

2025-27 Biennial Operating Budget Request



Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**

September 2024

2025-27 Biennial Operating Budget Request

This document is not the official budget submittal for the Department.

This is a reference document for business purposes. It excludes some components common to a standard submittal, the most pronounced being the reference documents for decision packages.

Please refer to the system of record, the Agency Budget Requests (ABR) system, for all details and documents related to the Department's 2025-27 Biennial Operating Budget Request.

The Agency Budget Requests (ABR) system is located at: <https://abr.ofm.wa.gov/>

Complete the following steps to locate the Department's request:

1. Select budget session "2025-27 Regular"
2. Select agency "Department of Fish and Wildlife (477)"
3. Click the "Search" button

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State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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September 10, 2024

Pat Sullivan
Director, Office of Financial Management
P.O. Box 43113
Olympia, WA 98504-3113

Dear Mr. Sullivan,

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW; Department) respectfully submits the operating budget request for the 2025-27 biennium, as approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Department recognizes revenue forecasts are lower than expected and the state faces uncertainty regarding revenue from the Climate Commitment Act and the capital gains taxes.

In support of the Governor's focus on maintaining current programs and services, the Department has categorized its policy level requests as follows and is included as an itemized list at the end of this letter:

- Phase II of previously funded budget items of greatest agency need,
- Existing critical work currently funded one-time that we are seeking ongoing, and
- Other high-priority policy investments.

While this budget request is sizeable, it is important to note that all Natural Resources agencies combined receive less than 1.5% of the General Fund. Yet funding our agencies yields a significant return on investment through increased recreational and commercial opportunities, as well as the preservation and restoration of our ecosystems for present and future generations.

The 2022 National Survey for Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago demonstrates that funding WDFW stimulates the economy. Participants in Washington spent \$15.3 billion on fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing in 2022, directly benefiting local economies through trip expenditures and the State's economy through sales tax revenue, which is then reinvested in other critical public services.

In the 2023-25 biennium the legislature appropriated \$15.5 million per year towards restoring Washington's biodiversity. Our species, ecosystems, and natural landscapes are foundational to our cultural heritage, providing a sense of what it means to be a Washingtonian. Washingtonians deserve a Fish and Wildlife Agency that delivers on outcomes. Funding the Department's current

WDFW Budget Transmittal Letter

September 5, 2024

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program and services, while investing in new policy initiatives allows WDFW to be proactive in meeting our commitments to the Legislature and its citizens.

Thank you for considering these requests. We look forward to supporting your efforts in developing the Governor's budget proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly Susewind", written in a cursive style.

Kelly Susewind

Director

Enclosure

cc: Jim Cahill, Senior Budget Assistant
Matthew Hunter, Budget Assistant
Ruth Musgrave, Senior Policy Advisor for Natural Resources
Tom McBride, Legislative Director
Morgan Stinson, Chief Financial Officer
Brandon Bean, Budget Officer

**Itemized List of WDFW Policy-Level Decision Packages:
Phase II of previously funded budget items of greatest agency need:**

1. WDFW Staff & Volunteer Safety
2. Restoring Washington's Biodiversity

Existing critical work currently funded one-time that we are seeking ongoing:

3. Salmon & Steelhead Monitoring
4. Quagga & Zebra Mussel Prevention
5. Respond to Wildlife Disease
6. Riparian Systems Assessment
7. Wolf Recovery
8. Streamflow Policy Support
9. Columbia River ESA Permitting
10. Pinniped Predation
11. Toutle & Skamania Hatcheries
12. Crab Fishery & Humpbacks
13. Fish Passage Prioritization
14. Lake Washington Predator Supp
15. Wolf Advisory Group

Other high-priority policy investments:

16. Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police
17. Scientific Data Modernization
18. Hatchery Investment Strategy
19. Emerging Fishery Implementation
20. Forest Health & Fuel Reduction
21. Invest In Lands Stewardship
22. Expand Wildlife Conflict Response
23. Facilities Six-Year Plan Alignment
24. Replacement Equipment
25. Fish Passage & Screening Capacity
26. Coastal Salmonids Management
27. Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience
28. Managing Emergent Toxic Threats
29. Hatchery Conservation Program
30. Mobile Harvest Application Support

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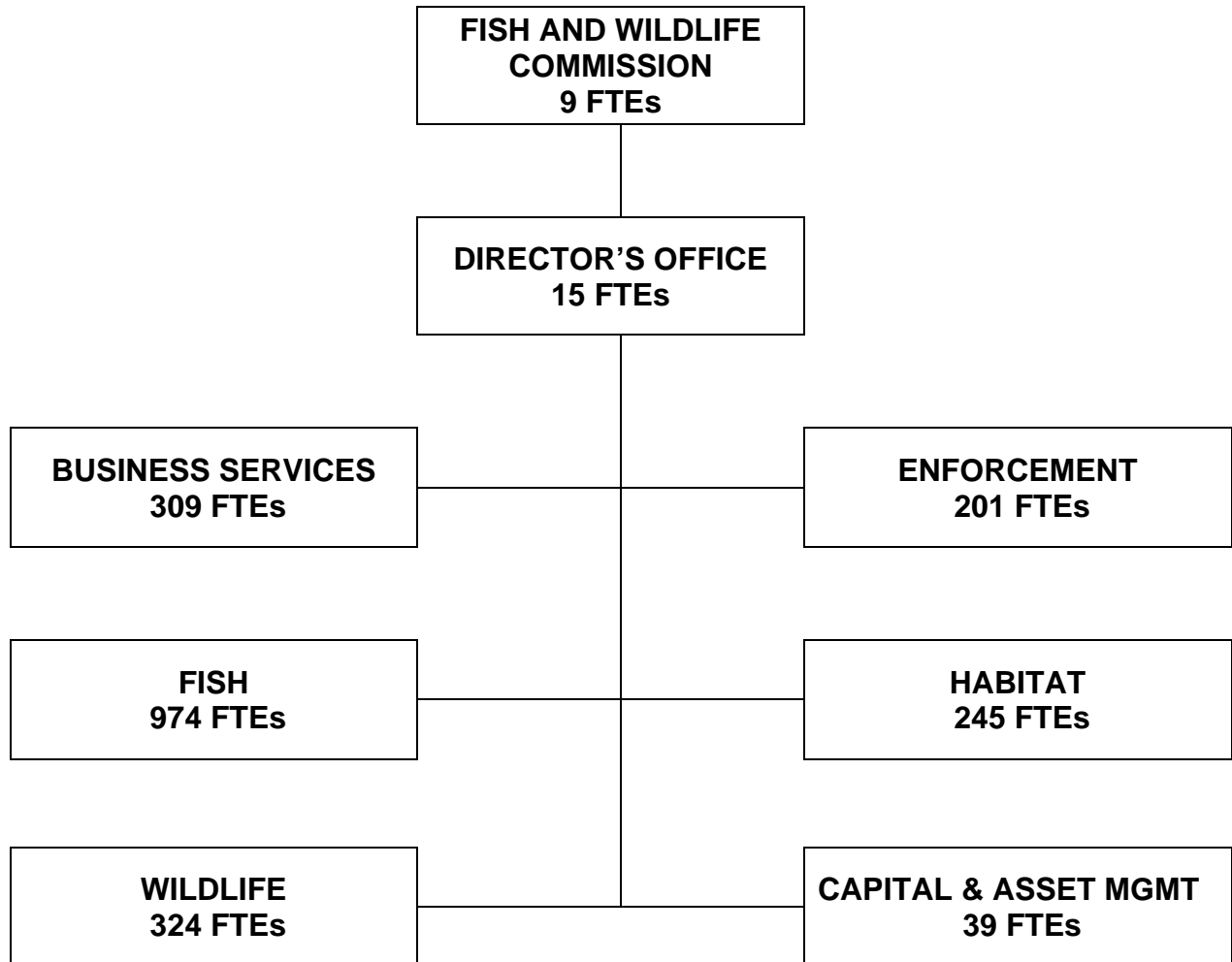
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Agency Information



A Western snowy plover walking on sand at Twin Harbors Beach. Photo by WDFW Staff.

**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART BY OPERATING FTEs
2,116 FTEs**





Dollars in Thousands

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A046 Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitats and Species

Perpetuating and managing wildlife, fish and shellfish into the future requires healthy aquatic habitat. Washington's imperiled salmon and orca populations need healthy habitat to ensure ecosystem support throughout their life. The key reasons the state has seen a decline in wild salmon populations and subsequent orca health is due to habitat quality that has degraded over time.

The department strives to preserve aquatic habitat health by protecting habitat from the effects of construction projects through the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) work, consulting with businesses, landowners and governments regarding aquatic species impacts, reducing the risk and devastation of oil spills, ensuring enough water remains in waterways to support healthy fish lifecycles, and monitoring and controlling invasive species. The department seeks to restore degraded habitat by improving fish passage through removal of stream barriers and screening of water diversions, developing and implementing plans to recover imperiled species and seeking out grant funding to use towards completing various restoration projects. Furthermore, effectively addressing the dual challenge posed by the changing climate and a rapidly growing human population is fundamental to WDFW's success in the 21st century in all of these areas. To ensure this success, the department studies and plans for climate impacts on aquatic lands and resulting effects on species.

In order to successfully preserve and restore aquatic habitats, the department maintains enforcement presence throughout the state to ensure construction projects near waterways are compliant with HPA permits, inspect vessels for invasive species, perform orca patrols and enforce all statewide rules and regulations that protect aquatic habitats and species.

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	490.8	493.9	492.4
21S Aquatic Invasive Species Mngmt Acct			
21S-1 State	\$33	\$39	\$72
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$523	\$547	\$1,070
14G Ballast Water & Biofouling Mgt Acct			
14G-1 State	\$5	\$5	\$10
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$1,610	\$1,478	\$3,088
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$13	\$13	\$26
444 Fish & Wildlife Equipment Revolving			
444-6 Non-Appropriated	\$137	\$137	\$274
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$2,821	\$2,817	\$5,638
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$32,784	\$33,746	\$66,530
001-2 Federal	\$16,153	\$17,096	\$33,249
001-7 Local	\$2,010	\$1,978	\$3,988
001 Account Total	\$50,947	\$52,820	\$103,767
447 Info Tech Invest Rev Acct			
447-6 Non-Appropriated	\$2,278	\$2,466	\$4,744
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$759	\$1,012	\$1,771
23P Model Toxics Control Operating Acct			
23P-1 State	\$4,204	\$4,168	\$8,372
26D Natural Climate Solutions Account			
26D-1 State	\$621	\$621	\$1,242
217 Oil Spill Prevention Account			
217-1 State	\$512	\$617	\$1,129
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$1	\$1	\$2

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
200 Reg Fish Enhance Salmonid Recovery			
200-2 Federal	\$2,377	\$2,624	\$5,001
209 Regional Fisheries Enhance Group			
209-6 Non-Appropriated	\$1,231	\$1,043	\$2,274
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-7 Local	\$14	\$17	\$31

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Aquatic habitats will contribute to a robust ecosystem that supports fish and wildlife in Washington. These healthy habitats will contribute to strong species diversity and abundant opportunities for hunting, fishing and non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Those hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities will contribute to economic health in rural communities reliant on outdoor recreation. Local and state governments will use the agency’s scientific knowledge in their land use and permitting decisions leading to sustained critical habitats.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A047 Preserve and Restore Terrestrial Habitats and Species

Perpetuating and managing wildlife, fish and shellfish into the future requires healthy terrestrial habitat. The department strives to preserve terrestrial habitat health by consulting with businesses, landowners and governments regarding terrestrial species and habitat impacts and legalities, partnering with private landowners to implement conservation strategies, permitting and regulating wildlife-related businesses such as taxidermy and rehabilitation centers, and responding to and mitigating wolf conflicts. The department seeks to restore degraded terrestrial habitat and imperiled species by developing and implementing plans to recover and sustain diverse wildlife and seeking out grant funding to use towards completing various habitat restoration projects. Furthermore, effectively addressing the dual challenge posed by the changing climate and a rapidly growing human population is fundamental to WDFW's success in the 21st century in all of these areas. To ensure this success, the department studies and plans for climate impacts on lands and resulting effects on species.

In order to successfully preserve and restore terrestrial habitats, the department maintains enforcement presence throughout the state to respond to incidents such as wolf depredations, ensure compliance of wildlife related businesses such as taxidermists and rehabilitation centers and enforce all statewide rules and regulations that protect terrestrial habitats and species.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	230.6	240.6	235.6
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$39	\$40	\$79
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$885	\$885	\$1,770
098 East Wash Pheasant Enhancement Acct			
098-1 State	\$2	\$3	\$5
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$16	\$16	\$32
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$1,853	\$1,851	\$3,704
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$25,091	\$22,041	\$47,132
001-2 Federal	\$4,554	\$4,853	\$9,407
001-7 Local	\$492	\$484	\$976
001 Account Total	\$30,137	\$27,378	\$57,515
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$2,172	\$2,896	\$5,068
26D Natural Climate Solutions Account			
26D-1 State	\$569	\$569	\$1,138
217 Oil Spill Prevention Account			
217-1 State	\$3	\$3	\$6
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$2	\$1	\$3
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-7 Local	\$66	\$79	\$145
14A Wildlife Rehabilitation Account			
14A-1 State	\$175	\$174	\$349
19W Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account			
19W-6 Non-Appropriated	\$2	\$2	\$4

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Terrestrial habitats will contribute to a robust ecosystem that supports healthy wildlife in Washington. These healthy habitats will contribute to strong species diversity and abundant opportunities for hunting, fishing and non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Those hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities will contribute to economic health in rural communities reliant on outdoor recreation. With their benefit in mind, local and state governments will use the agency's scientific knowledge in their land use and permitting decisions leading to sustained critical habitats.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A048 Acquire and Manage Lands

WDFW owns and manages over one million acres of land throughout Washington. These lands provide habitat for fish and wildlife, as well as recreational opportunities for the public, such as hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing. WDFW's land base is strategically developed based on the conservation needs of fish and wildlife, and provides sustainable fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and other recreational opportunities when compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. To effectively and responsibly own and manage public lands, the department maintains and improves the ecological health of its lands, strategically acquires new lands or sells lands that no longer serve the mission, builds and maintains safe, sanitary and ecologically friendly water access sites and ensures public safety through enforcement presence.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	181.0	194.4	187.7
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$332	\$347	\$679
098 East Wash Pheasant Enhancement Acct			
098-1 State	\$5	\$8	\$13
22N Fish and Wildlife Fed Lnds Rev Acct			
22N-6 Non-Appropriated	\$50	\$50	\$100
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$26	\$26	\$52
444 Fish & Wildlife Equipment Revolving			
444-6 Non-Appropriated	\$120	\$120	\$240
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$5,200	\$5,193	\$10,393
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$10,366	\$12,397	\$22,763
001-2 Federal	\$9,417	\$10,036	\$19,453
001-7 Local	\$954	\$939	\$1,893
001 Account Total	\$20,737	\$23,372	\$44,109
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$479	\$638	\$1,117
26D Natural Climate Solutions Account			
26D-1 State	\$1,584	\$1,584	\$3,168
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$322	\$310	\$632
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-1 State	\$1,479	\$1,445	\$2,924
110-2 Federal	\$267	\$265	\$532
110-7 Local	\$1,493	\$1,796	\$3,289
110 Account Total	\$3,239	\$3,506	\$6,745
14A Wildlife Rehabilitation Account			
14A-1 State	\$1	\$1	\$2
19W Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account			
19W-6 Non-Appropriated	\$7	\$7	\$14

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Land management will result in the conservation and restoration of diversity of Washington's fish and wildlife species and their habitats, while providing affordable access to hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching opportunities. Department land and sites will be managed appropriately to balance hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing with ecosystem preservation. Land management will successfully preserve or enhance its habitat value, minimize the spread of invasive species, and support the conservation of biodiversity and the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A049 Manage Fishing Opportunities

WDFW is responsible for the management of Washington commercial and recreational fisheries. Management of these fisheries includes maintaining compliance with complex intersections of tribal treaties, international agreements, case law, federal Endangered Species Act restrictions and monitoring of species health and populations. To manage fisheries, the department monitors and manages populations of both shellfish and fin fish; develops, negotiates and implements fisheries co-management plans; markets and sells fishing licenses; and manages licenses for commercial fishing groups. In order to effectively manage fisheries, the department maintains enforcement presence in commercial marine areas as well as recreational fishing locations for trout and anadromous fish, such as salmon.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	482.5	488.6	485.6
21S Aquatic Invasive Species Mngmt Acct			
21S-1 State	\$69	\$83	\$152
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$2,752	\$2,878	\$5,630
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$1,875	\$1,774	\$3,649
259 Coastal Crab Account			
259-6 Non-Appropriated	\$39	\$38	\$77
320 Puget Sound Crab Pot Buoy Tag Acct			
320-6 Non-Appropriated	\$20	\$15	\$35
098 East Wash Pheasant Enhancement Acct			
098-1 State	\$8	\$14	\$22
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$157	\$157	\$314
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$9,612	\$9,600	\$19,212
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$53,514	\$55,593	\$109,107
001-2 Federal	\$12,733	\$13,571	\$26,304
001-7 Local	\$9,283	\$9,136	\$18,419
001 Account Total	\$75,530	\$78,300	\$153,830
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$4,283	\$5,709	\$9,992
217 Oil Spill Prevention Account			
217-1 State	\$20	\$24	\$44
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$6	\$6	\$12
507 Oyster Reserve Land Account			
507-1 State	\$314	\$75	\$389
04M Recreational Fisheries Enhancement			
04M-1 State	\$262	\$225	\$487

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
12G Rockfish Research Account			
12G-6 Non-Appropriated	\$236	\$227	\$463
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-7 Local	\$58	\$69	\$127
09J WA Coast Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account			
09J-6 Non-Appropriated	\$60	\$62	\$122
14A Wildlife Rehabilitation Account			
14A-1 State	\$1	\$1	\$2
19W Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account			
19W-6 Non-Appropriated	\$5	\$5	\$10

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Fishing season decisions support healthy fish populations and ensure that commercial and recreational fishing harvest levels are sustainable. Fishing opportunities contribute towards economic activity, while complying with federal endangered species and other environmental requirements. WDFW and tribes work cooperatively to effectively manage fish populations. WDFW honors tribal treaty rights that were signed by the federal government in 1854-55 and upheld by *United States v. Washington*, 384 F. Supp. 312 (W.D. Wash. 1974).

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A050 Produce Hatchery Fish

WDFW maintains 81 hatcheries, either through direct ownership or management contracted with cities or counties in order to meet their mitigation requirements. These hatcheries produce healthy fish to benefit the citizens of Washington while providing conservation to natural origin salmonids. Production of hatchery fish is critical for the majority of fishing opportunities throughout Washington – trout and anadromous salmon and steelhead fisheries rely on the presence of hatchery fish in our waterways. Additionally, production of salmon, specifically Chinook, is critical to the recovery of southern resident killer whales. Hatchery conservation programs contribute to protecting and preserving natural runs of salmon and steelhead. Hatchery programs also help us meet co-management plans and court ordered directives.

The production of hatchery fish also requires facility maintenance of the system of 81 hatcheries owned or managed by the department.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	408.2	405.3	406.8
21S Aquatic Invasive Species Mngmt Acct			
21S-1 State	\$12	\$14	\$26
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$1,787	\$1,868	\$3,655
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$636	\$276	\$912
259 Coastal Crab Account			
259-6 Non-Appropriated	\$2	\$2	\$4
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$77	\$77	\$154
444 Fish & Wildlife Equipment Revolving			
444-6 Non-Appropriated	\$557	\$557	\$1,114
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$7,176	\$7,166	\$14,342
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$22,019	\$20,528	\$42,547
001-2 Federal	\$19,388	\$20,656	\$40,044
001-7 Local	\$17,041	\$16,770	\$33,811
001 Account Total	\$58,448	\$57,954	\$116,402
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$1,409	\$1,865	\$3,274
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$1	\$1	\$2
507 Oyster Reserve Land Account			
507-1 State	\$25	\$6	\$31
04M Recreational Fisheries Enhancement			
04M-1 State	\$1,666	\$1,443	\$3,109
12G Rockfish Research Account			
12G-6 Non-Appropriated	\$15	\$15	\$30
071 Warm Water Game Fish Account			
071-1 State	\$1,028	\$1,028	\$2,056

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
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WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Fishing opportunities are maintained or increased, without adversely affecting wild salmon and steelhead. Fish production supports Washington's sport and commercial fishing industry, creating economic activity and recreational opportunities throughout the state. Wild salmon and steelhead populations are stable or recovering. Native fish populations are recovering and hatchery operations do not adversely affect wild fish.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A051 Manage Hunting Opportunities

WDFW's wildlife population monitoring, protection and research help us ensure that wildlife populations will endure and provide future generations the opportunities to enjoy an abundant resource. These hunting opportunities, if protected in perpetuity, will promote a healthy economy; protect community character; maintain an overall high quality of life while delivering high-quality hunting experiences for the human populations we serve. In order to effectively manage hunting opportunities, the department surveys game populations and population trends, as well as health of the populations, sets sustainable hunting seasons, secures hunting access on private lands, provides opportunities for hunter education, responds to game wildlife conflicts and markets and sells hunting licenses.

In order to sustainably manage hunting, the department maintains enforcement presence throughout the state to deter and address instances of poaching, ensure hunting safety and make sure that regulations, such as time, place and method of hunts, are upheld and statewide natural resources are protected.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	164.5	172.9	168.7
21S Aquatic Invasive Species Mngmt Acct			
21S-1 State	\$23	\$28	\$51
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$353	\$370	\$723
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$792	\$792	\$1,584
098 East Wash Pheasant Enhancement Acct			
098-1 State	\$72	\$220	\$292
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$3	\$3	\$6
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$6,199	\$6,191	\$12,390
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$11,064	\$12,898	\$23,962
001-2 Federal	\$9,056	\$9,652	\$18,708
001-7 Local	\$525	\$517	\$1,042
001 Account Total	\$20,645	\$23,067	\$43,712
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$948	\$1,263	\$2,211
217 Oil Spill Prevention Account			
217-1 State	\$3	\$3	\$6
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$2	\$2	\$4
507 Oyster Reserve Land Account			
507-1 State	\$4	\$1	\$5
04M Recreational Fisheries Enhancement			
04M-1 State	\$11	\$9	\$20
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-7 Local	\$13	\$16	\$29
071 Warm Water Game Fish Account			
071-1 State	\$67	\$67	\$134

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

Dollars in Thousands

*

Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
14A Wildlife Rehabilitation Account			
14A-1 State	\$1	\$1	\$2
19W Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account			
19W-6 Non-Appropriated	\$6	\$6	\$12

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

Successful management of hunting opportunities will result in sustained healthy and abundant game species populations. Those populations will maintain hunting opportunities and outdoor quality of life, opportunities to harvest quality protein, boosts to local economies reliant on outdoor recreation and private lands access for hunting opportunities. Additionally, educational programs and enforcement of state regulations will promote public safety. Careful management will continue to allow Washington hunters the opportunity to hunt 10 big game species, 19 small game species and 42 migratory bird species. Hunters will have a convenient and simple way to understand and purchase their license options.

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A052 Provide Non-Consumptive Recreational Opportunities

Non-consumptive recreation passively benefits from all work of the department. WDFW promotes the opportunity to actively enjoy those passive benefits by working with local communities to develop and promote wildlife-viewing activities and festivals, providing wildlife web cameras featuring bald eagles, salmon, owls and more on its website, maintaining interpretive signs at select wildlife areas, and producing self-guiding pamphlets and birding trail maps. Additionally, WDFW promotes wildlife festivals, citizen science, bird watching, land-based whale watching, fish-migrator viewing, beach combing, target shooting, outdoor learning, outdoor skill building, self-guided outdoor experiences, community-centric resources to interpret local wildlife and fish resources and active lifestyle opportunities that allow the public direct contact with wilderness and wild native places.

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	6.0	6.0	6.0
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$27	\$28	\$55
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$7	\$7	\$14
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$69	\$69	\$138
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$559	\$485	\$1,044
001-2 Federal	\$46	\$49	\$95
001-7 Local	\$104	\$102	\$206
001 Account Total	\$709	\$636	\$1,345
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$462	\$616	\$1,078
04M Recreational Fisheries Enhancement			
04M-1 State	\$145	\$126	\$271

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

*

Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Through promotion of outdoor recreation, WDFW fosters a network of conservation partners, engaged communities, communications specialists and the public both in person and online. This network collaboratively supports wildlife viewing and wildlife-based outdoor recreation, fostering durable community-supported conservation solutions. These conservation solutions maintain and improve opportunities for future generations to experience Washington's wildlife and fish resources firsthand, and contribute to a wildlife-based outdoor economy.

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

A053 Business Management and Obligations

An effective agency requires administrative infrastructure that successfully supports the needs of staff who perform work directly in service to the mission. The department's business management work comprehensively supports the entire agency and meets obligations by providing agency leadership and strategy, communicating with the public and legislature, managing finance and contracts, managing human resources, managing information technology infrastructure, building and maintaining office facilities, maintaining agency records, responding to public safety incidents (obligation to general policing by fully commissioned WDFW officers) and accessing legal counsel from the Office of the Attorney General.

**ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
FTE	439.6	435.6	437.6
21S Aquatic Invasive Species Mngmt Acct			
21S-1 State	\$388	\$469	\$857
02R Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account			
02R-1 State	\$1,130	\$1,182	\$2,312
26C Climate Commitment Account			
26C-1 State	\$2,213	\$2,213	\$4,426
259 Coastal Crab Account			
259-6 Non-Appropriated	\$9	\$9	\$18
320 Puget Sound Crab Pot Buoy Tag Acct			
320-6 Non-Appropriated	\$4	\$3	\$7
098 East Wash Pheasant Enhancement Acct			
098-1 State	\$21	\$36	\$57
07V Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Reward			
07V-6 Non-Appropriated	\$14	\$14	\$28
444 Fish & Wildlife Equipment Revolving			
444-6 Non-Appropriated	\$135	\$135	\$270
24N Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Acc			
24N-1 State	\$9,202	\$9,190	\$18,392
001 General Fund			
001-1 State	\$82,280	\$79,585	\$161,865
001-2 Federal	\$9,616	\$10,351	\$19,967
001-7 Local	\$3,526	\$3,447	\$6,973
001 Account Total	\$95,422	\$93,383	\$188,805
104 Limited Fish and Wildlife Account			
104-1 State	\$5,406	\$7,207	\$12,613
23P Model Toxics Control Operating Acct			
23P-1 State	\$653	\$648	\$1,301
26D Natural Climate Solutions Account			
26D-1 State	\$288	\$288	\$576
217 Oil Spill Prevention Account			
217-1 State	\$46	\$57	\$103

ACT001 - Agency Activity Inventory
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

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Appropriation Period: 2025-27 Sort By: Activity

Account	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial Total
01B ORV & Nonhighway Account			
01B-1 State	\$22	\$22	\$44
507 Oyster Reserve Land Account			
507-1 State	\$80	\$19	\$99
209 Regional Fisheries Enhance Group			
209-6 Non-Appropriated	\$2	\$2	\$4
12G Rockfish Research Account			
12G-6 Non-Appropriated	\$17	\$16	\$33
110 Special Wildlife Account			
110-7 Local	\$101	\$122	\$223
09J WA Coast Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account			
09J-6 Non-Appropriated	\$6	\$6	\$12
071 Warm Water Game Fish Account			
071-1 State	\$454	\$454	\$908
14A Wildlife Rehabilitation Account			
14A-1 State	\$3	\$3	\$6
19W Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account			
19W-6 Non-Appropriated	\$30	\$30	\$60

Statewide Result Area: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Statewide Strategy: Preserve, maintain and restore natural systems and landscapes

Expected Results

This work will result in: strong, clear agency direction and leadership; efficient agency internal operations and a skilled, productive workforce; compliance with various financial, technology and other laws and requirements; maximized value from investment in WDFW administrative operations; decreased agency financial risk; and compliance with all state, federal and local regulations regarding financial management, contracting, budget, human resources, records management, technology and technology security.

Recommendation Summary



A young mountain goat on Aasgard Pass. Photo by Anour Esa.



Dollars in Thousands

**ABS024 Recommendation Summary
 Department of Fish and Wildlife
 2025-27 Regular Budget Session
 WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

	Average Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
CB T0PL Current Biennium Base	1,850.0	346,052	418,700	764,752
2023-25 Current Biennium Total	1,850.0	346,052	418,700	764,752
CL 051A Wildfire Funding Adjustment	0.0	250	0	250
CL 0RCA Orca Monitoring and Research	0.0	(100)	0	(100)
CL 5371 Orca Vessel Protection	(0.3)	(251)	(22)	(273)
CL 5784 Deer & Elk Crop Damage	0.0	92	0	92
CL 8F01 Fuel Cost Increases	0.0	0	0	0
CL 8U Utility Rate Adjustments	0.0	0	1	1
CL 90J Shared Tenant M365 to CSM	0.0	(1)	0	(1)
CL 90K Real Estate Services to CSM	0.0	0	0	0
CL 92C Archives/Records Management	0.0	(20)	0	(20)
CL 92D Audit Services	0.0	0	0	0
CL 92E Legal Services	0.0	23	0	23
CL 92G Administrative Hearings	0.0	(7)	0	(7)
CL 92J CTS Central Services	0.0	(188)	0	(188)
CL 92K DES Central Services	0.0	(11)	0	(11)
CL 92R OFM Central Services	0.0	(3,370)	0	(3,370)
CL 92W GOV Central Services	0.0	(10)	0	(10)
CL 9D Pension and DRS Rate Change	0.0	2	4	6
CL 9J Nonappropriated Fund Adjustment	0.0	0	197	197
CL 9Q Equipment Maintenance and Software	0.0	(12)	12	0
CL 9S01 AutoFish Marking Trailers	0.0	801	0	801
CL A4A Salish Sea Marine Mammal Surveys	(2.0)	(940)	0	(940)
CL A5A Salmon and Steelhead Monitoring	(6.7)	(1,644)	0	(1,644)
CL A5C Crab Fishery and Humpbacks	(2.5)	(570)	0	(570)
CL A9 Streamflow Policy Support	(3.0)	(1,037)	0	(1,037)
CL BA01 Enforcement Officer Body Cameras	0.0	(45)	0	(45)
CL BC01 Conservation Monitoring, Assistance	0.5	0	(1,440)	(1,440)
CL BDSR Biodiversity and Species Recovery	0.0	7,000	0	7,000
CL BEAR Bear Wise	0.0	(224)	0	(224)
CL BI Salmon ESA Regulatory Compliance	1.1	(827)	0	(827)
CL BIRD Avian Predation/Salmon	(0.6)	(222)	0	(222)
CL BWC Body-Worn Camera Compensation	0.0	(3)	(2)	(5)
CL C4 Columbia River Pinniped Predation	(4.2)	(1,506)	0	(1,506)
CL CLSA Employee Classification Adjustments	0.0	1	0	1
CL CM01 Hatchery Maintenance	1.5	1,476	0	1,476
CL CN01 GHG Emissions Reduction	(0.5)	0	(996)	(996)
CL CRS1 Climate Change Response Strategy	(0.5)	0	(184)	(184)
CL EC WCC contract increase from ECY	0.0	5	0	5
CL ELKM Skagit Elk Management	0.0	(100)	0	(100)
CL EW Post-wildfire Habitat Recovery	(0.7)	(1,657)	0	(1,657)
CL EXPR Experimental Fishing Gear Grants	0.0	(500)	0	(500)
CL FE Fisheries Enforcement Compliance	5.8	1,914	0	1,914
CL FHF Forest Health, Fuel Reductions	0.0	0	(2,000)	(2,000)
CL G09 WFSE General Government	0.0	135	76	211
CL G11 Fish and Wildlife Officers Guild	0.0	(111)	(99)	(210)

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

	Average Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds	
CL G12	DFW Teamsters 760 Enf Sgts	0.0	(11)	(10)	(21)
CL G99	Fish & Wildlife Professionals	0.0	284	311	595
CL GL6	Non-Rep Recruitment/Retention	0.0	(441)	(446)	(887)
CL GL7	Coalition of Unions	0.0	17	41	58
CL GL9	Non-Rep General Wage Increase	0.0	1,114	1,038	2,152
CL GLS	Updated PEBB Rate	0.0	91	110	201
CL GLU	PERS & TRS Plan 1 Benefit Increase	0.0	85	95	180
CL GLZ	PEBB Rate Correction	0.0	237	285	522
CL HA	Fish Health and Marking	1.0	403	42	445
CL HA01	Toutle River Fish Collection Maint.	0.1	0	0	0
CL LWP1	Lake Washington Predator Supp	0.0	(700)	0	(700)
CL LWPS	Predatory Fish Suppression	0.0	(700)	0	(700)
CL MR10	Upper Col R Salmon Reintroduction	0.0	0	(3,000)	(3,000)
CL MUSS	Invasive Mussels	0.0	(1,810)	(1,810)	(3,620)
CL NATR	Nature Play Toolkit	0.0	(125)	0	(125)
CL NEGF	Net Ecological Gain Framework	0.0	(470)	0	(470)
CL PE	Columbia River ESA Permitting	(4.0)	(1,394)	0	(1,394)
CL PLPL	Plastic Pollution	(0.3)	(327)	0	(327)
CL PP	Pro-Equity, Anti-Racism (PEAR)	0.0	(16)	0	(16)
CL RF01	Facilities Portfolio Mgt Tool	(1.0)	0	(310)	(310)
CL RI	Reclassified IT Positions	0.0	1	1	2
CL RR	Non-lethal Wolf Deterrence	0.0	404	0	404
CL RUCK	Ruckelshaus FY Shift	0.0	0	0	0
CL S111	Fish Barrier Prioritization	(1.3)	(584)	0	(584)
CL S4B	Toutle & Skamania River Hatcheries	0.0	(1,896)	0	(1,896)
CL SH	Monitor Shellfish Harvest	0.0	(204)	0	(204)
CL SL01	Ecological Assessment	0.0	(566)	0	(566)
CL SPLL	Pollinator Outreach	0.0	(325)	0	(325)
CL SRIP	Riparian Systems Assessment	(6.0)	(1,994)	0	(1,994)
CL SSKG	Skagit Tide Gate Dispute Resolution	0.0	(350)	0	(350)
CL STP	Safety & Training Program Expansion	6.5	2,654	(20)	2,634
CL STRB	Support of Tribal Hatcheries	0.0	(419)	0	(419)
CL SWLF	Additional Wolf-Livestock Det. Area	0.0	(100)	0	(100)
CL UAAL	Plan 1 UAAL Rates	0.0	(352)	(393)	(745)
CL WA	Hatchery Wage Adjustments	0.0	0	0	0
CL WBE1	Whidbey Basin Chinook Projects	0.0	0	8,144	8,144
CL WD	Wildlife Disease Surveillance	0.0	(644)	0	(644)
CL WFRC	Wolf Recovery	(1.5)	(780)	0	(780)
CL WLFA	Wolf Advisory Group	0.0	(260)	0	(260)
CL WR	Wildlife Rehabilitation	0.0	0	(300)	(300)
CL YYY	Vaccine Booster Incentive	0.0	(381)	(385)	(766)
CL ZM	Zooplankton Monitoring Program	0.0	11	0	11
Total Carry Forward Level		1,831.5	334,847	417,640	752,487
Percent Change from Current Biennium		(1.0)%	(3.2)%	(3.3)%	(1.6)%
Maintenance – Other Changes					
ML8L	Lease Adjustments	0.0	1,373	0	1,373
ML8U	Utility Rate Adjustments	0.0	118	430	548

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

	Average Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
ML 9E Other Fund Adjustments	0.0	0	0	0
ML 9Q Equipment Maintenance and Software	0.0	1,665	0	1,665
ML 9S Equipment Replacement Costs	0.0	2,498	0	2,498
ML 9V Capital Project Operating Costs	3.6	1,546	0	1,546
ML BC Body Cam Subscription Fill	0.0	206	0	206
ML EC WCC contract increase from ECY	0.0	68	0	68
ML EW Post-wildfire Habitat Recovery	1.2	2,966	0	2,966
ML GD Geoduck Stock Assessment	0.0	530	0	530
ML HF Hatchery Fish Food Cost Increases	0.0	398	116	514
ML HP HPA Permitting System Modernization	2.0	0	4,744	4,744
ML M7 WSP Radio Dispatch Charge Increase	0.0	310	0	310
ML MT Marking and Tagging Fish	0.0	140	60	200
ML PR Public Records Request	4.0	1,322	0	1,322
ML SE Personnel and Labor Services	0.0	192	0	192
ML VR Vehicle Replacement	0.0	3,116	0	3,116
Maintenance – Other Total	10.8	16,448	5,350	21,798
Maintenance – Transfers Changes				
ML CF Costs without Federal Revenue	0.0	3,170	(3,170)	0
ML CL Costs without Local Revenue	0.0	2,854	(2,854)	0
Maintenance – Transfers Total	0.0	6,024	(6,024)	0
Total Maintenance Level	1,842.3	357,319	416,966	774,285
Percent Change from Current Biennium	(.4)%	3.3%	(.4)%	1.2%
Policy – Other Changes				
PL A9 Streamflow Policy Support	2.8	1,100	0	1,100
PL AA Salmon and Steelhead Monitoring	6.1	1,644	0	1,644
PL AC Crab Fishery and Humpbacks	2.5	570	0	570
PL CS Coastal Salmonids Management	14.0	4,820	0	4,820
PL EF Emerging Fishery Implementation	2.0	598	0	598
PL EP Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police	20.5	17,281	0	17,281
PL ER Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience	20.2	0	13,027	13,027
PL F6 Facilities Six-Year Plan Alignment	0.0	2,871	0	2,871
PL FH Forest Health and Fuel Reduction	9.2	2,000	0	2,000
PL FP Fish Passage Prioritization	2.0	768	0	768
PL HC Hatchery Conservation Programs	4.2	2,594	0	2,594
PL HS Hatchery Investment Strategy	3.0	2,725	0	2,725
PL LM Invest in Lands Stewardship	22.8	9,948	0	9,948
PL LW Lake Washington Predator Supp	2.7	1,400	0	1,400
PL MH Mobile Harvest Application Support	20.5	6,203	0	6,203
PL PD Pinniped Predation	8.0	3,118	0	3,118
PL PE Columbia River ESA Permitting	4.0	1,394	0	1,394
PL PS Fish Passage and Screening Capacity	8.5	3,349	0	3,349
PL QZ Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention	20.7	3,620	3,620	7,240
PL RB Restoring Washington's Biodiversity	41.8	14,320	0	14,320

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

	Average Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
PL RE Replacement Equipment	0.0	4,565	0	4,565
PL RS Riparian Systems Assessment	5.0	2,006	0	2,006
PL RW Respond to Wildlife Disease	7.5	3,694	0	3,694
PL SD Scientific Data Modernization	3.9	6,902	0	6,902
PL ST WDFW Staff & Volunteer Safety	6.0	9,420	0	9,420
PL TB Managing Emergent Toxic Threats	4.0	0	1,946	1,946
PL TS Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries	5.7	1,896	0	1,896
PL WC Expand Wildlife Conflict Response	19.2	7,365	0	7,365
PL WF Wolf Recovery	1.5	1,110	0	1,110
PL WG Wolf Advisory Group	0.0	350	0	350
Policy – Other Total	268.2	117,631	18,593	136,224
Subtotal - Policy Level Changes	268.2	117,631	18,593	136,224
2025-27 Total Policy Level	2,110.5	474,950	435,559	910,509
Percent Change from Current Biennium	14.1%	37.2%	4.0%	19.1%

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

ML 8L Lease Adjustments

WDFW requests funding for increasing lease costs. WDFW maintains approximately 70 rental agreements, including its headquarters, with almost as many different property owners. These facilities include worksites for WDFW's 2,400 staff statewide, lab space, hatcheries, and storage for Department-owned equipment. In the 2025-27 biennium, WDFW is renewing, relocating, or closing leases, resulting in net increased lease costs.

ML 8U Utility Rate Adjustments

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding to meet increased utility costs at all facilities. Without funding to offset increased electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and heating oil costs, key activities protecting Washington's fish, wildlife, and ecosystems will decline, including salmon and trout production. Moreover, WDFW hatcheries produce fish that support Washington's tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, contribute to recovery efforts for salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and contribute significantly to the state economy. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

ML 9E Other Fund Adjustments

In response to a change in the distribution of revenue from the sale of small game hunting licenses between the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account (098) and the Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Account (24N), the department requests a shift of spending authority from 098 to 24N to maintain funding of the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program.

ML 9Q Equipment Maintenance and Software

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) faces increasing costs for mission-critical technologies including hardware and software. WDFW requests additional funding to maintain these essential functions for daily operations without compromising core Departmental activities.

ML 9S Equipment Replacement Costs

As a result of a long-standing structural deficit over the past decade, WDFW prioritized staffing and on-the-ground project costs before equipment replacement. Consequently, WDFW's equipment inventory has become a collection of aged and technologically outdated items that are subject to frequent breakdowns, poor safety conditions, and costly repairs. This equipment is mission-critical in that it facilitates fish and wildlife transport, enables staff access to fish and wildlife habitats, or is utilized to maintain habitat for fish and wildlife conservation or citizen recreation. This is ongoing funding to replace items that have exceeded their useful life.

ML 9V Capital Project Operating Costs

In support of its mission, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) secures prime habitat that meets conservation values or increases public outdoor recreation opportunities. Through the capital budget process, WDFW receives approval to obtain new lands or land management rights and implement related capital improvements, increasing WDFW's obligation for operations and maintenance (O&M) on WDFW-managed lands. This proposal identifies the most recent land acquisitions, related capital improvements, and requests ongoing funding needed for operations and maintenance.

[Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

ML BC Body Cam Subscription Fill

The focus of this proposal is to establish ongoing financial support of the WDFW Police Body Worn Camera (BWC) program. WDFW requests additional funding for body camera subscription services. Funding was included in the initial 2023-25 BN line item for this subscription, but was insufficient to fund it fully once the true cost was learned during the project.

ML EC WCC contract increase from ECY

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) utilizes Department of Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) for forage fish research and monitoring. Forage fish are a foundation of marine food webs and several species spawn in nearshore habitat, increasingly at risk from shoreline development, armoring, toxic runoff, and chemical spills. WDFW is a leader in protecting forage fish by documenting the location, condition, and use of spawning habitat. Funding contract cost increases ensures that WDFW can maintain critical monitoring and research. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly Related to Implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

ML EW Post-wildfire Habitat Recovery

Each year, wildfires statewide decimate many acres of public lands. Several of these wildfires have caused extensive damage to habitat and facilities on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) managed wildlife areas. WDFW implements efforts to recover habitat, reestablish native vegetation, prevent noxious weed infestations, and restore infrastructure in wildfire impacted areas. This investment supports vital habitat recovery and restoration work caused by wildfires.

ML GD Geoduck Stock Assessment

Provide direct expenditure authority to DFW to fund current level of work for Geoduck Stock Assessments.

ML HF Hatchery Fish Food Cost Increases

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) hatcheries produce fish that support Washington's tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries and contribute to fish recovery efforts listed under the Endangered Species Act. WDFW requests increased funding to meet fish food costs that continue to rise due to the global market conditions associated with fish food production. Without funding to offset increased fish food costs, salmon and trout plants into local waters will likely be reduced and/or potential hatchery closure(s) may be needed. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

ML HP HPA Permitting System Modernization

In 2023, WDFW received IT pool funds to replace its aged online HPA permitting system: Aquatic Protection Permitting system (APPS). APPS is used by permit applicants, agency staff, and other interested parties pursuant to RCW 77.55.351. The new permitting system will go live in November 2024. This request is for ongoing maintenance and operating costs in alignment with the approved tech budget pursuant to Section 701 of ESSB-5950.

ML M7 WSP Radio Dispatch Charge Increase

The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) Police utilizes the Washington State Patrol (WSP) communication services, which include dispatching services, mobile-to-mobile communications, and radio frequency spectrum management. In the 23-25 biennium, the Washington State Patrol increased the communication fee charged to WDFW.

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

ML MT Marking and Tagging Fish

The price for Coded Wire Tags has increased. WDFW seeks expenditure authority in state, local, and federal codes to pay the increased costs and continue to mark and tag fish, as required by RCW 77.95.290. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

ML PR Public Records Request

WDFW has seen a significant increase in large, complex public record requests in recent years due to agency growth and the speed at which we create records. The staff who handle public records requests (PRR) are increasingly challenged to respond in a timely and complete manner, increasing the Department's legal and financial exposure. Additional staff will significantly improve WDFW's ability to address the increase in records volume and current deliverable deadlines with assurance of completeness, which in turn reduces potential litigation and financial exposure. Additional resources will also allow for improved training of agency staff and overall records management.

ML SE Personnel and Labor Services

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding for increasing costs for two fee-for-service items, Personnel and Labor Relations services, from the Office of Financial Management that are within Central Services but are not in the state's Central Service Model. Agencies receive funding for services that are in the Central Service Model, but do not receive funding for fee-for-service costs.

ML VR Vehicle Replacement

This request seeks funding for Enforcement Program's comprehensive operational needs associated with these circumstances. WDFW Enforcement Officers patrol public lands and waters statewide and respond to a variety of service calls. The state's population exceeds 8 million residents and grows twice as fast as the national average. This growth increases usage of natural resources, which in turn requires additional WDFW Enforcement Officer presence and patrols to ensure public safety and resource protection. Increased patrols causes more wear and tear on vehicles and equipment which accelerates their service life. Replacement of modern vehicles will inherently cost more due to new technology and inflation.

ML CF Costs without Federal Revenue

General fund revenue from federal sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for federal authority that cannot be spent.

ML CL Costs without Local Revenue

General fund revenue from local sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for local authority that cannot be spent.

PL A9 Streamflow Policy Support

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

Climate change, human population growth, and struggling salmon populations require a long-term, strategic vision for Washington's water management into the future. The historical over-allocation of Washington's rivers and groundwater has negatively impacted fish and wildlife in many watersheds. As the demand for water increases, politically or legally expedient solutions are frequently favored over ecological requirements. WDFW is uniquely poised to provide science-based expertise and policy leadership to the state's understanding of streamflow issues and their ecological implications.

[Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

PL AA Salmon and Steelhead Monitoring

Robust fisheries monitoring and planning efforts are critical to species conservation and recovery, co-management with Treaty Tribes, and fishing opportunities. This package includes support for Puget Sound freshwater fisheries monitoring efforts, including steelhead spawning estimates and angler surveys, and fishery planning efforts, including preparation of fishery management plans for steelhead fisheries. With ongoing support for monitoring, WDFW can safeguard the health of imperiled fishery stocks, meeting federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and tribal co-management requirements while providing diverse and accessible recreational fishing opportunities for all Washingtonians. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL AC Crab Fishery and Humpbacks

Fishery managers need accurate and timely data to meet management goals and fulfill harvest sharing obligations outlined in state-tribal co-management agreements. Historically, management of the Washington coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery depended on fish receiving tickets at the time of landing and paper logbook records at the end of the season. Beginning in 2024, an operational electronic monitoring system that reports real-time fishing location and activity is required for fishery participants. This package provides the continued funding necessary to fully leverage the benefits of electronic monitoring in tribal co-management, enforcement, whale entanglement risk remediation, and the protection of public health during marine biotoxin events.

PL CS Coastal Salmonids Management

Coastal Chinook and steelhead are regarded as stronghold populations in Washington, but they were petitioned for ESA-listing in 2023 due to low abundance. The value of these fish and fisheries cannot be overstated. This package represents a holistic approach to fisheries conservation and management on the coast. Robust population viability monitoring will be led by expert scientists and leveraged in management strategy evaluations. Regional management plans will be developed with co-managers along with modern harvest management tools to inform forecasting, maintain critical fisheries, and achieve conservation goals. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL EF Emerging Fishery Implementation

There is increased political and social pressure to diversify the salmon fishing gears used in the lower Columbia River commercial fishery, especially gears with mark-selective capabilities. With an Emerging Commercial Fishery, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife can assess the viability of alternative gears in a commercial setting and use this information to provide recommendations to the legislature on the use of these gears in the future. This request will fund monitoring commercial alternative gear research to inform fishery implementation questions, monitoring for the emerging commercial fishery. Without funding, the Department will not be able to adequately monitor this emerging fishery to inform the viability of alternative commercial gears. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL EP Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

Washington State, with eight million residents and twice the national growth rate, faces increasing demands on its natural resources. These circumstances necessitate additional Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Officers to ensure public safety and resource protection. WDFW Enforcement Officers are responsible for law enforcement statewide, including state and federal lands and waters, and respond to a variety of related issues from poaching to habitat protection. As we finish recruitments in the 2023-25 biennium, Enforcement is poised for the addition of 20 more and six support staff this biennium. More officers mean proactive presence, crime deterrence, and greater natural resource protection statewide. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda implementation]. [Broadly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL ER Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience

This funding request builds upon ongoing work to enhance the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW's) response to climate change by building resilience to climate impacts and reducing Department-generated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The request funds initiatives to develop climate science and build capacity for resilience, and achieve meaningful emissions reduction through fleet electrification, energy efficiency, and alternative commuting.

The request also advances statewide priorities and mandates; the resilience projects are directly related to implementing Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy and the GHG emissions reduction projects support the Department in meeting the emissions reduction targets outlined in RCW 70A.45.050 (ESSHB 2311). [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL F6 Facilities Six-Year Plan Alignment

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has a deficit of office and storage space throughout Washington. The Department has grown by 30%, but its office and storage space has not increased. In the 2025-27 biennium, facilities in four locations face critical relocation needs due to lost leases or safety concerns, displacing staff and equipment. New funding for additional leased office and storage space is essential for the success of the Department's mission. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation].

PL FH Forest Health and Fuel Reduction

The enacted 2023-25 biennial budget for ongoing forest health and fuel reduction efforts moved the funding from the capital budget to the Forest Resiliency Account, reduced biennial funding from \$6 million to \$4 million, and restricted the funding to one-time. The enacted 2024 Supplemental added \$2 million per fiscal year ongoing from the Natural Climate Solutions Account, resulting in \$4 million for the 2025-27 biennium. WDFW requests restoration of the previous funding level at \$6 million per biennium. The additional \$2 million provides mandated cultural resources review of all forest projects, and for the prescribed burn crews which implement 4,000 acres per biennium of treatments, contributing to ecological health, habitat for critical species, reduced wildfire risk, and resilience to climate change.

PL FP Fish Passage Prioritization

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is developing a comprehensive strategy to prioritize fish passage barrier removal statewide. This proposal will continue strategy development first tasked by the Washington State Legislature in 2020 through legislative provisos in the supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 6168), the supplemental Capital Budget (ESSB 6248) and the Transportation Budget (ESHB 2322). A successful strategy will focus efforts of all culvert correction programs into a single approach to maximize the salmon and orca recovery benefits from the public investment. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL HC Hatchery Conservation Programs

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

Salmon population persistence in many rivers is threatened by the double jeopardy of climate change and legacy impacts from deleterious habitat, fishery, and hatchery practices. Conservation hatchery programs have proven to be an effective tool for maintaining at-risk populations and increasing genetic diversity. This package will extend this proven technique to address critical salmon conservation needs and complement broader recovery actions for five key salmon populations. An assessment of the risks, benefits, and feasibility of a conservation hatchery program is also proposed for Chehalis Spring Chinook salmon. These actions are supported by multiple tribes, salmon recovery entities, and stakeholder organizations. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy].

PL HS Hatchery Investment Strategy

State operated hatchery facilities need additional capacity for current and expanded production, including additional fish health services and mass marking of hatchery salmonids. This funding supports recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident killer whale prey, and conservation efforts for wild salmonids. If not funded, hatchery production goals may not be met, the Fish Health Unit will not be staffed adequately to monitor state and commercial aquaculture, fish intended for harvest will not be mass marked, and reciprocal marking and tagging for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission may not be achieved. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL LM Invest in Lands Stewardship

The long-term conservation and recreation value of lands managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), representing billions of dollars in public assets, is at risk. The growing costs to steward these lands and increasing demand for the services they provide have outpaced the capacity needed and funding available for maintaining their integrity. WDFW requires funding to address urgent near-term needs and support a transition to a proactive and comprehensive approach to conserving natural and cultural resources and managing recreation on 1 million-plus acres across the state. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation].

PL LW Lake Washington Predator Supp

Chinook and sockeye salmon returns to the Lake Washington watershed are at historic lows because of predation on juvenile salmon by non-native fish species inhabiting the lake. Climate change and continued illegal introductions of predator fish such as northern pike exacerbate the predation problem. Poor salmon returns in this highly populated watershed disproportionately affect under-served communities and Tribes. Suppression of non-native predators will increase survival for Chinook and sockeye, leading to increased adult returns and fishing opportunities for these species in Lake Washington. Hydro acoustic monitoring of juvenile Chinook and sockeye outmigration via sonar deployment provides a critical validation tool for determining success of predator removal. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy].

PL MH Mobile Harvest Application Support

Accurate and timely reporting of harvest is required for sustainable fisheries management. Further, WDFW is obligated under federal court order to provide accurate and timely catch accounting to tribal co-managers. Seeking to develop mobile harvest reporting tools which best accomplish these objectives, WDFW has developed mobile harvest reporting applications allowing the recording and submission of harvest information into an electronic catch-record-card (eCRC) - at real time. The applications, through mobile devices, accomplish these objectives and incorporate the ability to support the development and implementation of new tools in the future. This decision package includes support for a comprehensive suite of staff necessary to successfully implement mobile harvest reporting including biometrician, field technician, biologist, and technical and customer service support. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

PL PD Pinniped Predation

Pinniped (seal and sea lion) predation in Washington is negatively impacting Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead populations of great importance to endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and to commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. This package supports continued participation in a successful Columbia River sea lion management program partnering with regional states and tribes, as well as ongoing pinniped abundance, diet, and movement monitoring to better understand predation impacts. Without this continued funding, WDFW would have significantly reduced ability to engage in an increasingly controversial issue that is important to Washington's Native American tribes, businesses, and citizens. WDFW's inability to engage on this topic would undermine Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Task Force Recommendations #12 and #13. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

PL PE Columbia River ESA Permitting

This will allow WDFW to maximize recreational fishing opportunities for salmon and steelhead. Due to the year-round presence of ESA listed salmon and steelhead, WDFW is legally required to have coverage from NOAA to prosecute recreational fisheries. WDFW's existing suite of fishery permits were developed over the past two decades and currently do not provide full ESA coverage, limit flexibility to manage recreational fisheries, do not incorporate the best available science, and lack consistency between them. New and dedicated staff would complete all necessary ESA fishery permits within 5-6 years. Consequences of not completing fishery permits includes increased litigation risk, inability to open new recreational fisheries, and not achieving conservation objectives for listed salmon and steelhead. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL PS Fish Passage and Screening Capacity

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is finalizing review of Chapter 77.57 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) (known as the Fishways, Flow, and Screening Statutes) to implement new rules surrounding fish passage and water diversions. Full implementation of the rules will enable WDFW to better protect all fish species. Salmon populations throughout the state are at historically low numbers, due in part to barriers blocking fish passage and improperly designed water diversions. Without change, salmon are unlikely to recover, and Southern Resident killer whales will continue to struggle for lack of their preferred prey. This proposal will implement the new Fishways and Screening Rules on the date they become effective. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL QZ Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention

Building on a FY 25 quagga mussel proviso of \$1.81 million in state general funds and leveraging \$1.81 million in federal funds, WDFW will expand mussel activities including detection monitoring, implementing protections for habitat and infrastructure, and reducing impacts to our economy, environment, and species, including salmon and steelhead. WDFW will increase prevention activities, response readiness, public awareness and action, regulatory compliance, and preparation for extended management and mitigation. Through this ongoing investment, WDFW will address the greater than \$100 million annual quagga and zebra mussel threat on the state's doorstep for the benefit of protecting and perpetuating Washington's resources. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL RB Restoring Washington's Biodiversity

Habitat loss and degradation, climate change effects, pollution, wildlife disease, and invasive species threaten the state's biodiversity. Fish and wildlife are public resources, and it is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) mandate to conserve them for current and future residents of Washington. WDFW needs the remainder of the resources we proposed in 2023 to effectively implement the actions in the State Wildlife Action Plan and safeguard and restore Washington's biodiversity. We aim to develop and implement action plans for 80% of at-risk species and increase public participation in conservation by 25%. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Broadly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

PL RE Replacement Equipment

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) current heavy equipment fleet is deteriorating faster than it can be replaced through existing funds. As equipment is surplus, the Department is increasingly turning to rental equipment, but that is costly and unreliable, causing critical time delays and impacting business needs. WDFW is requesting funds to replace priority equipment to maintain critical business operations, including public access maintenance, hatchery improvements, habitat restoration, and recreational opportunities. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

PL RS Riparian Systems Assessment

Healthy, connected riparian habitat is critical for preserving, protecting, and perpetuating Washington's fish and wildlife, especially salmonid recovery. A lack of information on riparian conditions has been a barrier in prioritizing riparian restoration and protection. To optimize riparian investments, the Department of Fish and Wildlife was directed by the Legislature to create an online decision support tool - the Riparian Data Engine (RDE). Continued funding is needed for its development. This proposal aims to advance WDFW's goal of increasing riparian habitat (10% net gain by 2025) and measure progress towards this goal through increased data (66-100%), tool accessibility, and targeted capabilities.

[Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy].

PL RW Respond to Wildlife Disease

Diseases can significantly impact wildlife populations, and sick wildlife are often an early warning of diseases that can affect domestic animals and humans. Recent examples include chronic wasting disease (CWD) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or "bird flu"), respectively.

Early detection and response to wildlife diseases enhances the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) capacity to mitigate wildlife impacts and implement proactive strategies to help ensure healthy wildlife populations in Washington.

If funded, this proposal will enhance WDFW's capacity to detect and respond to wildlife diseases and proactively mitigate associated wildlife disease risks, including those associated with climate change, and provide action plans to preserve healthy and resilient wildlife in our state.

[Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

PL SD Scientific Data Modernization

WDFW proposes an investment in a comprehensive scientific data management program to enhance and streamline conservation of Washington's fish, wildlife, and wild spaces. With this program, WDFW will introduce cloud storage, a modern data library, and a collaborative scientific data analytics environment. WDFW will research and implement advanced data management technologies to leverage vast scientific data, while an AI Specialist will oversee policy and partnerships to ensure safe and efficient AI integration. Without this investment, WDFW risks falling behind in scientific innovation, compromising data integrity, and failing to meet public and legislative expectations for effective conservation management. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

PL ST WDFW Staff & Volunteer Safety

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Dollars in Thousands

WDFW is rapidly scaling its Safety and Training Program to ensure staff and volunteers have appropriate training and tools to mitigate risks inherent in their work. Over the last year, WDFW has updated policies, initiated a temporary “stand-down” of specific water-based activities to train and equip staff, and established an incident command team to reinforce a culture of safety. WDFW initiated this work with investments from the 2024 supplemental operating budget. WDFW seeks to address the next most important items for the Department with an additional \$6.3 million in ongoing funds for volunteer safety, safety equipment, and staff safety data management. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

PL TB Managing Emergent Toxic Threats

Chinook salmon and other key Puget Sound aquatic species are exposed to two emergent, highly toxic chemicals, PFAS and 6PPD-q, that potentially threaten species health as well as the health of Washingtonians who consume contaminated seafood. This investment would allow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to track the presence of these two contaminants in specific juvenile salmon habitats and in key fish species throughout Puget Sound. Results will be used to guide clean-up and pollution prevention efforts to protect threatened Chinook salmon and other sensitive species. Funding would also be used to test edible fish tissues for the Department of Health. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

PL TS Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries

Federal Mitchell Act funds are used to operate seven hatcheries and produce over 17 million salmon and steelhead in the lower Columbia River. Chronically stagnant funding for Mitchell Act facilities and increasing operational costs have put the Department’s ability to maintain current production levels at risk. Additionally, a \$1.9 million shortfall in this funding will limit the Department’s ability to maintain current production resulting in closures of two facilities, 1.5 million in lost salmon and steelhead production and further risking conservation, fishing opportunities and local economies. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy]

PL WC Expand Wildlife Conflict Response

As Washington’s population continues to grow, the potential for human-wildlife interactions and conflicts increases. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) seeks to build capacity for wildlife conflict response by consolidating and expanding response to negative human-wildlife interactions. Funding this request allows wildlife conflict specialists to increase responsiveness to crop and livestock damage and negative human-wildlife interactions, while increasing preventative education and outreach. These changes will reduce agriculture and livestock producer frustrations, decrease costly damage claims, and allow for a seamless response and follow-through to negative human-wildlife interactions with all species including black bears and cougars. This package also supports enhancing the Beaver Relocation Permit Program.

[Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

PL WF Wolf Recovery

With a steadily growing wolf population in Washington (from the first pack in 2008 to 260 wolves in 42 packs by 2023), wolf-livestock conflict also increased. Proactively mitigating wolf-livestock conflict is one of the greatest challenges for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), as this issue has a history of deep-rooted social disagreement and controversy. Through one-time provisos in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial budgets, the legislature funded WDFW staff and implementation of non-lethal mitigation strategies like range rider contracts, audio and visual deterrents, and cooperative cost-sharing agreements with producers in northeastern Washington counties who experience recurrent wolf-livestock conflict issues. WDFW is requesting ongoing funding to sustain current efforts to support wolf recovery.

ABS024 Recommendation Summary
Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

PL WG Wolf Advisory Group

Washington residents have strong and diverse opinions regarding co-existence with wolves. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been working to address critical biological and social issues collaboratively through the citizen-based Wolf Advisory Group (WAG). One-time funding was provided through provisos in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial enacted budgets for an external, neutral facilitator. WDFW is requesting ongoing funding for WAG facilitation. Lack of neutral facilitation focused on wolf recovery has proven to damage public trust, decrease engagement with agricultural and conservation communities, increase the risk wolf populations will not recover, and increase the risk of litigation.

Maintenance Level Decision Packages



Lupine flowers on Lewis Butte in the Methow Wildlife Area. Photo by WDFW Staff.



Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - 8L - Lease Adjustments

Agency Recommendation Summary

WDFW requests funding for increasing lease costs. WDFW maintains approximately 70 rental agreements, including its headquarters, with almost as many different property owners. These facilities include worksites for WDFW’s 2,400 staff statewide, lab space, hatcheries, and storage for Department-owned equipment. In the 2025-27 biennium, WDFW is renewing, relocating, or closing leases, resulting in net increased lease costs.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$624	\$749	\$1,373	\$749	\$749	\$1,498
Total Expenditures	\$624	\$749	\$1,373	\$749	\$749	\$1,498

Decision Package Description

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) currently maintains 70 rental agreements, including its headquarters in Olympia, the Natural Resources Building, with almost as many different property owners. There are 68 existing leases that will continue into the next biennium and WDFW anticipates adding at least 2 additional leases in the 2025-27 biennium.

Leases will be managed and re-negotiated throughout the biennium. These increased lease costs for existing leases are for office space, storage, moorage, labs, warehouse, and parking. Additional operating costs above the contracted lease at each of these locations include contracted expenses (e.g., janitorial).

WDFW is seeking funding to address the following facility-related costs that have increased since fiscal year 2023:

- Existing facilities with lease increases in the current biennium, totaling \$228,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$353,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.
- Changes in conditions that WDFW has received approval for from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) but has not received funding for (e.g., relocating the Thurston County Warehouse), total \$396,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

This package does not include any cost increases associated with the Natural Resources Building, which is included in the state’s central service model. This package also does not include consolidations or new spaces that have been approved by OFM, but do not have a signed lease.

WDFW is obligated to pay for the ongoing increased lease costs. Without additional funding, WDFW will have to decrease services that the general public relies on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish, public safety, conservation, hunting and recreational activities.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

This decision package includes expected lease increases and cost savings in instances where WDFW staff have vacated a facility. Each lease was reviewed individually and recalculated based upon expiration date, terms, and carry forward funding level.

Net adjustments total \$624,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$749,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. An increase in General Fund State is requested to cover the anticipated cost in leased space. See the "OFM Facility Cost Template" for additional detail.

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Related to the Governor's Results Washington Goal: Efficient Effective and Accountable Government, by increasing employee engagement and improving the customer experience.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

Related to WDFW's Strategy to move WDFW towards model operational and environmental excellence. The Department's leased facilities are in functional locations statewide where staff can operate the most effectively and efficiently in relation to its mission. This request delivers high-quality customer service to the citizens of Washington State and complies with all OFM and DES facilities plans and requirements.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Business Management & Obligations \$624,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$749,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing, General Fund-State.

All the WDFW leased facilities throughout Washington directly support each of WDFW's activities except for the production of hatchery fish, as those locations are not leased. WDFW activity inventory is split between the following activities: preserve and restore aquatic habitats and species, preserve and restore terrestrial habitats and species, acquire and manage lands, manage fishing opportunities, manage hunting opportunities, and provide nonconsumptive recreational opportunities.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW will use funding to maintain existing facilities that allow the Department to continue its fundamental day-to-day activities. In addition to ensuring that staff have a functional workspace, the agency owns and stores hundreds of vehicles, hundreds of vessels, and countless other pieces of equipment. Successfully maintaining Department facilities ensures that these assets are properly stored and protected from vandalism or theft.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased cost of increased lease rates over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for these increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 biennium submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Without adequate space the Department runs the risk of losing valuable employees performing critical, collaborative, and specialized work. As a result, stakeholders may be impacted by a reduction in service.

State Facilities Impacts:

If unfunded, this will have a significant impact on WDFW facilities. WDFW will have to make decisions to redirect funding from other priority areas or close facilities.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$624	\$749	\$1,373	\$749	\$749	\$1,498

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding to meet increased utility costs at all facilities. Without funding to offset increased electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and heating oil costs, key activities protecting Washington’s fish, wildlife, and ecosystems will decline, including salmon and trout production. Moreover, WDFW hatcheries produce fish that support Washington's tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, contribute to recovery efforts for salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and contribute significantly to the state economy. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$59	\$59	\$118	\$59	\$59	\$118
Fund 001 - 2	\$88	\$88	\$176	\$88	\$88	\$176
Fund 001 - 7	(\$8)	(\$8)	(\$16)	(\$8)	(\$8)	(\$16)
Fund 02R - 1	\$29	\$29	\$58	\$29	\$29	\$58
Fund 04M - 1	\$22	\$22	\$44	\$22	\$22	\$44
Fund 071 - 1	\$2	\$2	\$4	\$2	\$2	\$4
Fund 104 - 1	\$23	\$23	\$46	\$23	\$23	\$46
Fund 24N - 1	\$59	\$59	\$118	\$59	\$59	\$118
Total Expenditures	\$274	\$274	\$548	\$274	\$274	\$548
Revenue						
001 - 0315	\$88	\$88	\$176	\$88	\$88	\$176
001 - 0549	(\$8)	(\$8)	(\$16)	(\$8)	(\$8)	(\$16)
Total Revenue	\$80	\$80	\$160	\$80	\$80	\$160

Decision Package Description

Washington's facilities and hatcheries are essential to WDFW's mission to maintain fish and wildlife populations and a significant contributor to the Washington state economy. Utilities (electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and heating oil) have a crucial role in the production of salmon, trout, and game fish at WDFW's 80 hatchery facilities. In addition, fish production supports tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries in Washington and recovery and conservation programs for ESA-listed fish populations.

The Department’s hatcheries and fisheries are an essential part of maintaining fish and wildlife populations in the state. One of the largest needed expenditure classes for these locations is their utilities. In Fiscal Year 2024, WDFW had \$2,510,260 in utility expenditures at its hatcheries, a 6.0% increase over the previous fiscal year’s utility expenditure. With this biennium's projected utility spending based on historical billings and no inflationary increase adjustment, the result is a projected shortfall of \$274,000 for the Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 and ongoing. This funding request will allow WDFW to continue critical activities of managing habitats, maintaining current hatchery production levels, and supporting increased hatchery production requested by the Legislature.

Without additional funding, WDFW will have to move funds from other areas to cover the essential utility costs needed to run our facilities and hatcheries. This could potentially have a negative impact on the Department's ability to maintain current production levels at hatcheries, which will adversely affect fisheries jobs and the ability to meet federal treaty obligations and damage local economic development via tourism, lodging, and recreational equipment sales tied to fishing. These impacts are far reaching; in 2020 WDFW served 772,000 recreational fishing customers, and commercial fishing is a leading contributor to the Washington seafood economy. A loss to hatchery production may impact these areas. For example, income from commercial harvesters in 2016 totaled \$242,998,000, while the Washington state seafood industry, including imports, generated \$2 billion in 2016 (NOAA, 2016).

National Marine Fisheries Service. 2018. Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2016. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Tech, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/fisherieseconomicsunitedstatesreport2016>

Proposed Solution

Utility costs are not optional and needed for the proper operation of hatcheries and other WDFW facilities. WDFW facilities are often industrial complexes and incur significant utility usage and fees. Alternatives explored to lessen reliance on utilities have included hatcheries using energy-efficient lights, limiting heating during non-essential times, and recycling. While long-term options such as wind, solar, or hydropower development would lessen utility reliance and usage, these alternatives would require substantially higher capital budget funding requests.

Alternatives

Not funding this request could lead to reduced fish production levels which would negatively impact the ability of WDFW to meet salmon

production goals. In addition, a hatchery production decrease may lead to a loss in fishing opportunities resulting in the potential reduction of fishing license sales. This would negatively impact local economic activity in rural communities statewide that depend on fishing opportunities within their communities to generate revenue

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

n/a

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The attached funding model illustrates the difference between appropriated authority and current costs. In Fiscal Year 2024, WDFW utility expenditures totaled \$2.5 million at its hatcheries excluding payroll utility credits, a 6.0% increase over the previous fiscal year. The model estimates the average fund split base on the last four fiscal years. The exceptions would be funds 24N and 104 as three-year averages were used due to the creation of 24N in FY22. Although utilities are assumed to remain at fiscal year 2024 levels of \$2,510,260; for fiscal year 2026 and 2027, utility expenditure authority is currently \$2,236,343 resulting in a shortfall of \$273,918 for FY26 and FY27 and ongoing.

See attached table (attachment 1 – 8U Utility Rate Adjustment Model) detailing past and projected expenditures, current spending authority, and calculated appropriation needs.

Workforce Assumptions:

n/a

Historical Funding:

FY2026

- Total Funds = \$2,690,064
- Near General Fund = \$1,082,550
- Other Funds = \$1,153,793

FY2027

- Total Funds = \$2,690,064
- Near General Fund = \$1,082,550
- Other Funds = \$1,153,793

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor’s Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve two Results Washington goals: 1) Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment; and 2) Prosperous Economy.

Producing hatchery salmon and trout helps protect marine ecosystems and support the survival of Southern Resident orcas and ESA-listed Chinook. In addition, Hatchery salmon and trout contribute to commercial and recreational fishing opportunities across the state, supporting jobs and communities that rely on the economic benefits of fishing.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the Department Strategic Plan strategy of "Proactively address conservation challenges," expanding current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species. In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the performance outcome:

- 25% increase in wild salmon

WDFW Activity Inventory

Utility costs are allocated to WDFW based on activities (See Table 1. Budget request by activity). Multiple funding sources pay for WDFW utilities at hatcheries. WDFW hatcheries produce healthy fish to benefit the citizens of Washington State while providing conservation to natural-origin salmonids, and hatchery production is critical for fishing opportunities throughout the state. The Department operates 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights and co-manager management plans. The utilities rate adjustment and maintenance activities are necessary to keep hatcheries in good working order and meet different functions, including the entire fish production cycle.

Table 1. Budget request by activity.

Activity	Budget Request
	Fiscal Year 2026
Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species.	\$0
Acquire & Manage Lands	\$0
Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat and Species	\$0
Manage Fishing Opportunities.	\$0
Produce Hatchery Fish	\$274,000
Manage Hunting Opportunities	\$0
Provide & Facilitate Recreational Opportunities	\$0
Business Management & Obligations	\$0
Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species	\$0
Acquire & Manage Lands	\$0
Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat and Species.	\$0
TOTAL	\$274,000

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department’s ability to achieve the following Performance Indicators:

- Threatened and endangered species population improvements
- Value of commercial fishing in Washington State
- Total license sales achieved
- Number of angler days
- Hatchery programs in compliance with ESA

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through public engagement. The Communication and Public Engagement divisions are committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve. This proposal is a result of identifying non-discretionary cost increases that will have a negative impact on the business operations of WDFW and restrict mission-critical work.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This funding request is responding to the utility cost increase and budget shortfall due to this increase faced by WDFW. Without additional funding to cover these increased costs, other areas of the budget could be cut, which will cause reductions in other programs and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equity lens as WDFW will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents. Washington's hatcheries support recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state and contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses. This package supports the operation of Washington's hatcheries, which allows them to continue:

- Supporting local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers, and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses),
- Providing recreational opportunities for the people of Washington and its visitors,
- Protecting Washington's fishing and cultural heritages, practiced by diverse populations of Washington, and
- Commercial and recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 Harvest, Hatchery, and Adaptive Management of Salmon Recovery and Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Foods by ensuring WDFW's continued hatchery production of salmon and game fish across the state despite increased utility costs, to increase populations consistent with recovery efforts. Through these efforts this decision package is directly aligned with Action (ID#205) Increase salmon abundance while protecting genetic diversity by implementing hatchery and harvest management strategies and expanding available habitat while ensuring abundant salmon for harvest, treaty rights, and other species such as Southern Resident Orca by implementing key opportunity Work to reduce risk to wild populations by balancing the potential risks and benefits of hatchery production, and by conducting research on hatchery infrastructure and management to reduce the fitness differential between hatchery and wild populations. This decision package is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 89) Restore and enhance native fish, shellfish, game, and plant populations consistent with existing species recovery efforts. This decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria – support continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan. This decision package directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca taskforce recommendation 6 Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures. This decision package directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Salmon Strategy recommendation 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

WDFW hatchery production is a crucial element of fisheries co-management with tribes, collaborating and working with community partners to reach WDFW conservation principles.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW hatcheries and facilities operate across the state, and WDFW anticipates support from stakeholders, which include tribes, recreational and commercial fisheries, conservation groups, and the public.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Hatchery facilities and the programs they support are predominantly operated to expand harvest opportunities. Therefore, they are not contributing directly to salmon recovery efforts, but may become better aligned with the salmon strategy and recovery plans if sufficient funding were in place to optimize their performance.

Reference Documents

[Attachment 1 - 8U Utility Rate Adjustment Model.pdf](#)

[Attachment 2 - 8U Utility Breakdown by Type.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$274	\$274	\$548	\$274	\$274	\$548

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - 9Q - Equipment Maintenance and Software

Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) faces increasing costs for mission-critical technologies including hardware and software. WDFW requests additional funding to maintain these essential functions for daily operations without compromising core Departmental activities.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,375	\$290	\$1,665	\$193	\$193	\$386
Total Expenditures	\$1,375	\$290	\$1,665	\$193	\$193	\$386

Decision Package Description

At the current budgeted level, WDFW is only able to fund a portion of its most basic technological tools that allow staff to perform core Department work. As WDFW faces increasing costs for foundational technology tools, including those that enable all staff to deliver work products, it is attempting to minimize expenditures when possible. However, even with this fiscally conscious approach, WDFW is experiencing an increase in operation costs.

Infrastructure - \$1,327,000 in 2025-27 biennium, one-time

A significant portion of WDFW's owned hardware at the state data center and network hardware are approaching the end of its operational life cycle (average of 3 to 5 years). This impending obsolescence poses substantial risks, including increased maintenance costs, potential system failures, and reduced efficiency to systems. To mitigate these risks and ensure continued reliability and performance, it is crucial to prioritize the renewal of critical infrastructure.

DCO SDC and Network Hardware	FY26	FY27
HPE Hosts Production	\$ 133,900	\$ -
HPE Hosts Development	\$ 53,000	\$ -
HPE Installation & Implementation Pro Services	\$ 17,600	\$ -
HPE Hosts VDI	\$ 104,800	\$ -
NetApp FAS8300 and SATA Disk Shelves	\$ 259,000	\$ -
NetApp C190s and SSD Disk Shelf	\$ 51,900	\$ -
Office 365 Email, Teams, OneDrive Data Backup Service	\$ -	\$ 96,600
3650 Switches	\$ 449,600	\$ -
59 Security Cameras	\$ 105,900	\$ -
UPS Replacement	\$ 54,900	\$ -
Total (Rounded to the Nearest Thousand)	\$1,231,000	\$ 97,000

Total costs are \$1,231,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$97,000 in fiscal year 2027.

Hardware Leases – \$181,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$230,000 in the 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.

WDFW has shifted to a mobile workforce, and in alignment with the Office of the Chief Information Officer's (OCIO) Statewide IT Strategic Plan, the Department has replaced most of its leased PC desktops with mobile PC laptops, as desktops reach end of lease. WDFW currently leases more than 2,351 PCs, laptops, servers, and tablets from the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) for WDFW staff to use statewide.

In fiscal year 2025, the Department will replace 211 total devices, all of which are under active leases. WDFW assumes that the out-of-lease devices previously received funding for the lease costs. This decision package only requests funding for the difference between the average existing lease cost and the new lease costs. The price increase for hardware leases in fiscal year 2025 were asked for in the 2025 Supplemental 9Q Decision Package. The Department will need ongoing funding for fiscal year 2025.

The Department will replace 149 Dell Latitude 5400 Series of leased devices. The devices being replaced have an average lease cost of \$47.15 per month. The new lease cost will be \$54.85 per month, a 16% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 10 Dell Latitude Rugged Series of leased devices. The devices being replaced have an average lease cost of \$74.92 per month. The new lease cost will be \$86.44 per month, a 15% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 50 Dell Latitude 7400 Series of leased devices. The devices being replaced currently have an average lease cost of \$57.99 per month. The new lease cost will be \$71.26 per month, a 23% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 2 “Other” leased devices (e.g., Optiplex 7070, Precision 5820, Dell Latitude 7200 2-in-1). The devices have an average lease cost of \$61.22 per month. The new lease cost will be \$78.00 per month, a 27% cost increase.

FY 2025 Hardware Lease Replacements					
Model	Qty	Average Monthly Cost	New Monthly Cost	Cost Difference	Total Yearly Difference (Rounded)
Latitude 5400 Series	149	\$ 47.15	\$ 54.85	\$ 7.70	\$ 13,768
Latitude Rugged	10	\$ 74.92	\$ 86.44	\$ 11.52	\$ 1,382
Latitude 7400 Series	50	\$ 57.97	\$ 71.26	\$ 13.29	\$ 7,974
Other	2	\$ 78.00	\$ 78.00	\$ 16.78	\$ 403
Totals (Rounded)	211				\$ 24,000

In fiscal year 2026, the Department will replace 679 total devices, all of which are under active leases. WDFW assumes that the out-of-lease devices previously received funding for the lease costs. This decision package only requests funding for the difference between the average existing least cost and the new lease cost.

The Department will replace 300 Dell Latitude 5400 Series leased devices. The devices being replaced have an average lease cost of \$51.48 per month. The new lease cost will be \$54.85 per month, a 7% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 86 Dell Latitude Rugged Series leased devices. The devices being replaced have an average lease cost of \$83.29 per month. The new lease cost will be \$86.44 per month, a 4% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 220 Dell Latitude 7400 Series leased devices. The devices being replaced currently have an average lease cost of \$63.06 per month. The new lease cost will be \$71.26 per month, a 13% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 73 “Other” devices (e.g., Optiplex 7070, Precision 5820, Dell Latitude 7200 2-in-1). The devices have an average lease cost of \$72.42 per month. The new lease cost will be \$78.00 per month, an 8% cost increase.

FY 2026 Hardware Lease Replacements					
Model	Qty	Average Monthly Cost	New Monthly Cost	Cost Difference	Total Yearly Difference (Rounded)
Latitude 5400 Series	300	\$ 51.48	\$ 54.85	\$ 3.37	\$ 12,132
Latitude Rugged	86	\$ 83.29	\$ 86.44	\$ 3.15	\$ 3,251
Latitude 7400 Series	220	\$ 63.06	\$ 71.26	\$ 8.20	\$ 21,648
Other	73	\$ 72.42	\$ 78.00	\$ 5.58	\$ 4,888
Totals (Rounded)	679				\$ 42,000

In fiscal year 2027, the Department will replace 897 devices, all of which are under active leases. WDFW assumes that the out-of-lease devices previously received funding for the lease costs. This decision package only requests funding for the difference between the average existing least cost and the new lease cost.

The Department will replace a total of 400 Dell Latitude 5400 Series devices. The devices have an average lease cost of \$54.76 per month. The new lease cost will be \$54.85, a .02% cost increase.

The Department will replace 75 Dell Latitude Rugged Series devices. The devices have an average lease cost of \$83.29 per month. The new lease cost will be \$86.44 per month, a 4% cost increase.

The Department will replace 350 Dell Latitude 7400 Series devices. The devices have an average lease cost of \$63.95 per month. The new lease cost will be \$71.26 per month, an 11% cost increase.

The Department will replace a total of 72 “Other” devices (e.g., Precision 7670, Precision 5820 XL Tower). The devices have an average lease cost of \$60.75 per month. The new lease cost will be \$78.00 per month, a 28% cost increase.

FY 2027 Hardware Lease Replacements						
Model	Qty	Average Monthly Cost	New Monthly Cost	Cost Difference	Total Yearly Difference (Rounded)	
Latitude 5400 Series	400	\$ 54.76	\$ 54.85	\$ 0.09	\$ 432	
Latitude Rugged	75	\$ 83.26	\$ 86.44	\$ 3.18	\$ 2,862	
Latitude 7400 Series	350	\$ 63.95	\$ 71.26	\$ 7.31	\$ 30,702	
Other	72	\$ 60.75	\$ 78.00	\$ 17.25	\$ 14,904	
Totals (Rounded)	897				\$ 49,000	

Total costs are \$66,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$115,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Contract Software - \$106,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and ongoing

WDFW’s contract software, Novatus, is a mission critical service used to manage the entire lifecycle of every Department contract and grant. Vendor costs increased in fiscal year 2024 from \$162,000 to \$196,000 per fiscal year, an increase of \$34,000 per fiscal year.

Additionally, the prior contract required the vendor to pay the sales tax. Under the new contract, effective for fiscal year 2024, WDFW will be responsible for paying the sales tax (\$196,000 * 9.8% = \$19,000).

Total cost increase is \$53,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing, a 25% increase, including the sales tax.

GIS Imagery Service - \$50,000 in 2025-27 biennium and ongoing

GIS Imagery service is a WaTech managed service outside the state’s central service model. The service is a critical tool for the Department’s ecosystem management and conservation efforts and provides high-resolution imagery that is essential for monitoring and analyzing environmental changes, managing wildlife habitats, and conducting land use planning. Washington Technology Services increased WDFW’s portion of costs from \$10,000 per fiscal year to \$35,000 per fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 2024.

Total cost increase is \$25,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

Alternative: Maintain the Status Quo

Maintaining the status quo will mean that staff would be assigned outdated equipment, which increases the burden on Information Technology (IT) business units. IT will be frequently tasked with troubleshooting equipment failures and dealing with the inefficiencies caused by outdated technology. Critical software licenses will expire, leaving staff without essential tools to perform their duties effectively. Additionally, the use of obsolete equipment connected to Department servers will significantly heighten the risk of cyber-attacks, compromising the security of the agency’s operations. Ultimately, this approach will lead to a degradation of public services and hinder the Department’s ability to fulfill its mission.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Total 2025-27 biennium costs are \$1,665,000:

Infrastructure – \$1,328,000 – Object E

Hardware Leases – \$181,000 – Object E

Contract Software – \$106,000 – Object C

GIS Imagery Service – \$50,000 – Object E

Total 2027-29 biennium and ongoing costs are \$386,000:

Hardware Leases – \$230,000 – Object E

Contract Software – \$106,000 – Object C

GIS Imagery Service – \$50,000 – Object E

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This request provides important support to the Governor's Results Washington Goal, Efficient Effective and Accountable Government, by increasing the Department's technological functioning and ensuring a dependable network that will provide greater reliability to our customers who seek hunting or fishing information, hydraulic project approval status, and other core service information.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This request is essential in implementing WDFW's Strategy: Move WDFW Towards Operational and Environmental Excellence. Maintaining the Department's technology helps to build an effective and efficient organization by supporting the workforce, improving business, and investing in technology. This package works toward the objective of achieving operational excellence through effective business processes and investments in technology.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Business Management & Obligations – \$1,665,000 for the 25-27 biennium (\$1,375,000 FY2026 and \$290,000 FY2027) and \$193,000 ongoing.

An effective agency requires administrative infrastructure that successfully supports the needs of staff who perform work directly in service to the mission. The department's business management work comprehensively supports the entire agency and meets obligations by providing agency leadership and strategy, communicating with the public and legislature, managing finance and contracts, managing human resources, managing information technology infrastructure, building and maintaining office facilities, maintaining agency records, responding to public safety incidents (obligation to general policing by fully commissioned WDFW officers) and providing appeal processes.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW will utilize funding to maintain essential technical tools that allow the Department to continue its fundamental day-to-day activities. All staff require Microsoft Office products, email exchange, network access, and data storage to perform the necessary functions of their positions. Ensuring all staff have the fundamental tools to create, retrieve, share, and store information is critical to accomplishing the agency's mission.

Equity Impacts**Community Outreach and Engagement:**

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased rates over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for this increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 23: Good Governance by increasing WDFW administrative infrastructure technological functioning and ensuring a dependable network that will provide greater reliability to the public seeking hunting or fishing information, hydraulic project approval status, and other core service information. This decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria – support continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan by ensuring continued administrative infrastructure to support WDFW mission and serve the public related to Puget Sound recovery efforts.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

N/A

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21) identifies WDFW as part of the nation’s Critical Infrastructure given the risk to the nation’s food supply based on the significant quantity of fish produced by the agency. Federal requirements for IT security and resiliency cannot be met without maintaining enough sustainable technology solutions as proposed in this decision package.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. C	\$53	\$53	\$106	\$53	\$53	\$106
Obj. E	\$1,322	\$237	\$1,559	\$140	\$140	\$280

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Agency Recommendation Summary

In support of its mission, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) secures prime habitat that meets conservation values or increases public outdoor recreation opportunities. Through the capital budget process, WDFW receives approval to obtain new lands or land management rights and implement related capital improvements, increasing WDFW's obligation for operations and maintenance (O&M) on WDFW-managed lands. This proposal identifies the most recent land acquisitions, related capital improvements, and requests ongoing funding needed for operations and maintenance. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$773	\$773	\$1,546	\$773	\$773	\$1,546
Total Expenditures	\$773	\$773	\$1,546	\$773	\$773	\$1,546

Decision Package Description

Following the direction of RCW's 77.04.012, 77.12.039, 77.12.320 and 79a.15, WDFW buys land, accepts land donations, and enters into lease or management agreements to ensure habitat and recreational opportunities are preserved. In accordance with its mission, WDFW strategically manages and enhances these lands based on fish and wildlife conservation needs and sustainable recreation opportunities. WDFW manages over one million acres of land in 33 wildlife areas and includes over 450 boat launches. Management activities include resource stewardship, habitat restoration, real estate agreements, public engagement, recreation management, ecosystem protection, and vegetation management.

Population growth in Washington increases the pressure on ecosystem services, habitats, and infrastructure and increases demand for outdoor recreation. Wildlife and water access area maintenance are critical to meet the needs of a growing population. Additionally, capital infrastructure projects are implemented on these lands that require increased ongoing operations and maintenance review.

WDFW began including O&M estimates in funding requests related to land acquisitions beginning in fiscal year 2023. O&M is requested based on estimates identified at project initiation. If an estimate is impractical, a tiered rate schedule is used instead.

Funding for the stewardship of WDFW-managed lands is insufficient to meet the conservation and recreation land management goals and capital asset improvements. This proposal identifies new land acquisitions and improvements and requests ongoing funding for operation and maintenance, aligning with WDFW's commitment to mitigate new funding gaps related to O&M.

WDFW estimates that land-management costs range between \$95 and \$225 per acre per year. The operations and maintenance rates in this request reflect present day costs of stewarding publicly accessible conservation lands. This request is not intended to make up for existing funding gaps, however, it accounts for current costs without increasing the deficit as WDFW conserves and stewards new vital public lands.

WDFW requests \$1.5 million ongoing per biennium to support the maintenance and operations for the 3,672 acres of new WDFW-managed lands and related capital improvements completed between July 1, 2023, and August 15, 2024. This budget is based on tiered rates specific to the area and level of maintenance and stewardship needs.

WDFW strives to produce excellence in meeting its mission and the needs of the recreating public and vital conservation values. By not requesting funding, WDFW-managed lands would be unsafe for recreationists and threatened or endangered species risk being in jeopardy. Funding this package preserves the investment in this significant public resource.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Acquisitions statewide, \$551,000 per fiscal year and ongoing:

- Salaries and Benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$325,000 for 3.6 FTE working on newly acquired Wildlife Program lands.
- Goods and service, Object E, totals \$73,000 for general supplies for maintenance of fencing, weed control, facilities, roads, forests, habitats, and \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions costs per year.
- Travel, Object G, totals \$18,000 for motor pool and other costs for staff to travel to new maintenance sites.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Capital Projects statewide, \$222,000 per fiscal year and ongoing:

- Goods and service, Object E, totals \$168,000 for general supplies for maintenance of habitat areas, dikes and dams, and facilities maintenance for administrative, recreational, and operational facilities including those for aquatic and terrestrial species. This total includes \$81,000 for new power requirements at the Wallace Falls Hatchery.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

During fiscal year 2024, WDFW acquired 15 new properties and completed work on 7 additional capital improvement projects requiring ongoing O&M funding. The Department estimates the resulting annual O&M impact at \$773,000 per fiscal year. Attachment 1 summarizes the direct costs per fiscal year by property or capital project name.

Ongoing O&M needs for capital projects varies by projects type ranging from habitat areas, dikes and dams, and facilities maintenance for administrative, recreational, and operational facilities including those for aquatic and terrestrial species. Estimates were generated from typical annual O&M costs of like infrastructure. Attachment 2 provides short verbal descriptions of each acquisition and capital project.

Annual O&M costs were identified previously for 12 of the 15 newly acquired properties, Attachment 1. Cost estimates for projects with previously identified O&M were based on the discussion in Estimating O&M Costs for Lands Acquired by WDFW (K. Merg, 2018, Attachment 3). Three of the properties used the rates suggested in 2018 analysis. Estimates for nine of properties used varying estimates based on anticipated conditions at the time. The remaining acquisitions, Theler Wetlands, and Sportsmen's, do not have previously identified O&M. When the Lands 20/20 applications for Theler and Sportsmen's were submitted in 2020 and 2022, O&M was not specified. These applications assumed the O&M costs would be incorporated into existing wildlife areas which were anticipated to have sufficient funding to cover the additional O&M needs. Updated O&M needs based on current information are represented in this request. As of 2023 all Lands 20/20 applications clearly identify anticipated O&M costs for each new acquisition, specifically noting that the identified O&M costs will be requested in future 9V Capital Operating Cost Decision Packages. All future acquisitions will not rely on existing wildlife area funding.

The 2018 O&M estimates for natural land management acquisitions were reevaluated in April 2024. See the summary in the memo Preliminary inflation framework for WDFW Lands O&M cost estimates (B Van Deynze, PhD, Attachment 4). This evaluation was applied to the 2018 baseline rate to provide an adjusted 2024 baseline rate of \$95 per acre. Further review after the acquisitions were completed determined that the \$95 per acre baseline is applicable to 7 of the 15 new properties. Conditions at the remaining properties warrant a rate of \$125 per acre.

For capital improvement projects, annual O&M was identified previously for all completed projects, Attachment 1. In some instances, previously identified costs were sufficient, but in other projects, the O&M needs evaluated at the conclusion of the project varies from the initial estimate.

Many capital project and acquisition requests made in previous years expected to rely on existing funding for O&M. The number of new capital projects & acquisitions over the years with unspecified O&M has resulted in significant funding shortfalls. The related deferred maintenance has led to asset failure, resulting in additional capital requests. This request seeks to reverse that pattern, arguing that new funding for timely O&M will reduce future costs overall and ensure funding is secured to maintain the initial public investments in these projects.

Workforce Assumptions:

New staff will be needed for O&M related to land acquisitions.

- 0.7 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3, FY 2026 and ongoing: Will lead planning and design of studies, assessments, and resource management for Simcoe, Sportsmen's, Chester Butte, Central Ferry Canyon, and Mills Flat properties.

- 1.1 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2, FY 2026 and ongoing: Monitors, restores, and manages habitat at Chapman Lake, Simcoe, Chester Butte, Central Ferry Canyon, Mills Flat, Theler Wetlands, and North Willapa properties. Leads and supervises studies, assessments, and monitoring in support of habitat protection regulations and perpetual funding requirements.
- 0.4 FTE Natural Resource Specialist 2, 2026 and ongoing: Staff assistant to land managers at Chapman Lake, Mills Flat, and North Willapa properties. Works with internal and external stakeholders to identify opportunities and resolve disputes regarding management activities.
- 0.6 FTE Natural Resources Technician 3, 2026 and ongoing: Estimates time and materials, performs fencing maintenance and repair work, coordinates and supervises seasonal personal at Chapman Lake, Chester Butte, Central Ferry Canyon and Mills Flat properties.
- 0.7 FTE Natural Resources Technician 2, 2026 and ongoing: Ensures year-round management of on-the-ground conditions for habitat, recreation, and infrastructure at Central Ferry Canyon and North Willapa properties.
- 0.1 FTE Natural Resource Worker 2, 2026 and ongoing: Leads small crews in performing vegetation management and support ensure year-round management of on-the-ground conditions for habitat at Mills Flat properties.

Historical Funding:

This is new operation and maintenance work for new property acquisitions and recently completed capital improvement projects. There is no historical funding for O&M costs for these properties and projects.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Results Washington

- Goal 2: Prosperous Economy
- Goal 3: Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's mission is to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities. Land acquisition is one of many ways the Department has worked to meet this mandate. WDFW manages more than one million acres of public-owned land, including over 500 water access areas. These lands provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife and offer fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other conservation-based recreational opportunities for the public. In addition, acquired land is critical habitat for threatened or endangered species or for sustaining game populations, such as the winter range. WDFW-managed lands offer access to the public for fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and a multitude of other recreational opportunities. WDFW management protects ecosystems services, including carbon sequestration, clean water, clean air, scenic beauty, and other benefits of conservation. The outdoor recreation industry and ecosystems services provide substantial monetary and nonmonetary benefits to Washingtonians. A recent Earth Economics study reported that WDFW-managed lands generate \$2.5 billion per year in direct and indirect economic impact.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This proposal aligns with the Department's Strategic Plan strategy to proactively address conservation challenges. The Department ensures that land-use planning and decisions contribute to the conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife, and work with partners towards implementing and increasing net ecological gain.

WDFW Activity Inventory

1. Acquire and Manage Lands

WDFW manages over one million acres of land throughout Washington. These lands provide habitat for fish and wildlife and recreational opportunities for the public, such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. WDFW's land base is strategically developed based on the conservation needs of fish and wildlife. It provides sustainable fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other recreational opportunities when compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

To manage public lands effectively and responsibly, the Department maintains and improves ecological health. The WDFW strategically

acquires new lands, builds and maintains safe, sanitary, and ecologically friendly water access areas, and ensures public safety through enforcement presence. These activities are accomplished through a variety of actions, including weed control, timber thinning (to help control wildfire and improve habitat quality), maintaining infrastructure (fences, signs, parking lots, trails, culverts, water control structures, wells, and irrigation systems), and removing garbage and litter. In addition, maintaining the staff and services addressed in this request will allow continuation of:

- Current level of sanitation and litter removal
- Wildlife area plans developed through cross-programmatic, local community, and stakeholder collaboration (two to four plans per year on average)
- Clear stewardship and recreation priorities for wildlife area management to direct on-the-ground priorities
- Capacity to maintain and repair boundary fences and fences associated with other management needs.
- Hundreds of weed treatments per year protecting ecological integrity on thousands of acres and preventing weeds from spreading to adjacent landowners.

2. Produce Hatchery Fish

WDFW hatcheries produce healthy fish to benefit the citizens of Washington State while providing conservation to natural origin salmonids. Hatchery production is critical for fishing opportunities throughout the state – trout, steelhead, and salmon rely on the presence of hatchery fish to protect and preserve natural runs. The Department operates over 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights and comanager management plans. The additional funding requested to cover increased costs due to fish feed price increases is necessary to ensure the department can continue producing fish at the required levels.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following performance indicators:

- Conserve nearly 4,000 acres of highly valuable Fish and Wildlife Habitat and relate recreation lands in perpetuity.
- Maintain and operate 7 capital investments on all WDFW lands.
- Support hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and public access opportunities while supporting species habitat and conservation efforts.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

This package supports the Department's responsibility to stewards owned or managed lands for public benefit statewide. Access to public lands provides low-cost outdoor recreational opportunities to Washington communities. According to the Washington State Department of Health, increasing access to natural areas like parks or wildlife areas generally decreases a community's risk of chronic diseases. By securing funding to manage these lands, the Department ensures Washingtonians in these areas have access to quality outdoor experiences and a connection to nature.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased rates over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for this increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

WDFW-managed lands are neighbored landowners by both rural and urban communities. Managed lands are spread throughout the state, creating a diverse range of stakeholders.

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations, such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a "covered" or "opt-in" agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 *Harvest, Hatchery, and Adaptive Management of Salmon Recovery* and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID #206) *Ensure sustainable harvest of hatchery and natural salmon and support treaty-reserved fishing rights* by ensuring WDFW's ability to support salmon recovery through hatchery production of salmon and salmonids to meet tribal, commercial, and recreational fishery commitments. Through these efforts, this decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria – support continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan, directly implements the Puget Sound relevant orca taskforce recommendation 6 *Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures*, and indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant salmon strategy recommendation 5 *Align harvest, hatcheries and hydropower with salmon recovery*.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

This proposal is important for collaborations with governmental, tribal, and community partners to achieve WDFW conservation goals. This funding impacts the following intergovernmental benefits that WDFW provides:

- Collaboration on wildlife area planning.
- Public safety.
- Assistance in land exchanges and selling, buying, donating, or accepting lands from governmental partners.
- Developing and ensuring accurate payments for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and county assessments.
- Benefiting weed control districts and other local governments by preventing weed infestations that may also spread to adjacent lands.
- Information sharing with our federal, state, and local government partners.
- Enhancing habitats that provide clean air, water, and local economic activity.
- Supporting the statewide 20-year strategy for forest health.
- Participation in the Coordinated Resource Management efforts for working lands and vegetation management.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW has identified the following stakeholders that will benefit from the habitat enhancement, public safety, and engagement opportunities:

- Land trusts.
- Agriculture and timber industries.
- Conservation organizations such as Conservation Northwest, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Pheasants Forever, and the Audubon Society.
- Recreation organizations like the Washington Trails Association, Back Country Horsemen of Washington, and the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

- [Attachment 1 O&M Estimate by Property or Capital Improvement.xlsx](#)
- [Attachment 2 Acquisition and Capital Improvement Descriptions.xlsx](#)
- [Attachment 3 Estimating O&M Costs for Lands Acquired by WDFW.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 4 Preliminary Inflation Framework for WDFW Lands O&M Cost Estimates.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$230	\$230	\$460	\$230	\$230	\$460
Obj. B	\$95	\$95	\$190	\$95	\$95	\$190
Obj. E	\$241	\$241	\$482	\$241	\$241	\$482
Obj. G	\$18	\$18	\$36	\$18	\$18	\$36
Obj. T	\$189	\$189	\$378	\$189	\$189	\$378

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - 9S - Equipment Replacement Costs

Agency Recommendation Summary

As a result of a long-standing structural deficit over the past decade, WDFW prioritized staffing and on-the-ground project costs before equipment replacement. Consequently, WDFW's equipment inventory has become a collection of aged and technologically outdated items that are subject to frequent breakdowns, poor safety conditions, and costly repairs. This equipment is mission-critical in that it facilitates fish and wildlife transport, enables staff access to fish and wildlife habitats, or is utilized to maintain habitat for fish and wildlife conservation or citizen recreation. This is ongoing funding to replace items that have exceeded their useful life.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,498	\$0	\$2,498	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$2,498	\$0	\$2,498	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

The depreciation of the department's equipment inventory has evolved through years of budget constraints. WDFW requests \$2.498 million in the next biennium to replace capitalized equipment. This equipment will range from vessels and trailers to heavy trucks and agricultural equipment.

WDFW's biennial base budget allows only for equipment replacement on an emergent-need basis, typically identified when equipment has become completely inoperable or a safety hazard. Although delaying the replacement of equipment ultimately causes potential safety risks, loss of productivity due to equipment failure, and down time for costly repairs, WDFW is often unable to purchase higher-cost items without assistance. The objective of this request is to obtain funding for the systematic replacement of high-cost inventory items that have exceeded their useful life. Utilizing the requested funding, the department estimates it would take ten years to replace this equipment.

Funding this proposal would result in a safer, more efficient workforce equipped to carry out the department's mission to manage for sustainable fish and wildlife populations and to provide commercial and recreational access to the public. Additionally, maintenance of wildlife areas and water access sites promotes the generation of revenue from Discover Pass and hunting and fishing license purchases by keeping WDFW-managed public lands appealing and accessible to visitors engaging in outdoor recreation.

The following list of identified equipment to replace in the next biennium can be found in the attachment, "9S Reference Document."

List of identified equipment by DFW that agency would like to replace in the next biennium:

Region 1	Costs	Description
Dump truck	150,000	Dump Truck for Asotin Creek Wildlife Area, suspension system and dumping mechanism are faulty and unsafe. Tailgate is not latching properly. A properly working used dump truck would work as a replacement.
Semitruck	200,000	The semi used for hauling large farming equipment on the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area needs to be replaced. It doesn't have airbrakes and has a single axle and isn't the safest method for hauling equipment.
Region 2	Costs	Description
Ford F350 w/service body 185K miles	180,000	This is a lot of mileage on our main maintenance vehicle and the powertrain only last so long and will be expensive once we start replacing that stuff. Other maintenance issues: small things (hoses, exhaust system, etc.) We have spec. out a F-550* service truck to replace this on which will better fit our needs and add safety to our day-to-day job. Service body and crane with outriggers. *Realize a replacement would be for a 'like' vehicle.
1992 4 wd JD 2755 with a loader	100,000	The hydraulics are getting weak, and the tractor is undersized for some of our uses. A replacement tractor that would meet our needs would be a 4 wd JD 6105E with a loader.
Region 3	Costs	Description
Skid Steer-ASV	150,000	Does not run and cannot get replacement parts. Would need to replace attachments as well which are not on inventory SSSR Wildlife Area, FW009708, Model: POSITRAC 2810, Serial: AMF00629, 5/8/2002
1985 Ford F700, 2.5-ton truck 4x4	150,000	Critical winter-feeding vehicle, difficult to repair and keep running. Oak Creek WLA G012254, VIN: 1FDNF77H3GVA41921, 6/20/1986
Region 4	Costs	Description
Marshmaster	250,000	N/A
Tractor	80,000	N/A
Region 5	Costs	Description
1969 model 2020 John Deere tractor	100,000	Currently this tractor has several issues with it not running correctly and it no longer meets the current needs of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. I would like to replace this tractor with a somewhat larger tractor that would meet current needs and work capacities into the future.? This would include the ability to plant cover crops, spray large acreages for invasive weeds, and do road work.?
2017 Ford350 with 218,056 miles	90,000	The vehicle is no longer running (transmission is shot). Motor pool will not fix. The request to replace through motor pool was submitted 3 years ago and has still not been replaced. The Agency has purchased some of these specialized vehicles directly (not through motor pool) due to the difficulty of motor pool being able to acquire them.
Region 6	Costs	Description
Heavy Truck	240,000	for the Olympic/Willapa Hills WLA
1 ton utility bed truck	75,000	N/A
Game Division	Costs	Description
Outboard Motors	50,000	Replacement for both safety and project continuity and resiliency. We are dependent upon this boat for conducting sea duck composition surveys and do not have alternatives.
Truck	17,000	This is used daily to get around the farm and to move equipment.
Lands Division	Costs	Description
Fire and Fuels Truck	200,000	Trucks used for forest health prescribed burns
Fire and Fuels Truck	200,000	Trucks used for forest health prescribed burns
Marshmaster	175,000	N/A
Science Division	Costs	Description
Travel Trailer	40,000	16ft standard travel trailer - 2024 Forest River R-Pod Hood River Edition
Snowmobile Trailer	38,000	N/A
Wolf & Grizzly Bear	Costs	Description
Snowmobile	13,000	Wolf Team - Trent

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request in funding is to replace old, outdated, and failing equipment. This request asks for funding in the next biennium for replacement of listed equipment.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

An increase in base funding of \$2,498,000 next biennium would enable the Department to replace its most needed aged, depreciated equipment.

