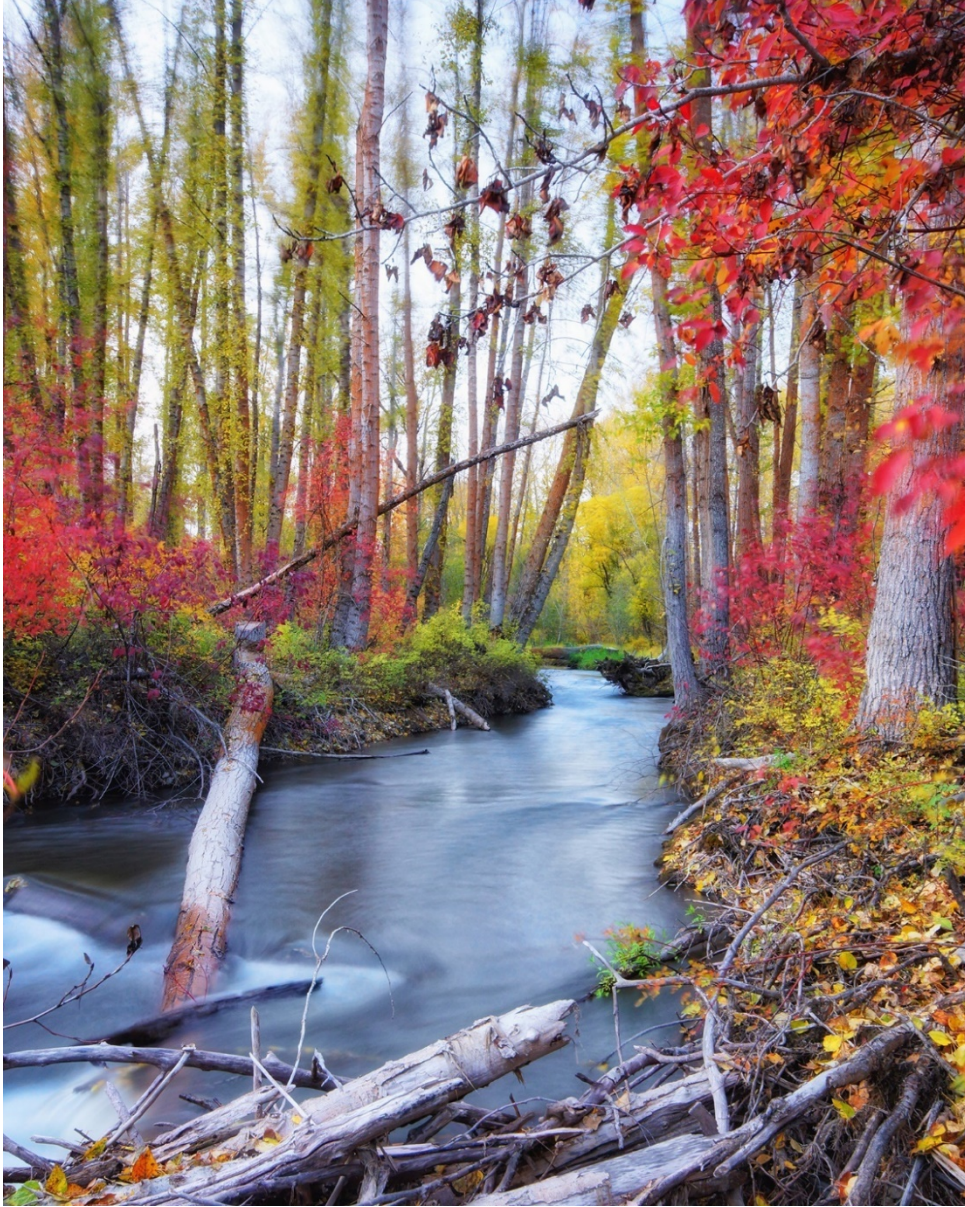


# Wildlife Area Planning Framework

2021



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALEA	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CRS	Cultural Resource Specialist
DAHP	Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
DNR	Washington State Department of Natural Resources
ECY	Washington State Department of Ecology
EIA	Ecological Integrity Assessment
EIM	Ecological Integrity Monitoring
ESA	Endangered Species Act
HCP	Wildlife Area Habitat Conservation Plan
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
NAP	Natural Area Preserve
NAWCA	North American Wetland Conservation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PHS	Priority Habitats and Species
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RCO	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SGCN	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
SMA	Shoreline Management Act
SRFB	Salmon Recovery Funding Board
SWAP	State Wildlife Action Plan
USBR	Bureau of Land Reclamation
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WAAC	Wildlife Area Advisory Committee
WDFW	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
WLA	Wildlife Area
WWRP	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

*Washington's Wildlife Areas (WLAs) are a tremendous asset for the citizens of Washington. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) **MANAGES OVER 1 MILLION ACRES OF LAND ACROSS THE STATE AS WILDLIFE AREAS, TO PROVIDE FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.** With increased population growth and conversion of lands to developed uses, loss of natural habitat poses the greatest single threat to Washington's native fish and wildlife. The state's 33 WLAs play a critical role in conserving Washington's natural heritage and maintaining natural ecosystems and biological diversity. Although they make up just two percent of all land in the state, they provide significant habitat for many of the fish and wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). WLAs fill a special niche for state tourism, supporting local and regional economies, and play an important role as places for outdoor recreation. Annually, approximately 4 million people visit WLAs to enjoy the diverse recreational opportunities they provide.*

### *Introduction*

*THE MISSION OF WDFW IS TO PRESERVE, PROTECT AND PERPETUATE FISH, WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS WHILE PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES. WDFW'S VISION IS CONSERVATION OF WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES AND ECOSYSTEMS, WHERE CONSERVATION IS DEFINED AS: PROTECTION, PRESERVATION, MANAGEMENT, OR RESTORATION OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS AND THE ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES THAT INHABIT THEM. CONSERVATION INCLUDES MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN USE FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS.*

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#### PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

WDFW manages over 1 million acres of land across the state, to provide fish and wildlife habitat and maintain recreational opportunities for the citizens of Washington. Every ten years, WDFW develops a process for updating management plans for each of the 33 WLAs.

This document provides the framework for statewide WLA management and summarizes the statutory, regulatory, and funding requirements followed when managing them. It includes internal guidance for integrating multiple management initiatives, including how WDFW addresses and prioritizes management actions for species, habitats, and recreation. It also provides transparency to the public and interested stakeholders and outlines how WDFW manages facilities and equipment in a cost-effective manner. The Wildlife Area Advisory Committees (WAACs) provide input during WLA plan development. WAAC members represent a range of stakeholders with an interest in management activities on a wildlife area. Development of each WLA plan will be guided by this document, be consistent with the statewide WLA goals in this document, and identify goals, objectives, and performance measures specific to each area's unique resources and features.

The WLA planning process integrates the priorities of the Wildlife, Fish, Habitat, and Enforcement programs. An interdisciplinary process engages WDFW personnel at WDFW headquarters in Olympia and resource specialists and decision-makers in each of WDFW's six regions, which facilitates dialogue regarding priority resource issues and addresses potential conflicts among competing objectives of WDFW programs. Ultimately the final plan is delivered to the WDFW director for approval.



This document identifies the WDFW directives, guidance, and requirements for managing WLAs, describes how these are addressed through the planning process, and what is documented in each plan.

This document is designed for both internal and external audiences and is organized in the same manner as a wildlife area management plan. There are four main sections, wildlife area planning overview, WLA management and planning, species and habitat management, and authority and purpose.

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#### WILDLIFE AREA PLAN PURPOSE AND PLAN BENEFITS

The purposes of the 10-year wildlife area management plans are to:

- Articulate to staff and the public management direction for WDFW lands, including new acquisitions, and restoration projects.
- Guide staff in prioritizing activities to achieve WDFW’s mandate and strategic plan, while meeting the original objectives of the funds in which the lands were purchased.
- Provide transparency regarding decision making process.
- Identify funding constraints and needs.
- Depends on regional teams and headquarters technical support and expertise.

The benefits of the 10-year wildlife area management plans include: The overall goal of the wildlife area planning process is to create a hands on, dynamic plan, reviewed annually by staff. The plan provides justification to our funders and the legislature for continued support for WDFW lands including operations and maintenance, land acquisitions, and restoration activities. Further it serves as a user manual for the wildlife area managers and WDFW staff. Lastly, it provides guidance for management actions, it is understood that emerging issues many take priority.

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#### WILDLIFE AREA VISION STATEMENT

*A Washington where fish and wildlife thrive in healthy habitats, and where people experience and enjoy our state’s natural gifts for generations to come. By actively managing lands, restoring habitats, and preserving wild places, WDFW serves as a steward for Washington’s natural places, protecting the state’s land and water for its human and wildlife populations.*

### **Statewide Wildlife Area Goals**

WLA plans advance the following statewide goals:

<b>WLA GOAL 1</b>	<b>RESTORE AND PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF PRIORITY ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND SITES.</b>
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<i>WLA GOAL 2</i>	<i>SUSTAIN INDIVIDUAL SPECIES THROUGH HABITAT AND POPULATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, WHERE CONSISTENT WITH SITE PURPOSE AND FUNDING.</i>
<i>WLA GOAL 3</i>	<i>PROVIDE FISHING, HUNTING AND WILDLIFE RELATED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.</i>
<i>WLA GOAL 4</i>	<i>ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN CONSISTENT, TIMELY AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION REGARDING WLA MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.</i>
<i>WLA GOAL 5</i>	<i>MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVE AND POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY NEIGHBORS, LESSEES PARTNERS AND PERMITTEES.</i>
<i>WLA GOAL 6</i>	<i>HIRE, TRAIN, EQUIP, AND LICENSE, AS NECESSARY, WLA STAFF, TO MEET THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT NEEDS OF WLAS.</i>
<i>WLA GOAL 7</i>	<i>MAINTAIN SAFE, HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL, AND COST-EFFECT ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONAL FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.</i>

## **Wildlife Area Planning Process**

The following section describes the internal and external process of developing a final wildlife area management plan.

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### **SCOPING**

Scoping begins with a meeting between a Lands Division planner (Project Manager) and the Core Team generally comprised of the wildlife area manager, lands operation manager or regional wildlife program manager, and the planner. The Core Team define roles and responsibilities, expectations, and a timeline for plan completion. The Core Team identifies members of the Planning Team, WDFW technical specialists and regional and headquarters leaders, and plans for the scoping meetings: internal, WAAC and public.

These scoping meetings help to define management issues which lead to the goals, objectives, and performance measures for the plan. At each scoping meeting, the statewide planning goals, WDFW guidance and WLA resource information (e.g., species occurrences, habitat types on the wildlife area) are summarized. Participants identify issues, interests, and other input, (e.g., recreation use and conflicts).

