

# WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

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**Wednesday, April 10 9:30am-3:30pm**

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

## **BPAG Attendance**

Andrea Imler, Washington Trail Association  
Andy Marks, Coastal Conservation Association  
Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Brittany Gallagher, The Nature Conservancy  
Craig Partridge, Capitol Land Trust  
Mike Peterson, The Lands Council  
Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association  
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center  
Jen Syrowitz, Washington Outdoor Women  
Kevin Van Buren, Methow Valley Fly Fishers  
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council  
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest  
Nick Chambers, Trout Unlimited  
Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

## **WDFW**

Joe Stohr  
Nate Pamplin  
Rob Geddis  
Kathy Backman  
Additional staff for morning presentations as noted

## **Facilitation – Ross Strategic**

Elizabeth McManus  
Mary Byrne

## **Introductions & Agenda Review**

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Nate Pamplin, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Policy Director, welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) and thanked people for traveling to the meeting.

Elizabeth McManus (facilitator) followed Nate by reviewing the agenda. The meeting is divided into two parts. The morning is focused on providing updates about the ongoing legislative session and implications for the WDFW budget, along with an initial discussion of potential legislative priorities for 2020, and a meet and greet with the new WDFW public affairs director. There will be a long break for lunch to accommodate BPAG members who have other meetings. Then, the afternoon work will focus on providing input into the strategic planning process, particularly examining the question of relevancy.

## 2019 Legislative Session Update

Raquel Crosier, Legislative Director and Morgan Stinson, Budget Director provided an update on the status of agency request and other bills WDFW is tracking and the budget outlook, and took BPAG questions.

### Agency Request Legislation -- Update

- ADA Bill – HB 1230 – This bill did not make the fiscal committee cutoff. Options to carry these ideas forward include: write it into the fee bill; bring back next session; or develop a more comprehensive fix with other natural resource agencies.
- Recreational Fee Bill – HB 1708/SB 5692 – This bill is considered Necessary to Implement the Budget (NTIB). Youth hunter recruitment was amended into the bill. Passage of the fee bill is assumed in the House budget, it is not assumed in the Senate budget. The following items/activities are at risk if the fee bill is not approved:
  - Maintain Packages
  - Maintain fishing (5 hatcheries; 2.6M salmon, steelhead and trout; early winter steelhead monitoring; warm water game fish management; CRSSE)
  - Maintain hunting (Master Hunting program; pheasant production)
  - 30.35 Maintenance FTEs
  - Enhance Packages
  - Enhance fishing (potential hatchery production increases; catch and release Skagit steelhead fishery)
  - Enhance Hunting (private land access)
  - 27.6 FTEs
- Orca legislation – all the Orca legislation is moving forward, and although there are differences between House and Senate, all is expected to make it through. These include:
  - Oil Transport (HB1578)
  - Chinook abundance (HB 1579)
  - Orca and vessels (SB 5577)
  - UAVs (drones) (HB 1341)
  - Whale Watching (SB 5918)

### Other Bills WDFW is Tracking -- Update

- Dog training (HB 1516) – this is related to ensuring there are experienced and well-practiced hounds available to address nuisance cougars if/as needed. Note: this bill is to establish provisions for pursuit/tracking animals only; not for removal.
- Wolf recovery (HB 2097).
- PILT (HB1662/SB 5696) – this is related to improving the ability to compensate counties with payment in lieu of taxes when land is placed in conservation status.
- Outdoor gear tax (HB 2122) – this would establish a tax on certain outdoor gear above \$200 and allocate the revenue to the State Wildlife Account.
- Hunter pink (HB 1548) – this is related to recruitment and retention of female hunters.

### Discussion

- BPAG members shared that they are also tracking the following bills:
- Graduated REET. This would lower real estate taxes for some transactions and raise real estate taxes on higher-value transactions. Because agricultural land and open spaces are often high-value transactions (due to the amount of land involved) this could result in higher real estate taxes for open space, forest, and agricultural land, dampening conservation transactions and encouraging break up of working lands. Some BPAG members are encouraging amendments which would keep working lands and open space at the same tax level they are now.

