

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, July 31 10am-4pm

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1111 Washington St SE, Olympia WA 98501 - Room 172

BPAG Attendance

Tom Davis, WA Farm Bureau
Andy Marks, Coastal Conservation Association
Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Brittany Gallagher, The Nature Conservancy
Charley Wilkinson, Audubon Washington
David Cloe, Inland NW Wildlife Council
Eric Johnson, WA State Assoc. of Counties
Gary Chandler, Assoc. of WA Business
George Harris, NW Marine Trade Association
Greg Mueller, WA Troller's Association
Jen Syrowitz, Washington Outdoor Women
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center
Margaret Pilaro, Pac. Coast Shellfish Growers Assoc.
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest
Mike Petersen, The Lands Council
Rachel Voss, Mule Deer Foundation
Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

WDFW

Kelly Susewind
Nate Pamplin
Jeff Davis
Kathy Backman
Nelson Falkenburg
Nikki Kloepfer
Carrie McCausland
Kim Marshall
Morgan Stinson
Dr. Sandra Jonker

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Barbara Baker

Governor's Office

Jon Snyder

Introductions & Agenda Review

Nate Pamplin, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Director of Budget and Government Affairs, welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) and thanked people for traveling to the meeting. Nate introduced new members of the BPAG, George Harris from the Northwest Marine Trade Association; Margaret Pilaro from the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association; and Charley Wilkinson from Washington Audubon.

Nate announced to the BPAG that the contract with Ross Strategic is complete, and that he and Jeff Davis, WDFW Director of Conservation Policy, would co-facilitate the meetings going forward. He reviewed the agenda which will cover updates on 2020 agency request legislation and the 2020 supplemental budget request. The BPAG will also hear a presentation on the America's Wildlife Values Survey and have the

opportunity to discuss how the data applies to strategic planning for WDFW. Finally, Jeff Davis will provide an update on WDFW strategic planning, and seek input on engaging the public in the process.

Bill Richardson from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation recognized Nate with an Elk Country Partnership Award for his work on the Merrill Lake land acquisition.

WDFW Director's Welcome, Director's Office Update, and Q&A

Kelly Susewind, WDFW Director, provided an update on the Director's Office and took BPAG questions and comments.

Kelly thanked the members of the BPAG for their work and support of WDFW. The Department will continue to need support to communicate the Department's 2020 supplemental budget request and for input on the development of the Department's strategic plan.

Director's Office -- Update

- Amy Windrope, former Region 4 Director, has been appointed to the Deputy Director position. Amy will focus on internal operations, Department structure, and human resources.
- Nate Pamplin has been appointed as the Director of Budget and Government Affairs. He will be the lead for centralized budget activities for the Department as well as the lead for state and federal government affairs and public affairs.
- Joe Stohr, former Deputy Director, has been appointed as Technology and Financial Management Program Director. His areas of focus will include Department efforts to build a modern work environment.
- Jeff Davis, former Habitat Program Director, has been appointed as Director of Conservation Policy. Jeff's focus will be to increase relevancy of WDFW work to all citizens and enhancing the Department's conservation work. He will also lead the development of the agency's strategic plan
- Ron Warren, former Fish Program Director, has been appointed Director of Fish Policy. Ron's focus will lead work on *US v Oregon* and *US v Washington* co-management issues and coordinate the F&W Commission's fish and hatchery policies.

The Department's increased focus on conservation, along with connection and communication between the Directors of Conservation and Fish Policies will help the agency move in the right direction for salmon recovery.

These new appointments were effective on July 1, 2019. The vacancies created by these appointments in Fish Program, Habitat Program, and Region 4 will be filled competitively.

While these changes to Department leadership are challenging in the face of a budget shortfall, Kelly explained that executive support is necessary for WDFW to be successful in solving their ongoing budget shortfall and fulfilling the goals of the agency.

