



Minutes

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting

June 23-25, 2022 – Hybrid

Attendance

Commission

Molly Linville, Vice Chair
Barbara Baker, Chair
Donald McIsaac
Kim Thorburn
Lorna Smith
Tim Ragen
Melanie Rowland
John Lehmkuhl

Staff

Joe Panesko, AGO
Kelly Susewind, Director
Amy Windrope, Deputy
Director
Aaron Dufault
Karen Edwards
Kirt Hughes
Captain Chadwick

Staff

Eric Gardner
Anis Aoude
Julia Smith

Commission Staff

Nichole Kloepfer

Friday, June 23, 2022

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order

a. Commissioners' Discussion

Vice Chair Linville shared information on the 9-year-old girl in Stevens County, Washington was injured as the result of a cougar attack.

Chair Baker shared her experience with Heron nests in downtown Olympia.

b. Meeting Minute Approval

The Commission considered approval of the April 7-9, 2022, webinar, May 13, 2022, and June 10, 2022, draft special web conference minutes.

Commissioner Thorburn made motion, seconded by Commissioner Linville, to approve the minutes of the April 7-9, 2022, webinar as presented. All in favor. Motion passes.

Commissioner Thorburn made motion, seconded by Commissioner Ragen, to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2022, special web conference as presented. All in favor. Motion passes.

Commissioner Thorburn made motion, seconded by Commissioner Linville, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2022, web conference as presented. All in favor. Motion passes.

The May 18-19, 2022 workshop notes were tabled until the August meeting.

c. Committee Reports - This Section constitutes the formal minutes from each of the listed committee meetings:

Wildlife Committee

Commissioners in attendance: Committee members Thorburn, Smith, Linville and Commissioners, Baker, Rowland, Ragen

Commissioner Thorburn reported on May 5 and May 31 the Wildlife committee held special meetings discussing the Game Management Plan. At the June 23 meeting staff and participating commissioners discussed the next steps for the Game Management Plan. The committee will bring forth a two-prong approach recommendation for consideration to the Commission during the Game Management Plan agenda item on Saturday. You can view the materials and the recording from the meeting [here](#).

Fish Committee

Commissioners in attendance: Committee members McIsaac, Linville, Ragen, and Commissioner Rowland

Commissioner McIsaac reported that the committee continued to discuss the alternatives to the Willapa Bay policy and were provided a briefing on the Free Fishing Weekend rulemaking that will be presented later in the agenda.

Staff will provide an explanatory write up of the model that Dr. Warheit presented, develop a draft purpose statement, and provide additional discussion on modifications to alternatives.

Commissioner McIsaac asked Commission staff to remove Willapa from the year-at-a-glance until a revised timeline has been made available.

You can view the materials and the recording from the meeting [here](#).

Big Tent Committee

Commissioners in attendance: Committee members Baker, Thorburn, McIsaac, Lehmkuhl and Commissioner Ragen, Rowland

Chair Baker reported that the committee continued their discussion on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Conservation Road Map process. The committee was also provided a briefing on the budget and the Pittman-Robertson formula and discussion continued about a draft Commission Conservation policy.

At the next committee meeting the committee will hope to have Hannah Anderson come and speak about State Wildlife Action Plan and the committee will continue discussing the Conservation policy. Commissioner Rowland volunteered to develop an ethics statement to add to the draft policy. You can view the materials and the recording from the meeting [here](#).

Habitat Committee

Commissioners in attendance: Committee members Linville, Lehmkuhl, Smith, Ragen and Commissioner Rowland, Baker

Vice Chair Linville reported that the committee was provided with an e-bike update and that lands items, for committee workload balance, will now be under Habitat committee instead of Wildlife committee. You can view the materials and the recording from the meeting [here](#).