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### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

This phase brings together the Planning Team for several meetings. A typical planning team includes a cross-program planning team, primarily – representatives from Habitat, Fish, Enforcement, and Wildlife programs to ensure all interest and values are incorporated into the plan. The Planning Team confirms management issues and identifies plan objectives and



performance measures based on input and feedback collected during internal, advisory committee, and public scoping, as well as technical expertise and program priorities. The draft list of goals and objectives are reviewed by the WAAC prior to public review. The WAAC also provides feedback in the prioritization exercise described below. Goals and objectives are prioritized for implementation.

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#### PRIORITIZATION OF PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Goals & Objectives are the backbone of WLA plans; they represent a 10-year action plan that details what WDFW and the WAAC wish to achieve and how progress will be measured and monitored. This action plan must be prioritized and achieved in phases as capacity and funding allow.

Once the goals and objectives are reviewed as part of the public review process for the draft plan, the planning team prioritizes the objectives of the plan in each goal category. The prioritization exercise considers three major factors: the urgency, benefits, and the level of effort of each objective.

In evaluating urgency, plan reviewers consider the objective's importance for protecting the health and safety of staff and visitors, protecting natural and cultural resources, and complying with regulatory, treaty, and contractual obligations.

In evaluating the benefit, reviewers consider the level of benefit in protecting and restoring important habitat and/or providing public access.

In evaluating level of effort, considerations include the amount of staff time and resources it will take to complete an objective and whether or not completing the objective depends on the coordination and participation of external partners. Additionally, the availability of funds for the objective should be assessed to the best degree known.

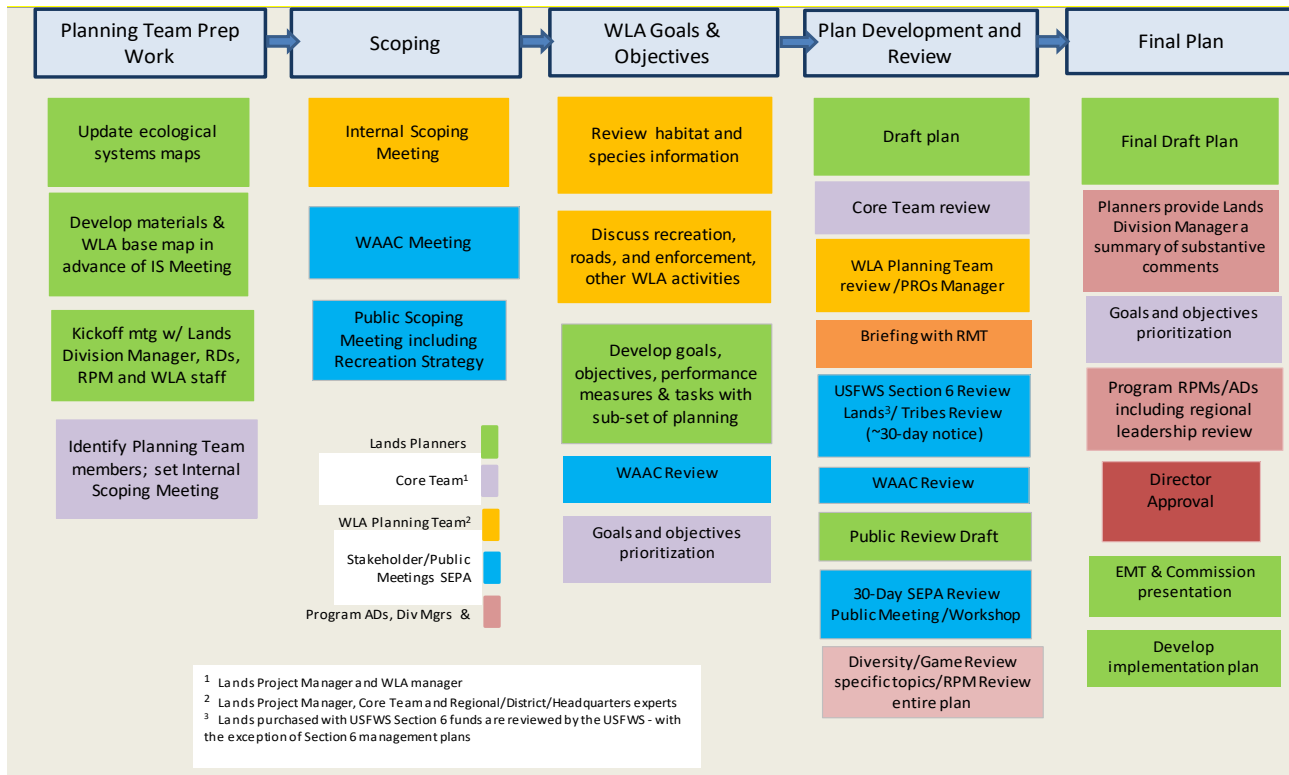
The prioritization process is designed to help WAAC members advise, and managers determine what actions should be prioritized for early implementation. Objectives are prioritized within each goal. This prioritization exercise should be reviewed at least annually to re-assess priorities and inform staff work plans during plan implementation district team meetings.

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#### PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW – FINAL PLAN

The planner is responsible for drafting and revising the plan with input from WLA and regional staff. A completed draft plan is reviewed by the Planning Team, WAAC, tribes, and the public. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reviews the draft plan if USFWS lands were purchased with USFWS Section 6 funds. Based on overall feedback, the draft plan is revised and then circulated

for review by WDFW resource programs, the regional program managers, and program assistant directors, the Lands Division manager, Deputy Wildlife Program Director, and eventually to the WDFW Director for final review and approval.



**Figure 1. Illustrates the internal and external process for developing WLA plans.**

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Following plan adoption, the wildlife area plan implementation process tracks progress on the implementation of plan goals and objectives. The collaborative process of creating the plan carries over into implementation to encourage shared responsibility, accountability, and ongoing engagement of the district team in the implementation of the plan as well as open communication about emergent priorities and adaptive management over the course of the plan’s lifespan. The wildlife area manager reports progress to the WAAC.

### *Engagement in the planning process*

WDFW is committed to a transparent and inclusive public outreach planning process for all wildlife areas. The following public involvement strategy is applied as each WLA plan is developed and provides flexibility to tailor activities for the unique stakeholders and local conditions in each area.

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## WILDLIFE AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEES

WAACs advise WLA managers about land management actions. WAAC members represent a range of stakeholders with an interest in management activities on their local wildlife area. WAACs provide input during WLA plan development, the prioritization of goals and objectives, and when WDFW completes annual updates through plan implementation. WAACs may also review grazing permits/agriculture leases, participate in site-based planning (e.g. travel management area plans), and other activities that may not be directly tied to management plan development or updates. For WLAs without active WAACs, one should be established prior to the initiation of WLA planning. At the outset of the planning process, the status of the WAAC is reviewed to determine if there is a need to supplement membership to balance stakeholder interests. In the WDFW website, each Wildlife Area Advisory Committee has a unique webpage created to provide an overview of the WAAC, including bylaws, list of WAAC members and meeting materials. An event calendar is included as a place to list upcoming WAAC and public meetings. WAAC meeting notices should be posted no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting.

The WAAC meetings may be combined with public meetings if determined by the team and the WAAC to be an effective and efficient way of reaching both groups. The WAAC may provide final comments after the public review of the draft plan, depending on the magnitude of changes suggested through that public review. This is most likely in cases where public comments of the draft plan recommend significant deviation from WAAC and WDFW direction.

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## COORDINATION WITH TRIBES

Planners coordinate with regional staff and cultural resources staff, in advance of scoping and SEPA public review, to identify and coordinate with tribal governments\*. At the onset of the planning process, tribes will be notified via letter signed by the appropriate Regional Director that planning is about to begin, and to invite their input and engagement. The letters are addressed to the tribal chair and copies provided to the cultural resources representative, and WDFW cultural resources staff. The letter should include the basics of the planning process, timeline, and a vicinity map of the wildlife area. Tribes are sent the draft plan prior to the SEPA 30-day public review and provided a minimum 30-days to respond.

\*Planners will consult the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and work with the Regional Program Manager/Regional Director to identify the appropriate list of Tribal Governments.

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## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Planners work with regional staff to identify stakeholders and plan outreach activities to support dialogue about WLA and plan review. Public outreach conducted for each plan supports WDFW compliance with SEPA, including preparing the environmental checklist, hosting a public meeting, providing a 30-day public review period for draft plans, and documenting and responding to comments.

The wildlife area statewide strategy recommends the following public involvement activities for each WLA:

- Develop a stakeholder database that includes recreational users, conservation advocates, economic development interests, local and regional media, and other interested or impacted parties.
- Develop WLA planning materials to announce upcoming meetings and communicate the status of the planning effort. Each plan effort includes three elements: 1) public and advisory committee meetings; 2) development and distribution of fact sheets, meeting announcements, and news releases; and 3) solicitation of public comments through phone, email, surveys, and the WDFW website.

## WILDLIFE AREA MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Each plan includes acquisition history and funding, resource information, existing recreation and public use, and goals, objectives, and performance measures. The planner facilitates discussions to identify key opportunities in a WLA and specific actions that meet the statewide WLA goals and contribute to meeting the WDFW's statewide mandate.

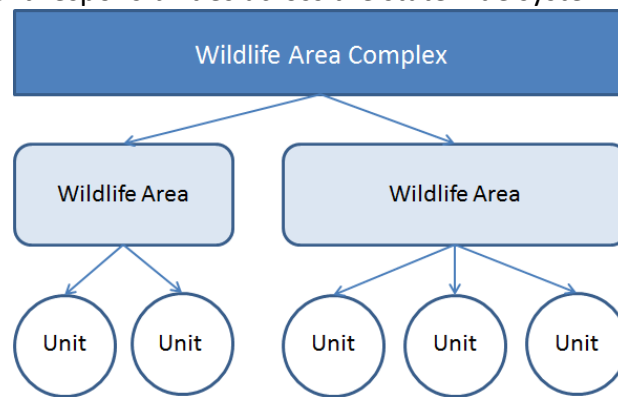
### *Land Ownership and Management*

Wildlife areas include land owned by WDFW and owned by other and managed by WDFW. Land management obligations may include circumstances where lands owned by other parties are managed by WDFW. They may also include encumbrances, or claim on property (e.g., grazing, agriculture, water rights, timber rights, etc.). These influence management activities and are described in the section below. Each WLA plan will describe these factors and their effect on land management.

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#### WILDLIFE AREA NAMING HIERARCHY

For management and administration purposes, WDFW organizes lands into a hierarchy of complexes, WLAs, and units (Figure 2). This organization maintains a consistent structure and delineates management responsibilities across the statewide system.



**Figure 2. WLA Naming Hierarchy**

Management plans may combine more than one WLA or complex into one plan.

- A WLA complex is made up of multiple WLAs supervised by one manager. Examples include Blue Mountains Complex and Columbia Basin Complex.

- A WLA is an area determined by funding source, location, proximity, geographic area, user groups and habitat. An individual WLA may be comprised of one or more units.
- A unit is WDFW-managed property that may or may not be connected to a larger WLA or unit or is spatially discrete from the other WLAs. For example, Big Buck, Methow, and Golden Doe are all units of the Methow WLA. A unit may be comprised of multiple non-connected parcels.

