



Minutes

## Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

December 12-14, 2024 Hybrid Minutes

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### **Attendance**

#### **Commission**

Barbara Baker, Chair  
Tim Ragen, Vice chair  
Lorna Smith  
Molly Linville  
John Lehmkuhl  
Jim Anderson  
Melanie Rowland  
Steve Parker  
Woody Myers

#### **Staff**

Kelly Susewind, Director  
Amy Windrope, Deputy Director  
Joe Panesko, AGO  
Jamie Caldwell, Executive Asst.  
Mike Livingston, Region 3 Director  
Gerry Hayes  
Taylor Cotten  
Matthew Trenda

Lisa Coffman  
Cynthia Wilkerson  
Julia Smith  
Emilie Kohler  
Mick Cope  
Anis Aoude  
Dr. Stephanie Landry  
Dr. Donny Martorello

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### **Friday, December 12, 2024**

#### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:00am. ([Begins at 0:01 mark](#))

#### Commissioner's Discussion

Commissioner Linville updated the Commission on the decision to cancel the Habitat Committee meeting this time around. ([Begins at 2:19 mark](#))

#### Meeting Minute Approval

Commissioner Baker commented that the minutes are still pretty long, and the Commission needs to have further discussion at some point to finalize what they want captured in the minutes. ([Begins at 3:05 mark](#))

*Commissioner Ragen moved to approve the October 24-26, 2024 hybrid meeting minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Lehmkuhl. The Commission voted unanimously; motion passes. ([Begins at 3:36 mark](#))*

### **Committee Meeting Updates:**

#### Big Tent Committee

Committee members in attendance: Lehmkuhl, Baker, Parker, Smith. To review the full meeting recording for December 12, 2024, please click this [link](#).

Commissioner Lehmkuhl reported out that the committee met on the 24<sup>th</sup> and started with a policy update. The Science and Conservation policies are still active. The Tribes have been met with twice for consultation on the Science Policy, the most recent having been on November 26<sup>th</sup>. The meeting went well and they're continuing to move forward on that policy. Because it's still in the Tribal consultation process, it isn't available to the public to review, but he's hoping it will be available for the meeting in February, so that it can be moved forward for approval at the March meeting. The Committee met on November 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss how to move forward with the Conservation Policy. The decision was made to step back and reinstate consultation with the Tribes again. They're planning to execute that meeting sometime in January. He went on to say that they had a presentation on what he's calling, "lessons in collaboration." He wants to continue this series in the Big Tent when the Commission meets in the various regions throughout the state for future meetings. He concluded his brief by discussing the presentation Professor Michael Blumm provided the Committee on the public trust doctrine. ([Begins at 4:08 mark](#))

### Fish Committee

Committee members in attendance: Anderson, Linville, Ragen, Parker. To review the full meeting recording for December 12, 2024, please click this [link](#).

Commissioner Anderson reported out that the committee reviewed the Resident Native Trout Harvest Management Policy, the Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy, and Coastal Steelhead Season Planning at the Fish Committee meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>. The Resident Native Trout Policy will help staff in their management of the resident trout. The Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy was approved in 2023 and this was the first year that they've gone through that fishery with the policy in play, so they were able to get an idea of how it's working in general. The Coastal Steelhead Season Planning was fairly brief and the seasons are underway for this coming year. It's been a successful outcome and there were better numbers throughout the coast with a couple of exceptions. For the future meeting planning, the Committee has laid out a 12-month schedule that's tentatively approved. ([Begins at 9:01 mark](#))

### Wildlife Committee

Committee members in attendance: Smith, Anderson, Myers, Rowland. To review the full meeting recording for December 12, 2024, please click this [link](#).

Commissioner Smith reported out that their first presentation was on mountain goats, their population ecology, and trends in Washington State. They're population has shown a large decline throughout the state that began around 2012 and is speculated to be caused by weather and climate related changes. That presentation was followed by one on big horned sheep. Their population is experiencing issues due to a form of pneumonia called MOVI that can be passed from domestic animals to wild animals, and the wild animals have no immunity to the disease. Research is being done to determine how to better get control over the spread of that disease. They also received an update on the Non-Lethal Pursuit Pass Training Program. That program utilizes private dog handlers and their animals to track cougars to assist research and enforcement staff with their work. The last piece of work they took up was revisiting the bear and cougar hunting framework for the upcoming season setting cycle. ([Begins at 19:17 mark](#))

## **2. Open Public Input**

Please see the attached list of commenters. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 27:07 mark. Commissioner response to the public comments received begins at the 1:44:48 mark.

