

Washington's Wild Future

A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife

Lacey Regional Forum

October 8, 2015

The following public comments were offered by participants at an open forum on fish and wildlife issues sponsored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) at Saint Martin's University in Lacey. Approximately 70 participants attended the event, one of six regional forums conducted around the state.

Agency management

- Reach out more often to other organizations.
- Attend more events for outreach.
- Focus outreach efforts on college students and the younger generation. Get into classrooms, identify skillsets that students should develop.
- This forum was a good thing!
- Watershed council: Lead entities would like direct contacts with WDFW regarding drought and fish issues.
- Reintroduce urban wildlife to urban areas. Public education would help people see the potential.
- The WDFW director needs to meet with the Cowlitz River Advisory Group to examine policy decisions that are contradictory to the best available science and the commission's policy.
- WDFW needs to take a lead role in science of spill in the Columbia River for spring Chinook. Increase the flow.
- Reinstate the director's Lands Management Advisory Council.
- Number 1 priority: Get rid of the F&W Commission.
- WDFW should interact in management processes with commercial and industry (sportfishing) on a more level playing field.
- North of Falcon is too long. Needs to be more available to people who work 9-5.
- Local elected officials need more information about wildlife and their jurisdiction.
- Agency staff should deal with citizen advisory groups with honesty and consistency.
- Need ad hoc advisory groups – commercial, sport, charter – by area on the westside.
- Maintain two-way communication.
- Allow the Legislature to override decisions by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission to ensure checks and balances.
- Partner with watershed councils: Fish viewing leads to education

- Increase the use of volunteers.
- Have a state DFW volunteer day for citizens to encourage involvement.
- Create a volunteer organizer who can observe and help enforce regulations in watershed, and have strong communications with the officers.
- Agency should have structured decision-making tools.
- Streamline public meetings and input.
- Mark Pigeon, Hunters Heritage Council, wants to work with agency on legislative proposals, but needs more time to evaluate.
- Pacific Salmon Treaty negotiations: Create an ad-hoc committee to advise WDFW. Need two-way communications between WDFW and grassroots so everyone is on the same page (similar to the coalition created in '84)
- Improve enforcement interaction with the public: No bullying, be courteous.
- Need senior managers who are honest and transparent.
- Enforcement should do more education.

Fish management

- Native steelhead in the South Sound will not happen. We need to rely on hatchery production.
- Why did WDFW stop passing Chinook up above Capital Lake? ESA issues? Can we re-instate this?
- Increase wild fish stocks and reduce hatchery production using best science models.
- Address statewide steelhead crisis.
- Recover wild steelhead populations in Puget Sound.
- Increase meaningful steelhead fishing opportunities in Puget Sound.
- Identify rivers where steelhead can be stocked.
- Stop decline of Puget Sound Chinook.
- Be sure US/Canada negotiations protect Washington salmon fisheries.
- People who don't fish should be able to buy fish.
- Wild steelhead gene banks work for entire basin.
- Wild steelhead gene bank on the Cowlitz River? Tilton River would help in recovery.
- Don't let Canada or Alaska harvest our WA-produced fish in upcoming negotiations.
- Increase catch-and-release for cutthroat and rainbow trout. Reduce harvest of cutthroat and rainbow trout.
- Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) member: Figure out why steelhead make it out of the rivers, but not out of the Puget Sound. Are more silver salmon plants having an effect on steelhead? Have more selective fisheries. Need public input on Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP) process. CCA wants to do an oyster/geoduck planting effort to clean Puget Sound, including some branding efforts to advertise good effects on filter feeders for the Sound.

