 transportation projects, and WDFW has issued 17 HPAs with another 21 HPAs in the pipeline. Examples of MAPT projects include improvements to SR-167 (Green River valley freeway), I-405 (Renton to Bothell), SR-539 (Bellingham to international border), and SR-20 (Mt Vernon-Whidbey Is). HPA projects include a variety of bridge and culvert replacements, channel changes, bank protection, and aquatic fills.

The MAPT investment is being tracked through 8 performance measures in three categories: time, cost, and changes in business practices. Customer feedback is also emphasized. Based on the initial feedback from the pilot phase and impetus for the refunding, the MAPT business model appears to be a good investment for the future in the world of transportation improvement projects.

Governor's Land Use Core Team: WDFW is a member of the Governor's Land Use Core Team that has been dealing with the Governor's Land Use Agenda. As a result of many meetings held in December and continuing into the current legislative session, the Core Team has developed several pieces of legislation directed to issues of concern with the Growth Management Act (GMA), agriculture, and eminent domain. This proposed legislation is now in front of the Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee and the House Local Government Committee. The following is a list of the bills and their titles:

SB 6427 & HB 2814 - Concerning schedules for the review of comprehensive plans and development regulations.

SB 6569 & HB 2815 - Clarifying the best available science requirements to protect critical areas.

SB 6575 & HB 2917 - Relating to accessory uses on agricultural lands.

SB 6345 & HB 2626 - Reaffirming existing Washington state law in the state constitution, state supreme court decisions, and statutes related to the use of eminent domain by state and local governments.

The Department will continue to work with the Core Team throughout the legislative session on these and other GMA bills related to land use issues.

Willapa Bay: A burrowing shrimp workshop was held on February 1-2 at the Washington State University Long Beach facility. These meetings, held annually, are conducted to inform the oyster industry and researchers on progress towards completing a burrowing shrimp integrated pest management plan. The meeting started with the history and background of the burrowing shrimp issue from the biologist's and from the shellfish industry perspectives. Presentations and updates were given on burrowing shrimp ecology and the latest on chemical, mechanical, and biological control opportunities. And talks were given on the latest projects involving monitoring all life stages of burrowing shrimp, from pelagic larvae to adult as well as implementing all the historic and current data into a GIS database. The meeting ended with a discussion on tying all this information together and determining if the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, as currently implemented, is working. Bruce Kauffman, a biologist at the Willapa Bay Field Station, attended both days.

Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project Relicensing Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement/ Grant County Public Utility District (PUD): The Priest Rapids settlement negotiating parties have reached a relicensing settlement agreement covering anadromous salmonids. On December 17, 2005, Director Koenings signed the Priest Rapids Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement that represents the culmination of many months of work by state, federal, tribal, and PUD staff. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have also signed the Agreement. The Yakama Nation is as yet undecided as to whether it will sign and it is unlikely the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla will sign. The Priest Rapids anadromous settlement negotiations also led to the USFWS signing the Hanford Reach

Fall Chinook Protection Program (HRFCPP) Agreement on December 16, 2005. Much work is still needed to reach settlement on resident fish species and wildlife for the Priest Rapids Project.

Rocky Reach Hydroelectric Project Relicensing Comprehensive Settlement Agreement/ Chelan County PUD: A comprehensive settlement agreement has been reached by negotiating parties for the Rocky Reach Project. The Comprehensive Settlement Agreement will be circulated for signatures and forwarded to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) by mid-March. Signatories will include: WDFW; Ecology; State Parks and Recreation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management; City of Entiat; and Alcoa. The Yakama Nation is as yet undecided as to whether it will sign and it is unlikely the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla will sign. The Rocky Reach Settlement Agreement includes agreement for the term of the license on measures for anadromous salmonids, bull trout resident fish, lamprey, white sturgeon, wildlife, recreation, water quality, cultural resources, and water quality management. The Rocky Reach Anadromous Fish Agreement and Habitat Conservation Plan serves as the anadromous portion of the Settlement Agreement. The Rocky Reach Comprehensive Settlement Agreement provides a very strong package of measures that will continue to benefit fish and wildlife resources during the term of the new license.

Wells Hydroelectric Project Relicensing/Douglas County PUD: Douglas County PUD started the relicensing effort for its hydroelectric project with a kick-off meeting on October 18, 2005. The Final License Application will be filed with FERC by Douglas County PUD on May 28, 2010; the current Wells Project license expires May 31, 2012. WDFW Region 2 staff and IRM will be heavily involved in the relicensing effort, providing Douglas PUD and FERC with the input necessary to ensure the new license includes appropriate fish and wildlife resource measures.

Highway 291 Washout: Regional staff responded to an emergency from WSDOT on Highway 291 near 5-Mile in Stevens County. The highway washed out and experienced an emergency closure due to high run-off in the area and undersized double culverts. Staff issued a verbal emergency permit to begin work. Materials were not immediately available to complete work, but the area was stabilized and a full written permit will follow. Staff provided assistance to WSDOT by providing some quick stream assessment and measurements to facilitate an emergency culvert order.

