

# WDFW Managed Nonlethal Pursuit Training Program

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1/29/2021

# RCW 77.15.245 Changes

2 (a) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit the ~~((killing))~~ **(hunting)** of black bear, cougar, or bobcat~~((, or lynx))~~ with the aid of a dog or dogs by employees or agents of county, state, or federal agencies while acting in their official capacities for the purpose of protecting livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety.

**2 (d)** (d) Nothing in this subsection may be construed to prohibit nonlethal pursuit training of dogs by persons selected through the process established in RCW [77.12.077](#) for future use for the purpose of protecting livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety.



RCW

77.12.077

Creation

**Use of dogs to hunt/pursue black bear, cougar, bobcat—Rules—Training program—Nonlethal pursuit.**

(1) The commission shall adopt by rule a process and criteria to select persons who may act as agents of the state for the purpose of using one or more dogs to hunt or pursue black bear, cougar, or bobcat to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety. The commission rule must outline the requirements an applicant must comply with when applying for the program including, but not limited to, a criminal background check.

(2) The department shall administer a training program to enable persons who have been selected pursuant to subsection (1) of this section to train dogs for use consistent with this section. The purpose of this program is to provide dog training opportunities using nonlethal pursuit.

[ [2019 c 226 § 1.](#) ]

# WDFW Public Safety Response

Agency Directives- Priority in providing the best public service related to dangerous wildlife incidents

- Primary authority on dangerous wildlife incidents.
- WDFW Police frequently call upon dog handlers to assist in locating offending animals.
- In these cases, handlers are acting under the purview as agents of the State.
- Currently, there does not exist a mechanism in Washington for handlers to keep dogs trained in between calls for service.

WDFW Received 915 Dangerous Wildlife Calls specific to Cougars in 2020

Close to 100 Cougars Removed by WDFW Police in response to public safety in 2020

The goal of the non-lethal pursuit training pass program includes

1. Improving dog handler/department relations,
2. Effective detection of target species when requested by the Department,
3. And the ethical treatment of working dogs and wildlife.



WAC 220-412-130

**In order to effectively manage and train hound handlers and their dogs to be agents of the state used for cougar conflict response, the department establishes the nonlethal pursuit training pass program.**