- Survey cutthroat before opening.
- Conduct genetic study on lower Cowlitz cutthroat to determine what kind of wild population we have left and how the hatchery fish been integrated.
- Need a solid source of funding for hatcheries statewide.
- WDFW should defend its hatchery practices more seriously. The sport fishing industry would like to work with this.
- Razor clams are the best-managed fishery in the state!
- Don't slow down hatchery production. Sport and commercial fishers depend on hatcheries.
- What would it take to get 100 naturally spawning Chinook up Chambers Creek? There are retired volunteers willing to help.
- WDFW needs to stand up for the 50% non-treaty share during the North of Falcon negotiations to restore the faith and trust of salmon fishers.
- Consider innovative ways to allocate the harvest between fisheries (i.e. a tag system like deer tags).
- The commercial fleet needs to move to an alternative method of harvesting salmon, especially in the estuaries.
- Consumers depend on commercial fishers for access to fish and shellfish.
- Don't forget the commercial fisheries. Support fair sharing between commercial and recreational fisheries.
- Coastal communities depend on both recreational and commercial fisheries.
- Cooperation between sport and commercial fisheries benefits fisheries and communities.
- Sport fishing should have priority given it is a billion-dollar business. What is the director going to do to make that happen?
- Gillnets: If they're coming out of Columbia River, why are they allowed in other rivers – specifically the Willapa?
- Smelt fishing should be licensed, due to listed-species concerns.
- Stop sport caught salmon and tuna from going into commercial markets.
- Prohibit non-tribal gillnetting in Marine Area 2A.
- Prioritize recreational fishing commensurate with contribution (licensing fees and participation).

Habitat protection/restoration

- Make investments in habitat and in the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEGs) a priority.
- Habitat will be more important in the future.
- Get local governments to better protect habitats.

- The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is removing artificial reefs and not replacing them. This has bad impacts on fish, including rockfish.
- The East Fork Lewis River Technical Committee is corrupt. It's associated with the gravel mine project. Sediment loads broke into aquifer, now base flow is one-third of natural low flows. Restore lower 10 miles.
- Environmental regulatory agencies aren't protecting the environment: Do a better job at enforcing Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) authority.
- Don't make Summit Lake in Thurston County a year round lake because it is the sole drinking water source for residents. The homeowners' association is completely against this because of concerns about water quality. (This statement was recorded 7 times during the forum.)
- WDFW needs to provide technical assistance to restoration entities.
- Training is needed for contractors regarding how to install culverts/bridges/fish passages properly.
- Chambers Creek Dam removal and fish release facility impacts, sediment impacts and planning.
- Interpret HPA authority more liberally to better protect fisheries resources (not just work below the ordinary high water mark.
- More restoration (fish/habitat) in eastern WA.
- Burden of conservation should fall on all user groups for shared solutions.
- More carcasses to streams.
- More funding for culvert program.
- Would like more information on reptile and amphibian restoration activities around the state. Volunteers who work on projects need to know where their data is going.
- Create an "Adopt a Habitat" volunteer program for streams and increase stream complexity.
- Supports WDFW lands acquisition to support ecosystem recovery and health.
- Invasive species: Need additional inspections at state borders, random checks, and public education.
- Need more attention to bees and other pollinators/wildflowers, especially in this age of wildfires. Concerned about the loss of bee diversity. An endemic species, *Bombus Occidentalis*, was recently discovered in Washington. Concerned about prairie habitat.
- Need state support for endangered species act at every opportunity.
- Need support for fish passage. Check on car debris and need for cleanup and fish passage work on Spurgeon Creek. Pat Pritchard, Olympia, Trout Unlimited offered potential for partnership.
- Increase monitoring by enforcement officers of placer mining in Eastern WA.
- RFEG Coalition: Prioritize investment into habitat and RFEGs.
- Increase wild fish stocks and reduce hatchery production using best science models.

- Increase and stabilize base funding for RFEs.

Access to lands/harvest opportunities

- Closed roads reduce access to fishing and hunting opportunities.
- Require all purchased lands to have full public access.
- Don't gate any non-green dot roads in Region 3.
- Rename Wildlife Areas as "Wildlife Recreation Areas."
- Too many "NO" signs on Wildlife Areas. Need to be more welcoming.
- Support building of Lake Tahuya fishing area.
- Develop co-ops for alternative harvest.
- Increase access sites for hunting and fishing.
- Don't shut down fisheries.
- Improve hunting access: Turn abandoned roads into improved trails.
- Seeking out additional fishing sites?
- Don't buckle even if it means closing fisheries.
- Allow economic data to drive decisions when allocating resources (time, fish staff, etc.) between fisheries.
- Increase recreational access to Tahuya/Point No Point.
- Allow shallow-water fishing for rockfish.
- Secure access to state/federal lands landlocked by private properties.
- Increase "hunt free" zones on public lands for non-hunters.
- Inform the public that it is correct to assume that most WDFW properties are open to hunting/fishing.
- Private timberland: Close to hunting if pay entry permits are required.
- Support year-round opportunity for lowland lakes (Munn Lake a good example).