Landslide At Lilliwaup Creek: Staff met with consultant Ron Gold at Lilliwaup Creek to review the results of a substantial landslide that occurred on January 6. The slide was large (at least 50,000 cubic yards of material) and it took out the penstock/intake flume for a powerhouse owned by Gary Reed of Green Diamond Resources. A previous slide had prompted about \$400,000 in repair and maintenance work at this site a few years back, in which a metal support system was installed beneath the concrete 4 foot by 4 foot enclosed penstock. This slide took out both the support system and the penstock, and repairs will cost at least a couple million. Mr. Reed has not yet decided whether they will rebuild and restore power generation at the facility. They are conversing with Mason County to see if an emergency declaration could be made, which allow them the potential to seek federal assistance with financing the repairs.

At Alderbrook Resort, staff authorized an emergency HPA for shoreline protection and flow re-direction at the mouth of Alderbrook Creek. Due to scouring associated with the recent heavy rains, the work is necessary to minimize potential damage to the existing shoreline floating dock system. During low tide and heavy rain, the creek took a hard right as it flows onto the beach, scouring a 3'+ deep by 4'+ wide channel beneath the dock system, twisting the dock system and increasing stress on the dock hardware during low tide. If the dock were to break, it could rupture a treated sewer outfall line, an untreated sewage return line from the mooring docks, and electrical lines, all of which are incorporated into the dock. The consultant and staff discussed re-directing the creek to the opposite side of the "delta" area, then installing large woody debris (LWD) with root wads along the right bank incorporated into and below an existing rip rap wall, with more LWD pieces further waterward to assist with long term flow deflection. Staff also authorized filling of the scour channel beneath the dock system using natural, rounded 2-3 man rock and beach materials, as well as tapering of the aggraded beach materials associated with the local littoral drift pattern.

Chief Joseph Hydro Project - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: In the late 1970s, Lake Rufus Woods (Chief Joseph Project reservoir) was raised 10 ft to accommodate 11 additional generating units. The expected terrestrial habitat losses as estimated by the Department of Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Colville Confederated Tribe were 550 aggregate acres of riparian vegetation, goose nesting islands and goose brooding pasture, conifer trees for bald eagle hunting perches and night roosting, and a small amount of shrub steppe. The Corps implemented a wildlife mitigation program that included a requirement for implementation progress to be assessed every five years over a period of 25 years. Major Project's staff reviewed the draft 25-year (final) assessment report and submitted comments to the Corps. The draft report indicates habitat losses have been replaced or exceeded.

Community Service Option for WDFW Lands: FWOs are working with the Okanogan County Prosecuting Attorney's Civil Attorney on using community service/probation labor on WDFW lands for projects as part of a sentence. The potential for using this labor source was discussed by the Prosecutor's office with the District Team during their last meeting. Currently there is not enough of a workload to continue community service through the winter months. This arrangement would provide a benefit for the Okanogan County and for the WDFW Wildlife Area Managers.

Makah Bay Wave Energy Pilot Project: Staff provided comments to AquaEnergy regarding their Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) for the Makah Bay Offshore Wave Energy Pilot Project. The SEPA Scoping Document stated the pilot project is for a period of three years, but in the PDEA the applicant did not indicate a time frame for the project. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regulations require a license be issued for a term of no less than 30 years. Since this is one of the first wave energy projects for FERC licensing, it will be interesting to see how the applicant and FERC handle this issue. The PDEA did not include the final design for the seabed connection, mooring design, or location of the transmission cable. We are hopeful that the next version of the environmental assessment will include the final design. We also recommended a comprehensive monitoring plan for the term of this project, because it is a new technology.

Invenergy Wind Power: Region 3 Habitat and Wildlife Program staff met with Invenergy regarding their Phase 1 plans for developing a wind farm near the Whiskey Dick wildlife area between I-90 and the Vantage Highway east of Ellensburg. While Phase 1 is located largely on privately owned shrub-steppe lands that are in relatively poor condition, we are concerned that ecological connectivity between the Yakima Training Center and Quilomene Wildlife Area may be adversely affected. Invenergy has also proposed a wind farm on WDFW ownership on the Whiskey Dick wildlife area. There are more significant concerns with developing a wind farm on the wildlife area and associated DNR lands, especially if sage grouse or recovery efforts are adversely affected. Invenergy has requested authorization to place Meteorological (MET) towers on WDFW land to collect site evaluation data. However, it appears that they may place the MET stations on adjacent Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands. This project also has the potential to complicate a proposed land exchange between DNR and WDFW. We will have further consultation with Invenergy regarding appropriate wildlife inventories and mitigation studies for the various proposals.

Scott Canyon Development Moratorium: Walla Walla County Board of Commissioners is considering extending an ordinance that provided for a development moratorium in a highly sensitive steelhead spawning area. Scott Canyon is a very narrow, steep watershed in the Blue Mountains of Washington. National Forest (NF) Dry Creek runs up the middle of this canyon and is bisected by a gravel road (forded) in at least seven places. Six months ago the Commissioners enacted the ordinance, in no small part due to repeated warnings regional staff that development in that area would threaten this sub-population of wild, ESA-listed steelhead. Regional staff sent a letter to the Commissioners commending them for this commitment and expressing the Department's support for the continuation of this ordinance.

SF Cowiche Creek Dam Removal (WRIA 38): Staff completed implementation of the SRFB-funded dam removal, channel restoration, and habitat restoration project on Snow Mt. Ranch, working under the supervision of Paul Cleary, P.E. (Natural Resources Conservation Service Center, Goldendale). This project significantly improved fish passage and channel and flood plain connectivity within this stream reach. This project experienced a flood event soon after construction. The project functioned as designed, flood energies were dissipated, and no erosion or channel head cutting occurred. Project sponsors were pleased with the project outcome, and migrating summer steelhead are expected to pass this site later this winter and spring.

