

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

First Ever Washington Wolverine Capture: Region 2 Biologists Scott Fitkin and Jeff Heinlen assisted U.S. Forest Service (USFS) personnel (Principal Investigator Keith Aubry and District Wildlife Biologist John Rohrer) with the capture and processing of a wolverine at Hart's Pass, northwest of Mazama on Saturday, February 11. This is the first wolverine radio-marked in the Pacific Coast states, outside of Alaska. The animal is a young female (almost 1 or 2 years old) and has been fitted with a satellite/VHF transmitter that should last 1-2 years. Data from this animal will be the first detailed information on wolverine ecology in this region of the species' range. This opportunity is the culmination of several years of survey and documentation work supported jointly by WDFW and the USFS. Earlier survey work had documented the presence of the species in the North Cascades, located a possible natal den site, and improved our knowledge of distribution. The capture of this young female supports our supposition that the North Cascades is host to a resident, reproducing population. Trapping continues this winter in the Okanogan District, with the hope of capturing up to two additional study animals. Jeff Copeland, well-known wolverine biologist with the USFS Forestry Sciences Lab in Missoula, Montana, oversaw this initial capture effort.

Report and Publication on Sharp Tailed Grouse Genetics: A manuscript coauthored by WDFW scientists Ken Warheit and Mike Schroeder on sharp-tailed grouse genetics throughout their range was recently accepted for publication in *Molecular Ecology*. A copy of the submitted version is available from the Wildlife Science Division in Olympia. The complete citation is:

Spaulding, A.W., K.E. Mock, M.A. Schroeder, and K.I. Warheit. In press. Recency, range expansion, and unsorted Lineages: Implications for interpreting neutral genetic variation in the Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*). *Molecular Ecology*.

New Publication on Smallmouth Bass Predation Risk to Salmonids: A paper, coauthored by Anthony Fritts and Todd Pearsons of the Hatchery Wild Interactions Unit, has been accepted for publication in *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*. The title of the paper is "Effects of predation by nonnative smallmouth bass on native salmonid prey: the role of predator and prey size". The paper deals with the predation risk of different sizes of juvenile Chinook salmon by different size classes of

smallmouth bass in the lower Yakima River. The risk of introduced smallmouth bass predation and the predation risk by native northern pikeminnow are discussed.

Intensively Monitored Watershed Studies: Staff completed day and night snorkel surveys in four Intensively Monitored Watershed streams to obtain relative coho salmon density before restoration treatments are applied within the next two years.

National Advisory Acceptance Team: The Director, with assistance from Rocky Beach and the Wildlife Diversity Division staff, has just completed the review of 56 Comprehensive Wildlife Strategies. The Director represented Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on the National Advisory Acceptance Team, which was charged with reviewing these strategies for eight essential elements set forth as a requirement to continue to receive State Wildlife Grants. All states are now cleared to receive these funds, although roughly 30% of the states were conditionally approved and will have some more work to do on their strategies. Washington received full approval.

Family Forest HCP Review: Staff conducted a scientific review of a draft of the Family Forestry (Lewis County Small Forest Landowners) Habitat Conservation Plan Riparian Buffer proposal. The proposal did not provide an innovative approach to protecting shade and large woody debris (LWD) recruitment, but simply proposed less protection and avoided comparison to other benchmarks of riparian protection such as current Forest Practices rules or the Lewis County Critical Areas Ordinance. The proposal was not significantly better than current Lewis County Ordinance, and may afford less protection for fish in certain situations.

Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines Presentation: Technical Applications biologists attended the annual Pacific Salmonid Recovery Conference in Seattle, Washington. Staff displayed poster presentations on the Aquatic Habitat Guidelines (AHG) and Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines (SHRG) at the conference. Staff also gave a 1-hour presentation on the recently published SHRG Document. The presentation was well received by conference attendees and generated great interest in the AHG program and SHRG. This regional conference provides participants with current fisheries science, regulatory updates, and innovative strategies for assessment, restoration, and monitoring of salmonid populations and their habitat

Ecosystem Management: A forum on Toxics in Puget Sound is being scheduled on April 5, 2006, Town Hall, Seattle. The biological resources covered in the presentations run the full gamut of fish and marine mammals affected by toxics in the Sound. Various presentations will discuss research on the transport, fate, effects and cycling of a range of toxics, including polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), and endocrine disruptors. The forum is being jointly sponsored by at least 7 organizations (including Ecology, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the John Merck Foundation, King County, and the Seattle Aquarium) and presenters include scientists of international stature from both the US and Canada.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) Program / Citizen Science: RFEG Program staff met with Margaret Tudor to discuss citizen science opportunities between WDFW, individual RFEGs, and, potentially, local schools. Several of the RFEGs are already involved in citizen science as they regularly work with regional staff to gather field data needed by WDFW.

Cooperative Sea Grant Application: Henry Cheng was named as a co-Principal Investigator on a Sea Grant application with scientists from the University of Washington and other WDFW shellfish managers. The proposal is to cover three years of testing the world's first sea cucumber data collector. The proposal is at the pre-proposal stage. If named successful in March, a full proposal will be submitted in April. In addition, they are preparing a manuscript for publication from pilot sea cucumber survey data.