Kelly announced that two new members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission have been appointed by the Governor. Jim Anderson is a long-time Executive Director of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and Molly Linville is a rancher from Douglas County. Jay Holzmilller has completed his service to the commission, and was recognized by Kelly for his service. Kelly also introduced Nikki Kloefer, who is the new support staff person for the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Discussion

- Questions about the new WDFW executive positions included the authority of the Fish Program Director with regard to the Director of Fish Policy. The Director of Fish Policy is an executive level position with no authority over the program, and the Fish Program Director has oversight of the program. There is no direct reporting relationship between the positions. BPAG members asked for an update on the status of the Legislative Director Position. The interview process is complete, and the finalists will meet with the Department's Executive Management Team (EMT) on Monday. A September 1 start date is the goal.
- There was a question about the long-term plan for wolves in the Northeast part of the state, and the role of the US Forest Service in developing solutions. BPAG members offered suggestions about wolf management such as: working with the U.S. Forest Service on updating management plans; using collars on livestock in addition to wolves; and, WDFW or citizen monitoring of riparian areas. WDFW has increased conflict staffing in the region and is working with Conservation Northwest, among others. Kelly also has a meeting with Glenn Casamassa, the Regional Forester of the USFS next week.
- BPAG members had questions about the new F&W commissioners. They asked what county Molly Linville is from, and which commissioner would be the point person for hunting issues. Ms. Linville is from Douglas County. The Fish and Wildlife Commission is a body representing all of Washington, so hunting questions and concerns can be addressed to all of nine commissioners.
- BPAG asked for and received confirmation that Ron Warren would continue to be the contact for the Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan. There was a brief discussion about whether the Department will seek to secure its own permit, and if so, how long the process would take.
- A BPAG member expressed concern that Department staff are carrying a heavy load, and the risk of losing staff due to overwork. Kelly remarked that he continues to be impressed by the level of expertise and commitment of WDFW staff, and assured the group that he is committed to helping staff achieve a work/life balance. The staff have tough jobs, and the Department's management team is working to manage people in a way that is sustainable.
- The Director was asked to reflect on his first year with the Department. Kelly was first overwhelmed with the expertise and dedication of the staff. He feels that he underestimated how polarizing the issues facing the Department really are. He was encouraged by the broad-based support for our budget requests for the 2019-21 biennium. The Department is poised to move ahead with the right message to be successful in our 2020 supplemental budget request.
- A brief discussion on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act reinforced the importance of supporting the bill and BPAG was asked to add their signatures to a sign-on letter.
- A BPAG member expressed gratitude for the increased Enforcement presence in Region 6, and the Director noted that Chief Bear is behind the successful strategy to fill vacancies in Enforcement, and development of the Enforcement internship program.
- BPAG members also expressed appreciation to the Director for being transparent and approachable, and for visiting the regions. Kelly reinforced the role of the Regional Directors as his voice in the regions. He encouraged BPAG members to engage with them for any regional concerns.
- BPAG asked for expectations of them relative to budget issues. Kelly asked that the BPAG work to advise the Director's Office on budget issues and to engage in the strategic planning process. The diversity and knowledge of the BPAG is an avenue to external stakeholders. Kelly again expressed his appreciation for the members of the BPAG and the advice and input they provide to the Department.

Update and Request Feedback on 2020 Agency Request Legislation

Nate Pamplin presented the Department's agency request legislation for the 2020 supplemental session. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will be briefed on the request at their meeting on August 2. At that time, the public will also be able to make comments.

Nate reviewed the bills that are still active after the 2019-21 regular budget session.

- Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) (HB1662/SB 5696)
- ADA Discount (HB 1230)
- Recreational License Fee Bill (HB 1708/SB 5692) – although this bill is still alive, the Department will not be pursuing a fee increase in the 2020 supplemental session.
- Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement (SB 5871)
- Killer Whale Bills – recommendations emerging from Year 2 of the Governor's Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force may have additional legislation that the Department needs to support in 2020.

Nate also presented an overview of two draft agency request proposals:

- Enforcement Civil Infractions and Revocations Bill – the effect of the bill convert some minor violations to civil infractions and change the framework for the number of violations over time that would result in a license being revoked.
- State Wildlife Account Transparency Bill – the effect of this bill would be to separate the State Wildlife Account into an account where flexible hunting and fishing license revenue is deposited and an account comprised of 25 restricted sub-accounts. This action would increase visibility of some of the budget challenges the agency faces.

