

1996-97

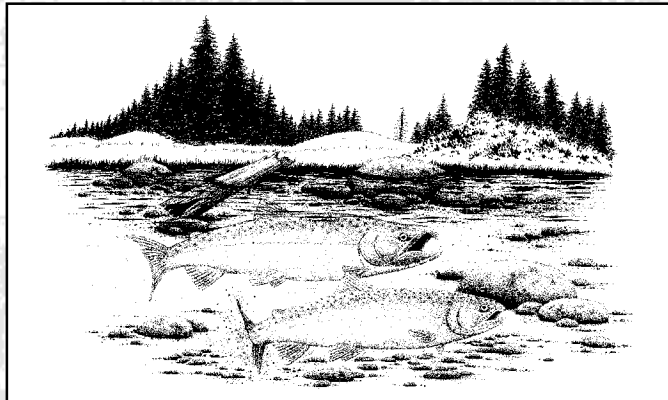
Department of Fish and Wildlife

Annual Report

**Mission**

Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife

Fish and Wildlife Commission Message



The past year was busy and productive as Department of Fish and Wildlife employees showed their resourcefulness and dedication in a series of initiatives aimed at protecting vulnerable fish and wildlife while providing new recreational opportunities for hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers.

Initiatives included expanded environmental education and volunteer programs; a training program for women learning how to fish and hunt; a new lands restoration effort aimed at preserving and restoring valuable fish and wildlife habitat; deployment of more employees to field offices for better public service and development of an agency website to allow Internet users to access agency information.

Of all the initiatives undertaken in the past 12 months, one of the most important was the agency's development of a Wild Salmonid Policy. Adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission in December 1997, the policy is intended to serve as a beacon, guiding efforts to halt the downward spiral of our state's wild salmonid stocks and rebuild them to healthy, sustainable levels.

The policy was pursued with the recognition that these are critical times in the salmon restoration effort. With many of the state's salmon and steelhead stocks already at extremely depressed levels, some wild fish could face extinction unless recovery strategies are immediately put in place. Federal endangered species listings for troubled wild fish species loom over much of the state. Time is running short. Chances to preserve fish and wildlife are vanishing along with habitat.

The Wild Salmonid Policy, which spells out various strategies to bolster wild fish productivity, was not developed in a vacuum. It was adopted following many public meetings and months of negotiations with western Washington treaty tribes. The policy reflects the expertise of department scientists and the concerns, ideas and suggestions of thousands of people from all walks of life who became involved in the adoption process.

Of course the policy is not a static document. It undoubtedly will evolve over time to reflect changing science and other factors; public input will be part of that evolution.

But the policy is a major first step. It comes at a time when the Governor's office, other state natural resource agencies, county and city governments, the tribes, recreational and commercial fishers, farmers, private and public landowners, corporations, environmentalists and others are joining together in an unprecedented effort to save our fish. It is the department's hope that the Wild Salmonid Policy will serve as an important tool in this critical endeavor.

With initiatives such as the Wild Salmonid Policy the department will continue its mission of preserving fish and wildlife resources as well as future recreational opportunities.

Lisa Pelly, Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair

Strengthening Relationships with the **Public**

“Building Partnerships and Common Ground for the 21st Century” was the theme of the Department’s Fish and Wildlife Congress. The congress, held in January 1997 in Olympia, brought more than 500 members of hunting and fishing groups, environmental organizations and other agencies together with WDFW personnel to exchange thoughts on how to ensure the long-term health and prosperity of fish and wildlife in Washington.

Participants met with the department’s top decision makers in workshops on topics ranging from restoration of department lands to the role of enforcement in fish and wildlife protection. WDFW and constituent groups also hosted information booths and displays featuring a number of fish- and wildlife-related activities.



Committing to **Education**

- More than 30,000 kindergarten through 12th-grade students participated in the joint WDFW-University of Washington NatureMapping program. The program generates environmental awareness by making students responsible for tracking and monitoring fish and wildlife species found in their communities.
- More than 1 million people visit state hatcheries annually.
- Nearly 700 Hunter Education instructors trained 10,000 students this year in hunting ethics and the safe use of equipment.
- Approximately 350 Angler Education instructors provided fishing lessons to 12,000 residents throughout Washington.
- Nearly 550 classrooms across the state participated in the Salmon in the Classroom program in 1997. Students learned about salmon, their lifecycles and the need for healthy habitat as the students watched the fish grow from eggs to fingerlings and then released them into area streams.