Workforce Assumptions:

No staff are requested in this decision package.

Historical Funding:

Funding for replacement equipment described in this package was not provided to the Department in the current biennium. Also, it has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carry-forward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for these items in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This request provides important support to the Governor's Results Washington Goal: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment, with the WDFW's purchase and use of newer equipment that would reduce emissions from those expelled while using older and poorly functioning equipment that was developed prior to current emissions standards.

This request also provides important support to the Governor's Results Washington Goal: Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government, in that WDFW would continue to be a resource steward by responsibly managing fish, wildlife, and habitat resources, as well as exercising fiscal responsibility by reducing repair costs and efficiently utilizing staff time through the employment of new, operable equipment acquired through a regular replacement cycle.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

The Department anticipates meeting informal measures through utilization of a safer, more efficient workforce equipped to carry out the Department's strategies to:

- Proactively address conservation challenges.
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship.
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions.
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve and Restore Terrestrial Habitats and Species \$970,000 General Fund State

Acquire and Manage Lands, \$1,461,000 General Fund State.

Manage Hunting Opportunities \$67,000 General Fund State.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW will replace the outdated equipment and avoid breakdowns, high repair costs, and inefficient use of staff time waiting for replacement equipment to complete projects.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW completes community engagement and public outreach through the Public Engagement and Communication divisions and committed is to improving and evolving community engagement with communities historically excluded and marginalized. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent a degradation of services to the communities we serve. This request will fund the purchase of one replacement automatic trailer per biennium thereby allowing WDFW to maintain current hatchery production levels.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Funding for maintenance level decision packages is frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to a need to replace aging automatic trailers to maintain current hatchery productions levels. Without additional funding for these replacement costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities, however cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equitable lens as WDFW will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents. Washington's hatcheries support recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state and contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses. This package will:

- Support local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses),
- Provide recreational opportunities to the people of Washington State and its visitors.
- Protect Washington's fishing and cultural heritages, practiced by the many diverse populations of Washington State.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

Replacement of equipment once the useful life has been met, satisfies OSHA, L&I, and union requirements for safe, reliable equipment that promotes safety and job performance proficiency and effectiveness.

Intergovernmental:

Some of this equipment may be used for wildfire fighting efforts across state and federal lands.

Stakeholder Impacts:

In accordance with the public’s expectations and WDFW’s legislative mandate, the department uses large vehicles, vessels, and heavy equipment in the management of fish and wildlife species and in the maintenance of wildlife areas and water access sites for public recreation.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund equipment and there is no new facility space needs identified.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

[9S Reference Document.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. J	\$2,498	\$0	\$2,498	\$0	\$0	\$0

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Agency Recommendation Summary

In 2023, WDFW received IT pool funds to replace its aged online HPA permitting system: Aquatic Protection Permitting system (APPS). APPS is used by permit applicants, agency staff, and other interested parties pursuant to RCW 77.55.351. The new permitting system will go live in November 2024. This request is for ongoing maintenance and operating costs in alignment with the approved tech budget pursuant to Section 701 of ESSB-5950.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 447 - 6	\$2,278	\$2,466	\$4,744	\$2,466	\$2,466	\$4,932
Total Expenditures	\$2,278	\$2,466	\$4,744	\$2,466	\$2,466	\$4,932

Decision Package Description

WDFW is responsible for managing and protecting Washington State’s fish and wildlife resources. The Habitat Program protects fish species and their habitats through the implementation of their hydraulic authority provided in Chapters 77.55 RCW and 220-660 WAC. Specifically, WDFW issues Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs) for construction or work in, or near, state waters for the protection of fish. Under RCW 77.55.351 WDFW is required to make HPA applications accessible to local governments, affected tribes, and other interested parties.

The new system will go live in November 2024. Ongoing funding is needed to cover maintenance costs (i.e. personnel, professional service contracts, and software license fees) to maintain operation of the online platform as well as process applications. Without these needed funds the successfully implemented system could not sustain its maintenance and operation which will jeopardize the issuance of permits within the statutory 45-day timeline and significantly delay application submittal for the public.

When the APPS replacement is live, the Department will need \$2,278,000 in FY 2026 and \$2,466,000 in FY 2027 and ongoing to pay for staff, contracted professional services and software licensing fees to maintain and operate the enhanced online permitting system.

We are on track to achieve implementation of the enhanced permitting system in November 2024. To make use of our state's investment and project success and sunset the current aging system, we will need funding for the maintenance and operation after going live. The maintenance and operation of this system will support permit applicants (~3000 permits issued annually), agency staff (~100 staff directly involved, all other staff indirectly involved), and other interested parties (general public) in addition to the successful protection of Washington State fish species and habitat.

WDFW recognizes that the successful implementation, maintenance, and operation of an enhanced online HPA permitting system is essential to fulfilling our obligations under RCW 77.55.351. Without the additional requested funding necessary to maintain and operate the enhanced system WDFW may not be successful in actualizing the new system and implementation investment. The implementation investment received in 2023 and supplemented by in-kind funds was in response to the following:

If WDFW continued to rely on the current aging system without replacement, WDFW is at risk of (and is already experiencing) the following:

- increased maintenance cost (by third-party vendor)
- increased workload to oversee management of the system, resulting in the agency needing to allocate (request) more funds to increase staff capacity
- permits issued out of compliance with the hydraulic code (Chapters 77.55 RCW and WAC 220-660) (e.g., outside of statutory timeline required to process applications)
- increased time for a customer to submit their permit application, making the permit process feel more burdensome and not streamlined
- limited transparency and sharing of HPA data with the public
- security risks

The limitations of the current online permitting system require WDFW to build and maintain additional systems that are managed outside of APPS to streamline business needs and modernize customer experience (e.g., external Excel databases, [Web APP of HPAs Issued](#)). In

addition, it doesn't accommodate growing business needs or allow flexibility to adapt the system as regulations are changed (e.g., HPA Compliance, [Habitat Recovery Pilot Program](#)). This results in an inefficient business process and a limitation on how effective WDFW can be at protecting fish species and their habitats through regulation because staff spend more time on administrative and technical review.

Unfortunately, there are limited improvements the current system vendor could make to the legacy software to prevent ongoing and foreseeable maintenance and security issues. The vendor has been forthcoming with WDFW that this is a natural cycle of software as software begins to age. WDFW has invested in several enhancement projects to attempt to streamline and improve the current system (the last project deployed June 2021). While the enhancements attempt to improve user experience, the system is limited in addressing all desired updates (e.g., mobile-friendly, geospatial), and each enhancement deployment seems to contribute to the overall decreasing stability of the system.

WDFW and the public are currently limited to accessing HPA data based on the search criteria that exist in the system. WDFW is reliant on paying the current system vendor to write queries to pull and analyze HPA data outside of these limited search criteria and this option is not available to the public.

If the maintenance and operations costs for the enhanced system are not funded, there will be ongoing challenges to the sustainability, functionality, and adaptability of not only the system but also of the Habitat Program's responsibilities to implement the hydraulic code. WDFW recognizes the hydraulic code has unique statutory requirements and how important and informative HPA data is to a variety of public groups. This request is for ongoing maintenance and operating costs in alignment with the approved tech budget pursuant to Section 701 of ESSB-5950.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Not applicable.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Decision package assumptions and calculations:

- \$246,000 in fiscal year 2026, increasing to \$302,000 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 2.0 FTE, Objects A and B
- \$132,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for contracting with the systems implementer, Object C.
- \$1,844,110 in fiscal year 2026 and \$2,015,988,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for annual software licenses, Object E.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs.

Total costs are \$2,278,000 in fiscal year 2026, increasing to \$2,466,000 in FY 2027 and ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

1.0 FTE Management Analyst 3 in FY 2026 and ongoing.

Salaries and benefits total \$106,000 in FY 2026, increasing to \$130,000 in FY 2027 and ongoing.

- Contracting and budget tracking
- Management business operational needs
- Coordinate with internal and external stakeholders

1.0 FTE IT App Development – Journey in FY 2026 and ongoing.

Salaries and benefits total \$141,000 in FY 2026, increasing to \$172,000 in FY 2027 and ongoing.

- Remediate system
- Coordinate with system implementer
- Update system with new requirements

Historical Funding:

2025-27 Biennium funding for the current program in 447-6Z0 is \$2,295,761.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Goal 5: Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government

- DFW will continue to engage and consider all system users when developing the new software system.

Goal 3: Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment

- The permitting system supports the State's ability to protect key priorities of WA state habitat.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package supports the goal of "Proactively Address Conservation Challenges" in WDFW's 25-Year Strategic Plan.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species:

- A.1 (3.1)- Protect Fish and their habitat from the effects of construction projects
- A.10 (3.10)- Enforce protection of aquatic habitats

Business Management & Obligations:

- X.2- Communicate agency matters with the public and legislature
- X.5- Manage Information Technology

Performance Outcomes:

The agency will be able to deliver on its statutory obligations pursuant to Chapter 77.55 RCW with the enhanced ability to receive consistently, appropriately, and transparently, review, and issue HPA applications for the protection of fish life.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Public Engagement and Communication divisions and committed is to improving and evolving community engagement with communities historically excluded and marginalized. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent a degradation of services to the communities we serve. Throughout all stages of this project, feasibility, procurement, and implementation, we have put outreach and communication to relevant parties at the forefront of activities, including workshops, email communications, guest presentations, and user discovery sessions. Relevant participants have included tribes, local government, other state government, federal agencies, non-government organizations, and individual applicants.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Target Communities and Populations:

The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. The maintenance and operation of the new enhanced system will improve user functionality, data accessibility, and details surrounding HPAs, HPA external review and comments, and hydraulic code compliance. This will benefit HPA applicants, HPA permittees, all HPA reviewers, and Washington at large through the effective protection of natural resources benefits for everyone.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Throughout all stages of this project, feasibility, procurement, and implementation, we have put outreach and communication to relevant parties at the forefront of activities, including workshops, email communications, guest presentations, and user discovery sessions. Relevant participants have included tribes, local government, other state government, federal agencies, non-government organizations, and individual applicants.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

Puget Sound Recovery:

Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation, this decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 3 Healthy Shorelines and is directly aligned with Action (ID #14), increase and improve shoreline regulation implementation, compliance, enforcement, and, communication by implementing key opportunities 1) evaluate and improve implementation of existing shoreline regulations and policies (which could include single-family residences as well as emergency construction permits) and 2) conduct effective and active compliance monitoring and enforcement to support and reinforce permitting decisions by state and local regulatory agencies, by ensuring that the public facing HPA permitting online system required for shoreline modification is functional, efficient, and aids in future compliance of shoreline regulations that support functioning shoreline habitat, species, and food webs.

This decision package is also aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 23: Good Governance by increasing transparency of decision-making processes related to shoreline regulations specific to HPA permitting by ensuring a clear and transparent online system for the public, tribes, and other communities. This decision package is indirectly aligned with the Action (ID#163), increase trust by including and communicating directly and effectively with new and diverse audiences by ensuring that a public facing online permitting system that is the pathway for decision making at the state agency level is clear, transparent, and functional to increase trust and communication with the diverse partners.

This decision package is necessary to support the ongoing Hydraulic Approval Program which is necessary to effectively implement Action Agenda Strategies: 3-Healthy Shorelines, 4-Riparian Areas, 5-Floodplains and Estuaries, 6-Fish Passage Barriers, 7-Sumerged Aquatic Vegetation, 22-Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship.

This decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria: Support Continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan by ensuring the integrity of the HPA online permitting system, where data is ultimately collected about HPA permits in Puget Sound, is functional and can be used for future regulatory and compliance reviews across the region. This decision package directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca Task Force recommendation 3: Apply and enforce laws that protect habitat, by enhancing state agencies' capacity for implementation and enforcement of the state Hydraulic Code and fish passage regulations by ensuring a functional HPA online permitting system for staff and partners. This decision package indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant Salmon Strategy recommendation 1: Protect and restore vital salmon habitat by ensuring a functional online permitting system for HPAs that are often required in shoreline construction projects that may support restoration projects for vital salmon habitat.

State Workforce Impacts:

Not applicable.

Intergovernmental:

Funding the software license fees for the enhanced online permitting system will improve local government, other state agency, and tribal experience (as a customer and third-party reviewer). Not utilizing the new system could result in decreased satisfaction in HPA application review (delayed time), continued frustrations with existing search functionality, and potential failure to produce records in response to the Public Records Act should the system be compromised through a cyber security incident or catastrophic technical issue.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Funding the maintenance costs for the enhanced permitting system will improve stakeholder experience (as a customer and third-party reviewer). Not utilizing the new system could result in decreased satisfaction in HPA application process (delayed time), and continued frustrations with existing search functionality.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

RCW 77.55.351 - The department shall develop a system to provide local governments, affected tribes, and other interested parties with access to hydraulic project approval applications.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy, the new HPA Permitting System positively impacts the Governor's Salmon Recovery Strategy as well as protects the Salmon habitat in Washington. Launching of the new hydraulic permitting system allows WDFW to efficiently issue and properly provision permits that impact the health of Salmon in Washington state.

Specifically, the system impacts the following elements of the Governor's Salmon Recovery Strategy:

Area of Impact	Description	Financial Impact
Protect and restore vital salmon habitat	WDFW permits ensure that Salmon are protected and at times restored by evaluating the impact of a proposed Hydraulic project or restoration project on the Salmon population.	Directly Linked to the System Modernization Costs 20% of the System Costs
Correct fish passage barriers and restore salmon access to historical habitat	WDFW does ensure that proposed fish passage barriers meet fish passage criteria through the WDFW HPA permitting process. HPA permits are also issued for restoration projects for Salmon passage barriers.	Directly Linked to the System Modernization Costs 20% of the System Costs
Build climate resiliency	The system will allow WDFW to ensure proposed projects meet evolving climate resiliency requirements.	Directly Linked to the System Modernization Costs 20% of the System Costs
Enhance commitments and coordination across agencies and programs	The WDFW system will allow for online access to proposed, approved, and denied HPA permits by Tribal governments, local governments, and other Federal and State agencies. This system will enhance and enable cross collaboration and enhanced coordination.	Directly Linked to the System Modernization Costs 20% of the System Costs
Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability	The system will expand that data that is captured for Hydraulic permits and expand data that is able to be mined to strengthen monitoring and accountability.	Directly Linked to the System Modernization Costs 20% of the System Costs

Reference Documents

- [HP - IT Addendum Budget 2025-27 - HPA Permit Sys Mod Proj.pdf](#)
- [HP - IT Addendum Budget 2025-27 - HPA Permit Sys.xlsx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$184	\$223	\$407	\$223	\$223	\$446
Obj. B	\$62	\$79	\$141	\$79	\$79	\$158
Obj. C	\$132	\$132	\$264	\$132	\$132	\$264
Obj. E	\$1,900	\$2,032	\$3,932	\$2,032	\$2,032	\$4,064

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - HF - Hatchery Fish Food Cost Increases

Agency Recommendation Summary

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) hatcheries produce fish that support Washington’s tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries and contribute to fish recovery efforts listed under the Endangered Species Act. WDFW requests increased funding to meet fish food costs that continue to rise due to the global market conditions associated with fish food production. Without funding to offset increased fish food costs, salmon and trout plants into local waters will likely be reduced and/or potential hatchery closure(s) may be needed. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$199	\$199	\$398	\$199	\$199	\$398
Fund 04M - 1	\$41	\$41	\$82	\$41	\$41	\$82
Fund 104 - 1	\$17	\$17	\$34	\$17	\$17	\$34
Total Expenditures	\$257	\$257	\$514	\$257	\$257	\$514

Decision Package Description

Fish food purchased by WDFW supports salmon and trout production for tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries in the state of Washington, as well as recovery and conservation programs for fish populations listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Until fiscal year 2022, the price of fish food had stayed relatively level. Since the Fish Program’s Hatchery Division established its biennial budgets for fish food at the beginning of the 2023-2025 biennium, the top two fish food vendors used have increased their prices.

	7/1/23-12/31/23	1/1/24-6/30/24
Vendor	Price increase %	Price increase %
Bio Oregon	2.5%	0%
EWOS	5%	-1%

Additional details on fish food prices are available in the Pricing Sheet Matrix document.

These price increases have resulted in overspending of fish food budgets in state accounts by \$247,000 in fiscal year 2024. Given where fish food prices started in fiscal year 2025 and the amount of funds budgeted in 2025, the Hatchery Division is anticipating a \$257,000 shortfall in fiscal year 2025. This shortfall will continue into fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

Fund	EAI	Annual Fish Food Budget	Annual Estimated Expenditures	Annual Shortfall/Surplus
001	01*	\$1,784,193	\$1,983,002	(\$198,809)
02R	090	\$257,701	\$257,701	\$0
24N	030	\$354,947	\$354,947	\$0
04M	1M0	\$253,468	\$294,168	(\$40,700)
104	TPF	\$39,755	\$56,727	(\$16,972)
Total		\$2,690,064	\$2,946,545	(\$256,481)

See Assumptions and Calculations section below for details on how the budget and expenditure estimates are established.

The global market conditions (including fish meal and fish oil shortages) that drove the recent price increases continue to persist, inflating this necessary cost associated with fish production. The Fish Hatchery Division expects fish food prices to continue to rise.

The Department is requesting additional authority in the various state fund sources used to purchase fish food. This increased authority will ensure hatcheries have the proper level of funding to purchase the amount of fish food needed to produce the number of fish required to meet tribal, commercial, and recreational fishery commitments.

The Department’s main priority is maintaining current fish production levels and fish health while remaining within hatchery operational budgets.

Various strategies are used to offset minor fish food cost increases when possible. These include reprioritizing activities and budget resources within the Fish Program when opportunities allow as well as buying fish food ahead of new contract pricing when funding allows. However, the latter is not always viable due to the fish food having a relatively short shelf life.

There are alternative vendors that produce fish food at lower prices. However, every vendor uses slightly different ingredients, therefore not all fish food is created equally. There is a significant risk associated with using a new type of fish food, the highest risk being the loss of fish, most commonly due to the fish rejecting the feed given to them. If the lower-priced fish food were as effective at raising fish, hatcheries would utilize it. Unfortunately, this is not the case which is why changing vendors is not a viable alternative.

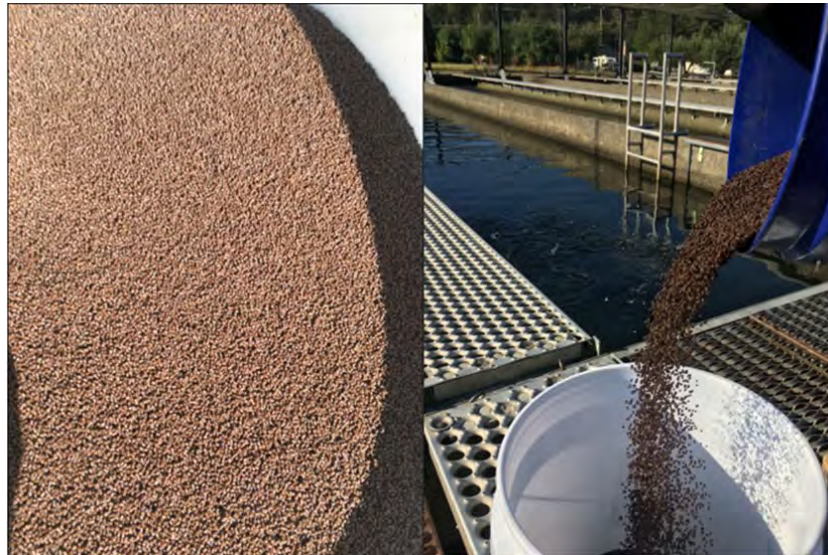


Figure 1. Fish Food in bulk (WDFW)

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This is not an expansion or alteration of a current program. This request is needed to keep hatchery production funded at its existing production levels.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Goods and services, Object E, total \$257,000 for fiscal year 2026 and fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for fish food costs. To estimate the impacts of the fish food price increases the Department compared the differences between the amount that was budgeted for fish food in fiscal year 2025 and the actual fish food expenditures in fiscal year 2024. The Department estimates that fiscal year 2026 and 2027 expenditures are going to be at least the amount of its fiscal year 2024 expenditures, because salmon and trout production goals remain the same in 2026 and 2027 as they were in 2024. This funding request is the difference between the expected fiscal year 2026 and 2027 expenditure amount and the funding amount available for fish food in fiscal year 2025, for state funded hatcheries.

Given this, how the fish food budget estimates are established for the biennium is a critical piece of information. Fish food costs are estimated by each stock (there are multiple stocks within each species of salmon and trout) produced at each individual hatchery. Each hatchery produces multiple stocks. These cost estimates are done separately by all 80 plus hatcheries. However, all hatcheries use the same methodology to estimate total fish food costs.

In this analysis it's important to understand the fundamentals of raising fish. When fish first hatch from the egg, they are very small, therefore they require a smaller feed size. As the fish grow, they are transitioned to larger feed sizes. Feed prices vary by feed sizes. Fish food manufacturers provide a scale informing which feed size is optimal for a fish size, which is measured by fish per pound. Feed costs are then estimated at each size interval until the fish reach their release size.

The following is an example of the methodology used by each hatchery to estimate fish feed costs per stock. Below the table you find definitions

of each column.

POP	Start fish/lbs	Total start lbs	End fish lbs	Total end lbs	Total lbs gain	Feed conversion	Lbs feed need	PPP	Cost	Type
600,000	1000	600	525	1143	543	0.6	326	2.35	\$765.43	BioVita 0
600,000	525	1143	275	2182	1039	0.6	623	2.35	\$1,464.94	BioVita 1
600,000	275	2182	125	4800	2618	0.6	1571	2.35	\$3,691.94	BioVita 2
600,000	125	4800	90	6667	1867	0.6	1120	2.08	\$2,329.60	BioVita 1.2
600,000	90	6667	70	8571	1905	0.7	1333	1.96	\$2,613.33	BioVita 1.5
600,000									\$10,864.93	

The above calculation is done for each individual stock produced at each hatchery. The total state budget for fish food is the summation of these estimates.

<u>Column Title</u>	<u>Description</u>
POP	Population size, which is the starting number of hatched fish, based on production goals established in the brood stock document
Start fish/lbs	The starting number of fish per pound
Total start lbs	The total pounds of fish to start
End fish/lbs	The number of fish per pound which is the goal to reach before transitioning the fish to the next size of feed. These amounts are typically recommended by the fish feed manufacturer
Total end lbs	The total pounds of fish once the ending fish per pound goal is reached
Total lbs gain	The difference between the total starting pounds and the total ending pounds. This is the total pounds needed to gain to get the fish from the starting pounds to the ending pounds before transitioning
Feed conversion	The feed conversion rate is the total pounds of feed needed to gain one total pound of fish. For example, in smaller fish only .6 lbs of feed is needed (in some cases) to produce 1 pound of fish
Lbs feed need	The pounds of fish feed needed which is equal to the total pounds gained times the conversion rate
PPP	The price per pound of the size of feed needed
Cost	The price per pound times the pounds of feed needed
Type	Feed type and size

For state-funded hatcheries, these calculations are completed at the beginning of the biennium when state budgets are established. Current feed prices at the time are used, which is why fish food price increases that occur during the biennium are so impactful to our state funded hatchery budgets.

Note that federal and local contract-funded hatchery production is not impacted by feed price increases in the same way because the department is able to factor any price changes into the future contract budgets since contracts start and end throughout a biennium.



-

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

FY2026

- Total Funds = \$2,690,064
- Near General Fund = \$1,784,749
- Other Funds = \$905,871

FY2027

- Total Funds = \$2,690,064
- Near General Fund = \$1,784,749
- Other Funds = \$905,871

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the following Results Washington goal of a Prosperous Economy. Producing hatchery salmon and trout helps protect marine ecosystems and support the survival of Southern Resident orcas and ESA listed Chinook. In addition, hatchery salmon and trout contribute to commercial and recreational fishing opportunities across the state, supporting jobs and communities that rely on the economic benefits of fishing.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the Department Strategic Plan strategy of "Proactively address conservation challenges," expanding current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species. In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the performance outcome of a 25 percent increase in wild salmon.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Produce Hatchery Fish - \$199,000 State General Fund, \$17,000 Limited Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Account, and \$41,000 Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Account starting in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

WDFW hatcheries produce healthy fish to benefit the citizens of Washington State while providing conservation to natural origin salmonids. Hatchery production is critical for fishing opportunities throughout the state – trout, steelhead, and salmon rely on the presence of hatchery fish to protect and preserve natural runs. The Department operates over 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights and comanager management plans. The additional funding requested to cover increased costs due to fish feed price increases is necessary to ensure the department can continue producing fish at the required levels.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Indicators:

- Threatened and endangered species population increases.
- Value of commercial fishing in Washington State.
- Total license sales achieved.

The primary purpose of this proposal is to address cost increases in fish food, without this funding the Department may not be able to achieve these outcomes.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communication and Public Engagement divisions. The Department is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that the Department can maintain its existing hatchery production levels to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve. This proposal is a result of identifying inflationary cost increases to hatchery fish food that will have a negative impact on the Department's business operations and restrict mission critical work or advances/improvements throughout the Department if additional funding is not received.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Without funding to offset increased fish food costs, salmon and trout plants into local waters will likely be reduced and/or a potential hatchery closure(s) may be needed. It is yet to be determined which hatcheries would be impacted, but a decrease in production at a specific hatchery would impact the local tribal, commercial, and recreational fishing communities by reducing fishing opportunities.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows the Department to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Washington's hatcheries provide economic opportunities for rural businesses and communities statewide that rely on commercial and recreational fishing revenue. They are also essential to preserving the historical and cultural heritage of fishing for tribal communities within the state.

This package supports the production of hatchery fish, which allows the department to continue:

- Supporting local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses),
- Providing recreational opportunities for the people of Washington and its visitors, and
- Protecting Washington's fishing and cultural heritages, practiced by diverse populations of Washington.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 Salmon Recovery and is indirectly aligned with Action ID #206, ensure sustainable harvest of hatchery and natural salmon and support treaty-reserved fishing rights, by ensuring WDFW's ability to support salmon recovery through hatchery production of salmon and salmonids to meet tribal, commercial, and recreational fishery commitments. Through these efforts this decision packages fulfills the secondary criteria, support continuity, from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan, and directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca Taskforce recommendation 6, significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures, and indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant salmon strategy recommendation, 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

WDFW hatchery production is a crucial element of fisheries co-management with tribes, in addition to collaborating and working with community partners to reach Department conservation goals.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW Hatcheries operate across the state, providing tribal, recreational, and commercial fishing opportunities for residents, tourists, and conservation groups.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Hatchery facilities and the programs they support are predominantly operated to expand harvest opportunities. Therefore, they are not contributing directly to salmon recovery efforts, but may become better aligned with the salmon strategy and recovery plans if sufficient funding were in place to optimize their performance.

Reference Documents

[Attachment 1 - EWOS Fish Feed Matrix.pdf](#)

[Attachment 2 - Bio-Oregon Fish Feed Matrix.pdf](#)

[Attachment 3 - Fish Food Cost Increase Model.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$257	\$257	\$514	\$257	\$257	\$514

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding for increasing costs for two fee-for-service items, Personnel and Labor Relations services, from the Office of Financial Management that are within Central Services but are not in the state’s Central Service Model. Agencies receive funding for services that are in the Central Service Model, but do not receive funding for fee-for-service costs.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$96	\$96	\$192	\$96	\$96	\$192
Total Expenditures	\$96	\$96	\$192	\$96	\$96	\$192

Decision Package Description

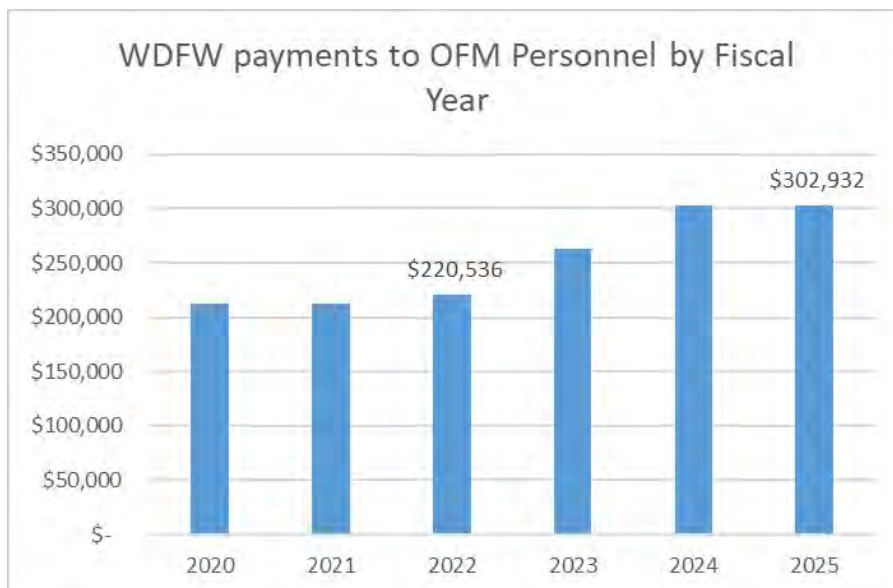
The Office of Financial Management (OFM) charges each agency for their Central Services (CS) costs. This decision package requests funding for increased Personnel and Labor Relations services costs.

Most OFM charges, such as warrants, OneWA, and OFM Enterprise Applications, are included in the Central Service Model (CSM). OFM includes these items in the governor’s budget on behalf of agencies. This is not the case for fee-for-service (FFS) items. Agencies do not receive funding for FFS items because the level of service provided is supposed to be at the discretion of the agency and budgeting for these services is the responsibility of the client agencies. For OFM Personnel and Labor Relations services, agencies' rates are set by OFM.

Personnel Services: Beginning in the 2021-23 biennium, WDFW saw its Personnel services costs rise because of 1) an increase in the Department’s salaries and benefits expenditures, and 2) a change in OFM’s cost methodology ([RCW 41.06.280](#)) in fiscal year 2024 which raised the eligible expenditures cap on which the 1.5% is based and increased the distribution of these costs across agencies.

OFM’s current cost methodology sets the fee at “an amount not to exceed one and one-half percent of the salaries and wages for all positions in each of the agencies.” This fee funds three programs, OFM State Human Resources (SHR), Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC), and Secretary of State Washington State Productivity Board (SEC-Productivity Board).

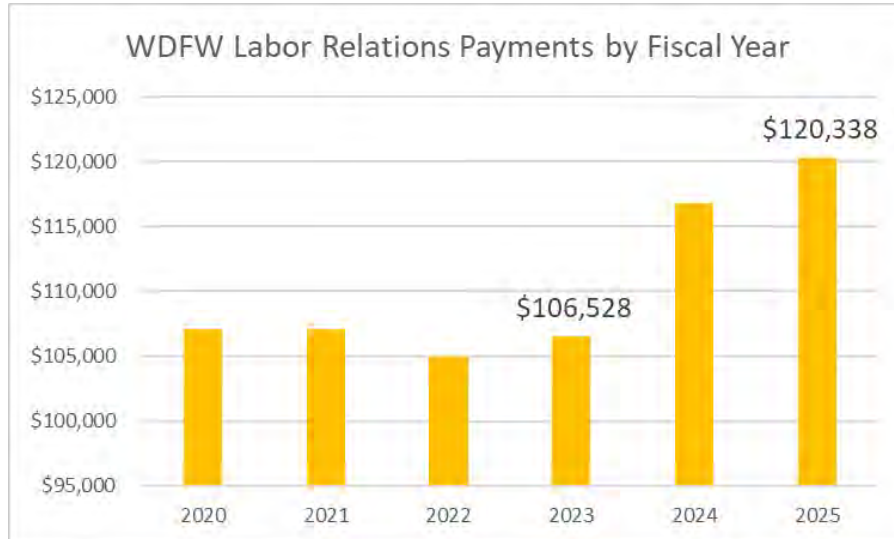
Historical data shows a 37% cost increase of \$82,000 per year from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2025. WDFW used General Fund-State for these costs.



Labor Relations Services: Beginning in fiscal year 2023, WDFW saw its Labor Relations services costs rise because of recent increases in WDFW’s allotted salaries and benefits. OFM’s cost methodology ([RCW 41.80.140](#)) sets the fee at “an amount not to exceed one-tenth of one

percent of the approved allotments of salaries and wages for all bargaining unit positions in the classified service in each of the agencies." This fee provides funds for SHR to negotiate master agreements for biennial collective bargaining for represented classified employees, bargaining on grievances and other union issues.

Historical data shows a 10% cost increase of \$14,000 per year from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2025. WDFW used General Fund-State for these costs.



Alternatives Explored

WDFW met with OFM to discuss the inclusion of these costs in the central service model. No change is anticipated in the 2025-27 biennium.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

OFM Personnel Services - \$82,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. \$164,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and ongoing.

Labor Relation Services - \$14,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. \$28,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and ongoing.

Total costs are \$96,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. \$192,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and ongoing. Both services were paid using 001-01 General Fund-State.

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This request provides important support to the Governor's Results Washington Goal: Efficient Effective and Accountable Government: by enhancing the effectiveness of the Department's human resources and labor relations for employee benefit.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This request is related to WDFW's strategy to move WDFW towards model operational and environmental excellence.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Business Management & Obligations \$96,000 (General Fund-State) in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

Performance Outcomes:

Personnel and Labor Relations services outcomes:

- To provide training and expert advice to the Department's HR staff.
- To negotiate better contracts which promote better public service for the people of Washington State.
- Promote employee engagement and satisfaction.
- Foster a safe and healthy work environment.
- Reduce staff turnover.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. The Department is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that the Department receive ongoing maintenance level funding to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Without additional funding for these additional cost increases, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities; however, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equitable lens as the Department is forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

N/A

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$96	\$96	\$192	\$96	\$96	\$192

Agency Contact Information

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
 2025-27 Regular Budget Session
 Maintenance Level - 9E - Other Fund Adjustments

Agency Recommendation Summary

In response to a change in the distribution of revenue from the sale of small game hunting licenses between the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account (098) and the Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Account (24N), the department requests a shift of spending authority from 098 to 24N to maintain funding of the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 098 - 1	(\$143)	(\$143)	(\$286)	(\$143)	(\$143)	(\$286)
Fund 24N - 1	\$143	\$143	\$286	\$143	\$143	\$286
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

An improvement in a survey methodology resulted in a change of revenue distribution. The amount of revenue received by the Department did not change, the distribution of the revenue changed. This request is to swap authority to match the new distribution.

The Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account (098) was established by the Legislature in 1997 for the purpose of funding the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program. RCW 77.12.810 states the “department may use moneys from the account to improve pheasant habitat or to purchase or produce pheasants. The department must continue to release rooster pheasants in eastern Washington.” Per RCW 77.12.810, a portion of each small game hunting license fee shall be deposited in fund 098. The Fish and Wildlife Commission is required by RCW 77.32.440 to “adopt rules to continue funding current enhancement programs at levels equal to the participation of licensees in each of the individual enhancement programs.”

To determine the portion of revenue that shall be deposited into fund 098 from the sale of small game hunting licenses, WDFW annually surveyed a sample of small game license holders by mail using a paper form. Responses collected from this survey were used to calculate the proportion of pheasant hunters relative to hunters of other species included on the survey. For the survey impacting fiscal year 2024 revenue distribution and ongoing, the mailed survey was replaced with a series of online surveys sent to all small game license holders. The new survey methodology employed an improved analysis process and increased hunter participation in the survey. The current proportion of pheasant hunters was extrapolated using the new method, while previous proportions used simple counts of survey responses.

Application of the new survey methodology resulted in a lower proportion of pheasant hunters relative to hunters of other small game species, which caused a decrease in the percentage of revenue directed to the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account (098) and an increase in the percentage of revenue directed to the Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Account (24N). As the costs associated with this work remain unchanged, the department requests an increase in 24N expenditure authority equal to the decrease in 098 expenditure authority to reflect the current revenue distribution.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request does not expand or alter any current programs or services.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

This package does not involve changes to work activities.

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Historical Funding:

Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account - 098						
	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Expenditure Authority	251,000	424,000	251,000	614,000	251,000	424,000
Actual Revenues	340,703	387,139	315,169	305,569	178,832	115,381*

** indicates projected revenue based on the updated survey methodology*

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This decision package supports the WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan action to provide and manage sustainable hunting opportunities.

Performance Outcomes:

Adoption of this decision package will not change current performance outcomes; however, failure to approve this package will result in a reduction to the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program funding.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the need for a change in authority to match a change in the distribution of revenue. This adjustment is for effective administration in response to the survey methodology change explained above. Without the adjustment of funds, this service would be reduced, and other services could be reduced to accommodate the required minimum level of service for the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program. These potential reductions cannot be directly connected to specific communities at this time; however, cutting services and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

N/A

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW anticipates support from the hunting community for this request. The expenditure authority adjustment is necessary to continue the current level of effort related to pheasant habitat improvements and pheasant production and purchase to maintain current hunting opportunities. The habitat work associated with this funding source also benefits a multitude of other wildlife species and garners the support of non-hunters that value wildlife.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Agency Contact Information

Brandon Bean
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Agency Recommendation Summary

General fund revenue from federal sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for federal authority that cannot be spent.

Fiscal Summary

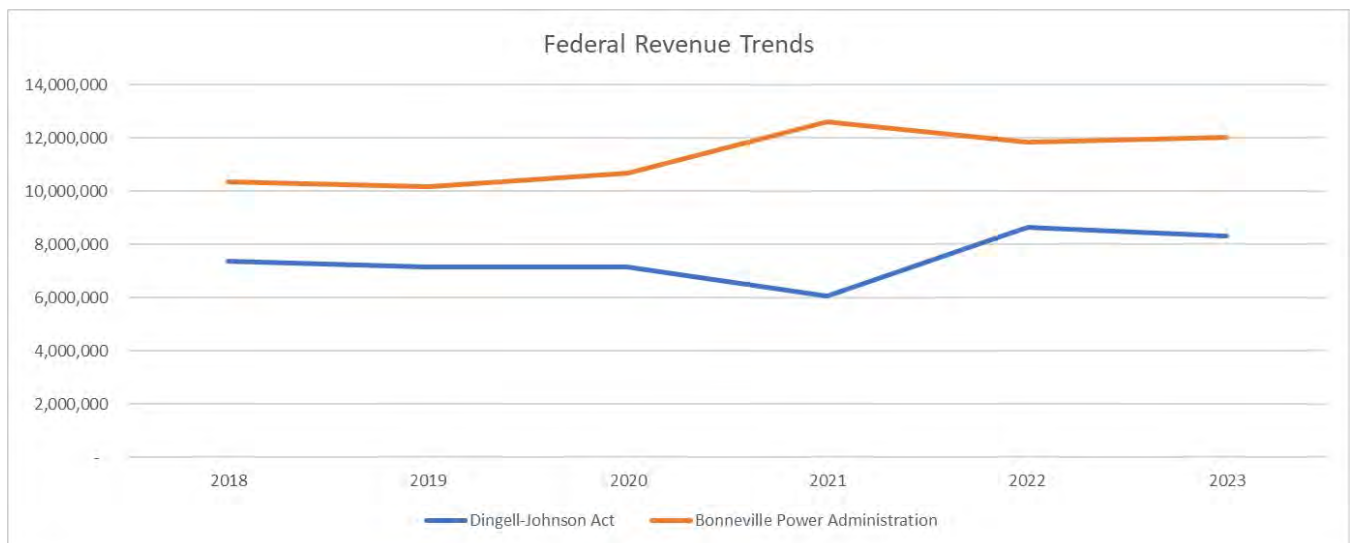
Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,585	\$1,585	\$3,170	\$1,585	\$1,585	\$3,170
Fund 001 - 2	(\$1,585)	(\$1,585)	(\$3,170)	(\$1,585)	(\$1,585)	(\$3,170)
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Revenue						
001 - 0315	(\$629)	(\$629)	(\$1,258)	(\$629)	(\$629)	(\$1,258)
001 - 0355	(\$956)	(\$956)	(\$1,912)	(\$956)	(\$956)	(\$1,912)
Total Revenue	(\$1,585)	(\$1,585)	(\$3,170)	(\$1,585)	(\$1,585)	(\$3,170)

Decision Package Description

With the passage of the state operating budget bill ESSB 5693 (Chapter 297, Laws of 2022), ESSB 5187 (Chapter 475, Laws of 2023), and ESSB 5950 (Chapter 376, Laws of 2024), the Legislature provided the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) expenditure authority to support operations of the department. Costs included annual cost of living (COLAs) adjustments to be paid for from multiple fund sources, including federal revenue sources. WDFW now has the allotment authority to spend from the federal sources for these increased costs, however there isn't a corresponding revenue increase to support these new expenditures.

Approximately 31% of WDFW's federal expenditures are supported by the Dingell-Johnson Act grant program and Bonneville Power Administration funding. These two federal revenue sources are largely static in the size of funds awarded. An increase in compensation spending will not be offset by an increase in federal revenue from these sources.

1. Bonneville Power Administration funding from the federal agency operating the electric dam located on the Columbia River. The purpose of the funding is to evaluate habitat suitability and species abundance for areas impacted by the electric dam.
2. The Dingell-Johnson (DJ) funding is from the sale of fishing gear, yachts and small engine and motorboat gas tax. The funding is dedicated to fishing activities and is apportioned based on land/water area and the number of paid sportfishing license holders.



Ongoing annual federal funding allocated for compensation amounts to \$5,109,000 per fiscal year. This amount is comprised of allocations from several state operating budget bills: \$1,821,000 from ESSB 5693, \$3,279,000 from ESSB 5187, and \$9,000 from ESSB 5950. It is imperative

to address that a substantial portion of this appropriation is not supported by federal revenue. This discrepancy is projected to result in an ongoing annual funding deficit of \$1,585,000 beginning in the 2025-27 biennium.

This package seeks to exchange \$1,585,000 ongoing state general funds for the federal funds appropriation authority provided by the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions because no additional federal fund revenue will be provided to the Department.

Without additional funding the department will have to cut or decrease the services that the public expects. This will result in activities such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish, public safety, and hunting services being cut or decreased.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Assumptions are based on total expenditures supported by local revenue sources. Total need is based on total Dingell-Johnson Act and Bonneville Power Administration expenditures as a percentage of total federally funded expenditures. Only the portion of federal funding that is from these sources is being requested because these sources are not eligible for amendments due to mandatory cost increases.

Year	Dingell-Johnson	Bonneville Power Administration	Subtotal of Expenditures Supported by Flat Trend Revenue	Total Expenditures
17-19 Biennium	14,524,547 13%	20,533,439 18%	35,057,986 31%	114,231,404 100%
19-21 Biennium	13,215,436 11%	23,296,162 20%	36,511,598 32%	115,755,890 100%
21-23 Biennium	16,973,852 13%	23,914,350 18%	40,888,202 31%	132,652,235 100%
Overall Trend	44,713,834 12%	67,743,951 19%	112,457,785 31%	362,639,529 100%

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$5.1 million • Near General Fund = \$5.1 million • Other Funds = \$0

FY2027 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$5.1 million • Near General Fund = \$5.1 million • Other Funds = \$0

Amounts based on ongoing federal compensation line-items from ESSB 5693, ESSB 5187, and ESSB 5950.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Goal 2: Prosperous economy: Fostering an innovative economy where businesses, workers and communities thrive in every corner of our state.

Compensation adjustments ensure that WDFW employees receive wages that allow them to better support themselves and their communities.

Goal 5: Efficient, effective and accountable Government: Fostering a Lean culture that drives accountability and results for the people of Washington.

The Department's ability to fund compensation adjustments will ensure that complies with collective bargaining agreements and maintains legally mandated work.

WDFW Strategic Plan

WDFW Foundation Work: To Meet Our Business Management and Obligations.

Funding the increased cost of living and increased costs from DES and OFM ensures that WDFW employees can support their families and communities with living wages and enables WDFW to recruit and retain valuable employees. This funding is needed so that WDFW can continue to provide the full scope of conservation and management services to all Washingtonians.

Performance Outcomes:

Exchanging federally funded general fund authority for state general fund authority will allow the Department of Fish and Wildlife maintain the current level of services that the public expects while paying for the increased compensation costs.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through public engagement. The Communication and Public Engagement Divisions are committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve. This proposal is a result of identifying unfunded cost increases that will have a negative impact on the business operations of WDFW and restrict mission-critical work that serve communities through these funding sources.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This funding request is responding to the compensation cost increase and funding shortfall due faced by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Without additional funding to cover these increased costs, other areas of the budget could be cut which will cause reductions in other programs and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equity lens as the department will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and a higher quality of life for all communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department's 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

N/A

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts. This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Agency Contact Information

Brandon Bean

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Agency Recommendation Summary

General fund revenue from local sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for local authority that cannot be spent.

Fiscal Summary

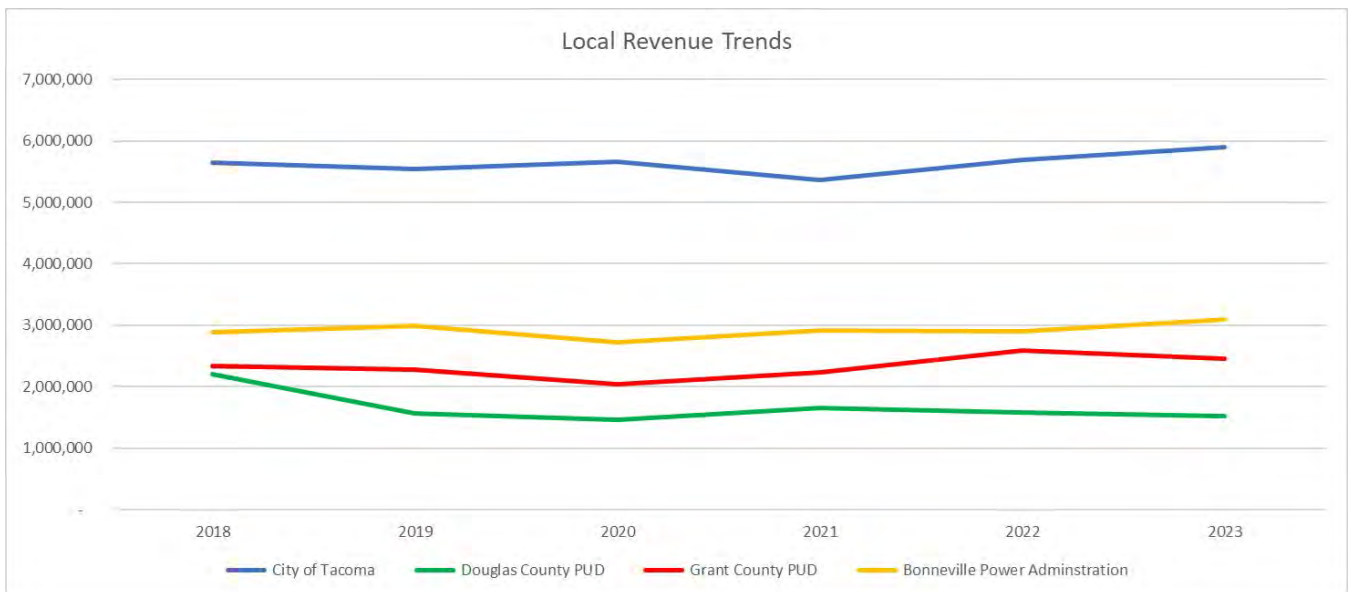
Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,427	\$1,427	\$2,854	\$1,427	\$1,427	\$2,854
Fund 001 - 7	(\$1,427)	(\$1,427)	(\$2,854)	(\$1,427)	(\$1,427)	(\$2,854)
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Revenue						
001 - 0541	(\$1,095)	(\$1,095)	(\$2,190)	(\$1,095)	(\$1,095)	(\$2,190)
001 - 0597	(\$332)	(\$332)	(\$664)	(\$332)	(\$332)	(\$664)
Total Revenue	(\$1,427)	(\$1,427)	(\$2,854)	(\$1,427)	(\$1,427)	(\$2,854)

Decision Package Description

With the passage of the state operating budget bill ESSB 5693 (Chapter 297, Laws of 2022), ESSB 5187 (Chapter 475, Laws of 2023), and ESSB 5950 (Chapter 376, Laws of 2024), the Legislature provided the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) expenditure authority to support operations of the department. Costs included annual compensation adjustments to be paid for from multiple fund sources, including local revenue sources. WDFW now has the allotment authority to spend from the local sources for these increased costs, however there isn't a corresponding increase of revenue to support these new expenditures.

WDFW receives electric dam mitigation money through contracts. These contracts involve public utility districts paying WDFW to operate fish hatcheries as a form of mitigation. The purpose is to offset the environmental impact of dams on fish populations. This funding helps support conservation efforts and wildlife management in the state.

Approximately 44% of WDFW's local revenue has come from the City of Tacoma, Grant County Public Utility District, Douglas County Public Utility District, and Bonneville Power Administration local pass-through funding. These four revenue sources are largely static in the size of funds awarded. An increase in compensation spending will not be offset by an increase in local contract revenue from these sources.



Ongoing annual federal funding allocated for compensation amounts to \$3,212,000 per fiscal year. This amount is comprised of allocations from

several state operating budget bills: \$1,204,000 from ESSB 5693, \$2,004,000 from ESSB 5187, and \$4,000 from ESSB 5950. It is imperative to address that a substantial fraction of this appropriation is not supported by local revenue. This discrepancy is projected to result in an ongoing annual funding deficit of \$1,427,000 beginning in the 2025-27 biennium.

This package seeks to exchange \$1,427,000 ongoing state general funds for the local funds appropriation authority provided by the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions because no additional local fund revenue will be provided to the Department.

Without additional funding the department will have to cut or decrease the services that the public expects. This will result in activities such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish, public safety, and hunting services being cut or decreased.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Assumptions are based on total expenditures supported by local revenue sources. Total need is based on total City of Tacoma, Douglas County Public Utility District, Grant County Public Utility District, and Bonneville Power Administration local pass-through expenditures as a percentage of total locally funded expenditures. Only the portion of local funding that is from these sources is being requested because these sources are not eligible for amendments due to mandatory cost increases.

Year	City of Tacoma	Douglas County PUD	Grant County Public Utilities District	Bonneville Power Administration	Subtotal of Expenditures Supported by Flat Trend Revenue	Total Expenditures
17-19 Biennium	11,196,628 21%	3,779,023 7%	4,627,264 9%	5,887,839 11%	25,490,754 48%	53,521,932 100%
19-21 Biennium	11,018,564 20%	3,126,600 6%	4,280,957 8%	5,647,757 10%	24,073,878 43%	55,742,578 100%
21-23 Biennium	11,587,053 19%	3,111,986 5%	5,051,084 8%	6,003,225 10%	25,753,347 43%	60,584,013 100%
Overall Trend	33,802,245 20%	10,017,609 6%	13,959,305 8%	17,538,821 10%	75,317,980 44%	169,848,524 100%

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$3.2 million • Near General Fund = \$3.2 million • Other Funds = \$0

FY2027 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$3.2 million • Near General Fund = \$3.2 million • Other Funds = \$0

Amounts based on ongoing local compensation line-items from ESSB 5693, ESSB 5187, and ESSB 5950.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Goal 2: Prosperous economy: Fostering an innovative economy where businesses, workers and communities thrive in every corner of our state.

Compensation adjustments ensure that WDFW employees receive wages that allow them to better support themselves and their communities.

Goal 5: Efficient, effective and accountable Government: Fostering a Lean culture that drives accountability and results for the people of Washington.

The Department's ability to fund compensation adjustments will ensure that complies with collective bargaining agreements and maintains legally mandated work.

WDFW Strategic Plan

WDFW Foundation Work: To Meet Our Business Management and Obligations.

Funding the increased cost of living and increased costs from DES and OFM ensures that WDFW employees can support their families and communities with living wages and enables WDFW to recruit and retain valuable employees. This funding is needed so that WDFW can continue to provide the full scope of conservation and management services to all Washingtonians.

Performance Outcomes:

Exchanging locally funded general fund authority for state general fund authority will allow the Department of Fish and Wildlife to maintain the current level of services that the public expects while paying for the increased compensation costs.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through public engagement. The Communication divisions are committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve. This proposal is a result of identifying unfunded cost increases that will have a negative impact on the business operations of WDFW and restrict mission-critical work that serve communities through these funding sources.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This funding request is responding to the compensation cost increase and funding shortfall due faced by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Without additional funding to cover these increased costs, other areas of the budget could be cut which will cause reductions in other programs and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equity lens as the department will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and a higher quality of life for all communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department's 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

N/A

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts. This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Agency Contact Information

Brandon Bean

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - EW - Post-wildfire Habitat Recovery

Agency Recommendation Summary

Each year, wildfires statewide decimate many acres of public lands. Several of these wildfires have caused extensive damage to habitat and facilities on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) managed wildlife areas. WDFW implements efforts to recover habitat, reestablish native vegetation, prevent noxious weed infestations, and restore infrastructure in wildfire impacted areas. This investment supports vital habitat recovery and restoration work caused by wildfires.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.4	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,966	\$0	\$2,966	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$2,966	\$0	\$2,966	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

During the 2024 wildfire season, wildfires impacted habitat, infrastructure, and other resources on several areas of WDFW managed lands. This funding request estimates the costs of all habitat recovery and resource restoration efforts, where feasible, from each significant wildfire on WDFW lands. Due to wildfire season typically lasting from May through December, more fires may occur during the 2024 wildfire season, resulting in a need for additional funding. Delayed rehabilitation work from cultural reviews, permitting, snow melt or fire conditions may also result in subsequent funding requests.

Based on current estimates, WDFW anticipates almost \$5 million for the full capacity of restoration spanning a 2-year restoration period, fiscal year 2025 and fiscal year 2026.

Consequences of not funding wildfire recovery work include:

- Habitat degradation,
- Erosion issues with potential damage to infrastructure such as: roads, power lines, riparian and other protected areas,
- Sedimentation in streams impacting salmonid health,
- Widespread infestation of noxious weeds, and
- Destruction of neighboring habitats from trespass cattle grazing resulting from wildfire destroyed boundary lines.

These consequences create greater costs for the state of Washington to mitigate as well as for other government entities and private landowners. Full wildfire restoration and recovery takes multiple years. Without funding for efforts to restore habitats to prior conditions, WDFW will be out of compliance with federal, state, and local entities that funded the purchase and stewardship of these lands.

Fire Season	Fire Event Begin Date	County	Fire Event Name	WDFW Location	WDFW Acres Burned	Total Statewide Acres Burned	FY25 Estimated Recovery Costs	FY26 Estimated Recovery Costs	Total Recovery Costs
2024	7/6/2024	Yakima	Sheep Company Fire	Wenas Wildlife Area	330	330	12,000	-	12,000
2024	7/15/2024	Asotin	Cougar Creek Fire	Chief Joseph Wildlife Area	5,769	24,091	271,000	984,000	1,255,000
2024	7/22/2024	Yakima	Black Canyon Fire	Wenas Wildlife Area	7,968	9,211	189,000	485,000	674,000
2024	7/23/2024	Yakima	Retreat Fire	Oak Creek Wildlife Area	19,040	45,601	169,000	716,000	885,000
2024	8/20/2024	Chelan	Stayman Flats Fire	Chelan Wildlife Area	2,500	3,118	332,000	605,000	937,000
Total 2024 Fire Season to Date					35,607	82,351	973,000	2,790,000	3,763,000
2023	7/29/2023	Okanogan	Eagle Bluff Fire	Scotchcreek Wildlife Area	1,500	34,049	175,000	316,000	491,000
2023	8/18/2023	Spokane	Gray Fire	West Meical Lake Water Access Area	4	10,085	179,000	-	179,000
2022	8/1/2022	Kittitas	Vantage Highway 2 Fire	LT Murray Wildlife Area	22,000	30,635	91,000	-	91,000
2021	7/7/2021	Asotin	Lick Creek (Dry Gulch Fire)	Multiple Wildlife Areas	34,283	80,421	46,000	-	46,000
2021	7/16/2021	Okanogan	Cub Creek 2 Fire	Methow Wildlife Area	730	70,186	116,000	-	116,000
Total Previous Fire Season in Need of Restoration					58,517	225,376	607,000	316,000	923,000
Total All Requested Wildfire Recovery					94,124	307,727	1,580,000	3,106,000	4,686,000
							Less current carryforward	(140,000)	(280,000)
Total Fiscal Year 2026 Request							1,440,000	2,966,000	4,406,000

Figure 1: Summary Table of Funding Request by Fire Event.

\$1,255,000 (FY2025 \$271,000 and FY2026 \$984,000) – Cougar Creek Fire of 2024 fire season

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area, 5,769 WDFW acres damaged by wildfire with 24,091 total acres burned.

The fire began on July 15, 2024, due to unknown cause and is currently under investigation. The fire damaged a mix of forest and shrubsteppe habitat. These lands were purchased by WDFW to conserve habitat for bighorn sheep, mule deer, upland game bird populations, and chinook salmon, summer steelhead trout and federally listed bull trout. Upland game bird populations consisting of California quail, mountain quail, blue grouse, ruffed grouse, Hungarian partridge, and chukar, along with over 100 other species of birds, provide for suitable recreation for horseback riders, hikers, and bird watchers. This restoration work is essential to restoring that habitat and associated recreational values. Approximately 6 gates require repair to control access to sites based on seasonal recreation. Approximately 6 miles of boundary fence burned and require replacement. Fence reconstruction may take multiple years. Seedling tree planting is also necessary. The wildfire was most intense in the Mountain View area. Fire suppression activities included several fire breaks, resulting in the need to re-vegetate these areas requiring, aerial seeding and weed control. Thinning of burned trees is crucial to protect the forested area from beetle and disease infestations. Grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the amount of \$80,000 will cover the most urgent and time sensitive post-fire thinning work of burned trees. DNR grant funded activity is not included in this request.

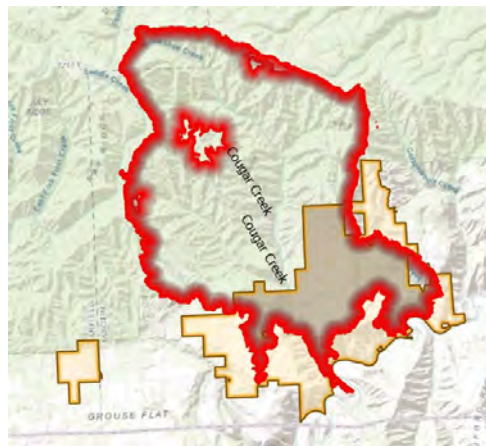


Figure 2: The fire burned mountainous and remote areas within the Umatilla National Forest and onto the Department's land. The above map shows about 50% of the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Unit was burned within the red fire perimeter line.





Figures 3, 4, 5 & 6: (Top left.) In some locations, wood posts used to mount access gates disintegrated leaving behind empty holes with nothing to keep the gates in place. (Top right.) In other locations, gate posts remain standing, however, severely damaged posts no longer securely hold mounting hardware. (Lower left.) With the wooden gate posts completely burned, staff find other ways to temporarily keep gates upright. (Lower right.) Compromised gate functionality make propped gates a safety hazard, however, still used to help detour the public from access to closed burned areas. Gate replacement is a priority. . Photo credits, Bob Dice, Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Manager





Figures 7, 8, 9 & 10: Pictures taken of the Cougar Creek Fire shows some areas burned with a lower intensity fire still causing much damage to the habitat. Restoration is needed to revegetate native shrubs and trees. Photo credit, Bob Dice, Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Manager





Figures 11 & 12: Establishing a fire break in some areas assist in the containment efforts. Unfortunately, the Department will need to replace about 6 miles of boundary fence along neighboring properties as well as interior fence. Department staff are still assessing the damaged interior fence and cost estimates for interior fence replacement are not identified in this request until more information is available. Photo credit, Bob Dice, Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Manager

\$674,000 (FY2025 \$189,000 and FY2026 \$485,000) – Black Canyon Fire of 2024 fire season

Wenas Wildlife Area, 7,968 WDFW acres damaged by wildfire with 9,278 total acres burned.

The fire began on July 22, 2024, fire cause is unknown. Damage consists of burned shrubsteppe habitat displacing Yakima elk herd, mule deer, songbirds, and upland birds. Candidate species impacted by the fire include Townsend’s ground squirrel, burrowing owl, Lewis’s woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, loggerheaded shrike, sage thrasher, golden eagle, and sagebrush lizard. Recreationists value and enjoy big game hunting, hiking and bird watching. Restoration work will include cultural resources review and elk fence replacement for approximately 1.5 miles of burned fence.

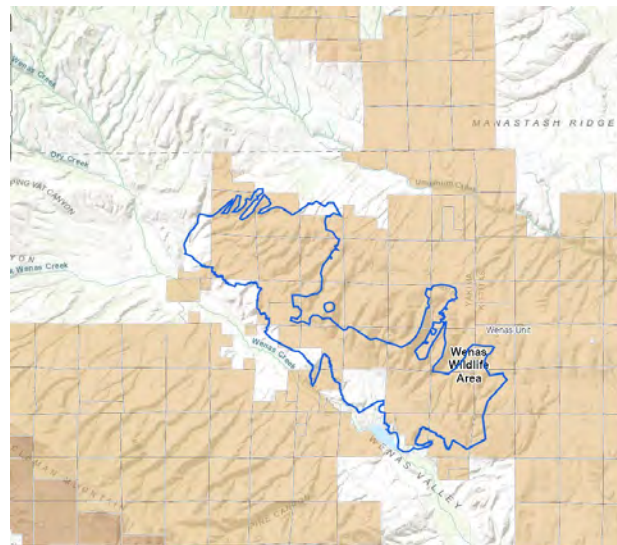


Figure 13: The above map shows about 8k acres of the Wenas Wildlife Area was burned within the blue fire perimeter line.



Figures 14 & 15: The loss of shrubsteppe habitat adversely impacts the Department's ability to provide quality wildlife viewing, hiking, and hunting opportunities in this area until restoration efforts increase wildlife populations. Photo credit, Melinda Gray, Wenas Wildlife Area Manager.

\$885,000 (FY2025 \$169,000 and FY2026 \$716,000) – Retreat Fire of 2024 fire season

Oak Creek Wildlife Area, 19,040 WDFW acres damaged by wildfire with 45,601 total acres burned.

The fire began on July 23, 2024, due to a propane tank explosion at the Rimrock Retreat area. The fire spread across WDFW land decimating sage grasses, ponderosa pines, and singeing the bottoms of old growth oak habitat. These habitats are critical due to their importance as a transition zone between shrubsteppe and mixed-conifer forests. They provide habitat for many species including elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, upland game birds (forest grouse, turkey, quail, chukar, northern spotted owl, bald eagle, many other small mammals), and bull trout. The area also provides habitat for a variety of neo-tropical and upland birds, raptors, reptiles, and amphibians. Approximately 1.23 miles of elk fence burned requiring replacement. Fence replacement material and installation equipment must be transported across the Tieton River, which is the only access point. This will significantly increase costs. The burned fences are still standing; however, wood posts are completely burned off or weakened causing loss of integral structure. Over 8 miles of fire breaks were established and require revegetation to repair dozer lines. A vacant cabin, owned by the Department, but situated on leased property owned by USDA Forest Service, was completely burned. The Department does not desire to replace the cabin and cleanup costs of the cabin will be absorbed by USDA Forest Service.



Figures 16 & 17: Firefighters on scene and working hard to contain the fire. Photo credit, Inaki Baraibar, WDFW Prescribe Fire Team.

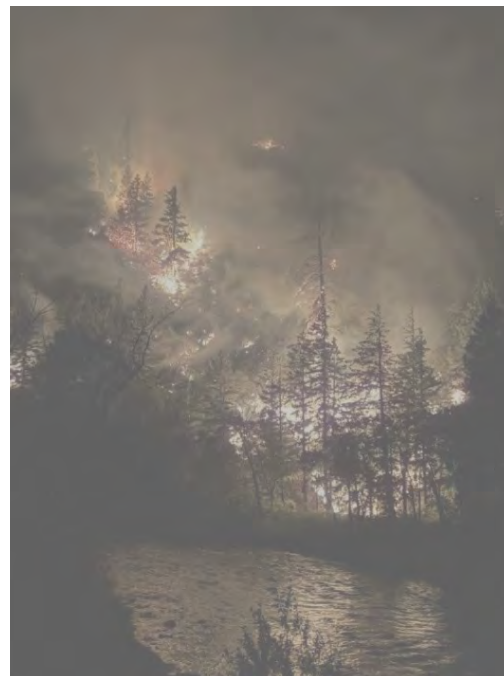


Figure 18: Depicts the intensity of the Retreat Fire against the night sky. The silhouette of burning trees contrast the intense flames as fire fighters work night and day to contain the fire. Photo credit, Inaki Baraibar, WDFW Prescribe Fire Team

\$937,000 (FY2025 \$332,000 and FY2026 \$605,000) – Stayman Flats Fire of 2024 fire season

Chelan Butte Wildlife Area, 2,500 WDFW acres damaged by wildfire with 3,118 total acres burned.

The fire began on August 20, 2024, from an unknown cause and is under investigation. Herbicide weed control and aerial seeding are necessary to restore shrubsteppe habitats critical for multiple shrubsteppe species. 1.5 miles of boundary fence replacement and planting activities are also essential recovery efforts for this area. Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River steelhead, northern goshawk, sharp-tailed grouse, western gray squirrel, and Pacific lamprey all benefit from this work as do golden eagle and bighorn sheep. The Chelan Wildlife area is known for its diverse wildlife species to include neotropical birds, raptors, upland game birds, bears, cougars, and mule deer. Recreationists enjoy hunting, photography, wildlife viewing, and camping. The wildlife area's numerous dirt roads, which are closed to motorized vehicles, offer good hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing opportunities. Restoring this area will continue the quality recreation valued by our public.

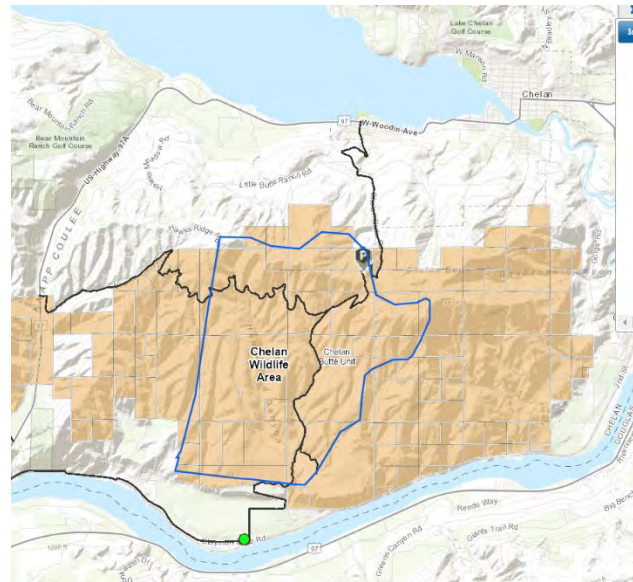


Figure 19: About 99% of the Stayman Flats fire occurred on the Chelan Wildlife Area.



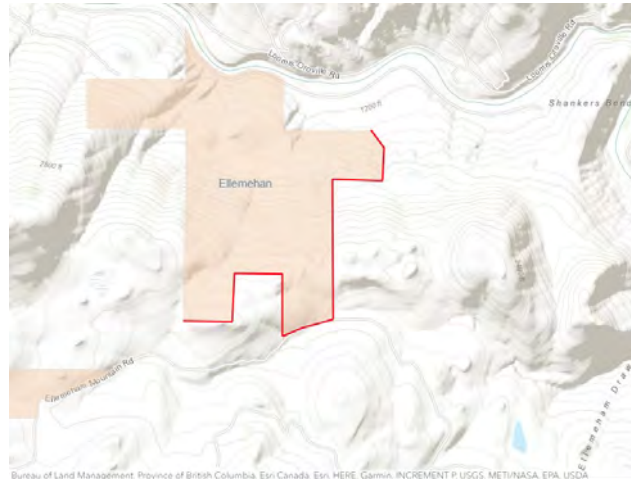


Figures 20, 21, 22, & 23: Within the charred landscape, restoration includes a combination of weed control, broadcast seeding, drill seeding, and mechanical planting of Forbes and shrubs will help to re-establish the natural vegetation and minimize non-native vegetation and noxious weeds. Photo credit, Amy Pavelchek, Chelan Wildlife Area Manager

\$491,000 (FY2025 \$175,000 and FY2026 \$316,000) – Eagle Bluff Fire of 2023 fire season

Scotch Creek Wildlife Area/ 1,500 WDFW acres damaged by wildfire.

The Ellemehan Unit habitat within the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area, supports shrubsteppe obligate species including the sage thrasher, loggerhead shrike, sharp-tailed grouse, and sage sparrow. The habitat is also quality mule deer winter range. Infrastructure repair costs include replacement of 3 miles of exterior fence and .5 miles of interior fence. The Department anticipates tearing out and replacing fence on high, rugged, steep terrain. Post wildfire habitat recovery funding in fiscal year 2024 allowed for aerial seeding of 500 acres. Weed control work was completed on approximately 50 acres. Cultural resource compliance reviews were conducted for aerial and mechanical application of seeds, plants, and weed control as well as initial prep work necessary for fence replacement. This request includes funding for permitting, boundary line survey, fence materials and contracted services for construction of the fence. cost increases of fence contractors, this request identifies the need for an additional \$491,000 for full restoration through fiscal year 2026.



Figures 24: (Top.) The red perimeter along the Ellemehan Unit indicates where the damaged fence needs replacement. Figures 25 & 26: (Bottom) Photographs show where the Eagle Bluff fire burned fence lines during the 2023 wildfire season. Photo credit, Bryan Dupont, Wildlife Area Manager

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is for an expansion of a current service. Ongoing funding of \$140,000 per fiscal year was provided beginning in the 2021-23 biennium. As wildfires occur and damage is assessed, additional funding is requested one-time to allow for specific restoration efforts.

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
GFS Post Wildfire Habitat Recovery	934,000	3,263,000	1,657,000	<i>1,023,000</i>
GFS Unspent Fund shift request	-	-	<i>(417,000)</i>	<i>417,000</i>
GFS Carryforward Base Funding	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
Total	1,074,000	3,403,000	1,380,000	<i>1,580,000</i>

Amounts in italics are pending budget requests in the 2025 Supplemental.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, total \$287,000, to include project management, contracts, and engineering staff to support infrastructure repair.
- Personal Service Contracts, Object C, total \$1,659,000, to contract for monitoring of planting for cultural compliance, fencing contractors to repair and replace fence and gates, helicopters for aerial application for weed control and aerial seeding.
- Goods and services, Object E, total \$240,000, to purchase materials and supplies such as seed, shrubs, trees, forbs, sign materials, and fence materials. Costs also include \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- Travel, Object G, totals \$20,000 for conducting site visits, assessment, and inspections.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

0.6 FTE, Engineering Technician Supervisor - review designs and provide recommendation for compliance and approval if plans require alterations or changes.

0.6 FTE, Contracts Specialist 3 - assist project managers in bidding and awarding fence and cultural resource contractors and ensure proper tracking and payment to contractors. (This position is not included in agency indirect.)

0.3 FTE, Construction Project Coordinator 4 - oversee project management and contracted services work on toilet and fence replacement activities.

0.9 FTE, Construction Project Coordinator 2 - inspect contracted services work for fence replacement activities.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$.14million • Near General Fund = \$.14million • Other Funds = \$0 million

FY2027 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$.14 million • Near General Fund = \$.14 million • Other Funds = \$0 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goal of a Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. This proposal guarantees essential activities in habitat recovery and restoration, including planting vegetation and weed control activities. Furthermore, post wildfire habitat recovery is necessary for the Department to enhance fishing and hunting opportunities for all residents while preserving, protecting, and perpetuating wildlife in the state.

WDFW 25 Year Strategic Plan

This decision package aligns directly with the Department's mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities. This request proactively supports recovery from devastation from wildfires posing extreme conservation challenges.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat & Species:

The Department restores habitat to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. The Department seeks to restore degraded habitat and endangered species by implementing plans to recover wildlife and seek funding to use toward completing various habitat restoration projects. That includes weed control, timber thinning and management, and habitat quality improvement. In addition, the Department maintains and improves the ecological health of state lands, maintains safe, sanitary water access sites to provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and recreational hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities for the public.

Performance Outcomes:

The Department anticipates meeting the informal measure of improved habitat restoration following annual wildfire seasons. In addition, supported performance indicators include:

- Acres of protected fish and wildlife habitat
- Threatened and endangered species population increases the percent change in hunter opportunities.

This request is essential to secure funding at the most effective time following a fire season and to support emergent habitat restoration recovery across the state. Restoring vital habitat in the aftermath of extensive fire damage, restores essential habitat for fish and wildlife and provides fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other conservation based recreation opportunities for the public. These lands are often either critical habitat for threatened or endangered species, or critical habitat for sustaining game populations. Rehabilitation of these lands directly benefit the public's interests.

Funding this request allows WDFW to implement restoration work necessitated from wildfire damage.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased rates over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for this increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations. ?

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Wildlife and recreational communities, partners, and local volunteers support healthy habitat restoration and repair work necessary to recover from catastrophic fires. More specifically, vested volunteer groups with Pheasants Forever and Inland Northwest Council provide the Department additional volunteer hours to help plant in some damaged areas. The Department expects positive impact to all stakeholders.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$214	\$0	\$214	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. B	\$73	\$0	\$73	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. C	\$1,659	\$0	\$1,659	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$240	\$0	\$240	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. G	\$20	\$0	\$20	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$760	\$0	\$760	\$0	\$0	\$0

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The focus of this proposal is to establish ongoing financial support of the WDFW Police Body Worn Camera (BWC) program. WDFW requests additional funding for body camera subscription services. Funding was included in the initial 2023-25 BN line item for this subscription, but was insufficient to fund it fully once the true cost was learned during the project.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$103	\$103	\$206	\$103	\$103	\$206
Total Expenditures	\$103	\$103	\$206	\$103	\$103	\$206

Decision Package Description

WDFW requested funding for body cameras for the 2023-25 biennium. Partial funding was enacted, including \$120,000 for ongoing contractor payments. After selecting a vendor and negotiating a contract, the full annual cost of contractor payments is \$223,000.

Continued employment of DFW Police Officers without the added benefit of BWCs exposes the officers and the state to elevated risk and liability. The Enforcement program will encounter increasing levels of difficulty and scrutiny with public interactions and the requirements to provide evidence of conduct and accountability. The requirement to record known felons as well as detainment of juveniles contained in recently passed police reform legislation (RCW 10.122) coupled with the fact that officers primarily work alone remotely make employing BWCs essential for the Program. Additionally, the records created by the BWC technologies will be a tremendous evidentiary resource should a DFW officer encounter an adverse situation.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This program was approved in a 23-25 biennial policy package. \$480,000 was appropriated in the first fiscal year and \$435,000 was appropriated in the second fiscal year. The first year of the program was to identify and select a vendor to outfit WDFW officers with BWCs. The initial funding supported 3 FTEs and the initial procurement of hardware. This request encompasses funding needed for the license, implementation, additional hardware, and software identified in the contract.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The total estimated cost of the contract is \$1,367,000. Payments to the contract will be made over a five-year period. \$475,000 was paid in FY25 for upfront hardware costs and first-year license fees. \$223,000 will be made in the following 4 years to cover license fees. These expenses occur in Object C. Details of the contract can be found in the attached documents.

Workforce Assumptions:

No additional FTE's are forecasted.

Historical Funding:

\$480,000 of general fund-state was appropriated for 2024 and \$435,000 of general fund-state for 2025 was enacted in the 2023/2025 budget. These funds generally went to hiring 3 FTEs and the initial procurement of cameras from the vendor.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

To Preserve and Restore Habitat and Species by recording interactions with the public using BWC to protect fish, wildlife, and their habitat through enforcement of regulations designed to sustain critical natural resources.

Model Operational and Environmental Excellence through investments in contemporary public safety tools that contribute to officer safety and provide the capability to demonstrate the professionalism the public expects and demands. The use of BWCs in law enforcement offers a technological advantage and is considered a best practice that will serve to showcase the professional conduct of WDFW Police as well as provide an umbrella of protection from false claims of inappropriate behavior or actions. Responsiveness to requests for BWC data and records, along with timely release of information will meet government transparency requirements and help investigations of crimes and incidents. Both will increase public confidence in WDFW Police capabilities.

Performance Outcomes:

Law enforcement agencies nationwide are implementing BWC technologies for the purposes of improving officer safety, enhancing the quality of evidence, reducing civilian complaints, increasing transparency, and reducing liability. Some studies are indicating police departments across the globe who implement BWCs are seeing reductions in citizen injuries and complaints. Roughly 93% of the public favor BWC use by police officers according to a Pew Research Center survey, and a recent State of the Industry Survey identified that 82% of officers surveyed want to wear them on the job. The procurement of BWCs is strongly supported by legislative constituencies, police reform initiatives, and the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. The Department is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that the Department receive ongoing maintenance level funding to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This proposal enhances accountability for both the public and the WDFW officers. Body cameras provide recordings of WDFW encounters with the public.

Target Communities and Populations:

The target population for the use of this technology are those community members who recreate in the outdoors and participate in natural resources activities (hunting, fishing, trapping, etc.). Secondary, are those who participate in commercial activities and businesses oriented toward harvesting of fish and wildlife as well as natural resources habitat restoration and development are business functions. Tertiary, are those individuals and groups contacted under the general authority scope of work that all fully commissioned peace officers perform. The scope of these interactions includes traffic stops, responding to assist other agencies, helping those in crisis, or requests for assistance from the public, and arresting those suspected of violating the law.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

NA

Puget Sound Recovery:

It is anticipated that BWC technology will be used to record audio and video data related to protection and sustainment of Chinook Salmon as well as other sensitive species and associated critical habitats defined in the Puget Sound Recovery program. Specifically, the BWC technology will directly provide data evidence of regulatory compliance by recording both violations and voluntary adherence to rules and seasons established by WDFW to promote recovery of ESA listed salmon stocks. The BWC data developed from police contacts in Puget Sound will help validate the goals and objectives in the plan as they are refined by the Department and Federal partners.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts outside of the scope found in the policy level package in the 23-25 biennia.

Intergovernmental:

Some Tribal sovereignties have expressed concerns about interactions with WDFW Police and have questioned data offered during negotiations related to fish and wildlife harvests and season setting. The use of BWCs to show WDFW Officer activities is anticipated to have a positive impact during selected fisheries and other harvest activities. The interactions that will be memorialized in the data derived from BWCs will be essential to those who negotiate the co-management of sensitive species where limited opportunity is an issue.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Stakeholders who monitor ESA listed species, marine mammals, as well as emergency responses to environmental disasters will also benefit from the application of BWCs. "Whale Watching" compliance patrols will show pressure on the South Sound Killer Whale resources, responses to stranded pinnipeds will help them survive, and assisting the Department of Ecology with an oil spill in marine waters are all clear examples where BWC data will be critical to decision making and support positive outcomes. It is impossible to inventory the hundreds of natural resources and conservation-focused stakeholders, but all will benefit from any BWC videos where WDFW Officers can demonstrate their direct efforts to benefit the animal/fish/habitat that is the primary interest of the organization concerned.

State Facilities Impacts:

No additional impacts are expected outside of the scope found in the policy level package in the 23-25 biennia.

Changes from Current Law:

There are no changes from current law associated with this proposal.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not a response to any legal claims or filings, audits, or executive direction. It is a proactive Investment in body worn camera technologies to support contemporary policies in law enforcement transparency as well as reduce officer safety liabilities. The BWCs also serve to either affirm or refute claims of wrongdoing, resolving the potential for frivolous lawsuits and needless investments in internal investigations that detract from the primary mission of public service. An investment in BWCs represents a liability mitigation strategy and is a futureproofing tactic to fend off costly legal attacks as well as provide substantial prosecutorial evidence for criminal justice proceedings.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

NA

Reference Documents

[Axon Contract.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. C	\$103	\$103	\$206	\$103	\$103	\$206

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) Police utilizes the Washington State Patrol (WSP) communication services, which include dispatching services, mobile-to-mobile communications, and radio frequency spectrum management. In the 23-25 biennium, the Washington State Patrol increased the communication fee charged to WDFW.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$155	\$155	\$310	\$155	\$155	\$310
Total Expenditures	\$155	\$155	\$310	\$155	\$155	\$310

Decision Package Description

WDFW Police rely on constant and consistent contact with their dispatch center to ensure responsiveness and essential officer safety oversight requirements. WDFW Police uses an internal dispatch center that provides supplementary radio communications capability through contracted access to the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Repeater radio network, but there exists a need to maintain communication services through WSP to mitigate radio coverage gaps, use as a backup to ensure 24/7/365 interoperable communication capabilities, and for WDFW enforcement officers to be able to interact directly with WSP for multi-jurisdictional public safety issues.

WSP charges third-party users of their communication services a flat fee based on communication rate studies. WSPS conducts these studies in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, federal cost allocation guidelines and governmental accounting standards. It is the Department's intent to comply with RCW 39.34.130, which states in part:

"... the full costs of a state agency incurred in providing services or furnishing materials to or for another agency under chapter 39.34 RCW or any other statute shall be charged to the agency contracting for such services or materials and shall be repaid..."

WSP's Communications Division's primary funding source is highway funds, and they are required under the 13th Amendment to ensure that those funds are used for highway related purposes only. Implementing the rate structure determined in this study should enable the WSP to recover all its costs and meet the regulatory requirements.

WDFW's communication fee was increased in the 23-25 biennium.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

NA

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

A fee study was conducted by the Washington State Patrol Budget & Fiscal Services to ensure rates charged are appropriate based on the costs of the services. In the 23-25 biennium, the communication fee increased to \$31,600 per month. This is a \$12,900 increase per month from the prior biennium. These expenses are incurred in object C.

Workforce Assumptions:

No additional FTE's are needed.

Historical Funding:

The carryforward from the 2020 supplemental was \$58,0000 per year, \$116,000 per biennia.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Goal: Healthy and Safe Communities

WDFW collaborate with local and federal law enforcement to respond to public safety incidents. Ensuring that WDFW officers can utilize WSP radio and dispatch will result in timely and efficient response to public safety incidents.

WDFW Vision

To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

Utilizing WSP radio and dispatch services enhances WDFW officers' ability to respond to threats to fish and wildlife.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Hunting Opportunity: \$70,000 annually, GF-S.

Manage Fishing Opportunity: 85,000 annually, GF-S.

Description: An effective agency requires administrative infrastructure that successfully supports the needs of staff who perform work directly in service to the mission. The Department's business management work comprehensively supports the entire agency and meets obligations by providing agency leadership and strategy, communicating with the public and legislature, managing finance and contracts, managing human resources, managing information technology infrastructure, building, and maintaining office facilities, maintaining agency records, responding to public safety incidents (general policing), and accessing legal counsel from the Office of the Attorney General.

Performance Outcomes:

No changes to performance outcomes described in the radio agreement between WSP and WDFW are anticipated.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

As a client to the WSP Radio Communications Network, WDFW relies on WSP to conduct any necessary outreach and engagement. WSP has fulfilled this requirement by providing comprehensive briefings on the status of their radio communications system, including improvements and enhancements, during the public proceedings of the quarterly Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee (SIEC) meetings. As of the last meeting on August 13, 2024, there were no public comments provided following the most recent WSP radio communications system update. The proceedings, minutes, and any decisions are publicly available on the SIEC website at State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) | WaTech.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Without additional funding for these increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder the Department's ability to apply an equitable lens.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents. This package also supports WDFW officers by equipping them with the safe and effective tools to communicate with other officers. WDFW officers are often spread out and isolated, and these communication tools help promote a culture of safety among agency field staff. Rural communities in Washington get left behind, and these radio communication devices in rural areas are effective ways to bridge the gap to enhance the services for rural populations.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

NA

Puget Sound Recovery:

NA

State Workforce Impacts:

The WSP radio network is used by all 154 WDFW Police officers deployed statewide. WDFW Police are often deployed in remote locations and operate independently. WSP troopers and local law enforcement are often the closest back up for WDFW officers, making the interoperability of communications a critical component of officer safety.

Intergovernmental:

Interoperable communication between law enforcement organizations is critical for public safety response and officer safety situations. Utilizing WSP radio and dispatching allows for the notification of natural resource calls for service sent to WSP to be efficiently routed to WDFW, mobile-to-mobile communications between officers of the two agencies, and additional connectivity with federal, county, and local law enforcement organizations who also use the WSP radio network.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WSP facilitates thousands of communication transactions for WDFW officers. These are associated with calls from the public that would have potentially been left unresolved if WDFW did not utilize the WSP communication network.

State Facilities Impacts:

NA

Changes from Current Law:

NA

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

As members of the OCIO State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC), WDFW is committed to ensuring that emergency responders, across all levels of government and across all jurisdictions can talk to each other and share data during crisis situations.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

NA

Reference Documents

[K20334-RR13-RDS-Department of Fish and Wildlife 2024-Final \(003\).pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. C	\$155	\$155	\$310	\$155	\$155	\$310

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

WDFW has seen a significant increase in large, complex public record requests in recent years due to agency growth and the speed at which we create records. The staff who handle public records requests (PRR) are increasingly challenged to respond in a timely and complete manner, increasing the Department’s legal and financial exposure. Additional staff will significantly improve WDFW’s ability to address the increase in records volume and current deliverable deadlines with assurance of completeness, which in turn reduces potential litigation and financial exposure. Additional resources will also allow for improved training of agency staff and overall records management.

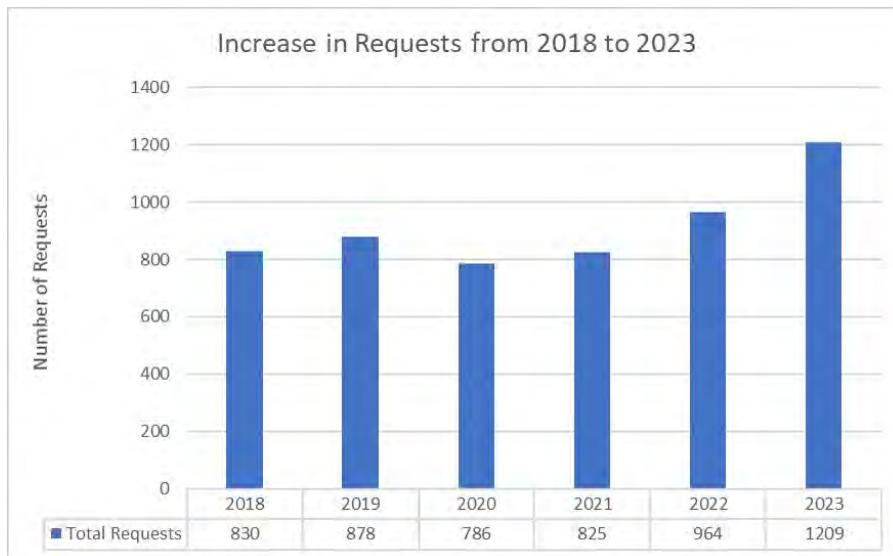
Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$661	\$661	\$1,322	\$661	\$661	\$1,322
Total Expenditures	\$661	\$661	\$1,322	\$661	\$661	\$1,322

Decision Package Description

Problem:

Each year, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) faces an increasing number of records requests. As new technologies are introduced and staffing levels grow, the volume of records produced daily continues to rise, creating more records that are subject to these requests.



Background:

WDFW is responsible for ensuring that public data are readily accessible and agency records are properly maintained, per [RCW 42.56 Public Records Act \(PRA\)](#). WDFW’s Public Records Unit (PRU) provides public records request responses, data classification, and risk management services. The PRU ensures transparency of agency records, protection of sensitive information, and remediation of risks within the Department, while providing oversight and guidance related to statutory requirements under the Washington State PRA and state and federal laws and policies.

Public records requests must be fulfilled in a reasonable amount of time, or penalties and judgements may be imposed. The 2022 Court of Appeals decision, *Cantu v. Yakima School District 17*, significantly increases potential legal risk associated with untimely public records responses. The decision opens a door for a requestor to seek penalties when a public records response takes long enough that the requestor reasonably believes the request will not be fulfilled. It does this by explicitly recognizing a cause of action for “constructive withholding” of public records for lengthy delays, for which penalties are now available. The risk associated with delays in providing public records has increased significantly due to this decision. WDFW has experienced a substantial increase in requestor complaints and several lawsuits claiming

unreasonable estimates of time. On average, WDFW has been sued once every two years prior to *Cantu v. Yakima*. In calendar year 2024, WDFW has been sued three times to date.

WDFW's workload has continued to increase in recent years in both complexity and volume of requests. From 2020 to 2023, the volume of public records requests increased by 51% and the Department is on track to meet or exceed this in 2024. Several factors contribute to this rise, including the integration of Microsoft Office 365 (MS 365) into the Department's business operations in 2020. This shift significantly expanded the volume of electronic records requiring review, redaction, and production for public records requests. Additionally, post-COVID changes in office spaces were a driving force to clean up physical records. WDFW has invested in creating an in-house scanning shop which includes two fulltime non-permanent Forms and Records Analyst 2's and the equipment to convert physical records to electronic. This increases the Departments ability to adequately search for records but also add the volume of records that must be search by centralized public records staff.

Coupled with the increased number of requests and the increased number of staff, it means longer review and response times. WDFW is currently processing requests with electronic responses up to 1-2 million records per request. Depending on the size, it can take anywhere from one minute to one hour to review a single record. In 2021, WDFW's electronic searches within MS 365 alone generated nearly 4.5 million records, and in 2022, this number grew exponentially, adding almost 2.5 million more. This excludes all other electronic records and physical records. There are several factors impacting the increased volume not limited to MS 365, facilities clean up and the scanning of numerous paper records, use of drones and other video, and agency growth.

WDFW's success is measured via the required annual Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) metrics. For the 2023 reporting period, the Department reported an estimated 22,613 staff hours spent on the 1,209 open and received requests. From January 1 through August 29, 2024, WDFW received 711 new requests. The average number of days to fulfilment has increased from 102 days in 2023 to 135 days in 2024.

Proposal:

WDFW is requesting additional staff capacity to keep up with growing public record demand and growing record volume to perform agency business.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The Public Records Units ongoing budget is \$2,010,000. WDFW has made \$511,000 of one-time investments in the 2023-25 biennium. This package is to meet increasing demands from the public.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Total costs are \$661,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

- \$467,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 4.0 FTEs Objects A and B.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

1.0 FTE Management Analyst 3

The Management Analyst 3 will collaborate with existing PRU staff to cover managing the public facing portion of request work and program level public records coordinator work. Additionally, the FTE associated with this request allows the PRU's continued goal to centralize as much as possible of the search, collection, and review of records in response to public records.

1.0 FTE Forms and Records Analyst 3

The Forms and Records Analyst 3 will assist existing PRU staff as well as the MA3 listed above and below with the PDR work for the Department's other programs. This position will support records management and public records review and redaction. This position will allow PRU to better distribute the program workloads from existing staff who are task saturated with their current workload, integrate other program public records coordination, and meet the ever-growing demands both internally and externally.

1.0 FTE IT System Administration - Entry

The IT System Administration – Entry will assist the existing Electronic Search Specialist (ESS) dedicated to searching all the electronic data stored in MS 365 and does not include data stored in other shared servers, local drives, external storage devices, and cloud locations. This request to add another ESS will widen the centralized search support and thus reduce the burden on program staff to conduct searches, reducing risk of human error during the processes. Additionally, the ESS is responsible for completing the search plan and conducts the search using MS 365 eDiscovery, but it cannot export every case due to limited capacity. This means the export work is often sent out to the Program Records Coordinators, the Public Records Unit, and the Litigation Holds Coordinator who are also responsible for completing the review, redaction, and release of the records in a timely manner. There is more risk realized in this scenario than if the Department could centralize it and complete all the work within the Public Records Unit.

1.0 FTE IT Data Management – Journey

The IT Data Management – Journey will help respond to public records requests, discovery, litigation, and other investigative requests effectively and efficiently. This position would be responsible for designing, testing, and implementing data retrieval methods, primarily through the executive of structured query language (SQL) queries, and ensuring the integrity of database system data. This position would be relied upon for subject matter expertise in data management practices and would be skilled in providing technical support and guidance around exporting data from these various databases. This will include but is not limited to SQL queries, data modeling, metadata management and repository usage, extensible data type administration, procedural skills for stored procedure, triggers and user-defined functions and storage management techniques.

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This package supports the Governor's goal of efficient, effective, and accountable government.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package supports two of WDFW's 25-Year Strategic Plan:

- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship.
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW has invested in technological tools to increase efficiencies in the general work of agency staff and specifically public records, litigation and investitive work. These tools include SMARSH for text message capture, Simply File for email organization, and specialized software to search, organize, review and redact in response to public records requests, litigation, and investigations.

This request includes sustainable funding for these software applications to ensure continued use in the future. It includes full-time positions to support the public records request process including centralization of the PRU. The Department is committed to enhancing our processes to better meet legal requirements and strengthen defensibility. By continuing to centralize public records functions and upgrading our search and review tools, we aim to improve response and fulfillment times. These efforts will help us achieve greater compliance with the RCW, reducing potential legal exposure and minimizing the risk of fines.

This request will also:

- Increase ability to respond in a timelier manner, which in turn drives down litigation and the risk of financial penalties.
- Reduce response time fosters public trust.
- Increased ability to provide timely responses records requests that impact the public, media, businesses, partner agencies, stakeholders, and law enforcement.
- Increased capacity to ensure that records protected by state and federal law are not inaccurately released.
- Increase compliance with Secretary of State schedules for proper retention and destruction of records.
- Reduce gaps in the workflow: receive public records, log, track, vet, work with requestor, legal compliant acknowledgement, gather, review, apply redactions to protected information, create legally compliant log of each redaction.
- Keep WDFW's staff current with records retention rules, storage, management, and public records obligations.
- Maintain and keep current policies and procedures.
- Increase training opportunities.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to additional public disclosure requests, requiring the need for resources for staff, software, and training of agency staff on records management protocols.

Disproportional impacts may arise if this is not funded. Without additional funding for this need, WDFW will not be able to keep up with public records requests and demands, and other areas of the budget will be cut. These consequences are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW is obligated under the Puget Sound Salmon Management Plan (PSSMP) to provide third party notice to the affect PSSMP tribe(s) when records are requested in a public records request. Additionally, the Department has legal requirements impacting the protection of certain tribal and department records related to tribal litigation in *US v. Washington* and *US v. Oregon*.

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW anticipates the public would be receptive of this proposal, as it would provide the agency with the resources needed to respond quickly to public records requests.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

- Public Records Act, chapter [42.56 RCW](#)
- [Executive Order 1601](#), Privacy Protection and Transparency in State Government
- [Executive Order 1701](#), Reaffirming Washington’s Commitment to Tolerance, Diversity, and Inclusion
- [Washington Secretary of State rules regarding records retention](#)
- Revised Code of Washington [RCW 40.14.040](#) Records officers—Designation—Powers and duties
- [RCW 40.10.010](#)—Essential records—Designation—List—Security and Protection—Reproduction
- [RCW 39.26.340](#) Data Sharing Agreements – When required - Contractors
- [RCW 39.24.240](#) - Data requests – When written agreement required – From another agency

Governor’s Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$346	\$346	\$692	\$346	\$346	\$692
Obj. B	\$121	\$121	\$242	\$121	\$121	\$242
Obj. E	\$32	\$32	\$64	\$32	\$32	\$64
Obj. T	\$162	\$162	\$324	\$162	\$162	\$324

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) utilizes Department of Ecology’s Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) for forage fish research and monitoring. Forage fish are a foundation of marine food webs and several species spawn in nearshore habitat, increasingly at risk from shoreline development, armoring, toxic runoff, and chemical spills. WDFW is a leader in protecting forage fish by documenting the location, condition, and use of spawning habitat. Funding contract cost increases ensures that WDFW can maintain critical monitoring and research. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly Related to Implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$34	\$34	\$68	\$34	\$34	\$68
Total Expenditures	\$34	\$34	\$68	\$34	\$34	\$68

Decision Package Description

The WCC is an AmeriCorps program that provides hands-on experience, field skills, and training opportunities to young adults and military veterans. Since 2014, WDFW has worked with WCC crews hired by Ecology to provide ongoing support for forage fish research, monitoring, and management. Forage fish are critical prey for salmon, seabirds, marine mammals, and other economically and culturally important species. They act as a buffer between young salmon and their predators; and they directly and indirectly support commercial and recreational fisheries in Washington State. Several species of forage fish require healthy nearshore habitat to spawn and thrive, and these habitats are often the first to be impacted by human disturbances and further imperiled by climate change.

Currently, a six-person WCC crew performs activities such as habitat surveys, sample collection and processing, lab analysis, data entry, scientific monitoring, outreach, and other related tasks. The agreement with Ecology aligns with the WCC service year, commencing on October 1 of each year. This proposal requests ongoing funding to align with contract costs for the WCC crew and maintain our current annual sponsorship of a WCC crew for a full-service year.

The WCC crew represents half of the personnel currently dedicated to researching and monitoring forage fish in the Puget Sound at WDFW. They provide much-needed capacity to work on the growing list of forage fish related questions, concerns, and management demands that have outpaced the resources provided to address them. Information that our WCC crew helps to collect, and process is used for annual updates to habitat maps and indices of abundance for forage fish species. This information is used regularly by state, federal, tribal, and local co-managers when reviewing permits for shoreline development projects. The capacity provided by the WCC crew also allows us to provide support to tribes, several citizen science organizations, and seven county Marine Resource Committees with projects focused on shoreline conservation and restoration. We will no longer have the capacity to assist these organizations without the WCC crew’s continuing support.

Sponsoring a WCC crew costs tens of thousands of dollars less than the alternative of hiring an equivalent number of technicians and provides professional training and experience to young adults and veterans from diverse backgrounds. Many previous crew members have leveraged their experience and training at WDFW into careers at WDFW and other state agencies or gone on to pursue advanced degrees. WDFW is proud to be a WCC crew sponsor and hopes to be able to continue working with WCC crews into the future.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is to maintain current program in light of contract cost increases.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

From 2014 through 2021, the forage fish WCC crew had been funded through DNR's capital budget.

The legislature provided \$721,000 (FY1: \$313K; FY2: \$408K) to WDFW in the 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget in budget item: Forage Fish Spawning Monitoring.

An adjustment was made to the base budget for the 2023-25 biennium, and the total increased in year one by \$95,000, for a new ongoing total of \$816,000 (\$408K/FY). The legislative budget note stated, "Ongoing funding is provided for Washington Conservation Corps crews to continue forage fish survey work previously funded by the Department of Natural Resources."

Of this amount, \$406,320 (FY1: \$202,960; FY2: \$203,360) was required compensation to Ecology for the cost of services by the WCC crew. The remainder of the budget, approximately \$410,000 (~\$205k/FY) funds travel (vehicle and vessel expenses), personal protective equipment, survey equipment, analytical supplies, specialized training, and 1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist that works daily with the crew to provide training, coordination, oversight, and provide quality assurance and analysis for WCC crew products and activities.

The legislature provided an additional \$35,000 (FY1: \$15K; FY2: \$20K) to WDFW in the 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget in budget item: WCC contract increase from ECY. This amount will increase \$5,000 in the carryforward level adjustments and the ongoing amount will become \$856,000 (\$428K/FY). This increased the amount available for required compensation to Ecology for services by the WCC crew to \$441,720 (\$218,360 FY2024/\$223,360 FY2025) leaving a deficit in the current biennium of \$72,912 (FY1: \$38,956; FY2: \$33,956), and an ongoing deficit of \$67,912 in 2025-27 biennium (\$33,956/FY).

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal is a result of identifying non-discretionary cost increases that will have a negative impact on the business operations of WDFW and restrict mission-critical work. This request supports the state's ability to achieve two Results Washington goals: 1) Prosperous Economy; and 2) Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. Forage fish are critical to support commercial and recreational fisheries in Washington State. Moreover, forage fish are essential for salmon, seabirds, marine mammals, and other economically and culturally important species.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package also supports the following three Department Strategic Plan priorities:

Proactively address conservation challenges strategy while contributing data for ecoregional assessments; expanding efforts to manage at-risk fish species; providing data for the priority habitats and species increases ability to deliver high-level technical expertise on species and habitats; And identifying species and habitats at risk of climate disruption.

Engage communities through recreation and stewardship strategy: Connecting with youth and young adults and the next generation to provide for emerging professional work experiences through internships and young adult employment programs; Driving community science that creates stronger awareness and stewardship of fish and wildlife while advancing agency goals; And expanding WDFW's volunteer program to advance a broader range of Department goals in concert with our partners.

Deliver science to inform Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions strategy while pursuing opportunities to increase community science in conservation efforts.

In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following performance outcomes:

- 10 percent net gain in the quality and quantity of fish and wildlife habitat
- 25 percent increase in wild salmon

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Fishing Opportunities: \$34,000 in FY 2026, and \$34,000 in FY 2027 and ongoing, General Fund State.

This package supports the activities and the following supporting strategy: monitor and manage fin fish populations. Fish resources are assessed, monitored, and evaluated to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and based on sound science. The department

develops and uses fish management harvest models that consider the annual variability of fish abundance to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities while minimizing risks to wild fish populations.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal will contribute to the following performance indicators:

- Priority research needs being met.
- Acres of fish and wildlife habitat being protected.

State, local, and federal agencies use the forage fish habitat map to inform habitat protection. The Forage Fish Spawning Habitat Map is provided here:

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=19b8f74e2d41470cbd80b1af8dedd6b3>.

