

Washington's Wild Future

A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife

Mill Creek Regional Forum

October 6, 2015

The following public comments were offered by participants at an open forum on fish and wildlife issues sponsored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) at the department's regional office in Mill Creek. Approximately 80 participants attended the event, one of six regional forums conducted around the state.

Agency management

- How do we fund the department to do more for wildlife?
- Consider setting up a non-profit foundation to handle donated funds and pro-bono work that would support WDFW efforts
- Increase funding for hatchery staff prior to increasing funding for more employees in the Natural Resource Building (WDFW headquarters)
- Would like greater transparency from meetings, like the North of Falcon season-setting process
- Open the gates on WDFW lands, since they are public property
- Conservation Northwest employee said WDFW is doing a good job.
- Perceived lack of communication between programs and within divisions
- Thank you! Agency needs more ethnic, age class, and gender diversity
- Better federal and state coordination needed

Enforcement

- More enforcement presence on the Olympic Peninsula, specifically Neah Bay, is needed
- Support for more enforcement presence in general
- More enforcement presence on the Olympic Peninsula would be beneficial
- Increase enforcement of Discover Pass in water access sites
- People are robbing crabs from pots in Kingston Harbor
- Lake Stevens kokanee angler thinks there is too much fishing pressure on the lake. The number of guided boats is too high, clients out 2-3 times per day. He thinks sharing of limit in the boat is a problem (i.e. guides share their limits so everybody limits out by dockside)
- Security concerns at water access and parking areas – crime, littering, etc.
- Increase WDFW enforcement at Cherry Valley Unit/Area

- More enforcement presence
- DFW should partner with rural communities and provide info on living in bear country/being bear smart
- Visible enforcement and anti-poaching message and target poaching zones
- Get money from WDFW-issued citations to stay in the department
- Increase enforcement presence on the rivers and Puget Sound. Constituent noted that it is understood that more funding is needed, but is very supportive of having more WDFW officers to enforce regs.
- There is a lack of enforcement of hydraulic mining regulations. Trout Unlimited contacts have offered their assistance to help with this.
- Enforce the permitting for suction dredging
- Public shaming of poaching violators. Publish names in newspaper

Fish management

- Fix the North of Falcon (NOF) season-setting process for salmon fisheries. Make the process and negotiations more public and transparent
- North of Falcon is broken
- NOF group of negotiators needs to be vetted. They need to know how to negotiate, and need to be able to say No and mean it
- At NOF, tribes got 76% and non-tribal got 24%, which reduces fishery from 45 days to 2 weeks for Chinook in Marine Area 9, and eliminates fishery in MA10.
- If we can't get to 50/50, the negotiators need to walk away and leave it up to the courts
- In-season management needs to go away, specifically for winter Chinook salmon (blackmouth)
- Make immediate reporting mandatory for all fisheries. It works for crab
- Mandatory fish descenders during halibut season
- Halibut and lingcod seasons need to be re-evaluated – seasons are too short
- Have fisher specific limits – a punch card for a specific number of halibut (i.e. four) over a longer season
- Make the fishing regulations consistent across the Straits
- Shut down all fishing, commercial, recreational, and tribal for 5 or more years to re-set the populations. Determine the new baseline for the populations, and then determine the quotas. Get away from Maximum Sustainable Yield.
- Fish management – Slowly introduce or shift to wild broodstock
- Save the Lake Sammamish Kokanee
- The planting of steelhead in Rattlesnake Lake was a poor management decision. It was a death sentence for the steelhead

- Marine Areas 8 & 9 – Continue the recreational crabbing through September and/or open in conjunction with the tribal fisheries
- Encourage federal help in monitoring tribal fisheries
- Consider Old Chamber Creek Mill Site for rearing fish
- Increase ability and speed for WDFW to shut down fisheries if needed
- Do not make the Skagit River a wild steelhead gene bank
- Use local broodstock from Skagit tributaries for hatchery stock
- Wiseman Creek enhancements are working; need wild steelhead enhancement
- Why does Lake Washington have a minimum escapement of 350,000 sockeye required to open fishing when Lake Wenatchee is 40,000?
- Support for wild steelhead gene banks
- Support for increasing the amount of steelhead gene banks, including complete watersheds
- WA guides should not be restricted to above Longview Bridge in Columbia River. WA guides should be allowed to fish in lower Columbia, Buoy 10, and coastal estuaries because it will enhance opportunity and revenue
- If Columbia River endorsement extended to Buoy 10, WDFW should allow WA guides to book trips in that area
- Move back to one-year fish regulations cycle; three years is too long
- Fishing regulations should be simplified for ease of understanding
- Saltwater salmon fishing has declined. Develop ways to improve fishing; maybe more hatcheries?
- Support for wild steelhead gene banks. Encourage to keep hatchery and gene bank rivers separate
- Need more wild gene bank rivers. Angler opportunity can be catch and release
- The Skagit should be a wild gene bank river with catch and release opportunity
- Make North of Falcon process changes a top priority, especially for Marine Area 10
- Resolve hatchery permitting in Puget Sound
- Fishing regulations should be released before July
- Pressure NOAA-Fisheries to get the Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP) done
- Recreational fishermen should have a higher proportion of the catch
- Cutthroat fishing on Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish should be managed more restrictively. Catch should be one per person
- Are fish farms bad for fish health and habitat?
- Increase trout plants on Western WA lakes
- Skagit Boat ramps need cleaning
- Lake Stevens kokanee angler thinks there is too much fishing pressure on the lake. The number of guided boats is too high, clients out 2-3 times per day. Sharing of

