



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

5/8/2023

Agenda item:

White Pelican Periodic Status Review – Briefing, Public Comment, and Decision

Presenter(s):

Taylor Cotten, Conservation Assessment Section Manager

Background summary:

Presenting the Periodic Status Review and status recommendation on the American White Pelican. The American White Pelican was “downlisted” and from Endangered to Threatened in 2017. This Periodic Status summarizes the current status of the species as well as conservation and recovery actions. The western population of white pelicans has recovered substantially and given the size of the Badger Island colony and number of non-breeding white pelicans in Washington during the past several years, a change in listing could be considered. The species remains somewhat vulnerable, however, as only the single colony regularly forms in Washington, and white pelican colonies are highly sensitive to disturbances; adults will desert and/or leave eggs and young exposed to predation following disturbances.

White pelican was presented to the Commission in the fall of 2022 and was voted on at that time to downlist from Threatened to Sensitive. However due to tying the rule making process with Cascade red fox in 2022, that vote was legally ineffective, and we are requesting a new vote for the same status recommendation, to downlist to sensitive.

Staff recommendation:

The American White Pelican is currently listed as Threatened in the state of WA, and we are recommending it be “downlisted” to Sensitive.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Sensitive species fall under the same WAC and penalties as Threatened species. However, we are communicating a lower level of conservation concern and recovery progress with the adoption of a sensitive status.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

none

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The agency sent out a press release and posted a request on our website to solicit information from the public to be included in the coming Periodic Status Reviews and Status Reports. In accordance with WAC regulations, individuals and organizations had one year to contribute information for the reviews. Department staff included this information as applicable in the status review documents. The documents were then reviewed by Department staff and external species experts before 90-day public comment periods on the document and our findings. There were 14 responses to the 90-day public comment period on the Periodic Status Review: 1 letter from the Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council recommended retaining Threatened status primarily over concern around the single colony in WA. 8 clearly support our recommendation to reclassify American White Pelican as a Sensitive species including a letter from the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission. 3 expressed fisheries concerns but no comment on status. 1 letter disapproved of the hazing of pelicans but again no comment on status.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Briefing and decision. Department staff are asking for a decision on the recommendation to downlist the American White Pelican, from Threatened to Sensitive.

Draft motion language:

I move to adopt the rule change as presented by staff, and downlist the American White Pelican from Threatened to Sensitive.

Post decision communications plan:

Website update
News release
WAC updates
