



Minutes

Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission

Web Conference

Friday, April 04, 2025

Attendance:

Commission:

Barbara Baker, Chair
Lorna Smith
Woody Myers – Remote on Fri only
James Anderson
John Lehmkuhl
Steve Parker
Melanie Rowland – Remote

Commission Staff:
Jamie Caldwell – Exec. Asst.

Kelly Susewind, Director
Amy Windrope, Deputy Director
Joe Panesko, AGO
Lorna Wargo
Megan Hintz
Matthew Trendera
Anis Aoude
Stephanie Landry
Kyle Garrison
Will Moore

Department Staff:

Mick Cope
Ben Maletzke
Jim Brown
Subhadeep Bhattacharjee

1. Call to Order

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 7:59am. ([Begins at 0:02 mark](#))

Commissioner's Discussion

Commissioner Smith reported that while driving back from the Kennewick meeting, she drove through Columbia Wildlife Area, that WDFW in-part manages with WSFW. She noted there wasn't a lot going on, but she did get to see some sandhill cranes a prairie falcon. She also recently discovered a WDFW property in Sequim that's having the Oak Prairie Habitat restored. ([Begins at 0:45 mark](#))

Commissioner Rowland reported out that on April 2nd, her and her husband went to the Golden Doe Wildlife Areas after several had been closed during the winter because they're very important areas for deer migration in the Methow area. She recognized WDFW for closing really important areas for deer during migration. ([Begins at 1:52 mark](#))

Commissioners Myers and Rowland reported out to the rest of the Commission as to why they were unable to attend the meeting in-person. There was some brief discussion about in-person vs. remote meeting attendance expectations. The Commissioners agreed to add it to the list of discussion topics at the Commission's retreat. ([Begins at 3:29 mark](#))

Meeting Minute Approval:

Commissioner Smith moved to approve the March 20-22, 2025 meeting minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Anderson. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 7:22 mark](#))

Committee Meeting Updates:

Commissioner Lehmkuhl reported out that the Big Tent Committee had a shorter than normal meeting the day before. The only topic of discussion was the early budget and legislation review. He noted it's a new process where the Commission is giving early input into the budget and legislation preferences for 2026. A number of potential items came up as a topic of interest. There was also a short discussion on future meeting topics. ([Begins at 8:33 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson reported out that the Fish Committee met yesterday and heard presentations on Puget Sound Crab & Shrimp policies, an update on Lampreys, Dungeness Crab Rules, and a discussion about budget and legislation. He encouraged folks to look at the presentation materials attached to the meeting agenda for the crab/shrimp policies and the lamprey update, as there was a lot of interesting information provided. He noted that the full Commission would be receiving the presentation on the crab rules later this afternoon, noting that the Fish Committee is recommending to

approve the rule after being heard later this afternoon. The budget and legislation discussion was very similar to the same topic discussed by both the Big Tent and Wildlife Committees. He's hoping to have it on the agenda for May's Fish Committee and would like to have information to pass forward at that time. There was also a short discussion about future meeting planning as well. ([Begins at 9:25 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith reported out that the Wildlife Committee received a brief update on the process for finalizing the Game Management Plan, noting that the Tribes have been given the opportunity to review the draft. The next step will be preparing it to go out for SEPA review. They're aiming for that to be done by the May Commission meeting. There was also a discussion about budget and legislation for the coming year. ([Begins at 17:16 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 22:14 mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 1:47:45 mark.

3. Director's Report

Director Susewind noted the Attorney General Panesko had asked for a short amount of time during his report so he turned the floor over to him to start. The AG reported out that he could publicly report out on a topic of litigation and update that the lawsuit challenging the Commission's adoption of a co-manager hatchery policy was argued last Friday, and the Department won, so the challenge has been thrown out on the merits. He went on to say that it's too early to tell if there will be an appeal of it, but it's one less item on the list. The Director then reported out that the Department has actively been engaged in North of Falcon meetings. NOF2 was the week before last up in Lynnwood. Next week, they'll be in California for the PFMC, where things are wrapped up, and final decisions get made. He wanted to give a big thank you to all the staff involved, because of how much work it is. He's had meetings with Tribal partners on the budget in general. He noted that a better effort has been made with the Tribes to engage with them, not so much to push the Department's budget, but to help get support for the Department's budget, and to hear from them on where they think the budget needs to be. There was a safety presentation given at the Senate AGNR group, noting that staff will send the Commissioners a link to the video that's on TVW. In the near future, JBLM will be holding their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan signing and will hold a small ceremony for it. He noted that they have one of the biggest in-tact pieces of prairie habitat that there is left, and they do a great job of coordinating and managing with the Department. There will also be a signing ceremony for Springwood Ranch that the Commission recently approved. The rule process for CWD was completed and most of the Commission was briefed on that at the Wildlife Committee in Kennewick last month. The hunting seasons, outside of cougar and bear, were finalized around the same time. They were very much the same as proposed in the CR-102, and have been fairly consistent overall from year to year. Waterfowl probably has the most changes, with some species being a little more liberal and others a little more conservative. Those decisions have been driven by the federal flyway regulations that the Department has to comply with. There are 6 pending petitions. Three of them are spring bear, one is to extend fishing seasons at seven lakes in Eastern Washington, one to open a recreational red rock crab harvest in Marine Area 13, one for a request for disabled hunter privileges for limited time injuries. He noted that one spring bear petition had been denied. On the Senate side, he kept it high-level. The Department has been pushing our Enforcement bill and it is doing well. The budget bills are moving along as part of the overall budget. The bill on shrimp pot limits is moving along well too. On the budget front, it's hard to even tell exactly where everything is because everything is all over the map. There is a huge state deficit, and the Department will be part of the group having to make sacrifices to fix that deficit, that's about all he knows for certain at the moment. There are two chamber budgets that he updated on. There is about \$5m in safety in the house that's not represented in the Senate budget. For biodiversity, the Senate reduced the Department by \$4m for biennium ongoing, and it's not in the house. The Department's big concern is hatcheries, particularly in the house. In the house, there's about \$9m worth of cuts. Some are directed at hatcheries, specifically Skamania/Toutle, and