limit in the boat is a problem (i.e. guides share their limits so everybody limits out by dockside).

- Restore hatchery steelhead for the benefit of sportsmen and women
- WDFW needs to consider and the economics of recreational fishing when managing fisheries (recreational vs. commercial)
- Recreational fisherman are on the losing end of WDFW and tribal co-management decisions when the two entities get together to set seasons
- Hatchery Genetic Management Plans for steelhead in Puget Sound drainage needs to be reevaluated
- Increase fishing on the Pilchuck River
- There is a need for increased litter enforcement on rivers and streams
- WDFW should provide more support for Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups to build partnerships with landowners
- Restore the Woods Creek steelhead program
- Manage beaver dams for fish (salmon) passage
- Concern about allocation of salmon to tribes
- The huge increase in the impact quota and decrease in sportsman quota in marine areas 9&10
- Tribes getting over their 50% and if this situation occurs, then reduce their quota in subsequent year(s)
- Release steelhead into tributaries that flow into Puget Sound
- Concern about marine mammal predators and piscivorous birds. They'll eat wild fish if no hatchery fish are released.
- Keep hatchery productions up. Glenwood Springs receive \$80K from self-imposed tax for hatchery winter Chinook yet 0% contributed to WA angling opportunities
- Re-allocate existing funds to hatcheries that actually contribute to WA angling opportunities
- In-season management for recreational fisherman needs to end. Those fisheries are the most regulated, least efficient and shut down early. Use data to support a fixed season and thus easier for fishers to plan and schedule their trips
- 5-year moratorium on fishing to "reset" stocks
- Good work on water typing; and asking citizens with local knowledge of fish presence in streams
- North of Falcon needs to be fixed should be 50/50 tribal/non-tribal on Chinook
- Razor clamming is great. Managed very well
- Maintain high-lakes stocking programs on the westside
- Produce more fish. Get more fish to return to rivers like in Oregon and Alaska
- Use local broodstock
- Fix Lake Washington and Sammamish fisheries

- Opposition to Skagit steelhead gene bank
- Re-open steelhead hatchery on Skagit
- Simplify steelhead fishing regulations
- Simplification of regs, or simply communicate why the regs are so complex.
- Increase the downstream Cowlitz access and open public access on existing easements.
- Fix the North of Falcon process, so the Boldt Decision is enforced. Constituent feels that tribes overreach their allocation
- Fix Puget Sound Chinook harvest setting, make it more transparent.
- Convert steelhead production (1 million+ fish) to catchable trout. Feels that steelhead rearing is too expensive and not worthwhile. And do a release in May/June for more trout in the lakes
- Move forward with wild steelhead broodstock in the Skagit River
- The agency needs to work with NOAA for permits to expand the Puget Sound Basin hatcheries complex
- Stock western WA lakes in proportion to eastern WA lakes
- Designate more rivers to be wild steelhead gene banks
- There must be separation of hatchery and wild steelhead
- There should be more catch and release opportunities on the Skagit River
- Reevaluate and increase escapement goals on the Olympic Peninsula Rivers
- Comment: the Skagit River used to be the best river in Washington in terms of steelhead production until the Boldt Decision, and tribal gill netters were allowed
- Fix North of Falcon, quit letting the tribes dictate the outcome (from recreational fisher). Too many emergency rules. WDFW needs to do a better job of messaging and getting the rules/information out there. Get the fishing regs out before July!
- Listen more to recreational fishers and less to tribes and commercial. Upset about closures on streams for steelhead genetic banks (why stop planting the Tolt River?). Improve the Wallace hatchery operations (Reiter Pond). Tokul Creek fishery way too short with selective gear rules.
- Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEG) need reliable, long term funding source

