



Minutes

Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission
Web Conference
Friday, February 14, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Attendance:

Commissioner:
Barbara Baker, Chair
Lorna Smith
Woody Myers
James Anderson
John Lehmkuhl
Steve Parker
Melanie Rowland

Department Staff:
Kelly Susewind, Director
Amy Windrope, Deputy Director
Joe Panesko, AGO
Julie Watson
Matthew Trendera
Charlene Hurst
Tom McBride
Margen Carlson
Craig Burley
Julie Peterson

Commission Staff:
Jamie Caldwell

1. Call to Order

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:00am. ([Begins at 0:01 mark](#))

Commissioner's Discussion

Chair Baker updated that she spent some time outside of the country recently and was getting back into the swing of everything with all the recent changes. ([Begins at 2:28 mark](#))

Commissioner Parker Commented that he appreciated being able to join from home instead of from Olympia due to the travel conditions. ([Begins at 3:01 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson updated that he was out for a few weeks and agreed with what the Chair echoed about getting back into the swing of things and tackling the work ahead of them. ([Begins at 3:29 mark](#))

Chair Baker commented that the Commission planned to do a few things in response to the final draft of the Ruckelshaus report. She noted that the Commission was planning on scheduling a one-day retreat so they can discuss the report in-depth and discuss what they can do better, and to discuss their mandate, and what they plan to do. She noted an executive committee meeting was scheduled for the following week to further discuss that planning. Secondly, the folks who wrote the report have offered to come and speak with the Commission and will likely be adding that to the March agenda. ([Begins at 4:39 mark](#))

Meeting Minute Approval:

Chair Baker noted that there were minutes for the December 12-14, 2024 hybrid meeting and minutes for the January 10, 2025 webinar. ([Begins at 6:55 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson moved to approved the December 2024 meeting minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 7:25 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith moved to approve the January 2025 webinar meeting minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Lehmkuhl. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 7:52 mark](#))

Committee Meeting Updates:

Chair Baker noted that there's only been one committee meeting since the last Commission meeting and that was Big Tent, so she turned it over to Commissioner Lehmkuhl to give the full update. He noted they had a closed-door meeting on February 10th to discuss how to move forward with the Conservation Policy. For the time being, the plan is to discuss the policy with the Tribes and suspend it at the Department level for the time being, until those discussions have concluded. He also commented that there was a discussion about how to move forward with the report from the Ruckelshaus center. He noted that the recommendations were compiled and now they needed to decide who was responsible for making the recommended adjustments. This is what the proposed framework is to begin the discussion on the recommendations the Commission can actually act on. ([Begins 8:47 mark](#))

Director Susewind noted that there have been discussions at the staff level about how to work with the Tribes. Firstly, they'll be working with the Tribes that have requested consultation on the policy to make sure that obligation is satisfied. Secondly, staff wanted to start working out what the right venues are to start having conversations at the department level with the Tribes about how to talk amongst each other, how they'd like to see things move forward, and then staff would come back to the committee with some recommendations, but that there wasn't a timeframe for that, as of yet. Chair Baker thanked the Director for the synopsis and asked the Commission if there was any objections to this approach, and there was none. ([Begins at 19:25 mark](#))

2. Open Public Input

Please see the attached list of commenters. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 21:30 mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 1:20:04 mark.

3. Director's Report

Director Susewind reported out on several meetings. He noted Margen Carlson is still working on the Net Environmental Game Proviso that they had from last year. There have been several meetings on the topic and he felt that the department is going to be in a good position to return a report to the legislature on that topic and he plans to schedule a briefing for the Commission as well. He went on to report that there have been multiple meetings with the Tribes on various issues. The last one was Skykomish. He's hopeful there will be a recreational fishery on the Skykomish River this year and the meetings with the Tribes has been going well. He noted there have been lots of meetings with individual legislators asking about various issues, mostly educational type things. The department continues to work with LNI on the department's appeal of the citations that were issued. It's been moved to the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals, so it's working it's way through the process.

