



Director's Report to the Commission

October 27-28, 2017

Director's Office

Operating Budget Proviso Update

A proviso in the 2017-2019 Operating Budget directs the Department “[i]n consultation with the Office of Financial Management...[to] consult with an outside management consultant to evaluate and implement efficiencies to the agency’s operations and management practices,” and “...develop a plan for balancing projected revenue and expenditures and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency operations...” Finally, it directs the Department, in cooperation with the Office of Financial Management (OFM), to conduct a zero-based budget review of its operating budget to submit with the Department’s 2019-2021 biennial budget request.

Organization and Management Assessment

The Department issued a procurement work request through the State’s Master Contract for Organization Assessment Services and, after a competitive bid process, selected Matrix Consulting Group (<http://www.matrixcg.net/>) to review the Department’s budget and to conduct the organization and management review. The executive sponsor for this part of the Proviso is Deputy Director Joe Stohr.

While the Proviso states that this assessment is to be completed by May 1, 2018, the Department advanced the deadline to January 2018 so that it could begin to implement findings this biennium (where feasible) and use the assessment to help build the long-term plan and 2019-21 budget submittals.

The Department entered into the contract with Matrix Consulting Group on September 15, 2017. Matrix is scheduled to submit an initial draft report to the Department in the middle of November 2017, and they will brief the Commission in December.

Matrix has been conducting interviews with Department executives, collecting comparative information from other state fish and wildlife agencies, and sister natural resource agencies in Washington. They have also started a budget review and have met with a number of central service managers.

The Department budgeted \$280,000 for this contract.

Long-Term Plan

Under the Proviso, the Department is to develop “[a]dditional revenue options and an associated outreach plan designed to ensure that the public, stakeholders, the

commission and legislators have the opportunity to understand and impact the design of the revenue options.” To address this requirement, the Department issued a procurement work request on September 1, 2017, through the State’s Master Contract for Facilitators and Facilitation. Under this contract a facilitator will assist in writing an outreach plan, and facilitate a new Budget and Policy Advisory Group to help the Department develop a long-term revenue plan. The bid process closed on September 22 and the Department announced the apparent successful vendor. The long-term plan is due to the Legislature on May 1, 2018. The executive sponsor for this part of the Proviso is Policy Director Nate Pamplin.

Under the current work request, the vendor will work with the Department to develop an outreach plan; provide facilitation services to a new Budget and Policy Advisory Group; develop a long-term revenue plan; and develop outreach materials.

Members to the new Budget and Policy Advisory Group have been appointed and their first meeting will occur in late-November or early-December. The meetings will be open to the public. Members include: Jason Callahan, Gary Chandler, Bill Clarke, Tom Davis, Mitch Friedman, Ron Garner, Andrea Imler, Eric Johnson, Fred Koontz, Wayne Marion, Andy Marks, Greg Mueller, Craig Partridge, Mark Pidgeon, Butch Smith, Jen Syrowitz, Rachel Voss, and Dick Wallace.

The Department has budgeted \$175,000 for the contracted vendor.

Zero-Based Budget Analysis

The Department is evaluating methods to conduct a zero-based budget analysis. This analysis will be submitted along with our 2019-2021 operating budget requests in early fall, 2018. The executive sponsors for this part of the Proviso are Assistant Directors David Giglio (Technology and Financial Management) and Jeff Davis (Habitat Program).

Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) comes in many forms, and the Proviso requirements also include several elements of performance-based budgeting. Additionally, ZBB starts with defining an agency’s “programs” or units of service delivery. Because of the variety of approaches to zero-based budgeting, and the central importance of meaningfully defining the service catalog, the Department’s first task is to build a template of the final product. The Executive Management Team is refining the template, and Programs will be asked to populate it with their activity information prior to end of the calendar year. The ZBB results will inform the work with the Budget and Policy Advisory Group, and will also provide foundational information for the Department’s next revenue package. We want to be certain that what we produce meets the needs of our stakeholders and the Legislature.

Other

The Department is building a webpage to provide more information about the work associated with the Proviso and the Budget and Policy Advisory Group. Future products will be posted here as they are developed.

The first quarterly report was sent to the Legislature earlier this month to provide a status update on the Proviso work from July 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017.