Protecting Fish and wildlife and their habitat

The department made significant progress in 1997 on the overall condition of Washington’s fish and wildlife resources. Much remains to be done, however. Each year the state gains 10,000 new citizens and converts 30,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat to alternative uses. The following are just some of the department’s accomplishments in 1997 benefiting fish and wildlife and their habitat:

- The Hatcheries Program in 1997 released more than 1.7 million juvenile chinook into the Dungeness River system in an effort to save natural runs from near extinction. By the year 2000, the program expects 600 adult chinook will return with a final goal of 1,000 returning adults by 2010. The effort mimics another recovery program begun a decade earlier in the White River system. That project is considered a success and populations have stabilized, with more than 1,000 adult chinook returning annually.
- A research project is tracking the movements of bald eagles that gather each winter along the Skagit River. Fifteen of approximately 500 bald eagles – the largest concentration in the lower 48 states – are fitted with satellite radio collars to help biologists identify and evaluate the quality of their non-winter habitat.
- Thirteen mountain caribou were transplanted from British Columbia to northeast Washington in 1997 to rebuild the Selkirk Mountain population. The existing population of caribou in the Selkirks of northeast Washington, northern Idaho and southern British Columbia is estimated at fewer than 50. The mountain caribou is the most endangered large mammal in the United States.
- WDFW in 1997 established the Lands and Restoration Program. The program manages state and federal land and works cooperatively with private landowners statewide to protect 2 million acres for habitat and recreation. The program was established with existing resources with the goal of becoming better stewards of our own lands.
- Because of protections and habitat improvements, the gray whale and Aleutian Canada goose were downlisted in 1997. The gray whale moved from the state’s endangered list to its sensitive list, and the Aleutian Canada goose was downlisted from endangered to threatened.
- The department made it to illegal to kill, harm or possess the California mountain kingsnake, Washington ground squirrel or any bats. Prior to agency action, a loophole allowed such acts to go unpunished. Bats found in homes and buildings are exempted under the new law.



Serving Our Customers

Decentralization

The agency continued with its efforts to develop a more efficient, accessible agency. By spreading personnel into regional and district offices, more matters are being decided at a community level. The department operations are divided into the following regions:

- Eastern Washington office in Spokane (Region 1)
- North-central Washington office in Ephrata (Region 2)
- South-central Washington office in Yakima (Region 3)
- North Puget Sound office in Mill Creek (Region 4)
- Southwest Washington office in Vancouver (Region 5)
- Coastal Washington and South Sound office in Montesano (Region 6)

Employees in these regions and their accompanying districts are empowered to make many decisions, taking advantage of their up-close and personal knowledge of the resource challenges in each of their communities.

Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) permits

The department has the authority to issue permits for any activity that alters state waterways. These permits, called Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) permits, are issued each time a project -- large or small -- impacts fish and shellfish habitat. The department issues more than 8,000 HPAs annually. In 1997, however, the Habitat Management Program implemented a plan that transfers HPA signature authority to the regions, making issuance more efficient and accessible. The department also created self-help brochures that tell developers and bankside residents what kinds of activities they can conduct in and along the state's waterways.

Problem wildlife complaints

The Enforcement Program has devoted more resources to public safety and animal damage complaints. A Fish and Wildlife officer typically is the first official to respond when a black bear strolls into a populated area or a deer or elk herd wanders into croplands. Department personnel received more than 50,000 problem wildlife complaints in 1997. The Seattle-area office, alone, received on average 150 problem wildlife calls daily. The Legislature in 1997 approved funding to hire five new officers for problem wildlife.

Automated licensing system

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission in 1997 agreed to a streamlined hunting and fishing licensing system following a series of public meetings, dealer meetings and an analysis of more than 2,500 license survey responses. The new system will simplify the licensing process for recreational users as directed by the Legislature. Part of the streamlining package still under development is an automated licensing system which would replace paper licenses with permanent cards. The new structure should take effect in 2000.

Fairs and trade shows

The department heard from both staff and constituents that the opportunity to meet and talk at fairs and trade shows was sorely missed. Following a commitment to resume these activities, where one-on-one contact is the rule rather than the exception, the department participated in nine regional events in 1997 and committed to 25 more throughout the state in 1998.