He recently had a really good meeting with NRCS. They have great tools, amenities, and access to farm bill money, that is some of the good bill money out there for restoration. He went over various ways they could assist and how the funds could potentially be allocated. There was also a recent meeting with the safety expert that was hired, called Rizikon. The external third party was hired to help guide the department as a culture of safety within the department. He's optimistic that the department will shift from a reactive interaction with LNI to a proactive one. He went on to say that there is a safety standup scheduled February 24th-28th. This is being offered to all staff to help get safety issues/concerns resolved and to ensure that safety is first and foremost on staff members minds.

North of Falcon meetings are going to begin soon, and was pretty sure the kickoff meeting is scheduled for February 28th.

For a legislative update, the enforcement bill 1325 was sponsored by Legislator Goodman and has moved out of committee and onto rule. The other agency request was for the personalized license plates to change fees from \$42 to \$52. The money will be directed towards management of non-game

species. There was a bit of a struggle to find a sponsor, and the request was ultimately rolled into bill 5444, an already existing bill dealing with specialty license plates, and this gets everything all in one place. That bill has a lot of support and was sponsored by Legislator Cortez. It recently had a hearing in transportation and he's pretty sure there's a follow up one approaching as well. For the Governance Bills, 1685 would make WDFW a cabinet agency, and 1930 that re-establishes how the Commission is selected. Both bills are up for a hearing on February 19th. Bill 5728 was another bill that contained an alternative method for selecting Commissioners and he didn't believe that one was scheduled for a hearing at this time. Bill 1311, that deals with the listing status for Gray Wolves, is scheduled for an executive session on February 21st and had a committee meeting this past week. There is a funding bill that has been proposed and is providing funding to the Northeast for Ferry and Stevens County Sheriffs and is moving along well. There's a hearing today for bill 1825 on Grizzly management. There was a bill that would change the fee for discovery passes and passed through an executive session and is moving along well. There is a fee bill (5583) out there for the WDFW recreational fees. That wasn't an agency request and it's going directly to Ways and Means for a hearing.

For rulemaking petitions, there are two petitions pending a decision on for Spring Bear. One decision is due at the end of March and the other at the end of April. There was a petition for fishing on the Stillaguamish River and that was withdrawn. All other decisions rendered on the rulemaking petitions have been denials. One was for Spring Black Bear that was similar to a previous petition. There was another requesting the elimination of the 3-point requirement in some areas for Mule Deer. Another was a request for a stand-alone crossbow season. There was another for excluding guides on the Sockeye and Skagit Rivers as well as expanding the area where fishing is allowed on both.

He went on to update that there was a question about Chronic Wasting Disease, and noted that rulemaking is being done through the agency and that the Commissioners would receive the information about important dates for that rulemaking topic.

He noted that he's had some questions about the Colville negotiations. Those discussions have been started with some of the Tribal members. The task is to renew the 1998 memorandum of understanding and manner of memorandum agreement. There are several other agreements that reference that one in particular. He's been in one meeting with the Tribe, is pretty sure that a couple of the regional directors have had more. There is a meeting in early March to get everyone together with a list of issues they believe need to be addressed, including issues that overlap into those other agreements. A plan/schedule will follow that meeting.

His last update was that the Habitat Program Director, Chris Conklin, has returned to the office after some recent health issues and that it was great to have him back. 20441 ([Begins at 1:36:25 mark](#))

4. Commercial Whale Watching Rulemaking - Decision

Staff requested a decision from the Commission on the Commercial Whale Watching Rulemaking. ([Begins at 2:13:49 mark](#))

Commissioner Rowland moved to adopt the Commercial Whale Watching Regulations as presented by staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Parker. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 2:52:31 mark](#))

5. Land Transaction – Briefing, Public Comment, Decision

Staff briefed the Commission and requested a decision on approval of four land transactions for acquisition and one land use agreement. There was no one signed up for public comment on this topic. ([Begins at 2:55:52 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith moved to approve all the proposals before the Commission as presented by staff, except for the Sekiu marina proposal and it was seconded by Commissioner Anderson. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 3:26:22 mark](#))

