



Director's Report to the Commission

February 10-11, 2017

Wildlife Program

Trapper Education

The Hunter Education Division collaborated with the Washington State Trapper's Association (WSTA), and recently completed a substantial revision of the Trapper Education student manual, examination, and instructor PowerPoint used for in-person classes. Major elements of the curriculum remain, but much of the information was updated and streamlined.

All first-time Washington trappers, regardless of age, are required to successfully complete Trapper Education training or successfully pass the written examination process through the home study option. The Hunter Education Division assists in coordinating Trapper Education, administers home study course written exams, and certifies successful students, while the WSTA offers in-person trapper education classes on behalf of the Department.

This curriculum update was sorely needed, as the Department manual was outdated, although the WSTA periodically updated the course materials used during in-person classes. The curriculum covers topics such as the history of trapping, furbearer biology and management, ecological principals, trapping seasons and regulations, trapping equipment and techniques, caring for game, trapper safety, responsible trapping and ethics, etc.

From 2009 to 2016, the number of new trappers ranged from 44 to 181. This number has remained relatively high recently, with over 140 new trapper certifications each year since 2011.

Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Spending Freeze

On December 13, 2016, the U.S. Army announced a spending freeze on all Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) projects throughout the nation while they conduct an audit of the program aimed at understanding how the investment has and will benefit military training. The freeze includes funds already awarded to cooperative agreements, impacting the Department and nonprofit partner actions, including Taylor's checkerspot butterfly reintroductions, restoration of south Puget Sound prairie habitats, and protection of important prairie sites. ACUB funds are a significant component of this work, and approximately \$4 million of unspent obligation to South Puget Sound has been frozen. The Department and partners are assessing the impact of the freeze both on the recovery progress being made and to staff working on these projects in order to

identify short-term solutions. The Army has indicated the freeze will last until July 2017, although many assume a longer duration while new oversight and policies are developed. The gap in support may undermine investments and progress made in conservation infrastructure, such as captive rearing programs for Taylor's checkerspot, the prescribed fire program, native plant seed nurseries, and more.

New Lands Division Manager

Cynthia Wilkerson was been selected as the new Wildlife Program Lands Division Manager. She started in her new position on January 16 and will take advantage of the mentorship and cross-training that Clay Sprague can provide before he retires in late February.

Enforcement Program

Increasing Outreach

In support of the Wild Future Initiative, and in an effort to provide the best service possible, the Law Enforcement Program has made a significant investment in a new platform that invites participation, encourages ideas, ensures feedback, and results in action. To facilitate this, Chief Anderson approved the hiring of a Community Outreach Liaison housed within the Department's Law Enforcement Program. Her name is Becky McRoberts. Becky will wear many hats, but her main mission is to connect with communities through the formation of a Shared Values Alliance (SVA). The goal of this Alliance is to establish a network of resources from which to mobilize grassroots action related to awareness, advocacy, and education, ultimately ensuring that the program and agency is in step with the changing public and resource based industries' values and needs. In other words, we are going to be proactive in soliciting input, identifying projects, and getting something done. Leading this charge will be Becky, who has worked in both agriculture and natural resource positions in Oregon, California, and Michigan.

Big Game Poaching

With the exception of a few special hunts, the regulated big game hunting season is over for the year. However, poaching is a 365-day-a-year event, and officers are investigating plenty of it across the state. Many cases involve the hardcore offender and touch on other criminal offenses.

As an example, an Enforcement Officer finished an investigation that started with a tip about a possible poached elk. It first led to a search warrant related to a Facebook post, followed by a search of the suspect's residence. Three convicted felons were found to be in possession of firearms (10 firearms total were seized), a fraudulent birth certificate out of Michigan, a fraudulent driver's license out of Washington, fraudulent credit cards, mail, and land/title/escrow paperwork. Identity theft and financial crimes were added to the poaching investigation.

Wildlife Conflict

Officers have been resolving a number of human-wildlife conflicts. Most responses this past month have involved cougar depredations on livestock and pets. Some wayward animals have also been reunited with their natural habitats, like this 600-pound California sea lion. The sea lion got lost in a shipyard where it eventually decided to make the most of a stressful situation and catch some rare winter sunrays. With considerable help from the Island County Sheriff's Office and Fire Department, Officer Downes, Stout and Kimball safely herded the sea lion back to saltwater using pallets from the shipyard.