Wildlife Program

National Hunting and Fishing Day



On September 23, the Department held the third annual National Hunting and Fishing Day event at Camp Pigott in Snohomish. National Hunting and Fishing Day, formalized by Congress in 1971, was created by the National Shooting Sports Foundation to celebrate the conservation successes of hunters and anglers. Youth 17 years of age and under who attended the event with an accompanying adult were able to shoot Department firearms, archery equipment, and

air rifles for free. The Fish Program stocked 850 trout in the lake for the participants to catch and keep. The Habitat Program had butterfly boxes the participants could build as well as seed balls for them to make. Enforcement brought a bear trap and staffed the Turn in a Poacher (TIP) trailer with several officers, including Karelian Bear Dog Colter. The Volunteer Program provided art activities where kids got to make slap bracelets, fish prints, and stuff-a-fish.



This event had over 750 youth participants, with an average age of 9.5 years old. Only 443 had fired a bow or firearm previously. Only 72 had taken Hunter Education. There were 100+ volunteers helping work the event, as well as about 15 Department staff members. The participants also got a "Swag Bag" full of Department pamphlets, a safety vest, safety glasses, hearing protection, a hunter education flashlight, a safety whistle, and more.



There were 14 non-government organizations that participated in the festivities. These organizations were Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association (WHEIA), National Wild Turkey Federation, Mule Deer Foundation, Trout Unlimited Monroe Chapter, Safari Club International, Washington Waterfowl Association, Back Country Horsemen Trail Dusters Chapter, Puget Sound Knappers, Washington Ornamental Game Bird

Breeders, Stonerose, Back Country Anglers, North American Falconers, Washington Trappers Association, and the Chief Seattle Shooting Sports Committee.

Grant funds were secured from the Stillaguamish Indian Tribe as well as a grant to WHEIA from the NRA Foundation. Chef and owner of Volterra Restaurants Don Curtis and three employees took time to cook pulled pork for the participants. Chef Curtis also worked with his food distributor to get food donated to the event. The Department's license dealers also donated prizes for raffle drawings throughout the day, including Fred Meyer, Triangle Bait and Tackle, Granite Falls Hardware, several Walmarts, Sportsman's Warehouse, Ace Hardware Silverlake, Cabela's, Dicks Sporting Goods, and Bass Pro Shops.

Smackout Wolf Pack Update

The Smackout wolf pack lethal removal action report for 2017 is available on the Department's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01929/>. The report describes the management actions taken by the Department from September 21, 2016, through September 21, 2017, to address recurrent livestock depredations by the Smackout pack. While much of the information has been posted on the Department's website, this report consolidates that material and provides a broader context for the Department's management activities.

Sherman Wolf Pack Update

The Department's 2017 Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol describes tools and approaches designed to influence pack behavior with the goal of reducing the potential for recurrent livestock depredations while continuing to promote wolf recovery.

On August 25, the Department notified the public that nonlethal deterrence measures were not achieving that goal in the Sherman pack territory, and that the Director had authorized incremental lethal removal of wolves as another tool to address recurrent depredations.

The approach taken consists of a period of active removal operations followed by an evaluation period to determine if those actions changed the pack's behavior. Between August 25 and September 1, the Department removed one wolf from the Sherman pack. On September 2, the Department initiated an evaluation period to assess the effect of that action on the pack's behavior.

Range riding activity continues in the grazing allotments used by the Sherman pack, including those allotments that experienced a wolf depredation. The producer rotates Department contract range riders throughout the grazing allotments to maintain human presence around the cattle.

The range riders have patrolled the area since May 9, before the cattle were turned out, to check for carnivore activity, proactively increase, and regular human presence and to report cattle information (locations, injuries, etc.) to the producer. Five people, including the producer, his family, and employees, also work cattle throughout the allotments.

The range riders share any noted wolf activity in the area or changes in cattle behavior with the Department.

The Department has not documented any wolf depredations by the Sherman pack since the evaluation period began, with the last known wolf depredation on August 28. The evaluation period is ongoing. Per the protocol, the Department may consider initiating another incremental lethal removal period if a wolf depredation is documented and likely occurred during the evaluation period.

