



Fish, wildlife and Washington's economy

Spending by fishers, hunters and wildlife watchers generates more than \$4.5 billion annually for Washington state's economy. Many of the dollars they spend support small businesses and rural communities, keeping cash registers ringing in restaurants, motels, gas stations, convenience stores and sporting goods outlets.

Some 40 percent of Washingtonians participate in the outdoor economy by fishing, hunting or actively observing wildlife, according to a national survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Commercial fisheries, meanwhile, generate an average of \$1.6 billion here annually by the time their catch is processed and distributed through wholesalers.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is the state agency charged with protecting native fish and wildlife, and providing sustainable fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities for millions of residents and visitors.

Working throughout the state, WDFW's 1,385 employees—field biologists, enforcement officers, land stewards, lab technicians and customer service staff—manage hundreds of species, maintain nearly a million acres of public lands and serve the public.

By the numbers:

Fish and wildlife generate annual economic benefits for Washington's economy:

\$1.5 billion Wildlife viewing *

\$1.1 billion Sport fishing *

\$313 million Hunting *

\$1.6 billion Commercial harvest/wholesale +

* Source US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

+ Source: Fisheries Economics of the United States 2006 (NOAA)

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WDFW's role: Stewardship of fish, wildlife and habitat



The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) primary mandate under state law is to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish and wildlife. In addition, the department is directed to provide sustainable fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities that are consistent with those goals. WDFW fulfills this dual mandate by:

- **Protecting vulnerable species:** Dozens of native species are classified as "threatened" or "endangered" in Washington state. WDFW monitors populations throughout their habitat, and develops and implements recovery plans for vulnerable species. Recovery efforts are under way for species ranging from gray wolves to rockfish.
- **Developing sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities:** Each year, WDFW resource managers craft fishing and hunting seasons, harvest limits and other regulations, based on the abundance of fish and game in particular areas. Fishing seasons are developed jointly with treaty Indian tribes to meet allocation requirements.
- **Rearing fish for harvest:** WDFW operates 87 fish hatcheries, which produce millions of salmon, steelhead, and trout for harvest each year. Many facilities also play an important role in recovering wild salmon and steelhead populations by incubating the eggs of at-risk stocks.
- **Enforcing fish and wildlife regulations:** WDFW enforcement officers patrol land and water to ensure compliance with regulations designed to protect fish, wildlife and habitat. WDFW officers also respond each year to thousands of reports of wildlife-related threats to public safety and damage to agricultural lands.
- **Protecting and restoring fish and wildlife habitat:** Fish and wildlife must have healthy, functioning habitat in order to survive. WDFW works with local governments, tribes, non-profit groups and private landowners to avert habitat damage and to restore wetlands, estuaries, shorelines and other critical habitat. The department also manages nearly one million acres of lands for fish and wildlife habitat.

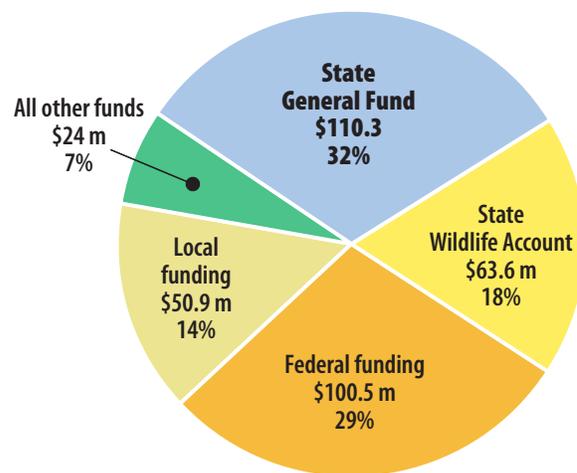
State General Fund – Revenues derived from state tax dollars

State Wildlife Account – Funds generated by fishing and hunting license fees, fines and forfeitures

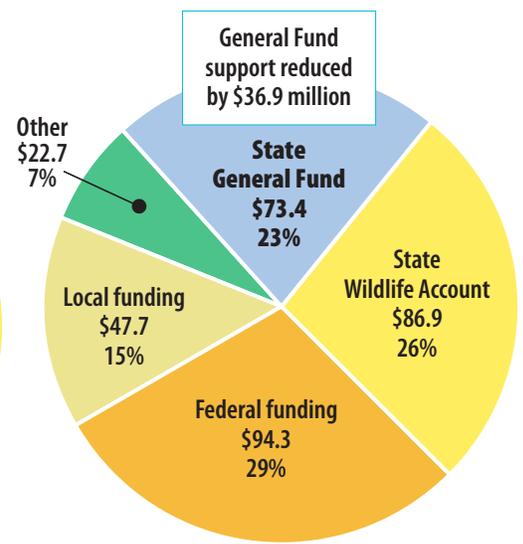
Federal Funding – Grants received from federal agencies

Local Funding – Revenues derived from providing services to local governments

Other Funds – State funding from accounts dedicated to specific activities, such as oil-spill response and regional fisheries development



2007-09 WDFW operating budget
\$349.3 million | 1,549 FTEs



2009-11 WDFW operating budget
\$326.8 million | 1,386 FTEs

Growing challenges, shrinking budget

Washington's fish and wildlife face mounting pressures from the state's growing human population. Many of the resources they need to survive – land, water and stable source of food – have been altered by decades of residential and commercial development.

Meanwhile, funding for fish and wildlife stewardship has been slashed amid the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. During the 2009-11 biennium, state General Fund support for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) was cut by nearly \$37 million – more than 33 percent – requiring significant reductions in key services.

