



Director's Report to the Commission

April 14-15, 2017

Wildlife Program

Hunter Education Division

On March 25, the Director's Office and Hunter Education Division recognized Mr. Howard Gardner for his 60 years of teaching hunter education. He is the longest serving volunteer instructor, and the only active instructor to have been with the program since its inception. Mr. Gardner was president of the Richland Rod and Gun Club in 1957, which was the year hunter education became required in Washington State. Howard taught and led the club's membership to begin teaching new hunters how to be safe, legal, and ethical in the outdoors. Mr. Gardner's efforts have been instrumental in helping dramatically reduce hunting incidents, as well as growing and shaping the Hunter Education Program into what it is today. Howard recently turned 88 years old and is still actively teaching hunter education. The Department presented him with a letter from the Director and a beautiful bronze statue of a mule deer, his favorite wild game pursuit. We sincerely thank Howard Gardner for his enormous contributions.

The Hunter Education Division attended the 2017 National Archery in the Schools Program at Central Washington University. The division provides grant funds to the Washington State Archery Association, which purchases archery equipment and trains school teachers to teach target shooting to elementary through high school students. This year, approximately 850 students competed at the state championship at CWU, as well as satellite locations. This also marks the first year Washington incorporated the wildlife 3D Challenge component into the championship. Schools have not had time to implement this into their programs, but approximately 150 students competed in the event. Offering 3D shooting competitions is thought of as an important element in recruiting youth hunters. The Washington State Archery Association is an incredibly dedicated group of people, and the state would not have a program, and certainly not one so successful and expanding, without them.

Wildlife Diversity Division

Fisher recovery continues at full speed in Washington. The Department is partnering with the National Park Service and Conservation Northwest, and our active fisher reintroductions into the Cascade Mountains continue to demonstrate success. This past winter, 43 fishers were brought from British Columbia to the southern Cascades to join the 27 released the previous winter. Each animal is implanted with a radio-transmitter and is currently being monitored via aerial and ground telemetry. The

animals are known to occur throughout much of the southern Cascade Range. We are eager to document denning, which will occur in April/May. With 70 animals total released in the south Cascades, our plans next winter are to begin releases in the north Cascades. Our reintroduction effort is complemented with protections for both fishers and private forest landowners through Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs). A CCAA is a voluntary agreement whereby landowners agree to provide benefits to fisher on their lands and, in return, they would not be held to additional conservation measures should the species become federally listed in the future. There are 45 forest landowners enrolled in the program, providing fisher protections on nearly 3 million acres.

Wolf Policy

The Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) and Department staff met March 29-30, 2017, in Olympia to develop a recommendation for the Department on a revised wolf-livestock interaction protocol. WAG and Department staff co-developed a protocol in May 2016, which the Department operated under during the last grazing season. The value was to operate under the 2016 protocol for a single grazing season, then incorporate lessons learned into a revised, multi-year protocol.

The revised protocol reflects a wide range of values and extensive participation from several different communities, including livestock producers, environmentalists, and hunters. It also reflects extensive public input and involvement from two WAG meetings, two Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings, and numerous one-on-one meetings between staff and members of the public.

WAG and staff had sufficient consensus supporting the recommendation for the revised protocol, which the Department has accepted for managing wolf-livestock interactions. The revised protocol is consistent with the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. The final written wolf-livestock interactions protocol will be available in the coming weeks.

Enforcement Progam

Clam Overharvest

An officer observed a group of three shellfish harvesters near Penrose Point State Park. As two people dug, the third was running the clams to a vehicle and stashing them in the trunk. When the officer contacted the group, they initially refused to give up the clams hidden in the trunk of the car. After collecting all of the clams, the officer determined they had nearly 700 clams. The suspects were cited for first degree over limit and failing to submit. The clams were seized.



Region 4 officers swept Marine Area 7 the first weekend of April and collected over 50 derelict crab pots that were still fishing. The majority of the pots were identified as tribal. Contact was made with the owners so they could recover them.

Hydraulic Project Approval Violation

Sergeant Christensen from Region 2 conducted Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) checks on Palmer Lake in Okanogan County and discovered two major violations that were occurring. He also discovered that no HPA permits had been issued for the projects. The lot owners had completely removed all lakeside vegetation to improve the view and then hardened the bank. Documentation and photographs were obtained for a possible criminal prosecution. The officer also contacted the local habitat biologist along with the County Planning Department for assistance.



