



Western pond turtle/WDFW

Conserving Washington's fish and wildlife

WDFW protects state resources for future generations

Washington's diverse fish and wildlife species—from magnificent orca whales and elk to the myriad inhabitants of our beaches, wetlands, mountains and meadows—are a fundamental part of our state's natural heritage. They have been here for eons, but their future is anything but assured.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) exists to ensure the survival of these living resources—now and for future generations.

Conservation
is WDFW's
primary responsibility

Protecting and perpetuating fish and wildlife is WDFW's mandate, set by the Washington Legislature. To meet that mandate, conservation is the first priority in all WDFW does—whether protecting vulnerable species, restoring their habitat, crafting sustainable fishing, hunting and wildlife-viewing opportunities, or enforcing laws that protect natural resources.

After decades of pressure from human development and loss of habitat, Washington's fish and wildlife now face new challenges from climate change, pollution and destructive invasive species.

At the same time, declining state revenues and competition for other state services have reduced funding for fish and wildlife conservation. In the past two years, State General Fund support for WDFW's work has dropped nearly \$30 million and further reductions are anticipated in the coming year.

While Washington state faces many pressing needs—from education to transportation, from health care to public safety—our fish and wildlife resources also need support and careful management if they are to remain part of our heritage.

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Protecting vulnerable species

Washington's once-abundant fish and wildlife species are under constant pressure from land development and other human activities that have altered the natural landscape. More than 50 species, from grizzly bears to bull trout, are currently listed by state or federal natural resource agencies as endangered, threatened, or at risk of decline.

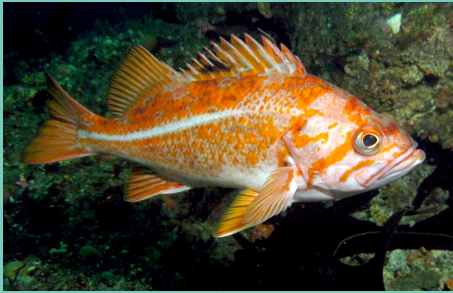
All these species – whether mammals, birds, fish or reptiles – play a role in the state's complex ecological balance. Salmon, for example, provide food for more than 100 other species, ranging from killer whales to bald eagles. Birds distribute seeds, which grow into plants that provide food and shelter for a wide array of animals.

WDFW works with partners to maintain healthy wildlife populations through a variety of planning, monitoring, recovery, and incentive programs. For fish and wildlife species

at risk of extinction, special protection is provided under state and federal laws, which set out guidelines for restoring vulnerable populations.

Before a wild population is listed for protection, WDFW biologists conduct field studies to collect scientific evidence on survival, habitat condition and factors impeding recovery. Species are listed for state protection by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission only after extensive public review.

The goal of recovery planning is to restore a vulnerable population to sustainable levels. Once a species has been classified as endangered or threatened, WDFW develops a detailed recovery plan outlining actions necessary to ensure its survival. Habitat restoration, predator management and disease control are some of the strategies prescribed in these recovery plans. WDFW typically works with a variety of partners—including treaty tribes, universities, conservation organizations, zoos, local governments and landowners—to put these plans into action.



Canary rockfish/Janna Nichols

Protecting Puget Sound rockfish

Many rockfish species in Puget Sound continue to decline, even after decades of severe restrictions on commercial and recreational fishing. Three species – bocaccio, yelloweye and canary rockfish – have been proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. One reason why rockfish have continued to decline is that they are often caught inadvertently in fisheries for other species. WDFW is developing a new Rockfish Conservation Plan designed to protect rockfish and their habitat throughout Puget Sound.



Gray wolf/USFWS

Managing gray wolves

Seventy years after they were eliminated from the state, gray wolves are beginning to re-enter Washington from neighboring states and provinces. Two newly-established wolf packs have been documented in Okanogan and Pend Oreille counties. Drawing on peer-reviewed science and an extensive public-involvement process, WDFW is developing a plan to guide the conservation and management of gray wolves as their numbers increase and the federal government shifts management responsibility to the state.

Maintaining sustainable fishing and hunting

While some species struggle for survival, others continue to thrive. WDFW manages hundreds of fish, shellfish and game species that are sufficiently abundant and widespread to support managed fishing and hunting opportunities. Under state law, the department is directed to maximize these opportunities in a manner that does not impair the resource.

