

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

MEETING SUMMARY

March 31, 2025

Time 1pm-4pm.

Virtual Meeting

BPAG Members

Butch Smith, Ilwaco Charter Association
Lance Winecka, Regional Fisheries Coalition
Mark Pidgeon, Hunters Heritage Council
Josh Wilund, Back Country Hunters & Anglers
Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Larry Phillips, American Sportfishing Association
Lucas Hall, Long Live the Kings
Kerston Swartz, Woodland Park Zoo
Trina Bayard, Audubon, WA
Mindy Roberts, WA Conservation Action
Alexei Calambokidis, Trout Unlimited
Marie Neumiller, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Tom O'Keefe, American Whitewater
Jess Helsley, Wild Salmon Center
Nora Nickum, Seattle Aquarium
Mitch Freedman, Conservation NW
Rachel Voss, First Hunt Foundation
Ryan Johnson

WDFW

Kelly Susewind
Nate Pamplin
Morgan Stinson
Brandon Bean
Wendy Connally
Chalee Batungbacal
Commissioner Lorna Smith
Kimmy Jarvela
Tami Lininger

Members of the public

Joseph Vaile, Defenders of Wildlife
Don Gourlie (PSP)

Meeting Notes

Welcome, Introductions, and Agency Update with Director Susewind

Nate Pamplin welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Groups (BPAG) members and other guests to the meeting. Director Susewind highlighted some of the operating budget concerns as well noted the potential legislative increase to hunting and fishing Licenses and the additional reductions to hatchery funding. Director Susewind also relayed that he has been receiving a lot of questions regarding when new commissioners might be appointed and he said that it might be forthcoming from the Governor's Office. He shared that 2025 hunting seasons have been adopted, with the exception of cougar and black bear seasons and the commission is scheduled to decide at their April meeting. Director Susewind also mentioned that the State Wildlife Action Plan was coming up and that he is in the midst of negotiations for the 2025 salmon seasons at North of Falcon and PFMC is coming up next week.

Legislative Update

Chalee Batungbacal, WDFW Legislative Coordinator, presented a brief overview of agency request legislation, various bills WDFW is tracking, and noted some bills that 'died' earlier this session. Chalee provided updates on the agency's Enforcement bill and Personalized License Plate bill, as well as other revenue related bills including the recreational license fee bills and the Discover Pass bill.

Governor Budget Update

CFO Morgan Stinson and Budget Officer Brandon Bean provided an overview of the House and Senate operating budget proposals and noted the differences between the Department's request and the proposed appropriations. Morgan summarized the cuts to hatcheries in the House budget and noted the cuts to Enforcement officers which we hadn't seen before, as well as cuts to lands maintenance. He also discussed the proposed cut to Biodiversity, the appropriation for Safety, and explained the consequences of not funding many of WDFW's request where we asked that one-time funding appropriated in 2023-25 would be re-appropriated as ongoing in 2025-27. WDFW plans to send a letter in early April to legislative leadership with WDFW's preferences between the two chambers' budget proposals; the letter will be forwarded to BPAG.

Please contact Morgan Stinson at Morgan.Stinson@dfw.wa.gov for additional information.

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Update

Wendy Connally, SWAP Coordinator for WDFW, provided an update on the background and purpose of the SWAP and the timeline to amend and submit a new SWAP by October 1, 2025. Washington's SWAP is a comprehensive plan for conserving the state's fish and wildlife and the natural habitats on which they depend. It is part of a nationwide effort by all 50 states and 5 U.S. territories to develop conservation action plans and participate in the USFWS's State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program. The USFWS requires these plans be updated every 10 years in order to remain eligible for State Wildlife Grants funding. A guiding principle of the SWAP planning process is to identify actions needed to conserve wildlife and their habitats before species become too rare and restoration efforts too costly. Our intent is that the SWAP serves to inform conservation priorities and guide conservation actions statewide. It is envisioned that any government entity and conservation partner that has an interest in wildlife and habitat conservation will be able to use the information presented in the SWAP and implement actions that align with their own conservation mission and goals. Wendy provided a preview of changes in the 2025 SWAP with an emphasis on actions that can be taken to improve the conservation of SGCN species. Please contact Wendy Connally at Wendy.Connally@dfw.wa.gov for additional information.

Closing

Nate closed the meeting and expressed gratitude for BPAG's support and engagement. He also noted that Mark Pidgeon was moving on from BPAG and Nate appreciated Mark's service to a variety of Department committees, including BPAG. The next BPAG meeting date will be announced soon and likely will be scheduled for late-May or June and will be posted to the intranet page.