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

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP): Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) completed a fish passage project on a tributary to Breckenridge Creek to open up approximately 2,000 feet of spawning and rearing habitat for coho, chum, and cutthroat. LIP provided \$12,000 and NSEA provided \$10,203 in match. The project has been successfully completed, and fish are utilizing habitat upstream of the newly installed culvert.

Elk Mortality: Investigation of a reported dead elk in Cowlitz County revealed an older cow with one deformed hoof. District Biologist Pat Miller and Wildlife Biologist Robin Woodin examined an elk cow that had died two days earlier in a citizen's pasture. The elk had extensive tooth wear and red gelatinous bone marrow in the femur indicating an older cow in poor condition. She also had one deformed hind hoof, which was removed and may be tested for hoof rot and other hoof deformity diseases.

WDFW has gotten a higher than average number of reports of elk with deformed hooves this winter. One animal with deformed hooves was tested for hoof disease; the findings were inconclusive. Additional testing will be conducted, but is complicated by the requirement that tissue samples be taken immediately upon death of the animal.

Agriculture and Wildlife Working Group (AWWG): Don Larsen met with the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership's AWWG to continue planning for the 2007 federal Farm Bill. Representatives included Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, the Wildlife Management Institute, the Izaak Walton League, Quail Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, the National Wildlife Federation, and several other state wildlife agencies. The chiefs of staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) also participated. We were able to discuss the possibility of a national Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) priority area for sage and sharp-tailed grouse with the chief of staff for FSA. WDFW staff met separately with Governor's Office staff and with Representative Cathy McMorris's staff to discuss the possible creation of a CRP national priority area for sage and sharp-tailed grouse. Another option would be to create a CRP conservation practice specifically for grouse, as was done with Conservation Practice (CP) 33 for the bobwhite quail initiative:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/quail04.htm>. This may even be a better option than trying for a national CRP priority area. Any priority ranking will help Washington retain CRP accomplishments in key areas like Douglas County.

Oil Spill Threatens Oyhut Wildlife Area Near Grays Harbor: On February 12, 2006, the fishing vessel "Nu-C" ran aground on the north jetty at the entrance to Grays Harbor. Fuel tanks on the vessel ruptured in the heavy surf and spilled up to 1000 gallons of diesel into the water. Most of the oil dissipated in the heavy seas, but some oil was observed near the Oyhut Wildlife Area and Damon Point. Spill Team staff provided recommendations for resource protection in the area and technical assistance to Washington Department of Ecology and the Coast Guard spill responders for the incident.

Family Forest Fish Passage Program: The legislature gave the program \$4.15 million for the current biennium. Thirty-eight fish passage projects are funded for construction this year at an estimated cost of \$2.12 million, opening approximately 103 miles of habitat. Last biennium, the program funded 63 barrier corrections, 50 of which have been completed. Together, all projects open about 235 miles of habitat, at a total cost of \$4.27 million. The application window for next year's projects is open until June 30, 2006. More information on the program can be found at: <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo/fffpp/>.

Walla Walla Water Management Initiative: Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) Director Jay Manning and State Senator Mike Hewitt attended the Water Management initiative meeting at the Walla Walla Community College Ecology Center. Director Manning announced that WDOE would like to offer the Walla Walla Basin the opportunity to develop a local watershed approach to water use. Essentially, WDOE would give the Walla Walla Basin five years to initiate a pilot program in which all of the regulatory, instream flows, water trust, irrigation rights, dispute resolution, etc. would occur locally among all stakeholders. The goal is to create water policy change through innovative water management strategies tailored to the local watershed by local stakeholders. Director Manning went on to say that there would be full amnesty after the pilot - no relinquishments or related issues as a result of the project. WDFW will participate on the Water Management Initiative Project Management Team.

Commercial Crab Emphasis Operation: Fish and Wildlife Officers (FWOs) flew the coastline in a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter out of Astoria in order to locate crab gear for an upcoming operation. Several commercial vessels were suspected of using treated cotton in place of untreated cotton that does not satisfy rules related to mandatory escape mechanisms. When crab gear becomes lost in storms or derelict, this regulation is meant to allow for an opening to appear in the crab pot when the untreated cotton rots away, allowing trapped animals to escape. Treating the cotton with a petroleum based product or other preservative would greatly slow down the rate that the cotton rots away, ensuring that the crab pots continue to catch and kill sea life. The operation was put into action, with the agency's Corliss coming down from Westport. FWOs were on board along with an Oregon State Patrol trooper and a National Marine Fisheries Service agent. Within hours, the Corliss was filled with the illegal crab gear from six different boats from the Chinook/Ilwaco area.

Wild Winter Steelhead Genetics Project: The Region 5 Fish Program is organizing volunteer anglers to collect genetic samples from wild winter steelhead spawning in the tributaries of the Lower Columbia River. The purpose of this collection is two-fold: 1) to develop the first comprehensive genetic baseline for wild winter steelhead populations in the Columbia River and 2) to estimate the stock composition in the Non-Indian commercial spring chinook fishery based on the baseline collection and fisheries sampling. To collect samples from tributaries without trapping facilities, WDFW will utilize hook and line sampling through a volunteer angler fishery in the following Columbia River tributaries: Coweeman, East Fork Lewis, Grays, Green (Cowlitz drainage), South Fork Toutle, and Washougal Rivers.

