

Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police



2025-27 Funding Request
\$17.3 Million

Washington's population has grown 2.4 million in the past 30 years

Fish and Wildlife Officer capacity hasn't grown to meet these increased demands

With 171 commissioned officer positions presently, we are poised to add 20 more

More officers = elevated presence, crime deterrence, and greater natural resource protection



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Washington state, with eight million residents and twice the national growth rate, faces increasing demands on its natural resources and people to protect the public's safety. In 2022, Washington recorded the lowest number of police officers per capita at 1.3 officers per 1,000 people. We need additional Fish and Wildlife Officers to ensure public safety and resource protection.

Fish and Wildlife Police are responsible for law enforcement statewide, including state and federal lands and waters, and respond to a variety of related issues from poaching to natural disaster response to habitat and shoreline protection. **Fish and Wildlife officers are essential** in maintaining safe and properly managed recreational and commercial opportunities for Washington's residents and visitors.

The program maintains 171 commissioned law enforcement positions and is **poised to add 20 more** and six support staff this biennium. More officers mean elevated presence, crime deterrence, and greater natural resource protection statewide.

Calls for service are exponentially rising as users of Washington's outdoor spaces increase. To do this necessary work, an increase in Fish and Wildlife personnel is crucial. Without increased presence, WDFW cannot continue to provide adequate protection to our most vulnerable threatened or endangered species and their impacted ecosystems.

Each year tribal communities request that WDFW increase our capacity to protect natural resources, police fisheries, and patrol public lands. Additionally, WDFW's Enforcement Program conducts community engagement and public outreach through everyday presence and patrolling on public waters and lands.

This added capacity will enable WDFW to expand habitat and wildlife enforcement and protection, which broadly supports species recovery including various terrestrial, salmon and Southern Resident Killer Whale populations.