Annual updates of herring spawning biomass trends. Puget Sound Partnership Forage Fish Vital Sign is provided here:

<https://vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov/VitalSignIndicator/Detail/36>.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Monitoring and sustaining forage fish is an integral part of preserving economic and cultural opportunities for Washington residents and tribal governments. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This request addresses priorities of the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) and the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, recommendations by Southern resident Killer Whale (SRKW) Task Force, and actions of the 2022-2026 Action Agenda for Puget Sound.

This decision package closely aligns with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda’s Institutional Strategy C (Research and Monitoring), Strategy 15 (Adaptive Management of Salmon Recovery) and Strategy 3 (Healthy Shorelines) by supporting WDFW and the WCC crew to continue critical forage fish monitoring and research and collect baseline data about shoreline food webs. Through these efforts this decision package is directly aligned with 2022-2026 Action Agenda’s Action 122, coordinate efforts to assess and report on ecosystem conditions and the effectiveness of ecosystem recovery strategies and actions by implementing key opportunity, follow, assess, and report on Puget Sound indicators, and is directly aligned with Strategy 15’s Salmon Recovery climate change response key opportunity, to ensure sustainable support for monitoring efforts, by providing habitat surveys, forage fish monitoring, and other tasks that directly support the forage fish vital sign and related indicators, and supporting sustainable harvest decisions and data on prey abundance for Chinook salmon.

This decision package implements priority actions, builds upon recommendations of the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project to further define bottom-up and top-down food web effects on juvenile salmonid mortality in Puget Sound from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan, and directly implements the SRKW Task Force Recommendation 15, monitor forage fish populations to inform decisions on harvest and management, by assessing forage fish habitat location, condition, and seasonal use of spawning habitat.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

We expect that stakeholders from both fishing groups and conservation organizations as well as the Marine Resource Committees and NGOs we have worked with would support this proposal.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

This package supports the Governor’s Salmon Recovery Strategy 6, How we will increase forage fish populations in Puget Sound; Fund ecosystem-wide monitoring programs to establish baseline for underlying; ecosystem conditions and forage fish populations; Implement findings from Salish Sea Marine Survival Study; Support acquisition and restoration of nearshore habitat to increase the abundance of forage fish for salmon sustenance.

Reference Documents

[Attachments and Reference Material.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$34	\$34	\$68	\$34	\$34	\$68

Agency Contact Information

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
Maintenance Level - VR - Vehicle Replacement

Agency Recommendation Summary

This request seeks funding for Enforcement Program's comprehensive operational needs associated with these circumstances. WDFW Enforcement Officers patrol public lands and waters statewide and respond to a variety of service calls. The state's population exceeds 8 million residents and grows twice as fast as the national average. This growth increases usage of natural resources, which in turn requires additional WDFW Enforcement Officer presence and patrols to ensure public safety and resource protection. Increased patrols causes more wear and tear on vehicles and equipment which accelerates their service life. Replacement of modern vehicles will inherently cost more due to new technology and inflation.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,198	\$1,918	\$3,116	\$1,198	\$1,198	\$2,396
Total Expenditures	\$1,198	\$1,918	\$3,116	\$1,198	\$1,198	\$2,396

Decision Package Description

Fish and Wildlife officers are essential in maintaining safe and properly managed recreational and commercial opportunities for the residents and visitors to Washington State. To do this necessary work an increase in Fish and Wildlife expenditure authority is crucial. The request includes funding for the following:

New patrol trucks to replace aging fleet of vehicles that is exceeding service life more rapidly due to increased calls for service and associated demands placed on the vehicles.

30-34' vessel for use in maritime patrols in vicinity of key maritime infrastructure and Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) populations.

Ongoing vessel maintenance and repowers to modernize and improve the reliability of the current fleet.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

NA

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Truck costs have increased due to new technology, features, and overall inflation. From the last biennium, costs for trucks and raw materials to outfit trucks have increased to \$30,601 per vehicle. The order price of trucks increased from \$44,266 to \$57,867 between 2021 and 2023. Additionally, the average cost to outfit trucks rose from \$9,000 to \$26,000. Together, the increase from \$13,601 increase in vehicle purchase amount plus \$17,000 increase in outfitting cost equals the \$30,601 per vehicle increase. That increase, multiplied by 150 trucks, and divided by the 5-year useful life, results in an ongoing annual cost increase of \$918,030.

This package also requests one time funding for a 30'-34' vessel at \$720,000.

Lastly, ongoing costs of \$280,000 per year are requested for repowers, hull refurbishment, and component replacements.

FY1 costs $\$918,030 + \$280,000 = \$1,190,000$ (rounded to nearest thousand).

FY2 costs $\$918,030 + \$720,000 + \$280,000 = \$1,918,000$ (rounded to nearest thousand).

Workforce Assumptions:

No additional FTEs are expected currently.

Historical Funding:

Historically, the funding for trucks and vessels were covered by vacancy savings. However, the hiring and retention rate has significantly increased which reduces the programs ability to fund these purchases.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

WDFW has a responsibility to preserve and protect the State's fish and wildlife. This responsibility becomes ever more complex with increased human and wildlife conflict, the obligation to protect treaty rights, and the presence of endangered and protected species. As vehicles and vessels age, WDFW Police will have difficulty providing adequate protection to our most vulnerable fish and wildlife resources.

Calls for service are exponentially rising as users of Washington's outdoor spaces increase. Enforcement Officers must be well equipped for this line of work and may be put at risk if their aging equipment fails while in the field or in emergency situations.

The consequences of not funding this package will have profound negative impacts on the ability of WDFW Police to deploy proper strategies and focus sufficient resources toward addressing a key mission of the protection of our natural resources and the public's safety. The lack of adequate funding hinders WDFW Police providing sufficient vessel patrol and officer presence in key geographic locations to protect threatened or endangered species and their impacted ecosystems.

This package will provide greater presence for the following groups:

1. Human Population – general safety to the public.
 1. Response times, strategizing, and prioritizing. Less downtime due to repairs to an aging fleet.
 2. Increased deterrence of illegal or overharvest of species which can limit hunting and harvest opportunities for the public.
 3. Commercial sanitary shellfish patrol and seafood marketplace inspections.
 4. Increased capacity for emergency response (e.g. search and rescue, wildfire, flooding, landslides, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)).
 5. Detrimental effects from aquatic invasive species to state waterways, power and agricultural systems.
2. Threatened and Endangered species (ESA) - Increasing coverage of ESA listed species resulting in decreased illegal take and positive population growth.
 1. Better ability to enforce closures, increased responsiveness to incidents.
 2. Habitat destruction.
 3. Poaching.
3. Animal and Resource Trafficking – Adequately patrol and investigate largescale and international crimes committed in Washington State.
 1. Sanitary shellfish and seafood labelling – consumer health and protection of industry.
 2. Washington Animal Trafficking Act.
 3. Commercial airport inspections.
 4. Trade of local animal parts.
4. State Lands – Deterring illegal use of lands
 1. Habitat destruction, vehicle usage, dumping, stream and waterway degradation.
 2. Illegal camping.
 3. Illegal timber harvest.
 4. Illegal agriculture operations.
 5. Preserve treaty rights.

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Indicators:

- Protect Aquatic Habitat
- Enforce Commercial and Recreational Fishing Regulations
- Preserve Hunting Opportunities
- Provide Public Safety on WDFW Owned Lands and Respond to Incidents
- Enhance the use of public spaces for all users, including camping, hiking, wildlife viewing.

Performance Outcomes:

This request will contribute to achievement of the following in WA State on behalf of the public:

1. Promote compliance with laws focused on protecting Washington's natural resources.
2. Provide professional law enforcement services.
3. Raise the level of appreciation for the protection of our natural resources through enhanced outreach and education.
4. Strengthen partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.
5. Enhance public safety response.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased rates over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for this increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities, however cutting services, and shifting resources will hinder WDFW's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding WDFW's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

NA

Puget Sound Recovery:

The lack of adequate resourcing inhibits the ability of WDFW Police to provide sufficient patrol vessel and officer presence in key geographic locations to protect threatened or endangered species in the Puget Sound area. An example of this is the iconic and endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale's habitats and feeding grounds in the central and southern Puget Sound. Numerous models have shown that SRKWs are showing up in the central and southern Puget Sound at an increased rate. Yet current officer deployment strategies have focused on the northern Puget Sound. WDFW Police must meet this shifting whale presence to have any chance of providing proper protection and response to whale related violations by both recreational and commercial boaters.

State Workforce Impacts:

NA

Intergovernmental:

WDFW Enforcement Officers routinely collaborate and partner with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and stakeholders for the protection of public lands and waters in Washington State. Strong existing partnerships with NOAA via Joint Enforcement Activities centered on preventing overharvesting of Pacific Ocean species and the protection of resident killer whales. Enduring cooperation with US Fish and Wildlife, CBP and neighboring states and provinces reduces the frequency of illegal trafficking of wildlife, national border incursions and related items. Cooperation with WSP, the Department of Homeland Security, the US Coast Guard, and local authorities secures waterways and related infrastructure critical to both marine life and the state's economic prosperity. Work with DNR, WA State Parks, and local jurisdictions reduce risks to outdoor recreators through increased information sharing, general education, and a balanced presence in high use areas for recreational boating, snowpark usage, hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting. Tribal cooperation secures treaty rights and ensures all aspects of outdoor connections that underpin native heritage are recognized, prioritized, and preserved. Chronic wasting disease exists in every state and province surrounding Washington state and would be catastrophic for tribal users and the general public alike, but the additional Officers will increase Washington State's chances of this becoming a reality here. Lastly, Officers and Staff cooperate with federal, state, and local emergency response officials annually during the wildfire season and in response to any disaster requiring the services of WDFW Enforcement Officers.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Although not yet solicited, WDFW Enforcement Program anticipates stakeholders described above will view these additions favorably. Federal agencies listed above proactively seek cooperation in SRKW protection, enforcement of marine fishery regulations, reducing wildlife trafficking, protection of public lands, and the security of critical maritime infrastructure. Tribal contacts emphasize cooperation towards reduction in illegal harvesting of fish and game and the infringement of treaty rights. State and local enforcement agencies routinely express appreciation for the cooperation and partnerships due in part to the severe lack of law enforcement officers as a whole in Washington State. WDFW Enforcement Officers are oftentimes the first to arrive on any scene requiring law enforcement response in rural areas.

State Facilities Impacts:

NA

Changes from Current Law:

NA

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21) identifies WDFW as part of the nation's critical infrastructure given the risk to the nation's food supply based on the significant quantity of fish produced by the agency. Federal requirements cannot be met without maintaining enough enforcement capacity as proposed in this decision package.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

NA

Reference Documents

[Invoice 2021.pdf](#)

[Invoice 2023.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. J	\$1,198	\$1,918	\$3,116	\$1,198	\$1,198	\$2,396

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The price for Coded Wire Tags has increased. WDFW seeks expenditure authority in state, local, and federal codes to pay the increased costs and continue to mark and tag fish, as required by RCW 77.95.290. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$70	\$70	\$140	\$70	\$70	\$140
Fund 001 - 2	\$14	\$14	\$28	\$14	\$14	\$28
Fund 001 - 7	\$14	\$14	\$28	\$14	\$14	\$28
Fund 04M - 1	\$2	\$2	\$4	\$2	\$2	\$4
Total Expenditures	\$100	\$100	\$200	\$100	\$100	\$200
Revenue						
001 - 0315	\$14	\$14	\$28	\$14	\$14	\$28
001 - 0549	\$14	\$14	\$28	\$14	\$14	\$28
Total Revenue	\$28	\$28	\$56	\$28	\$28	\$56

Decision Package Description

RCW 77.95.290 requires the adipose fin clipping of hatchery released salmonids, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) also requires hatchery raised salmonids (Chinook, coho and steelhead) to be marked prior to their release into the environment allowing for quick visual differentiation from wild populations. The costs for these services have increased over time, and WDFW requests funding for the difference.

Hatchery mass marking is critical to provide prey opportunities for endangered Southern Resident Orcas and recover endangered and threatened species to healthy, self-sustaining levels. Furthermore, hatchery mass marking benefits commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfills obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights in salmon and steelhead. In addition, mass marking is critical to enforce rules and regulations in fishing activities. Therefore, efficient mass marking is critical for the Department's activities enforcing fishing regulations, monitoring, and managing fish populations to conserve and protect native fish and wildlife.

These changes would have a ripple effect on various state budgets, such as PSRFE, Hatchery Reform, SRKW and regional state budgets. Additionally, federal funding such as Mitchell Act would be impacted.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This is an alteration of the reimbursable rates for marking and tagging work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The price of Coded Wire Tags in FY22 was \$92.00 per 1,000 units with 40,000 units ordered (Attachment A). As of the most recent purchase, in FY24, it was \$97.00 per 1,000 units (Attachment B). This results in a \$100,000 increase on an annual basis.

Workforce Assumptions:

There are no FTE associated with this request.

Historical Funding:

Current costs are included in the Department's base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will be forced to cut essential services that the general public depends on such as hatchery production, fisheries management, shellfish programs, public safety, conservation efforts, and recreational activities.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goals of Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment, Prosperous Economy, and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government. Mass marking and coded wire tagging is fundamental to the harvest management and recovery of ESA-listed Salmon and Steelhead in Puget Sound, the Washington Coast and Columbia River; it supports the commercial and recreational fishing industries; and it respects our state's government-to-government relationship with tribes by supporting their harvest opportunities.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the following Department Strategic Plan priorities:

- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, delivering hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as the Department continues to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, developing an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This package supports our activity inventory item "Produce Hatchery Fish" and applicable support strategy:

- Produce salmon and steelhead.

The Department owns and/or operates 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights. Production at hatcheries is conducted consistent with ESA requirements and hatchery reform goals. This activity includes the entire fish production cycle for salmon and steelhead, raising fish from eggs until release age, sometimes transporting them to their release location, and then collecting more eggs upon their return.

Hatchery mass marking is critical to provide prey opportunities for endangered Southern Resident Orcas and recover endangered and threatened species to healthy, self-sustaining levels. Furthermore, hatchery mass marking benefits commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfills obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights in salmon and steelhead. In addition, mass marking is critical to enforce rules and regulations in fishing activities. Therefore, efficient mass marking is critical for the Department's activities enforcing fishing regulations, monitoring, and managing fish populations to conserve and protect native fish and wildlife.

Performance Outcomes:

By addressing the impact of a rate increase on both state and Mitchell Act budgets, the agency can improve the accuracy of our expenditure recovery from federal and local partners for marking and tagging services provided. Presently, an estimated \$184k in program expenditures remain unrecovered, which is attributed to stagnant rates since 2019. In addition, to rectify the long-term fiscal deficit within the marking and tagging program, adjustments to the rates are needed to ensure financial viability and self-sustainability.

A rate change will create a shortfall in state and Mitchell Act which is the purpose of this budget ask. Conversely, the rate adjustment will increase expenditure recovery ability from federal and local contracts, facilitating enhanced contract award amounts from these partners. Securing this additional funding from the legislature will enable the marking and tagging program to realign its operations and eliminate the existing deficit it has been running since 2019.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department's hatcheries provide fisheries that people depend upon for jobs (commercial fishing and related industries), meet federal treaty obligations, provide additional forage for southern resident orcas, support local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses), provide recreational opportunities for the people of Washington and its visitors, and protect Washington's fishing and cultural heritages. Recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses, as well as the Department, through license sales. Most of the salmon production at WDFW owned hatcheries is linked to conservation, harvest augmentation (tribal and non-tribal) and federal court agreements.

The Department completes community engagement and public outreach through the Communication and Public Engagement divisions and is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with communities historically excluded and marginalized. It is important that the Department can maintain these functions to prevent a degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maintenance level decision packages are frequently inwardly focused. This funding request is responding to the increased costs over time due to inflation and other increases. Without additional funding for this increased costs, other areas of the budget will be cut. These reductions are not directly connected to specific communities; however, cutting services and shifting resources will hinder the Department's ability to apply an equitable lens in upholding the Department's mission and serving Washington's diverse populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal will help mass fin clipping and coded wire tagging, leading to more adult fish availability for tribal fishing and better fish management through science. Rural and geographically isolated communities in Washington will significantly benefit from the economic opportunities in commercial fishing. Recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to rural businesses.

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows the Department to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW maintains regular and open communication with communities and constituents of the state. Through ongoing conversations and engagement, WDFW actively seeks input, feedback, and suggestions. These discussions encompass crucial initiatives for the agency, including funding considerations for hatchery investments, ensuring that hatchery operations remain a valuable asset to communities statewide. This continuous communication allows for collaborative and informed decision making, ensuring that the interests and concerns of the communities are taken into account. By actively involving stakeholders and community groups in the decision-making process, WDFW can help to be sure that proposed initiatives align with community needs. In addition, WDFW works closely with the Budget and Policy Advisory Group which assists in facilitating the strategic pathways that align with the state's overall objectives and public interests, reinforcing WDFW's commitment to community-focused decision making.

The work associated with Washington hatcheries has far-reaching impacts on diverse communities and stakeholder groups across the state. Each of these communities possesses unique histories, cultural practices, and visions for the future, influencing their preferences and viewpoints on policies and decisions that shape that future. It is important to recognize that any decision regarding hatchery operations will inevitably garner both support and dissent from various stakeholders, each rooted in their distinct perspectives and interests. Therefore, in the decision-making process, WDFW acknowledges and respects the diversity of opinions and viewpoints brought forth by stakeholders. Despite the potential for differing opinions or alternative approaches, WDFW remains committed to considering and incorporating these diverse perspectives throughout the development and implementation of policies, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process that reflects the needs and values of all stakeholders involved.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15: Salmon Recovery and is directly aligned with Action (ID# 205) Increase salmon abundance while protecting genetic diversity by implementing hatchery and harvest management strategies and expanding available habitat while ensuring abundant salmon for harvest, treaty rights, and other species such as Southern Resident Orca, by implementing key opportunity, continue to implement increased state and tribal hatchery production to support prey availability for Southern Resident Orca, by increasing WDFW’s hatchery capacity to produce recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident orca prey, and catalyze conservation efforts for wild salmonids. These activities are supported through WDFW’s activities to increase pathogen monitoring, fish marking to meet regulatory requirements, and facilities operation. The Treaty Tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) co-manage hatchery production and salmon harvest allocations in Washington State. Through these efforts this decision package is also indirectly aligned with Action (ID#206) Ensure sustainable harvest of hatchery and natural salmon and support treaty-reserved fishing rights by increasing WDFW’s hatchery salmon production. Through these efforts this decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria: support continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan and directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca Taskforce recommendation 6: Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans, and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures, and indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant Salmon Strategy Recommendation 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

Mass marking and coded wire tagging have been long-standing desires among tribal co-managers. Marking and tagging salmon and steelhead inform decision making when crafting fishing opportunities for all users as well as providing opportunities for sport and tribal anglers. Support for Hatchery Investment Strategy efforts will be strong from tribal co-managers and federal partners overseeing implementation of fishery and hatchery management for conservation.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Fishing constituents are supportive of efforts that lead to increased opportunities on salmon and steelhead by maintaining current production levels. WDFW risks losing the support of the recreational fishing community if it reduces fishing opportunities because fish are unable to be mass marked due to budget limitations.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

In addition to RCW 77.95.290 requiring the adipose fin clipping of hatchery released salmonids, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) also requires hatchery raised salmonids (Chinook, coho and steelhead) to be marked prior to their release into the environment allowing for quick visual differentiation from wild populations.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Hatchery facilities and the programs they support are predominantly operated to expand harvest opportunities. Therefore, they are not contributing directly to salmon recovery efforts, but may become better aligned with the salmon strategy and recovery plans if sufficient funding were in place to optimize their performance.

Reference Documents

- [MT Attachment A - BN2123 Tagwire Invoice.pdf](#)
- [MT Attachment B - BN2325 Tagwire Invoice.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$100	\$100	\$200	\$100	\$100	\$200

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Provide direct expenditure authority to DFW to fund current level of work for Geoduck Stock Assessments.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$265	\$265	\$530	\$265	\$265	\$530
Total Expenditures	\$265	\$265	\$530	\$265	\$265	\$530

Decision Package Description

Currently, WDFW performs geoduck stock assessment, research, and environmental impact assessment through an interagency agreement with Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). WDFW has not recouped indirect charges in those contracts, which are necessary to support the WDFW scientific dive team. This level of funding is essential since a dive team requires four FTEs to safely and efficiently conduct the fishery and meet obligations with tribal comanagers.

In addition to the current funding challenges, recent WDFW research evaluating the fishery model that fishery managers use to set harvest quotas suggests that the geoduck fishery as it's administered now wouldn't be sustainable long-term.

Some areas have been closed to all harvest. This investment is critical to insuring that in the long term, the geoduck fishery will be a sustainable source of state revenue and economic opportunity.

The state and tribal governments are collaborating on a new management system that will enhance this long-term sustainability. However, implementing the new system includes more frequent stock assessment surveys. Therefore, demands on the geoduck dive team have only increased in recent years—further underscoring the critical need for investing in WDFW's full existing dive team.

To address the challenges described above, WDFW requests new spending authority from General Fund State (GFS) including indirect charges for geoduck stock assessment, research, and environmental assessment. Support for this proposal allows WDFW to maintain its existing scientific dive team, including all staff that are critical to conducting fisheries management. WDFW and DNR will continue to conduct an orderly fishery and generate state revenue, while now adequately covering administrative costs. Furthermore, WDFW will be able to meet obligations to comanagers with increased geoduck tract surveys to support a new management system, sustainable management of the resource, and to maintain full functionality and safety in its critical dive operations.

Consequences of Not Funding the Package

If this spending authority request is not funded, WDFW and DNR may have to deprioritize other important work. Scaling down the dive team isn't an option; for safety reasons, a functioning dive team needed to complete geoduck stock assessment surveys requires four divers. Moreover, a smaller team severely impacts the team's ability to conduct the necessary surveys safely and severely hampers the ability of the team to accomplish all the annual stock assessment projects critical to sustainably managing the fishery.

WDFW is the only agency or entity with the necessary scientific dive capacity and expertise to carry out this work, and as such, is also a critical leader in this realm. Annual stock assessment work is already streamlined through prioritization; due to the large number of sites and research questions and the scale of the Puget Sound geography, individual sites are generally surveyed according to a periodic basis.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

“This proposal provides ongoing funding, via a direct appropriation to the Department, to support four existing permanent staff who are dedicated to management of the geoduck fishery, including stock assessment, environmental impact assessment, research, and co-management responsibilities.”

2023-25 Biennium funding

\$1,374,000 with \$850,000 base funding from DNR and a \$524,000 increase made possible during the 2024 supplemental.

A \$6,000 increase over the biennium is the result of general wage increases for staff.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits for 4.0 fulltime equivalent (FTE) positions totals \$436,000 for fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E, includes \$6,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. Additional goods and services total \$51,280 for the following: \$8,000 each year for new scuba gear and the needed upkeep and maintenance of current scuba gear, \$15,000 for vessel maintenance, \$11,000 for vessel fuel, \$8,000 for dive pay (scuba diver hazard pay), \$5,280 for Nitrox air fills, and \$4,000 for other needed equipment and supplies during peak seasons.

Travel costs, object G, total \$10,000 in FY 2024 and ongoing and consists of \$9,300 to cover per diem and lodging expenses for four staff traveling (for multiple day projects at various sample sites) and \$960 for a daily vehicle rental for three weeks. \$59 per diem X 15 days = \$885 x 4 FTE = \$3,540 per diem. \$96 lodging per day X 15 days = \$1,440 x 4 FTE = \$5,760 lodging Pacific County cost estimate. Small 4x4 Truck total cost of \$960 DES daily rental for a cost of (15 days x \$32 = \$480) and mileage cost of \$ (100 miles per day x \$0.32 = \$32 x 15 days = \$480). An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

\$425,000 per year is credited in Object S to show the anticipated expenditure authority transfer, for a total of \$850,000 per biennium.

Workforce Assumptions:

No additional FTE's are needed, as these positions have existed on interagency funding previously. However, the related FTEs and descriptions of work are given for clarity.

Job classification and the associated work for 4.0 FTE are as follows:

2.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 are responsible for dive and stock assessment logistics, including vessel operation and maintenance, survey planning, dive equipment maintenance and operation; data management, analysis, and synthesis; comanager communication; support of fisheries managers; and critical in water dive survey work across several fisheries and abalone recovery work.

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3 is a scientist contributing to and leading geoduck research to support advancement in understanding of the geoduck resource and sustainable management of the geoduck fishery; management of the scallop fishery; various co-management roles; and critical in water dive survey work across several fisheries and abalone recovery work.

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 is the lead scientist and manager for the entire dive program, which manages geoduck, sea cucumber, sea urchin, scallop, and octopus resources as well as Endangered pinto abalone recovery for the state of Washington, and dive safety for the entire Department. This position oversees all aspects of management and research as well as all the administrative oversight of the work

unit and relevant agency assets (including two research vessels). The position also represents the Department in co-management of relevant fisheries and leads and participates in critical in water dive survey work across several fisheries and abalone recovery work.

Historical Funding:

Funding for this work has traditionally come from ALEA and RMCA funds in an Interagency agreement with DNR.

In 2023-25; \$1,374,000 with \$850,000 base funding from DNR and a \$524,000 increase made possible during the 2024 supplemental.

In 2021-2023 the contract amount was only \$850,000, as it was missing indirect and the intervening general wage increases.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor’s Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state’s ability to achieve the Results Washington Goal of a Prosperous Economy by supporting state and tribal commercial fishing opportunity.

WDFW 25Year Strategic Plan

WDFW’s proposal connects to the 25Year Strategic Plan by proactively addressing conservation challenges—including the implementation of a new, more sustainable geoduck management model; through research to better understand and advance management of the geoduck resource. It similarly helps to deliver science that informs some of Washington’s most pressing fish and wildlife questions through that same research capacity. Finally, it also connects with Modelling Operational and Environmental Excellence by improving (and maintaining) staff safety, as the dive team oversees the agencywide Dive Safety program.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Fishing Opportunities 4.0 FTE and \$665,000 fiscal year 2024 and ongoing, General Fund-State funding.

This package supports our activity inventory item “Manage Fishing Opportunities” and applicable support strategy: Monitor and manage shellfish populations

WDFW assesses and monitors shellfish resources to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and grounded in sound science. To understand what fishery resources are available, Department staff conduct shellfish population surveys. To maximize recreational and commercial opportunities and minimize risks to the viability of wild populations, the Department develops and uses shellfish management harvest models that consider the spatial and temporal variability of shellfish abundance. The Department cooperatively manages shellfish fisheries with treaty tribes. These state tribal shellfish harvest management plans ensure that fisheries are conducted to meet sustainability and conservation goals.

Performance outcomes

This proposal supports the maintenance of the Department’s existing dive team and staff and all its activities, and thus the Department’s ability to

achieve the following Performance Indicators:

- Priority research needs being met
- Value of commercial fishing in Washington state

This proposal supports the continued function of the agency's dive team, critical to monitoring and managing state revenue generating geoduck. Support for this proposal avoids the need to reduce or abandon priority research, critical to supporting short and long-term fishery opportunity and ecosystem health.

Commercial geoduck fishing generates tens of millions of dollars in direct revenue for the state. Geoduck stock assessment and research is critical to managing and executing a sustainable geoduck fishery, which in turn supports commercial fishing and revenue generation tied to the geoduck resources and supports the management and execution of sustainable sea cucumber, sea urchin, and scallop fisheries. Support for this proposal avoids the need to lay off WDFW divers, which would in turn result in impacts to geoduck and other fisheries. Examples include fewer tracts available to harvest for both state and tribal fishers (and less revenue for the state) ; hampered ability to track recovery of previous harvest sites for future harvest; and undermining of new sustainable (and critically needed) management approaches and pursuit of research questions to improve management of dive fisheries. Support for this proposal avoids both short-term and long-term economic impact to both commercial fishers and state revenue.

Performance Outcomes:

None

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through public engagement. The Communication divisions are committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Without additional funding to cover these increased costs, other areas of the budget could be cut, which will cause reductions in other programs and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equity lens as WDFW will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding maintenance level decision packages allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

N/A

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

DFW is neither a "covered" or "opt in" agency.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 25: Economic Benefits by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a sustainable geoduck fishery industry in Puget Sound. This decision package is aligned with Action Agenda Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Food and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 91). Improve appropriate access opportunities for harvesting local foods and other culturally significant materials on public lands and shorelines by increasing capacity to

support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a safe, local, and sustainable geoduck industry and harvest in Puget Sound. Through these efforts this decision package also implements the Priority Action 3 Assess the degree, and how, access to marine and coastal resources (e.g. fisheries, open space, native foods) is changing among different communities in the Salish Sea. This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 25: Economic Benefits by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a sustainable geoduck fishery industry in Puget Sound. This decision package is aligned with Action Agenda Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Food and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 91). Improve appropriate access opportunities for harvesting local foods and other culturally significant materials on public lands and shorelines by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a safe, local, and sustainable geoduck industry and harvest in Puget Sound. Through these efforts this decision package also implements the Priority Action 3 Assess the degree, and how, access to marine and coastal resources (e.g. fisheries, open space, native foods) is changing among different communities in the Salish Sea. This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 25: Economic Benefits by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a sustainable geoduck fishery industry in Puget Sound. This decision package is aligned with Action Agenda Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Food and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 91). Improve appropriate access opportunities for harvesting local foods and other culturally significant materials on public lands and shorelines by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a safe, local, and sustainable geoduck industry and harvest in Puget Sound. Through these efforts this decision package also implements the Priority Action 3 Assess the degree, and how, access to marine and coastal resources (e.g. fisheries, open space, native foods) is changing among different communities in the Salish Sea. This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 25: Economic Benefits by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a sustainable geoduck fishery industry in Puget Sound. This decision package is aligned with Action Agenda Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Food and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 91). Improve appropriate access opportunities for harvesting local foods and other culturally significant materials on public lands and shorelines by increasing capacity to support stock assessment, research, and environment programs that ensure a safe, local, and sustainable geoduck industry and harvest in Puget Sound. Through these efforts this decision package also implements the Priority Action 3 Assess the degree, and how, access to marine and coastal resources (e.g. fisheries, open space, native foods) is changing among different communities in the Salish Sea.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

This proposal supports work that is fundamental to both state and tribal commercial geoduck fisheries. WDFW and DNR have a long history of collaborating on geoduck stock assessments, with DNR providing the funding to support WDFW divers who perform the work. If this proposal were not funded, both WDFW and DNR would be without adequate funding for the necessary stock assessment surveys needed to support commercial fishery and would directly impact state revenue. WDFW divers perform a majority of the stock assessment surveys in Puget Sound, and if WDFW were forced to lay off divers, it would also negatively impact the tribal commercial geoduck fishery. This comes at a time when WDFW is also working with DNR to understand the health of Washington’s kelp forests and potential climate impacts. This decision package was developed in coordination with DNR, which fully supports this proposal. The Department anticipates Puget Sound comanager treaty tribes will also support the request.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Additional stakeholders impacted by this funding request include commercial geoduck fishers, local Washington seafood buyers and dealers, Puget Sound Restoration Fund, and various academic institutions. The Department anticipates all parties would support the request. Additional stakeholders impacted by this funding request include commercial geoduck fishers, local Washington seafood buyers and dealers, Puget Sound Restoration Fund, and various academic institutions. The Department anticipates all parties would support the request.

State Facilities Impacts:

The funding requested supports current staff and no new impacts to state facilities are anticipated. The funding requested supports current staff and no new impacts to state facilities are anticipated. The funding requested supports current staff and no new impacts to state facilities are anticipated.

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$319	\$319	\$638	\$319	\$319	\$638
Obj. B	\$117	\$117	\$234	\$117	\$117	\$234
Obj. E	\$75	\$75	\$150	\$75	\$75	\$150
Obj. G	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$10	\$10	\$20
Obj. S	(\$425)	(\$425)	(\$850)	(\$425)	(\$425)	(\$850)
Obj. T	\$169	\$169	\$338	\$169	\$169	\$338

Agency Contact Information

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Policy Level Decision Packages



Two elk with antlers locked in North Bend. Photo by Geoffrey Dodd.



Agency Recommendation Summary

WDFW is rapidly scaling its Safety and Training Program to ensure staff and volunteers have appropriate training and tools to mitigate risks inherent in their work. Over the last year, WDFW has updated policies, initiated a temporary “stand-down” of specific water-based activities to train and equip staff, and established an incident command team to reinforce a culture of safety. WDFW initiated this work with investments from the 2024 supplemental operating budget. WDFW seeks to address the next most important items for the Department with an additional \$6.3 million in ongoing funds for volunteer safety, safety equipment, and staff safety data management. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$6,105	\$3,315	\$9,420	\$3,145	\$3,145	\$6,290
Total Expenditures	\$6,105	\$3,315	\$9,420	\$3,145	\$3,145	\$6,290

Decision Package Description

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) mission requires remote, water-adjacent, challenging field work throughout the state and is committed to preventing serious accidents and fatalities. **WDFW’s safety vision is that WDFW has a robust culture of safety where every staff member and volunteer has the training and tools to mitigate the risks inherent in their work.** To achieve our safety vision, WDFW continues to reinforce a culture of safety and deliver the necessary tools, policies, and trainings to staff and volunteers. This decision package supports both elements.

In 2024, WDFW established an internal Incident Command System (ICS) to rapidly scale the Department’s safety and training program and to respond to three Department of Labor & Industries’ (L&I) citations. To support this scaling, WDFW requested and received \$4.8 million per fiscal year ongoing in the 2024 supplemental operating budget: to add additional safety capacity in each region, expand the high-risk job task training program, and increase support for staff working in remote areas. With this funding, WDFW is equipping field staff with job-specific first aid kits, field-based communication devices, and a system to ensure every field staff is accounted for at the end of the day. The Department also accelerated the delivery of field specific job task trainings across the state with both WDFW trainers and contractors. WDFW recognizes that there are key challenges, including the quantity, diversity, and geographic scope of field-based work that are a core part of the Department’s mission. WDFW is also in the process of conducting a job task analysis to catalog field work activities. This job task analysis will help the Department identify and develop accident prevention plans, training programs, and equipment to mitigate field-based risks.

When WDFW requested funds in the 2024 supplemental operating budget, the Department acknowledged there would be additional hazards and risks that would require additional funds to mitigate and the Department planned for future funding requests.

This package represents the second part of a multi-stage funding strategy and includes the next three most important items the Department must address – volunteer safety, safety equipment, and staff safety data management.

Volunteer Safety

Volunteers are a core part of WDFW’s legislative mandate ([RCW 77.04.012](#)) and perform critical work across the state. WDFW volunteers fall in three distinct categories: a) Hunter Education Instructors, b) Master Hunters, and c) General Volunteers. The Department’s volunteers log an average of 40,000 hours every year, and assist with: surveys for waterfowl, bats, and grouse; provide trail maintenance at wildlife areas; participate in habitat restoration projects; monitor for invasive species; perform routine duties at hatcheries; and more. The Department has more than 1,000 Hunter Education Instructors who certify more than 10,000 new hunters each year. The Department also has a Master Hunter volunteer program, where more than 1,100 certified master hunters support WDFW with landowner relations, hunting access, and wildlife damage.

Volunteers, like employees, are covered under agency, state, and federal safety regulations. To protect and support volunteers, the Department is building a more robust volunteer safety and training program to increase consistency statewide, provide dedicated staffing capacity, and secure a stronger volunteer management system.

Safety Equipment

WDFW is in the process of updating several Department policies related to personal protection equipment (PPE), first aid, and communication to ensure that staff have the necessary equipment for their identified job hazards. Using funds from the 2024 supplemental operating budget, WDFW is purchasing Garmin inReach devices and implementing new procedures to protect field staff in the event of an emergency. However, the Department continues to identify equipment and services needed to better keep staff safe. WDFW is using one-time funds to purchase additional safety equipment not identified in the 2024 supplemental operating budget in the current biennium, but that equipment will need to be maintained and regularly replaced or upgraded. WDFW is requesting ongoing funding to create a maintenance and replacement schedule for its safety equipment.

Safety Data Management

In the 2024 supplemental operating budget, WDFW received funding for a feasibility study to evaluate the Department's business processes for human resources data and safety data, prior to entry in Human Resource Management System (HRMS). WDFW completed the study in June 2024, including a gap analysis, peer benchmarking, and product research to provide a recommendation that can meet the data needs. The study also evaluated solutions to determine if they were complementary to future data migration and integration of OneWA's Workday solution.

With the funding in this decision package, WDFW will procure a system that will facilitate six core human resources areas that were identified as inefficient or lacking a technological capability: core HR employee record management, recruitment and application tracking, performance management, integration with existing WDFW and statewide solutions (e.g., HRMS, NeoGov), reporting and analytics, and training and development. These core areas are currently managed by manual processes and disparate technologies. Updating the system will allow WDFW to better track employee and position data and build digital position descriptions and staff profiles. These functions will provide the necessary foundation for WDFW to create job risk matrices, training dashboards, assign PPE and other safety equipment, and build safety and compliance reports.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

WDFW considered two alternatives:

- **Option 1: Status Quo:** If WDFW does not receive the funds requested in this package, WDFW will continue to use internal investments to meet the growing safety and training requirements.
- **Option 2: Delay Action:** WDFW anticipates completing a comprehensive job task analysis survey for all employees in September 2024. The Department will use the data to make decisions about additional staff trainings and how to continue scaling the safety and training program. The Department will use this data to inform an additional decision package in the 2026 supplemental operating budget. An alternative is to wait until WDFW has a more comprehensive understanding of what the Department's future state looks like. In the near-term, this solution carries the same risks as the status quo, delaying progress in areas where WDFW now knows what it needs to accomplish.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal is an expansion of WDFW's existing safety and training program. In addition to an existing budget of \$1.5 million per fiscal year and team of 16.0 FTEs statewide, WDFW received \$4.8 million per fiscal year ongoing in the 2024 supplemental operating budget to add additional safety capacity in each region, expand the high-risk job task training program, and increase support to remote employees.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Total package costs are \$6,105,000 in fiscal year 2026, \$3,315,000 in fiscal year 2027, and \$3,145,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing.

Volunteer Safety

- \$561,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and \$441,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 4.0 FTEs, Objects A and B.
- \$50,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$300,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for a volunteer management system. Includes one-time implementation costs in fiscal year 2025, Object C.

- \$18,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$10,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for safety equipment for volunteers, Object E.
- \$16,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for coordinator statewide travel, Object G.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Total volunteer safety costs are \$910,000 in fiscal year 2026, \$899,000 in fiscal year 2027, and \$729,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing.

Safety Equipment

- \$600,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for expanded Garmin inReach subscriptions services contract, Object C.
- \$269,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for a replacement schedule for field staff safety equipment including, personal flotation devices, individual first aid kits, and personal protection equipment, Object E.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Total safety equipment costs are \$1,150,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

Safety Data Management

- \$148,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 1.0 FTE, Objects A and B.
- \$2,900,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$800,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for safety data management system for WDFW staff. Includes one-time implementation costs, project management, and quality assurance review in fiscal year 2026, Object C.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Total safety data management costs are \$4,045,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,266,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

Volunteer Safety

- 1.0 FTE Safety Officer 3: The position will be dedicated to conduct job task and hazard analysis of volunteer work duties, which in turn identifies the required and/or needed safety training and personal protective equipment for the volunteer job task. The SO3 will also be able to provide safety training, collaborate and coordinate with the agency's safety and training program, and identify viable contractors. The SO3 will provide safety consultation to the volunteer program, guide adherence to accident prevention program, personal protective equipment, respond and investigate incidents, provide recommendations for safety improvements.
- 1.0 FTE Human Resource Consultant 3: The position will manage the training matrix that informs what training volunteers are required or need by their job task. The HRC3 will also coordinate and schedule statewide in-person training and make available e-learnings for the approximate 4,000 volunteers. The HRC3 will also be a viable training consultant to the volunteer program and a trainer available to volunteers.
- 1.0 FTE Management Analyst 4 (non-permanent): This position will conduct a comprehensive review of volunteer duties, including a job task analysis of volunteer work duties and create processes for tracking volunteer duties ongoing.
- 1.0 FTE Community Outreach & Environmental Education Specialist 4: Two 0.5 FTE positions will be the primary point of contact for volunteers and Department volunteer supervisors, with one stationed on the west side and the other stationed on the east side. The positions will support volunteer supervisors with volunteer management and coordination, including recruiting, onboarding, and ensuring that all volunteer training requirements are met. These positions will oversee screening of potential volunteers to ensure an appropriate match for the volunteer opportunity. They will work with regional staff and the Department's Safety and Training staff to ensure volunteers have access to the appropriate trainings for their assigned tasks, and that volunteer records and training documentation are completed following Department policies and procedures.
- 1.0 FTE Management Analyst 3: This position will provide guidance on system improvements for the volunteer program. The focus of this position will be to pursue process improvements for volunteer registration and hours tracking and coordinate with volunteer program

manager and the Safety and Training Office to support volunteers. This position would also be an additional subject matter expert in the volunteer program, providing guidance and support to both Department staff supervising volunteers and our volunteers. They would also provide updates to agency staff of policies and procedures for working with volunteers.

Safety Data Management

- 1.0 FTE IT System Administration – Journey: An IT Product Owner for a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) is tasked with overseeing the development and management of the HRIS to meet the organization’s human resource needs. Their responsibilities include defining the product vision, managing the product backlog, and ensuring the system aligns with HR goals and strategies 1. They work closely with stakeholders to gather requirements and translate them into technical specifications 2. The Product Owner ensures the HRIS effectively supports functions such as payroll management, time and attendance tracking, onboarding, compliance, and employee retention 3. They also focus on data integrity, user training, and continuous improvement of the system to adapt to evolving HR trends and organizational needs 4. Ultimately, the IT Product Owner is crucial in ensuring the HRIS serves as a valuable tool for managing employee data and enhancing HR processes within the company.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 31.5 FTE • Total Funds = \$6.3 million • Near General Fund = \$6.2 million • Other Funds = \$0.1 million

FY2027 • FTE = 31.5 FTE • Total Funds = \$6.3 million • Near General Fund = \$6.2 million • Other Funds = \$0.1 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor’s Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the Governor’s goal for an efficient, effective, and accountable government.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package models Department’s strategy to model operational and environmental effectiveness, which includes improving staff safety and developing a culture that supports physical and emotional safety.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This decision package is 100% in line with the activity, “Business Management & Obligations.” Total costs are \$9,420,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$6,290,000 in the 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW will measure the outcomes of the safety vision using the following metrics:

- **Established culture of safety.** The Department will use existing questions and data from the employee engagement survey to assess if employees feel that they are safe in their work environment and can report problems to their supervisor. WDFW aims to have 90% of employees positively responding to these survey questions.
- **Number of staff and volunteers fully trained based on their job hazards.** The Department will develop and implement training policy and procedures which will direct employees and volunteers to complete safety trainings prior to be exposed to job hazards. All required safety trainings will be available to staff and volunteers via the WDFW Safety & Training team or identified contractors.
- **Number of accidents, injuries, and near misses.** The Department cannot eliminate all risk from workplace hazards inherent in WDFW staff's work, but the Department aims to reduce the frequency and severity of incidents. The Department will utilize the data from the newly implemented Safety and Security Incident Reporting System to identify hazards and implement intervention to avoid serious accidents and fatalities.

For this decision package, the Department will use the following metrics:

- **Job task analysis will be completed for 100% of staff positions.** As new positions are added or position descriptions are updated, job task analysis will be conducted and documented.
- **Job task analysis will be completed on 100% of volunteer job duties.** As the Department creates new volunteer opportunities and reviews current volunteer work, job task analysis will be conducted and documented.
- **Compliance rate for safety equipment based on staff and volunteer's job task.** The Department will measure this outcome through random audits at job sites.
- **Compliance for new employee safety and training.** 100% of new employees' position description will include a completed job task analysis and identified job hazards so that 1) training can be assigned and completed and 2) equipment can be provided prior to employees being exposed to job hazards.
- **Compliance for WDFW supervisors.** Supervisors are accountable for ensuring that their employees have completed all required trainings and are properly equipped. When incidents happen, supervisors ensure Safety and Security Incident Reports (SSIRs) are completed and hazards are mitigated or elevated to leadership access.
- **Compliance for volunteer registrations and training.** 100% of volunteers are registered and receive proper training before conducting any field work.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

In 2024, WDFW established an internal Incident Command System (ICS) to rapidly scale the Department's safety and training program to respond to the three citations from Labor & Industries. Throughout ICS, WDFW has created opportunities to gather feedback from field staff.

The addition of the staff outlined above will develop robust mechanisms to implement advanced safety and training protocols that reflect the needs of WDFW field staff.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The funding for decision package will positively impact WDFW staff, particularly field staff who are generally exposed to more safety risks, resulting in robust field safety protocols that improve their safety. If this decision package is not funded, then WDFW safety and training protocols will not be enhanced in the expected manner in accordance with the staff feedback received in the process of setting up the culture of safety for the WDFW.

WDFW safety training and equipment are substantial investments in staff in order for them to perform their duties. WDFW plans to address additional safety concerns for a long-term approach. The funding for this decision package would facilitate those next steps to address equitable impacts for existing internal WDFW staff.

In general, field staff tend to be younger and earlier in their professional careers. This funding ensures that those newest to the field are adequately trained and provided equipment.

Target Communities and Populations:

This decision package benefits historically excluded populations through an internal and external capacity through this proposal's culture of safety framework.

Equity within the agency: This proposal enhances the workplace safety culture, enabling WDFW staff to feel more supported in the roles that they do to serve the public. It's important to note that the WDFW staff who are committed to public service represent a community of Washington workers in state service. WDFW has a significant amount of dedicated field staff whose job duties consist of working at field sites and outdoor locations in remote areas across the state. With more efficient safety initiatives, staff will not only be better supported with the proper protocols and tools to do the work they do, but they will also feel a stronger sense of belonging and respect.

External equity serving the people of Washington: A healthy workplace culture for public stewards has a strong effect on the public because of its connection to efficient outcomes in regard to external public services. The benefit of this proposal directly influences the manner that staff will perform their work that affect the people of Washington. When something happens to staff members, the Department is not able to serve the public as well as when there is an internal healthy environment, and this proposal addresses that situation.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

During the feedback process, field staff shared their own perspectives of how they would feel better supported at WDFW. The solicited feedback has been incorporated into the Department decision making as it implements a culture of safety.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

WDFW’s ability to deliver upon its commitments to Puget Sound recovery through decision package requests and ongoing programs is dependent on the resources to implement the safety vision that every staff member has the training and tools to mitigate the risks inherent in their jobs and that WDFW has a robust culture of safety. Additionally, it is necessary that WDFW have the resources to protect and support the volunteers that perform work critical to achieving Puget Sound recovery objectives. This directly links to implementing 22 Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship as well as all field activities related to WDFW commitments to other Puget Sound Action Agenda Strategies (including but not limited to 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, and 15) and their actions as well as the related actions under the Statewide Salmon Strategy and draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum.

State Workforce Impacts:

No anticipated impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department’s 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters. While not directly impacting the Department’s intergovernmental partners, this proposal will allow WDFW staff to continue doing critical work that supports its partners.

For the technological components, WDFW has consulted with Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech).

Stakeholder Impacts:

While not directly impacting the Department’s intergovernmental partners, this proposal will allow WDFW staff to continue doing critical work that supports its partners. WDFW anticipates that partners will be supportive.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may become problematic. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This request is part of WDFW’s response to three L&I citations.

Governor’s Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

[ST - IT Addendum - WDFW Staff and Volunteer Safety.pdf](#)

[ST - IT Addendum Budget 2025-27 - WDFW Staff and Volunteer Safety.xlsx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$526	\$526	\$1,052	\$437	\$437	\$874
Obj. B	\$183	\$183	\$366	\$152	\$152	\$304
Obj. C	\$3,550	\$1,450	\$5,000	\$1,450	\$1,450	\$2,900
Obj. E	\$337	\$329	\$666	\$321	\$321	\$642
Obj. G	\$16	\$16	\$32	\$16	\$16	\$32
Obj. T	\$1,493	\$811	\$2,304	\$769	\$769	\$1,538

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Habitat loss and degradation, climate change effects, pollution, wildlife disease, and invasive species threaten the state’s biodiversity. Fish and wildlife are public resources, and it is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) mandate to conserve them for current and future residents of Washington. WDFW needs the remainder of the resources we proposed in 2023 to effectively implement the actions in the State Wildlife Action Plan and safeguard and restore Washington’s biodiversity. We aim to develop and implement action plans for 80% of at-risk species and increase public participation in conservation by 25%. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Broadly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	33.3	50.3	41.8	50.3	50.3	50.3
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$5,733	\$8,587	\$14,320	\$8,587	\$8,587	\$17,174
Total Expenditures	\$5,733	\$8,587	\$14,320	\$8,587	\$8,587	\$17,174

Decision Package Description

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the full range of life in all its forms, including all species, the habitats in which this life occurs, the ways that species and habitats interact with each other, and the physical environment and processes necessary for those interactions. Biodiverse ecosystems are more resilient and are responsible for services like pollination, water purification, nutrient cycling, seed dispersal, pest control, climate regulation, and more. Biodiversity is relevant everywhere, from vast wilderness areas to suburban and urban yards, and Washington is no exception. Washington’s ecosystems provide habitat for an incredible variety of animal, plant, and fungi species, both common and rare. Many of these species, however, face mounting challenges to survival.

Tackling Biodiversity Loss in Washington

Continued habitat loss and degradation, climate change effects, pollution, invasive species, and disease accelerate biodiversity loss in Washington. WDFW and its partners have been working to recover the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, salmon, Southern Resident killer whale, and a host of other imperiled species. Unfortunately, many at-risk species’ populations continue to decline, and WDFW has much work to do to achieve our conservation recovery goals and our mission to “preserve, protect, and perpetuate” fish and wildlife in Washington.

At the same time, there is hope. We know what works, and where we need to invest additional resources to make real progress. We’ve had tremendous successes when we’ve invested in the science and data that helps prioritize actions to reverse declines. For example, fishers once again roam Washington forests due to reintroduction efforts. Northwestern pond turtles are making a comeback thanks to collective efforts to protect their habitat, reintroduce turtles to areas that had lost populations, reduce threats such as invasive bullfrogs, and address disease. Investments in shrubsteppe ecosystems are giving us a solid foundation to save pygmy rabbits, greater sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and other species that depend on shrubsteppe habitat.

Historically, work to protect and restore biodiversity has been difficult to achieve in part due to lack of dedicated funding allocated to non-game species and habitat protection. Work focused on wildlife species that people hunt (also known as game species) benefits from permanent funding sources to support research, ongoing monitoring, and management. The rest of the state’s biodiversity work has been chronically underfunded for many years, leaving the Department and policy makers with science gaps, incomplete data on fish, wildlife, and habitat conditions, and the inability to comprehensively implement actions that recover species and habitats or prevent their declines.

We have demonstrated that when there is adequate funding and a collaborative, science-based plan, we can be effective at overcoming conservation challenges such as recovering the bald eagle and peregrine falcon, increasing populations of snowy plovers and Taylor’s checkerspot butterflies, and down-listing canary rockfish. We know what to do, but our progress is not keeping pace with the problem. In 2007, the Washington Biodiversity Council published the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy that includes the following recommendations.

- Incorporate biodiversity conservation into land use plans and development practices.
- Strengthen the available science and information on biodiversity.
- Develop incentives to encourage voluntary actions to conserve biodiversity on private lands.
- Educate and engage the public to provide Washington residents with information about the value of biodiversity and the steps they can take to help conserve it.
- Achieve results by improving governance through better integration and coordination among state and local governments.

WDFW uses a comprehensive strategy called the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) to guide conservation of the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their habitats, and it reflects these Biodiversity Council recommended approaches to protect and restore biodiversity. The SWAP is part of a nationwide effort to develop plans that 1) objectively assess the status of each state's wildlife and habitats, 2) identify key problems they face, and 3) outline the actions needed to conserve them over the long term. Washington's SWAP informs WDFW's conservation priorities and actions statewide and focuses on supporting the state's 268 SGCN and the habitats they depend on. SGCN include species that are state or federally listed as threatened, endangered, or sensitive, as well as additional species that need conservation attention. The SWAP also informs WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) program, which provides tools and informational resources to support collaborative conservation initiatives across a range of organizations and states.

Closing the Implementation Gap

A significant investment is needed to close the gap on implementing critical conservation actions to protect and restore biodiversity in Washington. In 2023, WDFW proposed a comprehensive \$48 million funding package focused on what we know works to stem biodiversity loss:

1. Develop and implement species recovery plans;
2. Stop or slow declines in species and habitat loss;
3. Improve our knowledge of current species and habitats status, trends, and needs; and
4. Support partnerships and public engagement to maximize biodiversity protection and recovery actions across Washington.

Washington made a huge down payment on the resources needed to implement this work and stem biodiversity loss, allocating \$24 million of ongoing funding to support this work. This initial investment is already supporting increased species conservation, habitat protection and restoration, and policy and outreach to increase support for biodiversity actions. WDFW began by prioritizing work to implement known recovery actions for the most imperiled species, protect and restore the most at-risk habitats, fill information gaps that inhibit our ability to act, pass funding to critical partners, begin to galvanize the public, and update our State Wildlife Action Plan. Please see the attached 2023 Legislative Report for additional detail about implementation of this initial investment.

While this initial investment and the resulting actions are powerful, they represent half a vision for protecting and restoring biodiversity. Without the second investment represented in this package, the vision is incomplete and we risk falling short of the outcomes described by the full package. This funding request proposes to achieve the results of the original proposal that remain unfunded. Now is the time to build on the initial priorities described above by addressing the species that remain at the top of our list, expanding approaches to habitats and communities that remain neglected, and increase collection of needed data so we can implement actions sooner. This second suite of priorities includes proactive work to address the needs of the full assemblage of SGCN and the habitats they depend on to keep them from becoming imperiled. As the agency of expertise and with the mandate to "preserve, protect, and perpetuate" fish, wildlife, and habitats, WDFW needs resources to effectively implement all the actions we identified in 2023 to carry out the State Wildlife Action Plan.

Summary of Priority Investments and Examples from this Funding Request

Washington cannot afford to continue this trajectory of devastating biodiversity decline. The results of funding these actions will positively impact not only species and habitats, but the human and economic health of Washington state. Investing in biodiversity means preventing costly future species listings and regulatory burdens, ensuring the health of agricultural pollinators, protecting the habitats that provide us with clean air and water, and ensuring that Washington's current and future generations can enjoy the landscapes and wildlife that make our state special. Funding actions now will provide the best opportunity to avoid much larger public resource investments in the future.

Taken together, these remaining and unfunded actions will have significant positive impacts on biodiversity:

1. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT RECOVERY PLANS

- Increase capacity to conserve and recover SGCN and their habitats by collaboratively creating and maintaining recovery plans, developing guidance to mitigate threats, and implementing identified recovery actions, such as reintroducing species, treating disease, increasing prey availability, protecting vulnerable life stages such as nests and young, and managing invasive animals. (Examples: Complete wildlife biologist teams develop SGCN monitoring and survey protocols, conduct status assessments, and develop and facilitate implementation of recovery plans for forest, prairie, and marine/coastal species, as well as invertebrates such as gastropods and native insects. Teams of wildlife biologists and scientific technicians in all WDFW regions conduct conservation actions such as species reintroductions, translocations, and augmentations, as well as disease treatments and invasive animal removal.)
- Improve the habitat quality and function necessary to support SGCN vital rates by implementing non-regulatory tools and supporting habitat best management practices. (Examples: Wildlife biologist and scientific technician teams develop partnerships with landowners and land managers, identify land protection and management projects, and assist in pursuing funding and resources to implement and monitor these projects to meet SGCN life history needs. Environmental planner focuses on bringing the needs of forest-dependent species into forest management forums.)
- Increase the pace and scale of ecosystem restoration in Central and Southwest Washington by expanding the existing restoration project model to these places. (Examples: Senior restoration specialists and biologists identify, design and implement restoration projects in the places that will have the greatest benefit to species and ecosystems, and teams of biologists enhance effectiveness of these projects by working with community groups, tracking the status of projects, and gathering implementation data.)

2. STOP OR SLOW DECLINES IN SPECIES AND HABITAT LOSS

- Enhance the level of support for local, state, and federal decision makers and landowners through more effective and complete species and habitat information, guidance, and technical assistance. (Examples: Biologists in areas with high human population growth assist people to restore their property or develop responsibly, and assist local governments to avoid and minimize the effects of projects like large developments, new roads, or planting and restoration efforts. Environmental engineers develop guidance to protect and restore aquatic habitat and assist staff, partners, and the public to apply these techniques.)
- Proactively address conservation risks by looking ahead and influencing plans and actions to protect and restore habitats. (Examples: Planners and analysts work together and with partners to adopt policies and plans that commit to habitat protection and restoration, and execute funding strategies to implement those actions.)

3. IMPROVE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIES AND HABITAT STATUS, TRENDS, AND NEEDS

- Increase capacity to fill critical knowledge gaps regarding species' population distribution, size, trend, life history traits, and habitat associations to ascertain status, threats, and to assist WDFW staff and partners to make informed decisions that protect and recover Washington's biodiversity. (Examples: Research scientists plan, design and implement professional research and assessments for marine finfish. Teams of research scientists, biologists, and scientific technicians collect samples and data across the state for native freshwater fish and shellfish, smelt, and sturgeon to clarify distribution, abundance, and habitat associations that inform conservation actions. Teams of wildlife biologists and scientific technicians in all WDFW regions will collect data on local SGCN and ensure the data is available to all WDFW staff and partners via internal databases and web applications.)
- Conduct studies and assessments that result in the knowledge necessary to effectively conserve the habitats that are critical for Washington's biodiversity in the face of human population growth and climate change. (Examples: Research scientist conduct studies, assessments and monitoring to help us 1) identify the parts of the landscape that are most important for conserving biodiversity, 2) understand the effects of human activities in these landscapes, and 3) use this knowledge to help design functional, mixed-use landscapes that support people and biodiversity.)

4. SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION TO RESTORE BIODIVERSITY

- Support the biodiversity work of critical partners. (Examples: Increase pass-through funding in the new Wildlife Diversity Grant Program, thereby growing participation and expanding capacity to implement key conservation actions.)
- Grow community awareness, engagement, and participation in recovering Washington's biodiversity. (Examples: Help residents contribute to conservation in their local spaces through increased participation in the Department's Habitat at Home program.)
- Increase conservation and biodiversity stewardship behaviors of diverse communities in North Puget Sound and North Central Washington. (Examples: Regional Conservation Education Coordinators help culturally diverse residents connect with nature through

place-based learning and experiences such as at local parks, wildlife areas, beaches, schoolyards, or apartment patios, which increases engagement and creates improved habitat and greenspaces.)

- Remove barriers for people to experience nature, including the creation of a Wild Schoolyards grant program to transform lawn-based school yards into wildlife habitat that also serves as an outdoor biodiversity classroom for Title I schools and their communities throughout the state.

Alternatives Explored

Even at current funding levels that include the 2023 down payment on WDFW's biodiversity funding proposal, key species, ecosystems, and communities will not receive conservation attention. SGCN that face present risks will not be surveyed or have recovery actions identified and implemented, habitats that are at risk from development and human use will not be identified and incorporated into land use protection plans, ecosystems with restoration potential will not be restored, and diverse Washingtonians will have fewer opportunities to engage in conservation that benefits biodiversity and their own wellbeing. We will not be implementing the State Wildlife Action Plan, thereby continuing to challenge WDFW's ability to preserve, protect, and perpetuate biodiversity and fulfill the work we are directed to do through RCW and WAC.

RCW and WAC changes may be necessary in the future, but we won't be able to propose targeted and strategic changes and improvements without the work described in this package. The critical need is investing in the remaining funding and staff capacity to accomplish our work effectively and expeditiously, thereby catching up on the current biodiversity conditions, needs, and protection and recovery solutions.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is the second increment of WDFW's 2023-25 operating budget biodiversity funding proposal, which is a long-needed expansion of the non-game species and habitat work that continues to lag due to inadequate resources. This expansion will allow WDFW to begin to catch up on our gaps in knowledge and develop a more comprehensive understanding of biodiversity's current state and the actions necessary to protect and recover Washington's biodiversity in the face of human population growth, climate change, and increasing invasive species and disease. Success depends on a clear vision and ample resources to ensure that WDFW and all our partners are implementing their portions of the actions to protect and restore biodiversity.

WDFW will see an increase in recovery plan development and implementation, preventative actions to reduce or minimize habitat loss or degradation, increases in habitat restoration, and broad engagement from Washington residents.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Decision package assumptions and calculations:

- \$3,589,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$5,304,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 50.3 FTEs, Objects A and B.
- \$177,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$175,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for supplies, software, specialized training, and to update technical guidance documents, Object E.
- \$124,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$304,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for staff travel, Object G.
- \$198,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$345,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing to increase capacity for [Wildlife Diversity Grants](#) and establish Wild Schoolyard Grants, transforming school yards from desolate lawn spaces to diverse wildlife habitat, Object N.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Total costs are \$5,733,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$8,587,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

Scientific Technician 2 | 2.8 FTE in fiscal year 2026 | 8.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

- Collect species data to fill science gaps.
- Implement SGCN recovery actions.

Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2, 3, and 4 | 19.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 | 26.3 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

- Plan, facilitate, and Implement species and habitat recovery actions.
- Develop and implement habitat protection and restoration projects with willing landowners.
- Provide habitat technical assistance to influence land use plans, decisions, and permits.
- Collect data to fill science gaps and track status and implementation of restoration projects.
- Curate and manage data.

Environmental Planner 4 and 5 | 3.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 | 5.0 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

- Strategic planning and proactive engagement/coordination with partners.
- Place-based restoration planning and implementation.
- Facilitate inclusion of species recovery information into forest practices.

Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 and 2 | 1.5 FTE in fiscal year 2026 | 3.0 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

- Landscape modeling to maximize biodiversity benefit of conservation.
- Assessments and research on forage fish and associated finfish.

Management Analyst 3 and 4 | 3.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 | 4.0 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

- Business and operational support to increase coordination and effectiveness of conservation staff.

Environmental Engineer 3 and 5 | 2.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing

- Develop and maintain agency standards and guidance, and train others to follow guidance.
- Provide engineering technical assistance.

Community Outreach & Environmental Education Specialist 3 | 2.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing

- Coordinate informal and formal learning opportunities for people to connect with nature.
- Support people to create habitat at or near their home.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 69.2 FTE • Total Funds = \$15 million • Near General Fund = \$15 million • Other Funds = \$0 million

FY2027 • FTE = 69.2 FTE • Total Funds = \$15 million • Near General Fund = \$15 million • Other Funds = \$0 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This package directly supports the Governor's third goal for "Sustainable energy and a clean environment: Building a legacy of resource stewardship for the next generation of Washingtonians." Additionally, protecting and restoring habitats will improve overall watershed health, which is a priority in the Governor's Salmon Strategy. The Governor's Salmon Strategy specifically calls for improvements to be made in protecting and restoring salmon habitat. Salmon require properly functioning watershed conditions to have the best chance for recovery. This will require more of the public having clarity about the problem and the potential solutions and engaging and contributing through their individual and community actions. This proposal will provide and implement such an approach.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package directly supports three of the four strategies in the Department's 25-year plan: 1) proactively address conservation challenges, 2) engage communities through recreation and stewardship, and 3) deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This package directly supports the following activities from the WDFW activity inventory:

- Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitats & Species: \$2,155,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$3,018,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. \$5,173,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$6,036,000 in 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.
- Acquire & Manage Lands: \$309,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$528,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. \$837,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$1,056,000 in 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.
- Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitats and Species: \$2,528,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$3,858,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. \$6,386,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$7,716,000 in 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.
- Managing Fishing Opportunities: \$526,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$968,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. \$1,494,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$1,936,000 in 2027-29 biennium and ongoing.
- Provide & Facilitate Recreational Opportunities: \$154,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. \$308,000 in 2025-27 biennium and ongoing.
- Business Management & Obligations: \$61,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. \$122,000 in 2025-27 biennium and ongoing.

Performance Outcomes:

Biodiversity is vital for public health, culture, and economy. Native species and ecosystems contribute billions of dollars each year to fisheries, timber harvest, outdoor recreation, and other sectors of Washington's economy. The 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation found that people spent \$9 billion to hunt, fish and watch wildlife in Washington, which is greater than expenditures on new cars (\$6.9 billion), residential energy (\$6.4 billion), dentistry (\$5.1 billion), and hotels (\$4 billion). This spending also generated \$630 million in state general fund revenues. The World Economic Council has identified that ecosystem services (i.e., the benefits nature provides to people) support \$3 trillion toward the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). People also rely on healthy ecosystems for clean water, clean air, natural flood control, noise pollution absorption, reduced heat island effects in urban areas, carbon sequestration, cultural practices, recreation, and physical and mental health benefits.

The ultimate performance outcome for WDFW's work is the reduction of the number of fish and wildlife species that need our help to survive and thrive, and an intermediate performance outcome is the improvement of the quality and quantity of the fish and wildlife habitat that is most at risk.

WDFW's 25-year Strategic Plan (adopted in October 2020) sets the following goals for those outcomes.

- 80% of SGCN have been surveyed and incorporated into strategies and plans that ensure their conservation
- 10% net gain in the quality and quantity of our most important fish and wildlife habitat

This package will increase WDFW's capability to further these goals by increasing the direct and proactive assistance we can give troubled species and habitats. By preventing more species from declining and being listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, we can prevent regulatory burdens on local communities and have greater success at recovering biodiversity in Washington.

Anticipated outcomes for SGCN include:

- Increase SGCN species surveyed to 75%
- Double the number of SGCN species with active implementation of conservation actions

Anticipated outcomes for habitat protection and restoration include:

- Increased presence in proactive planning efforts that affect the protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitats
 - Increased participation and support for cities and counties through the full cycle of their Growth Management Act/Shoreline Manage Act planning steps (e.g., not only compensation plans and Critical Areas Ordinances, but also the comprehensive plan updates, zoning ordinances, open space planning, Urban Growth Area expansions and periodic updates for counties and cities.)
- 25-30% increase of implementation of site-scale fish and wildlife habitat protection and enhancement best practices
- Increased pace and scale of implementation of restoration projects within two additional watersheds/areas

WDFW's 25-year strategic plan also identifies the following goal for public participation in conservation-related activities.

- 25% increase in participation in fish and wildlife related activities, particularly among youth, racially diverse communities, hunters, anglers, and watchable wildlife enthusiasts.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

This budget request represents the remaining, unfunded components of a full biodiversity proposal that was submitted in the 2023-25 operating budget. Although the Department conducted outreach and engagement with a number of communities and stakeholders in this process, the primary work to partner with historically marginalized populations consisted of collaboration with tribal partners. Tribal partners have consistently expressed for many years their concern about loss of treaty resources and biodiversity in general to the Department via WDFW-tribal co-management forums, as well as formal and informal consultation and coordination.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Broadly, WDFW recognizes the fact that the benefits that communities and society derive from ecosystem services are deeply intertwined with social and political factors, leading to a distribution that mirrors existing patterns of inequity and injustice across Washington. In moving forward with projects included in this request, the Department will undertake a concerted effort to evaluate how work funded in this request can address

this disparity by examining the alignment of biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration, and prioritizing equitable access to and distribution of ecosystem services to build resilience, promote social equity, and ensure that all Washingtonians can enjoy the full benefits of our natural resources now and for generations to come.

Target Communities and Populations:

All Washington residents benefit from the valuable natural resources that make up Washington's biodiversity. As noted above, biodiversity is the full range of life in all its forms, including all species, the habitats in which this life occurs, the ways that species and habitats interact with each other, and the physical environment and processes necessary for those interactions. Biodiverse ecosystems are more resilient and reliably provide the services Washingtonians rely on, such as food production, clean water, disease management, pollination, erosion control, improved air quality, climate resilience, cultural practices, and recreational activities.

To meet the growing human demands for access to food, water, timber, land, and other natural resources, the state's ecosystems have been modified more extensively over the past 150 years than at any other time in history. While this transformation has contributed significantly to Washington's economic development, it has also resulted in degradation of the state's ecosystem services – the benefits humans derive from nature. Biodiversity loss, and the impacts of land degradation and climate change are straining ecosystems, limiting their capacity to provide the services to Washington residents. Implicit within the Department's mission to "preserve, protect, and perpetuate the state's fish and wildlife" is the need to protect and increase the resilience of ecosystems across the state in the face of ongoing and projected impacts from human population growth, climate change, and other threats.

The work in the Department's 2023 biodiversity funding proposal, which included this funding request, directly improves our ability to protect and restore fish and wildlife species statewide, as well as to protect and restore the ecosystems they rely on. The Department manages these resources in trust for the public, so all Washingtonians benefit from our success. They benefit directly through wildlife-related economic value (as noted above, \$9 billion in spending, and \$630 million in state general fund revenue) and indirectly through the assurance these resources will exist for them and future generations (i.e., existence value). They also benefit because the Department's work results in the protection, restoration, and increased resilience of the ecosystem services provided by Washington's ecosystems.

While work to protect and restore ecosystems must take place in a specific location, it is important to note that these actions often improve ecosystem services both *locally and more broadly*. This is because some ecosystem services play out over larger geographic areas due to the scales at which the affected ecosystem processes operate and the spatial relationship with natural resource management. In other cases, due to these same dynamics, in order to improve an ecosystem service in one location the natural resource action may need to be implemented in a different or broader area. For example, to restore a floodplain and improve water storage in a particular place, we must often conduct restoration work upstream or downstream of the location. As a result, local and more broad communities often benefit from the protection or improvement in ecosystem services.

In addition to these observations about the broad benefits of species and ecosystem, the work in this funding request is expected to most directly impact 1) tribes and Indigenous peoples dependent on natural resources for sociocultural and economic purposes, and 2) rural communities reliant on natural resource economies.

Indigenous Communities and Tribes

- Biodiversity loss threatens traditional practices of Northwest tribes and Indigenous peoples, with loss of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems crucial to the way of life for indigenous communities. Biodiversity loss driven by increasing human population and climate change will lead to continued declines in habitat quality, changes in plant blooming and berry ripening, and altered availability and distribution of treaty protected fish and game, as well as "first foods" such as roots and berries.
- This budget request will support the protection, restoration, and resilience of species and ecosystems throughout the state that Indigenous communities rely upon for cultural, subsistence, or socioeconomic purposes.

Rural Communities

- Washington's rural communities, heavily dependent on natural resource economies, face loss of critical ecosystem services due to biodiversity loss and climate and human impacts to ecosystems. For example, this might include loss of pollination or erosion control; increased wildfire, disease, or flood risk; or declining water availability. Many of the community members themselves are also more impacted by climate-related health impacts from working outside where they are more exposed to extreme heat, weather, and air pollution. These communities produce significant timber, agriculture, and fisheries outputs, crucial for local jobs and sales. However, their

resilience is often limited due to geographic isolation and lower political representation.

- This budget request will increase the health and resilience of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems that are central to the natural resource economies rural communities are reliant upon.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Tribal partners' concerns are well-captured in the [2012 Treaty Rights at Risk](#) white paper, as well as annual Centennial Accord discussions of fish and wildlife resources and habitat protection and restoration. This feedback helped inform the Department's comprehensive 2023-25 biodiversity proposal.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a "covered" or "opt-in" agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

Taken as a whole, WDFW's 2025-27 Biodiversity proposal has significant connections to the work of Puget Sound recovery. As noted above, habitat loss and degradation, climate change effects, pollution, wildlife disease, and invasive species threaten biodiversity in Puget Sound and throughout Washington State. Fish and wildlife are public resources, and it is the Department's mandate to conserve them for current and future residents of Washington. WDFW must be resourced to achieve this mandate for Puget Sound recovery to be achieved. The following description highlights the ways this decision package implements the Puget Sound Action Agenda, and please see [Attachment B: Puget Sound Partnership 2023 Connections](#) for more thorough descriptions of these connections.

This decision package describes the necessary resources for WDFW to deliver impactful progress for 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategies and associated actions that include but are not limited to 1 Smart Growth, 3 Healthy Shorelines, 4 Riparian Areas, 5 Floodplains and Estuaries, 12 Working Lands Runoff, 14 Invasive Species, 20 Climate Adaptation and Resilience, 22 Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship, B Strategic Leadership and Collaboration, C Research and Monitoring, D Education Partnerships, and E Stewardship and Motivating. Direct implementation of selected key opportunities from actions associated with the above strategies include: #1 (Significantly improve the implementation of the GMA within local jurisdictions land use planning and decisions, and across jurisdictions, to include the protection of natural areas and working lands;); #2 (Improve planning and zoning within UGAs that includes protection of existing habitat;); #178 (Integrate climate change mitigation and resilience and salmon restoration goals and strategies into the GMA and local land use plans;); #12 (Enhance funding for and capacity of landowners, tribal governments, local governments, and nongovernmental organizations to acquire, restore, and manage floodplain and estuarine properties). WDFW will deliver outcomes in four major areas that advance these strategies and actions: Develop and implement recovery plans for Species of Greatest Conservation Need; Stop or slow declines and species and habitat loss; Improve our knowledge of species and habitat status, trends, and needs; and Support partnerships, public engagement, and conservation education to restore biodiversity. This includes WDFW environmental engineers developing guidance to protect and restore aquatic habitat and assisting staff, partners, and the public to apply these techniques. The decision package also implements actions related to the above Action Agenda strategies and actions in the Governor's Salmon Strategy, the draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum, Orca Task Force Recommendations and the 2020-2024 Science Workplan for Puget Sound (see Puget Sound Partnership Smartsheet for details).

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW does not have the ability or authority to achieve the necessary change alone to restore biodiversity in the state. Conservation at this large scale can only happen through collaboration and building new and strengthening old partnerships, including with Tribes and other natural resource agencies. Local, state, federal, Tribal governments, nongovernmental and conservation organizations, land managers, farmers, commercial industries, private landowners, hunters, anglers, and others of all ages and backgrounds are needed to cooperate and work toward a more resilient future for fish, wildlife, and people.

This proposal will fill critical knowledge gaps, assist in providing more clear actions/pathways to recovering not just individual species, but to broader ecosystems that biodiversity needs and supports. The State Wildlife Action Plan that is being updated right now will provide a comprehensive understanding of the actions needed to successfully protect and restore biodiversity, as well as the roles of governments, businesses, and residents to contribute to biodiversity conservation and multiple scales. The work identified in this budget request will result in

data and information, best practices, and WDFW assistance to these partners to increase successful implementation of the SWAP.

Taken as a whole, WDFW's 2023 biodiversity funding proposal will result in many positive impacts for other governmental entities. Please see **Attachment A: Intergovernmental Connections and Stakeholder Responses** for more thorough descriptions of the connections to each of these entities.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONNECTIONS

- **County and City Governments**
- **State Agencies**
 - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
 - Washington State Conservation Commission
 - Washington Department of Ecology
 - Washington Department of Natural Resources
 - Washington State Parks
- **State Task Forces/Strategies**
 - Statewide Salmon Recovery Strategy (2021)
 - Washington State Southern Resident Orca Task Force (2019)
- **Federal Agencies**
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Department of Defense
 - National Park Service
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
- **Tribal Governments**

Stakeholder Impacts:

As noted above, WDFW does not have the ability or authority to achieve the necessary change alone to restore biodiversity in the state. Conservation at this large scale can only happen through collaboration and building new and strengthening old partnerships, including with non-governmental and conservation organizations, land managers, farmers, commercial industries, private landowners, hunters, anglers, and others of all ages and backgrounds.

Taken as a whole, WDFW's 2023 Biodiversity proposal will result in many positive impacts for non-governmental stakeholders. Please see **Attachment A: Intergovernmental Connections and Stakeholder Responses** for more thorough descriptions of the connections to each of these entities.

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE

- Academia
- Conservation Organizations
- Environmental Education
- Industry Groups
- Outdoor Organizations with Focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- WDFW Advisory Groups
- Zoos and Aquaria

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may become problematic. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

[RCW 77.04.012](#) is the legislative mandate of WDFW and serves as the foundation for the Department’s mission: “To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.”

This funding proposal aims to implement recommended actions from the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, which have not been adequately funded for the last 15 years.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 1 - Protect and restore vital salmon habitat; and Strategy Action Area 1c - Voluntary protection and restoration: This package expands the pace and scale of conservation and restoration actions in WA to the benefit of ESA-listed salmon and steelhead.

Reference Documents

- [RB - Attachment A - Intergovernmental Connections and Stakeholder Responses.pdf](#)
- [RB - Attachment B - Puget Sound Partnership 2023 Connections.pdf](#)
- [RB - Attachment C - Biodiversity Factsheet 2024.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$2,625	\$3,864	\$6,489	\$3,864	\$3,864	\$7,728
Obj. B	\$964	\$1,440	\$2,404	\$1,440	\$1,440	\$2,880
Obj. E	\$469	\$618	\$1,087	\$618	\$618	\$1,236
Obj. G	\$124	\$304	\$428	\$304	\$304	\$608
Obj. N	\$198	\$345	\$543	\$345	\$345	\$690
Obj. T	\$1,353	\$2,016	\$3,369	\$2,016	\$2,016	\$4,032

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Robust fisheries monitoring and planning efforts are critical to species conservation and recovery, co-management with Treaty Tribes, and fishing opportunities. This package includes support for Puget Sound freshwater fisheries monitoring efforts, including steelhead spawning estimates and angler surveys, and fishery planning efforts, including preparation of fishery management plans for steelhead fisheries. With ongoing support for monitoring, WDFW can safeguard the health of imperiled fishery stocks, meeting federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and tribal co-management requirements while providing diverse and accessible recreational fishing opportunities for all Washingtonians. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$822	\$822	\$1,644	\$822	\$822	\$1,644
Total Expenditures	\$822	\$822	\$1,644	\$822	\$822	\$1,644

Decision Package Description

Offering opportunities for sustainable recreational fishing is a primary mandate of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Sustainable management of exploited salmon and steelhead stocks requires an understanding of key population attributes, including population size, age composition, and fishery related mortality. Monitoring these metrics is essential for development of data-driven fishery planning and management, allowing managers to track the health of fish populations, quantify recreational fishery impacts, and adhere to the Department's Conservation Principles (WDFW Policy 5004) by managing, protecting, and restoring ecosystems for the long-term benefit of people, and for fish, wildlife, and their habitat.

This work is essential to implementing co-managed agreed to fisheries with Northwest Treaty Tribes, meeting federal statutory and international management obligations (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Pacific Salmon Treaty), and meeting Department conservation objectives. Given that fishery opportunities in Puget Sound rivers are inextricably linked to monitoring programs, the inability of WDFW to monitor fisheries is likely to diminish future recreational fishing opportunities in the region. With ongoing support for monitoring, WDFW can safeguard the health of imperiled fishery stocks while providing diverse and accessible recreational opportunities for all Washingtonians.

Quicksilver portfolio

The Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group (PSSAG), a panel of community stakeholders representing diverse perspectives on steelhead management, developed a suite of actions to restore steelhead populations and fisheries, referred to as the Quicksilver Portfolio. Key PSSAG recommendations included 1) improving the quality of steelhead abundance estimates, 2) improving freshwater fishery monitoring, 3) developing additional fishery management plans for Puget Sound steelhead, and 4) investing in additional hatchery planning, production, and monitoring. This proposal addresses objectives 1-3. Objective 4 is already being addressed by the new permanent statewide hatchery evaluation unit that was funded in FY23-25.

Objective 1: Improving steelhead spawner estimates

Uncertainty regarding spawner abundance of Puget Sound steelhead populations limits WDFW's ability to identify, pursue, and assess recovery actions and restricts options for fisheries targeting steelhead. Recent technological advances offer opportunities to improve the accuracy and precision of steelhead abundance estimates. This proposal supports continued work on several fronts, all of which were identified as priorities by PSSAG: 1) new mark-recapture and snorkeling programs on Deer Creek and the North Fork Skykomish River, 2) SONAR, mark-recapture, and redd-based approaches on the Samish River, 3) SONAR on the Dungeness River, 4) application of a novel spatio-temporal model to improve abundance estimation procedures relying on redd surveys (i.e., counts of gravel fish nests) throughout Puget Sound.

Abundance of summer-run steelhead in Deer Creek, a tributary to the Stillaguamish River, has not been estimated for several decades. A mark-recapture study began in 2022 that involves seining summer-run steelhead near the mouth of Deer Creek while they hold during the late summer, marking them with brightly colored spaghetti tags, releasing them, and subsequently re-sighting them with snorkel and angling surveys once they have moved into Deer Creek later in the fall. We have made preliminary abundance estimates for the last two years, and we plan to continue the

project to both estimate population size and evaluate mark-recapture assumptions. We have proposed a similar mark-recapture project on the North Fork Skykomish River to potentially begin in 2024.

On the Samish River we have completed the first of a multi-year study to compare various abundance estimation methods for the winter-run steelhead population. These include redd surveys in historical index reaches, a more complete census redd survey, SONAR estimates, and mark-recapture techniques. Every steelhead entering the spawning grounds must pass a weir, which is a human-made structure placed across a river to direct fish movement and enable trapping. We installed a robust video camera in the Samish River weir to capture the true abundance of winter-run steelhead, a rarity in ecological studies like this one, which can then be compared to abundance estimates generated by alternative methods. The monitoring methods will be evaluated for accuracy and precision, as well as relative costs in time and equipment. Lessons learned will be applied to other watersheds to improve monitoring plans in the future.

Steelhead redd surveys in the spring on the Dungeness River are challenging, as high flows lead to unsafe conditions, causing surveys to be cut short in most years before spawning is complete. Since 2018 we have deployed a SONAR in the lower Dungeness River to count fish moving upstream (and downstream). Starting in 2021, we have conducted weekly tangle netting surveys to establish species composition and allow us to separate the SONAR counts into steelhead and other species like bull trout. SONAR-based estimates of steelhead escapement for the last five years have been nearly twice the redd-based estimates over the same period. We plan to continue the project and have started an acoustic tagging component to help study kelting behavior, which is indicative of steelhead that have survived spawning, and will allow us to improve the accuracy of spawner abundance estimates by better differentiating between downstream milling of pre-spawn fish and outmigration of kelts.

Counting redds on the spawning grounds is a commonly applied method to estimate spawning population size for salmon and steelhead within Puget Sound and across the range of Pacific salmon, but missing data can introduce bias, and redd-based estimates usually lack precision. We propose to analyze historical redd survey data using a newly developed spatio-temporal model that can account for missing data and provide more accurate estimates of historical data with an approximation of uncertainty. This approach will be applied across numerous populations to improve the accuracy and precision of previous abundance estimates.

The funding request primarily represents the personnel costs of pursuing improvements in steelhead spawner estimates. The department identified several cost-sharing opportunities with anticipated or ongoing funding sources, including the Pacific Salmon Commission and existing WDFW funding, allowing us to request partial funding (i.e., less than 1 FTE) for two of the three positions that this decision package supports. We budgeted annual operating expenses (goods and services, travel), but did not request the startup costs for new equipment (e.g., SONAR unit or electronic tag detection gear) as a cost-saving measure. If funded, we plan to either use existing WDFW equipment or approach the PSSAG for the financial support for a one-time purchase of a new equipment.

Objective 2: Monitoring Puget Sound freshwater fisheries

Recreational fishery impacts must be accounted for to ensure that fishing opportunities occur within harvest constraints and allow WDFW to meet conservation objectives. This component of the package supports expansion and improvements to sport fishery sampling and monitoring in Puget Sound rivers, which is essential for adherence to Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) policy, management plans with tribal co-managers, federal law, and international management agreements. Monitoring Puget Sound freshwater fisheries complements Objective 1, as estimates of spawner abundance are essential for calculating harvest rates and population level impacts of recreational fisheries.

This work supports provisions of WFWC Policy C-3608, which guides the annual salmon season-setting process known as “North of Falcon”. Guiding principles of the policy focus on managing salmon and steelhead to recovery, assuring sustainability, and meeting or exceeding ESA, recovery, and conservation goals. Specifically, policy guidelines stipulate that “monitoring, sampling and enforcement programs will be provided to account for species and population impacts of all fisheries.” This policy in turn supports WDFW’s adherence to fishery management plans documented within the co-manager’s (i.e., state and tribes) annual List of Agreed Fisheries (LOAF) or regional co-manager memoranda of understanding and approved at the federal level by NOAA fisheries. At the international level, quantifying Washington’s salmon harvest impacts is essential for implementing management objectives of the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

This funding is needed to continue coordinated implementation angler surveys to understand when, where, and how many ESA-listed species anglers encounter in Puget Sound freshwater fisheries. A common method to achieve this is the use of creel surveys, where Department staff use a scientific study design to 1) conduct interviews with the angling public to quantify their catch, and 2) perform independent surveys to estimate the amount of angling effort within a designated fishery area. An important component of these surveys is sampling catch, which is necessary to identify the origin (e.g., hatchery or natural), release location based on coded-wire-tags or other marks and, for steelhead, the body condition relative to spawning. The focus of the surveys in each year will depend on outcomes of various fishery season setting processes, including tribal co-manager discussions during North of Falcon and our advisors’ recommendations. Based on co-manager discussions, we expect these

fisheries could include:

1. Nooksack River basin spring Chinook salmon and steelhead;
2. Skagit River basin sockeye salmon, spring Chinook salmon, coho salmon, pink salmon, and steelhead;
3. Stillaguamish River basin trout, coho salmon, pink salmon, and steelhead;
4. Snohomish River basin trout, Chinook salmon, coho salmon, pink salmon, and steelhead;
5. Nisqually River basin Chinook salmon, coho salmon, pink salmon.

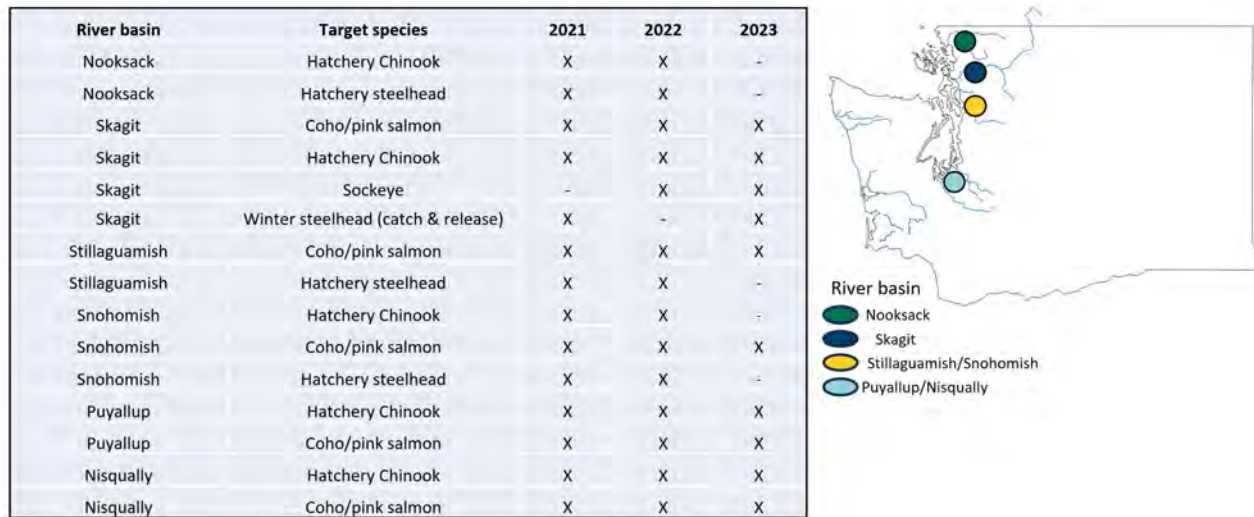


Figure 1. Puget Sound freshwater salmon and steelhead fisheries prosecuted and monitored (X) by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife from 2021-2023. Fisheries that did not occur are represented by the – symbol.

This list of priority fisheries was used to guide sport fishery monitoring activities in Puget Sound river fisheries from 2021-2023 (Figure 1). From 2021 through the current FY23-25 period, this package has supported key investments to modernize WDFW’s freshwater sport fishery monitoring, with accomplishments including:

- Further development of a modern database for storing and managing freshwater creel survey data.
- Adoption of electronic data collection for freshwater creel surveys.
- Daily publication of publicly available [freshwater creel survey data](#) to the official Washington State open data portal.
- Development of an integrated data analysis tool, [CreelEstimates](#), using open-sourced software and publicly available data and code, supporting open and reproducible science to inform fisheries management.

With the anticipated launch of WDFW’s electronic licensing system in late 2024, anglers will soon have the option to report fish and shellfish harvest on their mobile phones using a new electronic Catch Record Card system (eCRC). Field validation of new mobile reported harvest data, through minor modifications to existing creel surveys, will be essential for a smooth launch and long-term success of the eCRC system. Integrating eCRC validation into ongoing, priority salmon and steelhead fisheries (Figure 1) provides a value-added opportunity, where the Department can meet current data needs while collecting new validation data necessary to bridge the gap to the next generation of harvest estimation tools.

A key impact of this work is that fishery monitoring, where implemented through legal requirements and co-manager agreements, enables fishing opportunity. With the continued support of the Washington State Legislature, tribal co-managers, the Governor’s Office, and user groups, WDFW plans to implement a similar level of monitoring effort in future freshwater salmon and steelhead seasons. The location and season of fisheries is subject to change based upon co-manager discussions and in-season management actions, but the focus of our monitoring will again center on priority salmon and steelhead stocks in the Puget Sound.

Objective 3: Developing fishery management plans

Revising fishery management plans for fisheries that affect Puget Sound steelhead is a primary objective of this work, requiring an understanding of key population attributes identified in Objective 1 (population size) and Objective 2 (fishery mortality) of this proposal. Robust management plans require an evaluation of future population trajectories and quantification of long-term conservation risks and allowable fishery impacts under the proposed management regime. Currently, fishery management plans for Puget Sound steelhead populations are either missing or lack analyses that quantify risks to populations under different scenarios of impacts from recreational and tribal fisheries. We therefore plan to perform management strategy evaluations (MSEs) as the basis for developing or updating fishery resource management plans.

MSEs are designed to evaluate the long-term impacts of alternative harvest control rules (e.g., exploitation rates or escapement goals) and to compare their performance with regard to management objectives, such as providing future fishing opportunities without significantly increasing conservation risks. This approach will allow fishery managers to determine whether changes to current management need to be made, identify how to provide recreational fishing opportunities without substantially reducing the probability to recover at-risk populations, and pave the way for an adaptive fishery management paradigm where reference points and management strategies can be reassessed periodically.

Performing management strategy evaluations involves two main steps: (1) fitting statistical population dynamics models using available monitoring data (i.e., spawner abundances, fishing mortality, and spawner age structure) to estimate important population parameters such as productivity and capacity, and (2) using the resulting parameter estimates to project the population forward under alternative management strategies (e.g., spawner escapement goals, fixed harvest rates, or abundance-based impact rates), which are then used to quantify their relative performance and to identify trade-offs among the relevant management objectives. The population models are fit to estimates of abundances that are based on existing monitoring such as redd surveys, creel surveys, and mark-recapture studies. Because such models rely on unbiased abundance estimates, continued monitoring, and state-of-the-art estimation methods, such as the novel spatial-temporal model, are critical for producing reliable results that can be used for projecting populations into the future.

We have gathered and curated historical data on spawner abundances, age composition, and fishing mortality rates for several Puget Sound steelhead populations. This effort included recovering age data from paper copies that had not been digitized yet, (e.g., winter steelhead survey data in the Stillaguamish River). Integrated population models are currently being developed for some of our Puget Sound steelhead populations, and our goal is to combine those models into a Bayesian hierarchical model that would include as many populations as possible and that can be used to estimate population parameters more accurately and precisely, including for populations that lack consistent long-term monitoring data. Once the model has been developed, we plan to run forward projections for each population under alternative management strategies and to evaluate the relative risks and opportunities. This analysis would provide a basis for the development of new or updated fishery resource management plans.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The Department received one-time funding to implement this package that will expire June 30, 2025. Funds were provided in the 2023-25 Operating Budget Bill (ESSB 5950) in Section 308 “(15) \$822,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$822,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely to:

- monitor recreational steelhead spawning and
- harvest in freshwater streams and rivers in Puget Sound.”

The first bullet is to support the state's efforts to accurately monitor the size and productivity of Puget Sound steelhead populations.

The second bullet is to increase the state’s capacity to quantify fishery-related mortality of steelhead in Puget Sound rivers. The department must provide a report of goods and services purchased with grant funds to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Objectives 1 and 2 of the package represent ongoing work of a current program. Objective 3, “Developing fishery management plans”, is a new activity and not an expansion or alteration of a current program.

Funding is now being requested as ongoing to continue monitoring and implementation of work that improves spawning steelhead population estimates (Objective 1), provides capacity to monitor sport fisheries—and thus provide fishing opportunities (Objective 2), and will integrate essential fish population metrics into new fishery management frameworks (Objective 3).

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 6.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total \$532,000, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E, total \$54,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing. This includes \$48,800 (\$8,000 per FTE) for WDFW standard costs (which cover an average employee’s space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions, as well as central agency costs), and \$5,000 per fiscal year to purchase field gear for staff (boots, waterproof jackets, safety equipment, and miscellaneous supplies to assist with data recording). Travel costs, object G, total \$35,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing for motor pool and other travel costs. An infrastructure and program support rate is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job Classifications and the associated work for the 6.1 FTE are as follows:

4.5 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$79,013 salaries and benefits per FTE) in FY 2026 and ongoing. Staff are responsible for field operations: sampling and monitoring activities, installation of equipment, in season adjustments to equipment, data review and data management.

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 (\$96,773 salaries and benefits per FTE) in FY 2026 and ongoing. Position functions as field data collection team lead and data steward/coordinator. Will serve under existing Regional District Biologists and coordinate with Program Leads in Olympia.

0.5 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 (\$130,258 salaries and benefits per FTE) in FY 2026 and ongoing. The project lead responsible for all aspects of field operations, data review, analysis, reporting and communication.

0.1 FTE Journey-IT App Development (\$140,908 salaries and benefits per FTE) in FY 2026 and ongoing. Position facilitates merging newly collected data into existing centralized databases in Olympia. This work can be accomplished by existing staff with the annual funding for updating electronic data collection applications and database improvements.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal will support the state's ability to achieve two **Governor's Results Washington** goals:

- Recreational fisheries support **Healthy and Safe Communities** by providing families opportunities to access and enjoy Washington's natural environment and participate in sustainable harvest of fresh and healthy fish and seafood.
- Fishing opportunities contribute to a **Prosperous Economy**, supporting a growing outdoor recreation economy that supports rural communities in the Puget Sound region. These communities are disproportionately impacted by governmental decisions and market forces driving long-term declines in natural resource extraction industries like commercial fishing, logging, and mining.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

The package will support core strategies of the **WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan**:

- The package seeks to **Proactively Address Conservation Challenges** by developing the data and management plans necessary to balance conservation and harvest opportunity in the Department's decision making regarding imperiled salmon and steelhead stocks.
- Offering fishing opportunities provides a direct means to **Engage Communities through Recreation and Stewardship** as these activities encourage families to use natural areas, interact with and learn about local fish and wildlife species, and become invested in the long-term health of fish populations and critical habitat areas.
- Our work seeks to **Deliver Science that Informs Washington's Most Pressing Fish and Wildlife Questions** by addressing key data gaps for Puget Sound salmon and steelhead abundance, productivity, and fishery-related mortality.
- The package will **Model Operational and Environmental Excellence** through increased decision transparency of improved, science driven approaches to developing fishery management plans.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitat and Species (1.5 FTE with \$224,000 in FY 2026 General Fund – State)

This package supports the **Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitat and Species** activity and applicable supporting strategy: Recover and sustain diverse fish populations. The department manages unclassified and non-game fish and shellfish populations to ensure they are maintained at sustainable levels in the natural environment.

Manage Fishing Opportunities (4.6 FTE with \$598,000 in FY 2026 General Fund – State)

This package also supports the **Manage Fishing Opportunities** activity and applicable supporting strategy: **monitor and manage finfish populations**. The Department assesses, monitors, and evaluates fish and shellfish populations to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and based on sound science. The Department staff conduct field investigations to count the number of juveniles migrating to saltwater and adults returning to freshwater, conducts test fisheries to verify abundance assumptions, and uses fish management harvest models to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities while minimizing risks to wild fish populations. Activities that enable fishing opportunities help increase the sales of recreational fishing licenses and promote access to locally harvested fish.

Performance Outcomes:

The Department's ability to achieve salmon and steelhead recovery goals while offering broadly accessible fishery opportunities in Puget Sound rivers is inextricably linked to fisheries monitoring programs. This work is essential to implementing co-managed agreed to fisheries with Northwest Treaty Tribes, meeting federal statutory and international management obligations (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Pacific Salmon Treaty), and meeting Department conservation objectives. The inability to monitor freshwater fisheries would yield negative performance outcomes for WDFW by diminishing future recreational fishing opportunities in the Puget Sound region. Conversely, funding this package supports positive performance outcomes, actualized through cultural, community, economic benefits of recreational fishing to the people of Washington state. Freshwater fisheries provide financial support to rural communities and provide meaningful and accessible outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly for lower and middle-income families. This proposal also supports the development new science-driven fisheries management frameworks that provide managers with information needed to balance harvest opportunities with key conservation goals.

Additionally, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Goals of the WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan:

- 25% increase in participation in fish and wildlife-related activities, particularly among youth, racially diverse communities, hunters, anglers, and watchable wildlife enthusiasts.

Supported performance indicators include:

- Number of threatened and endangered species vs. all species
- Number of people buying licenses
- Number of state revenue dollars generated
- Number of fishing days

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Tribal communities

Salmon season-setting processes are formalized engagement with tribal co-managers to negotiate fishery management plans, including levels of harvest for salmon and steelhead. Engagement with tribal co-managers during the annual North of Falcon season setting process helped lay the groundwork for the initial expansion of the Department's monitoring footprint for freshwater salmon and steelhead fisheries, supported in the original 2021-2023 "Coastal and Puget Sound Monitoring" Package and detailed in the current package as on-going work.

Angler community

The sport fishery monitoring component of this package integrates recommendations and guidance from the angling community, represented by the Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group (PSSAG), a community stakeholder panel of anglers representing diverse perspectives on steelhead management.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The work detailed in this proposal seeks to improve monitoring and management of Washington coast salmon and steelhead and is expected to yield benefits across a broad swath of populations and communities in Washington State. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, improving sustainability and accessibility for all communities. WDFW aims to improve communication strategies and outreach services to better inform historically marginalized communities on freshwater recreational fishing opportunities.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal benefits communities including Indigenous Tribes, rural community members of diverse backgrounds, and angler groups across diverse geographic (i.e., urban, and rural) and socioeconomic backgrounds, giving the Department an opportunity to impact key Determinants of Equity through sustainable and equitable management of fish populations and fishing opportunities within Washington State.

Tribal communities rely heavily on healthy fish populations from both an economic and cultural standpoint. Conserving and perpetuating these populations requires a cooperative and data-driven approach to management. Increasing the monitoring of state freshwater fisheries fulfills a long-standing desire among tribal co-managers. Adhering to co-manager agreed to fishery management plans, which increasingly require sport fish monitoring, ensures sustainable total harvest levels and is essential for reaffirming the right of Northwest Treaty Tribes to an equitable share

of harvestable surpluses of salmon and steelhead. These tribal fisheries are critical for preserving cultural ties to salmon and steelhead in Washington State. Providing opportunity to harvest fish within the state’s agreed to share of fish demonstrates good faith in the co-management framework, reflecting shared cultural and economic valuation of salmon and steelhead fishing to the people of Washington state.

Rural community members of Washington State are disproportionately impacted by governmental decisions regarding natural resource management (i.e., regulations on land-use, resource extraction, and hunting and fishing seasons). Furthermore, changes to legal, regulatory, and market forces have contributed to long-term declines in natural resource dependent industries like commercial fishing, logging, and mining, which often formed the basis of rural economies. These communities are positioned to benefit from growth in recreation-based economic activity, including freshwater fisheries supported by this package. For example, in years from 2018-2024, when the Skagit winter steelhead catch and release fishery was opened, the preliminary estimate of the number angler trips per day ranged from a low of 92 trips/day in 2019 to a high of 165 trips/day in 2024, generating significant recreational and economic activity in rural areas of Skagit and Snohomish Counties and highlighting potential growth in popularity of the fishery. The inability to prosecute and monitor economically valuable recreational fisheries is likely to negatively impact rural communities already burdened with highly uncertain economic opportunities.

Table 1. Angler effort and participation estimates based on creel survey data collected during Skagit winter steelhead catch and release fishing seasons from 2018 – 2024. The fishery did not occur in 2020 and 2022 due to inadequate pre-season forecasted abundance of adult steelhead. Estimates are considered preliminary pending final review and publication.

Year	Fishery open?	Days open	Total estimated fishing effort (angler-hours)	Average trip length per angler (hours)	Total estimated trips	Trips per day
2018	Yes	12	11,504	5.85	1,967	164
2019	Yes	89	45,761	5.60	8,172	92
2020	No	-	-	-	-	-
2021	Yes	42	28,205	5.39	5,233	125
2022	No	-	-	-	-	-
2023	Yes	27	28,552	6.45	4,427	164
2024	Yes	55	62,429	6.87	9,087	165

Departmental policy guidance directs fishery managers to offer meaningful recreational fishing opportunities that are distributed equitably across fishing areas and reflect the diverse interests of fishers. Recreational anglers are likely to benefit from this package, as the work helps ensure the Department has the necessary resources to implement monitoring components of fishery management plans. More specifically, this package supports fishing opportunities in freshwater systems that are accessible to a broad swath of Washingtonians, including lower and middle-class families who don’t own a boat. These families are more likely exhibit diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds that have been historically excluded and marginalized by governmental decisions. Geography is also a key determinant of equity for fishing opportunity, and freshwater fisheries tend to offer recreational opportunities that reduce the distance needed to travel and, in some areas, may eliminate the need for a motor vehicle to access salmon and steelhead fishing opportunities.

Impacts on Determinants of Equity

WDFW has policy mandates to guide fisheries management decisions in a manner that is:

- Consistent with case law reaffirming tribes' treaty-reserved rights to fish in their usual and accustomed places (e.g., U.S. v. Washington; U.S. v. Oregon).
- Able to offer meaningful recreational fishing opportunities that are distributed equitably across fishing areas and reflect the diverse interests of fishers.

These guidelines afford the Department an opportunity to impact key **Determinants of Equity** and address upstream, systemic inequities in the accessibility to and allocation of fishing opportunities, and thus fishery resources, within Washington State. Specific examples include:

- **Community support**
 - Access to harvest opportunities for fresh caught salmon and steelhead support healthy and resilient food systems, impacting community food sovereignty by improving the quantity and quality of choices for fresh and affordable food and allowing diverse communities from other parts of the world to integrate their cultural practices into their lifestyle in Washington State
 - Fishing opportunities encourage well-being through experiential use of and learning in natural river environments.
- **Family support**

- Providing recreational fisheries in accessible systems like freshwater rivers encourages families to recreate in parks and become invested in the conservation of fish, wildlife, and critical habitat.
- **Community infrastructure**
 - The economic impact of freshwater fisheries is a net benefit to economically disadvantaged rural communities, supporting principles of Economic Justice through direct benefits like improved access to healthy and affordable food and indirect benefits like increased tourism and outdoor recreation activity.
- **Government systems**
 - Actualizing Department mandates to offer meaningful recreational fishing opportunities, distributed equitably across fishing areas, and reflecting the diverse interests of fishers is a means to promote Equity in Public Services offered by WDFW.

