

Director's report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
presented by Jeffrey Koenings, Ph.D., WDFW Director
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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 DEVELOP, INTEGRATE AND DISSEMINATE SOUND FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT SCIENCE.

Progress on Monitoring and Evaluation: The Collaborative System Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Project (CSMEP) is a coordinated effort to improve the quality, consistency, and focus of fish population and habitat data to answer key monitoring and evaluation questions relevant to major decisions in the Columbia Basin. The CSMEP project was initiated in 2003, and is chaired by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, with participation from many federal, state, and tribal fish and wildlife agencies¹. Specific goals for CSMEP are to: (1) document, integrate, and make available existing monitoring data for listed salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and other fish species of concern; (2) critically assess strengths and weaknesses of these data for answering key monitoring questions; and (3) collaboratively design and implement improved monitoring and evaluation methods with other programmatic entities in the Pacific Northwest to fill information gaps and provide better input to key decisions in the Columbia Basin.

During 2005, CSMEP is developing a general design template for monitoring the status and trends of fish populations in the Snake River subbasin, as well as the effectiveness of habitat, harvest, hatchery and hydrosystem recovery actions within the Columbia River Basin on those populations. It is important to monitor harvest as it is an integral part of a stock's status. It is also important to monitor in order to evaluate the impact of harvest actions on a stock's trend. The harvest group is currently identifying sources of uncertainty and procedures for incorporating the uncertainty into decision making. The intent is to help identify monitoring strategies and/or new sources of data to reduce the uncertainties. This type of summary is being compiled for all fisheries by WDFW, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and CRITFC.

¹Agencies: NOAA Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Columbia Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA), Columbia River Intertribal Fish Council (CRITFC), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), StreamNet, Nez Perce Tribe, Colville Confederated Tribes, Yakama Nation. Consultants: ESSA Technologies Ltd. (Facilitators), Eco Logical Research, Quantitative Consultants, Paulsen Environmental Research, KWA Ecological Sciences.

EDT Model for Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Stocks: WDFW's Conservation Biology Science Unit is initiating a sensitivity analysis of the Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) model for Puget Sound chinook salmon stocks.

The analysis will provide co-managers with uncertainty intervals for chinook population performance estimates (stock abundance and productivity) by incorporating the uncertainty associated with the EDT habitat attribute ratings. The Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team (TRT) will be able to use the analysis in their impending review of Puget Sound chinook salmon recovery plans.

Cooperative Mule Deer Project/Project Mule Deer: The winter round of captures has been completed with 47 radio marked deer captured and physical conditions assessed. Students from Leavenworth, Entiat, and West Valley school districts assisted with capture operations in addition to volunteers from the Inland NW Wildlife Council. Fog hampered capture efforts across the study area and prolonged the operation. Twelve Clover traps have been set in the Wedge and 6 whitetails have been trapped and radio tagged. Winter vegetation sampling is underway with Whitman County nearly completed.

Western Gray Squirrel Study: Radio-tracking of collared animals on 3 study sites indicates that the breeding season is underway, with several mating chases documented. Snow cover has been sporadic and currently is minimal on the study sites. Six mortalities have been documented over the last 3 weeks: 1 caused by mange and 5 by predation. A bobcat was seen carrying away part of the carcass of a (previously) healthy male. One squirrel at the Dead Canyon site was observed denning in an abandoned cabin--the first record of a squirrel using a human structure in this study.

3rd Annual Elk Winter Capture: During a 3-day period (Feb 8th-10th), WDFW staff conducted the 3rd annual winter elk capture effort in the Blue Mountains in support of the Elk Vulnerability Study. The crew consisted of Deer & Elk Specialist Dr. Scott McCorquodale, WDFW veterinarians Dr. Briggs Hall and Dr. Kristin Mansfield, District Biologist Pat Fowler, Assistant District Biologist Paul Wik, Warren Michaelis and Gary Bell from Region 6, Jason Earl of the Region 1 Upland Restoration Program, and Shana Kozusko of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. During the 3-day effort, 35 elk were helicopter darted and radiomarked. The captured elk included 20 branch-antlered bulls, 5 spike bulls, and 10 adult cows. There were no mortalities. To date in this study, 167 individual elk have been handled during 170 helicopter captures (3 elk recaptured for remarking).

Black Bear Publication: The final draft of a manuscript, incorporating final editor comments, has been submitted for publication in *Ursus*. The paper co-authored by Gary Koehler and John Pierce is entitled "Survival, cause-specific mortality, sex and ages of American black bears in Washington state, USA" and has been accepted and should be in print this year. Copies of the manuscript are available from the Wildlife Science Division.