WDFW is working with local volunteer anglers and sport fishing groups to collect these genetic samples. The volunteer angler fishery will also contribute valuable data regarding creel information and potential hooking mortality rates. Data collected will include: caudal fin tissue samples for genetic analysis, fishing start/stop times, angling method, gear type, hooking location, and fish condition upon release. The rivers included in the fishery close to sport fishing on March 16 or March 31, 2006, so some of the sampling will occur during closed seasons and in closed waters as directed by WDFW biologists.

During the "closed season" volunteer fishery, sampling will occur on weekends with some mid-week days from March 18 to May 15, 2006. Participating anglers must have a valid WDFW license, catch-record-card, and be registered WDFW volunteers. Participants will meet at a pre-determined location to receive an orientation and sampling kits at the start of each sampling day. All wild steelhead will be handled carefully, and released when fully recovered. Anglers will meet a WDFW biologist at the end of the day to deliver their samples and data. All steelhead or salmon caught in the "closed season" volunteer fishery, regardless of origin, must be released.

Salmon Emphasis Operation: Fish and Wildlife Officers (FWOs) coordinated an emphasis patrol of Marine Areas 8-1, 8-2, and 9 to monitor sport salmon activity covering two salmon derbies. Nine FWOs and four boats were deployed to enforce the selective fishery regulations, general sport salmon regulations, and check for any illegal (closed season) commercial crab gear. Over 140 fishermen were contacted on the water, 22 citations issued, 8 written warnings, and 1 wild (illegal) black mouth was seized. This is a significant effort, partly based on the scrutiny this fishery is receiving from all the co-managers. It also reinforces that folks cannot be checked often enough. The party who tried to keep the wild salmon had been checked earlier by one WDFW boat. About an hour later they were re-contacted using illegal gear and trying to hide a wild fish.

Juvenile White Sturgeon Marking: Fish Management staff from Region 1 assisted Columbia Basin Hatchery staff with positive identification tags (PITs) marking approximately 4000 juvenile sturgeon destined for release into Lake Roosevelt in May 2006. This marking and hatchery release effort is part of the Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Project.

Non-Point Water Quality Subcommittee: Several WDFW staff are currently developing applications for Direct Implementation Funding (DIF) grants for the 2005-06 funding cycle. Grants are through Department of Ecology from Clean Water Act 319 funds and are available to agencies for non-mandated

non-point water quality projects. WDFW has been successful in recent years in competing for these funds and reasonably can expect to attract between \$50-100K for projects during this cycle. IRM sits on the interagency Non-Point Committee and is coordinating our applications. Applications are due the end of February, with awards to be announced in May.

Vessel Sinking Near Penrose State Park: A vessel sinking in Mayo Cove near Penrose State Park required multi-agency coordination when it was determined that the proposed salvage plan would have risked substantial injury to both Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and WDFW resources. A joint WDFW/DNR recommendation to Ecology resulted in a revised salvage plan that was successfully carried out with any fuel having spilled.

Columbia River Water Supply Outlook: The Fish Passage Advisory Committee (FPAC) reviewed the water supply and snowpack outlook for the Columbia River basin. As of February 14, 2006, the snowpack in the upper Columbia River above the Snake River confluence is 110% of normal and the Snake River basin is 127% of normal. The February water supply forecast predicts all reservoirs above normal.

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

WDFW Hatchery Maintenance Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA): Program staff biologists have worked with the Hatcheries Division to revise a general maintenance HPA to bring it into compliance with current procedures with respect to emergencies. Additionally, staff has set the stage for a comprehensive review of the permit and provisions to fully and completely mitigate for the adverse impacts of WDFW hatchery maintenance work on fish species.

Snohomish County Landslide on the Stillaguamish River: WDFW staff worked with Snohomish County staff and CORPS personnel to respond to the massive landslide on the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River in eastern Snohomish County. The slide backed up the river, threatening to flood homes and re-direct the river. With an Emergency Hydraulic Project Approval, a new channel was developed with adequate bank protection for the homes. WDFW staff will meet with the other agencies to develop a long-term management plan for the slide area.

Musky Broodstock: The warmwater team is exploring the possibility of bringing muskellunge broodstock into Washington State for the purposes of creating a WDFW tiger musky program or investigating the possibility of sterilizing musky for non-hybrid planting. Region 2 fish staff will coordinate with other regional programs (Wildlife and Habitat) to address concerns and identify potential habitats for this program.

Tokul Creek Hatchery: The presence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHSV) has been confirmed in returning winter steelhead. Testing to determine the strain type is scheduled for the week of February 13. This finding will not affect the management of other species on-station. However, it will adversely

affect the transfer of 1.0-million fall chinook from Wallace River Hatchery to Tumwater/Deschutes Hatchery scheduled for later this spring.

Prosecutor Meeting: Region One FWOs met with the Spokane County prosecutor to discuss our concerns with the apparent lack of prosecution of WDFW cases within the prosecutor's office and the perception that our cases are being marginalized. The county prosecutor was not aware of the problem. We also discussed the need for better communication with Spokane County deputies. The meeting went well, and hopefully we will see some changes in the near future. The Captain has contacted the Inland Empire Wildlife Council director for a follow-up call if no improvement occurs.

