

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

July 21, 2022

10am-12:30pm

Online Meeting

BPAG Attendance

Alexei Calambokidis, Trout Unlimited
Jason Callahan, Green Diamond
David Cloe, Inland NW Wildlife Council
Tom Davis, Washington Forest Protection Association
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest
Lucas Hall, Long Live the Kings
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center
Deborah Jensen, Washington Audubon
Nora Nickum, Seattle Aquarium
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council
Mindy Roberts, Washington Environmental Council
Kerston Swartz, Woodland Park Zoo
Lance Winecka, Regional Fisheries Coalition

Other

Myra Baldini, OFM
Tanya Helbig
Claire Davis, Animal and Earth Advocates
Sam Bruegger, Washington Wildlife First

WDFW

Commissioner Melanie Rowland
Commissioner Lorna Smith
Kelly Susewind
Nate Pamplin
Kathy Backman
Chalee Batungbacal
Tami Lininger
Jon Neville
David Trimbach
Morgan Stinson
Sarah Meyer

Welcome, Introductions, Agency Update with Director Susewind

Nate Pamplin welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) members and other guests to the meeting.

Director Kelly Susewind provided agency updates including the addition of three new [Commissioners](#) to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and recent decisions by the Commission on [wolf livestock deterrence rule making](#), [sequencing the spring bear policy process](#), and [an increase in bag limit for cougars in the Blue Mountains](#). Kelly also discussed an [emergency rule](#) affecting commercial whale watching due to the vulnerable state of some Southern Resident killer whales. Kelly also reported that some salmon fisheries are being adjusted to ensure WDFW is meeting conservation objectives for Chinook and to reserve some “impacts” to allow WDFW to prosecute coho fisheries in late-summer. Kelly has been working on the

[license reduction program for Columbia River commercial salmon gillnet licenses](#) and participated in the opening of a [pollinator garden](#) on the Capital Campus.

Members of the BPAG had questions about progress of the multi-agency actions implemented in support of Southern Resident killer whale recovery. A [link to the Governor's Office Killer whale website](#) was shared with the group. Other comments about the Southern Resident killer whale recovery included appreciation to the Department for emergency action and questions about plans for enforcement. There was also a question about Columbia River commercial license buyback numbers for active and inactive licenses.

The support and engagement of the BPAG has had an instrumental role in the success of agency budget requests. There is also anticipation of federal funds from the Recovering America's Wildlife Act when it eventually passes the senate. The bill has already passed through the House and is closer to passing than ever before.

Nate updated the BPAG on the Department's expanded communication and outreach capacity with the centralization of those functions in a new communication and public engagement work unit. The Department has also hired David Trimbach as the new natural resource social scientist and a natural resource economist will also join the team in August. David introduced himself to the members of the BPAG.

2023 Agency Request Legislation

Nate reviewed the four bills for agency request legislation

- Streamlining maintenance at hatcheries by implementing an exemption to permit requirements similar to the Department of Transportation for removing sediment.
- Requiring recreational licensing for several unregulated species including carp, freshwater smelt, and crawfish.
- Authority to use checkpoints to monitor Chronic Wasting Disease and other disease sampling by non-enforcement staff.
- Creating a Shoreline Restoration Revolving Fund to address hard armoring; which may transition into a budget request with program legislation pursued in outyears.

For more details about the proposed agency request legislation, please contact Tom McBride.

Nate will connect Mindy and Nora with Tom to talk about the path forward regarding the shoreline restoration strategy.

Other items of note include a coastal steelhead report due to the legislature on December 1, 2022, and an update on land use and riparian. Several actions are occurring this summer that may influence 2023 proposals including reviews by the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management. WDFW is also reviewing the Washington State Academy of Science report on defining net ecological gain and how to implement it under land use laws with a summary due to the legislature on December 1, 2022. There is also a report due to the legislature this year on the commercial whale watching licensing program and associated vessel viewing restrictions.

Several BPAG members encouraged the Department to lean in on the habitat work, in particular net ecological gain. Staff noted that the timeline to develop agency request legislation for the 2023 session is essentially past given the timelines for some of the reports and analyses; however, those reports may influence Governor request or individual legislator proposals.

2023-25 Operating and Capital Budget Requests

[WDFW operating budget](#)

Morgan Stinson presented an overview of [WDFW's operating budget](#) and pointed out the natural resource agencies are now allotted more than 1% of the total state operating budget. WDFW is the second largest recipient of the general fund appropriations among Washington's natural resource agencies.