By supporting work that improves equity in the state's planning and management of fisheries, we have an opportunity to embrace Executive Order 22-02, which provides a directive to state government to dismantle discrimination and institutional and systemic barriers, ensuring that all people have full access to opportunities to flourish and live healthy, successful lives.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

This package seeks ongoing support for work to improve the Department's freshwater fisheries monitoring capacity, as described in Objectives 1-3 in the package description, and originally identified in the 2021-2023 "Coastal and Puget Sound Monitoring Package". Elements of the package were developed as a direct recommendation of the Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group (PSSAG), a stakeholder panel representing diverse perspectives on fisheries management. The original proposal was a key outcome of the PSSAG's nearly three-year process to develop its QuickSilver package of actions intended to promote steelhead conservation and provide fishing opportunities. Outreach and involvement of constituents participating in these fisheries is high. Inputs from this community are listed in the Quicksilver Portfolio sub-section (key recommendations 1-4), most of which were incorporated into Objectives 1-3 of this proposal.

Increased monitoring of state freshwater fisheries is a long-standing desire among tribal co-managers. As salmon and steelhead populations continue to decline, having a fuller understanding of the impacts of freshwater fisheries will inform decision making when crafting fishing opportunities for all users. This input is incorporated into the proposal in Objective 2, "Monitoring Puget Sound Freshwater Fisheries", which identifies key salmon and steelhead fisheries identified by both state and tribal co-managers as a priority for increased monitoring.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package increases monitoring activities of Puget Sound freshwater fisheries for Chinook Salmon and steelhead. The ongoing program Fishery and Hatchery Science and Management implements Regional Priority Approach *CHIN 8.1: Update Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan chapters and steelhead plan chapters* through this decision package. CHIN 8.1 includes as an example action “to develop and implement a Puget Sound steelhead recovery plan.” This decision package implements recommendations on monitoring needs identified in the NOAA Fisheries Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery plan released December 2019. The ongoing program also directly implements *CHIN 4.4: Invest in making better estimates so we can better manage and recover Chinook*.

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal would continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

We anticipate positive impacts to tribal co-managers through improvements to the Department’s fisheries monitoring programs. Ongoing support for the increased level of monitoring supported by this package is anticipated to be strong from tribal communities, whom co-manage fishery resources with Washington State, and federal partners overseeing implementation of fishery and hatchery management plans for conservation.

We anticipate collaborating with tribal biologists on the use and application of data generated by this project to steelhead conservation and management. Furthermore, steelhead recovery efforts in Puget Sound encompass a diverse array of federal, state, and local governments. Broadly speaking, improving the quality of steelhead monitoring data is a shared goal of steelhead managers across multiple levels of jurisdiction. At the regional, county, and city level, we anticipate that the ability to prosecute and monitor salmon and steelhead fisheries would have positive impacts on local economies and cultures, and thus receive broad support.

Stakeholder Impacts:

This proposal was a direct recommendation of the Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group (PSSAG), a stakeholder panel representing diverse perspectives on fisheries management. This proposal was a key outcome of the PSSAG’s nearly three-year process to develop its QuickSilver package of actions intended to promote steelhead conservation and provide fishing opportunities. Fishing constituents are anticipated to be supportive of efforts that lead to increased opportunities on gamefish and salmon due to increased monitoring. WDFW risks losing the support of the recreational fishing community if it fails to maintain progress on work stemming from PSSAG’s recommendations.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Monitoring natural populations are often requirements of U.S. Endangered Species Act consultations with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), but this proposal is not a direct outcome of litigation or action by the Washington State Legislature.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 7. Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability; and Strategy Action Area 7a. Monitoring and science-based efforts: This package continues essential population monitoring.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$373	\$373	\$746	\$373	\$373	\$746
Obj. B	\$159	\$159	\$318	\$159	\$159	\$318
Obj. E	\$54	\$54	\$108	\$54	\$54	\$108
Obj. G	\$35	\$35	\$70	\$35	\$35	\$70
Obj. T	\$201	\$201	\$402	\$201	\$201	\$402

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Building on a FY 25 quagga mussel proviso of \$1.81 million in state general funds and leveraging \$1.81 million in federal funds, WDFW will expand mussel activities including detection monitoring, implementing protections for habitat and infrastructure, and reducing impacts to our economy, environment, and species, including salmon and steelhead. WDFW will increase prevention activities, response readiness, public awareness and action, regulatory compliance, and preparation for extended management and mitigation. Through this ongoing investment, WDFW will address the greater than \$100 million annual quagga and zebra mussel threat on the state’s doorstep for the benefit of protecting and perpetuating Washington’s resources. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.7
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620
Fund 001 - 2	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620
Total Expenditures	\$3,620	\$3,620	\$7,240	\$3,620	\$3,620	\$7,240
Revenue						
001 - 0312	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620
Total Revenue	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$3,620

Decision Package Description

Freshwater invasive quagga and zebra mussels, two closely related bivalves that attach to hard surfaces, are prohibited aquatic invasive species in Washington. The aquatic invasive species may not be possessed, introduced on or into a water body or property, or trafficked without department authorization, a permit, or as otherwise provided by rule. They are prohibited due to the catastrophic consequences they pose to Washington’s infrastructure, water quality and human health, fisheries and conservation species, and economy through indirect impacts to agriculture, irrigation, and food production. Since first introduced to the United States in the Great Lakes in the late 1980s, these species have spread westward from state to state on watercraft and gear.



Figure 1. Current map identifying areas without quagga and zebra mussel infestations and Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID) stations.

The Columbia River Basin, including the entirety of Washington, have remained quagga and zebra mussel free through coordinated tribal, state, local, and federal action over two decades. These efforts include a 2017-2020 U.S. Department of the Interior Safeguarding the West from Invasive Species initiative with all Interior Bureaus and Offices developing and executing coordinated actions in partnership with Western Governors, state, federal, and tribal governments. Hundreds of millions of dollars, thousands of staff hours, and a multitude of organizations have worked together to protect the Columbia River and Washington from infestation through a western states and provinces ‘Perimeter Defense’; a series of mandatory watercraft inspection stations across the west seeking to intercept invasive mussel fouled watercraft and prevent establishment of mussels in new waterbodies.

In September 2023, Idaho Governor Brad Little announced that the Columbia River perimeter defense failed due to free-floating larvae being

detected in the Snake River in Idaho during routine early detection monitoring, followed by one adult mussel found during a SCUBA survey. This occurrence threatens high consequences and potential catastrophic negative impacts to Washington’s economy, infrastructure, water quality, fisheries, treaty protected resources, and way of life. Focusing on the mitigation and maintenance to hydroelectric systems alone, it will cost more than \$100 million annually to keep Washington’s hydroelectric infrastructure running if mussels take hold. Similar impacts and costs are anticipated to fish hatcheries and passage, irrigation systems, drinking water infrastructure, freshwater recreational sites, and other critical infrastructure such as commercial shipping locks or data center cooling systems.

Beyond economic impacts, quagga and zebra mussels also negatively affect water quality and the food web, filtering out beneficial nutrients and leaving toxins, leading to increased harmful algal blooms, reducing aquatic vegetation and fish habitat, and indirectly leading to collapse in fisheries through habitat loss and water quality changes. Quagga and zebra mussels pose a potentially catastrophic risk to resident fisheries, commercial, recreational, and tribal harvest, and threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead. Indirectly, through associated impacts to prey and prey availability, invasive mussels pose a threat to marine species such as the Southern Resident Killer Whale and Transient Killer Whales who rely on runs of Columbia River fisheries during certain times of the year.

The 2023 establishment of quagga mussels in Idaho, 375 river miles from Washington’s portion of the Snake River, is an imminent threat to Washington’s economy, environment, public health, and culture. While the State of Idaho executed a rapid response plan and treatment, it is unlikely that it was fully successful and does not address free-floating larvae found in the Snake River several weeks prior to the treatment. Quagga mussel larvae could have potentially entered Washington’s waters within one week. Additionally, Washington boaters represent a high amount of watercraft using the Snake River.

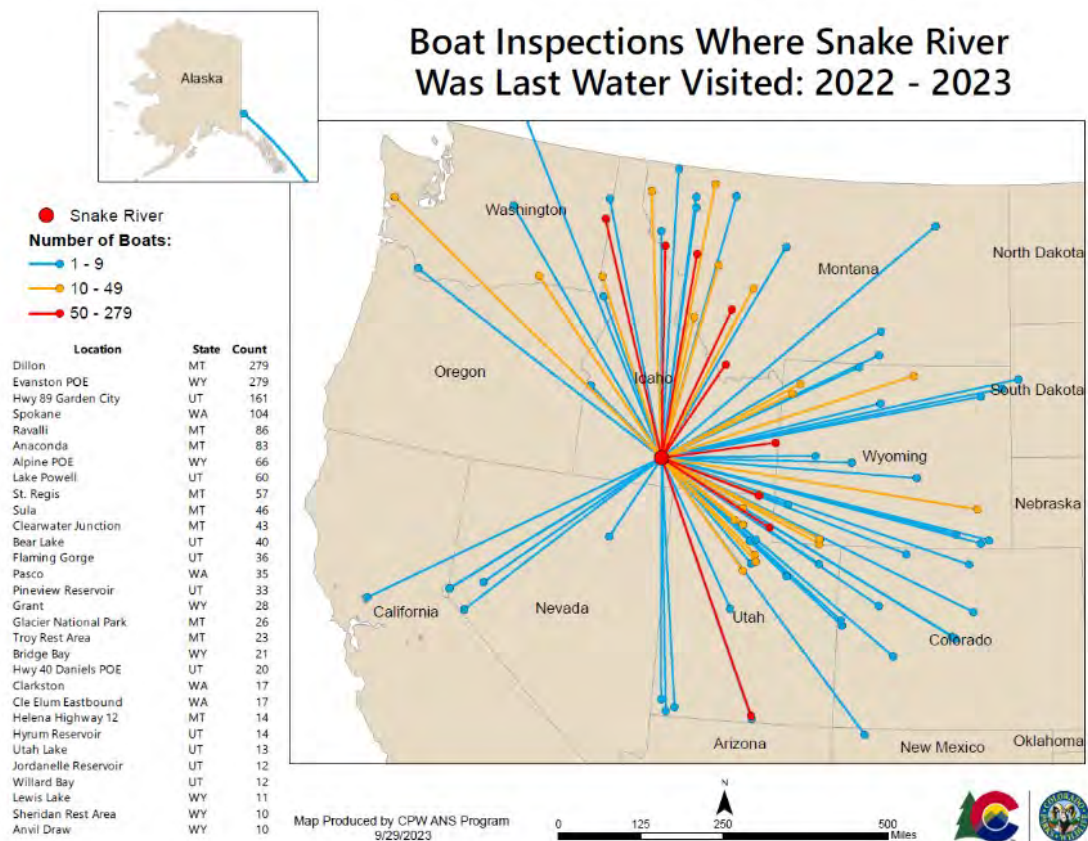


Figure 2. Map showing vessels intercepted by state mandatory watercraft inspection stations that were last used in the current quagga mussel infested portion of the Snake River. A high percentage of vessels were destined for Washington, which are a potential vector for spread.

Due to this imminent threat and known consequences, the Department is requesting ongoing funding, building upon a one-time Fiscal Year 2025 proviso to increase Washington’s prevention, monitoring, response readiness, and plans for mitigation and long-term management. With support from a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cost-share program, 50% of Washington’s effort will be funded by the federal government due to the catastrophic and ongoing impacts to the Columbia River Federal Hydropower System if quagga and zebra mussels become established here.

The Department, in partnership with tribal, federal, state, and local agencies, and the public, will take ongoing actions to increase prevention, response readiness, public awareness and reporting, regulatory compliance, and further prepare for extended management and mitigation. Through this ongoing investment and increased outreach and prevention effort, WDFW will be positioned to address quagga and zebra mussel threats for the benefit of protecting and perpetuating Washington's resources, environment, and economy.

By continuing a long-term leadership, planning, response and coordination structure, the Department will be prepared to respond to quagga and zebra mussel emergencies quickly and effectively, both small and large, with pre-existing agreements and partnerships from tribal nations, state and federal agencies, local governments, academic intuitions, and conservation partners. Led by the Department, this consortium will:

1. Continue a long-term leadership, planning, and command structure that includes internal and external partners including tribal, federal, regional, state, and local governments.
2. Continue coordination and capacity building efforts for long-term, local-led management with Department oversight in partnership with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Upper Columbia United Tribes, and tribal nations statewide.
3. Fully staff mandatory watercraft inspection and decontamination stations in Clarkston, Pasco, Ridgefield, and Spokane.
4. Maintain and support two invasive mussel detection canines and handlers to support Columbia River and Southeast Region check stations and early detection monitoring.
5. Perform intensive Snake River and Columbia River early detection and monitoring activities and statewide early detection monitoring to detect downstream quagga mussel establishment through Clarkston, Ephrata, and Olympia-based teams.
6. Maintain and enhance prevention of quagga and zebra mussel importation from both recreational and commercial pathways by addressing pet trade, food fish aquaculture, recreational transportation of live fish, and movement of aquatic invasive species on navigable waterways through ballast water and biofouling.
7. Continually increase state preparedness for containment and rapid response management actions for quagga and zebra mussels through procurement of equipment and training drills.
8. Understand and minimize risk to infrastructure such as irrigation systems or fish hatcheries and deploy strategies and equipment to prevent and mitigate quagga mussel establishment and infrastructure impacts.
9. Continue and enhance communications and outreach focused on invasive mussel prevention, response, and enforcement to grow awareness and support among decision makers, media, communities, and the public statewide, with emphasis on the Snake and Columbia River basins. Ongoing dedicated capacity for proactive communications includes informational multimedia content, targeted media relations, and community outreach that will support greater compliance with regulations (e.g., mandatory watercraft check stations and clean, drain, dry methods) as well as increased public engagement and reporting of suspected aquatic invasive species.

Alternatives Explored

Status quo and a decision against being proactive and investing additional resources now, prior to introduction and establishment of quagga and zebra mussels, threaten hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damages and untold environmental damage that will not be preventable later. Once introduced and established, the Department anticipates requesting Emergency Measures per RCW 77.135.090. However, it is anticipated that initial response and long-term management funding will far exceed these requested funds when this problem is preventable.

The Department has requested federal financial assistance in grants and agreements from organizations such as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services with success, but total available funding nationally is extremely limited. Federal funds have been awarded to improve a state response plan and hold executive level workshops to prepare for intergovernmental leadership and decision making in an emergency. Additional federal funds are used to fund watercraft inspection and decontamination at mandatory watercraft inspection stations.

The Department has leveraged a substantial amount of federal funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission-facilitated quagga and zebra mussel prevention, monitoring, and rapid response cost-share program. However, 50% of the total funds must be non-federal, meaning it requires a state contribution. This decision package assumes and has commitment for 50% cost-share from this program, meaning that 50% of all costs ongoing will be federal funds supplementing the state's investment.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

During the 2019-21 biennium, the Department took action to prevent, monitor for, and prepare for response and mitigation to quagga and zebra mussels using approximately \$698,400 in state funding through 21S Aquatic Invasive Species Management Funds generated through vessel

registration fees. Additionally, through a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cost-Share Program via the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Department leveraged approximately \$698,400 in federal funds to supplement the state investment. During the 2021-2023 biennium, the Department leveraged approximately \$871,000 in state funds to receive \$871,000 in federal funds through the cost-share program.

While sufficient for the time, quagga mussels found in the Snake River near Twin Falls, Idaho in September 2023 signaled the need for additional effort and increased prevention, monitoring, and preparation for rapid response and long-term management and mitigation. In State Fiscal Year 2025, the Legislature provided the Department a one-time \$1.81 million general fund – state, and \$1.81 million general fund – federal proviso to take actions to increase effort and protections, which is a jump start to this long-term and ongoing request.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits for 20.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions totals \$1,817,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Personal Service Contracts, object C, includes \$4,000 per FY for mussel detecting canine and handler training, \$55,000 per FY for plankton tow sample analysis and \$300,000 per FY for assessment, mitigation, and rapid response contracts. Goods and Services, object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE, per FY, for WDFW standard employee costs, which cover an employee's space, supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. Object E also includes \$5,000 per FY for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), \$21,000 per FY for sampling goods, \$45,000 per FY for WDFW genetics lab analyses, \$5,000 per FY for satellite messengers, waders, boots, etc., \$17,000 per FY for inspection station infrastructure goods, \$18,000 per FY for parts and equipment for inspection stations, and \$30,000 per FY for printing prevention education and outreach literature. Travel costs, Object G, totals \$140,500 per FY for combined leases, fuel, and per-diem. Pass-Through, Object N, totals \$147,000 for outreach and communications, sample analyses, monitoring and response capacity building grants. An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated startup and ongoing work are as follows:

2.0 FTE Environmental Planner 5, to plan and facilitate early detection monitoring, rapid response actions, and watercraft inspection and decontamination activities.

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3, to lead monitoring operations activities.

1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 3, to lead monitoring efforts in Spokane.

4.7 FTE Scientific Technician 2, to provide seasonal early detection, monitoring and collecting biological samples for quagga and zebra mussels.

2.0 FTE Natural Resource Specialist 1, one mandatory watercraft inspection and decontamination station supervisor to provide supervision of Clarkston mandatory watercraft in section station. One aquatic invasive species detection canine handler to perform canine assisted inspection and decontamination of watercraft and other aquatic conveyances.

7.5 FTE Natural Resource Worker 2, to provide watercraft and aquatic conveyance inspections enforcing state Clean Drain Dry requirements. Interception of aquatic invasive species and quagga and zebra mussel fouled motorized and non-motorized conveyances. Decontamination of aquatic conveyances using national uniform standards and procedures.

1.0 FTE Communications Consultant 3, to act as public information officer conveying information and prevention actions to the public, other agencies, and other external stakeholders. Developing and deploying communications plans and messaging tailored to specific user groups and stakeholders.

0.5 FTE Administrative Assistant 3, to provide office support to field supervisors ensuring safety check-in and check-out procedures, field equipment purchasing and inventory, and cell phone, emergency GPS communicators, and laptops are assigned and inventoried.

1.0 FTE WMS Band 2 to serve as AIS Management Coordinator will exercise continual AIS management strategic planning and critical decision-making with outcomes affecting the health and diversity of Washington's fresh and marine aquatic resources. The incumbent will implement quarantines, rapid response management actions, infested site management actions, long-term management strategies, and emergency measures to protect our aquatic ecosystems from invasive species. The position will provide internal and external leadership and policy support to facilitate actions that successfully manage AIS while considering policy objectives, strategic goals, and ensure compliance with federal and state laws.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes**Strategic Framework:**

This package supports three Governor's Results Washington Goal areas: 1) Prosperous economy, 2) Sustainable energy and a clean environment: Building a legacy of resource, and 3) healthy and safe communities. By preventing the negative effects of quagga and zebra mussels, economic impacts of higher food production costs, mitigation and maintenance of water infrastructure such as hydroelectric facilities, human health will be protected, and communities will benefit. As one human health example, invasive mussels increase harmful algal blooms. Additionally, protecting salmon habitat and infrastructure from negative effects of quagga and zebra mussels will improve overall watershed health and address predation and food web issues through prevention of an additional food web issue for salmon which are both priorities in the 2021 Governor's Salmon Strategy.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package also directly supports three of the four strategies in the Department's 25-year plan: 1) Proactively address conservation challenges, 2) Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, and 3) Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This package supports the Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitat and Species activity and applicable supporting strategy: Monitor and Control Aquatic Invasive Species (20.7 FTE with \$905,800 General Fund – State and \$905,800 General Fund – Federal in FY 2026 and ongoing). The Department, in partnership with tribal, federal, state, and local agencies, and the public, will take ongoing actions to increase prevention, response readiness, public awareness and reporting, regulatory compliance, and further prepare for extended management and mitigation.

Performance Outcomes:

Prevention of a quagga and/or zebra mussel infestation is vital to protecting Washington's human health, economy, culture, and environment. In the event prevention fails, the Department must have ample early detection monitoring practices in place to detect the first cases of establishment to take swift actions to eradicate quagga and zebra mussels from Washington State. If unsuccessful or not feasible, the Department must have adequate resources and staff to contain mussel populations and use regulatory authorities of Clean Drain Dry of watercraft and aquatic conveyances to protect uninfested lakes and rivers statewide. Preventative actions must be taken by everyone in Washington to be successful. Our ultimate performance outcome is the number of people reached by prevention messaging about simple actions to protect our waters and avoid spreading invasive species.

This package will increase the Department's capabilities to prevent, detect, respond, mitigate, and manage quagga and zebra mussels. Anticipated outcomes include:

50% increase in public awareness and public engagement through development and execution of a comprehensive strategy to inform the public of risks and simple behaviors to protect Washington's waters.

- 50-65% leverage of federal funds using state funds invested in quagga and zebra mussel prevention, monitoring, and rapid response.
- 20-30% increase in waterbodies and sites sampled annually for aquatic invasive species.
- 25% increase in aquatic conveyances such as recreational watercraft inspected at Washington's mandatory watercraft inspection stations.
- 15% reduction in non-compliant watercraft intercepted at Washington's mandatory watercraft inspection stations through public education and behavior change.
- Procurement and development of rapid response supplies and equipment, training of responders, and implementation of regular drills, workshops, and practice events.

State investments and actions will be doubled through a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 50% Cost-Share program for quagga and zebra mussel prevention, monitoring, and rapid response implemented by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Both Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Washington Invasive Species Council have engaged communities statewide for numerous years through public outreach events, summits, and indirect outreach and engagement through news releases, social media, blog posts, and public webinars. Outreach and engagement have occurred in numerous languages and in historically marginalized areas. Building upon this engagement, the Department consulted tribal nations and communities statewide to solicit input and feedback in creating this proposal. Feedback received informed the inclusion of tribal and local government capacity building pass-through funding, in addition to ongoing outreach support funding to the Washington Invasive Species Council with assistance from the Department to continue outreach and engagement improvements to share information on risks, prevention practices, and simple actions the public can take to protect their waters, resources, economy, and environment. Initial community feedback conveyed a need for additional targeted culturally responsive outreach in different languages for limited English proficiency (LEP) communities, explaining the potential impact of invasive mussels to personal economic income and recreational access and use. Economic impacts of quagga and zebra mussels will result in increased food production, power, and drinking water rates, in addition to limiting recreational access to waterbodies and freshwater resources. Affected communities may lose access and use of locally available areas and resources.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This investment will have a positive impact on traditionally marginalized communities by protecting water quality, and economic, recreational, and cultural access to freshwater. It will prevent negative economic impacts to water infrastructure requiring high cost and ongoing mitigation and maintenance, of which the costs will mean increased rates for power, drinking water, and food. Indigenous people in Northeast Washington have lost access to some fisheries such as salmon and are starting to make positive steps toward reestablishment with public support and funding. Quagga and zebra mussels pose a significant and potentially catastrophic negative impact on these efforts, as well as habitat, fish passage, food webs, and water quality. Preventing these negative effects is of critical importance to providing the equitable access to fisheries and cultural resources ensured by treaties and agreements.

Target Communities and Populations:

Quagga and zebra mussel prevention activities and work is designed to reach all residents of Washington State, to convey and mobilize the public to protect the economy, human health, and environment through collective action by the public and Department, and the positive effect it has on human health and wellbeing within all communities. Without such action, negative economic and environmental consequences will impact all communities in Washington, with the highest impact to the most vulnerable communities that have less economic resources, and experience other social-economic stressors. Without such action, negative economic and environmental consequences will impact all communities in Washington, with the highest impact to the most vulnerable communities that that experience more adversity, have less economic resources, and experience other social-economic stressors. These will be compounded by loss of clean and healthy water access and resources, increased economic costs of power, food, and drinking water, and loss of safe and healthy aquatic recreation locally. The most impacted communities may not have resources to travel to safe access points in uninfested portions of the state. Additionally, Washington expects significant population growth and continued changing demographics, which will be educated and engaged long-term through the ongoing funding of this proposal.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

In performing community engagement, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife received feedback from tribal nations that they desired the development of new outreach and education materials that were co-branded and developed in partnership with the department. In response, funding is included to respond to this request with intent to annually collaborate with tribal nations to update existing materials and develop new materials as needed. Additionally, the department received guidance illustrating the changing demographics and population of Washington, pointing to the need for increasing community support through different languages and building new partnerships with new and historically underserved communities. The department adjusted deliverables and funding in this proposal to respond to this information and input in both the short and long term. Broad feedback from all communities illustrated and communicated the desire for increased public engagement and participation. The department plans to build upon a pilot community science public engagement program assisting with early detection monitoring with long-term expansion performed in partnership with the Washington Invasive Species Council and organization such as Washington State University Extension and Washington Sea Grant.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 14 Invasive Species, action #46, and Action Agenda Influential Outcome 3.4 by increasing WDFW's capabilities to prevent, detect, respond, mitigate, and manage quagga and zebra mussels. Quagga and zebra mussels negatively affect water quality and the food web, filtering out beneficial nutrients and leaving toxins, leading to increased harmful algal blooms, reducing aquatic vegetation and fish habitat, and indirectly leading to collapse in fisheries through habitat loss and water quality changes. Because data indicates a high percentage of quagga and zebra mussel fouled watercraft across the Western U.S. are destined for Puget Sound, this decision package is also aligned with Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Addendum Strategy 3

State Workforce Impacts:

None.

Intergovernmental:

This decision package has positive impacts to tribal, regional, county, and city governments. By preventing infestation by quagga and zebra mussels, high consequence and ongoing maintenance and mitigation costs will be avoided to ensure that critical infrastructure such as drinking water systems, stormwater, and sewer systems, diking and water diversions, and irrigation systems are not impacted. Additionally, Department actions and staff will support and provide technical assistance to tribal governments, local agencies, regional governments, and other state agencies. This package also includes pass-through funding for tribal and local government capacity building upon feedback from tribal governments and cities. The Department convened a quagga mussel tribal policy coordination group in spring 2024 to develop mutual situational awareness and solicit feedback on short and long-term Department actions. Intergovernmental feedback and requests are summarized in this decision package.

Tribal Governments

Tribal cultures, health and wellbeing, and economies depend upon healthy habitats, clean water, and abundant resources. Additionally, potentially affected resources may be treaty protected and damages irreparable post-introduction of the invasive species. Department authorities do not apply to tribal lands, but tribes have acknowledged and benefit heavily from WDFW's expertise, technical assistance, and financial assistance. While quagga and zebra mussels pose a threat to all tribal nations due to movement of watercraft, the Columbia River and Snake River Tribes are most likely to be impacted first.

- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Cowlitz Tribe
- Kalispel Tribe of Indians
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Umatilla Confederated Tribes
- Yakama Nation Confederated Tribes

Regional Governments

Regional organizations develop and execute regional power plans and fish and wildlife programs to balance the Northwest's energy needs and environment. They also promote fisheries and harvest. Each sector of these regional governments would be catastrophically impacted by quagga and zebra mussels.

- Northwest Power and Conservation Council
- Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Federal Government

The following federal agencies have federal jurisdiction over land or infrastructure, and obligation to protect resources that are anticipated to be heavily impacted by quagga and zebra mussels. The Department has a long history of state and federal coordination, with all these entities having acknowledged and depending heavily on the Department's expertise, technical assistance, and ability to deliver activities at a statewide scale.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Atmospheric and Oceanographic Administration National Marine Fisheries Service

- U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. National Park Service

State Government

- Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) - RCO manages grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working farms and forests, and help return salmon and orcas from near extinction. Quagga and zebra mussels threaten investments and efforts to return salmon and orcas from near extinction, and threaten irrevocable degradation of habitat and resources, including loss of recreational opportunity.
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - DNR relies on the Department's expertise to inform management strategies and regulations for state owned aquatic lands and access areas. Quagga and zebra mussel infestations threaten DNR's strategies and fulfillment of their mandates and responsibilities.
- Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) - Quagga and zebra mussel impacts threaten food security and agriculture, including irrigated agriculture in the Columbia River Basin. Impacts may include domestic and international export of commodities. Additionally, rapid response actions require pesticide permitting and registration.
- Washington State Department of Ecology - Quagga and zebra mussels pose a significant threat to healthy water and climate, with known associated impacts to water quality and increase in harmful algal blooms. Additionally, rapid response actions require permitting.
- Washington State Conservation Commission - Quagga and zebra mussel impacts threaten investments made in voluntary, incentive-based programs that support private landowners, businesses, and other partners to practice conservation and ensure healthy natural resources and agriculture.
- Governor's Salmon Recovery Office - Quagga and zebra mussels pose a significant threat to recovery of salmon in Washington, through impacts to fish passage infrastructure, hatcheries, and habitat. Associated indirect impacts to water quality, aquatic plant life and the food web will negatively impact overall fisheries and a reduction of salmon as prey for species such as the Southern Resident Killer Whales will harm progress in recovery and constitute another stressor threatening extinction.
- Washington Department of Health - The Department of Health's Health Office of Drinking Water ensures that people in Washington receive safe and reliable drinking water. Quagga and zebra mussels threaten drinking water systems and treatment, potentially impacting drinking water security. Additionally, quagga and zebra mussels filter nutrients from waterbodies, leaving toxins and contaminants. Increased rates of harmful algal blooms and toxins in water pose a direct threat to human health. The mussels' shells are razor sharp, also posing a threat to humans while recreating.

State Task Forces/Councils/Strategies

- Washington Invasive Species Council
- Statewide Invasive Species Strategy (2020)
- Southern Resident Orca Task Force (2019)
- Statewide Salmon Recovery Strategy (2021)

Local Governments

Local governments will be heavily impacted by quagga and zebra mussels through damage to infrastructure such as drinking water systems, and storm water systems. However, few local jurisdictions have aquatic invasive species authorities, excluding the City of Bellingham. The Department is a key partner to protect local infrastructure and provide technical assistance and capacity building around prevention activities and early detection monitoring. While many other local governments may be impacted and could be supportive, the following have been engaged and supportive for several years.

- Benton County
- Chelan County
- Chelan County Public Utility District

- City of Bellingham
- City of Everett
- City of Seattle
- Douglas County Public Utility District
- King County
- Seattle City Light
- Whatcom County

Stakeholder Impacts:

Non-governmental stakeholder groups that are anticipated to support this proposal include:

Regional Organizations

The Department is actively engaged in regional efforts across the Western United States and Canada to prevent and address the spread of quagga and zebra mussels. The proposed work of the Department is built upon the foundation of two decades of national and regional efforts to prevent and prepare for responses. Among others, anticipated regional supports include the:

- Pacific NorthWest Economic Region
- Upper Columbia United Tribes
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Industry Groups

Water infrastructure is most at-risk from high consequence and forever mitigation and maintenance costs due to quagga and zebra mussel establishment. A whole community approach of government and industry working in partnership has been requested and is reflected in this request. Among others, anticipated regional supporters include:

- Washington State Water Resources Association [Irrigation Districts]
- Washington Public Utility District Association [Public Utility Districts]
- Washington Seaplane Pilots Association
- Northwest Marine Trade Association
- Recreational Boaters Association of Washington

Academia

The Department has partnered with many of these organizations to inform best practices for early detection monitoring.

- Washington State University
- Washington State University Extension
- University of Washington
- Washington Sea Grant

Conservation Organizations

The Department has partnered with conservation organizations to raise awareness of invasive mussel prevention activities for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife and natural resources.

- Trout Unlimited
- The Nature Conservancy
- Washington State Lake Protection Association
- Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Zoos and Aquaria

Zoos and aquaria are critical protection and recovery partners, and several organizations in Washington have partnered with WDFW to support education, outreach, and public engagement. Zoos and aquaria are also tremendous advocates and effective in public awareness and education around biodiversity challenges, such as the introduction and management of invasive species. Among others, anticipated zoos and aquaria include:

- Woodland Park Zoo

State Facilities Impacts:

Current facilities and workspaces of the Department’s aquatic invasive species unit will support additional staff and storage needs for monitoring and rapid response supplies and equipment.

Changes from Current Law:

There are no requested changes from current law, summarized in 77.135 – Invasive Species. The specific activities of this request are directly supported by statute including rapid response management, including expedited actions to contain, control, or eradicate the species, regulating aquatic conveyances, and ordering decontamination of conveyances such as watercraft that are fouled with prohibited quagga and zebra mussels.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

RCW 77.04.012 is the legislative mandate of WDFW and serves as the foundation for the Department’s mission: “To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.” Per Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 77.135, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the lead agency for managing invasive species in the animal kingdom, including quagga and zebra mussels, which are legally classified as Prohibited Level 1, which pose the highest invasive species risk to the state and are a priority for prevention and expedited rapid response management actions. Prohibited species may not be possessed, introduced on or into a water body or property, or trafficked, without department authorization, a permit, or as otherwise provided by rule. If a Prohibited Level 1 species detection poses an imminent danger that seriously endangers or threatens the environment, economy, human health, or well-being of the state of Washington, the director must ask the governor to order emergency measures to prevent or abate the prohibited species.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 6 - Address predation and food web issues for salmon and 6b - Food web monitoring: This package acknowledges the vast ecosystem and facilities threat that these mussels pose to salmon recovery, including food web concerns and hatchery facilities. Strategy Priority 6 - Address predation and food web issues for salmon and 6b - Food web monitoring: This package acknowledges the vast ecosystem and facilities threat that these mussels pose to salmon recovery, including food web concerns and hatchery facilities.

Reference Documents

- [2024-06-11_QZ-Quagga-and-Zebra-Mussel-Prevention-Tribal-Briefing.pdf](#)
- [QZ Reference Documents.docx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,270	\$1,270	\$2,540	\$1,270	\$1,270	\$2,540
Obj. B	\$547	\$547	\$1,094	\$547	\$547	\$1,094
Obj. C	\$359	\$359	\$718	\$359	\$359	\$718
Obj. E	\$307	\$307	\$614	\$307	\$307	\$614
Obj. G	\$141	\$141	\$282	\$141	\$141	\$282
Obj. N	\$147	\$147	\$294	\$147	\$147	\$294
Obj. T	\$849	\$849	\$1,698	\$849	\$849	\$1,698

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Diseases can significantly impact wildlife populations, and sick wildlife are often an early warning of diseases that can affect domestic animals and humans. Recent examples include chronic wasting disease (CWD) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or “bird flu”), respectively. Early detection and response to wildlife diseases enhances the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) capacity to mitigate wildlife impacts and implement proactive strategies to help ensure healthy wildlife populations in Washington. If funded, this proposal will enhance WDFW's capacity to detect and respond to wildlife diseases and proactively mitigate associated wildlife disease risks, including those associated with climate change, and provide action plans to preserve healthy and resilient wildlife in our state. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,166	\$1,528	\$3,694	\$1,436	\$1,436	\$2,872
Total Expenditures	\$2,166	\$1,528	\$3,694	\$1,436	\$1,436	\$2,872

Decision Package Description

This proposal has two components.

- 1) The continuation of wildlife disease surveillance activities funded one-time as a Proviso in the 2023-25 biennial budget, and
- 2) Enhanced response and management of CWD, following the first detection in Washington in July 2024.

Wildlife disease outbreaks are often detected only after animals are already impacted and found sick or dead, at which point the disease has likely been present in the population for some time. At late stages of a disease outbreak agencies can take only reactive, not proactive, actions and mitigating negative impacts can be extremely costly and logistically difficult. Some examples of wildlife diseases with significant impacts on wildlife populations include: rabbit hemorrhagic disease which threatens the population viability of sensitive lagomorph species such as pygmy rabbits, and white-nose syndrome which has caused precipitous declines in several bat species throughout the country. Vector-borne diseases such as West Nile Virus, which is believed to have contributed to greater sage grouse declines in some jurisdictions, and bluetongue outbreaks in white-tailed deer, are expected to increase as climate change creates favorable conditions for insect vectors.

Washington’s recent experiences with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or “bird flu”) are illustrative. HPAI viruses can cause high morbidity in birds and continue to reassort and infect mammals. In Washington HPAI was first documented in wild birds months before the first case was detected in a domestic poultry flock. Recently, HPAI was documented to have spread from the poultry industry to the dairy industry and ultimately infected farm workers in several other states. A 2024 HPAI outbreak killed over 50% of a nesting population of Caspian terns on an island in Jefferson County, Washington. WDFW implemented ongoing surveillance to document the catastrophic impacts of this virus on the Caspian tern colony and understand related effects in the broader marine environment, including documentation of HPAI infections in marine mammals. In collaboration with local, state, federal and tribal partners, WDFW established data-driven surveillance and action plans to mitigate the potential risks associated with HPAI in Washington’s wildlife. These plans also helped minimize potential risks to people using a popular State Park campground adjacent to the colony, and risks to staff responding to the incident. Much of WDFW’s HPAI detection and response capabilities were made possible by a 2023-25 biennial proviso, enabling WDFW to provide critical wildlife health information for our state partners (e.g., Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Health, and tribal partners) and expanded our knowledge of the distribution and impact of HPAI across Washington. Proviso funds made it possible to train WDFW field staff, university students, and tribal partners to conduct wildlife disease outbreak investigations as well enhance wildlife disease data management and analysis, all critical to detecting, monitoring, and responding to wildlife diseases in Washington.

With this proposal, we seek funding to:

1. Continue expanded efforts for wildlife disease detection and response in Washington.

This is a continuation of the new work funded as Proviso by the FY23-25 Washington State Legislature. Data obtained during proactive disease surveillance provides early warnings and opportunities for intervention, before significant sickness, death, and population declines occur, or diseases become endemic. Such early warning signals allow WDFW the opportunity to take steps that mitigate and minimize the impact of disease outbreaks and provide real-time information to tribes, state health, agriculture, university, and recreation partners.

For example, with the enhanced funding support for wildlife health and disease surveillance in FY23-25, WDFW identified two novel viruses in terrestrial wildlife (raccoon and beaver). In collaboration with state partners (e.g., Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory), WDFW is expanding our capacity to conduct surveillance to better understand the viral etiology (causes) and ecology, and especially the distribution in ecologically important species (e.g., beaver). This work is critical, especially as the beaver relocation efforts in Washington are expanding, which could facilitate the spread to disease without proper diagnostic testing.

Proactive efforts entail more than wildlife health and disease surveillance efforts. With the expanded wildlife health funding for the 2023-25 biennium, WDFW conducted training for staff and tribal biologists. The training focused on educating biologists on key wildlife pathogens of concern and common clinical signs, biosecurity approaches for limiting human-caused spread of wildlife diseases, and necropsy techniques to ensure human safety and appropriate sample collection. Such training further expands the Department's capacity to monitor wildlife health across our state, enabling the timely and safe collection of diagnostic samples in wildlife mortality events. Pending ongoing funding, WDFW will continue and expand these trainings. Associated with these trainings was the distribution of appropriate personal protection equipment and testing kits that allow remotely and widely distributed partners and staff to contribute to wildlife health surveillance efforts.

This funding enables WDFW to provide detailed wildlife health action plans for other priority diseases before they are detected within the state so that WDFW and its partners can be prepared to contain and manage new and emerging diseases.

Providing the current funding as ongoing for the Wildlife Health and Disease Surveillance program supports staff resources to enable WDFW to continue implementing proactive wildlife health and disease surveillance protocols.

2. Implement and maintain WDFW's chronic wasting disease emergency response plan

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) was confirmed for the first time in Washington in July 2024. This detection was a direct result of increased systematic surveillance for the early detection of CWD that was funded by in the Washington State Legislature beginning in fiscal year 2022. Early detection is critical for the management of CWD so that actions can be quickly implemented to prevent the disease from becoming endemic (i.e. established and widespread within an affected population). Emergency response actions for Washington's first CWD detection are detailed in WDFW's 2021 Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan and steps were promptly taken to begin implementation after our first detection in July. Additional funding is required to fully implement the response plan, including an immediate need to increase the number of samples collected in order to estimate disease prevalence and geographical distribution with a high degree of statistical confidence. Permanent funding is required to implement and maintain management actions to control and mitigate the long-term effects of CWD on Washington's deer, elk, and moose populations. If left unmanaged, CWD is expected to cause significant long-term declines in Washington deer and elk populations as has been documented in other states where the disease has become an endemic. This could significantly impact hunting opportunities in Washington. Since hunters are a valuable resource for obtaining samples for testing, reductions in their hunting participation could compound the challenge of CWD control.

This funding request adds to prior legislative funding for chronic wasting disease strategies provided ongoing in the 2021-23 biennial budget. Current funding for chronic wasting strategies was used for plan development and baseline, pre-detection disease surveillance. The additional funding requested is to implement and maintain the emergency CWD response plan, to expand staff resources, increase disease surveillance and sample collection, increase presence and frequency of check stations, implement planned management actions, and increase outreach.

The Department considered accomplishing some of this work by reprioritizing the duties of the one existing full-time veterinarian. This option isn't viable because the Department would lose veterinary capacity for ongoing wildlife capture work, managing wildlife immobilization drugs, and valuable training.

Not funding this request would result in maintaining status quo would mean that WDFW does not have the capacity to meet the needs and desires of Washingtonians in responding to wildlife morbidity and mortality events and interact with health and agriculture partners when diseases spill-over from wildlife populations to domestic animals or humans. Further, it would result in WDFW losing existing capacity made possible through the FY24-25 Wildlife Health Proviso. Detecting disease outbreaks without proactive surveillance usually coincides with sick and/or dead wildlife (as the disease is already impacting wildlife at the population level), making mitigation of the negative impacts extremely costly and less successful. The added value of proactive efforts to manage wildlife health and disease issues will expand WDFW's capacity to meet our mission for preserving, protecting, and perpetuating healthy fish and wildlife populations in Washington.

WDFW has previously managed the data and data systems for wildlife health issues on a project-by-project basis, which is both inefficient and has taken away IT support of other wildlife data systems that support the management of wildlife populations. Not funding this proposal would result in continued de-prioritization for maintaining and enhancing existing wildlife health data systems which are critical to the interdisciplinary and collaborative approach needed for managing future wildlife diseases.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

1) Continue expanded efforts for wildlife disease detection and response in Washington.

This is a continuation of a current one-time program. In the 2023-25 biennium, the Legislature provided WDFW with a Wildlife Disease Surveillance proviso to significantly expand WDFW's capacity to address wildlife health and disease concerns and increase surveillance efforts for data-driven management decisions. This has enabled the Department to expand its participation in state-wide One Health efforts, including the Washington One Health Collaborative. Our state partners expect the continued involvement of WDFW in this realm, especially given the importance of zoonotic diseases that often circulate in wildlife and their potential impacts on human and domestic health. If this funding is not provided ongoing, WDFW will lose this capacity to participate and return to a previous state where WDFW's wildlife health team included one full-time veterinarian, one part-time veterinarian, and one Scientific Technician. This proposal seeks to secure current funding to focus on disease surveillance and management and the Departments' ongoing interagency collaborative efforts on One Health and zoonotic diseases.

Wildlife Disease Surveillance One-time Proviso Funding:

(Dollars in thousands)

FY24	\$253
FY25	\$409

2) Implement and maintain WDFW's chronic wasting disease emergency response plan.

This is an expansion of a current ongoing program. In the 2021-23 biennium, as CWD detections moved closer to Washington each year, the Department completed a comprehensive Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (updated in 2024) and the Washington State Legislature prioritized CWD surveillance by providing the Department funding to expand efforts and begin systematic surveillance for the disease. Development of the CWD Management Plan and resources to conduct surveillance for the disease placed the Department in a favorable position for early detection and response to the arrival of CWD in Washington. Additional, ongoing funding is needed to fully implement the emergency response actions outlined in the CWD plan and to continue long-term management and control of the disease now that it is confirmed in Washington.

Chronic Wasting Strategies Ongoing Funding:

(Dollars in thousands)

FY22	\$155
FY23	\$310
FY24	\$310
FY25	\$310

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

1. Continue expanded efforts for wildlife disease detection and response in Washington, \$916,000 in biennium 2025-27 and ongoing:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, total \$225,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 2.0 FTE.
- Goods and services, Object E, total \$101,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. Costs include \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year and \$85,000 for operational costs associated with action plan implementation and diagnostic laboratory costs for processing samples from wildlife.
- Travel costs, Object G, total \$19,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing. A vehicle and travel are necessary for the second wildlife veterinarian as this position works state-wide and participates in multi-day events far from their home station. In addition, travel is expected by our partners to present findings and wildlife disease expertise where in-person attendance is required.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

2. Implement and maintain WDFW's chronic wasting disease emergency response plan, \$2,778,000 in biennium 2025-27 and \$1,956,000 per biennium ongoing:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, total \$501,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 5.5 FTE.
- Personal Service Contracts, Object C, total \$70,000 per fiscal year one-time for fiscal years 2026 and 2027 for operational costs associated with action plan implementation.
- Goods and services, Object E, total \$247,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$142,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. Costs include \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. \$198,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$93,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for operational costs associated with action plan implementation, increased diagnostic laboratory costs, and outreach materials.
- Travel costs, Object G, total \$95,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing. Travel and vehicle costs are necessary for the scientific technician 2 and natural resource technician 3 positions as these positions work throughout eastern Washington and participate in multi-day events far from their home station.
- Equipment, Object J, total \$500,000 in fiscal year 2026 for a one-time incinerator purchase.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

1. Continue expanded efforts for wildlife disease detection and response in Washington.

0.5 FTE Epidemiologist 3 non-medical.

The Epidemiologist 3 will be stationed in the western Washington region and will have statewide responsibilities, including travel to remote and distant locations in Washington to respond to wildlife health/disease concerns and/or capture efforts that can be multi-day events requiring accommodations and per diem. Other duties include assessments of key wildlife diseases, developing action plans, coordinating with federal, state, tribal, and external partners, and implementing strategies and practices from action plans to achieve the desired outcomes.

1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 2.

The Scientific Technician 2 will be stationed in the western Washington region and will work statewide. The position will report to the Epidemiologist 3 funded by this proposal. Duties include assisting in the implementation of the disease action plans, collection of wildlife samples, conducting necropsies on wildlife, and other data collection and field activities to achieve the desired outcomes.

0.5 Journey-IT App Development.

IT Data Management – Journey level position will be stationed at a regional or headquarters office and will implement data systems that will be used to support animal health/disease data collection, analyses, and sharing with external partners and the public.

2. Implement and maintain WDFW’s chronic wasting disease emergency response plan

1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 2.

The Scientific Technician 2 will be stationed in the western Washington region and will work statewide. The position will report to the Epidemiologist 3 funded by this proposal. Duties include assisting in the implementation of the disease action plans, collection of wildlife samples, conducting necropsies on wildlife, and other data collection and field activities to achieve the desired outcomes.

3.0 FTE Natural Resource Technician 3.

The Natural Resource Technician 3 positions will be for nine seasonal positions and stationed in WDFW Region 1. The duties include increase sample collection to better understand CWD prevalence and distribution, to staff hunter check-stations, and potentially implement other management actions.

0.5 Journey-IT App Development.

IT Data Management – Journey level position will be stationed at a regional or headquarters office and will implement data systems that will be used to support animal health/disease data collection, analyses, and sharing with external partners and the public.

1.0 FTE Management Analyst 4.

The Management Analyst 4 position will be stationed in headquarters and will provide admin support, coordination, and project management.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$.31 million • Near General Fund = \$.31 million • Other Funds = \$0 million

FY2027 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$.31 million • Near General Fund = \$.31 million • Other Funds = \$0 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve three Results Washington goals:

- 1) Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment.
- 2) Healthy and Safe Communities.
- 3) Prosperous Economy.

This proposal helps the Department meet these goals by supporting proactive wildlife disease surveillance and management in a changing climate where wildlife disease outbreaks are expected to change, and potentially increase. Because some wildlife diseases are transferable to people and domestic animals, early detection is critical and increases disease management, both for WDFW and our state partners. Washington's fish and wildlife resources are central to the economy of the state. In Washington, anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers spent over \$9 billion on equipment and trip-related expenses in 2022. This spending contributed an estimated \$630 million in tax revenues to the state general fund. Healthy wildlife is central to sustaining the wildlife populations that Washingtonians value and entrust to the Department to responsibly manage into perpetuity.

This decision package directly supports the Department's 25-Year Strategic Plan strategies "Proactively address conservation challenges", "Engage communities through recreation and stewardship", and "Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions" by early detection of wildlife pathogens that can have negative impacts to Washington's native wildlife and the Washingtonians who value them. The disease management and action plans will incorporate the current state of knowledge on the diseases and mitigation actions to reduce the impacts.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal provides ongoing support to ensure the Department's ability to continue to achieve the following Performance Outcomes:

- Priority research needs being met.
- Threatened and Endangered Species population increases.

This proposed funding will, among other activities, allow the Department to:

- Continue and expand annual efforts to train staff and partners about wildlife disease outbreak investigations including post-mortem examination and sample collection techniques, to ensure the availability of well-trained personnel for effective front-line wildlife disease surveillance.
- Continue to expand testing for wildlife diseases.
- Develop wildlife health action plans focused on specific pathogens of concern, including proactive surveillance and mitigative plans. Initial focus will be on diseases that may impact rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- Establish 20-30 CWD sample collection locations throughout the eastern Washington counties that border Idaho with a goal of collecting samples from enough deer and elk to estimate disease prevalence with high confidence.
- Conduct outreach to hunters and game meat salvagers with requests to provide samples from harvested deer, elk, and moose.
- Train and equip additional WDFW staff, tribal members, volunteers, and other partners to collect CWD samples from deer, moose, and elk.
- Analyze CWD laboratory results and associated metadata and prepare annual reports and regular updates to all interested parties.

If this proposal is funded, it will continue to enhance the Department's newly established capacity to conduct proactive surveillance and fully investigate causes of wildlife morbidity/mortality events across Washington. In addition, it will allow the Department to fully implement its Initial Emergency CWD Response plan as well as long-term management actions for the control of CWD. The outcome of such comprehensive health-targeted projects will be used to guide management and mitigative actions needed for supporting healthy and resilient wildlife populations in Washington.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department is committed to improving, growing, and evolving community engagement, particularly with historically excluded and marginalized communities. With the 2023-25 biennium Wildlife Disease Surveillance proviso funding, the Department created and held necropsy training for WDFW staff and tribal partners. The Department would like to expand this training and include more partners, including tribal biologists from across the state and multi-cultural outreach in targeted communities. This proposal is a proactive approach that will help mitigate future potential damage from wildlife diseases.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Because some wildlife diseases are zoonotic, or transferable to humans, it is important to mitigate risks as soon as possible. This proposal will help to protect against disproportional impacts to vulnerable communities and those who rely on wild game meat for sustenance by pivoting from reactive to proactive wildlife disease management actions.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal will protect the populations most vulnerable to animal-to-human transferrable diseases – the immunocompromised, low-income communities in high populous areas, and rural communities closest to wildlife areas. Some wildlife diseases are transferable to people and vice-versa. As an example, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID in humans and has recently been documented in wild deer, had a disproportional impact on different communities. Another example is H5N1 HPAI, the bird flu, which has spilled over from wild birds into domestic birds in Washington, having significant economic impacts on agricultural communities. Many families rely on wild deer and elk meat harvested by hunters or salvagers. From this perspective, funding this package will positively impact community health by proactively detecting and managing wildlife diseases that could impact people and domestic animals, including the agriculture and recreation industries.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Department strives to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for the people of Washington and its visitors. The Department received positive feedback and enthusiasm from tribes and university staff and students in response to the necropsy training. Funding this proposal would continue and expand the training.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 18: *Awareness of Effects of Climate Change* and is indirectly aligned with Action (ID# 131) Expand monitoring, research, and assessment of the individual and cumulative impacts and risks of climate change on Puget Sound, by increasing capacity to understand the climate impacts associated with diseases among wildlife and humans by supporting disease surveillance and response teams and data management systems. This decision package fulfills the Secondary Criteria - Adds value by filling gaps from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan by increasing capacity to understand the climate impacts associated with diseases among wildlife and humans by supporting disease surveillance and response teams and data management systems. This decision package also fulfills the Secondary Criteria Continuing support by ensuring that wildlife disease surveillance programs continue to be funded to support detection and rapid response of pathogens that may impact wildlife and human health. This decision package indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca task force recommendation 35 Conduct research, science and monitoring to inform decision-making, adaptive management, and implementation of actions to recover Southern Residents by ensuring capacity for disease monitoring programs that provide input for adaptive management and mitigate risk for marine mammals and food webs.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

This proposal has a potential to impact intergovernmental entities that have an interest in and/or jurisdiction around wildlife health, such as: the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), responsible for managing livestock and domestic fowl diseases shared by wildlife, and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), responsible for managing human diseases shared by wildlife. Multiple tribes within Washington are partners in natural resource management, including wildlife disease surveillance and management. Funding of this proposal will allow the Department to continue joint wildlife management with several tribes, including shared training opportunities, data sharing, and actions to monitor and control wildlife diseases. The implementation of this proposal would include proactive collaboration with these entities in the action plan development stage and disease surveillance design and implementation. It would also include assistance for tribes that don't have Wildlife Health staff resources. It is anticipated that each of those entities would support this proposal.

Stakeholder Impacts:

A diverse group of stakeholders are often impacted by wildlife diseases, including commercial poultry (e.g., H5N1 HPAI), private captive wildlife operations, zoos, hunters, wildlife watchers and enthusiasts, commercial fur operations, tribal partners, and permitted wildlife rehabilitators and permitted falconers. It is expected these groups will be supportive of this request.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$521	\$521	\$1,042	\$521	\$521	\$1,042
Obj. B	\$205	\$205	\$410	\$205	\$205	\$410
Obj. C	\$70	\$70	\$140	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$348	\$243	\$591	\$243	\$243	\$486
Obj. G	\$114	\$114	\$228	\$114	\$114	\$228
Obj. J	\$500	\$0	\$500	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$408	\$375	\$783	\$353	\$353	\$706

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Healthy, connected riparian habitat is critical for preserving, protecting, and perpetuating Washington’s fish and wildlife, especially salmonid recovery. A lack of information on riparian conditions has been a barrier in prioritizing riparian restoration and protection. To optimize riparian investments, the Department of Fish and Wildlife was directed by the Legislature to create an online decision support tool - the Riparian Data Engine (RDE). Continued funding is needed for its development. This proposal aims to advance WDFW’s goal of increasing riparian habitat (10% net gain by 2025) and measure progress towards this goal through increased data (66-100%), tool accessibility, and targeted capabilities. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy].

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,003	\$1,003	\$2,006	\$1,003	\$1,003	\$2,006
Total Expenditures	\$1,003	\$1,003	\$2,006	\$1,003	\$1,003	\$2,006

Decision Package Description

Problem and background

WDFW is creating a decision support tool, the Riparian Data Engine (RDE), to guide and optimize investments designed to improve riparian habitat condition and function, primarily to aid in salmon recovery. This tool is one of the foundational investments made by the Legislature through WDFW over the last two biennia to help prioritize and optimize these investments.

Wild salmon populations have been in decline for decades; many salmon stocks have already gone extinct. It is widely recognized that we are at a critical junction - to stabilize and restore salmon populations, or risk losing them forever. The hundreds of millions of dollars considered by the Legislature for salmon restoration and conservation strategies will only be successful if they can be applied to the habitats where they will have the greatest impact within the state’s vast, complex network of streams. We live in a data-rich world, but it is difficult and time consuming for those involved in stream and riparian restoration efforts to efficiently use the data to make informed decisions. Additionally, data vital to understanding riparian conditions must be updated regularly as the conditions change. This includes the Riparian Management Zones (RMZs), vegetation height data, and changes in vegetation and development within the RMZs. The Riparian Data Engine (RDE) is the most sophisticated tool to date and is designed to utilize the best available information to support the prioritization and allocation of riparian investments to ensure they will have the greatest possible effect on salmonids and other riparian and aquatic conservation outcomes.

The Riparian Date Engine was initially funded in 2022 through a mid-biennium proviso (ESSB 5693) at \$70,000 for FY22 and \$997,000 for FY23. In 2023 an additional \$997,000 was added (ESB 5187) for FY24 and FY25 (for a total of \$3.061M to date). Over these last two biennia, early versions of the RDE not only have been well-received and supported by the Legislature, but also have received, through WDFW-led outreach and focus group engagement, overwhelming support by riparian restoration professionals eager to utilize the completed tool throughout Washington.

The first completed version of the tool (RDE 1.0) is expected to be available to WDFW staff and key external partners in early 2025, but ongoing funding is needed continue to enhance the tool and make its services available to the public. Vital to achieving these goals are regular updates to WDFW’s high resolution land cover data and change detection data as they make possible the study of riparian habitat composition over time (e.g., changes to land cover, tree canopy height, and riparian zones).

Proposal

Continuation of the Decision Support Tool and Data: By June 2025 the initial Riparian Data Engine (RDE 1.0) will be available within WDFW and to limited key users outside of WDFW. Funding from this proposal will allow for the continued maintenance of, and updates to, the current tool, culminating in the release of a significantly improved product: RDE 2.0. This enhanced version of the RDE will both streamline and increase the capabilities of the tool, providing a more effective product to a wider range of users.

Parameter	RDE 1.0	RDE 2.0
Tool Design & Effectiveness		
User interface and experience	Broadly able to answer a variety of questions	Customized to prioritize key questions for target audiences
Analysis capabilities	Advanced filters, upstream/downstream analyses, summaries at various scales, interactive maps, etc.	Enhanced filtering ability and summaries of more attributes
Data Quality/Quantity		
Years of riparian change analysis	6 (2011-2017)	10 (2011-2021)
Years of statewide data for land cover with vegetation height	1 (2017)	2 (2017 & 2021)
Riparian Management Zones (year)	RMZ 1.0 (2019)	RMZ 2.0 (2025)
Datasets included (estimate)	15+	20
Availability		
Online hosting & maintenance funded through	6/2025	6/2027
Available to	WDFW and key external partners	WDFW, all partners, general public
Anticipated number of annual users	75	500+
Outreach to underserved communities	Targeted but limited	Expanded
Entities actively using to make decisions	11 (WDFW + approximately 10 external partners)	55-100 diverse entities (representing various scales, geographic locations, and areas of interest)

Tool Design & Effectiveness: With so much data to draw from, the user experience will hinge on the ease with which the information can be tailored to the unique needs of the users. To this end, RDE 1.0 has an online interface, with maps, filters, tables, and graphics designed to help agency staff and specific external users access the data they require (see Figure 1). This proposal will allow the user interface to be tailored to direct targeted users to features prioritized by focus group feedback. Refined features, like the ability to summarize upstream and downstream riparian conditions for a given area will also be prioritized (see Figure 2).

Hosting and Maintenance: There are monthly fees associated with hosting the data engine and applying security patches and other routine maintenance. Our contractor, Environmental Science Associates (ESA), has funding for this through June 2025. This proposal will extend that for another two years.

Distribution and Users: RDE 1.0 will be made available to staff at WDFW and key external users, While RDE 2.0 will be accessible by the broader public, including all members of tribes, other state agencies, regional governmental entities (e.g., salmon recovery regional organization), local governmental entities (e.g., county conservation districts and watershed-based lead entities), nonprofit groups, and trade associations. It will include a modest budget for outreach (including outreach to underserved communities) and for providing supporting materials to help users get the most out of the tool. This will entail custom user interfaces, user testing, and enhanced data security measures.

Data Quality/Quantity Improvements: RDE 2.0 will provide significantly more and better data, as the more data a data engine can draw from, the more powerful and useful it is. This proposal improves the quantity and quality of data available to the data engine. To support the RDE tool’s objectives of providing assessments of changing riparian conditions, increasing understanding of gaps in vegetation, and enabling the prioritization of riparian areas for protection and/or restoration efforts, continued updates to the datasets that make up the RDE are required. Three of the necessary datasets are created by WDFW and are included for updates in this proposal: 1) riparian management zones, 2) high resolution land cover with vegetation height, 3) high resolution change detection .

Riparian Management Zones (RMZs): The RMZs are the foundation upon which the tool’s analysis capabilities depend, as they are how related riparian data are summarized. The current version is based on calculations whose input data are now out of date. New statewide data is available which allows us to refine our mapping of Riparian Management Zones. This will result in a major upgrade to RMZs boundaries and enable a major update to the tool that will significantly improve the data engine’s accuracy (see Figure 3).

High resolution land cover with vegetation height data: A necessary dataset in understanding gaps in vegetation for riparian areas is WDFW’s high resolution land cover with vegetation height. The associated height data are necessary for comparing existing conditions to site-potential tree height, a scientific standard for a fully functioning riparian area. These data are available statewide for 2017, as well as 30% of the state for 2021. This proposal provides funding for staff to finalize the 2021 data for the remaining 70% of the state (see Figure 5).

High resolution riparian change analysis: Riparian change analysis (e.g., new development or loss of trees) has been identified as essential information in supporting the tool’s goal of being able to monitor riparian conditions over time. WDFW’s High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD) data uses high-resolution (1-foot) aerial imagery to analyze both natural and human-caused land cover changes. Currently, the HRCD data provide statewide riparian change analysis for a 6-year time period (2011-2017), as well as an additional four years (2017-2021) for 30% of the state. This proposal provides funding for staff to finalize the creation of these four additional years of riparian change data for the remaining 70% of the state, resulting in a 10-year (2011-2021) riparian change dataset for the entirety of Washington (see Figure 4).

Additional datasets: The tool incorporates a variety of other publicly available, statewide datasets that are commonly used in riparian management. RDE 1.0 incorporates approximately 15 datasets, which are designed to update automatically as their source data are updated. This proposal (RDE 2.0) will add an additional 3-5 high-quality, publicly available datasets identified through stakeholder engagement and feedback. Nominees include beaver habitat suitability, extent of noxious weeds, biodiversity areas and corridors, location of completed restoration projects, and environmental justice information.

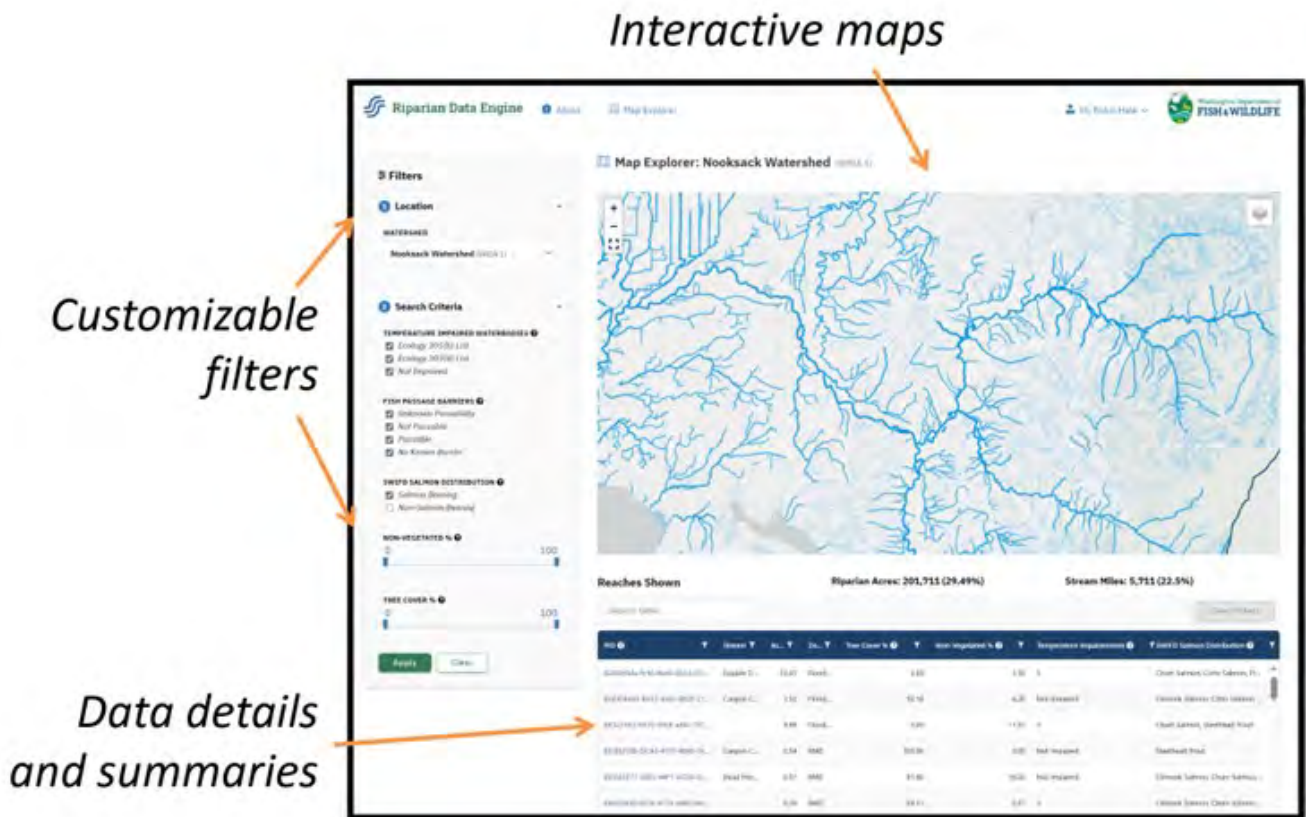


Figure 1: RDE 1.0 User Interface & Map Explorer

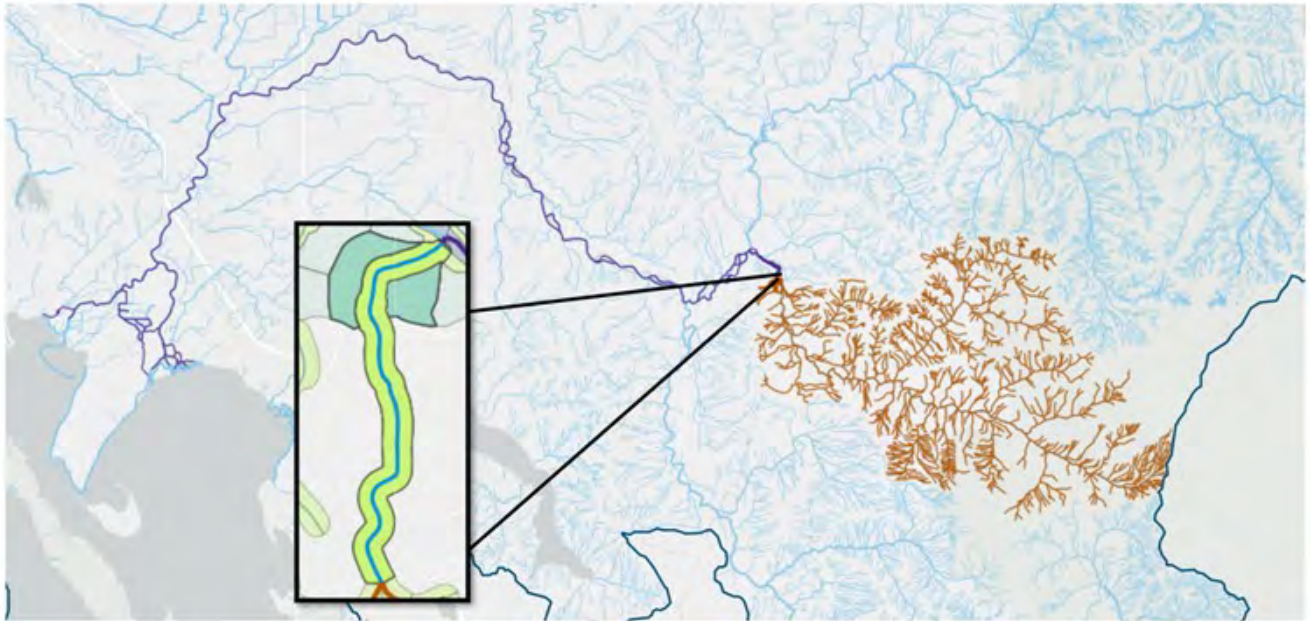


Figure 2: The RDE is capable of powerful analyses, both upstream (red) and downstream (purple) of any given reach (foreground insert).



Figure 3: The Riparian Management Zones (RMZs)(white), based on the 200-year Site-Potential Tree Height and the Extents of Observed Water.

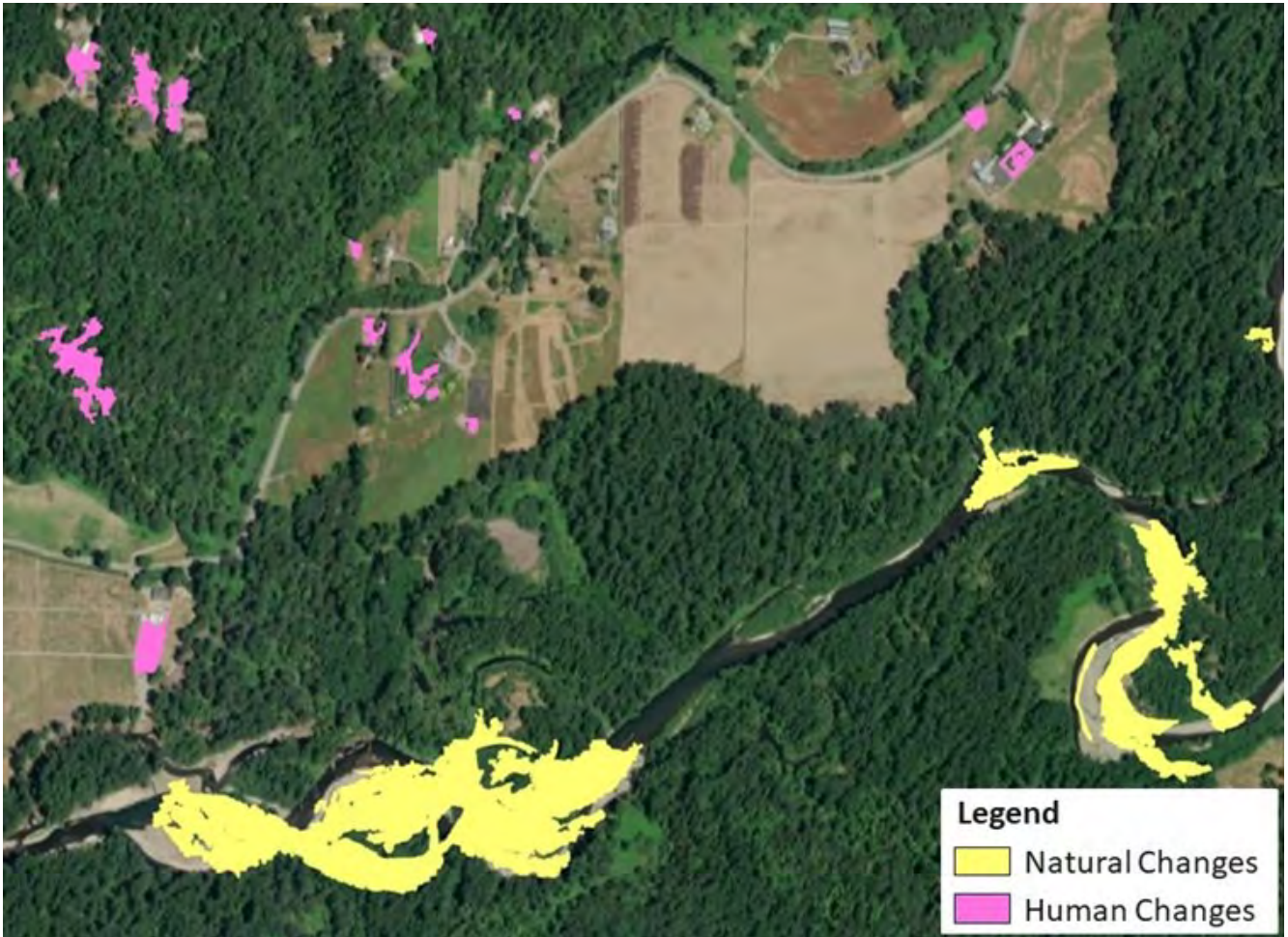


Figure 4: WDFW's High Resolution Change Detection dataset allows for riparian change analysis over time. The data differentiate between changes due to natural causes (yellow) and changes caused by humans (pink).

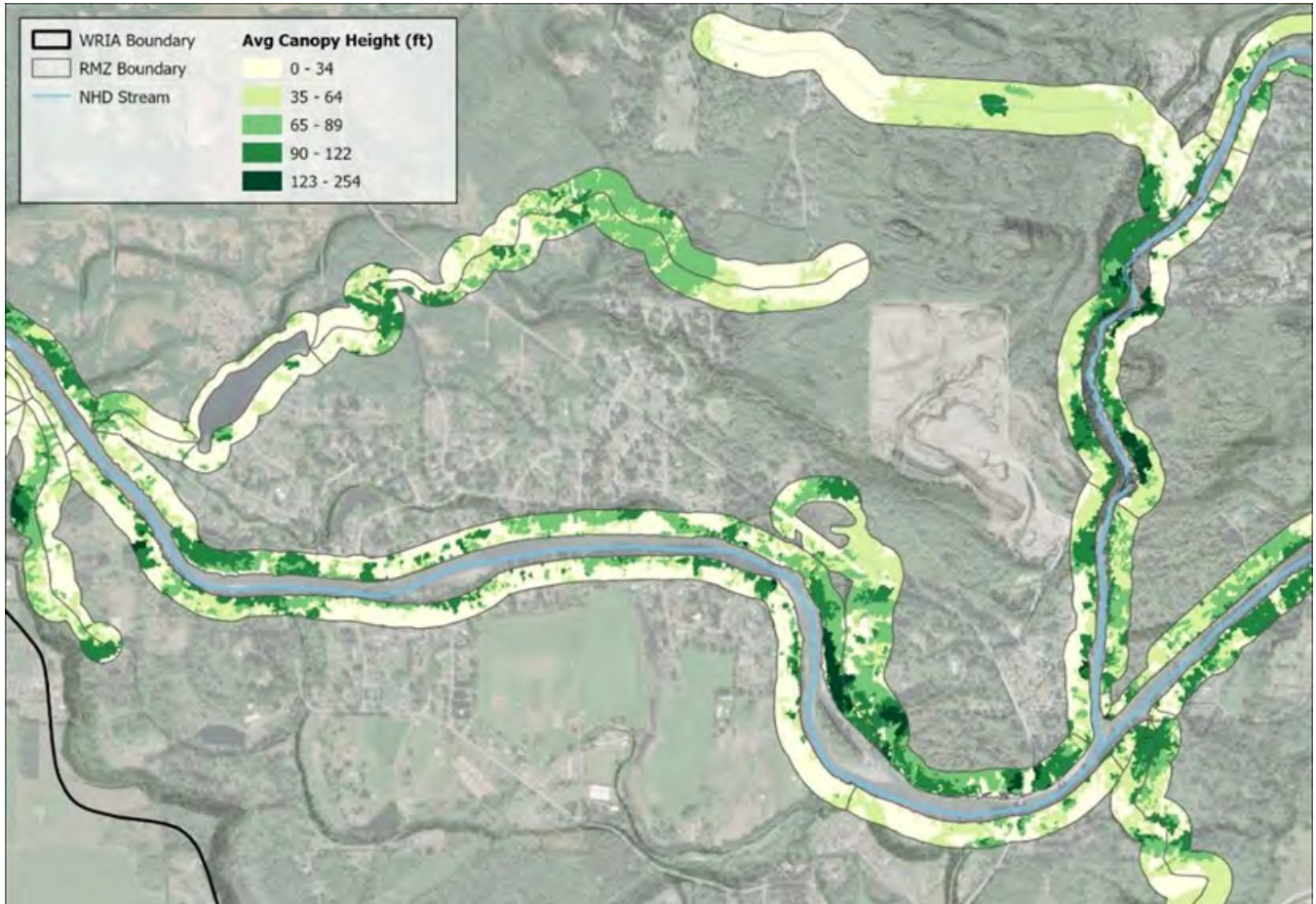


Figure 5: WDFW's High Resolution Land Cover dataset with vegetation height data. In addition to non-vegetation classes, vegetation height (darker green for tall trees, light green for shrubs and grasses) allows users to better understand the composition and status of riparian habitat.

2.2 WHY?: Washington is on the verge of an explosion in riparian restoration funding. The legislature recently has invested tens of millions of dollars in riparian restoration for projects in agricultural and forestry settings; this is on top of hundreds of millions of dollars for replacing culverts that block fish passages. Proposals were made last session for hundreds of millions of dollars for riparian restoration, and similar proposals will likely be made in upcoming sessions. This data engine can quickly and clearly provide the statewide view needed to guide restoration efforts and connect the projects to the places where they can be most effective.

The Riparian Data Engine will be a powerful tool to guide the identification and prioritization of riparian restoration statewide. Without a tool to steer riparian restoration funding to the most important projects, it is likely that funds will be applied to lower priority project, resulting in less ecological lift, and continued endangerment of salmon stocks and other riparian-dependent species. This would likely result in lower levels of investment in riparian restoration and preservation, and the cycle would repeat.

Due to our previous investment in engaging with and listening to users, we are confident this proposal will directly address the pressing needs of those involved in riparian management and restoration. Users at all levels, from local programs to statewide agencies and organizations, have expressed enthusiastic support for this project so far, and we expect this support to continue to grow.

Linking the tool and input data ensures the success of each one. The RDE tool cannot fulfil its objectives without updates to the land cover, vegetation height, and riparian change analysis data. Additionally, the data are complex enough that a tool like the RDE is needed to deliver meaningful information to the people who need it most.

Anticipated Users and stakeholder engagement: Every partner and stakeholder engaged in riparian restoration and salmon recovery in Washington could benefit from the use of the Riparian Date Engine (RDE) as a decision support tool. This includes Tribes, state, federal, and local governments, restoration professionals, and landowners throughout Washington, and, ultimately, society at large.

The Riparian Date Engine (RDE) will be made publicly available Summer 2026. Based on current involvement, an estimated 55-100 entities will actively use the tool to support riparian management decisions in the first year alone, and will represent the diversity of work being done at all

scales (state, regional, and local), geographic locations (Puget Sound, other western WA, and eastern WA), and areas of interest (e.g., agriculture, salmon, other threatened and endangered species).

Key user types have been identified as Policy Advisors, Program Managers, Local Practitioners, Data Stewards, Communicator, Scientists, and the Interested public. These individuals will represent state agencies (e.g., Salmon Recovery Office, State Conservation Commission, Puget Sound Partnership), tribes, regional Salmon Recovery Lead Entities, salmon enhancement groups, counties, local conservation districts, land trusts, and other non-governmental organizations. Providing a statewide, publicly available tool supports riparian restoration efforts across the state in a more equitable manner than currently exists, particularly in areas of the state without the resources to do this on their own.

Purchasing: The only services to be purchased for this project are cloud hosting for the online tool. The hosting allows the data, tool, and analysis capabilities to be accessed by end users. The cloud hosting fees and maintenance costs (\$76,000) for this biennium are paid for by the contractor and are included in Professional Service Contracts.

Alternatives explored: The Legislature has invested just over \$3M in the development of the Riparian Data Engine, and its underlying data, to support the tens of millions of dollars in pass-through grant funds being invested in riparian restoration and protection projects across the state. Without the RDE as a decision support tool, these investments are being made without a detailed understanding and comparison of the upstream and downstream opportunities, effects, or impediments to salmon restoration and the collective impact of these investments on a watershed or regional scale. There are not enough resources or opportunities to restore all riparian areas and conditions throughout Washington, so investments must be made in the places that will have the greatest benefit to salmon recovery. The RDE will be a key tool in prioritizing and making these crucial investment decisions.

Loss of funding for ongoing riparian condition assessments will compromise our ability to: 1) target WDFW protection and restoration efforts to streams that provide the greatest conservation value and thus offer most efficient approach to recovering salmon and other native species, 2) demonstrate cumulative improvement of statewide riparian conditions and extents over time, and 3) support other statewide salmon recovery programs (i.e., Voluntary Stewardship Program, Forest and Fish Agreement). Finally, the loss of funding would hinder local jurisdictions' efforts to protect riparian areas and anticipate effects of climate change.

Alternative data sources and time periods were considered and are being used for parts of the project; however, the three WDFW datasets supported through this proposal are the only ones which meet the needs of the tool. While Washington does have other high resolution land cover data available for 2021 (produced by Ecopia and distributed by WATech), it does not contain the valuable vegetation-specific information necessary for this work. Vegetation height information is key when assessing how riparian vegetation compares to the 200-year site potential tree height needed for full riparian function.

This proposal will update land cover and riparian change analysis data through 2021. Updating to 2023 was also considered; however, completing the 2021 data provides a 30% reduction in FTE and reduces costs for goods and services by \$800,000 compared to the 2023 data. The proposed 4-year data updates (2017, 2021, 2025, etc.) balance the financial costs of producing the data with the need for up-to-date data to understand riparian status and trends.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is seeking ongoing funding to allow for a continuation of a current program, which began in 2022 and has been funded through two provisos.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, total \$573,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing.

Professional service contracts, Object C, total \$145,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing to maintain the riparian dashboard tool and provide updates and support for external users, including support of data updates & refine automated data pipelines (\$64k); create public-facing app and rollout (\$150k); and application hosting 24 months (\$76k).

Goods and services, object E, include \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions, as well as central agency costs. Travel costs, object G, total \$5,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

This work assumes the following 5.0 FTEs:

- IT – Project Management – Entry
 - 1 FTE – Salary \$107,148, Benefits \$33,757, Total per BN \$281,810
 - Manage data creation process and ensure appropriate use within RDE tool.
 - Update process used to create RMZ boundaries, utilizing updated input data.
- IT – Data Management – Entry
 - 1 FTE – Salary \$86,256, \$ Benefits \$30,226, Total per BN \$232,964
 - Complete processing for change detection for 70% of the state (4 months), land cover for 70% of the state (6 months), and RMZ processing for the entire state (6 months).
- Cartographer 3
 - 3 FTE – Salary \$229,824, Benefits \$85,787, Total per BN \$315,611
 - 2.5 FTEs to complete change detection for 70% of the state.
 - 0.5 FTEs to complete QAQC for land cover for 70% of the state
- Above calculations based on the FTE needed to complete change detection for 30% of the state in the 2021-2023 BN

No startup costs will be required, as these positions are currently filled through the existing proviso funding this work.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal supports the Governor's Goal of 'Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment' by aiding riparian habitat restoration and protection efforts.

WDFW's Strategic Plan

This proposal supports several elements within WDFW's Strategic Plan:

- 'Proactively address conservation challenges', including through the following near-term action:
 - 5 – Ensure that land-use planning and decisions are contributing to the conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife.
 - Increase our ability to deliver high-level technical expertise on species and habitats.
 - 'Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish & wildlife questions.'
 - 'Move WDFW towards operational & environmental excellence', including through the following near-term actions:
 - 1 – Adapt decision-making based on publicly shared performance goals and indicators.
 - 2 – Increase decision transparency to both internal and external audiences.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This proposal contributes to WDFW's [activity inventory](#) in the following ways:

- Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species (100% of funds and 5 FTEs).
 - A.2 – Consult with businesses, landowners, and governments regarding aquatic species impacts and legalities.
 - A.5 – Ensure fish survivability by removing stream barriers and appropriately addressing water diversions.
 - A.6 – Acquire funding for, and complete, habitat restoration projects.
 - A.9 – Study and plan for climate impacts on waterways and resulting effects on aquatic lifecycles.

Performance Outcomes:

All people, fish, and wildlife across Washington benefit from healthy riparian habitats. Additionally, salmon recovery depends on healthy, connected riparian habitat.

WDFW's 25-year strategic plan sets a goal for a '10 percent net gain in the quality and quantity of our most important fish and wildlife habitat'. The ultimate goals for this package are to:

1. advance WDFW's goal of increasing riparian habitat, and
2. provide the data and tools needed to measure the progress towards this goal.

This package aims to increase the quantity and quality of riparian habitat through:

- The number and diversity of individuals and groups using the tool for riparian decision making.
 - Individuals from at least 55 entities will actively use the tool for decision making. This represents 50% of entities [HRL(1)] who have participated in outreach efforts to date.
 - Entities using the tool will represent the diversity of work being done at various scales (state, regional, local), geographic locations (Puget Sound, other western WA, eastern WA), and area of interest (e.g., agriculture, salmon, other).
- The effectiveness of the tool in providing quick (<5 min), easy answers to the most critical questions regarding riparian decision making.
 - Using focus group members' self-reported data to decrease the "level of pain"[EA(1)] (difficulty, time, resources, skills) involved in accomplishing the following critical tasks for riparian management decision making.
 - Look up information related to vegetation gaps, fish passage barriers, temperature impairments, and fish species present for specific riparian areas.
 - Assess riparian health at multiple scales, based on metrics and indicators.
 - Identify riparian areas which have the highest potential for ecological lift and are ideal for restoration and tree planting.
 - Determine riparian habitat trends, such as loss over time, as well as the cause of these changes.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks at stopping habitat loss in priority areas.
 - For each of these, this package will reduce the average stakeholder's response from finding these tasks to be "Moderately" or "Intensely" painful to "Not at all" or "A little" painful.
- The amount, quality, and accessibility of relevant data concerning vegetation gaps within riparian management zones. This will be done through the following actions:
 - Increase the amount of statewide information identifying riparian changes from 6 years to 10 years (a 66% percent increase in available data).
 - Double the amount of statewide vegetation height analysis available (from a single year to two years – 2017 & 2021).

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Community outreach and engagement has been a major component of this project from the beginning. Understanding and prioritizing the needs of those engaged in riparian restoration and protection efforts across multiple levels is vital to this project's success.

A concerted effort towards the decision support tool began in 2023 with the engagement of the Tribes, Conservation District staff, and lead entities.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

While the tool will be publicly available and built to encompass the entire state by using data which have statewide coverage, the land cover and riparian change analysis will not include Yakima and Colville reservations. After consultation with these two Tribes, they have chosen to not share with WDFW the LiDAR data necessary to create the land cover and change data. However, all other publicly available data for these areas will still be included in the tool, and the Tribes retain the option to share their LiDAR data for the purpose of land cover and riparian change analysis at any time.

The publicly available tool will first be developed in English with simple translation available for other languages, potentially limiting initial language accessibility. To improve this accessibility, instructions on how to use the tool will be developed for languages used commonly within WA.

As with any tool, end users could use the RDE in ways that create unintended and disproportional impacts, resulting in some communities being

left behind with regard to funding and riparian restoration efforts. By incorporating data on overburdened communities into the tool, decision makers will be able to include those key statistics when prioritizing projects and activities.

Target Communities and Populations:

All people, fish, and wildlife across Washington benefit from healthy riparian habitats. The RDE tool covers riparian areas statewide and will be available publicly for all entities involved in riparian work, including state, regional, local, private, NGO, and individual land stewards.

This statewide decision support tool allows riparian work to be supported more equitably across the state. This tool will provide equal access to information and increase transparency around decisions made. Historically, communities with more financial resources, such as those in and around Puget Sound and western WA, have had greater data coverage and availability than the rest of the state, namely eastern WA. This is particularly for data on land cover and changes to the land. With current funding, land cover and riparian change analysis in eastern WA have been prioritized to fill this data gap. This proposal will enable 4-year updates to these datasets statewide for continued equitable support.

The target users of the tool include diverse entities conducting riparian work at multiple scales (i.e., state, regional, and local), throughout WA (i.e., Puget Sound, other western WA, eastern WA, urban, and rural), with diverse areas of focus around riparian restoration and protection efforts (i.e., forestry, agriculture, and private or public land managers), and a variety of organization structures (government, non-profit, private businesses, and individuals).

Example target users include, but are not limited to, the following: local riparian restoration practitioners, salmon recovery lead entities, Conservation District staff, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the WA State Conservation Commission, WDFW staff, the WA State Legislature, and the Riparian Roundtable.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

More than 230 stakeholders representing over 100 entities have been engaged through workgroups, meetings, and presentations. A subset (~30) of these individuals self-selected to participate in an ongoing focus group process, which continues to provide feedback and direction for the tool.

The focus group represents the perspectives of data stewards, local practitioners, policy advisors, program managers, scientists, and communicators, all who serve state, regional, and local efforts across both eastern and western WA. The focus group has provided feedback on initial design concepts, types of users, data to be incorporated, and desired functionality. This feedback has directly influenced the development of both the tool and this proposal.

The tool's functions are being prioritized based on the focus group's feedback about which features would provide the greatest immediate impact (i.e., tasks which, currently, are both necessary for riparian work and difficult or time consuming). Feedback indicates that, as the project continues, additional features will be desired to turn the tool into a one-stop resource for understanding riparian conditions and making effective decisions.

The top feature identified by focus group participants is the ability to determine riparian habitat trends and habitat loss over time, and the riparian change analysis data provided through this proposal are critical to making this happen. Other highly desired features include the ability to assess riparian health, look up information at various scales, evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, and identify areas ideal for monitoring, restoration, and protection. Each of these will be available in RDE 1.0 and continue with RDE 2.0.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package provides continued funding for WDFW's decision support tool, the Riparian Data Engine (RDE), to guide and optimize investments designed to improve riparian habitat condition and function, for salmon recovery and Puget Sound ecosystem recovery. The RDE is the most sophisticated tool to date and is designed to utilize the best available information to support the prioritization and allocation of riparian investments to ensure they will have the greatest possible effect on salmonids and other riparian and aquatic conservation outcomes. This tool is foundational to decisions that implement the Action Agenda Strategies 1 Smart Growth and 4 Riparian Areas. This includes directly implementing key opportunities under Actions #1 (Significantly improve the implementation of the GMA within local jurisdictions land use

planning and decisions, and across jurisdictions, to include the protection of natural areas and working lands); #2 (Improve planning and zoning within UGAs that includes protection of existing habitat; #178 (Integrate climate change mitigation and resilience and salmon restoration goals and strategies into the GMA and local land use plans); #11 (Gather and evaluate riparian management, guidance, and implementation data); #201 (Fund and implement technical assistance and outreach programs with riparian landowners to assist in the implementation of BMPs that will protect, restore, and enhance riparian habitat; Provide technical support and enforcement capacity to local jurisdictions). The decision package also implements related actions in the Governor's salmon strategy, the draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum, Orca Task Force Recommendations and the 2020-2024 Science Workplan for Puget Sound.

State Workforce Impacts:

None known.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW cannot recover salmon or restore riparian functions on its own. While WDFW cannot compel anyone to use our Riparian Data Engine (RDE), we anticipate agencies from all levels of government will choose to use the RDE when they see that the tool provides an effective way for them to identify, prioritize, and/or allocate funding for riparian restoration and conservation projects. Many agencies have been made aware of the tool in development and are anxious to have access to it.

If utilized as designed, the RDE will have significant positive impacts:

- Tribes (including tribal entities, e.g., NWIFC): Tribes will be able to use this tool to assess riparian conditions throughout their Usual & Accustomed area and identify where to focus their restoration efforts to bring about the greatest improvement for salmon and other aquatic species. To date, tribal leaders and technical staff have actively participated in workshops to inform the tool's design. No opposition is anticipated.
- Counties and cities: Local governments will be able to use this tool to more readily assess the effectiveness of their regulatory and non-regulatory efforts to designate and protect riparian areas under the Growth Management Act (GMA) and Shorelines Management Act. It will also help local governments identify where to require restoration for unavoidable harm caused by permitted development. This tool will enable local governments to prioritize the replacement of fish-blocking culverts on county/city-owned roads. Because these capabilities will also extend to supporters and critics of such efforts, some local governments will welcome the tool and use it while others would prefer the *status quo*.
- Local Conservation Districts: Local conservation district staff will be able to use the RDE to strategically approach producers with incentives to restore and protect key reaches. CDs will also be able to use the RDE to assess the priority of willing producers who come to district staff seeking riparian restoration incentives. CDs have been core partners in development of the RDE. No opposition is anticipated.
- Department of Ecology: Ecology will be able to use the tool to aid efforts to improve water quality and shorelands through direct agency actions and when deciding where to invest grant funds and loans. Ecology staff from Water Quality and Shorelands have participated in workshops and briefings and have expressed a desire to use the tool as soon as it is available. No opposition is anticipated.
- Recreation and Conservation Office (including the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and Invasive Species Council): RCO will be able to use the tool to aid salmon recovery and riparian restoration when deciding where to invest grant funds and loans. RCO staff have participated in workshops and briefings and have expressed interest in the tool. No opposition is anticipated.
- Washington State Conservation Commission: WSCC will be able to use the tool to aid riparian restoration projects when advising Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) work groups and when deciding where to invest grant funds. To date, WSCC has been instrumental in raising awareness of the tool with local conservation districts and VSP workgroups. VSP workgroups may also choose to use the tool to monitor changes within riparian areas on agricultural lands – filling some of the requirements. No opposition is anticipated.
- Puget Sound Partnership: PSP will be able to use the tool to aid Puget Sound when deciding where to invest salmon, floodplain, and riparian restoration grant funds. PSP has invested directly in the tool by funding the addition of floodplains to the area analyzed by the tool. PSP staff have participated in workshops and briefings and have expressed keen interest in the tool. No opposition is anticipated.
- Department of Natural Resources: DNR will be able to use the tool to aid efforts to improve riparian health through direct agency actions and when deciding where to invest grant funds and evaluate effectiveness of riparian forest practices. No opposition is anticipated (however some members of the Forest Practices Board who represent the forestry industry may prefer the *status quo* if analysis of RDE data points to significant and widespread degradation in forestry riparian areas).

Department of Commerce: In Commerce's role of overseeing GMA implementation, the agency recommends local governments use adaptive

management to improve how they designate and protect critical areas. Commerce will be able to recommend that local governments use the RDE in a consistent manner to assess the effectiveness of riparian protection efforts. Commerce will also be able to use the RDE in conjunction with a forthcoming statewide zoning atlas to understand where foreseeable changes in land use may impact priority riparian areas. No opposition is anticipated.

Stakeholder Impacts:

During the making of RDE 1.0, over 230 stakeholders representing over 100 entities and organizations have engaged through workgroups, meetings, and presentations to provide feedback, direction, and opinions. Additionally, over a dozen presentations have been given to a variety of organizations as requested, allowing for more targeted conversations and feedback. Across the board, response has been overwhelmingly positive. With individuals eager to use the final product and tool.

- Local Salmon Recover Lead Entities and Regional Fish Enhancement Groups: LE and RFEG staff will be able to use the RDE to strategically approach landowners with incentives to restore and protect key reaches. Les/RFEGs will also be able to use the RDE to assess the priority of willing landowners who come to them seeking riparian restoration incentives. Lead Entity staff have been core partners in the development of the RDE. No opposition is anticipated.
- Salmon Recovery Regional Organizations: SRROs will be able to use the RDE to (a) strategically allocate funds to the highest priority projects, (b) identify and prioritize restoration projects, and (c) combine with regional datasets to improve protection and restoration efforts. SRRO staff have been active partners in the development of the RDE. No opposition is anticipated.
- Universities: Climate, natural resource, and land use researchers at universities will be able to use the RDE to evaluate current riparian conditions and consider how they may function in the future given changes in climate or protection/restoration efforts. No opposition is anticipated.

State Facilities Impacts:

None known.

Changes from Current Law:

None known.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

None known.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 7. Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability; and Strategy Action Area 7a. Monitoring and science-based efforts: This package continues the valuable work already underway to map and quantify riparian ecosystems to prioritize salmon recovery actions.

This proposal will provide a statewide tool to help stakeholders identify and prioritize riparian areas ideal for protection and restoration efforts, supporting a range of use cases from watershed scale funding allocation to site specific restoration opportunities. This package also supports creation of statewide riparian habitat monitoring data to help identify priority areas and determine if riparian habitat goals are being achieved.

Reference Documents

- [ITaddendumBudget2025-27 \(1\).xlsx](#)
- [WaTech202527ITAddendumSurvey_Submission_1260007755.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$423	\$423	\$846	\$423	\$423	\$846
Obj. B	\$150	\$150	\$300	\$150	\$150	\$300
Obj. C	\$145	\$145	\$290	\$145	\$145	\$290
Obj. E	\$40	\$40	\$80	\$40	\$40	\$80
Obj. T	\$245	\$245	\$490	\$245	\$245	\$490

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Agency Recommendation Summary

With a steadily growing wolf population in Washington (from the first pack in 2008 to 260 wolves in 42 packs by 2023), wolf-livestock conflict also increased. Proactively mitigating wolf-livestock conflict is one of the greatest challenges for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), as this issue has a history of deep-rooted social disagreement and controversy. Through one-time provisos in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial budgets, the legislature funded WDFW staff and implementation of non-lethal mitigation strategies like range rider contracts, audio and visual deterrents, and cooperative cost-sharing agreements with producers in northeastern Washington counties who experience recurrent wolf-livestock conflict issues. WDFW is requesting ongoing funding to sustain current efforts to support wolf recovery.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$555	\$555	\$1,110	\$555	\$555	\$1,110
Total Expenditures	\$555	\$555	\$1,110	\$555	\$555	\$1,110

Decision Package Description

The Problem:

As Washington state’s wolf population continues to grow, human-wolf interactions and wolf-livestock conflicts are expected to increase simultaneously. The areas with a history of wolf-related livestock depredations are across Stevens, Ferry, Okanogan, and Pend Oreille counties in northeastern Washington. The Department’s ability to engage with producers, provide non-lethal deterrence tools, and have a timely response to wolf-livestock conflicts hinges on the funding requested.

While traditional non-lethal tools and the occasional use of lethal removal of wolves seems to work in many conflict areas, continual financial investments in conflict reduction and mitigation are necessary in the northeast counties. Out of 42 wolf packs recorded in 2023, 35 packs occupy and range across these four counties. Dispersing individuals from these packs form new packs in the north cascades, central and south cascades of Washington state. Wolves that have started to occupy new areas in Washington, along with these established packs, could potentially cause more conflict in the near future, impacting the operations and livelihoods of a growing number of ranchers and livestock producers. The current number of conflict specialists in northeastern Washington needs to be sustained to adequately address conflict investigations and process non-lethal deterrence contract agreements. Without adequate funding for full time conflict specialists, wolf recovery in northeastern Washington, and eventually across the state, could be significantly impacted.

WDFW’s Proposal:

WDFW is responsible for assessing and mitigating interactions between wolves and agricultural communities in Washington and northeastern Washington communities are severely impacted by the expanding wolf population. Ongoing funding requested will allow the Department to continue critical public service focused on wolf recovery in northeastern Washington counties. Specifically, sustaining permanent conflict specialists enable the Department to:

- maintain and increase WDFW’s capacity for internal and external coordination in response to wolf related operations, such as timely response to reported wolf depredations and serving as liaisons to local governments.
- investigate and assess the forthcoming conflict events/issues across Stevens, Ferry, Okanogan, and Pend Oreille counties.
- to plan, implement, and follow up on non-lethal mitigation protocols and strategies, deploy non-lethal deterrence tools, provide post-deployment monitoring of wolf activities and deterrence measures, and process paperwork for Contracted Range Riding and cooperative cost-share contracts with producers.

In addition, the requested funding will maintain existing legislative direction for WDFW to manage Contracted Range Riding agreements in areas where “gaps” exist in the Department of Agriculture’s (WSDA) Range Riding grant program within the four county area, maintain existing WDFW Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock (DPCA-L) with producers, and procure wolf deterring non-lethal tools,

such as turbo-fladry fencing materials, small-scale solar-charged electro fencing equipment, fox lights, audio-boxes, and supporting carcass disposal efforts. Finally, the funding request will cover the cost of safety equipment for WDFW conflict specialists and contracted range riders.

WDFW's Purchase:

With the ongoing funding in this request, WDFW can continue the existing non-lethal mitigation efforts to manage wolf-livestock conflict across Stevens, Ferry, Okanogan, and Pend Oreille counties. This decision package will allow the Department to continue to provide Wildlife Conflict Specialist services, cover gaps in range riding coverage from the Department of Agriculture grant program and increase participation of producers in WDFW's Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock program. These public services and proactive non-lethal strategies can increase overall conservation support in the community and potentially reduce the use of lethal removal across northeastern Washington and eventually the whole state.

Alternatives explored:

WDFW is committed to working with livestock producers and community groups on existing and future human-wolf conflict issues across northeastern Washington, as well as throughout the state. However, without ongoing funding, current employee efforts and cost-sharing capacity to address conflict events and associated cooperative agreements cannot be maintained. This will result in inefficiencies and will severely hinder trust building between WDFW, livestock producers, and stakeholders impacted by human-wolf conflict. Without ongoing funding for full-time employees and financial opportunities to contract more range riders and create more cooperative agreements with producers, the Department will lose systemic trust resulting in drastically decreased tolerance and increased risk of losing social support for wolf recovery, as well as increased risk of litigation.

WDFW explored opportunities to cover existing conflict specialists, range riding contracts, and cooperative agreements for mitigating wolf depredation on livestock in northeast Washington with existing resources, but there are not sufficient financial resources in the agency that can be diverted to maintain current operations without ongoing funding from this proviso.

In recent years, the legislature has provided the WSDA funding for a Range Rider grant program, shifting this livestock management tool away from WDFW. The current WDFW funding request is only to fill "gaps" in WSDA Range Rider coverage. In addition, in 2024, WDFW received funding for non-lethal wolf/livestock deterrents focused on the 35 counties outside of northeastern Washington counties included in this funding proposal.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is to continue an existing service for an ongoing initiative. One-time funding was provided through provisos in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial enacted budget bills to increase staff resources in Ferry and Steven's counties and to implement non-lethal mitigation strategies like range rider contracts, audio-visual deterrents, including cooperative cost-sharing agreements with producers in northeastern Washington counties.

Contained within that funding is language directing the agency, *"the department shall not hire contract range riders in northeast Washington unless there is a gap in coverage from entities funded through the northeast Washington wolf-livestock management grant program as provided in RCW 16.76.020. No contract riders shall be deployed in areas already sufficiently covered by other riders. The department must focus on facilitating coordination with other entities providing conflict deterrence, including range riding, and technical assistance to livestock producers in order to minimize wolf-livestock issues in the Kettle Range and other areas of northeast Washington with existing or emerging chronic conflict."*

WDFW continues to coordinate with the Washington Department of Agriculture to ensure maximum coordination and cooperation between the departments and the contracted range riding entities to ensure maximum coverage of range riding services within each department's available funding resources. Including a focus on where "gaps" in coverage exist, how to minimize those gaps, and how to ensure coverage of those gaps

within available funding. Of note here, if the scale or direction of operation changes in the Department of Agriculture range riding program, corresponding changes need to be considered in the WDFW program in response, since one program and its funding may affect the effectiveness of the other department’s program.

In some cases, DPCA-L agreements with livestock producers are a better alternative to use than either departments’ range riding resources. And some producers much prefer the cooperative agreement option as a better alternative to utilize given their particular livestock operational needs. Robust funding is needed to maintain and expand the program as producers continue to adjust to changes in available externally provided range riding options.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Estimates are ongoing and per fiscal year:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$168,000 for 1.5 FTE to maintain increased conflict response in Ferry and Stevens counties as required in RCW 77.36.200
- Personal services contracts, Object C, totals \$220,000 per fiscal year to hire range riders and for damage prevention cooperative agreements for livestock with ranchers to buy and implement nonlethal deterrents such as predator-proof fencing, livestock guardian dogs, fox-lights, fladry, etc.
- Goods and services, Object E, totals \$12,000, \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- Travel, Object G, totals \$19,000 for vehicle costs.

