

Regional Water Access Management Planning Framework

2024 (DRAFT)



Table of Contents

CONTENTS

<i>ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS</i>	4
<i>REGIONAL WATER ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLANNING OVERVIEW</i>	7
<i>Introduction</i>	7
PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK.....	7
PLAN PURPOSE AND BENEFITS	9
WATER ACCESS PLANNING PRINCIPLES.....	10
PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIZATION	11
WDFW LANDS VISION STATEMENT (Lands Showcase, 2018)	15
<i>Statewide Water Access Management Goals</i>	15
<i>Water Access Management Planning Process</i>	15
SCOPING	15
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	18
PRIORITIZATION OF PLAN OBJECTIVES	18
PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW – FINAL PLAN.....	19
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.....	19
<i>Engagement in the Management Planning Process</i>	20
REGIONAL WATER ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEES	20
COORDINATION WITH TRIBES.....	20
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT.....	21
STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERESTS	21
<i>WATER ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING</i>	24
<i>Land Ownership and Management</i>	24
WDFW LAND ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY.....	24
WATER ACCESS LANDS	25
HATCHERY LANDS.....	29
WDFW LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS - LANDS 20/20.....	30
<i>Funding</i>	31
OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE - WATER ACCESS LANDS	31
OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE - HATCHERY LANDS.....	33
FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES.....	33

STATE FUNDING SOURCES.....	34
<i>Easements and Agreements</i>	36
AQUATIC LEASES	36
STREAMBANK EASEMENTS	36
AGREEMENTS	36
<i>Management Setting</i>	38
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING.....	38
WILDLIFE PROGRAM.....	39
FISH PROGRAM	39
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE.....	40
LAND MANAGEMENT AND FISHING OPPORTUNITY	41
<i>Local Land Use and Other Plans</i>	43
<i>Monitoring and Adaptive Management</i>	47
<i>Habitat Management</i>	47
<i>AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE</i>	48
STATUTORY AUTHORITY	48
25-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN	49
POLICIES.....	50

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

Select list of acronyms and abbreviations

AC	Agency control number
BFP	Boating Facilities Program
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
CAMP	Capital Asset Management Program
CAPE	Communications and Public Engagement
CR	Cultural resources
DAHP	Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
DJ	Dingell-Johnson Act (also known as Sport Fish Restoration)
DNR	Washington State Department of Natural Resources
FFS	Full Service Standard
LIS	Land Information System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
O&M	Operations and maintenance
PR	Pittman-Robertson Act
RCO	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RES	Real Estate Services
RMT	Regional Management Team
RPM	Regional Program Manager
RWAAC	Regional water access advisory committee
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
WWRP	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

DEFINITIONS

Access area – A named *management area* managed by the Wildlife Program primarily for fishing, boating, and other forms of water recreation. Access areas are distinct from wildlife areas and fish hatcheries. There are ≈370 access areas, ≈25 of which are managed by other parties, mostly local governments, through formal agreements.

Boat launch – A *designated recreation site* on a management area. A boat launch is typically comprised of a launch ramp, parking lot, and vault toilet. Boat launches exist on access areas, wildlife areas, and some fish hatcheries. WDFW manages ≈360 boat launches on 220 lakes, 44 rivers, and inland and coastal marine waters.

Fish hatchery – A named *management area* managed by the Fish Program primarily for fish production. Some hatcheries are open for public sport fishing. There are 80 active hatchery facilities inclusive of rearing ponds, which produce 165 million salmon and steelhead and 17.5 million trout (2023). Four hatcheries contain boat launches managed by the Wildlife Program.

Hatchery land – Land acquired fee simple or otherwise (agreement, etc.) for fish production and recorded in department land records in agency control (AC) series #420000 (fish hatchery) and #430000 (rearing pond). There are ≈5,470 acres of fish hatchery land, ≈1,100 of which are incorporated into wildlife areas.

Launch ramp – A facility used for the launching and retrieval of watercraft. A launch ramp may be designated for use by trailered boats or for hand launching small watercraft. WDFW ramps are inventoried as concrete, gravel, unimproved, or hand launch.

Management area – WDFW-managed land designated as an access area, wildlife area, public fishing easement, or fish hatchery. Operations and maintenance of the first three designations listed above are performed by Wildlife Program regional land managers. Fish hatchery operations and maintenance is the responsibility of Fish Program regional hatchery staff.

Operations & maintenance (O&M) – Routine recurring work performed to keep a management area and its recreation facilities in such condition that it may be continuously used for its intended purpose(s).

Public fishing easement - A named *management area* managed by the Wildlife Program for public sport fishing. Public fishing easements are perpetual, recorded legal rights held by department primarily on private properties. Most are unmonitored and receive no operations and maintenance. There are ≈300 public fishing easements totaling ≈158 miles of frontage on ≈50 streams.

Regional Management Team – Team comprised of regional staff to include the regional wildlife program manager, regional fish program manager, enforcement captain, regional habitat program manager, lands agent, and regional director.

Water access area – General term for access areas and boat launches only. Not included are other informal or undesignated fishing or boating locations on wildlife areas and fish hatcheries.

Water access land – Land acquired fee simple or otherwise (easement, agreement, etc.) for public fishing, boating, and/or general water access and recorded in department land records in AC series #200000. Formerly catalogued as “public fishing (PF)” land, they are now referred to as “water access” land. There are ≈18,000 acres of water access land, ≈45% of which are incorporated into wildlife areas. *The remaining ≈10,000 acres, as well as boat launches on all management areas, are the primary focus of this management planning framework.* Water access land is 1) not synonymous with land acquired with WWRP “Water Access” grant funds and 2) is distinct from fish hatchery and wildlife lands.

WDFW-managed land – Land owned or managed by the department. These lands may or may not receive routine operations and maintenance.

Wildlife area – A named *management area* managed by the Wildlife Program primarily for wildlife, fish, and habitat conservation and public recreation. There are 33 wildlife areas. A wildlife area may consist of one or multiple units and may include water access and/or hatchery lands.

Undesignated land – WDFW-managed land that is not assigned a management area designation.

*Washington's rivers, lakes, and marine waters are integral to the state's ecosystems, culture, and economy. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) **OWNS OR MANAGES** **≈475 WATER ACCESS AREAS AND ≈80 FISH HATCHERIES**. These lands are vital to public fishing, boating, and other water recreation for a rapidly growing state population. The department's **MORE THAN 360 BOAT LAUNCHES** are notably the largest system of its kind among public land management agencies in Washington, providing access to 220 lakes, 50 streams, and inland and coastal marine waters*. WDFW water access areas receive upwards of 12 million annual visits by those seeking enjoyment of the unique water recreation opportunities WDFW-managed lands provide.*

(Waterbody metrics are approximations.)*

REGIONAL WATER ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLANNING OVERVIEW

Introduction

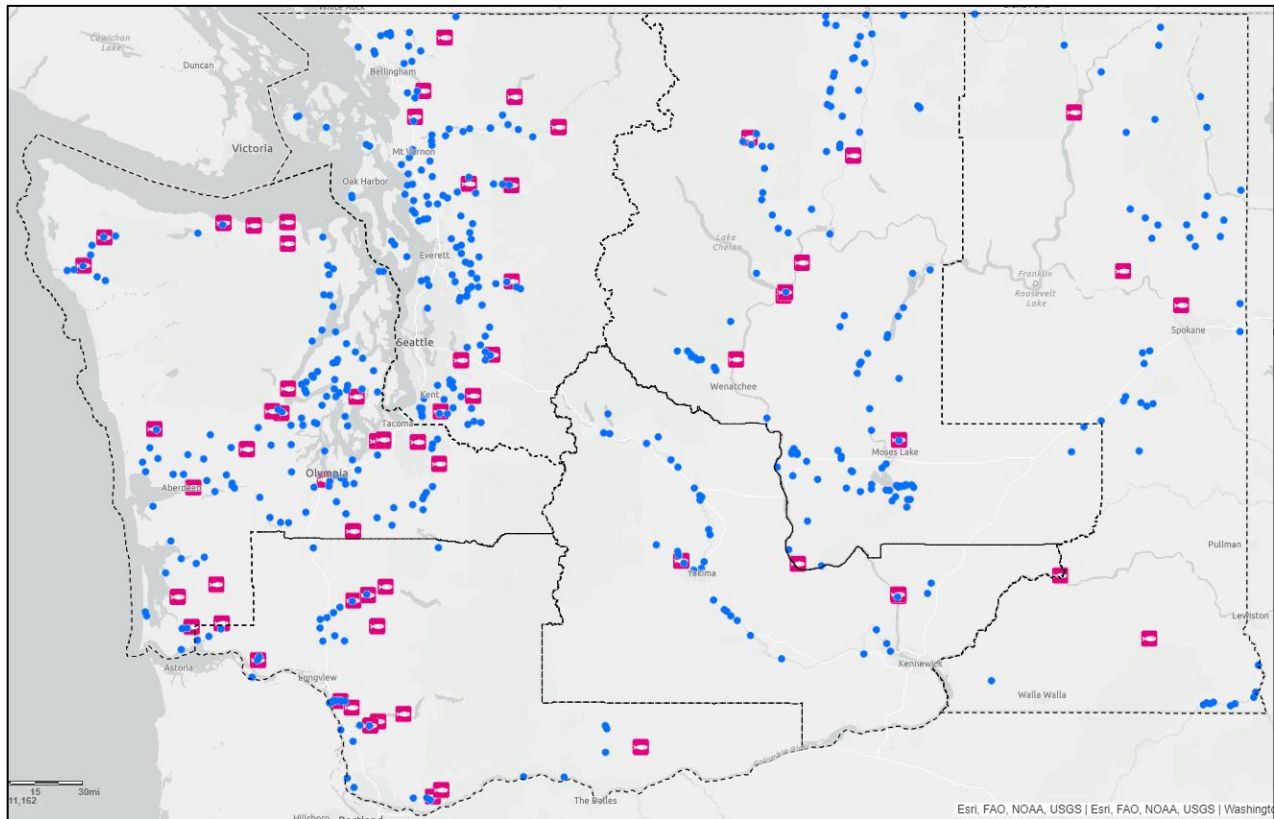
THE MISSION OF THE WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE IS TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PERPETUATE FISH, WILDLIFE, AND ECOSYSTEMS WHILE PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES. WDFW'S RECREATION VISION IS TO ENHANCE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES WHILE PROTECTING NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND TRIBAL RESOURCES.

PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) owns or manages ≈ 475 water access areas on state waters, providing fishing, boating, and other water recreation for Washington residents and visitors. These water access areas include more than 360 boat launches and collectively receive ≈ 12 million visits per year.

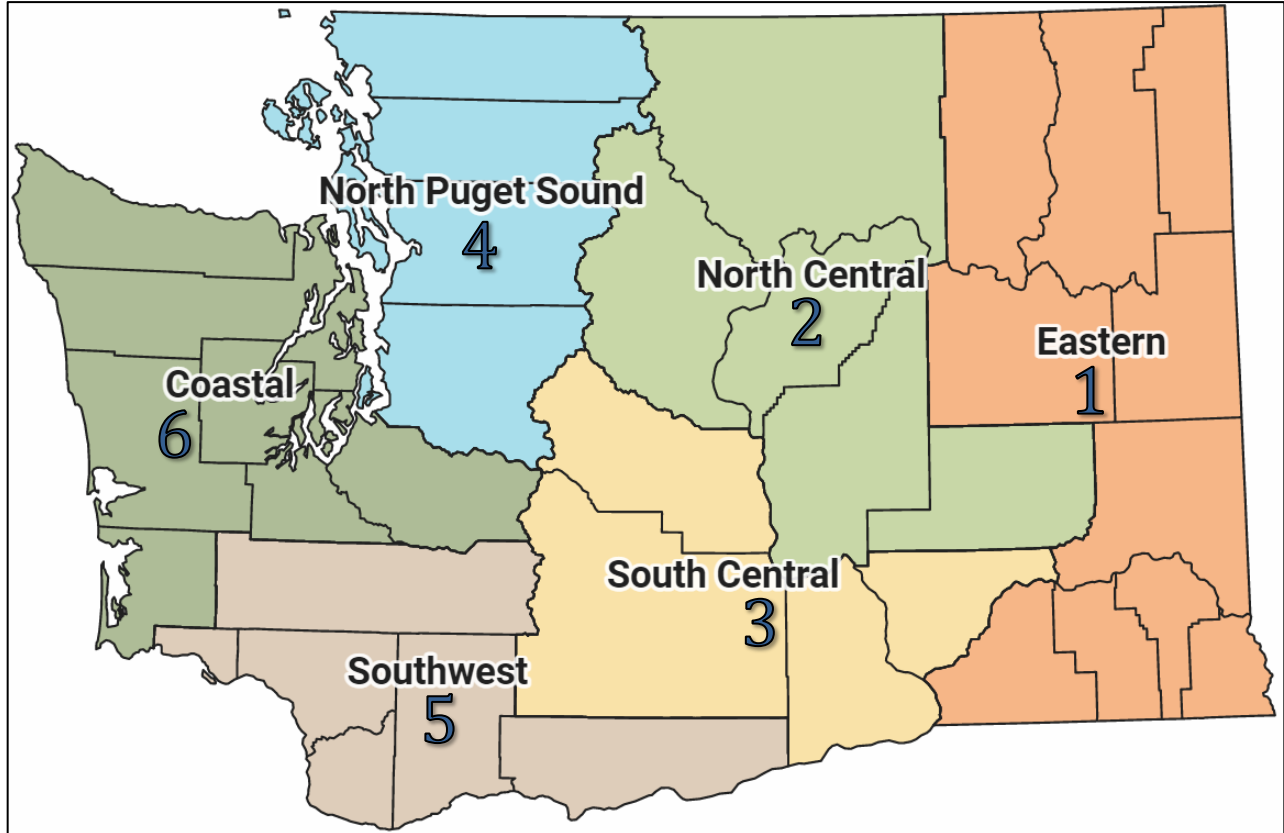
WDFW also manages ≈ 80 fish hatcheries, many allowing onsite public fishing and other recreation. Although established for fish production, they also support valuable outdoor pursuits at many key areas on state waters.