2023-25 operating budget request

Morgan explained that the budget requests for the Department are linked to the [agency strategic plan](#) and [foundational map](#) with clearly defined outcomes.

Maintenance Level Requests - \$40m

These are areas to request funding for costs that are increasing in ways the agency doesn't control. Morgan shared the list of maintenance level requests for the 2023-25 biennium.

Policy Level Requests- \$101m

Morgan shared the list of policy level requests and explained how the packages link to the Department's strategic plan.

Restoring Washington's Biodiversity

BPAG members asked for additional information about the details of actions contained in the request including the list of species of greatest conservation need that would benefit from funding this package. There were questions about how long it would take to realize the impact of the actions from the decision package. BPAG encouraged the Department to continue to identify alternative approaches and opportunities for future actions.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Standard maintenance on agency infrastructure to ensure proper functioning through useful life.

Fish Passage Maintenance Team

Evaluation, monitoring, and maintenance of fish passage facilities.

Expand wildlife conflict response

Reassessing the Department's approach to wildlife conflict and moving towards an expansion of the idea embodied in the idea of living with wildlife.

Wildlife Disease Surveillance

Identify, summarize, and prioritize disease threats, identify information gaps, and research monitoring needs. Identify how to manage or limit the spread of disease and identify actionable priorities.

Columbia River ESA Permitting**Hatchery Investment Strategy**

Operating funds to support staffing, broodstock, collection, marking, fish health, and monitoring. Also, to increase the number of marking trailers, provide facility and equipment maintenance to keep up with current production levels.

Engaging Volunteers in Conservation

The Department would expect at least a 50% increase in volunteer hours from 60k to 90k with specific volunteer programs and opportunities.

Emerging Fisheries Implementation

This is tied to an earlier proviso, license buyback, alternative gear research, monitoring for the emerging fishery, gear optimization, and site selection.

Building a Climate Resilient WDFW

Funding for actions to grow resilience in the face of climate change as it accelerates over the coming decades.

Building a Carbon Neutral WDFW

Required reduction in the Department's carbon footprint including changes to fleet, facilities, carbon sequestration, hatchery emission, and waste and toxics reductions.

Body Cams and Public Records

Investment in body worn cameras to improve officer safety and the records management associated with camera data. Increase in Department transparency and accountability.

Monitor and Manage Resource Impacts

Working with the Department of Natural Resources and Washington State Parks on an ecological integrity assessment to measure the health of the ecosystem and monitor the impact of human stressors.

IT Pool Funding

Funding to advance enterprise data strategy, legacy systems replacement, HPA application processes, and support for a proposal to identify a new vendor.

Funds from other agencies

Including Yakima Integrated Plan support, water team, emerging toxics in chinook and Southern Resident killer whales, and geoduck stock assessment

BPAG had questions about operating and maintenance funds for Department lands and how the Department plans to pay for maintenance of lands acquired in the future. There were also comments and questions about upcoming threats from external sources such as alternative energy siting, and the potential for future revenue from Department lands, and how to work collaboratively with other agencies with overlapping interests.

Other items of interest include the need to move \$25M to be available for the Duckabush estuary restoration project from the 2021-23 budget to be available next biennium, coupled with a need for an additional \$41M for the state match component of this important Puget Sound recovery project.

Capital Requests:

Capital requests are outlined in a 10 year plan that is updated every two years and consists of minor works which are projects with a cost less than \$1m and that can be completed in one biennium, and major works costing more than \$1m and typically are completed in phases over multiple biennia.

Morgan shared a list of hatchery improvements proposed, major projects, and grants with pass through funding.

Next Steps/timeline:

The proposed legislative and budget requests will be presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission in August. Budget requests are due to the Office of Financial Management in September, and the Governor's budget will be released in December. The legislature will present their budget in March of 2023, and it will be enacted in April of 2023.

When requests are submitted there is a place to indicate stakeholder support. Morgan will reach out to individual BPAG members to help us indicate which decision packages they would support to the Governor's office.

There was a question from the BPAG about the Department's position on match reform for certain grant requirements. Morgan will contact agencies working on this reform for more information. The BPAG members asked if they could generate a statement of support for the biodiversity decision package and asked for more information about the details of the decision package. The Department is developing materials that can be shared and will be available later this summer. Nate will also follow up with a fact sheet on the biodiversity decision package along with the notes and slides from this meeting.

The meeting closed with appreciations from Commissioners and Nate about the work that BPAG does and how grateful the Department is for the feedback and engagement.