



## REFORMING HOW WE PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

Washingtonians value their natural environment. Our air, water, farms, forests, fish and wildlife are central to our quality of life, and a big reason visitors flock to our state. Over the decades, we have created an impressive set of protections to ensure our grandchildren will enjoy the same natural gifts.

Yet the time has come to reform the way we protect our natural resources. Key goals are to improve customer service and increase efficiencies while advancing the state's commitment to protecting and restoring natural resources and the environment. Agency directors and policy and budget experts have conducted six months of study and public outreach to reach these goals. Through an executive order, the Governor is formalizing the creation of a Natural Resources Cabinet to oversee work to improve customer service and deliver programs in the most efficient manner possible. In addition to creating the Cabinet, the executive order tasks its members to:



- » **Create 'one front door'** to improve citizens' access to environmental permits, technical information, recreational opportunities and other services now scattered among multiple agencies and offices. This will entail the development of common application processes, standardized forms and other improvements to make it easier for citizens to get the services they need without being bounced from one office to another.
- » **Simplify permitting** by expanding the use of a multi-agency permit team to cover all agencies' environmental permits for major projects in a geographic area and with a willing local government partner. This will create opportunities for streamlined permitting for all environmental regulations within the local jurisdiction, saving time, effort and money for permit seekers.
- » **Establish a single set of regional boundaries** for natural resource agencies with local field operations. Over time, more agency offices will be co-located to make it easier for the public to access local services.
- » **Direct the sharing of scientific expertise and monitoring work** so a scientist doing fieldwork for one agency can simultaneously collect data for another agency. This saves money and yields faster information sharing.

- » **Provide better access to consistent, accurate GIS (geographical information systems) data** to streamline and reduce duplication among multiple agencies providing the same information.

Based on preliminary work completed by the Cabinet, Governor Gregoire will take a set of recommendations to legislators in 2010 to:

- » **Reduce duplication** by cutting the number of growth management hearings boards from three to one, and reduce the number of environmental appeals boards from five to two while maintaining the rights of citizens to appeal decisions.
- » **Simplify** appeal procedures and timelines by creating just one appeal timeline for environmental and land use laws. This will eliminate the confusion that often results when businesses and citizens want to challenge a government environmental or land-use decision.
- » **Cut red tape** by eliminating agency review processes that duplicate appeals to environmental hearings boards. Appeals that now must be sent to agencies before going to a hearings board could be filed directly with the quasi-judicial board.



- » **Strengthen law enforcement** on public lands by allowing the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to share law enforcement on DNR-managed lands. Law enforcement also would be better served by allowing 140 DFW officers to assist the eight DNR officers when they respond to a timber theft, or other violations, on 5.6 million acres of DNR lands.

Governor Gregoire and other officials also have agreed to work closely to further integrate management of nearly 6.5 million acres of state resource lands. They will share expertise and reduce duplication.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources will develop a formal agreement for DNR to provide land management, real estate services, and survey and records management services to DFW for 840,000 acres of wildlife

conservation and recreation lands. DFW will retain authority over the lands and how they are used.

Washington has done a good job protecting its natural resources. Governor Gregoire believes the time has come to reform and streamline those protections to create a solid 21<sup>st</sup> century future for our environment as well as the people and businesses of our state.