- An agricultural education bill which would help bring more people into the natural resource field and work towards ensuring a sustained workforce. A BPAG member noted that these concepts are interesting and relevant to the BPAG work, particularly around providing for systematic and sustained education and outreach around agriculture and natural resources management.
- There was a question about effort to amend the parcel tax to support fire suppression work at DNR. WDFW is working to ensure their work is written into the final bill; like DNR. The eligible activities and priorities for spending were discussed, with a number of BPAG members noted that forest treatments to reduce the potential for wildfire should be a priority for investment along with fire response work (some thought they should be a higher priority).
- There was a question about the substance of the concerns on the ADA bill. The sense is the failure of the bill to move is more about a sense that WDFW should focus of addressing present concerns with the budget before expanding services. There is not opposition to the substance of the bill; concerns have been expressed about the budget impacts to the agency of the proposed discounts.
- There was a brief discussion of HB 2122 regarding the outdoor gear tax. This bill is an effort by the sponsors to engage “non-consumptive” users in more direct participation for funding fish and wildlife conservation, similar to the ways that hunters and gun purchases are engaged through federal Pittman-Robertson taxes and anglers are engaged through federal Dingell-Johnson taxes. It is not expected to move this year but has served to elevate attention to the need for diverse sources of funding for fish and wildlife conservation, and the need for engagement beyond traditional users in funding discussions.
- There was discussion of the cougar and hound training/pursuit bill, with some BPAG members supporting the approach.

## **Budget Update**

There are significant differences between the House and Senate budgets. For the “maintenance” package, which is the funding needed to fill the \$31M budget shortfall and continue ongoing WDFW work, the House assumes passage of the recreational fee bill and fully funds the maintenance request consistent with the Governor’s budget request. However, the funding is provided as a one-time appropriation rather than being added to the Agency “base” or ongoing funding. The Senate does not assume passage of the recreational fee bill and has reduced funding for fishing and hatcheries management, hunting management, and the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead endorsement as described in the following table. The preferences listed in the column were based on WDFW’s letter to legislative leadership as they negotiate a conference budget.

<b>Maintain/ Buy-back Decision Packages</b>	<b>Gov</b>	<b>House</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Preference</b>
<b>Maintain wildlife conflict response</b>	\$4,360	\$4,360	\$4,360	Aligned
<b>Maintain public health and safety, Shellfish</b>	\$2,524	\$2,524	\$2,524	Aligned
<b>Maintain land management</b>	\$2,640	\$2,640	\$2,640	Aligned
<b>Maintain fishing and hatchery production</b>	\$9,388	\$9,388	\$3,732	House position – adopt fee bill
<b>Maintain hunting</b>	\$3,072	\$3,072	-	House position – adopt fee bill
<b>Maintain conservation</b>	\$3,392	\$3,392	\$3,392	Aligned
<b>Maintain Columbia River salmon and steelhead endorsement</b>	\$2,961	\$2,961	-	House position – adopt fee bill
<b>Maintain customer service</b>	\$1,872	\$1,872	\$1,872	Aligned

There also are differences between the House and Senate on potential enhancements as described in the following table.

<b>Enhancement Decision Packages</b>	<b>Gov</b>	<b>House</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Preference</b>
<b>Enhance conservation</b>	\$1,280	\$640	-	House position
<b>Enhance hunting and conflict response</b>	\$826	-	-	Aligned
<b>Enhance fishing</b>	\$6,878	\$4,300	-	House position
<b>Lands enhancement</b>	-	-	-	Aligned
<b>Enhance Regional Fishery Enh. Groups</b>	\$700	-	\$700	Senate position

There also are differences between House and Senate approaches on other budget items of interest including funding recommendations of the southern resident killer whale task force as summarized in the following table.