Interstate 90 Expansion Project: The mitigation plan (wildlife bridges - ecological connectivity) was completed after four years of work with the multi-agency Mitigation Development Team (MDT). The MDT gave a presentation to the WSDOT Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) on our recommendations along with a ranking of options where multiple options existed. The IDT will now review the MDT data and recommendations and reconvene in February to select options for ecological connectivity at several key locations along the 15-mile project.

GOAL II: SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES COMPATIBLE WITH MAINTAINING HEALTHY FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND HABITATS.

International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting: IRM staff attended the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) annual meeting the week of January 16, 2006. IPHC adopted the total allowable catches (TACs) for the 2006 halibut fisheries. The Area 2A (West Coast) TAC is 1.38 million pounds, which is 50,000 pounds higher than last year's quota. The higher quota resulted, in part, from a reduction in the bycatch mortality of legal-sized halibut in the groundfish trawl fishery. IPHC also approved the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan that describes the catch shares and general regulations for the different fisheries. Other changes to Area 2A regulations include clarifying the sport fishery possession limit on land in Washington and a requirement to record whether halibut weights are head-on or head-off fish on state receiving tickets.

Puget Sound Recreational Halibut Fishery: IRM staff held a public meeting with Puget Sound recreational halibut anglers the week of January 23 to review the results of the 2005 Puget Sound halibut fishery and develop season dates for the 2006 sport halibut fishery. The halibut quota for the Puget Sound sport fishery is 68,607 pounds, using the allocation strategy in the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan. Applying the "Fishing Equivalent Day" (FED) method that the Department has employed for several years and applying the highest catch per FED in the past five years (which occurred in 2003), there are 87 FEDs available in 2006.

In 2005, the halibut fishery in the eastern region of Puget Sound opened in mid-April in response to requests for an earlier opening date. Anecdotal reports from anglers indicate that this earlier time period produced a quality fishing experience and allowed them to successfully catch halibut. As such, we again received requests to open the eastern region beginning April 1. However, there are constituents who fish the Port Angeles area who favor the latter part of the season. To balance these interests, and given that we were near (but still under) the quota in 2005, we collectively decided to open the eastern region earlier, but would use only 84 FEDs for this region (rather than 87) as halibut catch is expected to be higher in April than in June.

Based on the input received, the Department has recommended to the National Marine Fisheries Service the following season dates for the Puget Sound sport halibut fishery: 1) Eastern Region (east of Low Point - inner sound) April 9-June 18, 2006; and 2) Western Region (west of Low Point - Marine Catch Area 5) May 25-August 5, 2006. As described in the Catch Sharing Plan, this fishery would be open five days per week, closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Highway 12 Scenic Highway Plan: Watchable Wildlife staff attended a public meeting in Naches, Washington regarding the organization of a community scenic byway planning process along State Highway 12, which is one of two scenic byways that are adjacent to the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. A common element emerging from this meeting and other community meetings over the past months is that "year-round wildlife viewing" is one of the area's strongest assets to attract and hold tourists and

outdoor recreationists in the nearby communities. Oak Creek Wildlife Area has been identified as a facility that has much to offer, but little infrastructure and public facilities in place to deal with increased visitation.

Columbia River Compact: The Compact met on January 26 in Oregon City, Oregon, to set commercial and recreational seasons for 2006. A commercial fishing plan was adopted for spring chinook fisheries that will likely begin at the end of February. A recreational fishing plan and season were adopted. The Columbia River recreational season below the I-5 Bridge has been extended through April 19 and a season was set for the area above Bonneville Dam. Staff is managing all fisheries with a 25% buffer and will review run status and fisheries weekly to determine if additional recreational fishing can occur.

WORK WITH TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED

Annual State-Tribes Shellfish Co-Managers Meeting: WDFW Fish, Enforcement, IRM, and Department of Natural Resources staff met with Puget Sound treaty tribes on January 26 to discuss a variety of shellfish co-management topics. Noteworthy items discussed included: 1) the current method used to estimate the recreational crab catch including results of the 2005 field validation study, planned management revisions for the 2006-07 season to continue improving estimate precision, and plans to develop an alternate method for the 2007-08 season with the objective to improve the accuracy of the estimate and increase constituent confidence in the method and results; 2) commitment to continue state-tribal enforcement efforts on a regional basis to enhance routine field operations, to address priority issues, and to share violation information, activity reports, compliance information, and prosecution dispositions on referred cases; 3) a plan to develop joint state-tribal revisions to Judge Rafeedie's Implementation Plan for submission to the court; and 4) a state plan to conduct commercial geoduck fisheries in South Sound on a rotational basis to address tribal claims that state harvest was precluding tribal access to equal shares in certain tribal Usual and Accustomed fishing grounds. A considerable number of follow-up steps were identified regarding these and other topics. IRM will develop a full meeting summary and task list to help guide the WDFW's responses. This meeting demonstrated a very positive working relationship that exists between state and tribal policy and technical staff.

