



# Washington's **WILD**Future **CONSERVATION**



## Conserving fish, wildlife and habitat for future generations

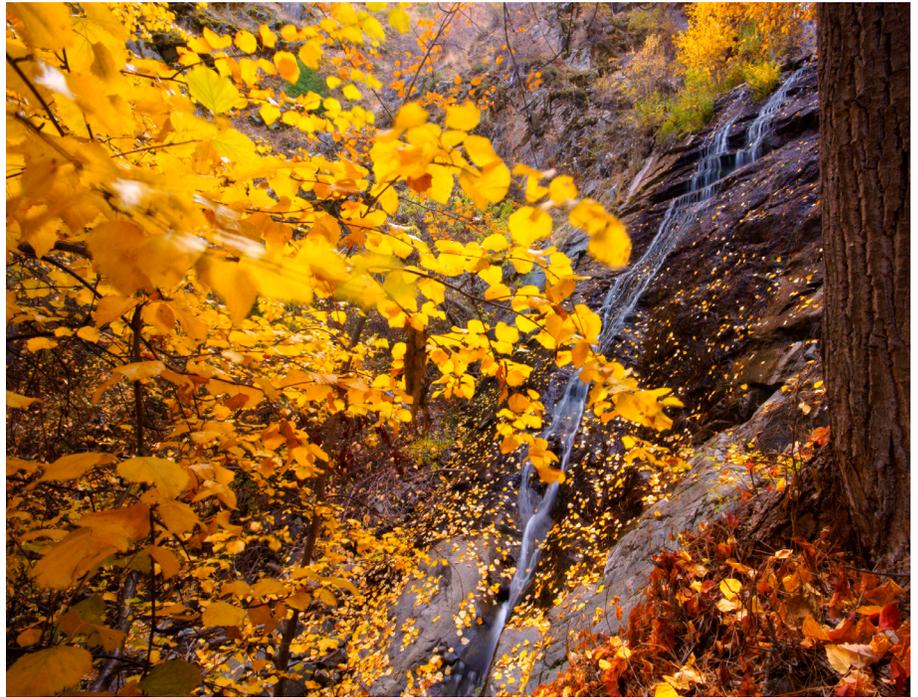
### Maintain support for non-hunted wildlife

In addition to managing fish and game species such as salmon, deer and elk, WDFW supports hundreds of other native species. More than 95 percent of the state's bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species are not hunted or fished, and their conservation is an important part of the department's mission. Wildlife and its associated habitat generate significant tourism spending and play an important role in the state's environmental health, quality of life, and economic vitality.

As Washington's growing human population exerts increasing pressure on these species, state wildlife managers see an urgent need to preserve the diversity of Washington's wildlife and take steps to avoid federal actions under the Endangered Species Act that can limit the uses of private and public land. WDFW recently completed a "conservation strategy" that determined more than half of the 268 identified species are not receiving adequate conservation attention.

For many years, the state has funded these types of activities through the sale of personalized license plates and a specialty plate that features an image of a killer whale (orca). However, projected revenue from these sources is expected to fall \$1.3 million short of current spending levels in the next two-year budget cycle.

WDFW will seek \$1.3 million from the State General Fund in 2017 to continue ongoing efforts to recover, monitor, and conserve fish and wildlife species before they are at risk of dying out. Further enhancements are described below, along with other funding options for 2019-23.



### Remove barriers to salmon migration

A critical component of restoring salmon and steelhead populations is ensuring that these fish can reach their historic spawning grounds. Since 1999, the department and partner organizations have removed more than 6,600 fish-blocking culverts around the state, yet thousands more continue to impede fish passage.

To support salmon and steelhead recovery – as well as fisheries for those species – the department plans to seek funding in 2017 to:

- Complete an inventory of high-priority fish passage barriers in western Washington, which will serve as the basis for a plan and a capital funding request to correct them. (\$600,000 in capital budget funds)
- Provide additional support for Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, the network of citizen volunteers who do the hands-on work of replacing culverts and conducting other restoration projects in partnership with counties, cities and tribes around the state. (\$840,000 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Account and \$560,000 General Fund State)

## Improve the effectiveness of Hydraulic Project Approvals

Since 1943, the state's Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) program has played a key role in protecting fish life by regulating construction projects and other work in or near Washington waters. To support the goals of the HPA program, the department will request funds in 2017 to:

- Increase the number of habitat biologists available to provide technical assistance to shoreline landowners working on projects permitted under an HPA. (\$2.5 million from multiple sources)
- Increase the number of WDFW enforcement officers and establish a dedicated code enforcement program to ensure that everyone required to obtain an HPA does so and follows the permit conditions when working around shorelines. (\$900,000 from multiple sources)

## Fully compensate counties for tax revenue lost to state land purchases

WDFW owns and manages 33 wildlife areas whose highest priority is to preserve habitat for fish and wildlife. These lands and waters cover about 1 million acres statewide. They support education and academic research, as well as wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, and many other forms of recreation.

Each year, the department provides Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to the counties where its lands are located to compensate for the loss of local property taxes, which cannot be levied on state-owned lands. However, the 2012 Legislature froze those payments at the levels paid to the counties in 2009.

WDFW plans to ask state lawmakers in 2017 to remove the payment cap and allow 13 counties to receive PILT under open-space tax rates, as recommended in a 2013 study conducted by the Department of Revenue in collaboration with the Office of Financial Management and WDFW. The department plans to ask lawmakers to increase current PILT funding of \$3.2 million by \$1.3 million in 2017-19 and another \$1.7 million in 2019-21 to provide full funding to all counties.

## Hunters, anglers and conservation

Hunters and anglers have long supported wildlife and habitat conservation. In addition to getting involved in conservation in their local communities, hunters and anglers pay a federal tax on sporting firearms, ammunition, fishing tackle and boats, whose proceeds are used to protect the habitat of fish and game species. Hunting and fishing issues and the department's license fee proposals – are discussed in greater detail in the Wild Future hunting and fishing fact sheets.

## Options for 2019-23

The department plans to develop specific proposals for funding in the next two to four years to:

- Improve roads and trails, gates and fences, weed control and other basic land-management activities necessary to maintain state wildlife areas and restore WDFW's reputation among other property owners as a "good neighbor."
- Ensure the department's law enforcement staffing levels increase when WDFW acquires new lands.
- Add staff to work with communities to protect habitat in urban areas and forests.
- Expand efforts to help local land managers protect fish and wildlife.
- Increase the enforcement of laws that protect non-hunted wildlife from habitat destruction, poaching, and other activities that undermine recovery efforts.
- Add a veterinarian and habitat biologists to the WDFW staff to support efforts to protect non-hunted species, and engage citizen scientists and the public in those initiatives.
- Provide state funding for the department's Karelian Bear Dog program, which has been funded solely by donations since its inception.
- Eradicate marijuana being grown illegally on WDFW lands.
- Expand partnerships with local governments, private landowners, and non-profit organizations to protect and improve native wildlife habitat.