



## 25-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

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A Path to an Improved Era  
for Fish, Wildlife and People

WD  
F&W



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH** and  
**WILDLIFE**



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## Letter from the Director

Our state is home to 7.2 million people – and despite our collective efforts to minimize associated impacts, human density has taken a toll on fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend on. Many fish and wildlife populations have suffered and our ability to provide hunting and fishing opportunities has decreased. We know that our traditional customers value this part of their family heritage and the key to realize such experiences lies in healthy habitats, ecosystems, and fish and wildlife populations. We know that 6.2 million residents who do not hunt or fish also expect us to protect and recover imperiled species and habitats and ensure that fish and wildlife are provided sound stewardship.

Today, social tensions surround us. Tensions affecting fish and wildlife management are caused by inequity and social injustice, limited access to opportunities to enjoy wildlife, the rural and urban divide, and conflict about social and cultural values. The extreme ends of the spectrum of values toward wildlife often embroil the department in costly and resource-depleting battles that detract from wildlife conservation.

Fortunately, the strategies in this plan form a path to mutual benefits. Conservation, increased public engagement and transparency, science, and operational excellence meet the challenges head on. These focus areas serve traditional customers, emerging customers focused solely on non-consumptive activities like wildflower viewing or restoration and recovery, and customers who have, for too long, not had a seat at the table.

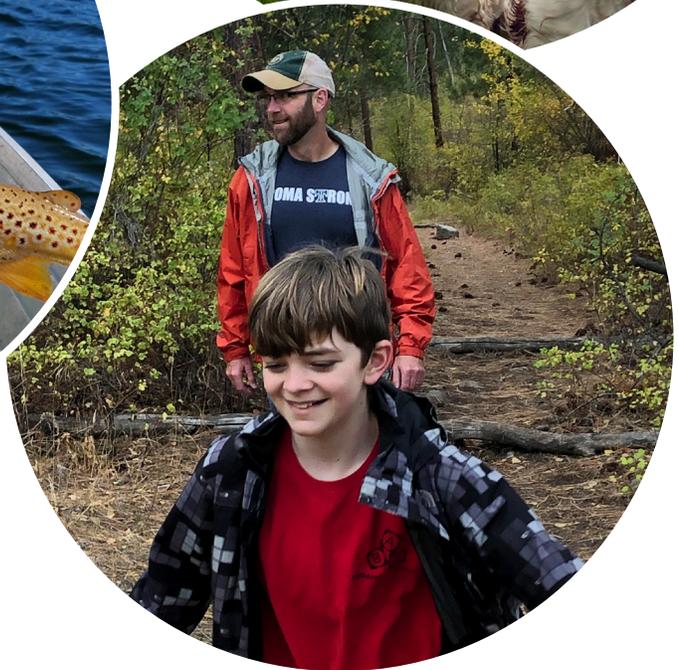
We recognize that the tensions will not entirely dissolve. Yet, a better connected, informed, and engaged array of citizens and staff will help us all to make the kind of long-term decisions that improve outcomes for our state's fish, wildlife, and people. This plan helps start the journey.

Director Kelly Susewind

## Message from the Commission

Coming in future draft.







## Introduction

Fish and wildlife hold intrinsic and substantive value for Washington residents and sovereign tribal nations. They are a significant part of our history, culture, and our future. Fish and wildlife feed us, both with nutritional substance and potent inspiration. Their habitats clean the air and water and moderate impacts from flooding and droughts. They provide recreational opportunities and important commercial industries that support our economy and society, locally, nationally, and internationally. All combined, these values underpin our biological, social, spiritual, cultural, and economic health.

The Department must demonstrate bold leadership in conservation, recovery, science, and management in order to better achieve its mission.

## Today's Challenges

We recognize that human development and population expansion, the spread of invasive species, and climate change are contributing to declines in species and habitats. Business as usual will lead to insufficient habitat for lasting, viable fish and wildlife populations for our children and future generations.

Washington is the smallest western continental state with the second-largest human population, and more people arrive every day seeking natural beauty, diverse and accessible outdoor recreational opportunities, natural food sources, and a vibrant economy. As such, there is growing understanding and demand for the protection and restoration of nature in order to sustain its many benefits.

We know more today about what is impacting fish and wildlife than we did in the past. There is better scientific understanding of fish and wildlife habitat needs, the changing climate and the adverse impacts as well as benefits of human actions. Laws and regulations protecting fish and wildlife have improved over time, but may be insufficient for today's realities as we observe the conversion of habitat at levels affecting overall watershed functions and they alone cannot assure the persistence of Washington's fish and wildlife species. Improved public engagement and expanded collaborative and cooperative programs will be needed to allow healthy fish and wildlife populations to live together with our expanding human population. As a result, not only are some iconic northwest species being lost, but an abundance of animals, even common ones, are decreasing at alarming rates.

### OUR MISSION

To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.





## The Needs of Tomorrow

Fortunately, we know what needs to be done. If we act now, we can stem the rate of loss and change the current trajectory. Healthy fish, wildlife, and habitats safeguard our own existence into the future. People still receive significant value from opportunities and livelihoods provided by fish and wildlife. There is a growing movement for stronger connections with healthy, local, and natural foods. It is increasingly essential to the public that we manage our public resources for both consumptive and non-consumptive uses in a manner that serves existing and future generations. Quality science and WDFW's conservation principles, per its conservation policy, will continue to drive management decisions. Decisions will be made with the understanding that Washington's residents hold diverse values and interests related to fish and wildlife and yet will attempt to ensure legitimate access to the environmental benefits by *all* of Washington's diverse people.