Region 4 Salmon Escapements and Forecasts: All of the stock assessment biologists in Region 4 have been working to complete spawner escapement estimates and forecasts. In Snohomish/ Stillaguamish and Nooksack/Samish areas staff have met with tribal co-manager and have agreed to escapement and forecast numbers. Staff in the Skagit basin, Lake Washington/Cedar River and Green River watersheds plan to meet with co-managers next week to reach consensus and finalize escapement and forecasts for those areas.

IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF WASHINGTON BY PROVIDING DIVERSE, HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

State Parks Planning: State Parks hosted a meeting at the Point Whitney Shellfish Laboratory with the Hood Canal Coordinating Council, Washington Trout, Jefferson County Land Trust, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, and WDFW to continue long-range planning for the Dosewallips State Park complex. The most important planning priority from the standpoint of sport fishing opportunity for shellfish is the proposal to seek the purchase of upland access to Toandos Peninsula State Park. There are more than 10,000 linear feet of tidelands at Toandos and it is an excellent oyster beach, but is currently accessible only by boat.

State Parks also announced that it would be interested in negotiating with WDFW for the possible acquisition of our property at the head of Pleasant Harbor and at Point Whitney. These sites would serve to fill gaps in their scenic waterway corridor in northern Hood Canal.

Sardine Advisory Group Meeting: IRM staff hosted a meeting of the Department's Sardine Advisory Group on January 4, 2006, to discuss proposed changes to the regulations governing the Washington experimental sardine fishery for 2006, including the issuance of additional (replacement) permits. After considerable discussion, the Advisory Group recommended that additional permits be issued to those persons who meet a set of qualifying criteria which includes ownership of a vessel that has recently participated in the Washington sardine fishery and a minimum landing requirement of 40 metric tons (mt). The intent is, during this experimental fishery phase, to transition towards a goal whereby permit holders are vessel owners who are actively engaged in the fishery. Other proposed changes include lengthening the season to April through December (currently it is May through November), changing the reduction limit from 10% per landing to 15% across the season (on a vessel-specific and buyer-specific basis), and allowing a change in vessel designation provided that the formerly designated vessel has not landed sardines during the current season. We are working with legal staff to develop and file a proposed rule that includes these changes and will schedule a rule adoption hearing for mid-March.

Puget Sound Recreational Crab Season Length Summary: The following table summarizes and compares the season length for each Marine Area (MA) in Puget Sound during the 2004-05 and 2005-2006 seasons:

Marine Area	Total Fishing Days During the 2004-05 Season	Total Fishing Days during the 2005-06 Season through 1/2/06	Status of the 2005-06 Season as of 1/26/06	Difference in the Number of fishing Days Between the 2004-05 and the 2005-06 Seasons
4	202	199	Open	-3
5	202	199	Open	-3
6	79	73	Closed	-6
7-South	79	73	Closed	-6
7-East	68	79	Closed	11
7-North	37	62	Closed	25
8-1	51	40	Closed	-11
8-2	51	40	Closed	-11

9	95	93	Closed	-2
10	95	93	Closed	-2
11	95	93	Closed	-2
12	95	123	Closed	28
13	304	199	Open	-105

In summary, five Marine Areas had seasons in 2005-06 that were shorter by 6 days or less than during the 2004-05 season. The seasons in Marine Areas 8-1 and 8-2 were 11 days shorter in 2005-06 than during 2004-05. Five Marine Areas had longer seasons in 2005-06 than during the previous season. Marine Area 13 is still open, but the default closure date is 2/28/06, which would provide a 256-day season, 48 days shorter than in 2004-05.

Kitsap Memorial State Park Oyster Enhancement: Intertidal shellfish enhancement staff met with a contractor to plan the placement of 2,000 bushels of Pacific oyster "clusters" on the public tidelands at Kitsap Memorial State Park this spring. The enhancement with large oyster "clusters" is designed to withstand the heavy wind and wave action at this particular tideland, which would wash single oyster shells off site.

Scenic Beach Oyster Enhancement: Oyster enhancement was completed at Scenic Beach State Park in Hood Canal. Two thousand bushels of "cluster" oysters were placed on the public tidelands in order to increase sport opportunity. Several year-classes of seed oysters are attached to each "cluster" and the large size and weight of each cluster prevents them from being washed away by wave and wind action. Routine enhancement with juvenile oyster seed on single oyster shells is not possible at wave-influenced tidelands like Scenic Beach. A similar "cluster" plant is planned for Kitsap Memorial State Park this spring.

Razor Clam Opener: The late January three-day recreational razor clam opener (January 28, 29, 30) resulted in some very happy clam diggers and some very wet and windblown clam diggers. The happy ones were out during the first two evenings when the mild weather and moderate surf allowed many to successfully find their limit of 15 clams, at least on most beaches. The low tide on the final evening (Sunday January 30) was timed perfectly to coincide with the landfall of a major winter storm. The hardy (or perhaps crazy) clam diggers that tried to dig in the 45-knot sustained winds with higher gusts and heavy driving rain went home clam-less. Needless to say, the Sunday crowd was small and the clams were, for the most part, absent...dug deep in the sand waiting out the storm! Not including data from Kalaloch (yet to be received from the Olympic National Park) a total of 14,000 digger trips were made taking home a total of 171,400 razor clams for an average catch of 12.2 clams per digger trip. Our staff was also able to transport a recently deceased tagged juvenile sea lion from Long Beach to the Regional office in Montesano for later pick-up by the WDFW Marine Mammal Investigations Unit.

