

# Washington's Wild Future

*A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife*

## Wenatchee Regional Forum

October 20, 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 the Port of Chelan County Confluence Technology Center. Approximately 60 participants attended the event, one of six forums conducted around the state.

### **Agency management**

- Stay transparent and accountable
- Support for those who don't fish or hunt is important (comment made twice)
- Look for ways to improve our practices of science and conservation
- Explore excise tax on camping and other outdoor gear. Move beyond hunting and fishing gear to support wildlife and habitat
- We need representation by non-consumptive interests on the commission
- Work with the shift in societal values. Society is supporting conservation, habitats and species.
- Commission's decisions should be based on best available science. Don't think this happened in regard to 3 pt. bucks and recent cougar hunting rule.

### **Communication, outreach**

- Simplify the fishing and hunting regulations. They can be hard to understand. Look at Wyoming and other states as an example. Solicit advisors for pamphlet simplification ideas.
- Improve openness and communication to the public. More open houses, more accessible reports/updates.
- WDFW should start implementing and fixing some of these suggestions. I recommend that WDFW post an outline on its website showing what it heard and what it is doing for all the suggestions and concerns from the forum.
- Outreach/Education would be good partnership with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Mobile technology for users who want access to information in the field
- Want news on Cinder and other bears
- "Fish Washington" sweatshirts should be sold in all the regions

## **Enforcement**

- Increase number of WDFW Enforcement officers (comment repeated 4 times). “Too much poaching, need higher fines.”
- Lots of money being put into salmon recovery, but often no enforcement of impacts to habitat from private property owners who alter them

## **Conservation**

- Minimize and mitigate growth management impacts through collaborative efforts and partnerships
- More monitoring for invasive species statewide at hatcheries, etc.
- More resources toward invasive species (e.g. northern pike, nutria, zebra/quagga mussels). Need management, prevention, education, and outreach
- Balance land use with conservation
- Use volunteers as citizen scientists. The Wenatchee Naturalist Program is already established with certified naturalists with expertise in flora
- Do a Bio-Blitz
- Embrace ecosystem management – all species fauna, geology, natural history
- Better population monitoring needed. Wildlife cams be one way to determine ATV influence on wildlife
- Audubon members would like opportunities to assist/partner with WDFW on conservations efforts that have the potential to protect and conserve all wildlife and their habitats. Want to create a relationship with WDFW that would help them to be more plugged in with community planning efforts that have the potential to impact their natural surroundings and recreational opportunities.
- Who will fund post-fire restoration in the Entiat and elsewhere?
- Examine aquatic invasive vegetation control vs Ecology water quality demands.
- Wildlife bridges and underpasses are needed in other parts of the state, wildlife corridors.
- Remove Wenatchee fish passage barriers, specifically the Tumwater dam west of Leavenworth
- Want intact wildlife corridors (2 peopled mentioned)
- ATV and snowmobile traffic is disturbing wildlife and hikers. Perceive more vehicles on the land, need more space set aside (without machines)
- Identify the right riparian zones and monitor the herds
- Do a better job of ensuring that riparian habitat is protected.
- Reform “Gold & Fish” pamphlet to better protect ESA listed fish

## **Land management**

- Hiking and biking trails are important

- Need effective ways for outside groups to partner with WDFW on trails identification and management on the department's lands
- Need mechanism/policy for officially recognizing/designating trails.
- Non-consumptive users can contribute to the agency through trail maintenance
- Non-consumptive users are a great resource for "Eyes in the Woods"
- River and lake access important for non-anglers too
- DNR should stay out of WDFW's recreation Plan on Colockum
- WDFW mandate is wildlife and the recreation plan should reflect that.
- Need better comprehensive map of all access sites (fishing, clamming, etc.) owned/managed by WDFW
- DNR and WDFW should partner to do more pre-commercial thinning of timberland to reduce fire and improve habitat. Job creation.
- Identify shared goals with USFS and other land managers.
- It is not a sin to harvest timber. It will improve habitat and lessen fire danger.
- Open access roads to our lands to direct traffic
- Do something with trails like is being done with Land Trust in Wenatchee and in Twisp and Winthrop
- Cattle on Colockum? Why?
- Put Stemilt Basin DNR land into WDFW ownership (mentioned 2 times)

