



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife 2005-2012

Introduction

The state's native fish and wildlife are a focus of fascination and passionate conviction for many Washingtonians. Each year, more than 1 million people go fishing or hunting in the state and many more enjoy observing wildlife at home and afield.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is the primary steward of the resources that support these activities. We are responsible for ensuring that native species are conserved, survive and for providing sustainable fishing, hunting and wildlife-viewing opportunities throughout our state.

These responsibilities – along with competing demands for scarce natural resources – pose long-standing challenges for WDFW that show no sign of easing. Budget shortfalls stemming from the recent global economic recession have also added complexity to achieving the department's mission.

In response to the economic downturn, WDFW worked with Governor Christine Gregoire's administration to define key priorities, improve

business practices and further engage stakeholders in fish and wildlife management.

Despite a deep reduction in general-fund support, WDFW has expanded selective fisheries that protect wild salmon, accelerated reforms in the state's fish hatchery system, streamlined habitat-protection regulations and developed new management plans for an array of fish and wildlife species. Customer service improvements have made it easier for the public to access information online, comply with permit regulations, and buy recreational hunting and fishing licenses.

Strong relationships with key constituents enabled the department to gain widespread support for recent license fee increases that generated increased funding for fishing and hunting and other programs. A new source of revenue, the Discover Pass, is helping the department pay for operating costs at its 32 wildlife areas and 700 boat launches across the state.



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For more information:

Bruce Botka
Bruce.botka@dfw.wa.gov
902-2262

Craig Bartlett
Craig.bartlett@dfw.wa.gov
902-2259



wdfw.wa.gov

1. Maintaining core services

The last several years have been difficult for all who have had to make state budget decisions, as well as those who depend on state programs and services. The deep recession and persistently sluggish job market have stifled revenue growth and forced painful budget cuts across state government.

WDFW has worked hard during the recession to manage its programs for the benefit of all Washington residents and visitors, especially those in communities that count on the “outdoor economy” to support local jobs, public services and their overall vitality.

A striking example of the importance of WDFW resource management in rural communities occurred earlier this month, when The Daily World newspaper in Aberdeen took the unusual step of delaying its press run to ensure it could provide timely information about upcoming razor clam digging opportunities for its readers. Razor clam operations provide a substantial revenue base for businesses and residents of economically fragile communities along the Pacific Coast.

A 47-percent reduction in general-fund support

The effects of the economic downturn on WDFW have been profound. Since the 2007-09 biennium, state general fund support to the department has fallen from \$110 million to \$58 million – a 47-percent reduction.

WDFW responded by cutting layers of management and support positions, curtailing some programs while preserving core services, and developing new funding sources. License-holders have also provided increased support for department programs through increases approximately 20 percent in the cost of fishing and hunting licenses and other user fees.

Basic services remain intact but are stretched thin

Throughout this period, the department has worked hard to protect basic services for such essential functions as habitat protection, fishery management and enforcement. Now, however,



repeated budget cuts have left the department with limited capacity and very little flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

For example, after more than a decade of relatively lean funding following the 1994 merger of the former departments of Game and Fisheries, a 2008 study by the International Association of Chiefs of Police concluded that the number of WDFW Enforcement officers should be doubled to meet current demands and provide for a pro-active presence in rural areas.

Washington currently has only one Fish and Wildlife Police officer for every 50,000 residents and for every 13,000 WDFW license holders, and recent constraints have prevented the department from improving that ratio.

License fees increased and Discover Pass created

In 2011, the Legislature approved fishing and hunting license fee increases and implemented a new state recreation land parking permit known as the Discover Pass. Earlier, an endorsement fee

was put in place for Columbia River salmon and steelhead anglers, along with additional optional fees for activities such as two-pole fishing.

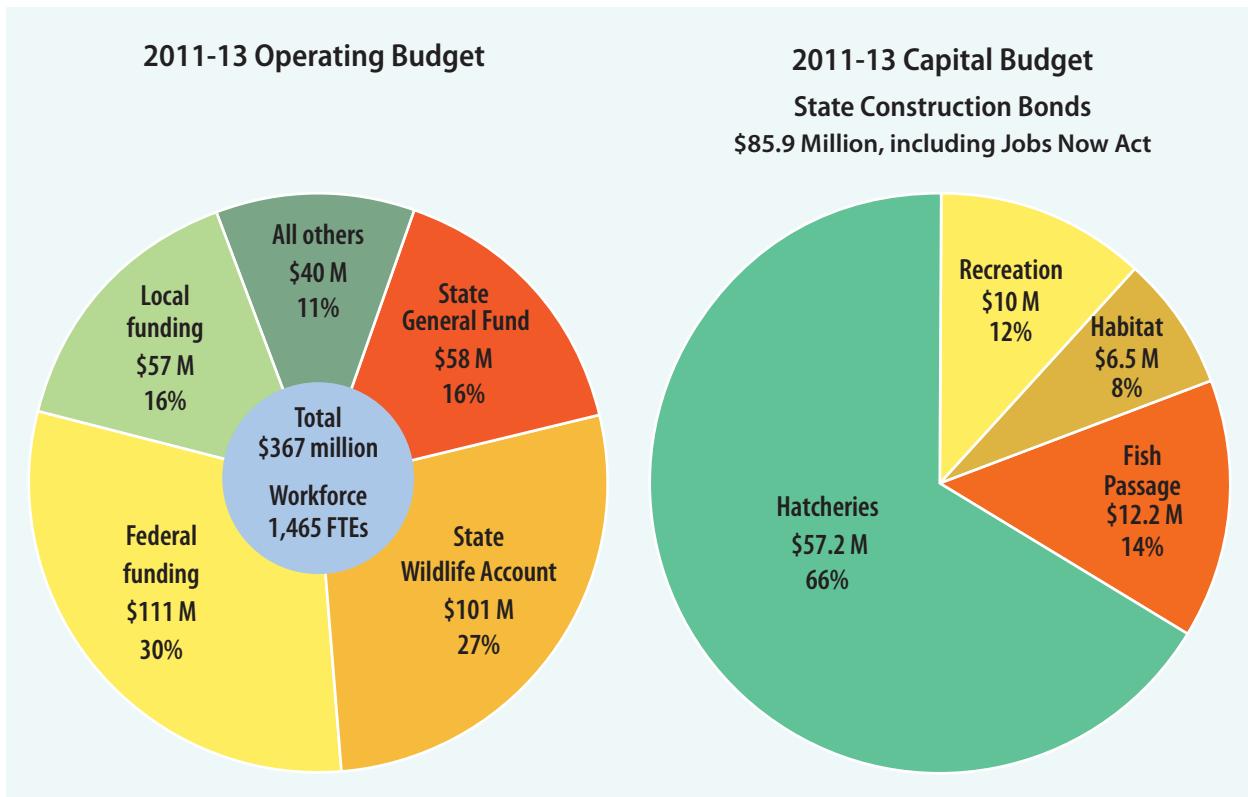
The department developed the Discover Pass in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources and the Parks and Recreation Commission. WDFW and DNR each receive 8 percent of Discover Pass revenue to manage recreation lands and facilities. Nearly 50 percent of the total revenue comes from sales through the WDFW license system.