People's connections and ethical relationships with nature, fish, and wildlife are varied. We have a responsibility, to manage fish and wildlife in trust for the public, to consider diverse values as long as they don't jeopardize the sustainability of fish, wildlife, and nature for generations to come. With the diversity of values and expectations come different judgments about the appropriate management for fish, wildlife, and habitat (e.g. the levels of protection, harvest amounts and allocations, when or if removal is appropriate). This reality brings significant conflict and management challenges before the Department.

### WDFW's Conservation Principles Policy 5004

- a. We practice conservation by managing, protecting, and restoring ecosystems for the long-term benefit of people, and for fish, wildlife, and their habitat.
- b. We work across disciplines to solve problems because of their connections among organisms, species, and habitats.
- c. We integrate ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives into our decision making .
- d. We embrace new knowledge and apply best science to address changing conditions through adaptive management.
- e. We collaborate with our co-managers and conservation and community partners, to help us achieve our shared goals.

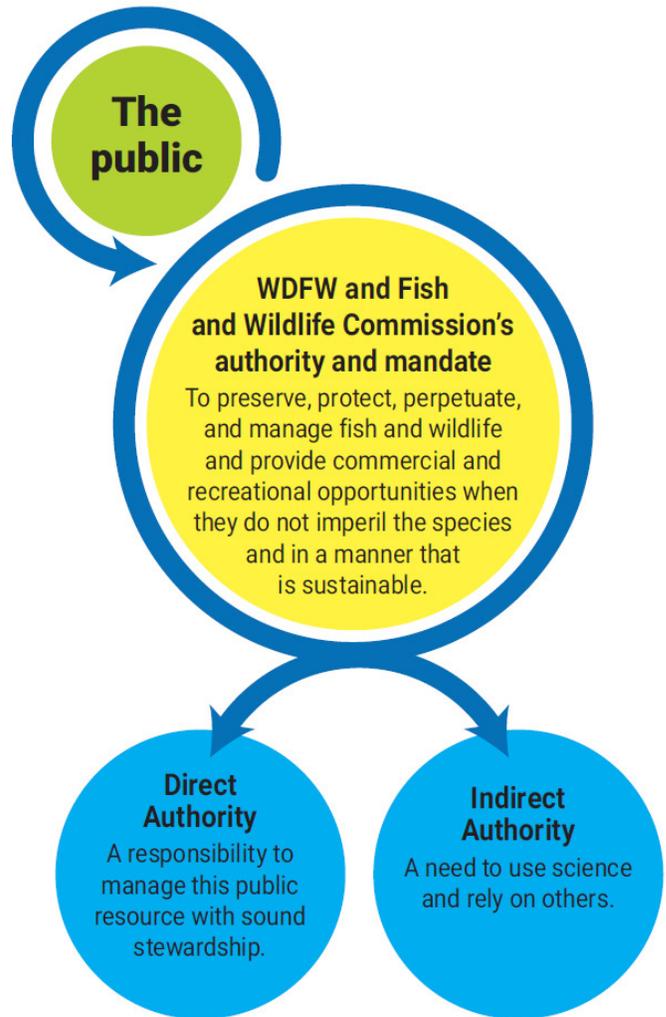
The Department will continue to evolve to understand and where possible, reduce disruptive conflict arising from the spectrum of the public's values. This means increasing public engagement and participation, listening to understand and fostering conflict resolution skills. As we do so, we will be better equipped to find the best balance for competing interests among the residents of Washington while ensuring that we are achieving our mandates.

To be more effective, the Department can improve how it makes and communicates decisions, engages with communities and youth, works with our tribal partners, and provides sustainable opportunities for both outdoor recreation and natural resource-based industries.

### Collaborative Conservation

The Department does not have the ability nor authority to achieve the necessary change alone. We must also invest in helping others' efforts, to preserve, protect, and manage fish and wildlife. Conservation at this scale can only happen through collaboration and building new and strengthening old partnerships - including tribes and other natural resource agencies.

It's going to take all of us working together. Local, state, federal, tribal governments, non-governmental, and conservation organizations, land managers, farmers, commercial industries, private landowners, hunters, anglers, and others of all ages and backgrounds are needed to cooperate and work toward a more resilient future for fish, wildlife, and people.



## Our Foundational Work

It is important to note that this plan's action items do not discuss all of the Department's work, which will continue to be detailed in our other working documents. There are many ongoing agency functions that are critical and essential. This existing foundational work, as informed by a zero-base budget analysis conducted in 2018 and listed below, must continue in order to achieve this plan's vision.

### To Preserve and Restore Habitat and Species

- We recover and sustain diverse fish and wildlife populations.
- We respond and work to mitigate conflicts between people and wildlife.
- We protect fish, wildlife, and their habitat through permitting and regulation enforcement.
- We consult with businesses, landowners, and governments regarding species impacts and legalities.
- We reduce the risk and decrease the devastation of oil spills.
- We ensure that there remains enough water in waterways to allow for healthy fish life cycles.
- We ensure fish survivability by removing stream barriers and appropriately addressing water diversions.
- We acquire funding for, and complete, habitat restoration projects.
- We monitor and control aquatic invasive species.
- We study and plan for climate impacts on lands, waterways, and resulting effects on species.
- We promote habitat-friendly actions and activities.