An infrastructure and administrative program rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

1.5 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3:

Salary \$83,000 per FTE per fiscal year. Benefits \$29,000 per FTE per fiscal year. These positions are current staff members. Startup costs are not necessary.

Conflict Specialists stationed in Ferry and Stevens counties. These positions increased response to reported wolf-livestock depredations, coordinate with local ranchers on deployment of nonlethal deterrents, and provide technical information to ranchers and community members.

Historical Funding:

Historical Funding:

Historical Wolf Recovery Funding
Department of Agriculture and Department of Fish and Wildlife
 (amounts in thousands)

Agency	Description of Funding	Area	BN 2019-21	BN 2021-23	BN 2023-25	BN 2025-27	ESSB 5950
WDFW	ESHB 2097 Develop conflict mitigation	NE	954	954	780	-	308(7)
WDFW	2025-27 Budget Request	NE				1,110	
WDFW	Damage prevention contract agreements for	non-NE			100	-	308(41)
WDFW	Non-lethal wolf deterrence	non-NE			404	808	308 topline
WSDA	WA wolf-livestock management grant	NE	752	842	1,400	712	311(6)(a)
WSDA	Sheriff's office of Ferry and Stevens counties	NE	40	200	200	200	311(6)(b)
			1,746	1,996	2,884	2,830	

The table above shows wolf funding across two agencies, with proviso locations in the budget current as of 9/1/2024 and a projection of funding for BN 2025-27.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve three of the Results Washington goals:

- 1) Prosperous Economy
- 2) Healthy & Safe Communities
- 3) Effective, Efficient & Accountable Government.

Wolf conflict results in economic loss to livestock producers. Reduced conflict should result in reduced losses. Directly providing services and resources to the public to improve effectiveness in mitigating wolf depredations and reducing conflict, targets real problems with tangible solutions.

WDFW 25 Year Strategic Plan:

This decision package directly supports:

- Proactively addressing conservation challenges
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve and Restore Terrestrial Habitats and Species:

This decision package directly supports WDFW foundational work to preserve and restore terrestrial habitat and species, which includes responding to and mitigating wolf conflicts.

Performance Outcomes:

This decision package supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Outcomes:

- Technical assistance, more timely response, and increased positive interactions with livestock producers across areas with a history of recurrent depredations.
- Increases to populations of threatened and endangered species by reduced lethal removal and increased social tolerance of wolves.
- Number of confirmed wolf-related conflict events mitigated each year.

By maintaining specialist coverage, negative human-wolf interaction response times will continue to be reduced and proactive technical assistance to help the public avoid these negative interactions will be maintained or increased.

Sustaining wildlife conflict specialist staffing will improve the agency's proactive outreach with communities, landowners, and livestock producers. Increased proactive outreach will improve availability and implementation of non-lethal conservation actions to help avoid negative wolf-livestock interactions. Avoiding these negative interactions is a key component of the agency's wolf recovery strategy and will improve public acceptance as well as aid in species recovery.

Sustaining full-time employees as conflict specialists and ongoing funding will result in more efficient wolf-related depredation response, proactive communication, and data collection for future cooperative agreements. Increased data availability will improve technical guidance for reducing negative human-wolf interactions and improve the agency's ability to mitigate similar conflict incidents.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Negative human-wildlife interaction mitigation and incident response is an issue of public safety, economic importance, and social and environmental security to many underserved groups. Hence, WDFW is committed to providing outreach and education to underserved agricultural communities, advisory group activities, cooperative agreements, and conservation education opportunities using a variety of platforms and languages. WDFW's Communication and Public Engagement (CAPE) team are engaged in strategic implementation of education and outreach to support Washington communities in areas with a history of recurrent wolf depredations and will provide accessible and multicultural outreach services to meet the needs of diverse demographics affected by wolf recovery.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

It is important for communities in northeastern Washington to have access to proactive non-lethal wolf-livestock mitigation resolutions as soon as possible. Community members living within areas with recurrent wolf depredations need increased access to these cooperative resolutions as the areas are remote and more likely than others to be impacted by human-wolf conflict. Communities living within these chronic wolf-livestock conflict zones are the communities who have historically been overlooked, and the increased number of wolves in their respective areas put them in a current situation that requires increased efforts to manage the conflict.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal sustains WDFW's available personnel and financial resources to address wolf-livestock conflict events along with proactive non-lethal strategies like deterrent equipment, cooperative agreements, and range riding contracts to be adopted across areas with a history of depredations in the northeastern Washington counties. Policies for responding to wildlife conflict across these counties and other parts of the state include both urban and rural communities experiencing negative wildlife interactions. However, livestock producers and ranching communities are the major target population for this proposal as they are the most impacted by wolf depredations. Over the years, wolf populations in these rural areas have increased considerably and created a disproportionate burden for the local communities. This funding request helps the Department continue to serve these under-represented communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW established the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) in 2013 to provide a broad range of perspectives to inform wolf management. The WAG identified and set expectations for the use of non-lethal deterrents to help address wolf conflicts with livestock operations and developed a Wolf/Livestock Interaction Protocol that WDFW uses to inform significant management decisions such as if lethal removal is warranted. The requested funding is for those non-lethal services and tools that help mitigate wolf conflict and are directly linked to the interaction protocol developed by the WAG.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions represented by the Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals union that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

In recent years, the legislature has provided the Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA) funding for a Range Rider grant program, shifting this livestock management tool away from WDFW. The current WDFW funding request is only to fill “gaps” in WSDA Range Rider coverage. Funding provided to WSDA is a key component to overall non-lethal wolf deterrence efforts and continuing that financial support critical. WDFW continues to coordinate with WSDA to ensure the two agencies are implementing complementary programs and local conservation districts, sheriff’s offices, and county commissioners have expressed the need for both programs to continue.

Stakeholder Impacts:

There is likely broad stakeholder support for this package, including environmentalists, ranchers, hunters, and people of Washington in general. Historically, these stakeholder groups supported non-lethal methods to proactively address conflict, protecting both livestock and wolves. Encouraging and including more producers to take advantage of range rider contracts and cost-sharing damage prevention cooperative agreements would reduce lethal controls of wolves and support wolf-recovery in the state.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

Not funding this request will put the Department in conflict with [RCW 77.36.200](#).

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is to continue funding originally provided as one-time in response to [ESHB 2097](#), which allowed for expanded staff resources and cost share agreements in Ferry and Steven’s counties.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$124	\$124	\$248	\$124	\$124	\$248
Obj. B	\$44	\$44	\$88	\$44	\$44	\$88
Obj. C	\$220	\$220	\$440	\$220	\$220	\$440
Obj. E	\$12	\$12	\$24	\$12	\$12	\$24
Obj. G	\$19	\$19	\$38	\$19	\$19	\$38
Obj. T	\$136	\$136	\$272	\$136	\$136	\$272

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Climate change, human population growth, and struggling salmon populations require a long-term, strategic vision for Washington’s water management into the future. The historical over-allocation of Washington’s rivers and groundwater has negatively impacted fish and wildlife in many watersheds. As the demand for water increases, politically or legally expedient solutions are frequently favored over ecological requirements. WDFW is uniquely poised to provide science-based expertise and policy leadership to the state’s understanding of streamflow issues and their ecological implications. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$550	\$550	\$1,100	\$550	\$550	\$1,100
Total Expenditures	\$550	\$550	\$1,100	\$550	\$550	\$1,100

Decision Package Description

Climate change and increasing human population pressures have already begun to challenge Washington’s streams to support native fish and wildlife. Managing water for fish and wildlife requires a thorough understanding of interactions between the changing climate, Washington’s hydrology, and the needs of fish, wildlife, and people. WDFW’s ability to maintain its current expertise and engagement on these issues is essential to ensuring ecological values and considerations are represented in the challenging conversations that lie ahead at the confluence of climate change, population growth, and sustaining our state’s ecosystems.

This decision package is solely focused on continuing to fund the work previously funded by the Legislature to engage in streamflow science and policy through the Fiscal Note for ESSB 6091 (Streamflow Restoration Act) and then a subsequent proviso. Allowing this funding to lapse without an alternate funding source would reduce the agency’s capacity to effectively engage in the science and policy interface around stream flows and aquatic ecosystems. Meaningful scientific studies and productive water policy conversations take time; an ongoing funding investment to support this work is needed to ensure the state develops data-driven and durable solutions to our state’s water challenges.

This proposal would provide on-going funding to the full-time employees currently working at the interface of water policy and science. This would allow continued and expanded investigations into the efficacy of streamflow mitigation and restoration measures; continued strategic relationship building and information sharing with stakeholders on water issues; and the development of policy strategies to protect and increase stream flows for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and habitat. Issues around the allocation and management of our state’s increasingly scarce water resources will only increase in their complexity and risk to the environment; the state needs WDFW to be fully staffed and engaged in streamflow science and policy, bringing the best available science, strong strategic thinking, and creative problem-solving to bear on this issue.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Not applicable. This proposal represents the continuation of existing work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, for 2.8 FTE positions total \$384,000, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing.

Goods and services, Object E, include \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions, as well as central agency costs.

Travel costs, Object G, total \$5,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing.

Equipment, Object J, total \$5,000 for annual software licenses.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classifications and associated work are as follows are needed in FY 2026 and ongoing:

Research Scientist 2: Plans and implements scientific studies related to stream flows and fish and water interactions. Provides technical scientific expertise on the water needs of fish, wildlife, and habitats in an effort to ensure those considerations are fully understood in policy conversation around water resource management.

Environmental Planner 4: Works on a watershed-level to support watershed planning groups, tribal partners, and various stakeholders by providing water policy expertise from an ecologically-based perspective to ensure those groups and processes have a holistic understanding of how water management and habitat restoration projects and initiatives might impact fish, wildlife, and habitat on a watershed-scale.

Environmental Planner 5: Works on a statewide-policy level to support state and local governments, tribal partners, various stakeholders and policy-makers by providing water policy expertise from an ecologically-based perspective to ensure those groups and processes have a holistic understanding of how water management and habitat restoration projects and proposals might impact fish, wildlife, and habitat on statewide scale.

Habitat Program, Science Division staff

Job Classification	FTE	Annual Salary	Benefits
Research Scientist 2	1.0	\$108,252	\$33,944
Research Scientist 2	0.3	\$32,476	\$10,183

Habitat Program, Energy, Water, and Major Projects Division staff

Job Classification	FTE	Annual Salary	Benefits
Environmental Planner 4	0.8	\$76,522	\$25,451
Environmental Planner 5	0.7	\$73,928	\$23,448

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package aligns with the Governor's Results Washington Goal 3: Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment Metrics by supporting the protection and restoration of Washington's freshwater systems.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

Proactively address conservation challenges: This proposal supports this element of WDFW's Strategic Plan by supporting the implementation of the Climate Resilience Plan as it pertains to water science and policy issues. This proposal also supports this element by adding nuance to our understanding of how land-use decision impact stream flows. Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions: This proposal supports this element of WDFW's Strategic Plan by strategically prioritizing and delivering streamflow science products that are tied to water policy and management questions to ensure that we effectively use state resources as we develop timely and effective management solutions.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Agency Activity Inventory This funding request supports the following agency activity: Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species.

Performance Outcomes:

The primary outcomes of this package will be the continued capacity and engagement on water science and policy work. This includes continuing ongoing studies about the streamflow impacts from various stream restoration techniques; providing information about biological and ecological risks and opportunities related to various water management strategies; and the development and management of new studies to fill important knowledge gaps to understand the stream flows and water resources needed to support fish and wildlife.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Streamflow restoration watershed planning groups throughout the state (in which WDFW participates) have served as a major conduit for information sharing about streamflow policy, science, and project implementation at the local level. Salmon Recovery Lead Entities have also provided an important nexus to local communities. WDFW has contracted through Washington's Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to work with individual Lead Entities to update RCO's Salmon Recovery Portal with Streamflow Restoration Act project updates. This information is available online for all to access.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

All Washingtonians benefit from well-managed water resources that support fish, wildlife, and habitats in addition to serving domestic water, agriculture, and industrial needs. Rural populations in particular are sensitive to this issue due to their reliance on individual, permit-exempt wells for their domestic water sources.

The investments made by the State in terms of salmon recovery, orca recovery, and the amelioration of climate change impacts may be undermined if WDFW is unable to effectively participate in the water resource management discussions occurring around the state (e.g., assessing mitigation adequacy, climate change impacts, drought response and preparedness, water banking, trust water rights, instream flow rulemaking, future water right adjudications).

Target Communities and Populations:

WDFW works particularly close with tribal governments statewide in the water science and policy space, collaborating closely to ensure water is managed in a way that protects fishery resources and ecosystem function. Tribal communities and populations that rely on fishing recreationally or for subsistence are among those who stand to benefit from the protection and wise management of our state's rivers and streams.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

We have been informed by various tribal partners and NGOs that WDFW must continue this work at the intersection of water and salmon, providing state government leadership and expertise to support water management actions and policy that do not put salmon recovery efforts at risk.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package supports WDFW to implement the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 7, Freshwater availability. This decision package implements several key opportunities under Action #19 Understand and plan for future freshwater availability and implement regulations, projects, and voluntary approaches to reduce water demand and encourage conservation, as well as reclaimed wastewater. These key opportunities are: Ensure watershed-scale planning addresses water quantity, water quality, fish habitat, and instream flows; Support water use data collection (metering and reporting) to improve watershed level knowledge about watershed carrying capacity, consumptive uses and effects on stream hydrology and habitat; Improve knowledge of water users and how their uses affect stream hydrology; and Support proactive planning for how Washington will manage and protect instream habitat and water levels given stress from changing climate conditions (for example, seawater intrusion) and demands on water use priorities of growing human populations. WDFW's will provide both science and policy support in furtherance of Strategy 7 by closing critical knowledge gaps related to water availability and ecological function and provide the agency with the resources needed to bring this increased understanding into relevant policy conversations. This decision package also implements the Low Flows and Climate strategies in the draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum and a priority in the 2020-2024 Science Work plans.

State Workforce Impacts:

There are no impacts to collective bargaining agreements, compensation, or benefits.

Intergovernmental:

Climate change and water scarcity threaten local, tribal, and state government entities in myriad ways. From ensuring adequate drinking water, to protecting instream water to support aquatic species, conversations about water management are broadly impactful to a variety of governmental interests.

Stakeholder Impacts:

All stakeholders benefit when the full suite of perspectives is engaged on a complex issue. Non-governmental stakeholders engaged in conversations around water management include agricultural interests, real estate and building association groups, environmental groups. WDFW seeks to ensure that our perspective and expertise is incorporated in future conversations about stream flows and water. While our perspective and priorities may be different from other stakeholders participating in this space, we believe incorporating our agency expertise will ultimately lead to more durable solutions and increase science-based, data-driven decision-making.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Orca Task Force Recommendation #45: Mitigate the impact of a changing climate by accelerating and increasing action to increase the resiliency and vitality of salmon populations and the ecosystems on which they depend:

This proposal supports the implementation of Recommendation #45 by seeking to increase understanding of climate impacts on stream flows and aquatic ecosystems and finding strategies to mitigate those impacts and increase resiliency.

Joint Legislative Task Force on Water Resource Mitigation (Foster Task Force): Recommendation 1: Conservation:

This proposal supports the conservation recommendation of the Foster Task Force by seeking to better understand water resources conservation and mitigation strategies and their impacts to the aquatic environment.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 1. Protect and restore vital salmon habitat; and Strategy Action Area 4a. Streamflow restoration: This package continues the essential work around ensuring salmon recovery concerns are considered in water policy decisions.

This proposal seeks to advance this strategy by filling knowledge gaps through targeted, policy-relevant scientific studies related to fish and water and by providing the policy expertise to communicate those scientific insights to protect and restore stream flows, potentially through the utilization of clean water infrastructure in ways that simultaneously increase climate resiliency.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$291	\$291	\$582	\$291	\$291	\$582
Obj. B	\$93	\$93	\$186	\$93	\$93	\$186
Obj. E	\$22	\$22	\$44	\$22	\$22	\$44
Obj. G	\$5	\$5	\$10	\$5	\$5	\$10
Obj. J	\$5	\$5	\$10	\$5	\$5	\$10
Obj. T	\$134	\$134	\$268	\$134	\$134	\$268

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

This will allow WDFW to maximize recreational fishing opportunities for salmon and steelhead. Due to the year-round presence of ESA listed salmon and steelhead, WDFW is legally required to have coverage from NOAA to prosecute recreational fisheries. WDFW's existing suite of fishery permits were developed over the past two decades and currently do not provide full ESA coverage, limit flexibility to manage recreational fisheries, do not incorporate the best available science, and lack consistency between them. New and dedicated staff would complete all necessary ESA fishery permits within 5-6 years. Consequences of not completing fishery permits includes increased litigation risk, inability to open new recreational fisheries, and not achieving conservation objectives for listed salmon and steelhead. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$697	\$697	\$1,394	\$697	\$697	\$1,394
Total Expenditures	\$697	\$697	\$1,394	\$697	\$697	\$1,394

Decision Package Description

Endangered Species Act (ESA) fishery permits are the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) legal means to prosecute and maximize recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River. WDFW's existing suite of ESA fishery permits issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) no longer provide full ESA coverage to prosecute and maximize recreational fisheries. Existing permits also do not incorporate the best available science, limit flexibility to manage recreational fisheries, and lack consistency between them. WDFW needs to update existing permits and draft new permits to protect ESA listed salmon and steelhead, maintain existing fisheries, proactively open new fisheries, and remove surplus adult hatchery salmon and steelhead. Consequences of not completing all necessary ESA fishery permits includes increased litigation risk, inability to open new recreational fisheries, closing existing recreational fisheries, and not achieving conservation objectives for listed salmon and steelhead.

For this proposal, the Columbia River refers to the following areas in Washington:

- Tributaries from the mouth upstream to Priest Rapids Dam.
- Snake River and its tributaries.
- Mainstem Columbia River from the Washington-Oregon border upstream to Priest Rapids Dam (i.e., Hanford Reach).
- Mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries between Priest Rapids Dam and Chief Joseph Dam.

Harvest management and ESA coverage for the mainstem Columbia River from the mouth upstream to the Washington-Oregon border and the Snake River (spring Chinook only) are governed under *U.S. versus Oregon*.

From 1991 to 2005, several Columbia River salmon and steelhead populations were listed under the ESA. With year-round presence of listed salmon and steelhead, WDFW was legally required to obtain ESA authorization from NOAA to prosecute recreational fisheries. WDFW developed its existing suite of fishery permits over the past two decades. Until recently these permits provided full ESA coverage. Over the past 5-10 years (depending upon location) several changes have made our fishery permits outdated, including:

- Changes to hatchery programs (e.g., smolt release increases or decreases, elimination or creation of hatchery programs, changes in mass marking, etc.).
- Successful reintroductions of salmon to areas where once extirpated.
- Changes in ESA listing status.

These changes have limited our ability to prosecute new and maintain certain existing recreational fisheries due to inadequate ESA coverage. One example is the successful reintroduction of Coho in the Upper Columbia River (above Priest Rapids Dam). Recently, returns have been sufficient to prosecute a recreational fishery. However, none of our ESA fishery permits issued by NOAA authorize standalone Coho fisheries. As such, WDFW cannot capitalize on this opportunity for recreational anglers. There are several situations like this throughout the Columbia River that this proposal would address.

It is an opportune time to address this problem because:

- New recreational fisheries opportunities exist in the Columbia River. They just need ESA coverage to prosecute.
- WDFW receives \$2.1M per biennium to monitor recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in Columbia River. This funding is available to monitor new recreational fisheries, which is a standard term and condition of ESA fishery permits.
- New approaches are available to update and standardize our ESA fishery permits that maximize fishery management flexibility. Integrated population models (IPM) and management strategy evaluations (MSE) use multiple data sources (e.g., escapement, age structure, catch, mortality, etc.) to identify the best strategy that maximizes recreational fishing opportunities while ensuring conservation objectives for listed salmon and steelhead are being achieved.

This proposal was previously submitted by WDFW as part of its 23-25BN budget request. One-time funding was granted. This proposal is seeking ongoing funding because two years is insufficient to complete all ESA fishery permitting work. Additionally, permit implementation, compliance, reporting, and scientific evaluation needs to be performed once new fishery permits are issued by NOAA. This work is ongoing.

Fishery Permitting

This proposal funds four new FTEs to update and draft ESA fishery permits, consult with NOAA, implement permit terms and conditions, ensure permit compliance, complete annual reporting requirements, and continue evaluating permit effectiveness towards meeting conservation and fishery objectives. There are two main components to this proposal. The first component is updating existing and drafting new ESA fishery permits and obtaining approval from NOAA. It is a government-to-government process between WDFW and NOAA and very technical in nature (e.g., data and statistical analyses and scientific writing). Outreach and engagement with target communities, populations, and our clients (see below sections for more details) is not appropriate for this component and not anticipated to occur. The second component is implementation of the terms and conditions of our new suite of fishery permits, ensuring permit compliance, completing annual reporting requirements, and continuing to evaluate permit effectiveness. Permit implementation is where fisheries managers will be able to prosecute and maximize recreational fisheries for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River. It is also where outreach and engagement with target communities, populations, and our clients will be critically important to highlight improved access to salmon and steelhead resources.

Proposed new staffing includes:

- One Natural Resource Scientist 4 (NRS4): Unit leader. Develops the approach for updating and drafting ESA fishery permits, supervises the Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s, assigns work to the Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s and Research Scientist. Performs data analyses, drafts permit language, and reviews and approves work of support staff. Consults with NOAA. Oversees implementation of permit terms and conditions, compliance, and annual reporting requirements. Provides permit technical interpretation and guidance to fishery managers.
- Two Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s (FWB3): Supports unit lead and Research Scientists with gathering and analyzing data, updating and drafting permits, implementing permit terms and conditions, ensuring permit compliance, and completing annual reporting requirements. Provides permit technical interpretation and guidance to fishery managers.
- One Fish and Wildlife Research Scientist 1 (RS1): Leads and performs data and statistical analyses and developments IPMs and MSEs for inclusion into permits. Provides technical assistance to unit lead, support staff, and fishery managers. Drafts certain sections of fishery permits. Performs future analyses to evaluate permit effectiveness.

Existing WDFW staff do not have the capacity to work on ESA fishery permitting. Funding new staff is the best option because they will work fulltime completing permitting and the associated tasks once permits are approved by NOAA. Additional benefits include standardized language amongst all fishery permits, a singular team that WDFW fishery managers can consult with, consistent and predictable recreational fisheries in the Columbia River, and achieving conservation objectives for listed salmon and steelhead. Given the backlog of fishery permitting needs, it will take existing staff up to 20 years to complete versus up to 5-6 years for dedicated staff.

This proposal affects WDFW and several communities, economies, populations (including those historically marginalized or excluded), and recreational anglers (i.e., clients). Internally, this proposal affects fishery managers in regions 1, 2, 3, and 5 and staff in WDFW's Columbia River Management Unit (CRMU). Specifically, the Region 2 Fish Program Manager has the additional responsibility of supervising the NRS4, managing the budget, and ensuring completion of all tasks. WDFW Science Division is responsible for supervision of the RS1. Regional fishery managers and CRMU staff will have increased and routine coordination responsibilities with this new team as fishery permits are being developed and implemented. However, fishery managers will benefit from having clear and consistent guidance to prosecute and maximize recreational fisheries with a new suite of ESA fishery permits.

One of the outcomes of this proposal is the ability to maximize recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries throughout the Columbia River. New

recreational fishing opportunities are anticipated to be at or near several communities, economies, and populations on the Columbia River. This will improve access to salmon and steelhead resources to residents historically marginalized, excluded, and/or who financially cannot travel to areas where fisheries currently occur. Additionally, some of these new fisheries will be accessible by shore and not require expensive boats and tackle to fish making them affordable to all. We also anticipate new fisheries will positively benefit local economies from angler spending (e.g., lodging, food, drink, tackle, etc.). For example, between 2020 to 2023 the WDFW was able to prosecute a new fishery targeting Coho in the Icicle River during the months of October and November. This fishery serviced several local rural communities and attracted anglers from across the state. During those four years, total fishing effort was 11,000 hours constituting 4,200 angler trips. Total economic value of this fishery to local economies was \$243,600 (4,200 trips X \$58/trip). WDFW anticipates similar or potentially higher increases in angler effort from opening new recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries throughout the Columbia River.

Clients who will benefit from work described in this proposal are resident and non-resident recreational anglers who fish salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River within Washington. An accurate estimate of Columbia River salmon and steelhead anglers is unavailable. However, most Columbia River anglers (resident and non-resident) have either an annual freshwater or saltwater-freshwater combination fishing license. During the 2023-2024 license cycle (April to March), WDFW sold a combined 516,000 annual freshwater and saltwater-freshwater resident and non-resident fishing licenses. Conservatively, if 50% of those license holders fished the Columbia River that would amount to 258,000 clients benefitting from work described in this proposal. WDFW believes 258,000 is an underestimate.

Salmon and steelhead fishing in the Columbia River is hugely popular and occurs throughout most of the year. Another metric that describes the level of participation (i.e., clients) in Columbia River salmon and steelhead fisheries is angler effort WDFW estimates annually. In 2023, an estimated 430,000 unique recreational angler trips were expended during open salmon and steelhead seasons on the Columbia River. While a portion of that estimate is multiple trips made by anglers, not all were, and it infers that hundreds of thousands of clients fish the Columbia River and will benefit from work described in this proposal.

Funding Request

This proposal is purchasing additional staffing capacity (see Assumptions and Calculations section below) to update and draft ESA fishery permits, implement permit terms and conditions, ensure permit compliance, complete annual reporting requirements, and continue evaluating permit effectiveness towards meeting conservation and fishery objectives. Updated and new fishery permits will allow WDFW to maximize recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River.

ESA fishery permits are expected to be completed in up to 5-6 years. Fishery permit implementation, compliance, reporting, and evaluation are ongoing activities. A new suite of ESA fishery permits will directly benefit WDFW staff, recreational anglers, and several communities, economies, and populations (including those historically marginalized or excluded) by maximizing recreational fishing opportunities and improving access to salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River.

ESA fishery permits are WDFW's legal means to prosecute and maximize recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River. A new suite of ESA fishery permits allows WDFW to maintain existing and prosecute new recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries. They will also provide recreational fishery stability and predictability for recreational anglers and several communities, populations, and economies across Washington.

Funding Alternatives

The only alternative explored was to delegate ESA fishery permitting responsibilities to existing WDFW regional and/or headquarters staff. No other alternatives were identified and believed to exist. No pros were identified for this alternative. The cons of delegating fishery permitting responsibilities are:

- Existing staff have full workloads and do not have the capacity to complete ESA permitting in a timely manner.
- Most existing staff do not have experience or expertise in ESA fishery permitting.
- Given the current backlog of ESA permitting needs it would take existing staff up to 20 years complete.
- WDFW would not be able to prosecute new recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries due to no ESA coverage.
- Select existing recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries are at risk of closure due to outdated ESA fishery permits (i.e., inadequate ESA coverage).
- Factors like workload, staff turnover, emerging resource issues, and others increase the risk that some fishery permits may never get completed.

No other state agency or governmental entity performs this type of work or has the same statutory/regulatory authority over fish resources as WDFW. Changing agency policy or state law does not have any impact on the work described in this proposal. ESA fishery permits are federal

law. As mentioned above, delegation/redeployment of these duties to existing staff will not result in fishery permits being completed in a timely manner or at all. Using existing funding to perform this work means other critical work WDFW performs will be replaced and not be completed. Status quo is minimal to no effort (depending upon location) being expended on ESA fishery permitting. Maintaining status quo will likely result in no ESA permits being completed.

Consequences for not completing fishery permits includes:

- Increased risk of litigation from non-governmental entities due to no or inadequate ESA coverage.
- Inability to prosecute new recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries due to no ESA coverage despite a surplus of salmon and steelhead available for harvest.
- Increased risk of not being able to prosecute existing recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries due to outdated ESA fishery permits (i.e., inadequate ESA coverage).
- Not meeting conservation objectives for ESA listed salmon and steelhead.
- Negative impacts to Columbia River communities and economies by not maximizing recreational fishing opportunities that bring angler spending.
- Marginalizing select communities and/or populations by not maximizing recreational fishing opportunities that improve access to salmon and steelhead resources statewide.

Criticisms from Columbia River region elected officials and communities for not prosecuting fisheries in those areas because permitting was not completed.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

One-time funding was provided in the 2023-25 Operating Budget Bill ESSB 5187 in budget item “Columbia River ESA Permitting” from the state general fund totaling \$1,394,000 (\$697,000 each fiscal year). The following legislative budget note stated: “Funding is provided for additional capacity to update Endangered Species Act permits for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin.” This decision package is asking that the funding be ongoing to support this work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 4.0 FTEs total \$458,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E for \$24,000, includes WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s office space, field supplies, communications, trainings, and subscription costs as well as central agency costs. Travel, object G, \$40,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for motor pool vehicle lease and mileage rates and additional travel expenses. The DES Long Term Rental Rate (permanently assigned agency vehicle) is \$535 per month for a half ton 4X4 truck ($\$535 \times 12 = \$6,420$ per year $\times 4$ FTEs = \$25,680). Additional travel expenses include \$0.35 per mile per DES charges for 4 FTEs. An infrastructure and program support rate are included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classifications and the associated work for 4.0 FTE are as follows:

1.0 FTE Natural Resource Scientist 4 (NRS4): Unit leader. Develops the approach for updating and drafting ESA fishery permits, supervises the Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s, assigns work to the Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s and Research Scientist. Performs data analyses, drafts permit language, and reviews and approves work of support staff. Consults with NOAA. Oversees implementation of permit terms and conditions, compliance, and annual reporting requirements. Provides permit technical interpretation and guidance to fishery managers.

2.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3s (FWB3): Supports unit lead and Research Scientists with gathering and analyzing data, updating and drafting permits, implementing permit terms and conditions, ensuring permit compliance, and completing annual reporting requirements. Provides permit technical interpretation and guidance to fishery managers.

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Research Scientist 1 (RS1): Leads and performs data and statistical analyses and developments IPMs and MSEs for inclusion into permits. Provides technical assistance to unit lead, support staff, and fishery managers. Drafts certain sections of fishery permits. Performs future analyses to evaluate permit effectiveness.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor’s Results Washington Goals

This proposal contributes to Goal #2, prosperous economy, of the Governor’s Results Washington. Washington attracts many businesses and new residents because in part of the diversity of natural resources, outdoor experiences, and quality of life. Recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River contribute millions annually into local economies. Many of these recreational fisheries are on or near small and often rural communities that are reliant on visiting anglers. Recreational anglers purchase food, drink, gas, and fishing tackle from stores and stay in hotels or resorts and dine at restaurants. Maximizing recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River benefits all businesses and economies.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This proposal supports all four strategies in WDFW’s 25-year Strategic Plan: (1) proactively address conservation challenges, (2) engage communities through recreation and stewardship, (3) deliver science that informs Washington’s most pressing fish and wildlife questions, and (4) model operation and environmental excellence.

Proactively Address Conservation Challenges:

1. Near-Term Actions
 - A. #2-Vastly expand current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species.
2. 25-Year Desired Outcomes
 - A. #2-The quality and/or quantity of harvest opportunities are sustainable.
 - B. #3-People recognize, prioritize, and take pride in the value of healthy species, habitats, and sustainable harvest opportunities for their contributions to our health and quality of life.
 - C. #8-WDFW is recognized as a national leader in fish and wildlife conservation policy and management.

Engage In Communities Through Recreation and Stewardship:

1. Near-Term Actions
 - A. #2-Complete a plan to better recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers, hunters, and nature appreciators, emphasizing increase participation from diverse audiences.
 - B. #7-Ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and easy to participate in.
 - C. #8-Better understand and deliver on hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as we continue to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.
2. Long-Term Actions
 - A. #1-Build capacity for better public engagement in planning and resource stewardship.
 - B. #4-Expand and improve access to the outdoors.
3. 25-Year Outcomes
 - A. #2-Anglers', hunters', and other recreationalists' levels of satisfaction are high.
 - B. #5-WDFW is well recognized for contributing to residents' quality of life.
 - C. #6-Wide recognition of the role fishing and hunting plays as conservation tools for many species.

Deliver Science That Informs Washington's Most Pressing Fish and Wildlife Questions:

1. Near-Term Actions
 - A. #1-Develop, prioritize, and deliver a science/policy framework to include the following components (includes sub bullets 1, 2, and 4).
 - B. #3-Develop an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach (includes sub bullets 2 and 3).
2. Long-Term Actions
 - A. #2-Communicate, with more transparency, how science informs decisions.
3. 25-Year Outcomes
 - A. #1-We have clear science priorities, and we're applying our resources to the highest policy needs.
 - B. #2-We have a process that assesses the effectiveness of our science in informing policy and management outcomes.
 - C. #3-The public trusts our science.
 - D. #4-There is effective coordination between science, policy, and management functions.

Model Operational and Environmental Excellence:

1. Near-Term Actions:
 - A. #2-Increase decision making transparency to both internal and external audiences.
 - B. #6-Assess the need and identify actions to improve cross-program collaboration.
2. 25-Year Desired Outcomes

- A. #1-Staff and the public see the Department is living its values.
- B. #2-Department operations take advantage of technology.
- C. #3-Department operations are synchronized across programs and regions.
- D. #5-WDW's skilled and increasingly diverse workforce is well equipped to serve Washington residents.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Fishing Opportunities, 4 FTE and \$697,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing - State General Fund. This package supports our activity inventory item "Manage Fishing Opportunities" and applicable support strategy: Monitor and manage fin fish populations.

Fish resources are assessed, monitored, and evaluated to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and based on sound science. To understand what fishery resources are available, department staff conduct field investigations to count the number of juveniles migrating to saltwater and adults returning to freshwater and conduct tests fisheries to verify abundance assumptions. The department develops and uses fish management harvest models that consider the annual variability of fish abundance to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities while minimizing risks to wild fish populations. To understand the lifecycle and movements of fish migration (necessary to protect threatened native runs), the department marks salmon, uses coded-wire tags, and analyzes population genetics. Selective fisheries are offered to provide increased harvest opportunity on hatchery fish while protecting wild populations and assisting recovery of fish populations.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports WDFW's ability to achieve the following Performance Outcomes:

- Contribute towards total number of angler days (i.e., trips).
- Contribute towards fisheries in compliance with harvest protection goals.
- Contribute towards total mark-selective fisheries.
- Contribute towards total license sales, including online license sales.

Completion of all necessary fishery permits gives WDFW full ESA coverage to prosecute and maximize recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Columbia River. If this proposal is funded, it will take staff up to 5-6 years to complete all necessary ESA fishery permits.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW did not conduct community outreach and engagement activities for this proposal. Work associated with updating and drafting ESA fishery permits is a government-to-government process between WDFW and NOAA. Community outreach and engagement will be critically important once fishery permits are issued and WDFW can maximize recreational fishing opportunities. WDFW will need to highlight recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries authorized under a new suite of ESA fishery permits to communities and populations on or near the Columbia River, including those historically excluded and marginalized.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Maximizing recreational fishing opportunities will benefit communities and populations on or near the Columbia River through increase access to salmon and steelhead resources. Additionally, some of these new fisheries will be accessible by shore and not require expensive boats and tackle making them affordable to most people.

Target Communities and Populations:

All populations or communities located on or near where Columbia River salmon and steelhead fisheries occur will benefit from work described in this proposal. Maximizing recreational fishing opportunities will improve access to salmon and steelhead resources to populations and communities, including those historically marginalized, excluded, and/or financially unable to travel to areas where fisheries currently exist. Additionally, some of these new fisheries will be accessible by shore and not require expensive boats and tackle to fish making them affordable to all. We also anticipate new fisheries will positively benefit those along the Columbia that have been negatively financially impacted by loss of jobs related to changes in the logging industry. Making fishing more available could improve job prospects along with food security and sovereignty as well as the visiting angler spending (e.g., lodging, food, drink, tackle, etc.).

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Work associated with updating and drafting ESA fishery permits is a government-to-government process between WDFW and NOAA. Community outreach and engagement will occur once fishery permits are issued and WDFW can maximize recreational fishing opportunities in the Columbia River.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal does not impact existing collective bargaining agreement or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

There are no anticipated negative impacts to or opposition from tribal, regional, county, or city governments or any political subdivision of the state. For regional, county, and/or city governments located on or near the Columbia River where recreational fisheries occur, we anticipate positive impacts to their economies from angler spending and improved access to salmon and steelhead resources by its residents. This package continues investments that expand ESA-compliant fisheries and may benefit recovery efforts through the removal of excess hatchery fish on the spawning grounds.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Non-governmental stakeholders impacted by this proposal include groups like Trout Unlimited, The Conservation Angler, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, and others. All these stakeholders have a vested interest in recovering Columbia River salmon and steelhead populations and maximizing recreational fishing opportunities. WDFW did not formally solicit opinions from non-governmental stakeholders on this proposal. However, informal discussions with some non-governmental stakeholders indicates strong support for this proposal.

State Facilities Impacts:

It is anticipated that these staff positions can be absorbed into existing facilities with no additional cost increases.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5 - Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery and 5a - Harvest management: This package continues investments that expand ESA-compliant fisheries and may benefit recovery efforts through the removal of excess hatchery fish on the spawning grounds.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$336	\$336	\$672	\$336	\$336	\$672
Obj. B	\$122	\$122	\$244	\$122	\$122	\$244
Obj. C	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$24	\$24	\$48	\$24	\$24	\$48
Obj. G	\$40	\$40	\$80	\$40	\$40	\$80
Obj. T	\$175	\$175	\$350	\$175	\$175	\$350

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Pinniped (seal and sea lion) predation in Washington is negatively impacting Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead populations of great importance to endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and to commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. This package supports continued participation in a successful Columbia River sea lion management program partnering with regional states and tribes, as well as ongoing pinniped abundance, diet, and movement monitoring to better understand predation impacts. Without this continued funding, WDFW would have significantly reduced ability to engage in an increasingly controversial issue that is important to Washington’s Native American tribes, businesses, and citizens. WDFW’s inability to engage on this topic would undermine Governor Inslee’s Southern Resident Task Force Recommendations #12 and #13. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,559	\$1,559	\$3,118	\$1,559	\$1,559	\$3,118
Total Expenditures	\$1,559	\$1,559	\$3,118	\$1,559	\$1,559	\$3,118

Decision Package Description

Background

Salmon and steelhead predation by pinnipeds has been a topic of escalating concern due to continued declines in salmon populations, fishing opportunities, and the population of endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales that depend on salmon as a primary food source. In response to a recommendation from the Governor’s Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force, WDFW worked with the Washington State Academy of Sciences to assemble a panel of experts to compile information about pinniped impacts on salmon. The panel’s 2022 report to WDFW stated that “the preponderance of evidence supports the hypothesis that current populations of pinnipeds are likely impeding the recovery of salmon populations in Washington waters.” This conclusion brought pinniped predation to the forefront of current discussions related to salmon recovery.

For decades WDFW has engaged in work to identify, understand, and mitigate impacts of pinniped predation on salmon runs, including early involvement in high profile predation hotspots such as the Ballard Locks and Bonneville Dam. After losing state funding during the financial turbulence of the early 2010s, WDFW’s Marine Mammal Investigations unit relied primarily on grant funding and collaborative efforts with partner organizations to meet some of the more urgent research and management needs related to marine mammals in Washington state. In recent years, growing interest from the Legislature, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, tribes, and stakeholders about the impact of seals and sea lions on fish stocks has increased the need for WDFW to provide scientifically sound information on the topic. WDFW is working to better understand what impact pinniped predation has on salmon and steelhead populations, and to actively mitigate these impacts.

For the last two biennia (2021-23; 2023-25), WDFW has been given one-time funding to 1) manage Steller and California sea lions in the Columbia River to mitigate impacts on fish runs of concern; and, 2) monitor and research pinniped abundance, diet, and movements in the Salish Sea and on Washington’s outer coast to identify predation hotspots and mitigate the impacts of seals and sea lions on threatened and endangered salmon runs.

1. Salmon and sea lions in the lower Columbia River

Though salmon population declines are the result of numerous factors, in the Columbia River one important cause of poor salmon survival and low recruitment of young salmon into the adult population is sea lion predation. Much of this predation occurs at locations where migrating salmon concentrate along the Columbia River, such as Bonneville Dam and Oregon’s Willamette Falls. High predation and lower salmon survival mean fewer adult salmon laying eggs on the upstream spawning grounds, fewer out-migrating salmon, and fewer adults to return in future years to repeat the cycle.

Since 2002, sea lion numbers in the Columbia River have increased substantially, significantly impacting Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed endangered and threatened Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESU's) of salmon and Distinct Population Segments (DPS's) of steelhead. The ESU of greatest concern is the Upper Columbia spring Chinook, which is listed as endangered under the ESA. The Snake River spring/summer Chinook ESU, listed as threatened under the ESA, are also highly vulnerable to predation by sea lions feeding immediately downriver from Bonneville Dam. Ten other threatened salmon and steelhead ESUs/DPSs pass through the lower Columbia River when sea lions are feeding and are therefore threatened with predation. Sea lions also prey on mature sturgeon below Bonneville Dam, and on ESA-listed eulachon.

Deterrence activities at Bonneville Dam

Because of the acute nature of the predation problem at the Bonneville Dam, WDFW and its federal, state, and tribal partners have used a variety of nonlethal methods to deter sea lions from this location in an attempt to increase salmon survival. WDFW and its partners use underwater pyrotechnics, acoustic harassment devices, and rubber projectiles to humanely deter pinnipeds. Agencies have also captured pinnipeds and relocated them out of the Columbia River or deterred them from the area using watercraft. The Department will continue to develop and test nonlethal methods to deter sea lions and will use these techniques when effective. Unfortunately, currently available nonlethal methods have proven ineffective long term.

In 2008, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho received federal authorization to lethally remove California sea lions observed preying on salmon and steelhead below Bonneville Dam. All lethal removals are conducted humanely, consistent with veterinary best practices and in consultation with a team of veterinarians.

Management and federal authorization were initially focused specifically on California sea lions. Despite utilizing lethal removals, the number of salmon and steelhead consumed by sea lions below Bonneville Dam more than doubled between 2006 and 2015 as the population of larger Steller sea lions increased and began to take a higher toll on salmon runs. In response, Congress passed an amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in December 2018 to provide state and tribal resource managers greater flexibility to manage sea lions in future years.

New federal permit and sea lion population health

In 2020, WDFW and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, and tribal co-managers received a new permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to manage sea lions in the lower Columbia River and its tributaries. This permit increased the scope and scale of management and expanded lethal removal to include Steller sea lions, while also expanding the area of potential removals. As a result, removal activity increased from a period of six or eight weeks per year to more than five months of active management each year.

One condition for approval of the new permit was that lethal removal could not have an overall negative effect on the health of the sea lion populations. Both Steller and California sea lion populations are currently robust. The California sea lion stock has been growing at an annual rate of 5.4% in the United States. The population is likely at carrying capacity (Figure 1). The Steller sea lion stock in the West Coast has been increasing at a rate of 3.54% per year (Figure 2) and is also considered healthy, with the number of animals in Washington outpacing growth in other regions with an estimated annual growth rate of 5.69%. Neither population of sea lions is at conservation risk due to low population numbers, and management actions in the Columbia River result in a very small removal of animals relative to the overall population of these stocks along the Pacific coast.

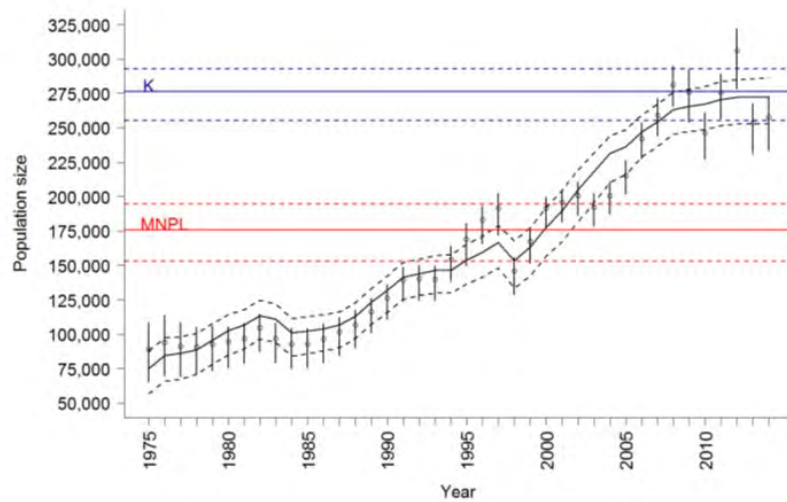


Figure 1. Reproduced from Laake et al. (2018). Fitted logistic growth curve (solid line) and 95% bootstrap intervals (dashed line) for reconstructed California sea lion annual population sizes in the United States, 1975-2014. Vertical lines are 95% bootstrap confidence intervals for reconstructed annual population sizes. Estimated carrying capacity (K; solid) with 95% confidence intervals (dashed) are blue lines and maximum net productivity level (MNPL; solid) with 95% confidence intervals (dashed) are red lines.

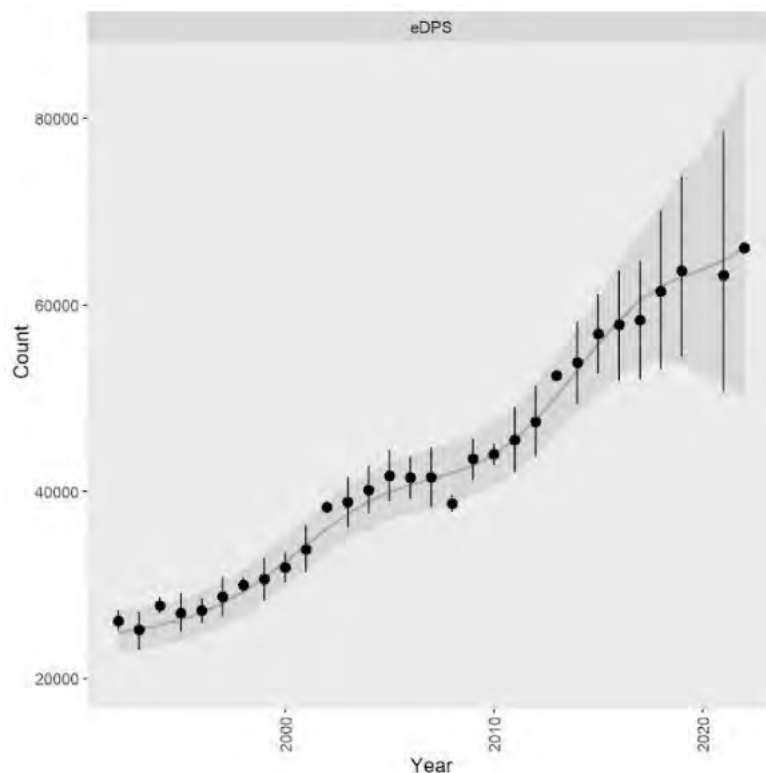


Figure 2. Reproduced from Young et al. (2024). Estimated counts of eastern Steller sea lion non-pups (adults and juveniles) for the period from 1992 to 2022. Counts are represented by black points and vertical lines (95% credible intervals), while the gray line and shaded envelope represent predicted counts (and 95% credible intervals).

The new authority granted by the 2020 permit has streamlined the management process and greatly increased the efficacy of the sea lion

management program. The total California sea lion removals under the previous five-year permit were estimated to have saved around 14,000 salmon from predation; meanwhile, biologists estimate that California and Steller sea lion removals during only the first three years of the current permit have saved more than double that number (28,696) from consumption by sea lions. A population viability analysis for Columbia River spring Chinook salmon runs conducted by WDFW staff estimated that the removals conducted during the first three years of the 2020 permit may have reduced the quasi-extinction probability of these populations by an average of 5.6%. These signs of success point toward the value of this program and the need to continue to fund this work into the future.

2. Seals, sea lions, and salmon in the Salish Sea and the outer coast

WDFW is experiencing an increasing demand for scientifically sound information about salmon and steelhead consumption by seals and sea lions on the Columbia River and on the Salish Sea and outer coast. The Legislature, Fish and Wildlife Commission, stakeholders, and tribes all want to know what impact seal and sea lion populations are having on fish stocks that are culturally, economically, and environmentally significant. While the issue of pinniped predation in the Columbia River is comparatively well understood, less is known about predation impacts on salmonids in Washington's marine waters and river systems to develop effective plans to mitigate negative predation impacts, more knowledge is required about the timing, location, and magnitude of this predation and identify predation hotspots.

Unlike the Columbia River, where a small portion of the sea lion populations visit seasonally to consume salmon, pinnipeds reside year-round in the coastal and inland waters of Washington. Substantial work is needed to maintain current abundance estimates of the three primary pinniped populations in Washington, as well as seasonal movements and salmon predation rates to identify where and when pinniped predation may be limiting the recovery of fish runs of concern. Understanding important nuances, such as whether salmon specialists exist within pinniped populations and if male or female pinnipeds eat more salmon, is incredibly valuable when modeling impacts, designing management strategies, and evaluating non-lethal deterrence options.

With the one-time funding received in previous biennia, WDFW has made important progress towards achieving the goals described above. During this time, staff in WDFW's Marine Mammal Investigations Unit have established a partnership with the Stillaguamish Tribe to study the impacts of pinniped predation on Stillaguamish summer Chinook. These fish are of great cultural importance to the Stillaguamish Tribe and have historically been among the most limiting to recreational and commercial fishery allocations. Staff have also conducted annual surveys of seal and sea lion abundance in Washington and worked on important pinniped diet research. WDFW conducted an in-depth investigation of year-round harbor seal diet in South Puget Sound and contributed to important improvements to the genetic tools used to study pinniped diet. In August 2024, WDFW staff published a peer-reviewed manuscript documenting harbor seal population trends and abundance estimates required for management under the MMPA (Figure 3). In collaboration with researchers at NMFS' Northwest Fisheries Science Center, WDFW staff are in the process of launching a large-scale project aimed at generating quantitative estimates of salmon consumption by harbor seals for two estuaries in Washington's inland waters.

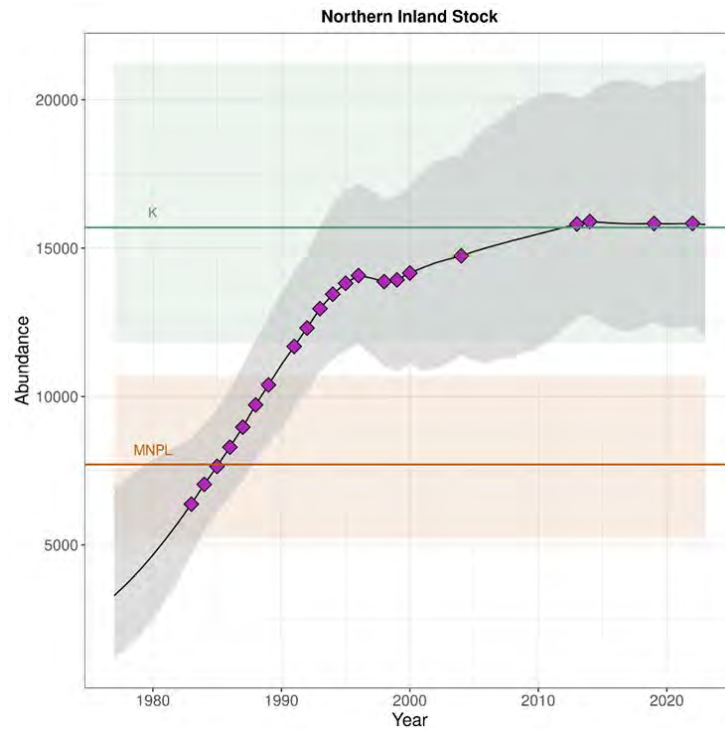


Figure 3. Reproduced from Pearson et al. (In Review). Abundance estimates (solid curved line) and 95% credible intervals (gray ribbon) for Washington’s Northern Inland Stock of harbor seals that live in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, San Juan Islands, and Eastern Bays/Estuaries. Estimated maximum net productivity level (MNPL, required information for management under MMPA) is represented by the orange horizontal line with 95% credible intervals represented by the orange horizontal bar. Estimated carrying capacity (K, also required for management under the MMPA) is represented by the green horizontal line with 95% credible intervals represented by the green horizontal bar. Years in which aerial surveys were flown are marked by purple diamonds.

The nature and magnitude of pinniped predation impacts on salmon vary substantially across Washington. Addressing the issue requires an ongoing effort to monitor the status and abundance of pinniped populations, pinpoint predation hotspots and areas of disproportionate impact to salmon runs and monitor the effectiveness of any future non-lethal deterrence and management activities. Continued dedicated funding from the Legislature will help WDFW continue to make progress towards mitigating pinniped predation impacts on Washington salmonids.

Proposal:

Continue to Fund the Marine Mammal Investigations Unit

Historically, WDFW’s Marine Mammal Investigation Unit Research Scientist was funded from the State Wildlife Account and General Fund State. These funds were lost during a past economic downturn, and WDFW was able to secure various federal and tribal contracts to maintain staffing and operational levels. However, the amount of capacity the Department was able to maintain through these contracts was inadequate to meet growing demands. For the past two biennia (2021-23; 2023-25), the Marine Mammal Investigations Unit has received one-time funding from the Legislature to pursue the important work outlined in this package. This current request proposes ongoing funding to allow us to continue conducting this work into the future.

Species included in research and monitoring work by the Marine Mammal Investigations Unit include seals and sea lions, sea otters, porpoise, and large whales (including Southern Resident Killer Whales). This research supports Columbia River salmon management by assessing diet and impacts on listed salmon stocks, assessing seal and sea lion populations along the river, and evaluating the effectiveness of management actions. As many marine mammal populations have increased in the past decades, interest in their population status, diet, ecology, behavior, and disease

has heightened dramatically. Tribes, stakeholders, and partners are extremely interested in the impact of pinniped predation on salmon, whale entanglements that influence whale populations and crab fisheries, increasing sea otter populations, and the recovery of killer whales. These priority research questions cannot be addressed without a reliably funded Research Scientist to lead the unit and staff to carry out the work. To adequately address research questions related to marine mammals in the Salish Sea, Washington's outer coast, and the Columbia River, this position and this unit need reliable, ongoing funding.

Fund expanded pinniped management work on the Columbia River

WDFW proposes reducing pinniped predation by increasing lethal removals of sea lions consistent with regulations under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). This proposal responds to one of the threats facing these salmon and steelhead stocks, improves salmon recovery efforts, and supports Southern Resident Killer Whale recovery, while ensuring that sea lion populations remain healthy.

Prior to the 2020 permit approval, WDFW's pinniped management was limited by the federal permit's four-to-six-week window. Six different staff with other primary duties spent part of their time planning and implementing pinniped deterrence during this brief window. Under this limited period of operations, staff included three biologists, a research scientist, a scientific technician, and a veterinary epidemiologist. This work was primarily funded by \$150,000 from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration annually and coordinated with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission to maximize efforts.

WDFW is requesting annual ongoing funding to continue the expanded deterrence, monitoring, and assessment work on the Columbia River to 10 months per year and the other expansions explained in the "New federal permit and sea lion population health" section above, that has been funded by additional state appropriations over the last two biennia. Year-round staff time provides planning and logistics, documenting and reporting operations, monitoring, and analyzing results, assessing management effectiveness, and working on the river. Equally important, these same staff assist in collecting and analyzing the data to assess the effectiveness of these management actions, which will provide the necessary information to adapt the management over time. To be effective, they will work together with our tribal partners and our fellow state and federal wildlife agencies in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. Funding this proposal allows WDFW to continue to engage as an active partner and collaborator to work to solve the issue of pinniped predation in the Columbia River.

Along with lethal removal of sea lions, WDFW intends to monitor pinniped distribution along the lower Columbia River and its estuaries. Collecting and analyzing this information will better allow the Department to evaluate the extent of the problem. It will help guide WDFW management actions, and ultimately, assess the effectiveness of that management.

Fund up-to-date annual surveys and diet assessments of pinnipeds in the Salish Sea and outer coast

The increased interest in the impacts of seal and sea lion predation on salmon and steelhead requires consistent, ongoing data collection and assessments to make informed management decisions. This work will maintain valuable long-term datasets to ensure WDFW and partners are able to make decisions about pinniped predation on salmon that are based on the most up-to-date and accurate information possible. This includes maintaining current estimates of pinniped numbers, foraging areas and predation hotspots, diet composition, consumption rates, and overall impact to fish stocks over geographic space and time. This work will continue to build upon WDFW's successes identifying important estuaries and rivers where predation is substantially impacting salmon, and determining where nonlethal deterrents can be used to protect spawning adult fish and out-migrating smolts. Annual ongoing funding will be invested in year-round staffing, sample collections and processing, data analysis, aerial surveys, vessel surveys, and safety equipment.

Alternatives explored and the consequences of not funding

WDFW cannot address priority research questions without a reliably funded Research Scientist to lead the Marine Mammal Unit. Without funding, WDFW would have to continue piecemealing the funding and capacity to complete this work through a variety of contracts inadequate to meet the increasing demand, while requiring deliverables inconsistent with the priorities of stakeholders and partners. In addition, funding is in danger of being redirected to the management of pinnipeds solely on the Columbia River. This would lead to research and management questions about marine mammals in the Salish Sea and Washington's outer coast to be ignored. In order for WDFW to continue its comprehensive approach to marine mammal research and management throughout the state, this position and this unit need reliable, ongoing

funding. WDFW will not be able to meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders, co-managers, and public that care about this issue without this funding.

Further, WDFW will not be able to continue implementing the expanded authority provided by the congressional amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. This would result in backsliding on progress already made, and struggling salmon populations will continue to face a high level of predation by pinnipeds in the lower Columbia River. WDFW’s efforts to assess the effectiveness of current and future management actions will be hindered and will not meet the expectations of neighboring states and tribal partners. There is no funding alternative at this time.

Not funding the expanded monitoring and diet work for pinnipeds will force WDFW to make management decisions without adequate information based in sound science. It will also squander an opportunity to continue partnering with tribes to identify important rivers and estuaries impacted by salmon predation and the potential use of nonlethal deterrents to protect those hotspot areas.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Historical Funding

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Lower Columbia Pinniped Management One-time Funding	-	462,000	753,000	753,000	753,000	753,000
Nonlethal PS Seal/Sea Lion Management One-time Funding	-	-	470,000	470,000	470,000	470,000
		462,000	1,223,000	1,223,000	1,223,000	1,223,000

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salmon and sea lions in the lower Columbia River, \$810,000 per fiscal year and ongoing:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$435,000 for 4.4 FTE working on Columbia River sea lion management.
- Personal services contracts, Object C, totals \$20,000 per fiscal year for veterinarian contracts.
- Goods and services, Object E, totals \$91,000 to include \$56,000 for safety equipment, boat and trailer fuel and maintenance, capture gear and equipment maintenance, disposal costs, and veterinary and sampling supplies. \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- Travel, Object G, totals \$66,000 including vehicle costs and accommodations for the expanded sea lion management team. This work begins at 3:30am, requiring frequent overnight lodging near the Bonneville Dam for staff safety.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T, totaling \$198,000, and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Seals, sea lions, and salmon in the Salish Sea and the outer coast, \$749,000 per fiscal year and ongoing:

- Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$388,000 for 3.6 FTE performing research and monitoring in the Salish Sea and outer coast.
- Goods and services, Object E, totals \$137,000 to include \$108,000 for safety equipment, boat fuel and maintenance, marine mammal surveys (aerial, shore, and/or boat-based), and pinniped diet analysis. \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- Travel, Object G, totals \$41,000 for vehicle costs and accommodations necessary for research and monitoring of pinniped predation in the Salish Sea and on the WA outer coast.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T, totaling \$183,000, and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

All staff for this work are currently employed at WDFW and funded through fiscal year 2025. Ongoing funding is needed to continue providing the necessary support for WDFW to engage in pinniped management and provide information needed to understand and mitigate the impacts of pinniped predation on salmon and steelhead.

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1, FY 2026 and ongoing.

The Research Scientist will have responsibilities throughout western Washington conducting research, monitoring, and assessments of whales, porpoises, seals, sea lions, and sea otters. This position will oversee the Columbia River sea lion management program (0.4 FTE) and design pinniped surveys and conduct analysis for the Salish Sea, Washington outer coast, and the Columbia River (0.6 FTE). This position will directly supervise two Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4s.

2.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, FY 2026 and ongoing.

One Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4 position will supervise and direct all on-the-ground aspects of WDFW's Columbia River pinniped management program. Duties include project implementation, project oversight, project management, logistics, budget management, developing agreements with partners, procuring federal permits, and daily hands-on operations. This position requires specialized expertise with pinnipeds and marine mammal management regulations. This position will directly supervise one Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2, one Fish & Wildlife Biologist 1 made available seasonally for sea lion management work (0.3 FTE), one Scientific Technician 3, and one Scientific Technician 2 that works on Columbia River sea lion management during periods of active operations (0.7 FTE). This position requires specialized expertise with boat operations, capture, handling, and assessment of pinnipeds.

One Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4 position will supervise the team conducting annual pinniped surveys and diet sampling, processing, analysis and estimations. Duties include project implementation, project oversight, project management, logistics, budget management, developing agreements with partners, procuring federal permits, and daily hands-on operations. This position will directly supervise two of the Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 positions. This position requires specialized expertise with boat operations, survey design, and collecting samples.

3.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2, FY 2026 and ongoing.

Under the direction of a Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, one Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 will conduct all work associated with pinniped management and monitoring on the Columbia River. This position also requires above-average expertise with boat operations and pinniped capture, handling, and assessment.

Under the direction of a Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, two Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 positions will conduct all work associated with pinniped surveys and diet sampling, processing, analysis, and estimations in the Salish Sea and on the outer coast. These positions also require above-average expertise with boat operations, pinniped capture, sample collection, and data management.

0.3 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 1, FY 2026 and ongoing.

Under the direction of a Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, a seasonally available (0.3 FTE) Fish & Wildlife Biologist 1 will conduct all work associated with pinniped management and monitoring on the Columbia River. This position also requires above-average expertise with boat operations and pinniped capture, handling, and assessment.

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Scientific Technician 3, FY 2026 and ongoing.

Under the direction of a Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, a Scientific Technician 3 will conduct all work associated with pinniped management and monitoring on the Columbia River. This position also requires above-average expertise with boat operations and pinniped capture, handling, and

assessment.

0.7 FTE Scientific Technician 2, FY 2026 and ongoing.

Under the direction of a Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4, a Scientific Technician 2 working full time during September through May, will conduct all work associated with pinniped management and monitoring on the Columbia River. This position also requires above-average expertise with boat operations and pinniped capture, handling, and assessment.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

Goal: Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment

Outcome Measure: Keeping the Columbia River Healthy

- WDFW's pinniped management on the Columbia River will increase the survival of salmon and steelhead migrating throughout the Columbia River Basin and aid in the recovery of salmon and steelhead populations.

Outcome Measure: Keeping Puget Sound Ecosystem Healthy

- Healthy salmon and steelhead populations support the survival of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW).
- Thriving Species and Vibrant Quality of Life – Governor Inslee has focused efforts on benefitting SRKW. This request provides critical support to transition from active legislation to future priorities.

Goal: Prosperous Economy

Outcome Measure: Increasing the Economic Security of Washingtonians

- Salmon and steelhead population recovery along the Columbia River and its tributaries directly supports communities and tribes that rely on the economic benefits of commercial and recreational fishing.

WDFW Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Conserve and protect native fish and wildlife

Increased pinniped management will protect declining salmon and steelhead populations and also benefit SRKW.

Goal 2: Provide sustainable fishing, hunting, and other wildlife-related recreational and commercial experiences

Recovering salmon and steelhead populations along the Columbia River will enhance recreational and commercial fishing opportunities and comply with tribal treaties and interstate agreements.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve and restore aquatic habitats and species.

Performance Outcomes:

The Department anticipates meeting the following informal measures:

- Increase Chinook salmon abundance for recovering Endangered Species Act-listed stocks in the Columbia.
- Provide Chinook for recreational fishers and Southern Resident Killer Whales.
- Increase the number of Chinook salmon moving up the Columbia River beyond the Bonneville Dam by reducing the amount of pinniped predation on Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook and steelhead. This would increase the number of salmon available for recreational fishing and increase the number of fish spawning, which should ultimately increase the number of salmon available to Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Both the Columbia River sea lion management program and the pinniped research and monitoring aspects of this package include direct collaboration with tribal co-managers on planning and execution. This input was solicited from tribal partners through a variety of means, including direct outreach to tribal staff to discuss their management and research priorities, and through engagement with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) to discuss future directions for pinniped management and research in the Columbia River. In addition to these conversations, WDFW engaged with tribal partners in a variety of other forums centered around the mitigation of pinniped predation on salmon and steelhead (e.g., the Predation Working Group of the Columbia Basin Collaborative), where the ideas that make up the foundation of this package were discussed and developed collaboratively.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The disproportionate impacts associated with this package stem from the possibility of this work not being funded and the subsequent negative impacts to salmon and steelhead. Potential benefits of this work, including to historically marginalized, underserved, and/or overburdened communities, are not possible without this funding.

Target Communities and Populations:

Northwesterners have broadly supported salmon restoration efforts, and borne the costs, because of the importance of salmon to the region's heritage and economy. Specifically, the decline and ongoing struggle of the region's salmon populations negatively impact the food sovereignty and security, health, and cultural practices of historically marginalized, underserved, and/or overburdened communities. This includes Native American tribes, for whom salmon have historically been and continue to be of great cultural value as food and as a source of income. The work included in this package will aid salmon recovery and improve these aspects of life for regional tribes and tribal members. Additionally, easily accessible fishing opportunities provide food security to low-income communities and decreases barriers to participation in recreational fishing opportunities, particularly in river systems such as the Columbia River and its tributaries where fishing opportunities can often be readily accessed without needing to purchase or charter a boat. Additionally, non-tribal commercial fishing communities, many of which consist of small, independently-owned vessels, have suffered negative impacts associated with the decline of salmon, and would positively benefit from salmon recovery as supported by this package.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The structure of staffing and work proposed in this package reflect input from tribal partners.

The Columbia River sea lion management work includes input received during interactions with partners at the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) regarding optimal staffing for operations at Bonneville Dam (conducted jointly with CRITFC staff, as well as staff from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG).

For the pinniped predation research and monitoring in the Salish Sea and on the outer coast, this package was structured to reflect the priorities communicated by various tribal and non-tribal partners that are interested in mitigating predation impacts on salmonids to promote recovery of these important fish. Specifically, the required staffing and proposed work reflect feedback received about the need to quantify impacts to salmon by tracking pinniped abundance and diet throughout Washington, with a focus on individual estuaries and salmon runs of concern.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

The increased interest in the impacts of seal and sea lion predation on salmon and steelhead requires consistent, ongoing data collection and assessments to make informed management decisions. Annual surveys and diet assessments of pinnipeds in the Salish Sea will maintain valuable long-term datasets to ensure WDFW and partners are able to make decisions about pinniped predation on salmon that are based on the most up-to-date and accurate information possible. This implements a key opportunity “Continue and secure sustainable funding for pinniped population assessments and diet studies” from Strategy 15 Salmon Recovery Action #204. The decision package further implements two other key opportunities from Action #204; “Implement, assess, and learn from pinniped deterrence pilot studies in Puget Sound and removals in the Columbia River” and “Advance discussions with co-managers and the Washington State Academy of Sciences about science- supported, Marine Mammal Protection Act-grounded options for reducing pinniped predation.” This decision packages funds WDFW to continue to implement Orca Task Force Recommendations #12 and #13 as well as the Statewide Salmon Strategy Action 6. Two Puget Sound draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum Strategies have several actions addressed by this decision package included Smolt 2.2, Smolt 2.6, Smolt 3.1, and Smooth 3.3. Finally, this implements the filling science gaps and support continuity in scientific efforts from the 2020-2024 Science Workplan.

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

Pinniped management in the Columbia River is an interagency effort between WDFW, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, tribal co-managers, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Pinniped predation research and monitoring in the Salish Sea and on the Washington outer coast are conducted with tribal awareness at a minimum, and typically in collaboration with tribal co-managers. This package continues the important pinniped predation work that is already underway to benefit the recovery of salmon.

Stakeholder Impacts:

We anticipate support from Columbia River pinniped management partners such as NOAA, ODFW, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and IDFG; recreational angling groups such as Long Live the Kings, Coastal Conservation Association, and Puget Sound Anglers; the Governor’s SRKW Task Force; and citizens concerned with declining populations of SRKW.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

WDFW staff are currently working with our Columbia River partners on sea lion removal efforts in the Lower Columbia River under various federal Marine Mammal Protection Act authorities including Sections 109 and 120. No changes to state law.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

The Marine Mammal Protection Act, specifically subsection 120(f), was recently amended by Congress to authorize the appropriate entities to lethally remove California or Steller sea lions in the Columbia River, where those animals are deemed to have a significant negative impact on endangered fish populations. This WDFW request is consistent with Congressional intent.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 6. Address predation and food web issues for salmon; and Strategy Action Area 6a. Predation management: This package continues the important pinniped predation work that is already underway to benefit recovery of salmon.

Pinniped predation in Washington is negatively impacting Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead populations of great importance to endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and to commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. This package supports continued participation in a successful Columbia River sea lion management program partnering with regional states and tribes, as well as ongoing pinniped

abundance, diet, and movement monitoring to better understand predation impacts. Without this continued funding, WDFW would be limited in our ability to engage in an increasingly controversial issue that is important to Washington’s Native American tribes, businesses, and citizens. WDFW’s inability to engage on this topic would undermine Governor Inslee’s Southern Resident Task Force Recommendations #12 and #13.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$597	\$597	\$1,194	\$597	\$597	\$1,194
Obj. B	\$226	\$226	\$452	\$226	\$226	\$452
Obj. C	\$20	\$20	\$40	\$20	\$20	\$40
Obj. E	\$228	\$228	\$456	\$228	\$228	\$456
Obj. G	\$107	\$107	\$214	\$107	\$107	\$214
Obj. T	\$381	\$381	\$762	\$381	\$381	\$762

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
 2025-27 Regular Budget Session
 Policy Level - TS - Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries

Agency Recommendation Summary

Federal Mitchell Act funds are used to operate seven hatcheries and produce over 17 million salmon and steelhead in the lower Columbia River. Chronically stagnant funding for Mitchell Act facilities and increasing operational costs have put the Department’s ability to maintain current production levels at risk. Additionally, a \$1.9 million shortfall in this funding will limit the Department’s ability to maintain current production resulting in closures of two facilities, 1.5 million in lost salmon and steelhead production and further risking conservation, fishing opportunities and local economies. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$948	\$948	\$1,896	\$948	\$948	\$1,896
Total Expenditures	\$948	\$948	\$1,896	\$948	\$948	\$1,896

Decision Package Description

Federal Mitchell Act funds are used to operate seven hatcheries and produce over 17 million salmon and steelhead in the lower Columbia River. Chronically stagnant funding for Mitchell Act facilities and increasing operational costs have put the Department’s ability to maintain current production levels at risk. A \$1.9 million shortfall in this funding will further restrict the Department’s efforts thus resulting in the closure of two Facilities and 1.5 million in lost salmon and steelhead production. These cuts would reduce fishing opportunities primarily in the lower Columbia River and eliminate several permanent staff positions operating these hatcheries. Lost production would impact recreational and commercial fisheries from Alaska to Canada, down the Washington coast, and in the Columbia River. It could also potentially impair Washington’s ability to fulfill its Pacific Salmon Treaty commitments with Canada. Additionally, some of the salmon reduction would include Tule Fall Chinook which are in the top three prey stocks for the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales whose food sources are already diminished. In short, allowing this deficiency in funding to remain unaddressed would result in an economic hit to commercial and recreational fisheries of approximately \$2.21 million annually (Wegge, T. 2009 Technical Memo. Economic Analysis of WDFW Hatchery Programs with Seattle CPI inflator).

Fisheries have a significant influence on the economic stability and cultural vitality of lower Columbia River communities. These communities are presently some of the most depressed in Washington state and reduced harvest opportunities would contribute further to these hardships. Maintaining current production will continue the positive economic benefits to lower Columbia River areas and the state as a whole.

Other alternatives to providing General Fund State backfill include shifting production to other hatchery facilities or to other entities. Production capacity is not available at other facilities, as hatchery production at facilities across the state are already at their maximum capacity in order to provide prey to Southern Resident Killer Whales. Backfilling the Department’s Mitchell Act shortfall is the preferred alternative.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Funds were provided in the 2023-25 Operating Budget Bill ESSB 5187, Section 308(26) “\$948,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$948,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely to continue operations of the Toutle and Skamania hatcheries.” These funds were provided to the Department onetime (budget line-item S4B) and are being requested ongoing.

No change to current programs unless not funded. This is a budget shortfall package requesting state backfill for hatchery funding for reductions in federal and local sources. If not resolved, the stagnate federal Mitchell Act funding will result in the closure of two hatcheries with lost production of 1.5 million salmon and steelhead due to increasing operational costs of \$948,000 per year.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, total \$502,000 in FY2026 for 5.7 FTE, and ongoing, and represent the permanent staff positions that currently support salmon and steelhead production at the Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries. Goods and Services, object E, total \$241,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing, and includes \$130,500 for fish feed and \$8,000 per fiscal year in standard employee costs. Travel, object G, consists of \$5,000 per fiscal year ongoing for motor pool costs. Equipment, object J, includes \$2,000 per fiscal year, ongoing, for non-capitalized equipment. An infrastructure and program support rate is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate. Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, total \$502,000 in FY2026 for 5.7 FTE, and ongoing, and represent the permanent staff positions that currently support salmon and steelhead production at the Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries. Goods and Services, object E, total \$241,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing, and includes \$130,500 for fish feed and \$8,000 per fiscal year in standard employee costs. Travel, object G, consists of \$5,000 per fiscal year ongoing for motor pool costs. Equipment, object J, includes \$2,000 per fiscal year, ongoing, for non-capitalized equipment. An infrastructure and program support rate is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated work for 5.7 FTE are as follows:

Toutle Hatchery

1.0 FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 3 (\$90,979 salaries and benefits per FTE): performs senior level professional technical and scientific fish culture duties and performs hatchery related maintenance.

1.4 FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE): performs journey level technical and scientific fish culture duties and performs hatchery related maintenance.

Skamania Hatchery

1.0 FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 4 (\$103,001 salaries & benefits per FTE): supervises employees and is responsible for implementing and managing a multispecies fish rearing program.

1.0 FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 3 (\$90,979 salaries and benefits per FTE): performs senior level professional technical and scientific fish culture duties and performs hatchery related maintenance.

1.3 FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE): performs journey level technical and scientific fish culture duties and performs hatchery related maintenance.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goals of Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment, Prosperous Economy, and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government. This proposal is fundamental to the harvest management and recovery of ESA-listed Salmon and Steelhead in Puget Sound, the Washington Coast and Columbia River; it supports the commercial and recreational fishing industries; and it respects our state's government-to-government relationship with tribes by supporting their harvest opportunities.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the following Department Strategic Plan priorities:

- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, delivering hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as the Department continues to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Produce Hatchery Fish, 5.7 FTE and \$948,000 fiscal year 2026 and ongoing, State General Fund.

This package supports our activity inventory item "Produce Hatchery Fish" and applicable support strategy:

- Produce salmon and steelhead.

Performance Outcomes:

Failure to backfill operational fund shortfalls will cause decreased salmon and steelhead production by 1.5 million fish and cause the closure of the Toutle and Skamania hatcheries. The reduced production of hatchery fish decreases the number of fishing opportunities, diminishes salmon conservation efforts in those river systems, and lessens the available prey for Southern Resident Killer Whales. Additionally, the shortfalls degrade the Department's (and the state's) ability to achieve the following Performance Outcomes. (At the time of this submittal, the Department is developing performance goals and indicators for the next 25 years, and the following are draft measures under consideration.)

At risk 25-year Goals:

- 25 percent increase in wild salmon
- 25 percent increase in participation in fish and wildlife related activities (youth, race, hunters, anglers, and watchable wildlife)

At risk performance indicators:

- Percent of salmon stocks achieving escapement goals
- Number of people buying licenses
- Number of state revenue
- Number of fishing days

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW understands the critical importance of equity and inclusivity in its community engagement efforts, particularly in reaching historically excluded and marginalized communities. Through the Public Engagement and Communications divisions within the agency, WDFW actively seeks to bridge gaps, foster conversations, and promote the voices of those that have been underrepresented in decision making processes related to fisheries and wildlife management in the past.

WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement by creating a more level playing field where all members of the community feel heard, valued, and empowered to participate in shaping policies and practices that directly impact their lives and communities. WDFW is proactively reaching out to historically excluded groups such as indigenous populations, low-income households, and minority communities to build trust, create partnerships and foster a culture of belonging and ownership among all the shareholders across the state of Washington.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

In economically depressed communities along the lower Columbia River, the closure of North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries would have far-reaching impacts beyond just employment and recreational opportunities. These facilities serve as economic drivers for the region and affect a network of businesses that cater to the fishing community in addition to serve as educational centers and hubs for community engagement.

Fish reared at these hatcheries attract not only local anglers, but also visitors from all around the state and elsewhere. The fisheries supported by these hatcheries stimulate the local economy through various means. Fishing supply stores benefit from increased demand for gear and equipment, while sales of boats and fishing vessels are increased as anglers' fish in the area. These fishing opportunities increase demand for camping sites, hotels, restaurants, and eateries, providing a steady source of income for local hospitality businesses.

In addition, these hatcheries serve as hubs for community engagement and education, particularly school children and conservationists. Hatcheries offer valuable outreach programs that promote environmental stewardship and conservation efforts and connect communities with the local environment and heritage of the region.

Maintaining the operation of North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries is vital not only for economic sustainability in the region but for preserving the heritage, educational, and recreational opportunities they provide for current and future generations. The closure of these hatcheries would not only impact the local economy and conservation initiatives but would also impact the shared values of the community.

Target Communities and Populations:

The North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries are integral parts of the communities along the lower Columbia River whose livelihoods and cultural identities are linked to the production from these facilities. These communities, which are characterized by diverse populations and unique geography will benefit greatly from the continued operation of these hatcheries.

From economically depressed populations to indigenous communities upholding time-honored fishing traditions, lower Columbia River communities rely on the economic stability and cultural heritage that hatchery production provides. These communities include a wide spectrum of ages, backgrounds, and interests. The common factor in all the diversity is the shared reliance on the resources and opportunities these hatcheries provide to the area.

Geographically, the lower Columbia River communities are made up of interconnected towns, cities, and rural areas that rely upon the fisheries found in the river. North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries serve as focal points of activity, attracting residents and visitors alike to engage in fishing, recreation and commerce which fuels the local economy and contributes to these communities.

The continued operation of the North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries is essential for the diverse demographic and geographical communities that reside along the lower Columbia. By keeping these facilities operational, it will help to keep the economic resilience and cultural heritage of these communities strong into the future.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW maintains regular and open communication with communities and constituents of the state. Through ongoing conversations and engagement, WDFW actively seeks input, feedback, and suggestions. These discussions encompass crucial initiatives for the agency, including funding considerations for North Toutle and Skamania hatcheries, ensuring that hatchery operations remain a valuable asset to communities statewide. This continuous communication allows for collaborative and informed decision making, ensuring that the interests and concerns of the communities are taken into account. By actively involving stakeholders and community groups in the decision-making process, WDFW can help to be sure that proposed initiatives align with community needs. In addition, WDFW works closely with the Budget and Policy Advisory Group which assists in facilitating the strategic pathways that align with the state's overall objectives and public interests, reinforcing WDFW's commitment to community focused decision making.

The work associated with Washington hatcheries has far-reaching impacts on diverse communities and stakeholder groups across the state. Each of these communities possesses unique histories, cultural practices, and visions for the future, influencing their preferences and viewpoints on policies and decisions that shape that future. It is important to recognize that any decision regarding hatchery operations will inevitably garner both support and dissent from various stakeholders, each rooted in their distinct perspectives and interests. Therefore, in the decision-making process, WDFW acknowledges and respects the diversity of opinions and viewpoints brought forth by stakeholders. Despite the potential for differing opinions or alternative approaches, WDFW remains committed to considering and incorporating these diverse perspectives throughout the development and implementation of policies, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process that reflects the needs and values of all stakeholders involved.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

The funding shortfalls impact the ongoing program Fishery and Hatchery Science and Management. The hatchery production impacts due to the Mitchell Act shortfalls described further impact the Fishery and Hatchery Science and Management program's implementation of Orca Task Force *Recommendation 6: Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas*. While the hatchery production decreases are not in Puget Sound, they impact the production of tule Fall Chinook, one of the top three priority prey items for Southern Resident Killer Whales, in turn impacting the likelihood of achieving Puget Sound Orca recovery goals under Regional Priority Approach *Orca 1.1: Implement the Governor's Orca Task Force recommendations and other plans*.

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

The North Toutle hatchery supports not just local communities, but also tribal commercial fisheries in Washington State. North Toutle is one of the few hatcheries in the state that produces Tule fall Chinook salmon. Tribes such as the Makah Nation, and Cowlitz and Chinook tribes, rely on the ocean-based fisheries and consider Tule fall Chinook salmon a critical species for their sustenance and cultural practices. The reduction in hatchery production could have significant repercussions on tribal fisheries.

Under various management agreements, North Toutle Hatchery's contribution to enhancing salmon populations and supporting conservation efforts is integral to fulfilling these agreements and maintaining the balance between resource utilization and conservation.

Stakeholder Impacts:

These shortfalls, if not resolved, will result in significant reductions to salmon conservation and production activities which Washington recreational and commercial fishing groups have advocated for at both the Federal and State level for decades.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

If funding is not provided, the process for decommissioning these hatcheries will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Options will be dependent upon geographic location, comanager or other partnership interest in taking over hatchery operations or the potential of future funding for the hatchery. The minimum cost to close and secure a hatchery facility would be \$250,000 - \$300,000 onetime. This would include fencing, security measures and removing all salvageable pumps and fish screens. WDFW looked into selling hatcheries, but the cost associated with preparing for sale is prohibitive, also the majority of hatcheries are located in a flood plain. If a hatchery is closed, WDFW will request funding in the capital budget in order to properly secure the facility.

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

The state is bound to provide fish for tribal harvest and closing any of the salmon programs could be considered a violation by its impact on tribal culture and fisheries. Skamania Hatchery produces steelhead for release in the Klickitat River. This production would need to be replaced in order to meet our *US vs. Oregon* obligations, resulting in further steelhead reductions in the region.

Tule fall chinook are one of the key prey species for Southern Resident Killer Whale and production decreases would be inconsistent with the Pacific Salmon Treaty, comanager agreements and the Governor's Executive Order on Southern Resident Killer Whale Recovery.

Production at these facilities support Executive Order 1802 and the recommendations of the Southern Resident Killer Whale Recovery and Task Force, specifically Goal 1: increase Chinook abundance.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5. Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery; and Strategy Action Area 5b. Hatchery investments: This package supports broad sense recovery by maintaining large hatchery programs.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$353	\$353	\$706	\$353	\$353	\$706
Obj. B	\$149	\$149	\$298	\$149	\$149	\$298
Obj. E	\$241	\$241	\$482	\$241	\$241	\$482
Obj. G	\$5	\$5	\$10	\$5	\$5	\$10
Obj. J	\$2	\$2	\$4	\$2	\$2	\$4
Obj. T	\$198	\$198	\$396	\$198	\$198	\$396

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Fishery managers need accurate and timely data to meet management goals and fulfill harvest sharing obligations outlined in state-tribal co-management agreements. Historically, management of the Washington coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery depended on fish receiving tickets at the time of landing and paper logbook records at the end of the season. Beginning in 2024, an operational electronic monitoring system that reports real-time fishing location and activity is required for fishery participants. This package provides the continued funding necessary to fully leverage the benefits of electronic monitoring in tribal co-management, enforcement, whale entanglement risk remediation, and the protection of public health during marine biotoxin events.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$285	\$285	\$570	\$285	\$285	\$570
Total Expenditures	\$285	\$285	\$570	\$285	\$285	\$570

Decision Package Description

The coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery is managed by the State of Washington through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and is one of the most economically significant commercial fisheries in Washington, with an average annual ex-vessel value of approximately \$45 million (\$88 million in the 2021-22 season). Fishery management has historically relied on fishing activity data provided by fish receiving tickets completed at the time of landing and paper logbook records supplied by fishers at the end of a season. Fish receiving tickets and paper logbook data present several challenges to timely fisheries management due to recording inaccuracies, poor compliance rates, and the staff time required for manual data entry. Fishers or buyers often make mistakes when reporting fishing areas on fish receiving tickets, resulting in data gaps and inaccuracies. Similar errors occur with paper logbooks and the average logbook return rate for the last 10 seasons is 74%. Accurate and timely reporting is critical for state fishery managers for three main reasons:

1. to meet co-management obligations outlined in state-tribal harvest management agreements,
2. to enforce area boundaries that minimize the risk of gear entanglement with marine life listed under the Endangered Species Act (e.g., whales, sea turtles, etc.), and
3. to help protect public health by facilitating harvest tracing to areas impacted by marine biotoxins.

Starting in 2024, an operational electronic monitoring (EM) system that reports real-time fishing location and activity is required for all participants in the Washington coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery. EM provides WDFW fishery managers with an opportunity to address data inaccuracies by providing a vessel's fishing activity (time and location) at the individual pot level. Fishing data of this accuracy will allow managers to monitor catch by management area, enforce closed areas and pot limits, and detect pot tampering or theft in near real-time. EM data can also be used to determine the density of fishing activity within a given area – information needed to minimize the risk of marine mammal entanglements in crab gear.

Solving the Problem

The funds requested in this decision package will be used to maintain the Electronic Monitoring Program within WDFW's Coastal Shellfish Unit, based out of the coastal Region 6 office in Montesano, at current funding levels. Ongoing funding is requested to support a fishery staff whose time will be dedicated to interpreting and synthesizing fisheries data collected by EM systems into fishery management and enforcement. Maintaining the EM Program at its current funding level will have local and regional benefits. At the local level, WDFW fishery managers and enforcement will be able to quickly respond to time-sensitive issues such as gear tampering and the movement of marine mammals into fishing grounds. Tribal co-managers will also receive more accurate and timely updates of fishing activity within tribal sharing areas. At the regional level, EM data collected in Washington is shared with state managers in Oregon and California through the Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee facilitated by the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC). Data sharing between states allows for improved coordination of season closures and cross-state collaboration when vessels fish in Washington and land catch in other states. WDFW is also currently in the process of developing a conservation plan for the Dungeness crab fishery; electronic monitoring of crab fishing gear density will be instrumental in informing the development of Adaptive Fisheries Management strategies to avoid whale entanglements.

Impacts of Service Level Changes

The integration of electronic monitoring data into fishery management has immediate benefits for fishery participants, managers, and tribal co-managers. First, EM benefits fishers by making paper logbooks obsolete, reducing the reporting burden associated with fishery participation. Fishers also benefit from EM's ability to provide a record of each participant's fishing activity, allowing WDFW enforcement to investigate allegations of gear tampering. Second, EM benefits fishery managers by providing more accurate and timely information about fishing location. WDFW can use EM data to correct area reporting errors on fish receiving tickets and monitor fishing outside of approved season and area boundaries. Third, EM data will benefit our tribal co-managers. Four treaty tribes (Quinault Indian Nation, Hoh Tribe, Quileute Tribe, and Makah Tribe) have federally adjudicated fishing rights in Washington coastal waters. These tribes and WDFW co-manage the Dungeness crab fishery within their 'usual and accustomed' fishing areas (U&As) in accordance with annually negotiated harvest management plans, which include specific strategies to provide opportunities to reach harvest sharing goals. The use of EM data directly supports co-management by:

1. allowing WDFW enforcement to confirm that vessels are not fishing within tribal areas closed to state fishers,
2. helping EM staff verify the accuracy of fishing location information reported by state fishers on fish receiving tickets within tribal U&As, and
3. providing a record of fishing activity that can be used to address allegations by tribal fishers of crab pot tampering or theft.

Alternatives Considered

One alternative WDFW explored was implementing an electronic logbook requirement in place of an electronic monitoring system requirement. In a two-year pilot project that began in 2020 conducted by WDFW, most vessel operators found e-logbooks user-friendly, with 10 out of 12 preferring them over paper logbooks. However, e-logbooks did not address several issues encountered in paper logbooks — namely, the correct attribution of fishing activity to catch reporting areas and the timely correlation of fishing activity with marine mammal activity. E-logbooks also did not provide WDFW with fishing activity at the level of a crab pot, limiting its utility when used to minimize entanglement risk. An EM system requirement for all fishery participants was approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission in a rule package submitted by WDFW in 2023. The 2024-25 coastal Dungeness crab season represents the first time that WDFW has had access to EM data for use in fisheries management across any fishery.

WDFW's current funding for the EM program was provided one-time by the legislature in the 2023-25 biennium and is set to expire on June 30, 2025. Lack of adequate funding to support continued operation of the EM Program will result in poor integration of EM data into state management of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery and a missed opportunity for WDFW to test its use in one of Washington's largest fisheries. Issues currently faced by the fishery in the areas of tribal co-management, gear entanglement with ESA listed marine life, and biotoxin risk will persist. Anticipated impacts of discontinued funding include increased chance that humpback whales become entangled in crab fishery equipment, increased risk of litigation, and closure of the economically valuable coastal crab fishery due to lack of compliance with Endangered Species Act (ESA) and not having an incidental take permit to promulgate the fishery.

To be compliant with the ESA, WDFW must secure an ESA Section 10 incidental take permit (ITP) from NOAA. A conservation plan (CP) for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery is required to initiate the ITP process; the CP describes the risks that the crab fishery poses to ESA species and the management tools (e.g., time and area closures, effort reduction, etc.) that will be implemented to reduce those risks. *A key component of the CP is a robust monitoring program*, which is necessary to ensure the fishery effectively operates within the terms of the ITP and that permanent, and Adaptive Fisheries Management tools are effective now and in the future.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

WDFW received one-time funding in the 2021-23 biennium in A5C Crab Fishery and Humpbacks totaling \$206,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2022 and \$364,000 in FY 2023. This initial funding supported staff needed for a feasibility study to research, test, develop, and implement the electronic monitoring (EM) program to keep track of commercial crab gear and protect humpback whales from entanglement. It funded staff to analyze fishery data from EM tools and work with fishery participants to troubleshoot and resolve issues. In the 2023-25 biennium one-time funding of \$285,000 in FY 2024 and \$285,000 in FY 2025 was provided to manage electronic tracked crab fishery gear to avoid whale entanglements during their migration as the agency develops a conservation plan to submit for an ESA incidental take permit.

This decision package requests ongoing funding at the current level (\$285,000 per FY) to continue the work of the EM program.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

This decision package requests ongoing funding of a program that was originally funded one-time by the legislature in the 2021-2023 biennium. Budget numbers are consistent with the original request and do not reflect cost of living adjustments or the department's current administrative program support rate (which is based on the federally approved indirect rate). Salaries and benefits are requested at historic cost of that job class at step L in the session that they were requested. FTEs funded in the past two biennia were included in the Compensation Impact Model; therefore, increases to salaries and benefits costs for these staff have already been accounted for. This decision package requests only that the current funding level be sustained in the 2025-2027 biennium and ongoing.

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 2.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total \$186,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E, include \$6,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions, as well as central agency costs. Object G includes \$15,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing to cover travel expenses for three staff to coordinate with crab fishers in Ilwaco, Chinook, Tokeland, Westport, Neah Bay, and La Push, including DES vehicle rental, mileage, and overnight stays. An infrastructure and program support rate of 31.82% is included in object T and is based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate at the time originally submitted.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classifications and associated work for 2.5 FTE are as follows:

1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 4 (\$89,882 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to coordinate with operations and policy staff, stakeholders, and EM providers, implement the electronic monitoring program, and supervise the two Scientific Technician 2 positions.

1.5 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$111,653 in FY 2026 and ongoing) includes one full-time staff and one career-seasonal working 6 months per year to perform technical review of EM data, coordinate with fishers, and troubleshoot problems.

This decision package requests ongoing funding for the EM Program within WDFW's Coastal Shellfish Unit at current levels. Job class step L and standard employee costs are provided at FY 2021 rates, reflective of the initial funding request for this work. The job classifications above were included in the original request two biennia ago and do not reflect current staffing of the program. WDFW anticipates a need to expand funding in the future as the integration of EM data into fisheries management and policies decisions grows.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal supports the governor's Results Washington goal areas and statewide priorities by facilitating effective management of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery. Effective management of the fishery supports the governor's goal of a prosperous economy (the coastal Dungeness crab fishery has an annual ex-vessel value of approximately \$45 million) and an effective, efficient, and accountable government (electronic monitoring data is available in near real time and does not require manual entry like traditionally used sources such as logbook data).

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This proposal aligns with WDFW's 25-year strategic plan by proactively addressing key conservation challenges, particularly those posed by marine life entanglements in crab gear off the coast. Electronic monitoring (EM) offers valuable insights into some of Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife issues; EM data provides unprecedented access to information about commercial fishing activity and crab gear density along Washington's coast, both of which can be used to investigate the ecological impacts of the fishery on marine habitats. In these ways, this proposal supports WDFW's goals of promoting ecosystem health by supporting whale conservation efforts and improving the department's stewardship of marine resources.

WDFW Activity Inventory

- Manage Fishing Opportunities: 1.7 FTE and \$200,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing – General Fund State.
- Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitats and Species: 0.8 FTE and \$85,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing – General Fund State.

This package supports WDFW's foundational work through two Activity Inventory categories: "Manage Fishing Opportunities" and "Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitats and Species" and falls under the supporting strategies of "Monitor and Manage Shellfish Populations" and "Recover and Sustain Diverse Aquatic Populations," respectively.

The enhanced monitoring capabilities provided by the coastal Dungeness crab electronic monitoring (EM) program improves the accuracy and collection speed of fishery data. Access to near real-time fishing activity improves WDFW's ability to "Monitor and Manage Shellfish Populations" by supporting the implementation of an Adaptive Fisheries Management framework that allows management actions to dynamically respond to changes in the intensity and location of fishing effort. Through the accounting of vessel location, EM improves the ability of WDFW to enforce fishing rule violations and area closures, while also assisting the state to meet harvest sharing targets within areas co-managed by coastal tribes.

Electronic monitoring supports WDFW's ability to "Preserve and Restore Aquatic Habitats and Species" by enabling fishery managers to take management actions that limit the risk of entanglement of marine life in fishing gear. Accurate information about the location and density of fishing activity empowers WDFW fishery managers to identify and respond to potential entanglement hotspots. With more accurate fishing activity data, WDFW can take proactive management actions to minimize entanglement risk for ESA listed species (i.e., humpback whales), such as adjusting fishing area boundaries or modifying gear deployment practices. By reducing the impact of the Washington coastal Dungeness crab fishery on marine mammal populations during their migration, EM supports WDFW's conservation and stewardship responsibility to "Recover and Sustain Diverse Aquatic Populations."

Performance Outcomes:

The main performance outcome of continuing to fund the electronic monitoring (EM) program will be the efficient integration of EM data in state management of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery. Integration of EM data into management provides managers with fishing activity in near real time and enables WDFW to validate catch area reporting, enforce area closures, investigate allegation of gear tampering, manage biotoxin contamination risk, improve relationships with tribal co-managers, and support whale conservation by tracking fishing activity and marine mammal co-occurrence.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW implemented the coastal Dungeness crab electronic monitoring (EM) program with community input. Before implementation, WDFW conducted a two-year pilot program with 12 volunteer fishing vessels to assess the feasibility of EM for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery. Pilot program vessels were chosen to adequately represent fishers that operate from Washington's five largest coastal port communities of Ilwaco, Westport, Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and La Push. To address the past exclusion of local fishermen that operate smaller vessels in the

development of fishery management policies, WDFW ensured a range of vessel sizes were included in the pilot. WDFW used information gathered during the pilot program to test different EM systems and solicit feedback from fishers regarding common issues and concerns about the technologies implementation. Fisher input informed the development of an EM rule package and an EM compliance guide designed to provide a timeline for EM implementation and clarify rule language for fishery participants.

WDFW solicited the input of the Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Group on EM rule language, the EM compliance guide, and the proposed implementation timeline. The Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Group is comprised of 15 active and past commercial fishery participants whose representation spans the five major coastal fishing ports and included the Presidents of the Washington Crab Fisherman's Association (WCFA) and the Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association. The Department also held three public industry meetings, both in-person in Westport and online via Teams, to provide updates on the EM pilot program, discuss proposed EM rule language, and solicit feedback on the timeline for rule implementation. Meetings were attended by community members and interested parties of the fishing ports of Ilwaco, Westport, Grays Harbor, and Willapa Bay. Prior to the submission of the EM rule package, information about pilot program performance and the proposed rule package was included in the annual Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery newsletter. Paper copies of the newsletter were distributed to fishery participants and industry representatives, and an electronic version was posted to the WDFW website. Following EM rule submission, WDFW collected the comments and concerns received from industry and the public and presented them to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The EM rule package was approved at the end of 2023 and EM devices were required for all 2023-24 fishery participants which began coastwide on February 1, 2024. WDFW continues to listen to fisher feedback regarding their experience with EM and routinely solicits feedback through meetings with the Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Group.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The requirement that all vessels participating in the coastal Dungeness crab fishery maintain a working Electronic Monitoring (EM) system was identified to have a possible disproportional impact on smaller vessels, which historically have had fewer economic resources to spend on vessel systems. To alleviate this impact, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) partnered with the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC) and Archipelago Marine Research to distribute EM systems to fishery participants utilizing grant funding. 229 vessels applied for the program and received an EM system before the conclusion of 2023. The wide and timely distribution of EM systems resulted in high EM rule compliance by the start of the fishery on February 1, 2024.

Target Communities and Populations:

Continuing funding for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery electronic monitoring (EM) program will provide substantial benefits to Washington communities across three key areas: ensuring fishery sustainability, enhancing food security, and safeguarding access to commercial and recreational opportunities.

First, integrating EM data into Dungeness crab management supports Adaptive Fisheries Management, enabling responsive decisions amidst dynamic changes driven by climate change. Climate impacts, such as fluctuating crab abundance and increased interactions with ESA-listed whale species due to altered ocean conditions, underscore the need for precise monitoring. EM's ability to track fishing activities to a greater degree of accuracy enhances fishery manager's ability to enforce sustainable harvest limits, mitigate risks of fishery closures due to incidental ESA species interactions, and ensure equitable resource sharing with tribal co-managers. A sustainable coastal Dungeness crab fishery will ensure reliable revenue for Washington's coastal seafood industry. Fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on the Dungeness crab fishery include the ports of Ilwaco, Westport, Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and La Push, as well as the historically marginalized tribal communities of the Quinault Indian Nation, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, and Makah Tribe.

Second, EM furthers environmental justice by supporting food security for shellfish consumers and low-income communities. As the world's population increases, safe and reliable food sources that are high in protein are required to avoid increases in food insecurity and malnutrition. EM data will provide fishery managers with faster and more accurate information regarding where crab landed into Washington ports are caught. The accurate attribution of shellfish product to fishing areas will assist WDFW and the Washington Department of Health conduct product tracing during harmful algal blooms which present a biotoxin risk. Effective product tracing will ensure shellfish consumers have uninterrupted access to safe crab product.

Third, EM will help to safeguard commercial and recreational access to the coastal Dungeness crab resource. Washington's coastal communities are the most vulnerable to climate change while also exhibiting higher poverty rates than the state average. The commercial and recreational Dungeness fisheries contribute significantly to the economies of coastal communities. Washington's coastal Dungeness crab fishery has steadily increased in value over the past 30 years, producing a record ex-vessel value of \$88.2 million during the 2021-22 season. The recreational fishery brings an influx of direct spending on activities such as fishing charters, boat rentals, gear purchases, and fishing licenses, as well as indirect expenditures, including lodging, dining, and other tourism-related services. The integration of EM data into fisheries management will

support WDFW with ongoing efforts to develop a stock assessment approach for the fishery and improve management decisions, ensuring the long-term health and resilience of the Dungeness crab population.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW listened to fishery participants and tribal co-managers during the rulemaking process for the EM rule package and made significant changes to final rule language to address them. WA coastal Dungeness crab fishery participants expressed a range of concerns about the proposed implementation of electronic monitoring (EM). Concerns broadly fell within one of three categories. The first related to the procurement, placement, and operation of an EM system on a vessel. Fishers suggested that supply chain issues could limit EM system availability, preventing compliance. Others took issue with rule language that specified the placement of EM equipment (a hydraulic sensor). Fishers also expressed concern that the battery draw from an 'always on' EM device would drain a vessel's battery and that EM data could not be used to identify fishery participation. To address procurement, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) partnered with the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC) and Archipelago Marine Research to distribute EM systems to fishery participants utilizing grant funding. To address placement, WDFW listened to fishers and amended rule language to be more flexible. To address operation concerns, WDFW confirmed that EM systems that meet required specifications do not pose an undue burden on vessel power systems and can be used to identify crab fishing activity.

The second category of concerns raised by fishers pertained to the proposed process for how a vessel secures an EM exemption following an EM system failure. Specifically, fishers expressed that the webform based process of requesting an exemption permit limited access, exemption permits were not long enough, and the requirement that fishers submit an activation report when returning to the fishery was cumbersome. Together, fishers argued that these rules could prevent participation during times of peak opportunity. WDFW staff recognized that these could be potential issues for some fishers. WDFW agreed to accept permit requests via text and email when outside of normal business hours, extended the duration of exemption permits to 4-days, and removed the requirement for an activation report when a vessel re-enters the fishery.

The third category of concerns raised by fishers were related to enforcement discretion during EM rule implementation. WDFW staff and enforcement recognize this is a substantial change for the coastal crab fishery. WDFW enforcement has focused on education in the past for significant changes in the fishery and has used discretion in enforcing new regulations. WDFW staff have committed to providing information in multiple formats on how to comply with the new regulations, including the Electronic Monitoring Program Compliance Guide. WDFW staff are also aware there may be unforeseen issues outside of the fisher's control that could lead to EM system failures and have provided an exemption permit process.

WDFW also solicited feedback from tribal co-managers during the EM rulemaking process. The fishery managers of the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN), Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, and Makah Tribe expressed enthusiastic support for EM implementation, citing that EM would improve transparency and accountability. Tribal fishery managers and policy staff requested to receive regular updates on EM implementation and meet to discuss how EM data could be used to improve fisheries management and rule enforcement. Leading up to rule implementation, tribal and state fishery managers held three technical meetings, which included discussions of how to use EM data to improve catch estimation and co-management of the fishery. WDFW and tribal enforcement officers met twice to discuss how EM data could be used to address gear tampering and fishing within closed areas. WDFW is committed to continued conversations with tribal co-managers regarding how EM can best be utilized to improve fisheries management and harvest sharing.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

WDFW co-manages the coastal Dungeness crab fishery with four treaty tribes (Quinault Indian Nation, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, and Makah Tribe) through annually negotiated harvest management plans. Representatives of the coastal treaty tribes have expressed appreciation that the state has implemented an electronic monitoring (EM) program. Tribal co-managers are particularly appreciative that EM data supports the state’s goals of harvest sharing within tribal usual and accustomed (U&A) fishing areas, increases WDFW enforcement officers’ ability to investigate gear tampering allegations, and improves the accuracy of the state’s weekly harvest updates.