Commissioner Rowland responded to some comments made about the plan to remove barred owls to help recover the northern spotted owl population. She noted the population decline for the northern spotted owl began sometime in the 80s, and that she's sad to hear that it's continued to decline. Initially, she was shocked at the plan to remove thousands of barred owls, but has received enough information to convince her that the plan does need to move forward. Secondly, she responded to the comment that there is a lack of accountability for the Commissioners. She wanted to know what kind of accountability the commentor would suggest. She noted that Commissioners can be removed from their positions, but wanted to know if that's what the commentor wanted, and as to how it would be determined which Commissioner would be removed. She requested that commentors stop saying that the Commission needs more accountability, unless they can articulate that that means and why it would be important.

Commissioner Linville responded to the comments to move Commission meetings into urban areas and felt it was a fair request. She also heard several people say they didn't want the Commission delegating to the Director, and she's not quite there with that request. She also heard folks say that they're sorry there's a lot of work, but it's what Commissioners signed up for. She felt that resonated with her, and noted that nobody will hear her complain for a body of work she signed up for. However, the position has changed since she agreed to it. She carefully vetted the position before applying because she had to be conscientious about the ranch she still had to run. She noted that they used to just work on policy and that was done at a high-level. Now, she feels she has to be a subject matter expert in everything to keep up with the conversation. She didn't feel that she could keep up at that pace and that it was too much of an expectation. After the Ruckelshaus report came out, she felt like a lot of the report nailed it, and felt it was time to reevaluate what the Commission is being asked to do, so that when folks sign up for the work, they have a clear understanding of what that work is, the level it's on, and what the time management is.

Commissioner Smith responded that her concern with that approach is that younger folks could be prohibited from being seated due to time constraints and lack of pay. She noted most of the Commissioners are retired in their personal lives. She acknowledged her concerns with the workload, but noted that the Commissioners seated at this time, have taken the work on and do the work. She hoped that those who were critical of the Commission would at least recognize that they're all dedicated volunteers doing the best they can. She did agree that having some meetings in population centers and possibly coordinating their meetings with the ODFW meetings is a good idea. She noted that an issue they hear over and over again that she wanted to challenge the staff to find a way to better address it, is the strongly held belief that in NE Washington where wolves have populated many places, is that the wolves are eradicating ungulate herds, because that's not what the Commission is hearing that from the scientists that are looking at these populations of ungulates. The Commission is guided by best available science, and she understands how that could be frustrating to folks living where wolves are present, but the Commission hasn't seen that data that shows those numbers in decline.

Commissioner Lehmkuhl thanked folks for the comments received. He clarified that the barred owl removal program isn't the department's program and is not something that has been department initiated. It isn't something the Commission has talked about or is going to decide on. It's a federal program from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Commission is interested in the Comments and can provide input to the USFWS, but it's not a decision that the Commission is going to make. He noted there was a comment about the Ruckelshaus report, and he didn't believe the final report had been delivered to the legislature, but the draft is out there. He wanted folks to remember when reading the report, is that its not a performance review of the department or the staff. It's simply an opinion survey of what folks think of the department.

Vice Chair Ragen responded to the comments made about accountability. He agreed with the opinion that every government agency should encourage accountability. To him, as the center of that accountability task is the mandate, and if they're doing what the legislature says they have to do. In doing that, he felt they'd need to look really hard at the mandate, understand and define what those terms are, so they have a measure of how they're progressing. He hopeful they'll do that in the near future and take a hard look along those same lines. He's in agreement with Commissioner Linville in that they do need to look at how they operate, and he had no problem with doing that. He felt that if they want to solve any problems, then they need to have that earnest conversation. He planned to speak more to that during future meeting planning. As far as the barred owl removal, things like this have been done in the past and have turned out horribly or wildly off in some cases. He suggested that the Commission be their own worst critics as they do this. It looks like they need an immediate solution or response, and didn't think that killing barred owls like this should be viewed as a long-term solution. It reminds him that in all of these cases, whether it's cougars, wolves, barred owls, etc. The extent that they can identify non-lethal solutions, the better off they are than always having to bring down the hammer of just hunting. Hunting is a tool that they can use, but it's not the only tool they have to control some of these populations. He suggested some of the non-lethal methods being used with wolves could be used on cougars as well, and could turn out to be worth their weight in gold. But it takes time to develop them, so the asked that folks stick with them because they're working towards that.

Commissioner Anderson briefly responded to the comments on the Ruckelshaus report, and felt that Commissioner Lehmkuhl was correct, that it is an assessment of what folks think of the Commissioner, the department, and how things are handled. He felt that there was some information brought forth that he felt the Commission needed to take very seriously. He didn't think it was just a report to the legislature. He noted that one of the suggestions was that leadership get together and talk. He felt that Commissioner Linville's comments about the workload is really critical. He felt they tended to get into the weeds and that causes the Commission to be in the way of some efficiencies with their desire to deal with everything all the time. He supports further conversation, and wasn't sure how they do that, but suggested they figure out some way to accomplish this in the near future.