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PROPERTY LOCATION, SIZE AND OTHER PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

WDFW owns or manages 957,765 acres of fish and wildlife habitat in 33 distinct WLAs across the state of Washington.

**Table 1. Acres per wildlife area.**

<b>Wildlife Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Asotin Creek	35,984
Big Bend	21,179
Chief Joseph	24,596
Chehalis	1,167
Chelan	30,971
Colockum	89,053
Columbia Basin	192,582
Cowlitz	10,780
Johns River	10,480
Klickitat	26,979
Le Clerc	614
L.T. Murray	119,078
Methow	34,501
Mt. St Helens	10,010
North Olympic	1,316
Oak Creek	63,423
Olympic	1,542
Revere	2,385
Sagebrush Flat	13,318
Scatter Creek	3,589
Scotch Creek	26,224

Sherman Creek	11,115
Shillapoo	2,339
Sinlahekin	22,065
Skagit	17,916
Snoqualmie	2,798
South Puget Sound	5,819
Sunnyside/Snake River	22,110
Swanson Lakes	20,757
Wells	8,901
Wenas	103,825
Whatcom	3,689
Wooten	16,660
<b>Total</b>	<b>957,765*</b>

\*This figure does not include water access areas located within the WLAs

Each plan includes information about the size of property, location, and its physical characteristics.

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#### ACQUISITION HISTORY, FUNDING AND PURPOSE

WDFW acquires land for a variety of purposes via a variety of mechanisms. WDFW land acquisition began in July 1939 when the then Department of Game purchased an 80-acre parcel of mule deer winter range in the Sinlahekin Valley of Okanogan County. Seventy percent of WDFW-managed properties were purchased prior to 1971 with federal funds made available through the Pittman-Robertson Act (PR) (see page 14); most of the lands were acquired to protect big game winter range and upland bird habitat. In recent decades, WDFW has deployed funding provided by the Washington State Legislature through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) to acquire properties managed for threatened and endangered species. Recent acquisitions include critical habitats for priority species and mitigation for wildlife losses from development. For example, WDFW acquired some properties as mitigation for construction and operation of hydroelectric dams by various power companies and public utility districts.

Throughout its 75-year history of acquiring and managing lands for fish and wildlife, WDFW has relied on and continues to pursue multiple funding sources to support these activities. Each plan summarizes specific funding sources relative to that WLA.



WDFW's Lands 20/20 process is a comprehensive acquisition process that guides the internal review and approval of potential new lands. This process ensures that future WDFW lands acquisition projects are consistent with WDFW's Mission Statement while meeting its legislative mandate. Project proposals are developed annually in the regions; regions conduct review by developing a ranked list of approved projects. These projects are submitted to Headquarters for review. An internal technical team reviews and develops a statewide ranked list of projects by funding source. The draft project list is presented to the Executive Management Team for final review and ultimately the director for final approval. The process includes public review at the end of the internal process. Feedback from the public is presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

### *Funding Sources*

WLA funding includes dollars for acquisition as well as operations and maintenance. Funding opportunities and limitations guide management activities at each WLA and are important to understand in crafting new plan actions. Some funding sources expressly prohibit the use of lands for certain recreation activities such as hunting, as is the case on the Reardan-Audubon WLA Unit, which is managed in conjunction with Spokane Audubon and provides critical bird habitat and birdwatching opportunities. The Zella Schultz Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area on Protection Island was purchased from The Nature Conservancy for the protection of nesting seabird colonies.

The most common federal and state funding sources for both acquisition and operations and maintenance purposes are summarized below. Each WLA plan identifies the funding sources used for acquisition, including all requirements of those funding sources, and funds currently used for operations and maintenance.

Other state funds for acquisitions have included: Legislative Appropriation, Wildlife Fund, State Bond Account, Conservation Futures Tax Program, State General Fund, and the State Jobs Bill.

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#### FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

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##### COOPERATIVE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND (SECTION 6)

*The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (<https://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/>), has two land acquisition grant categories: the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant and the Recovery Land Acquisition grant. Since 2000, the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation*

*Fund grant program has awarded over \$82 million to WDFW resulting in purchase of approximately 68,450 acres of critical fish and wildlife habitat. Most of these funds are used to complement and expand Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) projects that address federally listed species (see state funding sources on pg. 15).*

In order to meet federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund's Habitat Conservation Land Acquisition grant requirements (Section 6), WDFW is required to complete management plans with protection measures for listed fish and wildlife species for all Section 6 lands acquired, including properties used for match in the grant application.

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#### NATIONAL COASTAL WETLANDS CONSERVATION GRANT

Under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program through the Coastal Grants Program (<http://www.fws.gov/coastal/coastalgrants/>), the USFWS provides matching grants for acquisition, restoration, management, or enhancement of coastal wetlands. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboats and small engine fuel sales.

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#### NORTH AMERICAN WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT (NAWCA)

NAWCA (<https://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/north-american-wetland-conservation-act/how-to-apply-for-a-nawca-grant.php>) provides matching grants to organizations and partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Grant and matching funds support projects aiming to protect, restore, or enhance wetland and associated upland migratory bird habitats, benefiting priority species including waterfowl, shorebirds, water birds and land birds.

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#### FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION ACT – PITTMAN-ROBERTSON ACT (PR)

The Pittman-Robertston Act (PR) provides funding for restoration of wild birds and mammals, and to acquire, develop and manage their habitats. Of the PR funds available nationwide, more than 62 percent are used to buy, develop, maintain, and operate wildlife management areas. Funds are derived from an 11 percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and a 10 percent tax on handguns. These funds are collected from the manufacturers by the Department of the Treasury and are apportioned each year to individual states by the Department of the Interior based on the land and inland water area, and the number of hunting licenses sold in the state.

Eighteen WLAs in Washington State receive annual operations and maintenance funding through the PR program. All lands receiving PR funding are subject to NEPA and ESA

Consultation through the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries, which is coordinated by WDFW.

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#### THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Administered by the National Park Service, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (<http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/>) provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities as well as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies.

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#### NORTHWEST ELECTRIC POWER AND CONSERVATION ACT

Since the 1990s, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has provided mitigation for the loss of fish and wildlife resources resulting from construction of dams and subsequent inundation of habitat on the Columbia River since the early 1990s. BPA's mitigation is accomplished through fee title acquisition of new lands, and funding enhancement, protection, and operations and maintenance measures on publicly owned lands managed by WDFW and/or Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). BPA-funded activities on WLAs include administrative duties such as training and professional development and duties necessary to oversee the completion of the wildlife mitigation management plan. Other funded activities include maintenance activities on facilities, fences, signs and reader boards, and roads and trails. Enhancement activities include shrubsteppe and riparian restoration. WLAs that receive funding through BPA include Asotin, Wenas, Sunnyside, Swanson Lakes, Scotch Creek, Sagebrush Flat, Desert, and Shillapoo.

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#### STATE FUNDING SOURCES

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##### WASHINGTON WILDLIFE AND RECREATION PROGRAM (WWRP)

The Washington State Legislature created the WWRP in 1990 to accomplish two goals: (1) acquire valuable recreation and habitat lands before they are developed and (2) develop recreation areas for a growing population (<https://rco.wa.gov/grant/washington-wildlife-and-recreation-program-recreation/>). WWRP is administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). Chapter 79A.15 RCW establishes five grant accounts: Habitat Conservation Account; Outdoor Recreation Account; Farmland Preservation Account; Riparian Protection Account; and Urban Wildlife Habitat. The Habitat Conservation Account includes four categories: Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, State Lands Restoration, and Enhancement. WDFW competes for grants in all but the Farmland Preservation Account. Since 2006, WDFW has acquired approximately 186,704 acres of habitat and recreation lands with \$196,705,085 million in WWRP funds. This landmark legislation and subsequent funding have come about

through the support of the Governor, legislature, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (<http://www.wildliferecreation.org/>).

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#### AQUATIC LANDS ENHANCEMENT ACCOUNT (ALEA)

The ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grant Program (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/habitat-recovery/alea>) provides funding, on a cost-reimbursement basis, for individuals and organizations that undertake voluntary cooperative fish and wildlife projects in Washington State. Eligible project types include habitat enhancement, land acquisition, facility development, research, education/outreach, and artificial production of fish and wildlife for public recreation or to restore populations. The ALEA Program is a WDFW administered program and provides an important source of funds for WLAs.

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#### BOATING FACILITIES PROGRAM (BFP)

RCO administers the Boating Facilities Program (<https://rco.wa.gov/grant/boating-facilities-program/>) for the purpose of supporting motorized boating. RCO awards grants to projects that acquire, develop, plan, and renovate public boating facilities for motorized boats, including launch ramps, guest moorage, and support facilities. WDFW uses BFP funds primarily to redevelop existing access areas to better facilitate motorized boating.

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#### SALMON RECOVERY FUND

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) (<https://rco.wa.gov/boards/salmon-recovery-funding-board/>) provides funding for projects that increase overall salmon habitat health and biological productivity. This includes support for projects that protect existing, high quality habitats and those that restore degraded habitats. Criteria include using science-based information and review by local citizens. Projects must demonstrate, through an evaluation and monitoring process, the capacity to be implemented and sustained effectively to benefit fish (See pg. 39 for more information on the Salmon Recovery Act). WDFW uses these funds in WLAs to restore and purchase lands for salmon recovery.

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#### DISCOVER PASS

The Discover Pass is a vehicle access program administered by WDFW, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) and DNR. The program requires a parking pass for visitors to access state recreation lands. Funds from the purchase of one-day and annual passes go into the Recreation Access and Pass Account, and then are distributed to the three agencies to be used specifically for lands operation and maintenance. WDFW and DNR each receive 8 percent of the total, and State Parks receives 84 percent. WDFW's share is used to help fund staff and equipment for WLA operations and maintenance.

## *Leases and Other Permits*

WDFW holds title to 673,346 acres and manages an additional 284,419 acres that are owned by other agencies, organizations, or individuals. A variety of easements, deed restrictions and other encumbrances effect management of this land. Each WLA plan will include a summary of the agreements, easements, and encumbrances specific to that area. WLAs may be encumbered by agricultural leases or grazing permits. These encumbrances allow the land to be managed for fish and wildlife benefit and provide grazing and agriculture benefits.

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### WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WDFW leases 86,993 acres of DNR lands across ten WLAs: Asotin Creek, Wooten, Swanson Lakes, Chelan, Colockum, Columbia Basin, L.T. Murray, Oak Creek, Wenas, Sinlahekin, and Whatcom. The majority of permitted uses under these leases includes “wildlife habitat”, described as “parcels [that] are either interspersed within WDFW ownership and are managed as part of a WLA, or are isolated parcels that provide wildlife habitat protection.” Other uses may include water access primarily for boating.