Limited general-fund support but statewide public benefit

Currently, less than 20 percent of the department's total operating budget comes from the state general fund. Activities supported by general revenue are generally limited to enforcement activity, environmental permitting and various conservation programs, such as fish management, coastal hatchery production, and salmon recovery efforts.

Half of the department's overall budget comes from federal and local sources for a variety of purposes,





including mitigation for the loss of habitat for fish and wildlife species. The remaining one-third comes from user fees – mostly fishing and hunting licenses – which are dedicated to supporting those opportunities.

License fee increases supported by user groups

User groups provided critical support for the license fee increases and for the difficult management and budgeting decisions required by the loss of state general revenues. In fact, several leaders of fishing and hunting groups took the unusual step of asking state legislators to increase their license fees to support WDFW operations.

However, healthy fish and wildlife populations benefit all Washingtonians, supporting commercial and recreational opportunities that generate jobs and provide economic benefits throughout the state. Despite the loss of general fund revenues in recent years, WDFW has worked to maintain these broad-based benefits for the people and visitors of Washington state.

Substantial new investment in the capital budget

Historically, the department's biennial capital budget has averaged about \$20 million in state funds, which has contributed to a projected 10-year, \$400 million backlog of needed preservation projects.

In 2012, the Governor and Legislature increased the department's capital budget by including \$67.5 million in state funds for WDFW capital facilities in the 2012 Jobs Now Act. This represented an important recognition of the economic importance of the WDFW's capital facilities throughout the state.

The bulk of capital funding supports the agency's 83 fish hatcheries, as well as its work to improve fish passages and add vital spawning grounds for endangered species. In addition, these funds are essential for opening new fishing and hunting areas, ensuring safe access to existing areas, and limiting damage to private property.

2. Improving the way we do business

En before the repeated revenue shortfalls and budget cuts of recent years, the department was working to update and improve its business practices to maintain core functions and improve services to customers across the state. Here are just four examples of how we have improved our efficiency, effectiveness and customer service.

Improvements in the WILD license sales system

We have worked aggressively to improve the business system most relevant to our customers--the electronic recreational licensing system known as WILD. More than 1 million citizens and about 600 retail vendors use the WILD licensing system and our goal was to make it easier for them to do business with us.

By using Lean Management principles and practices (see performance and accountability section), we:

- Saved \$4.5 million from fiscal year 2008 through 2012 by instituting performance-based contracting methods.
- Reduced system defects by 98 percent and improved the process for interacting with license vendors and customers. Calls for assistance declined from 141,000 in 2007 to fewer than 51,000 in 2010.
- Reduced the time required to print and mail permits and licenses purchased online. In the past, it took up to three weeks. Today, the average is less than three days.
- Met the Governor's call center performance measure by answering at least 90 percent of incoming calls within 60 seconds.

More effective use of information technology

Department managers also restructured and refocused information technology activities, trimming non-core functions and reducing



staff by 20 percent. Our information technology unit has undergone significant business process re-engineering and culture change to adopt international standards for IT business process. We applied Lean efficiency methods to significantly improve management of employee computer hardware and improved the practices we use to prioritize and schedule scarce IT resources.

We also use web technology to make it easier for customers to find information and do business with the department. These activities range from participating in a broad effort to develop a state business portal to using web-based tools to help individuals access information about wildlife areas, Puget Sound shellfish opportunities or filing seasonal harvest reports.

Prioritizing general-fund expenditures

Pressure on the state's general fund and resulting cuts in general fund support to the department forced us to make painful staff and spending reductions. However, these changes also prompted executive managers to clarify priorities for general-fund expenditures, implement a more effective system to track fund balances, and work with stakeholders to identify work that could be supported by user fees.

Improved oversight of capital projects and facility maintenance

Maintaining a public investment in WDFW facilities and lands—including a system of 83 fish hatcheries—is the focus of the WDFW Capital and Asset Management program. We have made significant business process improvements during the past five years to improve strategic planning and project management.

We have developed:

- **A project scheduling system** to forecast staff and resource needs and improve overall project management.
- **A system to assess** the condition of WDFW facilities to focus on the highest-priority capital needs.

- **A system to predict annual maintenance requirements**, particularly for department fish hatcheries.
- **Project management tools** to improve budget planning for specific projects, and more effectively balance project's scope against available funding.
- **An improved capital budgeting process** more closely linked to the agency's strategic plan.
- **Establishment of meaningful performance measures** using the principles articulated through the Governor's GMAP process. Performance measures focus on program outcomes, facility function and safety and customer satisfaction.