Figure 1. WDFW water access areas (blue) and fish hatcheries (pink). Not all named hatchery lands are shown. (Internal boundaries = WDFW administrative regions)



The purpose of this planning framework is to facilitate the development of 10-year regional water access management plans in each of the department's six administrative regions. Each regional management plan will be owned and implemented by its respective WDFW regional management team (RMT) with support from the Wildlife Program's Lands Division. The framework will be refined every ten years or as otherwise needed to remain compatible with corresponding wildlife area planning processes.

Figure 2. WDFW administrative regions.



This document provides the framework for water access area management and summarizes the associated statutory, regulatory, and funding requirements. For hatchery lands, the framework is *limited to onsite public recreation management, excluding interpretive programs and land within wildlife areas*. It includes internal guidance for integrating multiple management initiatives, including how WDFW addresses and prioritizes management actions for land, facilities, and recreation. It also provides transparency to the public, interested stakeholders, and tribes and outlines WDFW's management of these public assets. Regional water access advisory committees (RWAAC) will provide input during plan development. RWAAC members will represent a diverse range of stakeholder perspectives with a shared interest in management activities on water access areas, and recreation management on hatchery lands, within each of the department's administrative regions. Potential participants on the RWAACs include boaters, anglers, and local communities and governments.

Development of each regional management plan will identify goals, objectives, and performance

measures specific to each region's unique assets and circumstances with the purpose of prioritizing expenditure of resources to best serve the recreating public. In cooperation with government partners, tribes, and key stakeholders, the regional water access planning process integrates the priorities of WDFW's wildlife, fish, enforcement, and habitat programs. Lands Division planners facilitate dialogue among partners, WDFW regional managers, and statewide management staff as an interdisciplinary process to prioritize management and capital needs and address potential conflicts among competing priorities of WDFW programs. The final regional plan is delivered, following completion of State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review, to the WDFW director for approval.

This document identifies the WDFW directives, guidance, and requirements for managing water access areas, and recreation on hatchery lands, and describes how these are addressed through the planning process and documented in each plan. It is modeled on the wildlife area management planning framework and is intended for both internal and external audiences. There are three main sections: **planning overview**; **water access management and planning**; and **authority and purpose**.

PLAN PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Water access areas are integral to the department's mission to provide sustainable fish and wildlife recreation opportunities. However, most water access lands, acquired by WDFW for public fishing, boating, and other water recreation, have not undergone a formal public planning process regionally or statewide to evaluate and prioritize their development and management. Boat launches on wildlife areas have long been included in wildlife area management planning but are not assessed in the context of their individual roles in the larger portfolio of water access lands. Beginning in 2017, the wildlife area management planning process was broadened to include all water access lands within a larger planning area around wildlife areas, but it did not lead to emphasis on specific management goals and objectives or other action items needed for those lands. This new regional water access management planning framework is distinct from wildlife area management planning. However, the two will intersect because $\approx 20\%$ of WDFW boat launches are located on wildlife areas and are key features of WDFW-managed water recreation lands and facilities.

Fish hatcheries have long been guided by various types of management planning related to fish production. Approximately 20% of hatchery lands, excluding the hatchery facilities, have been incorporated into wildlife areas and are included in wildlife area management planning. However, the remaining 80% of hatchery lands have received little or no planning focus on recreation management.

The purposes of each 10-year regional water access management plan are to:

- Inform staff, partners, and the public of the management direction for water access lands
- Guide staff in prioritizing activities to provide sustainable fish and wildlife recreation opportunities while conserving natural, cultural, and tribal resources
- Resolve certain existing, critical management needs
- Provide transparency regarding decision making processes
- Identify funding constraints and needs
- Advance implementation of the Lands Division's land organizational hierarchy
- Implement the *Streambank Easement Management Framework* (Appendix A); and

- Address recreation management on hatchery lands.

The benefits of the regional management plans include: 1) development of an implementation plan that is regularly reviewed and updated by regional managers; 2) justification to the legislature and other funding bodies for continued support for WDFW-managed lands; and 3) a sanctioned reference to support management actions, prioritization of investment, and responses to emerging issues.

WATER ACCESS PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The following principles shall guide management planning for water access areas and hatchery lands. Those marked with an asterisk are adopted from the Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum¹.

- *Each water access area is a single resource within a statewide system of department-managed lands that provide recreational access to lakes, streams, reservoirs, marine areas, and other waters. Each can have special qualities that make it an important contributor to the larger system of department-managed lands.
- *Department-managed lands, including water access areas and hatchery lands, provide recreation opportunities that are often distinct from other public lands.
- *An individual water access area cannot necessarily be all things to all people at all times. Therefore, the recreational role or niche of each must be recognized and managed for within the context of local and regional public needs and interests.
- *Each water access area and hatchery land should fill a niche within a larger system of diverse water recreation opportunities provided by multiple land management agencies. The conservation of recreation diversity across a larger system will benefit the public and increase management effectiveness and efficiency for WDFW water access and hatchery lands. Infrastructure investment and O&M will vary across water access areas and hatchery lands according to need and the intended user experience.
- Recreational fishing will continue to be a management priority on WDFW water access areas. Recreational boating access will be a priority where required by grant obligations. Other recreation activities will be accommodated to the extent that funding strings are satisfied, and quality fishing opportunities maintained.
- Fish production will continue to be the management priority on WDFW hatchery lands. Public fishing and other recreation will be accommodated to the extent that management capacity and funding strings allow.
- Recreation management at water access areas and on hatchery lands will be guided by the agency mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems.
- Management of department-owned lands and other lands where the department has legal obligations (e.g., grant contracts) will be prioritized over discretionary management of land owned by other parties.

¹ Haas, G., Aukerman, R., Lovejoy, V., and Welch D. Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS) Users' Guidebook. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Office of Program and Policy Services, Denver Federal Center, Lakewood, Colorado. July 2004.

- The department’s water access land ownership and recreation management rights (e.g., streambank easements; land use agreements) require an integrated inter-programmatic management model to best leverage department resources and those of external partners, where possible, to expand public fishing, boating, and other water recreation opportunities.
- Fishing, boating, and other water recreation opportunities on department-managed lands will be optimized within the constraints of land management capacity.
- Land management priorities will serve the public and advance department business needs.
- Consistent with RCW [77.04.012](#), the exercise of the department’s land use rights (i.e., streambank easements) on private property will not infringe on the rights of private property owners to otherwise control their property.
- Water access planning will aim to increase fishing, boating, and other water recreation opportunities and access for underserved groups.

PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIZATION

Water Access Lands

The department’s prioritization of public recreation management on *water access lands* is informed by two major considerations: control and funding (Table 1). Department water access lands will be evaluated, *in part*, based on these two factors. Table 1 alone does not necessarily predetermine management. The top portion of the table is a matrix that determines if public use management by the department for a property is obligatory, assumed, contractual, or discretionary. The bottom portion of the table lists the most common types of department-managed lands comprising each class. The examples listed are not exhaustive but represent the most common cases.

Table 1. Public use management prioritization schema for water access lands.

Control	D e e d o r E a s e m e n t t o t h e P r o p e r t y ?			
	Yes		No	
Funding	G r a n t N e x u s		G r a n t N e x u s	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
MANAGEMENT CLASS	OBLIGATORY	ASSUMED	CONTRACTUAL	DISCRETIONARY
Property Types	<i>Land acquisition funded by grant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeded property • Streambank easement 	<i>Land acquisition funded by license revenue or mitigation; transfer or donation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeded property • Streambank easement 	<i>Site development funded by grant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDFW development on land owned by other party <i>Land management agreement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDFW manages land owned by other party; <u>termination requires mutual agreement</u> 	<i>Land management agreement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDFW manages land owned by other party; <u>termination requires mutual agreement</u>
	<i>Land management agreement: WDFW-owned land is managed by another party</i>			

-Obligatory-

The department is obligated to manage for public use those properties acquired or developed with grant funds². These are a management priority, as the funding sources require that they remain open to the public in perpetuity. Properties open to public recreation generally require some level of investment in O&M. Most water access areas belong to this class.

-Assumed-

The department owns or has legal rights (e.g., easement) on these properties and there are no grant-related encumbrances. Recreational access to these lands is assumed but not required by law or policy. WDFW does not necessarily prioritize management of deeded lands over other types of land holdings. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Account (formerly the State Wildlife Fund or Game Fund), generated by fishing, hunting, and trapping license revenues, was used to purchase most of these for public access; others were acquired through utility mitigation agreements and no-cost

² Examples include recreation grants provided by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [USFWS; Sport Fish Restoration (SFR/D)], and National Park Service (Land and Water Conservation Fund [LWCF]).

transfers and donations. Many properties in this class, including many deeded lands, currently receive no investment in O&M.

Most unmonitored (i.e., there is no O&M) properties in this class are streambank easements. They were acquired under a 1950s “farmer-sportsmen” model that gives the department only the right to allow public fishing, and originally relied on sportsmen’s organizations to provide user-based site stewardship as directed by the department. That model no longer exists in practice and has resulted in a major management capacity gap. These easements should be viewed as a collective, integrated network of limited-use public recreation lands that can be opened when and where possible.

- Contractual -

Two types of contractual agreements comprise this class: 1) land management agreements on land owned by other parties where *termination of the agreement must be mutually agreed to by both parties* and 2) grant-funded site developments (e.g., boat launches) on land owned by other parties.

1. These lands are owned by other parties but are managed by WDFW as access areas. Mostly owned by local governments, they are typically indistinguishable from department-owned land, and many have been managed by the department for many decades, some for 70+ years. Termination of these management agreements must be by mutual consent. Were it not for the mutual consent stipulation, these properties would belong to the Discretionary class.

2. On these grant-funded (i.e., RCO) site developments, the department’s routine O&M involvement varies greatly, from full service (e.g., Bureau of Reclamation lands in Region 2) to none (e.g., local government lands in Region 4). This variability is largely a function of the age of the grant contract. In many cases, the infrastructure is 40+ years old and routine O&M by WDFW, assuming it ever occurred, ended decades ago. However, grant funders consider WDFW the responsible party for continued management of the grant project³.

- Discretionary -

The department is involved in management of these properties by choice. The majority are lands owned by other parties that are managed by WDFW as access areas through land management agreements, many of which include initial terms (time duration) that expired decades ago and automatically renew until cancelled by one or both parties. *The decision to terminate the agreement can be made at will by either party.* These agreements should be closely scrutinized to determine if continued department investment is warranted, specific attention being given to validity, conditions, expiration date, renewal options, and cancellation terms. Agreements that do not clearly advance the agency mission, require disproportionately high levels of O&M, or create untenable liabilities for WDFW should be evaluated for possible termination. Most reductions in O&M obligations and overall liabilities will be found in this group.

³Per RCO policy, boating infrastructure has a 25-year expected service life. The underlying land, however, is required to be open to public recreation in perpetuity. For projects >25 years old, WDFW remains the responsible party to boating facilities development grants until administratively released by RCO.

Many access areas in this class are closely tied to specific fish management projects and associated public fishing opportunities. These situations will be evaluated collaboratively by the Wildlife and Fish programs to determine if 1) public benefits justify management and opportunity costs and 2) continued management of the access area by WDFW is in the mutual best interest both programs.

Hatchery Lands

Public use management *is discretionary* on most hatchery lands. Exceptions include regulatory or mitigation agreements requiring certain public recreation opportunities, and where recreation or interpretation infrastructure was developed using recreation grant funding. Interpretive programs are outside the scope of this planning framework. SFR (DJ) funding tied to hatchery land acquisitions and/or management operations does not itself obligate WDFW to allow public recreation at those locations.

WDFW LANDS VISION STATEMENT (Lands Showcase, 2018)

A Washington where fish and wildlife thrive in healthy habitats, and where people experience and enjoy our state's natural gifts for generations to come.

Statewide Water Access Management Goals

Regional water access management plans will advance the following statewide goals:

- GOAL 1 RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND PUBLIC USE RULES ARE CLEAR ON WATER ACCESS AND HATCHERY LANDS
- GOAL 2 WATER ACCESS LANDS ARE MANAGED CONSISTENT WITH THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE WHERE DEED OR EASEMENT STIPULATIONS RESTRICT USE
- GOAL 3 LAND MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC USE OBLIGATIONS ARE SATISFIED ON WATER ACCESS AND HATCHERY LANDS
- GOAL 4 OPERATIONS & MAINTANENCE ON WATER ACCESS AREAS IS FUNDED AT FULL SERVICE STANDARD
- GOAL 5 MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL INVESTMENTS SUPPORT INCREASED PUBLIC FISHING OPPORTUNITIES ON WATER ACCESS AND HATCHERY LANDS
- GOAL 6 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE LEVERAGED TO INCREASE PUBLIC FISHING OPPORTUNITIES ON WATER ACCESS AND HATCHERY LANDS
- GOAL 7 WATER ACCESS LANDS ARE MANAGED, WHERE PRACTICABLE, FOR ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS
- GOAL 8 WATER ACCESS AND HATCHERY LANDS ENHANCE WATER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERRECOGNIZED GROUPS

Water Access Management Planning Process

The following section describes the process of developing a final regional water access management plan.