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### EASEMENTS

Easements are a right, held by an entity other than WDFW on WLAs, to cross or otherwise use a portion of the land for a specified purpose. They can be valid for a specified time or put in place indefinitely and may terminate when the land is sold or can be transferred with other property rights to a new owner. WDFW also issues easements across agency lands to others, such as for utilities get access They can also allow for utilities, irrigation structures, and rights-of-way. WDFW also holds leases on private properties providing either administrative access to agency lands, and/or public use.

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### CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

A conservation easement is an interest in real property established by agreement between a landowner and land trust or unit of government. Conservation easements transfer certain property rights, such as the right to develop, to an outside entity (government department or land trust) while leaving the land in private ownership. Conservation easements "run with the land," meaning they are applicable to both present and future owners of the land. As with other real property interests, a conservation easement is recorded and becomes part of the chain of title for the property. WDFW holds several conservation easements on WLAs across the state.

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## GRAZING PERMITS AND AGRICULTURAL LEASES

In addition to state laws and agency procedures, grazing permits and agricultural leases on WLAs are guided by HB 1309 Ecosystem Standards for state owned agricultural and grazing land. Each WLA area plan will identify the total number of acres for current grazing permits and agricultural leases.

Grazing on WDFW lands is allowed by permit in accordance with the above-referenced regulations. Permits lasting more than two weeks require a livestock grazing management plan that includes descriptions of ecological impacts, desired ecological conditions, fish and wildlife benefits, monitoring plans, and schedules for evaluation. Grazing permits are written by WLA managers with assistance and oversight by the range ecologist. Permits are reviewed and/or approved by regional biologists, managers, and headquarters staff. Lease terms are typically no longer than five years. As of early 2021, WDFW had 44 active grazing permits covering 88,917 acres on 14 WLAs. Most of these permits occur in eastern Washington.

Agricultural activities produce food and cover for wildlife, and secondarily for commercial purposes. Food and cover attract target wildlife species and reduce damage on adjacent private ownership. WDFW does not actively convert native habitat to agriculture but may maintain areas in agriculture that were under such management at the time of acquisition by WDFW. Generally, WDFW encourages the use of grain crops to benefit wildlife on WLAs. WDFW land managers, biologists, and managers review agricultural permits. Lease terms are generally five years. Where leases are not feasible or necessary, agricultural activities are conducted by staff to meet wildlife needs. As of 2021, WDFW has 77 active agriculture leases covering 13,475 acres on 17 WLAs.

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## AGREEMENTS

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### BUREAU OF RECLAMATION (USBR)

The Grand Coulee Dam was constructed in the 1930s, lead to the development of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project in the 1950s. Water from the Columbia River is pumped into the Banks Lake Equalizing Reservoir and supplies water to approximately 670,000 acres of irrigated agricultural land through a series of reservoirs, canals, and wasteways. The BOR owns large parcels of land critical to the operation of the project. In 1952, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the former Washington Department of Game, the USFWS and the BOR turned fish, wildlife, and recreational management of much of those parcels over to WDFW. When the original 50-year MOU expired, in 2003 a new 25-year agreement was negotiated in 2021. WDFW receives operations and maintenance funding from BOR for

management of these lands. WDFW manages approximately 192,582 acres of lands within the Columbia Basin WLA; the BOR owns approximately 69 percent of this land and is a partner in the planning for its management. In addition, the Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area manages 4,200 acres of BOR land.

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**NATURAL AREA PRESERVES**

In 1972, the Washington State Legislature passed legislation to establish a system of state-owned, state-managed natural area preserves (NAP). As envisioned in the Natural Area Preserves Act (RCW 79.70), these areas protect the highest quality examples of native ecosystems and rare plant and animal species, as well as other natural features of statewide and national significance in perpetuity.

WDFW currently manages 1,199 acres in five NAPs at the following WLAs: Columbia Basin, Colockum, Skagit, Whatcom, and Mount St Helens. As new WLA plans are developed, a section addressing management of these areas including status of the NAP, monitoring conducted, and future management actions, is added to plan.

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**PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICTS AND POWER COMPANIES**

The WDFW has six active mitigation agreements with PUDs and power companies. Summarized in Table 2, these agreements mitigate for habitat losses sustained when hydroelectric dams were constructed in various parts of the state.

**Table 2. List of Mitigation Agreements by Wildlife Area.**

<b>Wildlife Area</b>	<b>Utility District/Power Company</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Agreement Expires</b>
Scatter Creek – Skookumchuck	TransAlta	966	In perpetuity
Olympic/Willapa – Wynoochee	Tacoma Power/Corps of Engineers	1,303	2037
Cowlitz	Tacoma Power	14,700	2038
Wells	Douglas Co PUD	8,200	2050
Chelan	Chelan Co PUD	30,000	2052



Columbia Basin	Grant Co PUD	14,295	2052
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#### CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

CRP is a cost-share and rental payment program under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). The CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as cultivated or native bunchgrasses and grasslands, wildlife and pollinator food and shelter planting, windbreak and shade trees, filter and buffer strips, and riparian buffers. WDFW lands that have historically been managed for farming may be enrolled in CRP through its lessees. As of 2016, WDFW had 4,660 acres of WDFW lands enrolled in CRP (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/crp/>).

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#### WATER RIGHTS

The Washington State Department of Ecology (ECY) is responsible for overseeing water use in the state. ECY's website provides the following overview of water rights: "The waters of Washington State collectively belong to the public and cannot be owned by any one individual or group. Instead, individuals or groups may be granted rights to use them. A water right is a legal authorization to use a predefined quantity of public water for a designated purpose. This purpose must qualify as a beneficial use. Beneficial use involves the application of a reasonable quantity of water to a non-wasteful use, such as irrigation, domestic water supply, or power generation, to name a few. An average household uses about 300 gallons of water per day.

State law requires certain users of public waters to receive approval from the state prior to using water - in the form of a water right permit or certificate. Any use of surface water (lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, or springs) which began after the state water code was enacted in 1917 requires a water-right permit or certificate.

Likewise, withdrawals of underground (ground) water from 1945 onward, when the state groundwater code was enacted, require a water right permit or certificate – unless the use is specifically exempt from state permitting requirements. While "exempt" groundwater uses are excused from needing a state permit, they still are considered to be water rights."

WDFW utilizes water right for six general purposes:

1. Domestic/household
2. Livestock watering

3. Irrigated agriculture
4. Emergency firefighting
5. Fish and wildlife use
6. Rights held in trust

Water rights must be used, or they are forfeited under state law. Unused water rights may be held without use through the Washington State Trust Water Rights program. This program, administered by ECY, provides applicants the opportunity to legally hold water rights for future uses without relinquishing the water right. Water is held in trust to maintain groundwater and instream flows and for other beneficial uses. While water is held in trust it retains its original priority date. Water rights owned by WDFW, and their specific uses, will be identified for planning purposes.

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#### TIMBER RIGHTS

In some cases, WDFW owns forest lands but does not own the timber or the right to harvest it. In the rare cases where this occurs it will be discussed in the forestry section of the management plan and the WLA Forest Plan.

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#### MINERAL RIGHTS

In some cases, WDFW owns mineral rights associated with its property; in most cases it does not. In cases where mineral rights are an issue it will be addressed in the management plan.

### *Management Setting*

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#### ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Land management within WDFW is divided into three organizational layers: WLA, region, and Olympia headquarters (Figure 3). Each of these is described below.

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#### WILDLIFE AREA STAFF

WLA staff (including WLA managers, assistant managers, and natural resource technicians) are responsible for stewardship activities specific to a WLA or complex. These activities include planning and management for sustaining fish and wildlife and recreation values; operations and maintenance; habitat restoration; and public education and outreach.

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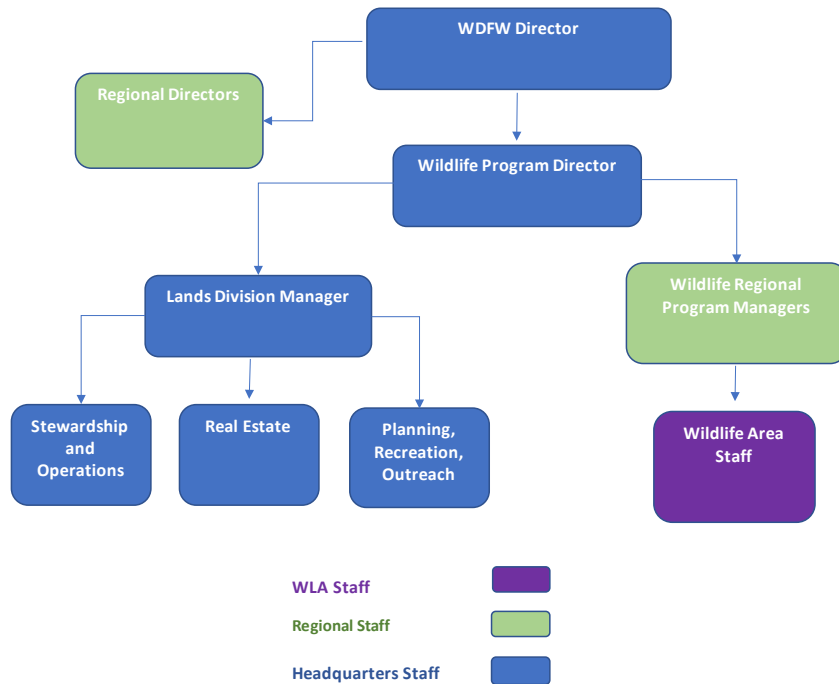
## **REGIONAL STAFF**

Regional Program Managers oversee the implementation of WDFW goals and objectives as they apply to WLAs. They are responsible for supervision of regional program staff, including WLA staff, and the implementation of WDFW policy and budget. They interact with communities and landowners to address local issues and values. In some regions, Lands Operation Managers provide supervision to all wildlife area managers in a region. This position reports directly to the Regional Wildlife Program Manager.

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## **HEADQUARTERS STAFF**

Headquarters staff in Olympia coordinate and implement policy- and budget-related activities. The Lands Division is responsible for WLA management (e.g. budget, planning and policy) and is divided into three sections: Lands Stewardship and Operations; Planning, Recreation and Outreach; and Real Estate Services. Land Stewardship and Operations is responsible for land management, restoration, and regulatory compliance. Staff provides technical assistance to WLA managers on a range of topics, including management of species and habitats, forestry, weed and range management, archaeology, and planning. The Planning, Recreation and Outreach section is charged with developing new management plans for the WLAs, acquisition planning, recreation planning and designing and conducting public outreach associated with WLAs and water access areas. Real Estate Services is responsible for the purchase, sale, and leasing of property. Real Estate staff also provides technical assistance to the WLA managers on water rights, trespass and encroachment resolution, easements, rights of way and commercial use. Not all staff who assist with policy development affecting lands management are located in the headquarters office in Olympia. WDFW range ecologists, foresters and one Land's Division planner are located in or close to regional offices.