Elk Damage Tour in Asotin County

Department staff members from Headquarters and Region 1 spent September 28 on a field tour with Representative Mary Dye, Commissioner Jay Holzmilller, staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service, and local farmers to discuss issues surrounding elk management and reducing elk conflicts adjacent to the Asotin Wildlife Area in the Blue Mountains. The discussions were open and collaborative and explored the history of land use in the area, current concerns, and potential solutions. Immediate actions by the Department include hiring a temporary (three-month) herder/ hazer to begin work in November, as well as an emergency rule (already in place) that adjusts the game management unit boundary to allow more hunting opportunities in the area and hopefully help with both the harvest of elk and the hazing that comes with hunting pressure. This emergency rule change for 2017 will be proposed as a permanent Game Management Unit rule change for 2018. The Wildlife Program and local staff continue to look for opportunities to use Master Hunters to help reduce herd size in the area. Current crop rotations on Department lands and the potential for more crop acres, other crops, or shifts in the timing of crop plantings that may hold more elk on the wildlife area in the fall and winter were discussed. Also discussed was the interest in and details of returning grazing to the area, elk feeding ("interim" and long-term), and fencing on Department lands and the possibility of creating special hunts. Department staff members will continue to work with these interested parties and pursue long-term solutions.

Forest Health Work

The Department continues to make progress on forest health restoration work. The prescribed burn team is working to burn 300+ acres on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in Okanogan County and 200+ acres on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area in Yakima County this fall. From October 9-13, the prescribed burn team spent the week in the Oak Creek Wildlife Area working on two prescribed fire units of 80 acres and 30 acres, respectively. They completed the 30-acre units, but snow fell on the October 11 and proceeded to get worse as the days progressed. The Oak Creek sites will need significant drying time before conditions will allow more burning.



At the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area, staff completed 700 acres of mechanical forest restoration, which is on top of the 500 acres finished in August on Taneum Creek. This work is funded by Capital Forest Health dollars and proceeds from the timber that was removed and sold to various purchasers in the region. An additional 30-acre project on the L.T. Murray produced wood that Yakama Nation fisheries biologists are using to improve watershed integrity in the Teanaway watershed.

Wildfires

Eleven wildfires have occurred on Department lands this season, burning 3,557 acres spread over six wildlife areas (Scatter Creek, Columbia Basin, Wenas, Swanson Lakes, Sinlahekin, and Oak Creek). There are likely other small ones that have not been reported. A supplemental budget request was submitted to cover the costs of fire response, including a significant need for restoration on Scatter Creek where threatened prairie and oak woodland habitat supporting several threatened and endangered species, such as the Mazama pocket gopher and Taylor checkerspot butterfly, was destroyed. That fire burned 430 acres and burned down both the historic Miller–Brewer House and the Red Barn, which were used for office space, meeting space, and storage.

Real Estate

Elyse Kane, Property Acquisition Specialist in the Real Estate Services Section, gave three presentations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Wildlife Restoration Program on the Department's Land Information System. The first was to the Portland Regional Office. The second was in Denver to representatives from each USFWS Regional Office, the tracking and reporting system development team, and two state representatives with established land information systems. The final presentation included the state partners in Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho, California, and the Pacific Trust Territories (Washington and Nevada were not represented at the meeting); and USFWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration representatives from the respective regions. Our partners at USFWS have indicated that the information Elyse presented will be valuable for other states looking to build a similar system on their own.

Wenas Target Shooting

Region 3, Lands Division and Hunter Education headquarters staff hosted two community listening sessions to share the recommendations of the Wenas Target Shooting Advisory Committee and hear public input. The Advisory Committee is currently considering including enhanced public education, enforcement, and potential improvements to high use sites, all aimed at reducing user conflicts and providing quality target shooting experiences. A status update on these recommendations will be provided at the December Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, as well as other strategies to improve target shooting experiences statewide.

Legislative Affairs

Agency Request legislation was submitted to the Governor's Office on September 18, and Budget Decision Packages were submitted to the Office of Financial Management on October 9.

The Government Affairs Unit has been conducting outreach on the performance audit, meeting with Representative Springer, Representative Sullivan, and Senator Braun in the last couple weeks. They have received positive feedback on the direction we are moving and a lot of interest in the process and final outcomes of the audit.

The Government Affairs Unit held three legislative tours in the last few weeks as well. On September 20, Representatives Tharinger, Fitzgibbon and Appleton saw habitat restoration and protection work occurring in the Hood Canal area as well as the Hood Canal Hatchery. The week of September 25, members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee saw the Teanaway Community Forest and heard a talk about habitat restoration and forest health, then traveled to the new Chief Joseph Hatchery to talk with the Colville Tribe about efforts to reintroduce salmon above Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph Dams. On October 17, staff took Rep Wilcox, Barkis and MacEwan out on the South Sound to talk about our work with the Nisqually Tribe, Puget Sound Partnership and Long Live the Kings to study early marine survival of Puget Sound Steelhead.