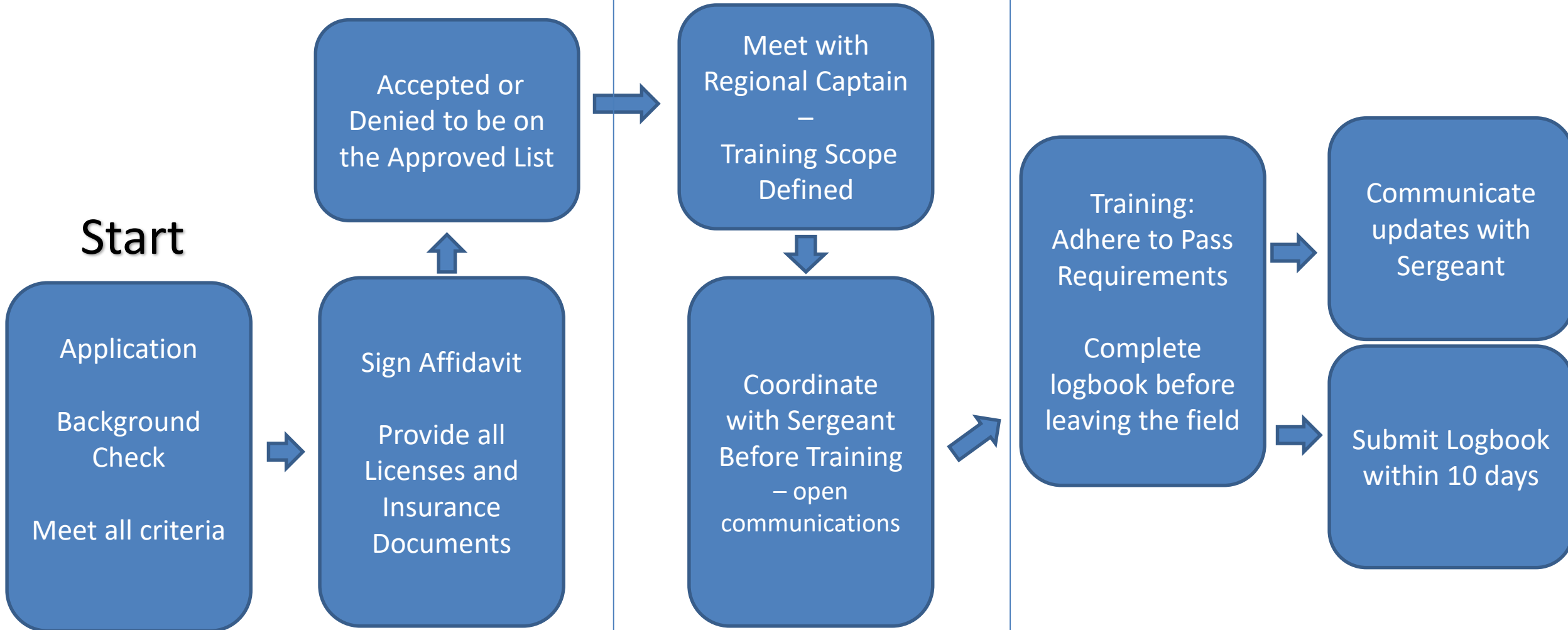
# Program Steps -

## Enrollment Process

## Regional Relationship

## Training and Reporting

### Start





# Public Comment

# Public Comments Received

Written Public Comment Received:		
<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>240</u>	
In support	179	74.6%
Not In support	51	21.3%
Other	10	4.2%

Public Testimony during Dec 4 Commission Meeting:		
<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>23</u>	
In support	9	39.1%
Not In support	12	52.2%
Other	2	8.7%

- 263 comments received. (239 emailed, 23 public testimony and 1 phone call)
- 71.5%(188) of comments who specified their stance were in general support.
- 24% (63) of survey respondents who specified their stance generally opposed.
- 4.6% (12) of survey respondents had a neutral stance or failed to provide a stance on the rule.







# Recommended Adjustments

## Recommended Adjustment:

(4) If a firearm is discharged at any point during a training activity, the training pass granted pursuant to subsection (11) shall be placed on hold until reinstated by the Department Captain or training area Sergeant. Before a training pass may be reinstated or reissued, WDFW Police shall investigate the circumstances of the discharge to determine if it was unlawful or a result of not meeting the best practices of dog handling.



## Recommended Adjustment:

(5) A Non-Lethal Pursuit Training Pass Program participant who purchases a cougar harvest tag in Washington State cannot fill a cougar tag 72 hours before or after a training exercise.



# Recommended Adjustment:

(§10) Training program enrollment – The department will authorize no more than fifty valid training pass holders to participate in the program annually on a statewide basis. Training passes issued by the Department for training activities shall be geographically limited to no more than nine training passes at a time per WDFW Region, and no more than three training passes at a time per enforcement detachment.