SCOPING

Scoping begins with a meeting of the Lands Division planner and the Core Team, which will typically be comprised of the regional wildlife program manager (Wildlife RPM), regional fish program manager (Fish RPM), enforcement captain, access area manager, and fish management division representative. The Core Team defines roles, responsibilities, expectations, and timeline for plan completion. The Core Team also identifies designees for itself (e.g., RPM → assistant RPM or Lands Operations Manager), members of the larger Planning Team, and pertinent WDFW subject matter experts.

Table 2. Sample composition of WDFW planning team (Region 4).

Programs			
FISH	WILDLIFE	ENFORCEMENT	HABITAT
<u>Core Team</u>			
Regional Program Manager	Regional Program Manager	Captain	
Fish Mgmt Div representative	Access area manager		
<u>Planning Team</u>			
RPM rep.	Asst. RPM (RPM rep)	Sergeants (Capt. reps)	Representative
Inland fish bio (FMD rep)	Access area manager 1		
District 12 biologist	(Access area manager 2)		
District 13 biologist	Lands agent		
District 14 biologist	Wildlife area manager*		
Hatchery operations manager(s)			
Shellfish bio (FMD)*			
Aquatic Invasive Species Biologist (FMD)*			
*If applicable and assigned by the Core Team. RPM = regional program manager. FMD = Fish Management Division			

Individual scoping meetings will be held for internal, advisory committee, and public audiences. These meetings help define management issues, which in turn lead to management goals, objectives, and performance measures. At each scoping meeting, the statewide planning principles, goals, recreation management prioritization criteria, and access area information (e.g., predominant public uses; infrastructure needs, etc.) are summarized. Participants identify issues, express interests, and provide other relevant input (e.g., predominant recreation uses; conflicts). Special focus will be given to existing and potential expansion of shore fishing opportunities.

The development of each regional water access management plan will include a comprehensive assessment of all water access and hatchery lands within the administrative region, including:

Water access lands

- All access areas
- All water access lands not in wildlife areas
- Boat launches on wildlife areas and fish hatcheries
- Review of existing area information, including management history and facility data
- Description of current management status and emphasis
- O&M intensity
- Open period (year-round; seasonal)
- Fishing opportunities in associated waters (e.g., Fish Washington; fish stocking)
- Grant obligations tied to land and/or facilities
- Name of access area or boat launch and proposed alternatives, if any
- Local regulations on associated waterbody (e.g., boat engine restrictions, speed limits)
- Interface with DNR state-owned aquatic land, if any
- Area-specific rules, existing and proposed
- Other nearby public lands providing water access
- Encroachments
- Other area-specific items

Hatchery lands

- All hatchery lands not in wildlife areas
- Review of existing area information, including recreation facility data
- Description of current recreation management status
- Recreation management O&M intensity
- Open period for recreation (year-round; seasonal)
- Recreation grant obligations tied to land and/or facilities
- Area-specific rules, existing and proposed
- Other area-specific items related to recreation

All water access lands, hatchery lands, and boat launches within a region will be included in the regional management plan. Boat launches on wildlife areas are accounted for in wildlife area planning but will be incorporated into the regional water access plan because of their importance to water recreation at the regional scale. Sequencing of regional water access management plans and wildlife area management plans will not affect the content of either.

A high volume of land and facility information will be compiled and shared among members of the planning team. This will require the development of a map-based planning tool for area profiles that will 1) pull from existing data from the wildlife program's Land Information System (LIS), recreation facility inventory, water access area dataset, Fish Washington, fishing rules, and possibly other sources; 2) facilitate team collaboration through comments, interactive maps, and other features; and 3) record data corrections.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This phase brings together the Planning Team for several meetings. A typical planning team is cross-program in composition, including district fish biologists, hatchery managers, Wildlife assistant RPM, access area managers, and enforcement officers, to ensure all interests and values are incorporated into the plan. The Planning Team confirms management issues and identifies SMART (Specific-Measurable-Attainable-Realistic-Timely) objectives and performance measures based on program priorities and input collected during tribal engagement and internal, advisory committee, and public scoping. The draft list of goals and objectives is reviewed by the RWAAC prior to public review. The RWAAC also provides feedback on prioritization described below. Goals and objectives are then prioritized for implementation.

PRIORITIZATION OF PLAN OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives are the backbone of regional water access management plans – they represent a 10-year action plan detailing what WDFW and the RWAAC wish to achieve and how progress will be measured and monitored. Actions in the plan will be prioritized and phased commensurate with management capacity and funding.

Following review of the goals and objectives through the public review process for the draft plan, the planning team will prioritize the objectives for each goal. This prioritization exercise considers three major factors for each objective: **urgency**, **benefit**, and **effort**.

In evaluating urgency, plan reviewers consider the objective's importance for ensuring the health and safety of staff and visitors, protecting natural, capital, cultural, and tribal resources, and complying with regulatory, contractual, treaty, and other legal obligations.

In evaluating benefit, reviewers consider both public benefit and department business needs in actions related to land, facility, and recreation management.

In evaluating effort, considerations include the amount of staff time and resources necessary to complete an objective and whether or not its completion depends on coordination with and participation by external partners.

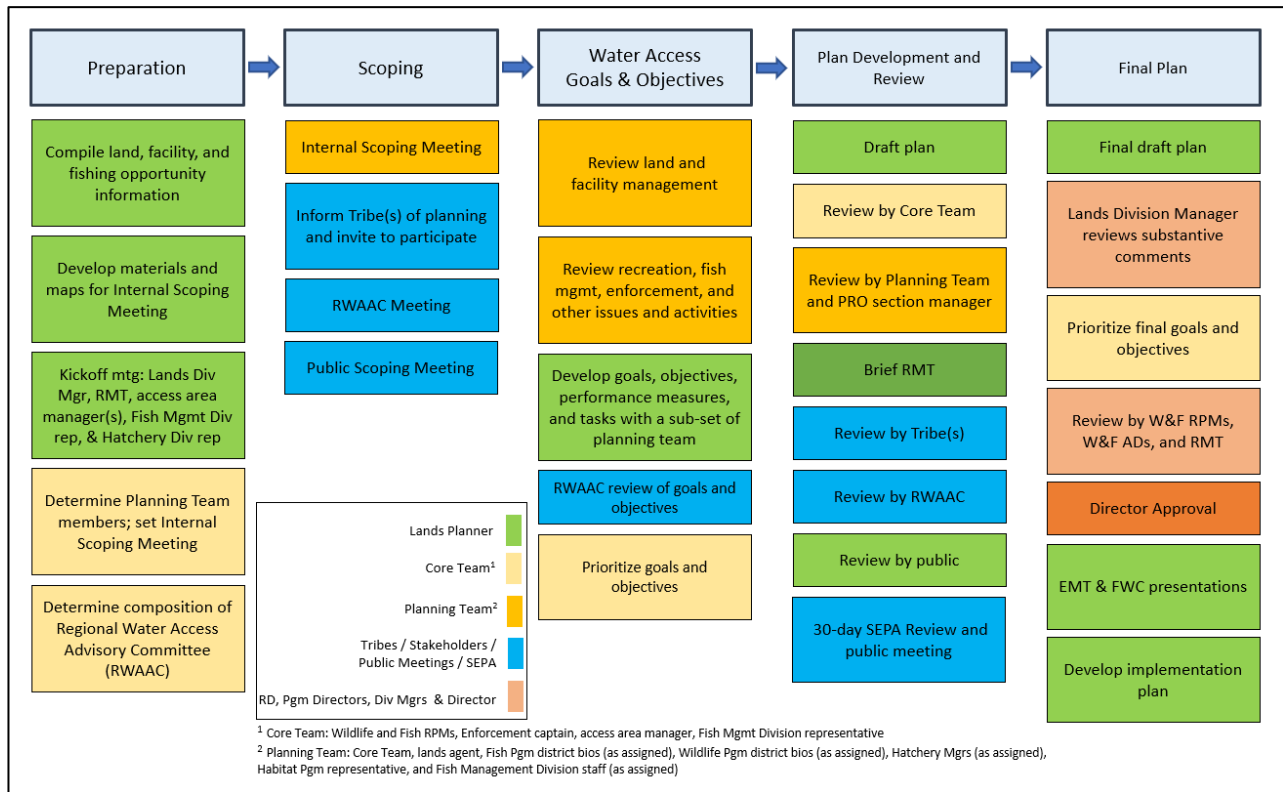
The prioritization process is designed to help RWAAC members advise and land managers to determine how actions should be prioritized for implementation. Progress on implementation will then be reviewed each biennium by the RMT (or designees) to re-assess priorities and inform staff of work needs.

Some aspects of regional planning will closely relate to Lands Division statewide interests, such as application of the streambank easement management framework. Division headquarters will thus help ensure goals and objectives, and their prioritization, are consistent with and advance those interests.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW – FINAL PLAN

The Lands planner is responsible for drafting and revising the plan with input from regional and statewide staff, partners, and stakeholders. A completed draft plan is reviewed by the Planning Team, Lands planning section manager, RWAAC, tribes, and the public through SEPA. Based on overall feedback, the draft plan is again revised and then circulated for review by WDFW regional field staff, regional Wildlife and Fish RPMs, wildlife and fish program assistant directors, Lands Division manager, Fish Management Division manager, Hatchery Division manager, and, lastly, the WDFW Director for final review and approval (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Water access area plan development process.



PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Following plan adoption, implementation is tracked by the region to document progress on achieving the plan’s goals. The collaborative nature of plan development is designed to encourage shared responsibility, accountability, and ongoing engagement by the RMT to implement the plan and address emergent priorities and adaptive management during the plan’s 10-year window. The Wildlife RPM or designee reports implementation progress to the RWAAC.

Engagement in the Management Planning Process

WDFW is committed to a transparent, inclusive public planning process for WDFW-managed lands. The following strategy is used in the development of each plan to provide flexibility to tailor activities to unique stakeholders and regional conditions.

REGIONAL WATER ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Regional water access advisory committees (RWAAC) advise regional land and fishery managers on recreation management related to boating, fishing, and other water recreation. RWAAC members represent diverse partners and stakeholders with an interest in management activities on local and regional lands that provide public access to state waters. RWAACs provide input during both plan development and the 10-year span of the plan's implementation. RWAACs may also review proposals for water access area and hatchery recreation infrastructure development, seasonal closures, and other area-based management activities not necessarily tied to management plan development or updates. They may also support initiatives such as public volunteerism.

A RWAAC should be established in a region prior to the initiation of regional water access management planning. At the outset of the planning process, the composition of the RWAAC is reviewed by the Core Team to determine if membership adjustments are needed to ensure that diverse interests are represented. On the WDFW website, each RWAAC has a unique [webpage](#) to provide an overview of the RWAAC, including bylaws, a list of members, and meeting materials. An event [calendar](#) is included as a place to post scheduled RWAAC meetings. RWAAC meetings are open to the public in compliance with [Chapter 42.30 RCW](#) and will be posted accordingly.

The RWAAC may provide final comments after public review of the draft plan, depending on the magnitude of changes suggested through public review. This is most likely in cases where public comments on the draft plan recommend significant deviation from the RWAAC's and WDFW's intended direction.

COORDINATION WITH TRIBES

Lands planners coordinate with regional and cultural resources staff in advance of scoping and SEPA public review to identify and coordinate with tribal governments*. At the onset of the planning process, the WDFW regional director will formally notify affected tribes that planning is about to begin that their input and engagement is requested and welcomed. The letters are addressed to the tribal chair and copies provided to the cultural resource representative and WDFW cultural resources staff. The letter should include the basics of the planning process, timeline, and map(s) of the planning area. Tribes are sent the draft plan prior to the SEPA 30-day public review and are provided at least 30 days to respond.

*Planners will consult the WDFW Director of Tribal Affairs and regional director to identify the appropriate tribal governments, and Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) to develop an outreach strategy.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The department is committed to providing opportunities for the public to engage with and give feedback on its work. In addition to providing opportunities for the public to share their views and get involved, public engagement also supports the department's compliance with SEPA. This can include public meetings, public review periods, and documenting and responding to comments. Accordingly, Lands planners work with regional staff to identify stakeholders and plan outreach activities to support dialogue about regional water access planning and review.

The following public involvement activities will occur for each regional plan:

- Develop a stakeholder database that includes recreational users, current landowner partners (e.g., local governments), economic development interests, local and regional media, and other interested or affected parties.
- Develop planning materials to announce upcoming meetings and communicate the status of management planning. Each planning process includes three public elements: 1) public and advisory committee meetings; 2) development and distribution of fact sheets, meeting announcements, or news releases; and 3) solicitation of public comments by various means, including, but not limited to, media such as phone, email, text, survey, and/or the WDFW website.

STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERESTS

Water access stakeholders include both external and internal (WDFW) parties (Table 3). External stakeholder interests are incredibly varied and include a broad spectrum of recreationists, landowners, and local governments, among others. Internal stakeholders are comprised of the various WDFW programs, offices, and regions that have a business relation to water access and hatchery lands. Regional water access management planning will account for those perspectives through the Core and Planning Teams, RWAACs, and public review and comment.

Table 3. Stakeholders and interests.