<b>Additional</b>	<b>Gov</b>	<b>House</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Preference</b>
<b>CB1 - Salmon Marking Trailers</b>	\$510	-	-	*critical to produce fish
<b>P2 - Global Wildlife Trafficking</b>	\$298	-	\$298	Senate position
<b>WR1 - Orca Whale Recovery-Prey</b>	\$10,530	\$4,600	\$10,530	Senate position
<b>WR2 - Orca Whale Recovery-Vessels</b>	\$1,683	\$1,366	\$1,572	House position
<b>WR4 - Orca Whale Recovery-Capacity</b>	\$580	-	-	Gov's position
<b>Payment in lieu of taxes</b>	\$761	\$761	\$758	House position
<b>Enforcement Records Management (RMS)</b>	\$1,484	-	\$1,484	Senate position
<b>Elk fencing in the Skagit Valley</b>	-	\$100	\$400	Senate position
<b>State Data Center</b>	\$963	\$963	-	House position
<b>Local and tribal hatchery production</b>	-	\$5,489	-	House position
<b>Wolf Recovery</b>	-	\$954	\$870	House position

WDFW's perspective on the differences between House and Senate proposals is included in the tables above. WDFW priorities for budget conference discussions include:

- Senate – adopt recreational fee bill and align funding for maintenance with the house proposal.
- House – make one-time State General Fund funding on-going
- For Orca – adopt House hatchery proposal and Senate Orca Prey proposal

## Discussion

- There was a discussion about the challenges of the recreational fee bill.
- There was a question about the potential for a budget proviso on a more comprehensive look at sustainable funding for conservation. WDFW is still interested in this proviso but has not so far focused on it during this session because of the need to solve core budget issues (i.e., with the maintenance-level budget) and to support the Governor's budget requests for killer whales.
- A BPAG member noted that those interested in targeted requests to legislators based on budget information WDFW presented might note that: Natural resources now are less than 1% of the state budget, and with new revenue proposals, that is percentage is decreasing (0.7% of budget and declining rapidly). Washington citizens agree that conservation is important, and full funding for WDFW is part of that investment.
- There was a question about how other budget actions related to across-the-board cuts to state agencies and cost of living increases might affect WDFW. WDFW is, like other agencies, tasked with defining a 2% cut to their spending focused on the lowest priority work. WDFW also is likely facing a shortfall between responsibility for cost of living increases and anticipated revenue in the State Wildlife Account.
- There was a question about Federal funding and context.
  - The President's budget is harsh on natural resource agencies across the board.

- Dingell-Johnson (DJ) and Pittman-Robertson (PR) federal excise tax apportionments: DJ is lower for federal fiscal year 2019, and PR has reduced significantly. These grants fund basic, necessary activities related to hunting and fishing management.
- The Pacific Salmon Treaty was recently updated. There is also additional proposed funding for habitat restoration and hatcheries.
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act has changed origin of funding from oil and gas lease revenue to being part of general federal tax funding. Washington would receive \$26 million to implement state wildlife action plans and recovery endangered species. There may be a window for the State legislature to pass a memorial to signal support for this funding.

## Initial Planning for 2020 Agency Request Legislation and Budget Requests

Raquel and Morgan also led a discussion how WDFW plans to approach 2020 Agency request and budget legislation and potential priorities.

WDFW is planning proactive vetting of 2020 legislation and budget requests. This includes increased involvement from Executive Management and BPAG, more vetting/ownership from the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and more time for stakeholder input. WDFW believes fewer, better vetted priorities will help produce better budget and legislative outcomes. The budget and legislative 2020 calendar includes Executive Management Team reviewing and approving proposals in June, the WDFW Fish and Wildlife Commission presentation and decision in June and August, and the final submittal to OFM in October.

Legislative development will be a criteria-based process that focuses on stakeholder support, political viability, Results Washington, legal obligation, program/agency priority, revenue impact, urgency, etc. Additional considerations have to do with it being a short 60-day legislative session (e.g., policy only; no major budget impact; emerging issues; clean-up and streamlining). The following legislative ideas have already been discussed as potential ideas for 2020:

- Fur dealer license fee
- Wildlife trafficking technical fixes
- Budget cleanup – restricted/ non-restricted account management
- Transfer commercial landing excise tax revenue to State Wildlife Account
- ADA discounts, if it doesn't pass this session
- PILT, if it doesn't pass this session
- Remove outdated or no longer necessary statutes/ reporting requirements (a suggestion from BPAG during past discussions)

On the budget side, OFM has not provided instructions yet. WDFW will engage in a criteria-based process this year and will link the budget proposals to the foundational map developed as part of the zero-based budget work. WDFW will ask for BPAG input on budget development in late-May.

