

## **“GREEN SHEET”**

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**Meeting:** October 7-8, 2011, Commission Meeting

**Agenda item #6:** Habitat Program Overview – Briefing

**Staff Contact:** Lisa Veneroso, Assistant Director, Habitat Program

**Presenter(s):** Lisa Veneroso, Assistant Director, Habitat Program

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**Background:**

The WDFW Habitat Program contributes to the agency’s conservation mission by protecting, conserving, and restoring ecosystems necessary for the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife in Washington State. To serve this goal, Habitat Program staff use permitting authority and provide sound scientific information, management recommendations, and expert technical guidance for use by internal and external agencies and the public.

The Habitat Program has undergone significant changes in recent years, resulting in a revised organizational structure, an expansion of functions, and a renewed commitment to fulfilling the WDFW mission. This briefing is intended to provide the Commission with an overview of the Program’s current structure, expertise, collaboration, and proactive approach to protecting, conserving and restoring fish and wildlife and the ecosystems they depend on.

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**Policy issues:**

None

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**Public involvement process and outcome:**

None

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**Action requested:**

None

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**Draft motion language:**

N/A

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**Justification for Commission Action:**

N/A

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**Communications Plan:**

The Habitat Program is in the process of developing new communication materials for other agencies and the public that describes the unique role and value of the Habitat Program.

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*Form updated 04/26/2010 - sdy*

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

# Habitat Program

September 2011



# Habitat Program

## Agency Mission

Preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife and the habitat they depend upon while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

## Habitat Program Vision

Washington State’s habitats are protected and restored to enable the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife populations and the ecosystems they depend upon.

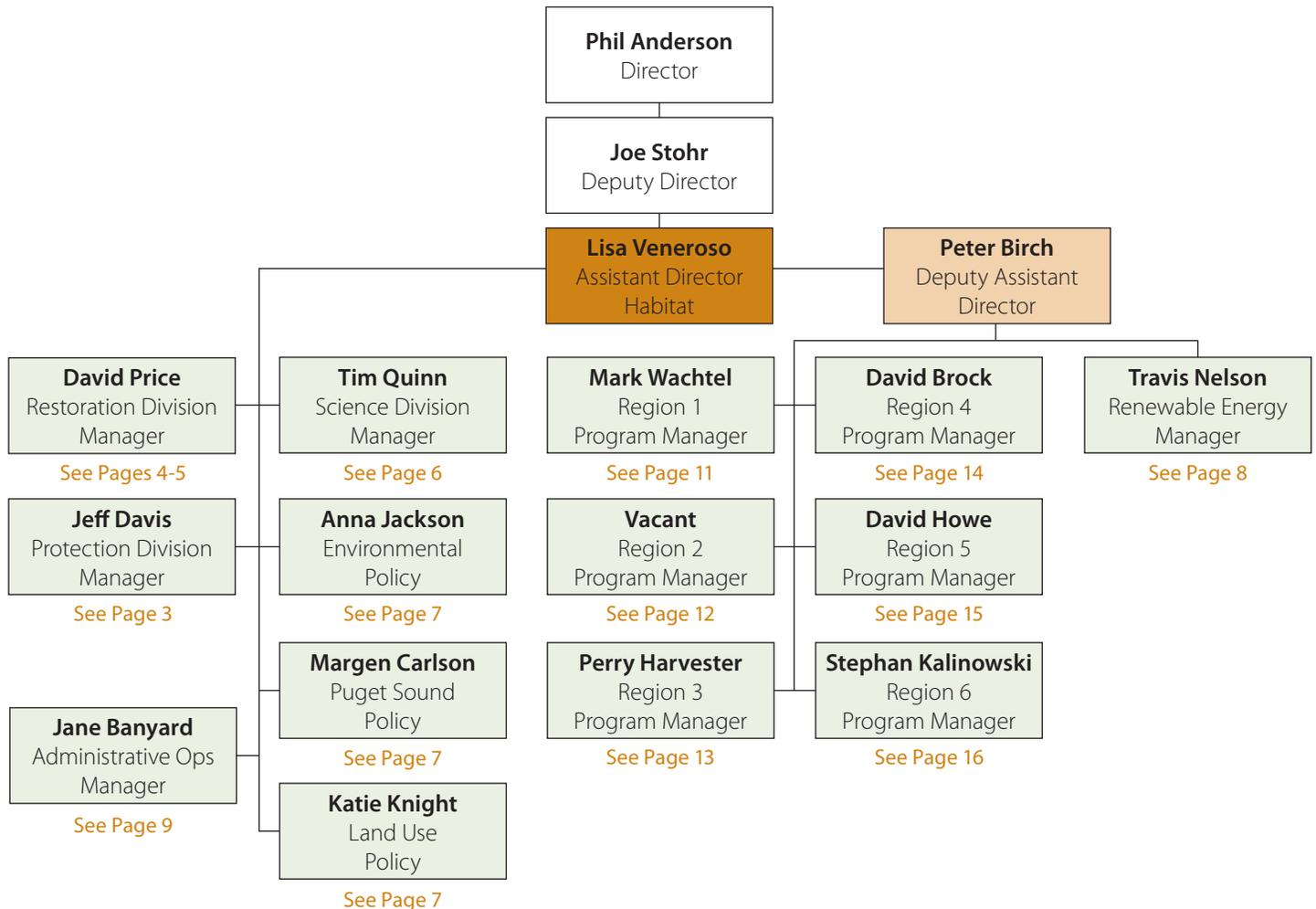
## Habitat Program

The Habitat Program is dedicated to protecting, conserving, and restoring ecosystems necessary for the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife populations in Washington State. To serve this need, Habitat Program staff use permitting authority and provide sound scientific information, management recommendations, and expert technical guidance to other agencies and the public.

## Organizational Structure

The Habitat Program employs 180 personnel with expertise in many disciplines, including fish and wildlife biology and ecology, scientific research, environmental engineering and planning expertise. Program members are located in seven offices: headquarters in Olympia and six regional offices located across the state.

The Habitat Program is organized into divisions focused on ecosystem Restoration, Protection, Science, Environmental Policy, and Administrative Operations.