Commercial Razor Clam Fishery: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has decided to proceed with a "Right of Entry" lease for a three-year term for access to the Willapa Bay spits NAP (Natural Area Preserve). This lease agreement is necessary for WDFW to be able to conduct the commercial razor clam fishery on these detached spits at the mouth of Willapa Bay. Most recently the agreement had to be re-negotiated annually. The three-year term is more efficient and ensures more stability for the fishery. DNR still may pursue discussions with the commercial razor clam industry regarding the feasibility of assessing a fee for the commercial harvest of naturally occurring shellfish from state-owned tidal lands. We hope to be able to proceed with a normal opening of this fishery in mid-May or early June. A public meeting is being planned sometime in March for interested industry members of this small but locally very important commercial fishery.

Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis Rivers 2006 Spring Chinook Forecasts: Spring Chinook pre-season run forecasts to the Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis Rivers are down slightly from last year, however, the projected returns are large enough to prosecute full recreational fisheries in these rivers. Managers will monitor actual returns and make any needed adjustments to fisheries in-season. Forecasted returns to the rivers are: Cowlitz 8,700; Kalama 2,100; and Lewis 4,400.

GOAL III: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PROVIDE EXCELLENT PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.

New Geneticist on Board: Dr. Scott Blankenship (no relation to a previous Fish Program employee) joined the Genetics lab staff on January 20. Scott received his PhD from the University of California at Davis in 2001, studying the use of DNA micro satellites in population differentiation studies. He came to us from a post-doc at University of California Santa Cruz, where he worked with the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center on the population genetics of California chinook. His experience with salmon genetics, coupled with this detailed knowledge of molecular genetic lab technique, make him a valuable addition to the lab staff as we move into new areas of study such as single nucleotide polymorphism (SNPs). We plan on having him give a seminar at the Natural Resources Building (NRB) in the near future.

Illegal Shooters Pursued: Officers noticed a suspicious vehicle parked off of Selah Landing Road near SR 395 in Franklin County. The vehicle was illegally parked on railroad property. As the officers approached the pit, they heard gunshots from a handgun and an assault rifle. They observed two subjects, both in possession of firearms. The subject with the handgun fled when he saw the officers. A train was going by at the time, which prevented the subject from making it to his vehicle. The man finally went over an embankment and went out of sight. Officers requested assistance, and were joined by the Washington State Patrol, Franklin County Sheriff's Department, and Pasco Police Department (PD). After approximately one hour of tracking, the Pasco PD K-9 unit located and detained the suspect, who was then taken into custody. A check revealed that the subject had one misdemeanor warrant for his arrest, he was also a convicted felon and currently on active Department of Correction probation for possession of methamphetamines. A consent search of the vehicle revealed a large amount of crystal methamphetamine and evidence of intent to deliver. The suspect was transported and treated for dog

bites at the hospital and then was booked into jail. He dropped the gun before the K-9 found him, but later gave officers its approximate location. The second gun the subjects were shooting was a 45-caliber Thompson Machine Gun style rifle.

Big Farm Equipment Ring Investigated: Sergeant Anderson stopped and talked with a local farmer who advised him that he had contacted two men stealing the sprinkler heads off of one of his irrigation circles. He had obtained the license plate number of the suspect's vehicle, but had neglected to report it. Sergeant Anderson contacted Grant County Sheriff's Office regarding the info and they advised they did not have the time or manpower to investigate. Several days later, after searching jail records, Sergeant Anderson and Officer Steinhoff contacted one of the men believed to have been one of the suspects. Interviewed in the patrol vehicle, he confessed and provided a taped statement. Another subject who was also at the residence was arrested and taken to jail after officers learned he had three outstanding felony warrants. Officer Steinhoff returned to the jail and spent three hours interviewing the young man after learning that he too might be involved in the scrap metal trade. The man eventually admitted that he was part of a criminal conspiracy that specialized in stealing farm and irrigation equipment that could be later broken down and sold as scrap metal to feed their growing methamphetamine habit. The man provided Officer Steinhoff with a complete outline of the people involved and how they operated. Officers obtained statements from the majority of the suspects, and recovered several truckloads of stolen equipment and power tools. As a result of this investigation, Sergeant Anderson and Officer Jewell will be providing a presentation to the Washington Farm Bureau Board of Director's in Moses Lake to discuss ways they can protect their equipment and provide them with an update on the status of the case. Moses Lake Police Department assisted in the investigation and information of the investigation will be provided to the Grant County Sheriff's Office for potential follow up.

2006-08 Hunting Seasons Public Comment Period: Seven public meetings were recently conducted to seek comments on alternatives and proposals for the 2006-08 hunting seasons. In general, the meetings were well attended with 50 to 130 people at each meeting and nearly 500 total attendees. The deadline for submitting comments was February 3, 2006, and folks sent them to WDFW via mail or by completing a survey on the Internet. Those attending the meetings seemed supportive of the format and their ability to talk directly with agency staff about the proposals. The comments will be compiled and used to develop recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The public will then be encouraged to provide comments on the recommendations in March, in preparation for the April Commission meeting.