Chair Baker noted that it's unusual for the Commission to have representatives of advisory committees and department advisory committees come and talk to them. She wanted to acknowledge their time and effort because she appreciated it. She went on to ask the Director to provide some clarification to the folks that have been asking about where their black bear points go after the demise of the spring bear season.

Director Susewind clarified that the points are still there for folks, there's just nothing to apply them to at the moment. He offered to reach out to the individuals asking directly. Chair Baker went on to say that she agreed with everything said about the Ruckelshaus report and noted that they'd need to figure out how to process and respond to the comments and contents of it after the final report comes out. She went on to say that the Commission may need to decide amongst themselves whether they have an opinion on any particular legislation that might come of it. There didn't appear to be any recommendation, but it did contain some options she felt that the Commission could argue all sides of the recommendations pretty easily. She agreed with Commissioner Linville that the Commission job has changed, but felt it was a reaction rather than an initiative, to the issues and problems the Commission has been trying to juggle having outgrown the ability of the Commissioners to do it. She went on to say that the whole state wants a balanced Commission, not of one group of interest or another. She felt the Commission was already extremely balanced.

### **3. Director's Report**

Director Susewind reported out that they had a meeting with US Forest Service leadership about joint projects. These meetings had been done annually, but hadn't happened recently due to getting out of cycle during and after the pandemic. The Aquatic Invasive Species Groups had a large summit. The agency was represented by Raquel Kroger and Justin Bush, who focused on quagga and zebra mussels. The agency also provided an update to the House Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee on the Biodiversity Program and funding, the Washington Shrubsteppe Initiative, and House Bill 2424. There was a second committee meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> that was on beavers, but since he was in Cle Elum for the Commission meeting, he wasn't in attendance. WAFWA held a meeting of the Directors, and it was attended by the Deputy Director and the Director of External Affairs in his absence. The Army Corps of Engineers held a ceremony in Seattle at their Oxbow Headquarters, and signed the Duckabush agreement. That agreement was 20 years in the making and is the first big Puget Sound Near-Shore Restoration Project. The Governor issued a hiring and travel freeze on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Though it doesn't apply directly to the agency because it's not a cabinet/small cabinet agency, but are participating in good faith. He updated the Commission on petitions, noting several were in the works, and that he'd recently denied the pending spring bear petition. He briefed the Commission on the pending petitions he still needed to render a decision on. The agency received a response from LNI on the citations received. They included a number of abatement requirements that the agency has completely satisfied. The appeal the agency filed is still working through the process. He updated the Commission on the health progress of the Habitat Program Manager. He's currently recovering at home and is making positive progress. The acting Director is still covering the body of work until he returns. He went on to announce that Cynthia Wilkerson is the new Wildlife Division Deputy Director. Lastly, he noted that during the restructuring in the Director's Office, Sam Montgomery is acting on an interim basis taking the lead for the CAPE Division. ([Begins at 2:10:23 mark](#))

The Region 3 Director, Mike Livingston, provided an update on happenings in the area. ([Begins at 2:19:29 mark](#))

### **4. 2025 Commission Meeting Schedule – Decision**

Staff requested a decision on the proposed 2025 Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting Schedule. The Commission received requests to add an additional travel meeting to their proposed schedule that would accommodate an additional urban area. ([Begins at 2:55:56 mark](#))

*Commissioner Linville moved to adopt the 2025 Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting date recommendations as presented by staff with a nod to the fact that the November Olympia meeting location may change at a later date and it was seconded by Commissioner Parker. ([Begins at 3:14:11 mark](#))*

*Commissioner Rowland offered a friendly amendment to Commissioner Linville's original motion, and allow Jamie to move either the June or November meeting and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The Commission voted unanimously; motion amendment passes. The Commission then unanimously voted on the full motion; motion passes. ([Begins at 3:16:13 mark](#))*

### **5. Pygmy Rabbit Periodic Status Review – Briefing, Public Comment, Decision**

Staff received public comment after briefing the Commission and requested a decision on the Pygmy Rabbit Periodic Status Review. ([Begins at 3:17:55 mark](#))

For public comment sign up, please see the attached list of commentors. ([Begins at 3:38:14 mark](#))

*Commissioner Smith moved that the Pygmy Rabbit maintain its current status as an endangered species in Washington as recommended by department staff and it was seconded by Commissioner Rowland. The Commission voted unanimously; motion passes. ([Begins at 3:44:28 mark](#))*