3. Conserving fish & wildlife

State law directs WDFW to “preserve, protect and perpetuate” the state’s native fish and wildlife, while also providing fishing and hunting opportunities for the people of the state. Balancing these dual responsibilities, along with countless other factors affecting the future of fish and wildlife, is the department’s primary occupation.

Resource managers agree that the primary factor affecting Washington’s fish and wildlife is the rapid growth of the state’s human population, which has increased by one-third in the past 20 years. All efforts to preserve the state’s fish and wildlife take place against a backdrop of expanding residential and commercial development, which displaces species from their native habitat, degrades the natural environment and subjects fish and wildlife to a variety of other pressures.

Despite some recent success stories – including the American bald eagle – the number of species listed as threatened or endangered by WDFW or federal agencies has continued to increase. In keeping with its mandate, WDFW identifies and carries out the measures needed to restore these species.

But WDFW’s responsibilities are not limited to tending to fish and wildlife species that have been identified for special protection. Indeed, a major goal of the department is to “keep common species common,” and to manage both game and non-game species so they don’t need special protection under the law. To that end, WDFW regulates

fishing and hunting to ensure those species are sustained in healthy numbers. Most policies and regulations must first be approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, the nine-member governing board appointed by the Governor.

Many management decisions draw intense public interest, whether the issue involves the allocation of fish between recreational and commercial fisheries or the killing of one species to protect another.

Gray wolves

No issue generated more public attention in recent years than the department’s efforts to manage gray wolves, which began migrating back into Washington from neighboring states and western Canada in the past decade. Historically vilified for preying on livestock, gray wolves were trapped, shot, and poisoned in Washington to the point that the species was scarcely seen or heard for more than 70 years.

As of 2012, gray wolves were listed as an endangered species statewide under state law and under federal law in the western two-thirds of the state.

In 2007, a year before the arrival of the state’s first wolf pack was confirmed, WDFW began working with a 17-member citizen advisory group to develop a plan to manage the controversial species.

In 2011, after five years of public and scientific review, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the state’s Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

The plan provides a framework for wolves’ recovery in Washington, including recovery goals for each of three regions in the state, strategies for minimizing predation on livestock and compensation for ranchers who lose cattle to wolf predation. While emphasizing the use of non-lethal deterrents, the plan authorizes WDFW to kill wolves that repeatedly attack



domestic animals as in all other states with growing wolf populations.

That provision was put to the test in September of 2012 after a two-month effort to stop repeated attacks by one wolf pack on a rancher's cattle in northeastern Washington. When non-lethal measures failed, WDFW killed seven members of the pack – one of eight packs then confirmed in the state – in an effort to preserve public tolerance for wolves in rural areas most affected by their presence. Wildlife managers were concerned that wolves would face an increasingly hostile reception if the public lost confidence in the department's ability to manage the species.

Despite the elimination of the wolf pack, state wildlife managers were confident that wolf recovery was proceeding more quickly than expected in Washington. A week after the so-called Wedge pack was eliminated, biologists confirmed the existence of a new wolf pack on the Colville Indian Reservation.

California sea lions

Controversy has also surrounded WDFW's participation in a joint effort to deter California sea lions from preying on threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead below Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River. Partners in that effort, which began in 2005, include the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Since 2002, a growing number of California sea lions gathered each spring immediately below the dam, where salmon and steelhead congregate before they move up the dam's fish ladders to spawn upstream. The Army Corps estimates sea lion predation on salmon and steelhead grew from



about 1,000 fish in 2002 to more than 6,000 fish in 2010.

In 2005, boat-based "hazing" teams from all three agencies have attempted to drive sea lions away from the area using underwater firecrackers, rubber buckshot and other non-lethal measures. When those tactics failed to slow predation, NOAA-Fisheries authorized Washington, Oregon and Idaho to remove individual California sea lions documented as preying on salmon and steelhead below the dam. That authority was granted under Section 120 of the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Since then, the states have captured and euthanized 36 California sea lions and placed 11 in zoos and aquaria around the nation – the preferred method of removal so long as institutions will take the animals. Since 2010, the number of California sea lions feeding below the dam has declined significantly as has the number of salmon lost to predation.

About 20 to 30 percent of the fish moving past the dam are listed as threatened or endangered by NOAA-Fisheries. The California sea lion population, on the other hand, has rebounded to historic high levels in recent decades under the protection of the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Fishery managers note that an extraordinary effort has been made in recent years to protect and recover salmon and steelhead populations, requiring changes in fisheries, hatchery practices and dam operations. From WDFW's perspective, the initiative to reduce sea lion predation on vulnerable salmon and steelhead runs is consistent with those efforts.

Salmon and steelhead

With 17 populations of salmon and steelhead currently listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, salmon and steelhead recovery has been a top priority for resource managers. Nearly half of WDFW's total budget for fish and fisheries is dedicated to restoring those stocks, although most of those funds come from federal and other non-state sources.

To measure progress toward recovery, WDFW developed the Salmon Conservation and Reporting Engine (SCoRE), an interactive, web-based tool to track recovery of the state's ESA-listed salmon and steelhead populations.

Since state and treaty Indian tribes' jurisdiction and authority overlap in the field of salmon and steelhead management, the department and tribes have pursued a cooperative management approach to exercise their authority and achieve shared conservation objectives.

Effective resource co-management is among the key outcomes identified in department's 21st Century Salmon and Steelhead Initiative, developed in recent years to ensure that cross-program efforts are coordinated and focused on long-term recovery objectives. Through the initiative, management decisions on hatchery operations, harvest management and habitat protection are coordinated to restore salmon and steelhead populations and meet sustainable fishery goals.