Wildlife management

- Youth hunting before regular opener impacts success of opener
- Have to wait for northern ducks to come down before you can have success
- Took away last 30 minutes after sunset – more ducks but difficult to harvest
- Switching from noon to early morning ruined hunting
- More recognition of the benefit on licensee sales for non-game species

- Why are shed antler hunters advised to not hunt in the spring because it disturbs deer and elk, yet cougar season was extended into April?
- Do timber owners get tax reductions from the state? If so, why can't hunters access their property?
- Make sure the Region 4 Replacement Lands Initiative gets legislative attention in 2017-2019
- Maintaining hunt access on Leque Island is important
- Consider block management for deer and elk on private land
- Appreciate pheasant land. Want more recreational opportunities for pheasants
- See comments in habitat section (particularly in regard to ecosystem based management and ecological factors)
- Concerns over private land access and fee access on timberlands
- Concerns over the perception of lost or lower quality hunting experience or opportunities as a result of wolves establishing themselves in Region 4
- There is a need to restructure or improve the Eyes in the Woods program
- WDFW should provide public shooting ranges
- Increase the number of Western WA pheasant release sites
- Increase the number pheasant released
- If release pheasants in eastern WA, then also release 50% of them as females to help propagate population
- Save the Vaux's Swifts. Say NO to delisting
- For private industrial timberlands that receive break in property taxes, seek legislation that requires public access for that tax break
- More motorized access on DNR lands
- WDFW need to be more involved in public access conversations and actively work with landowners on behalf of sportsmen
- Simplify Master Hunter course materials
- Simplify hunting and fishing regulations.
- Perhaps offer a pre-Hunter Ed; and some materials to expose very young kids to hunting, and prep them for hunter ed class later.
- Concerned about post-delisting management of wolves, in particular, does not want derbies/contests.
- Concern about derbies/ contests for coyotes.
- No notes/instructions on bear tooth submittals; offer explanation with envelope or on-line.
- Need more ungulate studies, in particular to address wolf recolonization
- Regulations should be provided on a smart phone app.
- Hunter Ed classes should be offered in Spanish
- Regulations too complicated

- More info and educations for bears in rural communities
- Bring back hound hunting
- Purchase more DFW land
- Maintain existing DFW land more efficiently
- Release more pheasants; buy from private sources.
- Need to concentrate growth so we can maintain wildlife corridors
- Need to concentrate on carnivore poaching
- Simplify regs, or simply communicate why the regs are so complex
- Use the public trust document to open gates on DNR lands for greater constituent access for hunting
- Management of moose is going well
- Don't allow private timber lands to be closed to hunting. They charge for hunting access and eventually it'll be a rich person's sport. Timber companies should not receive tax breaks if they charge for hunting to the public! Master hunter program is not what it used to be. I won't renew because of it

Threatened/endangered species

- There needs to be more cooperation among farmers, hunters, and wolf advocates to determine hunting regulations and wolf recovery plan
- Wolves should remain listed on the federal endangered species list
- Recommend a stronger focus on ecosystem restoration, as opposed to single species focus
- Salmon escapement goals/carrying capacities should be re-evaluated to take habitat restoration projects already completed into account
- Continue estuary restoration efforts and messaging that more than just salmon benefit from these types of projects
- Need to be more active in orca recovery to increase the orca population. There are more commercially licensed whale-watching boats than orcas
- Allocate more resources (time or money) for the recovery of nongame species, such as the orca. For example, have increased enforcement for the whale-watching boats that may get too close to pods. Or support sister organizations like the state Department of Ecology on a legislative level for their pollution controls

Habitat management

- Maintain Skagit farmland, rather than convert it to salmon habitat
- Cherry Point oil spill created a crash 3-4 years later due to epigenetic alteration of embryos. Need intervention: long-term use of bio enzymes to reverse the alterations and predator control in the short term.
- Create deep pools for returning adult salmon given ongoing climate changes

- DNR is removing tire reefs and pilings without replacing rock fish habitat. Build more artificial habitat to mitigate for the loss
- WDFW should get credit(s) for the restoration of public lands for salmon habitat, which could be used for additional acquisitions of credit(s) for other recreational lands. The Legislature should pay the department for the land so they can purchase more land
- Take the changing climate into account when making habitat management decisions
- Need to revise permitting process for suction dredging. More careful review is needed
- Why is WDFW involved in mineral extraction permitting? Why can't DNR handle this, so WDFW can focus on fish and wildlife issues?
- Need time series data for adaptive management of forestry (sediment sampling to understand baseline for improvement). Sediment is harmful to fish. We should take a greater role
- Call for ecosystem based management – more funding to establish baselines on populations, and to develop and enrich this approach in the state
- “It’s easier to protect than restore.” We need more study/controls on de-icing chemicals (work with Ecology, DOT, etc.). This could become increasingly important in drought/low snowpack situations if chemicals become concentrated
- Explore higher education partnerships re: alternatives to pesticides and herbicides (also Integrated pest management) to protect upland birds, fish and other wildlife
- Concern about conserving riparian and wildlife corridors
- Concentrate human growth to retain wild places
- Help plant more trees in riparian. It yields cooler water
- Who is responsible for cement piling removal and for limiting access? Why are other agencies allowed to make closures to access?
- Remove concrete pilings blocking river access on the Tolt River and other rivers in the Snoqualmie Watershed
- RFEs would like to see an enhancement of partnerships with the agency
- WDFW needs to support and better finance RFEs to build a citizenship that supports the department
- WDFW needs to be at the forefront of ESA policies and habitat protections, setting a national example
- Current greenbelts are inadequate and there needs to be an effort to increase the number and size of greenbelts
- Habitat should be the leader and the primary connection with the public