Stakeholder	Interest	Notes
<i>Internal</i>		
Fish Program	Fishing opportunities	Steelhead, salmon, warmwater, shellfish
	Hatchery lands	Recreation management
	Fish management	Stocking, fish monitoring
	Fishing rules	Fish Washington mobile app
Enforcement Program	Law enforcement	Ch 220-500 WAC
Wildlife Program		
<i>Lands</i>	Land management	O&M funding and ops.
<i>Lands</i>	Encroachments	Real Estate Services
<i>Lands</i>	Recreation management	10-year recreation strategy; incl., non-consumptive rec.
<i>Diversity</i>	Non-game wildlife	Listed species / SGCN / PHS
<i>Game</i>	Hunting opportunities	Waterfowl, boat access to remote areas
Communications and Public Engagements	Public outreach	Information kiosks, signs, and other messaging
CAMP	Infrastructure	Development and repair
Habitat Program	Fish and wildlife habitat	Aquatic habitat restoration, PHS, HPAs, BMPs, regulations
<i>External</i>		
Boating	Fishing	Lakes, rivers, marine
	General recreation	Motorized, non-motorized
Fishing	By boat	Lakes, rivers, marine
	By land	Lakeshore, streambank
Hunting	By boat	Waterfowl
	By land	Accessing uplands by boat
Other recreation	By land	Swimming, floating, etc.
Land mgmt agreements	Land owned by others	Managed by WDFW
	Land owned by WDFW	Managed by others
Private property owners	Public recreation easements	Streambank easements
	Boat launch neighbors	Seasonal vs year-round
HOAs / LMDs	Watercraft regulations	Signage

	Water quality	AIS
Grant funders	Compliance	
Local governments	Planning	UGBs, public transportation
DNR	State-owned aquatic land	Aquatic leases, stream jurisdiction, shore fishing
State Parks	Boating safety	Messaging
Ecology	Litter control & prevention	Funding
PUDs	Irrigation water supply	
	Drinking water supply	
	Hydropower	
	Mitigation	Fishing easements
Federal land managers	Recreation connectivity	Boating/floating
Commercial interests	Guides	Fishing
	Rentals	Watercraft (kayaks, etc.)
	Other	Paddleboard yoga

WATER ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Each management plan includes an account of acquisition history and funding, recreation infrastructure, existing public uses, and goals, objectives, and performance measures. The Lands planner facilitates discussions to identify key opportunities and specific actions that relate to local, regional, and statewide water access goals and contribute to advancing WDFW’s mission.

Land Ownership and Management

WDFW water access areas occur on WDFW-owned lands and on lands owned by other public and private entities. Some WDFW-owned water access lands are managed by other parties, typically local governments, under various types of agreements. Land obligations include not only direct management of access areas, but also encumbrances or claims on property (e.g., acquisition or development grant obligations, recreation easements, etc.).

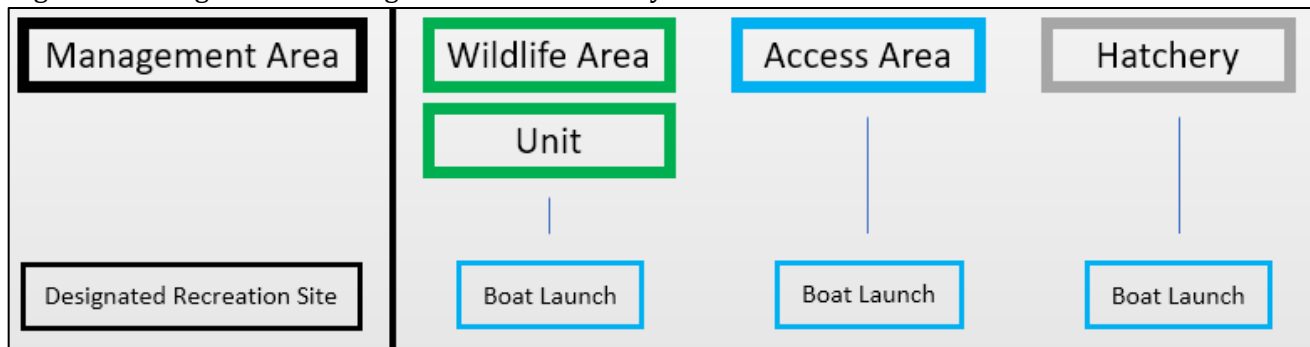
WDFW hatcheries occur on lands acquired by deed, agreement, easement, lease, and permit. Some hatchery lands are no longer used for fish production and lie dormant, while others are leased to other parties. Land obligations pertain primarily to fish production but also include encumbrances related to public recreation (e.g., regulatory stipulations and grant obligations).

These factors may influence management decisions and are described in more detail the sections below. Each regional water access management plan will address these considerations and their effects on land and recreation management.

WDFW LAND ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY

For management and administrative purposes, WDFW organizes lands in a hierarchy adopted in 2022 that includes wildlife areas and units, access areas, and hatcheries (Figure 4). Each of these management area types may or may not include *designated recreation sites*, such as boat launches or developed shore fishing sites. Access areas and boat launches, all marked in blue in Figure 4, collectively constitute the “water access areas” that are the primary focus of this framework.

Figure 4. Management area organizational hierarchy.



Regional water access management plans will cover water access lands, access areas, hatchery lands, and boat launches.

- Water access lands are those acquired for public fishing or other water recreation.
- An access area is a *management area* resulting from one or more real estate transaction and may consist of lands acquired by deed, easement, agreement, lease, or a combination thereof. An access area may or may not contain a boat launch.
- Hatchery lands are those acquired for fish production.
- Boat launches are *designated recreation sites* on access areas, wildlife areas, and hatcheries. A boat launch may comprise an entire access area.

WATER ACCESS LANDS

WDFW owns, manages, or has rights to $\approx 17,000$ acres of land acquired for fishing, boating, and general water access (Table 4.) These water access lands were originally catalogued in the department's land titles and records as "public fishing (PF)" lands in the AC #200000 series. Most exist today as access areas. Many other tracts, including a large number with boat launches, are embedded within wildlife areas and managed as part of those management areas. *Others are unassigned, meaning they are not assigned a management area designation.*

Table 4. Regional water access lands.

Region	Total Acres	# Access Areas	# Boat Launches*	Streambank Esmt (miles)	Acres in WLAs	Unassigned acres ⁺
1	960	35	37	14.7	TBD	TBD
2	3,406	46	101	27.2	TBD	TBD
3	5,258	23	24	7.6	TBD	TBD
4	1,470	122	98	70.0	TBD	TBD
5	2,496	31	29	21.5	TBD	TBD
6	3,353	116	103	16.9	TBD	TBD
Total	16,943	373	392	≈ 158	TBD	TBD

* Some boat launches on wildlife areas are on non-water access lands.

+ Excluding public fishing easements.

The acquisition of public fishing lands by the department began in 1933 when the newly created state Department of Game took ownership of county-owned public recreation lands held by former county game commissions. The first acquisition of privately owned lands by the department for public sport fishing was in 1937 for what is now the Summit Lake Access Area in Thurston County. Acquisitions

continued at a rapid rate for several decades to provide public access to the state’s lakes, streams, and marine waters, and that work continues today (Figures 5 and 6). Due to these early efforts, much of the department’s vast water access land portfolio was assembled prior to the existence of most of today’s wildlife areas. Seventy percent of WDFW-managed water access lands were acquired prior to 1980, and most were acquired with state wildlife funds for public fishing. In recent decades, WDFW leveraged funding provided by the Washington state legislature through the Recreation and Conservation Office to acquire additional lands for public water recreation.

Figure 5. Land acquisition timeline of water access, wildlife, and hatchery lands.

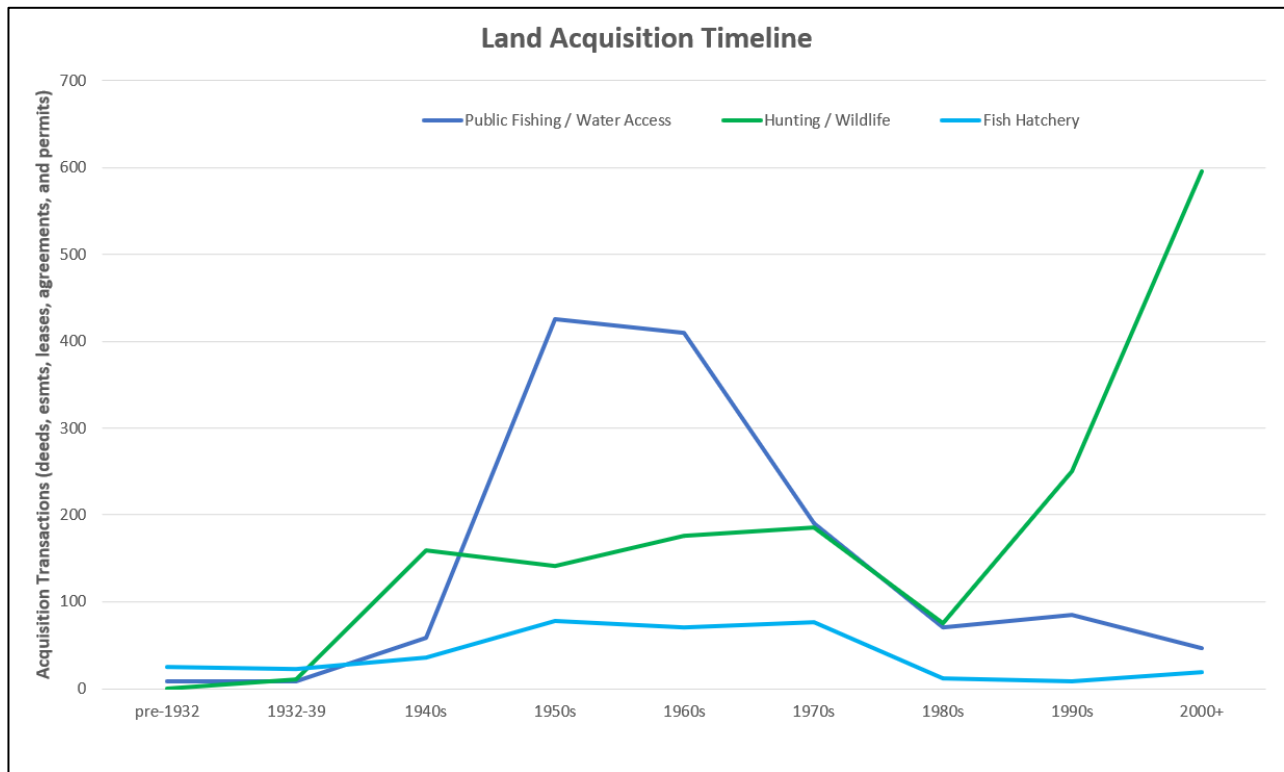
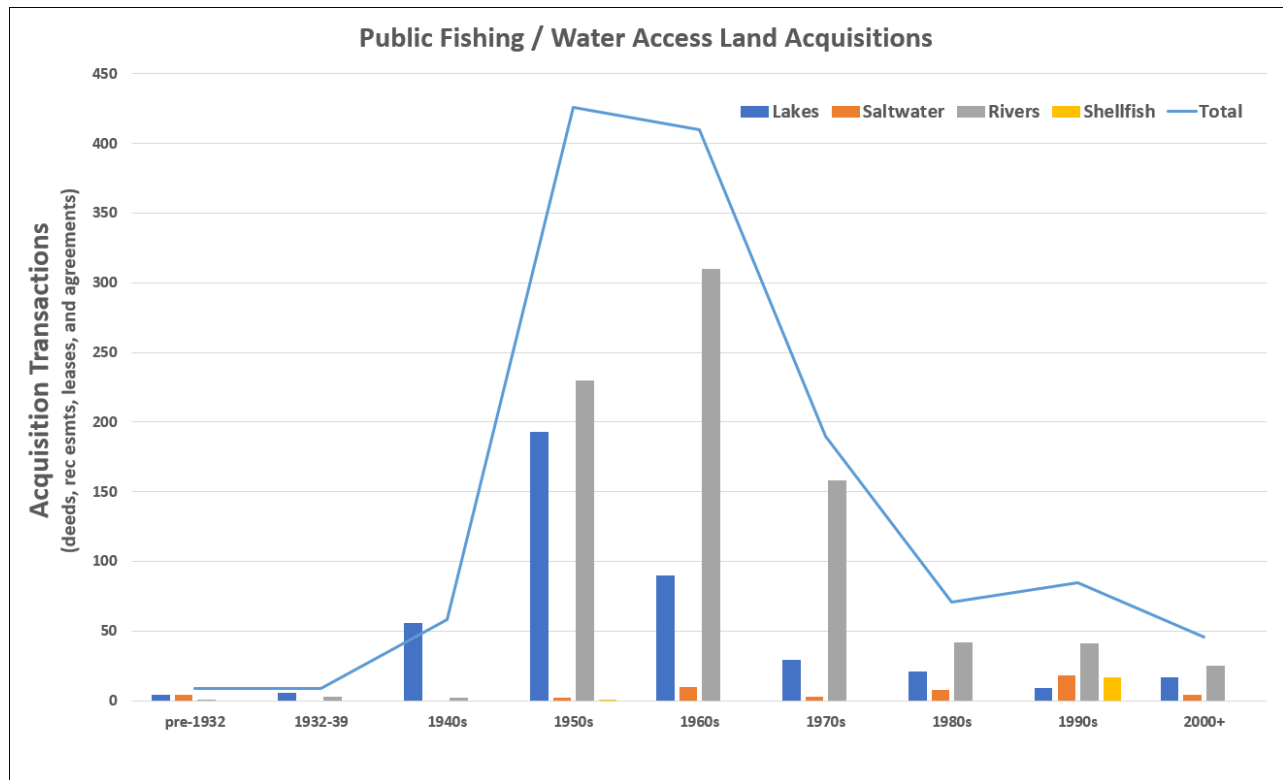


Figure 6. Land acquisition timeline of water access lands: Lakes, saltwater, rivers, and shellfish.