Puget Sound Chinook salmon management has been a contentious topic for fishers and environmental and conservation organizations. The department has devoted significant effort



toward developing a new Puget Sound Chinook Resource management plan in order to secure federal authorization for sport and commercial fisheries under the Endangered Species Act. The department must work to ensure that fisheries are sustainable, focused principally on hatchery fish and managed consistently within federal ESA recovery needs.

Hatchery Operations

WDFW resource managers have also worked to ensure the department's own hatchery practices support wild salmon and steelhead recovery. WDFW has worked with federal natural resource agencies and a regional scientific panel known as the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) to identify ways to minimize adverse impacts of hatchery operations on wild fish stocks, while contributing to sustainable fisheries.

The HSRG conducted a comprehensive review of 178 hatchery programs and 351 salmon and steelhead populations in Puget Sound, coastal Washington and the Columbia River basin. The resulting population-specific recommendations are aimed at providing scientific guidance for improved hatchery management. Under these guidelines, the number of fish released should be tailored to the available habitat in a given watershed, to avoid overwhelming feeding and spawning resources used by wild fish. The department has developed Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans for more than 100 state hatchery programs.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission has set an ambitious schedule for hatchery reform, aimed at reducing biological risks to wild fish, increasing the selectivity of fisheries targeting hatchery fish and shifting selective fishing opportunities as needed to support wild fish conservation.

Puget Sound rockfish

Another key effort in fish recovery has focused on Puget Sound rockfish populations, which have plummeted due to historical fishing practices, chemical contamination, and lost or abandoned fishing nets.

In 2011, WDFW completed the Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan to address the decline. The plan lays out a pathway to protect existing rockfish populations, rebuild depleted stocks and provide sustainable fishing practices. It offers a framework for state fish managers to follow in developing regulations, establishing priorities and working with tribal co-managers. Developed with input from an ad-hoc advisory group, the plan incorporates input from an extensive public review process that drew 1,100 public comments.

Groundfish and lingcod

WDFW has played a leadership role in enhancing groundfish conservation and management on the Washington coast. The department worked within the Pacific Fishery Management Council to implement an individual quota program for the West Coast groundfish fishery. This program includes full observer coverage and an electronic catch accounting system that will greatly improve the conservation of fish stocks and regulation enforcement while providing marketing opportunities for fishers.

Preliminary results indicate that bycatch of non-targeted rockfish has been reduced by 50 to 100 percent while the average per-vessel catch of targeted fish has increased 20 percent over the

2006-2010 average. Average revenue per vessel has increased by 38 percent over the recent five-year average.

WDFW has led the way in advocating a higher conservation standard in West Coast fisheries management. One example is the lingcod fishery, where curtailing over-harvest in coastal and offshore waters has resulting in a rebuilt stock now at the highest level seen in decades. Under our new management approach, lingcod will support healthy sport and commercial fisheries far into the future.

Derelict crab gear

Cleaning up abandoned crab fishing gear off the Washington coast has been the focus of another WDFW conservation effort. In 2009, the department initiated two programs to involve commercial fishers in removing derelict gear that can trap and kill a variety of marine life. By the end of 2011, a total of 85 metric tons of gear had been recovered, including more than 1,500 crab pots and miles of lost line, and additional work will continue in the fall of 2012.

In addition, through a grant from NOAA's Community Based Marine Debris Removal Program, commercial fishers removed more than 23 metric tons of crab gear, representing more than 400 crab pots, before the grant expired in December 2011.





Invasive species

Aquatic invasive species are causing increasing damage to Washington's land, water, fish and wildlife. Without natural predators, these invaders can displace native animals, destroy natural habitat and cause billions of dollars of damage to public infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and hydroelectric dams. WDFW has played a leading role in blocking aquatic invaders since 2007, when the state established a permanent source of funding for a comprehensive aquatic invasive species.

Boat inspections: Since 2007, WDFW has helped to stop nearly 50 non-commercial boat haulers and boaters from transporting highly invasive zebra and quagga mussels into our state. Many of the infested boats were stopped at mandatory highway check stations, where department staff inspects boats being towed along key highways. Boats are also inspected by WDFW enforcement staff during emphasis patrols, boater safety inspections and during Washington State Patrol Port of Entry inspections. Voluntary inspections at boat launches have been an important method for outreach and education, and WDFW is encouraging local governments and private citizens to set up their own prevention programs.

Columbia River Basin Team: The department works closely with neighboring states through the 100th Meridian Initiative, which has been successful in keeping zebra and quagga mussels out of the entire Columbia River Basin – the last large river basin outside Alaska to remain free. A regional rapid response plan was signed by the

Governor in 2008, and state partners hold annual table-top exercises to test and revise the plan as necessary.

Ballast water management: Washington was one of the first Pacific states to implement a ballast water management program, and a world leader in ballast water exchange effectiveness research. This is an important issue for a state that sees an average of 4,000 vessel arrivals that discharge over 15 million cubic meters of ballast water each year into Puget Sound, the Columbia River, and coastal ports. Under the program, two ballast water inspectors board over 300 vessels each year, significantly improving compliance with state laws from a low of 39 percent in 2004 to more than 90 percent in 2012.

Japanese tsunami debris: In June of 2012, a large dock washed ashore in Oregon carrying a thriving and diverse colony of non-native and highly invasive species, alerting WDFW and other agencies to a new pathway for infestation. The dock identified as debris from the tsunami generated by the devastating earthquake that hit Japan in March of 2011. Just weeks after the dock washed ashore, a 21-foot boat was found at Cape Disappointment on the Washington coast and was also confirmed to be tsunami debris.

WDFW led the investigation for invasive species and found the boat was heavily fouled by Japanese coastal species not native to Washington. Based on WDFW's expertise in invasive species, the department has since led the development of key provisions of the state's tsunami-debris response plan and is working with other members of the response team to educate others on the plan.