These cutbacks have a direct effect on fish, wildlife and the economic benefits they produce for the people of Washington state.

Budget cuts mean service reductions

Certain programs have borne the brunt of WDFW's General Fund cut, because much of the department's overall budget is dedicated to specific projects. New fishing and hunting fees approved by the Legislature could generate up to \$10 million, but that is far short of the amount needed to maintain WDFW programs and services. As a result, cuts have been made in a number of key services.

Wildlife area maintenance: Garbage collection, toilet cleaning and other maintenance activities have been reduced at public-access sites on WDFW lands across the state.

Enforcement: The number of enforcement officers has been frozen at the lowest level in a decade, reducing WDFW's capacity to protect natural resources and public safety in several areas of the state. No officers are currently assigned to Garfield, Adams or east Lewis counties, and fisheries patrols have been reduced throughout the state. Overtime hours have been cut by a third, reducing law enforcement during holidays and special events.

Fish production: Salmon and steelhead production at state hatcheries has been cut by 9 percent in Puget Sound and on the Washington coast, reducing the number of fish available for harvest in future years. The Bellingham Hatchery and Palmer Ponds rearing facility in eastern King County are scheduled for closure and five hatchery manager positions in western Washington have been eliminated, reducing oversight of dozens of state hatcheries.

Marine fish monitoring: Surveys of several marine fish stocks have been delayed due to budget cuts, depriving fish managers of needed information on Puget Sound herring and rockfish populations.

Wildlife research and recovery: Cuts in funding have compromised the department's ability to manage deer, elk and waterfowl. Research on marine mammals that prey on protected fish runs has also been curtailed. Recovery efforts have been reduced for species ranging from killer whales to marbled murrelets listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Habitat protection: The department can make only about half the number of direct contacts with citizens planning construction projects around rivers, lakes and other waters. This reduction is expected to result in reduced compliance with Hydraulic Project Approval permit conditions that are intended to protect fish and shellfish. At the same time, WDFW habitat-protection advice and assistance to landowners, utilities and local governments have also been reduced.

Ecotourism: Budget cuts have limited WDFW support for local communities seeking to develop wildlife-related tourism. Past support for wildlife-related tourism efforts has helped to generate an estimated \$1.5 billion for the state's economy each year.

Business services: Funding for WDFW's business operations was reduced by \$5.6 million, eliminating 12 percent of department's business-services staff. These cuts have strained basic services such as financial management, computer support and employee training.

User fees prevent deeper cuts in service

About one quarter of WDFW's operating budget comes from fishing and hunting license sale revenues. As state General Fund support to the department declines, user fees are more important than ever in helping to avert even deeper cuts to services. The 2009 Legislature authorized a temporary recreational license surcharge and several other fees changes that are expected to generate up to \$10 million in the current biennium. These fees are designed to offset part of the WDFW's \$29.1 million reduction in WDFW's state General Fund support.

- **Temporary surcharge:** A temporary, 10 percent surcharge on sales of recreational licenses, permits, tags, stamps and raffle tickets is expected to generate \$6.1 million during the 2009-11 biennium. The surcharge is scheduled to remain in place until June 30, 2011.
- **Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead endorsement pilot program:** A new \$7.50 annual fee for adult salmon and steelhead anglers who fish the Columbia River and its tributaries is expected to raise \$1.6 million during the biennium. The fee takes effect April 1, 2010, and proceeds will be used to maintain and improve recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River basin.
- **Two pole option:** A new licensing option allows anglers to fish with two poles in certain waters for an additional annual fee of \$20 (\$5 for resident seniors). The optional fee is expected to generate \$1.5 million in revenues to support hatchery fish production in the 2009-11 biennium.
- **Pheasant permits:** A modification in the way western Washington pheasant hunting is permitted boosts each pheasant hunter's annual fees by \$3, generating an estimated \$422,000 in the current biennium to maintain production at westside pheasant release sites. Eastern Washington pheasant hunters are not affected by the measure.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife—by the numbers

- 1 million+** The number of people who purchase Washington State fishing licenses, hunting licenses or vehicle-use permits for access to WDFW lands each year.
- 175 million** Salmon, steelhead smolt, trout, and warm water fish such as bass, perch, and walleye reared at WDFW hatcheries for release into Washington waters each year.
- 95 million** Hatchery-produced coho and chinook salmon and steelhead marked each year so fishers can distinguish them from protected wild fish, and fishing can continue in the era of endangered species listings.
- 348** Selective salmon fisheries provided through mass marking efforts by WDFW in 2008.
- 2.9 million** Hunter days of recreation provided through WDFW's management of 55 game species, including elk, deer, bear, cougar, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, waterfowl, upland game birds and small game.
- 185,313** Endorsements purchased by sportfishers to fish for Dungeness crab in Puget Sound in 2008.
- 300,000** Public contacts made by WDFW's enforcement officers in 2008 to educate citizens and ensure compliance with natural-resource laws. Those contacts included 450 citizen complaints about cougars and 669 complaints about black bears.
- 63,235** Razor-clam licenses purchased during the 2008 season.
- 840,000** Acres of state lands managed by WDFW to provide habitat for fish and wildlife and recreational opportunities for citizens.
- 686** Water and land access sites operated by WDFW to provide hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and other recreational activities.
- 1 million** Approximate number of annual visits to WDFW lands each year.
- 1.4 million** Acres of land made available for hunting through WDFW agreements with private landowners per year.
- 60,000** Pheasants released annually by WDFW game managers.
- 13,000** People completing WDFW's Hunter Education course each year.

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Razor clam digs draw up to 30,000 people to Washington's beaches in a single day.