WWRP Skookumchuck Watershed Project Display Kelly Craig, Mike O'Malley, Paul Dahmer, Steve Sherlock, and Ginna Correa helped develop a display for the WWRP Legislative Reception Tuesday, February 22nd, in the Capital Building. The display was based on a WWRP presentation given by Mark Teske (Region 3) to acquire 20,000 acres of Skookumchuck property between the Whiskey Dick and Quilomene Wildlife Areas. The display was exceptionally well done and received many compliments. The WDFW display also included two mounted sage grouse, a bobcat, and peregrine falcon, as well as sagebrush, basalt, and other plants from the Columbia Basin.

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

WDFW Water Rights: Staff were hired to compile all WDFW water rights. This project is to ensure that WDFW does not relinquish water rights for lack of use, but if use is infrequent or no longer needed, then the water rights can be placed temporarily or permanently in the state trust water rights program for maintaining instream flows. They have cataloged more than 900 water rights owned by WDFW. Many are associated with major purchases of land in eastern Washington and identified by Wildlife Area or Hatchery Complex. Ecology has initiated relinquishment against some WDFW water rights for alleged lack of use or lack of payment of fees; staff will try to avoid relinquishment because in at least some of the cases WDFW is using the water.

Oiled Wildlife Response Readiness on Mystery Spills: The Oil Spill Team is developing a Request for Qualifications/Quote to solicit contract bids with an organization to provide oiled wildlife rescue and rehabilitation to the State during "mystery" oil spills--spills in which a responsible party (RP) has not been identified. In nearly all oil spills, the RP is known, and by law assumes responsibility for oiled wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. However, in October 2004, wildlife were oiled as a result of the Dalco Passage Oil Spill, a spill for which no RP was identified. To ensure that a timely and professional response is available during mystery spills, the Oil Spill Team is working to facilitate a standing response contract for mystery spills that injure wildlife. This effort is being conducted in collaboration with the Department of Ecology, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Coast Guard with the goal of providing a response that conforms to state and federal emergency response protocols.

Access to Lake Shannon, Baker River: Staff was contacted by the Governor's office requesting information about the closure of access to Lake Shannon (Baker River lower reservoir). The only boat access to Lake Shannon is over private property. The property owner (Glacier Northwest) stated that the reason they closed the road was due to liability issues associated with landslides. Access to Lake Shannon is addressed in the settlement agreement for relicensing the Baker River Hydroelectric Project (Nov. 2004), but implementation of this license article requires a willing landowner and issuance of a new federal license. It is likely to be a year or two before the issue will be addressed through the new license. The settlement agreement will not address the issue prior to the opening of this year's fishing season.

Integrated Stream Bank Protection Guidelines Training Request: Region 2 would like to offer training to the Natural Resources Conservation Service and state engineers about using the Integrated Stream Bank

Protection Guidelines. Often projects are designed in the region that could take advantage of the techniques in this manual. We think that it would be beneficial to educate and train the federal agencies that work with landowners on the use of this manual. The Regional Program Manager has contacted Michelle Cramer about assisting us with planning the training for sometime this summer.

North Lynden Drainage Initiative: Recent snow, frozen ground, and warm rain events in Whatcom County led to flooding of roadways, barns, manure lagoons, fields and basements. This fueled the concern over the lack of routine maintenance of these watercourses and the need for predictable permitting of maintenance work. These events, coupled with pieces of information spreading among agricultural communities that WDFW is in a new mode of dealing with agricultural drainage, appear to present an opportunity to bring some long-needed planning responses to a diverse set of interests. Responding to this concern, WDFW staff will work with the Conservation District, Whatcom County, Tribes, DOE, and landowners to resolve flooding and ditch maintenance issues in a structured, cooperative problem-solving process.

Two meetings have been held to date to identify fish habitat and water quality concerns, drainage issues, and mitigation opportunities. Fragmentation of responsibility at the local government level is a major challenge. Recognition may be materializing that a drainage improvement district (or some form of drainage entity) needs to be formed to facilitate planning, funding, permitting, and mitigation.

Sauk River Bank Stabilization Project (Green Property): Work has begun to construct a tree revetment along the Sauk River property that was the site of the illegal channel excavation done in January/February 2004. The work uses a design from the Integrated Streambank Protection Guidelines.

An expedited HPA was obtained from WDFW and emergency permit approval obtained from Snohomish County for Shoreline purposes, which will require follow up permitting after the project is constructed. No Corps permit was needed because there was no fill or excavation in the river. Tribal staff has expressed strong dissatisfaction with the accommodation that was granted to the applicants. It is indeed a stretch of the normal work window to allow the work; however, there is a significant risk to the Green's improvements that is undeniable.