Predator control

- Cougar webpage states that the cougar population in Eastern WA is declining. Is this true? Need more information on quotas and reports.
- It's important to manage predators. The science is questionable on wolves and cougars. WDFW's legislative mandate to maximize hunting opportunities and predator control is needed to do this.
- Enforcement should respond more to reports of predators in neighborhoods. Also, make it publicly known when a predator is present.
- More tribal cooperation regarding large predator control.
- Need to have a sea lion season, or at least a management plan.
- Would like definitions for wolf pack map on website (#'s, gender, etc.).

- Provide literature/education materials about cougar habits and removal impacts.
- Concerned that delisting of wolves will lead to hunting of wolves. Concerned with what permits will allow.
- Restore top tier predator balance, expanding proactive measures such as wildlife corridors. Need stronger enforcement of poaching laws and punishment.
- Stop coyote derbies. Why does the department permit wildlife killing contests?
- Ban game derbies in the state. Strive for ecosystem balance.

Education, recruitment, retention

- Expand the Master Hunter program to include taking kids out hunting if parents don't want to or can't.
- Start a Master Fisher program, include things like instructing kids.
- Help kids learn values/ethics and a sense of ownership, stewardship. Help them experience the outdoors and peace/quality of life.
- Focus on youth for future stewardship.
- WDFW webpages contain misleading information, feeding political correctness and animal rights activists.
- Access and educate non-hunters.
- The reality and perception of outside hunters: Out-of-state hunters won't hunt here and locals are going out of state. One incentive to hunt might be to give back the money to those who applied for a special hunt and weren't drawn.
- Recruit and retain new hunters.
- What are we doing for the future fishers, who currently can't hold a tight line?
- Lifetime hunting and fishing licenses. In Minnesota and Idaho you can give them as a gift.
- Have hunter safety permit be indicated on WA driver's license (endorsement, partner with Department of Licensing).

Involve those who don't hunt, fish

- Tie driver's license fees and vehicle ownership to funding wildlife and habitat.
- Wildlife watchers should be licensed or taxed to support fisheries.
- Find creative ways to fund non-game species. License fees are a good start. Need to work with non-consumptive users for other sources of funding.
- Support ecotourism for economic benefits, revenue, jobs.

Regulations and reporting

- Have a mobile app for harvest reporting.
- Have special hunt packages for both eastside and westside hunting opportunities.

- Use the Oregon mapping system in our pamphlets.
- Provide online salmon reporting, as with crab.
- Sell tags for “fish of concern.”
- License buyer should be able to direct fees.
- Why are barbless hooks required in the Columbia and tributaries? Also the Westport Marina?
- Revenue from fishing license sales should go to WDFW, not the state general fund.
- Limit the number of years owners can lease out their commercial fishing permits.
- License fees should go back to specific programs at WDFW.
- Eliminate muzzleloaders and modern firearm in urban growth areas or within a half mile to a mile of any wildlife habitat.
- Need to increase base funding, since costs have risen and there have been no increases since 1990
- Don’t close rivers just because there is an enforcement concern.
- Tell enforcement to allow the retention of lingcod with halibut onboard in Marine Area 1.
- Simplify the regulation pamphlets.
- Sports clubs pay officers to hunt and fish on their days off, during peak times!
- Require single-point barbless hooks for juveniles (at least).
- Improve/clarify the tagging of big game that is quartered in the field. Require perforated or multiple tags (part A, part B, etc.) per license for transporting multiple pieces.

Other issues

- Supports WDFW acquisition of lands via land trusts/partnerships in general.
- Lead ammunition and raptors: Studies have shown that banning lead ammo in California did not reduce the lead levels in condors. Roadkill is a likely a lead source.
- Lead ammunition needs to be banned. Example: California’s alternatives.
- Like and support the Karelian bear dog programs; use as an example for other species.
- Love fish and wildlife enforcement! Just need more officers.