**Figure 3. Responsibilities for Land Management Activities**

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#### FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

WLA managers, assistant managers and other WLA staff are responsible for developing and maintaining WLA infrastructure and facilities. Facilities support land management activities, e.g., buildings for equipment storage and repair; as well as facilities that support public activities on a WLA, e.g., signage, kiosks, fencing. Maintenance activities on a WLA may include road and parking lot surfacing and maintenance, trail maintenance, brush clearing, hazard tree removal, weed control, construction and repair of signs, informational kiosks, fencing, hunting blinds, nesting boxes, ADA facilities and gates, graffiti removal, trash collection, restroom cleaning, and maintaining buildings and equipment to meet these obligations.

Access area managers are responsible for maintaining boating and fishing facilities, and related infrastructure and grounds, on access areas embedded within WLAs. Typical work includes vault toilet, launching ramp, and parking area maintenance and repair; vegetation management within the footprint of the access area; and posting and maintaining signage.

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## ROAD MANAGEMENT

Road management activities undertaken by WDFW are guided by several laws and policies. These include: the Road Maintenance and Abandonment Planning process, which was developed in 2001 to manage roads consistent with forest practices standards ([http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/ForestPracticesApplications/Pages/fp\\_forms.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/ForestPracticesApplications/Pages/fp_forms.aspx)); and Policy 6012: Managing Public Access on WDFW Lands allows WDFW to require short-term, seasonal and permanent road closures to ensure public health and safety; minimize impacts to fish, wildlife and their habitats; protect WDFW infrastructure; and/or address budgetary constraints. Other laws and rules governing road management are listed in the section about laws and policies and include RCW 77.12.320, which authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Commission to enter into agreements to provide wildlife-oriented recreation; WAC 232-12-177 which allows WDFW to limit use of motor vehicles on lands under a road management agreement; and RCW 77.12.210, which gives the director the ability to maintain and manage WDFW lands including the construction of buildings, structures and improvements, as well as adopting rules for operations and maintenance.

### *Local Land Use and Other Plans*

WLA plans are developed consistent with local government land use regulations, including Comprehensive Plans and zoning laws, as required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) and Shoreline Management Act (SMA). Each WLA plan includes a description of the land use designations that are adjacent to the WLA and/or have implications for WLA management. Both laws are summarized below with links to more information.

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## GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

In 1990 the Legislature found that “uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals... pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning.” This is the foundation for the GMA (Chapter 36.70A RCW). Although not all jurisdictions must fully plan, meaning that they are not required to develop a Comprehensive Plan, all jurisdictions are required to designate and protect natural resource lands and critical areas.

Critical areas are included in the GMA section RCW 36.70A.172 and include the following: (a) wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (including rivers, streams, lakes, and saltwater shorelines); (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas. These areas are

to be designated and protected using the best available science to protect the functions and values of environmentally sensitive areas.

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#### SHORELINE MANAGEMENT ACT

The SMA (Chapter 90.58 RCW) requires all local governments in Washington State to adopt Shoreline Master Programs that contain policies and regulations that will ensure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions. The SMA defines affected areas to include marine waters, streams with a mean annual flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second, water areas of the state greater than 20 acres, land extending 200-feet landward of the ordinary high-water mark and associated wetlands, river deltas and some or all of the 100-year floodplain. The SMA establishes a balance of authority between local and state government. Cities and counties are the primary regulators, but the state (through Department of Ecology) is responsible for approving local master programs and some permits including variances and conditional use permits.

See the following links for more information: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/>

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Shoreline-coastal-management/Shoreline-coastal-planning/Shoreline-Management-Act-SMA>

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#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources management (CRM) is governed by state and federal laws and agency policy. WDFW's Cultural Resources Specialists (CRS) have developed guidelines for meeting policy and regulatory requirements and ensuring appropriate management of cultural resources. WDFW coordinates and consults with a broad array of interested parties, promotes heritage education; and provides CRM expertise to external partners.

CRS who help with project management include tribal liaisons, ethnographers, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and architectural historians. WDFW has a team of in-house specialists, but also employs CRM consulting firms to manage the volume of review needed to remain in compliance with CRM regulations.

CRS evaluate and implement practices to protect and preserve cultural resources on WDFW lands. They lead or guide consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and affected Tribes. WDFW's CRS also work with wildlife area and

program managers to provide relevant historical information and recommendations for appropriate management practices around cultural resources.

WDFW projects are conducted in a wide variety of regulatory contexts which are determined by project location, project type, and/or project funding sources. All state and federally funded projects are required to undergo review to identify the potential for impacts to cultural resources. Initial research for these reviews includes a review of existing documentation including historic maps and photographs, diaries, journals, legal documents, and archaeological site information curated by DAHP. This "first look" is followed by consultation with affected Tribes and DAHP. WDFW may also coordinate project review with project stakeholders, which can include local landowners, project proponents, and others.

Archival research, consultation, and coordination may be followed by fieldwork, during which the project location is surveyed for unrecorded cultural resources or to assess the condition of known archaeological sites and/or historic structures. It is at this phase of review that archaeological sites and historic buildings are formally recorded. The results of this research is collected in a report, which is then shared with WDFW's consulting parties for review and comment. Reviewers include DAHP and local tribal governments, but can also include stakeholders, regulatory agencies, and funding sources. The results of research and consultation conducted during project planning and implementation are used to inform project design and any future development or management plans.

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## ENFORCEMENT

The WDFW Law Enforcement Program has 177 commissioned law enforcement personnel statewide. Fish and Wildlife Officers are general authority peace officers deployed to six regions throughout the state and to a Marine Division. Officers are responsible for enforcing a myriad of laws and regulations related to health and public safety, dangerous wildlife/human conflicts, fish and wildlife protection, hunting and fishing license regulations, habitat protection, and commercial fish and shellfish harvest. On WLAs, the Enforcement Program is primarily responsible for enforcing the Fish and Wildlife Code (Title 77) and the Public Conduct Rules (WAC 232-13). Enforcement Administration is housed in Olympia, and each region has a full complement of enforcement staff whose responsibility includes enforcement on WLAs within their assigned region.

In addition, they enforce federal laws, Oregon state statutes, and county ordinances through memorandums of agreement. They conduct boating law enforcement on state and federal waters, and law enforcement in state and federal parks and forest lands. Because of their



unique capabilities, assets, and jurisdiction, officers are often called upon to respond during severe weather to natural disasters and other critical incidents, to perform public-safety and search and-rescue operations on both land and water. Officers also hold federal USFWS and National Marine Fisheries Service commissions, and have jurisdiction over federal violations, the most important of which are the ESA (summarized in the Resource Management Section) and the Lacey Act (summarized in the Statute Authority Section). Officers collaborate and coordinate with these agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Each Planning Team includes enforcement staff and WLA plans may include management actions that address enforcement priorities.

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#### RECREATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

WDFW manages over 1 million acres of land and welcomes visitors to its 33 wildlife areas and 450+ water access areas for a variety of outdoor adventures, including hunting, angling, and nature viewing, as well as increasingly popular activities like mountain biking and rock climbing. Outdoor recreation is good for human health and an important part of state and local economies. It also fosters lifelong relationships between people and the land, which contribute to conservation.

WDFW manages recreation consistent with the mission, the purposes for which individual properties were acquired, and the statewide planning goals. Traditional users for agency-managed lands include hunters, anglers, and wildlife viewing. Although hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing remain priority recreation uses, most visitors to WDFW-managed lands come for other recreation opportunities. Hiking, dog walking, bicycle riding, and other “close-to-home” outdoor recreation has increased in popularity. WDFW-managed lands also have seen an expansion in other nature-based outdoor recreation including wildlife and wildflower viewing, collecting, photography, and picnicking.

WDFW-managed lands support dispersed recreation, which occurs outside of a developed facility, as well as undispersed recreation, e.g. motorized and nonmotorized trails and campsites, in some areas. Entrances may be defined with gravel parking, signage, and primitive restrooms.

WDFW lands are also used for educational and research purposes. These activities are often directed by WDFW and/or are undertaken in cooperation with recreation and conservation partners. For example, the Nisqually Unit of South Puget Sound Wildlife Area is home to the Nisqually Reach Nature Center (<http://nisquallyestuary.org/about/>).

The Recreation Strategy (estimated completion 2021) will address an increase in demand for outdoor recreation experiences, combined with a growing population in Washington.

#### Recreation Strategy Goals

- Provide clear and consistent rules, policies, and guidance for determining compatibility, providing access, and managing recreation impacts. Empower local managers to protect fish and wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources while welcoming recreation use within a statewide framework.
- Provide quality recreational experiences through partnerships, new funding, adjustments within ongoing management, and promotion of opportunities. Balance hunting, angling and wildlife viewing with support for other outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Improve communication, coordination, and consultation with government partners. Engage stakeholders, including local communities, in recreation planning, management and advocacy for WDFW lands. Welcome visitors as diverse as the population of Washington State.

#### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

1. Data Development and Management
2. State and Local Rulemaking
3. Regional and Local Planning
4. Travel Management
5. Education and Engagement
6. Capacity and Funding

Beginning in 2022 through the wildlife area planning process, WLAs will begin integrating Recreation Strategy components into WLA plans. Recreation has been a component of the ongoing scoping process with the public, advisory committee, and internal staff. Planners collect comments from the users and stakeholders and assess them for incorporation into goals and objectives in the plan. Details on current recreation use is described in the plan. Objectives address future recreation, public access, conflicts, and infrastructure.

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#### WATER ACCESS AREAS

Approximately 75 percent of visits to WDFW-managed lands are to water access areas. Statewide, roughly 25 percent of all water access areas are embedded within wildlife area

boundaries. Management planning for these access areas are integrated with WLA planning. Water access areas not included in wildlife area management planning will be addressed separately in regional access area management plans.

There are three main phases of water access area planning within the wildlife area management planning construct: 1) compilation of property profiles by the statewide access area coordinator, 2) review of property profiles by the regional wildlife area planning team, and 3) as part of the general wildlife area planning process, engagement with tribes and stakeholders and development of goals and objectives.

The statewide access area coordinator creates a one-page property profile for each “area of interest”. The profiles include information on land transaction parcels and existing recreation facilities data; pertinent management context from department property records; relevant fishing opportunity information, if any (e.g. Fish Washington); and information on grant strings.

The property profiles are reviewed by the regional wildlife area management planning team, or a designated subset of the team, assisted by the statewide access area coordinator. Key planning team members for the review include the access area manager, wildlife area manager, regional wildlife program manager, lands agent, and district fish biologist(s). Consideration is given to existing management issues, infrastructure needs, and other factors regarding public use and agency business needs.