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

State Wildlife Listings & Forest Practices Board: On January 13, 2006, the Fish & Wildlife Commission listed the Mazama pocket gopher as threatened, and the streaked horned lark and Taylor's checkerspot as endangered. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is required to consult with WDFW and propose a list of critical wildlife habitats (state) to the Forest Practices Board within 30 days of listing. WDFW has worked internally to assess the need for critical wildlife habitats (SEPA triggers). On February 8, 2006, WDFW briefed the Forest Practices Board on the new listings and outlined a schedule to work with stakeholders on evaluating the need for, and developing, critical wildlife habitats. WDFW, in conjunction with DNR, will be meeting with stakeholders, and DNR will be making recommendations to the Board by April 1, 2006.

Family Forest Management Plans Pilot: Staff are working with the small forest landowner caucus and other Timber, Fish, and Wildlife stakeholders on a pilot to provide guidance to facilitate small forest landowners usage of the current alternate plan forest practices rules to develop management plans for their ownership. Management plans would address any proposed deviations from current Forest Practices Rules, and they would secure a 5-year forest practices permit. Work on the pilot is nearing completion. The Washington Farm Forestry Association was successful in getting \$250,000 in the Senate supplemental budget, some of which would go to the state agencies to assist in development and review of the management plans. After the pilot is up and running, we will immediately begin working on larger policy issues associated with transitioning from the 5-year permit to a 15-year forest practices permit, which will require a forest practices rule change.

Lower Columbia Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) / Habitat Enhancement: The Lower Columbia RFEG has been planting roughly 500 native trees a week along the Little Washougal using both volunteers and corrections crews donated by WA Dept of Corrections from Larch Mountain Honor camp. The group is also monitoring project effectiveness at their Lower & Upper Washougal Salmon Recovery Fund Board restoration sites, along with their Indian Mary, Little Washougal and Lockwood Creek sites.

Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Board Inter Local Agreement: At the last combined board meeting, final changes were made to a Inter Local Agreement (ILA) that outlines the development of the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Board to replace the existing Planning and Lead Entity boards. So far all three counties

(Benton, Kittitas, and Yakima) and a few of the cities have signed the ILA, with others expected to follow over the next few weeks. This is a significant milestone due to Kittitas County finally agreeing to fully participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring fish and wildlife recovery efforts. The Board is also currently reviewing candidates for an executive director for this new board. There is a strong list of candidates to review with over 26 applicants for the position. Currently, there is collaboration and momentum to carry us through this transition period with the hope that by July there will be a fully functioning Regional Recovery Board in place.

No Solution to Elk Problem in Over 10 Years: The Dungeness elk herd continues to consume a large amount of time and energy for WDFW staff. A local tribe announced to the media that it intends to relocate the herd of eighty elk to the Sol Duc watershed near Forks, with financial assistance from the WDFW. Apparently, no WDFW staff were consulted or advised of this decision until it appeared in the Peninsula Daily News. The Dungeness Elk Work Team, an advisory group comprised of agency staff and stakeholders, has marked its tenth anniversary of monthly meetings and has of yet to produce any solutions to the problem. Conditions in the field haven't improved. The traditional model of harvesting animals to keep their numbers manageable isn't working. Seasonal harvest of elk isn't keeping up with annual herd recruitment, and urban development in the area will ultimately create a firearm closure. It will not be long before hunting elk and keeping the herd size and commensurate damage to crops in check is no longer an option.

50-Year Project to Stabilize 12 Miles of the Quinault River: Staff attended the Quinault River Restoration Meeting where a proposal was made by the Quinault Tribe for a 50-year project to stabilize the upper 12 miles of the Quinault. This area was snagged and clear-cut for spruce airplane wood for the WW1 effort nearly 100 years ago and was made so unstable that it has never recovered. The project proposes installing engineered log jams (ELJs). In addition, natural jams would be augmented, key pieces could be imported as needed, and jams would be aggressively revegetated so that eventually enough stability would be created for trees to actually grow to key piece size. To accomplish this, a unique agreement will need to be crafted with the Tribe that allows them to use a general HPA for specific designs and techniques of ELJ construction. The consultant for the Tribe anticipates Joint Aquatic Resource Permits Application (JARPA) in late March/early April 2006.

Future Resource Wardens Receive Education: A Jefferson County FWO gave a presentation to a large group of pre-school children at the request of a local teacher. The FWO had a hands-on talk where he used antlers, hides, bones, feathers and calls to entertain and educate the new group of future hunters and fishers as to what wildlife is and what a fish and wildlife officer does. The presentation culminated with a commissioning ceremony where the students were sworn in as junior game wardens and presented with their "official" Junior Game Warden Badges. The excited junior wardens were also issued their "junior fishing licenses" in preparation of the upcoming spring trout season. It was very satisfying for our FWO as he was sure that he had ignited the spark of the outdoors in this group as every student loudly and excitedly informed their parents (when they were being picked up) that "we get to go fishing now!"

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Derelict Vessel Removal Program Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA): Program staff developed a statewide HPA issued to DNR for the removal of derelict and abandoned vessels in conjunction with the DNR Derelict Vessel Removal Program. This will permit and facilitate rapid response to hazardous situations wherein both marine and freshwater fish species and habitats are at risk from sunken vessels, leaks, and debris.

