



FUNDING CUTS AND RISING COSTS THREATEN FISHERIES

SB 5632

WDFW is also proposing adjustments to select hunting license fees.

See page 4 for details.

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SALMON, STEELHEAD AND OTHER FISH species play an integral role in the economy, ecology, and culture of Washington state. While the value of these resources cannot be fully expressed in dollars and cents, recreational and commercial fisheries generate billions of dollars for the state's economy.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is charged with maintaining these valuable species as well as the recreational and commercial fishing opportunities they provide.

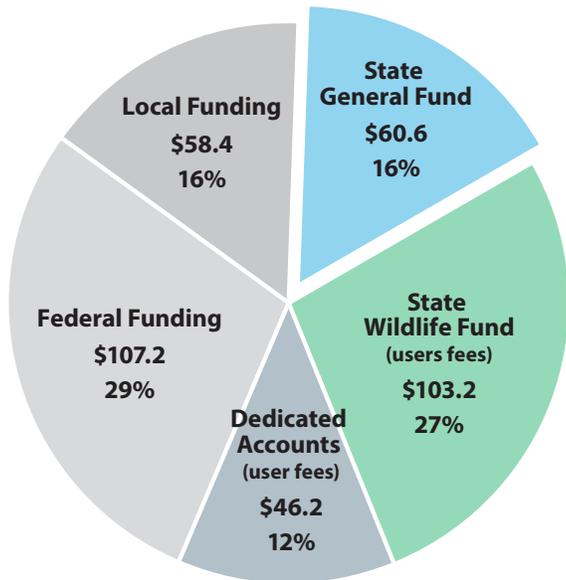
But meeting those responsibilities has become increasingly difficult in recent years, due to shrinking state and federal funding, steadily rising costs, and increasingly complex management requirements. For example:

- **State General Fund support** for WDFW has declined by about \$50 million – 45 percent – since 2008, forcing the department to make significant service reductions and funding adjustments. The Office of Financial Management indicates further reductions in General Fund support are likely, and Governor Inslee directed WDFW and most other state agencies to identify how they would absorb another cut of up to 15 percent in the 2015-17 budget cycle.
- **Federal dollars to WDFW** have been reduced by nearly \$1 million since 2012, and further reductions are expected. Until now, the federal government has provided a consistent level of funding for fish production and related fisheries management activities to offset the impacts on salmon and steelhead fisheries from dams on the Columbia River.
- **The costs of managing** recreational and commercial fisheries continue to rise. Most fisheries require hatchery fish production and stringent monitoring and enforcement of fishing regulations to ensure the resource remains sustainable. In fact, current and projected revenue may require WDFW to significantly reduce commercial salmon fisheries in the lower Columbia River, the ocean, Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and Puget Sound.

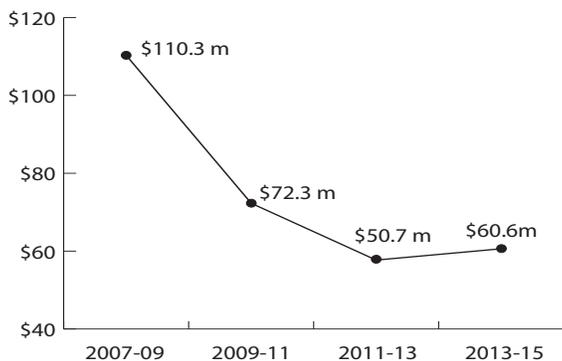
PRESERVING & ENHANCING FISHERIES THROUGH INCREASED LICENSE FEES

WDFW is largely funded from user fees, grants and other sources

Total 2013-15 operating budget: \$375.6 Million



State general fund support has fallen sharply



TO MAINTAIN AND INCREASE fishing opportunities, WDFW is seeking support from recreational and commercial fishers for license fee increases in 2015. The department's proposal to the Legislature may be revised based on public input and changing federal and state budget conditions. Under WDFW's current proposal:

The recreational fishing license fee for residents would increase by \$1 for a combination fishing license and by \$2 for a temporary combination license, a three-day razor clam license, and a one-day charter boat stamp, as well as annual saltwater, freshwater, shellfish, and razor clam licenses. Fees for all of those licenses would increase by \$5 for non-residents.

A new surcharge would be applied to commercial businesses that fish, harvest, sell, buy or process salmon and steelhead. Also, the salmon excise tax paid by commercial fishers would increase for the harvest of chinook, coho, chum, pink, and sockeye salmon. Individuals assisting in the commercial harvest of fish or shellfish would be required to possess a crewmember license.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission and WDFW director would be authorized to reduce recreational license fees to increase participation in fishing and hunting.

Based on annual sales of about 1.4 million recreational fishing licenses and 1,500 commercial licenses, the proposed increases would generate total new revenue to the State Wildlife Account of about \$3 million per year, including \$2.2 million from recreational fees and \$800,000 from the new commercial surcharge and excise tax increase.



