

WDFW BUDGET AND POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #6 –SUMMARY

Wednesday, August 1, 2018, 9:00am-4:00pm

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia Washington

Committee Members in Attendance

Bill Clarke	Fred Koontz	Craig Partridge
David Cloe	Wayne Marion	Mike Peterson
Mitch Friedman	Andy Marks	Jen Syrowitz
Ron Garner	Greg Mueller	

Other Attendees

Neil Aaland

Facilitator

Elizabeth McManus, Ross Strategic

WDFW Representation

Barbara Baker, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner	Rob Geddis
Bruce Bodka	Nate Pamplin
Raquel Crosier	Peter Vernie

Introductions & Agenda Review

Nate Pamplin, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Policy Director, welcomed the Budget and Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) and updated the group on the progress the Department is making on the 2019-21 budget proposal. Many other agencies are just beginning the budget process, and in previous years WDFW would have been as well, but this year work is already far along. It's a big asset to the Department to be this far along at this point in the year.

Elizabeth McManus (facilitator) followed Nate by outlining the key questions the BPAG will tackle during their final meeting before the Long-Term Funding Plan (LTFP) is due:

- What, if anything, is needed to finalize the LTFP?
- What advice do members have for the Department on the emerging 2016 legislative proposals?
- How will BPAG members be engaged in outreach and the 2019 session?

Welcome & Discussion with WDFW Director Kelly Susewind

Incoming WDFW Director Kelly Susewind joined the BPAG to talk about his background and approach to his new role. Director Susewind thanked the group for their engagement and noted

that the Department needs to do a better job reaching the younger generation, reaching non-hunters and anglers, and instilling the idea that WDFW is not just a “weekend thing” as well as serving its core fish and game constituency.

BPAG members welcomed the new director and thanked Joe Stohr for his work as Acting Director. The group provided a brief overview of its work since December and highlighted key points in the draft LTFFP.

BPAG Questions & Comments

- Question: What brings you to WDFW? What is your passion in wildlife?
 - Answer: My passion has always been natural resources and environmental work, fueled by an early love for fishing and hunting. I worked at the Washington State Department of Ecology for 28 years and saw the WDFW Director position as an opportunity to make a change.
- Question: What is your vision for the Department?
 - Answer: I want to broaden public awareness of the importance of this agency. We need to work on improving relationships with stakeholders, legislators, tribes, and the Commission itself.
- Comment: One BPAG member noted that while there are a lot of big challenges for the Department right now, there are a lot of great things happening that should be celebrated.
- Comment: BPAG members emphasized the strong sense of unified urgency among the group and the cogent vision of what participants would like to see next for the Department. They explained the vision as a transformational shift in the Department fueled by the inadequacy of the current funding model for fish and wildlife.

Debrief from Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting & Feedback from July Public Engagement

Nate provided an update on the June Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting. WDFW presented the status of the proviso work and Commissioners were able to see the impacts through the budget proposals that were described.

Nate described the status of the public engagement efforts conducted throughout July. The Department has been communicating with several organizations, their advisory groups, and the tribes. In order to provide the media and the public consistent and accurate information, WDFW conducted two webinars on July 23rd. The public webinar was recorded and posted to the WDFW website ([link to recording](#)) and shared via social media. Nate noted that the webinar platform allows WDFW to broadly share information and engage people in a more convenient manner. However, there may be WDFW customers that were unable to access the information due to limited computer or internet access.

In addition to the outreach, WDFW has launched a public opinion survey to capture Washingtonians thoughts on the budget process. The survey asks participants about their opinions on topics like which services should be cut first if full funding is not obtained; which additional investments would be most supported; the recommendations on funding in the Long-Term Funding Plan; and funding strategies like general tax increase, and license fee increase.

BPAG Comments and Questions

- What is your take way from this outreach work?
 - Nate responded that it's good to see there is support in pursuing a general fund ask. However, it's important to consider which groups of users have seen and responded to the survey. Comments on license fee increases are generally negative and comments on a conservation stamp vs a license increase are fairly evenly split between the two.
- What has the Department's interaction with tribes been?
 - WDFW has been working with the Consortium of Tribes and the Western Washington Treaty Tribes and making sure they're up-to-date on the proviso work. They have expressed concerns with hatchery production and monitoring and evaluation of fisheries. The Department has discussed the Tribes important role in conservation, especially for harvest management.
- One member noted the Wildlife Diversity Council sent a letter to the Commission and the WDFW Director in support of this work.
- Several BPAG members expressed the need for additional and more effective brief outreach materials aimed at different audiences and issues to dispel the misperceptions and provide people with accurate information.
 - Outreach methods and materials discussed by the group include: organizing a lobby day, publishing an open letter describing the need, engaging directly with the Governor's staff, improving social media presence and messaging, targeted messaging toward champions of the Department, and enlisting a known outdoor spokesperson to help highlight the message.
 - BPAG members discussed their own roles in providing information back into their home organizations and the need for outreach materials to support these engagements.

Long-Term Funding Plan (LTFP)

Since the June meeting, the facilitation team has been working to incorporate revisions to the LTFP and feedback from BPAG members, the Department, and the Office of Financial Management. Notable updates include adding an Executive Summary with a narrative description of the findings and revising the Findings and Recommendations to soften some of the language so that everyone on the BPAG can support the messages. A revised version of the Executive Summary and the full report will be sent around with revisions highlighted. Elizabeth asked that BPAG members please send any final comments and reminded the group that the final report is due to the Legislature on September 1.

Comments and Questions

- Several members commented that dedicated funding from the Legislature from things like the Real Estate Transfer Tax or Public Utility Tax, is unlikely. Another member noted that those strategies have been successful in other parts of the country and they are still worth considering.
- One member suggested that as WDFW continues the next phase of this effort, it'll be important to reference the Long-Term Funding Plan, but be able to distill a few key messages because it is a long document.