#### **6. Land Transaction – Briefing, Public Comment, Decision**

Staff received public comment after briefing the Commission, and requested a decision on approval of two Land Transactions. First, an acquisition in Skagit County. Second, a property management-land use agreement in Okanogan County. ([Begins at 0:13 mark](#))

For public comment sign up, please see the attached list of commentors ([Begins at 7:34 mark](#))

*Commissioner Lehmkuhl moved to approved the two Land Transactions – acquisition in Skagit County and property management-land use agreement in Okanogan County as recommended by the department and it was seconded by Vice Chair Ragen. The Commission voted unanimously; motion passes. ([Begins at 12:54 mark](#))*

#### **7. Lands 20/20 Update – Briefing**

Staff briefed the Commission on 20 proposed land acquisitions under consideration as part of the Department's Lands 20/20 process. The proposed acquisitions cover about 13,749 acres across 10 counties. ([Begins at 13:52 mark](#))

#### **8. Spotted Owl Resilience – Briefing**

Staff briefed the Commission on approaches to recover the Spotted Owl, including maintenance of habitat, population augmentation, and Barred Owl management. ([Begins at 51:42 mark](#))

Commissioners held their questions until the end of the presentation. ([Begins at 1:24:52 mark](#))

#### **9. Black Bear and Cougar Hunting Framework Update – Briefing**

Staff provided the Commission and update on the Cougar and Black Bear hunting framework options for possible 2025-2026 season rulemaking and requested Commission direction on how to proceed for each. The Commission reviewed the Cougar framework first and then reviewed the Black Bear framework. ([Cougar review begins at 2:04:52 mark](#)) ([Black Bear review begins at 3:08:55 mark](#))

**Cougar Direction Motion:** *Commissioner Smith moved that the Commission recommend staff move forward into the CR-102 including pelt seal requirements of three days, excluding weekends and holidays after harvest hotline reporting, removed the hunter reporting option, but keep closures and general info options, and weekly unit closure on Thursdays and it was seconded by Commissioner Linville. The Commission voted 8-1 (Vice Chair Ragen, no); motion passes. ([Begins at 3:00:02 mark](#))*

**Black Bear Direction Motion:** *Commissioner Anderson moved to recommend the staff proceed with their recommendation for the CR-102 and it was seconded by Commissioner Myers. Chair Baker recapped that the motion was for staff to proceed with their recommendation for the CR-102 with respect to both the season setting, making it illegal to shoot cubs and females with cubs, and inserting a date for mandatory tooth submission. The Commission voted unanimously; motion passes. ([Begins at 3:24:32 mark](#))*

#### **10. 2024 Rulemaking Delegation to the Director – Discussion, Decision**

The Commission discussed whether to delegate some or all, of the rules anticipated to be brought forward around Chronic Wasting Disease, Bullfrog, Waterfowl, Ungulate, and Carnivore Hunting to the Director. ([Begins at 3:27:08 mark](#))

*Chair Baker moved that the Commission delegate rulemaking to the Director for Chronic Wasting Disease, Bullfrog regulations, Waterfowl regulations, and Ungulate regulations, for the 2025-2026 season setting and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The Commission voted 8-0 (Vice Chair Ragen didn't cast a vote); motion passes. ([Begins at 3:43:18 mark](#))*

*Commissioner Lehmkuhl moved to delegate the principal decision making to the Director for Carnivore hunting and it was seconded by Commissioner Linville. Chair Baker recapped that the motion made and seconded is the Commission delegate Cougar and Bear rulemaking for the 2025-2026 season to the Director of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. ([Begins at 3:50:48 mark](#))*

*Chair Baker requested a rollcall of the vote: ([Begins at 3:52:05 mark](#))*

*Commissioner Myers: No*

*Commissioner Rowland: No*

*Commissioner Linville: Yes*

*Commissioner Smith: No*

*Commissioner Lehmkuhl: Yes*

*Commissioner Parker: Yes*

*Commissioner Anderson: Yes*

*Vice Chair Ragen: No*

*Chair Baker: No*

*The Commission voted 4-5 not in favor of the proposed motion; motion fails.*

The Chair recessed the meeting at 5:08pm

## **11. Open Public Input**

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 8:00am. Please see the attached list of commenters. To listen to the audio please click this [link](#). Public input begins at the 1:21 mark. Commissioner response to public comment starts at the 49:22 mark.

