

## Now we're developing solutions for the 2019 legislative session

With a long-term funding plan in place, the department submitted budget and license fee proposals to the Governor and Legislature to (1) eliminate the projected \$31 million shortfall, and (2) make strategic, focused investments that will provide long-term benefits.

### Closing the \$31 million gap:

This proposal will avoid cuts and preserve current services in the following programs:

- Wildlife conflict prevention and response (\$4.4 million)
- Shellfish enforcement and consumer protection (\$2.5 million)
- Land management (\$2.7 million)
- Hatchery operations and fisheries management (\$9.3 million)
- Hunting management, including hunter education (\$3.2 million)
- Recovery of at-risk species and prevention of invasive species (\$3.5 million)
- Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement program (\$3.3 million)
- Customer service support (\$1.9 million)

### Strategic investments for the future:

Whenever the department talks with conservation and recreation groups and the businesses that depend on Washington's outdoor economy – people who deeply understand the state's fish and wildlife management history – they stress the importance of not just reacting to today's challenges, but anticipating the needs of future Washingtonians.

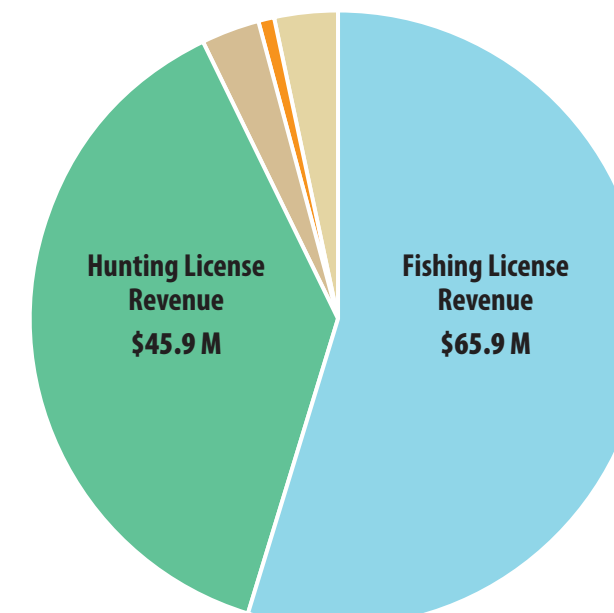
The department's advisory group was emphatic in this regard, essentially telling WDFW to try to secure the funding needed to implement the mission. The state Fish and Wildlife Commission, which provides policy direction to the department, agreed.

With that guidance in mind, WDFW developed several budget enhancements for the 2019-21 budget cycle, which begins in the summer of 2019. The Governor's 2019-21 operating budget includes funding for:

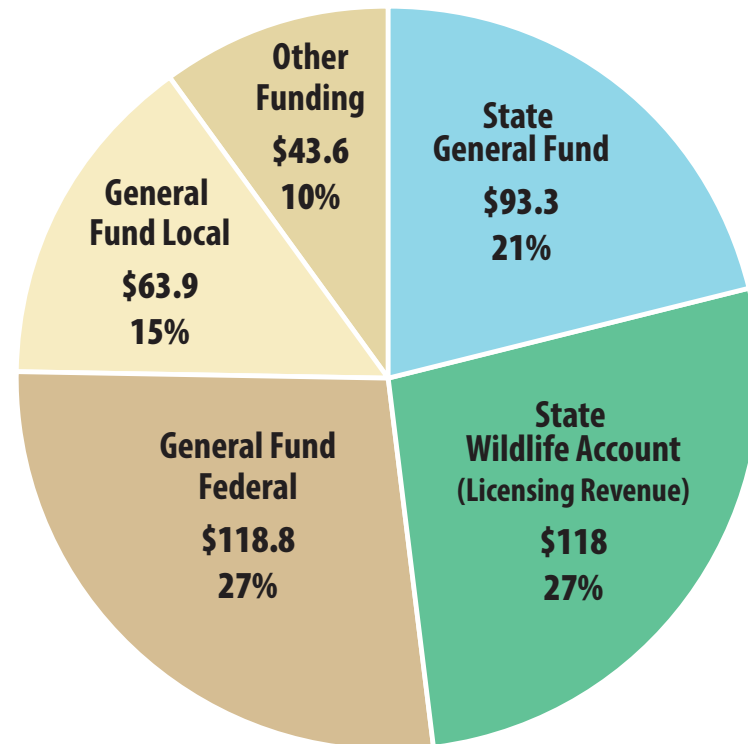
- **Conservation investments** in four enforcement officers (\$1.3 million)
- **Expanded fishing opportunities and hatchery improvements** (\$6.9 million)
- **Hunting enhancements** to improve access on private lands (\$0.8 million)
- **Regional fishery enhancement groups** (\$1.5 million)
- **Orca recovery actions** including hatchery production, vessel regulation and enforcement, and salmon recovery (\$12.8 million)

## WDFW Sources of User Fee Revenue (2015 – 2017)

Discover Pass Revenue	Vessel Fees	Other Revenue*
\$3.6 M	\$1.0 M	\$3.9 M



## WDFW 2017-19 Operating Budget (in millions)



## WDFW has taken several steps to address a chronic problem

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, the Legislature in 2017 directed WDFW to find efficiencies in current operations, examine the department's management and operation, and develop a long-term funding plan with the help of a broad-based stakeholder advisory group.

In response, WDFW:

- **Contracted with an independent consultant** for an extensive management review, which concluded that the department's management practices had not contributed to the funding problem. The consultants did recommend numerous small-scale operational improvements, almost all of which have been or are being made.
- **Identified \$2 million in spending cuts** that will be implemented over the next 6-12 months. These include reductions in fish stocking, habitat restoration, and grants to volunteer organizations. By making these cuts soon, the department is reducing the size of the long-term funding problem.