### To Provide Recreational and Commercial Fishing Opportunities

#### By Producing Hatchery Fish

- We produce trout and warm water game fish.
- We produce salmon and steelhead.
- We build and maintain hatcheries.

#### By Managing Fishing Opportunities

- We ensure recreational and commercial fishing opportunities and regulation enforcement.
- We develop, negotiate, and implement fishery co-management plans.
- We monitor and manage fin fish populations.
- We monitor and manage shellfish populations.
- We sell recreational fishing licenses.
- We promote fishing and access to locally harvested fish.

**To Provide  
and Manage  
Sustainable Hunting  
Opportunities**

- We enforce hunting opportunities and regulations.
- We provide hunter education opportunities.
- We set sustainable hunting seasons.
- We survey game populations and population trends.
- We study game species populations and their health.
- We secure hunting access on private lands.
- We sell hunting licenses.
- We promote hunting opportunities.

**To Provide Fish  
and Wildlife  
Habitat and  
Recreation**

- We monitor and enhance habitat for hunting, fishing, and conservation on WDFW-managed lands.
- We acquire, sell, and work to provide safe public access to WDFW-managed lands.
- We build and maintain safe, sanitary, and ecologically sound public water access sites.
- We develop, organize, and promote wildlife viewing opportunities.
- We develop, organize, and promote recreation opportunities.

**To Meet Our  
Business  
Management  
and Obligations**

- We provide agency leadership and strategic direction.
- We communicate agency matters with the public and legislature.
- We manage finances and contracts.
- We manage human resources.
- We manage information technology.
- We build and maintain office facilities.
- We maintain agency records.
- We respond to public safety incidents (enforcement).
- We provide WDFW legal counsel.
- We facilitate the Fish and Wildlife Commission.



## Purpose and Scope

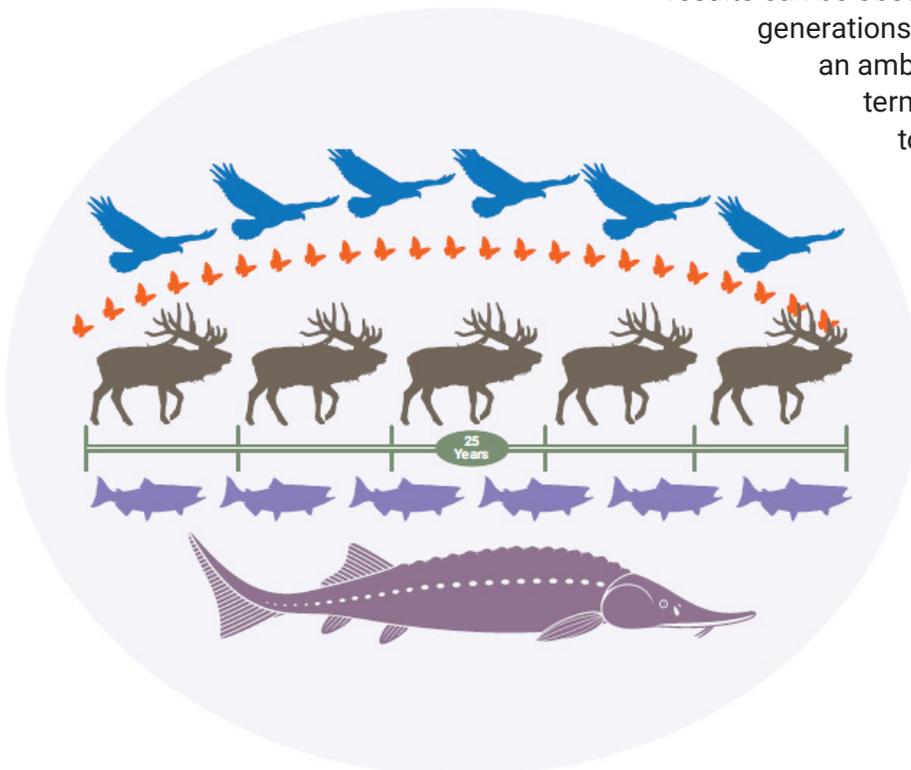
This plan provides the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife with a long-term strategic focus aimed at improving mission success.

These strategies will help us to shift how we do things now; making changes we see as pivotal to modernizing the agency, conserving the state's fish and wildlife, and positioning WDFW for success. Each strategy includes near and longer-term actions, and 25-year desired outcomes. The strategies are to:

- Proactively address conservation challenges,
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship,
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, and
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

This plan includes 25-year performance goals. These metrics and the development of more specific future work plans will help the Department to continuously adapt our efforts toward this plan's vision and desired outcomes.

This plan was built on a 25-year timeframe, allowing the Department opportunity to build on its work within a biological context, where results can be observed across multiple species' generations. It also allows the Department to seek an ambitious vision, while near- and longer-term steppingstone actions advance us towards achieving our performance objectives.



## Vision

The plan identifies a set of desired future outcomes from the successful implementation of each of the four strategies. In short, our desired future includes a Washington state where we see:

- Healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations.
- A restored network of resilient habitats that connects ecosystems across the landscape.
- Abundant recreational, stewardship, commercial, and educational opportunities available to diverse populations.
- Residents with a deep appreciation of the intrinsic value of nature and the benefits of fish and wildlife and who have a strong sense of personal stewardship and environmental responsibility.
- A Department that reflects and connects with the diverse public we serve, and is a model of great governance.