4. Preserving and restoring habitat

The department is dedicated to protecting, conserving and restoring the ecosystems and habitats necessary for the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife populations throughout the state. We strive to ensure sustainable land and water use, thereby improving the quality of life for our citizens and the economic vitality of our communities.

The urgency of these activities is underscored by the following impacts of human development:

- **90 percent** of the state's original old-growth forests have been lost.
- **70 percent** of coastal grasslands and estuaries have been altered or destroyed.
- **50 percent** of the natural habitat near the state's rivers and streams have been altered or destroyed.

Restoration of Columbia River salmon habitat

A recent habitat-related achievement occurred in 2009, when the Governor and WDFW entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the federal agencies that operate the Columbia River Power System –the Bonneville Power Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation -- that committed \$40.5 million in federal funds for WDFW to restore salmon habitat in the lower Columbia River estuary.

Restoring shallow water habitat in the estuary is a key component of the larger Columbia basin effort to recover endangered salmon populations.

WDFW is currently implementing several restoration projects under the agreement and is scoping more projects. We expect several thousand acres of estuary habitat will have been restored for salmon use when the MOA expires in 2017.

Land acquisition and habitat management

Residential and commercial development in Washington's suburbs and rural areas continues to reduce the amount and quality of habitat for fish and wildlife. To compensate, lawmakers have directed WDFW to preserve critical habitat by acquiring land and conservation easements, water rights and other property.

Today, the department owns or manages nearly 1 million acres across the state and provides public recreation access at 32 designated wildlife areas and about 700 boat launches. The Department owns or manages only about 2 percent of the state's total land area, but these lands provide both environmental benefits to the state and economic benefits to communities whose economies depend on tourism and recreation-related consumer spending.

In the past eight years, the department completed 181 transactions that increased the state's land portfolio by nearly 72,000 acres, focusing on preserving habitat for threatened and endangered species. Key transactions included:

- A two-part land exchange in 2011 and 2012 between WDFW and DNR that enabled the agencies to preserve habitat, maintain recreation opportunity, generate money for



public schools and other beneficiaries of DNR-managed trust lands, and improve the efficiency of their land management activity. In the first exchange, WDFW transferred 5,400 acres in Yakima, Kittitas and Okanogan counties to DNR in exchange for 9,000 acres of wildlife habitat and recreation lands. In the second phase, WDFW exchanged 12,400 acres of high-elevation forestland in Eastern Washington for 25,800 acres of DNR's shrub-steppe and low-elevation forestlands.

- **The purchase of 7,700 acres** in Kittitas County in 2011 from the Nature Conservancy and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation completed a 10,000-acre expansion of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area as part of the "Heart of the Cascades" project. The \$4.6 million purchase preserves an area that supports many threatened and endangered species, including spotted owls, bull trout and steelhead, and game species such as elk and bighorn sheep.

- **The \$9.1 million purchase** in 2009 of 2,808 acres along the West Branch of the Little Spokane River known as the Rustler's Gulch property. This Pend Oreille County parcel lies between two popular fishing areas, Fan and Horseshoe lakes, and its preservation will help preserve the lakes' water quality as well as supporting many bird and game species.

WDFW receives funds for conservation and recreation lands from several sources, including the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program which has allowed WDFW to leveraged millions in federal grants from programs such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.

Discover Pass helps maintain access

Keeping public lands open and operating is essential to maintaining recreational opportunities for the millions of Washingtonians who enjoy hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities.





When recent budget reductions threatened the state's ability to keep parks and recreation lands open, WDFW teamed with the Department of Natural Resources

and the Parks and Recreation Commission to develop the Discover Pass, a recreation lands parking permit approved by the 2011 Legislature.

The department's Licensing Division played a crucial role in Discover Pass startup. Just weeks after lawmakers authorized the program, we designed and implemented the Discover Pass sales and distribution policies and systems to provide operating revenue to ensure continued public access to parks and other state-managed recreation lands. WDFW sold and/or distributed 380,000 passes in the program's first year.

The State Park system receives 84 percent of Discover Pass revenue, while WDFW and DNR each receive 8 percent. WDFW uses the revenue to manage wildlife areas and boat launches for public access. In fiscal year 2012, about 15 percent of the WDFW Lands Division's operating budget came from the sale of the Discover Pass.

Streamlining Hydraulic Project Approvals

Under a legislative mandate dating back to 1949, WDFW operates the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) program to review construction projects in or near state waters to ensure they do not harm fish habitat. We review about 4,500 proposed projects annually, work with applicants to help them plan projects that protect fish life, and monitor compliance with permit conditions and the projects' environmental impact.

In 2012, the Legislature integrated the fish-protection standards of the HPA

program with those of the state's forest practices permit process, thereby eliminating the need for two permits in many cases. The legislation also authorized a \$150 per-project application fee to help meet the cost of processing the state permit required for construction projects in and around state waters. This permit streamlining is expected to be completed by December 2013.

Technical assistance to support habitat protection

WDFW helps local governments do their part to protect habitat by providing landscape-scale planning and technical expertise. The department maps habitat data and provides biological, engineering and planning expertise to other agencies, tribe and non-governmental organizations to further habitat conservation and restoration. These partners rely on the department's technical assistance in making informed conservation decisions on matter such as shoreline management, critical area ordinances and water resource management.

The Department also offers habitat guidelines through the Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) effort, including PHS on the Web, an interactive map that allows citizens, landowners, cities, counties, tribal governments, developers, conservation groups and others to find basic information about the location of important habitats and wildlife species. PHS is a source of



best-available science that can inform local planning activities, development projects, conservation strategies, incentive programs, and numerous other land use applications.

Minimizing the impact of energy development

The department also works with operators of hydroelectric dams, wind power facilities and other energy projects to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife.