Flood Damage Projects: Three floods so far this winter created significant damage on the Wallace, NF Skykomish, Miller, and Pilchuck Rivers. AHB Pfeifer and TAPS Engineer Phil Jensen have been working with King and Snohomish county staff on solutions and designs for repairs. Culvert upgrades will be made in some instances. Major projects include:

Wallace River right bank at Camp Huston. Northwest Hydraulic Consultants is working with staff on design of an engineered log jam to arrest major bank erosion. This bank erosion is creating, or certainly aggravating, downstream flooding on the Wallace River north of Gold Bar.

Multiple sites on the Pilchuck River are being coordinated with Snohomish County Surface Water Management engineers. The ISPG methodology is being implemented in most cases.

Unfortunately, illegal and extensive bank protection continues to occur on the North Fork Skykomish River near Index. Over 200 feet of left bank was heavily revetted in recent weeks without an HPA. Staff is working with WDFW Enforcement, Snohomish County and NOAA Fisheries on enforcement actions.

The Army Corps of Engineers again performed emergency dike repair on the Startup Setback Dike. Staff coordinated during the emergency repair, but unfortunately the Corps' usual approach was followed, and the net result was an extension of the existing dike by over 200 feet. Agencies met on site, and mitigation planning is under way.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Red Timber Sale: Regional Habitat staff coordinated with Olympia Habitat staff to prepare a response to DNR's proposed "Red Timber Sale" in Klickitat County. This sale includes approximately 500 acres near Glenwood, and involves harvest of suitable spotted owl habitat. Although intended to enhance spotted owl habitat, this experimental sale would result in increased habitat fragmentation, potential expansion of barred owl territories, and would adversely affect adjacent and occupied nest sites. We have recommended that the sale be modified to remove 400 acres from the sale boundary, and to shift harvest to areas where adverse impacts to spotted owls would not result. A decision on the sale is forthcoming.

Columbia River Channel Deepening Project: Regional Habitat staff met with the multi-agency (e.g., Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Ecology, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and National Marine Fisheries Service) Adaptive Management Team for the Columbia River Channel Deepening Project. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and refine thresholds and triggers for adaptive management for the construction phase of the project.

We came to agreement on thresholds pertaining to impacts on sturgeon, smelt, and Dungeness crab. Significant mitigation measures for upland and wetland impacts have already been agreed upon, and studies on shipwreck stranding of juvenile salmonids are ongoing. With the recent funding of the project, construction is scheduled to begin this year.

Grays River Habitat Restoration Projects: Regional biologists met with Olympia Habitat staff, NOAA Fisheries staff, and Grays River Habitat Enhancement District representatives to conduct a rafting tour of approximately 15 projects on the lower Grays River.

We provided technical advice and comments on project design to assist with project prioritization and permitting. One channel rehabilitation and riparian restoration project has recently been funded by the Salmon Funding Recovery Board, and grant requests for several others, including chum channel construction, tidegate replacement, and culvert and stream assessments, are being prepared. Public support for habitat restoration in Wahkiakum County is building as the result of recent funding for project implementation, and due to extensive state and federal agency involvement with local sponsors.

Columbia River Fall Chinook Forecasts: Run size forecasts for fall chinook destined for the Columbia River have been completed. The return to the Columbia River mouth in 2005 is projected to total

650,000 adult fall chinook, which is down somewhat from the 2004 return of 792,000 adults but is a 38% increase over the recent 10-year average of 468,000.

Columbia River Coho Forecasts: Coho returns are not expected to be strong in 2005. The return to the Columbia River mouth in 2005, is forecasted to total 362,600 adults as compared to the 2004 return of 592,000. The projected return includes 284,600 early stock adults and 78,000 late stock adults. The forecasted early stock return is down somewhat from the 2004 return of 389,000 while the return of late stock adults would be a significant drop from the 2004 return of 203,000.

Waikiki Springs Project: A public meeting was held by WDFW on Thursday February 10th at St. Georges School library in North Spokane, to provide information on WDFW's application to the Washington Department of Ecology for a water use permit at Waikiki Springs. The water use application is for non-consumptive water use to rear fish. Nine area residents attended the meeting to listen to a presentation by WDFW and to provide initial comments on the proposal to develop a fish hatchery facility along the Little Spokane River at Waikiki Springs. The meeting was productive and attendees were appreciative of the proactive nature of the initial public outreach on this project. Department related staff attending the meeting included Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Fred Shiosaki, WDFW Regional Director John Andrews, Information Specialist Madonna Luers, and regional Fish Program staff.