“Traditionally, hunters, anglers, and commercial fishers have carried the banner of fish and wildlife conservation. It’s time, now, to bring this together with the support of a much broader spectrum of our state’s population. Such an achievement will be good for nature; vastly improve fish, wildlife, and habitat outcomes; and best meet the needs of Washingtonians.”

—Jeff Davis  
WDFW Director of Conservation Policy



## **STRATEGY** | Proactively address conservation challenges

### **The Current Challenge**

WDFW has a critical and central role to play in ensuring that Washington residents enjoy connected, healthy, and resilient habitats that support robust fish and wildlife, and our own human health and wellbeing.

Human population growth and unsustainable land development, pollution, climate change, and invasive species are all contributing to the decline of biodiversity. These declines negatively affect the economic stability of commercial industries, the health of people and communities, limit access to hunting and fishing, and degrade ecosystem benefits. As many fish and wildlife populations decline, there is a growing need for the Department's species and habitat management work to become more precise, timely, and effective.

If we are to meet the needs and expectations of Washington residents, we must do better and be more proactive in advancing this fundamental part of our mission.

While we've seen promising success stories in species and habitat recovery, overall trends point to continued decline of native populations, healthy habitats, and the status of species of greatest conservation need. As an organization we face the challenge of having a broad mandate, yet limited direct authority and technical assistance capacity. Land-use decisions (financing and permitting development, establishing open space, protecting critical habitats, etc.) represent opportunities to conserve and restore important habitats and maintain green open space while offering additional outdoor recreation opportunities and enhancing urban and rural vitality. Limited access to up-to-date fish and wildlife information hinders the abilities of land-use planners and decision makers to recommend or support regulations and other strategies that achieve conservation.

In addition, some of our existing regulatory systems discourage landowners from growing and maintaining habitat for species of greatest conservation need. We must break through these challenges to develop a robust toolbox of incentives to encourage long-term fish, wildlife and habitat stewardship on private lands.



STRATEGY

Proactively  
address  
conservation  
challenges

### The Opportunity

By providing more leadership, investment, and commitment, WDFW can become a stronger collaborator and more effectively connect with decision makers to provide actionable information and solutions for net ecological gains (i.e. more eco-friendly construction/ use than damage to the ecosystem), while achieving benefits for local communities. Ensuring that the worth provided by healthy functioning habitats, such as outdoor recreation and human health, are more effectively included in traditional economic analyses will further the understanding of these benefits.

Other agencies, private landowners, tribes, and the public, and tribes are ready to work together with us and we can take advantage of previous and existing planning efforts (such as the State Wildlife Action Plan, Washington’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, and game management plans) to help us build upon the great work already done. We have untapped opportunities to leverage our efforts with others’ to improve synergies and accomplish better conservation across Washington.



# Proactively address conservation challenges

## Near-term Actions

WDFW will seek policy and funding necessary to prioritize these actions over the next four years.

1. Lead the development of a statewide fish and wildlife conservation road map with stakeholders and partners to develop collaborative approaches to landscape-scale ecosystem recovery and fish and wildlife conservation. Build on past efforts from the Washington Biodiversity Council, the State Wildlife Action Plan, ecoregional assessments, etc.
  - Review data and products to assess the current state of conservation and identify the most significant needs and actions.
  - Publish a biennial state of the state fish and wildlife report.
  - Collaborate with regional, national, and international partners to:
    - Establish common conservation principles and priorities.
    - Develop and implement an invasive species response plan.
2. Vastly expand current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species.
3. Implement a co-manager habitat workplan to improve salmon and steelhead populations that are limiting fishing opportunities.
4. Develop a Statewide Hatchery Monitoring and Evaluation Plan to adaptively manage programs to minimize risk to wild stocks.
5. Ensure that land-use planning and decisions are contributing to the conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife.
  - Work collaboratively with local governments, landowners, and other stakeholders to pursue net ecological gain and additional resources to support management and land-use planning that encompasses fish and wildlife conservation.
  - Enhance the quality, quantity, and display of information within the Priority Habitats, Fish, and Species (PHS) portal to ensure that land-use planners have the appropriate scale and quality of information to make informed decisions.
  - Increase our ability to deliver high-level technical expertise on species and habitats.
  - Pursue conservation and recovery goals through incentives, and if needed, improved regulations, regarding the financing of development projects.
6. Shape Washington's 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan to reflect this strategic plan's priorities.
7. Develop and implement a WDFW Climate Resilience Plan.
  - Identify species and habitats at risk to climate disruption.
  - Address actions for WDFW to make its work and investments more resilient to climate change.
  - Identify nature-based climate resilience solutions that can be used statewide to strengthen ecosystem health.
  - Align state de-carbonization advances with efforts to protect species biodiversity.

## Proactively address conservation challenges

### Longer-term Actions

Longer-term strategies may build on near-term actions or represent additional actions to be initiated with time. These may shift over time based on emerging information. For this strategy, longer-term actions would largely be determined by the statewide conservation road map and the climate resiliency strategy.

1. In collaboration with others, improve and develop more effective landowner incentives for conservation.
2. Work with partners towards the implementation and increase of net ecological gain.
3. Work with other natural resource agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, collaborative partners, stakeholders, and businesses to leverage their expertise and secure new and stable fund sources to further enhance conservation work and outcomes in Washington.