Import Airport Emphasis Update: Officers spent a day doing market follow up from a previous airport inspection. They found air-bills indicating a person in Auburn is importing live fish from Vietnam several times a year. It was unknown if these were for market consumption, but the volume indicated more than personal consumption. After a long search for a non-existent address, they finally discovered the fish are being imported for the pet trade market. They are being sold to about six pet stores in south King County. None of the fish qualify as deleterious. The importer failed to get a fish import permit from WDFW. He had obtained all the other permits necessary. Following an educational session, a written warning was issued. The next inspection was a company doing millions of dollars worth of business each year. They were unlicensed as a wholesale dealer. However, they do not deal in live product, nor do they deal in anything listed under Title 77. So it turned out to be a nice visit. Officers continue to work on the huge backlog of commercial market checks and cited one business for no Wholesale Dealers license. We currently are attempting to follow-up on over 100 operating businesses that have yet to re-new their license for 2006.

HARRNESS Report: The recently completed national plan for algal toxins and harmful algal blooms titled HARRNESS (Harmful Algal Research and Response National Environmental Science Strategy) is now available in PDF format at the following web link:
<http://www.who.edu/redtide/nationplan/2005nationalplan.html>.

WDFW shellfish biologist Dan Ayres played a role in the completion of this document by serving on an advisory committee and participating in a workshop in Charleston S.C. (March 2004). As a result, some of Washington's harmful algal blooms problems are well represented in the report.

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.

Columbia River Fisheries: The 2006 commercial salmon fishery will be conducted similar to past years and should continue through March. Season structure is expected to include test fishing on Sundays, Compact hearings on Mondays and Wednesdays, and full fleet fishing periods likely on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The upriver spring chinook run size (88,400 fish) and the Willamette spring chinook run size (46,500 fish) play an important role in the design of the fishery. Both runs are somewhat less than that seen in 2005 and only a portion of each stock is available for commercial harvest.

The ongoing commercial smelt fishery has slowed some, with about 14,000 pounds harvested from the Columbia River. No smelt have been commercially harvested from the Cowlitz River. Recreational catch and effort has also been slow for smelt.

The commercial sturgeon fishery concluded on February 22 with landings below expectations, due in part to poor river conditions and low effort in the beginning of the season.

Fall chinook forecasts were distributed in early February. Total run size is less than the 2005 return, but similar to the 10-year average. The upriver bright component of the 2006 fall chinook run is projected to be a strong return. 2006 forecasts for Columbia River coho returns will be available after the North of Falcon process that will be completed in early April.

Coastal Sport Bottomfish Ad Hoc Advisory Meeting: IRM staff sponsored a sport bottomfish ad hoc advisory group meeting in Montesano the week of February 20, 2006, to continue discussions for the 2007-08 Pacific Fishery Management Council biennial management process for groundfish fisheries. Discussion topics included reviewing the results of the recent yelloweye rockfish stock assessment and the preliminary rebuilding alternatives for the overfished stocks, with a primary focus on yelloweye and canary rockfish. We also reviewed the recreational coastal catch statistics for these species by port area, month, and trip type (bottomfish, halibut, and salmon). Based on the catch and effort data from 2005, additional management measures for the coastal sport fisheries will need to be considered to meet Washington's recreational harvest targets within the rebuilding requirements for canary and yelloweye rockfish. Different rebuilding targets are available for canary and yelloweye with varying degrees of rebuilding time and probability of rebuilding within that specified timeframe. Depending on which rebuilding target is ultimately selected, there may be impacts to other coastal sport fisheries such as halibut and salmon fisheries, in addition to bottomfish restrictions. Department staff will draft a preliminary range of management measure alternatives, based on the input we received, to present to the Pacific Council at its April meeting. Another meeting to finalize the 2007-08 alternatives will be scheduled for mid-May in preparation for the Council's final action in June.

Sidley Lake, Okanogan County: Eastside Lands Supervisor Brian Trickel met with Okanogan County Commissioners and discussed a joint Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) project for redeveloping a public access site on Sidley Lake. This will be a combined effort with Okanogan County, WDFW, the Molson Grange, and a private landowner who has expressed an interest in entering a long-term (50 year) agreement on enough of her property to make the project work.

Watchable Wildlife Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): MOU participants from WDFW, State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Department of Transportation, Audubon Washington, and Community, Trade and Economic Development, continue to work on mutual objectives for Watchable Wildlife. Upcoming projects include a complete redesign of State Tourism's website, with a focus on points of interest. Highlighting the initial release of the new page will be many wildlife viewing points of interest from all of Washington's scenic highways and the three completed Audubon driving birding trail maps. WDFW staff provided photographs and copy for many of these points of

interest. Watchable Wildlife will be a dominant theme and feature of Washington's new look. The next state Watchable Wildlife conference will be held September 14-15, 2006, in Richland, Washington, at the invitation of a Richland city councilwoman and the local Visitor's Bureau.

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

Hood Canal Crab Tagging Project: Crab management staff from Point Whitney and marine resource staff from Olympia met with representatives of the Skokomish Tribe to discuss a proposed Dungeness crab tagging project, which would primarily target crab in southern Hood Canal. This project is intended to monitor crab movements and behavior in south Hood Canal, especially in response to periods of low dissolved oxygen. Point Whitney staff provided tribal representatives summaries of seven years of WDFW crab testing data that has been conducted throughout Hood Canal. We also provided a map of crab movements in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which was determined by WDFW tagging 3,300 Dungeness crab in that region.

