



## Director's Report to the Commission

November 4-5, 2016

### Wildlife Program

#### **National Hunting and Fishing Day Celebration**

On October 1, the Department held its second event to celebrate National Hunting and Fishing Day (NHFD), this year at the North Central Washington Gun Club in East Wenatchee.

The Wildlife Program's Hunter Education Division and Human Resources' Volunteer Program Manager led the event. There was substantial regional and Olympia involvement and support from the Fish, Habitat, Enforcement, Human Resources, Public Affairs, and Capital Asset and Management programs.

This year, 78 youth, ages 2 to 17, and approximately 120 adults attended the free day of events. Participants were invited to bring their own firearms or try out firearms and archery equipment provided by the Department. They received training, guidance, direction, and encouragement from certified Hunter Education Instructors and Master Hunters. Participants had the ability to visit six shooting stations throughout the day to experience target shooting with .223 rifles, .22 rifles, and air rifles, as well as trap shooting and archery shooting.

There were several other activities, such as rod and reel casting lessons, a virtual turkey hunt sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation, making plaster casts of wildlife tracks, fish and wildlife-related crafts, and Gyotaku (Japanese style fish printing). There were also mini-clinics on knot tying, scent control while hunting, and walleye fishing.

Participants visited several displays, including the Hunter Education display, the TIP (Turn in a Poacher) trailer (staffed by Enforcement officers), poster-sized infographics from the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the 2014 International Hunter Education Association's Volunteer Instructor of the Year, Steve Mills.

Several non-government partners sponsored the event and provided displays, information and activities. Sponsors included Wenatchee Sportsman's Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Mule Deer Foundation, Bass Pro Shops (Tacoma, WA), Team Naturaleza, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Participants received giveaways and door prizes donated by local sporting goods stores, and everyone enjoyed a free lunch donated by Volterra Restaurants and Pacific Food Importers. At registration, all youth participants were gifted a durable drawstring backpack that included a hunter orange vest, eye protection, ear plugs, and leaflets from the Audubon Society and the Department. The Department also distributed gunlocks provided by the Project Childsafe program, and firearm bore flags were distributed to participants who brought their own firearms. Participants were also able to earn a Hunter Education flashlight, survival bandana, and NHTD bracelets by participating in shooting activities.

A big thank you to Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Graybill for attending the event and helping give away free raffle prizes.

### **Wolf-Livestock Conflict**

Washington has 19 wolf packs, based on current information. All 19 pack territories overlap livestock, some more than others. To date this calendar year, staff have documented wolf-livestock conflicts in five of the 19 packs, so about a quarter of the packs have been involved in livestock depredations, while three-quarters have not. Below is a summary of the depredations this year:

- One confirmed depredation in the Tucannon pack in mid-April
- One confirmed depredation in between the Stranger and Huckleberry packs in late May
- Two confirmed and one probable depredations in the Smackout pack in September
- One confirmed depredation in the Dirty Shirt pack in early October
- Ten confirmed and five probable depredations in the Profanity Peak pack from early July through early October

The Department authorized lethal removal in the Profanity Peak pack this summer following the protocol for lethal removal. Recall that the protocol was co-developed with a diversity of Department staff and the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG), which is comprised of wolf advocates, livestock producers, and hunters. The protocol was unanimously supported by WAG and Department staff and became effective May 31.

On August 3, the escalation of wolf depredations in the Profanity Peak pack met the criteria in the protocol for consideration of lethal removal of wolves. That day, I authorized partial pack removal. The goal of lethal removal is to stop depredations. Based on information gathered throughout the summer, we estimated the pack size to be 12 members, with seven adults and five pups.

The Department initiated lethal removal to remove a portion of the pack on August 4. The Department lethally removed two wolves on August 5. On August 18, after two weeks without further depredations since the removal of the two wolves, the Department suspended the removal action because it appeared depredations had stopped.

The next day, additional depredations were documented and the Department again authorized lethal removal of wolves, but this time at a level of up to full pack removal, recognizing the challenges of removing an entire pack given the rugged terrain in the area. From August 19 to October 19, the Department lethally removed another five wolves.