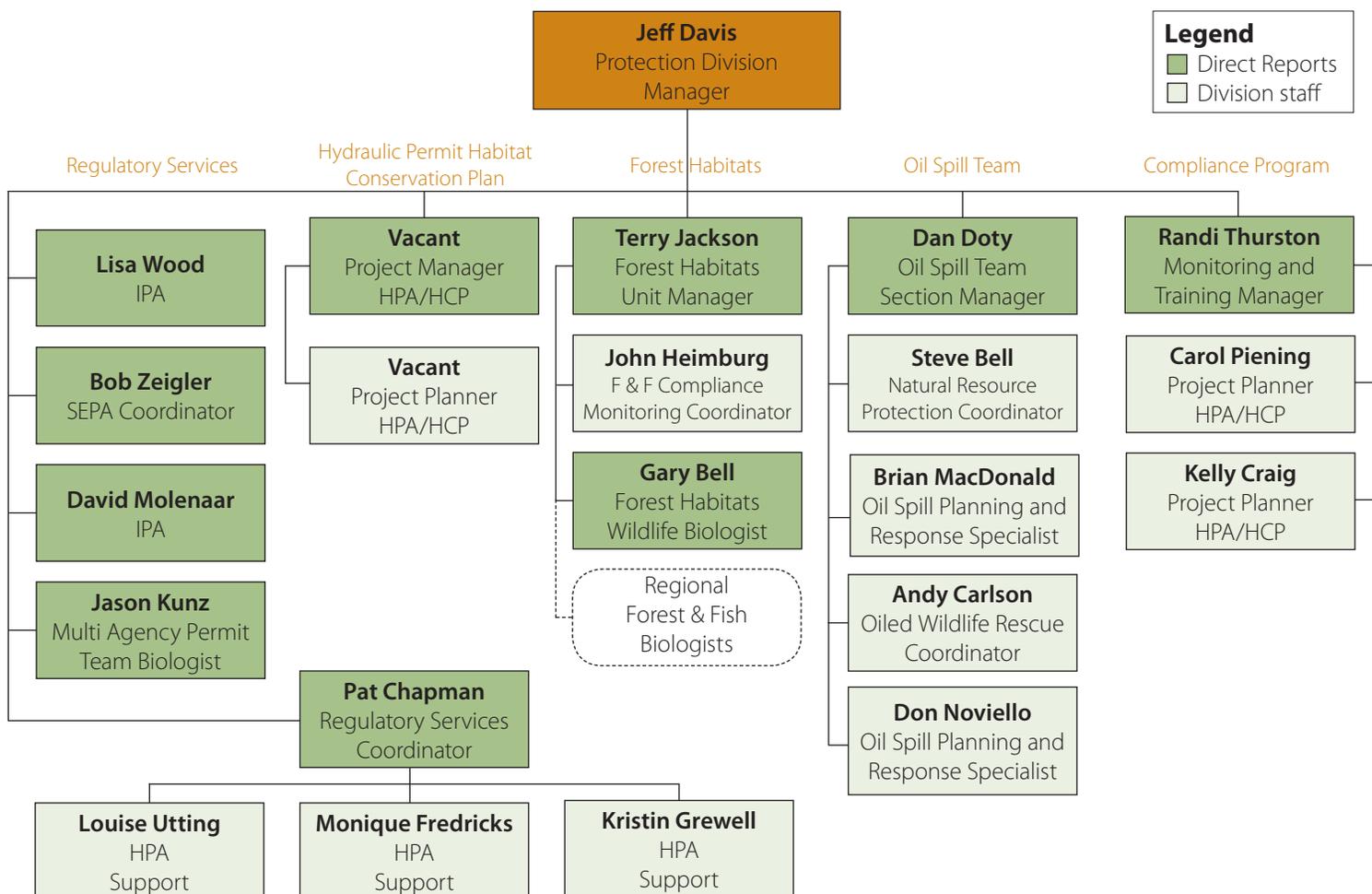
# Protection Division

The Protection Division protects fish life using WDFW's Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) permitting authority. Under state law, WDFW is charged with preserving, protecting and perpetuating all fish and shellfish resources of the state. To achieve this mission, the Legislature passed a law in 1943, known as the Hydraulic Code, that requires any construction activity in or near state waters be done under a HPA permit issued by WDFW. The purpose of the law and permit is to ensure that work avoids habitat damage or mitigates for loss of habitat.

The Protection Division also provides guidance in forest practices forums to protect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and coordinates agency efforts to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems from the impacts of oil spills.

## Focus Areas:

- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the HPA program.
- Developing a Habitat Conservation Plan to ensure that activities authorized under the HPA program meet federal requirements for fish and wildlife protection under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Protecting fish and wildlife resources through implementation of the Forest and Fish agreement and state forest practices rules, as well as contributing to prioritization and permitting of road management plans.
- Providing technical support to protect fish, wildlife, and their habitats from oil spills. This work includes planning, preparing, and responding to spills; recovering and rehabilitating oiled wildlife; assessing natural resource damage; and negotiating restoration efforts to compensate for fish, wildlife, and habitat impacts.

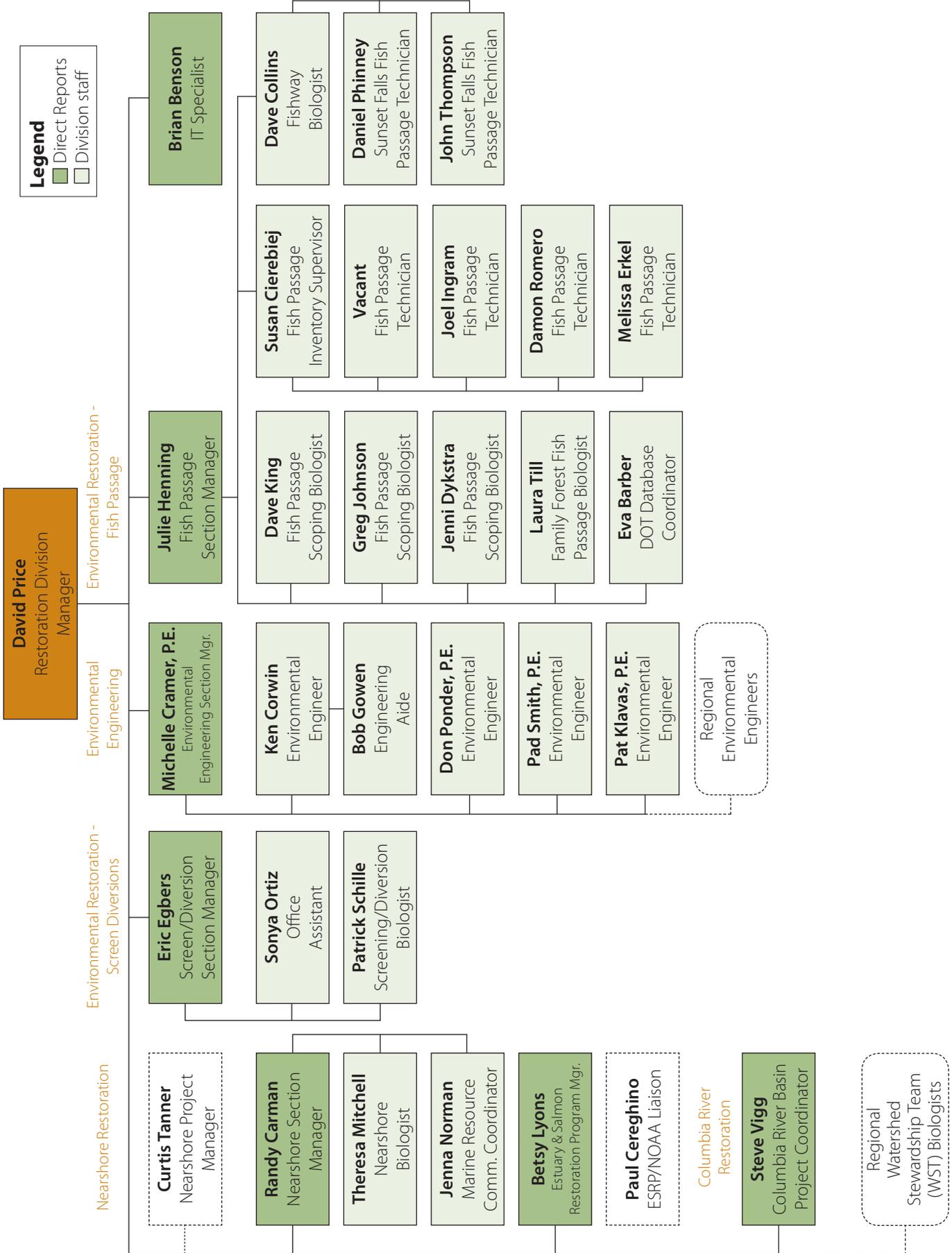


## Restoration Division

The Restoration Division leads DFW's efforts to restore and protect aquatic ecosystems, including freshwater, marine, and nearshore environments by providing scientific, engineering, and planning expertise through cooperative partnerships.