The Department will continue legislative outreach, stakeholder outreach, media outreach, and development of communication tools through the fall.

Discussion

- BPAG members discussed the feasibility of not requesting any fee increase. Nate reviewed the reasons for not requesting fees: The Department needs to catch up on past State General Fund shortages; the last three attempts of a recreational fee bill have been unsuccessful; and, some stakeholders are concerned that a fee increase without a change in opportunity is not a realistic request.
- Members of the BPAG expressed concern that a long-term solution is needed. The current budget structural deficit is real, and the resources of the Department are slowly eroding. The Department's goal is to stabilize the budget situation.
- BPAG discussed some of the reasons behind some stakeholders' concerns about the proposed fee increases.
- The BPAG discussed the plan to host field tours with legislators about the Department's budget.

Update and Request Feedback on 2020 Supplemental Budget Request

Morgan Stinson and Nate Pamplin began by presenting the results of the 2019-21 Operating Budget request.

- The Department requested \$31 M and \$30 M in enhancements.

- The Department received \$24.5 M in one time General Fund – State funds.
- The Recreational Fee Bill did not pass.
- The Legislature approved bills that increased costs to the Department by an additional \$9.4 M.

The Department reduced operating costs with the following budget balancing decisions:

- Reduced fisheries on the Columbia River due to the expiration of the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement (CRSSE),
- Elimination of the after-hours customer service Licensing call center, and,
- Implemented a 4% vacancy savings target in the first year of the biennium.

Morgan reviewed the maintenance level requests of \$11.4 M to cover the legislated cost increases and other increased costs and performance level requests of \$13.1 M to save the funding packages requested in 2019-21 and to pursue some new, emergent enhancements. The Department is seeking ongoing funding in order to correct the ongoing \$30 M structural budget shortfall and to avoid making a significant ask, once again, in 2021 legislative session and have to continue to message to staff and stakeholders about services that are at risk.

Morgan also reviewed the items for the 2020 supplemental capital budget request.

- Infrastructure Master Plan for SRKW Recovery,
- Soos Creek Hatchery completion,
- Hurd Creek Hatchery relocation out of the floodplain,
- Beaver Creek Hatchery - close Grays River Hatchery and shift production to Beaver Creek, and,
- Wiley Slough Dike – raise the setback levee to acceptable flood protection elevation standards.

Discussion

- Questions from the BPAG about the budget included specifics about cuts to at-risk areas. BPAG members will be provided with talking points for the budget requests.
- BPAG members noted that communicating the impact to local communities as a result of cuts in services might be an effective strategy.
- BPAG members asked questions about whether excess funds from orca patrols could be shifted to other work. There are costs for orca patrols that occur, even when the orca are not present. Staff continue to do a lot of outreach and education with the boating community. NOAA Fisheries also provides ESA Section 6 funds to help with killer whale patrol costs.
- BPAG members asked how the capital budget request compares to requests in previous supplemental budget request years. It is a large request, but the competition for capital funds is different than it is for the operating budget.
- A BPAG member commented that all of the emergent needs seem to be related to fish, and noted a lack of focus on terrestrial issues. Many of the terrestrial issues are related to the 2019-21 budget request, and funds to continue that work are included in the performance level requests.
- BPAG members asked about the last economic analysis of return on investment on State General Fund dollars invested in WDFW. Both National Marine Fisheries Services and US Fish and Wildlife Service estimates economic contribution from commercial fishing, recreational fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing. The state Department of Revenue completed a report in 2017 looking at the amount of State General Fund appropriated to WDFW, and leveraged with other funds, results in a significant return-on-investment back to the State General Fund.

Presentation: America's Wildlife Values Survey

Jeff Davis introduced Dr. Sandra Jonker, Wildlife Program Manager in Region 5 to the BPAG. Jeff highlighted Sandra's work with Colorado State University on Human Dimensions in Wildlife Management, along with Steve Pozzanghera, Region 1 Director.

In order to inform the strategic planning conversation for the Department, it is important to understand the spectrum of values of Washington citizens around fish and wildlife issues.