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#### OTHER PLANS

Other local, regional, state, and federal planning efforts influence WDFW’s management activities. These may be area- or species/habitat-specific efforts initiated by other agencies, and WDFW may be consulted in their development. This is oneway new science is reviewed, may prompt consideration of new management actions, and can provide species- or habitat-specific management recommendations. In addition, plans like these are used to support grant funding applications, in concert with other materials. When relevant to local management, WLA plans will reference and provide hyperlinks to cross reference both internal and external plans. A sampling of potentially relevant plans includes:

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- USFWS Concept Plan for Wintering Waterfowl
- Pacific Coast Joint Venture Strategic Plan
- Northern Pacific Coast Shorebird Conservation Plan
- USFWS Pacific Region Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Strategic Plans

- Washington State’s Coastal and Estuarine Conservation Program Plan
- Important Bird Areas (IBA’s) – Audubon Society
- Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plans
- U.S. Shore Bird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
- USFWS Regional Wetland Concept Plan (1990)
- Globally Important Bird Areas – The American Bird Society
- Yakima Basin Integrated Resource Management Plan
- Pacific Flyway Management Plan

In addition, significant research has been conducted on WLAs. This may be directed by WDFW, local academic institutions, or by other organizations or subject matter experts. A list of the relevant local, regional, and other planning documents, as well as any relevant research, will be included in each WLA plan.

**Statewide WLA Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures**

Statewide goals express the long-term vision for WLAs statewide and inform the development of individual WLA goals and management plans. The statewide goals and objectives and corresponding performance measures (Table 3) support monitoring of activities for WLAs across the state. Each plan will develop its own set of goals, objectives, and performance measures consistent with the statewide directives outlined below.

**Table 3. Statewide goals, objectives, and performance measures.**

Goal	Objective	Performance Measure
1. Maintain or improve the ecological integrity of priority systems and sites.	A. Establish an ecological integrity baseline and associated goals for ecological systems of concern/priority systems.	1. Baseline established (y/n); 2. Ecological integrity goals established (y/n).
	B. Implement weed management plan annually.	1. Number of acres inspected; 2. Number of acres treated;

2. Achieve species diversity at levels consistent with healthy ecosystems.	A. Annually integrate new Diversity or Game priorities on the wildlife area into district biologist work plan.	1. Annual coordination occurs (y/n).
3. Support and maintain appropriate recreation opportunities.	A. Finish and implement the Recreation Strategy 2021-31.	1. Recreation Strategy completed (y/n).
		2. Percentage of WLAs where the recreation strategy has been applied.
4. Offer multiple and varied opportunities for stakeholder participation and engagement.	A. Coordinate and maintain a Wildlife Area Advisory Committee that meets at least annually.	1. # of meetings per year: 2. Number of correspondences annually.
	b. Coordinate communication with community members/ groups/neighbors about current wildlife area management activities.	1. Number of members/groups /constituents contacted; 2. Number of community meetings attended; 3. Number of partnerships created; 4. Number of public tours/events; 5. Number of public presentations.
5. Maintain productive and positive working relationships with neighbors, partners, and permittees.	A. Support working landscapes and neighboring communities through development of management agreements where consistent with other WLA goals.	1. Total number of acres managed under either a) an agricultural lease or b) a grazing permit.

6. Properly train, equip and license WLA staff to meet the operation and management needs of the WLAs.	A. Increase staff capacity and identify funding for operations and maintenance funding.	1. Funding sought out and applied for to meet capacity needs.
7. Maintain safe, highly functional, and cost-effective administrative facilities and equipment.	A. Maintenance of facilities and equipment by WLA staff.	1. Annual reporting to RPM of structures developed, maintained, and/or replaced;  2. Ongoing budget review and management including annual reporting of WLA equipment and maintenance needs to RPM.

### Monitoring and Adaptive Management

WLA plans are updated annually by review of the implementation spreadsheet by WLA staff, the District Team, and WAACs. The update reports progress on goals and objectives and identifies any new actions to meet plan goals. Every two years, WLA staff prepare a summary of management highlights and new issues published on the agency website.

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#### ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY MONITORING

*At the time of this update, WDFW lacks funding to fully implement this program and/or develop a model for targeted ecological integrity monitoring to subareas within WLAs. We are hopeful it will be implemented in the future with a multi-agency initiative. For the time being, the ecological integrity goal and objectives will remain in the plan.*

Ecological Integrity Monitoring is a measuring and monitoring approach developed by NatureServe and the Natural Heritage program to assess the current ecological integrity of a system compared to reference or benchmark examples, as defined by Ecological Integrity Assessment (EIAs). A description of EIAs is provided in the following document that is available on the WDFW Web site: (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01314/>).

The WDFW Lands Division has adopted the EIA framework and EIM as a tool to evaluate ecological integrity and changes in integrity over time within priority systems and sites on WLAs.

As capacity for EIM becomes available, the resultant data will increasingly define WLA Management planning. Application of EIM at individual WLAs or WLA units will be defined by the goals and objectives of the site. Each individual WLA plan will have an associated EIM plan that defines the monitoring necessary to determine changes in ecological integrity over time.

Data generated through this process will enable WDFW to assess changes in EI over time, as well as determine where to implement active habitat management and restoration to meet ecological integrity goals.



### *Ecological Values*

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#### ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

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#### ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS CLASSIFICATION

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The WDFW has adopted the EIA framework and EIM as a tool to evaluate ecological integrity and changes in integrity over time, within priority systems and sites on WLAs. Ecological Systems are a classification unit developed by NatureServe (<http://www.natureserve.org/about-us>), defined as “a group of (existing) plant community types that tend to co-occur within landscapes sharing similar ecological processes, substrates, and/or environmental gradients”. Because these systems are classified and described (Rocchio and Crawford 2008) ([http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/communities/ecol\\_systems.html](http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/communities/ecol_systems.html)), conservation-based management actions can be prioritized spatially through inventory and mapping.

There are 92 natural ecological systems in the state of Washington (NatureServe <http://www.natureserve.org/>); these systems fit into seven major vegetation formations, including 1) barren, 2) mixed upland and wetland, 3) herbaceous wetland, 4) woody wetland, 5) herbaceous, 6) steppe/savanna, 7) shrubland, and 8) forest and woodland.

WDFW worked with the Washington Natural Heritage Program to evaluate ecological systems using methods and criteria common to Natural Heritage Programs in the United States. Ecological Systems of Concern are systems that have been determined to be intrinsically rare, severely degraded by human activities, in need of some conservation action, and/or are important for conservation of biodiversity in Washington. These systems of concern, along with other priority ecological systems identified by WDFW as having high wildlife diversity values (2015 SWAP), will be given added focus in the WLA planning process.

Planners and resource scientists review the ecological systems information for each WLA and identify the priority systems for which management actions will be considered. Consistent with the EIA/EIM program, plan objectives will include identifying the current ecological integrity condition for these systems as a baseline, setting a future goal for ecological integrity, and identifying management practices and timelines to meet the goal. Each WLA plan will include a list of ecological systems of concern by unit and approximate acres.

## Habitat Connectivity

Fish and wildlife survival depend in part on species' ability to move through the environment to find food and reproduce. The degree to which land protection and condition supports these necessary movements is called habitat connectivity. WDFW is a member of the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (Group) ([www.waconnected.org](http://www.waconnected.org)), a science-based collaboration of land and resource management agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and Washington Treaty Tribes. The Group has developed sophisticated scientific products for wildlife habitat connectivity throughout Washington State. These include statewide and Columbia Plateau ecoregion connectivity analyses based on focal species, landscape integrity, and climate change. Where applicable, the WLA planning process will use this information to identify restoration areas and/or prioritize other species and landscape conservation actions.

## *Resource Management*

Scientists in each of WDFW's resource programs draw from published research, monitoring data, field studies and other sources to provide a strong scientific foundation for management policies adopted by the agency.

Under the guidance of federal and state resource management laws and the Conservation Principles (see p. 48), WDFW identifies species and habitat priorities and develops plans, studies and other reports that lead to specific management actions for individual species, habitats and ecological systems. Examples include the statewide Game Management Plan, the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), individual game species plans (e.g. elk, white-tailed deer, wild turkey management plans), individual species recovery plans, and fisheries management and conservation plans (e.g. Forage Fish Management Plan, Puget Sound Groundfish Management Plan).

With input from WDFW species and habitat experts, the planning process identifies resource management actions for each WLA. The following section provides the primary direction for prioritizing resource management activities in WLA plans.

Each WLA is unique, in terms of landscape, habitat, species presence, and the funding sideboards that exist, which, in many cases, was to conserve specific species and their associated habitats. Depending on the individual characteristics of each area, the following information in this section will guide management decisions. Each WLA Planning Team is responsible for reviewing species and habitat management guidance, as well as the species and

habitats information, to identify conservation species and specific plan actions consistent with conservation requirements.

## Species Management

The WDFW's fish and wildlife conservation activities are guided by a broad range of regulations, policies, plans, and programs. These include federal and state listings of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; management plans such as the WDFW Game Management Plan and the SWAP which includes the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and associated management actions (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>).

The section below identifies the lists of at-risk species (diversity species): federally listed species; state listed species; SGCN and Priority Habitats and Species (PHS). Each list is based on different criteria and provides varying degrees of regulatory protection. The next section includes the Statewide Wildlife Action Plan, which includes both species *and* habitats of concern, the Game Management Plan, and other game-specific plans. Specific references for salmonids and other fish species are summarized last.

Each WLA plan will identify PHS and SGCN species and management actions - objectives to address these priorities.

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### DIVERSITY SPECIES

Diversity species includes Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) and federally and state listed species, and those species categorized by WDFW as non-hunted. This section in the wildlife area management plan will describe focal species for management actions on each WLA.

### FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES

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All species that are federally listed under the ESA are also state listed. Species that are federally listed are defined as species in decline throughout a significant portion of their entire global range. The ESA requires federal agencies, in consultation with the USFWS and/or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries Service, to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat of such species. The law also prohibits any action that causes a "taking" (defined as "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct") of any listed species of endangered fish or wildlife, or interferes in vital breeding and

behavioral activities. Likewise, the import, export, interstate, and foreign commerce of listed species are all generally prohibited.

#### STATE LISTED SPECIES

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In Washington, animal or plant species of conservation concern may be listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive under WAC 232-12-297, or designated as a candidate species for listing. Species may be state listed and not federally listed because the state list deals only with the status of the species within Washington. State Endangered species are defined as species native to the state of Washington that are seriously threatened with extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range within the state. State Threatened species include species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range within the state. State Sensitive species are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of its range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. These lists are used to determine protection and management actions necessary to ensure the survival of the state's endangered, threatened, and sensitive wildlife.

#### SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED (SGCN)

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The SGCN list is included in the Washington's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The SWAP includes species considered by state or federal agencies as sensitive, threatened, and endangered, as well as those not yet listed but of conservation concern. The list includes many species for which the most important conservation action may be a need for additional research attention. The SGCN list is designed in part to be an early warning system for species of conservation concern and will inform future updates of WDFW species of concern lists as well as the PHS program (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>).

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 five U.S. territories to develop conservation action plans and participate in the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program. The SWG Program supports state actions that broadly benefit wildlife and habitats, but particularly "[Species of Greatest Conservation Need \(SGCN\)](#)" as identified by each individual state. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requires these plans be updated every 10 years to remain eligible for State Wildlife Grants funding.