### Focus Areas:

- Providing nearshore ecosystem assessment, strategic planning, and funding assistance to local communities to maximize on-the-ground restoration and conservation projects.
- Serving as a local sponsor with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement a General Investigation known as the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project. DFW Habitat staff work with counties, tribes, and state and federal agencies to secure federal funding to restore functioning nearshore habitat throughout Puget Sound.
- Identifying and prioritizing needed projects to remove fish-passage barriers. This work includes fish passage evaluation, habitat assessment, and engineering design review of culverts, bridges, and fishways.
- Providing training and guidance to local restoration projects to help communities inventory fish passage and successfully restore habitat.
- Supporting aquatic habitat restoration by providing environmental engineering review, design, and technical guidance to public and private landowners and restoration entities.
- Offering technical guidance to irrigators to prevent fish from being trapped in irrigation systems.
- Coordinating the Outer Coast Marine Resource Committees.
- Representing DFW on the Pacific Salmon Commission Habitat Committee, Olympic National Sanctuary Advisory Council, and the Pacific Fisheries Management Council's Habitat Committee.



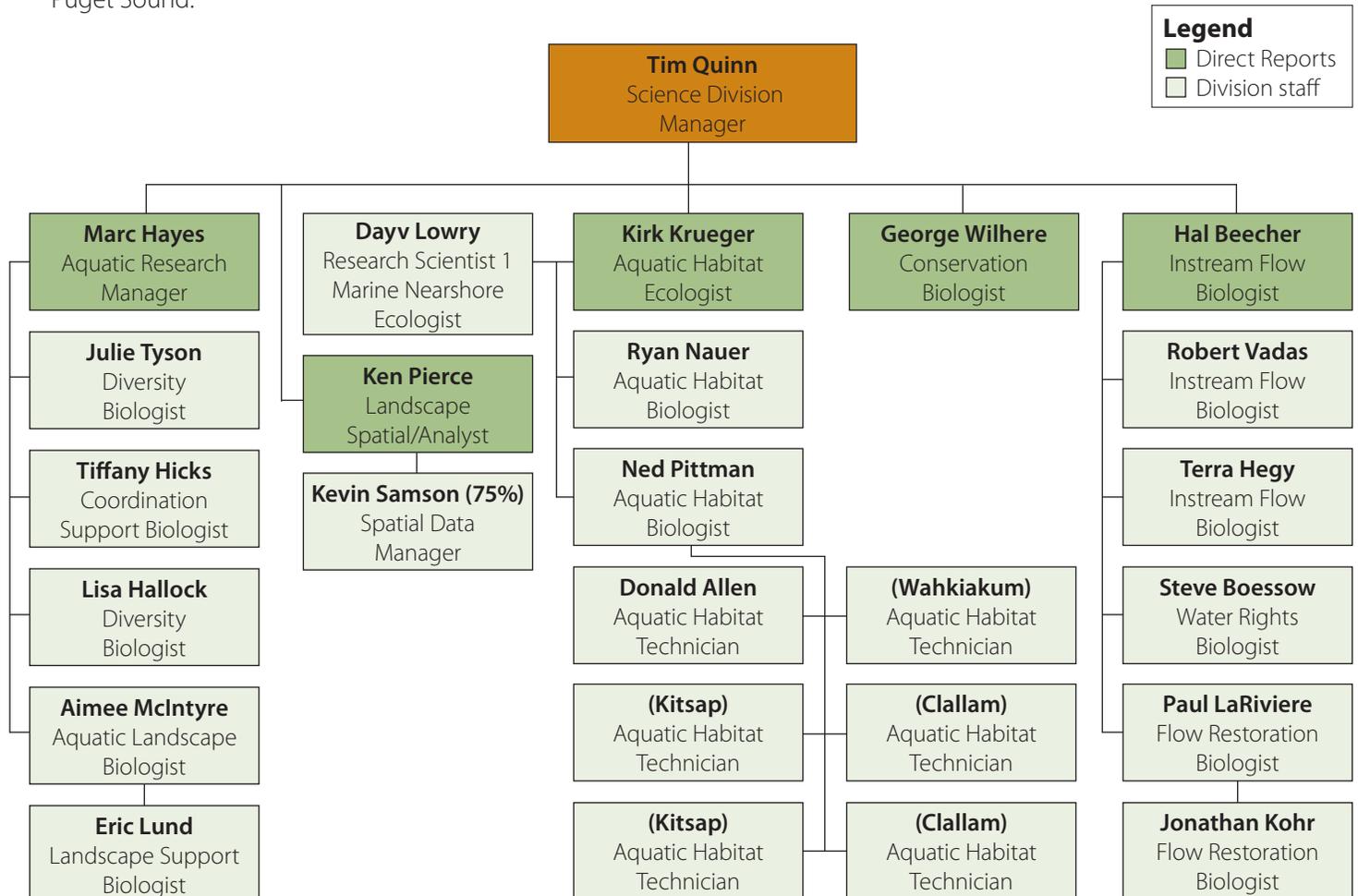
# Science Division

The Science Division helps provide the scientific foundation for DFW's management decisions and technical assistance related to conservation and restoration activities across the agency. This work includes identifying how habitat influences the survival, diversity, and productivity of fish and wildlife populations. Division staff develop new knowledge to better inform land-use actions and new techniques for monitoring ecosystem changes.

**Focus Areas:**

- Leading terrestrial, freshwater, and nearshore watershed characterization work for the Puget Sound Partnership. This work complements the state Department of Ecology's water flow and quality characterization and will help guide future development in Puget Sound watersheds.
- Providing technical expertise on forage fish ecology, including the distribution and habitat use of forage fish in Puget Sound.

- Coordinating a lowland marsh habitat recovery program that supports the Oregon Spotted Frog in Washington, Oregon, California, and British Columbia. This work includes identifying the best remaining places across the Pacific Northwest for habitat recovery and conservation efforts.
- Managing the Intensively Monitored Watersheds program to assess the success of habitat restoration programs in salmon and steelhead streams in ten watersheds of Western Washington.
- Leading the development of remote-sensing methodologies to quantify habitat gained through restoration and lost through development activities.
- Providing research-based stream flow and water-quantity planning and management recommendations to conserve and restore habitat and protect fish and wildlife from direct impacts of flow modifications.