To meet this mandate, WDFW works closely with tribal, state and federal resource managers as well as with fishers, hunters and advisory groups to coordinate management efforts throughout the state. Key activities include:

- Monitoring the condition of fish and wildlife populations to determine if they are sufficiently abundant to warrant fishing and hunting.

- Crafting fishing and hunting regulations to ensure the state's fish and wildlife populations remain at sustainable levels.
- Patrolling the state to enforce fishing and hunting regulations that guard against overharvesting.

In setting fishing and hunting seasons, WDFW works with a variety of public agencies and other partners, with broad public input. Fishing seasons are developed in consultation with Washington treaty tribes, neighboring states, citizen advisory groups and the public, within guidelines established by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and federal natural resource agencies. A statewide management plan, subject to extensive public review, establishes the framework for hunting seasons adopted by the commission.

Preserving and restoring critical habitat

The largest single threat to Washington's fish and wildlife is the loss of natural habitat. According to the Washington Biodiversity Council, 90 percent of the state's old-growth forests have been lost to human development since statehood. Seventy percent of Washington's coastal grasslands and estuaries also have been altered or destroyed, along with 60 percent of eastside shrub-steppe habitat and 50 percent of the natural habitat near rivers and streams statewide.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is working to protect and restore natural habitat for fish and wildlife in a variety of ways:

Supplying statewide conservation efforts: Each year, WDFW provides technical assistance to public agencies, non-profit organizations and thousands of landowners on habitat-protection issues ranging from stream restoration to forest management. WDFW assists landowners in removing barriers to fish passage, and makes recommendations on conservation issues ranging from growth management to the siting and licensing of major energy projects..

Managing wildlife areas: WDFW owns or manages nearly 850,000 acres of land throughout the state, acquired specifically to preserve natural habitat for Washington fish and wildlife. While most of WDFW's 32 wildlife areas are open for public recreation, all are managed primarily to maintain fish and wildlife habitat.

Protecting water for fish: Under state law, WDFW reviews proposed projects for construction work that will use, divert, obstruct or change the natural flow of state waters. Through the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) program, WDFW reviews plans for docks, bulkheads and other applicable projects and sets conditions on the work to protect fish habitat.

Restoring Puget Sound nearshore: The bluffs, beaches, mudflats, kelp beds and estuaries that surround Puget Sound are vital habitat for a community of fish and wildlife, ranging from clams and salmon to orcas and bald eagles. Since 2001, WDFW has worked with multiple public, tribal and private partners to preserve and restore the natural ecological functions of this urbanized area. Completed projects have re-established hundreds of acres of Puget Sound nearshore habitat critical to the survival fish and wildlife. The nearshore is a top priority of the Puget Sound Partnership, the state agency charged with working with partners to restore the Sound by 2020.

Progress in salmon recovery

No Washington conservation effort has commanded more attention during the past decade than recovery of the state's wild salmon runs. Since 1991, when the first of nine regional salmon populations were listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been at the forefront of the statewide salmon-recovery effort.