A major accomplishment of the past eight years was the adoption in 2009 of updated Wind Power Guidelines, developed in collaboration with wind energy developers, county planners, representatives of environmental groups, and state and federal resource managers and scientists.

Restoration of Puget Sound nearshore habitat

The Department plays a central role in administering the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP), a



collaboration between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Washington, represented by WDFW. A central element of this program is a “general investigation” feasibility study to evaluate significant ecosystem degradation near the shorelines of the Puget Sound basin; to develop and evaluate potential solutions to these problems; and to recommend a series of actions with federal and local involvement.

The PSNERP effort produced a scientifically rigorous assessment that identified 36 priority sites that required action to restore nearshore function in the Puget Sound basin. WDFW developed preliminary engineering for each site, with the intention of securing large-scale authority for the Army Corps of Engineers to fund the restoration efforts.

Today, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources are using PSNERP science to direct spending from the EPA’s national estuary program fund toward activities that will make a substantial contribution to the recovery of the Puget Sound ecosystem.

The PSNERP project also led to the development of the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program to protect and restore the nearshore habitat. ESRP has restored a total of 2,094 acres of Puget Sound habitat since its inception, including 386 acres since 2006.



5. Maintaining opportunity

The department manages the state's fish and wildlife populations to ensure their survival and to provide sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities. Besides offering popular outdoor opportunities for well over a million people per year, these native resources provide thousands of jobs in settings ranging from sporting goods stores to fishing trawlers. Together, fishing and hunting generate \$5.2 billion annually for local economies across the state.

The department uses field studies and harvest reports to assess the health of fish and wildlife populations and develops seasons and opportunities with extensive public input. With a number of wild salmon populations and other species under protection as threatened or endangered, fishing opportunities must be carefully planned and managed.

Mark-selective salmon fisheries

One of the biggest changes in fishing over the past decade has been the expansion of selective fisheries for Chinook and Coho salmon. In 1991, WDFW tested its first mark-selective fishery for salmon off the state's southern coast, requiring anglers to release any Coho they caught that were not clearly

marked as hatchery fish. Today, the majority of all salmon and steelhead fisheries are mark-selective, allowing anglers to catch their limit of hatchery fish while preserving weak wild stocks – many protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

To make this possible, hatchery crews mark more than 100 million juvenile salmon each year before they are released from state and tribal hatcheries. When these fish return to spawn, anglers can distinguish them from wild fish by their clipped adipose fins.

If WDFW had not begun mass-marking hatchery fish for identification, many state fisheries would have been closed or greatly curtailed. The department applied selective fishing rules to Columbia River summer Chinook for the first time in 2010, and to the ocean Chinook fishery in 2011.

But mark-selective fisheries cost more to implement than traditional fisheries, given the extra expense of marking fish and monitoring the catch. In 2009, when budget constraints threatened many popular fisheries with closure, the Legislature authorized the Columbia River Recreational Salmon and Steelhead Program



endorsement, an \$8.75 annual fee for Columbia River recreational salmon fishers. Funds generated from the endorsement fee support the continuation and expansion of selective fisheries in the Columbia River basin. Without this support many popular fisheries would be limited or eliminated.

Hunting access on private lands

Since about half of all land in Washington is under private ownership, many hunting opportunities rely on the willingness of landowners to open their lands. Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through negotiated “Feel Free to Hunt,” “Register to Hunt” and other agreements.

But until recently, landowner participation in those agreements had declined significantly as more agricultural and forestlands were converted to residential development and other uses. In 2010, about a million acres of private land remained open to hunting, compared to 3 million acres a decade earlier.

In 2010, WDFW launched an initiative to reverse that trend, using about \$400,000 raised through changes in the department’s application process for special-hunt permits. In addition, the department later qualified for \$1.8 million in additional funding from the U.S. Farm Service Agency.

As of late 2012, the department had increased the amount of private lands available to hunters by 35,000 acres under agreements that provide cash incentives to landowners who agree to participate in the program. Some landowners also receive compensation for planting crops that attract birds or agreeing to accommodate duck blinds on their property.

Under a separate arrangement, the Weyerhaeuser Company has opened up to 250,000 acres of timberland to elk hunting near Mount St. Helens on the condition that WDFW enlists enough volunteers to ensure a safe and orderly hunt. Since 2007, the first year of the agreement, WDFW has enlisted 50 to 60 volunteers each year orient hunters, staff access points and maintain safety buffers between hunters and active Weyerhaeuser operations.

Besides increasing recreational opportunities for hunters, the access program has also helped to reduce the size of the St. Helens elk herd – a key goal of the department’s management plan for that area. The elk herd, the largest in the state, had exceeded the carrying capacity of the area habitat, resulting in high winter-starvation levels over the past decade. Surveys show mortality rates from starvation have declined significantly in recent years.



6. Protecting public health, safety and the environment

With statewide jurisdiction and general law-enforcement authority, WDFW Enforcement officers protect both fish and wildlife species and the 6 million people who recreate outdoors in Washington each year. WDFW officers encounter and respond to wildlife-related calls for assistance, and they pursue a wide range of illegal activity on recreation lands and elsewhere.

Like other state programs, the Enforcement Program has been significantly affected by scarce resources. WDFW officers make more than 225,000 enforcement contacts annually, but in the face of steady growth population in the state's population and call for service, officers are taxed to meet the growing workload. Since the mid-1990s, the number of WDFW officers has fallen by 20 percent while the population has grown at about that same rate.

Our officers' responsibilities are very broad. They are responsible for enforcing laws and regulations designed to:

- Protect public health and safety;
- Address dangerous wildlife / human conflicts;
- Protect fish and wildlife species and their habitat;
- Promote compliance with hunting and fishing regulations; and
- Regulate commercial fish and shellfish harvesting.

Through agreements with other jurisdictions, we also enforce federal laws, Oregon state statutes, and county ordinances.

