

Hello Master Hunters:

We want to provide an update on WDFW's operating and capital budgets, and to let you know the Master Hunter Permit Program has been funded and will continue. The application period will open July 1, 2020. See <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter> for more information.

Below is complete information on WDFW's operating and capital budgets.

As you know, WDFW entered the 2020 legislative session with a lot on the line. Our operating budget faced a major structural deficit from the result of legislatively-approved cost increases that were not backed by revenue over multiple past biennia. Our proposed recreational license fee bill did not pass in 2019, further exacerbating our inability to fund basic services on an ongoing basis. Instead, in 2019 the legislature appropriated \$24 million from the State General Fund (money that comes from general taxpayers across the state) to maintain services for 2019-21. Unfortunately, the appropriated funds did not cover the \$31 million need for the entire biennium. Further, most of that funding was only for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, and the legislature approved new costs in 2019 that also weren't backed by revenue, which deepened the hole even more.

Therefore, last fall WDFW submitted a supplemental budget request for \$26 million of State General Fund. Most of the funding was requested as an ongoing appropriation, so WDFW would not have to request funding to back-fill the same activities again in the future. While \$6.8 million of the request was for new, emergent needs; most of the request was to maintain core and essential services. The department did not request a recreational fee bill in 2020 to generate additional revenue. In addition, WDFW requested \$21.3 million in new capital funds for five projects.

The legislature has provided WDFW with \$27 million in State General Fund in this supplemental operating budget, which will fund the department's core services through June of 2021 and allocates significant resources for new work. The ongoing dollars are close to fully funding today's needs in outyears. It is a huge improvement, especially in a supplemental year.

The legislature funded our at-risk activities and the cost increases adopted in 2019 (that were not backed by revenue) on an ongoing basis. As you may know, the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement expired on July 1, 2019. The legislature back-filled this important revenue source on an ongoing basis with State General Fund.

Put another way, WDFW won't have to cut conservation activities, hatcheries or fish management capacity, work to support hunting, our wildlife conflict response efforts, land management activities, sanitary shellfish patrols, or customer service. This is a huge relief for all of us.

The legislature also funded many of our maintenance level costs such as: post-fire habitat recovery on our wildlife areas for \$517 thousand and the Enforcement Program Records Management System at \$2 million, among others.

The Department enjoyed unprecedented partner support during this past legislative session. Over 60 different organizations signed letters supporting the Department's budget. Many wrote op-eds or came to Olympia and testified about our work and how it affects their quality of life. WDFW is so appreciative of these leaders for taking the time to advocate for the value of WDFW and recognizing the services we provide to conserve fish and wildlife and sustain a robust outdoor economy.

Kris Thorson  
Hunter Education Division Specialist  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
PO Box 43141, Olympia WA 98504  
360-902-8410  
[Kristopher.thorson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kristopher.thorson@dfw.wa.gov)