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*Violation 1
Unpermitted work to construct a newly hardened bank*

*Violation 2
Two lots stripped of all vegetation and the construction of hardened rockwork within the ordinary high water line*



Off-Road Vehicle Damage to Wildlife Areas

Every year officers from Region 2 focus quite a bit of patrol efforts on the seasonal area closure and closed Green DOT roads located in the Colockum Wildlife Area. The closures are designed to protect thawing roads and wintering elk herds. Every year the wildlife area experiences a lot of illegal encroachment by off-road vehicles users wanting to try their skills at mudding. This results in major damage to the landscape.

On one recent patrol, officers found several roads torn up from illegal mudding. Checking the road system officers found an overturned truck in the Lilly Lake parking lot located in the Stemilt Basin. The driver of the vehicle had driven around a locked gate and had been doing serious damage to the parking lot when they flipped the vehicle over onto its side. Officers were able to contact the registered owner, who will be cited for numerous violations.



Vehicle that had flipped over in the WDFW parking lot at Lilly Lake after causing serious damage

Another vehicle found abandoned after getting stuck in the Colockum Wildlife Area



Undersized Crab

Officers were monitoring commercial off-loads of crab at Westport recently when one officer observed what appeared to be a large amount of undersized crab being unloaded from one vessel. Throughout the day the officers seized over 640 pounds of undersized Dungeness crab from two vessels. One vessel had 13 percent of his load made up of undersize crab (over 500 pounds). The skipper and crew of both vessels were cited.



Marketplace Inspection

Officers conducted a marketplace inspection at a grocery store in Seattle. There, officers found a

large self-service, live-well tank full of manila clams, but with no Department of Health certification tags. Invoices showed that some of the clams had been purchased on March 9, but they had been mixed with older batches. Also very concerning, officers found many of the clams were dead, causing serious concerns about potential health-related illnesses. Approximately 119 pounds of clams were seized for destruction. Officers also found several fish labeling violations where the owners had failed to identify the species of salmon being offered to consumers.

Staffing

The Enforcement Program currently has seven empty, funded officer positions. We are planning on another round of testing to begin in late April. There are also several officers planning to retire this year.

Improving Service

Officer Vincent contacted a homeless Vietnam veteran on Department of Natural Resources property that was without food or gas. The man was advised he could not squat on the land, and was told he would have to move within the posted timeframes. The officer followed up a few days later and found the man was still there. He advised the man to gather his belongings, and the officer would follow him down to a gas station. Once there Officer Vincent purchased fuel for the man's vehicle using his personal credit card and bought him a meal. The owners of the gas station also helped by providing some dog food for his puppy. The man was very thankful and advised the officer this was going above and beyond the call of duty. The officer also followed up with Veterans Affairs in an effort to get the man some additional help.

Training Video

Captain Myers, Sergeant Olson, Officer Kim, and Danny Garrett from the Fish Program in Region 4 conducted both a seafood market inspection and a cold storage inspection to film a training video. The video will be added to the Department's website to help commercial businesses understand Washington State law when dealing in commercial fish and shellfish. The Enforcement Program has been developing the training videos that will eventually fold into the Department's new website. The videos are designed to assist seafood buyers and sellers. Currently, there is no place for commercial dealers to go to find out what is required to conduct business. The commercial industry is complex, and a difficult landscape to navigate. There are also different regulatory agencies that can lead to confusion, non-compliance and even a lack of support. The program recently embarked on a multi-phase project to build content for businesses, beginning with seafood sellers and buyers. The build-out is underway and, when completed, will include a summary of information related to each sector in the industry, links to laws and regulations, portals to other regulatory agencies and training videos.



Capitol and Asset Management Program

Soos Creek Hatchery Renovation Project

Bids opened for the construction contract on March 16 and we received bids from seven contractors. The apparent low bid was from Prospect Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$15 million...the engineer's estimate is \$16.8 million. We anticipate contract award during the week of April 10. The project will essentially replace an aging facility originally built in 1901 by constructing new hatchery facilities out of the floodplain to reduce damage due to flooding and improve staff safety. The hatchery produces annually 4.5 million Chinook and 1.2 million coho salmon, supporting recreation and commercial fisheries in the Green River, Puget Sound and Pacific Ocean.