Hatcheries Drought Plan: The extremely low snowpack is likely to create water conditions for hatcheries this summer, which have not been seen since the 1976 drought. The low streamflows and high water temperatures associated with droughts of what is being anticipated may require production program changes. In response to these water conditions, the Hatchery Drought Contingency plan is being updated. This plan provides information on available equipment and its location that can help facilities during low streamflow conditions. Complex Managers are also updating the document that we will supply to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that provides the location(s) of equipment and water supplies WDFW can make available to fight wildfires. DNR includes this later document in their briefing manual that is distributed at the beginning of each fire season.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Augmentation: British Columbia has agreed to provide up to 40 sharp-tailed grouse to augment dwindling populations in north-central Washington. Birds will be translocated in April to Washington sites in a cooperative project with the Colville Confederated Tribes. This is the second attempt to conduct the translocation. The translocation was cancelled in 2004 when the border was closed to birds after a poultry farm bird flu outbreak.

Bald Eagle Killed: Officers responded to a bald eagle shooting on the Lummi Reservation with Lummi Law and Order officers. A suspect (who is allegedly a Canadian Indian) was visiting friends (who are identified as Lummi Tribal members) shot and killed a bald eagle on the Lummi reservation. WDFW Officers, USFWS Special Agents, Lummi Law and Order and Lummi Tribal Prosecutors met to discuss the investigation. The U.S. Attorney, Jeff Sullivan, advised they would be taking the case and charging all involved. An additional female has been identified as a possible conspirator in the case.

Superior Court Order on Sika Deer: Officers contacted and administered the Snohomish County Superior Court Order that directed WDFW Officers to enter the property of the owner of a small herd of sika deer, and to lethally remove whatever remaining deer he had on his property.

According to the order and plea agreement, the subject had until December 20th to voluntarily eliminate his illegally possessed sika deer herd of 9 animals. He eliminated 3 and had 6 remaining. Three animals were taken, but three yearlings were able to escape the compound and get into a nearby swamp. When the deer return, Regional WDFW officers will attempt to eliminate the remaining deer. The carcasses were donated to the Stillaguamish Tribe.

HPA Violations: (1) Fish and Wildlife Officers worked with Washington State Patrol air units in the Whitman County area to photograph and document an un-permitted dam on Rock Creek. Officers will be following up with a search warrant for the property. (2) Officers investigated a report of a stream in the Chewelah area that had become clogged with sediment and debris stranding fish in the lowered water. Closer inspection revealed an illegal diversion was used to create the stream, but one that has been there for years. Officers are working with the area habitat biologist on the situation.

Shellfish Emphasis Patrols: Fish and Wildlife Officers organized a major shellfish patrol to coincide with the low tides series over the super bowl weekend. With the assistance from Lummi Natural Resource Enforcement and Nooksack Police, they ran a three-day shellfish emphasis from the border to Whidbey Island. Officers issued two citations for no license, one overlimit of oysters, and two overlimit of clams, one for non-tribal participation in a tribal fishery, and one for allowing non-tribal to assist. Another violator is believed to have harvested oysters commercially from Drayton Harbor during a DOH closure. That investigation is ongoing.

Joint Efforts Addressing Sturgeon Fishing: Fish and Wildlife Officers and Oregon State Police conducted a joint meeting of Washington and Oregon officers to discuss joint efforts toward addressing sturgeon-fishing violations in the Columbia River Gorge. A database has been designed and in use by officers to collect and track record card information, multiple purchases of cards (duplicates), and license purchases for both states in an attempt to better detect over-bagging on sturgeon. As a result, officers have already made arrests. Local officers from both states will be participating in an emphasis to collect and share the record card information and conduct future planned joint patrols. Other agencies attending the meeting were USFWS and NMFS.

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

Snake River Salmon Recovery: Regional staff from Fish Management and Habitat Management attended a Snake River Regional Technical Team Meeting (RTT) meeting in Dayton on February 16th to continue work on the draft Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan. A deadline of March 16th has been identified to complete and submit a final full document draft of the plan to the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.

Final WDFW draft comments on chapter 6 (Planning Targets - goals and objectives) and 7 (Management Strategies), chapters 8 (Action Plan) and 9 (Implementation Plan) are due to lead consultant John Marsh of Parametrix, by the first of March. A coordinated and timely review of final products, involving Fish Program Science, Management, and Hatchery staff, remains a regional top priority.

Landowner Access Damage Elk Permit Update: 257 permits were issued for 2004/2005 in Region 3 with 67 cows and 4 branch antlered bulls harvested and issued 49 landowner access permits for antlerless deer in Benton and Franklin counties with 20 deer harvested.

Taxidermist Emphasis Patrol: Officers accomplished checks of taxidermists in the Puyallup locale. Upon checking one business, Officers discovered the taxidermist had not been licensed by WDFW since 1997. The owner's wife, minding the store while her husband attended a trade show in Portland, was unable to provide either a ledger or invoices with the required information to show names, tag numbers, etc. of customers and game material as required by law. Safety violations were also observed, including: the employee was cleaning animal parts with raw gasoline in an unventilated facility using a natural gas stove for heat. Officers notified Department of Labor and Industries who dispatched an inspector on February 11th. Officers will be returning to serve a search warrant on the premises. Investigation continues. All other businesses checked were free of violations.