Washington Watchable Wildlife

The department launched the Washington Watchable Wildlife program in 1997, expanding its outreach to more customers by offering new opportunities for people interested in bird-and wildlife-watching, hiking, photography and scenic tours.

Community policing

Research shows that law enforcement is more effective when officers are highly visible and approachable in the communities they serve. That is why community policing continues to be a priority for the Enforcement Program. Officers devoted more hours in 1997 to attending community meetings and speaking to community groups and students. In addition to those responsibilities, officers made more than 170,000 contacts with the public, 15,000 arrests and wrote 3,000 warnings.

Find it on the Internet

Constituents can find a wealth of information on department activities and events through the Internet. New web offerings include educational materials, documents, hunting and fishing regulation pamphlets and press releases. All are accessible at: <http://www.wa.gov/wdfw>. The web site also tells residents where to find the hottest fishing sites and wildlife viewing areas across the state.



Partnering with the Public

One of the department's most important partnerships is its work with volunteers. The department continues to receive essential aid from volunteers, without whose help some functions simply could not continue. Volunteers numbered more than 10,000 in 1997, filling a variety of roles. Many of the state's fish and wildlife education functions are conducted by volunteers. Volunteer instructors led hunting, fishing and wildlife education courses for tens of thousands of Washington residents.

Other volunteer activities in 1997 included:

- Enhancing habitat for wildlife on thousands of acres of land.
- Helping raise and transplant thousands of salmon, steelhead and other fish species.
- Clearing non-native vegetation, such as spartina, that destroys fish and wildlife habitat on thousands of acres of land.
- Conducting educational tours at agency hatcheries and wildlife areas.
- Serving as eyes and ears for enforcement efforts through the Stream Watch, Unit Watch and Road Management programs.
- Building feeders and monitoring and maintaining sites for winter deer and elk feeding projects.
- Aiding in elk herding efforts and removing elk from private property and agricultural sites.

Other Partnerships

- The department reached agreement with treaty Indian tribes in 1997 for mass marking hatchery coho salmon to differentiate them from wild stocks. The marking entails clipping the adipose fins of hatchery coho so that they can be identified easily while their wild counterparts are released. The agency in 1997 marked more than 18 million hatchery coho from the Columbia River, Willapa and Grays Harbor; 12 million 1996 brood year coho, and 3 million 1996 brood Puget Sound yearling chinook.
- The Jobs for the Environment Program, administered jointly by the departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources, employs displaced timber workers and fishers in projects that restore habitat for declining fish stocks. Currently in its fourth year, the program employed more than 200 workers in the 1995-97 biennium. The program received nearly \$4.4 million in state and federal funding for 28 projects in 14 counties. Local partnerships contributed \$2.1 million in cash and in-kind matches to the program.
- The department continued to cooperate with the tribes in developing management plans for razor clams, coastal and Puget Sound Dungeness crabs, coastal and Puget Sound shrimp, sea urchins and geoducks.
- Working closely with the fishing industry, environmental groups and federal government, the commission passed a rule minimizing incidental death of seabirds that become entangled in fishing nets. The commercial fishing regulations protect common murre, rhinoceros auklets and other diving seabirds that sometimes swim with schools of salmon in northern Puget Sound.
- In a joint program with Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, the department reintroduced into the wild more than 70 endangered western pond turtles, rescuing the species from near-extinction in Washington. The program includes both captive breeding, and "headstarting," in which newly hatched turtles are gathered from wild sites and nurtured in captivity until the tiny turtles grow large enough to avoid being eaten by bullfrogs. They are then returned to their original habitat.
- Wildlife biologists from Idaho, Washington, and Oregon captured bighorn sheep in the tri-state Hells Canyon area to give them an experimental vaccine that may protect them from a fatal disease. In December 1995, more than 100 bighorns along the Snake River in southeast Washington, northeast Oregon, and west-central Idaho died from a pneumonia-like disease caused by *Pasteurella spp.* bacteria that produce toxins deadly to wild sheep.