Washington also manages the coastal Dungeness crab fishery in collaboration with Oregon and California, with assistance from the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC). Oregon, California, and the PSMFC will be granted confidential access to Washington’s EM data to support cross-state fishery closures and to enable a coordinated response to marine mammal co-occurrence with fishing gear.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW meets regularly with the 15-member Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Group, comprised of fishery participants within each of the major coastal fishing ports and those who operate larger and smaller fishing vessels. WDFW consulted the advisory group during the lead up to, and throughout the implementation of, an electronic monitoring (EM) requirement for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery. WDFW also held three meetings throughout the process to solicit industry comment on the performance of the EM pilot program, proposed EM rule language, and rule implementation timeline. Industry feedback has been largely positive due to the benefits that fishers have observed in WDFW’s improved response to allegations of gear tampering and the phase out of paper logbooks, which were less efficient in reporting fishing activity.

State Facilities Impacts:

The coastal Dungeness crab electronic monitoring (EM) team works out of the Region 6 Montesano office. The office currently has all the facilities necessary to support current staffing and operation of this program.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$127	\$127	\$254	\$127	\$127	\$254
Obj. B	\$59	\$59	\$118	\$59	\$59	\$118
Obj. E	\$15	\$15	\$30	\$15	\$15	\$30
Obj. G	\$15	\$15	\$30	\$15	\$15	\$30
Obj. T	\$69	\$69	\$138	\$69	\$69	\$138

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is developing a comprehensive strategy to prioritize fish passage barrier removal statewide. This proposal will continue strategy development first tasked by the Washington State Legislature in 2020 through legislative provisos in the supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 6168), the supplemental Capital Budget (ESSB 6248) and the Transportation Budget (ESHB 2322). A successful strategy will focus efforts of all culvert correction programs into a single approach to maximize the salmon and orca recovery benefits from the public investment. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$384	\$384	\$768	\$384	\$384	\$768
Total Expenditures	\$384	\$384	\$768	\$384	\$384	\$768

Decision Package Description

One of the most effective, and only proven, restoration techniques for salmon recovery is removing manmade barriers to reconnect isolated aquatic habitat. Although fish passage barrier correction is necessary for salmon and steelhead recovery, and thereby also critical for Southern Resident killer whales (SKRW), an additional driving factor for fish passage barrier removal investments is the federal court injunction. “On June 11, 2018, after decades of litigation, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the treaty obligation of the State of Washington to repair or replace fish-blocking culverts under state-owned roads within the United States v. Washington case area, Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) 1-23.”¹ As such, Washington State is currently spending billions of dollars replacing barrier culverts through multiple culvert correction programs. Statewide, there are thousands of inventoried barrier culverts that need to be replaced (Figure 1). To maximize salmon and SKRW recovery benefit from the state investment – and build support for the level of funding needed – it is crucial to develop one comprehensive strategy for prioritizing and removing fish passage barriers for Washington State.

Figure 1. Map of fish passage barriers (by HUC 8 watershed) identified in Washington State and reported in the Washington Fish Passage database (<https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/hp/fishpassage/index.html>).

In response to the problem statement above, the Washington State Legislature tasked the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) in 2020 Supplemental Capital Budget and Transportation Budget provisos to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy, focusing the efforts of all culvert correction programs.

In July and October of 2022 respectively, WDFW hired a Fish Passage Strategist and contracted with Cramer Fish Sciences and Triangle & Associates to undertake strategy development. These hires, in addition to WDFW Habitat Program’s fish passage division manager, form the Fish Passage Strategy Project team. WDFW also supports this effort through a leadership team that provides key policy input and decision making. The project team has crafted a framework to launch the development of the strategy in coordination with the leadership team beginning with outreach first to tribal co-managers and then to key stakeholders. WDFW leadership, the project team, and the agency’s tribal liaison, briefed all tribes with interests in Washington on the strategy, meet with interested tribal parties, and provide updates including the upcoming draft strategy for discussion and review.

Most critically, the Project Team selected a small group of scientists with appropriate expertise in areas such as evaluating fish passage projects, WDFW fish passability criteria, fish passage prioritization, salmon and steelhead ecology and life history, salmon recovery, climate change, and fish passage economics to serve on the Science Panel. The Panel met 8 times in 2023-2024 to discuss relevant literature, the recommended approach to statewide barrier prioritization, and the key metrics needed to incorporate into the process to maximize the outcomes for salmon and SRKW. The panel assessed existing datasets such as work done by WDFW and partners that identified potential Chinook fish passage barriers, the primary diet of SRKW (Figure 2), and identified data gaps to address to prioritize barrier removal. The panel recommendations provide a strong scientific foundation for the development of the fish passage barrier removal strategy. One key outcome from the science panel is the recommendation to develop a statewide optimization decision-support tool to prioritize barrier culverts.

Figure 2. Map of WDFW-inventoried and potential Chinook fish passage barriers in Washington State
(<https://wdfw.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=def763e1e64842a9bd3780784a0bd8d3>).

This is the opportune time to implement the strategy and build upon the recommendations of the science panel since the draft is complete and the course of action is clear. This proposal is a continuation of the fish passage prioritization strategy. The fish passage strategist position has been funded previously and is requesting continued funding, and this proposal is also requesting the additional capacity needed to develop and maintain a statewide optimization model needed to implement the strategy.

This proposal seeks funding for two portions of the Fish Passage Strategy. The first is ongoing funding for the Fish Passage Strategist position, first hired in 2022. The Strategist reports to the Habitat Fish Passage and Screening Division Manager and Habitat Program Director and is responsible for understanding the outcomes the agency is trying to achieve relative to fish passage including the risks and opportunities to achieving these outcomes. This position leads the critical and conceptual thinking to develop strategies and tactics to achieve the desired results. This position requires skillful coordination internally with both senior and executive management, and technical and scientific experts, as well as leading discussions with tribal governments, state, federal, and local agencies, salmon recovery regions, and other stakeholders to build support for the implementation of the fish passage strategy.

The second portion of funding sought through this proposal is for an IT position that will develop and maintain a statewide fish passage prioritization web application using an optimization approach. Optimization is a mathematical approach that solves a function with a defined objective and constraints (parameters) to solve for optimal combinations of barriers to remove. For barrier removals, it is often used to identify optimal sets of barriers to remove that maximize connectivity and length of stream for given budget or number of barriers. An optimization approach requires the creation of program files, inputting them into a solver, and extracting, transforming, and loading data. The tool will be updated regularly, with a frequency similar to the fish passage barrier database on which the tool will be based.

This proposal will result in an implementable strategy that will allow the public access to a decision-support tool that prioritizes barrier removal at multiple scales of inquiry. This tool will empower users with information rooted in the best available science on the highest priority barriers to remove in their watershed, county, salmon recovery region, and statewide. The tool will be based on transparent objectives and datasets laying the scientific foundation for accompanying policy decisions made by a far-reaching range of clients. Tribes with interests in Washington, salmon recovery regions, cities, counties, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens will all benefit from this proposal. In particular, the salmon recovery community and entities both allocating and receiving state funds for barrier correction will have much-needed guidance on how to best prioritize barrier removal projects state-wide.

Funding this proposal in its entirety will gain efficiencies for strategy implementation in several ways. First, continued funding for the Fish Passage Strategist will allow for the existing momentum on outreach and drafting the strategy to build resulting in timely state-of-the-art results for the state of Washington. The IT specialist and associated technology are an essential component of implementing the recommendations from the Science Panel and will allow WDFW the longer-term capabilities and related efficiencies to manage this barrier removal prioritization model into the future. This capacity will reduce the need for contract funding and reliance on external parties to maintain and improve the iterative decision-support tool. The WDFW Fish Passage Division will leverage the existing database by having designated funding for inventory and provide a one-stop location for users to access fish passage data.

The consequences of not funding this proposal will result from not being able to implement the Fish Passage Strategy that the legislature tasked WDFW with developing. Currently, funding for barrier removal in Washington State comes from a variety of sources including multiple tribal, federal, state, and local government entities that are prioritizing and implementing removal of manmade fish passage barriers. Thus, there has not been a consistent strategy for prioritizing barriers and different entities use different methods and criteria for prioritizing barriers for correction or removal. Research indicates that coordinated efforts of barriers across individual or even multiple states are more efficient and effective at reconnecting isolated habitat than individual watershed-scale prioritization strategies.²

This proposal is based on a rigorous process to pursue the best course of action focusing fish passage barrier removal. Alternatives explored by the WDFW Project and Leadership Team and the Science Panel include expanding on existing prioritization strategies in the state, adopting a pilot optimization model developed by the University of Washington for prioritizing barrier removal, and maintaining status quo. They determined that to have an interconnected singular strategy of varying tactics that, when applied sequentially and consistently at the state, regional, or watershed level, that results in the maximum benefit possible for the objectives of improving habitat for ESA-listed salmon and SRKW recovery a new approach is needed. While the strategy leverages existing work being done across the state, it will have the additive statewide optimization tool that will allow for connectivity, trade-off analyses, and tiers of priority barriers that may be integrated at a range of spatial scales. This approach will allow for the optimization tool to integrate into regional prioritization schemes recognizing the varying data and needs of different

parts of the state, while also providing a big picture look at where the highest priority barriers are located statewide.

¹ Excerpted from the introduction of a white paper written by Mr. Joe Mentor, of Mentor Law Group, dated March 13, 2019.

² Neeson, T. M., A. T. Moody, J. R. O’Hanley, M. Diebel, P. J. Doran, M. C. Ferris, T. Colling, and P. B. McIntyre. 2018. Aging infrastructure creates opportunities for cost-efficient restoration of aquatic ecosystem connectivity. *Ecological Applications* 28(6):1494–1502.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal is a continuation and expansion of the work tasked to WDFW by the Washington State Legislature in 2020 through legislative provisos in the supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 6168), the supplemental Capital Budget (ESSB 6248) and the Transportation Budget (ESHB 2322). In July of 2022 WDFW hired a Fish Passage Strategist to develop a statewide fish passage strategy. In October of 2022 WDFW awarded Cramer Fish Sciences and Triangle & Associates a contract of \$300,000 to assist with strategy development. The consulting team has been central in developing an outreach and engagement plan, meeting facilitation, a literature review, the formation of the Science Panel, and drafting the strategy report. The contract was amended twice since 2022. The first amendment was in September 2023 for \$38,244 to accommodate conference participation and external science panel member fees. The second amendment was in March 2024 for \$77,709 to account for addition coordination of science panel and leadership team meetings and associated travel costs. This proposal does not include a request for additional contracting funds but does include new requests for an IT APP Developer and an Environmental Planner 5.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

\$271,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 2.0 FTEs, Objects A and B.

\$3,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for annual software subscription for IBM C-Plex optimization model, Object J.

Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Total costs are \$384,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classifications and associated work are as follows are needed in FY 2026 and ongoing.

Job Classification	FTE	Annual Salary	Benefits
Environmental Planner 5	1.0	\$105,612	\$33,497
IT APP Development - Entry	1.0	\$99,672	\$32,494

1.0 FTE Environmental Planner 5: This position reports to the Habitat Fish Passage and Screening Division Manager and Habitat Program Director and is responsible for understanding the outcomes the agency is trying to achieve relative to fish passage including the risks and opportunities to achieving these outcomes. This position leads the critical and conceptual thinking to develop strategies and tactics to achieve the desired results. This position requires skillful coordination internally with both senior and executive management, and technical and scientific experts, as well as leading discussions with tribal governments, state, federal, and local agencies, salmon recovery regions, and other stakeholders to build support for the implementation of the fish passage strategy. This position will continue to develop and maintain a comprehensive statewide fish passage strategy to enable statewide prioritization at the barrier and stream system scales which will contribute the most to recovery. The development of the strategy was tasked to WDFW through budget provisos in 2020 to focus the efforts of all culvert correction programs into a single strategic approach to maximize the salmon and orca recovery benefits from the public investment.

1.0 FTE IT App Development Entry: This position will develop and maintain a statewide fish passage prioritization decision support tool using an optimization approach. An optimization approach requires the creation of program files, inputting them into a solver, and extracting,

transforming, and loading data. The tool will be updated regularly, with a frequency like the fish passage barrier database of which the tool will be based. This optimization decision-support tool is based on the recommendations from the science panel responsible for providing recommendations to WDFW on the best available science for prioritizing barriers to ESA listed salmonid species and species prey to South Resident killer whales

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This package meets Goal 3 of the Governor's Results Washington goal areas and statewide priorities of sustainable energy and environment. Specifically, this work not only supports threatened populations of salmon and orca, but it also provides a framework for reconnecting aquatic habitat across the state.

This package also aligns with the WDFW Strategic Plan in multiple categories. First, it proactively addresses conservation challenges by collaborating with partners on a landscape-scale approach to habitat connectivity. Next, it supports the near-term action of delivering science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions. The strategy will answer: how do we prioritize the removal of thousands of fish passage barriers in a way that benefits depressed, threatened, and endangered stocks, and that is informed by the best available science? The strategy aligns with the near-term action of developing a science-policy framework in that it is designed by explicitly delineating its science foundation and ecological metrics critical for salmon and orca from policy considerations essential for successful implementation and trade-offs. The strategy will ensure that its science supports adaptive management through an iterative decision-support tool that may be updated to reflect both ongoing project work and emerging science in the form of new datasets and thinking around fish passage barrier removal. Lastly, it ties into the near-term actions of moving WDFW towards operational and environmental excellence through its process of transparent decision making and improving cross-program/region collaboration. The WDFW fish passage strategy leadership team includes leaders from several different programs: the Habitat Director, Conservation Director, Fish Science Manager, Habitat Chief Scientist, and Salmon Recovery Policy Lead. The science panel includes research scientists from both Habitat and Fish programs. Ongoing cross-programmatic and regional discussions are a key component to developing this strategy as it touches on many areas of WDFW's mission and expertise. The decision support tool will be based on metrics that are transparent and linked directly with the goals of the provisos that tasked that agency with this work.

Performance Outcomes:

The primary specific outcomes from the WDFW Approved Performance Measures are "miles of fish habitat opened" and "threatened and endangered species population increases." At its foundation, the Fish Passage Strategy is centered on opening miles of the highest-quality habitat statewide. The optimization approach incorporates stream connectivity that will prioritize barrier removals that will open the most miles of actual habitat without other existing upstream or downstream barriers. Additionally, the strategy will provide recommendations on coordinated investments which enables the removal of more than one barrier in a location to maximize miles opened while gaining efficiencies in construction, permitting, and funding. The Strategy will also prioritize areas of the state with the largest number of threatened and endangered species. Removing fish passage barriers in the highest priority stream reaches will provide the needed connectivity to assist in these imperiled populations.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

An initial step in the launch of the fish passage strategy was to brief all Tribes with an interest in Washington on the plans to develop the strategy. Some key questions included asking Tribes what partnership on the strategy development looks like for their Tribe should look like, and how they would like to engage moving forward. WDFW has met individually with tribal representatives throughout the process and are providing them with the initial opportunity to review the draft strategy document and provide input on steps forward. As we gather feedback from the Tribes, we will integrate their suggestions and continue to partner with them on the implementation of the strategy in a way that is respectful of Tribal sovereignty and the Co-Manager relationship (Figure 3).

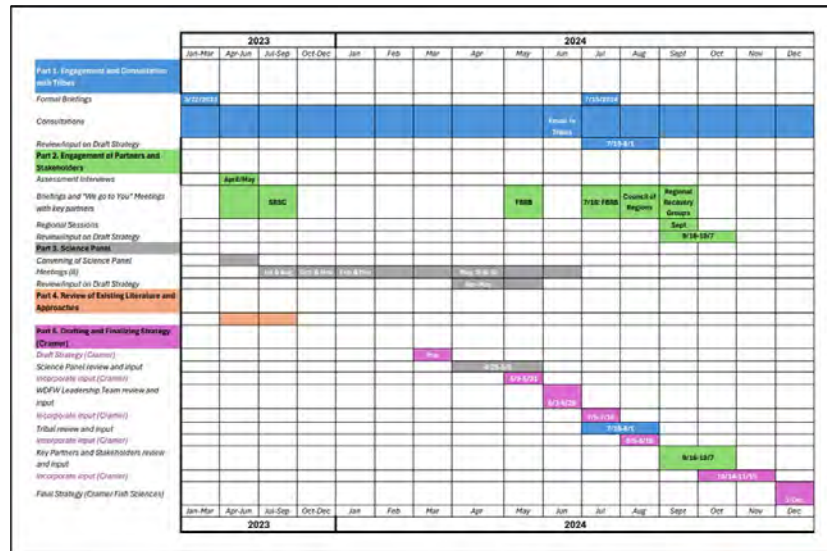


Figure 3. Draft Barrier Removal Prioritization Strategy Development Process

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This project is state-wide; therefore, WDFW does not foresee disproportional impacts on populations or communities. This project’s intention is to increase access to federally recognized tribes and Washingtonians of diverse backgrounds who fish both recreationally and commercially. That said, it is always a challenge to identify and engage private landowners with fish passage structures, and this strategy will direct WDFW resources to high priority areas for future outreach.

Target Communities and Populations:

This package will benefit federally recognized tribes with interests in Washington and Washingtonians who fish both recreationally and commercially state-wide. Washington’s demographics are represented by diverse populations who partake in recreational fishing for cultural and food-sovereignty practices. The fish passage strategy will support and coordinate with the 2016 U.S. Supreme Court issued injunction directing the state of Washington to correct culverts because they violated — and continued to violate— the Stevens Treaties, which were entered in 1854 and 1855 between Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest and the Governor of Washington Territory ([U.S. vs Washington 13-35474](#)). The injunction requires Washington to restore 90% of the habitat blocked by state owned culverts by 2030. In addition, Southern Resident Killer Whales hold significant cultural value to native tribes and are among the most iconic species to all Washington residents. This strategy will help focus funding on high priority barrier culverts to Chinook salmon, SRKW’s primary diet.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

We have been incorporating feedback from the community into the draft strategy and providing opportunities for key partners and the public to hear about the strategy, provide their comments and concerns, and most importantly their ideas for how to implement the strategy. We have been incorporating barrier inventory data, regional prioritization efforts, and have highlighted the need for updated hydrography datasets in addition to considerations for a more robust fish passage barrier database.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

Puget Sound Recovery:

Yes, this strategy is state-wide and encompasses any geographic area with fish passage barriers. This package aligns with the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP)’s 2022-2026 Action Agenda of protecting and restoring habitat and habitat-forming processes which the PSP identified as a key relationship to Puget Sound vital signs of number of SRKW and Chinook salmon abundance.

State Workforce Impacts:

There are no impacts to collective bargaining agreements, compensation, or policy benefits.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW leadership, the project team, and the agency’s tribal liaison held a virtual briefing for all 29 federally recognized tribes in the state in March 2023. Since that time agency leadership has offered and met with interested tribal parties and the tribal liaison provides updates to the tribes via email with significant updates to the strategy. Initial feedback is supportive of the strategy although there has not been much input yet in anticipation of how it will or won’t influence the culvert injunction.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Triangle and Associates conducted a situation assessment interview process where they reached out to key stakeholders at the executive leadership level to engage them early in the process and communicate accurate information about the goals of the effort (Table 1). In addition, they in turn asked questions to hear the stakeholders’ candid insights into what a successful strategy would look like to them, what concerns they may have, and how a strategy can better inform their fish passage programs.

The natural resource values expressed include salmon recovery, population viability, and watershed function and resilience. The implementation values reflected include leveraging specific regional expertise and existing strategies, economics and focused investments, partnership, and collaboration, and focusing funding and efforts in a coordinated way. Stakeholder barriers and challenges include funding, capacity, and partnerships. Many organizations are working to implement projects with limited funding and resources, and many do not have the staff capacity to focus on fish passage barrier projects. And lastly, organizations expressed the lack of state resources and partnerships with landowners needed to focus their efforts.

1	Washington Department of Transportation
2	Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
3	Snake River
4	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
5	Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board
6	Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office & Recreation and Conservation Office
7	Association of Washington Cities
8	Upper Columbia Fish Recovery Board
9	Kalispel Tribe of Indians
10	Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
11	Coast Salmon Partnership
12	Puget Sound Partnership
13	Washington State Association of Counties

Table 1. Stakeholders who participated in the situation assessment.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Strategist position has an assigned cubicle in the Natural Resources Building (NRB) within the Fish Passage Division. An IT Specialist may

also need a cubicle in the NRB and/or be able to telework and use a touch-down station when needed.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable. This package does not contain any changes from current law.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal will continue strategy development first tasked by the Washington State Legislature in 2020 through legislative provisos in the supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 6168), the supplemental Capital Budget (ESSB 6248) and the Transportation Budget (ESHB 2322).

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 3. Correct fish passage barriers and restore salmon access to historical habitat; and Strategy Action Area 3c. Barrier information and regulation improvements: This package continues the important work to develop, update, and implement that statewide fish passage strategy.

Reference Documents

- [ITaddendumBudget2025-27.xlsx](#)
- [WaTech202527ITAddendumSurvey_Submission_1260000286.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$206	\$206	\$412	\$206	\$206	\$412
Obj. B	\$65	\$65	\$130	\$65	\$65	\$130
Obj. E	\$16	\$16	\$32	\$16	\$16	\$32
Obj. J	\$3	\$3	\$6	\$3	\$3	\$6
Obj. T	\$94	\$94	\$188	\$94	\$94	\$188

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Chinook and sockeye salmon returns to the Lake Washington watershed are at historic lows because of predation on juvenile salmon by non-native fish species inhabiting the lake. Climate change and continued illegal introductions of predator fish such as northern pike exacerbate the predation problem. Poor salmon returns in this highly populated watershed disproportionately affect under-served communities and Tribes. Suppression of non-native predators will increase survival for Chinook and sockeye, leading to increased adult returns and fishing opportunities for these species in Lake Washington. Hydro acoustic monitoring of juvenile Chinook and sockeye outmigration via sonar deployment provides a critical validation tool for determining success of predator removal. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy].

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$700	\$700	\$1,400	\$700	\$700	\$1,400
Total Expenditures	\$700	\$700	\$1,400	\$700	\$700	\$1,400

Decision Package Description

Chinook and sockeye salmon returns to the Lake Washington watershed are at historic lows because of predation on juvenile salmon by non-native fish species inhabiting the lake. Climate change and continued illegal introductions of predator fish such as northern pike exacerbate the predation problem. Research and monitoring conducted over the past 10 years in lake Washington has clearly demonstrated that predation by non-native fish is limiting survival for juvenile salmon. Previous research has been funded by local grants, Tribes, and one-time legislative provisos. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe sponsored a legislative proviso for the 2023-25 Biennium that was funded to help initiate this work. This package would continue the work that was initiated under the Tribally sponsored proviso for the 2023-25 biennium.

This project will increase Chinook and sockeye survival in the Lake Washington watershed by removing predatory fishes from key rearing areas and migration corridors used by juvenile salmon. Nets, traps, or other means would be deployed in the Lake Washington watershed to assess areas of acute predation and remove non-native predator fishes during the time that juvenile Chinook and sockeye salmon are rearing and migrating in the watershed. Recent predation monitoring work has provided strong evidence for areas of acute predation in parts of the watershed used by Chinook and sockeye for rearing and migration and supporting the idea that management strategies involving the direct removal of predatory fishes (especially non-native fish) could increase survival rates for juvenile salmon. The proposed project would build upon previous monitoring and research efforts that have identified areas of the Lake Washington watershed where non-native piscivorous fish species such as northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, bass, crappie, and northern pikeminnow consume juvenile Chinook and sockeye during the lake-rearing and out-migration periods. Suppression of non-native predators using nets, traps, or other means will increase survival for Chinook and sockeye salmon, leading to increased adult returns and fishing opportunities for these species in Lake Washington. The project would benefit millions of people. Nearly 2.5 million people live in King County where the Lake Washington watershed is located and more than 1 million of those people reside in cities directly adjoining Lake Washington itself (Seattle, Bellevue, Renton, Rainier City, Kirkland, etc.). Increased returns of adult salmon would result in direct and indirect benefits to all local residents and the many diverse communities located in the Seattle area.

Much of the project work will be conducted by a contractor with special expertise in the capture of fish in freshwater lakes. Use of the contractor will dramatically increase the efficiency of fish capture work. Funding will also support staff time to conduct additional suppression and monitoring work in support of the project.

Many alternatives to direct suppression of predatory fish have been considered and tried in past years. Habitat-related ordinances regulating lake shoreline modification or development, overhead lighting, and aquatic vegetation have been in place for many years in the Lake Washington watershed. The intent of these regulations has been to benefit juvenile salmon rearing in Lake Washington, but they have not been sufficient to reduce predation from non-native fish species. Fishing regulations have been liberalized to encourage the capture and removal of non-native fish from Lake Washington, but participation in these fisheries is not sufficient to reduce populations of key predator fish within the lake. Finally, hatchery programs for Chinook and sockeye have been initiated within the basin and, although the programs are successful at increasing returns of adult salmon to the watershed, the success of these hatchery programs is limited by predator fish aggregations inhabiting the lake.

Monitoring of juvenile outmigration abundance via sonar deployment is a critical piece to understanding the success of predator removal in the lake. Additionally, quantifying the abundance of out-migrating juveniles by species supports the development of annual freshwater survival indexes and estimates that can be integrated into productivity and annual forecast projections. Predator removal and juvenile abundance monitoring aids co-managers in pre-season and in-season management of Chinook and sockeye, as well as determining future conservation measures to ensure population sustainability.



Figure 1. Non-native Yellow Perch predation on Lake Washington salmon fry.



Figure 2. Non-native Yellow perch predation on Lake Washington Chinook salmon smolts.



Figure 3. Non-native Rock bass predation on Lake Washington salmon fry.



Figure 4. Non-native rock bass predation on Lake Washington Chinook salmon smolt.



Figure 5. Illegally introduced non-native northern pike caught in Lake Washington.

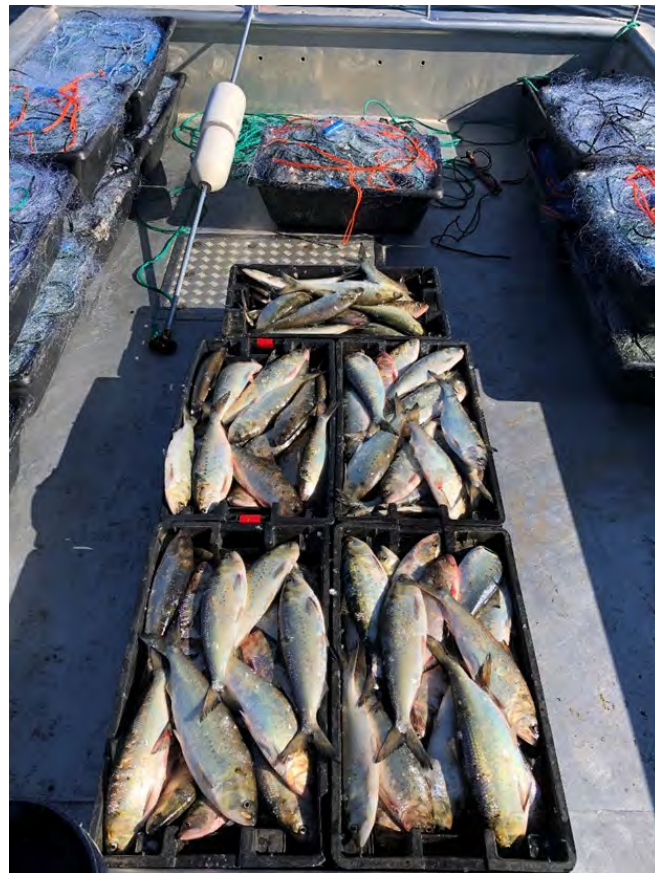


Figure 6. Non-native shad: abundant catches in Lake Washington.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Funds were provided in the 2023-25 Operating Budget Bill ESSB 5187 in Section 308(35) totaling \$700,000. Additional onetime funds of \$700,000 were provided in the 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Bill ESSB 5950 in Section 308:

“(35)(a) \$700,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$700,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely to initiate a demonstration project to contribute to rebuilding of salmon runs in the Lake Washington basin through suppression of predatory fish species. The project shall include:(i) Removal of nonnative species and northern pike minnow using trap, nets, or other means; (ii) Assessment of the benefits of reduced predator abundance on juvenile salmon survival; (iii) Assessment of the recreational fishing rules that were implemented in 2020 in the Lake Washington basin, and (iv) Assessment of juvenile salmon outmigration abundance index using hydroacoustic deployment. (b) An interim report on the demonstration project must be provided to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2024.”

\$1,400,000 of State general funds is now being requested to continue this work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 2.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total \$257,000, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Personal Service Contracts, Object C, \$220,000 beginning in Fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for a contract vendor who specializes in fish capture/removal services. Goods and services, Object E, totaling \$24,000 beginning in FY26 and ongoing which includes \$15,000 for net purchases, repairs, and associated supplies for predator suppression support work and an additional \$9,000 for moorage of predator suppression vessel on Lake Washington. Travel costs, Object G, totaling \$27,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing which will include the lease of a vehicle for \$12,000 in FY26 and ongoing and \$15,000 in boat fuel and annual maintenance costs for the use for predator suppression vessel on Lake Washington. An infrastructure and program support rate are included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated work for 2.7 FTE are as follows:

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 is a biologist overseeing and implementing sonar monitoring program in Lake Washington. This staff person will serve as a field lead for deployment of sonars and office support with data review, evaluation, and processing, as well as assisting with reporting requirements.

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 will oversee implementation of the predator suppression/monitoring program. This staff person will assist with reporting requirements and overall management.

0.7 FTE Scientific Technician 2 will fund two seasonal technicians for approximately 4 months each. These technicians will help implement predator suppression efforts seasonally, during times of peak workload.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goal of a Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. This proposal is fundamental to the harvest management and recovery of ESA-listed Salmon and Steelhead in Puget Sound and the Washington Coast.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the following Department Strategic Plan priorities:

- Proactively Address Conservation Challenges, implementing a co-manage habitat Workplan to improve salmon and steelhead populations that are limiting fishing opportunities, and monitoring programs to minimize risk to wild stocks.
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, delivering hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as the Department continues to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations. Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, developing an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach. In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve two 25-year Performance goals:
 - 25 percent increase in wild salmon populations
 - 90 percent of the public reports trusting WDFW to do what is right for the fish and wildlife management in our state.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species 2.7 FTE \$700,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing, General Fund State.

This package supports our activity inventory item "Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species" and applicable support strategy:

- Acquire funding for complete habitat restoration projects.
- Monitor and control aquatic invasive species.

Throughout the state of Washington, state agencies work to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species and controlling them if they have an established presence. WDFW administers programs aimed at restoring fish habitat, salmon recovery and the recovery of watersheds.

Performance Outcomes:

An on-going predator management and monitoring program would increase survival rates for juvenile salmon in the Lake Washington watershed. The program will decrease the abundance of non-native predator fishes in areas of Lake Washington used by juvenile salmon for rearing and migration. The program will allow us to detect illegal introductions of new predator fish and monitor the status of key predator species currently inhabiting the lake. Increased survival rates would result in larger adult returns and more frequent Tribal and non-Tribal fishing opportunities for sockeye and Chinook in Lake Washington.

If this funding and work is not supported, the sockeye salmon in Lake Washington will not recover, and this population will persist at very low levels. Chinook salmon will persist at low levels and possibly become a limiting stock in pre-terminal fisheries. Fishing opportunities for sockeye or Chinook salmon in Lake Washington would be extremely unlikely.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW has worked closely with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Indian Tribe to identify this problem and select this course of action. This project proposal has the full support of these Tribal Co-Managers. WDFW has also worked closely with the WRIA 08 Salmon Recovery Council on this issue over the course of many years. The WRIA 08 Salmon Recovery Council has identified predation on juvenile salmon as a key limiting factor in the Lake Washington watershed and has provided significant amounts of grant funding in recent years to support the suppression project being proposed. WDFW staff have provided outreach and presentations on this issue in recent years to local organizations such as the Seattle Aquarium, Cedar River Salmon Journey, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group, Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, Puget Sound Anglers, and the Environmental Science Center. Together these organizations conduct outreach to thousands of individuals from within a diverse variety of communities in the greater Seattle area.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The project would include all communities in the greater Seattle area.

Target Communities and Populations:

Tribal communities with Usual and Accustomed fishing areas (U&A) within the Lake Washington watershed and Seattle Area (primarily the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, but also the Suquamish and Tulalip Indian Tribes) will benefit directly from this proposal through increases in fishing opportunities for salmon within their U&A. Also, the Lake Washington watershed is the most densely populated and diverse area in the State. Located in King County, the Lake Washington watershed is home to a wide diversity of demographic communities residing in cities such as Seattle, Bellevue, Renton, Rainier Beach, and Kirkland. Increased salmon returns to this urban population center will benefit a wide variety of demographic and geographic communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Extensive outreach associated with this project has been conducted with local communities over the course of the past decade. A wide variety of input has been received, considered, and incorporated when appropriate. WDFW staff have provided outreach and presentations on this issue in recent years to local organizations such as the Seattle Aquarium, Cedar River Salmon Journey, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group, Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, Puget Sound Anglers, and the Environmental Science Center. Research around this issue has been conducted for many years in close coordination with the Tribes and the WRIA 08 Salmon Recovery Council. Community input has been received through many of these stakeholder groups during presentations, workshops, and outreach events that have been conducted in this area over the past 10-year timeframe.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is critical for WDFW to implement the 2022-2026 Puget Sound Action Agenda and additional recovery strategies through an investment in capacity to address non-native fish predation on juvenile salmonids, including Chinook and sockeye, in Lake Washington. This project will increase Chinook and sockeye survival in the Lake Washington watershed by removing predatory fishes from key rearing areas and migration corridors used by juvenile salmon. WDFW will be advancing Action Agenda Strategies 15: Salmon Recovery and Strategy 14: Invasive Species by building upon previous monitoring and research efforts where non-native piscivorous fish species (e.g., northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, bass, crappie, and northern pikeminnow) consume juvenile Chinook and sockeye during the lake-rearing and out-migration periods. Suppression of non-native predators using nets, traps, or other means will increase survival for Chinook and sockeye salmon, leading to recovery through increased adult returns and fishing opportunities. This increases WDFW’s capacity to reduce displacement, competition, and predation of imperiled native species caused by invasive species (Action ID #204) and rapidly respond to the introduction and spread of predatory fish, and invasive plants. (Action ID #46).

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

The Muckleshoot, Suquamish, and Tulalip Indian Tribes each support this program. The Muckleshoot Tribe is an active partner in predator reduction in Lake Washington. The WRIA 08 Salmon Recovery Council, representing King County and several large cities (such as Seattle, Bellevue, Renton, etc.) has been involved in the development of this program and is in full support of it. This package will directly inform sockeye conservation and management in Lake Washington.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW staff have provided outreach and presentations on this issue in recent years to local organizations such as the Seattle Aquarium, Cedar River Salmon Journey, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group, Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, Puget Sound Anglers, and the Environmental Science Center. Together these organizations conduct outreach to thousands of individuals from within a diverse variety of communities in the greater Seattle area. All of these organizations are supportive of this program. WDFW staff have provided outreach and presentations on this issue in recent years to local organizations such as the Seattle Aquarium, Cedar River Salmon Journey, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group, Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, Puget Sound Anglers, and the Environmental Science Center. Together these organizations conduct outreach to thousands of individuals from within a diverse variety of communities in the greater Seattle area. All of these organizations are supportive of this program.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to continue funding existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 6 - Address predation and food web issues for salmon and 6a - Predation management: This package will directly inform sockeye conservation and management in Lake Washington.

Reference Documents

- [2024_WRIA08SalmonRecoveryCouncil_PredationUpdate-Final.pdf](#)
- [Letter_KWGtoWDFW_PredatoryFishControl_2024.pdf](#)
- [Letter_WRIA8_Support_WDFW_Predation_Management_2024.pdf](#)
- [WRIA 8 predator presentation May 18 2023 - update for WRIA 8 policy committee mtg-compressed.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$184	\$184	\$368	\$184	\$184	\$368
Obj. B	\$73	\$73	\$146	\$73	\$73	\$146
Obj. C	\$220	\$220	\$440	\$220	\$220	\$440
Obj. E	\$24	\$24	\$48	\$24	\$24	\$48
Obj. G	\$27	\$27	\$54	\$27	\$27	\$54
Obj. T	\$172	\$172	\$344	\$172	\$172	\$344

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Washington residents have strong and diverse opinions regarding co-existence with wolves. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been working to address critical biological and social issues collaboratively through the citizen-based Wolf Advisory Group (WAG). One-time funding was provided through provisos in the 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial enacted budgets for an external, neutral facilitator. WDFW is requesting ongoing funding for WAG facilitation. Lack of neutral facilitation focused on wolf recovery has proven to damage public trust, decrease engagement with agricultural and conservation communities, increase the risk wolf populations will not recover, and increase the risk of litigation.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$175	\$175	\$350	\$175	\$175	\$350
Total Expenditures	\$175	\$175	\$350	\$175	\$175	\$350

Decision Package Description

The Problem:

As Washington’s wolf population continues to grow, human-wolf interactions and conflicts continue to occur. Because wolf recovery and human-wildlife conflict are so closely tied, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has been working collaboratively with the citizen-based Wolf Advisory Group (WAG). Originally, WDFW attempted to facilitate this advisory group using internal staff and the process was unsuccessful in building trust and durable long-term strategies to help the livestock and hunting communities move forward in an era of wolf recovery in Washington. Through budget provisos in 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennia, the legislature provided one-time funding for a third-party, neutral facilitator to guide the agency and the advisory group to develop recommendations to help address wolf-livestock conflicts while also supporting wolf population recovery.

Providing ongoing funding for WAG facilitation is critical. Washington citizens have a wide spectrum of opinions about wolf recovery and management and the WAG creates an equitable way to connect diverse stakeholders. It is an important forum for stakeholder representatives to engage in shared learning and create mutual empathy and understanding. As we move forward in wolf recovery, these foundational relationships, and the mutually developed recommendations from the group, are cornerstones to successful conservation and management.

WDFW’s Proposal:

WDFW is responsible for assessing human/wolf interactions in communities across the state. The department is also committed to protecting sensitive or confidential information provided by staff and stakeholders, while non-confidential, non-proprietary, information is shared transparently and equitably among all interested individuals and groups. Third-party, neutral facilitation for the Wolf Advisory Group has been, by far, the most effective strategy to gather support from multiple stakeholders and develop durable strategies for mitigating wolf-related wildlife conflicts.

The WAG was originally formed without a third-party neutral facilitation framework and that effort was very ineffective. The agency was only successful in promoting equitable, inclusive, and respectful dialogue and decision-making when a third-party, neutral facilitator was hired. With that facilitation, diverse people and groups were able to foster a good amount of durable peace and mutual empathy. The group has provided high quality recommendations for wolf recovery, conservation, and management under the third-party neutral facilitation model and, the WAG envisions a future for Washington whereby:

- People have equal and balanced voices in decisions that impact their communities,
- Diverse perspectives are welcomed and heard,
- Mutual understanding of the needs of diverse communities and groups is achieved and respected,

- Wolves are an opportunity for shared, constructive problem-solving,
- The deeper roots of social conflict in Washington are continually transformed,
- Healthy, sustainable populations of wolves and wild ungulates are achieved and maintained in balance,
- Livestock and financial losses to livestock producers are minimized,
- Diverse communities, including rural residents, livestock producers, hunters, environmental communities, and the interested public are kept whole (in terms of quality of life),
- The best available science is used for decision-making on group recommendations,
- WDFW, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the Washington legislature are provided with creative, inclusive recommendations for effective decision-making,
- Public dialogue and mutual learning around wolves, ungulates, and natural resource issues are significantly improved, and
- There is continual fostering of high-quality dialogue and decision-making around wolves and related or emerging issues now and into the future.

WDFW's Purchase:

With the funding in this request, WDFW can continue the existing functionalities of WAG to foster wolf conflict mitigation recommendations. This funding provides support for a more inclusive framework with contracted third-party neutral facilitation striving towards consensus recommendations.

Alternatives explored:

The Department considered convening the group without third-party neutral facilitation. However, previous attempts have resulted in unsustainable engagements and were not supported by WAG members. Facilitation by WDFW employees was not received as neutral and did not adequately address the challenges that exist due to the Department's direct involvement in the issue. This caused inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness in engaging multiple stakeholders impacted by wolf conflict. Without third-party neutral facilitation, the Department experienced an unacceptable loss of institutional trust resulting in decreased tolerance of wolves on the landscape, decreased social support from both conservation and agricultural communities, and a decrease in long-term durable conservation outcomes.

WDFW explored opportunities to cover the facilitation contract with existing ongoing funding for wolf activities, but there are not sufficient resources to maintain current conservation efforts and the facilitator contract without this funding.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This request is a continuation of an existing service. Funding for these efforts began in the 2021-23 biennium in the amount of \$130,000 per fiscal year and were appropriated in the same amounts again in the 2023-25 biennium as one-time. Current appropriations allow for \$99,000 of direct work per fiscal year. The current facilitator contract is \$97,000 per fiscal year for three in-person and one virtual meeting, with WDFW responsible for:

- Meeting logistics including meeting facility rental, audio/visual equipment, and meals/refreshments,
- Hotel accommodations for the facilitators, WAG members, and WDFW staff attendees,
- Compensation for some WAG members,
- Reimbursement for additional travel costs.

WDFW requests the funding ongoing and adjusted to account for the additional expenses incurred by WDFW related to this work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Contracts, Object C, are estimated at \$107,000 per fiscal year. The current annual WAG facilitator contract is \$97,000 per fiscal year and ends 06/30/25. An increase of 10% is anticipated to maintain the current level of service based on recent general cost increases beginning in fiscal year 2026.

Goods and Services, Object E, are estimated at \$10,000 per fiscal year to account for significant increases in costs for meeting logistics such as, facilities, audio visual equipment, and food for the in-person WAG meetings. Estimates also include WAG member compensation payments in accordance with [2SSB 5793](#).

Travel, Object G, is estimated at \$15,000 per fiscal year for WAG members, facilitator, and WDFW staff's hotel accommodations for the in-person WAG meetings.

An infrastructure and support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve three of the Results Washington goals:

1. Prosperous Economy
2. Healthy & Safe Communities, and
3. Effective, Efficient & Accountable Government.

Wolf conflict results in economic loss to livestock producers. Reduced conflict should result in reduced losses. Directly providing services and resources to the public to improve our effectiveness in managing wolves and reducing conflict targets real problems with tangible solutions. In addition to economic losses during wolf depredation on livestock, it results in emotional torment to the ranching community, as well. If this cannot be resolved by a third-party neutral facilitation, it could develop into gap in conservation support and trust building with multiple stakeholders. Such differences of perspectives and operational trusts could be detrimental to economic prosperity of the community unless it is addressed neutrally and mutually agreed strategies.

WDFW 25 Year Strategic Plan

This decision package directly supports:

- Proactively addressing conservation challenges.
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This decision package directly supports WDFW foundational work to preserve and restore terrestrial habitat and species, which includes responding to and mitigating wolf conflicts.

Performance Outcomes:

Under third-party neutral facilitation, WAG uses a sufficient consensus model for decision-making and recommending mitigation strategies to manage wolf-related conflict scenarios. Where consensus cannot be reasonably reached, under the guidance of the facilitator, WAG will determine next steps, including the flexibility to continue the conversation, seek additional information, and/or look for other creative ways to address the issue. WAG members may also choose to discontinue further action on issues. Ultimately, once a decision is reached, all WAG members are supportive, including those who opposed the decision initially.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important for WDFW to maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve. Formation and implementation of human-wolf conflict mitigation responses through WAG encompass issues of public safety, economic impacts, and social and environmental interest to many currently underserved groups. Appointment of WAG membership positions allow WDFW to provide participatory involvement and outreach, and education opportunities across underserved communities.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Advisory groups are a unique opportunity for people to share their knowledge and expertise with the Department. At the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, we celebrate diverse individuals who bring a wide range of perspectives. All are welcome to participate in our processes regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, status as a veteran, and basis of disability. To reduce barriers for people to engage, WDFW offers compensation for advisory group members' time and reimbursements for childcare, adult care, lodging, meals, and mileage. WDFW follows guidance developed by the [Office of Equity](#) to provide compensation for an

- Individual has direct personal experience in the subject matter being addressed in the advisory group.
- Individual has income not more than 400% of the [federal poverty level](#), adjusted for family size.
- Compensation rates range from \$45 for one hour to \$200 maximum per day.

Target Communities and Populations:

WAG is designed to include representation from many underrepresented communities impacted by increased wolf activity. Hunters, environmentalists, and livestock producers are represented in WAG. Representation includes members from various regions in Washington to ensure the diverse regional perspectives are considered. Neutral third-party facilitation ensures differing perspectives are heard, especially from groups with less of a presence and has been well received by participants.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Over the past four years, the agency has received strong feedback from WAG members and other members of the public about the value of a third-party, neutral facilitator. This feedback is a large part of the Department's proposal for ongoing funding.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

Several inter-governmental entities should support this decision package. Cities, counties, conservation districts, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources have shown interest in wildlife resources managed in response to wolf conflict. Tribes can be impacted by state actions affecting cooperatively managed wildlife and are generally neutral regarding WAG. The work done by the WAG is used to inform, and is informed by, a separate, Interagency Wolf Committee that includes a broader coalition of state/federal/tribal partners.

Stakeholder Impacts:

A wide variety of stakeholders are supportive of this work, including environmental groups, animal rights groups, agricultural interests, livestock interests, the timber industry, hunting interests, and general outdoor recreation groups.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. C	\$107	\$107	\$214	\$107	\$107	\$214
Obj. E	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$10	\$10	\$20
Obj. G	\$15	\$15	\$30	\$15	\$15	\$30
Obj. T	\$43	\$43	\$86	\$43	\$43	\$86

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Washington State, with eight million residents and twice the national growth rate, faces increasing demands on its natural resources. These circumstances necessitate additional Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Officers to ensure public safety and resource protection. WDFW Enforcement Officers are responsible for law enforcement statewide, including state and federal lands and waters, and respond to a variety of related issues from poaching to habitat protection. The Program maintains 171 commissioned law enforcement positions and is poised for the addition of 20 more and six support staff this biennium. More officers mean proactive presence, crime deterrence, and greater natural resource protection statewide. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda implementation]. [Broadly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	15.0	26.0	20.5	26.0	26.0	26.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$7,396	\$9,885	\$17,281	\$6,136	\$6,136	\$12,272
Total Expenditures	\$7,396	\$9,885	\$17,281	\$6,136	\$6,136	\$12,272

Decision Package Description

Fish and Wildlife officers are essential in maintaining safe and properly managed recreational and commercial opportunities for the residents and visitors to Washington State. To do this necessary work an increase in Fish and Wildlife personnel is crucial.

Proposed staffing Structure:

Commissioned Officers

- 18 FTE – Fully Commissioned Officers deployed across the State.
- 2 FTE – Sergeants, supervise officers assigned to their detachment.

These positions will achieve the following in WA State on behalf of the public they serve:

1. Promote compliance with laws focused on protecting Washington's natural resources.
2. Provide professional law enforcement services.
3. Raise the level of appreciation for the protection of our natural resources through enhanced outreach and education.
4. Strengthen partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.
5. Enhance public safety response.

With the addition of 20 officer FTEs next biennium, nine positions will be added in year one and the remaining eleven added in year two. Two of these FTEs will be sergeants and will supervise officers assigned to their detachment. These additional positions will be dispersed throughout the state in areas of greatest need, and require training, equipment, workspace, body cameras, and a fully equipped patrol vehicle. The Program is seeking additional funds for a detachment sized office lease in the Tacoma area to accommodate the newly created and fully staffed South Sound Detachment that is actively serving and patrolling the area presently. Additionally, the Program requests seven ATVs for patrolling remote areas vital to winter grazing for core species in the state, and one 30-34' vessel for use in maritime patrols in vicinity of key maritime infrastructure and Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) populations.

Support Staff

- 2 FTE – Communications Officers – assist existing staff with dispatch services, focusing on officer and public safety by answering emergency and non-emergency calls from the public and coordinating responses and dispatch services of commissioned general authority enforcement field officers. These positions multi-task to ensure officer safety and facilitate prompt response to incidents involving dangerous wildlife threatening public safety. Additional duties require customer service and referral to achieve compliance with laws relating to fish and wildlife, providing responsive public service, promptly resolving human-wildlife interaction conflicts, and forming

partnerships with the public and peer agencies to benefit fish and wildlife. Provides general information and referral services to public requests regarding Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA), interpretation of rules and regulations, Problem Wildlife Conflict Specialists, Wildlife Control Operator contacts (trappers), wildlife rehabilitation, Hunter Education, regional agency contacts, etc.

- 2 FTE – Program Specialists 3s – the Recruitment Support Specialist is responsible for recruiting and hiring the highest qualified Fish and Wildlife Police Officers, Public Safety Telecommunicators, and non-commissioned support staff candidates to enforce compliance with fish and wildlife laws and provide responsive public service within the Law Enforcement Program. This position cultivates mutually beneficial partnerships with the public and stakeholders by leveraging all authorized communications mediums to encourage compliance with fish and wildlife laws and provide responsive public service. Expectations also include developing and implementing administrative process improvements to enhance business operational planning that achieve efficiencies and meet operational goals to support responsive public service.

The Training Program Specialist supports the mission of the Enforcement Program by serving as the Subject Matter Expert for all Watercraft Operations, Training, and Safety as applied to conducting marine law enforcement operations for the State of Washington and when supporting Federal Joint Enforcement Activities. This includes managing all boat training to achieve compliance with all State and Federal laws as well as standards of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), National Association of Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC), Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC), and WDFW Regulations and Policies. The position coordinates attendance at the WSPRC Basic Marine Law Enforcement (BMLE) Course, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Marine Law Enforcement Patrol Training Course and assist in instructing selected modules of the WDFW specialized boat training courses (MOTC). Directly supporting the Enforcement Program Fleet Manager by conducting audits of the vessel fleet to identify equipment needs, inspecting enforcement watercraft for safety, and determining if vessel carriage requirements are valid. Includes inspecting all enforcement vessels for equipment and adherence to maintenance schedules.

- 1 FTE – Equipment Technician 2 –assists existing staff with the fabrication, repair, and field patrol vehicles. The position is responsible for providing and assisting with first tier maintenance and up-fitting of vehicle and vessel fleets at the Patrol Shop including the installation and removal of enforcement equipment (radios, antennas, lights, wiring, sirens, transport cages, consoles, push bars, gun racks, etc.) in patrol vehicles, vessels, and other specialized equipment. Additional expectations include welding and custom fabricating supporting framework and infrastructure that houses all the above in patrol vessels and vehicles. Work includes installing specialized parts in patrol vehicles and vessels. In addition to the performance of general maintenance on trailers and vessels the position lubricates and services vehicles and trailers, inspects vehicles, vessels and trailers.
- 1 FTE – IT Customer Service Support - Entry - assist existing IT staff with added customer support requirements stemming from expansion of program workforce, the expanse of technical tools used by officers, and the onboarding of new positions that heavily rely on these associated systems. The position supports growth in activity that has outpaced the single IT FTE in the Program, with staff reliant on situational awareness and officer safety oriented technical applications including the Spillman database, body worn camera technology, Cradlepoint router applications, radio over IP (RoIP) and voice over IP (VOIP) applications, satellite based systems for areas with low/no cell service, secure access licensing, MicroSoft applications including SharePoint and TEAMS, SECTOR, and continuity of operations applications for the Program and the Agency.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The proposal seeks to expand the Enforcement program's workforce and improve the level of service to the State's hunting and fishing communities. Washington State recorded the lowest number of police officers per capita at 1.36 officers per 1,000 people in 2022. The request for additional officers will improve response time and the ability to assist with the protection of resources in our wildlife areas and incidents on the water, where the bulk of work falls on our agency.

- 2021-23: \$28,512,541 in GFS funds to cover the salary and benefits of up to 162 commissioned Enforcement staff
- 2023-25: \$39,806,543 in GFS funds to cover the salary and benefits of up to 171 commissioned Enforcement staff

This 2025-27 policy level decision package will ensure the Enforcement program stays on a trajectory to fill vacancies. Without the \$17 million in BN 25-27 and \$12 million ongoing, the Enforcement program will exceed the ability to self-sustain operational and maintenance related costs in the next biennium. Collectively, the Program is postured well for the opportunity to grow and catch up the staffing levels that have not recovered since the merger between Department of Fisheries and the Department of Game in 1994.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The first year of the decision package recognizes the challenging task of recruiting, hiring, onboarding, equipping, and training a significant number of highly trained staff. Therefore, this request scales the the FTE requirement to focus on getting support staff on board in fiscal year 2026 with only 8 officers and one sergeant, and adding an additional 10 officers and one additional sergeant in fiscal year 2027.

Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, for 15.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions totals \$2,004,000 in fiscal year 2026. This increases to 26.0 FTE positions totaling \$3,722,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Goods and services, Object E, totals \$1,580,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,273,000 in fiscal year 2027 and dropping off to \$913,000 ongoing. Costs include \$25,400 per fully commissioned law enforcement FTE per year. WDFW Enforcement standard costs, include the employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. Additional goods and services include costs for rulemaking, signage, printed materials, and standard issued equipment.

Travel costs, Object G, are estimated at \$404,00 for fiscal year 2026 and \$505,000 for FY 2027. These costs include overnight stays and per diem reimbursement for necessary trainings, meetings, and attending the Training Academy.

In addition, certain specialized equipment, Object J, are necessary for Enforcement officers to safely perform their patrol duties which is above the standard WDFW employee costs. These costs total \$1,122,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,370,000 in fiscal year 2027.

Specialized materials include: Firearms and optics, modified patrol trucks, radio and dispatch communication equipment for safety, call response, and coordination. This includes vehicle laptop mounts, hands free device adapters, etc.

Workforce Assumptions:

Position	Salary per FY	Benefits per FY	Description	Total FTE by Fiscal Year	
				FY 2026	Ongoing
Equipment Technician 2	\$62,892	\$26,278	Position supports EP Fleet growth and operations	1.0	1.0
Communications Officer 1	\$67,716	\$27,093	Positions supports elevated workload in WILDCOMM consistent with adding officers and employee safety expectations. Expanded hours/prolonged presence.	2.0	2.0
Program Specialist 3	\$74,724	\$28,278	Positions supports additional boating/training/recruiting/outreach/marketing requirements.	2.0	2.0
IT Customer Support - Entry	\$80,268	\$29,214	IT updates for routers, hardware, software	1.0	1.0
Fish and Wildlife Officer	\$120,969	\$32,511	Population growth in WA produced higher users of opportunities, higher amount of lands being managed by DFW, wildlife conflicts increase, more calls for services, higher demand for LE services.	8	18
Fish and Wildlife Sergeant	\$146,556	\$35,886	Sergeants will be integrated into supervision of above additions.	2.0	2.0

The table outlines the position types and expected responsibilities for each of the FTE's needed to expand the Enforcement Program's level of service.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 181 FTE • Total Funds = \$7 million • Near General Fund = \$13 million • Other Funds = \$25 million

FY2027 • FTE = 191 FTE • Total Funds = \$10 million • Near General Fund = \$13 million • Other Funds = \$25 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Funding this decision packages allows WDFW to support populations and communities who are systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted. Many of these communities depend on natural resources and open spaces to help feed their families and recreate. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so these resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents. Washington's fisheries and public spaces support recreational opportunities throughout the state and contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses. This package supports the operation of other WDFW programs, which contribute to:

Supporting local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers, and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses), providing family recreational opportunities, and protecting Washington's fishing cultural heritage. Commercial and recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW has a responsibility to preserve and protect the State's fish and wildlife. This responsibility becomes ever more complex with increased human and wildlife conflict, the obligation to protect treaty rights, and the presence of endangered and protected species. Without increased presence, WDFW cannot continue to provide adequate protection to our most vulnerable fish and wildlife resources.

Calls for service are exponentially rising as users of Washington's outdoor spaces increase. Enforcement Officer candidates well suited for this line of work may choose employment elsewhere if the Program cannot provide opportunities to work as WDFW Enforcement Officers.

The consequences of not funding this staffing package will have profound negative impacts on the ability of WDFW Police to employ proper strategies and focus sufficient resources toward addressing a key mission of the protection of our natural resources and the public's safety. The lack of adequate staffing does not allow WDFW Police to provide sufficient patrol vessel and officer presence in key geographic locations to protect threatened or endangered species and their impacted ecosystems.

Increasing capacity will provide greater presence for the following groups:

1. Human Population – general safety to the public.
 1. Response times, strategizing, and prioritizing. Extra officers will allow us to manage our lands proactively.
 2. Increased deterrence of illegal or overharvest of species which can limit hunting and harvest opportunities for the public.
 3. Commercial sanitary shellfish patrol and seafood marketplace inspections.
 4. Increased capacity for emergency response (e.g. search and rescue, wildfire, flooding, landslides, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)).
 5. Detrimental effects from aquatic invasive species to state waterways, power and agricultural systems.
2. Threatened and Endangered species (ESA) - Increasing coverage of ESA listed species resulting in decreased illegal take and positive population growth.
 1. Better presence to enforce closures, increased responsiveness to incidents.
 2. Habitat destruction.
 3. Poaching.
3. Animal and Resource Trafficking – Increased capacity to adequately patrol and investigate largescale and international crimes committed in Washington State.
 1. Sanitary shellfish and seafood labelling – consumer health and protection of industry.
 2. Washington Animal Trafficking Act.
 3. Commercial airport inspections.
 4. Trade of local animal parts.
4. State Lands – Deterring illegal use of lands
 1. Habitat destruction, vehicle usage, dumping, stream and waterway degradation.
 2. Illegal camping.
 3. Illegal timber harvest.
 4. Illegal agriculture operations.
 5. Preserve treaty rights.

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Indicators:

- Protect Aquatic Habitat
- Enforce Commercial and Recreational Fishing Regulations
- Preserve Hunting Opportunities
- Provide Public Safety on WDFW Owned Lands and Respond to Incidents
- Enhance the use of public spaces for all users, including camping, hiking, wildlife viewing.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW's Enforcement Program conducts community engagement and public outreach through everyday presence and patrolling on public waters and lands. The Program remains committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This request is in response to public demand for services, cost increases and budget shortfall faced by WDFW. Without additional funding other areas of the budget could be cut, which will cause reductions in other activities and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, cutting services will hinder the ability to apply an equity lens as WDFW will be forced to shift resources.

Target Communities and Populations:

Each year at Centennial Accord tribal communities request that WDFW increase our capacity to protect natural resources, police fisheries, and patrol public lands. The increasing state population has increased the amount of people recreating and impacting natural resources. While these additional officers can be employed in any location throughout the state, the focus of these additions is to address the additional enforcement presence needed on public lands.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW maintains regular and open communication with communities and constituents of the state. Through ongoing conversations and engagement, WDFW actively seeks input, feedback, and suggestions. These discussions encompass crucial initiatives for the agency, including funding considerations for hatchery investments, ensuring that hatchery operations remain a valuable asset to communities statewide. This continuous communication allows for collaborative and informed decision making, ensuring that the interests and concerns of the communities are taken into account. By actively involving stakeholders and community groups in the decision-making process, WDFW can help to be sure that proposed initiatives align with community needs. In addition, WDFW works closely with the Budget and Policy Advisory Group which assists in facilitating the strategic pathways that align with the state's overall objectives and public interests, reinforcing WDFW's commitment to community-focused decision making.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a "covered" or "opt-in" agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package will expand WDFW enforcement capacity through the addition of new enforcement officers across the state, adding communications and program staff, and funding necessary equipment. This added capacity and equipment will enable WDFW to expand habitat and wildlife enforcement and protection. By providing staffing for patrol vessels and a vessel for use in maritime patrols in the vicinity of Southern Resident Killer Whale populations, this decision package implements 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 17 Responsible Boating, action #68, and Orca Task Force Recommendation 20. By increasing enforcement capacity to respond to incidents, enforce regulations for habitat and wildlife protection, and engage the community, this decision package also implements Action Agenda influential outcome 5.2 to increase engagement and trust in natural resource governance.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW Enforcement Officers routinely collaborate and partner with federal, tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies and stakeholders for the protection of public lands and waters in Washington State. Strong existing partnerships with NOAA via Joint Enforcement Activities centered on preventing overharvesting of Pacific Ocean species and the protection of resident killer whales. Enduring cooperation with US Fish and Wildlife and neighboring states and provinces reduces the frequency of illegal trafficking of wildlife. Cooperation with WSP, the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard, and local authorities secures waterways and related infrastructure critical to both marine life and

the state's economic prosperity. Work with DNR, WA State Parks, and local jurisdictions reduce risks to outdoor recreators through increased information sharing, general education, and a balanced presence in high use areas for recreational boating, snow park usage, hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting. Tribal cooperation secures treaty rights and ensures all aspects of outdoor connections that underpin native heritage are recognized, prioritized, and preserved. Lastly, Officers and Staff cooperate with federal, state, and local emergency response officials annually during the wildfire season and in response to any disaster requiring the services of WDFW Enforcement Officers.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW Enforcement Program anticipates stakeholders will view these additions favorably. Federal agencies proactively seek cooperation in SRKW protection, enforcement of marine fishery regulations, reducing wildlife trafficking, protection of public lands, and the security of critical maritime infrastructure. State and local enforcement agencies routinely express appreciation for the cooperation and partnerships due in part to the severe lack of law enforcement officers as a whole in Washington State. WDFW Enforcement Officers are oftentimes the first to arrive on any scene requiring law enforcement response in rural areas.

State Facilities Impacts:

Support staff will be stationed in Olympia, with five of the six FTEs working in the Enforcement Program Headquarters in the NRB. These five FTEs include 2x Communication Officer 1s, 2x Program Specialist 3s, and 1x IT Customer Support-Entry. The Equipment Technician 2 will work at the Enforcement Program Lathrop Shop in Tumwater. Current space in the NRB and at the Lathrop Shop is believed to be adequate for these positions, although the requested cubicle construction, IT equipment and nationally mandated professional development training listed in the attachment will be vital to integrating these positions into the Program's current operational framework.

WDFW's Enforcement Program dedicates proportionate efforts to maritime presence and response. However, these 18 additional Enforcement Officers and two Sergeants are expected to be dispersed predominantly throughout the state upstream of Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean, where "tributary and land focused" enforcement activities occur. WDFW Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, and the interior portions of 4 and 6 can anticipate receiving enforcement FTEs associated with this request. Construction of physical detachment size facilities in the Sherman Creek Wildlife/Hatchery area and the greater Yakima area compliments the efforts of existing WDFW Enforcement Staff and reciprocates the vision of Tribal and intergovernmental partnerships stated above. These facilities are a part of the Program's capital request and contain provisions for office and equipment storage space for five to six officers per location, a secure armory, and evidence storage facility that are subject to elevated security standards. Existing facilities in these locations are not adequate.

Workspace for additional commissioned officers does not need to be expanded or otherwise dramatically modified in order for these positions to be relevant and efficient in meeting the Enforcement Program's mission: "To protect our natural resources and the public we serve." The patrol trucks, IT equipment, ORVs, vessel related items and officer equipment provide commissioned staff with the tools and capabilities needed to operate safely in the State's public spaces. A majority of an officer's duty occurs in these places, with patrol vehicles serving as a makeshift "office" on a routine basis. Hardstand facilities are critical to information consolidation, evidence and equipment preservation, and preparation for formal court proceedings.

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21) identifies WDFW as part of the nation's critical infrastructure given the risk to the nation's food supply based on the significant quantity of fish produced by the agency. Federal requirements cannot be met without maintaining enough enforcement capacity as proposed in this decision package.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5. Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery; and Strategy Action Area 5a. Harvest management: This package broadly supports salmon recovery through the addition of WDFW Enforcement Officers to ensure broader protection of ESA-listed fish and their habitats.

Reference Documents

- [ITAddendum_EP - Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police_25-27 BN.pdf](#)
- [ITaddendumBudget2025-27 Expanding WDFW Police.xlsx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,542	\$2,899	\$4,441	\$2,899	\$2,899	\$5,798
Obj. B	\$462	\$823	\$1,285	\$823	\$823	\$1,646
Obj. C	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$1,580	\$1,273	\$2,853	\$913	\$913	\$1,826
Obj. G	\$404	\$505	\$909	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. J	\$1,754	\$2,161	\$3,915	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$1,654	\$2,224	\$3,878	\$1,501	\$1,501	\$3,002

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Agency Recommendation Summary

WDFW proposes an investment in a comprehensive scientific data management program to enhance and streamline conservation of Washington’s fish, wildlife, and wild spaces. With this program, WDFW will introduce cloud storage, a modern data library, and a collaborative scientific data analytics environment. WDFW will research and implement advanced data management technologies to leverage vast scientific data, while an AI Specialist will oversee policy and partnerships to ensure safe and efficient AI integration. Without this investment, WDFW risks falling behind in scientific innovation, compromising data integrity, and failing to meet public and legislative expectations for effective conservation management. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.7	5.0	3.85	5.0	5.0	5.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,962	\$3,940	\$6,902	\$3,940	\$3,940	\$7,880
Total Expenditures	\$2,962	\$3,940	\$6,902	\$3,940	\$3,940	\$7,880

Decision Package Description

The Problem

Over the past several years, WDFW has conducted multiple assessments to evaluate the agency’s effectiveness and scientific data management needs. These assessments involved third-party consultants, staff interviews, surveys on data analysis needs, and engagements with scientific partners. The findings from these assessments informed both the [WDFW 25-year strategic plan](#) and [WDFW IT 5-year strategic plan](#). In these strategic plans, the Department emphasizes the need to establish a scientific data platform to address the significant problems. Advances in computer engineering for data management and analysis, reduced costs in cloud data services, increased security of cloud technologies, and the state IT strategic plan’s focus on improved data management for Washington state have all contributed to the timing of this proposal.

The Technology Data Problem



Problem Statement 1: WDFW needs a digital library to store and organize the large diverse and growing portfolio of unique biological data.

WDFW has more than 100 years of monitoring and research data collected on behalf of Washingtonians who rely on the agency to provide answers to and make decisions around fish, wildlife, and habitat. Yet the difficulty of this role is compounded by the lack of a comprehensive and standardized inventory of what data is available. Without an organized digital library, it can take WDFW staff months to track down historical work which is highly inefficient. As the Legislature and the public invest more into WDFW, this business operational level inefficiency must be addressed to enhance work done to preserve, protect, and optimize commercial and recreational opportunities.

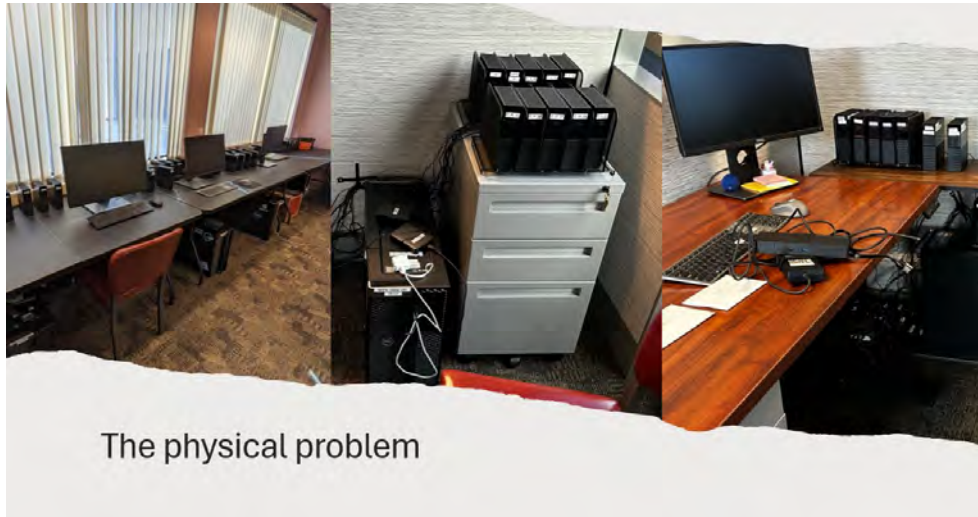


Figure 1: Image of physical hard drives used to store scientific data that is not cataloged or shared with others easily.

Hundreds of WDFW scientific teams continue to collect and analyze data in dozens of server-hosted databases, tens of thousands of Microsoft Access standalone file databases, and an unknown number of individual spreadsheets. Despite recent and ongoing efforts to review paper records, further data likely remain stranded in physical copies on shelves and tucked away in cabinets. This data is used to set fishing and hunting seasons for recreational and commercial use, to inform counties and cities when they are doing population growth planning, and is sued to inform counties and home builders where homes can be built and remediations should be implemented to reduce and prevent habitat loss.



Figure 2: WDFW's staff collecting data in the field using different approaches.

The plan to deploy a digital library will impact data collected for all species and habitats in Washington. The data collected to manage one species and the interconnected relations with other species and habitat is complex. For example, coho salmon from a particular river may be tracked via spawning hallows (redd) and spawner counts, electrofishing surveys, smolt traps, beach seines, commercial fleet observers, test fisheries, and dockside and/or in-river creels. Each of these modes of data collection may include repeated measures of numerous attributes of multiple fish as well as tissue samples. These fish move through streams, floodplains, and estuaries with dynamic form (width, depth, slope, substrate, etc.), function (flow, temperature, salinity, etc.), and legal attributes (treaties, federal and state statutes, local ordinances) that directly influence management. Samples from the field make their way to the lab for scale or otolith aging, coded-wire translation, toxicological assays, and genetic analysis, and they may be complemented by sonar, satellite, UAV or underwater ROV imagery depicting places from above, below, and in between. All of this work results in population estimates, distribution maps, parasite loads, genetic marker frequencies, and interconnected relationships with every living creature in Washington.



Figure 3: WDFW research helps explain the interconnected relationships between people, species, and habitats.


Unfortunately, much of this data is unknown or not readily available. Separate monitoring and research teams may be unaware of work being done within another area of WDFW, and this lack of visibility limits the potential for collaboration while increasing the risk of redundant or conflicting work. Furthermore, even when a data resource is known, siloing across divisions or programs may prevent data stewards from easily sharing it with other teams or researchers. Without a comprehensive view of all ongoing research activities, scientists are unable to align their efforts effectively, leading to inefficiencies and delays in achieving research goals. To build public trust in WDFW's science, the Department must use modern scientific tools and manage its data properly. Transparency in data is essential for this trust. As new technologies enhance the Department's data collection methods, WDFW is accumulating data faster to support core conservation efforts.

Problem Statement 2: WDFW lacks standard infrastructure and tools for scientific data analysis.

Historically, WDFW's scientific teams self-determined the workflows, processes, and data systems that met their unique needs within the constraints of their available technical resources. In practice, this means that one group may deploy iPads and custom data processing routines that feed into a carefully-designed model for a hosted relational database from which analysts programmatically query data elements subject to automated Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QAQC), while another group may manually transfer hand-written values from paper sheets into a copy of a copy of a copy of an Excel workbook with dozens of sheets that was originally created by a staff member who retired more than two decades ago and is then emailed as an attachment. This inconsistency in data processing procedures can lead to errors, misinterpretations, and difficulties in reproducing results, undermining the reliability and credibility of scientific research on which the Department depends. Another major challenge involves teams spending an excessive amount of time configuring the analysis environments required for computations, which diverts valuable time and focus away from actual research activities such as conducting experiments, interpreting results, and communicating conclusions.

Problem statements from science staff

- They don't know what data other science teams have or are creating (need a library)
- Today they run R scripts and pull data to local laptops for analysis (need a system to organize data science projects)
- They spend excessive time transforming data from multiple data types and locations (slow network) before aggregating locally to run analysis scripts
- They are very concerned about data quality (data lineage and data provenance)
- They are concerned about data misuse or unauthorized modification to their data
- They want to share data and analytical scripts for data projects internally and externally for scientific peer review and collaboration
- They want us to make it easier to do data categorization and data sharing agreements to do what is right within the state government regulatory environment.

 Department of Fish and Wildlife 10

The absence of an enterprise-wide solution has entrenched disparate problem-solving approaches that are not necessarily compatible and may be duplicative, creating barriers to collaboration and data integration. This technological fragmentation leads to increased costs and inefficiencies, hindering the overall effectiveness needed to tackle complex scientific challenges.

For the public, this results in long wait times for public records requests, fishing regulations for hunting and fishing, and county zoning using

priority habitat and species information. For WDFW partners (other state agencies, tribes, and stakeholder groups), this means tasks to collect related data to make informed decisions can take months and hundreds of hours of staff time.

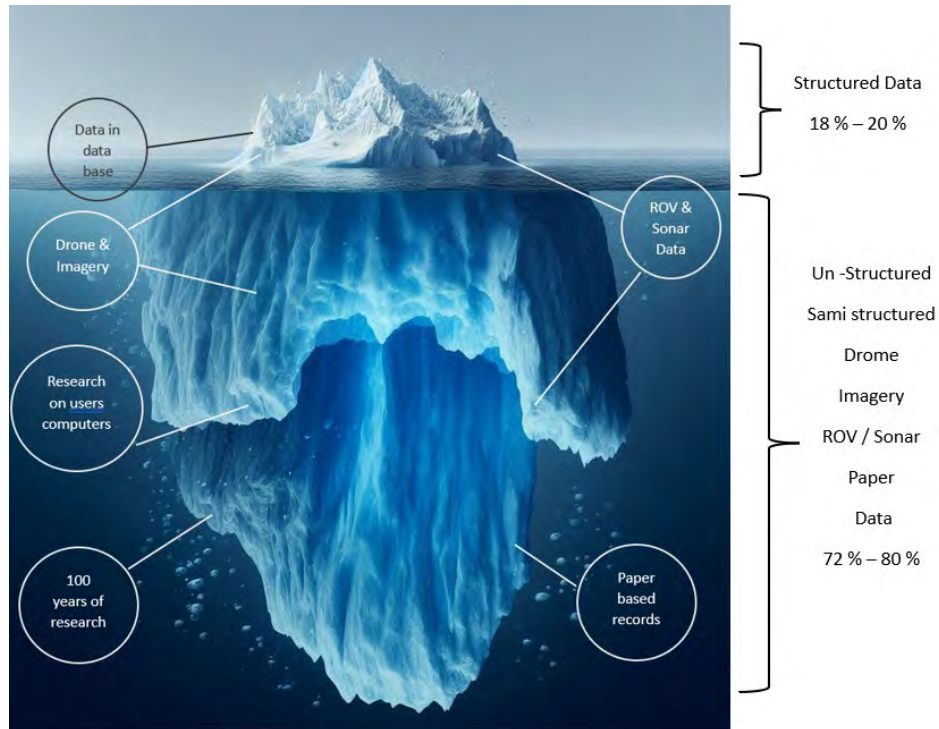


Figure 4: organizing the different types of scientific data





Proposed Solution

WDFW intends to partner industry leading technology vendors to provide a digital library of scientific data, storage services, and modern data analysis tools for scientists. This comprehensive solution aims to overhaul WDFW's approach to data, empowering scientists and decision-makers alike with modern tools and capabilities to address the state's environmental and wildlife conservation challenges.



Digital Scientific Data Library

The first critical service to prioritize is establishing a digital library for scientific data. While data libraries and catalogs have long existed, WDFW currently lacks a centralized repository or policy for recording the location of all scientific data. The current system relies on outdated methods, such as physically searching through volumes or asking librarians for assistance in locating data across the state. Implementing a modern data catalog would enable the establishment of policies and procedures for registering all new scientific projects and documenting their data storage locations. Automated smart augmentation tools can streamline this process by adding metadata, reducing the administrative burden on researchers, and ensuring necessary metadata for data management is consistently applied. The catalog will serve as a comprehensive ledger of all active scientific projects, archived projects, raw data for future research, and records of data outcomes or publications. This will significantly enhance the efficiency of conservation science operations by providing transparency into project status and outcomes.

Illustration of data library concept and the problem it solves			
<p>Current state: The piles below represent datasets and solutions from WDFW's over 300 scientific groups. Due to WDFW's long history, it is challenging to see what other teams are working on. This leads to isolated data solutions and datasets, making it hard for teams to find their predecessors' work or collaborate across teams.</p>	<p>Consequence of in action: The cost of inaction is too high. If WDFW will not invest into a core, enterprise-wide data solution. Those siloed datasets will continue to grow.</p>	<p>Solution: Data Library / Catalogue Properly cataloging data like a library makes it visible and accessible. Internal teams can see the work done by their predecessors, and other teams can search for data to support cross-collaboration. Sharing data with the public and external partners will also be more efficient, building trust in our scientific data.</p>	<p>Solution: Searchable Data Library This solution will provide the digital library so that the Internal teams can see the work done by their predecessors, and other teams can search for data to support cross-collaboration, innovation and publication.</p>
			

Cloud Data Storage

WDFW possesses over a century of research data stored in various legacy physical and digital formats. With the advancement of sensors, cameras, and instrument accuracy, the demand for data storage continues to rise. A primary service that the scientific data program must offer is cloud storage. This cloud storage should be user-friendly for scientists, securely backed up to guard against cyber threats like ransomware, and cost-effective. Initially, WDFW will prioritize providing simple options for storing survey data, game camera images, drone images, and other instrument data. As the initiative expands, a data literacy program can be implemented to educate users on advanced modern storage technologies. These technologies can help reduce costs and time for addressing complex problems, such as implementing data lakes for analysis across multiple data types or utilizing neural network databases for multi-dimensional algorithms that consume less power, thereby reducing the Department's carbon footprint.

Collaborative Data Analysis Capabilities

The third critical priority that unifies the program is the implementation of a scientific data Interactive Development Environment (IDE). Currently, scientists collect data and analyze it locally on laptops, while some teams utilize R or Python scripted reports that draw data from various networked locations, resulting in lengthy processing times. Introducing a modern IDE specifically designed for scientists that is capable of accessing data directly from the data catalog and cloud storage will be more efficient while decreasing computation times, thereby enhancing the productivity of scientific staff within their limited budgets. Modern IDEs offer features such as collaborative notebooks, data modeling test environments for running theoretical scenarios and comparing results, and budgeting tools to monitor and manage cloud computing expenses. This capability will significantly improve access to modern computer engineering tools for data science among scientific staff, promote the adoption of modern technologies to enhance conservation outcomes, and enhance operational efficiency for administrative staff delivering data services to scientists.



Figure 5: WDFW staff using modern technologies.

Incrementally Adding Data Services to Meet Business Needs for Scientists

A fourth priority will involve researching and implementing modern data management technologies to maximize the value of WDFW's vast historical research data for today's scientists. This entails collaborating with universities and technology vendors to address challenges associated with large volumes of scientific data historically recorded in physical field journals, over 10,000 access databases, and various other legacy unstructured formats. Historically, the cost of solutions has outweighed the perceived value of such endeavors. However, recent advancements in computer engineering have rendered hardware semiconductors and algorithms more effective. Research efforts will explore advanced scanning techniques to automate the organization of scanned handwritten or typed documents, leveraging modern data storage technologies like data lakes, vector databases, and graph databases for running private Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) workloads trained on Department data. Additionally, modern analytical tools and techniques will be employed to assist researchers in uncovering insights. As old datasets are analyzed, they will be made available in the data library, enriching the historical body of knowledge for future research projects.

In conclusion, the transformative influence of technology on WDFW's work, business operations, scientific endeavors, and public expectations for conservation cannot be overstated. It's imperative that WDFW acknowledges this impact and devise a new strategy to meet evolving needs. Investing in a scientific data program is crucial, involving both initial setup costs and ongoing maintenance expenses to ensure the sustainability of the Department's investment and the attainment of goals outlined in state and WDFW strategic plans.

How WDFW will implement the solution

WDFW has already chartered and formed a Data Steering Committee that includes the Department's Deputy Director (executive sponsor), Chief Information Officer (chair), Chief Science Officers, and other executives to set strategic direction. The steering committee has chartered a sub data council responsible for evaluating data platforms and their ability to solve these problems. WDFW is also using third-party market research to inform decision-making. As of September 2024, a data platform had not been selected. If this package is funded, WDFW will procure the Committee's recommended data platform and associated deployment services.

Following Washington Technology Services (WaTech) and Legislative strategic direction, the project will use an agile project management approach to procure and quickly deploy a new scientific data platform that includes a data library, storage, and data analysis capabilities for scientists.

Implementation principles to achieve intended business outcomes:

- Focus on self-service solutions for scientists.
- Collaborate with other state agencies, tribes, universities, and scientific partners.
- Use agile project methodology to deploy services quickly and iteratively.
- Prioritize allowing scientists to connect or upload data for their current active projects.
- Connect to existing structured data to accelerate time-to-value for the business.
- Build a training plan to help upskill scientists, ensuring effective use of provided services and improved public outcomes.
- Develop Department data policies to achieve the desired outcomes of this request.

Alternative Solutions

Alternative 1: Do Nothing

Failing to implement the proposed scientific data management program would have profound consequences for WDFW and its conservation efforts. Without modernizing data systems, including cloud storage, a data library, and a collaborative scientific data platform for analysis, scientists will continue to struggle with inefficient data access and analysis. This inefficiency could hinder critical research on species, ecosystems, and climate impacts, compromising the Department's ability to inform conservation policies effectively. Moreover, without leveraging AI and advanced data management technologies, WDFW risks falling behind in scientific innovation and failing to meet public and legislative expectations for transparent, and data-driven conservation practices.

Alternative 2: Invest in multiple vendors that specialize in specific needs or custom development of a scientific data platform

Selecting an interoperable and cohesive data management system offers several advantages over pursuing multiple vendor solutions or custom development:

- **Integration and Efficiency:** An interoperable system ensures seamless integration between different components, such as cloud storage,

data catalogs, and analytical tools. This integration reduces complexity and streamlines data workflows, enhancing overall operational efficiency.

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Investing in a cohesive system reduces the need for multiple vendor contracts and ongoing maintenance costs associated with disparate systems. It also minimizes the overhead costs of custom development, including the time and resources required for implementation and support.
- **Scalability and Flexibility:** A cohesive system provides scalability to accommodate growing data volumes and evolving technological needs. It allows for flexibility in adapting to new scientific requirements and integrating future advancements in data management and AI technologies.
- **Interoperability for Collaboration:** By standardizing data formats and protocols, an interoperable system facilitates collaboration with external partners, including universities, tribes, and other state agencies. This collaboration improves data sharing, enhances research capabilities, and supports collective efforts in conservation science.
- **Enhanced Data Governance and Security:** A cohesive system promotes consistent data governance practices, ensuring data integrity, security, and compliance with regulatory requirements. Centralized management simplifies data protection measures and reduces vulnerabilities compared to managing multiple systems independently.

In contrast, pursuing multiple vendor solutions or custom development may lead to increased complexity, higher administrative overhead, interoperability challenges, and greater overall costs. Therefore, selecting an interoperable and cohesive data management system not only optimizes operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness but also strengthens WDFW's capabilities in scientific research and conservation efforts.

Conclusion

The cost of inaction is too high. WDFW cannot continue the same path – the Department must implement a solution for better scientific collaboration and analysis. Simplicity in architecture helps reduce the time to deploy, the cost to train staff, and the maintenance of the solution. An enterprise data solution offers a unified, scalable, and flexible platform that integrates all these functionalities seamlessly. With the advance of scientific technologies, failure to invest today will lead to greater costs in the future as the size of the data problems grow. This approach not only reduces future costs and operational complexities, but also enhances data visibility, governance, and user collaboration, making it a more strategic and efficient investment for addressing the organization's data management needs. This proposal is the best option because it will add a data layer on top of WDFW's existing cloud-based compute and storage infrastructure.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Decision package assumptions and calculations:

- \$406,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$736,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for salaries and benefits for 5.0 FTEs, Objects A and B.
- \$800,000 in fiscal year 2026 for contracted implementation to meet Section 701 requirements, including project management, and quality assurance, and quality engineering services, Object C.
- \$1,010,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$2,200,000 in fiscal year 2027 for the data platform software, data storage, computation services, network databases, and computer engineering research, Object E.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Total costs are \$2,962,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$3,940,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

1.0 FTE IT Data Management – Manager (Architect /Data Program)

To ensure its success, the program will require a dedicated Program Manager responsible for planning, delivery, and maintenance of services. Responsibilities include:

- Oversee business and product management in the data program.
- Manage team of system administrators and data engineers.
- Manage vendors and vendor contracts for data management services.
- Facilitate and monitor cross-functional data initiatives.
- Establish workflows to identify issues and develop enterprise-wide solutions.
- Create tactical plans for data governance and ensure compliance.
- Manage performance of data initiatives.
- Collaborate with data scientists and stakeholders for effective scientific data services.

1.0 FTE MANAGEMENT ANALYST 4 (Trainer)

A Data Program Trainer will be crucial for upskilling scientists, enhancing the Department's scientific capabilities, and maximizing the utilization of services offered by the data program. Responsibilities include:

- Develop and deliver data literacy training.
- Train scientists to use new technologies.

1.0 FTE IT System Administrator – Journey (Data Engineer)

The program requires a dedicated Systems Administrator to manage vendor-provided data systems. Responsibilities include:

- Design and develop data pipelines for efficient data ingestion, processing, and storage.
- Implement and optimize databases and data warehouses to support large-scale data analytics.
- Collaborate with other WDFW system administrators to ensure seamless integration and performance of data systems.
- Write and maintain scripts for data cleansing, transformation, and validation.
- Conduct performance tuning and troubleshooting of data infrastructure and pipelines.
- Work with data scientists to deploy machine learning models and integrate analytics solutions.

1.0 FTE IT System Administration – Journey (System Admin)

The program requires a dedicated Server Administrator to oversee cloud computing and storage needs.

- Manage and maintain cloud and on-premises data storage systems.
- Monitor system performance and ensure high availability of data services.
- Implement and enforce data security measures and compliance protocols.
- Troubleshoot and resolve technical issues related to data storage and access.
- Collaborate with data engineers to optimize data processing and integration workflows.
- Provide technical support and training to users on data management tools and systems.
- Ensure backup and disaster recovery procedures are in place and regularly tested.

1.0 FTE IT System Administration – Journey (AI Specialist)

To meet the growing demand for AI, an AI Specialist will be responsible for overseeing policy and partnerships. This position will ensure efficiencies in WDFW's scientific processes and provide policy oversight to ensure the safe and trusted implementation of emerging AI capabilities. Responsibilities include:

- Develop and implement AI strategies aligned with WDFW's conservation goals.
- Coordination and compliance with [Washington Executive Order 24-01](#) and the [White House Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence](#).
- Collaborate with stakeholders to identify AI opportunities and requirements.
- Research and evaluate AI technologies, tools, and algorithms for suitability.
- Design and develop AI models and solutions tailored to WDFW's scientific data.
- Ensure ethical and responsible use of AI technologies in conservation practices.
- Train and deploy machine learning models for predictive analytics and data-driven insights.
- Monitor AI model performance, conduct analysis, and optimize models for accuracy and efficiency.

- Provide expertise and guidance on AI-related policies, governance, and compliance.

Historical Funding:

N/A

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor’s Results Washington Goals

The scientific data program aligns with the Results Washington initiative's values and goals as follows:

Values:

1. **People Matter:**
 1. **Inclusive Culture:** Promotes collaboration among WDFW scientists, IT teams, universities, tribes, and partners.
 2. **Respect and Humility:** Empowers team members with self-service data solutions and training.
2. **Resources Matter:**
 1. **Accountability and Transparency:** Ensures transparent data management and reporting.
 2. **Good Stewardship:** Optimizes resource utilization, reducing costs with a unified data system.
3. **Ideas Matter:**
 1. **Innovation and Creativity:** Utilizes advanced technologies like cloud computing and AI.
 2. **Fact-based Decision-making:** Supports evidence-based conservation decisions with integrated data.
4. **Teamwork Matters:**
 1. **Trust and Collaboration:** Enhances teamwork and open communication.
 2. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Uses agile methods for quick and iterative service deployment.

Goals:

1. **Prosperous Economy:**
 1. Supports sustainable resource management, benefiting industries like fisheries and tourism.
2. **Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment:**
 1. Enables better monitoring and conservation of natural resources.
 2. Supports ecosystem and biodiversity preservation.
3. **Healthy and Safe Communities:**
 1. Informs strategies to protect public health and safety.
 2. Develops policies for long-term community well-being.
4. **Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government:**
 1. Reduces redundancy and optimizes data workflows for efficiency.
 2. Ensures transparency and accountability in data governance.

Washington State Enterprise IT Strategic Plan

This request aligns with all 4 of the state enterprise IT strategic plan:

- **Goal 1:** Create a government experience that leaves no community behind.
- **Goal 2:** Better data, better decisions, better government, better Washington.
- **Goal 3:** Innovative technology solutions create a better Washington.
- **Goal 4:** Transform how we work. Best workforce ever.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package supports two strategies in WDFW’s 25-Year plan:

- Deliver science that informs Washington’s most pressing fish and wildlife questions.
- Model operational and environmental excellence by ensuring that the systems and applications that are in place allow the Department to

efficiently collect scientific data needed to make informed decisions, manage data in a safe and secure manner, provide better customer experiences.

WDFW 5 Year IT Strategic Plan

This package has been developed and will be implemented if funded in alignment with the agencies 5 year IT Strategic plan. Specifically, goals around providing mature scientific data services to scientists that are cost effective, secure, and reliable.

Agency Activity Inventory

This funding request supports the following agency activities:

- Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species – Total costs are \$2,302,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$2,628,000 ongoing.
- Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat & Species – Total costs are \$2,300,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$2,626,000 ongoing.
- Manage Fishing Opportunities – Total costs are \$2,300,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$2,626,000 ongoing.

Performance Outcomes:

The performance outcomes for WDFW's proposed scientific data management program include:

1. **Efficiency Gains:** Scientific teams can initiate data projects and set up environments faster, reducing the time required to gather and perform analysis needed by policy decision makers. This improves overall operational efficiency.
2. **Enhanced Collaboration:** Improved visibility and accessibility of data enable better collaboration among different teams within WDFW and with partners like universities, tribes, and other state agencies.
3. **Data Integration and Standardization:** Standardized data management processes and integrated data platforms allow for consistent data analysis methods across different scientific disciplines and geographic locations. This ensures consistency in data analysis methods and allows for comprehensive insights into ecological trends and conservation needs.
4. **Budget Strategy:** Consolidating data management systems into an interoperable platform reduces the need for multiple teams and vendors building out individual siloed solutions. Implementing standard Department wide data services helps reduce disparate software licenses, maintenance costs, and the administrative burden of overseeing disparate technologies.
5. **Innovation and Adaptability:** Adoption of advanced technologies like cloud computing and AI enhances innovation capabilities, supporting more sophisticated data analysis and improving decision-making in conservation science. This capability enhances WDFW's ability to respond to evolving environmental challenges and scientific advancements.
6. **Transparency and Accountability:** A cohesive data management system supports transparent reporting and data-driven decision-making, enhancing public trust and Department credibility. Having the proper tools for scientific data management ensures that data-driven decisions are well-documented, accessible, and based on rigorous scientific standards, thereby enhancing public trust in WDFW's initiatives.
7. **Environmental and Ecological Impact:** By optimizing data utilization, the program supports more effective conservation strategies. This includes better monitoring of wildlife populations, habitat health assessments, and proactive measures to mitigate the impacts of human activities on natural ecosystems across Washington State.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW established a [Budget and Policy Advisory Group](#) (BPAG) in 2017 to address issues of communities that did not trust or felt marginalized by agency budget decisions. This group advises the Department on a wide range of issues, including future budget requests and policy proposals, options for improving public engagement, and strategic planning. BPAG members are selected by the Director as representative of stakeholder groups. All meetings are public and time is set aside at each meeting for public comment. BPAG reviewed this decision package and provided feedback that was included in the proposal.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

One of the concerns WDFW has heard from the public and partners is the fear of Artificial Intelligence if not managed appropriately. Bad models or inaccurate results could result in misinformed decisions and policies that do not serve target populations as intended. To address this risk the Department is investing in an AI community of practice, is participating with WaTech and other agencies on AI steering committees, adhering to the [WaTech Generative AI Guidelines](#), and requesting for an AI Specialist in this package to help focus on responsible AI usage and oversight.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal will have an equitable impact for both internal WDFW staff and external to the state of Washington Constituents and partners.

An equitable solution for WDFW teams

WDFW has approximately 2,300 staff organized into more than 300 scientific groups, each of which has historically invested in various data solutions to meet their specific needs, creating multiple data silos. These decisions were based on the resources available to each group. For example, one team was able to invest in an Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud environment seven years ago, while others with limited resources had to rely on self-built Microsoft Excel worksheets.

This proposal aims to provide a core data solution that empowers all scientific teams with a standardized environment, a comprehensive data library, and consistent governance capabilities. It also offers self-service capabilities for provisioning different data projects.

Implementing this solution will ensure an equitable approach for all groups, regardless of their size and available resources. WDFW will further promote internal equity by providing training to all scientists, empowering them with a robust and efficient data management solution.

Impact on equity in the state

WDFW is a science-based organization focused on conservation activities related to fish, wildlife, and habitats in the State of Washington. Equity and conservation justice are at the core of the Department's work, ensuring that WDFW effectively manages resources for future generations. WDFW's biological and social science efforts evaluate the impacts on resources and the communities that rely on them. Improved data management and collaboration between biological and social sciences will allow WDFW to understand the effects of potential policy decisions on different populations and communities across Washington State.

With this proposal, WDFW aims to become a more inclusive organization. This proposal will enable WDFW to implement a platform that provides visibility into the Department's decision-making process, mapping the journey from data gathering to analysis, reporting, scientific discoveries, and final decisions. This transparency will help the Department share the reasoning behind its decisions and how it arrived at them, thereby building trust in the Department's scientific data and decision-making and advancing conservation justice.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

After talking with BPAG members more emphasis was put into the appendix to show explicit examples of current state and desired outcomes impacting specific species. A key element of this package is investing in tools that help scientists with ways to safely and more easily collaborate and this includes increasing transparency into the data that informs WDFW policy decisions. Talking with BPAG members, this will have a major positive impact on the efficiency of coordination with non-profit and tribal comanagers and the communities we serve together. Not having timely or efficient data to inform conversations and decisions that impact all communities greatly impacts the integrity and reputation of WDFW.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is critical to WDFW implementing the 2022-2026 Action Agenda and additional recovery strategies through an investment in a comprehensive scientific data management program to enhance and streamline conservation of Washington's fish, wildlife, and wild spaces. With this program, WDFW will introduce cloud storage, a modern data library, and a collaborative, scientific data analytics environment. WDFW will be advancing Action Agenda strategies 23: Good Governance and C: Research and Monitoring as well as all the other strategies where WDFW data and analysis inform recovery decisions. Without this investment, WDFW risks falling behind in scientific innovation, compromising data integrity, and failing to meet public and legislative expectations for effective conservation management.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

The proposed solution will improve the ability for WDFW scientists to create data projects and collaborate with tribes, other state agencies, other states, Canada, and other governmental partners. Through a request and access controls stakeholders will be able to be given permissions to log into the online collaborative environment. Today much of this collaboration happens over email and this new ability will drastically reduce the time it takes to collaborate and do peer review on scientific projects.

Stakeholder Impacts:

The proposed solution will improve the ability for WDFW scientists to create data projects and collaborate with non-governmental partners. Through a request and access controls stakeholders will be able to be given permissions to log into the online collaborative environment. Today much of this collaboration happens over email and this new ability will drastically reduce the time it takes to collaborate and do peer review on scientific projects.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may become problematic. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Executive Order (EO) 13-04: The EO mandates that "Each organization shall develop, implement, and sustain a responsive, innovative, and data-driven culture and conduct day-to-day operations, legislative efforts, and regulatory or policy reforms and initiatives in alignment with the five goal areas set forth by Results Washington."

RCW 43.105.375: Making an investment in a cloud-based system instead will bring WDFW into compliance with and fulfill requirements in RCW 43.105.375.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 7. Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability; and Strategy Action Area 7a. Monitoring and science-based efforts: This package improves data management, analysis, accessibility, and the efficiency of science and management decisions that are data driven. Salmon recovery implications of this work are expansive and relate to all strategy actions.

Reference Documents

- [SD - Appendix A - Practical Examples.pdf](#)
- [SD - IT Addendum Budget 2025-27 - Scientific Data Modernization.xlsx](#)
- [SD - IT Addendum Scientific Data - Scientific Data Modernization.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$311	\$563	\$874	\$563	\$563	\$1,126
Obj. B	\$95	\$173	\$268	\$173	\$173	\$346
Obj. C	\$800	\$0	\$800	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$1,032	\$2,240	\$3,272	\$2,240	\$2,240	\$4,480
Obj. T	\$724	\$964	\$1,688	\$964	\$964	\$1,928

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Agency Recommendation Summary

State operated hatchery facilities need additional capacity for current and expanded production, including additional fish health services and mass marking of hatchery salmonids. This funding supports recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident killer whale prey, and conservation efforts for wild salmonids. If not funded, hatchery production goals may not be met, the Fish Health Unit will not be staffed adequately to monitor state and commercial aquaculture, fish intended for harvest will not be mass marked, and reciprocal marking and tagging for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission may not be achieved. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,164	\$561	\$2,725	\$2,347	\$744	\$3,091
Total Expenditures	\$2,164	\$561	\$2,725	\$2,347	\$744	\$3,091

Decision Package Description

The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) owns and/or operates 80 hatchery facilities. These facilities release more than 160 million juvenile anadromous salmon and steelhead and 17.5 million trout annually. Each year, more than 110 million salmon and steelhead are mass marked. Mass marking involves removing the adipose fin, a small fleshy fin located on the back behind the dorsal fin. This process allows for harvest opportunities in mark selective fisheries and broodstock management. Mass marking is a non-lethal and cost-effective method for marking fish which allows for effective fisheries management and conservation efforts.

WDFW currently utilizes a fleet of 15 AutoFish System trailers, 27 manual mass marking trailers, and two manual tagging trailers. These trailers are used to facilitate marking and tagging statewide, including some tribal and PUD hatcheries. To conduct seasonal mass marking, WDFW hires temporary staff through a private labor firm. Each location requires 12-14 workers. If these temporary positions are not filled, the Department cannot meet state and federal requirements of mass marking 100 percent of hatchery-produced fish.

In the past decade, WDFW has seen a drastic decline in the availability of temporary labor needed to mark these fish within the required timeframe. Manual mass marking fish presents challenges in quality due to human error, which the AutoFish system largely negates. Inaccurate mass marking impacts fish survival and presents fish management challenges. To mitigate these constraints, WDFW has offered employee retention and recruitment incentives including fuel and attendance bonuses and increased hourly rate. Despite these incentives, staffing the manual trailers remains challenging.

Unmarked fish may not be released under the Endangered Species Act, as they compromise hatchery broodstocks and complicate native fish population monitoring. To maintain production levels, WDFW has employed state inmates under Department of Corrections’ supervision, retained well-trained seasonal staff, utilized alternate temporary staffing agencies, and sought efficiencies to maximize state funds. These strategies have not been enough to ensure the mass marking program’s success going forward.

Under the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Federal Government (Feds) purchased AutoFish systems in 2022 and 2024 to help meet mass marking requirements for increased production under the Governor’s Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) Prey Initiative. Despite receiving funds for the purchase of these systems from the Feds, funding for the operators was not included. WDFW needs funding to address this shortfall in AutoFish operators, ensuring the equipment can be used to mass mark all increased hatchery production.

With the transition to an AutoFish system fleet, each trailer requires an operator. If the budget request to transition to an AutoFish fleet is approved, operating the equipment will be critical. Without funding for operators, the acquired trailers are inoperable.

Fish Health Lab

In the past ten years, there has been an increased demand for fish health services at state, PUD, and Tribal hatchery facilities. In response to this demand, the Governor and Legislature have increased funding to WDFW to hire additional field staff, including veterinarians and pathologists. The Colville Tribes and the Nez Perce Tribe have also contracted with WDFW for fish health services at their hatchery facilities.

Due to growth in fish health services and disease surveillance, the WDFW microbiology laboratory has received a significant increase in samples

submitted for viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasite testing. A large portion of these tests are required by joint policy with Tribal Co-Managers. Prior to this increase in samples, the microbiology laboratory was appropriately staffed. However, during the past ten years, our ability to complete casework on time has slowly degraded due to increase in samples. The laboratory is currently understaffed to meet demand. Because of this staffing shortage, WDFW is struggling to meet the obligations of the WDFW-Tribal Co-Manager Disease Policy and fulfill our trust responsibilities to diagnose diseases in a timely manner. This shortage places our ability to protect fish populations at risk.

AutoFish System Transition

WDFW is requesting funding to purchase 10 Autofish systems over the next ten biennia and funding to rebuild aging systems. This will expand and maintain a fleet of 25 Autofish systems and 12 manual marking and tagging trailers going forward (see Attachment A). Over 70% of annual marking and tagging occurs in April, May, and June to meet legal obligations. Each new Autofish system WDFW purchases will replace a manual marking trailer, reducing dependence on unreliable contracted labor, improving clip rate quality, and causing less harm to fish due to excessive handling and anesthetic.

In 2022, 87,184,472 of the total 117,300,371 fish were marked and tagged during a three-month timeframe. Therefore, it is even more critical WDFW begins moving away from reliance on contracted labor during this time. This transition will be achieved by growing and maintaining a larger Autofish system fleet.

If the Department is not able to shift most of the mass marking to AutoFish systems, hatchery production would need to be reduced to levels that can be marked manually. Alternatively, the Department may need to hire permanent state employees to manually mass mark fish. That cost would be significant, considering each trailer requires 12 staff to ensure that all the hatchery production is mass marked. This would mean hiring up to 324 temporary staff each year for 4-5 months, plus year-round staff to mass mark yearling Chinook, coho, and steelhead.

Manual mass marking poses significant risks to effective and efficient marking. Recently, a WDFW contracted employee working in one of the manual mass marking trailers mistakenly clipped the dorsal fins instead of the adipose fins for their entire shift, resulting in more than 2,000 juvenile salmon being clipped incorrectly. The consequences of this are severe for the salmon; cutting the dorsal fin disrupts the fish's balance, movement, and ability to swim effectively. This means the salmon's chances of survival will be greatly decreased.

Manual mass marking comes with a much higher risk of human error. This results in poor clip rates of over 10% of fish, as opposed to AutoFish systems that have poor clip rates of 1-2%. When any significant number of fish have been incorrectly or poorly marked, it results in lost resources, including time, labor, and finances. Poor clips also make effective salmon and steelhead management challenging which negatively impacts recreational fisheries. This impacts small communities, as recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to rural businesses.

The expansion of the fleet includes addressing ongoing maintenance and replacement of aging systems. An Autofish system, with proper storage and maintenance, has an assumed useful life of approximately 20 years or more. WDFW received ongoing funding from the legislature in 2024 to rebuild aged out AutoFish systems to ensure the continuity of the fleet going forward.