The Department suspended the removal action on October 19 because the likelihood of additional depredations was low. The pack size was reduced from twelve to four. We believe the remaining four include one adult female and three juveniles from this year's litter.

Also, by mid-October, the vast majority of livestock had been removed from the federal grazing allotments in the area, where the depredations occurred.

In total, the Department documented ten confirmed and five probable depredations on livestock by wolves. In total, seven wolves were removed.

Throughout the summer, and in the case of the removal in the Profanity Peak pack, the Department was committed to following the protocol. We have worked diligently on improving communication and coordination with local county governments, and while we don't always agree on every aspect, we have had a good, open channel of regular communication or coordination.

This winter, the Department and WAG will be reaching out to the public again to review the protocol for lethal removal. We know the protocol is not perfect, but it was a good start. Now is the time to come together to review what worked and what didn't work, and make improvements to our protocol.

The Department is currently working on a report of the removal action in the Profanity Peak pack, which will be available this month (November).

### **Wolf Advisory Group Update**

The WAG met on September 14-15 in Issaquah. All WAG meetings are open to the public. The September meeting had the largest public attendance to date, with about 80 members of the public present. During the first day of the meeting, the focus was on the situation in the Profanity Peak pack, with an update by the Department and comments from WAG members and the public. On the second day, the Chief Scientist of the Wildlife Program, John Pierce, gave a presentation on the biological status of wolves in Washington. WAG also discussed wolf budget financials, improvements to the compensation process, and wolf outreach and education ideas. The next WAG meeting will likely be in mid-February in Olympia.

# Legislative Affairs

## **Fishing Seasons**

The Department had a particularly tough season-setting process this past year, with poor fisheries forecasts. Staff have been monitoring fisheries and opening fishing wherever possible – and get people out fishing. Coho fishing was opened in the following areas:

- Lake Washington and the Green River
- Skagit and Cascade rivers
- Snohomish River
- Skykomish River
- Wallace River
- Puyallup River
- Western portion of Marine Area 13

In order to open these fisheries, the Department has to be able to provide evidence of improved returns and demonstrate that there will be limited impacts on Endangered Species Act listed species – so these aren't easy decisions to make – but the co-managers have been very cooperative.

## **Washington's Wild Future Initiative**

This fall I have also been out with staff talking to fisherman, hunters, business owners and policy makers in an effort to gather their ideas and priorities for the Wild Future Initiative.

At this point, we have held 14 public meetings, along with dozens of smaller sessions with local groups. Our customers have been helping us shape the proposal – by providing us with feedback in person and online. The proposals have been refined.

- We have reduced the price of the catch record card to \$10.
- We are keeping prices low for youth, seniors and temp licenses to encourage recruitment and retention.
- We have worked in some streamlining of commercial license types to eliminate redundant and unused licenses and make it easier to figure out which license you need for which commercial activity.
- We have also kept prices well under Oregon's to keep them competitive.

Raquel and I have begun meeting with legislators on the license fee package. So far, we are hearing good support for the new opportunities that we have built into the package. We will be finalizing the recreation and commercial bills with final feedback from stakeholders, the Governor's office and the Office of Financial Management in the next few weeks, so we have a final to shop for signatures after the elections on November 8.

# Enforcement Program

## **Staffing**

The Enforcement program is on track to fill approximately nine funded officer vacancies. Conditional offers of employment have been made to four individuals who are now in various stages of the hiring process, or scheduled to attend the Criminal Justice Basic Law Enforcement Academy. The Program is on track to interview candidates for the remaining five (5) positions. The hiring and training process is necessarily intensive, and a number of vacancies are a result of new recruits washing out of the program.

## **Program Realignment**

The Program made shifts at the headquarters level to re-direct a stronger focus on the Aquatic Invasive Species Program (AIS). Lieutenant Anderson has been appointed as program lead for AIS, where he will also be engaging with the Wildlife Program on Hunter Education matters. A Training Sergeant position has been reestablished, where his former duties will be assumed.