### 25-year desired outcomes

- State and federally listed species are recovering.
- The quality and/or quantity of harvest opportunities are sustainable.
- People recognize, prioritize, and take pride in the value of healthy species, habitats, and sustainable harvest opportunities for their contributions to our health and quality of life.
- WDFW is viewed as a leader in salmon recovery.
- WDFW operates hatcheries with minimal risk to wild stocks.
- WDFW effectively conveys the agency's conservation priorities and influences land-use decisions to help sustain the full array of Washington's species.
- Society is practicing net ecological gain in their land-use actions and management.
- WDFW is recognized as a national leader in fish and wildlife conservation policy and management.
- Washington supports an increasing amount of quality, well-connected fish and wildlife habitat providing unimpeded movement through critical migration corridors.
- Climate resiliency and biodiversity conservation are key components in our everyday individual and Department actions.





## **STRATEGY** | Engage communities through recreation and stewardship

### **The Current Challenge**

WDFW has a long history of providing angling, hunting, and wildlife viewing opportunities to the public. Such outdoor recreation adds to the public's quality of life. Unfortunately, the quality and access to these opportunities, in too many cases, doesn't meet public expectations as our human population grows and competition for land increases. This can create management challenges on public lands and for public resources, while also building conflict among user groups.

Residents' interests and values towards fish and wildlife also shift through time. National surveys tell us people's connection to nature is changing and even waning, especially in urban centers. The Department, with help from its partners, can do a better job reaching youth and young adults, as well as other groups in our communities who have traditionally had less access to fish and wildlife-based outdoor recreation and stewardship (including in urban areas). Racial minorities, notably, are underrepresented among whom we serve. This perpetuates system disadvantages that rob us of potential employees and diverse perspectives.

To effectively address these shifts, we need to adjust and learn more from the public regarding their needs and motivations. Fortunately, we have passionate constituencies – hunters, anglers, and nature enthusiasts – who want to see WDFW succeed and are eager to help.



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## The Opportunity

Land stewardship and recreation need each other. We wish to provide access to public and private lands and waters to connect people to memorable experiences, and motivate continued care. We can make choices and opportunities, together with partners, that support ecologic integrity and preserve natural and cultural resources.

The Department must better serve residents who may not have a history of participation in outdoor recreation or stewardship. We can help residents connect with nature and learning in their existing – urban and rural – places.

As we work to effectively engage our residents, the Department will be better equipped to model values that embrace conservation of biologic diversity and healthy ecosystems. We'll seek stronger partnerships with the many organizations across our state that are doing some of this work.

By investing in and building staff capacity to engage with allies, the Department will be better positioned to help our partners succeed, while we also directly benefit from the work.



## Engage communities through recreation and stewardship



### Near-term Actions

WDFW will seek policy and funding necessary to prioritize these actions over the next four years.

1. Connect with youth and young adults - the next generation.
  - Staff engagement in meaningful natural resource education in schools (K-12).
  - Provide for emerging professional work experiences through internships and young adult employment programs.
2. Complete a plan to better recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers, hunters, and nature appreciators, emphasizing increased participation from diverse audiences.
3. Develop and implement a plan to improve public access opportunities for all people by developing and broadening partnerships to promote a broad spectrum of sustainable recreation and stewardship opportunities in all areas, including urban zones.
4. Solicit expertise to identify how to eliminate unintentional bias and more effectively engage underserved communities in public processes.
5. Vastly expand, promote, and offer incentives for backyard wildlife habitat programs.
6. Create and promote education opportunities in WDFW wildlife areas, in urban centers, and on school grounds.
7. Ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and easy to participate in.
8. Better understand and deliver on hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as we continue to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.
9. Invest in and implement social science to understand how to effectively serve our public and tailor our services and outreach appropriately.
10. Drive community science that creates stronger awareness and stewardship of fish and wildlife while advancing agency goals.
11. Expand WDFW's volunteer program, in concert with our partners, to advance a broader range of Department goals.
12. Reevaluate how we engage with advisory committees to more effectively implement our mission and establish regional advisory groups to represent regional interests.
13. Establish regional advisory groups to represent local interests
14. Offer wildlife and wildflower-viewing interpretive programs.

## Engage communities through recreation and stewardship

### Longer-term Actions

Longer-term strategies may build on near-term actions or represent additional actions to be initiated with time. These may shift over time based on emerging information.

1. Build capacity for better public engagement in planning and resource stewardship.
2. Champion partner efforts and work collaboratively to achieve shared objectives.
3. Advance existing education requirements to teach Washington schoolchildren about their natural resources and conservation.
4. Expand and improve public access to the outdoors.
5. Develop a robust stewardship/education volunteer recognition program.

### 25-year desired outcomes

- A broader group of passionate and diverse people are:
  - Working together to improve sound fish, wildlife, and habitat stewardship.
  - Enjoying access to public and private lands for outdoor recreation and have improved connections with nature.
- Anglers', hunters', and other recreationalists' levels of satisfaction are high.
- WDFW lands have been restored where necessary and offer high quality, functioning ecosystems that support biodiversity.
- Local and state elected officials and diverse interest groups have an appreciation and pride in the value of their local wild places, including WDFW lands.
- WDFW is well recognized for contributing to residents' quality of life.
- Wider recognition of the role fishing and hunting play as conservation tools for many species.
- WDFW is working together with a broader group of partners to engage future generations in conservation and stewardship.