### **Fish management**

- What is a barbless hook? When a barb is broken off and there is a ridge on the hook would that be a barb? Seems there is enforcement inconsistency around the state depending on what officer you speak to (Repeated 2 times)
- Steelhead acclimation at Blackbird Island Pond needs to size conservation and safety net hatchery programs to assist recovery and provide angling access as available
- Sturgeon numbers in the mid-Columbia pools are very low. WDFW should not allow catch & release angling; very hard on the larger fish
- Permitting is a tangled mess, with federal agencies in conflict with one another (NOAA vs FWS)
- Steelhead recovery: Use the Entiat River as a reference stream for comparison of tributaries with hatchery programs, not initially as a gene bank
- Stop gillnetting to help preserve endangered species
- Require commercial fishers to pay their fair share
- Recreational fishers want fair share. They deserve more than they are getting.
- Recognize that Entiat River fisheries, the Entiat River Landowner's Association, WDFW and DNR all have different mandates
- US v. Oregon – Mass marking agreement should require marking in production programs

- Have state and tribes follow the same rules. Be unified instead of separate and non-transparent.

## **Wildlife management**

- Muzzleloader hunting. Allow 209 primers.
- Like the 3-point minimum for bucks. Seeing bigger bucks. Would WDFW consider making bull elk minimum 3 point or greater in Eastern WA like it is in Western Washington? If not, explain why to the public.
- Seasons should be based on population data, not harvest records
- Create some sort of regulations keeping hunters from target practicing the day before the season. Advised the constituent that target shooters being able to use the lands as well.
- Policy guidelines needed on relocating vs euthanizing dangerous wildlife
- Support having elk north of Highway 2
- Explain management better to hunters with additional outreach
- Will lead shot be phased out?
- Recovery of threatened/endangered species: Stop using the term “non-consumptive use.”
- How well does WDFW monitor amphibians and herps?
- Work on how to finance diversity work.
- Manage based on good science and adaptive management
- Wolves situation: Look at Idaho, will happen here

## **Written statements**

Two participants in the forum handed recorders written statements, included below.

### **Dan Dickerson, Wenatchee Sportsman Association Secretary**

1. Upland bird program:
  - Youth are being taught to shoot whatever flies.
  - There seems to be a need for three release points for birds instead of just two. Along with changes to the laws on release, we need more female birds.
  - Currently the youth hunt for upland bird is only open for two days, can that be extended or allow the youth to attend with the over 65 season.
2. Access to the Tarpiscan area:
  - Washed out roads limit access.
  - The gate at the Carr’s property.

3. Ease restrictions on the true spike only hunting in the Colockum Game Unit. Consider allowing more branch antler tags for bulls 2x2 or smaller.
4. There seems to be abuse of the disabled hunter road access program where a disabled hunter had a large camp with several vehicles and quads in the Boulder Creek area.

We are all for disabled hunters having the access they need along with a companion hunter, but not for multiple non-disable hunters to be able to camp and use vehicles on the roads that are intended for use as a part of the “road Access Entry Program”.

5. Enforcement, especially on opening weekend of a particular weapon/deer or elk needs more attention. It is understood that budget is the bottom line on having the number of enforcement officers in the field.
6. Keep steelhead restrictions to two adult fish not the young jacks or trout under 20 inches.
7. Removal of the mad-made structures being left in public hunting areas, especially the Colockum Game unit. WSA is willing to put together a work party to find these structures, report them to WDFW Enforcement and then remove them with WDFW’s permission.

## **Trout Unlimited Comments**

### Reference

- Suction dredging for gold mining
- Sufficient monitoring?
- Inequity between fishing license and dredging requirements
- Request study of dredging impact on environment, waterways, ESA
- There would be benefits with increased enforcement presence
  - a. Increase visibility
  - b. Work on local groups to improve “eyes” and “ears”
  - c. (ex. Eyes in the woods ) for hunters

### Protecting habitat

- Appreciate Department’s effort
- Should continue to improve that effort

### Pheasants

- Senior pheasant hunts on release sites only
- Set releases for Friday afternoon/evening so they're available for weekenders

#### Summer Chinook Fishery

- Request research to learn where the natural origin fish are spawning

#### Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement

- Prefer funding to go to new opportunities verses backfilling budget shortfalls

#### Naneum/Mission Ridge

- Large # of cattle grazing in elk habitat, then...
- Elk numbers have dropped

#### Wenatchee River

- Request catch and release permit for trout fishing  
Revenue source

#### Misc.

- Recommend the Department bans lead shot (rifle and shotgun) to prevent lead contamination
- More WDFW promo apparel for sale at regional offices (like Fish WA sweatshirt)
- Reference banning lead shot
  - a. If use copper rounds potential problems with ballistics (ex. tumbles end over end)
  - b. Converting to steel may require buying a new weapon (ex. shotguns)

#### On WDFW lands along the Wenatchee

- Recommend more public access to fishable waters, and identify the existing sites with "fishing easements," so the public knows where they are.