Skagit Steelhead Plans: IRM and Fish Program staff met with policy and technical representatives of the Upper Skagit, Sauk-Suiattle, and Swinomish Tribes on February 3, 2006, to discuss unresolved issues associated with the 2005-2006 Skagit River Steelhead Management Plan. Although both tribal and non-Indian fisheries are currently being conducted, the annual harvest management plan has not yet been agreed upon and signed by the parties. Outstanding issues include: 1) clarification of the rationale for scheduled fisheries; and 2) agreement on production and rearing plans for the 2006 brood steelhead at the Marblemount facility.

Salmon Recovery Planning: IRM and Fish Program staff met with Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) staff members on February 1, 2006, to discuss tribal and state activities related to salmon recovery and Shared Strategy. NWIFC representatives urged WDFW to plan meetings with the tribes during the North of Falcon/Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) process to discuss intentions related to selective fisheries and the "conservation" strategy introduced by Director Koenings at the recent Ron Simms meeting in Seattle.

Implementation of Expert Panel Recommendations for Selective Fisheries: Director Koenings, IRM staff, and Fish Program staff met with representatives of Columbia River and Northwest tribal governments to discuss how to implement recommendations of the Pacific Salmon Commission's "Expert Panel" concerning potential effects of selective fishing on the Coded Wire Tag (CWT) program. Director Koenings and Ron Allen (Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe) guided participants toward a proposal supporting creation of a work group comprised of WDFW and tribal scientists to help guide implementation of the Expert Panel's recommendations. This proposal was introduced to the Pacific Salmon Commission at its February meeting in Vancouver, B.C.

Nooksack River Chinook: WDFW is working cooperatively with the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe and local landowners on two projects in the Nooksack River basin. WDFW staff from engineering, Region 4

Habitat program and Region 4 Fish program recently met with Lummi and Nooksack staff to discuss the design and installation of a weir to collect adult South Fork Nooksack spring chinook brood stock beginning in 2006. The abundance of this stock is critically low and supplementation has been identified as a mechanism for recovery. Following the South Fork discussion, meeting attendees traveled to the North Fork to meet with the owner/operator of the Nooksack Falls power plant. The owner of the plant is interested in having WDFW construct a temporary acclimation pond for an offsite release of chinook reared at the Kendall Creek hatchery. The hope is that releasing chinook much higher in the basin than the Kendall Creek hatchery will increase habitat utilization and encourage recovery of this stock.

Colville Confederated Tribes Annual Meeting: On January 30, Commissioner Perry, IRM staff, and Region 1, 2, and 3 staff met with representatives of the Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) for the annual meeting called for in the WDFW-CCT Memorandum of Agreement. In general, the meeting went very well. Staff opened by listing things that were going well and represented positive accomplishments. The remainder of the agenda primarily centered on coordination issues (harvest planning, Lake Roosevelt coordination, cougar and mule deer work, BiOp remand, BPA solicitation, salmon recovery). At the end of the meeting CCT announced that it was no longer interested in discussing the issues surrounding jurisdiction on Lake Rufus Woods and the Okanogan River. These issues deal with both licensing and enforcement on these boundary waters and have been the subject of discussions over the last few years. CCT stated it was prepared to force its issues to the next level. WDFW countered by saying we were still open to discussing the issues and if CCT was not we would like to see two things: 1) a specific list of the issues of concern to the Tribe (since the explanations over time have not always been consistent); and 2) a warning of the steps CCT was prepared to take to make their point. CCT agreed to go back to the tribal council to see if there was interest in continued discussions. In any event, CCT is willing to provide us more specific details of the issues and next steps. CCT stated that it did not want this to jeopardize our broader working relationship.

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

Coastal Dungeness Crab: Non-Treaty coastal Dungeness crab landings reached 4.7 million pounds through January 31, the commercial season opened on December 31, 2005. Tribal fishers started fishing in mid-November and have landed 2.9 million pounds bringing the coastal total to 7.5 million pounds. Last season produced a record high season total of 25 million pounds making the coastal Dungeness crab fishery one of the highest valued coastal fisheries. The first month of this season has been plagued with back-to-back storms and price disputes. Fishers are just now sorting through what is left of their gear after last weekend's storm that brought swells to 35-feet. This is the first season that coastal crabbers are required to have a buoy tag on each pot that they are using, the weather is testing the replacement tag program that was implemented with the rule, but so far the process seems to be working out well.

Meeting With Business Owners: On Wednesday (February 22, 2006) Dan Ayres and Ron Warren met with eight citizens who own or operate small resorts and other businesses located on the Copalis Beach,

north of the Ocean City beach approach. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss possible options to increase the number of razor clam harvest dates for this portion of the Washington coast. The business owners present discussed the importance of the recreational razor clam fishery to the health of their businesses. One resort owner shared copies of his resort's reservation sheet for the razor clam opener (Friday through Sunday, February 24 to 26). It clearly showed that all of his cabins and trailer spots were booked for both Friday and Saturday nights, with several also booked for Thursday and/or Sunday nights. He also shared the reservation sheet for the following weekend (March 3,4) showing no reservations. Those gathered indicated this was indicative of a non-razor clam weekend during the winter months. Dan and Ron thanked the group for sharing the importance of the razor clam fishery to small communities like their own. They pointed out that WDFW has been aware of this fact and have, over the years, adjusted their management techniques as a result of public input to try to gain the maximum value for the coastal communities from the razor clam fishery. The meeting continued with the discussion of various ways to maximize the number of digging days. In the end, it was agreed that the lines of communication between this small community and WDFW had been generally improved as a result of the meeting.