# **STRATEGY** | Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions

## **The Current Challenge**

WDFW is a science-based agency; unbiased, trusted, and actionable science is critical to our decision-making processes. As a state agency with limited resources, we must prioritize and fund science aligned with Washington's highest needs. There is tremendous opportunity to be more efficient and effective in how we collect, manage, and share our data by modernizing our data systems.

At times, WDFW's science has been developed in silos. One challenge is to move to interdisciplinary approaches that cross programs and are integrated, for example, with the social sciences.

We recognize that many people and organizations depend on WDFW's science and good science increases public trust.

## **The Opportunity**

Strategically prioritizing, funding, and delivering science products that are tied to policy and management questions will ensure that we effectively use state resources as we develop timely and effective fish and wildlife management solutions. Federal, state, and tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and the general public rely on WDFW's research to build their scientific activities, policies, and actions. In addition, many of our science endeavors are integrated across various agencies, tribal governments, academic institutions, and non-profits - pointing to continued opportunity for collaboration.

Shifting WDFW's focus to collaborative cross-program, cross-agency approaches, and better aligning science to policy and management needs, will improve the credibility of decision making. In addition, integrating social science will help the Department be poised to inform some of our most pressing questions.

The agency must also become adept at communicating science across disciplines and to decision makers and the public. Investing in effective science communication will help ensure that findings reach relevant audiences and help inform decisions.

Finally, participating with non-profits and community science programs to gather important fish, wildlife, and habitat data connects people to nature in tangible ways. Increasing such efforts could deepen relationships and improve the Department's relevancy and credibility with residents and partners.



**Deliver science  
that informs  
Washington's most  
pressing fish  
and wildlife  
questions**

### Near-term Actions

WDFW will seek policy and funding necessary to prioritize these actions over the next four years.

1. Develop, prioritize, and deliver a science/policy framework to include the following components:
  - Assess existing science - policy questions, on-the-ground management needs, funding, and processes.
  - Review predictive models and processes in consideration of emerging technologies.
  - Identify alternatives that improve cross-discipline science collaboration and acknowledge indigenous knowledge.
  - Ensure that our science is supporting adaptive management.
  - Enhance and identify new opportunities for partnerships, including local universities, zoos and aquariums, and other organizations.
2. Implement effective science communication training/strategies.
3. Develop an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach. This will include:
  - Developing a system that allows for the intake and analysis of data across programs.
  - Modernizing and standardizing technology to allow for integration and transparency of scientific data across the agency.
  - Identifying business needs and ensuring appropriate investments in the right tools.
4. Pursue opportunities to increase community science in conservation efforts.

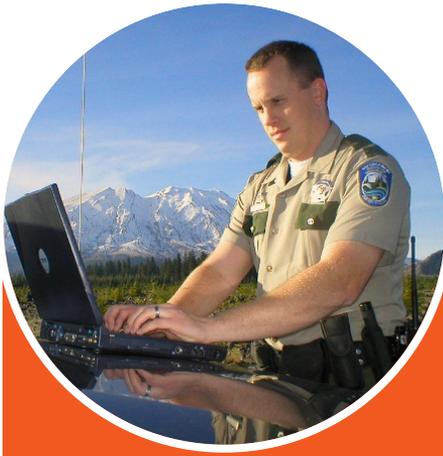
### Longer-term Actions

Longer-term strategies may build on near-term actions or represent additional actions to be initiated with time . These may shift over time based on emerging information .

1. Expand opportunities for technology-driven community science data.
2. Communicate, with more transparency, how science informs decisions.

### 25-year desired outcomes

- We have clear science priorities, and we're applying our resources to the highest policy needs.
- We have a process that assesses the effectiveness of our science in informing policy and management outcomes.
- Our science communication results in the greater use of our science to effect conservation outcomes.
- The public trusts our science.
- There is effective coordination between science, policy, and management functions.
- Our science agenda has strengthened working relationships across programs.



## WDFW Values

### Accountability

We hold ourselves and each other responsible for acting consistent with our values and mission.

### Service

We add value to Washington communities and seek to improve the public's experience.

### Professionalism

We serve in a manner that reflects positively on the Department and on ourselves.

### Integrity

We are consistently open, honest, ethical, and genuine in our actions.

### Respect

We treat each other with dignity.

### Empathy

We take time to understand and appreciate others.

# STRATEGY | Model operational and environmental excellence

## The Current Challenge

Our internal processes, tools, resources, and culture loom large in terms of how much we can accomplish as an organization. Achieving our mission while living our values is critical to our effectiveness, credibility, and public support.

Supporting employees remains central to our work, and the most important part of supporting our staff is keeping them safe.

Ensuring employee's safety not only protects our wellbeing but also allows us to better serve residents. Another significant challenge is that the speed of technological and societal change has sometimes moved faster than WDFW's ability to adapt to new opportunities or upgrade outdated tools.

Staff safety, public service, and environmental sustainability must form a strong core of how we work. This includes supporting communities' environmental sustainability efforts, reducing WDFW's carbon footprint, building a modern workforce that can work from anywhere, and seeding a willingness to adapt to new circumstances.

## The Opportunity

Strategically investing in improving our internal operations could have huge payoffs. Living our agency values – through safety, education, training, accountability to actions, and transparency – will result in greater trust internally and externally.

