

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

A career as a fish and wildlife officer



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Jason Day

Jason Day was always interested in a career in natural resources and obtained a Bachelor of Science in general biology. After graduation he found himself working as a fisheries technician surveying fisherman about winter steelhead. This led him to realize that the most interesting thing about working in natural resources was working with people. "Being a WDFW officer is not about engaging wildlife, it's about engaging the people who encounter wildlife," he said.

According to Jason, "success (and a whole lot of failure) in sports was by far the most important building block in my youth." These experiences taught him how to handle conflict and helped build the leadership skills and confidence necessary to be able to confront criminals.



Jason said the diversity of responsibilities and often open-ended expectations from the public provide an endless stream of new and exciting challenges for his work with the Department. He likes that the days look different with the season and provide plenty of variety.

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When asked what the most challenging part of being an officer was, Jason responded, "As the only source of law and order on public lands in a small community, you must be willing to endure real human conflict and stand up for the right side of the law, regardless of personal beliefs or relationships. As a WDFW police officer, you won't be universally loved and acclaimed. There are people who will hate you. You must be willing to accept that the someone may paint lies about you on the side of his barn for everyone passing by on the highway to read (true story). **You gotta be willing to take the heat.**"



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For those interested in becoming a fish and wildlife officer, Jason recommends seeking out leadership positions and enhancing those skills, whether it be community work, sports, etc.

He also recommends, "at a minimum" to learn how to fish. "Without having participated in consumptive use of our natural resources, you will be years behind in understanding the motivations of intentional violators, confused recreators, and avid participants. Lack of understanding leads to poor choices in officer discretion, ultimately damaging the agency's reputation."

Finally, he recommends self-defense skills. As an officer, the potential for physical conflict is present in every contact made. According to Jason, it's imperative you can defend yourself because the unexpected can always happen.



"When you think about this career, Washington State's natural resources, the public we serve, and the potential for verbal, emotional, and physical conflict, you have to ask yourself, 'am I willing to fight for this?'"