## **Blue Lake Project**

Enforcement Program provided law enforcement assistance to the Fish Program during the rehabilitation project at Blue Lake. The project was controversial for a few year-round residents, and in the days leading up to the event, rumors were spreading about a possible protest. One dissenter even contacted the Grant County Sheriff's Office in an effort to stop the project from moving forward. This same person did show up on both days of the rotenone treatment to take video and threaten action by Department of Agriculture, but no serious issues arose.

## **Big Game Poaching**

Officers are working hard during big game hunting seasons and trying to respond to an increase in calls for service. Likely because the proximity of open seasons are good cover for illegal harvests, poaching incidents have increased.

A busy week during the second half of the modern firearm deer season meant 34 calls for service for a single officer in Okanogan County, with 22 charges related to violations. The Officer seized nine unlawfully harvested mule deer (donating eight to charity).

Dozens of examples of pursuing the hard-core poacher have been as typical as this example from last week: a convicted felon was using high-powered spotlights to kill deer at night. Officers tracked his movements over several weeks until they were able to anticipate his movements. Two decoys were set up to capitalize on his patterns. The suspect shot one of them with a rifle as his wife held the spotlight. Both were booked into jail. The vehicle and rifle used in the violations were seized for forfeiture. Officers then served a search warrant on the residence and recovered a deer taken during the closed season, though multiple deer are involved in the case as well as unlawfully purchased duplicate tags.

In an interesting twist, Officers heard a cry for help at 3:00 a.m. while serving the search warrant. A man working on his car had used particleboard for a jack, which resulted in a tire crushing his hand as it gave way. Officers administered aid, but the man was a wanted felon so he received medical treatment in jail.



*A busy week in Okanogan County*

### **Trafficking in Seafood**

Detectives have been working the past two weeks with California Fish and Game Wardens to locate a Washington fish dealer who has been hiding in California to avoid prosecution on a 2014 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife case. The man conspired with three other fish buyers, and at least 25 tribal fishermen, to harvest undersized Dungeness crab and not report the catch to state and tribal harvest managers. Detectives were able to identify at least 60,000 pounds of unreported crab harvested in this scheme. California Wardens have the man located in Los Angeles and Whatcom County has agreed to expand the felony Fish and Wildlife Trafficking warrant extradition to include California. Detectives are making plans to have the man arrested in California, and then extradited back to Washington. Department Detectives will bring the man back from California to stand trial.

Detectives continue to work through a daunting amount of records to determine the extent of the violations involving large- scale catch accounting violations by a fish buyer. Over \$70,000 in assets believed to be connected to criminal activity were originally seized. The suspect has mounted an intensive offense requiring the assistance of the Attorney General's Office to address court motions over the evidence seizures. The Enforcement Program recently hired a forensic accountant to help navigate a massive network of businesses and money transactions.

In a separate case, a fish dealer failed to accurately report over 27,000 pounds of ground fish harvested during a tribal trawl fishery. Additionally, several thousand pounds of overfished stocks of widow and canary rockfish were reported to harvest managers as a less imperiled species. The dealer transported the catch to Oregon for

processing presumably in an effort to conceal the illegal activity. Fish and Wildlife Police Detectives are working in concert with federal NOAA agents to have the case prosecuted.

### **Endangered Species Act (ESA) Salmon Protection**

Salmon are present in many tributaries, with numerous arrests being made for illegal snagging and netting. ESA cases with a major nexus to critical salmon spawning habitat are also being pursued, such as the re-routing of Benson Creek in Okanogan County. A landowner with an excavator completely re-routed the stream and constructed four log dams last year during the peak of the salmon run. A recent jury trial resulted in the defendant being convicted for the hydraulics violation. This was a prime example of the hard work that occurred between the Enforcement and Habitat programs to work collaboratively for a successful prosecution. The defendant was also responsible for posting online threats against the Department.

### **Initiative 1401**

Participating in the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program, the International Visitor Leadership Program, eleven delegates from Africa spent three weeks traveling to various U.S. cities to meet with their professional counterparts to discuss issues related to Wildlife Trafficking. Program objectives included assessing U.S. efforts to deter poaching and trafficking of global wildlife resources; discussing international collaboration at federal and state levels; exploring non-governmental organizations' efforts to promote wildlife protection; and examining the harmful impact of international wildlife trafficking. Deputy Chief Cenci met with the visitors where they were exposed to the Washington State role in combatting a global problem.