WDFW officers partner with other state and local agencies to boating laws on state and federal waters and to enforce the law in state and federal parks and forest lands.



WDFW officers engage in search and rescue response and perform approximately 12 percent of the vessel safety inspections statewide each year. In 2011, WDFW's marine enforcement program was named the Law Enforcement Boating Program of the Year by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Over the past decade, WDFW's public recreation lands have been the scene of increasing criminal activity, including garbage dumping, vandalism and marijuana grows. This state currently ranks second in the nation for illegal marijuana cultivation, only behind California. Banned chemical use, illegal water diversions and armed growers threaten the safety of legitimate users and the habitat.

Response to conflicts with predatory animals

One of the department's most-publicized Enforcement functions is to respond to encounters between livestock and dangerous wildlife such as bears, cougars and wolves. The department emphasizes public education and prevention, as well as landowner cooperation, to limit and mitigate wildlife conflicts. As a result, some types of complaints have declined over the last few



years. The number of cougar complaints involving human or pet/livestock interactions in 2010 was its lowest point in a decade.

One recent initiative, the Karelian Bear Dog Program, offers a valuable new tool to deal with wildlife conflict. The dogs – specifically trained to deter and repel bears – are paired with WDFW Enforcement officers, and together they have responded to hundreds of bear and cougar incidents, often resolving them without euthanizing wildlife.

Despite these successes, human population growth and the resulting loss of wildlife habitat continue to generate conflict involving various predators. For example, complaints about black bears in 2010 were up 46 percent over 2009, and two incidents involved attacks on humans.

Predation on livestock is an ongoing challenge that is receiving increasing public attention, especially as gray wolves re-establish themselves in Washington under the terms of the state Wolf Conservation and Wildlife Plan.

Addressing environmental threats

To combat environmental threats, WDFW Enforcement has developed and implemented several strategies, including collaborating with

volunteers on clean-up efforts and with other law enforcement agencies on emphasis patrols.

A marijuana eradication team made up of specially trained WDFW officers complements a larger law enforcement effort to keep industrial marijuana growing off public lands. The team has responded to more than 100 reports of growing operations on public lands in Eastern Washington in the past two years.

WDFW officers also protect public health and safety by ensuring that shellfish sold in retail markets and restaurants have been legally harvested from approved locations.

Ensuring hunter safety

The Department also promotes public safety through its Hunter Education Program, required for all new hunters born after 1971. Firearm safety, environmental awareness, wildlife conservation and basic outdoor skills are included in the training program. Over the past two years, 22,651 students successfully completed the training. The success of this program would not be possible without the work of dedicated volunteers. More than 900 certified Hunter Education instructors have contributed more than 65,000 instructional hours to teach the hunters of today and tomorrow.

7. Connecting with stakeholders

At WDFW, our connection to stakeholders begins at the top, with a nine-member citizen commission that sets policy direction for the agency. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission – with members appointed by the Governor – ensures that stakeholder and public voices are heard and considered on all the department's vital business. Our Fish, Wildlife, Habitat and Enforcement programs all rely on advisory committees composed of key stakeholders, and our Licensing Division maintains close connections with the 600 vendors who sell licenses to the public.

Extensive public involvement in 2011 wolf plan

Stakeholder involvement was a key element of one of the department's most significant accomplishments of the past eight years – the development of the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. The department began developing the plan in 2007 as wolves began migrating into Washington from Canada and Idaho and re-establishing themselves decades after they were virtually eliminated in the state.

Government's role in wolf recovery is highly controversial, requiring extensive public involvement in the planning process. The department assembled a 17-member advisory committee to guide the plan's development, with members representing key constituencies across the spectrum of public opinion, from cattle

ranchers and farm groups to sportsmen's clubs and conservationists.

The commission's adoption of the plan in December 2011 did not end the controversy surrounding wolf recovery. But it provided a solid foundation for future conservation and management decisions that balanced sound science with extensive public involvement.

The wolf plan might be the most contentious issue with which the department's has dealt in recent years, but it is hardly the only one. As the state's primary steward of fish and wildlife, the department receives intense public scrutiny and news media interest whenever it gets involved in situations involving people and predators.

Timely, accurate communication with local news media, residents and police is always required when wild animals move into populated areas. In recent years, WDFW Enforcement officers were lead responders in several memorable wildlife encounters, such as when:

- A cougar made an appearance in Seattle's Discovery Park;
- A black bear set off alarms outside student housing units near the University of Washington;
- Coyotes became unusually aggressive in a suburban Bellevue neighborhood; and
- A moose made itself at home in a Spokane garage.



Communicating with the news media and with citizens who hold passionate and often opposing views of wildlife management is a routine element of daily business at the department.

Technology provides new communication options

With the growth of web-based business tools, social media and mobile communications, the way we communicate with citizens has changed dramatically in recent years. In the past four years alone, the department has turned to social media to expand the ways we talk to our stakeholders, launching a Twitter feed and Facebook pages that today are some of the most-followed in state government. Among other initiatives, we were active participants in the administration's effort to develop a "One Front Door" web portal for those seeking natural-resource information.

These efforts have produced measureable results:

- Between 2005 and 2011, traffic to the WDFW website increased by an average of 16.5 percent per year – 218 percent overall. In 2011, our website received 97 million hits.
- In August 2010, we successfully launched a completely redesigned website.
- In June 2010, we launched our first Facebook page. Today we have two pages – one for the entire agency and one dedicated to Enforcement activities – with more than 8,200 "likes."



- Between 2005 and 2012, more than 45,000 people subscribed to email distribution lists for news releases and a wide range of information about all of the department's programs.

- Add watchable wildlife cameras – top destination on our website.
- Over the last eight years our Wildlife Program added 13 video cameras to the network of "WildWatchCams" that show otherwise difficult-to-see wildlife such as eagles, bats, salmon and seals in their native habitat across the state. The cameras are partially funded by private donations and the sale of personalized license plates. The cameras are among the most popular features of the WDFW website.

