

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 9:30am-12:00pm
Zoom Meeting

BPAG Members

Andy Marks, Coastal Conservation Association
Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Brittany Gallagher, The Nature Conservancy
Butch Smith, Ilwaco Charter Association
David Cloe, Inland NW Wildlife Council
Deborah Jensen, Washington Audubon
Dick Wallace, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups
Eric Johnson, WA State Assoc. of Counties
George Harris, NW Marine Trade Association
Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center
Jonathan Stumpf, Trout Unlimited
Kerston Swartz, Woodland Park Zoo
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council
Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest

Mike Petersen
Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau

Public

Chris Bachman, The Lands Council
Lucas Hall, Long Live the Kings

WDFW

Kelly Susewind
Nate Pamplin
Tom McBride
Morgan Stinson
Nelson Falkenburg
Chalee Batungbacal
Commissioner Lorna Smith

Welcome, Agency Update with Director Susewind

Kelly Susewind provided the Budget and Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) with updates on high-level agency activities. The legislative session wrapped up at the end of April and there is some good, new policy and significant new investments for our work. The Department received a strong budget that continued to build on the successes of 2020. Kelly thanked the BPAG for their work on the budget and acknowledged this group's work during these meetings and work with constituents that contributed to this outcome. Department staff are already implementing legislative and budget items that passed this session.

Licensing continues to do well, and the Department is seeing a surge in license purchases from folks wanting to get outdoors this summer. The Department is eager to keep these folks engaged beyond this current time and to continue to deliver services. The trout opener at the end of April is historically the Department's largest fishing event with the most participation. There has been great support from communities and industry sponsorships with around \$38,000 in prizes for the trout derby. This event is a fun introductory and family opportunity.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) recently adopted the 3-year hunting package along with hatchery policy C-3624. The Fish Committee continues to work on getting to concurrency with the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on the Columbia River. The next Joint-State Columbia River Salmon Fishery Policy Review Committee meeting is on 5/26/21. Additionally, the empty Commission seat remains open. The Department anticipates that the Governor's Office will fill that seat now that the legislative session is over.

North of Falcon (NOF) also wrapped up at the end of April. It was completely virtual this year and staff observed that far more people tuned in to participate. Despite the difficulties of being virtual and intense negotiation, the outcomes were better than expected given the salmon forecast.

Coastal steelhead management was a critical issue for the Department this year due to continued declining runs and few forecasts above the minimum escapement goals. The Department plans to work with co-managers to develop forecasts earlier in the year to prepare for next year. This issue will be brought to the Commission in June and the Fish Program will host community workshops later this summer. Kelly commended Fish Program staff for working hard and collaborating with tribes to produce forecasts earlier than they had previously been produced.

Kelly also provided personnel updates. The Department is proceeding with the hiring process for the Region 2 Director. Nelson Falkenburg, the Legislative Coordinator, is leaving the Department later this month. Additionally, the Budget Office is being moved back with other financial services and Kelly created a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position. This position has been recruited for and Kelly introduced former Budget Officer, Morgan Stinson, as the new CFO. Finally, Ron Warren, Director of Fish Policy is retiring at the end of June.

Nate Pamplin expressed the Department's interest in keeping BPAG going and noted that BPAG appointments end in June. Nate will reach out to members regarding their interest in continuing to participate on the BPAG, and welcomes input and suggestions on other entities/sectors that we should reach out to invite to participate.

2022 Supplemental Session Orientation

Nate Pamplin presented an orientation on the 2022 supplemental legislative session. There were no reductions in budget at the end of the 2021 session. Some of the Department's shortfall packages were funded on a one-time basis and it is likely that these packages will return in the 2023 session. There were tremendous investments in the Department's work this year including AIS, shrubsteppe conservation, tribal hatchery production for SRKW, and chronic wasting disease. Funding for capital projects was the strongest its ever been.

The 2022 supplemental session is a short 60-day session and is a sprint. The revenue outlook is currently positive with the vaccine rollout, a recovering and reopening economy, and the federal infrastructure package that was recently passed.

2022 Agency Request Legislation

Tom McBride provided the members of the advisory group with information on agency request legislation for the 2022 legislative session.

There are three carryover bills from the 2021 legislative session that the Department will continue to work on in the 2022 session.

- HB 1508 (Concerning the sanitary control of shellfish) did not make it out of the legislature session due to time. There will be a work session on this bill in the House Rural Development, Agriculture, and Natural Resources committee later this fall.
- HB 1172 (Recognizing judicially affirmed and treaty-reserved fishing rights and promoting state-tribal cooperative agreements in the management of salmon, trout, and steelhead resources), the Department's agency request legislation in partnership with the AG's Office, also did not pass due to time and the Department will continue to work on the bill in 2022.
- Finally, while HB 1117 (Promoting salmon recovery through revisions to the state's comprehensive planning framework) did not pass, there is a budget proviso at OFM that would work on developing a baseline for the issues covered in the bill.

Tom presented a few agency request legislation concepts to the group including:

- ADA Advisory Committee Composition,
- Recruitment,
- Electronic and print-from-home licenses, and
- Discover Pass Free Day Alignment.

There are also other bills likely being run by other agencies and groups that the Department would like to support next session. These may include:

- Hydropower fee expiration date extension (Ecology),
- RFEG fund/percentage splits,
- Governor's Salmon Recovery bill, and
- Highway 97 wildlife underpasses.

BPAG questions and comments included a discussion about the Highway 97 wildlife underpasses and a discussion about supporting legislator's bill versus engagement and outreach to develop agency request legislation.

2022 Supplemental Operating and Capital Budget Requests

Morgan Stinson presented information on prospective 2022 supplemental operating and capital budget requests. Supplemental budget requests generally focus on emergent needs, clean-up, and following through on commitments.

High level categories for operating budget requests include:

- FERC/FCRPS Relicensing
- Building Salmon Team Capacity

- Bull Trout: Implementing Regional Recovery Plans
- Columbia River Alternative Gear
- Forage Fish Spawning and Monitoring
- Freshwater Monitoring
- Hatchery Compliance
- Trailer Operators
- Updating Puget Sound Recreational Shellfish Harvest Assessment
- Compliance Inspectors
- Fish Passage Rulemaking
- Land Use Support
- Restoration Coordination
- Revolving Loan Fund
- Senior Conservation Consultants
- Shore Friendly Landowner Engagement and Outreach
- Solar Support
- Engineering Specialists
- Avian Predation Capacity
- Increased Cultural Resources Capacity
- Increased Recreation Pressure on WDFW Lands
- Lands O&M Backlog
- Wildlife Conflict
- Wildlife Health Westside Veterinarian Position
- WILD System Update
- Cloud Computing

The 2022 supplemental capital budget requests include:

- Deschutes Watershed Center Hatchery
- PSNERP State Match – Duckabush Estuary
- Toutle River Fish Collection Facility
- Hoffstadt Hills Habitat Acquisition
- Beaver Creek Hatchery
- Klickitat Wildlife Area – Simcoe Fencing
- Taneum Creek – Brain Property

BPAG questions and comments included a discussion about engineering needs and whether that is in-house or contracted, clarity around the wildlife conflict funding concept and support for greater outreach on large carnivore conservation; support for the ‘solar support package’ and technical assistance to local governments, funding for the Duckabush capital project, and a status update on the Deschutes hatchery project.

Next Steps

The BPAG will meet again on July 20 and will have an opportunity to comment on Department budget and legislative proposals once more before they are presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for decision at their August 6 – 7 meeting.