

DRAFT Conservation Policy

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Policy

Policy number: C-700X

Effective date: MONTH X, 2021

Signed by: Larry Carpenter, Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair

Preamble:

The Department's mandate is to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage fish and wildlife and their habitat in trust of the public for the benefits of present and future residents. Our success provides the public with the opportunities to enjoy fish, wildlife, recreation, natural food sources, and intrinsic values of fish, wildlife and a healthy environment. A critical foundation to this success requires healthy intact ecosystems and food webs that are managed in a manner so as to not impair the ecosystem and resources. It is also critical that the Department's policies and decisions be informed by the best available science and through extensive public engagement.

Washington's fish and wildlife are under increasing pressures from habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, the effects from changing climatic conditions, invasive species, and changing food webs. The human population is expected to grow significantly over the next 30-years, exacerbating these pressures. As the population grows, outdoor recreation and commercial opportunities will expand in need and contributions to cultural, social benefits including human health and well-being, and economic importance to Washington.

Given that the ongoing challenges remain a large and complex task, we must work in partnership with other state and federal agencies, tribes, local governments, private landowners, businesses, and non-governmental organizations using all of our collective available resources and tools to achieve success.

Definitions:

Conservation: The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural environments and the ecological communities that inhabit them. This includes the management of human use for public benefit, and sustainable social and economic needs.

Ecosystem: A community of organisms together with their physical environment, viewed as a system of interacting and interdependent relationships and including such processes as the flow of energy through trophic levels and the cycling of chemical elements and compounds through living and nonliving components of the system.

Science is the systematic enterprise of gathering knowledge about the world and organizing and condensing that knowledge into testable laws and theories (AAAS, 2015)

THEREFORE, the Department shall utilize the following principles to inform decisions and actions:

Principles of Decision Making and Public Engagement:

1. We seek and incorporate diverse perspectives by ensuring a means for citizens to become informed prior to decision making
2. We engage in a transparent decision-making process that has the following characteristics: adequate notice of pending decision; access to information used in decision making; and a robust process to provide input
3. Our decisions are accountable to the public, legislature, and governor. We integrate ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives into our decision making;

Principles of Partnerships:

1. We will facilitate collaboration and coordination across ecological, jurisdictional, and ownership boundaries;
2. We collaborate with conservation and community partners, to help us achieve our shared goals.
3. We collaborate with tribes to ensure that adequate consultation and coordination has occurred prior to decision making per WDFW's consultation policy

Principles of Incorporating Science:

1. Our decisions are grounded in ecological, biological, and relevant sciences pertaining to the decision at hand.
2. The social and economic sciences inform decision making,
3. We embrace new knowledge and apply best science to address changing conditions through adaptive management.
4. We work across disciplines to solve problems because of their connections among organisms, species and habitats;
- 5.

Therefore: We commit to the following Commission Operations:

1. We practice conservation by managing, protecting, and restoring ecosystems for the long-term benefit of people, and for fish, wildlife, and their habitats;

-
2. We will apply these conservation principles in the development and approval of the Department budget, planning, and decision-making processes.

DRAFT