others are just general hatchery cuts, and some others are cuts to operations and maintenance to hatcheries or monitoring and valuation of them. The increase in the license fees results in a net-zero to the Department on dollars, and then the Legislature will ask the Department to contribute to the deficit. ([Begins at 2:01:56 mark](#))

4. Coastal Crab Fishery – Comprehensive Line Marking Rule - Decision

Staff requested a decision from the Commission on the Comprehensive Line Marking Rule. ([Begins at 2:22:44 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson moved to adopt WAC 220-340-430, commercial crab fishery gear requirements, as presented by the staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Parker. The Commission voted unanimously. Motion carried. ([Begins at 2:37:36 mark](#))

5. Land Transaction – Briefing, Public Comment, Decision

Staff briefed the Commission, held a public hearing, and requested a decision on the land transaction for acquisition of 655+ acres in Pacific County, that is part of the North Willapa Bay Project in the Johns River Wildlife Area. ([Begins at 2:41:36 mark](#))

There was one individual signed up to give public comment on the topic, but didn't end up showing up in-person or on Zoom.

Commissioner Lehmkuhl moved to approve the land transaction for the Willapa property as presented by staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 2:50:56 mark](#))

6. Cougar Season Setting – Decision

Staff requested a decision from the Commission on the 2025-2027 Cougar Season Setting and other sealing-related rulemaking. ([Begins at the 0:10 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson moved to adopt WAC 220-415-100 and 200-400-050 as presented by department staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Parker. ([Begins at 45:16 mark](#))

After some short discussion, Commissioner Smith expressed interest in offering a substitute motion.

Commissioner Smith proposed rather than have the 10-16%, and bouncing back and forth between those, that it be left at 13%, but they adopt the cougar hunt framework, the CDAUs, the CHMUs (that she understood to have a fair amount of population and scientific validity.) So, it would be combination then of the existing regulation, in that it's 13%, but would be managing per the CHMU and CDAU. And it was seconded by Commissioner Rowland. ([Begins at 53:52 mark](#))

After a brief discussion amongst the Commissioners, Commissioner Smith decided to withdraw her amendment. ([Begins at 1:14:13 mark](#))

The Chair called for the vote on Commissioner Anderson's original motion. The Commission voted 6-1 (Commissioner Rowland nay); motion carried. ([Begins at 1:22:18 mark](#))

7. Black Bear Season Setting – Decision

Staff requested a decision from the Commission on the 2025-2027 Black Bear Season Setting. ([Begins at 1:24:14 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson moved to adopt WAC 220-415-090 as presented by Department staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Lehmkuhl. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 1:38:50 mark](#))

8. Blue Mountain Calf Survival Report – Briefing

Staff briefed the Commission on the Blue Mountain Calf Survival Report. ([Begins at 1:48:23 mark](#))

The Chair recessed the meeting at 4:01pm

9. Open Public Input

Please see the attached list of commenters. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 0:22 mark mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 37:44 mark.

10. Annual Wolf Report – Briefing

Staff briefed the Commission on the Annual Wolf Report ([Begins at 58:40 mark](#))

11. 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: No additional tasks
- Fish Committee: No additional tasks
- Wildlife Committee: No additional tasks
- Call to Order: Add a discussion about remote Commissioners to retreat agenda
- Open Public Input: No additional tasks
- Director's Report: No additional tasks
- Coastal Crab Fishery – Comprehensive Line Marking Rule: Adopted with no additional tasks
- Land Transaction: Approved with no additional tasks.
- Cougar Season Setting: Adopted with no additional tasks
- Black Bear Season Setting: Adopted with no additional tasks
- Blue Mountain Calf Survival Report: No additional tasks
- Open Public Input: Start retreat idea list
- Annual Wolf Report: No additional tasks.
- Meeting Debrief & Future Meeting Planning: No additional tasks

Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 11:49am.

Jamie Caldwell, Executive Assistant

Agenda Item #2 – Open Public Input

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. David Jennings2. Robert Fabbri3. Carl Barner4. Francisco Santiago-Avila5. Ryan Christensen6. Mandy Carlstrom7. Jeremy Franz8. Alison Anderson9. Blake Knobbe10. Liz Carr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cory Maxwell2. Jerry Lowdermilk3. Kelsey Ross4. Dane Czarnecki5. Mike Herz6. David Linn7. Susan Kane-Ronning8. John Rosapepe9. Rachel Haymon10. Eric Lagally11. Dale Magart12. Rachel Bjork13. Josh Rosenau14. Dan Wilson15. Suzy Dix16. Timothy Coleman17. Patricia Arnold

Agenda Item #9 – Open Public Input

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Jerry Lowdermilk2. Ross Barkhurst3. Stacey Demaranville4. Lloyd Lytle	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cory Maxwell2. Kelsey Ross3. Dane Czarnecki4. Carl Barner5. John Rosapepe6. Dale Magart7. David Linn8. Ilene Le Vee9. Joseph Vaile