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

Wenatchee/Okanogan Forest Plans: Region 2 initiated communication with the US Forest Service about their efforts with updating the federal Forest Plans for these two forests. The Forest Plan for the Wenatchee was adopted in 1990 and the Okanogan in 1989. Federal law requires that every 15 years the plans be updated with new science and to meet the needs of the public. New criteria for elk and grizzly bear habitat has been developed that will be incorporated in the plan. In addition, new information on recreational activities, roads, and vegetation management will be included. Margaret Hartzell, is coordinating this effort and is also looking for someone from the Department that would like to be a contact for the Colville National Forest.

Kitsap County Alternative Futures: The Silverdale and Dyes Inlet Alternative Futures Technical Working Group (TWG) convened its first meeting in January. In the coming months the TWG (includes representatives from Kitsap County, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Ecology, and Department of Fish and Wildlife) will provide scientific information and analyses for citizens to evaluate alternative growth scenarios within the contributing watersheds of Dyes Inlet. This community-based planning process will lead to land use zoning designations (e.g., urban growth areas) and development standards (e.g., low-impact development), and it will identify mitigation and restoration opportunities. WDFW will use this planning process to introduce and pilot the Local Habitat Assessment tool.

Fisher Fire Salvage Timber Sale: The Forest Service is fast-tracking timber sales on Forest Service property, DNR property, and private timberlands in the Wenatchee Forest for this summer. Staff has made three site visits to look at potential wildlife impacts from logging on Colville Tribal lands, DNR

lands, and Longview Fiber's property. These will be marginal salvage operations because of the difficulty with accessing the burnt timber on marginal lands with steep slopes and limited road access. The Colville Indian Nation decided not to harvest on their lands because of these challenges.

Douglas County Habitat Buffer Committee: Staff attended a meeting of the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Douglas County that will be making recommendations to the County Commissioners about riparian buffer sizes necessary for fish and wildlife purposes. Staff provided an overview of the state's best available science (BAS) requirement, the BAS rule, and how they could utilize existing information about wildlife and fish needs in the county. The committee requested a speaker for their next meeting about what types of wildlife occurs in the region. The committee would also like to invite adjoining counties (Chelan, Okanogan and Grant) to share data and land use planning information so that their decisions will complement their work. This is a positive direction for them to take, and WDFW will assist them with their efforts.

Resolution in Support of De-listing Mid-Columbia Steelhead: The Yakima Basin Joint Board (composed the major irrigation districts in the Yakima Basin) submitted a report to NOAA Fisheries that advocates de-listing of mid-Columbia steelhead. The Board also distributed letters and draft resolutions to other jurisdiction in the basin urging them to pass the resolutions and forward them to NOAA. The basis for the initiative was a recent report from S.P. Cramer et al. entitled "Viability of the Middle Columbia Steelhead ESU." By chance, this resolution appeared just before a local steelhead workshop and generated some interesting discussions among the research and management biologists.

Green River Restoration: Region 4 Habitat staff met with Army Corps of Engineers, City of Tacoma, and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe biologists to review and comment on a long list of projects that are included as mitigation and restoration elements for the Howard Hansen Dam Additional Water Supply Project on the upper Green River. Implementation of these projects started in 2003 with installation of engineered logjams and a gravel supplementation program just downstream of Tacoma's water diversion dam. Most of the remaining projects will be implemented in 2005 and 2006, with the replacement of three culverts and installation of approximately 66 more log jams and over 500 pieces of loose woody material and various other activities in the watershed upstream of Howard Hansen Dam. Adult fish passage facilities are in place downstream of the water diversion dam, though passage is not expected to start until downstream facilities at Howard Hansen Dam are completed about 2009.

City of Battle Ground Critical Areas Ordinance Appeal: The City of Battle Ground recently adopted a critical areas ordinance (CAO) that fails to provide adequate protection for fish and wildlife resources, including endangered, threatened and sensitive species and riparian corridors. Battle Ground is the fastest growing city in Southwest Washington and supports several watercourses that are key for recovery of listed salmonids, including the East Fork Lewis River. The city has ignored WDFW's written and verbal recommendations for increased protections. As a result, a third party appeal has been filed. Regional Habitat staff will be providing technical support in the appeal process.

MINIMIZE ADVERSE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND WILDLIFE.

WDFW-County Meeting on Pilot Cougar Hound Hunt: Wildlife and Enforcement staff and County Commissioners from Chelan, Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties met Friday, February 18th, to discuss improvements for the 2005-06 cougar hound hunt. A number of issues were raised, including the role of hound handlers and the requirement that only dog owners may participate. Future revisions to the WAC may include language that prohibits hound handlers from releasing dogs when not accompanied by the permit holder and a definition of accompany. In an effort to minimize people from attempting to participate in the hunt who are not dog owners, future WAC changes may also include a dog registration process. The next coordination meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2005.

