A Perspective on Governance and Relevancy for the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

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What is Governance?

The practices and processes that determine how decisions are made and implemented, and how responsibilities are exercised.
Public Trust Thinking &
The Public Trust Doctrine

- Philosophy
- Codified and Case Law
Public Trust Management

Three key elements

Assets

Trust Administrators

Beneficiaries
Fish & Wildlife Trust Administrators

Roles & Responsibilities

**Trustees**  
(Elected/Appointed Officials)

- Fiduciary duty to the people
- High level policy decision-makers
- Allocate benefits of the trust
- Accountable to the people

**Trust Managers**  
(WDFW Professional Staff)

- Ministerial/executive duties
- Recommend, but do not decide, policy
- Monitor resources and manage programs
- Accountable to trustees
Evolution of Conservation

Protection/Preservation
(Late 1800s – 1930s)

Focused on Regulation and Law Enforcement
Evolution of Conservation

Scientific Management
(1940s – 1970s)

Focused on Propagation & Restoration
Evolution of Conservation

Expanding Agency Programs

(1970s – Today)
Evolution of Conservation

Expanding Stakeholder Involvement
(1970s – Today)
Evolution of Conservation

Declining Trust in Government

Source: Pew Research Center
Evolution of Conservation

Stable or Declining License Sales

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Demographic Changes

- Increasing population
- Aging population
- Increasing minorities
- Increasing cultural diversity
Socio-economic Changes

- Increased urbanization
- Service v. production economy
- Technological innovation
- Detachment from nature
Is Conservation Relevant?

• Trend in funding and priorities for federal agencies
• Lack of state general fund support
• Few states with alternative funding – MO, AR, VA, MN
• Legislators’ focus on partisan/fiscal/ideological issues
• Federal land transfer movement
• Lack of citizen recognition of F&W agency
How we think of conservation

Wildlife population management and control

Protection of sensitive species and biodiversity

Hunting and fishing participation

Sustained Yield

Regulation

Habitat management
How others think of conservation

Air quality
Water quality and quantity
Flood retention
Ground water recharge
Climate regulation
Caring about wildlife

Resiliency
Public health
Outdoor recreation
Aesthetics / Open space
Physical and mental well-being
How to Respond?

Resist and retrench or reform and revive?
What Needs to Change?

• Narrow focus → broader perspective
• Static priorities → adaptable to meet modern challenges
• Declining relevance → valued and supported
What Should NOT Change?

None left out

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None left behind
What Should Guide Change?

Public Trust Thinking

Good Governance

Wildlife Governance Principles
Public Trust Thinking

- Fish & Wildlife resources are an endowment
- Fish & Wildlife resources are not suited to private ownership
- All citizens deserve fair consideration
- Current decisions should avoid foreclosing future options
- Trust administrators must be transparent
- Citizens can hold trustees accountable

Source: Hare & Blossey 2016
Good Governance

- Responsive to the public
- Participatory decision-making
- Transparent decision-making
- Equitable and inclusive
- Consensus-oriented decisions
- Accountable to public
- Effective and efficient use of public resources

Source: Weiss 2000
Wildlife Governance Principles

Normative, aspirational statements developed to:

- Improve practices, procedures and programs.
- Increase quality & quantity of stakeholder engagement.
- Increase diversity of input.
- Increase adaptability and relevance.
Wildlife Governance Principles

Designed to support:

• Strategic thinking & organizational adaptability.
• Evidence-based and broadly-informed decision-making.
• Inclusivity and diversity.
• Transparency and accountability.
• Capacity for conservation.
Wildlife Governance...

• Will be adaptable and responsive to citizens’ current needs and interests, while also being forward-looking to conserve options of future generations.

• Will seek and incorporate multiple and diverse perspectives.

• Will apply social and ecological science, citizens’ knowledge, and trust administrators’ judgment.

• Will produce multiple, sustainable benefits for all beneficiaries.
Wildlife Governance...

- Will ensure that trust administrators are responsible for maintaining trust resources and allocating benefits from the trust.
- Will be publicly accessible and transparent.
- Wildlife governance will ensure that trust administrators are publicly accountable.
- Will include means for citizens to become informed and engaged in decision making.
Wildlife Governance...

• Will include opportunities for trust administrators to meet their obligations in partnerships with non-governmental entities.

• Will facilitate collaboration and coordination across ecological, jurisdictional and ownership boundaries.
From Principles to Practices

**Principles** – individual normative statements

**Themes** – common attributes of principles

**Traits** – characteristics an agency possesses

**Practices** - behaviors or actions performed by an agency that support or impede the WGPs
From Principles to Practices

Wildlife governance will be adaptable and responsive to citizens’ current needs and interests, while also being forward-looking to conserve options of future generations.

Strategic Thinking & Organizational Adaptability

Proactive

Using strategic planning tools to set realistic goals

Reactive
Wildlife governance will apply social and ecological science, citizens’ knowledge, and trust administrators’ judgment.

Evidence-based and broadly informed decision-making

Decisions informed by facts

Decisions unduly influenced by politics

Informing decisions with data and supportive evidence
Wildlife governance will include opportunities for trust administrators to meet their obligations in partnerships with non-governmental entities.

Partnering with other agencies/NGOs to increase capacity

Capacity for Conservation

Collaborative/Cooperative

Isolated and Uncooperative
Where to Start?

On-line assessment of:
- 32 Traits
- 66 Practices
“Your proposal is innovative. Unfortunately, we won't be able to use it because we've never tried something like this before.”
Conservation’s Path Forward

Sustainable Funding

Increased Public Engagement and Political Support

Awareness of the Changing World

Focus on Quality of Life, Economic and Public Health Benefits

Incorporate Additional Social Factors into Agency Decisions

Define the Relevancy of Conservation to the Public on Their Terms

Adapt Agency Structure, Programs, and Decision-making

Public Trust & Good Governance
Thank You