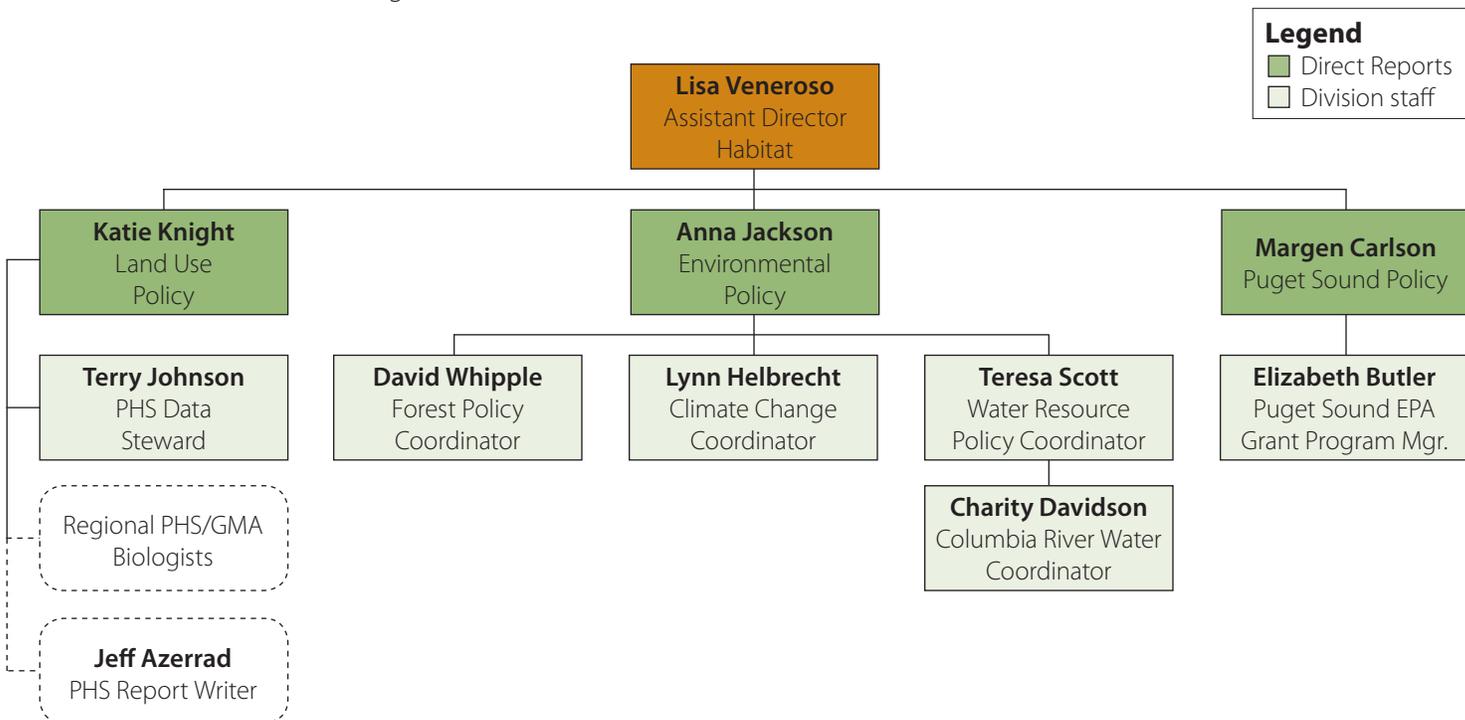
# Environmental Policy Division

The Environmental Policy Division provides leadership to resolve complex statewide environmental policy issues that affect fish, wildlife, and their habitats. This division provides applied science and expert guidance for habitat conservation partners and stakeholders to promote sound decisions on land use, development, and fish and wildlife habitat protection and recovery.

**Focus Areas:**

- Representing fish and wildlife habitat policy issues on the state Forest Practices Board and participating on the Forest Practices Board’s Wildlife Work Group, Northern Spotted Owl forum, and the Forest and Fish Policy Committee and forums. This work is aimed at resolving statewide fish and wildlife forest habitat policy issues associated with management of private, state, and federal forestland.
- Coordinating DFW’s climate adaptation strategies for fish and wildlife species, ecosystems, and habitats to prioritize biodiversity and maintain ecosystem integrity, processes, and functions. This work provides coordination and leadership to ensure that key DFW resource-management activities are adapted in preparation for climate change.
- Leading DFW’s participation in implementing the Puget Sound Partnership’s Action Agenda, including representing the agency on the state’s Ecosystem Coordination Board and state natural resources agencies’ caucus.

- Providing policy leadership and coordination of land use planning issues related to the Growth Management Act, Shoreline Management Act, and Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) program. Providing review services and science-based support for the development of local growth management and shoreline management plans, ordinances, and programs.
- Providing PHS information to local governments, tribes, land managers and developers, conservation and restoration groups, state and federal agencies, and the general public to help ensure that land-use decisions consider fish and wildlife needs.
- Leading agency coordination for water resource policy and implementation of Columbia River water and hydropower projects, including representing the agency on the Columbia River Water Program Policy Advisory Group, Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee, and Chelan/Douglas County HCP Coordinating Committees. This work also includes close coordination with the Department of Ecology’s Water Resources Program and Office of Columbia River, the federal Bureau of Reclamation, tribes, local governments, and water resource and environmental stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to water resource management that protect instream and other habitat resources while better serving water right stakeholder needs.



# Renewable Energy

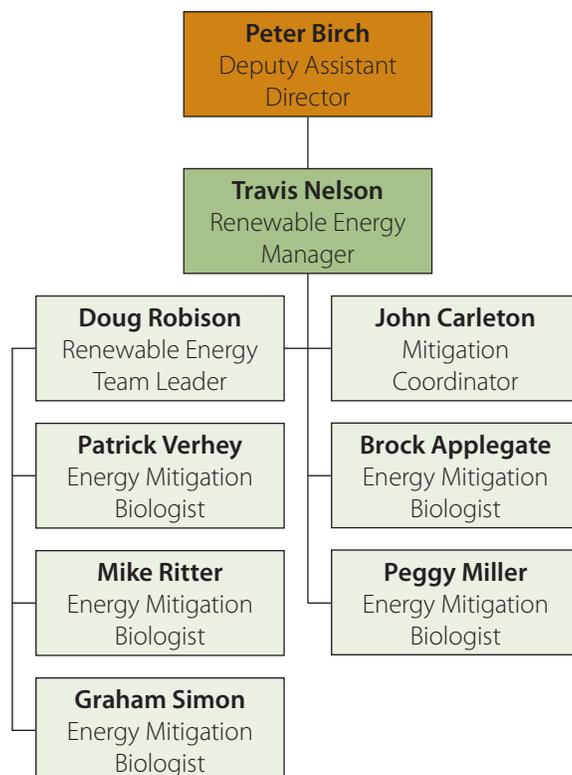
The Renewable Energy Team provides technical assistance in support of natural resource protection and mitigation for agricultural water supply, water storage, and energy projects (natural gas, wind, hydroelectric, wave, tidal, and nuclear). Technical assistance is provided for both existing and proposed energy facilities. Staff operate within the regulatory framework of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing process, the Federal Clean Water Act (Section 401) process, the State of Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) process, and various other regulatory processes.

**Focus Areas:**

- Negotiating and implementing mitigation and settlement agreements for resource impacts from energy project development and operations. Agreements are developed through a collaborative process involving the project proponent, state, federal, and tribal agencies and species experts with disciplines specific to natural resources in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest.
- Providing technical assistance to energy project owners to guide project development and siting decisions that result

in equitable consideration for impacts to natural resources and energy generation. Current high priorities include the license implementation for the Boundary hydro-electric project north of Spokane, the Cushman hydro-electric project, the Radar Ridge wind project within the Marbled Murrelet recovery area, and the Statewide Energy Mitigation Land Bank in Klickitat County.