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.

MOU on Watchable Wildlife Signed: By attracting tourist dollars, Washington State's wildlife may be feathering its own nest for the future under the terms of an agreement signed February 8, 2005, in Olympia by four public agencies and a statewide conservation group.

A public ceremony was held on the Legislative Campus to conduct the signing. The new memorandum of understanding establishes a cooperative effort to create, enhance, and market wildlife watching in Washington State.

"Washington's legislators are the first in the country to request a plan for Watchable Wildlife," said Senator Ken Jacobson. "It's a visionary approach to rural economic development that also helps achieve wildlife conservation."

Participants included Director Jeff Koenings of Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Director Julie Wilkerson of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), Deputy Director Paula Hammond of Transportation (WSDOT), and Director Rex Derr of State Parks and Recreation Commission. Also signing the agreement was Trice Booth, Chair of Audubon Washington Board of Stewards, which together with its local chapters develops and publishes maps of the Great Washington State Birding Trail.

Watchable Wildlife Viewing Conference #3: Initial discussions were held to host the next statewide wildlife viewing conference, tentatively scheduled for late September 2005. The draft theme is "Building a Statewide Wildlife Viewing Map." Tourism is continuing to refine its Web presence and the use of its website as a source of discovery for visitors to Washington. An integral part is the "Point of Interest (POI) mapping feature that can be greatly expanded. The concept for this conference is to be a "working" conference rather than a "listening " conference. It is the intent to engage the participants in activities that will help "populate" Tourism's POI database for inclusion on the website. This is envisioned to be inclusive of, and similar to, the brainstorm sessions that lead up to the Coulee Corridor Plan and the Washington Great Birding Trails maps, but for the entire state and for things other than birds (i.e., other species, amenities, recreational options nearby, etc.).

NW Gold Miners Rally Planning: The Habitat Program Deputy Assistant Director is taking the lead on negotiating this year's NW Gold Miners Rally to be held on August 19th and 20th on the Similkameen River. The project proponent is requesting a standard Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) to allow for exceptions to the Gold & Fish pamphlet just for the rally. They include dredging closer than 200 feet to mussels, and allowing up to three dredges operating closer than 200 feet. The mussel exception was allowed last year, and we could allow the spacing exception too, provided that the work is conducted under the supervision of a WDFW biologist. Ecology assured the project proponent that they will not be requiring an NPDES permit provided they follow the HPA, and that this does not include an exception to use dredges with nozzle sizes above four inches. Once completed, the Habitat Program Regional Manager will be signing the HPA this year.

Last year WDFW conducted a survey of the fresh water mussels, and that information is being analyzed by Area Habitat Biologists. They have expressed concern over damage to fish life and mussels from last year's rally. With lower than normal snowfall this year, we are expecting extreme low flows in the river and elevated temperatures (> 70 °) that will further stress the fisheries in the river at this time. The Department may want to express a recommendation that the rally not occur again in the same location (or in Okanogan County) next year.

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

Columbia River Commercial Fishery Gear Study: Region 5 has received funding to collect genetic samples from wild winter steelhead handled in the Columbia River live capture commercial spring chinook fishery. In response to NOAA Fisheries requiring the release of all wild Willamette spring chinook handled in freshwater fisheries, the spring chinook commercial fishery switched gear from large mesh gill nets (> 8") to small mesh tangle nets (< 4¼") for the purpose of maximizing survival rates of non-target salmonids handled in this fishery. The change in gears resulted in a significant increase in the number wild winter steelhead handled in this fishery.

In addition to concerns raised over the increased handle of wild winter steelhead in the spring chinook commercial fishery, questions have also arisen regarding the stock composition of wild winter steelhead handled in this fishery. Questions focused on whether handle rates, and resulting impact rates, vary by ESU or stock for wild winter steelhead handled in this fishery. This study will be funded and conducted in an attempt to answer this question.

Genetic samples will be collected from wild winter steelhead handled in the ongoing commercial fishery. These collection efforts will occur in conjunction with the on-board monitoring program that will be in place again in 2005. Additionally, samples will be collected from tributary locations to develop the baseline data necessary to analyze samples collected from the fishery.

Razor Clam Project: The first round of razor clam samples required by the Washington Department of Health (WDOH) for the March 6th, 7th and 8th opener were collected over the weekend. The results were received yesterday and except for Kalaloch, domoic acid levels remain low on all beaches. With one sample still measuring above 20 ppm (21 ppm) Kalaloch will not open in March.