Lakes

Following initial projects of the 1930s, the acquisition of access areas on westside lakes accelerated in the late 1940s to ensure permanent public fishing access to those waters. Many lakes at the time were accessible to the public only by fee through private lake resorts, and others were rapidly becoming inaccessible to the public due to subdivision of the surrounding land and sale of residential private lots. WDFW set out to secure by any means available even the smallest of lots to provide public boating access for the purpose of recreational fishing and instituted a policy of only stocking fish (i.e., trout) on lakes with public access. In this effort, the department collaborated with King County to ensure at least one lot for department use would be requirement of lake subdivisions (Appendix A). Another strategy involved the dedication of county road rights-of-way to the department to manage for public use. Additional action taken by the department was to secure management rights on city- or county-owned lands abutting lakes, which at the time provided the only public boating access. Many of those same local jurisdictions now own and manage full-facility boat launches elsewhere on those same lakes or others nearby, often far exceeding in sophistication and recreation capacity the original rudimentary WDFW-managed launch.

Streams

Water access lands on streams include boat launches and lesser developed lands for bank fishing. A primary focus during the 1950s-1970s was public fishing access to the robust steelhead runs of the

time, especially on the major Puget Sound rivers north of Seattle. This includes the acquisition of ≈300 perpetual streambank easements throughout the state totaling ≈158 miles of frontage on ≈50 streams. Streambank easements are nearly exclusively on private property and are therefore not public land; the underlying landowner continues to own the land and pay the property tax, but *limited* public recreational use is allowed under department control. These easements were secured by the department beginning in the early 1950s to reduce trespass conflicts between recreational steelhead fishermen and landowners.

Marine Waters

Water access lands on marine waters consist of boat launches and shellfishing tidelands. WDFW owns or manages 12 marine boat launches: eight on Puget Sound, two that provide direct access to Grays Harbor, and two servicing Willapa Bay. Shellfishing tidelands on WDFW water access lands are widely distributed throughout Puget Sound, including access areas on Case Inlet, Hood Canal, and Penn Cove.

The most common federal and state funding sources for acquisitions of and O&M on water access lands are summarized below (Table 5). Each regional water access management plan identifies the funding sources used for acquisitions and O&M, including any associated obligations.

Table 5. Acquisition funding for water access lands. (* LWCF is always tied to RCO bonds.)

Fund	# Transactions	%
State Wildlife Fund	425	39
RCO Bonds	242	22
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*	98	9
Mitigation	84	8
Dingell-Johnson (DJ)	58	5
RCO - Boating Facilities Program (BFP)	25	2
WWRP - Water Access	15	1
Other (transfer, donation, exchange, &c.)	140	14
Total	1,087	100

HATCHERY LANDS

WDFW owns or has rights to ≈5,470 acres of land for fish production (Table 6). These lands are catalogued in the department's land titles and records in the AC #42000 (fish hatchery) and #43000 (rearing pond) series. Despite the different designations, these lands are generally referred to collectively as hatchery lands. WDFW operates ≈80 fish hatcheries, several of which are on properties catalogued with a classification other than hatchery land. With few exceptions, hatchery lands, including portions open to the public for sport fishing, are managed by Fish Program personnel.

Approximately 1,100 acres (20%) of hatchery lands are incorporated into the seven wildlife areas (Chelan, Columbia Basin, Klickitat, Mt. St. Helens, Oak Creek, South Puget Sound, and W.T. Wooten). Eight hatchery land tracts contain access areas, including 5 boat launches. The hatchery land acreage not associated with active hatcheries is undetermined.

Table 6. Regional hatchery lands.

Region	Total Acres	Acres in WLAs	# Hatcheries	# Access areas	# with boat launches
1	273	12	6	0	0
2	668	308	8	3	1
3	330	13	4	2	2
4	1,173	0	16	0	0
5	1,873	756	18	0	0
6	1,154	6	30	3	2
Total	≈5,470	≈1,095	82	8	5

Acquisition of state hatchery lands began in 1895 with the establishment of the Fallert Creek Hatchery on the Kalama River in Cowlitz County. Twelve additional hatcheries were in place prior to the 1932 creation of the Department of Fisheries. The new department was charged with management of food fish (i.e., salmon), while the Department of Game, and later the Department of Wildlife, managed game fish (e.g., steelhead, other trout, etc.). In 1933, five sport fish hatchery properties were transferred from county game commissions to the newly formed Department of Game. Acquisition of hatchery lands by both departments increased notably during the 1950s through 1970s, generally mirroring the acquisition patterns of water access and wildlife lands. The Department of Fisheries operated independently until the 1994 merger with the Department of Wildlife to form the Department of Fish and Wildlife, at which time game fish hatcheries managed by the former Department of Wildlife were placed under the purview of the new WDFW Fish Program. Eighty-nine percent of hatchery lands were acquired prior to 1980, and most were acquired with state fisheries and wildlife (i.e., sport fishing) funds.

Grant-funded recreation and education infrastructure investments are recorded on seven hatcheries, including boat launches, fishing platforms, and interpretive displays. Other similar projects funded by WDFW occur elsewhere on hatcheries. A few hatchery lands no longer used for fish production have been specifically converted to recreational uses, such as the former Cle Elum Hatchery property on the Yakima River in Kittitas County, acquired by the Department of Game in 1942. It was included in a 1972 omnibus boating access development grant funded by RCO and is now the Kinghorn Slough Access Area.

Table 7. Acquisition funding for hatchery lands. (Acquisitions and exchanges only.)

Fund	# Transactions	%
Fisheries	236	65
State Wildlife Fund	77	21
Transfer	20	5
Dingell-Johnson (D)	8	2
Appropriation	7	2
Other (mitigation, donation, PR, Jobs Bill, ALEA, WWRP)	17	5
Total	365	100

Throughout its more than 125 years of acquiring and managing lands for fish and wildlife, WDFW has relied on and continues to pursue multiple funding sources to support and expand these activities. Each management plan accounts for the specific funding sources associated with regional water access and hatchery lands.

WDFW LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS - LANDS 20/20

WDFW's Lands 20/20 process is a comprehensive acquisition process that guides the review and approval of potential new lands. This process was enacted in 2005 to ensure that future WDFW land acquisition projects are consistent with WDFW's mission and legislative mandate. Project proposals are developed annually in each of the regions, which then conduct a review and rank approved projects. The projects are then submitted to program headquarters for additional review. An internal interdisciplinary technical team reviews and develops a statewide ranked list of projects by funding source. The draft project list is presented to the Executive Management Team for final review and ultimately the director for final approval. The process includes tribal and public review at the end of the internal process. Feedback from the public is presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Lands 20/20 process does not include proposals to acquire hatchery lands.

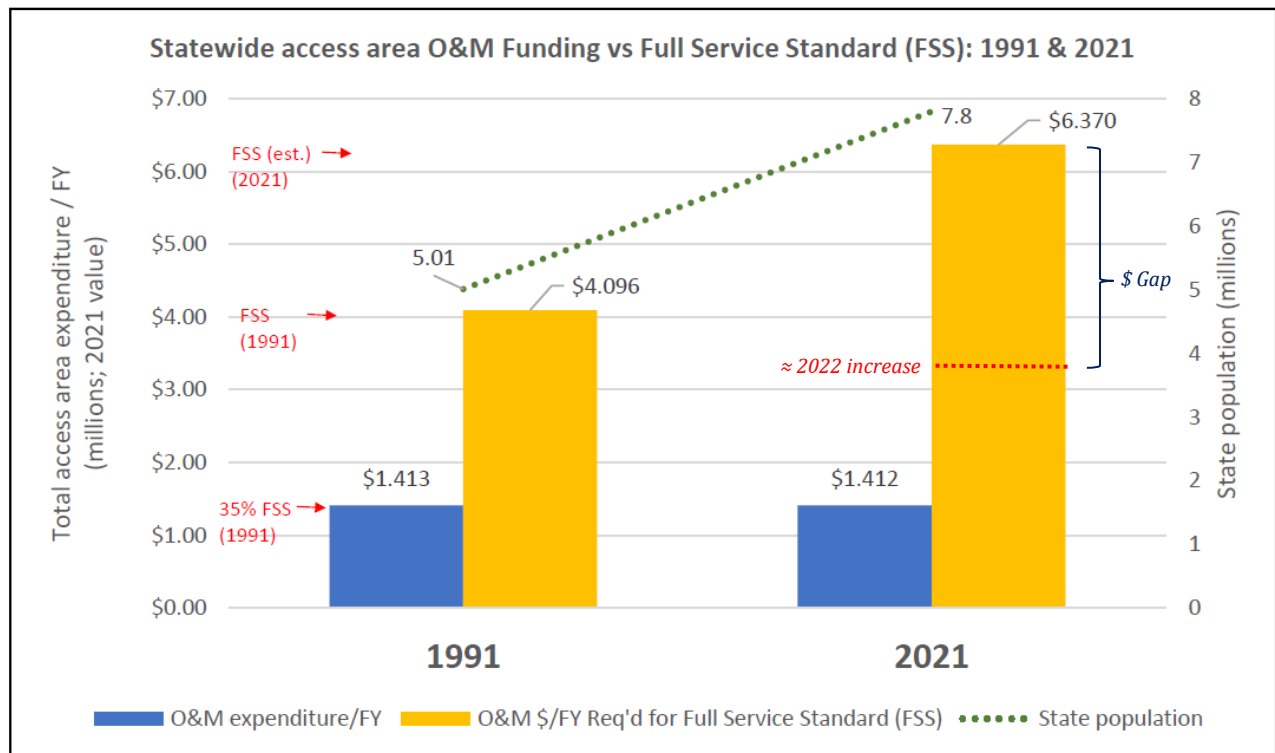
Funding

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE - WATER ACCESS LANDS

Water access area funding is primarily for operations and maintenance (O&M). Funding sources and their requirements, conditions, and limitations affect management and are important to understand when developing new plan actions. Some funding sources expressly prohibit the use of lands for certain activities such as commercial uses, while others specifically require that public access be allowed to funded lands.

O&M funding has been chronically inadequate for over 30 years (Figure 7). A 1991 detailed study concluded that O&M funding at the time was at 35% of full service standard (FSS), which was defined as “the mean level of maintenance necessary to keep an access area in a condition that provides a safe, clean, and functional facility for the visitor and presents a pleasing appearance and a positive department image.” Spending on O&M (adjusted for inflation) on water access areas remained flat through 2021 despite a 56% increase of the state’s population during the 30-year period.

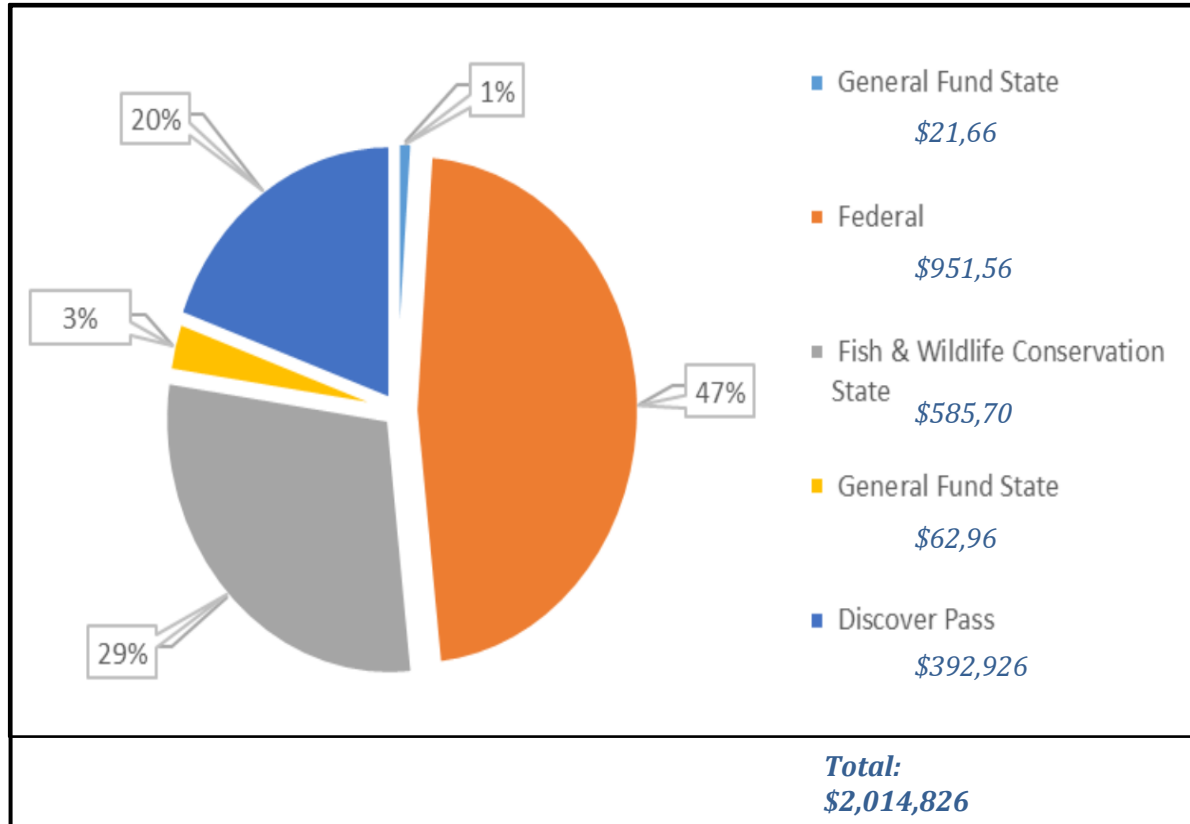
Figure 7. Statewide O&M funding vs full service standard.



