



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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March 15, 2021

The Honorable Christine Rolfes
Chair, Senate Ways and Means
303 John A. Cherberg Building
Post Office Box 40466
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The Honorable Timm Ormsby
Chair, House Appropriations
315 John L. O'Brien Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

The Honorable Steve Hobbs
Chair, Senate Transportation
305 John A. Cherberg Building
Post Office Box 40444
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The Honorable Jake Fey
Chair, House Transportation
415 John L. O'Brien Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

The Honorable Steve Tharinger
Chair, House Capital Budget
314 John L. O'Brien Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Chairpersons, Rolfes, Hobbs, Ormsby, Fey, and Tharinger:

I am writing to provide you with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board's (FBRB) second update to the legislature regarding the development of a statewide culvert remediation plan for all culvert correction programs. Per provisos in the 2020 supplemental Capital, Operating and Transportation budgets, WDFW, WSDOT, and the FBRB are required to submit updates to the legislature on the development of the statewide culvert remediation plan. Updates were required by November 1, 2020 and March 15, 2021, with the goal of developing a final statewide culvert remediation plan to be submitted by this past January 15, 2021. WDFW, WSDOT and the FBRB all affirm that developing a statewide culvert remediation plan is a smart and cost-effective approach to the problems created by fish passage barriers.

As reported in our November 1st update, WDFW, WSDOT, and the FBRB have begun work on the provisos, but the underlying technical and analytical work to compare data about the proviso criteria (Endangered Species Act listings, orca, and constraining fisheries) at statewide and watershed scales has been limited by this year's focus on saving money and limiting hiring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our focus has been making progress on the proviso

regardless of these constraints. Although we were optimistic in November about what could be accomplished with existing staff resources, the regular duties of our team recovery from earlier field delays and furloughs have made that difficult. Therefore, in order to complete quality products with the time remaining in the biennium, WDFW is attempting to hire consultant resources from within Washington's salmon recovery consultant community to assist in completing the fish passage strategy.

Since our November 2020 update we have made progress on several aspects of the proviso criteria, specifically identifying the salmonid stocks that are currently limiting fisheries, the diet of the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) and the geographies where salmonids are listed as threatened or endangered. The proviso's most complex work, and its main mission, is to provide guidance about the locations and sequence within watersheds where fish passage barrier removal will make the difference in salmonid recovery. There are also aspects of this work that are progressing conceptually. A statewide strategy should be built from saltwater to fresh headwaters because Chinook, Chum, Coho, and Steelhead utilize the habitat in this fashion. Chinook utilize habitat closest to the saltwater while Steelhead utilize habitat furthest upstream in freshwater. All salmonid species, adults and juveniles utilize off-channel habitat as they pass through watersheds. We acknowledge that the members of the state's Salmon Recovery Network and the Tribes have essential expertise in how best to delist threatened or endangered fish in their regions and in their Usual and Accustomed Areas. Working with the regions and Tribes will be a best practice.

While we work toward an overall statewide fish passage barrier removal strategy, we have also continued our efforts to chart a smart course through the 2021-23 biennium for the legislature's consideration. Each of the three main state barrier removal programs have coordinated their work with local jurisdictions, tribal nations, and the salmon recovery community. WSDOT has developed a fish passage delivery plan for 2021-23 which is currently part of the Transportation budget process, and a full delivery plan to address the injunction requirements for 2030 is underway. Similarly, the FBRB and the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFPPP) requests are being considered in the Capital budget process. Continuing the state's progress at removing the barriers on these lists is critical to salmon and consistent with the development of a statewide approach.

WDFW, WSDOT and FBRB members continue discussing how to complete the work described in the provisos in light of both the constraints and consultant opportunity discussed here. The WDFW, WSDOT and the FBRB will identify opportunities to adjust proviso expectations or deadlines based on our efforts to hire additional consultant capacity, and share these observations with OFM, fiscal committees, and interested legislators. We continue to be grateful for the patience and understanding of the effects of the pandemic on the proviso work, and the reasonable approaches we're implementing to deliver quality recommendations that can guide the state's strategy into the future, as expected in the provisos.

March 15, 2021

WDFW, WSDOT and the FBRB are committed to delivering our recommendations regarding a comprehensive strategy to OFM, relevant committees, and interested legislators as noted above, by June 30, 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this report update to the legislature, please feel free to contact Tom McBride, WDFW's Legislative Director, at (360)480-1472.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Jameson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "J".

Tom Jameson
Chair, Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board