Recent Burglaries Solved with WDFW's Assistance: FWOs contacted two subjects, a male and female, riding a quad on the closed roads. A wants check showed the quad was recently stolen in Montesano and the female had a warrant. Officers arrested the subjects for 1st degree possession of stolen property and possession of drug paraphernalia (crack pipes). At the jail, the subjects were interviewed and admitted to knowledge of several stolen vehicles and motorcycles. Grays Harbor Sheriff's Office (GHSO) detectives obtained statements and information from the pair. The residence the pair had gotten the quad from is in the area of a recent series of burglaries in the Wynoochee Valley. Assisting the detectives from the GHSO, Officers responded to the residence to recover other stolen vehicles and search the Weyerhaeuser Roads for several abandoned stolen trucks, including a 2005 Ford Excursion.

The GHSO detectives were able to identify other suspects, but the landowner had been tipped and several suspects departed prior to officer's arrival. The GHSO detectives are continuing their investigation with good suspect information. The quad owner was very happy to hear his quad had been recovered.

Investigation / Arrest of Buying / Selling Fish Without License: The Central Sound Marine Detachment, along with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agents served a search warrant at a south Seattle residence. The suspect was cited on November 1 for "No Wholesale Dealers License." He was told to get a license or cease doing business. The suspect said he would quit doing business. Upon follow up, Officers found the suspect was continuing to buy and sell fish until December 19 without a Wholesale Dealers License. An NMFS agent was watching the residence to make sure our suspect was home while the search warrant was to be served. The agent observed a Seattle detective attempt to take a murder suspect into custody. The suspect fled, causing the area to be flooded with police cars, K-9, and the Guardian 1 helicopter. Due to our radio frequencies being non-compatible, we were unable to assist Seattle Police Department (PD). Imagine the surprise of our officers to find a Seattle police car, emergency equipment blazing, sitting in the suspect's driveway! The actual warrant service went smoothly. The suspect kept great records, with invoices from each purchase and sale. A number of felony charges will be filed. And wouldn't you know, the suspect failed to make any court arrangements on the first ticket he got. This resulted in an arrest warrant being issued. So, in addition to the search warrant, Officers executed the arrest warrant. The suspect was booked in the King County Regional Jail. During the search, FWOs came across a large number of betting forms, all carefully filled out. Agents from the Gambling Commission were called in to investigate. The suspects' brother, who has not worked since 1989, admitted to being a bookmaker for the local community. Some \$2,200 in 100s and 20s were located. The Gambling Commission will file charges as well. Special thanks goes out to the Statewide Investigations Unit for assistance in affidavit preparation.

Body Uncovered on Department Land: Enforcement Program assisted Cowlitz County Detectives with a homicide investigation. The victim is reported to have been buried on Department lands near the Lewis River.

Multiple Thefts on WDFW Property: While patrolling the Sunnyside Wildlife Area (WLA), Officers observed a fellow officer's personal vehicle parked at one of the access areas. The driver's side window was broke out; the vehicle was vandalized; and numerous items had been stolen. While awaiting the sheriff's office to arrive, WDFW WLA personnel reported that they had gathered information to include a partial plate off of a vehicle that was parked in the lot near the vandalized vehicle. Officers patrolled the area and discovered a vehicle matching the information in another WFDW lot, a mile away. The vehicle occupants were contacted. Officers observed some of the missing items from the vandalized vehicle and requested assistance. Washington State Patrol and Yakima County Sheriff's Office arrived and the suspects were taken into custody. A second hunter arrived at the scene minutes later reporting that he had witnessed the two suspects break into his vehicle. Two of his backpacks were also located in the suspect's vehicle. Both suspects were booked into jail for vehicle prowl and possession of stolen property.

Flood Concerns in Region Four: Huge landslide, large enough to completely block the river, occurred on the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River near Oso. The river was temporarily blocked and then rerouted itself around the slide through pastures, woodlots, driveways and front yards. Somewhat successfully, Snohomish County worked vigorously over the weekend to clear and establish a new route for the river in attempts to save property and homes. Several summer and permanent residences are in danger of completely flooding and washing away if these heavy rains cause the river to rise significantly. Officers spoke with Army Corps of Engineers and a few of the affected and concerned neighbors.

Red Sea Urchin Season: Officers coordinated an emphasis patrol for the Commercial Red Sea Urchin season for Urchin Districts 3 and 4 out of the Port Angeles area. This patrol incorporated many of the newer officers so they could complete required sections of their Career Development Plan. Officers and a Clallam County Sheriff's deputy took part in the three-day season. The patrol covered all aspects and regulations of the season. On the first day of the emphasis patrols, Officers discovered a major urchin violation. A participating fisherman had a 4,130-pound load that consisted of 33 percent oversized urchins. The entire load was seized and the fisherman was cited. All of the officers put in an extremely long day, and their persistence paid off with an excellent case. The news of the violation and seizure spread throughout the commercial urchin fleet, subsequently resulting in no violations during the next two harvest days. Several of the officers toured the Pacific Urchin Products processing plant in Tacoma for an inspection of the operation.

Officer Encounters Stolen Vehicle with Occupant: While patrolling the Capitol Forest, a FWO encountered a stolen vehicle on the side of Rock Candy Mountain Road. One individual occupied the vehicle and the nearest back-up units were over 20 minutes away. Due to the circumstances, the Officer was forced to take the individual into custody by himself. After giving several verbal commands the suspect finally exited the vehicle and was placed into custody. After being taken to the hospital to be treated for a medical condition the suspect was booked in Thurston County Jail several hours after the incident first began. The suspect was charged with one count of Possession Stolen Property in the second degree.

IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF WDFW'S OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

School Fire Negligence: Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has issued a finding of negligence in the School Fire on the part of the Columbia Rural Electric Association and their right-of-way contractor Asplundh for failure to properly maintain the power line right-of-way. The fire started when a tree in the right-of-way fell against the power line. DNR and WDFW will be filing a claim for damages. A class action suit by private landowners has already been filed in federal court.

Policy 5212 Implementation: Regulatory Services Section staff met with representatives from Enforcement to discuss implementation of Policy 5212, HPA compliance monitoring. Training needs for Habitat and Enforcement staff were outlined, and staff was assigned to start development of an implementation plan. Staff from Habitat and Enforcement will spearhead this effort.

DEVELOP INFORMATION SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE AND COORDINATE DATA SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND INFORMATION

New Fish Passage Barriers in Clark County: Regional staff and staff from Clark Conservation District will coordinate with WDFW's TAPPS Division to upload 300 newly assessed fish passage barriers into Salmonscape. A regional website to integrate these data with our Lower Columbia River recovery plan will also be developed for immediate access by local salmon recovery groups.

MAINTAIN A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Lewis River Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement - Merwin Trap Upgrades: A meeting was held at Region 5 office to discuss section 4.2C of the Lewis River Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement, which calls for upgrading the Merwin Trap to provide a greater margin of safety for staff working in the trap. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), NOAA Fisheries, WDFW and PacifiCorp attended the meeting. The agreement calls for upgrades to be made by the second anniversary of the Issuance of the New License for the Merwin Project. PacifiCorp has agreed to implement additional safety improvements this summer.

Spokane Hatchery Radon Abatement: Work with WDFW Engineering staff on measures to reduce radon levels at the Spokane Hatchery is progressing. A recent meeting between John Kerwin and Engineering staff in Olympia resulted in decisions being made to concentrate on the potential to strip radon gas out of incoming water rather than utilizing ventilation hoods over incubation troughs. As envisioned, water would need to be pumped up through gas diffusion stripper(s). In case of pump failure, the system would be designed to allow gravity flow from Griffith spring to the incubation building. No backup power generator will be needed. As part of initial evaluation, radon gas level measurements will be taken at the Ford Hatchery well facility, already equipped with a gas stripping unit, to determine a course of action best suited for Spokane.

RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN A DIVERSE WORKFORCE WITH HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

Officer Reports to Iraq: Officer Jerry Zimmerman reports back to active duty with the US Marine Corps for his second tour to Iraq. Our thoughts and prayers will be with him and his family while we look forward to his safe return.

Wildlife Rescue Coordinator Position: Andy Carlson was appointed to the position of wildlife rescue coordinator within the oil spill team. He replaces Chris Lane who retired in November 2005. This position functions as the Wildlife Branch Director in the federal Incident Command System during a spill event that requires the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife.

Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) Program Testing Methodology: HPA Program staff met with staff from Personnel and a representative of the Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals to

discuss and resolve outstanding details surrounding HPA testing. Testing is one component of the HPA Program Comprehensive Training Plan and will be used as a tool to help assess when an employee is ready to receive HPA signature authority.

RECONNECT WITH THOSE INTERESTED IN WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Program (RFEG) / Annual Report and Partnership: The RFEG Annual Report for Fiscal Year 05 has been printed and is being distributed. The RFEG annual report highlights salmon and salmon habitat restoration and protection activities throughout the State. The RFEGs also conduct a variety of stream monitoring and surveying, and public education and outreach activities.

A tour to Issaquah Hatchery is planned for February 10. A group of Pierce County Utility executives interested in building a new Environmental Education Center on the Chambers Creek Properties will attend the tour. This is the group our Agency is working with to help develop upgrades to the Chambers Creek facility.

Public Outreach and Education / Sportsmen's and Boat Shows: The Department has completed the first two events of the annual sportsmen's show season. The Tri Cities show in Pasco, January 20 through 22, the Washington Sportsmen's Show at the Puyallup Fairgrounds, January 25 through 29, and the Seattle Boat Show, January 6 through 13, were well supported by Program and Regional staff. Public interactions were lively and positive. Unfortunately, but also fortunately, coordination for agency participation in the Seattle Boat Show was challenging this year due to event dates changing because of the Seahawks' success in the playoffs. Thanks to all who participated to make these events successful.

Public Outreach and Education / Weatherby Foundation Grant: The Weatherby Foundation announced a \$10,000 grant to Camp Fire USA, Lower Columbia Council, in partnership with the Department and the Washington Wildlife Coalition, to provide seed money to present a South West Washington Youth Outdoor Expo to be held in the spring of 2007. The Expo will be designed to include both outdoor recreation based skill building activities and fish and wildlife resource management educational opportunities. The 2 day "Go Play Outside" event will serve 3,000 to 5,000 young people.

Partnerships and Volunteer Services Program Activity: Fourth quarter volunteer hours are in. Volunteer activity for WDFW for January - December 2005 total just over 90,000 hours. Volunteer activity for 2004 totaled 86,000 hours and in 2003 totaled 87,500.