### Discussion

- WDFW should develop a structured process to assess customer service and satisfaction. This could include external surveys and interviews.
- Economics should be considered when creating policy and the cost benefit ratio of WDFW's work should be shared through external communications.
- BPAG members suggested the following legislative ideas should be considered by WDFW:

- Natural resource education to broaden understanding of how lands are managed and ensure all school children have a basic understanding of the benefits of fish, wildlife, and natural lands and what it takes to sustain them.
- Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement if it doesn't pass this year.
- Continue discussion on sustainable funding for state natural lands and potential new funding mechanisms. This could build on the discussion started by the outdoor gear tax bill this year.

## Public Affairs Director Meet-and-Greet

Carrie McCausland, the new WDFW Public Affairs Director introduced herself and discussed some of her initial thoughts on the job. Carrie previously served as Deputy Communications Director of DNR. She noted the importance of creating a comprehensive approach to public communications that emphasizes transparency and trust building. As part of this effort, WDFW has started streaming public meetings on line and launched a more user-friendly website. The agency is focusing on positive storytelling that emphasizes the engaging work WDFW does in the field. Rather than assigning communications professionals based on the medium (e.g., press, web, social) they will be assigned by topic and will follow that topic through all communication channels. This will increase communications' knowledge around topic areas, encourage stakeholder relationships, and build a higher degree of accountability into the communications process.

Carrie discussed regional communication and her interest in establishing effective communication leads in the regional offices to support program work, build relationships with local influencers, and increase understanding and responsiveness to local concerns and priorities. Related to this, she has an emphasis on increasing communication professions' connectivity with the program work – so they are available, effective, utilized, and trusted by program staff and integrated into program activities.

Carrie noted that there is a need to improve internal communications. This includes better informing staff on budget and legislation developments. The communications team is working on building and expanding foundational these foundational capacities. Communications has also worked to develop standardized templates for fact sheets, reports, and PowerPoints to help “brand” the agency.

### Discussion

- BPAG members welcomed Carrie to the Department and reinforced the importance of her work.
- The importance of communication in regions was discussed. There is support for this effort from many BPAG members. The need to communicate beyond traditional media channels also was discussed, e.g., to local radio stations, blogs, and local newspapers.
- BPAG members suggested that WDFW should communicate the rationale/benefits of conservation activities and the relevancy of those activities to the health and wellbeing of all Washingtonians, along with information on how these activities are funded.
- Department Advisory groups were discussed and the need to support these groups. Carrie discussed the need to better acknowledge and utilize the expertise provided to the Department by advisory groups and noted that she is working to improve advisory group support including through facilitation training for WDFW advisory group contacts.
- Related to regional communication, the benefit of WDFW staff and experts “showing up” locally was discussed – by participating in local gatherings and festivals, being available to provide expertise and input to local decision making (e.g., around habitat and land management), and working with local groups and schools. Many WDFW staff do this kind of outreach on their own time, or, if staff are not available or not able to do this on their own time these opportunities are not realized. The

need to prioritize making WDFW staff available for this type of engagement and giving them the tools (media training, etc.) necessary for them to be successful was discussed.

- A BPAG member raised the issue of availability of WDFW data and the need to make data easily available to partners and other who could use it as way of increasing partnership and building relationship. WDFW does not have a centralized data system, and some IT services are managed differently depending on division. The need for centralized and easily accessible databases has been elevated within the Department. WDFW is also examining how to better use data in communication planning, process development, and decision making.

## Strategic Planning Workshop

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Rob Geddis, Lean Manager, provided an update and led a discussion about WDFW's ongoing strategic planning effort.

WDFW is in the process of developing a new strategic plan. The emerging focus areas for the plan are relevancy, conservation trajectory, and culture change/workforce happiness.