We can modernize our work through better use of technology, and intentionally tackle the need to account for – and dramatically reduce – our carbon emissions and environmental impacts. We can prepare staff for advancement and leadership roles and establish a culture in WDFW that embraces diversity. Support for staff can also come through: empowered decision making, training excellence, communicating priorities, and setting benchmarks at multiple scales so that all staff understand how they contribute to the mission.

Finally, we have an opportunity to codify the contribution of the Department through performance measures that promotes confidence and understanding of our work by the broader community.

## Model operational and environmental excellence

### Near-term Actions

WDFW will seek policy and funding necessary to prioritize these actions over the next four years.

1. Adapt decision making based on publicly shared performance goals and indicators.
2. Increase decision transparency to both internal and external audiences.
3. Expand ways for the Fish and Wildlife Commission to connect with residents.
4. Support the recommendations of employee resource groups and the Department's internal Diversity Advisory Committee.
5. Track workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion measures.
6. Assess the need and identify actions to improve cross-program/region collaboration.
7. Develop measures for strengthening employee satisfaction and adopting best practices for staff retention and advancement.
8. Develop and implement a WDFW sustainability plan that includes actions to minimize our carbon footprint, maximize carbon sequestration, and achieve more net ecological gain.
9. Develop a culture that supports physical and emotional safety.

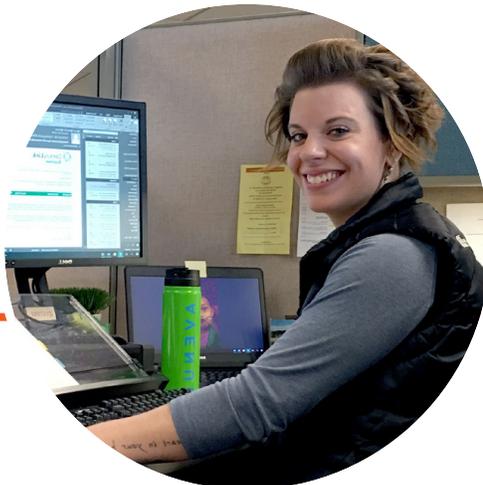
### Longer-term Actions

Longer term strategies may build on near-term actions or represent additional actions to be initiated with time . These may shift over time based on emerging information.

1. Continued implementation of an environmental sustainability plan.
2. Seek further methods to strengthen employee satisfaction.

### 25-year desired outcomes

- Staff and the public see the Department is living its values.
- Department operations take advantage of technology.
- Department operations are synchronized across programs and regions.
- Department operations set the example for environmental sustainability among state agencies with a reduced carbon footprint.
- WDFW's skilled and increasingly diverse workforce is well equipped to serve Washington residents.
- WDFW is an employer of choice with high employee retention.





## Measuring our Success

If the Department is to achieve its mission, it must demonstrate bold leadership – necessary in these unprecedented times – in conservation, recovery, management, and in the implementation of this plan. The public cares deeply that the Department is achieving the measures of success below.

### 25-year Performance Goals

The Department will use existing data sources to establish baselines and report progress.

- 90 percent of the public reports trusting WDFW to do what is right for the fish and wildlife management in our state.
- 10 percent net gain in the quality and quantity of our most important fish and wildlife habitat.
- 25 percent increase in wild salmon populations.
- 80 percent of species of greatest conservation need have been surveyed and incorporated into strategies and plans that ensure their conservation.
- 25 percent increase in participation in fish and wildlife-related activities, particularly among youth, racially diverse communities, hunters, anglers, and watchable wildlife enthusiasts.
- 90 percent reduction in WDFW's carbon footprint.
- 90 percent of employees report that they would recommend WDFW as a great place to work.

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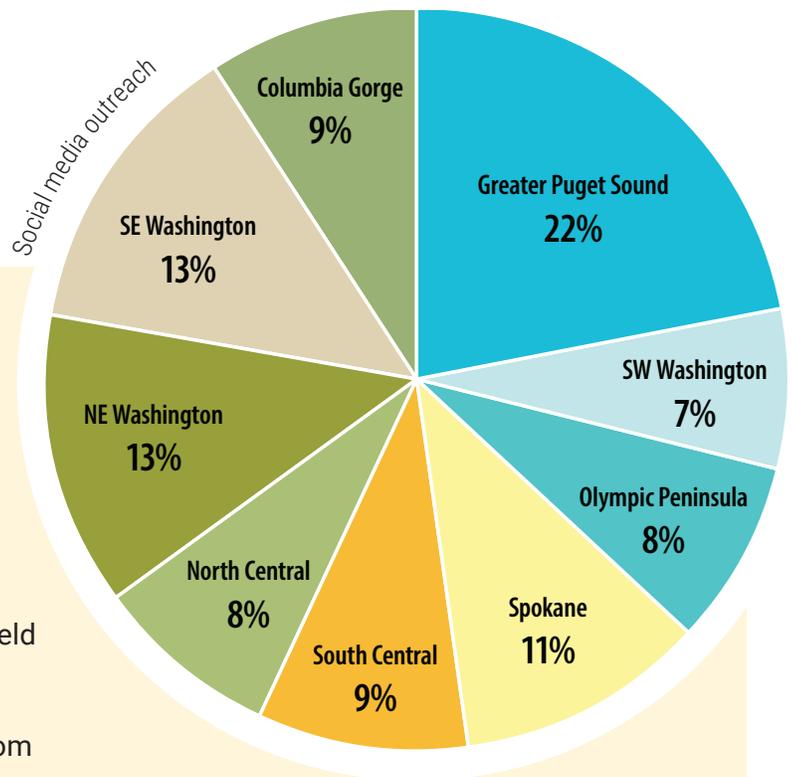
## The Process

To understand and address the core challenges facing the Department and inform the elements of this plan, more than 300 regional and headquarters employees participated in eight work sessions, plus a digital open house, and senior management staff meeting. In addition, the Department held 21 initial listening sessions with a spectrum of current and potential partners, to further understand challenges and opportunities from an external perspective.