The Enforcement Program and Public Affairs is working on the final touches to a web-based outreach webpage in an effort to provide critical information to ensure the public can easily understand their obligations under the new law.

## **Technology and Financial Management / Licensing**

### **Washington Interactive Licensing Database**

The Department is on track for deploying a new Washington Interactive Licensing Database (WILD) with a new vendor, JMT, on December 19, 2016.

This large-scale IT/business project has been divided into a phased approach. This first phase establishes online sales and deploys new Point-of-Sale Terminals to approximately 600 dealers across the state, which contains the majority of the functionality of the current system. A subsequent phase will be completed in February, 2017 which will include modules for the special hunt drawings and new financial reporting tools.

One of the largest and most complex parts of changing any complex IT/ business system is the migration of all the data from the old system to the new database. The Department and JMT's teams are working very well together and a solid plan is in place to ensure all data is migrated when we "cutover" to the new system.

The Security Design review, required by the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of Cyber Security, is in its final stages and the Department expects final sign-off in early November.

An independent third-party consultant has been providing quality assurance over the project. The quality assurance consultant produces a monthly report to ensure the project risks are properly managed. In the past several reviews, the Department has received a 100% rating in the assessment of the IT Project Critical Success Factors.

The Department sent a letter to ACTIVE Networks, LLC to provide a notice of termination and outlined the steps that need to be taken to decommission the current equipment and close out the contract.

The Department will distribute a news release ensuring customers are aware of the transition to the new system as WILD will be temporarily down for maintenance on December 18 while the technical transition occurs to "Go Live" with the new sales platform.

The new system will provide immediate functional upgrades for security and other benefits. Over time, the ongoing programming hours we receive will be used to provide further benefits, such as the ability for Enforcement to check licenses in the field using a mobile device, mobile applications, and selling of commercial licenses within the new WILD system. JMT's fee proposal is lower than our current rate by over one percent, meaning the Department will retain over \$832,000 per year in revenue over the previous contract with ACTIVE Networks.

## Habitat Program

### **Culvert Design and Climate Change**

The Department recently completed a project to explore how climate change data could be considered when designing new or replacement water crossing structures to ensure fish passage through time. Current design guidance does not consider how climate change is expected to affect the timing and amount of water in streams, in spite of the fact that most water crossing structures are expected to have a 50- to 100-year service life. The intent of our project was to provide information to interested project managers and engineers involved with road crossing structures. The use of our report and the data it provides is voluntary.

We teamed with the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington to translate fine-scale projects of the timing and amount of water in streams into bankful width (BFW), the most important parameter used by Department engineers and many others



to size culverts. The results of this analysis are detailed projections throughout the state, which show that by the 2040s nearly half (49.8%) of the state is predicted to have an average percent change in BFW greater than 5%, and 14% of the state is predicted to have a change greater than 10%. Our project also included approaches for helping managers understand how to apply these BFW projections in light of the uncertainty that exists in climate models. The project offers a framework for weighing the risks of not considering future changes against the costs of designing culverts to accommodate likely, but still uncertain, increases in peak flows.

The Department is now working with agency managers to apply these “climate adapted” culvert design guidelines on agency owned lands. We are also working with restoration project proponents in the Chehalis River watershed to use our projections of future flows for the design of new culverts that will replace existing fish passage barriers. Future work, depending on funding availability, will include creating a web interface for these results making it easier for users to access.

## Capitol and Asset Management Program

### **US v. Washington - Culvert Case**

With the recent construction completion of the McKernan Hatchery culvert project, the Department has met their obligation to repair all of their fish passage barriers identified in the *US v. Washington* culvert case ruling by the October 31, 2016 deadline. The original injunction (in 2013) identified 43 fish passage barriers at 23 separate sites in western Washington. Total cost for corrective actions was approximately \$5.7 million.