2. Open Public Input

The following people provided input on various topics:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Commissioner Justin Dixon – Blue Mountain Elk | Alex Bauer - Blue Mountain Elk |
| Mike Herz – Spring bear | Marie Neumiller – Leadership |
| Sam Bruegger – Wolf management | Chris Hager – Spring bear |
| John Dykes - Blue Mountain Elk | Jeff Holbrook – Spring bear |
| Doug Boze – Spring bear | Charlie Whitwam - Blue Mountain Elk |
| Bryce Levine – Spring bear | Brant MacDuff – Carnivore management |
| Zoe Hanley – Wolf management | Heath Heikkila – Columbia River |
| Brett Benton – Spring bear | Steve Gacke – Jig baiting |
| Seth Watts -Spring bear | Chelsea Hajny – Wolf management |
| David Linn – Wolf management | Ryan Garrett – Spring bear |
| Jacob Pickett – Spring bear | |

3. Director's Report

Director Susewind provided an overview of current events, activities, and meetings of impact within and in relation to the agency.

Other important issues to note:

- As a public disclosure requirement WDFW recently settled with a previous employee for \$350,000 in exchange for settling all pending and future issues, agreeing to resign and to never seek employment with the agency. This settlement was influenced by recent arbitration cases. The agency has now amended their procedures to comply with this new arbitration caselaw.
- WDFW will be publishing an emergency rule before the end of the month that designates vulnerable whales prior to the upcoming season where commercial viewing of Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW). This designation will restrict Commercial Whale Watchers from approaching within ½ nautical mile of a vulnerable whale or any group of SRKW containing a vulnerable whale.
- The WDFW received a petition on January 11th, 2022, to open the Chelan River to fishing. At the February 25th Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting. The Commission adopted the staff recommendation. After additional review staff determined that the Department is not procedurally able to have the Commission adopt one section of a rule and the Director adopt other rules in the same CR-102 filing. Staff briefed the Fish Committee at the April 7th meeting and Committee Chair McIsaac provided a report to the full Commission on April 8th. Chair Baker removed the Chelan River item from the agenda and asked that the Chelan River rulemaking be considered later. Staff will be bringing a rule change proposal forward later this summer with a briefing and public hearing planned for September and Commission action in October.
- The Columbia River Salmon Gillnet Buyback Program structure establishes two tracks: one for active and one for inactive license holders. Inactive licenses are eligible for \$25,000 and active licenses will be eligible for up to \$120,000 with the price set based on the number of "Declaration of Intent" forms we receive. This past session the legislature provided \$14.4M which will need to be spent by June 2023 to voluntarily buy back licenses from willing sellers who wish to retire or exit the fishery. While the proposal looks different than what the agency had proposed, it also provides a more generous price per license. The proviso also directs the Department to submit a report to the legislature by December of this year outlining recommendations on implementing alternative commercial fishing gear. This report will align with our emerging commercial fisheries rulemaking and FY 23-25 budget request.

Deputy Director Windrope introduced Larry Delgado the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion manager.

4. Land Transactions - Briefing, Public Comment and Decision

Karen Edwards, Real Estate Manager asked the Commission for approval of a land transactions recommended by the Department for the enhancement of conservation and public recreation opportunities.

There was no public comment for this item.

Commissioner Thorburn made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the land transactions as presented by staff. Majority in favor. McIsaac abstains. Motion passes.

5. Staff and Community Appreciation Awards

Deputy Director Windrope and Director Kelly Susewind announced the Staff and Community Appreciation awards.

The following individuals were awarded:

Employee of the Year – Aaron Needham

Manager of the Year – Charlene Hurst

Director's Award – Mark Baltzell

Organization of the Year – Washington Sea Grant Crab Team

Educator of the Year – Dr. Megan Friesen

Volunteer of the Year – Pete Haase

Landowner of the Year – Don Howard

Lifetime Achievement Award – Howard Gardner

Region award ceremonies will be in-person this year. As more information is provided it will be circulated to the commissioners.

BREAK

6. Free Fishing Weekend Rulemaking – Briefing, Public Hearing

Kirt Hughes, Fish Management Division Manager provided the Commission a briefing on a rule proposal to limit the waiver of licensure requirements on free fishing weekend, only to fish species that do not require a catch record card.

There was no public comment for this item.

7. Executive Session/Working Lunch

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110, the Commission met in executive session. No action was taken, and the public was not permitted to attend. The Chair reconvened the meeting at 1:40 p.m.

8. Crewmember License Rulemaking – Briefing, Public Hearing

Captain Dan Chadwick, Enforcement, and Kirt Hughes, Fish Management Division Manager provided the Commission a briefing on a rule proposal to increase the number of unspecified commercial crewmember licenses allowed as to provide better flexibility with commercial license holders rotating crewmembers on larger vessels during the season.