Department Statistics

Fish and Wildlife manages more than 640 fish and wildlife species and 150 species of commercially and recreationally valuable fish. The agency also manages nearly 100 hatcheries and rearing ponds; 840,000 acres of wildlife habitat, and 583 lakes, streams and other water access sites. Each year, the department licenses about 1.3 million sports anglers, nearly 7,000 commercial fishers and approximately 260,000 hunters.

Licensing Statistical Breakdown

Fish License Statistics:

Fishing licenses sold in 1996:

Gamefish	596,898
Foodfish	358,954
Steelhead	89,393
Shellfish	248,624
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Total	1,939,138

Game License Statistics:

Hunting licenses sold in 1996:

General Licenses	261,788
Deer	184,895
Elk	84,480
Sheep	4
Moose	2
Goat	3
Bear	14,478
Cougar	1,346
Turkey	4,676
Migratory and Upland Bird	93,597

Financials

Buying power: How the money is distributed . . .

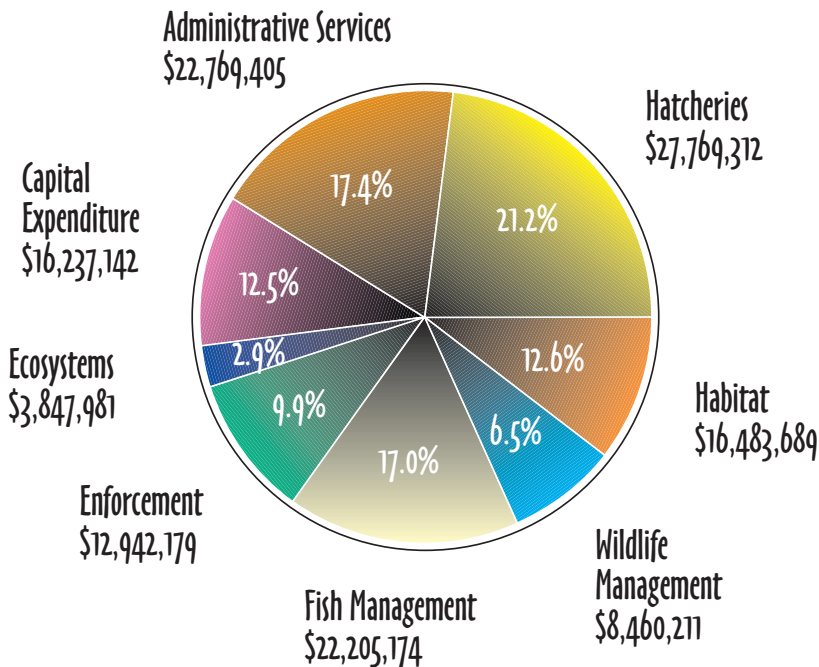
Dedicated funds are those that, by law, must be spent on specific projects. More than two-thirds of department funds are dedicated.

Discretionary funds are those typically used for ongoing department costs such as salaries, benefits, goods and services, and equipment. Less than one-third of the department's funds are discretionary.

The department's financial status remained the same as the year before. Demands of human and fish and wildlife populations, in the meantime, have changed dramatically. While dedicated funding has increased, discretionary funding levels continue to slip. Unless alternative funding is secured, the loss of discretionary funds, coupled with inflation, will erode the department's ability to manage future fish and wildlife needs.

For fiscal year 1997 (July 1, 1996-June 30, 1997), expenditures were as follows:

Operating expenditures for FY 97 were \$114,477,951, spent in 7 programs. The capital expenditure was \$16,237,142, for a total of \$130,715,093.



Revenue: Where the money comes from . . .

User Fees - \$41,815,001 (34.3%)

This includes all fishing and hunting license fees (commercial and recreational), federal excise tax for certain hunting gear, fishing gear and motorboat fuel, fines and forfeitures and miscellaneous revenue collected from department activities.

General Fund Revenue - \$37,902,416 (31%)

This includes that portion of the state's General Fund appropriated to the department. Funds are derived from state tax dollars and the sale of general obligation bonds.

All Other - \$42,226,741 (34.6%)

This includes all other revenue received or expended by the department and is composed of mitigation revenue for losses of fish and wildlife, all other federal and local government revenue, personalized license plate revenue, and other state funds received by the department. Funds in this category are all dedicated to specific departmental activities.

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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please call the Olympia office at (360)902-2200, or TDD (360)902-2207 for more information.

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