- Supporting voluntary compliance with the DFW Wind Power Guidelines by working with permitting authorities at the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council and county planning departments to include permit conditions that provide for habitat and wildlife protection and mitigation.
- Building and maintaining the science of wildlife and energy facility interactions through applied research using the Grayland Wind Energy Project Memorandum of Understanding which provides DFW with the opportunity to conduct wildlife interaction research at the facility.
- Conducting wildlife assessments on state lands eligible for wind energy leases. Objectives are accomplished through a partnership with Department of Natural Resources to develop the Wind Power Leasing Strategy and Risk Assessment Tool for State Lands within Habitat Conservation Plan unit boundaries.

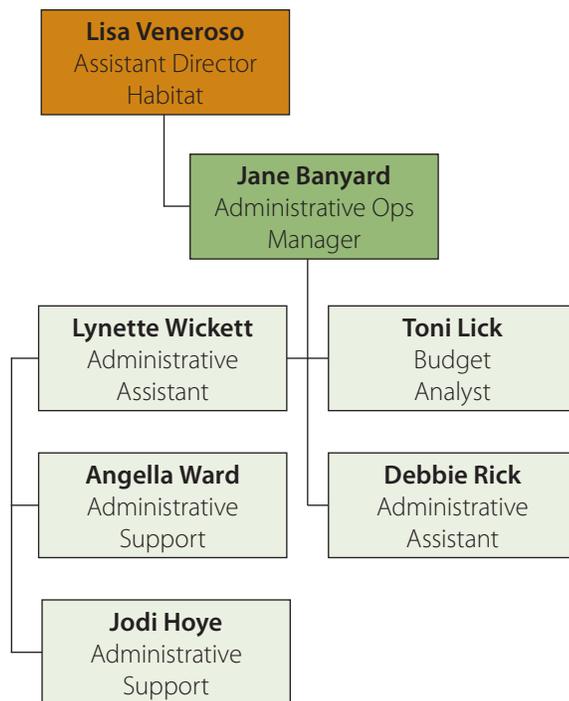


# Administrative Operations Division

The Administrative Operations Division provides budget management and administrative support to the Habitat Program.

**Focus Areas:**

- Managing the Habitat Program’s operating budget and federal, local, and interagency contracts.
- Coordinating communication efforts for the Habitat Program.
- Coordinating Habitat Program legislative bill analyses and fiscal notes.
- Providing excellent customer service and administrative support.



# Regional Offices

Habitat Program staff in each of DFW's six regional offices work closely with Habitat Program headquarters staff to implement permitting authority and provide sound scientific information, management recommendations, and expert technical guidance to other agencies and the public. Regional staff serve as the primary public point of contact for implementing the Habitat Program's vision of ensuring that Washington State's habitats are protected and restored to enable the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife populations and the ecosystems they depend upon.

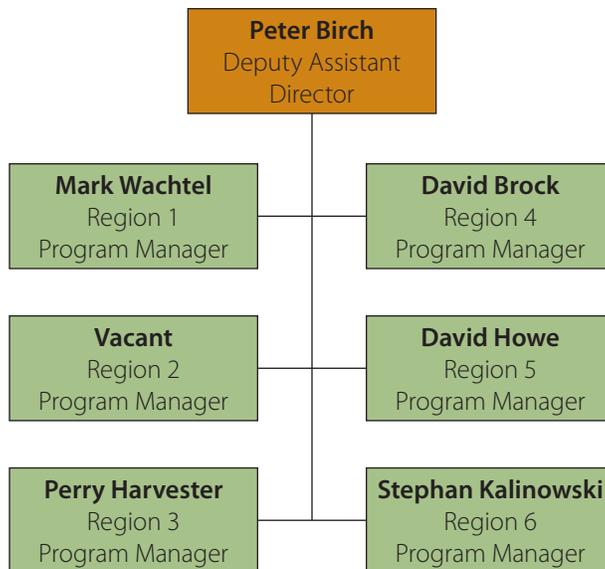
**Focus Areas:**

- Providing timely and collaborative reviews of HPAs to support fish protection and recovery.
- Offering technical support consistent with habitat conservation priorities to local governments participating in Growth Management Act planning, Shoreline Management Plan and Critical Area Ordinance updates, and the application of PHS information to regulatory activities.

- Working cooperatively with forestland owners to promote habitat protection and restoration.
- Designing and implementing habitat restoration projects with tribal, federal, state, and local partners.
- Providing technical assistance to citizens on habitat protection and restoration.
- Supporting Lead Entities and fish-enhancement groups through regional habitat recovery forums and projects.
- Fostering cooperative relationships with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that fish and wildlife habitat needs are considered in decision-making processes.
- Providing regional support for Habitat Program operations.

**Abbreviations used:**

**WST:** Watershed Stewardship Team  
**PHS:** Priority Habitat & Species  
**GMA:** Growth Management Act  
**F&F:** Forest & Fish  
**RHPM:** Regional Habitat Program Manager



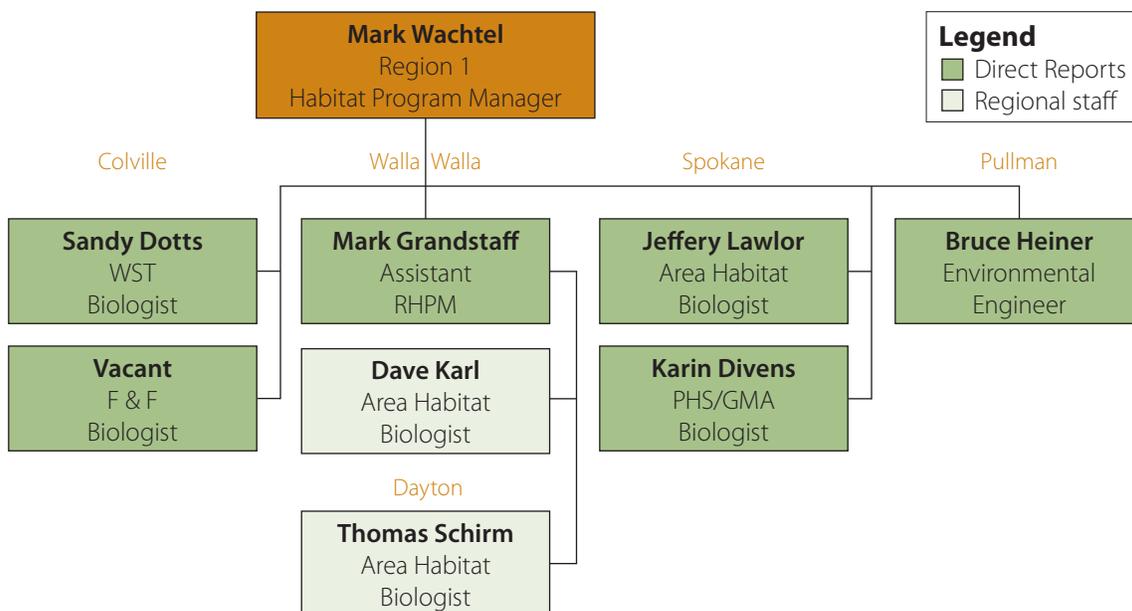
# Region 1

This region covers Washington’s ten eastern-most counties from Canada to Oregon and from Idaho to the Columbia Basin, including Pend Oreille, Stevens, Ferry, Lincoln, Spokane, Whitman, Garfield, Asotin, Columbia, and Walla Walla counties.