Commissioner Lehmkuhl felt that the comments made about the Ruckelshaus report were sort of unfair. He felt the Commission was criticized for not addressing some topics the report included, but the report hasn't been released to the public. When the official report comes out, that is when the Commission will take a look at those. He also went on to state that spotted owls aren't equivalent to elk in terms of their conservation status and viability of the population. Spotted owls are a critically endangered species and elk are very abundant. There is no danger of their extinction. It's a false equivalency to make that statement. He was also disappointed that people in the past have complained that the Commission doesn't take the recommendations of the staff seriously. We're not following the recommendations of the staff seriously and aren't following the science that the department is bringing forward. Yesterday, the Commission passed unanimously, two recommended options for cougar and bear management that the staff recommended. Yes, there was a lot of discussion about it, and people did object to the discussion had, but in the end, they were passed nearly unanimously. He was hoping a pat on the back for that, but hasn't hear any of that. If there are complaints about the seasons or how they're set up, then talk to the staff.

Commissioner Anderson commented that the Ruckelshaus report does require people to look into the report to figure out their place, role, and level of engagement. He believed the Commission had an entity there and the obligation to do that. The question is, how to go about scheduling that? His concern was syncing that up with timing and others engagement. He didn't exactly know, and didn't think anyone could say specifically what that is or will be. From his perspective, it did point out a number of issues, provided some different pathways that are being looked at. He thought the Commission needed to address that and is ready to participate. On the issues of the seasons for bear and cougar, he thought they're kind of separate and kind of together. He was encouraged with the engagement by the Commission with the science folks. I thought the staff, both from a professional management perspective and a professional science division, work together really well. He gave credit to the agency to try to get that out in a way that really helped them stay on track. He felt that the deliberation was good. People might have opinions of the outcome, or the sideboards on that, but he thought they made step forward yesterday. He agreed with Commissioner Lehmkuhl, that the process was civilly worked through and that they were successful. ([Begins at 51:45 mark](#))

Commissioner Linville commented that she thought the point of why Thursdays and nobody had brought it up, left her wondering why it wasn't brought up. She knew they talked about it, and thought it was a great



point. She thought it was to reevaluate the number, and requested the Director clarify. Director Susewind clarified that Thursdays are the day they make a determination. The season won't close on Thursday, the decision is made on Thursday. The agency manages to cap, and when it's hit, then it closes. Rather than doing that daily, so hunters have to check in everyday, they do it on Thursdays. If the cap has been hit, the season will be closed. If the cap hasn't been hit, then the season will be open at least the next Thursday. So, you can go out on the weekend and not have to worry about having cell service on a Saturday or Sunday, and have to come out of camp to check. Hunters will know on Thursday night if it's open or closed for the following week. Thursday was selected because it's as late as the agency can get it, so it's as real-time as they can get. But, it's as close to the weekend and still gives folks for those that go on weekends. He recognizes that people go more than a week. That was the concept and the Decision is made on Thursday, but the season doesn't close on Thursday. ([Begins at 54:13 mark](#))

Commissioner Rowland noted that the last point was a perfect example of comments that the Commission gets from people on every side, making the point that she wasn't talking about a particular side, where they just don't know the facts, and statements are made about things as though they are facts. They would say, 'why is hunting is closed on Thursdays?' She went on to say that she didn't ask about it, but she didn't really focus on closing on Thursdays, and thought the agency must have a reason, but didn't think she needed to know. As it turns out, it's not closing on Thursdays, and the statement was a mistake. She went on to say that the unsupported data that she's heard on many occasions from many commenters, that she didn't understand how the Commission is to make decisions in a collaborative way, when everyone is basically each in a separate box. One has a window that looks one way, and that's what they think the world is. Then someone else in a different box, is seeing the world over there. She doesn't want to be in despair, but the from actions that the Commission has been accused of, and the things that are factual statements that aren't supported at all, leaves her being unable to understand how the Commission is supposed to govern with that kind of information gap, and she'd heard a lot of this that morning. ([Begins at 55:40 mark](#))

Commissioner Linville responded to Commissioner Rowland's statement saying she felt she needed to push back a little bit. She remembered hearing a pretty uninformed conversation about electric fences from Commissioner Rowland, and felt the important piece here is to give everyone grace. People need to be given grace. It was a misunderstanding. The person who said that wasn't trying to make something up. It was a misunderstanding that the Commission got clarification on. She reiterated that everyone needs to be given grace, and that is how everyone works together. When Commissioner Rowland made the comment about the fence, Commissioner Linville stated she was biting her tongue, because she knew Commissioner Rowland's intentions were good, so she wasn't going to call her out on a misunderstanding. She requested that Commissioner Rowland please give other people that same grace. Commissioner Rowland replied that she corrected herself in that meeting, and said that she had now understood what she was saying. Commissioner Linville disagreed with her statement, and Chair Baker requested they hold this conversation outside of the meeting. ([Begins at 57:41 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith stated she felt the need to push back too, because for whatever reason, she's one of the Commissioners that takes a whole lot of slack and criticism, which is fine with her, because that's the seat she sits in. She felt it becomes very personal at times. She would say that's the conversation that should maybe take place outside of the meeting or by phone. She stated she's always available and will listen respectfully, as long as folks attempt to be respectful as well. She noted this job is tough, and she gives her fellow Commissioners, herself included, credit for the fact that they do try to think about resource conservation first, because that's their mandate. Then, she thinks about all of the users. She noted that they're all wildlife users, and how the Commission can accommodate them. So, the respect is just the word she'd throw out there that everyone needs to practice. She stated this is a tough business and a tough time to be managing the world's resources that are limited, especially at a time of climate change. She asked that they all give each other grace. ([Begins at 59:21 mark](#))