Washington completed its first SWAP (formerly the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy) in 2005. The 2015 SWAP is a complete revision of the 2005 plan, new components include a list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, threats reassessed, climate change vulnerability information, and new conservation actions identified. It assesses the status of the

state's wildlife and habitats, identifies key problems, and outlines the actions needed to conserve them over the long term (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>). 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. The 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. To that end, the SWAP provides tools and informational resources to support collaborative conservation initiatives across a range of organizations and entities.

The SWAP includes descriptions for habitats of conservation concern and priority conservation actions for these habitats. These are defined using a nationally recognized ecological systems classification and identify those most important for multiple SGCN and/or imperiled in terms of ecological integrity or distribution. The SWAP includes fact sheets for each SGCN and Habitat of Conservation Concern. These fact sheets will list threats and conservation actions for each of these species.

#### PRIORITY HABITATS AND SPECIES

Initiated in 1989, the PHS Program is the backbone of WDFW's proactive approach to the conservation of fish and wildlife and is the principal means by which WDFW provides important fish, wildlife, and habitat information to local governments, state and federal agencies, private landowners and consultants, and tribal biologists for land use planning purposes and habitat protection.

PHS is used to screen Forest Practices, Hydraulic Project Approvals, and SEPA reviews; by local governments to meet requirements of the Growth Management Act; for development of habitat conservation plans on federal, state and private lands; for landscape-level planning and ecosystem management by federal, state and tribal governments; and for statewide spill prevention planning and response.

The PHS program identifies habitats and species that are priorities for conservation and management based on defensible criteria, maps known locations of these habitats and species, and provides information on the conditions required to maintain healthy populations of priority species. The PHS list includes many of the species of recreational, commercial and/or cultural or tribal importance which are not included in the SGCN list. PHS management recommendations are intended to incorporate the information regarding conservation stressors and threats that are outlined in the SWAP.

## GAME MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Many WLAs were purchased to protect and enhance habitat for game animals and/or hunting. Management of game species and providing access for hunting are key parts of the WDFW's mission, and the income derived from hunting license sales provides funding for operation and maintenance on WLAs.

The WDFW's Game Management Plan provides statewide guidance on game management priorities. The plan outlines strategies for providing and improving hunting access, habitat improvement, adjusting hunting seasons, and the study of individual species needs or population dynamics to improve management. The plan is updated through a public process on a three-year cycle (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01676>).

## SPECIES-SPECIFIC GAME MANAGEMENT PLANS

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Statewide species-specific game management plans include plans for elk, wild turkey, mule deer, and white-tailed deer. These plans provide habitat management recommendations for where populations of these species are present. WDFW also participates in regional or national planning processes that may apply to WLA management either specifically or in a more general sense. For example, the Pacific Flyway Management Plan and the National Wild Pheasant Plan identify habitat goals within Washington.

## HUNTING SEASONS AND RULES

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The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is the rule making body that establishes the time, place, and manner by which wildlife can be hunted in the state. Rules are modified on an annual basis. Hunting rules may affect recreation or other activities on WLAs and in some cases apply only to specific WLAs. For example, hunting rules restrict shot shell types on designated units of the Skagit, Snoqualmie, North Olympic, South Puget Sound WLAs. A small game license is required to train dogs on wildlife game birds between Aug. 1 – Mar. 31. WLA plans identify WLA-specific information that relates to limits and/or special circumstances about hunting seasons and rules, where applicable.

## FISH PROGRAM PRIORITIES

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In 1991, the federal government listed Snake River sockeye salmon as endangered. In the next few years, 16 more Evolutionary Significant Units or Distinct Population Segments of Salmonids were listed as either threatened or endangered. Seventy-five percent of the state is impacted by federal listings of salmonids. In 1998, the Washington State Legislature passed the Salmon Recovery Act (<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=77.85>). For more than a decade, WDFW has worked with tribal, other state, regional and local agencies to protect and restore

wild salmonids. Within the Columbia River Basin, WDFW’s salmon recovery effort is consistent with the Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion and stream reach assessments associated with the Upper Columbia Region process (<https://www.salmonrecovery.gov/BiologicalOpinions/FCRPSBiOp.aspx> ).

Planners work with the Habitat Program Biologists (<https://rco.wa.gov/salmon-recovery/managing-organizations/lead-entities/>) to determine if the WLA is within a priority reach for salmon recovery projects as identified in regional salmon recovery plans. Potential projects are discussed with the Planning Team and, where appropriate, plan goals, objectives and performance measures are developed. For instance, WDFW has significant land holdings along the Methow River in the Upper Columbia River watershed. These lands were identified by the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board as a priority for restoration. Working with the Yakama Nation, local non-profit and federal partners, WDFW shifted the management of these lands to include benefits to salmon while ensuring existing wildlife values persist. (See Restoration Pathways page 41.)

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#### BULL TROUT

Bull trout populations in the Columbia River and Puget Sound were listed as a federally threatened species in 1998 and critical habitat was designated in 2005 (70 FR 56212). Bull trout occur in rivers and tributaries throughout the Columbia Basin. Bull trout exhibit both resident and migratory life history strategies and tend to prefer colder water than other salmonids. Bull trout could occur on most of the WLAs with the exception of Columbia Basin. Maintaining stream-side vegetation is essential for controlling stream temperatures and providing cover. In most cases, salmon recovery restoration projects completed on the wildlife areas will also benefit bull trout. Forest restoration projects are required to take into consideration bull trout impacts thorough ESA consultation.

### *Habitat Management*

WDFW is committed to managing habitat based on the most current conservation science. The following section highlights the areas of management focus on the wildlife area, including forest management, weed management, fire management, and habitat restoration. The “Restoration Pathway” outlines a process to guide decisions and interactions with internal and external stakeholders when conducting restoration projects.

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#### WDFW FOREST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

WDFW’s statewide Forest Management Strategy includes an inventory of forest types and conditions, and management direction to address common forest types and conditions (e.g.

fire-dependent and infrequently burned conifer forests, oak woodlands, aspen woodlands). The strategy requires that forests be managed consistent with statewide ecological integrity goals and requires the development of a forest plan for each forested WLA; forest plans include the specific forest types, conditions, and prioritized management strategies for forest management actions. WDFW foresters provide the WLA Planning Team with forest inventory information, to identify potential forest management actions to include in the WLA plan and provide input for future development of a WLA forest plan.

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#### FOREST RESTORATION PATHWAY

The Restoration Pathway is designed to ensure that restoration projects on WDFW lands advance agency values and that a process is in place to ensure that the agency efficiently makes and effectively communicates/documents decision. The Forest Restoration Pathway process outlines a framework for internal cross-programmatic input to ensure that restoration projects avoid or mitigate competing goals and are collaboratively scoped, developed, implemented, and well managed. The Restoration Pathway will be applied to all commercial thinning projects and first-entry prescribed fire projects >200 acres including smaller projects that generate substantial concerns related to Species of Greatest Conservation Need as determined in Headquarters Lands/Diversity Division.

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#### FIRE MANAGEMENT

WDFW has arrangements with a variety of agencies (DNR, Fire Districts, U.S. Forest Service) to provide wildfire suppression services on WLAs. Because fire protection services are not available in all areas, all WLAs maintain maps showing fire suppression coverage and which entity provides suppression services for each area. Additionally, some WLA staff are certified for specific fire suppression activities through the “red card” process administered by DNR. This enables them to assist with suppression when fires impact WLAs. Each WLA plan has fire response information in the appendix.

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#### WEED MANAGEMENT

Managing weeds is a significant part of every wildlife area manager’s workload to establish and maintain diverse native plant communities that will support fish and wildlife populations. Invasive plants and noxious weeds can infest high quality native plant communities and convert them to low quality monocultures with little wildlife value.

WDFW manages weeds consistent with the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as defined by state law (RCW 17.15.010). IPM is the control of weeds through a long-term management approach, using several weed management techniques such as physical, chemical,



biological and/or cultural control. IPM include principles such as weed identification, prioritization for control based on land management objectives, treatment options for target weed, monitoring, and adaptively managing the site to improve efficacy based on previous treatment outcomes. Each WLA includes a weed management plan, which identifies species, timing, and management practices to control weeds.

For more information about weed management, see the list of sources below:

- Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/>
- Aquatic Weed Program <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/links/plants.html>
- Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook <http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/>
- Center for Invasive Plant Management <http://www.weedcenter.org/index.html>
- County Noxious Weed Control Board (Check online for specific counties County Weed Board Websites)

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#### HABITAT RESTORATION

Restoration is an important management strategy implemented by WDFW staff to protect, conserve, and perpetuate species and habitats. In addition to the “Restoration Pathway” for salmon restoration (described below), WDFW has developed habitat- and species-specific restoration guidelines within PHS recommendations. As appropriate and relevant, restoration activities are discussed in each plan. This includes past, current, and future restoration projects. WDFW-specific guidance for restoration is described below.

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#### SHRUBSTEPPE RESTORATION

In 2011, WDFW collaborated with the BPA and Bureau of Land Management to develop the “Shrub-steppe and Grassland Restoration Manual for the Columbia River Basin” (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01330/>). Input was also sought from Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority’s Wildlife Advisory Committee and Natural Resources Conservation Service specialists. The manual informs restoration activities in shrubsteppe and grassland habitats and can be used to design site-specific restoration activities.

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#### RESTORATION PATHWAY

The WDFW Restoration Pathway is designed to ensure that restoration projects on our lands are chosen carefully, implemented effectively, and communicated appropriately to project proponents. The goal is to develop a collaborative approach that balances the value of new initiatives with prior obligations or commitments.

The Restoration Pathway was initially developed as a framework to ensure that proposed salmon restoration projects on our lands considered the full breadth of WDFW’s mission and resulted in well-managed projects. The Restoration Pathway has been refined within each region and has been employed throughout the state. As the Pathway evolved, it became clear that additional policy direction was needed on two issues: addressing changes to recreational opportunities and decision making when there is not consensus at the regional level. The policy guidance is now intended for all restoration projects on WDFW managed lands (e.g forest health restoration treatments, shrubsteppe restoration, prairie restoration).

The Pathway is activated when an external partner approaches WDFW with an idea for restoring some portion of department lands. The criteria are applied by the District Review Team comprised of staff from Wildlife, Habitat, and Fish programs and the WLA manager, technical representatives from Capital Asset and Management Program, Business Services, and Enforcement maybe added. which include:

Criteria	Description
#1	Does the proposed restoration project benefit the ecosystem?
#2	Is it feasible to replace existing WDFW land uses displaced by the proposed restoration project or does the project improve existing land uses?
#3	Can identified legal or contractual constraints associated with the project be reasonably addressed to allow the proposed restoration project?
#4	Can future maintenance requirements be reasonably addressed?
#5	Can future liabilities be reasonably addressed?
#6	Can WDFW adequately staff the proposed project?
#7	Can additional red flags or potential project concerns be reasonably addressed?

The Criteria were designed to uncover red flags that would need to be either addressed in feasibility or raised for management consideration.