WDFW will never be able to fully transition away from manual mass marking due to seasonal timing issues and/or fish size. However, maintaining a fleet of 25 Autofish systems is the only option that ensures salmon and steelhead will be successfully mass marked into the future, supporting recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident killer whale prey, and conservation efforts for wild salmonids.

Mass Marking Salmon and Steelhead Intended for Harvest

WDFW requests funding to purchase one AutoFish system each biennium to meet mass marking requirements for all hatchery salmonids. Recruiting temporary staff to manually clip fins to meet federal and state requirements to mass mark Chinook, coho, and steelhead has been challenging or impossible to do in many areas of the state. In addition, the Department and tribal co-managers have taken on increased production to provide prey for the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale (Orca). WDFW must switch a large portion of the manual mass marking fleet to AutoFish systems (automated mass marking trailers) to successfully complete this work.

From order date to delivery, each AutoFish system takes a minimum of one year to build and deliver. WDFW estimates that each new system could reduce contracted labor by approximately 5,700 hours each year. With each Autofish system that comes online, one manual trailer could be taken out of the fleet.

Providing the funding requested is the most cost-effective way to ensure successful mass marking of WDFW's hatchery production of Chinook, coho, and steelhead, without a corresponding reduction in production. If the Department is not able to shift most of the mass marking to AutoFish systems, WDFW needs to reduce hatchery production to levels that can be marked manually. The Department would need to explore options of hiring permanent state employees to manually mass mark fish to ensure proper staffing levels in the trailers, although that cost would be significant. Any fish production decrease would have a negative economic impact on local economies, impact federal court orders made with

treaty tribes, and reduce prey availability for Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The proposal is an alteration of current services provided by the Department's Fish Health Unit and mass marking for hatcheries statewide.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 3.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions totals \$300,000, in biennium 25-27. Goods and services, object E, total \$31,000 each fiscal year and include \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. \$5,000 is needed per FY and ongoing for the previously funded, ongoing, Aquaculture Coordinator's continuing education cost to obtain and maintain all required certifications and licenses for this veterinary position.

With an increase of one FTE per BN for new trailer operators, objects A and B for 4.0 FTE positions will increase in BN 27-29 to \$396,000. Goods and services, object E, will increase to \$40,000 which includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year, and the ongoing \$5,000 per FY for continuing education needs for Fish Health Aquaculture Coordinator.

Travel costs, object G, total \$92,000 per FY in BN 25-27. \$37,000 associated with vehicle lease and mileage, and \$55,000 associated with hotel and meals (details provided below). Equipment cost, object J, totals \$1,603,000 per biennium, includes \$1,463,000 for a Marking Auto Trailer, and \$139,000 in sales tax at 9.5% (will likely have future inflationary costs that are not included here). Finally, an infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in object T, for all but the equipment purchase, and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

AutoFish System Transition Travel Costs

Travel costs total \$92,000 in biennium 25-27 for the two AutoFish System Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 operators and previously funded AutoFish System Maintenance Mechanic.

Operator Travel Costs:

Hotel and per diem cost for two AutoFish System operators total \$37,648 per fiscal year in BN 25-27. It is assumed that the two operators each will require: 52 single days of per diem for travel status days not requiring overnight lodging, 104 per diem travel days associated with the assumed 52 trips requiring one night of lodging each [$2(52 * \$79/\text{day per diem}) = \$8,216$] and [$\{2(104 * \$79/\text{day per diem}) = \$16,432\}$] and [$2(52 * \$125 \text{ lodging rate}) = \$13,000$].

It is assumed that each subsequent biennium will see an increase of \$18,824 in hotel and per diem travel costs, per fiscal year, as one new AutoFish System operator is brought on board bringing fiscal year 2028 costs to \$56,472.

Vehicle rental and mileage costs for the two AutoFish System operators total \$29,016 per fiscal year in BN 25-27. It is assumed each operator will require a state motor pool vehicle for 12 months per year at a cost of \$403/mth and are assumed to travel 2,600 miles per month (31,200/year) with a DES motor pool mileage rate of \$.31 per mile. [$2x(12 \text{ mths} \times \$403/\text{mth lease}) = \$9,672$] plus [$2x(2,600 \text{ miles} \times 12 \text{ mths} \times .31/\text{mile}) = \$19,344$]

It is assumed that each subsequent biennium will see an increase of \$14,508 per fiscal year in vehicle rental and mileage costs with the addition of one new AutoFish System operator per BN, bringing the yearly vehicle and mileage costs in BN 27-29 to \$43,524.

Maintenance Mechanic Travel Costs:

Maintenance Mechanic 3 -Travel costs total \$25,116, beginning in fiscal year 2026, and ongoing. Assumed to travel 12,000 miles per fiscal year for a total vehicle cost of \$8,136, including vehicle rent and fuel, and 120 total travel days per year totaling \$16,980 for hotel and per diem costs.

Total vehicle cost for the Maintenance Mechanic in fiscal years 2026 and ongoing totals \$8,136, including vehicle rent and fuel. A DES long-term vehicle rental for a "Truck-Small-4X4" totals \$5,016 ($\$418 \text{ per month} \times 12$) and fuel costs total \$3,120 ($12,000 \times \$0.26 \text{ per mile}$).

Travel costs for the Maintenance Mechanic in fiscal years 2025 and 2026 total \$16,980 per fiscal year. Overnight trips, and corresponding meal per diem, total \$15,210 [(\$110/day hotel x 90 overnights = \$9,900) and (\$59 meal rate per day x 90 travel status days = \$5,310)]. Travel costs for single day trips, not requiring overnight stays, total \$1,770 (\$59 meal rate per day x 30 travel status days).

Workforce Assumptions:**Fish Health Unit**

1.0 FTE MICROBIOLOGIST 2 (\$105,204 salaries and benefits per FTE). Position will be located in the WDFW microbiology laboratory and this additional position will allow samples to be prepared, processed, and analyzed in a consistent and timely manner and provide the laboratory the staffing needed to meet our obligations of the WDFW-Tribal Co-Manager Disease Policy, and to fulfill our trust responsibilities to diagnose diseases.

AutoFish System Transition

2.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 (\$96,773 salaries and benefits per FTE).. These positions work independently to operate automated/manual mass marking and coded wire tagging AutoFish systems at hatcheries statewide. They plan, organize, direct, and conduct coded wire tag experiments. Analyze coded wire tag data to determine contribution rates, allocation, brood-stock identification, and effect of mark selective fisheries. These positions contribute to the Agency goals of conservation of wild salmon through coded wire tagging and mass marking.

Historical Funding:

Funding is requested because activities in this specific package exceed the 2025-27 base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will not be able to implement these activities or will need to consider cutting other essential services.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goals of Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment, Prosperous Economy, and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government. This proposal is fundamental to the harvest management and recovery of ESA-listed Salmon and Steelhead in Puget Sound, the Washington Coast and Columbia River; it supports the commercial and recreational fishing industries; and it respects our state's government-to-government relationship with tribes by supporting their harvest opportunities.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the following Department Strategic Plan priorities:

- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, delivering hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as the Department continues to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, developing an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Produce Hatchery Fish 3.0 FTE \$2,164,00 in fiscal year 2026 and \$561,000 fiscal year 2027, General Fund State.

This package supports our activity inventory item "Produce Hatchery Fish" and applicable support strategy:

- Produce salmon and steelhead

The Department owns and/or operates 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights. Production at hatcheries is conducted consistent with ESA requirements and hatchery reform goals. This activity includes the entire fish production cycle for salmon and steelhead, raising fish from eggs until release age, sometimes transporting them to their release location, and then collecting more eggs upon their return.

Hatchery mass marking is critical to provide prey opportunities for endangered Southern Resident Orcas and recover endangered and threatened species to healthy, self-sustaining levels. Furthermore, hatchery mass marking benefits commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfills obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights in salmon and steelhead. In addition, mass marking is critical to enforce rules and regulations in fishing activities. Therefore, efficient mass marking is critical for the Department's activities enforcing fishing regulations, monitoring, and managing fish populations to conserve and protect native fish and wildlife.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve two 25-year performance goals:

- 25 percent increase in wild salmon populations
- 90 percent of the public reports trusting WDFW to do what is right for the fish and wildlife management in our state.

In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Outcomes:

- Mass marked hatchery-produced Chinook salmon
- Mass marked hatchery produced coho salmon
- Mark-selective fisheries
- Fisheries in compliance with harvest protection goals
- Hatchery programs in compliance with ESA
- Threatened and endangered species population increases.
- Number of angler days
- Number of online sales transactions
- Total license sales achieved
- Salmon hatchery recommendations

The Fish Health Unit will be able to provide comprehensive fish health services for Washington State Hatcheries and fulfill regulatory obligations for commercial aquaculture. This will also help the Department meet the demands of climate change and other environmental factors with regards to veterinarians and pathologists providing adequate care for fish reared in the hatchery environment.

Funding the purchase of AutoFish systems will allow WDFW to continue to produce and release hatchery fish at current and expanded levels. The systems will ensure higher and consistent quality, significantly less stress and mortality to the fish, and a reliable workforce. The AutoFish systems also give WDFW more reliable staffing and the ability to train and invest in staff, leading to consistent, higher quality performance. Contracted labor solutions result in unreliable staffing which can make it difficult to complete projects on time. The high turnover of contracted staff creates training issues which results in poor clip rates of over 10%, making it difficult to effectively manage the fishery and protect natural populations. Properly trained AutoFish operators can ensure poor clip rates do not exceed 1-2% even when faced with challenging populations of fish that have varying body shapes, may be dealing with fish health issues, or a species such as steelhead that are more difficult to handle than Chinook and coho. Fish that are manually mass marked also suffer undue stress due to increased handling and the use of anesthesia, leading to higher mortality and fish health issues. Autofish systems minimize fish handling and do not require anesthesia.

AutoFish systems give the agency the ability to modify and improve our monitoring and evaluation efforts to ensure that hatchery fish have the least negative impact to natural populations. The AutoFish systems can simultaneously clip and insert a coded wire tag, requiring no additional time or handling. When this process is done in a manual trailer, the contracted labor would have to split the two functions between staff. Manual operations require more time and money, and place unnecessary stress on the fish while compromising quality.

Fish do not require an anesthesia to be processed in the AutoFish systems. This results in cost savings and is safer and healthier for the fish. Fish simply swim through the AutoFish system and robotics hold them in place to be processed. They are then returned to a rearing vessel without requiring any recovery time. Processing fish in the manual trailers requires anesthesia, and physical handling. This can compromise the immune protection of the fish and comparatively make them more susceptible to health issues and mortality.

The benefits of AutoFish systems are difficult to ignore. Other governmental agencies such as Oregon, US Fish & Wildlife Service and Canada have already made this determination and are processing the majority, if not all, of their production through AutoFish systems.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department's hatcheries provide fisheries that people depend upon for jobs (commercial fishing and related industries), meet federal treaty obligations, provide additional forage for southern resident orcas, support local economies (tourism, lodging, restaurants, wholesalers and retailers of recreational equipment, boats, and licenses), provide family recreational opportunities, and protect Washington's fishing cultural heritage. Recreational fishing opportunities throughout the state contribute significant revenue to local and rural businesses, as well as WDFW, through license sales. Most of the salmon production at WDFW owned hatcheries is linked to conservation, harvest augmentation (tribal and non-tribal) and federal court agreements.

WDFW completes community engagement and public outreach through the Public Engagement and Communication divisions and is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with communities historically excluded and marginalized. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent a degradation of services to the communities we serve.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

If this proposal does not receive funding, there could be disproportionate impacts to those who rely on hatchery fish for their subsistence, economic welfare, and recreation if hatchery fish become ill and WDFW does not have enough staff to thoroughly address the issue. There is a strong possibility of disproportional impacts if this proposal isn't funded as WDFW has recently been having trouble filling contract positions for fin clipping. When that happens, there are fewer fish available for tribal fishing, along with commercial and recreational fishing.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal will help maintain and increase fish health and mass fin clipping, leading to more adult fish availability for tribal fishing. Rural and geographically isolated communities in Washington will significantly benefit from the economic opportunities in commercial fishing. Recreational fishing opportunities for Washingtonians throughout the state contribute significant revenue to rural businesses.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW maintains regular and open communication with communities and constituents of the state. Through ongoing conversations and engagement, WDFW actively seeks input, feedback, and suggestions. These discussions encompass crucial initiatives for the agency, including funding considerations for hatchery investments, ensuring that hatchery operations remain a valuable asset to communities statewide. This continuous communication allows for collaborative and informed decision making, ensuring that the interests and concerns of the communities are taken into account. By actively involving stakeholders and community groups in the decision-making process, WDFW can help to be sure that proposed initiatives align with community needs. In addition, WDFW works closely with the Budget and Policy Advisory Group which assists in facilitating the strategic pathways that align with the state's overall objectives and public interests, reinforcing WDFW's commitment to community-focused decision making.

The work associated with Washington hatcheries has far-reaching impacts on diverse communities and stakeholder groups across the state. Each of these communities possesses unique histories, cultural practices, and visions for the future, influencing their preferences and viewpoints on policies and decisions that shape that future. It is important to recognize that any decision regarding hatchery operations will inevitably garner both support and dissent from various stakeholders, each rooted in their distinct perspectives and interests. Therefore, in the decision-making process, WDFW acknowledges and respects the diversity of opinions and viewpoints brought forth by stakeholders. Despite the potential for differing opinions or alternative approaches, WDFW remains committed to considering and incorporating these diverse perspectives throughout the development and implementation of policies, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process that reflects the needs and values of all stakeholders involved.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15: Salmon Recovery and is directly aligned with Action (ID# 205) Increase salmon abundance while protecting genetic diversity by implementing hatchery and harvest management strategies and expanding available habitat while ensuring abundant salmon for harvest, treaty rights, and other species such as Southern Resident Orca, by implementing key opportunity, continue to implement increased state and tribal hatchery production to support prey availability for Southern Resident Orca, by increasing WDFW’s hatchery capacity to produce recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident orca prey, and catalyze conservation efforts for wild salmonids. These activities are supported through WDFW’s activities to increase pathogen monitoring, fish marking to meet regulatory requirements, and facilities operation. The Treaty Tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) co-manage hatchery production and salmon harvest allocations in Washington State. Through these efforts this decision package is also indirectly aligned with Action (ID#206) Ensure sustainable harvest of hatchery and natural salmon and support treaty-reserved fishing rights by increasing WDFW’s hatchery salmon production. Through these efforts this decision packages fulfills the Secondary criteria: support continuity from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan and directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca Taskforce recommendation 6: Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans, and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures, and indirectly implements the Puget Sound relevant Salmon Strategy Recommendation 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

Additional staff positions are associated with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals.

Intergovernmental:

Fish health and mass marking have been long-standing desires among tribal co-managers. As salmon and steelhead populations continue to decline, having strong fish health policies and procedures are critical. Additionally, mass marking salmon and steelhead intended for harvest inform decision making when crafting fishing opportunities for all users as well as providing opportunities for sport and tribal anglers. Support for Hatchery Investment Strategy efforts will be strong from tribal co-managers and federal partners overseeing implementation of fishery and hatchery management for conservation. Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission would also be in support of measures taken to sustain fish health, as required by The Salmonid Disease Control Policy of the Fisheries Co-Managers of Washington State.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Fishing constituents will be supportive of efforts that lead to increased opportunities on salmon and steelhead by maintaining current production levels. WDFW risks losing the support of the recreational fishing community if it reduces fishing opportunities because fish are unable to be mass marked.

State Facilities Impacts:

It is anticipated that positions can be absorbed into existing facilities.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

In addition to RCW 77.95.290 requiring the adipose fin clipping of hatchery released salmonids, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) also requires hatchery raised salmonids (Chinook, coho and steelhead) to be marked prior to their release into the environment allowing for quick visual differentiation from wild populations.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5 - Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery and 5b - Hatchery investments: This package continues to expand the fish health and marking needs to operate large hatchery programs that are aligned with salmon recovery plans.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$216	\$216	\$432	\$285	\$285	\$570
Obj. B	\$84	\$84	\$168	\$111	\$111	\$222
Obj. E	\$31	\$31	\$62	\$40	\$40	\$80
Obj. G	\$92	\$92	\$184	\$125	\$125	\$250
Obj. J	\$1,603	\$0	\$1,603	\$1,603	\$0	\$1,603
Obj. T	\$138	\$138	\$276	\$183	\$183	\$366

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Agency Recommendation Summary

There is increased political and social pressure to diversify the salmon fishing gears used in the lower Columbia River commercial fishery, especially gears with mark-selective capabilities. With an Emerging Commercial Fishery, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife can assess the viability of alternative gears in a commercial setting and use this information to provide recommendations to the legislature on the use of these gears in the future. This request will fund monitoring commercial alternative gear research to inform fishery implementation questions, monitoring for the emerging commercial fishery. Without funding, the Department will not be able to adequately monitor this emerging fishery to inform the viability of alternative commercial gears. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$299	\$299	\$598	\$299	\$299	\$598
Total Expenditures	\$299	\$299	\$598	\$299	\$299	\$598

Decision Package Description

A combination of factors has caused the decline in mainstem commercial fishing opportunity in the Columbia River, including Endangered Species Act (ESA) restrictions, changes to commercial allocations, decreased hatchery production, and current understanding of limitations for other commercial gears. Thus, there is a need to make the most of the commercial allocation provided for in the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) policy by maximizing the harvest of healthy wild and hatchery stocks, while minimizing impacts to unhealthy wild and ESA-listed stocks within harvest constraints.

The impacts of commercial and recreational fisheries are managed through harvest constraints approved by NOAA Fisheries and detailed in management agreements with co-managers. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), along with co-managers, manages commercial and recreational fisheries within those limits, regardless of the gear used or the catch allocation between fisheries.

In 2013, the WFWC adopted Policy C-3620, with the purpose of promoting orderly fisheries, advancing the conservation and recovery of wild salmon and steelhead, and seeking to enhance the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry in the state. Among various provisions, the policy included direction to develop and implement alternative commercial fishing gears for use in the lower Columbia River. Gillnets are presently the primary gear used in commercial salmon fisheries. One alternative gear, the tangle net, was developed in the early 2000s and has been implemented for both spring Chinook and coho. A few additional alternative gears have been in development recently: pound nets (a fixed gear) and seines (mobile gears), which were used in the Columbia River prior to being outlawed in the 1930s.

In 2020, when the Commission reviewed and adopted its new policy, C-3630, they reaffirmed the need to advance the alternative gear provision. The goals of the new policy regarding alternative commercial gear were to promote conservation goals and enhance and optimize economic benefits to commercial and recreational fisheries. In theory, gears with greater selectivity for hatchery fish will harvest more hatchery-origin salmon with the same number of allowable impacts to wild salmon and steelhead. This would extend commercial fishing seasons, as more opportunity would be allowed before meeting harvest constraints and could potentially increase economic benefits to commercial fishers and their communities.

Recently the Department completed rulemaking to designate an Emerging Commercial Fishery (WAC 360-220-510) in the lower Columbia River to further the investigation of alternative gear by allowing pound nets and seines to operate in a commercial setting. The Emerging Commercial Fishery process is defined in state statute (RCW 77.65.400) for assessing the viability of new areas and/or gears for commercial fisheries statewide.

The funds requested will allow the Department to continue to monitor the Emerging Commercial Fishery. This is the best option for addressing the problem, because it allows the Department to work with commercial fishers, stakeholders, and our co-managers over a prescribed length of time (~5-years per RCW 77.70.180), to gather information to inform some of the significant unknowns with alternative gear. Without funds for this proposal, we will be unable to monitor the Emerging Commercial Fishery in the lower Columbia River, and thus will not be able to offer this fishery or collect the information essential to provide recommendations to the state legislature on next steps.

The legislature could decide to circumvent the Emerging Commercial Fishery process and move forward with legalizing these alternative gears.

However, significant unknowns remain for these gears in terms of their potential economic viability (pound nets and purse seines do have high capital costs and substantive operating cost), and their harvest efficiency compared to gill nets and tangle nets. The Emerging Commercial Fishery process allows for some additional time to assess these unknowns in a commercial setting to provide staff with information on which to base a recommendation for gear legalization to the legislature.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Funds were provided in the 2023-25 Operating Budget Bill ESSB 5187 in Section 308(51): “\$250,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$250,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for grants to commercial fishers to modify fishing gear in order to facilitate participation in the emerging commercial fishery in the lower Columbia river, and to fund staffing and supplies needed to monitor the emerging commercial fishery on the lower Columbia river. The purpose of the grants to modify fishing gear is to support the state's efforts to develop fishing tools that allow for increased harvest of hatchery fish while minimizing impacts to salmonid species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal endangered species act. The department must provide a report of goods and services purchased with grant funds to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2025.”

These funds were provided to the Department onetime (budget line-item EXPR) to implement this fishery and will expire June 30, 2025. Because we did not operate a fishery in fiscal year 2024, a portion of the funds were used to provide grants to selected fishers to modify their gear (\$100,000 in FY24). Funds were also used for a few months’ staff time of a Fish and Wildlife Biologist 4 and a Natural Resource Economist to plan and organize the fishery, and to purchase gear and supplies to monitor the fishery. Funding in fiscal year 2025 is focused on staff time needed to monitor the fishery: technicians to observe and sample, and biologists to schedule sampling and perform analyses.

Funding is now being requested to continue the monitoring and implementation of this emerging commercial fishery ongoing.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total \$180,000, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E, include \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s space, supplies, communications, training, and subscriptions, as well as central agency costs. Travel costs, object G, total \$18,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing for six seasonal Scientific Technician 2 staff for 3 months per year. This is based on a DES rental rate of \$40 per day for about 80 days per vehicle for four 4x4 trucks (the Department currently has two additional vehicles that can be used for this work) with about 1,125 miles per vehicle at \$0.30 per mile. This also includes 12, 2-day, 1-night trips totaling \$4,000 for per diem and lodging for the staff listed below. Equipment, object J, totals \$12,000 per FY for PIT tag wands/supplies and processing of genetic samples. An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated work for 2.0 FTE are as follows:

- 0.2 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 4 (\$25,003 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to monitor plan development, oversee fishery planning at North of Falcon and implementation in-season, and prepare reports.
- 0.1 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 (\$10,478 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to supervise technicians, oversee scheduling, and assist with data analyses.
- 1.5 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$130,520 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to perform monitoring, database entry, and organization for observation (six full-time seasonal staff from July to October).
- 0.1 FTE IT App Development – Journey (\$14,891 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to maintain the data collection application and database for the fishery.
- 0.1 FTE Natural Resource Economist – WMS Band 2 (\$14,639 in FY 2026 and ongoing) to develop surveys, methods, and metrics to inform the economic viability of this type of fishery.

Job class salaries and benefits are provided at step L.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal relates to the Results Washington goal of supporting Healthy and Safe Communities and the goal of Prosperous Economy, by supporting living wage jobs. Washington's coastal communities, especially Pacific, Grays Harbor, and Wahkiakum counties have been hit hard by declining natural resource industries. Coastal communities are often heavily reliant on industries targeting natural resource extraction such as timber and fishing to support their economy. It is our intention that the development of alternative gears will provide a path to creating a stable, economically viable fishery in the lower Columbia River by allowing fishers and managers to choose the best tool(s) with which to harvest the most hatchery-origin fish, while remaining within our conservation objectives.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

The Department's 25 Year Strategic Plan identifies shifts in how we do things now, to better serve our residents in the future. This decision package addresses the following strategies:

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

This budget request supports strategic plan strategy #1: This request proactively addresses conservation challenges by expanding current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish species. One example of how this could occur is by allowing more gear options for fishers and managers to choose from to select the best gear for the job. Specifically, the use of alternative gears in areas where gillnets do not operate, may provide commercial fishers with more fishing opportunity, and could further reduce the number of hatchery origin fish that escape fisheries to spawn.

The Columbia River was historically one of the key food fish fisheries in the state, providing fresh salmon to Washington families that can't access that fresh protein on their own. By supporting this fishery, this project will also support strategic plan strategy #2: "Engage communities through recreation and stewardship." This funding package also would allow us to engage communities through recreation and stewardship over the long term by championing our partner efforts with the commercial fleet and working collaboratively to achieve shared objectives. Since implementation of alternative gears is dependent on the commercial industry's interest and ability to make these gears economically viable, we need their input and support for all facets of alternative gear development.

This budget request supports strategic plan strategy #3: "Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions." By developing and implementing alternative gears, this request will support the development of a mixed gear commercial fishery that will provide fisheries managers with more flexibility for managing our fisheries.

WDFW Activity Inventory

- Manage Fishing Opportunities, 2.0 FTE and \$299,000 fiscal year 2026 and \$299,000 fiscal year 2027 ongoing - State General Fund.

This package supports our activity inventory item "Manage Fishing Opportunities" and applicable supporting strategy: Enforce commercial fishing opportunities and regulations. WDFW is responsible for the management of Washington State commercial and recreational fisheries. Management of these fisheries includes maintaining compliance with complex intersections of tribal treaties, international agreements, case law, federal Endangered Species Act restrictions, and monitoring of species health and populations. To manage fisheries, the Department monitors and manages populations of both shellfish and fin fish, develops negotiates and implements fisheries co-management plans, and markets and sells fishing licenses and manages licenses for commercial fishing groups. To effectively manage fisheries, the Department maintains enforcement presence in all state waters.

Performance Outcomes:

Continuing to implement this new fishery, as directed by our Commission in our Columbia River Salmon Fisheries Policy (C-3630), will be critical for informing the utility and economic viability of alternative gears in the lower Columbia River commercial fishery. If the gears prove viable through the Emerging Commercial Fishery process, then having multiple tools in our gear toolbox will enable fishers to maximize the harvest of hatchery and healthy wild stocks, while minimizing impacts to ESA-listed and other non-target species.

This funding will allow the agency to make progress on the following Performance Outcomes:

- Value of commercial fishing in Washington State
- Mark-selective fisheries
- Fisheries in compliance with harvest protection goals

This proposal will support the management of sustainable fisheries and will allow us to build more consistency and reliability into our management approach so we can provide a more viable commercial fishery. Additionally, this proposal aims to increase mark-selective fishery capability through gear options such as pound nets. Finally, the development of alternative gears could result in further increases in harvest of hatchery-origin salmon using mark-selective gear, while remaining within our harvest constraints.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department committed to improving and evolving community engagement with systemically excluded and marginalized communities. Those most directly affected by this proposal are commercial fishers that fish in the lower Columbia River. We have had a Columbia River Alternative Gear Advisory Board/workgroup in place since 2019 to help advise the Department on how to move forward with developing and implementing alternative gear, and we met with them consistently as rules for this fishery were developed. Since then, we have discussed this fishery at North of Falcon public meetings, in targeted meetings with the selected fisher, and have transitioned the board to a workgroup to keep folks in the industry apprised of new developments.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Having alternatives to commercial gillnets may provide communities with options for choosing the best tool for the job in terms of balancing the harvest of target fish while optimizing how impacts to non-target fish are utilized to stay within the various fishery harvest constraints, for the non-treaty fishery as a whole and for the recreational and commercial sectors. However, the ability of a fisher to utilize alternative gear will depend in part on the commercial viability of the gear, which the Department is investigating with this new fishery.

Target Communities and Populations:

Most of the Columbia River commercial fishers reside in Wahkiakum, Pacific, Grays Harbor, Cowlitz, and Clark counties in Washington. These commercial fishers help provide high quality, locally harvested salmon to Washington residents who don't choose to or can't afford to fish for it for themselves. They ensure that this public resource is available to the general public.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

We have had a Columbia River Alternative Gear Advisory Board/workgroup in place since 2019, to help advise the Department on how to move forward with developing and implementing alternative gear, and we met with them consistently as rules for this fishery were developed. Their input directly influenced our fishery rules in terms of how our participant lottery was conducted, and what the terms of the permits/licenses are. Most notably the board supported having observers for each day of fishing with each gear, thus dictating the need for a prescribed number of observers.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable.

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

Fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River are managed jointly with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The Washington and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commissions developed similar policies for development and use of alternative gear, so ODFW is anticipated to be supportive of this effort. The four treaty tribes of the Columbia Basin will be kept apprised of any alternative gear developments and will participate in review of any technical data. One of the four county governments that border the Washington side of the Columbia below Bonneville, Wahkiakum County, has expressed concern about the ongoing loss of commercial fishing opportunity, and may be supportive of efforts to increase commercial fishing activity.

Permitting and siting of fixed gear such as pound nets will require collaboration among county (i.e., Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, and Clark), state (WDFW, Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources), and federal government entities (the United States Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the United States Coast Guard). Although one pound net has currently been installed for research in Washington to date, the Department anticipates permitting for commercial use to involve much more public engagement and it is unknown how long this process will take for the currently installed site, and for any additional sites.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Impacted stakeholders include commercial harvesters and processors, recreational fishers, and conservation organizations. Reactions from the commercial industry will be mixed; some active support for development of new gears and some reservations about replacing existing gears. Those concerns include the increased capital and operational costs associated with the new gears, the change from a gear that requires only a single operator to gears that must be fished with a crew, and political concerns about whether the initial investment required will be recovered.

Recreational support will also likely be mixed. Many recreational fishers believe that gillnets should no longer be used in the Columbia salmon fisheries and will support their replacement with other gears. Others will be opposed, either due to opposition to commercial fisheries in general, or due to the removal of large numbers of marked fish which will reduce success rates in fisheries operating upstream of the commercial gears.

Many conservation organizations will be supportive. One organization participated in development of the pound net as an alternative gear, and strongly supports further implementation. Most conservation organizations support development of mark-selective commercial and recreational gears to increase fishing opportunity and minimize impacts to bycatch. Some organizations may be opposed to installation of fixed gears if siting interferes with meaningful recreational fishing opportunities, river navigability or aesthetic river value.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is responsive to Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Policy C-3630, and the findings of the recent five-year review of the previous policy, C-3620. That review found that implementation of alternative gear was not meeting the initial expectations of the policy, and the Commission concluded that additional resources were necessary to achieve this objective. This proposal is also responsive to a legislative proviso in Section 308(65) of the supplemental operating budget (ESSB 5693, Laws of 2022), which directs the Department to provide recommend changes in program funding to the legislature, to allow for the development and implementation of mark-selective commercial fishing gears.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5a - Harvest management and 5a - Harvest management: This package continues the development of fishing methods that align with salmon recovery, especially through the expansion of gear types that allow for successful release of non-target fish.

Reference Documents

[EF Reference Documents.docx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$127	\$127	\$254	\$127	\$127	\$254
Obj. B	\$53	\$53	\$106	\$53	\$53	\$106
Obj. E	\$16	\$16	\$32	\$16	\$16	\$32
Obj. G	\$18	\$18	\$36	\$18	\$18	\$36
Obj. J	\$12	\$12	\$24	\$12	\$12	\$24
Obj. T	\$73	\$73	\$146	\$73	\$73	\$146

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The enacted 2023-25 biennial budget for ongoing forest health and fuel reduction efforts moved the funding from the capital budget to the Forest Resiliency Account, reduced biennial funding from \$6 million to \$4 million, and restricted the funding to one-time. The enacted 2024 Supplemental added \$2 million per fiscal year ongoing from the Natural Climate Solutions Account, resulting in \$4 million for the 2025-27 biennium. WDFW requests restoration of the previous funding level at \$6 million per biennium. The additional \$2 million provides mandated cultural resources review of all forest projects, and for the prescribed burn crews which implement 4,000 acres per biennium of treatments, contributing to ecological health, habitat for critical species, reduced wildfire risk, and resilience to climate change.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Total Expenditures	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000

Decision Package Description

Problem/Opportunity:

WDFW-managed lands play a unique role in strategies for forest resilience. These lands are often at mid-elevation areas located between federal (e.g., U.S. Forest Service), other state (Department of Natural Resources) lands, and local communities. Some wildlife areas are at the urban-forest interface, a crucial area to reduce wildfire risk to local communities. Wildlife areas are also critical to species and habitat recovery, providing baseline ecological health conditions upon which investments in biodiversity and species recovery build. Although statewide in focus, a 2019 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee report outlined:

- More than 67% of wildlife area acres are ecological systems of concern;
- Almost 75% of wildlife area acres are ecological systems especially important to Species of Greatest Conservation Need;
- More than 81 non-fish Species of Greatest Conservation Need are known to occur, or have occurred on WDFW wildlife areas;
- State and federal listing status applies to 53, and 16 species, respectively;
- Federally listed fish species have been documented on 19 wildlife areas; and
- Federal critical habitat has been designated on 20 wildlife areas.

WDFW's Forest Health and Fuel Reduction activities support these landscapes and species, reduce wildfire risk, and improve resilience. Since 2014, WDFW has treated over 26,000 acres.

This proposal requests \$2 million of funding in addition to \$4 million of current funding to restore funding levels from the previous two biennia for a total of \$6 million per biennium. Funding for the forest health and resilience projects support WDFW's mission-critical work to improve WDFW-managed lands' ecological integrity that supports habitats, species, climate resilience, and reduces wildfire risk to surrounding communities.

Additional Background

WDFW serves residents and visitors by protecting, restoring, and enhancing the ecosystems that support fish and wildlife. WDFW manages over 1 million acres of land in wildlife areas across the state, including about 200,000 acres of forested lands, approximately 100,000 of which are feasible for forest health treatments. The mid-elevation placement of these lands makes them critical to the overall landscape resilience of Washington's forests and community safety. WDFW has a successful track record of significant forest health treatments since 2014.

Current funding for the forest health program is insufficient to continue the landscape-level progress needed for fish, wildlife, forests, and communities that WDFW is poised to achieve. WDFW used almost \$3 million in grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to complete projects over and above the \$6 million provided in the 2023-25 biennium budget, further demonstrating both the need and successful use of the funding received. Restoring the full funding need allows for implementation of the full suite of forest health activities necessary on WDFW-managed lands.

Forest health has been in decline for decades in Washington state and other western states. Significant losses in ecosystem health, function and resilience are due to ecosystem stressors and past land management activities, such as insect infestations, invasive species introductions, disease control activities, increased severity wildfires, active fire suppression, and landscape fragmentation from development. While many of the lands WDFW manages are critical ecosystems for species of concern, they are often acquired at lower levels of ecological health and are shifting from a forest production management goal to ecosystem health goals.

Alongside federal and state agencies (including WDFW), tribes, communities, private landowners, and timber industry, DNR responded with the 2020 Forest Health Strategic Plan – Eastern Washington, which set an ambitious goal to conduct 1.25 million acres of scientifically-sound, landscape-scale, cross-boundary management and restoration treatments in priority watersheds to increase forest and watershed resilience by 2037. This goal set forth an “All Lands, All Hands” approach to work across government agencies, tribes, and private parties to restore the health and resilience of eastern Washington forests. This decision package focuses on continuation of this strategy and the 2014 Management Strategy for WDFW’s Forests, implementing over 100,000 acres of treatments on WDFW-managed wildlife areas in eastern Washington.

Current WDFW forest health management activities reduce fuel hazards, restore forest health, and improve ecosystems degraded by prolonged fire exclusion. As shown in the attached supporting documentation, treatments have reduced fuel loading and increased vegetative diversity. Continued investment at previous funding amounts will allow WDFW to maintain the following actions:

- Reduce elevated risks of insect and disease problems, especially on wildlife areas within high priority watersheds identified in the DNR 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan where landowners are strongly encouraged to actively restore forests in association with strategic, landscape-scale restoration strategies.
- Reduce elevated risks to life and property both on wildlife areas and in nearby communities where wildfire would likely have severe impacts.
- Improve habitat quality for wildlife dependent on healthy dry forests.
- Improve watershed conditions for listed salmon, such as supporting a healthier hydrologic cycle, which results in improved instream flows, as well as provide large wood for salmon recovery projects where possible.
- Improve soil health with prescribed burning, which adds valuable nutrients.
- Enhance the health of fire-dependent plant species.
- Enhance recreational opportunities by improving game habitat quality and reducing the likelihood of wildfire-related closures that restrict public access.

Proposal:

Enacted in 2024, ESSB 5950 Section 308(31), the supplemental budget identified:

(31) \$4,000,000 of the forest resiliency account—state appropriation and \$2,000,000 of the natural climate solutions account—state appropriation are provided solely to reduce severe wildfire risk and increase forest resiliency through fuels reduction, thinning, fuel break creation, and prescribed burning on agency lands. The amounts provided in this subsection may not be used to fund agency indirect and administrative expenses. If Initiative Measure No. 2117 is approved in the 2024 general election, upon the effective date of the measure, funds from the consolidated climate account may not be used for the purposes in this subsection.

Of this funding, only the \$2 million per fiscal year is ongoing; therefore, WDFW requests restoration of the full \$6 million per biennium to continue forest health treatments, which includes activities as described above. The \$6 million supports staffing levels, equipment, and travel costs for all thinning and fuel-reduction activities, as well as prescribed burning. For the purposes of this decision package, the \$2 million is best characterized as the funding that supports cultural resources regulatory review of all forest health projects, *and* the biennial target of 4,000 acres of prescribed burn projects that complete forest health improvements.

Funding in this decision package will fulfill mandated cultural resources review for all forest health projects, including prescribed burns. Although WDFW received funding to assist with implementing these reviews in 2023, the number of reviews across all WDFW operations and capital projects necessitates additional, dedicated staff and sufficient associated resources. This is especially important for Tribes, building partnerships during cultural reviews is critical to protecting and enhancing tribal resources. Some projects have improved relationships and supported more sustainable harvest of native plants for medicinal or cultural practices.

The prescribed burn crews are located in Yakima and Okanogan counties, both of which have median incomes half or less than the state average. Providing high-paying, skilled jobs in these areas can help maintain and build local economies.

In areas where burns take place, the activity can generate small economic gains with local purchases. Where some of the wildlife areas are a part of local communities' recreation or natural resource economy, the prescribed burns support longer-term recreational economic activity. Burns also protect economic activity, decreasing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and such impacts on local communities directly, as well as indirect income derived from continued recreational uses.

Forest Health and Fuel Reduction activities are driven strategically by the 2014 Management Strategy for WDFW's Forests, in partnership with DNR's 2020 Forest Health Strategic Plan – Eastern Washington. WDFW has successfully invested all forest health appropriations since 2017, and in fiscal year 2024, spent the entire \$6 million in the first half of the biennium. Since the 2014 inception of the Forest Health Thinning work, the team has completed 19,965 acres of treatments. Since the 2005 inception of Prescribed Burn work, the team has completed over 10,220 acres of treatments.

As demonstrated in several recent, and local, monitoring studies by DNR, University of Oregon, and the U.S. Forest Service, thinning and prescribed burning provide the greatest values of wildfire risk reduction, ecological health, and support for sensitive species. All these studies demonstrated the significant, targeted improvements by following other forest health activities with prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is an essential investment in forest health, particularly for WDFW, whose landscape focus is on ecological integrity and wildlife.

Alternatives Explored

WDFW developed and evaluated alternatives during the planning process for both the 2014 Management Strategy for WDFW's Forests, as well as the 2020 Forest Health Strategic Plan. The targets and timeline were negotiated results of those plans to achieve necessary protections for communities and forest health. Not acting will significantly increase wildfire risk, harming ecosystem functions, species, habitats, recreational opportunities, human health, community safety, tourism, and local, rural economies. Lack of reliable funding also puts the long-term viability of the forest health program within WDFW at risk. There is a limited pool of qualified staff in this field and WDFW must be able to offer long-term job security to maintain a viable team.

Several alternatives were considered to deal with the existing budget reduction, including:

- Reduce the number of projects for the biennium;
- Reduce the overall sequence of the work to shift costs; and
- No longer hiring crew and exclusively use contractors for prescribed burns.

The Department did not select these alternatives for the following key reasons:

- Considering climate and species recovery needs, all indicators point to the strong need to increase the pace of actions, not maintain status quo, or slow the pace.
- This forest health work provides the foundational ecosystem health and ensures the highest performance for investments in biodiversity and species or habitat recovery efforts.
- WDFW has demonstrated a very strong track record of spending all funds allocated for this work in previous biennia.
- Costs have increased significantly for fuel, equipment, contracting, and other goods and services utilized to complete forest health projects. As demonstrated in an analysis completed by WDFW's natural resource economist, the costs of land management, based on a combined producer price index have increased by 81.9% since 2016.
- The loss of momentum may result in loss of staff and associated institutional knowledge and skill, as they seek work in other organizations where more active, on-the-ground work is happening.
- Relying exclusively on contracted crews does not build the desired institutional knowledge focused on enhancing forest ecological (over economic) health.
- Relying exclusively on contracted crews also significantly increases risk of delayed or cancelled burns, where agencies in the northwest are significantly ramping up prescribed burn activities, resulting in a labor shortage, and increased competition for activities at the same time.
- If not funded, WDFW-managed lands are at higher risk of wildfire, which may have dramatic effects on species, as in the near loss of pygmy rabbits in the shrub-steppe fires in fall of 2020, or in fires that burn very hot and catastrophically burn forests, making recovery more difficult and longer-term.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal restores the \$6 million in funding for Forest Health from previous biennia, as outlined below.

- 2021-23: \$6 million in capital budget for Forest Health and Resiliency
- 2023-25: \$4 million in General Fund State transfers into the Forest Resiliency Account, one-time only
- 2023-25: \$2 million in Natural Climate Solutions, on-going (\$2M/fiscal year), agency indirect removed (to mirror capital appropriations)

The 2024 Supplemental budget identifies \$2 million in on-going funding, per fiscal year, from the Natural Climate Solutions account. This funding totals \$4 million per biennium, \$2 million less than previous biennia funding levels.

This 2025-27 biennium policy level decision package restores the \$2 million in funding to reach the necessary on-going \$6 million of previous biennia to ensure maintaining momentum on this critical work.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Activities funded by this decision package include cultural resources review for all forest health projects, and project implementation by prescribed burn crews.

Cultural Resources, \$128,000 per fiscal year:

At a given point in time, the Cultural Resources team has 25 projects for review in various stages. For the necessary regulatory requirements of Executive Order 21-02, at least one FTE is necessary to ensure these projects are reviewed in a timely fashion. We are also seeking to go beyond the essential review to incorporate other beneficial work, such as including Yakama Nation staff in replanting post-treatment to support Tribal cultural needs for these areas.

- Salaries and Benefits, Objects A&B, total \$120,000 for 1.0 FTE.
- Goods and Services, Object E, totals \$8,000 for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Prescribed Burn Crew, \$872,000 per fiscal year:

- Salaries and Benefits, Objects A&B, total \$790,000 for 8.2 FTE. Average prescribed burn activity with full crews supports 2,000 acres per year, 4,000 per biennium. Overall, the work supports two crews, one "North" crew and one "South" crew, as well as contractors to ensure the projects are implemented safely. This decision package supports the actual project time for the crews, not their administrative time.
- Goods and Services, Object E, totals \$72,000 to include specialized personal protective equipment and \$8,000 per FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- Capital Outlays, Object J, totals \$10,000 for additional fire equipment for use in projects, such as hose, water pumps, and chainsaws.

Other staff involved in prescribed burn activities, such as the program lead and prescribed burn planners are covered under the existing \$4M/biennium on-going funding. Further, the activities for thinning and planting are covered under the existing funding. Activities funded by this decision package include cultural resources review for all forest health projects, and project implementation by prescribed burn crews.

Workforce Assumptions:

Workforce for this decision package focuses on two items: cultural resources review for all forest health projects, and actual project work by prescribed burn crews. Other elements of forest health and prescribed burn work, including prescribed burn planning and administration, are covered in existing, on-going funding for Forest Health. None of these positions are new, this request is to maintain current levels of support. All salary and benefit costs are reflective of percentage of FTE.

All amounts provided below are per fiscal year.

Cultural Resources:

- Archaeologist – Natural Resources Scientist 3, 1.0 FTE, salary: \$88,800, benefits: \$30,656, additional on-going costs: \$8,000
- Performs cultural resources review of potential project impacts for all forest health projects (thinning and prescribed burn).
- Completes field surveys, generates reports.
- Negotiates avoidance, mitigation of impacts with Tribes and other affected parties, as relates to forest health project scope.

Prescribed Burn:

- Prescribed Fire Operations – Environmental Planner 4, 0.2 FTE, salary: \$19,130, benefits: \$6,363, additional on-going costs, \$1,600
 - Provides oversight to all prescribed fire operations.
 - Sets schedules for crews and burns, based on burn plans.
 - Participates in prescribed burn projects.
- Fire Unit Manager – Natural Resources Specialist 5, 1.5 FTE, salary: \$133,200, benefits: \$45,984, additional on-going costs: \$12,000
 - Unit Manager oversees one crew each, providing for administrative oversight (timesheets, safety, training, etc.).
 - Responsible for crew setup for projects, understanding of scope of burn, maintenance of crew equipment and gear.
 - Participates in prescribed fire activities.
- Fire Crew Supervisor – Natural Resources Specialist 3, 1.5 FTE, salary: \$114,912, benefits: \$42,894, additional on-going costs: \$12,000
 - Responsible for day-to-day supervision of crew, completion of tasks from Unit Manager and Operations.
 - Participates in prescribed fire activities.
- Fire Crew – Natural Resources Specialist 1, 5.0 FTE, salary: \$299,220, benefits: \$128,813, additional on-going costs: \$56,000
 - Complete training, maintaining qualifications for safety and fire practice.
 - Implement day-to-day activities in support of prescribed burns.
 - Workforce for this decision package focuses on two items: cultural resources review for all forest health projects, and actual project work by prescribed burn crews. Other elements of forest health and prescribed burn work, including prescribed burn planning and administration, are covered in existing, on-going funding for Forest Health. None of these positions are new, this request is to maintain current levels of support. All salary and benefit costs are reflective of percentage of FTE.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

The Forest Health and Fuel Reduction work meets the following Governor's Results Washington Goal Areas in the following ways.

- A prosperous economy: Forest health and fuel reduction work supports living-wage jobs in rural communities, from timber jobs in thinning, mills, to tourism and recreation associated with healthier wildlife areas.
- Sustainable energy and a clean environment: Projects in the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program steward forested areas for future generations, a heritage provided to us from previous generations and thousands of years of tribal management.
- Health and safe communities: Activities in this program reduce risk to community life, property, and public infrastructure. Reduction in catastrophic fires can improve health through reduced exposure to wildfire smoke and stresses from personal loss.
- Efficient, effective, and accountable government: The Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program has effectively stewarded the funding provided across four biennia of investment – spending all of the funds made available. Further, the program seeks to implement work across the forest landscape by working with sister agencies, private landowners, and federal and tribal lands. The program also seeks ongoing process improvements that reduce overall costs, such as combining Executive Order 21-02 cultural resources reviews for a variety of treatments into a single, phased request for review, saving time and further demonstrating accountability of our cumulative actions on the landscape.

WDFW's strategies outlined in the 25-year Strategic Plan are outlined below, with anecdotal information about how the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program meets the intent of those strategies.

- Proactively address conservation challenges: activities increase resilience; improve biodiversity; and work across agency lines to proactively deal with the forest health challenges. Further, work sustains local economies, which rely on timber and tourism/recreation.
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship: Forest health work is stewardship and seeks to maintain and improve the health of WDFW-managed forested lands for future generations. WDFW uses local contractors whenever possible, contributing to a sustainable restoration economy. Activities also provide for student internships that build skills for future management and stewardship of WDFW-managed lands.
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions: the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program has been at the forefront of land stewardship in the state. For example, the prescribed burn team was the first of its kind in the state to use prescribed burn techniques to improve the ecological health of forests.
- Model operational and environmental excellence: the program meets diversity and inclusion goals and requirements, including mapping out alignment of forest health activities with cultural resource needs and goals, as well as demonstrates transparency in reporting activities.

WDFW wildlife area plans incorporate forest health activities as key to improving the ecological health and integrity of lands for vegetative and wildlife species. Wildlife area plans are a collaborative process that incorporates input from tribes, stakeholders, and across and within programs within the Department. The collective actions of the plans often include forest thinning and prescribed burning as key steps within these focal, forested landscapes to reach ecological integrity.

This decision package is alignment with the WDFW Activity to Acquire and Manage Lands.

Please view our storymap linked below, which outlines the rationale and approach to forest health projects, as well as key examples of the work.

[WDFW Forest Management \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

Performance Outcomes:

This decision package aims to maintain existing staffing and activity levels by restoring funding to funding levels in previous biennia. Therefore, performance outcomes reflect existing work that would proceed. If funding is not provided, staff will need to revisit project planning to adjust workload and project mix. Restoring the \$2 million reduction in funding to the originally proposed \$6 million for the biennium, will:

- Maintain the current minimum 1.0 FTE for required cultural resources review of all forest health projects.
- Treat 4,000 acres of high-priority forested areas through prescribed burn projects.
- Maintain activity and staff focus on on-the-ground results toward healthier forests and resilience, rather than pulling staff off to plan for future projects.
- Maintain the prescribed burn crew for on-the-ground activities, supporting the local restoration economy.

Treated forest areas demonstrate:

- Protection or enhancement of cultural resources across all forest health projects.
- Higher habitat and wildlife diversity.
- Lower risk to ecological health, and to community life, property, and infrastructure.
- Higher resilience to the effects of climate change, including impacts of wildfires.
- Indirect support for local and rural economies, tourism, and recreation opportunities.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW completes community engagement and public outreach through public engagement. Our Communications and Public Engagement division provides the support to realize the Department's commitment to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to prevent degrading services for the communities we serve.

The Forest Health program is actively expanding its outreach to a variety of communities, from recruiting staff for burn crews to how outreach prior to prescribed burns is carried out (e.g., translation and multicultural outreach services to immigrant worker and limited English proficiency communities). These activities take time and require funding, though this decision package itself mainly focuses on the cultural resources review and prescribed burn crews, and the outreach and planning activities are covered in existing funding.

An example of expanded outreach and engagement includes that WDFW has engaged with Tribal partners to hold a cultural burn prior to commencing the full-scale burn at our Scatter Creek wildlife area. Actions in that area are also enhancing rare prairie landscape in western Washington, an area that was very important to tribal use and harvest of native and medicinal plants.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

If this request is not funded, other areas of the budget could be cut, which will cause reductions in other programs and projects currently funded. These reductions are not easily connected to specific communities. However, reducing or eliminating services will hinder the ability to apply an equitable lens as WDFW will be forced to shift resources.

Where cultural resources evaluations and prescribed burn activities overlap with overburdened communities, communities of race, poverty, public health, these communities could all be impacted by work not completed by prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is considered a final step in forest treatments that improve ecological health and reduce risk of catastrophic, high-impact wildfires close to communities. These impacts are taken into account at the strategic level, such as in the 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan for eastern Washington, or planning with the US Forest Service, or during planning for the actual burn projects themselves. Not funding and implementing these projects will continue to impact these communities and further strain local and state resources in supporting recovery.

Target Communities and Populations:

Current funding allows WDFW to support target populations such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted communities. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems so the resources are sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities, and many others, are finding that environmental justice, smart

growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for people in Washington.

Prescribed burn projects take place mostly on wildlife areas or are done in coordination with DNR, Washington State Parks (Parks), and U.S. Forest Service. The areas burned are mostly near rural communities, although given the geographic location of WDFW-managed lands, which are in lower elevations than DNR and USFS lands, they are closer to the wildland-urban interface and have a disproportionately higher risk to communities.

From these perspectives, the communities benefitting from this proposal are:

- Rural communities.
- Often the resource-based economic sector (agricultural, forestry, etc.), including the entire workforce, although this demographic is changing with more people moving to rural communities post-COVID-19.
- Mixed diversity of people, including immigrant workers with English as a second language.

This decision package covers multiple projects on forested lands owned or managed by WDFW, with projects in various stages of development including concepts. Projects may move forward toward implementation or be delayed for a variety of reasons, including regulatory review, potential synergies with other public land agencies, “readiness” of communities or others, staff capacity, climatic conditions, or logistics. Some projects have also been delayed or not taken place, because WDFW could not reach all areas fast enough to stay ahead of wildfires, resulting in critical losses of species, and making recovery more difficult.

While not every project hits every category, and some projects may hit fewer or potentially none, the prescribed burn program overlaps with the following populations or communities:

- Communities sensitive to environmental health, environmental exposure, socioeconomically distressed communities including poverty, race, and public health related.
- Communities considered disadvantaged in the Climate and Economic Social Justice tool.
- Overburdened communities, as defined by Department of Ecology and expanded upon by WDFW.
- Wildlife areas may be adjacent to, or nearby, tribal reservations.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The Forest Health program has been shaped over time through a variety of inputs: plan development, direct contact and outreach, regulatory review, bid processes, working with contractors, and through collaborative venues such as WA DNR’s Forest Health Advisory Committee. Inputs have shaped both the priority and sequence of planned projects, shaped project objectives and outcomes, and in how projects are designed to be more cost effective to implement.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

This proposal will continue to provide funding for positions that were funded in the previous biennium.

Intergovernmental:

This project is consistent with the integrated approach laid out in the DNR 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan. Alternatives included weighing pros and cons of prescribed burning, mechanical thinning, and general fuel load reduction strategies are identified in the DNR Strategic plan. The Department has consistently received support from tribes, conservation districts and local governments for its forest health efforts. The alternative of not acting has been deemed socially unacceptable.

Projects require a cultural resources review, prior to starting. In addition, several projects have directly benefitted tribes, by improving conditions

for medicinal and food plants, or providing large wood for instream or beaver dam analogue projects. Overall, tribal support for forest health projects is good, although projects may not be the center of attention among the many other priorities Tribes may face.

Projects also coordinate actions with other state agencies, sharing resources among agencies to achieve the best results. For example, prescribed burning may utilize a natural break on neighboring state-managed lands, which is both more effective and ecologically sensitive.

Where necessary, projects are coordinated with regional, county, or city governments, whether for permitting, awareness, or reporting. For example, WDFW currently participates in the Yakima Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which coordinates activities of multiple government entities in reducing wildfire risk to the community. These types of community wildfire protection plans exist throughout eastern Washington.

Projects are also coordinated among federal partners, including US Forest Services and Bureau of Land Management, where the landscape level, “all-hands” approach is critical. WDFW has participated in several activities that are coordinated among state and federal agencies to ensure projects maximize the land area and capacity of all public land ownerships.

As part of prescribed burn planning and implementation, Tribes in Washington State are engaged in projects. WDFW recognizes the current intensive context for many Tribes, where the increase in number, scope, and breadth of impacts of projects is a significant challenge to resource-stretched Tribal staff. WDFW has worked with Tribes to make engagement more meaningful overall, and more efficient and effective for our projects, which can have significant positive impacts for tribes. These government-to-government relationships are critical to advancing our work, and we will continue this engagement with our partners in Indian Country.

Stakeholder Impacts:

The impacts of uncharacteristic, catastrophic wildfires that this project helps prevent accumulate to all Washingtonians. A disproportionate percentage of the impacts fall to rural communities where the fires occur and disrupt ecosystem services associated with reduced ecological function (habitat, water, air) as well as economic generation from activities such as reduced recreation and tourism. The health impacts both near and far from the wildfires themselves affect low-income, underserved populations more due to lower overall health and access to quality health care. WDFW-managed lands are positioned at mid-elevation zones, closer to communities, increasing the magnitude of the positive impacts due to the lands’ spatial location. Location of these lands and the restoration activities this proposal implements result in highly effective risk reduction from catastrophic wildfires’ impacts to local communities, their associated economies (e.g., tourism), and impacts to human health (e.g., smoke-related respiratory problems, or mental health due to loss of home or job).

Broadly speaking, the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program impacts, or is impacted by, a variety of stakeholder groups as below.

- Local communities benefit from reduced wildfire risk, local jobs, as well as the many environmental and ecosystem benefits.
- Non-governmental organizations and several nonprofits support the work, recognizing the overall benefits of the program. However, there are some groups that are opposed to the treatments, where they view any management activities as harmful and driven by economic profits. To this point, WDFW has been able to demonstrate benefits and at least gain a passive allowance for the project to proceed.
- Recreation organizations are supportive of management that enhances forest health and resilience, ultimately reducing the incidence of uncharacteristic large wildfires and associated smoke and disruptions to recreating opportunities.

Overall, the Department has consistently received appreciation and support from non-governmental organizations for our forest health program.

State Facilities Impacts:

This decision package is to fund existing staff and therefore there are no new facility space requirements. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

RCW 77.12.880 – Wildlife Program Management: “The Department shall manage wildlife programs in a manner that provides public opportunities to view wildlife and supports nature-based and wildlife viewing tourism without impairing the state’s wildlife resources.” The Forest Health and Fuel Reduction program restores forest habitats that support wildlife species for viewing or other nature-based activities. Further, the restoration activities can result in safer access, where roads and trails are improved, and where risk of catastrophic wildfires is reduced.

RCW 84.34.010 – Open Space, Agricultural, Timber Lands – Current Use, Conservation Futures: “The Legislature hereby declares that it is in the best interest of the state to maintain, preserve, conserve, and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for production of food, fiber, and forest crops, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well-being of the state and its citizens [emphasis added – ed.]. The legislature further declares that assessment practices must be so designed as to permit the continued availability of open space lands for these purposes, and it is the intent of this chapter so to provide...” Funding for Forest Health and Fuel Reduction activities preserves the perpetuation of forest ecosystems, supports local nature-based economies, and provides for mental health and well-being, as demonstrated in the marked increase in use of wildlife areas during and following the pandemic.

Executive Order 21-02 – Archaeological and Cultural Resources – all projects are reviewed for their potential impacts, positive or negative, to archaeological and cultural resources. Where possible, prescribed burning impacts seek to enhance cultural resources. Where impacts are likely negative, areas for burning are adjusted, or practices changed to either avoid, or mitigate for impacts. Post-burn, WDFW’s cultural resources team often surveys sites to identify cultural resources that are otherwise covered by vegetation that is burned off. Information from post-burn surveys enhances our ability to evaluate impacts from other projects in the future.

Centennial Accord between the Federally-recognized Tribes of Washington State, and the State of Washington – prescribed burning planning and implementation follow the Centennial Accord, respecting Tribal sovereignty, inviting tribes to participate in planning and implementation of our activities, and seeking to enhance management of our landscapes to support tribal harvest. Forest Health activities are reported annually.

Forest restoration, wildfire protection, and wildfire prevention require an all-lands, all hands approach. Successful delivery of the 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan and related plans (the Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan and the Washington State Forest Action Plan, as referenced in 2SHB 1168, Section 2) requires a cohesive and synergistic approach that spans state agencies and non-state partners. Extensive, long-term funding is required to meet the full breadth and depth of need and legislative intent of 2SHB 1168 and we continue to support the integrated partnership of our state agencies and strongly encourage full and robust support of associated budget requests from the Wildfire Protection, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account (the Account) and other General Fund and Capital Fund sources by DNR, Parks, and Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC).

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

- [Ramsey Creek -Methow Wildlife Area Forest Management.pdf](#)
- [Sinlahekin WLA Spring 2018 Prescribed Burn.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$655	\$655	\$1,310	\$655	\$655	\$1,310
Obj. B	\$255	\$255	\$510	\$255	\$255	\$510
Obj. E	\$80	\$80	\$160	\$80	\$80	\$160
Obj. J	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$10	\$10	\$20

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The long-term conservation and recreation value of lands managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), representing billions of dollars in public assets, is at risk. The growing costs to steward these lands and increasing demand for the services they provide have outpaced the capacity needed and funding available for maintaining their integrity. WDFW requires funding to address urgent near-term needs and support a transition to a proactive and comprehensive approach to conserving natural and cultural resources and managing recreation on 1 million-plus acres across the state. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation].

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	16.0	29.6	22.8	29.6	29.6	29.6
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$3,503	\$6,445	\$9,948	\$6,403	\$6,403	\$12,806
Total Expenditures	\$3,503	\$6,445	\$9,948	\$6,403	\$6,403	\$12,806

Decision Package Description

The State of Washington has invested hundreds of millions of dollars acquiring land to place under WDFW stewardship. Today, these diverse holdings represent billions of dollars of conservation and recreation assets, which the agency has a fiduciary, contractual, and mission-critical obligation to manage to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable recreational and commercial opportunities.

WDFW is responsible for managing lands to maintain or improve the ecological integrity of priority sites and habitats, promote functional diversity, preserve treaty rights, maintain game and non-game populations at levels consistent with healthy ecosystems, and provide quality recreation opportunities to diverse visitors. Today, the department is only partially meeting this obligation. Current funding requires WDFW to manage wildlife areas at approximately 16-40% of the per acre need and water access areas at 47-51% of the need per site (see assumptions below summarized Table 3). Effects of inadequate stewardship include loss of critical habitat and species; public lands and infrastructure degradation by wildfire, climate change, or pressures from development; and failure to respond proactively to the growing demand for outdoor recreation and address its impacts.

This package offers immediate progress meeting the department's most urgent land stewardship needs, while building the long-term tools and structure to prioritize and adapt future investments. Near-term and ongoing needs include statewide weed management; local habitat restoration and infrastructure maintenance; real estate asset management; and improving recreation access and safety, while addressing impacts from increased use. Long-term stewardship tools supported by this proposal include metrics and methods for monitoring species and habitat health; data and an improved model for measuring visitation use levels and patterns; and an analysis of the department's true per acre costs of stewardship.

Summary of priority investments

An investment of \$10 million in biennium 2025-27 with an ongoing investment of \$13 million per biennium will improve near- and long-term stewardship across the department's 1 million-plus acres of land. This request includes support to 1) address urgent lands stewardship needs, 2) implement the 10-year recreation strategy, and 3) build systems, tools, and relationships for long-term stewardship.

1: Address Urgent Lands Stewardship Needs

Goal: Improve compliance with state mandates to manage weeds and protect cultural resources, while addressing immediate local planning, stewardship, and project management needs.

WDFW proposes a \$5.3 million investment in land and property management to improve stewardship across 1 million-plus acres of state lands. This adds 14 new full-time positions, converts 8 seasonal part-time positions to full-time, adds one new part time position, and includes \$444 thousand in contracted services. Taken together, this will address immediate statewide management needs for weed treatment, infrastructure

repairs, wildlife area planning, wildlife area management, real estate portfolio management, and cultural resources review.

Manage invasive weeds: Invasive noxious weeds pose a serious and growing threat to the ecological health of department-managed and adjacent lands, including agricultural areas. A new statewide effort for setting weed management priorities will allocate weed management resources across department-managed wildlife and water access areas and help us meet increased reporting requirements and adaptive management needs. Regional capacity will be bolstered in key areas, including funding to contract management services and a Washington Conservation Corps crew where they are most needed across the state.

Update plans to reflect changing conditions: The management of each wildlife area is guided by a management plan that addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, habitat restoration, public recreation, weed management, and other activities to advance the department's mission. Currently, plans are updated only once every 15 years. This proposal provides capacity for more frequent updates that include staff, partners including tribes, and stakeholders in decision-making responding to new conditions and priorities over the life of each plan.

Support understaffed wildlife areas: Local staff direct stewardship and operational activities at each of our 33 wildlife areas. Typical activities include engaging with the public and local and regional partners; advancing resource restoration efforts; and maintaining equipment and infrastructure. Currently, wildlife area staff are stretched thin caretaking huge tracts of land dispersed over wide geographies. We propose augmenting staffing in targeted areas and contracting funding for critical infrastructure repairs.

Improve Real Estate portfolio management: WDFW proposes retaining the Real Estate Unit's critical capacity to meet expanded payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) responsibilities to counties, accommodate growing property management needs, and growing capacity to address expanding permitting demands in Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Pacific, Pierce and Thurston counties.

Perform mandated cultural resource reviews: Cultural resource reviews are mandated on many stewardship projects, including smaller-scale projects, such as kiosk and gate installation, medium-scale projects, such as fence installation and construction of wildlife habitat, and broader scale projects such as landscape-scale restoration projects and new infrastructure development. We propose increasing staff capacity by 25% to meet the cultural resource demands for expanded lands stewardship work.

Bottom line: Meeting near-term needs in critical areas adds conservation "lift" for diverse wildlife and habitats, mitigates impacts on cultural and tribal resources, and increases the quality of visitor experiences on highly visited WDFW-managed lands.

2: Implement the 2022 Recreation Strategy

Goal: Conserve natural and cultural resources while enhancing recreation access and experiences.

Implementing the next phase of the [10-year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands](#) (Strategy) includes stepping up maintenance and planning for targeted areas, including North Puget Sound; statewide and area-specific rulemaking to address safety and resource impact concerns from diverse uses; and on-the-ground projects to address travel on roads and trails, camping in dispersed and designated areas, ADA accessibility, visitor education, and other demands in high traffic areas.

Maintain popular water access areas: We propose adding maintenance capacity in WDFW region 2 (Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan counties) to perform daily maintenance duties, including trash and graffiti removal, restroom cleaning, and other grounds projects.

Reduce resource damage via rulemaking: We propose enacting rules to protect elk and streams by regulating the collection of shed antlers and use of streambank easements. We also will develop area-specific rules to respond to specific conservation needs identified in local wildlife, water access, and recreation management plans. Subjects for area-specific rules may include, but are not limited to camping, dog walking, and access hours.

Plan for increasing recreation demand: Recreation and/or travel management plans will address conservation and recreation needs in four wildlife areas statewide and 125 water access areas in region 4 (North Puget Sound).

Deliver local recreation projects: Projects will include road and trail designation, decommissioning and improvements, interpretive and informational signage at key entry points, and educational programming to promote safe, responsible recreation. WDFW will engage with affected tribes and stakeholders in delivering these projects and contract partners to work with paid and volunteer crews across the state.

Bottom line: This investment will build on 3 years of momentum behind the [10-year Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed Lands](#) and benefit all Washingtonians and the many visitors to the state that enjoy the outdoors.

3: Build Tools, Methods, and Partnerships for Long-term Stewardship

Goal: Equip the department along with partners and funders to better identify, scale, prioritize, and fund investments in the long-term stewardship of WDFW-managed lands.

Effective and efficient long-term stewardship requires tools for measuring and monitoring the ecological health of department-managed lands; refining estimates for the true per acre costs; and measuring and monitoring visitation. This work is best done with partners and across land management boundaries, including Washington tribes and other state agencies.

Measure and monitor ecological health: WDFW is working with DNR's Natural Heritage Program, State Parks, Washington Tribes and other partners to develop an ecological integrity framework applicable to Washington state-managed lands with guidelines for the efficient collection, management, and analysis of data. For the 2025-27 biennium, WDFW proposes further development and testing of the framework and its early implementation as a tool to benchmark and guide future stewardship efforts.

Estimate true stewardship costs: We know we steward our portfolio at a deficit. The department will partner with Washington Sea Grant and the University of Washington to develop a system for measuring and evaluating the true per acre costs of stewarding WDFW-managed lands. The cost model will include evaluation of diversity and equity in use of WDFW-managed lands, identify how funding levels may affect different communities, and seek equitable funding distribution within the cost structure. Further, the model will incorporate learning from the three state-agency work to manage impacts to state lands to identify opportunities and costs associated with Tribal Treaty Rights. (State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Initiative).

Measure and monitor recreation use: In partnership with DNR, State Parks, and Earth Economics, WDFW will refine our model for estimating visitation to state lands based on anonymized cell phone data and maintain these updated visitor use data. This will help the agencies better understand where and when visitation is highest and/or growing, which are key data points for prioritizing when and where to invest in recreation management.

Maintain working relationships with tribes and other state partners. WDFW has undertaken a first of its kind effort together with State Parks and DNR, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), and Tribes with protected rights in Washington to assess and improve management of recreation impacts across state-managed lands and waters. Work to date has included developing a draft working charter (see Attachment 1), which includes a vision statement, communication principles, organization structure (steering committee and workgroups), decision-making processes, and a technical framework to guide this joint effort. Work during the current biennium will advance cooperative development of standardized resource assessment and adaptive management methodologies and identify priority geographies in which to apply the methodologies during the 2025-27 biennium.

WDFW proposes funding to support the department's contributions to this collaborative effort. Each of the participating state agencies has developed an agency-specific budget request for contributing to this effort. Together, these requests will enable collective ongoing participation for state agencies and tribes, as well as initial implementation of its work products. See Assumptions below for details on the coordinated multi-agency 2025-27 biennial budget requests.

Bottom line: Managing department-managed lands for ecological integrity is integral to WDFW's mission and we are in this for the long haul. Investing in tools, methods, and partnerships will allow WDFW to better apply its portfolio holdings to the state's scientifically defined conservation need and inform planning and adaptive management of department lands with measures of ecological integrity.

Alternatives Explored

Status quo: Failure to address the widening capacity gap for stewarding department-managed lands risks the continued degradation of their conservation and recreation value and the department's ability to meet our statutory and fiduciary responsibilities. There is also risk of losing good professional staff demoralized by their inability to fully succeed in their work as stewards.

Grant funding: WDFW pursues federal, state, local, and nonprofit grants. The volume of proposals submitted is delimited by existing capacity for grant-writing, contract management, and reporting. The needs outlined in this proposal are far greater than available grant opportunities and grant seeking capacity.

Downsizing: A long-term option for right sizing capacity for land stewardship would involve selling off department assets. However, divesting department-owned lands on any meaningful scale is not a viable alternative due to requirements to maintain the conservation and recreation value in perpetuity, a common condition for most land purchased by the Department.

The most viable alternative is a phased increase of capacity to meet the full need over the next several biennia. This proposal represents the next phase for meeting the department's fiduciary, contractual, and mission-critical obligations.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

WDFW proposes expanding focus and capacity to meet existing obligations associated with the department's 1,054,473-acre portfolio.

Coordinated Multi-Agency Requests

Agency budget requests from WDFW, State Parks, DNR and GOIA for the 2025-27 biennium will enable ongoing participation in an Interagency-Tribal effort to address recreation impacts on treaty rights and tribal lifeways – the State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Initiative. Successful implementation will depend on deliverables within, and unique to, each agency-specific budget request.

Funds requested by DFW, DNR, and State Parks include:

- Coordination and technical staffing and natural resource assessments in requests submitted by DFW, DNR, and State Parks
- Contracted services for acquisition and management of recreation use data submitted by DFW (\$250K)
- Funding for ongoing cross-agency costs in support of the effort, which includes:
 - Contracted facilitation and intermediary services (\$275K)
 - Contracted Tribal ethnographic studies (\$300K)
 - Two annual state-Tribal information sharing conferences (\$50K)
 - Funding for Tribes to support participation in this effort (\$6.2M)

The lead agency for requesting these funds will be determined in consultation with the Office of Financial Management.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Land Management Costs

Land management costs change over time, due to shifting priorities and expectations, regulatory regimes, levels of service, and inflation. WDFW manages 33 wildlife areas across the state. A 2016 analysis identified five cost categories for wildlife area stewardship based on use and amount of infrastructure (Attachment 3). The analysis yielded a range of \$32 to \$224 per acre and median cost of \$52 per acre. In March 2024, WDFW completed a preliminary analysis of the change in costs from 2016 to 2024 using a combined producer price index approach developed by U.S. Department of the Interior. Costs for land management activities performed have increased 81.9% since 2016. This analysis suggests that WDFW's median \$52 per acre costs in 2016 have nearly doubled in eight years to \$95 per acre in 2024 (Attachment 4).

WDFW manages 450+ water access areas. In 1991, WDFW conducted a detailed assessment of the department's capacity to manage these popular recreation sites and determined they were operated at 35% of "Full-Service Standard." Operations and maintenance funding continued to decline from 1991 to 2021 as the annual budget for water access areas remained flat with no adjustment for inflation or expanded service hours. Adjusting the 1991 figures for inflation gives a current estimate for meeting Full-Service Standard at \$14,000 per site.

Table 3 estimates the gaps between spending and estimated need associated with Wildlife Area lands (calculated on a per acre basis) and Water Access Areas (calculated on a per site basis). Based on an average of the dollars spent per unit, WDFW spends \$38 per acre on Wildlife Areas and \$7,300 per site on Water Access Areas. Current budget sufficiency is calculated using two methods. One way is simply comparing the fiscal year 2023 average amount spent versus the average estimated need. For Wildlife Areas, \$38 per acre is 40% of the estimated minimum \$95 per acre need. For Water Access Areas, \$7,300 is 51% of the estimated \$14,400 need. The second way is to compare the total amount spent across all Wildlife Areas and Water Access Areas in fiscal year 2023 to the estimated need amount of the average per acre or per site rate. For Wildlife Areas, \$16.2 million was spent in fiscal year 2023, which is 16% of the need estimated by multiplying the \$95 per acre by the acreage of 1,054,473. For Water Access Areas, \$3.2 million was spent across the system, which is 47% of the need estimated by multiplying the \$14,400 per site by the 477 sites. As such, WDFW stewards wildlife areas at 16-40% of the overall need and our Water Access Areas at 47-51% of our need. Regardless of the method, it is clear there is a substantial gap in the current funding for properly stewarding the WDFW Lands portfolio. These estimated needs are the best we are able to do with our current information. Further analysis to be developed using funding from this decision package will refine these numbers and identify the stewardship funding target.

Table 3: Estimated per unit and portfolio wide gaps for stewardship of Wildlife Areas and Water Access Area (based on 477 water access areas and 1,054,473 of WDFW-managed lands).

	Estimated Need	FY23\$ average per unit	FY2023 System-Wide Budget	Estimated Current Need that is Secured
Wildlife Area Lands	\$95/ acre	\$38/ acre	\$16,266,503	16 - 40%
Water Access Areas	\$14,400 per site	\$7,300/site	\$3,228,636	47-51%



1: Address Urgent Lands Stewardship Needs, \$1,898,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$3,807,000 in fiscal year 2027. Ongoing costs beyond the 2025-27 biennium are \$3,765,000 per fiscal year:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$931,000 for 9.6 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,873,000 for 18.20 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing, working to address urgent lands stewardships needs.

Personal services contracts, Object C, totals \$222,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$352,000 in fiscal year 2027 for research and development for O&M rate basis and tracking system, weed control services, and quality control inspectors. The ongoing amount is \$320,000 per fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 2028.

Goods and services, Object E, totals \$151,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$265,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing to include \$104,000 for weed control supplies, native seed, and wildlife area supplies and tools. \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Travel, Object G, totals \$130,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$386,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing including vehicle costs and overnight accommodations due to the large geographic scope of the work – both statewide for those positions and within regions or wildlife areas due to the geographic spread of water access areas and wildlife area units.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

2: Implement the 2022 Recreation Strategy, \$800,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,543,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$356,000 for 3.4 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and \$674,000 for 6.4 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing, working to implement the 2022 Recreation Strategy.

Personal services contracts, Object C, totals \$188,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$375,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for contracts with

nonprofit partners to deliver on-the-ground projects, including inventory and assessment of roads and trails with analysis for accessibility; trail and campsite development and maintenance; onsite interpretation and visitor services, including Ambassador Program and signage; restoration of recreation-affected areas utilizing volunteers and/or paid staff; cultural resources expertise to review projects for potential impacts on Tribes and archaeological resources.

Goods and services, Object E, totals \$30,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$57,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. Costs include \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Travel, Object G, totals \$30,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$60,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing including vehicle costs and overnight accommodations for the due to the large geographic scope of the work – both statewide for those positions and within regions or wildlife areas due to the geographic spread of water access areas and wildlife area units.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

3: Build Tools, Methods, and Partnerships for Long-term Stewardship, \$805,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,095,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A&B, totals \$390,000 for 3.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and \$629,000 for 6.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing, working to build tools, methods, and partnerships for long-term stewardship.

Personal services contracts, Object C, totals \$150,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$100,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for a visitation measurement contract and for modeling ecological integrity analysis and results.

Goods and services, Object E, totals \$39,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$46,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing, including survey and data management equipment and supplies. Costs include \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee’s supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Travel, Object G, totals \$29,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$52,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing including vehicle costs and overnight accommodations for collaborative conferences and to monitor ecological integrity data of WDFW-managed lands.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW’s federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Workforce Detail:

Position Name	Summary of Priority Duties	Total FTE	
		FY 2026	Ongoing
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT 3	0.7 FTE - Support the Real Estate Services Unit to ensure operation and fiscal efficiencies.	0.5	0.7
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER 3	3.0 FTE - Statewide wildlife area planners collaborate with internal and external subject matter experts, tribes, and stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, develop goals and objectives for wildlife areas, and create wildlife area plans.	1.5	3.0
ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST 5	0.2 FTE - Lead coordination, partnership, outreach, and grant management for estuary restoration projects on wildlife areas.	0.2	0.2
FISH & WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST 2	3.0 FTE - Assistant Managers for Scatter Creek, Simcoe, and North Olympic areas to manage on-the-ground conditions for habitat, recreation and infrastructure.	1.8	3.0
FISH & WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST 3	1.0 FTE - Statewide weed coordination. 1.0 FTE - Wildlife Area Manager for Mt. St. Helen's and Shillapoo. 2.0 FTE - Conduct place-based ecological assessment monitoring to inform adaptive management to maintain and enhance ecological integrity.	1.5	4.0

FISH & WILDLIFE RESEARCH SCIENTIST 1	0.5 FTE - Retain current position supporting the scientific analysis and development of monitoring tools and protocols to maintain and enhance ecological integrity; position is currently funded with expiring proviso funds.	0.5	0.5
IT DATA MANAGEMENT JOURNEY	0.5 FTE - Retain current position that is developing and manages a data system for incoming ecological assessment data; position is currently funded with expiring proviso funds.	0.5	0.5
MANAGEMENT ANALYST 4	1.0 FTE - Grant Coordinator to coordinator efforts for development, restoration and recreation grants to maintain and enhance ecological integrity, conservation and recreation on WDFW-managed lands.	-	1.0
NATURAL RESOURCE SCIENTIST 4	1.0 FTE - Increase cultural resource review capacity. 1.0 FTE - Retain current position leading development and implementation of ecological integrity monitoring tools and protocols. Position is currently funded with expiring proviso funds.	1.5	2.0
NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST 2	1.0 FTE - Support for the Colockum Wildlife Area. 1.0 FTE - Weed Management Specialist on the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. 0.3 FTE - Convert existing seasonal position to full time for increased weed management work. 0.4 FTE - Develop and implement off-highway vehicle rider education program in the Wenas Wildlife Area.	2.5	2.7
NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST 3	1.0 FTE - Access supervisor for the eastern region of the state.	0.5	1.0
NATURAL RESOURCES TECHNICIAN 2	0.8 FTE - Convert 2 existing part time, seasonal positions to full time at the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area for ensure year-round management of on-the-ground conditions for habitat, recreation and infrastructure.	0.8	0.8
NATURAL RESOURCES TECHNICIAN 3	1.2 FTE - Convert 4 existing part time, seasonal positions to full time at the Wells and Chelan Wildlife Areas for increased weed management work. 1.0 FTE - New position for increased weed management work at the Methow Wildlife Area. 1.0 FTE - Improve safety and cleanliness at high traffic water access areas in the north central region.	1.7	3.2
PROGRAM SPECIALIST 4	2.0 FTE - Recreation project managers responsible for site-specific planning and implementation, especially high priority projects.	1.0	2.0
PROPERTY & ACQUISITION SPECIALIST 2	1.0 FTE - Assistant Lands Agent for the Coastal and South Puget Sound Region for increased capacity to issue permits, leases, monitor conservation easements.	0.5	1.0
PROPERTY & ACQUISITION SPECIALIST 4	1.0 FTE - Property Management Coordinator focused on statewide aquisition. 1.0 FTE - retain current position to maintain statewide property management functions, process annual assessment fees, payment in lieu of taxes, and coordinate non-grant funded acquisitions.	1.0	2.0
WASHINGTON MANAGEMENT SERVICE 1	1.0 FTE - Provide policy and coordination duties associated with the GOIA-led State-Tribal Recreation Impacts Partnership.	-	1.0
WASHINGTON MANAGEMENT SERVICE 2	1.0 FTE - Assistant Region Program Manager to oversee region-wide Wildlife Area and Water Access Area programs including developing and maintaining key community partnerships, budgets, and region-wide conservation and recreation efforts.	-	1.0
		16.0	29.6

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 238 FTE • Total Funds = \$38 million • Near General Fund = \$13 million • Other Funds = \$25 million

FY2027 • FTE = 238 FTE • Total Funds = \$38 million • Near General Fund = \$13 million • Other Funds = \$25 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This work supports the Governor's Results Washington goals for Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government.

This work to support Stewardship on WDFW-managed Lands aligns with key foundational work and strategies of WDFW's 25-year Strategic Plan. Relevant sections outlined below.

Foundational Work

- Preserve and Restore Habitat and Species
- Provide Recreational and Commercial Fishing Opportunities
- Provide Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Recreation
- Meet our business management obligations.

Strategies:

- Proactively address conservation challenges
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions
- Model operational and environmental excellence.

This decision package is in alignment with the WDFW Activity to Acquire and Manage Lands.

Performance Outcomes:

- 50% increase in weed treatment = 4,200 acres predicted.
- Increased ecological integrity (see Attachment 2) across all 1,054,473 acres.
- Increased infrastructure maintenance across 9 wildlife areas.
- 50% of water access areas in the North Central Region in better working condition (e.g. cleaner restrooms, reduced weed infestations, more compliance with responsible recreation, reduced destruction of habitat and infrastructure, litter and graffiti abatement, etc.).
- 20% statewide and 50% increase in the Coast and Sound Puget Sound Region of ability to meet Real Estate Property Management obligations, including PILT and county assessment payments, and reduced permit processing times.
- 20% increase cultural resources reviews completed.
- 83% increase in planning and management capacity to improve recreation opportunities and experiences for an estimated 30 million annual visits to 1,054,473 acres of department-managed lands.
- 150% increase in on-the-ground projects delivered by nonprofit partners to improve recreation infrastructure (e.g., trails), restore lands impacted by recreation, and educate visitors on how to recreate responsibly. 40% increase in off-highway vehicle (OHV) rider education.
- Robust ecological and visitation assessment tools to support monitoring and adaptive management across 1,054,473 acres.
- Methodology for tracking true stewardship costs across WDFW-managed lands.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The department is implementing Washington's Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Ecosystem Plan & Playbook (Executive Order 22-04) across its operations. Following are PEAR efforts that informed development of this proposal.

Engagement with Tribes: WDFW engages tribes early and often on projects that directly affect their interests on department-managed lands. This includes all aspects of stewardship ranging from habitat and species recovery to recreation infrastructure development and maintenance.

Listening sessions with underserved communities: In 2024, WDFW conducted a series of interviews and listening sessions to identify opportunities to make WDFW-managed lands safer and more welcoming for diverse visitors of all ages and backgrounds, particularly people of color, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities. Participants included representatives from diverse groups, including Outdoors for All, the LGBT Commission, Latino Outdoors, Disability Rights Washington, the Bronze Chapter, the Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Outdoor Asian, and Girl Scouts of Western Washington. Findings informed multiple elements of this proposal, including a commitment to assessing

recreation sites for their accessibility, translating and improving signage, and developing partnership agreements and events with identity-oriented organizations.

Rural communities: Most lands managed by the department are within or adjacent to rural communities, which are directly and indirectly affected by acquisitions, asset management decisions, and stewardship actions. WDFW engages local communities in prioritizing local stewardship actions during wildlife area and recreation planning. This proposal includes projects prioritized in past plans and capacity for future planning in collaboration with WDFW's rural neighbors.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Tribes: Washington Tribes' capacity to engage in proposed work is stretched thin by other obligations. To begin to address this capacity gap, WDFW secured and are administering a one-time America the Beautiful Challenge grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Attachment 7). WDFW urges federal partners and the state legislature to support additional capacity for tribal engagement in efforts with the State, including an effort to mitigate the impacts of outdoor recreation on tribal resources.

Low-income, traditionally marginalized communities generally have less capacity to engage in planning and development of conservation and recreation plans and projects and often have less time and resources to take advantage of recreational opportunities on WDFW-managed lands.

Where possible, we will engage with marginalized communities to inform planning efforts and improve functional engagement. Some funding will support development of a "trusted advocates" program that identifies and contracts liaisons to underserved communities.

Communities with Limited English Proficiency can be marginalized by communication that occurs predominantly in English. We will increase translation of engagement materials (e.g. maps and surveys used in planning) and translation of signage and other wayfinding infrastructure to support multiple languages. We also are increasingly using infographics and Plain language in agency communications that help with LEP barriers that overlap with literacy rates, indigenous populations where even Spanish may be a second language, and to ensure that scientific and technical language is synthesized in a manner that is understood.

WDFW-managed lands include uneven terrain and other natural barriers that can be less accessible for *people with physical disabilities*. We will assess all department-managed infrastructure on department lands for accessibility and continue to implement ADA accessibility upgrades as funding allows.

As WDFW increases its capacity to manage recreation and strengthens camping rules and enforcement, *unhoused individuals and families* sheltering on department-managed lands face further displacement and deepening risks associated with homelessness. To reduce the risks to unhoused individuals and families from increased WDFW visitor use management, we will invite homeless groups and advocates to engage in rulemaking that relates to camping on department-managed lands.

Target Communities and Populations:

Stewardship of department-managed lands provides ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits to all present and future Washingtonians and visitors. *Ecological benefits* include ecosystem services like air and water filtration, healthy wildlife habitats, migration routes and breeding grounds; preservation of diverse plant and animal communities; and climate change mitigation and adaptation. *Economic benefits* include support for the state's multibillion dollar outdoor recreation sector, as well as local tourism dollars. *Social benefits* include enhanced recreational opportunities that support physical and mental health and provide a wide variety of fun opportunities for individuals, groups, and families. *Cultural benefits* include preservation of tribal resources and lifeways, conservation of other cultural resources and artifacts, and opportunities for visitors to connect to food sovereignty, spirituality and the sacred.

Tribes: Tribes are active collaborators in the near- and long-term stewardship of WDFW-managed land stewardship for conservation and access to natural and cultural resources and assertion of tribal treaty rights for current and future generations.

Conservation and Recreation NGOs: Conservation and recreation NGOs advocate and work with the department to improve recreation and conservation outcomes on department-managed lands. 19 recreation and conservation groups provided written support for proposed work to implement the 10-year Recreation Strategy (Attachments 6 and 7).

Conservation Districts: This proposal helps the Washington State Association of Conservation Districts meet its goal to work with WDFW to identify funding needs and opportunities to complete their management plans and implementation goals for acquired lands.

Rural landowners and local governments: The department works cooperatively through landscape-based community collaboratives, such as Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) efforts in different parts of the state to collectively prioritize work needed on-the-ground. This

package will expand capacity to address the concerns of these groups.

Historically excluded or marginalized groups: BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled and other underserved communities engaged during 2024 listening sessions have expressed interest in increased access to recreation opportunities on WDFW-managed lands and expanded engagement in land use and recreation planning. See “community outreach and engagement” section for further details.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Tribes participating in the Tribes-State Recreational Impacts Steering Committee directly and indirectly contributed to content in all 3 elements of this proposal, and tribal coordination and/or consultation will be essential to its implementation. Tribes support proposed efforts to measure and monitor ecological integrity and impacts of recreation usage on treaty resources and tribal lifeways on WDFW-managed lands, improve conservation and stewardship of habitat and wildlife, and encourage responsible recreation via planning, public education, and rulemaking.

Recreation and conservation organizations support proposed efforts to educate and engage visitors to department-managed lands and contracting with non-profit partners to deliver on-the-ground projects. Low-income, traditionally marginalized communities also recommended that WDFW improve public-facing information about recreation opportunities and include diverse groups in recreation and wildlife area planning processes. These suggestions are embedded into this proposal.

Conservation districts and weed control boards have an interest in the Urgent and long-term stewardship needs and this decision package has been informed by on-going discussion we have had with both groups. The Washington State Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) passed a resolution in 2023 (2023-10) that states “WACD will work with state agencies and the State Legislature to identify funding needs and opportunities to complete their management plans and implementation goals for acquired lands.” We meet regularly with weed control boards throughout the state, and the issue of weed control on WDFW-managed lands is always a high priority and need.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply. The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is directly aligned with 2022-2026 Puget Sound Action Agenda Strategy 22 Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship and Strategy 24 Cultural Practices and Local Foods by increasing WDFW’s capacity to manage WDFW lands to maintain or improve the ecological integrity of priority sites and habitats, promote functional diversity, preserve treaty rights, maintain game and non-game populations at levels consistent with healthy ecosystems, and provide quality recreation opportunities to diverse visitors. This decision package addresses human wellbeing in Puget Sound by expanding and promoting equitable access to information and opportunities for engagement for outdoor recreation and stewardship actions and recognition of tribal nations’ treaty and sovereign rights. Additionally, many of the cultural traditions held by Puget Sound residents are dependent on the health of Puget Sound ecosystems and our collective ability to manage them. Increasing WDFW’s capacity to manage lands appropriately ensures the protection, and enhancement opportunities for cultural practices and access to safe and abundant local foods.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A

Intergovernmental:

This proposal builds capacity for the State-Tribal Recreation Impact Initiative to collaborate with federally recognized Washington Tribes to ensure that their tribal treaty rights and tribal lifeways are protected.

State, county and city governments benefit from recreation on WDFW-managed properties. According to an analysis by non-profit Earth Economics, visitors took nearly 30 million trips in 2020 to WDFW-managed properties, spending approximately \$1.4 billion across the state and contributing approximately \$172 million in taxes to state and local governments. This consumer spending and tax revenue does not account for the value of recreational experiences and ecosystem services enjoyed by residents that may otherwise need to be provided by other federal, state, tribal, or local agencies. (Outdoor Recreation on State Lands in Washington — Earth Economics, 2020, Attachment 8).

Stakeholder Impacts:

Based on preliminary conversations and recent patterns of engagement, WDFW anticipates support from Washington Tribes, Conservation Districts, rural landowners, and conservation and recreation NGO partners.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

[RCW 77.04.012](#) is the legislative mandate of WDFW and serves as the foundation for the Department’s mission: “To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.” [RCW 77.12.037](#) authorizes WDFW to acquire, use and manage property. For a more complete list of mandates, see Attachment 9.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

- [Attachment 1 Interagency-Tribal Recreation Impacts Effort Working Charter \(5-17-24\).docx](#)
- [Attachment 2 Ecological Integrity Fact Sheet.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 3 Access Area O&M 2021.09.23.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 4 LandsOM-maintenance-memo-April22.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 5 Sign on Letter House.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 6 Sign on Letter Senate.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 7 Final AtB Tribal Partnership Proposal 2023.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 8 Outdoor Recreation on State Lands in Washington — Earth Economics.pdf](#)
- [Attachment 9 Legal Mandates for Stewardship on WDFW managed Lands.docx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,220	\$2,321	\$3,541	\$2,321	\$2,321	\$4,642
Obj. B	\$457	\$855	\$1,312	\$855	\$855	\$1,710
Obj. C	\$560	\$827	\$1,387	\$795	\$795	\$1,590
Obj. E	\$220	\$368	\$588	\$368	\$368	\$736
Obj. G	\$189	\$498	\$687	\$498	\$498	\$996
Obj. T	\$857	\$1,576	\$2,433	\$1,566	\$1,566	\$3,132

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

As Washington’s population continues to grow, the potential for human-wildlife interactions and conflicts increases. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) seeks to build capacity for wildlife conflict response by consolidating and expanding response to negative human-wildlife interactions. Funding this request allows wildlife conflict specialists to increase responsiveness to crop and livestock damage and negative human-wildlife interactions, while increasing preventative education and outreach. These changes will reduce agriculture and livestock producer frustrations, decrease costly damage claims, and allow for a seamless response and follow-through to negative human-wildlife interactions with all species including black bears and cougars. This package also supports enhancing the Beaver Relocation Permit Program. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	14.3	24.0	19.15	24.0	24.0	24.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,896	\$4,469	\$7,365	\$4,243	\$4,243	\$8,486
Total Expenditures	\$2,896	\$4,469	\$7,365	\$4,243	\$4,243	\$8,486

Decision Package Description

The Problem:

Human population growth and urbanization of wildland habitats are causing increased negative human-wildlife interactions. WDFW’s Dispatch Center has received 30,582 contacts specific to dangerous, problem, and injured wildlife between February 2022 and June 2024, over 1,000 contacts per day. In addition, WDFW regional offices and individual staff received hundreds of contacts directly. Human safety, commercial crop losses from deer and elk damage, and livestock losses from bears, cougars, and wolves are the Department’s primary concern. Trends in Washington’s population growth indicate that these problems are likely to continue to increase in the future.

The WDFW Enforcement Program expends a significant amount of time and resources responding to and handling calls about human-wildlife interactions. Enforcement does not have the capacity to continue with the upward trending number of negative human-wildlife interaction responses or address increased law enforcement needs. This model is not the most efficient use of Department resources.

The Department employs trained wildlife conflict specialists that currently work on deer and elk damage, bear timber damage, wolf conflicts, and other less dangerous human-wildlife interaction responses. Wildlife conflict specialists also work with landowners on preventative measures, engage local communities in outreach and education, and conduct site visits to provide proactive information to limit negative human-wildlife interactions.

Wildlife conflict staff are often unable to provide a timely or adequate response to conflicts due to inadequate staffing levels. This is of particular concern in situations like elk and deer commercial crop damage, which requires a response per state law (RCW 77.36), or for incidents of public safety concern. With more wildlife conflict specialists, the agency would have the opportunity to increase proactive and preemptive measures to potentially decrease negative human-wildlife interactions and improve customer service to the people of Washington.

Wildlife conflict specialists assist Enforcement with many cougar, wolf, and bear-related incidents and are trained to handle many situations. With increased staffing levels, wildlife conflict specialists and WDFW’s Wildlife Conflict section could assume more of the responsibility responding to these types of incidents as they increase in frequency, allowing Enforcement to prioritize the most dangerous wildlife interactions impacting human safety.

As directed by RCW 77.32.585 and 77.36.170, WDFW administers a Beaver Relocation Permit Program that mitigates beaver conflict by relocating conflict beavers as an alternative to lethal removal. Beaver relocators are community members trained and permitted to move beavers across the landscape while improving salmon and riparian habitat. WDFW’s role as the manager of this program is to train and permit community members, gather data on each relocation, prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, inspect husbandry facilities, and support relocators if beavers are injured. WDFW does not have sufficient resources to fund the necessary training or staff resources to successfully implement the relocation program.

Our Solution:

With the funding in this request, the Department will add staff capacity that allows response to negative human-wildlife interactions in a timely manner. This proposal reprioritizes a significant amount of initial wildlife conflict responses from the Enforcement Program to the Wildlife Program for more effective use of Department resources maximizing enforcement resources for human safety concerns. This decision package helps ensure adequate response times and service coverage and provides increased education and outreach to communities, landowners, and producers.

This decision package will provide improved geographic distribution of staff and allow for more effective responses to conflict. Currently, the Department employs 23 wildlife conflict staff across 39 counties in the state. More staff are needed to cover the entire state, reduce response times for negative wildlife damage interactions, and provide expanded response to statutorily required actions effectively and efficiently.

The Department recently developed a Landowner Services Division within WDFW's Wildlife Program due to the significant growth in conflict and to provide a consistent statewide approach and management of resources. In addition to administering negative human-wildlife interaction response and claims processing, the new division is designed to better plan, coordinate, and with the funding from this request, implement initiatives to improve response to negative human-wildlife interactions.

Beaver Relocation Permit Program training is a requirement for relocators and focuses on trapping safety, husbandry, release site selection, and regulations around working with wildlife. Our relocation partners, the Methow Beaver Project and the Tulalip Beaver Project, will need financial support as hosts and instructors for our three annual training courses. The beaver relocation community is concerned about the risk of translocating aquatic invasive pathogens with beavers, and it is our responsibility to test trapping sites to detect the presence of our two most alarming pathogens, Chytrid fungus and ranavirus.

Beaver population, distribution, and density in Washington has never been studied. Our current estimate of beaver numbers is drawn from rough modeling on incomplete data from several decades ago. Updating and confirming the base data we use to select beaver release sites will show what variables most accurately predict beaver habitat suitability to maximize the success of relocating conflict beavers.

The Beaver Relocation Permit Program is currently understaffed. The program is currently run by a 0.25 FTE position but funding a 1.0 FTE position to continue developing and growing the permitting program is needed.

Alternatives explored:

The Department considered maintaining status quo; however, the status quo is unsustainable and lacks the expanded response needed for existing and anticipated future negative human-wildlife interaction issues. Status quo also does not address the capacity challenges that exist between the Enforcement and Wildlife programs. Sharing responsibility for wildlife conflict response between these two programs causes inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness. Enforcement does not have the capacity to continue with the upward trending number of negative human-wildlife interaction responses in addition to activities that require an enforcement commission.

The Department also considered centralizing wildlife conflict work fully in the Wildlife Program without added staff capacity. However, without additional staff, the public would experience an unacceptable loss of even the current service levels, resulting in drastically longer response times and ultimately, increased risk of dangerous and expensive human-wildlife interactions.

Neither of these two options meet the public need for response to increasing negative human-wildlife interactions statewide. The current shortfall in staffing and coverage adds to the frustration of landowners and can result in increased costs for statutorily required payments for commercial crop and livestock damages.

Without support of this package, the Beaver Relocation Permit Program will not be adaptable to climate change and preventing disease spread. This program is not sustainable long-term without additional funding. With current resources only supporting a 0.25 FTE, the program will not be able to grow and provide adequate training to tribal co-managers and certified beaver relocators.

Assumptions and Calculations***Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:***

This decision package is an expansion of an existing and ongoing initiative. It brings together efforts from 2012 to expand wildlife conflict work into the Wildlife Program, and subsequent initiatives to improve the Department's response to wolf, bear, and cougar conflicts.

Conflict Specialists and Enforcement share conflict responsibilities which often results in inefficient use of officer time. Current resources do not support the desired public response capability.

Expanding the wildlife conflict workforce will streamline negative human-wildlife interaction response to the appropriate staff initially. Increased wildlife conflict staff capacity will also allow for proactive educational opportunities in communities where wildlife conflicts have historically occurred or where an increase in reports have been received. This proactive communication provides valuable wildlife co-existence information to the public and may help deter future negative interactions.

Many incidents require lengthy investigation or consultation, often resulting in follow-up communications with the landowner and surrounding landowners. Despite hiring 15 wildlife conflict specialists and three conflict technicians between 2013 and 2018 to help with negative human-wildlife interaction response, WDFW's Dispatch Center has received 30,582 contacts specific to dangerous, problem, and injured wildlife since February 2022.

In the last ten years alone, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of calls for service in response to negative bear, cougar, moose, and wolf interactions. The number of cougar reports officers received and responded to has tripled since 2012, from an average of 300 calls a year to well over 1,000 in 2021. Additionally, last year, WILDCOMM received 2,752 calls for service specific to black bears ranging from private property destruction (e.g., trash and structure damage) to dangerous incidents involving public safety. The Department estimates that adding 24 new dedicated conflict specialists will drastically improve the ability to respond to and mitigate negative human-wildlife interactions.

All of WDFW's dedicated wildlife conflict staff are currently supervised by six regional Wildlife Program Managers who manage and supervise between 19 and 56 diverse staff across varying programs and counties. This proposal will add four wildlife conflict supervisors to the agency to expand communication and outreach, supervise an expanded workforce, and better deliver this specialized public service.

This proposal also funds a new twice-annual Wildlife Conflict Response Training Academy for WDFW conflict staff. This training academy will provide a community of practice for Department staff to receive and provide training to tribal staff, non-profits, and other interested groups. This training will workshop common concerns and problems with nationwide experts to inform Department staff about effective tools to develop Washington into the gold standard of living with wildlife and responding to human-wildlife interactions. Training topics could include education and outreach, non-lethal deterrence, animal husbandry, depredation investigation techniques, and other wildlife conflict reduction tools.

WDFW is in the process of rulemaking to establish the Beaver Relocation Program as a permanent initiative. However, it is currently being run at a 0.25 FTE. This decision package would allow the position to be a full 1.0 FTE, adding capacity to expand the program, mitigate potential disease spread while relocating beavers, and develop coexistence materials for public education and outreach.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The first year of the decision package recognizes the challenging task of recruiting, hiring, onboarding, equipping, and training a significant number of technical staff. Therefore, this request estimates approximately half of the staffing in year one. For year two and subsequent biennia, the staffing level increases to the full level.

Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, for 14.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions totals \$1,483,000 in fiscal year 2026. This increases to 24.0 FTE positions totaling \$2,488,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing.

Goods and services, Object E, totals \$165,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$315,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing. Costs include \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. Additional goods and services include costs for rulemaking, signage, printed materials, testing supplies, trail cameras, and non-lethal tools such as, traps, fladry, fox lights, rag boxes, etc.

Travel costs, Object G, are estimated at \$249,00 for fiscal year 2026 and \$382,000 for FY 2027 and ongoing. These costs include overnight stays and per diem reimbursement for necessary trainings, meetings, Training Academy, and occasional overnight field work. Estimates also include leases for 18 new vehicles which are required for staff to complete assigned work.

In addition, certain specialized equipment and tools, Object J, are necessary for conflict field employees to safely perform wildlife conflict workover and above the standard WDFW employee costs. These costs total \$280,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$181,000 in fiscal year 2027

and \$10,000 per fiscal year ongoing.

Specialized materials include:

Firearms and optics for deploying non-lethal hazing rounds, pyrotechnic noise makers, lethally dispatching injured, depredating, or dangerous wildlife, and a secure device or container to secure all arms and associated ammunition and pyrotechnics.

Radio and vehicle communication equipment for safety, call response, and coordination. This includes vehicle laptop mounts, hands free device adapters, etc.

Assorted tools such as catch-poles, transport boxes, live-traps, hobbles, and other tools for humane and safe wildlife handling. Personal protective equipment, immobilization drugs and equipment (darts, needles, etc.) for non-lethal immobilization of wildlife.

An infrastructure support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T as calculated on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3

4.0 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 9.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Biologist 3 is a senior biologist position that is the most skilled and highly trained full-time staff responding to and resolving negative human-wildlife interactions. They will be stationed around the state in each of the six WDFW Regions. This position interacts with private landowners to address commercial crop, livestock, and other private property damage primarily caused by ungulates and/or carnivores. The wildlife conflict specialist uses biologically based knowledge to plan, negotiate, and implement Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements with landowners and provide technical assistance related to preventative measures and lethal removal options. The position is also responsible for mitigating carnivore depredation issues including conducting complex investigations to determine the cause of mortality. The position works across program with Enforcement and, at times, with tribal co-management collaborations regarding wildlife conflict resolution.

Natural Resource Technician 3

3.5 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 6.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Natural Resource Technician 3 is a career seasonal position employed during times of peak negative human-wildlife interactions to maximize staffing resources. They will be deployed around the state in each of the six WDFW Regions. They support the work of the Biologist 3 and are typically employed for six to nine months of the year. The actual number of people working at any time during the season exceeds 9 persons. Utilizing seasonal positions increases staffing during times of increased need, in the places most needed. Duties include activities such as herding and hazing wildlife, assisting with wildlife conflict incident response, follow-up public outreach and education, monitoring recurrent conflict issues, fence repair, and other labor-intensive tasks.

Communication Consultant 3

0.7 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 1.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Communications Consultant 3 provides consistent, science-based information about wildlife conflict issues and incidents as they arise. This position is responsive to media inquiries regarding human-wildlife interactions and participates in community events and other outreach opportunities to spread conflict prevention messaging and answer questions from the public about living with wildlife.