**Focus Areas:**

- Issuing an average of 400 HPAs each year, with a workload of approximately 100 permits per year for each area habitat biologist.
- Reviewing approximately 90 Road Management and Abandonment Plans annually, assessing an average of 300 stream typing projects each year, and reviewing approximately 1,000 Forest Practice applications each year.
- Addressing fish needs and future water use in the Pend Oreille and Spokane Rivers as part of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydroelectric dam re-licensing processes.

- Providing ongoing technical assistance to Pend Oreille County, the City of Spokane Valley, and the City of Clarkston’s Growth Management Act and Shoreline Management Plan to incorporate PHS information into these ordinances.
- Reviewing Spokane County’s Growth Management Act and Shoreline Management Act plans for compliance with state environmental policy.
- Guiding the Mill Creek Passage project to address the flood control structures in Walla Walla.
- Participating on the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board and over 20 salmon recovery projects to ensure salmon habitat is protected and restored.



## Region 2

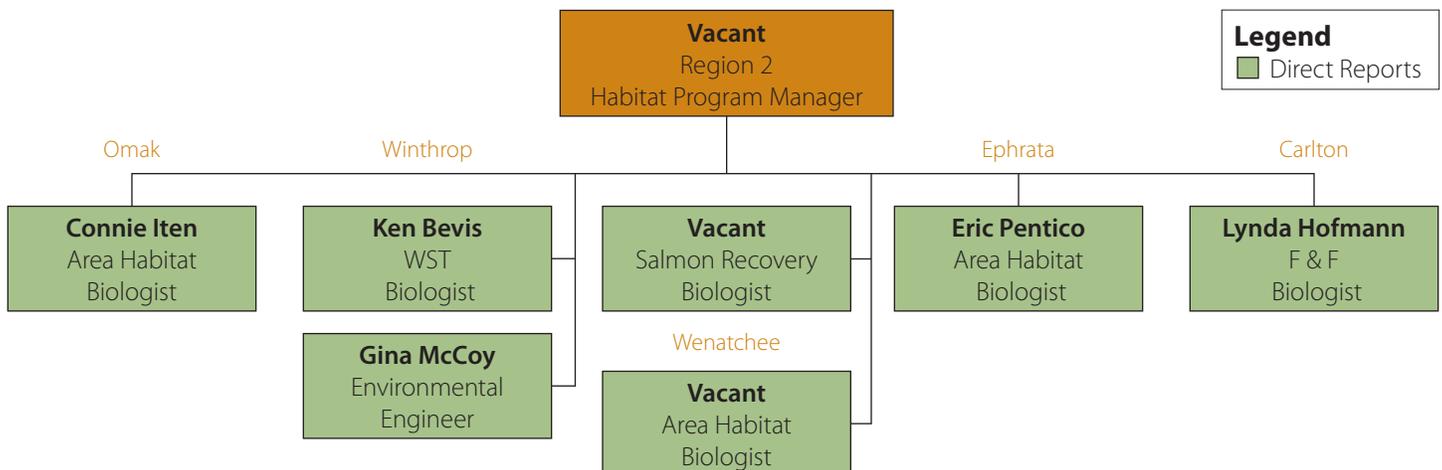
This north-central Washington region is bordered on the north by the Okanogan Highlands and Canadian border, on the west by the crest of the North Cascade Mountains, and extends south and east through the Columbia Basin Plateau. The region contains many diverse terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including many large lakes and rivers such as Lake Chelan and the Columbia River, and encompasses Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Okanogan counties.

### Focus Areas:

- Issuing an average of 240 HPA permits each year, with a workload of approximately 80 permits per year for each area habitat biologist.
- Reviewing an average of 280 Forest Practice Applications each year.
- Protecting fish and wildlife through participation in the Eastern Washington Cascades and Yakima Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Scientific Advisory

Group-East Side (SAGE) to support adaptive habitat management in landscape-scale activities on dry east-side coniferous forests.

- Participating in Upper Columbia River Salmon Recovery forums that address listed salmon, steelhead, and bull trout recovery and other fish and wildlife habitat-restoration projects within the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Region.
- Supporting implementation of the Columbia River Water Management Program with emphasis on water storage, the Crab Creek Feeder Route, and Odessa Aquifer Study.
- Protecting fish and wildlife resources and habitat through participation in Columbia River Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) License applications and implementation.
- Promoting protection and restoration of the Lake Chelan ecosystem and its important native fish life through participation in the Lake Chelan In-Lieu Fee Program.



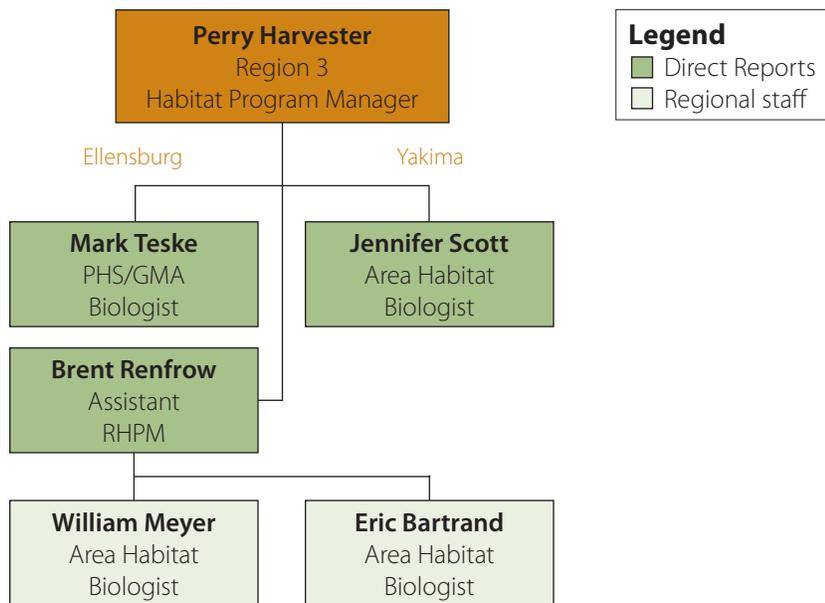
## Region 3

This South Central region is bordered on the west by the Cascade Mountains and extends eastward to the Tri-Cities area, encompassing much of the state's remaining shrub steppe habitat. The region includes the Yakima River Basin, the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River and Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, and Franklin counties.

### Focus Areas:

- Issuing an average of 230 HPA permits each year, with an annual workload of approximately 60 permits for each area habitat biologist.
- Conserving and protecting remaining shrub-steppe habitat and priority species that depend on these habitats. Over 30,000 acres of shrub-steppe habitat has been acquired or protected.

- Protecting pine forest habitat by working collaboratively to restore ecosystems where wild land fires have occurred.
- Providing technical guidance to protect fish and wildlife in forums that are developing methods to utilize forest products for renewable energy.
- Restoring habitat to aid recovery of threatened salmon and steelhead populations in the Yakima River Basin.
- Preserving nearly 2,000 acres of forest land through Teanaway Solar Reserve mitigation agreement.