BENEFITS FROM NEW FISHING LICENSE REVENUE

REVENUE FROM THE PROPOSED fee increases will help WDFW take several important actions to maintain Washington's salmon and steelhead fisheries. For example, the department plans to:

- **Maintain and increase hatchery production:** Hatchery production drives many fisheries in Washington, where nearly 300 million salmon and steelhead are produced each biennium. Without increased revenue, hatchery production of salmon and steelhead will significantly decrease, threatening the recreational and commercial fishing industries that are critical to the economies of numerous communities in Washington.
- **Enhance hatchery maintenance:** Washington has invested more than \$500 million in fish hatcheries, yet spends less than \$500,000 annually on maintaining the state's 82 facilities. The lack of maintenance at the state's aging hatcheries has resulted in costly emergency repairs, failing infrastructure, increased safety risks, and reduced fish production.
- **Reform hatchery programs:** With numerous salmon and steelhead stocks in Washington federally protected, WDFW must change state hatchery operations to support the recovery of these wild fish populations. Reforming hatchery operations to meet these efforts will result in federally approved hatchery and fishery management plans, which are key to ensuring Washington's fishing industries remain strong for future generations.
- **Increase monitoring and enforcement:** Most federally approved fisheries require stringent monitoring and enforcement programs to ensure the resource remains sustainable and protected species are not harmed. Without increasing these efforts, WDFW will need to significantly reduce current harvest opportunities for salmon and steelhead.

Fishing, hunting and wildlife watching are big business in Washington

Every five years the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducts a national survey of fishing, hunting and wildlife watching activities and spending. These results are from the 2011 survey for Washington State.

Fishing by residents and non-residents

Angler days	13.5 million
Average trip spending per day	\$40
Average annual spending per angler	\$1,085
Total fishing expenditures	\$1.03 billion

Hunting by residents and non-residents

Hunter days	2.6 million
Average trip spending per day	\$64
Average annual spending per hunter	\$1,421
Total hunting expenditures	\$356 million

Wildlife watching by residents and non-residents

Wildlife-watcher days	9.6 million
Average trip spending per day	\$53
Average annual spending per watcher	\$1,412
Total wildlife watching expenditures	\$3.2 billion



ADJUSTING HUNTING LICENSE FEES TO INCREASE ANNUAL PARTICIPATION

EACH YEAR, WDFW sells about 550,000 hunting licenses, generating about \$17 million to manage game populations, maximize recreational opportunities, and enforce related regulations.

Hunting license revenue has been relatively stable recently, although the number of hunters is slowly declining nationally. In Washington, fewer hunters are participating in small game hunting for species such as ducks, geese, and upland birds.

The sale of hunting licenses also supports efforts to reduce conflict between humans and wildlife, especially in areas where the increasing human population is encroaching on wildlife habitat. WDFW has traditionally relied on “master hunters” and has issued damage-hunt permits to reduce the size of herds that damage public and private property.

WDFW believes that selectively reducing certain fees will improve hunter recruitment and retention, and thereby increase revenue. With those goals in mind, the department is proposing several changes to state law that would:

- **Allow the state Fish and Wildlife Commission** to stimulate sales by reducing the price of several licenses that are currently set at fixed amounts. Under this change, state law would specify only the maximum fees and the commission could authorize selected discounts.



- **Establish new licenses** to encourage participation in damage-related hunts without requiring hunters to forego their general hunting season opportunities for deer and elk. The new Master Hunter and Damage Hunt licenses would cost \$20 each.
- **Establish a fee to recover the costs** of developing and operating the department’s private lands hunting reservation system.
- **Clarify hunting rules** for people with disabilities.

WDFW PROGRAMS SUPPORT RECREATION, COMMERCE, AND CONSERVATION

AS STATE GOVERNMENT’S PRINCIPAL STEWARD of fish and wildlife resources, WDFW supports \$4.5 billion in economic activity each year and more than 60,000 jobs across the state. WDFW conserves native fish and wildlife, protects and enhances the environment, and provides recreational and commercial fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other sustainable opportunities.

In communities throughout the state, the department’s 1,700 employees:

- **Manage fishing and hunting resources** to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities and economic benefits while conserving fish and wildlife species;
- **Operate 82 fish hatcheries** that produce salmon, steelhead, trout, and other game fish;
- **Manage programs to benefit hundreds** of fish and wildlife species, including those protected under federal and state endangered species laws;
- **Oversee nearly 1 million acres** of wildlife lands to provide public access while protecting the environment and providing habitat for fish and wildlife;
- **Maintain 700 boat launches** and other water access sites;
- **Conserve and restore habitat** with a special focus on ecosystems that support native fish stocks; and
- **Enforce laws and regulations** that protect fish and wildlife resources and public safety.