Poaching Banks Lake

Winter is whitefish season on Banks Lake and the concentrations of spawning fish are attracting a great deal of attention from both poachers and officers braving frigid temperatures to catch them. Officers have noted violations ranging from snagging and exceeding limits to operating boats with no navigational lights, and many other vessel safety violations. Some of the worst violations involved two-tripping. In other words, anglers would hide fish in their vehicles, then motor back out on the lake in a boat to catch another limit. One group officers were watching was tipped off that the "Game Wardens" might be out in the area, so they steered their vessel clear across the lake where they stashed over 30 fish and a gillnet. The group was cited for exceeding bag limits, failure to produce catch for inspection, using illegal methods, and vessel safety violations.

In another case, an officer observed two males return to fishing after hiding the first two limits of whitefish in their truck. They stayed out until 4 a.m. catching more fish. Upon contacting them at the dock, both claimed to have the previous nights' limit and part of that mornings limit with them in the boat (they had 44 fish in the boat – the daily limit is 15 per person). They denied possessing any more fish, but eventually both admitted to two additional bag limits in their vehicle. Their fishing rods were seized for forfeiture and most of the fish were seized. Citations for over limit and possession of snagged fish were issued accordingly.



Pound Pups Sniff Out Trafficked Wildlife

Detective Wendt concluded the two-week project with Working Dogs for Conservation (WD4C). This project focused on the question “How effective are K9s at searching cargo containers in a port environment?” The main location was the Port of Tacoma. Other locations used were Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and Customs and Border Protection container exam stations. The target odor used was shark fin, and NOAA supplied about 500 pounds of dried fin.

The team completed a total of 79 problems. Each problem had different variables and three K9s were worked on each problem. The shark fin was broken up into 27 different training samples, which varied by volume and packaging type (cardboard, plastic bags, metal container wrapped in plastic, etc.). The variables in the problems included length of time training sample was in the container, location within the container, how the shark fin was packaged, standard container versus reefer container, “burping” the container (wiggling the door open as the K9 sniffed around the seal), and leaving the container door cracked while the K9 searched. WD4C will be analyzing the data collected and writing a paper. No matter the specific outcome of the data, it is obvious that using a K9 to search numerous cargo containers is much more efficient than without a K9 and would result in being able to search a higher volume of containers and result in more “finds” than without using a K9. This project will have influence on the Department’s future K9 program and numerous programs that WD4C assists with in many other countries. King 5 News did a short piece on the project that highlighted both WD4C and the Department. Our thanks to U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Port of Tacoma Police for their support and assistance!

Public Affairs

Website Redesign Project

The Department’s website redesign project has officially begun. Last week the final hurdle was cleared in the project initiation phase when the state Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) approved the project budget and timetable, which is required by law for technology projects of this type.

We now have all of the project groundwork in place and have signed a contract with a vendor (Anthro-Tech of Olympia) to help with the Department’s largest communication project since the website was developed about 20 years ago.

As most of the commissioners know, the current website is about ten years old, and needs a significant upgrade to keep pace with current technology, including website security. For example, more than half of our current website visitors are using smart phones or other mobile devices, but the current website displays poorly on those devices. Likewise, the current site does not adequately serve people with visual disabilities or impairments.

For those reasons, the most important goals of the project are to:

- **Reorganize our content** from the user's perspective, to make it easier for the public to find information,
- **Ensure that the website is fully functional** regardless of whether people are using desktop computers in their homes or smart phones in the field, and
- **Comply with relevant state and federal requirements** for IT security and for accessibility for people with disabilities.

Deputy Director Joe Stohr is the project's executive sponsor, and Public Affairs director Bruce Botka is the sponsor.

Technology and Financial Management / Licensing

WILD Project Update

The deployment of the first phase of the new Washington Interactive Licensing Database (WILD) System took place on December 18, 2016. A firm in Maryland called JMT Technology Group built the new system.

This initial phase, which represented the greatest amount of work and included the greatest amount of risk, established online sales and deployed new Point-of-Sale Terminals to approximately 600 dealers across the state. This phase included the development of the core functionality of the system that has been used for the previous ten years, such as creating a customer profile, conducting license sales, collecting harvest reports, and managing financial data; only on a much more secure platform that is more user-friendly and it will be easier to make subsequent enhancements in the future.