- By July, WDFW will develop a summary of the long-term challenges (e.g. population growth, climate change), a draft long-term (25-50 yr.) vision statement for staff, public, federal, and tribal feedback through 2019, and primary focus areas (e.g., relevancy). For each of the focus areas, interim objectives/milestones for FY19-21 will be identified.
- By April 2020, WDFW will produce a summary of the long-term challenges, finalized long-term vision statement, revised primary focus areas, and objectives/milestones for each focus area for the next 25-50 years.

Rob discussed the emerging draft vision, which will continue to be refined. It includes:

- We will work with the people of Washington to build a future with
  - Healthy ecosystems
  - Sustainable fish and wildlife opportunities
- We'll achieve that vision by
  - Engaging the public in natural resource decisions
  - Using best science
  - Strengthening our workforce with diversity of views and identities of the public we serve
- To accomplish this vision we commit to
  - Listening and partnering
  - Changing based on what we hear
  - Reaching shared goals
- We'll incorporate those dynamics in our work to be the best fish and wildlife agency in the country

## Discussion

- A BPAG member asked about Commission engagement in the strategic planning process and recommended a deliberate approach to engaging the Commission in the planning and potentially involving the Commission in BPAG deliberations and meetings on planning. WDFW is open to this idea. The strategic planning committee Commissioner members are: Baker, Thorburn, Graybill, and Smith.
- It was noted that Federal agencies manage some of the habitat in which WDFW manages the wildlife. It is important for WDFW to attend meetings with Forest Service and DNR for coordination.

- It was suggested that it could be helpful for WDFW to have a public facing/societal vision and an internal/organizational vision. The current draft seems a mix of both.

### **Small Group Work on Relevancy**

BPAG members were split into four groups and asked to consider and discuss how WDFW can improve relevancy with their respective organizations/stakeholders and more broadly, and what segments WDFW should focus on improving relevancy (e.g., particular geography, an age group, different heritages, etc.). Ideas were captured on flip charts in each small group and then briefly summarized (and captured here) in small group report outs.

Small group reports on relevancy:

- Identify and describe benefits the agency provides and communicate what would happen to Washington's natural resources if WDFW was gone.
- Expand branding on the benefits WDFW provides. For example, include language such as "This initiative was brought to you by WDFW" and include logo.
- Expand use of social media, particularly focusing on positive conservation efforts.
- Emphasis that WDFW helps communities and citizens, in addition to providing hunting and fishing opportunities.
- Highlight the value WDFW provides to habitat and species, along with the added value to outdoor recreation.
- Increase attendance and collaboration with other agency, stakeholder, and conservation groups.
- Direct agency outreach (attend conferences, local meetings, school events, etc.). WDFW should look for opportunities to engage with and support communities in non-confrontational ways.
- Expand reduced permits to first time hunters/fishers as a tool for recruitment.
- Acknowledge and be sensitive to the fact that expanding WDFW's relevancy and engaging in outreach beyond the Agency's core costumers is a position of vulnerability.
- Improve opportunities for sharing knowledge. For example, at the hunting and angling event in the Fall, there could be workshops on maps and compass skills, survival skills, etc.
- Provide hunters ed or fishing day for youth.
- Identify and communicate unifying themes around conservation.

Small group reports on where to start:

- Youth
- Women
- Schools (STEM programs)
- Urban populations
- Expand outreach to "hidden relevancies," such as people who aren't hunters and fishers, but have an interest in wildlife
- Cultivate mentorship opportunities (especially for youth and women)
- Better partner with other natural resource agencies
- Recognize that there is work to do with shoring up relationship with existing constituents

There was further discussion of the importance and opportunities associated with K-12 education (summer camps were mentioned), the benefits of children having time in nature, and the need to make more of these opportunities available. The need for WDFW staff to have the capacity and support to show up for local events and participate in local processes as experts and to advise decision makers was reinforced.

Rob and Nate thanked BPAG members for their engagement and ideas.

## Next Steps

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- WDFW will continue to keep BPAG members informed as the legislative session continues and budget decisions are made.
- BPAG will reconvene via webinar in mid- to late-May to discuss the WDFW SFY2020 operating budget requests. BPAG will be asked to help prioritize requests.
- BPAG engagement in strategic planning will continue.