



Minutes

Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission
Web Conference
Friday, March 21, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Attendance:

Commission:

Barbara Baker, Chair
Lorna Smith
Woody Myers
James Anderson
John Lehmkuhl
Steve Parker
Melanie Rowland

Commission Staff:

Jamie Caldwell – Exec. Asst.

Department Staff:

Kelly Susewind, Director	Lorna Wargo
Amy Windrope, Deputy Director	Megan Hintz
Mike Livingston, Reg. 3 Director	Chad Jackson
Joe Panesko, AGO	Laura Heironimus
Margen Carlson	Justin Bush
Dr. Ken Warheit	Mick Cope
Dr. Tim Quinn	Anis Aoude
Craig Burley	Stephanie Landry
Julie Peterson	

External Attendees:

Chris Page
Phyllis Shulman
Amanda Murphy

1. Call to Order

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:02am. ([Begins at 0:01 mark](#))

Commissioner's Discussion

Commissioner Rowland reported that for the last few years a pair of Sandhill Cranes have nested in one of the Methow Valley's wildlife areas. She noted that WDFW has made the permanent decision to close a section of that wildlife area for the cranes to be able to nest. She went on to comment about how a couple of WDFW Staff were giving a presentation at a continuing education event she attended and how good of a job they did at that event. The last thing she reported on was the total eclipse of the moon. ([Begins at 1:48 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson reported that he had the opportunity to take advantage of the March 1st lake fishing. ([Begins at 4:53 mark](#))

Chair Baker reported on her recent trip to Alaska and her visit to Moose Pass. ([Begins at 5:50 mark](#))

Meeting Minute Approval:

Chair Baker noted that there were minutes for the February 14, 2025 webinar. ([Begins at 9:10 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith moved to approve the February 14, 2025 meeting minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Anderson. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 9:19 mark](#))

Committee Meeting Updates:

Commissioner Lehmkuhl reported out that the Big Tent Committee met yesterday from 10am-12pm. The meeting started with a quick update on the Conservation Policy. The Department is in talks with the Tribes about the policy. There was a brief conversation about the Ruckelshaus Report, and made a list of recommendations from the report, and the best way the Commission should respond to the report. There was also a discussion about some options for early input on the budget and legislation. The Committee is recommending that the Commission adopt option 2. There was also a presentation on the Integrated Science Policy (previously the Best Available Science Policy). The Committee is recommending that the Commission approve the policy that's being presented later in the day. There

was also a second recommendation that the Commission assigns the Big Tent Committee the task to work with staff to revisit the decision-making process that was in the original policy. Chair Baker asked if anyone was opposed to agreeing to the Committee recommendation of option 2 for the budget and policy development, and there were no objections. ([Begins at 10:22 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson reported out that the Fish Committee met yesterday and heard presentations on Mid-Columbia white sturgeon management, the statewide trout management, and the Commercial Dungeness Crab Rules, in particular, the coastal comprehensive line marking rules. There was a request to delegate rulemaking to the WDFW Director and the Committee is recommending to the full commission that it be delegated as requested. ([Begins at 22:45 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith reported out that the Wildlife Committee heard two presentations the day prior on the positive detection of Chronic Wasting Disease in Washington and wildlife conflict by the landowner services division ([Begins at 27:37 mark](#))

2. Open Public Input

Please see the attached list of commenters. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 35:54 mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 1:21:51 mark.

3. Director's Report

Director Susewind reported out that there are a couple of ongoing meetings with the Tribes. He recently met with some members of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe for the first time and members of the Quinault leadership team to discuss concerns and areas of interest with each. The Department held it's safety standup week from February 24th-27th. The kick-off meetings for North of Falcon and PFMC in Vancouver. He also recently held public hearings for the delegated season settings that are outside of Cougar and Bear. He anticipates that decisions will be made in the near future. He went on to note that there are currently five petitions under review waiting to be acted on and he briefly touched on the petition topics. For budget, he didn't have a lot to report on, and the bills at the legislature are moving along well. H was hoping to have more to report on the budget, but this year is a strange year. The Department is focusing it's energy on it's own packages, and aren't focusing on being aggressive for additional, but more defensive for not cutting. He noted that staff are keeping an eye on the federal cuts being made, and thus far, it hasn't affected the Department. The Region 3 Director, Mike Livingston, then provided the Commission with an update on happenings in the area. ([Begins at 1:45:01 mark](#))

4. Science Integrity Policy - Decision

Staff requested a decision from the Commission on the Science Integrity Policy. ([Begins at 2:42:22 mark](#))

Commissioner Lehmkuhl moved to approve the Science Integrity Policy as presented by the staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The Commission voted unanimously. Motion carried. ([Begins at 2:56:39 mark](#))

5. Commercial Dungeness Crab Rules: Coastal Comprehensive Line Marking Rules – Briefing, Public Hearing

Staff briefed the Commission and held a public hearing on the commercial Dungeness Crab coastal comprehensive line marking rules. ([Begins at 3:04:28 mark](#))

Comments from the public hearing began at the 3:35:45 mark. For a list of the commentors, please see the sign-up sheet that's attached.

