



Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE

Enhancing Biodiversity in Washington

2023-25 Investment Plan

In the 2023 Legislative Session, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife requested funds to implement the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), including habitat and species conservation, along with public education and outreach. The Legislature provided \$24 million of that request for 2023-25 with \$31 million ongoing beginning in 2025-27. The following are highlights for how the Department will invest this appropriation.

Species Conservation (\$13.5 million)

- Implement known recovery actions
- Support partners to implement conservation actions
- Survey, monitor, and conduct research to inform conservation action

Habitat Conservation (\$8.6 million)

- Create and implement strategic habitat plans
- Modernize standards and guidance for protecting and restoring habitats
- Assist people to follow standards
- Integrate standards into land use and other regulations
- Increase the pace and effectiveness of restoration
- Respond to spills and protect orcas

Policy & Outreach (\$1.9 million)

- State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator
- Conservation education
- Habitat at Home
- Communications
- WDFW governance assessment

\$24 million



Species Conservation (\$13.5 million)

Implement known recovery actions

FTE (Full-time equivalent)

Specific work includes addressing population threats by implementing conservation actions for species such as pinto abalone, Olympia oyster, pygmy rabbit, sharp-tailed grouse, Washington ground squirrel, northern leopard frog, and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. This work could include conservation translocations and reintroductions, disease treatments, abating threats such as removing invasive bullfrogs, and collaborating with land management staff and partners to protect and restore habitat for species of greatest conservation need. New staff will implement these actions as well as produce recovery plans, develop and nurture conservation partnerships, provide state-wide technical expertise, and define, coordinate, and implement recovery actions.

16.0 FTE

Support partners to implement conservation actions

FTE

Develop a Wildlife Diversity grant program that facilitates implementation of prioritized recovery actions. Example priorities include island marble butterfly captive rearing, prairie butterfly and habitat surveys, Cascade red fox research, jackrabbit and burrowing owl surveys and research, and western pond turtle shell disease research and treatment. The agency will also provide \$250,000 in pass-through funding to PSRF per biennium for Olympia oyster restoration and \$900,000 in pass-through funding per biennium to partners like PSRF and PS tribes for pinto abalone conservation.

1.0 FTE

Survey, monitor, research

FTE

This work includes conducting surveys to collect information on distribution, abundance, and baseline natural history to inform management actions; developing and conducting research projects focused on identifying mechanisms driving declines and that inform conservation strategies; assessing the effectiveness of conservation management; curating, managing, and displaying data; communicating results of research investigations to managers to better inform conservation strategies for species such as western snowy plover, western gray squirrel, and sharptail grouse.

16.0 FTE

Establish a new Research Scientist position to design and analyze ocean forage fish surveys that will provide new information about recruitment and trends in forage fish abundance. This new information will inform ecosystem-based management, bioenergetics models, improve our understanding of potential effects of climate change, and provide new data to help better understand and predict changes in abundance of forage fish predators such as salmon, seabirds, and marine mammals.

Establish an environmental DNA team to collect samples in freshwater systems statewide to better understand abundance, distribution, population dynamics and habitat quality of fish and shellfish species of greatest conservation need.

Develop and implement sturgeon and eulachon stock assessment surveys in the Columbia River, the Coast and Puget Sound. Data will inform development of a White Sturgeon management plan. This work will be split across the biodiversity and sturgeon and smelt provisos.

Habitat Conservation (\$8.6 million)

Create and implement strategic habitat plans

FTE (Full-time equivalent)

Create and coordinate implementation of strategic plans for key issues such as responding to sea level rise on Puget Sound shorelines, siting energy projects and transmission to minimize impacts, and contribute to shrubsteppe protection and restoration. Develop and maintain plans for these outcomes, and coordinate the training, resourcing, and reporting of staff and partners implementing the habitat actions.

8.0 FTE

Modernize standards and guidance for protecting and restoring habitats

FTE

Create and/or update the standards and guidance that inform the public what methods and best practices will reliably achieve the desired habitat protection and restoration outcomes. Staff will specialize in best practices for key habitats or issues, such as riparian ecosystems, habitat connectivity, and shrubsteppe. Create contracts to integrate the latest science and engineering to update or create new guidance for topics such as designing road crossings that pass fish and water, and safely utilizing beaver in climate resilience and floodplain restoration projects.

5.0 FTE

Assist people to follow standards

FTE

Provide assistance and incentives to customers to help them follow the standards and guidance that will reliably protect and restore habitat. Staff will help residents comply with existing fish protection laws. Contract initiated in fiscal year 24 employs social marketing experts to identify which services will incentivize or remove the barriers people perceive to actions like building farther from shorelines and protecting and restoring native vegetation. Staff will assist people to restore their property or develop responsibly, and assist local governments to evaluate the effects of projects like large developments, new roads, or planting and restoration efforts.

8.0 FTE



Habitat Conservation Cont. (\$8.6 million)

Integrate standards into land use and other regulations

FTE (Full-time equivalent)

Partner with local government and other partners to integrate habitat protection and restoration standards and guidance into regulations in order to achieve results at large scales. Staff will use knowledge of growth management and water management laws to advocate for fish and wildlife protection in light of activities that can degrade habitats.

4.0 FTE

Increase the pace and effectiveness of restoration

FTE

Using knowledge of which restoration techniques are effective, work with communities to increase support for the best restoration projects in the right places. Staff are assigned to defined areas in order to increase supporting landowners to host effective restoration projects, assist in field work to prepare for and implement these projects, and monitor the results.

8.0 FTE

Respond to spills and protect orcas

FTE

Staff participate in oil spill planning, drills, and 24/7 on-call response to address effects of oil spills on wildlife and habitats. Pass-through to partners in both years to pilot and evaluate emerging methods of deterring orcas and other marine mammals from approaching contaminated areas.

1.0 FTE



Policy and Outreach (\$1.9 million)

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Coordinator

FTE (Full-time equivalent)

Ongoing funding to update the SWAP, the state's comprehensive plan for conserving the state's fish and wildlife and the natural habitats on which they depend. This position also assists the Director of Conservation Policy to coordinate interdisciplinary solutions to address conservation challenges in the state.

1.0 FTE

Conservation education

FTE

Develop fish and wildlife curriculum to equip K-12 students with the knowledge and social skills needed to think critically and problem solve fish and wildlife conservation issues. Ongoing funding for staff and provides pass-through grants to under-served schools to transport students on fish and wildlife field trips to WDFW wildlife areas and hatcheries.

0.5 FTE

Habitat at Home

FTE

Ongoing funding to encourage Washingtonians to connect with nature where they live, work, and play. By learning ways to increase biodiversity through planting with native plants, coexisting with wildlife, and making decision that positively impact the health of our communities, both people and fauna.

1.0 FTE

Communications

FTE

Ongoing funding to convey to the public the benefits of biodiversity and the threats and challenges for sustaining wildlife in the state. This position is also responsible for reporting outcomes of this appropriation to the Legislature.

1.0 FTE

WDFW governance assessment

FTE

One-time funding (\$300,000) is appropriated by the Legislature to the Ruckleshaus Center to review the Department's obligations as the trustee of state fish and wildlife on behalf of all Washingtonians, including reviewing the governance structure, the funding model, and accountability and transparency in decision-making at both the Fish and Wildlife Commission and Director levels.

0.0 FTE