The following person provided comment:
Larry Thevik

9. WA-Tix Commercial Electronic Catch Reporting App – Briefing, Public Hearing

Aaron Dufault, Puget Sound Shellfish Manager provided the Commission a briefing on the proposed rule to add dealer geolocation to the required information provided on an electronic fish receiving ticket. This rule change is needed to support a fishery enforcement feature of the new WA-Tix electronic catch reporting application under development by WDFW.

There was no public comment for this item.

The Commission suggested adding these types of rule changes to the criteria for the upcoming update to the delegation of authority.

10. Wolf Livestock Conflict Deterrence Rulemaking Discussion

The Commission and staff continued to discuss the rule making information and process regarding the wolf livestock conflict deterrence rules.

Commissioner Smith provided an amendment [recommendation](#).

The Environmental Impact Statement will be available for review July 1 and a decision will be made on the rule at the July 8, special meeting.

11. Spring Bear Policy Discussion

The Commission discussed making changes to the spring bear policy as described in the current Game Management Plan.

Commissioner McIsaac reviewed the [January 2021 motion language](#) and then offered a [proposed process recommendation](#).

After commissioner discussion it was agreed to discuss next steps at future meeting planning.

RECESS

Saturday, June 25, 2022

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

12. Open Public Input

The following people provided input on various topics:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Marie Neumiller – Leadership | Tanya Helbig – Wolf management |
| Claire Davis – Leadership | Sam Bruegger – Leadership |
| Ann Prezyna - Wolf management | Dan Wilson – Leadership |
| Gabriel Garza – Spring bear | Josh Rosenau – Remote testimony |
| Steve Gacke – Willapa Bay | Rachel Bjork – Spring bear/leadership |
| Heath Heikkila – Columbia River | Steve Snowden – Spring bear |
| Tino Villaluz – Spring bear | Jocelyn Leroux – Wolf rulemaking |
| Amaroq Weiss - Wolf management | Colby Harrington - Spring bear |

13. Cougar Rulemaking – Briefing. Public Hearing

Anis Aoude, Game Division Manager briefed the Commission on the proposed rule amendment to adjust the annual hunting season regulation for the future hunting season.

The following people provided comment:

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Marie Neumiller | Tanya Helbig | Sam Bruegger |
| Bernard McDevitt | Ann Prezyna | Rachel Haymon |
| Dale Magart | Josh Rosenau | Bob McCoy |
| Susan-Kane Ronning | Rachel Bjork | Hannah Thompson-Garner |
| Brant McDuff | David Linn | Karen Kunda |
| Toby Cooper | | |

The commissioner had follow-up questions. Staff will compile and respond to the inquiries before the decision July 15.

BREAK

14. Game Management Plan – Briefing. Public Comment

Anis Aoude, Game Division Manager provided an update to the Commission on the proposed 2022-2028 Game Management Plan.

The following people provided comment:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Tino Villaluz | Marie Neumiller | Tanya Helbig |
| Hannah Thompson-Garner | Rachel Bjork | Josh Rosenau |
| Linda Machia | Toby Cooper | Sam Bruegger |
| Rachel Haymon | | |

The Commission agreed to move forward with the Game Management Plan process as recommended by the Wildlife committee.

15. Meeting Debrief and Future Meeting Planning

The Commission discussed, and staff captured the following items that arose throughout the meeting and discussed April meeting planning.

Commissioner Rowland asked for a trapping briefing. This will be taken up at the Wildlife committee or a blue sheet will be provided at a future commission meeting.

Commissioner McIsaac suggested that seeing those visually who are testifying virtually would be beneficial.

The Commission agreed to cancel the special commission meeting that intended to continue discussion about the capital budget.

Chair Baker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Smith, to amend the July 15 agenda to include a Spring bear agenda item that may include a motion that will sequence the Spring bear policy approach and supersede the motion passed in January. Majority in favor. Commissioner McIsaac and Thorburn opposed. Motion passes.

Commissioner Thorburn noted that she will not be at the August commission meeting.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110, the Commission met in executive session. No action was taken, and the public was not permitted to attend.

Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

Nichole Kloepfer 8/5/22

Nichole Kloepfer, Executive Assistant