- **Conducted a "zero-based" funding analysis** that connected the dots between WDFW's mission and its day-to-day operation. This exercise underscored the close connection between WDFW's day-to-day business and the goals set by state lawmakers and allowed the Department to examine and ensure that flexible funding goes towards the highest priorities.
- **Developed a long-term funding plan** with help from an advisory group representing outdoor recreation advocates, businesses that depend on WDFW-supported economic activity, and non-profit groups who work with the department on a wide range of projects that benefit their communities and the entire state. The plan describes the current budget situation and provides a vision for securing stable funding.

All of these initiatives are described in detail on the WDFW website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/about/budget/development/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/about/budget/development/). (Please see graphs on this page and next for a breakdown of WDFW's revenue sources.)



## So, where should new money come from?

The Fish and Wildlife Commission directed WDFW to submit a budget proposal to Gov. Inslee that would close the \$31 million funding gap and make targeted investments.

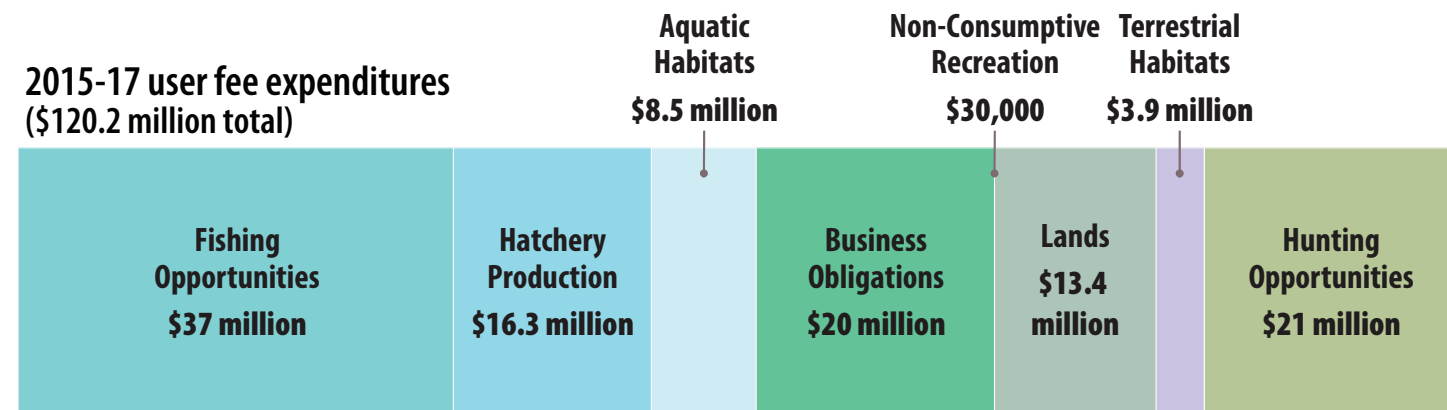
As part of that proposal, the Fish and Wildlife Commission authorized WDFW to request a 15 percent increase in recreational hunting and fishing license fees, with caps to cushion the impact on people who buy multiple hunting and fishing licenses. These caps would limit the maximum increase for bundled packages to \$7 for fishing and \$15 for hunting. For example, WDFW sells multiple fishing licenses

in the “Fish Washington” package and plans to create additional value packages to hold down license costs for avid recreationists.

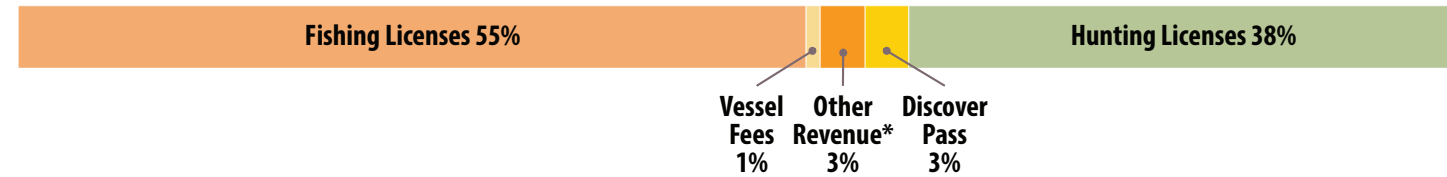
WDFW is also requesting that the Legislature extend the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement through 2023, which would otherwise expire in June 2019.

This increased recreational license revenue is expected to cover about 25 percent of WDFW’s total budget proposal, with the other 75 percent coming from general funds.

## How WDFW spends user fees



### User fee revenue sources



\* Other revenue includes: non-report penalties, sales of property, income from property, firearm permits, hydraulic permits, and miscellaneous revenue.



# 2019 Budget Development



## Overview

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is state government’s leading fish and wildlife conservation agency. With the state’s human population growing at one of the fastest rates in the country, the department’s effectiveness is increasingly important to millions of longtime and new state residents.

Unfortunately, WDFW has experienced chronic budget shortfalls – essentially a gap between available funding and required spending. Today, the projected gap for the next two-year budget cycle has grown to about \$31 million. This problem is more serious than ever and threatens WDFW’s ability to provide the programs and services that Washingtonians expect and deserve.

The shortfall has several causes, but most important are these: (1) state funding from general taxes and the sale of recreational licenses has not kept pace with the cost of managing fish, wildlife, and their habitat, and (2) several one-time funding patches will expire soon. The department still has not fully recovered from the deep cuts imposed during the recession. Recreational license fees have not been adjusted since the last increase in 2011. One-time funding of \$10 million in the current budget will expire in 2019.

Unless the problem is comprehensively addressed during the 2019 legislative session, the department will not be able to do its job effectively. Ultimately, programs, services, and facilities will have to be reduced and, in some cases, eliminated.

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