# Region 4

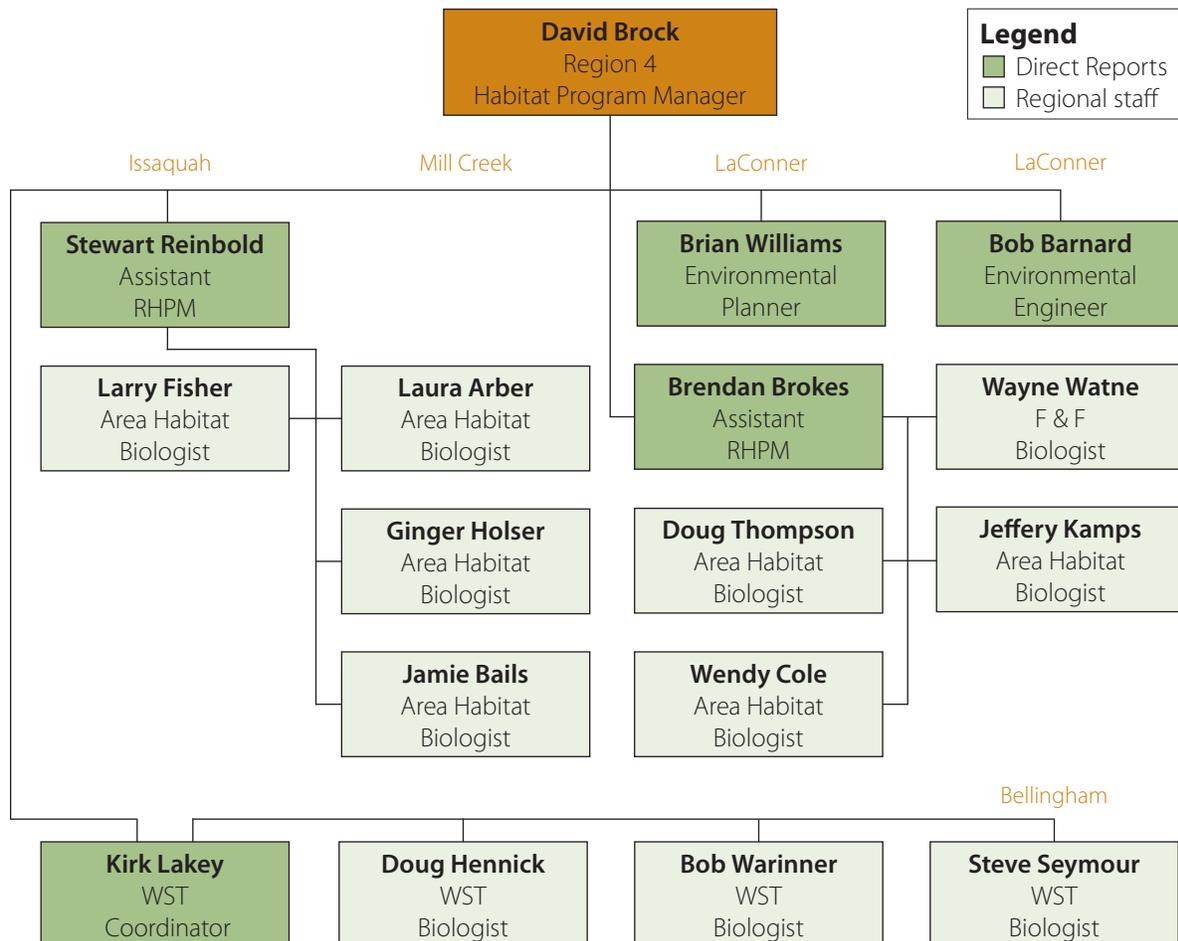
This region covers northern Puget Sound from King County to the Canadian border and includes King, Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom counties.

**Focus Areas:**

- Issuing approximately 1,500 HPA permits each year, with an annual workload of approximately 160 permits for each area habitat biologist.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive management plan in Skagit County for water courses on

agriculture land, known as the Tidegate/Fish Initiative (TFI). The aim of the work is to provide clarity and certainty for the agriculture community on stream management on agricultural land.

- Planning, developing, and implementing fish habitat enhancement projects with tribal staff, including work with the Lummi and Nooksack tribes on fish habitat projects in the three forks of the Nooksack River and with Skagit River Systems Cooperative on beach habitat along the east side of Fidalgo Bay.



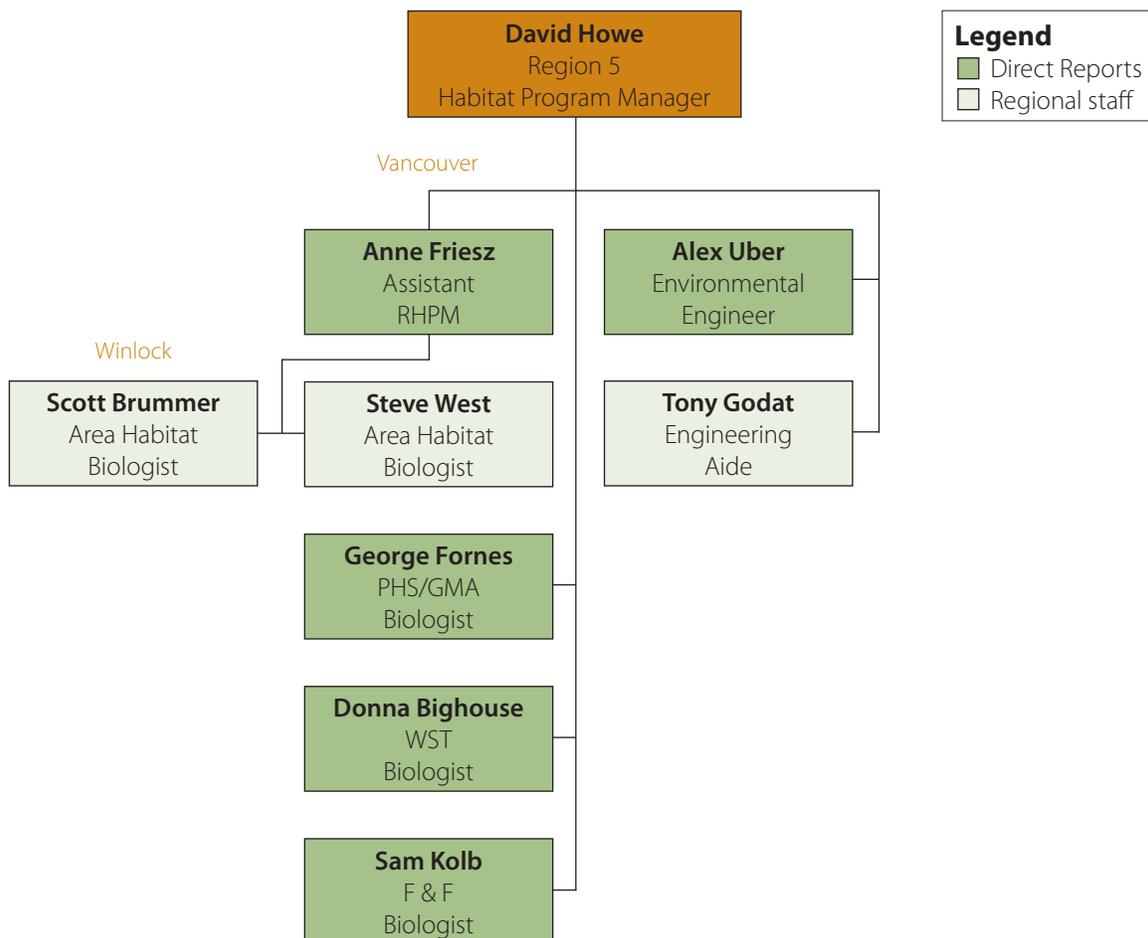
# Region 5

This region covers southwest Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties.