Beach Websites Expanded: The final versions of six new "customized" beach pages were posted on the agency web site (Fort Flagler, Mystery Bay, and Sequim Bay State Parks, Cline Spit County Park, and Dungeness National Wildlife Sanctuary tidelands). The new beach pages provide specific information on clam and oyster opportunities, access and facilities at each beach. Orthophoto maps of the beaches are also featured on some of the new beach pages. Proposed 2006 sport clam and oyster seasons have also been posted on the web site for all beaches where changes were recommended. Another new feature on the shellfish page is a bar chart showing 2006 sport clam and oyster seasons in an easy-to-read

format. The 2006 sport season's bar chart was also sent to customer service representatives in the NRB, Mill Creek, and Montesano offices.

Washington Oiled Wildlife Care Training: WDFW, with funding assistance from Department of Ecology, is sponsoring "Washington Oiled Wildlife Care Training." The first training class was held in Port Angeles on January 14-15. The seven-hour training session was conducted by the Island Oil Spill Association and Focus Wildlife and was attended by 34 people. Classroom training was provided on health and safety issues, oiled bird rehabilitation facilities, bird anatomy, the effects of oil on wildlife, and how to minimize stress on birds during captivity. The training was well received and will be repeated in the San Juan Islands on January 28.

Bristol Court Meeting: On Tuesday January 17 the monthly Bristol Court meeting was held at Region 6 office in Montesano. Participants were Joe Durham (Trout Unlimited), Mike Munsell (Friends of the Chehalis), Dave Hamilton (Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force), and from WDFW Ron Warren, Hal Michael and Randy Aho. Topics of discussion were; Future Brood Document updates, Blanket HPA covering Satsop Springs and Mayr Ponds, Nutrient Enhancement projects, Status of Skookumchuck Hatchery upgrade, Wynoochee 1135 mitigation, West Fork Satsop River boat launch, EDT and pollution abatement system at Satsop Springs. A lot of topics for a two-hour meeting, but all participants have good ideas, attitudes and are willing to work together to resolve issues.

Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG): Fish Program representatives from the Marine Resource unit and the Point Whitney Shellfish Laboratory met with members of the HCSEG to discuss possible opportunities for local volunteers to provide data collection assistance for crab in Hood Canal. Of particular interest to the group is the potential impact to the crab population by the occurrence of low dissolved oxygen (DO), especially in south Hood Canal. WDFW staff also presented summaries of crab test fishery data collected in Hood Canal by WDFW staff at Point Whitney for the last seven years. Preliminary ideas included: 1) counts of sport crab buoys to assess redistribution of recreational effort, 2) assessment of crab distribution outside of our standard test fishery depths during the recreational season, 3) comparison of historical crab test fishery data with dissolved oxygen data, and 4) crab tagging to monitor crab movements in southern Hood Canal, particularly during low DO events.

Shellfish Website Update: A new web page on "How to Shuck Oysters" was completed and submitted it to the agency web master for review and posting. We have long featured a web page on why state regulations require that oysters be shucked on the beach, but until now we haven't taught harvesters how to shuck. The new page features color close-ups of two popular shucking techniques along with step-by-step instructions. Staff also updated the agency web site by removing the "beach page" for a small public tideland in Scow Bay near Port Townsend. An upland owner had complained that the beach as shown on our web page included some private tidelands, and a check of the DNR land parcel layer showed this to be the case.

Dungeness Elk Working Team (DEWT) Update: Officers attended the DEWT meeting in Sequim. The committee voted to recommend that the elk herd be relocated from the farmlands on the north side of

town to somewhere out of the Dungeness watershed. This issue has been debated for over ten years with no progress. Urban development in the area has complicated the issue, and the traditional method of management hunting is rapidly becoming an option that is no longer available.

PROVIDE SOUND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF WDFW LANDS, FACILITIES AND ACCESS SITES.

Sunland Access Improvement Project: The Sunland Access Improvement Project was an IAC funded project, with additional monies coming from Bureau of Reclamation and the Sunland Homeowners Association. The project replaced the single plank boat launch with two plank boat launches, installed an accessible vault toilet with accessible parking, provided mitigation plantings onsite and at an offsite location, and improved the gravel parking area. Design started in 2003, and phase 1 of the project, parking area, vault toilet, and plantings, was completed the summer of 2004. After a lengthy delay waiting for the US Army Corps of Engineers permit, phase 2 was completed - removal of the existing ramp and installation of the two new ramps in October 2005. The project is now complete and the Sunland Estates Homeowners Association is very pleased with the results. Project was on time and under budget.

Floods Waters Have Receded in Rainer Complex: High Water peaked at Soos Creek on Wednesday January 11 with less than two feet of water in the Soos Creek Hatchery building. Flow hit a high of 1,150 cfs in Soos Creek, and over 10,000 cfs in the Green River at Auburn; these were the highest flows observed since the flood of 1996. Hatchery crews worked around the clock beginning Tuesday night, working continuous shifts to keep intakes and pond manifolds free from debris, washing eggs, and cleaning shallow and deep trough incubators to remove the accumulated silt. The entire hatchery crew deserves praise for their dedication and hard work, which prevented any major fish loss during this event. While not hit as hard, the Puyallup Hatchery also saw some of the highest and most turbid water observed since the flood of 1996. Hatchery staff worked to clean shallow and vertical incubators, and keep the newly hatched rainbow fry from being smothered in silt. Loss at this point appears minimal due to the diligence and hard work of the hatchery crew.