This 30-year funding stasis broke in 2022 with a \$3.7M (\$5M gross) recurring biennial increase for O&M of water access lands. Initial investments are being made to strengthen regional field staffing levels. Fiscal Year 2022 expenditures demonstrate the application of this increased funding (Figure

8). However, the funding boost increases O&M at most to 50% FSS. Despite the very significant lift coming from the recent funding increase, there is more work to be done in this area.

Figure 8. Water access areas – FY 2022 expenditures



Regional planning will provide the opportunity to identify ways to reduce O&M liabilities where continued investment no longer advances the agency mission, determine if the transfer of management of certain access areas to other parties (e.g., county parks and recreation departments), where permissible, would better serve the public, and, conversely, decide where additional targeted investment by WDFW is needed to improve management, meet business needs, and enhance recreation.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE - HATCHERY LANDS

Operations and maintenance on hatchery lands is predominantly tied to fish production facilities (i.e., fish hatcheries). Hatchery funding sources are varied and include General Fund State, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Account, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Dingell-Johnson, Mitchell Act, and public utility districts. These existing funding streams are insufficient with respect to overall maintenance of hatchery infrastructure. Public recreation on hatchery lands, including fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing, lacks dedicated funding, planning, or staffing.

Hatchery staff oversee recreation management on their areas. Fish Pgm RPMs are the regional authority for where and when recreation on hatcheries will be allowed. Much of the existing public use of hatcheries is well-established and Fish Pgm aims to not limit public use so long as production activities are not interfered with. Some hatcheries have Friends or volunteer groups help with rec mgmt on hatchery lands. Includes interpretive displays, trails, etc. Examples include Tumwater Falls and Issaquah.

FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

SPORT FISH RESTORATION

The Sport Fish Restoration program (SFR; <https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration>) administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service provides funds to fish and wildlife agencies for fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education. It was created in 1950 with passage of the Sport Fish Restoration Act, commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson (DJ) Act. Modeled after the successful Wildlife Restoration Act, also known as the Pittman-Robertson (PR) Act, DJ dedicates permanent funding for fisheries management and to support connecting people with nature through outdoor recreation opportunities and aquatic resources education programs.

Revenue for DJ is derived from manufacturers' excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats.

Roughly 47% of annual O&M on water access lands is derived from DJ Boating Access funds. DJ funds were used for 5% (58) of acquisition transactions for water access lands during the period 1952-1992.

DJ also funds fish hatchery O&M but is not specifically intended for onsite recreation management purposes. And spending of DJ for onsite recreation is incidental.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Administered by the National Park Service, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; <http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/>) provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities, and as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies.

LWCF funds were used between 1966 and 1991 for 9% (98) of acquisition transactions for water access lands. LWCF purchases were administered by RCO and are tied to RCO bonds.

STATE FUNDING SOURCES

GENERAL FUND STATE

General fund state (GFS) funding has greatly increased in recent years and is used predominantly for O&M on new acquisitions, as well as for increased staffing, road and parking lot maintenance, hazard tree removal, and equipment. GFS comprises ≈23% of O&M funding for water access lands. GFS also funds fish hatchery O&M and is not specifically intended for onsite recreation management.

FISH, WILDLIFE, AND CONSERVATION ACCOUNT

The Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Account (FWCA), formerly the State Wildlife Fund and Fisheries Fund, is generated primarily by fishing, hunting, and trapping license revenues and was once the sole funding source for department recreation and conservation land acquisition and management activities. FWCA funds ≈29% of O&M on water access lands and ≈7% of O&M at hatcheries.

These funds were used from 1937 through 2022 for 39% (425) of transactions for water access lands. They were also used for 1927 through the early 2000s for 21% (77) of transactions for hatchery lands used for “sport fish” production.

The Fisheries Fund was used from 1895 through the mid-1990s for 65% (236) of transactions for hatchery lands used primarily for salmon production.

DISCOVER PASS

The Discover Pass is a vehicle access program administered by WDFW, State Parks, and DNR. The program requires a vehicle parking pass for visitors of state recreation lands. Funds from the purchase of one-day and annual passes are deposited in the Recreation Access and Pass Account and are then distributed to the three agencies to be used specifically for land operations and maintenance. WDFW and DNR each receive 8% of the total revenue, and State Parks receives 84%. WDFW’s share is used in part for water access area operations and maintenance. Roughly 20% of annual O&M at water access areas is supported by Discover Pass funds. Fish hatcheries do not require a Discover Pass and therefore do not receive Discover Pass funds.

WASHINGTON STATE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE: BONDS, WASHINGTON WILDLIFE AND RECREATION PROGRAM, AND BOATING FACILITIES PROGRAM

The first external state funding source for land acquisitions leveraged by WDFW were those administered by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) through bonds. This precedes several other specialized funding categories described below that were later administered by RCO.

RCO bonds were used from 1966 to 1991 for 22% (242) acquisition transactions for water access lands.

The Washington legislature created the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP; <https://rco.wa.gov/grant/washington-wildlife-and-recreation-program-recreation/>) in 1990 to accomplish two goals: (1) acquire valuable recreation and habitat lands before they are developed and (2) develop recreation areas for a growing population. WWRP is administered by RCO. Chapter 79A.15 RCW establishes five grant accounts, including the Outdoor Recreation Account. As part of its recreation management program, WDFW competes for grants primarily in the State Lands Development and Renovation (SLD) and Water Access (WA) categories. WDFW has secured approximately \$9.5M in SLD development grants and \$3.9M in WA acquisition/development grants for WDFW-managed lands. This landmark legislation and subsequent funding have come about through the support of the governor, legislature, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (<http://www.wildliferecreation.org/>).

Between 1990 and 2018, WWRP-WA accounted for 15 (1%) acquisition transactions for water access lands.

RCO administers the Boating Facilities Program (<https://rco.wa.gov/grant/boating-facilities-program/>) for the purpose of supporting motorized boating. RCO awards grants to projects that acquire, develop, plan, and renovate public boating facilities for motorized boats, including launch ramps, guest moorage, and support facilities. WDFW uses BFP funds primarily to redevelop existing boat launches on access areas and wildlife areas to better support motorized boating. Since 1966, WDFW has secured 179 BFP grants totaling \$40.7M for boating infrastructure development. Since 1972, BFP funded 2% (25) of acquisition transactions for water access lands.

MITIGATION

Several hydropower settlement agreements between WDFW and public utilities resulted in mitigation funding to secure public recreation lands to replace areas lost due to development projects. Primary concentrations of such mitigation-funded water access lands are on rivers in Chelan and Okanogan counties. Additional mitigation funded by the US Navy for shellfish impacts are represented now by numerous WDFW-owned tidelands in southern Puget Sound. Many fish hatcheries on the Cowlitz, Lewis, mid-Columbia, Snake, and Okanogan rivers resulted from mitigation

agreements.

Mitigation funds were used from 1964-2015 for 8% (84) of acquisition transactions for water access lands, including tidelands. Mitigation also resulted in the fee-simple acquisition of six fish hatchery properties between 1932 and 1974 and led to the establishment of many other fish hatchery programs, through a wide variety of arrangements, throughout the state.

Easements and Agreements

WDFW holds title to ≈12,600 acres of water access land and has management rights to an additional ≈5,500 acres that are owned by other parties. A variety of easements, deed restrictions, and other encumbrances affect management of these lands. Regional plans will include information on encumbrances specific to each water access property.

AQUATIC LEASES

WDFW holds various leases on Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) state-owned aquatic land for recreational access to state waters. Most are tied to the installation of launch ramps for boating access. Other aquatic leases, primarily linear areas along riverbanks, were conveyed to the department for the purpose of public fishing and are vulnerable to reversion if not managed by WDFW in the public interest.

STREAMBANK EASEMENTS

Easements are a right held by WDFW on lands owned by others. Most easements at issue are perpetual public fishing easements on private properties. WDFW holds ≈300 streambank easements totaling ≈158 miles of frontage on ≈50 streams. Acquired from private landowners during the 1950s-1970s, they exist in 23 counties across all six WDFW administrative regions. These perpetual easements grant the department certain limited legal rights to allow specific types of public recreation. Most (≈75%) give the department only the right to allow sport fishing; department rights on the remainder (≈25%) are limited to allowing pedestrian travel (i.e., walking for recreation) and sport fishing. The “streambank access program” was established on the premise of mutual cooperation by the department, landowners, and sportsmen organizations. However, most easements (≈94%) are not currently monitored and receive no O&M from WDFW, and the extent to which they are used by the public is largely unknown.

AGREEMENTS

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

The Grand Coulee Dam was constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) in the 1930s and led to the development of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project in the 1950s. Water from the Columbia

River is pumped into the Banks Lake Equalizing Reservoir and supplies water to approximately 670,000 acres of irrigated agricultural land through a series of reservoirs, canals, and wasteways. The BOR owns large parcels of land critical to the operation of the project. In 1952, a 50-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WDFW, USFWS, and BOR assigned fish, wildlife, and recreation management responsibility of much of those parcels to WDFW. A new 25-year agreement was entered into in 2021 following expiration of the original MOU and includes BOR funding for WDFW operations and maintenance. WDFW manages ≈56 boat launches on the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. BOR owns approximately 69 percent of this land and is a partner in its management planning.

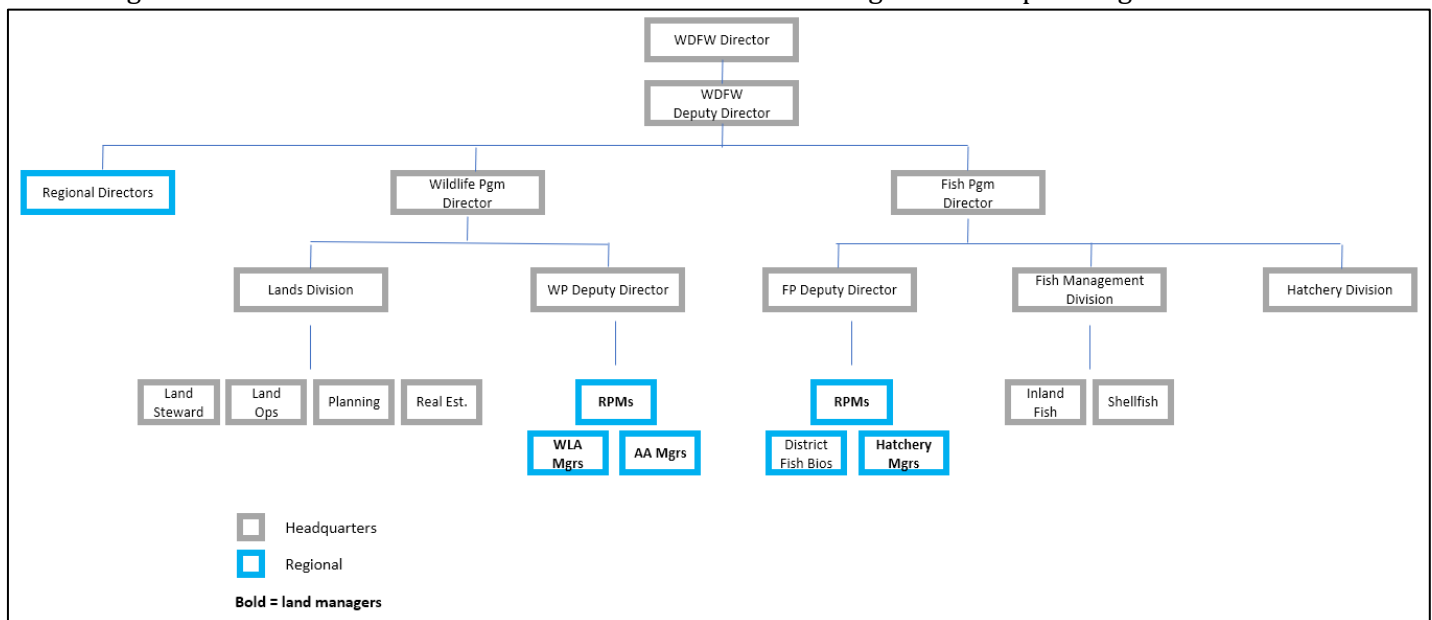
Management Setting

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Wildlife Program land management operations on water access areas is conducted by regional access area managers, who report directly or indirectly to the Wildlife RPMs. The RPMs, under the direction of the wildlife program deputy director, are responsible for implementation of program priorities, initiatives, and policy. Lands Division staff provide policy, budget, and planning support to the regions.

Fish hatcheries, including recreation management on hatchery lands, are the responsibility of regional fish hatchery operations managers, who report to the Fish RPMs. Fish management, implemented by district fish biologists based in the regions, also report to the Fish RPMs. The RPMs, under direction of the fish program deputy director, are responsible for implementation of program projects. The Hatchery Division and Management Division support regional work and oversee statewide initiatives such as inland fisheries, and recreational shellfishing.

Figure 9. WDFW work units involved water access area management and planning.