Better communication improves efficiency

Our efforts are not only designed to "get the word out." Timely, accurate communication is vital to helping the department's 1,500 employees do their jobs every day and to improving service to our customers.

Here are some examples of how the department is using 21st century communication tools and techniques to communicate more effectively with the public and operate more efficiently:

- The department's Enforcement staff encourage citizens to text their tips on poaching and other wildlife violations. By creating partnerships with our constituents, we are increasingly successful in gaining their trust and providing them an opportunity to help protect the resources that are so valuable to them.
- The department strategically issues smart phones to employees who need to be constantly available to their colleagues, to ensure they have the capacity to obtain information via voice and data downloads across the state. This is especially important given the number of agency employees whose "offices" are often in remote locations in the Cascades, the backcountry of Eastern Washington, or the waters of Puget Sound.
- Since January 2012, the Enforcement Program has used social media—including a Facebook page, an Outdoor Police Beat blog, and YouTube videos—to promote public understanding of natural resource policing and to recruit new personnel into this highly professional law enforcement organization.

- We also use information technology to improve our customers' outdoor recreation experiences and their ability to communicate with us. Our redesigned website includes several online mapping applications that allow users to get in-depth information about fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. We also launched web-based applications for hunters to report their season's harvest and posted online survey forms to collect citizen feedback.
- Technology-aided document handling and retention practices have enabled us to fulfill a steadily increasing number of public disclosure requests with no increase in staff. From 2005 to 2011, the number of requests increased from 360 to 533, and this year's requests are up a further 20 percent. Throughout this period, we have had just one full-time staff person to coordinate our responses.

Social media improving Enforcement Program effectiveness

Social media allows our Enforcement officers to engage the community, receive and send information, dispel myths and rumors, educate the public about natural resource law enforcement, and reach many more people than we could through traditional means.

For example, in 2011, the Enforcement Program rolled out a new Hunter Education/Turn-In-A-Poacher Trailer. This trailer and associated training material and poached wildlife display is intended to engage the hunting and general public in direct protection of natural resources and to promote Hunter Education, including the recruitment of volunteer instructors.

The trailer also is the primary community policing and outreach tool used by Fish and Wildlife Police Officers at county fairs, sportsman's shows, outdoor events and other venues throughout the state.



8. Performance and accountability

When Governor Gregoire took office in 2005, she secured passage of legislation emphasizing the importance of quality management, performance, and accountability. Like other agencies, WDFW embraced the direction in House Bill 1970 to “develop and implement a quality management, accountability, and performance system to improve the public services it provides.”

Focusing on improved performance

In 2006, the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the department staff established a Performance Improvement and Accountability Office to “align agency programs under common initiatives and goals, improve stakeholder communications, and enhance agency performance.” The performance office is responsible for:

- **Analyzing and recommending changes** to business practices to meet the intent of the Commission, Legislature, and Governor; and
- **Establishing performance measures** and management programs that increase accountability, improve communication, and contribute to the department’s strategic initiatives and goals.

The 2005 law also directed agencies to use strategic business planning to establish goals, objectives, and activities consistent with the state’s Priorities of Government. WDFW has responded by adopting increasingly sophisticated strategic plans every two years. The current plan, for 2011-17, reflects contributions from department leaders and Fish and Wildlife Commission members, and feedback and suggestions from customers, stakeholders and WDFW employees.

Putting performance principles into action

The hallmark of Governor Gregoire’s accountability initiative was creation of the Government Management Accountability Program (GMAP) to help state agencies measure and improve their performance. GMAP was modeled after successful programs in New York and Baltimore, but the Governor’s GMAP program represented the first such initiative with a statewide focus. WDFW has

been involved with GMAP since its inception and contributes data and analysis for the Economic Vitality and Natural Resources forums and quarterly reports.

Since 2008, WDFW has annually measured our quality management, accountability and performance systems by surveying executive and middle-level managers about progress made in strategic planning, allocating resources, managing people, analyzing data, improving processes, communicating results and listening.

Lean Management for process improvement

WDFW has begun to use Lean Management principles, methods and tools to improve its processes from the customer’s viewpoint.

By deploying Lean in focused initiatives, WDFW has been able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the process and build staff support for a long-term commitment to employee problem-solving. For example:

- **The Fish Program** is using Lean principles to streamline the process of collecting and sharing commercial fishing harvest data. The process was especially slow and error-prone during the peak season, requiring extensive revision and requiring fishery managers to wait months for “clean” data. Using Lean to redesign the process, we have reduced the processing time of priority fish tickets from 11 days to one, providing managers much more timely data to inform their management decisions. We also eliminated many redundant reporting requirements, improving service to the customers who must file reports and cutting the time required to detect errors from four months to four hours.
- **The Technology/Finance Program** is applying Lean principles to its deployment of desktop computers to staff, to reduce a longstanding backlog and ensure timely delivery of new equipment. We have reduced the fulfillment time from 6 months to less than three days and decreased the time computers sit in inventory from 12 months to 30 days.

- As noted earlier, the Licensing Division applied Lean principles to make significant improvements in the productivity and performance of the WILD license sales system. Performance of the system improved by 20 percent from fiscal year 2009 through 2011, enabling the completion of 152,000 individual actions that were not being completed earlier.
- The Habitat Program is using Lean principles to streamline the Hydraulic Project Approval permitting process and reduce the time

required to issue permits. In the first round of improvements, we eliminated unneeded steps in mailing and filing procedures and reduced batch processing of HPA applications. As a result, we reduced the application entry time – a key step in the permitting process -- by about 22 percent. The Program also plans to improve communication with permit applicants to improve the quality of their applications, and to provide additional time for field review of HPA projects.