Commissioner Lehmkuhl moved to approve the purchase of the Sekiu marina as presented by staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Anderson. The Commission voted 6-1 (Commissioner Rowland nay); motion carried. ([Begins at 3:27:31 mark](#))

6. Blue Sheet: Columbia River Fisheries - Briefing

Staff presented an overview of the Columbia River Compact, implementation of the 2022 Columbia River gillnet buyback budget proviso, and fisheries monitoring efforts. ([Begins at 0:20 mark](#))

7. Policy C-3630: Columbia River Salmon Management Annual Review – Briefing, Decision

Staff provided an annual review of the 2024 calendar year for policy C-3630, that guides salmon management in the Columbia River, and requested a decision on the recommendation to delegate to the WDFW Director. ([Begins at 1:22:49 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith moved to approve Director delegation for the DFW Director to work with the ODFW Director to achieve concurrent fishing regulations, which may require the Director to vary from policy, in jointly managed the waters of the Columbia River for 2025 and it was seconded by Commissioner Parker. The Commission voted unanimously; motion carried. ([Begins at 2:20:29 mark](#))

8. 2023-2025 Biodiversity Update – Briefing

The WDFW Conservation Director provided the Commission with an overview of the Department's 2023-2025 BN Biodiversity Funding and highlighted some early results and accomplishments. ([Begins at 2:23:03 mark](#))

9. Meeting Debrief and Future Meeting Planning

Deputy Director Windrope covered the debrief of meeting items listed below. ([Begins at 3:16:00 mark](#))

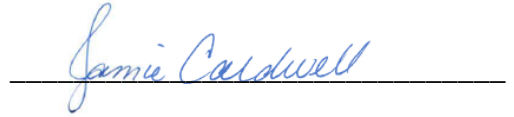
- Call to Order: Approved moving forward the Big Tent recommendation and staff will come back with recommendations on how to engage Tribes in broader conversations
- Open Public Input: Post an Organizational Chart online for public access
- Director's Report: No action
- Commercial Whale Watching Rulemaking: Approved
- Land Transactions: Approved
- Columbia River Fisheries Blue Sheet: No action
- Columbia River Salmon Management Annual Review: Authority delegated to the WDFW Director to negotiate the Columbia River Fisheries with Oregon
- Biodiversity Update: Schedule SWAP briefing

Election of Officers: Leadership position elections will not be on the March agenda, but it will be considered again at the end of that agenda.

Committee Compositions: Commissioner Lehmkuhl has requested to vacate the Habitat Committee and join the Fish Committee. Chair Baker discussed it with Commissioner Anderson, who was fine with that change. Chair Baker requested the Commission give consensus to appoint Commissioner Lehmkuhl to the Fish Committee and there was no opposition. The Habitat Committee will be put on hiatus until further notice. The Executive Committee is composed of the two longest serving members of the Commission, the Chair, and the Vice Chair. Since there isn't a Vice Chair at the moment, the Executive Committee is comprised of Commissioners Baker, Anderson, and Smith.

The Commissioners discussed scheduling their retreat and decided to do so after the new Commissioners are announced. They also discussed speaking with the Ruckelshaus center staff, and it was decided to invite them to the March meeting to engage in dialogue with the full Commission.

Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 5:26pm



Jamie Caldwell, Executive Assistant

Agenda Item #2 – Open Public Input

1. Dane Czarnecki
2. Kelsey Ross
3. Heath Heikkila
4. Nello Picinich
5. Rachel
6. Jeff Holbrook
7. Chris Hyland
8. Robert Sudar
9. Patricia Arnold
10. Kevin Dickey
11. Greg King
12. Ryan Garrett
13. Don McBride
14. Corey Maxwell
15. Jerry Lowdermilk
16. Dale Magart
17. Liz Hamilton
18. Jonathan Grudin
19. Ron Garner
20. Gabriel
21. Jim Coleman
22. Shari Tarantino