

# WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

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**Tuesday July 28, 9:00am-12pm**

**Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Online Meeting**

## **BPAG Attendance**

Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Brittany Gallagher, The Nature Conservancy  
Butch Smith, Ilwaco Charter Association  
Deborah Jensen, Washington Audubon  
Steve Manlow, Council of Regions  
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center  
Jonathan Stumpf, Trout Unlimited  
Margaret Pilaro, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association  
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council  
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest

Mike Petersen, The Lands Council  
Rachel Voss, Mule Deer Foundation

## **WDFW**

Kelly Susewind  
Nate Pamplin  
Tom McBride  
Morgan Stinson  
Nelson Falkenburg  
Kathy Backman

## Welcome, Introductions, Agency Update with Director Susewind

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Nate Pamplin welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group members and reviewed the agenda. The scope of the meeting was to review the Department's budget request for 2021-23 and to discuss the consequences of some of the at-risk work.

Kelly Susewind provided an update of Department activities.

- The Department is responding to a request from the Governor's Office for a budget reduction exercise. He acknowledged that any cuts are hard; however, we are early in the budget development process, and the final outcome may be different than what is discussed today. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will have the opportunity to review the proposed cuts at their meeting on Friday, July 31. More details of the budget reduction exercise are included below.
- There has been an early start to wolf depredations this year. Kelly reported on a lethal removal order on the Togo pack that was paused. The Togo pack is in an evaluation period at this time. The Wedge pack is also under an evaluation period after one recent removal. BPAG members asked if it could be certain that the removed wolf was the depredator. While the depredations were not observed by WDFW, Department staff feel confident that the wolf removed was involved in the depredations. BPAG members asked about what improvements were being made by producers, and Kelly commented on increased human presence including range riding that appears to be improving the situation. Kelly updated the BPAG on a ruling in King County regarding a challenge to a lethal removal last year. Kelly also noted that the Fish and Wildlife Commission denied a recent

petition from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) to place the Department's wolf protocol in rules. The petition has been forwarded to the Governor's Office by CBD.

- The Fish and Wildlife Commission will be briefed on the following at their meeting on July 31 and August 1.
  - Columbia River salmon fishery policy review
  - Hatchery and Fishery Reform policy
  - Willapa policy
  - Cougar safety issues
  - Hunting contests proposed rules
  - Target shooting rules briefing
  - Budget discussions
- The Department's Strategic Plan is open for feedback on the [www.dfw.wa.gov](http://www.dfw.wa.gov) website through August 8. The Strategic planning team is working on engagement of rural communities through conversations with local conservation districts. The Commission will review the plan at their meeting in September.
- The 2020 fire season has been mild so far, with a small fire on the Colockum Wildlife Area and another fire on the Colville reservation.
- An increase in the use of state lands has brought an increase in littering and damage. Kelly asked the BPAG to communicate the issue with the members of their various organizations to spread the message of responsible recreation, including care for natural resources. WDFW, State Parks, and the Department of Natural Resources are planning a combined media event.
- The Department will continue monthly furloughs of all staff through November. At this time office staff continue to telework. Executive management is reviewing any long-term changes in telework policies and gathering lessons learned.

BPAG members noted that the proposed Department budget cuts affect the ability for the state to generate revenue and asked that this concern be factored into proposed reductions and included in the Department's communication plan for budget decisions.

## 2021 Agency Request Legislation

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Tom McBride reviewed the four areas of agency request legislation for the 2021 legislative session. Legislative Policy proposals were solicited from the programs and regions; reviewed by EMT and briefed to the FWC.

### **Technical Corrections to split State Wildlife Account**

A bill to correct a technical problem with the State Wildlife Account splitting bill from 2020. Wolf-livestock injury claims and assessment costs were identified as being in the unrestricted account but should have been coming from the restricted account. It also includes repealing RCW 77.55.331 (HPA account – which expired in 2017).

### **Federal Indemnification Authority**

A bill to provide the FWC with authority to agree to indemnification to federal agencies (specifically in the first case to the Army Corp of Engineers) for federal funding and involvement in Major Restoration Work. This issue ties to the Duckabush restoration project (as well as the Skagit River and Nooksack River delta

projects). These would be decisions that come to the FWC. The AGO has reviewed the drafting. This is the same authority that WSDOT and DNR have in statute.

### **Hunting and Fishing Recruitment and Retention**

A hunting and fishing recruitment and opportunity bill addressing increased youth access, license options, college student and military license prices. We are monitoring the cumulative revenue impacts, which are expected to be neutral. There are ten distinct amendments:

- Align the definition of youth to be those persons under 16 for both hunting and fishing;
- Adjust the residency definition of active duty members of the US military, as well as their spouses and children, so service members qualify for licenses at the resident rates;
- Allow the Department to sell merchandise to better market to hunters, fishers, and the general public, driving more participation in the sport;
- Exempt retired members of the US military and current or retired federal peace officers from firearm skills portions of hunter education;
- Allow individuals to defer hunters' education for one year if they are accompanied by a licensed hunter who is over 18 years of age (Section 4);
- Provide a financial incentive to resident hunter education graduates by providing a \$20 discount on the purchase of their first hunting license (Section 4);
- Removes the restriction that prohibits temporary fishing combination licenses from being used for the popular lowland lakes fishing opener (Section 5);
- Allows youth to use a second pole free of charge (Section 5);
- Allows out-of-state, full-time, post-secondary students at an accredited institution to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at resident rates. Children and spouses of eligible students also qualify for resident rates (Section 6); and
- Provide additional authority for the Department to create bundled license packages and multi-year license packages through rule; and provide the ability for the Director to offer promotional pricing. (New Section).

