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POLICY 5004

Cancels:

See Also: [RCW 90.54](#)

This policy applies to all WDFW employees. However, if policies and procedures are in conflict with or are modified by a bargaining unit agreement, the agreement language shall prevail.

Approved By: /s/ Joe Stohr

POL-5004 THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

Definitions: For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

Conservation: The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural environments and the ecological communities that inhabit them. This includes the management of human use for public benefit, and sustainable social and economic needs. (Modified from The American Heritage Science Dictionary.)

Conservation Framework: A strategic foundation to improve how the Department works internally and with its partners to implement ecosystem-based management. The Conservation Framework has led to creation of the Restoration Pathway.

District: The Department's administrative units that serve as geographic units for describing staff work plans. Districts are composed of multiple Watershed Resource Inventory Areas, or subareas in the marine environment. There are 17 districts.

Ecosystem: A community of organisms together with their physical environment, viewed as a system of interacting and interdependent relationships and including such processes as the flow of energy through trophic levels and the cycling of chemical elements and compounds through living and nonliving components of the system.

Ecosystem-Based Management: An approach to natural resource management that recognizes the complexity and full array of interactions within ecosystems, and whose goal is to protect and restore the health and resilience of ecosystems for the benefit of all organisms, including humans.

Restoration Pathway: A cross-disciplinary decision making tool for restoration work that occurs on Department lands.

Watershed Resource Inventory Area (WRIA): Administrative and planning boundaries described in Washington State law, as defined by the natural resource agencies. Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 90.54.

1. **WDFW Will Apply the Following Conservation Principles to Management Decisions and Development of Employee Work Plans:**
 - 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; and
 - e. We collaborate with our co-managers and conservation and community partners, to help us achieve our shared goals.

2. **WDFW Will Establish Cross-Program/Cross-Regional, Interdisciplinary Teams to Implement the Conservation Principles and Advance Ecosystem-Based Management**

- a. All Interdisciplinary teams identified below will:
 - i. Resolve potential conflicts at appropriate geographical scales;
 - ii. Apply adaptive management improvements to conservation activities based on experience and learning; and
 - iii. Work collaboratively with co-managers and relevant stakeholders.
- b. District Teams are composed of staff providing the appropriate expertise for their geographic area or for the issues under their review, such as: District Fish Biologist, District Habitat Biologist, District Wildlife Biologist, Hatchery Complex Manager, Sergeant, Private Lands Biologist, and Wildlife Area Manager. At the discretion of the Regional Director or a Regional Management Team (RMT) member, any regional staff may be asked to participate as an invited District team member. Other regionally deployed staff (e.g., Statewide Specialists, Statewide Scientists, Marine Component staff) will be included for regional conservation activities involving or affecting their respective expertise.

Regional Directors, or a designee from the RMT, will attend District Team meetings to assess progress towards addressing emergent conservation challenges within the district.

District Teams will:

- i. Share information routinely (e.g., at regularly scheduled District Team meetings) in order to effectively coordinate conservation activities, foster collaboration, clarify issues, and develop general and situational awareness amongst Team members;
 - ii. Work on assignments from the Executive Management Team (EMT) and/or the RMT relative to tactical and strategic conservation activities (e.g., Restoration Pathway, Strategic Plan, Lands 20/20);
 - iii. Make recommendations to the EMT and/or RMT on activities identified above; and develop independent Team recommendations or position statements on a variety of other local natural resources issues; and
 - iv. Communicate and collaborate with their respective co-managers and relevant stakeholders
- c. Regional Management Teams are composed of the Regional Director, Regional Fish, Habitat, and Wildlife Program Managers, and Enforcement Captain. Other key regional staff (e.g., Administrative Assistants, Lands Supervisors/Agents, and Communication Consultants) will participate in the RMT meetings at the discretion of the Regional Director.

Regional Directors will lead weekly meetings to address emergent conservation challenges within the region. RMTs will meet regularly to review progress towards reaching regional conservation priorities.

Regional Management Teams will:

- i. Create a foundation for conservation work within the Region that is centered on collaborative, functioning District Teams;
 - ii. Provide guidance and leadership to make District Teams successful;
 - iii. Identify or approve conservation activities and natural resources issues for assignment to District Teams to develop recommendations and/or position statements;
 - iv. Develop a process and criteria for their respective District Teams dictating how recommendations and/or position statements are to be provided to the RMT, the Cross Program Headquarters Team, and/or the EMT; and
 - v. Analyze conservation activities, natural resource issues, and organizational/operational issues, and make recommendations to the EMT.
- d. Multi Program Ad Hoc Teams are identified by EMT members and are composed of Division Managers, and/or their respective Section Managers, and/or of members from one or more RMT.

Multi Program Ad Hoc Teams will:

- i. Identify and provide recommendations to the EMT regarding interdisciplinary conservation activities and natural resource issues;
 - ii. When appropriate, and in coordination with the AD and/or the RD, identify and forward conservation issues for resolution at the DT and/or RMT level; and
 - iii. Focus on the statewide application of the Conservation Principles to increase consistency and improve conservation outcomes.
 - e. Executive Management Team – See EMT Charter for composition and role of the EMT in implementing the Conservation Principles.
3. **WDFW Strategic Plans Will Reflect the Department’s Conservation Principles.**
4. **WDFW will Apply the Department’s Conservation Principles in the Development of Department Budget, Planning, and Decision Processes.**
5. **WDFW will Actively Seek and Engage Other Agencies, Co-managers, Stakeholders, and Interested Parties in Implementing Conservation Principles that Guide Department Efforts.**