Committee assembly days are coming up November 13-17. We are anticipating a couple work session in front of the Natural Resources and Parks Committee and the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on both our performance audit and our efforts to respond to the Cypress Island Net Pen collapse.

Enforcement Program

Poaching Season Is All Year

The first wave of charges have been filed against some members of a group involved in large scale poaching. What began as an investigation into headless mule deer lying across the Eastern Oregon landscape morphed into an estimated 100 illegally taken

animals from two states. Based upon information from Oregon State Police, Enforcement Police initially searched the homes of two Vancouver men and recovered 26 mule deer heads, many of which were from trophy class animals. That unleashed over 20 additional search warrants served on 10 suspects. Over 20 individuals that committed a wide range of resource violations have been identified in the investigation. Deer, elk, bear, bobcat, and other animals had either been taken outside of seasons, in excess of limits, killed with illegal methods, or without proper tags or licenses. Washington black bears were routinely and illegally taken with hounds. Spotlights were regularly used to poach deer and elk, and much of the game killed was left to waste in the field.

One suspect is currently facing 25 charges of first degree unlawful hunting of big game, 24 counts of unlawful use of dogs to hunt bear or bobcat, two counts of second-degree unlawful hunting of big game and 13 counts of first-degree waste of fish and wildlife in Skamania County Superior Court. Four other suspects are facing a total of 81 criminal charges in the same court with preliminary appearances set for early October. Additional suspects may face charges in coming months.

Deer and Elk Season

Even though poaching occurs year around, big game related violations appear to trend upwards as we near open hunting seasons. This could be an accurate reflection of reality as illegally taken animals are easier to pass as legal harvest, or we just receive an increase in information because law abiding and vigilant members of the public are more active outdoors this time of year - though it is probably a combination of the two.

Here is a weekly sample:

Officer Budai responded to a call of a convicted felon illegally in possession of a firearm and shooting a deer during the closed season and within the town of Washougal. While on his way, the Officer learned the suspect also had some outstanding felony warrants for his arrest. The Officer arrived in time to watch the suspect get into a vehicle with another man and try to leave the area. He effected a high risk traffic stop and secured everyone. The suspect gave the Officer a false name. The man was booked into jail on a variety of charges.

Officer Stout assisted Officer Ludwig after two tribal members had failed to follow up and track possible wounded elk after making 12-15 unethical shots on a herd of elk near the mouth of the Sauk River. Shortly after their volley of gunfire, the hunters left to go home assuming they missed. Officer Ludwig was quickly able to locate blood. Officers' Ludwig and Stout were able to track for several hours what was eventually found to be a wounded bull elk. The bull was found bedded in thick brush and was unable to stand up. The Officers dispatched the bull putting it out of its misery. Officers Stout and Ludwig gutted the bull and a stick was placed between its ribs to allow the bull to cool. The Officers laid out a flag line and took GPS coordinates so that the bull could be located quickly. The tribe was contacted and their enforcement recovered the bull.

Reports will be completed and forwarded to the tribe for the possible wastage and unethical hunting practices.

On opening day of muzzleloader elk season, Officer Tucker noticed multiple vehicles parked on the side of the road in the closed Mission unit. While monitoring the vehicles, Officer Tucker witnessed two different groups of hunters retrieving back boards, which indicated harvests in a closed area. Multiple individuals were cited and the bull was seized after following a small blood trail for hours. Another elk believed to have been shot was never found.



Officer Ludwig with a recovered bull after it was abandoned

Polluted Clams

One of many Enforcement responsibilities includes enforcing sanitary shellfish laws on behalf of the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). This is a year-around responsibility, involving a large industry worth \$270 million just in private sector harvest alone. The Department is mandated to conduct a certain amount of patrols per a risk formula, and failure to meet the obligation could result in a shellfish embargo on Washington shellfish. While the work often involves dealing with poaching and trafficking on an individual basis, investigations also involve the conduct of companies. One recent example involved Officers Smith and Branscomb when they checked on a commercial shellfish company reported to be harvesting clams in an area closed due to recent pollution. The Officers located the company and found them loading 1,200 pounds of clams into a boat in the middle of a closed area. None of the crew had licenses or certification tags, the absence of which makes it hard to trace product should there be a health outbreak. DOH followed up at the company headquarters and found another 1,400 pounds of clams taken from the same area. A small batch was sold to a private citizen out of the company's storefront. Officers tracked down the customer and warned him the clams were unsafe to eat.