Commissioner Parker commented that that the first step in Commissioner Rowland's analogy is collaboration, recognizing that there are other windows, and the view from those windows is just as important to the people's looking through them, and the Commission shouldn't insist everyone look out the same window. He felt they were trying to grasp defeat from the jaws of victory here. He thought yesterday's process for the bear and cougar rulemaking decision was exemplary in many ways, and here's why. He thought this is what helps the Commission get to collaboration, if not consensus. He felt they came pretty close yesterday. His

diagnosis of it, is they had some excellent staff work that provided them with modeling, background information of the technical foundation that the Commissioners could understand, and all agree to. This was the science that they would base their policy making on. That was the strongest part of this in his mind, that they could have some confidence, and in his case, a great deal of confidence that the biological information was correct, or at least the best available to them. The management team fashioned that science into a set of options that were understandable and transparent. He thought all the public/stakeholders could recognize what the options were and to some extent, the implications. For great extent, the implications of those options. When those of them on the Commission kind of have the confidence in what they are about to decide on, he thought it made it much easier for them to find where their interests are being met and where they aren't being met, and then have that conversation about how to close the gap if there are differences in perspective, priorities, or interests. What happened the day before was especially gratifying to him. It was a willingness to come to the center. He wanted to make sure that he's doing his best, having done this once now. In his 1.5yrs on the Commission, this is the best example of structured, transparent, and focused decision making. Now that they know they can do it, he's going to try to keep that process intact as much as possible, so it becomes a model of decision making for them. He was pretty jazzed about their process from yesterday, because it shows that it can be done, and gave them the pattern for doing it. He's hopeful that the Commission can sort of institutionalize that in this process. ([Begins at 1:01:02 mark](#))

Chair Baker commented that she was going to try and explain the Thursday question, but the comments already made did that. The good thing about the question, was that it was specific. They got a specific question and they were able to deal with it, and she found that to be useful. She also noted that she expected to receive a comment at least once, stating, 'you did what we asked. You spent almost a year, felt the science, decided on a framework that was based on the science, and almost unanimously passed.' She expected a little more, but it didn't happen, and that's ok. They also hear a lot from people about how hard they work, how long they work, and all of that. She noted that the Commissioners aren't saying that. She stated they're there and only doing this for a reason, and that's because they love what they do. She appreciated the sympathy. What she really wanted to say is that what bothers her about the comments they receive from all sides, is there's sort of an embedded nostalgia about the 'good old days.' That takes a personal form. Even though everybody's towing the line and not talking about specific Commissioners. They kind of know on both sides, who everyone is complaining about. But, the nostalgia is that if they just had different people on the Commission, then Ruckelshaus would be different, the Commission would be different, and everybody would be happy. She just had to say is that all anyone has to do is read history. That isn't true. In her short time on the Commission, they argued, and it wasn't hunting, and it was fish. In 2018, 2019, and 2020, commercial fishers were just at each other. They had to abolish advisory groups for the Willapa, because they didn't have enough enforcement to control the literal fights that were happening. People were wearing bullet proof vests to Commission meetings. There was the era of fish. Before that, it was wolves. Before that, it was the 90s, where they had the citizens initiative to abolish hound hunting and to some extent, baiting. And also to do the Commission. Before that, it was an argument over preservation vs. conservation. This isn't new. What would be new, is if the combatants would not expect them to referee these. That's how she's always felt, like a referee at a baseball game, where people are arguing in the infield, expecting the Commission to referee it. She's proud of how this Commission functioned this weekend. It's not easy, and everyone had to give a bit to get to saying yeah, we have the right size for the cougar harvest. The right size for bear harvest, etc. She suggested that if folks didn't like that decision, that they go talk to staff that provided, or tell the Commission about what's wrong with, the science or the policy that was developed. Don't tell them what's wrong with each one of the Commissioners individually. That is completely disrespectful. The last thing she wanted to speak about is accountability. Things are really general and really focused, and it's hard to react to that. For instance, they got a lot of criticism from one side of the spectrum over delegating rulemaking petitions to the Director. What she heard was, that the Commission had to be accountable and transparent. So, at the very least, the Director needs to tell the Commission why he did what he did (either approved or denied the petitions). She called the Director, and within 10 minutes, the letters explaining his reasons for every single one of those decisions he'd made, was on the webpage. That's accountability. They can't be accountable if they don't know what's they're expected to be accountable for. She anticipated someone to now say that the Chair doesn't even know what they're accountable for, and that's not right. They're as accountable and transparent as they can be. They fulfill the law as well as they can, both in open public meetings and public disclosure requests. She finds it demoralizing, not tragically so, to continually be complained about, when really what's happening, is both ends of the spectrum are being argued for a world that is very different than it was 120 years ago, when



