



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

4/18/2024

Agenda item:

Big Tent Committee

Presenter(s):

Nate Pamplin, Director of External Affairs

Background summary:

The F&W Commission has tasked the Director's Office with three projects during the summer and fall 2023: assess and recommend changes to the Commission's open public comment hearing process; draft a code of conduct for Commission meetings and hearings; and conduct a public comment assessment project with the intention of identifying best practices for the agency to solicit, categorize, synthesize, and present public comments to decision makers (this project will be heard at FWC meeting on Friday, April 19).

For the Commission's open public comment opportunities, we recommend:

- Schedule 1.5 hour sessions for open public comment on Friday and Saturday mornings of Commission meetings (not as part of the Commission's bi-weekly webinars).
- Review public hearing procedures at the start of the public hearing, including the process and order of speakers and the amount of time allotted to each speaker (typically three minutes).
- Sequence and hear in-person verbal comments in the order of sign up.
 - Time may be limited to two minutes if there is a lot of interest in providing comment and the number of people registered exceeds the allotted time.
- If time allows, transition to participants commenting virtually.
- If there isn't enough time to hear from all virtual participants registered to comment, virtual participants will be selected at random to provide verbal comments.
 - Virtual participants will need to register by 5pm the day prior to the open public comment session to aid in ability to conduct a random draw.
- Once the pre-determined time for verbal public comments has concluded, we will encourage any remaining in-person or virtual public commenters that were not able to testify to provide their feedback to the Commission through an alternate form (such as joining a future meeting, sending the Commission an email, or providing feedback on topics through comment portal).
- Elected officials signing up to comment, whether in-person or participating virtually, will be prioritized to speak first and will not be timed.

- Following public comment, Commissioners will have a pre-determined amount of time (likely 10-15 minutes) that is scheduled on the agenda to discuss and share any reflections on the substance of the comments heard. We recommend that Commissioners speak to major themes heard and refrain from speaking to specific commenters/comments. By setting aside time on the agenda for this discussion, it will not interfere with the time scheduled for public comments or other commission agenda items.
- Use Commission executive administrative staff to facilitate commenters and to let commenters know to wrap up their comments if they are exceeding their allotted time. If commenters violate the meeting code of conduct (see below), the Chair would need to intervene.
- If adopted, we will post this approach to verbal comments online to notify meeting participants about the shift from the current commenting approach.

For the code of conduct, we recommend posting a sign with a meeting code of conduct at the entrance of commission meetings and posted on the Commission’s webpage. This sign would be accompanied by our “Welcome” sign designed to set tone for a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space for all attendees. Both signs are attached.

We have also provided recommendations to the Commission’s executive assistant regarding meeting safety and venue considerations for meetings outside of Olympia; as they relate to security, those recommendations are not outlined further here.

Staff recommendation:

Adjust open public comment procedures as proposed. Adopt a code of conduct for FWC meetings. I think this could occur during the Committee meeting report out.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

N/A

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

N/A

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The Commission received some complaints about attendees not feeling safe or welcome during a Commission meeting in fall 2023. Department staff met with those raising concerns and incorporated the feedback in the recommendations.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

During the Committee report out, adjust open public comment procedures as proposed and adopt a code of conduct for FWC meetings.

Draft motion language:

I think this could be adopted as part of Committee report out to the full Commission.

If needed:

I move to approve the changes to the verbal public comment process as proposed by staff at the Big Tent Committee on April 18, 2024.

I move to adopt the Public Meeting Code of Conduct presented to the Big Tent Committee on April 18, 2024.

Post decision communications plan:

Updates to the FWC webpage and future agendas will reflect any changes adopted. A sign showing the code of conduct and a welcome message will be printed and displayed at future in-person FWC meetings.

Form revised 1-20-21