Communication/public outreach

- Support for Wild Future Initiative meeting style

- WDFW brand, logos, formal meeting styles, etc. are very outdated. It is important to be up-to-date on marketing techniques because WDFW competes for attention with other agencies/issues in a modern world
- Hope to see a more diverse demographic of interests in fish and wildlife issues in the future
- Suggest more WDFW outreach in public schools
- Wolves – need more information about predation to be able to better educate the public. Do wolves kill to eat or kill to kill?
- Need more public outreach to local organizations. Provide speakers to talk about all the good things the department is doing.
- Recognition of ALL wildlife users not just Hunters and Fishers but watchers and other non-consumptive users as well
- More use of Citizen Science partnerships with the community.
- RFEGs totally and irrefutably rock! They want our support/stable support
- WDFW should adequately fund RFEGs, particularly education and outreach initiatives. They include programs for schools/youth done by RFEGs
- Leverage private partnership funding to achieve conservation values, land conservation, youth outdoor education, youth fishing opps, youth outdoor recreation opportunities
- WDFW listens to funders (hunters/fishers) too much
- Update the agency brochures, logos, etc. to overhaul WDFW branding in order to reach nonconsumptive users and future generations. The department should focus its advertising to be more like commercial advertising to reach different economic classes and minorities. The agency has a very white, middle-aged male feel to it
- Make Facebook more engaging like the National Parks service. Move away from only doing bulletin posts. Ask questions of the members, such as favorite fish or why they hunt
- More communication and outreach needed. Want easier access to data, either through web pages or some server. Don't want to have to contact individual biologist for their data
- Maybe have these types of meetings – which are great – in Seattle, where the public can access easily via public transportation to reach a greater and more diverse audience. Message in multiple languages to engage a more diverse audience. Start diverse relationships, build them and then they are our future advocates for the department

Licensing system and fees

- How can license fees increase when fishing opportunity decreases? Specifically in Marine Area 10
- The permit for commercial guides who use WDFW Public Access points is confusing and difficult to find out whom in the department issues the permit.

- Consider selling trail passes
- Consider selling a smelt license
- Consider selling an all season license
- Raise funds from non-consumptive users
- Develop a reciprocity license that combos both Washington & Oregon
- Revamp license documents (less paper)
- Find other sources of revenue besides hunters and fishers; tap into the non-consumptive users. Constituent recognizes the minimal amount received from the Discover Pass to the agency. Would like to see more non-voluntary ways of supporting the agency, i.e. more than a license plate.
- Appreciates the online catch reporting, and would like additional ways to report catch online.
- Parking on DFW lands should be free, since it is public land.

Invasive species

- Need more money and resources to deal with aquatic invasives
- More invasive species checkpoints are needed

Wildlife viewing

- Emphasize wildlife viewing opportunity. Do more outreach, partner with local governments. Need to increase general fund support
- Maintaining ADA access on Leque Island is important
- Increase emphasis on watchable wildlife
- Tax bird seed to develop revenue for watchable wildlife, as is being attempted in Oregon.

Other

- How is the department changing species management as it relates to climate change?
- Have a public forum in Seattle. Woodland Park Zoo official indicated he may be able to arrange space.
- “Public trust doctrine, open all lands.”
- Support citizen science initiatives
- WDFW should raise funds from non-consumptive users
- Increase support for conservation and support for outdoor recreation for the public needs
- Increase support for conservation and support for outdoor recreation for the public needs

- Would like a mobile-friendly WDFW website. Likes what Wildlife Program is doing for hunting, but would appreciate it there was an application for fishing regulations and other activities
- Concerned that the new director will bring aggressive Idaho wolf and hunting policies to Washington and make major, unsupportive changes to hunting policies
- For the director: When addressing the crowd, be mindful that there are other groups present, besides just sportsmen
- More effort and focus on non-game species