everything was plentiful, and there wasn't a need to manage the extraction of resources. So, she's proud of the Commission and thanked her fellow Commissioners for spending the day yesterday doing what they did, which was hard. She planned to go home feeling pretty good about it. ([Begins at 1:05:18 mark](#))

Commissioner Anderson commented that he agreed with much of what Chair Baker said, but what he wanted to do is make sure that they as a Commission, and they had a pretty major study done by the Ruckelshaus, make an effort to not precipitate stuff. He thought what they've done in past at times is that through their process, or lack of process, that they've almost created a situation where it isn't easy for people to be held accountable, so when they do that inadvertently, it creates problems. He said their focus has to be on the excellent process and build the accountability into that. That's the definition he has of accountability, and what Commissioner Parker mentioned about the way the staff work together to get information to the Commissioners and get them educated before they sounded off. They were able to get back on track. He wanted to say that what started this wasn't very good if everyone remembers right. Through the process, he thought they had a mid-course correction like on the cougar rule, and the bear rule was a little bit different to track, but it was in the same frame. He felt good about that and they all saw a way to go. He just wanted to make sure as they go forward that they have the right kind of discussion and recognize that they play a major role in functioning. He didn't want to use the word disfunction, but noted they have to function properly. ([Begins at 1:11:14 mark](#))

Chair Baker noted that they'd discuss the Ruckelshaus report when they get to the next agenda item, but did want to say something about that, is that every one of them could have written that report without ever talking to anybody. They understand and they hear all of those criticisms. The other thing she wanted to let people know is that each one of them was interviewed and asked if there was anyone else who should be interviewed. She gave a list of 15 names, none of whom she would say would say that the Commission is great. They were trying to mine out what they can do to do better. They were all participants and the study isn't imposed on them. They were participants in it and thought that it will help them get to a better place or figure out how to transition. the sometimes seemingly impossible divides they have to traverse. ([Begins at 1:13:27 mark](#))

Commissioner Smith commented that there was a point that was alluded to but didn't make directly, and that's that the last several years, they have heard from all sides, everybody, to please listen to their scientists and they took that to heart, and have worked diligently with their science team way more than they have in the past on these carnivore issues. She had some great meetings both on and offscreen, and hoped that those folks that watched yesterday, saw that there was seamless passing of information from the researchers, biologists, to them. Management was sitting at the table also having taken in the science and putting it into the framework to pass to the Commission, so that's what she felt really good about. They got the science and felt that Washington State should really pat itself on the back. She noted the Commission has done tremendous research on cougars, bears, and other critters that are being used by other states, and frankly, Washington hadn't been using it. So, now they are and she feels really good about that. ([Begins at 1:14:34 mark](#))

## **12. Meeting Debrief and Future Meeting Planning**

Deputy Director Windrope covered the debrief of meeting items listed below. ([Begins at 1:16:35 mark](#))

- Call to Order: No additional tasks.
- Open Public Input (Friday): No additional tasks.
- Director's Report: No additional tasks.
- 2025 Commission Meeting Schedule: Approved, but explore June or November for change of venue from Olympia to somewhere along the I-5 corridor.
- Pygmy Rabbit PSR: No additional tasks.
- Land Transaction: No additional tasks.
- Lands 20/20 Update: No additional tasks.
- Spotted Owl Resiliency: Update the Commission periodically. Suggestion from staff was to provide an update in June and thoughts on outreach about the Spotted Owl process.
- Black Bear and Cougar Hunting Framework Update: Staff will move forward with the CR-102s.
- 2024 Rulemaking Delegation to the Director: No additional tasks except for the delegations.
- Open Public Input (Saturday): No additional tasks.

**13. Executive Session**

This Commission struck the Executive Session from the agenda and will hold it at a later date, most likely to be remote.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:44 am.