The Project Team and Steering Committee, with the assistance of the consultant team, develop an adaptive management plan that pairs measurable targets and adaptive management actions with potential risks and liabilities.

### *Climate Change Impacts on Species and Habitats*

WDFW staff is engaged with regional, statewide, and national efforts to study climate change impacts on species and habitats. WDFW focuses its climate change efforts on mitigation, statewide, national, and regional adaptation planning.

Research on Pacific Northwest climate change impacts by the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group and others identifies numerous climatic changes and associated impacts that are likely to have ecological consequences for WLAs and the ecosystem services they provide. These impacts may include changes in the distribution and composition of the state's forested lands, increases in the severity of wildfires, changes in stream flow timing, rising sea levels, longer summer drought and increases in flooding, extreme weather events, and impacts outdoor recreation. For more detail on how climate change is expected to affect Washington's natural resources, please consult WDFW's Climate Change website: (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/habitat-recovery/climate-change>).

The climate change approach section in WLA plans provides an overview of projected statewide climate change impacts, a climate summary report for specifically tailored to the WLA – (Water Resource Inventory), impacts to wildlife area resources, Species of Greatest Conservation Need with high vulnerability to climate change (SWAP), and a summary of wildlife area objectives with a climate nexus.

Planning Teams consider the impacts of climate change and consider goals; objectives and performance measures that may help mitigate these impacts, as well as consider how the wildlife area contributes to the state's overall resilience to variations in climate. Climate change threats and action are also built into many species and ecological systems specific conservation actions.

## AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

WLA management is directed at the state level by statute including the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) (<http://leg.wa.gov/LawsAndDepartmentRules/Pages/default.aspx>), and by the WDFW's Strategic Plan, Conservation Principles, and adopted policies and procedures.

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### STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The following sections of Washington State code provide statutory authority for WLA management. These are a subset of the multitude of laws governing natural resource management in Washington State.

**RCW 43.21C - State Environmental Policy Act.** Directs the process for environmental review for all department actions. Note: WLA plans qualify as a department action and are not categorically or by statute exempt under SEPA. The SEPA process for the WLA planning process is outlined in the Public Involvement Section (page 7). Individual projects implemented on a WLA will require their own compliance with SEPA and will not be covered under this process.

**RCW 77.04.012 – Mandate of department and commission.** States that wildlife, fish, and shellfish are property of the state and authorizes the Fish & Wildlife Commission, the director and the department to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish in state waters and offshore waters. RCW 77.04.012 also states that the commission shall maximize the public recreational game fishing and hunting opportunities of all citizens including juvenile, disabled, and senior citizens.

**RCW 77.12.210 – Management, sale of department property.** Directs the department to manage real or personal property, including construction of buildings, structures, and improvements, and adoption of rules for operation and maintenance of the property.

**RCW 77.12.220 – Acquisition or transfer of property.** Directs the commission to purchase, transfer or convey state property if judged to be consistent with public interest.

**RCW 77.12.320 – Agreements for purposes related to fish, shellfish, and wildlife.** Directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission to enter into agreements to provide wildlife-oriented recreation.

**RCW 77.12.880 – Wildlife program management.** Directs the department to provide wildlife viewing opportunities as long as resources are not impaired.

**RCW 79A.15 – Acquisition of Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Lands.** States that it is "...the policy of the state to acquire as soon as possible the most significant lands for

wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation purposes before they are converted to other uses, and to develop existing public recreational land and facilities to meet the needs of present and future generations” and creates accounts for grant funds administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding board.

RCW 79.70 – **Natural Area Preserves.** Establishes a state system of natural area preserves, including aquatic and land areas, and defines how natural areas will be preserved.

RCW 79.13.620 – **Ecosystem standards.** Requires state-owned agricultural lands, grazing lands, and grazable woodlands be managed according to the ecosystem standards.

RCW 27.34.200 – **Archaeology and historic preservation.** Authorizes the department to manage cultural resources. Executive Order 05-05 requires all state agencies with capital projects to integrate the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs, and concerned tribes into their capital project planning process.

RCW 77.15 – **Fish and Wildlife Enforcement.** Directs the authority of enforcement officers on department lands.

WAC 220-500-010 defines the primary purpose of WDFW lands as the preservation, protection, perpetuation, and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats. The WAC further states that public use of department lands may include fishing, hunting, fish and wildlife appreciation, and other outdoor recreation opportunities when compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.

WAC 220-500-030 – Behavior and conduct. Defines acceptable conduct on department lands.

WAC 220-500-040 – **Regulating public access.** Authorizes the director to close and/or control/restrict access on department lands to protect human safety, vulnerable fish and wildlife resources or habitats, and department infrastructure, and to increase wildlife use in order to improve hunter success or manage wildlife viewing opportunities. It authorizes the department to control access by limiting the number of users in the areas and/or limiting the days of the week or hours of the day that the public can access the area.

WAC 220-500-140 – **Firearms and target practicing.** Directs WDFW to designate or restrict locations, times, and manner for recreational target shooting upon department land, consistent with resource management concerns, management agreements or requirements, recreational use compatibility, or public safety concerns.

WAC 220-500-190 – **Domestic animals on department lands.** Directs WDFW to restrict domesticated animals on department lands.

WAC 220-500-200– **Livestock grazing on department of fish and wildlife lands.** Authorizes the department to issue grazing permits when it has been determined that the grazing permits are consistent with desired ecological conditions for those lands and with the department’s mission, management objectives, and strategic plan.

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#### 25-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The 25-year Strategic Plan provides a long-term strategic focus aimed at improving WDFW’s mission success. Four strategies guide WDFW’s path to modernizing the agency, conserving the state’s fish and wildlife, and positioning WDFW for success. Each strategy includes near and long-term actions, and 25-year desired outcomes (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/administration/strategic-planning>).

- Strategy 1 - Proactively address conservation challenges.
- Strategy 2 - Engage communities through recreation and stewardship.
- Strategy 3 - Deliver science that informs Washington’s most pressing fish and wildlife questions.
- Strategy 4 - Model operational and environmental excellence.

WLA plans are developed to be consistent with the WDFW’s Strategic Plan. The 25-year Strategic Plan recognizes existing foundational work as critical and essential. For example, two important common goals on wildlife areas include recover and sustain diverse fish and wildlife populations; and develop, organize, and promote wildlife viewing opportunities.

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#### CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

The Conservation Principles express the WDFW-wide commitment to improve how the Department works internally and with its partners to implement ecosystem-based management. The principles below outline how WDFW will implement ecosystem-based approach for better outcomes, and more effective engagement of citizens and partner organizations.

Principle 1	Practice conservation by managing, protecting, and restoring ecosystems for the long-term benefit of people, and for fish, wildlife, and their habitat.
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Principle 2	Work across disciplines to solve problems because of the connections among organisms, species, and habitats.
Principle 3	Integrate ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives into decision making.
Principle 4	Embrace new knowledge and apply best science to address changing conditions through adaptive management.
Principle 5	Collaborate with our co-managers and conservation and community partners to help us achieve our shared goals.

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## POLICIES

The following policies direct and guide activities and management of WDFW lands.

Policy 2155 – **Protection of Cultural Resources.** Directs the protection of cultural resources on department lands.

Policy 5003 – **Managing the 21st Century Salmon and Steelhead Initiative.** Directs the department’s 50-year plan to manage salmon and steelhead to recovery and sustainability in a way that is science-based, well-documented, transparent, well-communicated, and accountable.

Policy 5004 – **Conservation Initiative and Guiding Principles (see above).** Describes outcomes including integrated conservation priorities and doing a better job of addressing unmet conservation needs. The intent is to have strong interdisciplinary headquarters and regional teams that coordinate conservation priorities across all programs in the department at both the state and local level.

Policy 5007 – **Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments.** Defines provisions for enhancing the WDFWs consultation process, including communication and coordination with tribal Governments.

Policy 5203 – **Preparing and Reviewing State Environmental Policy Act and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Documents.** Provides guidance for preparing SEPA (RCW 43.21c) and NEPA documentation (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq).

Policy 5211 – **Protecting and Restoring Wetlands.** Guides the department’s management of wetlands and emphasizes “no net loss and long-term gain” of wetland areas and functions.

Policy 5302 – **Winter Wildlife Feeding.** Provides authority for feeding wildlife during the winter in order to prevent and/or reduce deer or elk damage to private property, and to allow the regeneration of winter habitat that has been severely damaged or destroyed by fire or drought.

Policy 5307 – **Weed Management.** Requires the department to control listed weed species consistent with state and local laws.

Policy 5309 – **Forest Management.** Requires the development of a comprehensive forest management plan for all department-owned forestlands.

Policy 5408 – **Addressing the risks of climate change.** Provides guidance for managing risk to agency investments due to current and potential future impacts of climate change. It also serves to demonstrate WDFW leadership on the issue of climate change, specifically in terms of supporting the science necessary to understand the risks, proactively responding to those risks, and taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the policy establishes aspirational goals and provides guidance for managing risks to agency investments due to current and potential future impacts of climate change. WDFW will manage its operations and assets to better understand, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change (specific goals apply to the strategic plan, resource planning, agency facilities and infrastructure, land acquisition, technical assistance, grants, outreach, regulatory processes and carbon footprint).

Commission Policy 6003 -- **Domestic Livestock Grazing on Department Lands.** States that domestic livestock on department owned or controlled lands may be permitted if consistent with WDFW’s conservation mission and WAC 220-500-200.

Policy 6007 – **Management of Real Property Assets.** Defines authority and responsibilities for real property assets and identifies the Wildlife Program as responsible for acquisition, performance, and management of WLAs and access sites.

Policy 6010 – **Acquiring and Disposing of Real Property.** Authorizes the department to acquire or dispose of real property including interests, benefits, and rights inherent in the physical ownership of, and appurtenances affixed to, the land, e.g., fences or buildings.

Policy 6011 – **Selecting Conservation and Recreation Lands to Acquire** (Lands 20/20). Implements the land acquisition process outlined in Lands 20/20, with the intent to ensure that



future land acquisition projects are consistent with the strategic plan, provide benefits to fish and wildlife; provide benefits for the public; and provide for operational excellence.

Policy 6012 – **Managing Public Access on WDFW Lands.** Provides a framework that addresses appropriate access while meeting the mission and mandate and includes the process for temporary and permanent closure on lands for public safety, fish and wildlife sustainability, and to support wildlife for recreational purposes.

Policy 6015 – **Agricultural Leases on Department Lands.** Recognizes the Department enters agricultural leases with private operators as a tool to achieve fish and wildlife management and recreation goals. While the Department may receive revenue from agricultural leases, the primary objectives of these leases is to improve fish and wildlife habitat and to address land management goals while increasing operating efficiency.

Policy M5001 – **Fish Protection at Water Diversions/Flow Control Structures and Fish Passage Structures.** Compiles and defines department application of state laws and applies to all state and private water diversions and man-made fish passage barriers in state waters to ensure restoration and maintenance of healthy fish.