Since the release of the system, the Sales and Marketing team in the Licensing Division has assisted license dealers throughout the state with completing the installation of their new terminals. For the first day of sales on the new system, there were approximately 300 of our 585 partner retail stores set up to sell licenses. We currently have all but less than 20 stores set up with the new equipment.

The customer service teams in Licensing, Regional Offices, and throughout the resource programs have done a great job working with customers to get through any issues with accessing the new system. Perhaps the primary concern we are hearing from customers is the steps it takes to login to the system, especially for a first-time user. The additional login prompts were necessitated by an OCIO security review of the development of the new WILD system and is necessary to protect the Department's customer data. This has generated additional calls, and customer service teams have been busy assisting customers to access their profile, report harvest, or purchase license privileges. Once customers have accessed the system initially, subsequent access will be simpler. The Licensing Division is staffing up with seasonal help in anticipation of a busy spring workload during the special hunt permit process.

Two significant events had prompted a lot of use in the new system, since the release. First, in mid-January, the Licensing Division made the 2017-2018 license year products available for sale. Second, the deadline for hunters to report their harvest from the 2016-17 hunting year was on January 31. The deadline was extended another day to correct a calendar date issue in the system, which also provided an additional day for individuals to report.

The Business Technical unit in Licensing has worked with JMT to complete three full system releases that addressed approximately 40 tickets (i.e., fixing minor bugs or system enhancements) in a single release. These releases have improved the overall experience for users and fixed a significant number of minor issues reported since deployment. The Licensing Division is working with JMT on a daily basis to update the system to enhance the customer experience.

We are now in the middle of Phase 2 of the project, which will round out the functionality of the old system, but on the new platform. The core module for Phase 2 is the special hunt choice submittal and draw tool. JMT and the Department have been meeting to capture all necessary requirements, and WILD will have the ability for customers to submit the hunt choice for spring bear available by February 15. The other aspects of this phase include a tool for dealers to request licensing inventory (e.g., license paper, regulation pamphlets, etc.) and HTML content management for the Fishhunt site.

We are also going to conduct a secondary deployment of terminals to dealers that can support additional point-of-sale devices as well as on-board new dealers. The Department had temporarily paused setting up new dealers while we navigated the transition to the new system.

Fish Program

Washington Commercial Fish Ticket Database Deployment

The Fish Program has deployed the new Washington commercial fish tickets database. The new design significantly stabilizes and modernizes the fish ticket portion of the aging LiFT commercial license and fish ticket database while leaving the licensing portion of LiFT untouched for the time being. Improvements in the new system include the ability to accept electronic fish tickets from coastal and other fisheries, a web-based interface, enhanced error trapping, and migration to modern technology and design structures. The new application was developed using NOAA Fisheries Information Systems (FIS) grant funding.

Capitol and Asset Management Program

Tokul Creek Hatchery – Fish Passage and Weir Restoration Project

The Fish Passage and Weir Restoration project at the Tokul Creek Hatchery was recently completed. The project replaced a 67-year-old dam and fish ladder that was structurally deficient and in danger of collapsing. The Tokul Creek Hatchery currently supports a valuable winter-run steelhead recreational fishery within the Snohomish

basin. The existing fish ladder and dam created a nearly impassable route to migrating adult salmonids restricting access to valuable spawning and rearing habitat upstream. The dam diverted water from Tokul Creek to support the hatchery operation.

The objective of this project was to provide fish passage past the Tokul Creek Fish Hatchery intake dam, provide additional prime habitat for fish rearing, and provide structural improvements to the dam. The project consisted of: repairing the intake, replacing the dam, and constructing a new fish ladder. There were features to minimize intake maintenance which are rotating belt screens to remove fine debris from entering the intake and a small adjustable weir near the intake to flush sediment pass the intake when lowered pneumatically. The dam apron is longer than existing to eliminate undermining of the foundation. There is a fish trap lift in the ladder to capture returning fish for spawning.

The project was managed by the Capital and Asset Management Program, designed by KPFF Consulting Engineers, and constructed by the Natt McDougall Company. The project was started on June 1, 2016 and completed on February 1, 2017. The total contract cost was \$3.2 million.

Before



After



Fish ladder