### **Payment in lieu of Taxes Program**

The Department is working with a coalition of conservation groups and counties to reform the payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) program. This has been a multi-year effort and should help with support for Lands 20/20. This change would stabilize how junior taxing districts receive their equitable PILT amount when WDFW acquires land and removes the property from the county's tax rolls. We are pursuing permanent statutory change that places the transfer of payment into the State Treasurer's Office in 2021.

### **Federal Update**

Nate Pamplin provided an update on Federal legislation.

- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) has passed out of the House of Representatives and is now in the Senate.
- The Great American Outdoors Act was passed by Congress. The bill makes a guaranteed \$900 million per year available for new parks and conservation in the Land and Water Conservation

Fund (LWCF). WDFW has been successful in receiving US Fish and Wildlife grants funded by the LWCF under the ESA Section 6 program.

## 2021-23 Operating Budget Proposals

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Nate Pamplin and Morgan Stinson presented information on the current state budget climate: there is an anticipated \$9 billion shortfall in the state revenue forecast. The Department has implemented the requested hiring and purchasing freezes, furloughs, and cancelling cost of living salary increases for certain employees. In addition, the Department is identifying 15% in budget reductions for 2021-23 and is planning for shortfalls in several other funding streams, independent of the coronavirus economic impacts.

**SFY2021 Second Supplemental Operating Budget Request.** The second supplemental is for one-time, emergent costs that occurred during the second fiscal year of the biennium.

For the 2021 second supplemental, the Department is requesting \$586K for IT reclassification appeals, interest arbitration (E2SSB 5481 funding for OFM), and Office of Attorney General 2% increase. This request also includes a placeholder for \$100K of post-fire habitat recovery (pending summer 2020 fire season).

**2021-23 Operating Budget Maintenance Level Request.** The maintenance level budget is for routine, unavoidable anticipated cost increases.

For the 2021-23 maintenance level budget, the Department is requesting \$10.7M for the following items:

- Police RMS & CAD Replacement Project Completion
- IT Reclass Appeals (also 2021 SUPP)
- Office of Administrative Hearings
- Interest Arbitration (E2SSB 5481) (also included in 2021 Second Suppl.)
- Lease Rate Adjustments
- Maintain Technology Access
- Equipment Replacement
- Operation and Maintenance (O&M) from Capital Budget
- Equipment Replacement
- Utility Rate Adjustments
- County assessment Increase for Fire Suppression
- Wildfire Habitat Recovery
- NPDES (ECY rate change after July 2020)
- Minimum Wage (L&I, COLA adjustments in Sept 2020)
- PILT Office of the State Treasurer Bills
- Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Correction

In addition, the Maintenance Level budget requests includes two adjustments to spending authority (which does not impact the State General Fund). The first is a \$21M net increase in spending authority to address the authority needed next biennium when the State Wildlife Account is separated into the Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Account and the Limited Fish and Wildlife Account, per SB 6072. A second authority adjustment is to decrease federal and local expenditure authority by a total of \$11M to account for declining contracts in those fund sources.

**2021-23 Operating Budget Performance Level request.** The performance level budget is for new, policy level budget requests.

The Department is seeking \$14.7M in new enhancements. These include the following items:

- AIS Prevention and Enforcement
- HPA Landowner Assistance
- Evergreen Jobs (complements capital request)
- North of Falcon Habitat Commitments
- Columbia River Policy
- Monitoring Fisheries
- Marine Mammal Management
- Wildlife Rehabilitation (non-GF-S authority request)

In addition, in June 2020, the Governor's Office of Financial Management provided budget development instructions to state agencies, asking them to identify 15% reduction in State General Fund. For WDFW, those reductions include:

- Salmon and Steelhead Hatchery Production; \$5.2M
- Trout Hatchery Production; \$2.0M
- Fisheries Opportunity and Management; \$5.7M
- Warmwater Gamefish Management; \$2.4M
- Orca and Global Wildlife Trafficking Enforcement; \$1.2M
- Lands Stewardship and Operations; \$3M
- Conservation; \$2.7M
- Partnering with Volunteers; \$1.3M

The Department is also seeing declining revenue in several accounts and is requesting the reduction of expenditure authority and the commensurate back-fill with State General Fund for the following:

- Pittman-Robertson; \$2.8M
- Dingell-Johnson; \$0.8M
- Personalized License Plate; \$1M
- Federal and Local Hatchery Grants; \$2.6M

Staff will complete writing the budget requests and submit them to the Governor's Office of Financial Management in September.

BPAG members asked how many FTEs were affected in the budget proposals. Nate noted that the reductions would affect at least 100 FTE positions, with additional impacts to staff that may be affected by reductions in force.

The Budget and Policy Advisory Group adjourned at 12pm.