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Jamie Caldwell, Executive Assistant

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Agenda Item #2 – Open Public Input

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dr. John Farnsworth</li> <li>2. Justin Averde</li> <li>3. Don Schafer</li> <li>4. Judy Hallisey</li> <li>5. Patrick Gallagher</li> <li>6. Francisco Santiago-Avila</li> <li>7. Mark Nuetzmann</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jeff Holbrook</li> <li>2. Gary Strassburg</li> <li>3. Kelsey Ross</li> <li>4. Ryan Garrett</li> <li>5. Dave Werntz</li> <li>6. Melodie Meyer</li> <li>7. Rachel Haymon</li> <li>8. Patricia Arnold</li> <li>9. Susan Kane-Ronning</li> <li>10. David Moskowitz</li> <li>11. Ronald Reed</li> <li>12. Jon Dykes</li> <li>13. Don Peaker</li> <li>14. Jerry Joyce</li> <li>15. Douglas Boze</li> <li>16. Timothy Coleman</li> <li>17. Dan Wilson</li> <li>18. Roxane Auer</li> <li>19. Rocky Ross</li> <li>20. Joan Beldin</li> <li>21. John Rosapepe</li> </ol>

Agenda Item #5 – Pygmy Rabbit PSR

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Francisco Santiago-Avila</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Susan Kane-Ronning</li> <li>2. John Rosapepe</li> <li>3. Ann Prezyna</li> </ol>

Agenda Item #6 – Land Transaction

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teresa Castrilli</li> <li>2. Francie Castrilli</li> </ol>	

Agenda Item #11 – Open Public Input

In-Person	Zoom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jerry Lowdermilk</li> <li>2. Don Schafer</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eric Lagally</li> <li>2. Kelsey Ross</li> <li>3. Ryan Garrett</li> <li>4. Brandon Ross</li> <li>5. Mandy Carlstrom</li> <li>6. Teri Wright</li> <li>7. Rachel Bjork</li> <li>8. Ben Rusch</li> <li>9. John Rosapepe</li> <li>10. Ann Prezyna</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Alyson Anderson</li> <li>12. Hannah Thompson-Garner</li> <li>13. David Linn</li> <li>14. Heather Nicholson</li> </ul>
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### **Fish and Wildlife Commission and Fish Committee 2025 Planning**

#### **January 10<sup>th</sup> -- Webinar**

- Tentative - Blue Sheet - Columbia River Fisheries for a full commission vote on blue sheet

#### **February 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> – Olympia**

- Columbia River Salmon Management Policy Annual Review – Fish Committee and (Full Commission – Director delegation for 2025 fisheries)
- Quagga and Zebra Mussel Briefing – Full Commission
- mid-Columbia white Sturgeon briefing and possible delegation of rulemaking for mid-Columbia recreational sturgeon fisheries Fish Committee and Full Commission
- Blue Sheet presentation - Columbia River Fisheries

#### **March 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> – Tri Cities**

- Coastal Crab Fishery – Comprehensive Line Marking Rule – Briefing Fish Committee
- Implementation of mobile eCRC system – Fish Committee
- Resident Native Trout Management (Stream Strategy, Rule Simplification etc.) -- Fish Committee Briefing

#### **April 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> – Olympia**

- Coastal Crab Fishery -- Comprehensive Line Marking Rule – Fish Committee Briefing and Decision Full Commission
- Lamprey Briefing – Fish Committee
- Annual Briefing on Puget Sound Crab ([C-3610](#)) and Shrimp ([C-3609](#)) Policies – Fish Committee

#### **May 15-17<sup>th</sup> – Sequim**

- Fish Program biodiversity package update – Fish Committee
- North of Falcon Outcomes Briefing – Fish Committee
- C-3632 Non-Native Game Fish and Fisheries – Fish Committee annual briefing

#### **June 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> – Olympia (Possible special Fish Committee meeting for June)**

- MSE Update (work completed for Willapa and plans for Grays Harbor)
- Resident Native Trout Harvest Policy Briefing – Fish Committee
- Tentative Statewide Steelhead Management Plan Briefing – Fish Committee

#### **July 18<sup>th</sup> – Webinar**

**August 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> – Bellingham**

- Resident Native Trout Harvest Policy – Fish Committee and Full Commission Briefing and Public comment (possible Commission decision)
- Hatchery Monitoring and Evaluation Progress Update – Fish Committee

**September 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> – Wenatchee**

- White Sturgeon Conservation Strategies Update – Fish Committee
- Resident Native Trout Harvest Policy – Fish Committee and Full Commission Decision

**October 24<sup>rd</sup> – Webinar**

**November 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> – Olympia**

- Coastal Steelhead Season Planning Update – Fish Committee

**December 12<sup>th</sup> – Webinar**

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