It is clear that residents along the north coast who prefer to dig at Kalaloch or depend on the income generated by diggers passing through their businesses are not happy with the extended closure of this beach (recall there has been no harvest here since May 2004). Based on the e-mails we have received and on the chat on a popular fishing web site bulletin board (much of it misinformed) the north-coast rumor mill is running a little rampant. In conjunction with staff at WDOH and the Olympic National Park we are planning to hold two public meetings in the area (Forks and Port Angeles) to try to explain the reasons for the lack of Kalaloch razor clam harvest. These meetings will likely be held in early March, although specifics are still being worked out.

Because of the current persistent low domoic acid levels at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks, and our on-going monitoring of surf-zone plankton assemblages (as part of our federally funded ORHAB project), WDOH has agreed to allow us to collect only one sample per beach. Because Kalaloch domoic acid levels remain elevated, we will be required to continue to collect 2 samples from this beach. The result of this action is a marked reduction in the WDFW staff needed to collect these samples.

Region 6 staff has been working on a proposal for April and possibly May razor clam harvest dates. These will all be openers during the popular morning / daylight low tides. We hope to be able to announce those tentative plans in the near future.

Razor Clam Project: The February 5th, 6th, 7th recreational razor clam opener was successful by all accounts. There was a considerable up swing in the number of people interested in getting out to dig razor clams. With the ever-popular NFL Super Bowl planned for Sunday afternoon, it appeared many diggers chose to take advantage of the Saturday opener with a total of 20,000 digger trips made coast-wide that day alone. This was easily the highest daily level of effort since the season opened in October 2004. The next highest effort level was on Friday October 15th when 12,300 digger trips were recorded. Weather conditions were partly cloudy and varied from good to excellent with temperatures in the mid to low 40's and mostly light easterly winds. Monday was the best weather day, with the temperature just a little warmer, skies a little sunnier and almost no wind. This great weather combined with good surf conditions, which allowed digger success to be high with an average catch of 14.7 clams per person. The only down side to this opener was the unfortunate fact that the Kalaloch beach remained closed once again due to domoic acid levels just above the action level of 20 ppm.

2004-2005 Final Hatchery Escapement Report: The 2004-2005 Final Hatchery Escapement Report dated January 21, 2005, has been posted at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hat/escape/escape.htm>. The Hatchery Escapement Report is published annually and is generated directly from the WDFW Adult Report Database. The database contains daily records of adult fish handling activities as reported by hatchery

facilities on the Adult Report form. It describes the total escapement or return, of species of salmon and trout to WDFW facilities and cooperative projects within Washington State. It also enumerates the total number of fish returning to hatchery racks or traps in the rivers and streams of Washington State for the spawning activity cycle beginning in approximately March 2003 and ending in approximately March 2004.

The 2003-2004 return year produced 948,494 anadromous and 146,288 resident adult fish returning to hatchery racks and traps for a total adult escapement of 1,094,782. These returning adults produced an anadromous eggtake of 207,764,635, and a resident eggtake of 14,535,025 for a total eggtake of 222,299,660.

Clam and Oyster Enhancement in Puget Sound: The 2005 proposals for clam and oyster enhancement on State Park beaches were sent to the State Parks and Recreation Commission for approval. Shine Tidelands in northern Hood Canal is proposed for continued Manila clam enhancement in 2005, and six state Park beaches have been recommended for continued enhancement with Pacific oyster "seed" (Birch Bay, Sequim Bay, Illahee, Potlatch, Kopachuck, and Penrose Point). Most of these popular beaches require annual enhancement with oysters to satisfy public demand, but Kopachuck required no enhancement for five years because sport harvesters seemed reluctant to take the huge oysters. Last year, however, the big oysters at Kopachuck became suddenly popular with sport shuckers, and virtually all the 1998 "crop" were gone by the end of the 2004 season.

GOAL III: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE RECONNECT WITH THOSE INTERESTED IN WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE.

Upland Game Advisory Committee (UGAC): The first meeting of the UGAC was held Saturday, February 26th. In addition to general organizational information, the topics discussed by the committee included wildlife program legislative issues, eastern Washington pheasant season closing dates, spring youth hunting for wild turkey, western Washington pheasant allocation, and eastern Washington pheasant habitat projects (Partnerships for Pheasants). The three-year hunting season package was briefly introduced, but detailed discussions on these issues will take place at the next meeting in June. A committee chair (Bob Holtfreter) and vice-chair (John Glenwinkel) were elected by the committee which meet at least two times per year to discuss upland game management and policy issues.