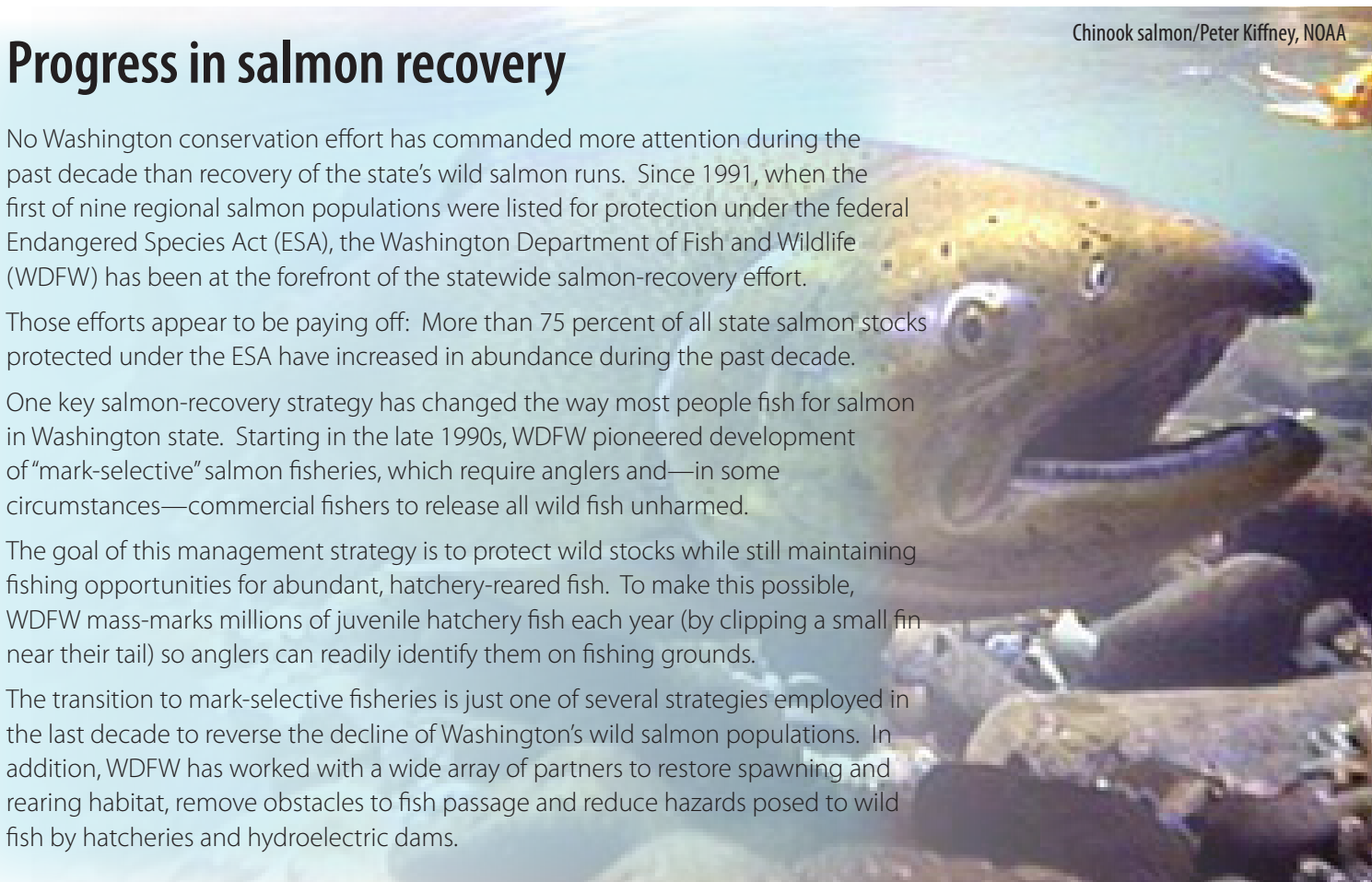
Those efforts appear to be paying off: More than 75 percent of all state salmon stocks protected under the ESA have increased in abundance during the past decade.

One key salmon-recovery strategy has changed the way most people fish for salmon in Washington state. Starting in the late 1990s, WDFW pioneered development of "mark-selective" salmon fisheries, which require anglers and—in some circumstances—commercial fishers to release all wild fish unharmed.

The goal of this management strategy is to protect wild stocks while still maintaining fishing opportunities for abundant, hatchery-reared fish. To make this possible, WDFW mass-marks millions of juvenile hatchery fish each year (by clipping a small fin near their tail) so anglers can readily identify them on fishing grounds.

The transition to mark-selective fisheries is just one of several strategies employed in the last decade to reverse the decline of Washington's wild salmon populations. In addition, WDFW has worked with a wide array of partners to restore spawning and rearing habitat, remove obstacles to fish passage and reduce hazards posed to wild fish by hatcheries and hydroelectric dams.