The study Sandra presented was funded by a Multi-state Conservation grant, and the information collected is intended to help states answer the following questions:

- How do agencies adapt and remain relevant in the face of societal change in an increasingly diverse constituency?
- How can agencies effectively engage with stakeholders?
- How can agencies garner broad-based support?

Public expectations for wildlife policy are changing. Today's conflict over issues in wildlife management are grounded in these changing values. A person's values with relation to wildlife can also predict their position across issues.

Sandra explained the continuum of wildlife values from the traditionalist through the mutualist orientation.

Traditionalist (formerly utilitarian)

Wildlife as subordinate to humans
Wildlife should be used to benefit humans
Wildlife should be used for research and funding
Wildlife should be killed if a safety threat

Mutualist

Less likely to support actions that result in death of wildlife
Wildlife is viewed as companions
Care for wildlife as humans
Vision is to live side by side without fear

Four types of people were identified based on their level of agreement with these orientations:

Traditionalists – use of wildlife is appropriate, i.e. hunting and fishing

Pluralists – have high values in both traditionalist and mutualist beliefs

Mutualists – view animals are family, i.e. feeding and caring for animals

Distanced – have low scores in both beliefs, their focus is on safety in interactions with wildlife

Sandra provided highlights of the survey, which compared all 50 states. The full reports are available for review [online](#).

Overall, the Washington rates are indicative of U.S. averages, moving towards more mutualist values. This information can guide conversations on how WDFW can increase relevancy with WA citizens. Other questions in the survey reviewed how wildlife values relate to behavior, to trust in government, and to preferences for funding.

WDFW plans to use the information from this study to inform strategic planning efforts and public outreach.

Discussion

- BPAG members commented on the importance of outreach to youth, as values are formed early in life. How does the department plan to use this information?
- A brief conversation discussed the ways that migration and immigration of citizens into and out of Washington can change the values of a state as a whole.
- BPAG members encouraged the Department of focus on the using the information to communicate with the right people, in the right way.

Update on Strategic Planning

Jeff Davis addressed BPAG with highlights of his work on the Department's strategic plan.

Jeff views the strategic planning process as an opportunity to focus energy around conservation and the agency's mandate to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. He plans to engage the public in what they know about the Department, what it does well, and what and how it can do better. The BPAG has the opportunity to review and provide input on the strategic plan on behalf of the public.

Jeff asked for feedback from the BPAG on

- how to increase education and outreach capacity lost through budget cuts,
- engagement with the broader public for funding support,
- outreach to other conservation agencies, and,
- achieving better conservation outcomes.

Challenges facing the Department are:

- an anticipated increase in population of two million people in the upcoming decades,
- climate change that effects fish and wildlife habitats across the state, nation, and the world, and,
- loss of biodiversity.

Jeff plans to check in one-on-one with BPAG members to engage each represented group.

Discussion

- BPAG members indicated that continuing transparency by the Department and continued engagement with user groups through the entire strategic planning process is key. It will be important to know how the public measures success of WDFW, and to hold the Department accountable to those measures. The Department is committed to engaging the public and to provide accountability through alignment of the Department budget and its strategic plan.

- BPAG members requested information about the scope and sequence of strategic planning activities. The strategic plan is intended to cover a broad vision over the next 25 years, with strategic actions planned over a shorter term. The plan will also address internal components of employee retention and developing a highly motivated workforce. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will use its Big Tent committee to focus on strategic planning, and their meetings are open to the public. The Commission has the task of evaluating the Director's performance agreement, and the strategies from the strategic plan will be a part of that evaluation.
- The BPAG's support of WDFW's budget request for FY2019-2020 was key to receiving more State General Fund than ever before, even if the Department did not receive the full request.

Next Steps

- Nate Pamplin will provide the BPAG for details of potential cuts in at-risk areas and other budget outreach materials, once the Commission approves the proposals to be submitted to the Governor's Office.
- Jeff Davis will contact BPAG members for one-on-one conversations regarding strategic planning.
- The next in-person BPAG meeting will be in the fall; likely October.
- Nate will likely schedule a webinar after the Governor releases his budget in December.