**Focus Areas:**

- Issuing an average of 500 HPA permits each year, with an annual workload of approximately 125 permits for each area habitat biologist. Major projects include the future replacement of the Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River and the removal of Condit Dam on the White Salmon River.
- Providing advice on sustainable wind power development in Klickitat and Skamania Counties to balance clean energy interests with conservation of avian and other sensitive species, including development of a land/mitigation bank.

- Providing technical assistance to cities and counties for land use and comprehensive planning decisions, including the Clark County Shoreline Master Plan update and participation in the development and implementation of the Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery and Fish and Wildlife Sub basin Plan.
- Implementing the Columbia River Estuary Memorandum of Agreement that commits \$40.5 million of federal funds for WDFW sponsored estuary habitat projects to restore ESA-listed salmon and steelhead abundance in the Lower Columbia River estuary.
- Reviewing western gray squirrel management plans in Klickitat and Skamania counties for consistency with WDFW Management Recommendations.



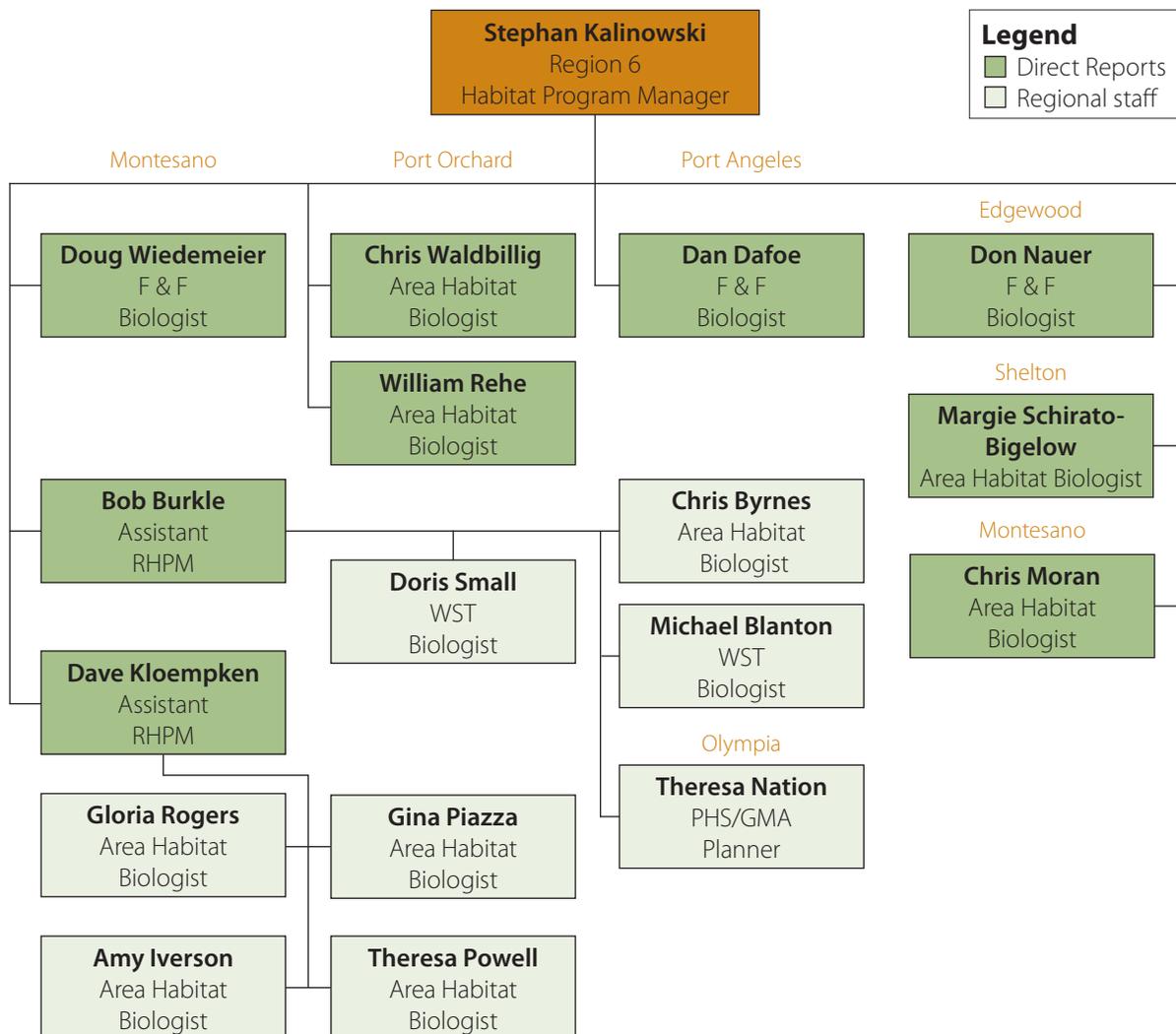
# Region 6

This region covers the Pacific coastal counties from the Long Beach Peninsula in the south to the Olympic Peninsula and the Strait of Juan de Fuca in the north, and as far east as Mount Rainier. Along with areas surrounding southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal, the counties in this region are Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Kitsap, Pierce, Thurston, Grays Harbor, and Pacific.

**Focus Areas:**

- Issuing an average of 1,150 HPA permits each year, with an annual workload of approximately 100 permits for each area habitat biologist.

- Addressing PHS needs through recommendations on Shoreline Master Plan updates in Jefferson, Pierce, Thurston, and Kitsap counties.
- Developing salmon recovery guidelines, such as the Land Use Planning for Salmon, Steelhead, and Trout and the Steelhead Foundation’s primer for recovery.
- Participating on the Chehalis Basin Flood Authority, Twin Cities Flood Damage Reduction General Investigation, and Chehalis Basin Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Retention General Investigation.





**Lisa Veneroso**  
Assistant Director  
(360) 902-2836  
Lisa.Veneroso@dfw.wa.gov

**Peter Birch**  
Deputy Assistant Director  
(360) 902-2641  
Peter.Birch@dfw.wa.gov

**David Price**  
Restoration Division Manager  
(360) 902-2565  
David.Price@dfw.wa.gov

**Jeff Davis**  
Protection Division Manager  
(360) 902-2527  
Jeffrey.Davis@dfw.wa.gov

**Tim Quinn**  
Chief Scientist  
(360) 902-2414  
Timothy.Quinn@dfw.wa.gov

**Anna Jackson**  
Environmental Policy  
(360) 902-2589  
Anna.Jackson@dfw.wa.gov

**Margen Carlson**  
Puget Sound Policy  
(360) 902-2229  
Margen. Carlson@dfw.wa.gov

**Jane Banyard**  
Administrative Operations Manager  
(360) 902-2530  
Jane.Banyard@dfw.wa.gov



**Mark Wachtel**  
Region 1 Habitat Program Manager  
(509) 892-7860 ext 320  
Mark.Wachtel@dfw.wa.gov

**Vacant**  
Region 2 Habitat Program Manager

**Perry Harvester**  
Region 3 Habitat Program Manager  
(509) 457-9314  
Perry.Harvester@dfw.wa.gov

**David Brock**  
Region 4 Habitat Program Manager  
(425) 775-1311 ext 114  
David.Brock@dfw.wa.gov

**David Howe**  
Region 5 Habitat Program Manager  
(360) 906-6729  
David.Howe@dfw.wa.gov

**Stephan Kalinowski**  
Region 6 Habitat Program Manager  
(360) 249-4628 ext 227  
Stephan.Kalinowski@dfw.wa.gov