Chinook salmon/Peter Kiffney, NOAA



Species Listed for Protection in Washington

State Endangered Species

Northern leopard frog • Oregon spotted frog • American white pelican • Brown pelican
 Sandhill crane • Snowy plover
 Spotted owl • Streaked horned lark • Upland sandpiper • Mardon skipper • Oregon silverspot butterfly • Taylor's checkerspot
 Black right whale • Blue whale
 Columbian white-tailed deer
 Fin whale • Fisher • Gray wolf
 Grizzly bear • Humpback whale
 Killer whale • Pygmy rabbit • Sea otter • Sei whale • Sperm whale
 Woodland caribou • Leatherback sea turtle • Western pond turtle

State Threatened Species

Ferruginous hawk • Marbled murrelet • Sage grouse
 Sharp-tailed grouse • Lynx
 Mazama (Western) pocket gopher
 Steller sea lion • Western gray squirrel • Green sea turtle
 Loggerhead sea turtle

Federal Endangered Species

Short-tailed albatross
 Chinook salmon (Upper Columbia)
 Sockeye salmon (Snake R.) • Brown pelican • Killer whale • Black right whale • Humpback whale • Blue whale • Fin whale • Columbian white-tailed deer • Gray wolf
 Lynx • Sei whale • Sperm whale

Federal Threatened Species

Chinook salmon (Snake R. Sp/Su)
 Chinook salmon (Puget Sound)
 Chinook salmon (Snake R. Fall)
 Chinook salmon (Lower Columbia)
 Coho Salmon (Lower Columbia)
 Chum salmon (Lower Columbia)
 Chum salmon (Hood Canal)
 Sockeye salmon (Ozette Lake)
 Steelhead (Puget Sound)
 Steelhead (Upper Columbia)
 Steelhead (Snake River)
 Steelhead (Middle Columbia)
 Steelhead (Lower Columbia) • Bull trout • Oregon silverspot butterfly
 Spotted Owl • Grizzly bear
 Steller sea lion • Green sea turtle
 Leatherback sea turtle
 Loggerhead sea turtle

Meeting new challenges

The work of protecting and sustaining Washington's fish and wildlife becomes more complex each year. New challenges emerge, while work continues on longstanding recovery efforts. WDFW is working to meet emerging challenges on a number of fronts:

Climate change: Evidence is growing that climate change will have major effects on Washington's fish and wildlife populations in future years. Temperatures in many of the state's rivers and lakes are increasing, threatening the long-term survival of salmon and steelhead stocks. Forests and wetlands could also be threatened by prolonged droughts. WDFW is monitoring these changes and has a leadership role in the state's Climate Change Task Force that is working to establish conservation strategies for the future of Washington's fish and wildlife.

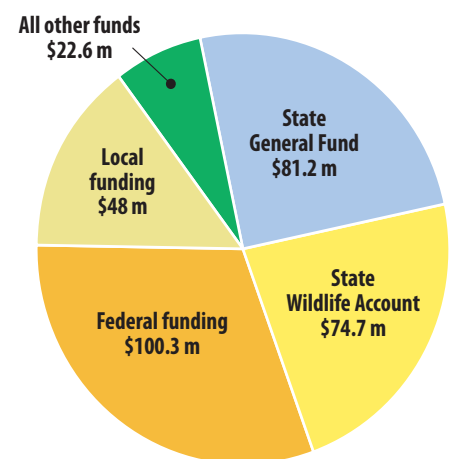
Invasive species: Whether in the ballast water of international cargo ships or on pleasure boats arriving from other states, a host of aquatic invaders have the potential to take a heavy toll on native species and cause millions of dollars in damage to public infrastructure. WDFW is working to keep invaders such as zebra and quagga mussels out of Washington by inspecting inbound watercraft. So far, invasive mussels have been found and removed from more than 17 vessels stopped at check stations around the state.

Shrinking budgets: Budget reductions present an additional challenge for WDFW in its efforts to conserve Washington's fish and wildlife. During the 2009 Legislative Session, State General Fund support for WDFW's operations was reduced by 27 percent. Activities affected by that reduction

include fish and wildlife enforcement, habitat protection and recovery of at-risk species.

Total funding for WDFW in 2009-11 comes from a variety of sources:

- **State General Fund** (\$81.2 million) – Revenues derived from state tax dollars
- **State Wildlife Account** (\$74.7 million) – Funds generated by fishing and hunting license fees, fines and forfeitures
- **Federal Funding** (\$100.3 million) – Grants received from federal agencies
- **Local Funding** (\$48 million) – Revenues derived from providing services to local governments
- **Other Funds** (\$22.6 million) – State funding from accounts dedicated to specific activities, such as oil-spill response and regional fisheries development



2009-11 WDFW operating budget
 \$326.8 million | 1,386 FTEs

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