Staff refined this feedback into a series of draft concepts, and then strategies, with the help from tribes, members of the Department's Budget and Policy Advisory Group, and guidance from the members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission Big Tent Committee. Additional outreach to State and Federal partners, members of our 52 additional advisory group and committee members, and, ultimately, more than 70 stakeholder and partner-affiliated individuals, helped to further improve this work.

In recognition of the importance of this effort, the Department sought public feedback for two months via fliers, social media, news coverage, and the assistance of our partners. More than 3,500 people visited the project webpage, and 550 people continued on to provide written feedback. Individuals also shared their thoughts via a brief social media-driven survey 900 times. This feedback was captured and used to further modify and improve the plan. In addition to general appreciation and support of the plan, below are some of the major feedback themes:

1. A desire for more hunting/fishing opportunity and access.
2. Support for enhanced transparency and public engagement to build trust.
3. Support for improving the customer experience.
4. A wish for more, faster conservation.
5. Concerns regarding predator/wolf management.
6. Support for science-based decision making.
7. A desire to see the Department address funding concerns.
8. Support for improving salmon populations (predation, dams, and hatcheries).
9. A need to better address poaching.
10. Support for private landowner partnerships.





## Moving Forward

The Department advances this plan with guidance from our Fish and Wildlife Commissioners, key decision makers, collaborators, stakeholders, tribal partners, employees, and the public, knowing that our work must remain flexible as we embark on a new path for fish and wildlife management in Washington.

The contents of this plan will function as a “living document.” To help the Department stay focused on the strategic direction represented here, the Department will revisit this plan every two years, or more frequently, to develop our proposed biennial budget. In the spirit of adaptive management, we will seek to examine where we are achieving our goals, where we fall short, when short-term goals need more time, or long-term goals must become more urgent.

Rather than a printed document that sits on a shelf, this plan’s contents will form a series of agency webpages where strategies will be modified to recognize emerging realities and performance goals will be tracked. Through this process, the public will be invited to continue learning about our strategic goals for a new era, and our progress towards achieving them.

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## Acknowledgments

This plan would not have been possible without the selfless personal investment from many people who care deeply about Washington's fish and wildlife. In particular:

The Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission: Chair Larry Carpenter, Vice Chair Barbara Baker, Jim Anderson, Dave Graybill, Robert Kehoe, Molly Linville, Donald McIsaac, Bradley Smith, and Kim Thorburn — and in particular, Big Tent Committee members Baker, McIsaac, Thorburn, and Smith.

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Washington photographers and staff, for the use of their inspiring images: Cover photo: Justin Haug; Table of Contents, Daniel McBride; pg. 1, WDFW staff; pg. 2, Justin Haug, Nick Eisenmann, Duke Panich, Carrie McCausland; pg. 3, John Riggs; pg. 4, WDFW staff; pg. 5, Jason Wettstein, Adam Brown; pg. 8, Tara Meyer; pg. 9, Mark Riedesel; pg. 10, Jason Wettstein; pg. 11, Tara Meyer, Doug Rogers; pg. 13, Steve Showalter; pg. 14, Rachel Blomker, WDFW Staff; pg. 15, Shannon Haywood, WDFW staff; pg. 16, WDFW staff; pg. 17, Janet Pearce, RFEG staff; pg. 18, WDFW staff, Danny Warren; pg. 20, WDFW staff; pg. 21, WDFW staff; pg. 22; David Anderson; pg. 24, Larry James; and pg. 26, J. Heinlen

It is with great appreciation that this effort was able to build upon past foundational work representing countless hours of dedication and expertise. We would like to recognize the work invested in the following publications for playing a formative role in the development of this plan:

**The Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap: Enhanced Conservation Through Broader Engagement**, complete in 2019 by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Wildlife Management Institute, which initiated a WDFW self-assessment process.

**The America's Wildlife Values Washington State Report**, completed in 2018 by Colorado State University's Department of Human Dimension of Natural Resources, in combination with a subsequent Colorado State University and WDFW Scenario Planning Workshop and final report.

**The 2018-2022 Action Agenda for Puget Sound**, produced by the Puget Sound Partnership in 2018, including subsequent State of the Sound reports, and in particular the Thriving Species and Food Web recovery goals established by the Washington State Legislature.

**A Road Map to Washington's Future**, completed in 2019 by The University of Washington's William D. Ruckelshaus Center through the visionary support of the 2015 Washington State Legislature.

**Washington's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy: Sustaining our natural heritage for future generations** completed by the Washington Biodiversity Council in 2007.

**The 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for Eastern Washington** produced by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources in 2017.

**The 2017 Washington Wildlife Leaders Forum Report**, Toward a Wildlife Future for Washington State, which was informed by environmental, recreation, governor, tribal, and state agency representatives.

Past WDFW strategic plans, and the many laudable fish and wildlife strategic plans completed by other state and federal agencies across our nation. This plan also drew from staff expertise informed by many operational Department planning efforts.