WILDLIFE PROGRAM

WATER ACCESS AREA STAFF

Access area managers, consisting mostly of natural resource operations supervisors and maintenance mechanics, are responsible for O&M on water access areas, including designated boat launches on wildlife areas and hatcheries. Additional activities include grant writing for infrastructure projects (e.g., WWRP and BFP grants) and O&M of other some additional other wildlife area facilities, particularly vault toilets.

REGIONAL STAFF

Wildlife RPMs oversee implementation of land management plans. They are responsible for supervision of regional program staff, including access area managers, and the implementation of WDFW policy and budget. They interact with communities and landowners to address local issues. In some regions, assistant RPMs or lands operations managers supervise the access area managers; in others, access area managers report directly to wildlife area managers. The RPMs report directly to the wildlife program deputy director.

LANDS DIVISION STAFF

Lands Division staff coordinate policy- and budget-related activities. The Lands Division is responsible for budget, planning, and policy to support land management by the regions. The division is divided into four sections: Land Stewardship; Land Operations; Planning and Recreation; and Real Estate Services (RES). The land stewardship and operations sections are responsible for land management, restoration, and regulatory compliance. Staff provide technical assistance primarily to land managers on a range of topics, including species and habitats, forestry, weed, and range management. The planning and recreation section is charged with developing land and recreation management plans. RES is responsible for land acquisition planning and the purchase, sale, and leasing of property. RES also provides technical assistance to land managers on water rights, trespass and encroachment resolution, easements, rights of way, and commercial uses.

FISH PROGRAM

REGIONAL STAFF

Fish RPMs oversee implementation of regional fisheries and carry out management priorities as identified by fish program leadership. They are responsible for supervision of regional district fish biologists and hatchery operations managers, and the implementation of WDFW policy and budget. Regional staff work within and interact with local communities and landowners to address local issues and provide on-the-ground management of state inland fisheries resources with guidance from program managers. The RPMs report directly to the fish program deputy director.

FISH MANAGEMENT DIVISION STAFF

Fish Management Division staff develop, coordinate, and implement policy- and budget-related activities. The Fish Management Division is responsible for budget, planning, and policy development for fish and shellfish management by the regions. The division is divided into five programs, three of which are important to regional water access management planning: inland fish program, Puget Sound shellfish, and aquatic invasive species. The inland fish program is responsible for the management of all freshwater game, non-game, and shellfish species(?). Staff develop and provide broad statewide goals and guidelines for fisheries and species conservation to regional managers for implementation at the local level where appropriate. The Puget Sound shellfish program manages Puget Sound shellfish species for commercial and recreational harvests. The aquatic invasive species program is responsible for the prevention, regulation, detection, and management of aquatic invasive species in the environment. The activities of these programs create public opportunities on WDFW-managed and other public lands in each region.

HATCHERY DIVISION STAFF

Hatchery Division staff develop, coordinate, and implement policy- and budget-related activities and are responsible for planning and policy development for hatcheries. The division oversees mass marking and coded wire tagging, coded wire recovery, hatchery data, and ESA compliance, and is involved in facility maintenance and capital projects. Hatcheries annually produce 160+ million salmon and steelhead, and 17.5 million trout for inland programs. Staff coordinate with tribal co-managers on hatchery production and ESA compliance. Puget Sound production is covered under U.S. v. Washington (Bolt Decision) and Columbia River production above the Bonneville Dam is covered by U.S. v. Oregon Management Agreement.

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

Access area managers, with occasional support from the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP), are responsible for maintaining recreation facilities on water access areas. Facilities support land and recreation management activities, such as launch ramps for recreational boating, vault toilets for public convenience and sanitary conditions, signage and kiosks, and fencing. Maintenance activities on these areas include litter removal, boat ramp repair, vault toilet servicing, noxious weed and other vegetation control, hazard tree removal, sign posting and replacement, and graffiti removal.

The O&M load of access area managers may vary across regions, with some possibly bearing more than others. The reasons for this are many, including factors such as the number of water access areas, designated recreation sites, facilities, collaboration with fellow WDFW land managers (or lack thereof), driving distance, traffic congestion, seasonal weather impacts, and geographic coverage. In general terms, regional O&M spending is largely tied to staffing levels. The regional management planning process will specifically aim to identify and address O&M loading in order to help lessen any identified imbalances across regions.

Public fishing is not permitted within hatchery *facilities* or at rearing ponds. It is, however, allowed

elsewhere on many hatchery *lands* and is often leveraged as an important management tool to remove excess surplus fish while also providing harvest opportunities. Hatchery managers are responsible for maintaining areas on hatchery lands used by the public for fishing and other types of recreation. This includes general maintenance of shore fishing areas, such as litter removal, vault toilet maintenance, rental toilet procurement, and posting of regulatory signage. Most O&M activities performed by hatchery staff is ad hoc in nature and done in addition to their primary duties in fish production.

LAND MANAGEMENT AND FISHING OPPORTUNITY

Most water access areas were acquired and developed by the department for public fishing. While supporting many forms of public recreation today, most originate from the Game Department's early sport fishing programs tied primarily to steelhead and other trout and the Fisheries Department's saltwater access programs for salmon fishing and shellfishing. Access area management and sport fish management were long housed in closely aligned work units prior to the 1994 merger of the Department of Wildlife and the Department of Fisheries. After the merger, those two management programs become more organizationally isolated from one another than at any time in the department's history. Close collaboration between wildlife program land managers and fish program fish and hatchery managers does occur within many regional settings, but there is a general absence of statewide programmatic coordination in strategic planning and management. This management planning framework is intended to address this need by facilitating regional management planning *within the construct* of greater institutionalized coordination between the two programs.

Some management interests common to both the wildlife and fish programs are shown below. They all advance the 2022 Washington Hunting & Angling Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Plan.

Fish Program		Wildlife Program
General		
Public fishing opportunities	... are supported through...	clean, safe, and well-maintained water access areas.
Fishing seasons	... are compatible with...	water access area management capacity.
Fishing opportunity, rules, and waterbody data	... are linked to...	WDFW land and facilities data.
Fishing opportunity	... information provided to the public is paired with...	water access area information.
Lakes		
Fishing opportunities on lakes	... are enhanced by...	capital investment in fishing platforms.
Non-boating fishing opportunities on lakes	... are expanded at...	suitable lakeshore locations on WDFW-managed lands.
Rivers		
Fishing opportunities on rivers	... are expanded through...	properly managed public fishing easements.
Angler access to important river fisheries	... is improved through...	well-managed launches for drift boats and other non-motorized watercraft.
Marine waters		
Sustainable shellfishing opportunities	... are optimized on...	WDFW-managed tidelands.
Marine fisheries	... are accessible from...	well-managed boat launches.

PUBLIC ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Policy 6012 “Managing Public Access on WDFW Lands” allows regional land managers to impose short-term, seasonal, and permanent land closures to ensure public health and safety; minimize impacts to fish, wildlife, and their habitats; protect WDFW infrastructure; and/or address budgetary constraints. Hatchery lands are not subject to Policy 6012. Hatchery managers have full authority to determine how best to manage public access on hatchery lands.

Local Land Use and Other Plans

Regional water access management plans are developed consistent with local government land use regulations, including Comprehensive Plans and zoning laws, as required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) and Shoreline Management Act (SMA). Each plan will reference land use designations that have known implications for management of water access and hatchery lands.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

In 1990 the Legislature found that “uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals... pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning.” This is the foundation for the GMA (Chapter 36.70A RCW). Although not all jurisdictions must fully plan, meaning that they are not required to develop a comprehensive plan, all jurisdictions are required to designate and protect natural resource lands and critical areas.

SHORELINE MANAGEMENT ACT

The Shoreline Management Act (Chapter 90.58 RCW) requires all local governments in Washington to adopt Shoreline Master Programs that contain policies and regulations to ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions. The SMA defines affected areas to include marine waters, streams with a mean annual flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second, water areas of the state greater than 20 acres, land extending 200-feet landward of the ordinary high-water mark and associated wetlands, river deltas, and some or all of the 100-year floodplain. The SMA establishes a balance of authority between local and state government. Cities and counties are the primary regulators, but the state, through Department of Ecology, is responsible for approving local master programs and some permits including variances and conditional use permits.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources (CR) management is governed by state and federal laws and agency policy. WDFW cultural resources specialists have developed guidelines for meeting policy and regulatory requirements and ensuring appropriate management of cultural resources. WDFW coordinates and

consults with a broad array of interested parties, promotes cultural heritage education, and provides CR management expertise to external partners.

CR specialists who assist with project management include tribal liaisons, ethnographers, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and architectural historians. WDFW has a team of in-house specialists, but also employs CR consulting firms to manage the volume of review needed to remain in compliance with CR regulations.

CR specialists evaluate and implement practices to protect and preserve cultural resources on WDFW-managed lands. They lead or guide consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and affected tribes. WDFW CR specialists also work with WDFW land managers and program managers to provide relevant historical information and recommendations for appropriate management practices around cultural resources.

WDFW projects are conducted in a wide variety of regulatory contexts that are determined by project location, project type, and/or project funding sources. All state and federally funded projects are required to undergo review to identify the potential for impacts to cultural resources. Initial research for these reviews includes a review of existing documentation, including historic maps and photographs, diaries, journals, legal documents, and archaeological site information curated by DAHP. This "first look" is followed by consultation with affected tribes and DAHP. WDFW may also coordinate project review with project stakeholders, which can include local landowners, project proponents, and others.

Archival research, consultation, and coordination may be followed by fieldwork, during which the project location is surveyed for unrecorded cultural resources or to assess the condition of known archaeological sites and/or historic structures. It is at this phase of review that archaeological sites and historic buildings are formally recorded. The results of this research are collected in a report that is shared with WDFW's consulting parties for review and comment. Reviewers include DAHP and local tribal governments, but can also include stakeholders, regulatory agencies, and funding sources. The results of research and consultation conducted during project planning and implementation are used to inform project design and any future development or management plans.

ENFORCEMENT

The WDFW Law Enforcement Program stations commissioned law enforcement personnel throughout the state. Fish and Wildlife officers are general authority peace officers deployed to WDFW's six administrative regions and to a marine division. Officers are responsible for enforcing a myriad of laws and regulations related to health and public safety, dangerous wildlife/human conflicts, fish and wildlife protection, hunting and fishing license regulations, habitat protection, and commercial fish and shellfish harvest. On department-managed lands, the Enforcement Program is

primarily responsible for enforcing the fish and wildlife code (Title 77) and the general rules for department lands (Chapter 220-500 WAC). Enforcement administration is housed in Olympia, and each region has a full complement of enforcement staff whose responsibility includes enforcement on water access areas and hatchery lands within their assigned region.

They also enforce federal laws, Oregon state statutes, county ordinances through memoranda of agreement, boating laws on state and federal waters, and other laws on state and federal parks and forest lands. Because of their unique capabilities, assets, and jurisdiction, officers are often called upon to respond to natural disasters and other critical incidents and to perform public-safety and search-and-rescue operations on land and water. Officers also hold federal USFWS and National Marine Fisheries Service commissions and have jurisdiction over federal violations, the most important of which are the ESA and the Lacey Act. Officers collaborate and coordinate with these agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Each regional water access management planning team includes enforcement representation and may address issues related to enforcement priorities.

RECREATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

WDFW manages over one million acres of land and welcomes visitors to its 475 water access areas, 33 wildlife areas, and 80 fish hatcheries for a variety of outdoor adventures, including fishing, hunting, boating, and nature viewing. Outdoor recreation is good for human health and is an important part of state and local economies. It also fosters lifelong relationships between people and the land, which contribute indirectly to conservation.

WDFW manages recreation consistent with its mission, the purposes for which individual properties were acquired, and the statewide planning goals. Traditional users of agency-managed lands include hunters, anglers, and wildlife viewers. Although hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing remain important recreation uses, many visitors to WDFW-managed lands come for other recreation opportunities. Hiking, dog walking, bicycle riding, picnicking, and other “close-to-home” outdoor recreation has increased in popularity.

WDFW-managed lands support both dispersed and concentrated patterns of recreation. Water access areas are largely the latter due to their relatively small acreage and focal recreation infrastructure, such as designated boat launches. Access areas with boat launches typically have a distinct entrance marked by a driveway and signage that lead visitors to designated parking, a vault toilet, and boat launch ramp. Less-developed access areas may consist simply of a road turnoff near a streambank. Boat launches on wildlife areas and hatcheries support concentrated uses similar to those on access areas. And many hatchery lands support concentrated fishing at strategic locations near hatchery facilities.

The [10-year recreation strategy for WDFW-managed lands](#) (2022) addresses the marked increase in demand for outdoor recreation experiences by the state's rapidly growing population and by visitors.

Recreation strategy goals:

- Provide clear and consistent rules, policies, and guidance for determining compatibility, providing access, and managing recreation impacts. Empower local managers to protect fish and wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources while welcoming recreation use within a statewide framework.
- Provide quality recreational experiences through partnerships, new funding, adjustments within ongoing management, and promotion of opportunities. Balance hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing with support for other outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Improve communication, coordination, and consultation with government partners. Engage stakeholders, including local communities, in recreation planning, management, and advocacy for WDFW-managed lands. Welcome visitors as diverse as the population of Washington.

Recreation strategy priorities:

1. Recreation planning
2. Education and engagement
3. Use and impact monitoring
4. Rulemaking
5. Travel Management
6. Capacity and Funding

Integration of the recreation strategy into planning for WDFW-managed lands began in 2022 through the wildlife area planning process and is likewise an essential aspect of regional water access management plans. Recreation is a key element of the scoping process with the public, RWAAC, and internal staff. Lands planners collect comments from the users and stakeholders and assess them for incorporation into goals and objectives in the plan. Information on current recreation use is described in the plan. Objectives will address future recreation, public access, conflicts, and infrastructure needs.