6. Mid-Columbia River White Sturgeon Management – Briefing, Decision

Staff briefed the Commission on the Mid-Columbia River white sturgeon management and requested a decision on delegation to the WDFW Director for rulemaking. ([Begins at the 0:15 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson moved to delegate rulemaking authority to the Director for white sturgeon recreational fisheries in the Mid-Columbia River and it was seconded by Commissioner Lehmkuhl. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 32:51 mark](#))

7. Quagga & Zebra Mussel Update – Briefing

Staff briefed the Commission on the status of the invasive mussel threats to Washington State. ([Begins at 34:31 mark](#))

8. Ruckelshaus Report – Discussion

The Commission welcomed staff from the Ruckelshaus Center to discuss the final report of the Organizational Review of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. ([Begins at 1:35:01 mark](#))

9. Cougar Season Setting & Rulemaking Hearing – Briefing, Public Hearing

Staff briefed the Commission and held a public hearing on the 2025-2027 Cougar Season Setting and other sealing-related rulemaking. ([Begins at 2:47:10 mark](#))

Comments from the public hearing began at the 3:10:38 mark. For a list of the commentors, please see the sign-up sheet that's attached.

10. Black Bear Season Setting – Briefing, Public Hearing

Staff briefed the Commission and held a public hearing on the 2025-2027 Black Bear Season Setting. ([Begins at 3:50:16 mark](#))

Comments from the public hearing began at the 4:01:53 mark. For a list of the commentors, please see the sign-up sheet that's attached.

11. Open Public Input

Please see the attached list of commentors. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 1:16 mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 1:04:18 mark.

12. Meeting Debrief and Future Meeting Planning

Deputy Director Windrope covered the debrief of meeting items listed below. ([Begins at 1:34:57 mark](#))

- Big Tent Committee: Provide budget update to Commissioners when available
- Fish Committee: No additional tasks
- Wildlife Committee: No additional tasks
- Call to Order: No additional tasks
- Open Public Input: No additional tasks
- Director's Report: Commission adopted option 2 out of the budget & legislation conversation, so staff will come in April for a conversation this year. It will be added to the YAAG for all Committees. It'll be put in as a tickler for 2026 as well.
- Science Integrity Policy: Adopted. Big Tent Committee will begin working on developing a suite of decision support tools to improve decision making.
- Commercial Dungeness Crab Rules: Additional conversations with whale conservation groups was committed to by Kelly Cunningham.
- Mid-Columbia River White Sturgeon Management: Approved with no additional tasks.
- Quagga & Zebra Mussel Update: Engage with staff to understand if there are needs from the Commission, like funding or legislative support, to see if there is more that the Commission can do to help.
- Ruckelshaus Report: No additional tasks

- Cougar Season Setting & Rulemaking: Provide visual to show overall opportunity difference between 13% and 16%. Second request was to understand the impact of the proposal in terms of actual harvest, by looking back at historical harvest.
- Black Bear Season Setting: No additional tasks.
- Open Public Input: No additional tasks.
- Meeting Debrief & Future Meeting Planning: No additional tasks

13. Executive Session & Working Lunch

The Commissioner entered into executive session pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(i) and 42.30.110(1)(g) at 10:30am

Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.

Jamie Caldwell, Executive Assistant

Agenda Item #2 – Open Public Input

In-Person: 1. Dane Czarnecki 2. Gabriel Garza 3. Brett Patrick 4. Jim Millbauer 5. Don McBride	Zoom: 1. Jerry Lowdermilk 2. Dale Magart 3. Cory Maxwell 4. Kelsey Ross 5. Brandon Ross 6. Don Peaker 7. Patricia Arnold 8. Ann Prezyna 9. Francisco Santiago-Avila 10. John Andrews 11. David Linn 12. Timothy Neagle 13. Heath Heikkla
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Agenda Item #5 – Commercial Dungeness Crab Rulemaking

In-Person: 1. Richard Miller	Zoom: 1. Ann Prezyna 2. Ben Grundy 3. Francine Kershaw 4. Larry Thevik
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Agenda Item #9 – Cougar Season Setting Rulemaking

In-Person:	Zoom: 1. Julian Matthews 2. Susan Kane-Ronning 3. Rachel Haymon 4. John Rosapepe 5. Rachel Bjork 6. Jerry Lowdermilk 7. Cory Maxwell 8. Josh Rosenau 9. Douglas Boze 10. Patricia Arnold 11. Kelly Bush 12. Christine Psyk 13. Hannah Thompson-Garner 14. Ann Prezyna 15. Mike Herz 16. Alison Anderson 17. Liz Carr 18. Francisco Santiago-Avila
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Agenda Item #10 – Black Bear Season Setting Rulemaking

In-Person:	Zoom:
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heather Aldrich 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Julian Matthews 2. Susan Kane-Ronning 3. Rachel Haymon 4. Hannah Thompson-Garner 5. Rachel Bjork 6. Jerry Lowdermilk 7. Dale Magart 8. Kelsey Ross 9. Douglas Boze 10. Patricia Arnold 11. Kelly Bush 12. Christine Psyk 13. Ann Prezyna 14. Judith Akins 15. Mike Herz
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Agenda Item #11 – Open Public Input

<p>In-Person:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dale Magart 2. Don McBride 3. Rocky Ross 	<p>Zoom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gabriel Garza 2. Rachel Haymon 3. Rachel Bjork 4. Jerry Lowdermilk 5. Cory Maxwell 6. Kelsey Ross 7. Brandon Ross 8. Ben Rusch 9. Don Peaker 10. David Linn 11. Erica Stock Williams 12. Jennifer Stephens – Former Washington Wildlife First Employee 13. Stephanie Bell 14. Heath Heikkla 15. Brenda Skinner 16. Liz Carr 17. Jay Kinney
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