Public Outreach on Polluted Beaches: WDFW intertidal bivalve managers met with the recreational shellfish lead from the Washington Department of Health (WDOH) to brainstorm solutions for a data gap created by changes in our agency's flight routes for shellfish harvest estimation. WDOH has relied on our harvester counts from the air to measure their performance in educating the public not to harvest on beaches closed for pollution. Polluted beaches, however, were largely dropped from our flight routes in 2002 in order to improve the precision and timing of counts on beaches open to shellfish harvest. WDFW employees will be helping WDOH develop land-based harvester count methods, and will assist with estimating the number of users on these closed beaches of concern. Health plans to include Asian

Pacific Islander youth groups, Seattle schools, and other volunteers to collect the effort counts on polluted beaches.

Interest and Enthusiasm are Building for the Yakima Outdoors Expo: This "Go Play Outside" event is sponsored by the Washington Wildlife Coalition and will be held April 15th and 16th at the Central Washington Fairgrounds. In the past week, an article appeared in the Yakima Herald Republic newspaper and two short television interviews were broadcast in the local viewing area. Among the activities planned include fishing ponds, archery and air rifle ranges, and rock climbing walls. There will also be exhibits for backpacking, backcountry horseback riding, biking and camping, along with Native American and pioneer encampments. The first day of the Expo will be exclusively for students in several area school districts, including Yakima, Selah, West Valley, Union Gap, and home schooled students with no admission charge. Saturday's session, which is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., is open to the public and there will be admission charged.

Region 5 Partnership Progress: At the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center (CSEEC) and the Vancouver Trout Hatchery, planning for future education facilities is getting closer to reality every day. At last weeks corporation board meeting, a motion was passed to provide a letter to State Legislators requesting 2005-2007 State capitol budget dollars for completion of design and permit work to bring the proposed new education facility project to a construction ready state.

The 2004 supplemental legislative budget provided money for a pre-design study for a new environmental education and research facility at CSEEC. That project is complete and the design is as exciting as it is innovative. This new facility will create a wonderful place for young and old to enjoy environmental education. Current education activities take place in the center of the hatchery building, which was converted into a classroom with grant funds in 1998. The classroom has an average of 8,000 students visit for hands on learning activities form Evergreen and Vancouver School Districts annually.

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

Samish Hatchery Pond Renovation: Capital Programs and Engineering Division has now turned over the new ponds and cleaning system at Samish Hatchery to the hatchery for fish rearing. The remaining items such as paving, fencing, and replacement of one pipe will be completed by April. Samish Hatchery had 12 concrete ponds, eight of which were in poor condition and not configured for modern fish production practices. This construction project required the demolition of the eight ponds and construction of eight new ponds and a pollution abatement system. The abatement system will allow cleaning of the ponds and settling of the effluent in order to reduce suspended solids discharges into the environment, in order to comply with Department of Ecology standards.

PROVIDE EXCELLENT PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.

Suspect Arrested on Harassing WDFW Employees: Officers prepared and executed a search warrant of a 60 year-old Mount Vernon man who made death threats against WDFW employees. The suspect also

threatened to kill WDFW staff if they did not stop tribal fishing by Tuesday 02/08/05. The suspect made about a dozen calls to WDFW staff on Thursday 02/03/05, and identified himself. Fish and Wildlife Officers, NOAA (Terrorism Joint Task Force Member), and Mount Vernon Police Department arrested and transported the man to Thurston County Jail where he was booked for Investigation of Felony Harassment.

Fish and Wildlife Warrant Emphasis: Fish and Wildlife Officers participated in a Tri-Cities fish and wildlife warrant emphasis patrol. The objective of the emphasis was to locate and apprehend individuals that had outstanding fish and wildlife related warrants. Officers worked in teams of two and targeted those individuals within a certain geographical area. About 30 locations were checked with a total of five individuals lodged on warrants. Between the individuals arrested, there were eight warrants served and one individual was found to be in possession of methamphetamine. The emphasis was successful and sent a strong message to those who fail to properly take care of their fish and wildlife violations.

MAINTAIN A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT.

New Oil Spill Response Boat: After several attempts, a contract for the purchase of a new oil spill response boat was signed on February 14th. The new 24 ft welded aluminum boat will be built by ALMAR in Tacoma with delivery expected in September.

This boat provides a significant improvement in workspace and safety and will become the Oil Spill Team's primary response and sampling vessel. The smaller existing OST boat has been repaired and upgraded, and will provide the team with a secondary vessel.

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

Vehicle Use Permit Sales: WDFW Licensing and Dept. of Licensing (DOL) are partnering to increase awareness and sale of Vehicle Use Permits. DOL has provided a link on their Internet site that allows individuals to purchase a Vehicle Use Permit at the time they renew their license tabs.

Starting in mid-April, all boat registration cards mailed to the public will also contain online purchasing instructions for Vehicle Use Permits. WDFW is working with DOL on a method by which people could return payment for Vehicle Use Permits by mail with a tab renewal. WDFW should know in May 2005 if either of these opportunities have had an impact on Vehicle Use Permit sales.