Hatchery lands were not included in the 10-year recreation strategy. However, hatchery lands do provide high-value, niche opportunities for public fishing at very productive locations below and above hatchery facilities, and elsewhere. One aim of regional water access management planning is to better integrate recreation management, particularly public shore fishing, on hatchery lands into the larger WDFW recreation management sphere. Initial steps have been taken by including fish hatcheries in the development of standardized kiosks and entrance signs for WDFW-managed lands.

OTHER PLANS

Other local, regional, state, and federal planning efforts influence WDFW's management of land and recreation. These may be land use-, species-, or habitat-specific undertakings by other entities that may affect WDFW's management options. When relevant to regional water access planning, regional plans will be referenced where appropriate.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Regional water access plans are updated annually following review of the implementation plan by the Core Team and RWAAC. The update is in the form of a report that describes progress on goals and objectives and identifies any new actions to meet plan goals. Every two years, the regional wildlife and fish RPMs or designees will prepare a summary of management highlights and new issues for publication on the on the agency website.

Habitat Management

WDFW is committed to managing habitat based on the most current conservation science. Water access lands and hatchery lands were acquired specifically for public recreation and fish production, respectively. Many are highly impacted by developed recreation and hatchery infrastructure and most are too small to provide significant fish or wildlife habitat or ecological services. However, some water access and hatchery lands, particularly unmanaged tracts along streams, are of significant acreage and position to be important forest and/or riparian areas. For water access lands, the general principles and practices in forest management, weed management, fire management, and habitat restoration, where appropriate, will be applied in a manner consistent with the [Wildlife Area Management Planning Framework](#).

AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

Access area, wildlife area, and hatchery management is directed at the state level by statute, including the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) (<http://leg.wa.gov/LawsAndDepartmentRules/Pages/default.aspx>), and by the WDFW's Strategic Plan, Conservation Principles, and adopted policies and procedures.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The following sections of Washington State code provide statutory authority for access area, wildlife area, and hatchery management. These are a subset of the multitude of laws governing natural resource management in Washington.

RCW 43.21C - **State Environmental Policy Act.** Directs the process for environmental review for all department actions. Note: Regional water access management plans qualify as a department action and are not categorically or by statute exempt under SEPA. The SEPA process for the regional water access planning process is outlined in the Public Involvement Section of this framework. Individual projects implemented on access areas, wildlife areas, and hatcheries require their own compliance with SEPA and are not covered by the management planning process.

RCW 77.04.012 – **Mandate of department and commission.** States that wildlife, fish, and shellfish are property of the state and authorizes the Fish & Wildlife Commission, the director, and the department to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish in state waters and offshore waters. RCW 77.04.012 also states that the commission shall maximize the public recreational game fishing and hunting opportunities of all citizens including juvenile, disabled, and senior citizens.

RCW 77.12.210 – **Management, sale of department property.** Directs the department to manage real or personal property, including construction of buildings, structures, and improvements, and adoption of rules for operation and maintenance of the property.

RCW 77.12.220 – **Acquisition or transfer of property.** Directs the commission to purchase, transfer or convey state property if judged to be consistent with public interest.

RCW 77.12.320 – **Agreements for purposes related to fish, shellfish, and wildlife.** Directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission to enter into agreements to provide wildlife-oriented recreation.

RCW 77.12.880 – **Wildlife program management.** Directs the department to provide wildlife viewing opportunities as long as resources are not impaired.

RCW 79A.15 – **Acquisition of Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Lands.** States that it is “...the policy of the state to acquire as soon as possible the most significant lands for wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses, and to

develop existing public recreational land and facilities to meet the needs of present and future generations” and creates accounts for grant funds administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding board.

RCW 27.34.200 – **Archaeology and historic preservation.** Authorizes the department to manage cultural resources. Executive Order 05-05 requires all state agencies with capital projects to integrate the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs, and concerned tribes into their capital project planning process.

RCW 77.15 – **Fish and Wildlife Enforcement.** Directs the authority of enforcement officers on department lands.

WAC 220-500-010 **Declaration of purpose - Department lands.** Describes the primary purpose of WDFW lands as the preservation, protection, perpetuation, and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats. The WAC further states that public use of department lands may include fishing, hunting, fish and wildlife appreciation, and other outdoor recreation opportunities when compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.

WAC 220-500-030 – **Behavior and conduct.** Defines acceptable conduct on department lands.

WAC 220-500-040 – **Regulating public access.** Authorizes the director to close and/or control/restrict access on department lands to protect human safety, vulnerable fish and wildlife resources or habitats, and department infrastructure, and to increase wildlife use in order to improve hunter success or manage wildlife viewing opportunities. It authorizes the department to control access by limiting the number of users in the areas and/or limiting the days of the week or hours of the day that the public can access the area.

25-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The department’s [25-year Strategic Plan](#) (2020) provides a long-term strategic focus aimed at improving WDFW’s mission success. Four strategies guide WDFW’s path to modernizing the agency, conserving the state’s fish and wildlife, and positioning WDFW for greater relevance. Each strategy includes near and long-term actions and 25-year desired outcomes.

- Strategy 1 - Proactively address conservation challenges.
- Strategy 2 - Engage communities through recreation and stewardship.
- Strategy 3 - Deliver science that informs Washington’s most pressing fish and wildlife questions.
- Strategy 4 - Model operational and environmental excellence.

Regional water access management plans are developed consistent with and to advance the strategic plan.

POLICIES

The following select policies most significantly direct and guide activities and management of WDFW-managed water access lands.

Policy 2155 – **Protection of Cultural Resources.** Directs the protection of cultural resources on department lands.

Policy 5007 – **Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments.** Defines provisions for enhancing the WDFWs consultation process, including communication and coordination with tribal Governments.

Policy 5203 – **Preparing and Reviewing State Environmental Policy Act and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Documents.** Provides guidance for preparing SEPA (RCW 43.21c) and NEPA documentation (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq).

Policy 5307 – **Weed Management.** Requires the department to control listed weed species consistent with state and local laws.

Policy 6007 – **Management of Real Property Assets.** Defines authority and responsibilities for real property assets and identifies the Wildlife Program as responsible for acquisition, performance, and management of WLAs and access sites.

Policy 6010 – **Acquiring and Disposing of Real Property.** Authorizes the department to acquire or dispose of real property including interests, benefits, and rights inherent in the physical ownership of, and appurtenances affixed to, the land, e.g., fences or buildings.

Policy 6012 – **Managing Public Access on WDFW Lands.** Provides a framework that addresses appropriate access while meeting the mission and mandate and includes the process for temporary and permanent closure on lands for public safety, fish and wildlife sustainability, and to support wildlife for recreational purposes.

Appendix I
Streambank Easement Management Framework
Executive Summary
(Draft)

Executive Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) holds ≈300 streambank easements totaling ≈158 miles of frontage on ≈50 streams. Acquired from private landowners during the 1950s-1970s, they exist in 23 counties across all six WDFW administrative regions. These perpetual easements grant the department certain limited legal rights to allow specific types of public recreation. Most (≈75%) give the department only the right to allow sport fishing; department rights on the remainder (≈25%) are limited to allowing pedestrian travel (i.e., walking for recreation) and sport fishing.

The “streambank access program” was established on the premise of mutual cooperation by the department, landowners, and sportsmen organizations. However, most easements (≈94%) are not currently monitored or actively managed by WDFW and the extent to which they are used by the public is largely unknown. The general rules for department land ([Chapter 220-500 WAC](#)) do not apply to private lands, except those under “cooperative agreement” (i.e., not easements). Existing rules are therefore silent to streambank easements and do not provide a means to regulate public use in accordance with department rights. There are many known, specific cases of the public using streambank easements for purposes other than pedestrian travel and sport fishing.

Five desired future conditions and associated measures will better position the department to manage streambank easements consistent with their intended, legally established purposes –

1. Each easement is categorized in the corporate data as one of several *Forms* based on easement content and acquisition date.
2. Each easement is assigned a management *Type* that reflects allowed use(s).
 - Type I – sport fishing only
 - Type II – pedestrian travel and sport fishing
3. Easements are open to the public only by WDFW posted notice.
4. Type I easements are open only during sport fishing season(s); Type II easements are open during sport fishing seasons and other periods as determined by regional managers.
5. Streambank easements are regulated and managed as distinct from other department-managed lands.

Updates to the Washington Administrative Code are needed to reflect WDFW’s limited rights to these unique public recreation assets, including modifying the definition of “department land,” establishing “public fishing easement” as a codified management area designation, and defining “posted” (i.e., posted notice) to include means other than onsite physical signage.

Rulemaking, information management, planning, and other aspects of implementing this management framework should consider 1) the broad similarities with the Game Division’s role in managing public recreation on private lands and 2) leveraging the Fish Program’s relationships with fishing organizations to provide targeted site stewardship. Public fishing easement-specific signs should be developed and installed at locations that are open to the public so that recreation opportunities and limitations, consistent with and backed by rules, are clearly communicated.

Appendix II

1947 Game Department letter to King Co. regarding lakes

Pub-fishing

STATE OF WASHINGTON
THE DEPARTMENT OF GAME
Don W. Clarke, Director
515 Smith Tower
Seattle 4

May 7, 1947

King County Planning Commission,
Room 913,
County State Building,
Seattle 4, Washington

Gentlemen,

During the 1947 session of the legislature laws were passed establishing a source of revenue and a method for the acquisition and development of public fishing areas, hunting areas and game habitats in this state. A portion of the annual revenue from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses is set aside for this work and no funds from taxation are involved. Such a program is vital if the general public is to continue to enjoy the right of fishing and hunting in many sections of this state, for although the waters of most of our lakes and the fish in the water are the property of the state, they are of small value unless the people have the right of access to the lakes.

Therefore, to attract the public interest and assure utilization of the fishing resources by the public, it is apparent some agency must acquire and develop public access facilities. Fishing intensity on many lakes is so heavy that natural reproduction will not maintain the fish population and hatchery reared fish must be planted. This cannot be justified in waters from which the general public is excluded, neither can the eradication of undesirable fish species or other management practices.

In view of the increasing number of lakes in King County from which the public is being excluded each year, we ask that you recommend to all persons submitting plans for sub-division of lake property that they deed, or otherwise transfer, to the State of Washington Department of Game an area to be developed and maintained for public use. Such sub-divisions should also if possible include a dedication of the body of the lake lying 50 feet beyond the shore line to public use.

The Department of Game is prepared to accept the responsibility of the construction of necessary roads, parking areas, sanitary facilities, fences and picnic tables on any lands deeded to us, and to properly maintain such lake areas for public use and enjoyment. For such improvements, it is not believed necessary to have more than one area on the average size lake, i.e. a lake with less than two miles of shore line. However, the site should be chosen so that the land is suitable for development as a recreational area.

There are three general types of development sites that we can utilize:
(1) a single lot not less than 50 feet in width extending from the road to the lake for a distance of not less than 100 feet. This type of site definitely restricts the development possibilities and public use of so narrow an area tends to interfere with

Page # 2

the adjoining private lands, (2) a tract of land containing two or more lots of approximately 100 feet or more in width extending from the road to the lake, or a wedge shape lot with about 50 feet lake frontage and extending back to approximately 150 feet or more in width at the nearest public road. A lot of this shape and size allows the utilization of dense vegetation to screen it from adjacent properties and is large enough to permit the parking of a number of cars and the installation of picnic tables and others facilities while the amount of lake frontage involved is minimized. (3) an area where the public road around the lake is within 100 feet of the water line and a right of way not less than 40 feet in width extends from the lake to the road, coupled with a tract of land of 100 feet or more in width and 200 feet or more in depth on the opposite side of the road. Such a site can readily be developed with the parking and picnic area across the main road and the narrower tract giving the public access to the lake. In many cases this might be the most satisfactory type of lot as it involves less actual lake frontage and utilizes property that is hard to sell. It also has the advantage from a development standpoint of putting all sanitary facilities back further away from the lake. It is the opinion of this department that the public interest can best be served if the several entry ways now planned for some lakes can be united into a single large unit. This would cause less interference with adjoining lots and make possible a degree of development that can not be attained with the smaller and separate units.

As previously mentioned, we recognize that such areas transferred to this department, or any other public agency, can become a liability rather than an asset if they are not developed and maintained, and we are in a position to and desirous of developing and maintaining such areas on a non-commercial basis. No boat hire, cabin construction, or any type of concession will be permitted. We also recognize the fact that in some instances unrestricted public use of a lake can become a great public nuisance. This is particularly true on small lakes where the use of motor boats is permitted. The authority of the State Game Commission to regulate such motors would extend only to the use of motors for fishing. The Commission will however give full consideration to the limitation of motors for such use on bodies of water where it appears desirable.

The preservation of the public right of entering into and the use of fishing waters in this state is of prime interest and importance. We realize that persons sub-dividing properties are hesitant to dedicate public access ways but feel that, if a lake should have but one large access way and picnic ground, so developed and maintained, it might lessen the opposition and would be of more value to the public than a number of smaller access ways that are unsuitable for development. The fact that the department will adequately stock such waters, where it has a deed to land, and will where advisable conduct other management practices, such as the eradication of scrap or rough fish, and has the power to regulate activities on the access areas should greatly increase the value of the lake for all property owners.

We therefore respectfully request that you give the foregoing proposals your thorough consideration.

Very truly yours,

THE DEPARTMENT OF GAME

By: Don W. Clarke,
Director of Game