- Commissioner Barbara Baker noted that this group has taken a bad situation and turned it into something great, but the Long-Term Funding plan is a very dense document. It's important to highlight key messages people should take away.

Overview & Discussion of Emerging 2019-21 Operating Budget Proposals

Nate explained that in the Department funding package proposed to the fish and wildlife commission, one-third of the Department's operating budget will come from license fees and two-thirds from general fund. WDFW has developed two options for potential fee increases and noted that under both scenarios, the Commission would have the authority for future increases. The two options are:

- A flat one-time 12-15% increase across all license types. This would require a change to statute
- An annual, one-time surcharge of \$10 on every license except one-day licenses which would be subject to a \$3 charge

BPAG Questions and Comments:

- One member commented that the term "surcharge" could be confusing for customers, "conservation stamp" has been used in other states.
- Several participants asked if the surcharge could be added as an optional add-on to other purchases like bird seed, outdoor equipment, or whale watching excursions. WDFW has not yet had those discussions and would need to define when/how the surcharge is applied.
- Members noted that the surcharge would produce more revenue long-term and provide a potential pathway for non-consumptive users to make additional contributions to fish and wildlife funding.

Overview & Discussion of Emerging 2019-21 Capital Budget Proposals

Tim Burns, the Assistant Director for WDFW's Capital Asset Management Program, provided an overview of the Department's Capital Budget process. He began by explaining that the capital budget includes projects like constructing new facilities, repairs, and improvements. There are two types of capital projects: minor projects that are under \$1 million and are typically finished within a biennium, and projects over \$1 million that have a longer timeframe.

The process begins with the distribution of the capital budget instructions in January of even numbered years. Projects are submitted at the program level and are first evaluated and ranked by the Assistant Director. Then the Capital Budget Working Group, comprised of the Deputy Assistant Directors for each program, has an opportunity to review the scoring and suggest any changes. Tim explained that the ranking system relies on 11 criteria that receive a score from 1-10. After the Working Group reviews the projects, the list is forwarded to the Executive Management Team for endorsement and then to the Commission for approval. The approved list then goes to the Office of Financial Management in September with funding decisions announced in April or May of the following year.

The prioritized list of projects is used to create the Program's ten-year plan, with a focus on the next biennium. The plan includes projects that are in the design and permitting phase as well as those in the construction phase. This system allows the program to tell the Legislature exactly what projects are ready to go, if funding allows, and why they are ranked the way they are.

BPAG Questions and Comments:

- Question: How many staff do you have in the Capital Asset Management Program?
 - Answer: The Program has 80 full-time staff and about 70 tradespeople, but 85% of the work is contracted out.
- Question: Is there a similar process for ranking projects under the operating budget?
 - Answer: No, there currently is not a similar project ranking process.
- Question: One slide showed the increase in dollars being spent by the program, what changes were made to do that?
 - Answer: Basic project management improvements like monthly check-ins and implementing tracking and recording best practices.

Strategic Planning: Initial Thoughts

Rob Geddis, WDFW Lean Performance Manager, described the Department's initial concept for the strategic planning process. He began by briefly explaining the current planning process as a somewhat top-down approach focusing on four goals. The proposed strategic plan outline (Meeting Materials, Page X) incorporates recommendations from the Matrix report and considers focusing on the Department's eight outcome areas:

1. Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species
2. Acquire & Manage Lands
3. Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat & species
4. Manage Fishing Opportunities
5. Manage Hunting Opportunities
6. Produce Hatchery Fish
7. Non-Consumptive Recreational Opportunities
8. Business Management & Obligations

Rob noted that this planning process aims to look out 10 years but include specific steps for the current and next biennium. He proposed quarterly check-ins with the BPAG to gauge the progress of the Strategic Plan, with a clear vision and goals described by June 2019.

BPAG Questions and Comments

- Several participants noted that a 10-year strategic plan seems like a reasonable timeframe but should be paired with a short-term plan as well.
- BPAG members added it's important that the strategic plan be a simple, visual, living document that communicates the plan with both staff and external partners, not a long report that doesn't get read.
- One member noted that it will be especially important for upper-level management to use the long-term funding plan to enforce its importance and usefulness throughout the agency.

BPAG Role Going Forward

Elizabeth described the BPAG's role following the completion of the LTFP. The facilitation team will assist in the development of new materials highlighting and supporting the budget proposal and the needed paradigm shift of the agency. The BPAG will play an important role in spreading the messaging through your groups and social media channels to break the negative and incorrect perceptions of the Department. Some members of the group have coalesced around a letter supporting the Department and calling for action from the Legislature. The letter will be finalized and sent around the beginning of September.

Over the longer term, this group will continue to focus on the vision for the Department through engagement on the strategic planning process. The BPAG will convene later in the Fall to discuss a 2019 agenda. The group also talked about the need for a broader range of participants on the group, including more female, Eastern Washington, and younger representation.

Public Comment

No public comments were offered during this meeting.

Next Steps

- **Long-Term Funding Plan.** The facilitation team will make final editorial changes to the Long-Term Funding Plan and it will go to the Fish and Wildlife Commission during their August meeting. Any Commission comments will be addressed, and a final version will be sent around to the BPAG and submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2018.
- **Letter of Support.** A revised version of the letter supporting the Department, drafted by Mitch Friedman, will be circulated. The facilitation team will assist with final formatting and adding signatures of BPAG members who wish to participate in the letter. The letter is not a BPAG product.
- **Outreach.** Development of outreach materials will continue and the facilitation team is available to assist BPAG members with outreach to their home organizations as needed.
- **Next Meeting.** The group will meet again in October or November 2018.