Still Fire Season

Despite state and local agency messaging, the obvious danger and the fact that another Northwest state is experiencing a horrific fire season, Officers find themselves having to reinforce local burn bans with their presence, especially on properties managed by the agency. For example, Officer Trautman and Officer McCormick were on a night patrol in the Green Lake area when they observed a large fire in the parking area of the Department access site. Upon closer inspection they located six individuals with a raging bonfire made with wood pallets. They contacted the group and asked them about the posted burn ban and vehicle access pass signs at the entrance. All claimed that they had not seen the signs and did not know they couldn't have a fire. The individual who started the bonfire was identified and ticketed for the violation. The rest of the group was educated on the various regulations for the area.

Salmon Everywhere

As adult fish migrate up tributaries toward spawning grounds, Officers are responding to numerous complaints of snagging, illegal netting, and pitch forking. Some are repeat offenders, like the one encountered by Officer Summit and Student Officer Stolp on the Dewatto River. After receiving reports of rampant salmon snagging activities, in order to see the reported activity undetected the officers drove in through logging roads, hid the vehicle and made their way across the river to a point of seclusion near the fishing hole. The spot was adjacent to a popular campground. They weren't there long before they saw three subjects attempting to snag salmon. Only one of the snaggers was able to land a fish during the two-plus hours of observations. The other two subjects are well-known offenders to the Mason County officers. One of them had two outstanding fish and wildlife warrants (big game violations and snagging) totaling nearly \$6,000, but the jail would not accept him. It is believed that he knows that the jail's capacity limitations allows him to avoid his court date, which would likely result in the loss of hunting and fishing privileges.

Endangered Species Act (ESA) Protection

Some tributaries are closed to fishing because of low returns and impacts to ESA fish. Patrolling these areas are a priority for the Enforcement Program and the dedicated officer presence has resulted in a number of noteworthy cases. One example involves the Metthow River in Eastern Washington, where the steelhead season remains closed. The closure did not deter the man who Officer Foss watched catch and retain a steelhead. When asked to submit the fish for inspection, the person told him he was a tribal member, but he refused to produce identification, and eventually refused to produce the fish. The man absconded to his nearby home. Much later that evening, Sgt. Jewell and Sgt. Christensen helped serve a search warrant at the residence. Another non-tribal person was implicated in the case, and five steelhead were recovered – all appear to be wild fish under ESA protection.

Seafood Imports

Department Enforcement Police have involvement in a wide range of activities, some of which are not well known. A top priority in recent years has been to protect legitimate seafood industry by doubling down on black market trade, whether it be local, national or international.

Illegal, unreported, or unregulated fisheries (IUU) are a global concern, and if left unaddressed, have an obvious negative impact on conservation. But there are also domestic consequences. A prime example is the Russian king crab fishery, considered by some as one of the most unsustainable fisheries in the world. The illegal component of that fishery is believed to directly compete with the Alaska fishery in the market place.

But what does that have to do with Washington State? According to members of the Bering Sea Crab Association, the IUU issue has resulted in an estimated \$600 million loss in crab-related revenue and tax since 2000. Of the \$255 million of the US' frozen crab imports from Russia in 2015, 79 percent are estimated to be imported through

Washington State ports (Blaine, Seattle, Tacoma, and, to a lesser extent, Bellingham). Over the last five years, as much as 88 percent (2014) of all frozen (king and snow) crab from Russia entered through either the ports of Blaine, Seattle, or Tacoma.

Over the past year and a half, Department Police made a number of strategic moves in an effort to minimize state ports from being the warehouse for illegal products, to include ramping up inspections at ports, and businesses, and advocating for tighter state regulations, like requiring country of origin on imports. Through collaborative efforts with federal agencies and in partnership with NOAA, the Department has made significant strides in understanding how to trace imports to source and how to differentiate between legal and illegal fish and shellfish.

Given its value, it is no surprise that illicit trade in local resources also exists. What may give you pause, though, are the locations where it is occurring. Department Police have led dozens of investigations over the past two years where nail salons, restaurants, and parking lots behind coffee stands have been the staging grounds for mini-trafficking.

While the state is making some headway in increasing the profile of the problem and sending a message through prosecutions, success in detecting this kind of illegal activity requires a partnership with legitimate businesses. Confidentiality is always protected should disadvantaged businesses reach out to the Department. The good reputation and high standards set by U.S. seafood businesses should not have to compete with an illegal marketplace.