Early Spring Trout Stocking: Lyons Ferry Complex personnel are in the process of stocking spring season lakes for the March first opening day. Half of the Tucannon lakes have been stocked, with the remaining lakes still ice covered at this time. Agency news releases have been issued notifying the public that these lakes will open March 1 while salvage logging continues on the Wooten Wildlife Area. Some temporary travel restrictions on the main Tucannon River access road may be experienced, due to logging operations.

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

Murder Suspect Apprehended: WDFW Officers and local Department of Corrections officers spent time this week searching for and apprehending subjects with WDFW Warrants. During this search, Officers received information about a subject who was possibly wanted for murder in Arizona. The subject was reported to have killed his wife in Arizona in 2003 and had been on the run ever since. We checked his information in the county computer and found an active felony warrant for the murder. Several possible addresses were checked, including the local hospital that confirmed that he had been a patient but that he had been released two weeks earlier. The hospital refused to give us the address that he had given. Two houses were checked finding a few other warrant subjects but not the one we were looking for. On the third try the murder suspect was located and apprehended without incident.

Citizens Rescued From a Cold Night: Officers conducted a boat patrol to check sturgeon gill-netters one night on the Columbia River but the commercial effort still remains slow. They did, however, rescue two boaters who were stranded on an island after their boat had broken down. The two were destined for a long cold night until the patrol vessel happened on them by chance. The officers thought sure that they had some after-hours sturgeon fishers but instead found two happy campers.

Criminal Trespass: Officers responded to a report from the Columbia County Sheriff's Department of a man stuck in his car in the middle of a stubble field. Officers arrested the man who stated he was chasing deer. The farmer/property owner provided an itemized list of costs to fix the long muddy trenches left by the car. The man was booked on felony Malicious Mischief and Criminal Trespass.

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

WILD: The project reached its first major milestone recently. On February 17, 2006, the new Internet sales site went on-line for the public. The new web site sells all license types and additional non-license items such as youth donations. During the first week of operation, the new site sold 923 licenses documents to 244 individuals. The focus of the project now shifts to building and deploying the retail sales capability.

MAINTAIN A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Safety Through Innovation: A longstanding safety concern has finally been resolved at Merwin Hatchery, through some innovative thinking. The original walkways are made of aluminum bar grating, and were designed lengthways. They had no grip coating or slip prevention, and many near misses have occurred over the years. The facility is owned and funded by PacifiCorp, and we have worked with them for months trying to find an affordable solution. There is approximately 3500 sq. ft. of walkway, including raceways, adult area, and incubation room. We tried several coatings, sandblasting, and explored replacement costs. All of these proved to be very costly, so a new approach was needed. Our Complex Manager, Eric Kinne, decided to try scoring the walkway with a table saw. The end product worked great. PacifiCorp provided two of their people to do the work, and we provided two table saws. Within two weeks...problem solved.

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

Growth Management Act (GMA) / Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) Conference Call: On February 13, 2006 a conference call was held between the regional GMA/PHS staff and headquarters staff. This is a continuing series of conference calls aimed at keeping the regional staff informed of current issues that may affect their work and to inform the headquarters of needs and concerns of regional staff. The subject of this call was centered on a legislative update on legislation that related to GMA and land use issues. Included was an update of the PHS mapping review and update process. Also there was a discussion of the landscape planning effort. Another conference call occurred on February 27, 2006 to continue these talks.

RECONNECT WITH THOSE INTERESTED IN WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE

Citizen Science Field Projects: In spite of the cold temperatures and gusting wind, 20 sixth grade students from Littlerock Elementary School had a great time mounting bluebird boxes on Friday,

February 17, 2006. The students, their teacher, and the school principal accompanied staff from the Nature Conservancy, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Pacific Education Institute to the Evergreen Sportsman's Club to mount bluebird boxes on a restored section of the club's property. Students explored and learned about the Mima Mound prairies. They also watched a number of killdeer and a harrier as it glided over the prairie. All of this was in preparation for the return of the western bluebird, which has been spotted in the south sound area. The WDFW sponsored bluebird cam serves as an important tool to focus public attention on the western bluebird recovery and project partner activities.

Citizen Science Network Meeting: Region 4 Biologist Trish Thompson attended the Citizen Science Network meeting. There is heavy support within WDFW for Citizen Science, with our Science Division and Wildlife Diversity Education onboard and active. This meeting was called for us to come to an agreement on our vision statement and mission statement, as well as discuss and refine the goals, objectives, and guiding principles. Our preliminary vision statement still needs to be reviewed by the stakeholders. The Citizens Science Network was formed to link individuals, schools, and community groups with professionals in the public and private sector to provide data for WDFW and the community at large, and improve scientific knowledge within the community.

Eventually, the vision is to create a network of ecoregional centers all over the state, linking with existing facilities such as Western Washington University, Olympic National Park, and West Valley Learning Center, for the purpose of data collection, collaboration, and helping citizens get outdoors and contribute to a larger scientific, educational, and recreational effort.