# WDFW Police structure

147 WDFW Police Officers cover 42.6 million acres

6 Regional Captains  
(WDFW Regional Offices)

REGION 1: 20-22

REGION 2: 14-16

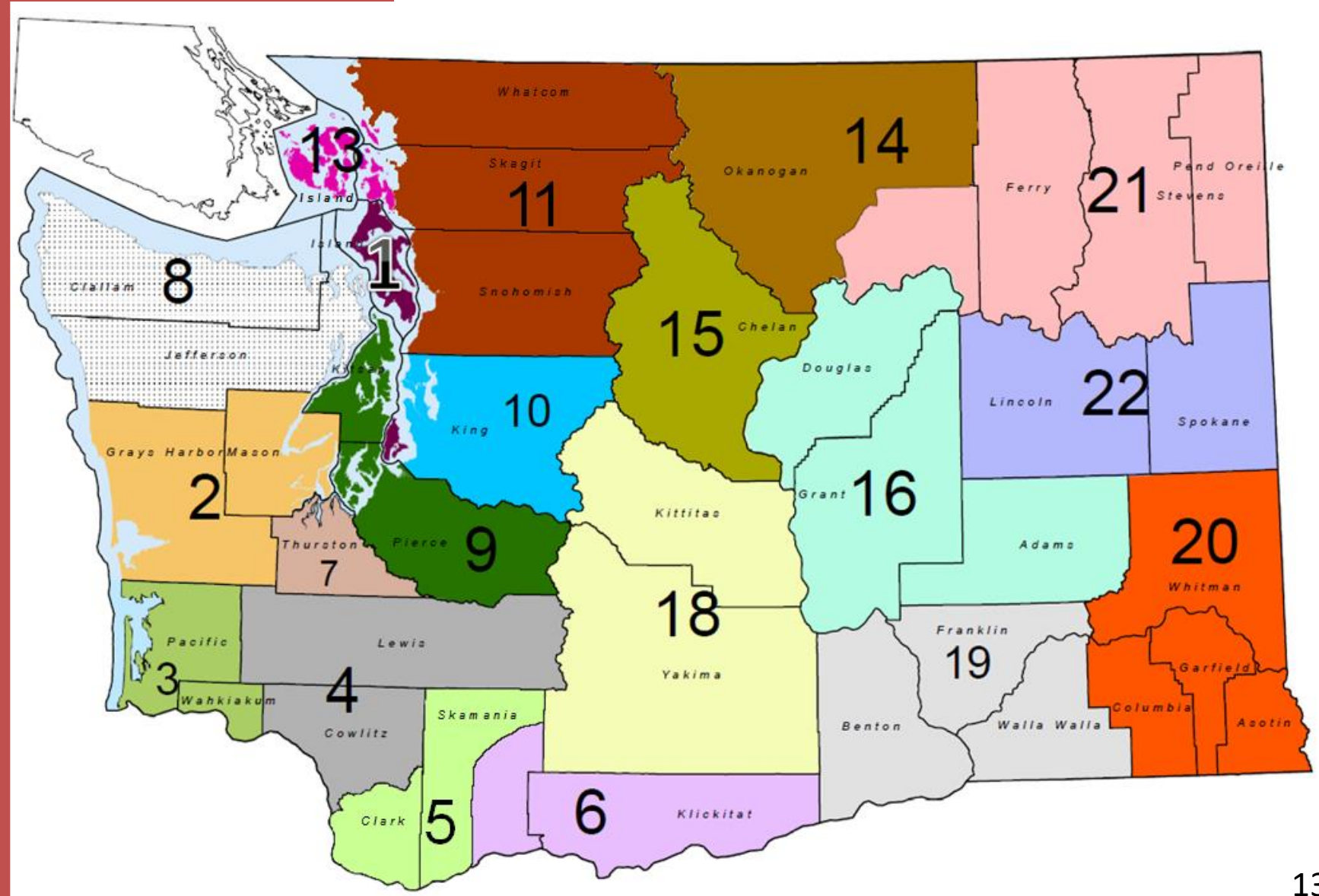
REGION 3: 18-19

REGION 4: 10-11, 1, 13

REGION 5: 4-6

REGION 6: 7-9, 2-3

HEADQUARTERS: Olympia



## Recommended Adjustment:

(119) Prior to engaging in any nonlethal pursuit training activity, a member of the nonlethal pursuit training pass program shall obtain from the department captain with oversight responsibility for the area proposed to be used for training a nonlethal pursuit training pass, which will be in via paper or electronic format. A nonlethal pursuit training pass, issued at the captain's discretion, will be issued for a period of up to thirty days, with an option for a thirty-day renewal at the request of the training pass holder. This training pass will detail the time frame and geographic scope of the training area that is acceptable to the captain and the training pass holder. Prior to engaging in a training exercise within the limitations of the training pass, the training pass holder will communicate with a department sergeant with oversight of the training area. The training pass holder shall keep the department sergeant appraised of regular training activities, and the sergeant shall keep the training pass holder appraised of any operational or logistical concerns or restrictions. A department captain may, at any time, change the geographic scope or time frame of the training pass to address management or emergent needs, and retains the discretion to terminate a training pass. **The Department Captain shall restrict training pass scope for certain Game Management Units (GMU's) during big game hunting seasons when prudent.**



## Recommended Adjustment:

(12) Any training pass holder engaged in training activities is required to carry either pepper spray or an air horn so that non-lethal means are available to mitigate wildlife interactions.



## Recommended Adjustment:

(14) As a best practices in dog handling, training pass holders shall not knowingly engage in the pursuit of spotted kittens or cougars with spotted kittens. Upon any observation of tracks of more than one cougar or visually observing the presence of spotted kittens during a training exercise, the handler shall terminate the current training pass activity and report the observations to the training area Sergeant. The Sergeant may choose to subsequently limit future training activities in the area.





# Recommendation:

## Motion:

“Having considered the materials presented by staff, public comment and responses I move to adopt WAC 220-412-130 with the recommended adjustments.”





# Questions?

Thank you