Burrowing Owls: Volunteer Joe Harris and Wildlife Program Biologist Mike Livingston installed the solar panel that will power the web camera and wireless connection for the burrowing owl web cam. The next task is to have I-Pocket Net connect their wireless Internet connection. They plan to have the whole system running by mid-March.

NatureMapping: NatureMapping Teacher Diane Peterson, who leads the NatureMapping Adopt a Farmer project in which elementary school students investigate short horned lizard presence on farmland, was honored on public television this week with the Golden Apple Award presented by Dr. Terry Bergeson and Governor Gregoire. Diane and her students will conduct a presentation at the Wildlife Society Meeting in Idaho this March with NatureMapping Director Karen Dvornich, John Pierce, and Margaret Tudor.

Science Education Partnership with Montesano School District: District 17 staff has begun work with representatives of the Montesano School District to develop a classroom education segment on aquatic invertebrates and some type of outdoor science education for the middle school. Initial contact was from the Montesano Continuing Adult Education Classes coordinator. In the past two years, Rick Ereth and Curt Holt have offered classes on Lake and Stream Fishing for Trout through this program. Monies for course materials and planning would be from an endowment to the City of Montesano.

Skagit River Wild Steelhead Age Composition: Brett Barkdull, Fish Management Biologist for the Skagit River system has been working with the Upper Skagit, Sauk Suiattle, and Swinomish Tribes to improve the amount and quality of data collected for use in managing the steelhead resources in his watershed. Though his efforts, and in conjunction with the tribes of the Skagit River system, age data from wild origin winter steelhead are being collected to improve the information available for managing this stock. Most recently Brett and other staff, both in Region 4 and at Olympia headquarters, have developed a program that has enlisted the assistance of recreational anglers to collect scales from wild origin fish they are encountering while fishing in the watershed. This program has, to some extent, taken its lead from a similar one on the Green River that Tom Cropp instituted a while ago and has developed in cooperation with co-managers. These efforts involve and educate the public in various ways and help develop avenues for future participation of those folks and others interested the Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife resources that our state has to offer.

Public Outreach and Education:

Egg Displays: Staff spent some time this week on a workshop to learn the craftsmanship of building the egg vials that display fish development from the egg stage to fish stage. This cross training preserves this craft, so masterfully done by Al Demorest for so many years. These egg displays are highly popular with teachers and volunteers throughout the state.

"Go Play Outside" (GPO): A formal notification letter from the Weatherby Foundation and a \$10,000 check were received by Jackie Jones, Executive Director of Camp Fire USA Lower Columbia Council and Chair of the Washington Wildlife Coalition, to provide seed money for the Youth Outdoor Expo to be held in early May, 2007 in SW Washington. This GPO event will be the first large-scale (5,000 attendees), youth-focused presentation in the on-going partnership with WDFW. An event-planning workshop will be held May 6 and 7, 2006 at Camp Singing Wind in Toledo.

Puyallup Fair: Planning has already begun for the 2006 Puyallup Fair. The Puyallup Fair Board appreciates WDFW's participation in the fair, particularly with the kid's fishing pond, and the plan to improve the aesthetics around the pond, making it park-like, etc.

Sportsmen's Show: Outreach and Region 2 staff geared up for the Yakima Sportsmen's Show on February 17-19, 2006.

Washington State Angler Education Manager Appointed: A new Angler Education Manager has been hired to fill the vacancy resulting from Jim Byrd's retirement. Keith Underwood will begin work February 15. Besides being an avid fisherman, Keith is a Master Gardener (his family had an orchard in Yakima) and an active Ski Patrolman. Total Volunteer Hours For Calendar-Year 2005: Recently Program staff reported that a total of 90,000 volunteer hours were provided to the Agency in 2005. Since that report, additional hours have been submitted, bringing the total number of hours citizens volunteered in 2005 to 101,540.

Central WA Sportsmen's Show: Region 3 Fish Management personnel staffed shifts in WDFW's booth on all three days of the Central WA Sportsmen's Show at the Yakima Sun Dome, which ran February 17-19. Staff answered the public's questions regarding Columbia and Yakima River salmon/steelhead seasons and Region 3 lowland lake catchable trout stocking for 2006. We also demonstrated how to track emergency fishing rule changes on WDFW's web site and how to monitor Columbia River adult fish counts on-line using the Data Access in Real Time (DART) website:
<http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/>.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Program (RFEG) / Updated Fiscal Requirements: WDFW has prepared information for the RFEGs advising them of updates needed in the cost reimbursement procedures. These updates are a result of recent discussions with the State Auditor's Office after its most recent audit of this agency program. The RFEG Cost Reimbursement Manual is undergoing revision to reflect these updates.

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

Fishing Access on Wynoochee River: The cooperative agreement to reopen public access to a popular bank fishing area at the City of Aberdeen Water Diversion structure on the Wynoochee River has been finalized. This collaborative effort is between the City of Aberdeen, the Grays Harbor Chapter of Ducks Unlimited and WDFW. Signs at the site detailing the reopened area should be erected by late this week or early next week. Problems of trash/litter and dumping forced the City of Aberdeen to close off access to this popular area several months ago. Ultimately, it will be up to anglers to respect the City and adjacent owners property, if they want to maintain