Management Analyst 3

1.8 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 2.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Management Analyst 3 collaborates with staff to assist and analyze processes related to damage prevention and mitigation contracts and agreements with private landowners. This position manages the statewide program for commercial livestock and commercial crop loss prevention and compensation once those claims are filed and provides management, analysis, and mitigation of negative human-wildlife interactions on a statewide level.

FTE Management Analyst 4

0.8 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 1.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Management Analyst 4 Works with the Contracts Office and field staff to develop, implement, monitor, and manage damage prevention and mitigation contracts and agreements. This position is the lead supervisor for the Management Analyst 3 team and works on budget implementation and Department adherence to Federal grant requirements. This position will coordinate all Rulemaking efforts to align Wildlife Conflict related WACs with current RCWs.

FTE Biologist 4

3.5 FTE in fiscal year 2026 and 5.0 FTE in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing

The Biologist 4 is an expert level supervisory biologist position that is the most skilled and highly trained full-time staff responding to and resolving negative human-wildlife interactions. They will be deployed around the state in four of the six WDFW Regions that do not currently have supervisory biologists on staff and will work in the counties within each region. Duties include independently directing, developing, evaluating, implementing statewide conflict policies, legislation, and regulations. This position will direct and supervise regional Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3's and manage regional conflict related budgets. The position works across program with Enforcement and, at times, with tribal co-management collaborations regarding human-wildlife conflict resolution.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 20.0 FTE • Total Funds = \$3.26 million • Near General Fund = \$2.48 million • Other Funds = \$.78 million
FY2027 • FTE = 20.0 FTE • Total Funds = \$3.26 million • Near General Fund = \$2.48 million • Other Funds = \$.78 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve three of the Results Washington goals:

1. Prosperous Economy
2. Healthy & Safe Communities
3. Effective, Efficient & Accountable Government

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

Additionally, this decision package directly supports all four strategies in the WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan:

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

WDFW Activity Inventory

This decision package supports WDFW foundational work:

1. Preserve and Restore Terrestrial Habitat and Species

\$3,543,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$4,082,000 per biennium ongoing

Prompt and proper response to human-wildlife conflicts can reduce or mitigate potential negative interactions and increase public tolerance for wildlife. Increased staffing in areas with wolves can help reduce wolf/livestock interactions and improve acceptance and long-term viability of wolves on the landscape. With increased community engagement by Department staff, private landowners are less likely to want conflict wildlife lethally removed if other, non-lethal means can be found to address conflicts. Increased staff engagement fosters durable, community-supported conservation solutions. Improved dangerous wildlife conflict response improves public safety for all members of the public, including those who work and recreate outdoors.

2. Manage Hunting Opportunities

\$3,543,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$4,082,000 per biennium ongoing

Wildlife conflict response includes establishing agreements with landowners to provide hunting opportunities to remove wildlife causing property damage (e.g., elk and deer). Eligibility for damage claim payments, require the landowner to maintain public access for hunters targeting the species causing damage. When determining whether to issue a lethal removal permit, WDFW must also consider impacts to other huntable wildlife populations. Increased wildlife conflict staffing can help decrease the need to address issues on private lands, leaving more opportunity for harvest on public lands.

3. Business Management and Obligations

\$279,000 in 2025-27 biennium and \$322,000 per biennium ongoing

The Communications Specialist position funded through this request would add capacity to communicate with the public about negative human-wildlife interactions. It is critical to create the capacity for deliberate educational messaging about living with wildlife, safe outdoor recreation, and agency response to negative human/wildlife interactions.

Performance Outcomes:

The decision package supports the Department's ability to achieve the following Performance Outcomes:

- Technical assistance interactions.
- Threatened and endangered species population increases.
- Number of confirmed dangerous wildlife incidents mitigated for each year.

This proposal increases wildlife-focused technical assistance for negative human-wildlife interactions by increasing the number of WDFW Wildlife Conflict Specialists from 23 to 42 statewide. Increasing specialist coverage will improve response times and increase proactive technical assistance to help the public avoid negative interactions.

Increased wildlife conflict staffing will improve the agency's ability to proactively engage with communities, landowners, and crop and livestock producers. As state-endangered gray wolves continue to recover and occupy new parts of Washington, increased outreach will improve accessibility and awareness of non-lethal, proactive actions to help avoid negative wolf-livestock interactions. Deterring negative interactions is a key component of the agency's Wolf Recovery Plan and will improve public acceptance as the species continues to recover.

In addition to improved response times and proactive communication, increased staff capacity allows for increased data collection and availability to the public to improve the agency's ability to mitigate wildlife conflict incidents.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities we serve.

WDFW holds public meetings and further engages communities through many channels, including, but not limited to citizen groups, schools, and homeowner associations

Funding this request allows WDFW to respond effectively to community feedback that has expressed through multiple mechanisms of feedback. This project fosters capacity and increases responsiveness to community concerns about crop and livestock and human wildlife interactions, also while increasing preventative education and outreach to affected communities in urban and rural areas.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

It is important for all communities to have access to wildlife conflict resolutions as soon as possible. Rural areas in Washington especially need increased access to wildlife conflict resolution as the areas are remote and have the potential to have increased conflict.

Target Communities and Populations:

Negative human-wildlife interaction prevention and incident response is an issue of public safety, economic importance, and social and environmental interest to many currently underserved groups, including farmers and non-commercial producers. Hiring a Communication Specialist will allow the agency to provide outreach and education in underserved communities in a variety of platforms and languages.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW consistently receives feedback from community groups that conflict services are lacking resources and the associated rules are outdated. This proposal increases available agency resources to engage in rulemaking efforts and respond to negative human-wildlife interactions across a broader geographic area (statewide), including urban areas and rural communities. These areas would see increased dedicated wildlife conflict specialist staffing, thus increased services to more people of various and diverse groups.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 2: Working Lands by consolidating and improving agency response to wildlife conflicts. Consolidating and improving agency response will reduce producer frustrations, lower costly damage payment claims, and allow for a seamless response and follow-through to dangerous wildlife conflicts including conflicts with bears and cougars. This package also directly aligns Action (ID#4) Support the long-term viability and sustainability of agricultural lands and working forests to reduce pressure for conversion from the current use to a more developed use through expanding incentives and technical assistance for agricultural lands and owners of working forests. By increasing wildlife conflict staffing, this decision package also will improve the agency’s proactive outreach with communities, landowners, and crop and livestock producers, supporting Action Agenda influential outcome 5.2 to increase engagement and trust in natural resource governance.

State Workforce Impacts:

The total package will result in at least 20 positions being added to the Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals (WAFWP), and at least 1 being added to the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE GG).

Intergovernmental:

Several inter-governmental interests should support this decision package. Cities, counties, conservation districts, the Washington Department of Agriculture, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources have shown interest in the wildlife resources managed in response to negative human-wildlife interaction. Tribes can be impacted by agency actions affecting cooperatively managed wildlife and are generally supportive of this work. Increasing proactive actions and decreasing the need to lethally remove wildlife causing damage can be a positive outcome. Other governmental entities engage with the Department to prevent or mitigate negative human-wildlife interactions, and improving the agency’s ability to respond can reduce the need for their engagement over time.

Stakeholder Impacts:

A wide variety of stakeholders are supportive of this work, including environmental groups, animal rights groups, agricultural interests, livestock interests, the timber industry, hunting interests, and general outdoor recreation groups.

State Facilities Impacts:

The department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,078	\$1,807	\$2,885	\$1,807	\$1,807	\$3,614
Obj. B	\$405	\$681	\$1,086	\$681	\$681	\$1,362
Obj. C	\$8	\$8	\$16	\$8	\$8	\$16
Obj. E	\$165	\$315	\$480	\$315	\$315	\$630
Obj. G	\$249	\$382	\$631	\$382	\$382	\$764
Obj. J	\$283	\$184	\$467	\$13	\$13	\$26
Obj. T	\$708	\$1,092	\$1,800	\$1,037	\$1,037	\$2,074

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has a deficit of office and storage space throughout Washington. The Department has grown by 30%, but its office and storage space has not increased. In the 2025-27 biennium, facilities in four locations face critical relocation needs due to lost leases or safety concerns, displacing staff and equipment. New funding for additional leased office and storage space is essential for the success of the Department’s mission. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation].

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$250	\$2,621	\$2,871	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$250	\$2,621	\$2,871	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

Since 2018, WDFW has grown by 550 staff, a 30% increase from approximately 1,850 to 2,400 employees, with further growth expected. WDFW has grown to the point of almost all statewide facilities being at or above capacity and the unique nature of the Department’s work, combined with the type of space needed to store specialty equipment makes it impractical to reduce existing space. Now facilities in four locations, Okanogan, Port Angeles, Thurston County, and Pasco, face critical relocation needs due to lost leases or safety concerns.

To address these issues, WDFW is requesting one-time funding to find new space for staff and equipment. The projects included in this decision package are the most critical to maintain the Department’s current levels of service and amenities. Consolidation of smaller offices is prioritized to reduce maintenance and operation costs, and to centralize support services. **WDFW is requesting funding for lost space and the most urgent space needs. WDFW is not requesting funds for expansion projects.**

As part of WDFW’s Six-Year Facilities Plan, all Department space needs were collected through a series of interviews and site reviews. The requests were considered and prioritized based on OFM principles to utilize existing space, co-locate with other state, local, and tribal entities, and maximize telework. The Department aims to consolidate where possible while providing functional, safe, and accessible space. Additionally, WDFW is working to minimize the need for tenant improvements while providing staff a basic level of safety, accessibility, and workability in their office environment.

The four projects below are the most critical to continuing business operations and none of the alternatives explored met the Department’s business needs. There are other projects identified in the Department’s Six-Year Facilities Plan, including a consolidation with local law enforcement and other office sharing opportunities. This request is for the only projects where no other feasible lower cost options existed.

Okanogan Burn Team Facility – 24 FTEs

The Okanogan burn team facility was sold to Okanogan County in 2024. WDFW has been notified that the County intends to use the facility in 2025 when the lease expires. WDFW is looking for a new location with an opportunity to consolidate with staff working at the Omak Hatchery, who are currently working in sub-standard conditions. This request will address space and safety issues with working conditions, while providing an opportunity for an accessible and inclusive workspace.

Port Angeles Facilities – 10 FTEs

The Port of Port Angeles has given WDFW notice that the Department will need to vacate one of its two Port Angeles facilities by 2027. WDFW is looking for a new location with an opportunity to consolidate with the second Port Angeles office for increased space and cost efficiency. Without lab spaces and offices in Port Angeles, critical work will cease, take longer, or displace other essential tasks. This request will address adequate office space issues.

Automatic Marking Trailer Storage (Thurston County) – 3 FTEs and 15 Trailers

The high-value marking trailers were originally stored at a WSDOT facility; however, that site was prone to theft, vandalism, and WSDOT sold the property in 2023. The Department currently has six automatic marking trailers stored outdoors at hatcheries. In addition to replacing the lost

space, WDFW needs more space to add two new marking trailers each biennium (2024 Supplemental Operating Budget - Autofish Marking Proviso). These trailers are each valued at \$1.6 million. Outdoor storage will significantly decrease the trailers' useful lives and require more maintenance, increasing ongoing costs. This request will address issues with proper storage of Department equipment.

Currently, marking trailers are stored at dispersed locations, reducing storage capacity at several hatcheries. This offsite storage causes significant travel time and expenses for the maintenance team and disruption to hatchery operations during the movement of the trailers. WDFW previously requested indoor storage for marking trailers and located a site, but OFM deemed the tenant improvement costs too expensive and rescinded approval to consolidate the marking trailers with the Cleveland Warehouse relocation. WDFW is looking for a secure site to replace that lost opportunity.

Pasco District Office – 31 FTEs

This facility is used for both office and storage. The Pasco Office faces new challenges due to the expansion of the nearby industrial park, leading to a dramatic increase in traffic on the main access road. Many Department boats and trailered equipment are stored at this site, and the heavy and fast-moving traffic has made entering and exiting the facility increasingly unsafe. Despite local attempts to resolve the issue, the situation remains unsafe and unlikely to be remedied. Ensuring safety for staff and protection of equipment in Pasco is vital and the risk of a collision endangers staff and the public. Additionally, the loss of boat or trailer due to a collision would delay critical work. This request will address staff safety issues.

Alternatives Explored

The Department explored several other options, including:

- *Partnering with other state, federal, tribal, or local governments to share space.* This is not feasible in these locations because other organizations are also at capacity.
- *Developing a capital construction project to build more office and storage space on our own land.* This is not feasible because the Department either does not own land in the necessary locations, or the costs are significantly higher than leasing.
- *Increasing telework opportunities and rotating staff through a limited number of desks.* The scientific requirements of field work dictate staff come to work in the morning to develop plans, collect necessary gear, and then report to the field site for the day (or sometimes multiple days). They then return and require office space to analyze findings and prepare reports. This makes shared desk space challenging and inefficient.
- *Assigning staff to buildings with current capacity.* The only building WDFW has any available capacity is the Natural Resources Building in Olympia. It is untenable to assign staff to Olympia when the work they need to perform is in Clallam, Franklin, or Okanogan County.

Conclusion

WDFW must provide its employees the necessary tools to perform their work. This includes office and storage space near their field sites, ensuring the ability to protect the state's natural resources as the public expects. Requesting funds for new locations is the only viable option that meets the Department's timing, staffing, and equipment needs and is essential for the success of the Department's mission.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This is not an expansion or alteration of a current program. This request will sustain the current level of service and improve WDFW's ability to complete its mission.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Total costs are \$2,871,000 in the 2025-27 biennium:

- \$250,000 in fiscal year 2026 for DES Real Estate Fees, Object E.
- \$2,621,000 in fiscal year 2027 for one-time costs, including tenant improvements, technology infrastructure, furniture, moving costs, building security, and electric vehicle expenses, Object E.

Assumptions and calculations for these projects follow Office of Financial Management (OFM) guidelines and were created using the OFM project request forms.

Any increased annual costs will be requested in the lease rate adjustments maintenance level decision package.

Project Name	Estimated One-time costs	Estimated Annual Lease Costs	Estimated Annual Operating Costs	Estimated Total Annual Costs	FY24 Annual Costs	Ongoing Costs Increase
Okanogan Burn Team/Omak District Office	\$ 645,000	\$ 410,331	\$ 76,241	\$ 486,572	\$ 32,533	\$ 454,039
Pot Angeles Facilities	\$ 350,000	\$ 88,044	\$ 18,170	\$ 106,214	\$ 21,497	\$ 84,717
Marking Trailers (Thurston County)	\$ 979,000	\$ 669,961	\$ 106,800	\$ 776,761	\$ -	\$ 776,761
Pasco District Office	\$ 897,000	\$ 230,656	\$ 51,321	\$ 281,977	\$ 62,248	\$ 219,729

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$0.1 million • Near General Fund = \$0.1 million • Other Funds = \$0.0 million

FY2027 • FTE = 0 FTE • Total Funds = \$0.1 million • Near General Fund = \$0.1 million • Other Funds = \$0.0 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports two Results Washington goals: 1) Prosperous Economy; and 2) Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. This proposal is fundamental for the Department to continue preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. Additionally, this will ensure WDFW staff have the requisite resources to support a vibrant recreational and commercial fishing industry, provide hunting oversight, develop and execute habitat restoration projects, and provide oversight of local environmental ecosystems. Lastly, this request respects our state's government-to-government relationship with tribes by supporting their harvest opportunities.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package directly supports the Department's 25-Year Strategic Plan strategy to "Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions" and to "Model operational and environmental excellence." It is critical to fully resource our scientists with all the tools, equipment, and other resources needed to research and publish the best available science, including adequate office space and field equipment storage.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This funding request supports the following agency activities:

- Produce Hatchery Fish – Total costs are \$979,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Business Management & Obligations – Total costs are \$1,892,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.

Performance Outcomes:

WDFW measures the outcomes of its facilities work using the following metrics:

- All staff have a safe, accessible, and functional work environment.
- There is secure storage for Department equipment to prolong useful life and minimize maintenance costs.
- Before looking for new space, WDFW first utilized existing space, co-located with other state, local, and tribal entities, and maximized telework opportunities to reduce maintenance and operation costs.

For this decision package, the Department will use the following metrics:

- Secure new leased space for the four projects identified. This includes lab space, enforcement space, office space, and secure storage.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW conducts community engagement and public outreach through the Communications and Public Engagement divisions. WDFW is committed to improving and evolving community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities. It is important that WDFW can maintain these functions to ensure there is not degradation of services to the communities WDFW serves.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The intent of this project is to increase the accessibility of the workplace to allow WDFW to pursue inclusive and welcoming hiring practices in the future. By increasing the safety and security of the Department's office and storage locations, WDFW helps improve impacts to marginalized communities such as persons with different abilities, and maintain state government presence in smaller communities to provide local job opportunities as well as spending money in communities that may be disproportionately impacted due to their remote locations.

Target Communities and Populations:

Funding facilities allows WDFW to support specific communities such as systemically marginalized, historically excluded, and disproportionately impacted groups. WDFW is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities. These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a healthy and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

This request reflects regional input indicating smaller communities benefit from stable, local employment and stable, local facilities that allow staff to eat, shop, fuel up, and work locally. Regional staff have reported their advisory groups appreciate localized service and access to staff.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package will enable WDFW to handle increased staffing by providing new office locations due to lease expirations and equipment storage facilities. Specifically, the Port Angeles office and lab support healthy fish populations, and the marking trailer storage in Thurston County supports hatcheries throughout Puget Sound. This decision package is therefore aligned with the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 Salmon Recovery and action #205 by providing better storage and increasing the life of fish marking trailers that assist with increasing Chinook salmon hatchery production.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW reached out to other state, local, and tribal entities to explore sharing opportunities. Responses indicated several state entities are facing similar capacity issues. If this request is funded, WDFW may have the opportunity to find space adequate that could be shared with other government entities.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Without funding, stakeholders may be impacted by a reduction in service. Between the Okanogan Burn team, the Port Angeles Fish Science team, and enforcement detachments, the Department’s work impacts many stakeholders. Without adequate space the Department runs the risk of losing valuable employees performing critical, collaborative, and specialized work.

State Facilities Impacts:

If unfunded, this will have a significant impact on WDFW facilities. The Department will have to make decisions to redirect funding from other priority areas or close facilities.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$250	\$2,621	\$2,871	\$0	\$0	\$0

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) current heavy equipment fleet is deteriorating faster than it can be replaced through existing funds. As equipment is surplus, the Department is increasingly turning to rental equipment, but that is costly and unreliable, causing critical time delays and impacting business needs. WDFW is requesting funds to replace priority equipment to maintain critical business operations, including public access maintenance, hatchery improvements, habitat restoration, and recreational opportunities. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$3,000	\$1,565	\$4,565	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$3,000	\$1,565	\$4,565	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

Problem

WDFW’s current heavy equipment fleet is deteriorating faster than it can be replaced through existing funds. In the past 3 years, WDFW has surplus 20 items (see Appendix A) when the equipment was no longer repairable, usable, or safe. As equipment is surplus, the Department is increasingly turning to rental equipment, but that is costly and unreliable, impacting business needs. **From improving public access, habitat enhancement, and fish passage projects to emergency flood debris removal or hatchery pump replacement, the ability to have a core construction fleet is integral to maintaining hunting and fishing access, producing hatchery fish, delivering sport fish to hundreds of lakes, and maintaining Department infrastructure as well as implementing the capital budget.**



The Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account (444) is designed to be a self-sustaining account that supports a fleet of heavy equipment vehicles, including the purchase of equipment and vehicles and the cost to operate, repair, and maintain them. Billable rates are intended to replenish the fund and cover the costs to maintain and eventually replace aging equipment. However, the revenue generated from billing mileage and equipment usage has not kept pace with maintenance and operating expenditures, and WDFW is seeing a dramatic increase in replacement costs. The Department is actively updating the rates and making reasonable market-based adjustments to ensure the long-term health of the Revolving Account, but is unable to fund the most immediate, critical replacements within the expected lifespan of the equipment.

When owned equipment is unsafe or unusable, WDFW rents the equipment needed to support current projects. Due to the seasonal nature of construction work, rental equipment is getting more difficult to acquire when needed and rental costs are escalating rapidly (an average cost of \$140,000 per year per piece of equipment). Additionally, specialized equipment for WDFW’s unique tasks and workloads (e.g., fish transport tankers, fire suppression trailers), are often unavailable for rent or not available for rent by regional dealers – especially on short notice.

Finally, the Department is struggling to maintain operations as the number of projects continues to increase. Project progress will begin to slow as the heavy equipment fleet continues to deteriorate, repair parts become less available, and rentals become more expensive and difficult to find. Responsiveness during natural disasters and other emergency events across the state will also decline, potentially costing WDFW and the

state millions.



Solution

WDFW is requesting \$4.6 million to replace 19 pieces of Priority 1 equipment. To create this request, a team including mechanic staff, fleet management, and budget staff evaluated the Department’s current inventory of equipment, including recently surplus equipment, and the highest rental maintenance costs. A list of 43 pieces of needed equipment was evaluated based on cost, availability to rent, frequency of use, and relative to existing equipment and split into 3 levels of priority (see Appendix B). The top 19 pieces of equipment were selected based on need and age of equipment.

Priority	Type	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Cost
1	28K Road Grader (Medium)	1	\$ 325,000	\$ 325,000
1	30K Front End Loader (Medium)	1	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
1	56K Excavator (Medium)	1	\$ 275,000	\$ 275,000
1	20K Backhoe (Medium)	1	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
1	18K Excavator (Small)	1	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000
1	35 Ton Boom Truck w/ 30 Ton Crane	1	\$ 580,000	\$ 580,000
1	15K Forklift	1	\$ 115,000	\$ 115,000
1	14 Yard Dump Truck	2	\$ 300,000	\$ 600,000
1	5,000-Gal Tanker Trailer	1	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
1	2500-Gal Fish Truck	3	\$ 250,000	\$ 750,000
1	E550-Electrician's Van	1	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
1	F-550 w/Service Bed-Road Maintenance	1	\$ 120,000	\$ 120,000
1	F-450 w/Service Bed-Carpenter	1	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
1	F-450 w/Service Bed-Generator/Pump Maintenance	1	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
1	F-350-Crew Transport	1	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
1	15 Ton Hydraulic Crane (already have truck)	1	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Total		19		\$4,565,000

With this equipment, the Department will be able to immediately increase the level of support WDFW provides Washingtonians by providing much-needed habitat restoration and wildlife area accessibility along with fish passage and hatchery maintenance as well as a multitude of other projects across the state. The state can also expect an increased readiness level for emergency response once WDFW has the proper equipment to support these events. The increase in timeliness and quality of work will improve the Department’s ability to grade more roads, repair more boat ramps, and be more efficient with its capital and maintenance dollars.

An additional 25 pieces of priority 2 and 3 equipment will be needed in the near future for an additional \$3.6 million (see Appendix B), but this request focuses on the Department’s greatest needs and equipment that will provide the greatest immediate benefit.

Primary Alternative: Increase Reliance on Rented Equipment

The primary alternative for WDFW is to continue renting equipment and renting more equipment as owned equipment is surplus. WDFW’s team assessed long-term rental options and determined that, while renting is the most cost-effective choice for some equipment, replacing equipment proves to be the most time- and cost-efficient solution for the majority of items needed for the Department’s non-contracted projects.

The current market for heavy equipment is characterized by rising inventory and waning demand due to high interest rates, keeping prices

reasonable. At the same time, construction equipment rental costs have risen significantly. In the third quarter of 2023, year-over-year growth was 7.6%, followed by 3.1% in 2024. The rental increases are expected to continue in 2025. The steady increase in rental costs and low inventory is slowing work on WDFW construction projects.

Rented equipment is often not from the same manufacturer, the same model, or the same year. Employees are required to train every time on how to safely operate the specific piece of equipment. Additionally, most rental companies provide equipment with standard petroleum products in their fleets, and WDFW must change these fluids to environmentally friendly products while working on Department projects, then replace with petroleum products when returning the equipment. These fluid changes cost an average of \$6,000 each time equipment is rented. Both training and fluid replacement takes time and delays projects.

If rental equipment continues to be the solution, additional funding will still be needed to support increasing rental costs.

Other Alternatives Considered:

- *Contract more construction work.* Much of the Department’s work can be and is contracted out, but WDFW often needs to do time-sensitive or specialized work. It would not be timely or cost-effective to outsource those projects due to the operational complexity, scope of responsibilities, and remoteness of the work. This request focuses on equipment that supports those types of projects.
- *Reduce the number of annual projects.* WDFW could also scale back its capital projects. This will lead to a reduction in the Department’s ability to deliver technical and professional engineering, construction, maintenance to hatchery, habitat restoration (including in rivers and estuaries), and recreational access projects. This would also impact WDFW’s responsiveness during natural disasters and other emergency events.



Conclusion

WDFW’s mission is to provide hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities to Washingtonians. Retraining operators on changing rented equipment and waiting for fluid changes takes critical project time. During urgent situations, such as a flood blocking the sole access bridge to hatchery housing, it is crucial to have reliable, ready equipment. By renewing critical components of the heavy equipment fleet, the Department will enhance its readiness and provide critical capacity to complete the mission.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This is not an expansion or alteration of a current program. This request will sustain the current level of service and improve WDFW's ability to execute capital projects and respond to emergencies.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Total costs are \$4,565,000 in the 2025-27 biennium for the following equipment, Object J:

Priority	Type	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Cost
1	28K Road Grader (Medium)	1	\$ 325,000	\$ 325,000
1	30K Front End Loader (Medium)	1	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
1	56K Excavator (Medium)	1	\$ 275,000	\$ 275,000
1	20K Backhoe (Medium)	1	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
1	18K Excavator (Small)	1	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000
1	35 Ton Boom Truck w/ 30 Ton Crane	1	\$ 580,000	\$ 580,000
1	15K Forklift	1	\$ 115,000	\$ 115,000
1	14 Yard Dump Truck	2	\$ 300,000	\$ 600,000
1	5,000-Gal Tanker Trailer	1	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
1	2500-Gal Fish Truck	3	\$ 250,000	\$ 750,000
1	E550-Electrician's Van	1	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
1	F-550 w/Service Bed-Road Maintenance	1	\$ 120,000	\$ 120,000
1	F-450 w/Service Bed-Carpenter	1	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
1	F-450 w/Service Bed-Generator/Pump Maintenance	1	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
1	F-350-Crew Transport	1	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
1	15 Ton Hydraulic Crane (already have truck)	1	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Total		19		\$4,565,000

WDFW intends to purchase \$3,000,000 worth of equipment in fiscal year 2026 and the remaining \$1,565,000 worth of equipment in fiscal year 2027.

This is a one-time ask for capitalized heavy equipment. The Department plans to incorporate these assets into Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account (444) for long-term cost recovery and financial management.

Workforce Assumptions:

N/A

Historical Funding:

N/A

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports two Results Washington goals: 1) Prosperous Economy; and 2) Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. This proposal is fundamental for the Department to continue preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems by ensuring that capital projects are completed that support a vibrant recreational and commercial fishing industry, provide recreational opportunities on Department lands, develop and execute habitat restoration projects, and provide oversight of local environmental ecosystems. Lastly, this request respects our state's government-to-government relationship with tribes by supporting their harvest opportunities.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package directly supports the Department's 25-Year Strategic Plan strategies to "proactively address conversation challenges," "engage communities through recreation and stewardship," and "model operational and environmental excellence."

This request is essential for executing the physical improvements necessary to advance several key aspects of the Department's strategic plan. New equipment will support hatchery improvements aligned with the Southern Resident killer whale recovery plan and the Governor's salmon strategy. These improvements include habitat restoration through fish passage repairs, road grading to prevent sediment runoff, and enhancements to recreational access. Overall, these improvements will enable WDFW to deliver services effectively and safely, ensuring cost efficiency for taxpayers.

WDFW Activity Inventory

This funding request supports the following Department activities:

- Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species – Total costs are \$989,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat & Species – Total costs are \$989,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Produce Hatchery Fish – Total costs are \$989,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Acquire & Manage Lands – Total costs are \$914,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Provide & Facilitate Recreational Opportunities – Total costs are \$228,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Manage Fishing Opportunities – Total costs are \$228,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.
- Manage Hunting Opportunities – Total costs are \$228,000 in the 2025-27 biennium.

Performance Outcomes:

The performance outcomes for WDFW's heavy equipment include:

- **Long-term health of the Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account (444):** The Department will use the Revolving Account to maintain new equipment and fund future equipment replacement.
- **Reduced Long-Term Costs:** Long-term cost savings by reducing WDFW's reliance on rental equipment.
- **Capital Project Success:** Reduce or eliminate project delays due to unavailable equipment.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Regional staff at WDFW identify new projects, and projects needing repair and replacement. The Department's work is a result of Wildlife Area Management planning, community outreach by the regions, and work with tribal and government entities. Specific outreach for this request was not completed.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

This request will bolster outdoor accessibility and other improvements that will benefit Washingtonians in every county.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal supports the purchase of equipment that will be used throughout the state. Most of the equipment is available through local businesses which can benefit local economies, and will allow WDFW to continue work throughout the state to create and improve recreation and tourism in rural communities.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Although outreach for this request was not specifically completed, it will allow the Department to complete work identified through local interest group outreach.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

WDFW requires a functional and effective heavy equipment fleet to effectively implement restoration project activities on WDFW lands and maintain opportunities for stewardship and outdoor recreation. This advances Puget Sound recovery through the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategies: 3. Healthy Shorelines, 5. Floodplains and Estuaries; 6. Fish Passage Barriers; 15. Harvest, Hatchery, and Adaptive Management of Salmon Recovery; and 22. Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship. Specific Action Agenda actions including implementing restoration actions include 11, 12, and 20. Associated Statewide Salmon Strategy and draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Regional Chapter Addendum actions are also implemented through this decision package.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

WDFW often partners with other governmental and tribal partners to coordinate efforts. Purchase of new equipment will make the ability to enter into those cooperative agreements more reliable and cost effective with our own equipment.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW has routinely heard from non-government stakeholders, the need to be more responsive to maintenance needs and the need for higher quality roads, boat ramps, and public access. WDFW anticipates support from stakeholder groups.

State Facilities Impacts:

These are replacements of existing or surplus heavy equipment, and they have space waiting for them at the Department’s Lacey and Yakima Construction shops.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

Reference Documents

[RE - Appendix A - WDFW Heavy Equipment Surplus 2021-2024.pdf](#)

[RE - Appendix B - WDFW Heavy Equipment Prioritized Requests.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. J	\$3,000	\$1,565	\$4,565	\$0	\$0	\$0

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is finalizing review of Chapter 77.57 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) (known as the Fishways, Flow, and Screening Statutes) to implement new rules surrounding fish passage and water diversions. Full implementation of the rules will enable WDFW to better protect all fish species. Salmon populations throughout the state are at historically low numbers, due in part to barriers blocking fish passage and improperly designed water diversions. Without change, salmon are unlikely to recover, and Southern Resident killer whales will continue to struggle for lack of their preferred prey. This proposal will implement the new Fishways and Screening Rules on the date they become effective. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	8.0	9.0	8.5	9.0	9.0	9.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,546	\$1,803	\$3,349	\$1,638	\$1,638	\$3,276
Total Expenditures	\$1,546	\$1,803	\$3,349	\$1,638	\$1,638	\$3,276

Decision Package Description

The ability of salmon and steelhead to migrate to and from their traditional spawning grounds is vital to their life cycle and persistence in Washington. Additionally, other fish species and the freshwater life stages of juvenile salmon move between different areas of the stream to find suitable habitat. Human-made obstructions block fish from swimming upstream and moving within the stream. In 2018, the Southern Resident Orca task force published its report identifying lack of prey as a key threat to Southern Resident killer whales. Recommendation three of the report endorsed agencies to apply and enforce laws that protect habitat. Specifically, the task force noted that the governor should direct WDFW to develop rules to fully implement Chapter 77.57 Revised Code of Washington (RCW). RCW 77.57 grants the Department the authority to establish standards and address noncompliant, human-made fish passage obstructions and improperly screened water diversions.

To fully execute this law, WDFW must develop a new rule section (Environmental Standards and Conservation) under title 220 Washington Administrative Code (WAC). Additionally, WDFW was provided funding to establish these rules in 2019 and again 2022 through legislative provisions. WDFW has been working on this new WAC development since 2020, investing significant resources towards the creation of a WAC that upholds Washington law. As the WAC development is finalized, supporting the implementation requirements is needed and well-timed. This decision package is being requested to develop the Department's existing Compliance Division with policy guidance and necessary tools and capacity that is needed to support implementation of the WAC. This is also required by the Administrative Procedure Act requirements (RCW 34.05.328) related to rule adoption.

Protecting Species

The Southern Resident killer whale diet consists primarily of Chinook salmon. Several runs of Chinook salmon that are important prey for Southern Resident killer whales are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. To be abundant, diverse, and sustainable, Chinook salmon need productive and protected habitat as well as a reliable supply of forage fish to feed on.

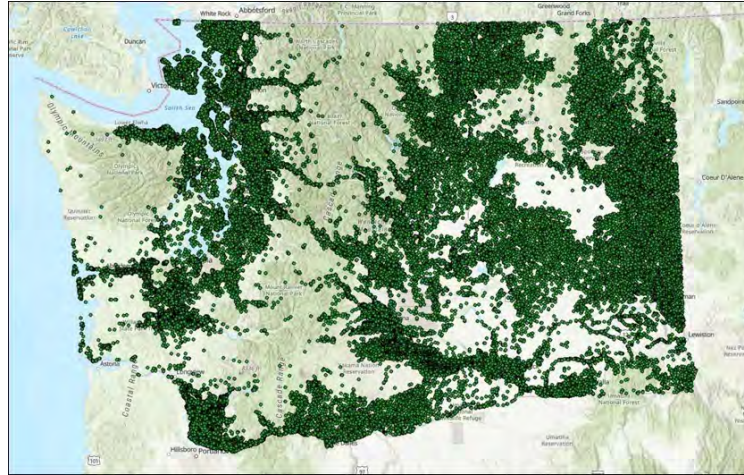
Salmon recovery across Washington depends on the ability of salmon and steelhead to swim upstream to their traditional spawning grounds and migrate downstream. Barriers that block fish from swimming upstream or fish movement instream, such as deteriorating culverts, outdated bridges, and diversion dams undermine the state's salmon recovery efforts and impact other aquatic species. WDFW seeks to help landowners protect fish by providing technical assistance to achieve voluntary compliance of non-compliant structures which will require more staffing and resources to support this effort.

Proper fish screens help prevent fish from being harmed or stranded in irrigation channels and provide water users cleaner water and more reliable flow. Similarly, well-designed fish passage projects have multiple benefits for fish and people: they improve fish migration, reduce flood risks and emergency repair costs, and support jobs in local communities across the state.

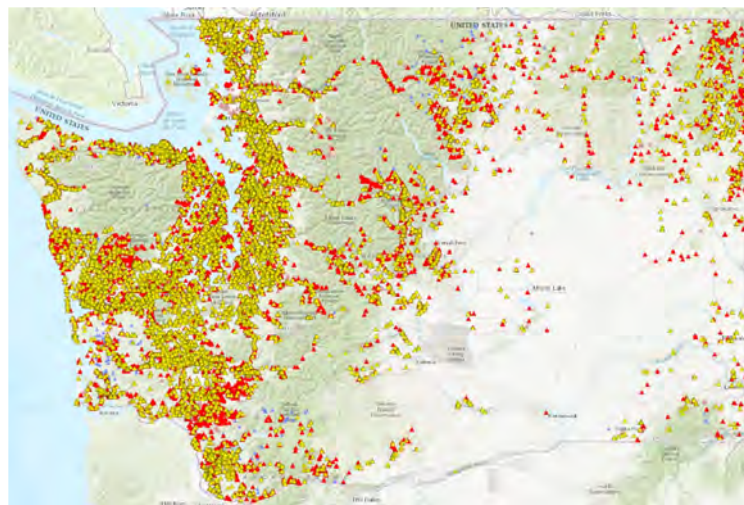
Scope of the Issue

Water diversions and fish passage barriers are located statewide and are a result of agriculture, forestry, recreation, and urbanization. WDFW estimates over 20,000 known barriers are either partially or fully blocking salmon and steelhead from reaching their spawning grounds in Washington.

The first figure illustrates the known water diversions in Washington. Not all water diversions indicated in the map are located on fish bearing waters, but it shows the magnitude of screening devices throughout the state.



The second figure shows known fish passage barriers throughout Washington. The map does not indicate unknown barrier status or passable fish passage structures. WDFW estimates over 20,000 known barriers are either partially or fully blocking salmon and steelhead from reaching their spawning grounds in Washington.



Those affected by implementation of RCW 77.57 and WAC range from governmental agencies to private landowners that are responsible for fish passage structures and water diversions.

Proposed Solution

With statewide rules that incorporate compliance metrics for fish passage and screening barriers, it is critical to implement rules that are clear, fair, and provide adequate technical assistance opportunities. In order to do this, WDFW is requesting additional regional habitat biologist staff and additional compliance staff to further build out an existing compliance team (the Department expects to learn more about compliance capacity as implementation starts), additional program administrative support, and funding to enhance an existing IT software for the purposes of implementing agreements that are sometimes required under the new WAC.

The purpose of rule implementation is to inform the public how WDFW intends to:

- Implement and enforce the rule.
- Inform and educate persons affected by the rule.

- Promote and assist voluntary compliance of the rule.
- Guide noncompliant structure owners through WDFW administrative actions.

WDFW need additional capacity to develop programs to encourage voluntary compliance. These programs include technical assistance visits, printed information, information and assistance by telephone, training meetings, and other appropriate delivery methods of technical assistance. WDFW anticipates existing regional habitat biologist staff will be able to provide this assistance, however there are a few regions of the state where there isn't capacity to absorb this new work, therefore the agency is requesting minimum additional capacity at this time and will monitor as implementation rolls out to ensure this is adequate. WDFW has an existing Habitat Engineer team but is similarly requesting two additional staff in order to accommodate the additional technical assistance site visits that result from implementation.

WDFW recognizes the high volume of existing fish passage and diversion structures throughout Washington. When prioritizing compliance inspection site visits, prioritizing the deployment of compliance resources, and determining the appropriate enforcement response to a violation, the department will consider the nature of the fish resources impacted by the existing noncompliant structure as well as the quality and quantity of associated habitat. WDFW has never explicitly used Chapter 77.57 RCW to correct a barrier, predominantly because it is difficult to issue administrative actions without first having a public process to discuss ramifications. Currently, barriers are largely corrected through the hydraulic project approval (HPA) process, which is initiated by the structure owner (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/hpa>). WDFW anticipates many of the obstructions and improperly fish screens to be resolved through voluntary compliance. At this time, WDFW is requesting only two additional compliance inspectors to add to an existing team of 7 compliance inspectors who enforce the hydraulic code. In addition, WDFW is requesting two additional working compliance supervisors to accommodate the program growth and development of new policy guidance necessary for implementation. WDFW will continue to monitor as implementation rolls out to ensure this is adequate capacity.

There is a significant increase in administrative work necessary for tracking technical assistance and compliance efforts to ensure the program is efficient and effective. As a result, WDFW is requesting some administrative support for the compliance program as well as funding to put towards enhancing an existing permitting system to accommodate agreements that are required as part of implementation.

WDFW anticipates implementation of RCW 77.57 to start in January 2025.

Best Option

At this time, WDFW is requesting minimal resources to set up RCW 77.57 program implementation. As previously stated, WDFW believes most of the work can be absorbed into existing programs and IT software. However, If WDFW identifies gaps, it will submit an additional request in future sessions for additional support.

Without adequate funding, WDFW will be unable to enforce the new WAC and help owners of inadequate structure correct them, further contributing to the decline of fish and, ultimately, orcas.

Transparency and trust throughout the implementation of the new WAC is critical. The core of this request is providing support that will, in turn, foster greater confidence among the people we serve. Further RCW/WAC changes will not help to streamline the implementation. Redeploying base budget to increase current funding is also not an option because we are in a new biennium. Finally, status quo is also not an option because previous funding was provided solely for the 2019-21 and 2021-23 biennium (BN) for the rule development, not implementation, without continuation into the 2023-25 or 2025-27 BN.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal will result in the expansion of the Habitat Program's Compliance Division. Currently, the compliance division is only staffed to address Hydraulic Code violations. Through implementing the new WAC, there is currently insufficient staffing to adequately address noncompliant structures. Two working supervisors to supervise staff across the state will be needed, as will two compliance inspectors respectively located. As WDFW implements this new WAC, it will be assessed if additional compliance staff is needed. A management analyst will also support critical internal infrastructure changes from staff expansion. The WDFW regional offices will gain two new habitat biologists to assist the compliance division. There is small expansion of the Engineering Division as two engineers will be needed to help with technical assistance.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, Objects A and B, for 8.0 FTEs totals \$954,000 in FY 2026.

In FY 2027, Salaries and benefits for 9.0 FTEs is \$1,065,876 and ongoing.

Goods and services, Object E, include \$8,000 per FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's space, supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year, as well as central agency costs.

For FY 2026, Object E is \$64,000 for 8.0 FTEs. For FY 2027 and ongoing, the total is \$72,000 for 9.0 FTEs. Additionally, \$100,000 is included for Assistant Attorney General (AAG) support. As a result of implementation, there will be new civil administrative enforcement actions can be formally appealed under RCW 77.57 and the new WAC. Habitat program will need legal advice and consultation as well as representation time for research and analysis to establish a new rule section under Title 220 WAC. In FY 2027 and ongoing, this cost will remain the same as we anticipate that we will require the same AAG capacity.

Personal services contracts (Object C) for \$50,000 in FY 2026 and \$125,000 in FY 2027 for contract support for permitting system enhancements necessary to implement compliance of RCW 77.57 in the new Aquatic Protection Permitting System (APPS) and for the initial development of a web-based tool for strategy implementation.

An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T, totaling \$378,000 in FY26, \$441,000 in F27, and \$401,000 in FY28 and ongoing. Object T is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated work are as follows:

Restoration Division

2.0 FTE Environmental Engineer 3 to accommodate the increase in technical assistance work. In addition, these positions provide dedicated engineering capacity for reviewing fish passage at dams that currently do not exist.

Regional Staff

2.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3 – Habitat biologists will be leading the proactive voluntary compliance working closely with their Assistant Regional Program Manager (ARHPM) and Regional Program Manager (RHPM). There is likely capacity to absorb this work into existing teams on the eastside of the state, however there is a need to add capacity to some district teams on the Westside of the State to accommodate this new work. WDFW will monitor and request additional funding in the future if there is a gap.

Compliance Division

2.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 4 – A dedicated working supervisor for the west side and east side of Washington to oversee implementation of a growing compliance program and will support the development of guidance and training for implementing this new WAC.

2.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologists 3 – The workload from RCW 77.57 for compliance is expected to be less than RCW 77.55, therefore, WDFW is requesting to add 2 additional compliance inspectors to the existing team to provide statewide coverage. WDFW will monitor and request additional funding in the future if there is a gap.

1.0 FTE Management Analyst 3 – the management analyst will provide administrative support in tracking compliance related to RCW 77.57 and generating reports.

Historical Funding:

Current funding for the work described in this package was provided to the Department on a onetime basis and expires on June 30, 2025. It has been removed from the WDFW budget through the carryforward level adjustment. Without approval of this request, no funding will be available for this work in the 2025-27 biennium.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

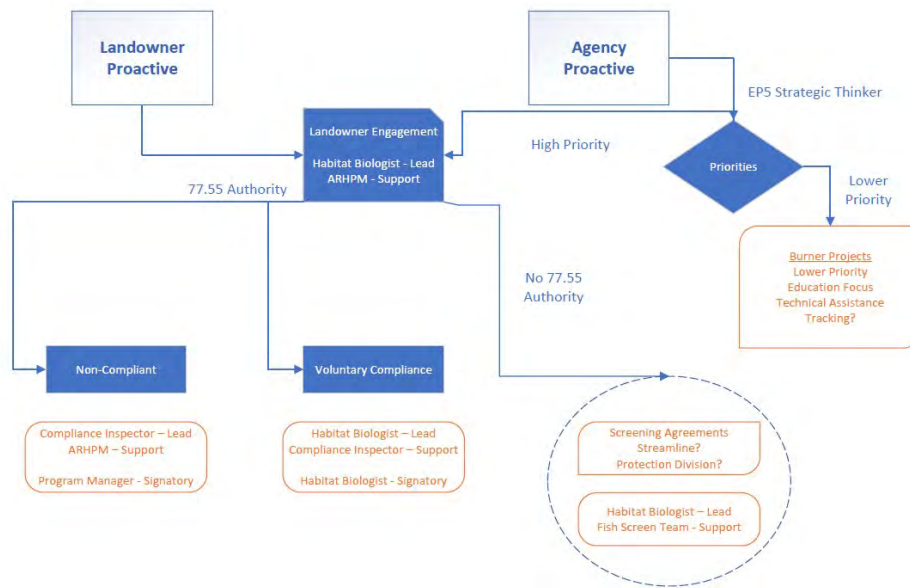
This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve the Results Washington goal of a Sustainable Energy and Environment. Specifically, this measure supports threatened populations of orca and fish species on lakes, streams, and rivers.

This package is related to the agency Strategic Plan. First, it ties into the near-term actions that proactively address conservation challenges. This rule's goal is ultimately related to expanding current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species, such as the Southern Resident Orca population. It indirectly improves salmon and steelhead populations that are limiting fishing opportunities by removing barriers, opening fish habitat, and protecting species from inadequate fish screening.

Performance Outcomes:

The primary outcomes from the WDFW Approved Performance Measures are “miles of fish habitat opened” and “threatened and endangered species population increases”. Secondary outcomes relate to “HPA compliance” and “technical assistance interactions”.

This new rule will allow WDFW to target specific, existing barriers outside of the normal HPA correction process for compliance. Although Chapter 77.57 RCW provides broad authority to fix barriers on lakes, streams, and rivers in Washington, it is not WDFW’s intent to use this rule indiscriminately. The rule will focus on a tiered process of voluntary actions and lean on existing technical assistance procedures on targeted projects.



The rule will also help increase the efficacy of fish passage improvement projects made throughout the state. State agencies, tribal governments, cities, counties, and private landowners have made significant monetary investments throughout the state to improve fish passage. However, many other barriers exist downstream and/or upstream that may prevent fish from reaching habitat made available by these corrections. WDFW recognizes the high volume of existing fish passage and diversion structures throughout Washington. When prioritizing compliance inspection site visits, prioritizing the deployment of compliance resources, and determining the appropriate enforcement response to a violation, the department will consider the nature of the fish resources impacted by the existing noncompliant structure as well as the quality and quantity of associated habitat. This promotes better stewardship of project dollars and minimizes early replacement and/or maintenance.

Since hydraulic code laws and regulations are complicated, WDFW has a responsibility to help the regulated community understand how to comply. WDFW will use a range of tools as our roles move from educator to enforcer. WDFW will improve compliance with the RCW 77.57 and WAC through increased public education, technical assistance, and inspections. Habitat Biologists typically have first contact with structure owners and will work with them to address inadequate obstructions and water diversion. When voluntary compliance is not successful, Compliance Division staff will seek authorization from management to take appropriate administrative enforcement. The department will employ a continuum of increasingly stringent enforcement tools as our role moves from technical assistance to enforcer. This continuum runs from correction requests advising people of areas of noncompliance, to administrative enforcement actions and, when appropriate, criminal prosecution.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

WDFW has been actively engaged in outreach since June 2020, working directly with many stakeholder groups including treaty tribes, Association of Washington Cities, Washington State Association of Counties, state agencies, nongovernmental agencies, and the general public in developing the new rules. WDFW took a broad approach to outreach, communicating the objectives of the rule proposal and soliciting input through virtual presentations. News releases and social media notifications were also used to publicize rule making activities.

Date	Activity
6/23/20 & 7/1/20	Tribal Technical Workshop Presentation on existing WDFW fish passage and screening processes and to take comments about the direction of rule development
7/1/20	CR-101, preproposal statement of inquiry, published (filed on June 17, 2020)
7/20/20	News Release
7/29/20	General Public Technical Workshop Presentation on existing WDFW fish passage and screening processes and to take comments about the direction of rule development
2/10/21	Tribal Policy Webinar to review the initial draft rule proposal and take comments
2/16/21	News Release
2/26/21	General Public Policy Webinar to review the initial draft rule proposal and take comments
10/11/22	News Release
10/18/22	Tribal Second Policy Webinar to review the updated draft rule proposal and take comments.
10/25/22	General Public Second Policy Webinar to review the updated draft rule proposal and take comments
6/15/23	Tribal Policy 3 rd Briefing Webinar on updated draft language
8/16/23	CR-102, file of proposed rulemaking notice published
9/13/23	General Public 3 rd Policy Webinar to review the updated draft rule proposal
10/27/23	WDFW Commission Public Comment and Hearing

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Due to the rule’s broad nature and numerous fish passage and water diversion structures throughout the state, identifying and contacting individual, private structure owners has been difficult, especially with available data. WDFW is continuing to broadly notify the general public of the rules.

Target Communities and Populations:

This package would indirectly provide benefit to all communities located near lakes, streams, or rivers.

By protecting all fish species at all life stages, recreational opportunities will increase throughout the state as fish are protected from poorly designed fish passage and water diversion structures. Commercial fisheries will experience benefits as well if the health and prevalence of fish populations increase. Southern Resident Orca and salmon hold significant cultural value to native tribes and are among the most iconic species to all Washington residents. In addition, the whale-watching industry contributes up to \$60 million per year to Washington's economy and supports hundreds of jobs in the Puget Sound region.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WDFW received feedback and comments during the Tribal Technical Workshops and Tribal Policy Webinars, and public comments from the General Public Policy Webinars.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package is aligned with 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 6 Fish Passage Barriers, action #152, and Action Agenda influential outcome 1.3 by increasing agency capacity to implement new rules to address noncompliant and human-made fish passage barriers and improperly screened water diversions. By increasing the number of habitat biologists and compliance staff that can provide education, technical assistance, and inspections, this decision package directly implements Orca Task Force Recommendation 3 to apply and enforce laws that protect habitat and action 4: develop and adopt rules to implement and enforce the Fishways, Flow, and Screening law. This decision package also directly implements Statewide Salmon Strategy 3 and is aligned with Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Addendum Strategy 6 and will result improved outcomes for endangered salmonids and Southern Resident killer whales.

State Workforce Impacts:

There are no impacts to collective bargaining agreements, compensation, or policy benefits.

Intergovernmental:

We anticipate support from our tribal partners, even though they are exempt from compliance standards on their own fish passage and water diversions. Tribal partners are supportive of the inclusion of fish passage for all fish species at all life stages. They have a vested interest in seeing better outcomes for salmon and lamprey.

Other intergovernmental agencies have expressed similar concerns over the new rule but are supportive of protecting fish passage. Cities, counties, and the Washington State Department of Transportation have expressed concern with 1) the potential definition of the term “fishway” and 2) the inclusion of all species, at all life stages. Only cities and counties have expressed concern about the rate in which WDFW might utilize this rule for enforcement. WDFW has remained clear that the Department would only use enforcement measures for the most egregious circumstances.

Stakeholder Impacts:

All landowners in Washington will be impacted by these new rules. If a person owns a fish passage or water diversion structure on a lake, stream, or river, they will be regulated.

We anticipate support from the environmental conservation organizations for these rules, as they focus on removing barriers to fish passage and protecting fish and their habitats. Additionally, this rule is supportive of the Orca Task Force’s recommendations to protect and improve the health of Southern Resident Orcas. Orca and salmon are part of our cultural identity, fishing economy, and tourism industry in Washington.

We foresee possible concerns from the agricultural community as it relates to the enforcement of screening standards on water diversions. The agricultural community and private landowners would generally oppose policy and process that will result in increased costs.

State Facilities Impacts:

It is anticipated that the new staff position can be absorbed into existing facilities with no additional cost increases.

Changes from Current Law:

There are no changes to Chapter 77.57 RCW. The 2019-2021 Operating Budget (2019 Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1109 [Laws of 2019, chapter 415] tasked WDFW to create new rules for Chapter 77.57. This will create a new section under Title 220 WAC, consistent with Chapter 77.57 RCW. In addition to a new WAC, WDFW will also create guidance documents to assist in the implementation of the rule. We anticipate the Hydraulic Code will be updated because of these rules. There are no changes in statute.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

On March 14, 2018, Governor Jay Inslee signed Executive Order 18-02, which created the Southern Resident Orca Task Force to identify needed policies and programs, recommend priority actions, highlight budget needs, and suggest legislation to support orca recovery.

In November 2018, the Southern Resident Orca Task Force published its report identifying lack of prey as a key threat to Southern Resident Orcas. Contributing to this threat are development activities and fish passage barriers like impassable dams, tide gates, screens, and culverts that have reduced habitat available for salmon and forage fish. Recommendation three of the report endorsed agencies to apply and enforce laws that

protect habitat. Specifically, the task force noted that the governor should direct WDFW to develop rules to fully implement Chapter 77.57. The 2019-2021 Operating Budget directed WDFW to develop and adopt rules to implement and enforce Chapter 77.57, known as the Fishway, Flow, and Screening Statute.

New rules are necessary to fully implement Chapter 77.57, consistent with recommendations of the Southern Resident Orca Task Force’s goal of increasing salmon availability for Southern Resident Orcas.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

This decision package is aligned with the Governor’s Salmon Strategy Priority 3. Correct fish passage barriers and restore salmon access to historical habitat; and Strategy Action Area 3a. Fish passage barrier removal: This package continues the critical work of ensuring fish passage and screening structures are effective and maintained across WA. By implementing rules that lay out compliance pathways to correct state-owned and non-state-owned barriers that impede salmon recovery, there will be increased access to historic habitat, further supporting salmon recovery. Additionally, rules that clearly lay out the response for noncompliant structures that harm salmon and limit access help achieve accountability statewide. It also provides accountability for the fish barriers that strand newer and future state-owned fish passage projects.

Reference Documents

- [7757 FishwaysFlowsScreening_ITaddendumBudget2025-27.xlsx](#)
- [WaTech202527ITAddendumSurvey_Submission_1260003736.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$709	\$791	\$1,500	\$791	\$791	\$1,582
Obj. B	\$245	\$274	\$519	\$274	\$274	\$548
Obj. C	\$50	\$125	\$175	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$164	\$172	\$336	\$172	\$172	\$344
Obj. T	\$378	\$441	\$819	\$401	\$401	\$802

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Coastal Chinook and steelhead are regarded as stronghold populations in Washington, but they were petitioned for ESA-listing in 2023 due to low abundance. The value of these fish and fisheries cannot be overstated. This package represents a holistic approach to fisheries conservation and management on the coast. Robust population viability monitoring will be led by expert scientists and leveraged in management strategy evaluations. Regional management plans will be developed with co-managers along with modern harvest management tools to inform forecasting, maintain critical fisheries, and achieve conservation goals. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$2,464	\$2,356	\$4,820	\$2,361	\$2,361	\$4,722
Total Expenditures	\$2,464	\$2,356	\$4,820	\$2,361	\$2,361	\$4,722

Decision Package Description

This decision package intends to solve multiple problems related to the conservation and harvest of salmon and steelhead on Washington's coast. For decades coastal Washington has been considered a stronghold for salmon and steelhead in the contiguous United States, however recent shifts in ocean conditions, a warming climate, and other stressors have led to declines in the population abundances of these iconic species. The ramifications of these changes have affected tribal, sport, and commercial fisheries, led to increased investments in habitat restoration and protection on the coast, and persistent low abundances have resulted in a status review led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that could result in Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection for Chinook salmon and steelhead.

This proposal has existed in various forms for a few years. It was initially drafted as a product of the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan (CSPPIP), which identified many of these same priorities specifically for steelhead. The following year (2023) the package was updated to include more fish species, which coincided with a petition to list coastal Chinook salmon under the ESA. This is still the opportune time to implement this work because it is not too late. Regardless of ESA-listing petition outcomes, all the work highlighted in this proposal is needed. There are extreme risks to fisheries on the coast if ESA listings occur, and it is likely that fisheries would close until products like the ones detailed in this proposal are completed. Previous versions of this proposal had vast support but have not yet been funded. Indeed, the overall cost of this work is high, but coastal Washington has more rivers, hatcheries, and fish populations than any other part of the state; this funding level is sufficient to make massive gains, but it will not allow for comprehensive monitoring. This updated proposal emphasizes the modernization of fishery management and population monitoring in a way that we hope will resonate with partners and decision makers.

This proposal directly addresses the need for more effective conservation and management of salmon and steelhead on the Washington coast. The work proposed here represents a necessary modernization of population viability monitoring and fishery management. The outcomes of this work will benefit Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), co-managers, stakeholders, and all people in Washington who depend on fish populations. Some of the most important outcomes include: 1) capacity to begin developing Regional Management Plans in collaboration with tribal comanagers and federal partners; 2) implement integrated population modeling and management strategy evaluations to account for various harvest control rules; 3) improved transparency and predictability of fisheries year-to-year; 4) updated evaluations of population viability and data comprehensiveness; 5) strategic implementation of spawning grounds and fishery monitoring staff based on critical information gaps; and 6) expanded collaborations among scientists, managers, comanagers, and stakeholders.

Modern Fisheries Management

Fishery management goals for salmon and steelhead on the Washington coast were largely developed after the 1974 Boldt Decision based on data available 40 to 50 years ago. Management goals were based on estimates of the spawner escapement that was expected to produce Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Conservation risks to populations or alternative harvest strategies were not evaluated at the time. Since then, many years of monitoring data have been collected using spawning grounds surveys, fishery samples, creels, and other methods. Recent fishery closures on the coast highlight the need for a thorough quantification of the current status and trends of populations, and an assessment of long-term conservation risks.

This is particularly urgent considering ongoing environmental change. Climate change is altering environmental conditions in freshwater and marine ecosystems at an unprecedented rate. Land use practices that impact stream ecosystems have also changed dramatically over the last 50 years. To account for today's climate and environmental conditions, integrate new data, and utilize recent methodological advancements, we need to modernize our fishery management tools. We intend to re-evaluate biological reference points, such as the escapement at MSY, assess alternative harvest control rules (HCRs), such as fixed or abundance-based impact rates, and, most importantly, evaluate long-term risks to populations and expected fishing opportunities under each HCR.

We propose to perform management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for coastal salmon and steelhead, in collaboration with tribal co-managers, to assess the relative performance of alternative management approaches by modeling their long-term effects on population status, conservation risks, and fishing opportunities. The results from such an MSE will provide useful scientific information for designing regional management plans (RMP). Without an MSE, managers have little information to support their choice of harvest strategies. By developing MSEs, managers can compare alternative harvest strategies, identify potential trade-offs among our objectives (i.e. fishing opportunities versus conservation risks) and quantify uncertainties in management outcomes, all of which support robust management decisions. MSEs thereby help to better balance biological and socio-economic objectives.

This approach would (i) allow managers to determine whether changes to current management need to be made, (ii) identify how we can best manage fisheries to provide fishing opportunity without substantially increasing conservation risks, and (iii) enable periodic reassessment of reference points and harvest control rules that allows for an adaptive fishery management. These outcomes would be relevant for commercial and recreational fisheries across the coast as the project develops. They will also be available for integration into co-manager led RMPs that help define sustainable fisheries into the future. Key results of this work include transparency and predictability of fisheries from year-to-year. This overall approach to fishery modernization was recently adopted in the Skagit River for the wild steelhead catch-and-release season, which is very popular and until this framework was formalized had been closed for years.

Expand and Improve Fishery Monitoring

River fisheries can provide important recreational opportunities. These fisheries have grown due to the popularity of angling and overall growth of Washington's population. They have also intensified on the coast due to the proliferation of fishery closures across Washington due to ESA listings and conservation concerns. The popularity of coastal river fisheries combined with growing conservation concerns warrants a more rigorous approach to quantify the impacts of these fisheries on salmon and steelhead populations. Salmon and steelhead fisheries are diverse and can be complex with various rules regarding harvest of wild and hatchery fish, species that are caught and released, and other considerations that are relevant for today's fisheries.

Similar challenges were encountered in the management of Puget Sound marine fisheries with ESA listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon. In recognition of the value of the fishery and the need to meet conservation objectives, the legislature provided funding to monitor the fishery with creel surveys, a method of contacting anglers at docks to assess the number of fish caught or released. This work allowed for fisheries to take place despite their listing and conservation status. A similar advancement in fishery management is needed for these recreational fisheries.

Monitoring of freshwater fisheries has been recognized by stakeholders as fundamentally important to maintaining or increasing fishing opportunities. WDFW has engaged numerous advisory groups, comprised of diverse representatives from conservation and recreation organizations, to provide recommendations to advance the recovery of steelhead populations and fisheries. Those recommendations include:

- Improve spawning, escapement, and productivity estimates both annually and in-season.
- Improve forecasts of future salmon and steelhead returns.
- Monitor directed fisheries on salmon and steelhead.
- Assess impacts on non-targeted species in salmon and steelhead fisheries.

We propose addressing the fundamental need to improve the management of coastal river fisheries by initiating creel surveys of anglers and estimating when, where, and how many species are encountered in those fisheries. We will also sample the catch to identify the origin (hatchery or natural), age release location based on genetics, coded-wire-tags or other marks, and the status relative to spawning. Creel results will be compared to estimates of fish detected at select sonar sites in coastal watersheds.

Importantly, harvest monitoring and reporting in Washington is changing. As we develop electronic means of reporting harvested and released fish, the coastal river fisheries that are discussed in this package make ideal places to validate the new system alongside robust traditional creel sampling. Over time we intend to transition away from intensive and expensive fishery samplers and helicopter-based effort surveys in favor of better accuracy and precision of harvest estimates using electronic catch record cards. This future condition will yield better conservation outcomes by collecting more data (e.g., caught and released steelhead which are currently unreported) and allowing real-time access to fishery data for in-season adaptive management.

Improve Population Viability Evaluations

Monitoring the viability of wild salmon and steelhead populations is an essential component of stewarding Washington's most important natural resources and effective fisheries management. The most critical viability data include spawning abundance, adult-to-adult productivity, life history diversity and relative proportion of hatchery spawners, and spatial distribution. These metrics are tracked across the state where populations are listed for protection under the ESA. Indeed, these are the parameters that determine whether populations warrant listing and de-listing. With potential ESA listings looming on the Washington coast, it is imperative that we commit to robust viability monitoring of the most important coastal populations. Advancements in statistical approaches, computational power, and ecological sciences mean that traditional field-based methods can yield vastly improved results with modest new investments. The viability data are critical for forecasting future adult returns in harvest management and evaluating recovery actions, such as investments in fish passage, conservation hatcheries, predator management, and habitat restoration. Spawning ground surveys (SGS) are the most important tool WDFW relies upon for evaluating the status and trends of fish populations.

Counting adult spawners and sampling carcasses can yield robust viability information when analyzed appropriately. These outcomes provide information about the productive capacity our freshwater and marine environments in their current state and with the growing effects of climate change. Historically, SGS are built from a series of seasonally appropriate, systematic surveys of index and "random" stream sections for evidence of adult salmonid spawning activity. Adult fish and redds (nests) are counted and georeferenced. Carcasses are sampled for origin, age, and sex. These data yield annual abundances, proportion of hatchery spawners, adult-to-adult productivity, and spatial distribution of spawners within surveyed areas, which are among the most important viability metrics for salmon and steelhead populations. While long-term time series data that have been collected for 40-50 years are valuable, many of the existing estimates can be improved using updated methods. We plan to use spatial-temporal models to reanalyze historical spawner survey data and produce unbiased estimates of spawner abundances.

Capacity and Implementation

Coastal Washington (WDFW's Region 6) has among the most streams, salmon populations, hatcheries, and fisheries of any place in the state. There are also complex demands related to co-management and jurisdictional responsibilities with Olympic National Park managing fish and habitats within important headwaters of the Olympic Peninsula. This package goes a long way towards improving the capacity of biological and harvest monitoring in the previous sections. We also need to dedicate time to formalizing RMPs with each co-manager, as their respective capacity allows. This effort will be an essential collaboration in the event of ESA listings and a proactive effort to avoid listings that have not yet occurred. The improved viability monitoring and management tools discussed above will be led by Research Scientists and senior Fish and Wildlife Biologists. These same positions will work directly with tribal co-managers, a new fisheries policy manager, and the existing Regional Program Manager to develop RMPs for each watershed, manage hatcheries according to WDFW policy, and advance fisheries conservation on the coast.

Addressing the Problem

This proposal directly addresses the need for more rigorous population viability information and management tools to facilitate effective management of salmon and steelhead on Washington's coast. Historically, these areas have been under-resourced relative to places with ESA-listed stocks where monitoring resources were needed. This portfolio of work includes critical monitoring and statistical support to leverage data that inform viability assessments, conservation actions, and fishery implementation.

Funding this proposal will have direct benefits to anglers through improved predictability of fisheries. The work contained here would likely be essential to conduct any fisheries that affect Chinook salmon or steelhead if they are protected under the ESA. The in-season fishery monitoring components and sonar work could expand fishing opportunities when warranted based on abundances, catch, or other factors. Alternatively, fishing opportunity may be reduced when stocks are underperforming pre-season forecasts, but fishery modeling will make these tradeoffs clear.

This package solves multiple problems simultaneously across coastal Washington's salmon and steelhead populations. Fishery monitoring and management tools, and RMPs, are developed by a 1.0 FTE Washington Management Service (Band 2) and Fish and Wildlife Biologist 4 (Bio4). Population viability and MSE model development are led by a Research Scientist 2, sonar-based run escapement estimation is led by a Research Scientist 1, and data management support for all aspects of this work is supported by an IT Data Management Journey staff.

Harvest monitoring is led by a Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3 and a 0.5 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2. Field staff includes 8 Scientific Technicians for 4 months to cover fisheries occurring in Willapa Bay rivers, the Chehalis River system, Quinault River, Queets and Clearwater rivers, and the Quillayute River system, where capacity is currently insufficient.

Viability monitoring is primarily led by the Research Scientist 2 but implemented by a 0.5 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 and 13 Scientific Technicians working 2 to 4 months each on the same rivers where harvest monitoring is identified.

Alternatives Explored

This proposal represents the strongest alternative of many that have been explored over an iterative process since 2022. The first concept of this work emerged after the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan was released, but that concept was further refined to include Chinook salmon as they are facing ESA listing, provide essential fisheries and food for Orca, and appear to be in decline. The scope of this proposal and associated funding request account for OFM-requested reductions that occurred previously, and internal reductions made in 2024 by WDFW leadership. Alternatives to this scope of work are numerous due to the scalability of field components of this work. However, the status quo is not yielding acceptable outcomes for the people of Washington or WDFW's mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish and fisheries on the coast. The request detailed here is enough to modernize and implement fisheries management and conservation tools, collaborate with comanagers for sustainable fishery plans, and prepare for, or respond to potential ESA listings. We will adaptively manage this portfolio in the future. As harvest monitoring transitions to electronic reporting and viability assessment models are updated, we may be able to re-appropriate staff to fill other needs through surveying different fisheries, habitats, and watersheds to fill the most critical information gaps.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Assessment & Implementation

Salaries and benefits for 5.0 FTE totals \$678,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and Services, object E, totals \$42,000 and includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. The WDFW federally approved infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% included in object T totals \$233,000.

Fishery Monitoring

Salaries and benefits for 4.2 FTE totals \$376,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and Services, object E, totals \$132,000 and includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Object E also includes \$63,000 for helicopter survey efforts and \$1,280 for communication services (8 seasonal staff, \$40/mo. for 32 staff months) for a data plan. Additionally, \$4,000 is needed for seasonal field gear, which includes waders, rain gear and boots at a cost of \$500 per person for 8 seasonal staff.

Onetime funding of \$22,500 is needed for coded wire tag wands (5 x \$4,500 each) and \$3,600 (8 x \$450 each) for purchase of iPads for data collection.

Travel costs, object G, totals \$24,000. The DES agency vehicle rental of a SUV-MEDIUM-HYBRID-4X4 costs \$17,408 (\$544/mo. x 32 staff months) and DES mileage costs \$6,323 (\$0.19 per mile x 1,040 miles x 32 staff months). The WDFW federally approved infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% included in object T totals \$172,000.

Spawning Ground

Salaries and benefits for 4.8 FTE totals \$390,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and Services, object E, totals \$181,000 and includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Object E also includes \$2,080 for communication services (13 seasonal staff, \$40/mo. x 52 staff months) for a data plan. \$6,500 is needed for seasonal field gear, then replacement costs of \$3,250 per FY ongoing. Seasonal gear includes waders, rain gear, and boots at a cost of \$500 per person for 13 seasonal staff. Onetime funding of \$45,000 for coded wire tag wands (10 x \$4,500 each) and \$4,500 (10 x \$450 each) is need for the purchase of iPads for data collection.

Object E also includes \$60,000 for DNA genetic analysis of biological samples collected during monitoring and \$20,000 for DNA fish aging of scales and otoliths collected during monitoring activities (see table below).

Travel costs, object G, totals \$39,000. The DES agency vehicle rental of a SUV-MEDIUM-HYBRID-4X4 costs \$28,288 (\$544/mo. x 52 staff months) and DES mileage costs \$10,275 (\$0.19 per mile x 1,040 miles x 52 staff months). The WDFW federally approved infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% included in object T totals \$197,000.

DNA Genetic Sampling and Scale Aging					
Watershed	Fin Clips for DNA Testing	DNA Analysis \$32 per Fin Clip	Scales for Aging Testing	Scale Aging - \$2 per Scale	Total Fiscal Year Cost
Willapa Bay	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Chehalis	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Humptulips	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Quinault	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Queets/Clearwater	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Hoh	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Quillayute	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Independent Streams	235	\$7,520	1,250	\$2,500	\$10,020
Total per Fiscal Year	1,880	\$60,160	10,000	\$20,000	\$80,160

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classifications and the associated work for 14.0 FTE are as follows:

Assessment and Implementation

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Research Scientist 1 (\$130,669 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position functions as an agency expert on interpretation of sonar and hydro acoustic information from studies in coastal watersheds, coastal ecology and life cycle monitoring, fish in fish out analyst, Chehalis, and coastal sonar assistance in coordination with the Quantitative Synthesis & Reporting unit.

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Research Scientist 2 (\$142,607 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position provides long term research and biometric support for monitoring and assessment of salmon and steelhead populations originating from coastal watersheds. Quantitative synthesis and reporting, escapement and MSE support focused.

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 4 (\$117,427 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position is meant to add capacity to north coast Region 6 biological staff to support increased workloads and oversight of fisheries management in this area.

1.0 FTE IT Data Management – Journey Level (\$143,785 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Position supports Fish Program data systems and management of increased data collected in multiple districts. Field data collection is anticipated to be electronic. Position supports electronic sampling coordination and data systems maintenance. Position supports the Fish Program data systems with additional data collection and data management in multiple districts.

1.0 FTE Washington Management Service, Band 2 (\$142,312 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Position provides additional leadership for Fish Management and Policy oversight in Region 6. Position will help implement the regional management plans (RMP) and collaboration with tribal co-managers.

Fisheries Monitoring

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 3 (\$112,820 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position functions as implementation and data/estimation coordinator for freshwater fishery monitoring activities directed at salmon and steelhead under the direction of the region and in coordination with the centralized implementation team in Olympia. Position monitors Biologist for implementation of creel and spawning ground monitoring activities in District 17.

0.5 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 (\$97,184 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position functions as field data collection team lead and data stewards/coordinator and will serve under regional creel implementation biologist. Position supervises and leads creel survey crews in North Coast systems (Quillayute, Hoh, and independent tributaries).

2.7 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$79,425 salaries and benefits per FTE) – 8 seasonal positions serve as fishery sampling and monitoring staff. This totals 32 staff months, as 8 positions are four months per fiscal year. Additional technicians to conduct Fisheries monitoring in the Willapa, Chehalis, Quinault, Queets/Clearwater, and Quillayute system in time periods where there is no current monitoring.

Spawning Ground

0.5 FTE Fish and Wildlife Biologist 2 (\$97,184 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position functions as spawning ground field team lead and will serve under District 16 Biologist. Position supervises and leads spawning ground survey crews in north coast systems (Quillayute, Hoh, and independent tributaries).

4.3 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$79,425 salaries and benefits per FTE) – 13 seasonal positions serve as spawning ground survey staff. This totals 28 staff months, as each position is four months per fiscal year. Additional technicians to conduct spawning ground surveys in the Chehalis, Humptulips, Quinault, Queets/Clearwater, Hoh, Quillayute, and independent north coast tributaries.

Assessment and Implementation

1.0 FTE Fish and Wildlife Research Scientist 1 (\$130,669 salaries and benefits per FTE) – This position functions as an agency expert on interpretation of sonar and hydro acoustic information from studies in coastal watersheds, coastal ecology and life cycle monitoring, fish in fish out analyst, Chehalis, and coastal sonar assistance in coordination with the Quantitative Synthesis & Reporting unit.

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Historical Funding:

Funding is requested because activities in this specific package exceed the 2025-27 base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will not be able to implement these activities or will need to consider cutting other essential services.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This decision package supports the state's ability to achieve two Results Washington goals: 1) Prosperous Economy; and 2) Sustainable Energy & Clean Environment. This proposal is fundamental to the harvest management and recovery of salmon and steelhead on the Washington coast. In addition, the enumeration of migrating fish and origin identification is crucial for conservation and recovery of populations.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This decision package supports the following Department Strategic Plan priorities:

- Proactively address conservation challenges, implementing a co-manage habitat Workplan to improve salmon and steelhead populations that are limiting fishing opportunities, and monitoring programs to minimize risk to wild stocks.
- Engage communities through recreation and stewardship, delivering hunting and fishing customer service, including needs for predictability, as the Department continues to focus on maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations.
- Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions, developing an agency-level data management system to provide better science for agency decision-making and constituent outreach.

In addition, this proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve two 25-year Performance goals:

- 25 percent increase in wild salmon populations
- 90 percent of the public reports trusting WDFW to do what is right for the fish and wildlife management in our state.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Fishing Opportunities: \$2,425,000 and 14.0 FTE in FY 2026 General Fund – State, and \$2,316,000 and 14.0 FTE in FY 2027 General Fund – State.

This package supports the Manage Fishing Opportunities activity and applicable supporting strategy: monitor and manage finfish populations. The Department assesses, monitors, and evaluates finfish populations to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and based on sound science. The Department staff conduct field investigations to count the number of juveniles migrating to saltwater and adults returning to freshwater, conducts tests fisheries to verify abundance assumptions, and uses fish management harvest models to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities while minimizing risks to wild fish populations.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve the following performance indicators:

- Priority research needs being met.
- Threatened and endangered species population recovery.
- Number of angler days.

Additional expected outcomes from increased monitoring are renewed or increased recreational fishing opportunities in the systems that we monitor, a better understanding of fishery impacts on protected resources and hatchery production. The proposal maximizes existing facilities and information technology structures within the agency to reduce the overall costs of implementing a monitoring program.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Improvements to monitoring and management of coastal salmon and steelhead described in this package integrate feedback resulting from numerous community outreach and engagement activities, including:

Salmon and Steelhead Season Setting With Tribal Co-Managers

The state of Washington's process for setting salmon and steelhead seasons on the Washington coast involves structured and legally mandated intergovernmental engagement with tribal co-managers. This occurs on a year-round basis through regional co-management of salmon and steelhead populations. For salmon fisheries, the process culminates in season setting in late winter/early spring with meetings that are collectively referred to as the North of Falcon process, which includes both tribal and state consultation and a process for WDFW to solicit feedback from

the general public. Steelhead fishery planning often occurs on a regional basis in the fall. This proposal incorporates direct feedback from tribal co-managers that seeks to improve WDFW's monitoring and management practices for coastal salmon and steelhead populations. Monitoring sport fishery harvest impacts through on-site creel surveys, which improve the quality and timeliness of catch estimates, is a long-standing request of co-managers that this package supports and integrates into its processes.

Angler Community Engagement

WDFW seeks recommendations and guidance from the public, including formalized engagement with the angling community through forums like the annual Coastal Steelhead town hall meeting series and North of Falcon process. During these processes the Department invites the public to submit fishery proposals and shares updates on salmon and steelhead management, trends, environmental indicators, and forecasts. Public feedback plays a crucial role in shaping the priorities and final choices that help define fishery seasons, which must balance WDFW's dual mandate for conservation and recreational harvest opportunity.

For years, anglers, conservation groups, and advisors have encouraged the use of better technology to monitor fisheries. Investments to expand the use of SONAR-based tools to monitor adult salmon and steelhead escapement described in this package directly incorporate this feedback. Fully functional SONAR programs are expected to provide accurate in-season abundance data, which can be used to adjust fisheries based on real-time data.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The work detailed in this proposal seeks to improve monitoring and management of Washington coast salmon and steelhead and is expected to yield benefits across a broad swath of populations and communities in Washington. If either coastal Chinook or Olympic Peninsula steelhead become ESA-listed and the investments detailed in this package are not funded, there will be disproportionate impacts to both tribal and rural communities on the Washington coast, relative to entire population of Washington. The Department will work to improve communication strategies and outreach services to better inform historically marginalized communities on the status and trends of salmon and steelhead populations and available freshwater recreational fishing opportunities.

Target Communities and Populations:

The work supported by this proposal promotes equity and benefits local communities who have been historically excluded by government decisions. Target populations of this package include:

Tribal Communities

This package is a direct investment to improve tribal and state (collectively, co-manager) capacity to effectively monitor and manage imperiled salmon and steelhead populations. This work is relevant to and benefits tribal communities, who depend on fishing to maintain culture and provide economic opportunities. There is a high degree of cross-dependency between state and tribal entities when collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing data to perform fishery stock assessments. These scientific evaluations use population and fishery harvest data to measure productivity and quantify the amount of harvestable surplus available from a population. Inferences from stock assessments help inform the conservation risks and ability of tribal and state managers to prosecute sustainable fisheries. Potential ESA listings for coastal Chinook and Olympic Peninsula steelhead present severe risks to tribal fisheries, which have immeasurable cultural, as well as economic value. Investments by Washington to modernize fishery monitoring programs on the Washington coast are critical for a resilient co-management framework that provides the data and insights necessary to support priority tribal treaty rights. Geographically, tribal communities on the Washington coast tend to occur in rural areas that historically depended on natural resource extraction and presently exhibit low diversity in economic opportunity.

Rural Communities

People who reside in rural areas of Washington are disproportionately impacted by governmental regulation of natural resources. Rural areas contain the highest quality fish and wildlife habitat, representing our best available areas for meaningful restoration and conservation actions. Consequently, rural communities tend to bear a higher burden regarding governmental land use and resource management decisions. These communities are further challenged by long-term declines in natural resource industries like commercial fishing, logging, and mining. Investments in fisheries monitoring and management programs are likely to benefit rural communities on multiple levels. Economically, rural communities are positioned to benefit from growth in recreation-based economic activity and opportunities for sustainable commercial fisheries— activities that are both supported by rigorous fishery monitoring and management programs. These same fisheries provide opportunities for people to connect with and develop meaningful relationships to salmon and steelhead populations. Demographically, many middle- and lower-income families in rural areas are expected to benefit from freshwater recreational fisheries that are made possible through improved monitoring and management

practices, especially fishing opportunities that are locally accessible and do not require a boat to participate, as these fisheries provide local and relatively low-cost opportunities to access fresh and healthy seafood and build tangible connections with Washington's salmon and steelhead populations.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

This proposal incorporates direct feedback from tribal co-managers that seeks to improve WDFW's monitoring and management practices for coastal salmon and steelhead populations. Monitoring sport fishery harvest impacts through on-site creel surveys, which improve the quality and timeliness of catch estimates, is a long-standing request of co-managers that this package supports and integrates into its processes.

For years, anglers, conservation groups, and advisors have encouraged the use of better technology to monitor fisheries. Investments to expand the use of SONAR-based tools to monitor adult salmon and steelhead escapement described in this package directly incorporate this feedback. Fully functional SONAR programs are expected to provide accurate in-season abundance data, which can be used to adjust fisheries based on real-time data.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Although WDFW is not covered under the HEAL Act, the agency is strongly supportive of providing meaningful engagement, reducing environmental harms and health disparities, and increasing equitable access to environmental benefits for overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

Tribal co-managers have long advocated for enhanced freshwater monitoring of state fisheries. With the continued decline of salmon and steelhead populations, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of freshwater fisheries is crucial for informed decision-making when creating fishing opportunities for all stakeholders. Increased monitoring efforts to collectively improve our understanding of sport fishery impacts, population dynamics, develop forecasts of expected fish returns, and implement state of the science Management Strategy Evaluation will receive strong support from tribal co-managers and federal partners responsible for implementing fishery and hatchery management plans for conservation.

The Department initiated a robust process engaging representatives from over twenty tribes beginning in April 2024. At these meetings tribes insisted on action from the State in a variety of environmental areas. Attached as part of the Department's 2025-27 BN submittal is a report related to these matters.

Stakeholder Impacts:

This request includes recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group, which included Department staff, sport anglers, business owners, conservationists, research scientists, fishing guides, and others interested in steelhead recovery. All interested constituents will support monitoring and evaluation programs that enable both conservation of populations and fishing opportunities.

Outreach and involvement of constituents participating in these fisheries is high. Fishing constituents will be supportive of efforts that lead to increased opportunities for recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries resulting from increased monitoring.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may become problematic. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts. This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

This proposal is not in response to litigation, an audit finding, executive order, or task force recommendation.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 7 - Strengthen science, monitoring, and accountability and 7a - Monitoring and science-based efforts: This package expands the conservation of salmon and steelhead on the Washington coast by modernizing fish management tools and bolstering population monitoring, which are essential as population on the coast are in decline.

This project directly supports salmon recovery and conservation efforts by investing critical monitoring dollars into salmon and steelhead populations that have historically received little investment, but support some of the most renowned fisheries in the world. This investment will provide rigorous information about the viability of these populations and help facilitate responsible fisheries. Populations on the Washington Coast have been under increasing pressure from climate change, expanding human population, and deleterious ocean conditions. Low abundance of adult salmon and steelhead have led to unprecedented closures of fisheries and petitions to list Chinook salmon and steelhead for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Reference Documents

- [2025-27_IT_Addendum_Survey_CoastalSalmonidsMgmt.pdf](#)
- [CS - Coastal Salmonids Management Support Letter.pdf](#)
- [ITaddendumBudget2025-27_CoastalSalmonidsMgmt.xlsx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,043	\$1,043	\$2,086	\$1,043	\$1,043	\$2,086
Obj. B	\$401	\$401	\$802	\$401	\$401	\$802
Obj. E	\$355	\$273	\$628	\$277	\$277	\$554
Obj. G	\$63	\$63	\$126	\$63	\$63	\$126
Obj. T	\$602	\$576	\$1,178	\$577	\$577	\$1,154

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

This funding request builds upon ongoing work to enhance the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW’s) response to climate change by building resilience to climate impacts and reducing Department-generated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The request funds initiatives to develop climate science and build capacity for resilience, and achieve meaningful emissions reduction through fleet electrification, energy efficiency, and alternative commuting. The request also advances statewide priorities and mandates; the resilience projects are directly related to implementing Washington’s Climate Resilience Strategy and the GHG emissions reduction projects support the Department in meeting the emissions reduction targets outlined in RCW 70A.45.050 (ESSHB 2311). [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 26C - 1	\$6,810	\$6,217	\$13,027	\$4,171	\$4,171	\$8,342
Total Expenditures	\$6,810	\$6,217	\$13,027	\$4,171	\$4,171	\$8,342

Decision Package Description

This decision package advances WDFW’s climate change response by building resilience to climate impacts and reducing GHG emissions. Climate change is affecting Washington’s fish, wildlife, ecosystems, and challenging WDFW’s ability to fulfill the Department’s mission. At the same time, the Department’s operations contribute to climate change. In response, WDFW has developed a holistic response to climate change that falls into two related but distinct categories: (1) reducing GHG emissions and (2) building resilience to the unavoidable impacts of climate change. This climate-focused decision package strategically builds upon WDFW’s ongoing work to advance the Department’s climate change response within these two categories. The climate resilience investments across the Department will fund initiatives to build resilience to the ongoing and projected impacts of climate change through the development and application of climate science, and funding the institutional capacity needed to incorporate resilience into projects, programs, and activities. The emissions reduction investments reduce Department GHG emissions by electrifying fleet vehicles, reducing building energy use, and expanding the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE INVESTMENTS

Climate change is already affecting WDFW’s operations and facilities. Increasing stream temperatures and low summer flows have resulted in fish dieoffs and fishing closures along rivers. Declines in snowpack and wildfires have damaged critical habitat and pose significant management challenges for many threatened or endangered species. Continuing climate change trends are expected to exacerbate these and other climate-related impacts, further challenging the Department’s ability to fulfill its mission to “preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.”

The **Climate Resilience Investments** portion of this request for the 2025-27 biennium is essential for implementing the WDFW-led and interagency actions currently proposed in the [draft Washington’s Climate Resilience Strategy](#) which is being developed under RCW 70A.05 and will be finalized by September 30, 2024. The initiatives span three related, but distinct categories of actions to advance climate resilience: (1) integrating climate science into governmental and institutional planning, (2) gathering and analyzing environmental data to inform adaptive management strategies, and (3) implementing on-the-ground practices and behavior changes to enhance ecosystem and community resilience against climate impacts. These categories collectively aim to bolster preparedness, sustainability, and advance climate resilience in the face of ongoing and projected climate challenges. A summary is provided below:

Management and Planning. These projects emphasize incorporating understanding of climate science, impacts, vulnerability, and risk into government and institutional planning and management.

- **Increasing Habitat Connectivity for Washington’s Wildlife** | Washington’s ecosystems and wildlife are undergoing significant changes due to shifting climatic conditions. As the climate changes, wildlife species are adapting by relocating to areas with more suitable habitats. However, human-made barriers like highways, farms, and cities can limit wildlife movement. Protecting and enhancing habitat

connectivity is crucial to ensuring that wildlife can move freely across the landscape. This initiative supports WDFW and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in implementing the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Action Plan. By focusing on strategic activities such as purchasing land through conservation easements, providing landowner assistance for removing fencing and invasive weeds, and supporting incorporating connectivity into local land use planning, WDFW aims to protect our natural heritage and improve highway safety by reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. This comprehensive approach is essential to preserving biodiversity and enhancing the resilience of Washington's ecosystems.

- **Fisheries Management Strategy Evaluation** | Climate change is already impacting Washington's fisheries, with significant implications for Washington's salmon populations. To address these ongoing and projected impacts, WDFW will use a climate-enhanced management strategy evaluation approach to better understand the interactions between future environmental changes and fishing-related impacts on salmon populations. This project will create an innovative tool that estimates population dynamics and projects population abundances under projected climate change and alternative management strategies. By quantifying long-term conservation risks to populations and expected fishing opportunities, this tool will compare the performance of alternative management strategies under changing climate and ecosystem conditions. The resulting information will be integrated into regional fishery management plans, which can be updated regularly as new data become available. This approach aims to produce climate-ready fishery management plans that minimize conservation risks and support the recovery of at-risk populations while ensuring sustainable fishing opportunities.
- **Incorporating Climate Considerations into WDFW Guidance Updates** | This action will provide additional capacity to incorporate climate change considerations into the Department's design guidance for infrastructure standards. The Department's design guidelines are broadly accepted technical guidance and many stakeholders use them to design habitat restoration projects. Incorporating climate considerations into this guidance will ensure habitat restoration work considers expected future climate conditions during design and construction.
- **Drought Coordination Capacity** | Adequate water resources are essential for the preservation and protection of fish, wildlife, and their habitats, as well as for sustainable recreational and commercial opportunities. Climate change has increased the frequency and severity of droughts, impacting many areas of WDFW's work. To address this, the proposed investment will fund a 1.0 FTE position within the Energy and Major Projects Division of Habitat Program. This role will ensure ongoing drought capacity and coordination throughout the year, providing essential planning and coordination support even during years when no drought is declared.

Data Collection and Monitoring. Projects in this climate resilience action category involve gathering and analyzing data on environmental changes and their impacts to inform adaptive management strategies and support policy decisions aimed at enhancing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation in the face of a changing climate. Monitoring is critical for detecting slow changes or disturbances that may otherwise go undetected. These projects are critical for understanding and mitigating the effects of climate change on natural systems effectively.

- **Puget Sound Marine Fish Monitoring** | This project will expand monitoring of key fish species in Puget Sound, including species of greatest conservation need, threatened and endangered species, and species in active fisheries. This project will directly measure temperature data at the surface and the seafloor to relate to fish observations and validate the Department's sea surface temperature models. Additionally, this project will use the monitoring data to predict and anticipate shifts in fish distribution due to climate change. WDFW will use modeling data, forecasted under different carbon emission scenarios through 2100, to develop a climate-ready fisheries management plan. This includes identifying cold-water refuges and applying regional mortality rates to manage fish populations effectively in response to climate changes.
- **Marine Mammal Support** | Climate change is impacting marine mammals in the eastern Pacific Ocean and Washington state, altering migratory patterns and driving range shifts. Washington's marine mammals face challenges like sea level rise, altered prey availability, and potential interactions with proposed renewable energy developments. These impacts will accelerate, presenting novel conservation and management challenges for WDFW. This request funds a research scientist in the Department's Wildlife Program to evaluate climate change impacts on marine mammals and identify management options, complementing existing fisheries-focused efforts. This position will work synergistically with a position funded in the 2023-25 operating budget climate resilience proviso evaluating the impacts of climate change on entanglement issues in the Dungeness crab fishery.
- **Enhancing Forage Fish Resilience** | This initiative focuses on addressing critical data gaps concerning forage fish in Washington state. By employing advanced survey methods, such as acoustic surveys and mid-water trawls, the project aims to identify key areas where forage fish aggregate and interact with predator species like salmon, steelhead, pinnipeds, and seabirds. The research will provide essential insights into how climate change and fisheries impact forage fish populations, crucial for both commercial and recreational fisheries. Collaborating with researchers and managers, the project will generate actionable information to enhance management strategies, including understanding trophic interactions driving predator-prey dynamics and improving predictions of species distribution and abundance. This effort directly supports climate resilience by informing adaptive management strategies, ensuring sustainable fisheries, and maintaining resilient marine ecosystems amidst climate uncertainties.

- **Mountain Goat Monitoring** | Mountain goat populations in Washington's Cascade Range have exhibited consistent and significant declines since 2016. Recent research by WDFW and external partners suggests that altered environmental conditions associated with climate change - such as snowpack levels, warmer temperatures, and more frequent summer drought - are major factors contributing to their decline. Mountain goats are one of the least studied large mammals in North America, and more knowledge is critical to support this species' conservation. This request will greatly expand much needed aerial survey population monitoring throughout the Cascade Range, and fund research efforts to investigate how climate change is affecting mountain goat survival, reproduction, and population trajectory. The knowledge gained from these efforts will guide near- and long-term conservation and recovery strategies for this ecologically and culturally important alpine species.
- **Managed Aquifer Recharge Efficacy Analysis** | Climate change and increasing demand for water threaten Washington rivers and streams and the species they support. Effective water management requires a deeper understanding of the efficacy of our existing water management methods to inform where and when they can be implemented with the highest likelihood of success given interactions between the changing climate, hydrologic systems, and the needs of fish, wildlife, and people. Managed aquifer recharge (MAR) is a water management method that has been implemented in Walla Walla, Dungeness, and elsewhere in Washington to support aquifer levels while increasing the availability of groundwater and providing ecological benefits such as increasing streamflow and providing thermal refugia for fish. This decision package will fund the investigation of MAR projects in Washington and provide the opportunity to evaluate the efficacy of MAR programs. Increasing understanding of MAR projects in Washington may better enable WDFW to ameliorate instream water declines and fill a critical information gap.
- **Washington Atlas of Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems** | Groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) are essential for supporting diverse wildlife, providing stability against climate changes, and offering cool water refuges for aquatic species during extreme heat. In dry regions of the state, these ecosystems are often the only year-round water sources. Although naturally resilient to climate changes, GDEs are still at risk from changes in water availability due to climate change. This project will create a Groundwater Atlas with six maps specific to Washington state (Atlas map of groundwater-dependent ecosystems of Washington; map of springs of Washington; groundwater-dependent rivers of Washington; groundwater-dependent wetlands of Washington; groundwater-dependent lakes of Washington; and groundwater-dependent species of Washington). These maps will help prioritize the conservation, protection, management, and monitoring of GDEs. The assessment will include specific actions to safeguard groundwater and maintain these crucial refuges as the climate changes.

Practice and Behavior. Projects in this subsection include revisions or expansions of on-the-ground practices and behavior that are directly related to increasing resilience to climate change. These projects include altering management practices, infrastructure upgrades, restoration activities, and other hands-on interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability and enhancing the capacity of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to withstand and recover from climate-related stresses.

- **Toutle Salmon Reintroduction** | Restoration of fish passage above dams has proven highly effective for salmon recovery in Washington, providing access to high-quality unused habitats upstream. This action is particularly valuable when above-dam habitats contain cooler water and abundant snow- and glacier-derived summer river flows that can act as climate refugia relative to warmer lower elevation rain fed areas. The North Fork Toutle watershed in Southwest Washington offers a unique opportunity to restore 146 square miles of productive salmon and steelhead habitat. Currently, coho and steelhead distributions are limited, and Chinook salmon are absent above the Sediment Retention Structure, a dam built after the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens. The Army Corps of Engineers will soon enhance fish passage facilities, allowing year-round access for anadromous fish via a trap-and-haul program. This budget request funds WDFW to reintroduce spring and fall Chinook and expand the distribution of steelhead and coho salmon into 46 miles of unoccupied tributaries, including key snow-fed streams from Mt. St. Helens.
- **Climate-Resilient Hatcheries** | Warming stream temperatures, declining summer streamflows, and increasing peak streamflows are significantly impacting Washington's fisheries and exacerbating challenges in fish hatchery management. In 2023, WDFW took a critical first step towards building resilience to four hatchery facilities. This assessment identified vulnerabilities and actions that could be implemented to enhance climate resilience across these facilities. This request builds on WDFW's existing climate vulnerability assessment in three ways: (1) by investing in staff capacity to ensure tracking of relevant climate metrics for hatchery production (e.g., dissolved oxygen, temperature), (2) by expanding the hatchery climate change vulnerability assessment, and (3) by acquiring equipment needed to cool the water in hatchery facilities. This work will help prioritize resource investment and implement necessary retrofits and modifications to WDFW's hatchery facilities.
- **One Health Wildlife Disease Surveillance** | Climate change is expected to have overall detrimental impacts to wildlife populations, especially reptiles, amphibians, fish, and seabirds. While the connections between climate change and wildlife health issues are complex and not fully understood, there is a clear link between climate change and reduced resiliency, or a capacity to cope with change. Further, it

is likely that pathogen distribution and disease transmission will increase with climate change, highlighting the need for improved wildlife health surveillance and management strategies. Zoonotic pathogens (e.g., highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI) and vector-borne pathogens (e.g., bluetongue and other hemorrhagic diseases) in Washington will be affected by climate change, with changing and expanding host and/or vector ranges as the climate changes. A fundamental research gap in wildlife health and climate resilience is the development of an integrated animal health, pathogen and vector surveillance system with climate data. Increased capacity and resources are essential to effectively track and respond to emerging diseases and pathogens in Washington's wildlife. This request aims to improve capacity for disease surveillance and response in Washington's wildlife and improve inter-agency coordination. A broader surveillance program will identify early warning signals and enhance earlier investigations and diagnostics, complementing our ongoing traditional disease surveillance. This approach is crucial for swiftly identifying and characterizing emerging threats and enabling data-driven response actions.

- **Interagency Shrubsteppe Resilience Implementation** | The shrubsteppe ecosystem is a diverse arid ecosystem in Eastern Washington that is home to numerous unique species including pygmy rabbits, greater sage-grouse, and the sagebrush sparrow, many of which are declining due to habitat loss. Historically, frequent low severity fires were an important and natural part of the shrubsteppe, maintaining ecosystem health and diversity. However, the invasion and establishment of non-native annual grasses, coupled with the effects of climate change, have resulted in an unprecedented alteration of the ecosystem's fire regime, with increasing fire frequency, size, and severity across the landscape. This transformation of native shrub-perennial grass communities into fire-prone, non-native annual plant communities creates a positive feedback loop that results in heightened fire severity and an accelerated fire cycle. The Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI), led by a three-agency steering committee (WDFW, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC)) aims to conserve and restore Washington's shrubsteppe wildlife and habitat with an emphasis on addressing the escalating extent, frequency, and severity of fire. WSRRI also addresses the needs of people that live and work in our shrubsteppe ecosystem and benefit from healthy and resilient landscapes. To these ends, [WSRRI's 30-year strategy](#) focuses on community engagement, habitat protection, habitat restoration, species management, and wildland fire management. To succeed, WSRRI requires increased capacity and resources, including access to native plant materials and seed. This request will enhance WDFW's access to a reliable source of native grasses (e.g., Idaho fescue) needed to restore shrubsteppe habitat and increase resistance and resilience to future fire. By replacing non-native annual grasses with native perennial vegetation, WDFW will reduce a primary driver of wildfire risk, decrease fire damage to natural and human communities, and facilitate natural recovery, resulting in less intensive and expensive intervention by state and local partners during and after fire.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION INVESTMENTS

WDFW's operations produce GHG emissions that contribute to climate change. Burning fossil fuels to power Department vehicles or generate electricity for Department facilities releases greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, causing climate change. In this way, WDFW's current operations contribute to harming the very environment the Department is charged with protecting. In 2023, the operation of WDFW's fleet and facilities emitted 14,036 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO_{2e}), as reported to Department of Ecology (Figure 1). 59% of emissions came from fuel used in vehicles, equipment, and boats, and the remaining 41% came from electricity and natural gas used in Department facilities. In addition to mandatory emissions reporting, WDFW also voluntarily tracks emissions for additional Department activities — employee commuting and business travel.

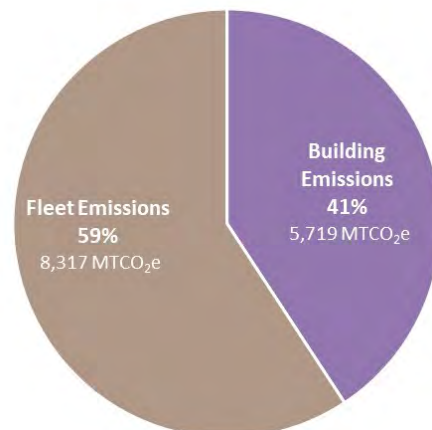


Figure 1. WDFW's 2023 fleet and facilities emissions reported to the Department of Ecology

WDFW is required to reduce GHG emissions from Department operations. Washington state has mandated ([RCW 70A.45.050](#)) that

state agencies reduce GHG emissions 15% by 2020, 45% by 2030, 70% by 2040, and 95% by 2050, relative to the recorded 2005 baseline levels. In 2020, the law was updated through [ESSHB 2311](#) to require state agencies to develop short-term actions and long-term strategies to meet these emissions limits. In addition, WDFW’s 25-Year Strategic Plan commits to reducing Department GHG emissions 90% by 2045 and developing and implementing a [Sustainability Plan](#), which WDFW developed in 2022. The plan lays out 29 strategies and 90 implementation actions to achieve the 2030 emissions limit and come close to achieving the 2040 emissions limit. Advances in technology for low-emissions trucks will be needed to achieve the 2050 emissions limit.

This package would put WDFW on track to meet the next RCW limit of reducing emissions 45% by 2030. This package will reduce harmful GHG emissions by building upon the successful initiatives funded in the 2023-25 capital and operating budgets to address each of the Department’s primary emissions sources by electrifying its fleet, reducing building energy use, and expanding the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program. Without action (i.e., assuming “business-as-usual” emissions rates), the Department’s baseline 2019 emissions are forecasted to increase by 4% by 2027. Along with complementary projects proposed in the capital budget, this request is projected to reduce these forecasted 2027 emissions by 10%, preventing approximately 1,800 metric tons of GHG emissions annually. Mandates in the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) affecting the state’s utilities as well as other state and federal climate policies are projected to reduce WDFW’s emissions by an additional 24% by 2027. Together, these changes would **reduce WDFW’s GHG emissions 34% by 2027**, putting the Department on track to meet the next limit of reducing emissions 45% by 2030.

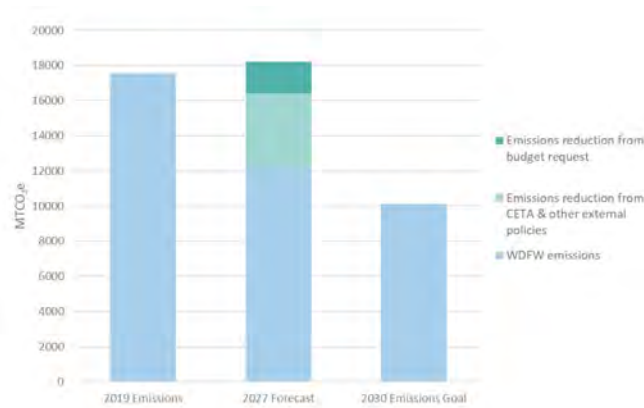


Figure 2: This budget request, along with CETA and other state and federal policies, will reduce WDFW’s GHG emissions 34% by 2027, putting the Department on track to meet the next RCW 70A.45.050 limit of reducing emissions 45% by 2030.

This budget request is organized by the Department’s two largest GHG emissions sectors — fleet emissions and building emissions.

Fleet Emissions. WDFW’s fleet of approximately 1,400 vehicles, 800 boats, and hundreds of pieces of equipment is the Department’s largest source of emissions, producing 8,317 MTCO_{2e} in 2023.

- **Fleet Electrification** | This package will fund (1) a contract to assess the electrical capacity of Department facilities to support long-term electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure; (2) installation of EV chargers at select high priority leased facilities with long-term leases; (3) one FTE to support the Department’s head electrician in completing EV charger installations and ongoing maintenance; a reclassification of the Sustainability Project Coordinator position to advance the Department’s EV transition; and (4) the lease of EV pilot vehicles and purchase of a small fleet of electric bikes that the Department will share across regions to expose employees to EVs and replace trips made with gas or diesel vehicles and ATVs. This operating budget request is complemented by a capital budget request to continue to install EV chargers at owned facilities. Together, these items are projected to **reduce fleet emissions 15% by 2027** by directly replacing approximately 26% of motor vehicle travel with electric alternatives. The total number of chargers installed by the end of the biennium are projected to position the Department to convert 34% of vehicle travel with EVs.

Building Emissions. WDFW’s 1,300 facilities, comprising nearly two million square feet, are the Department’s second largest source of emissions, producing 5,719 MTCO_{2e} in 2023. This package reduces building energy emissions by developing a strategic pathway for reducing energy use and transitioning away from natural gas.

Facility Energy Efficiency and Electrification Retrofits | This package will fund two contracts to complete energy efficiency audits at high priority WDFW facilities and to develop a plan for electrifying the Department’s highest natural gas consuming facilities. These items are complemented by a capital budget request to implement energy efficiency improvements and electrification upgrades at WDFW facilities.

Together, these projects are projected to **reduce annual energy emissions by around 6% by 2027** and also set the Department on a path to completely phase out natural gas usage by 2029. These projected reductions are above and beyond a forecasted 34% reduction in energy emissions from CETA.

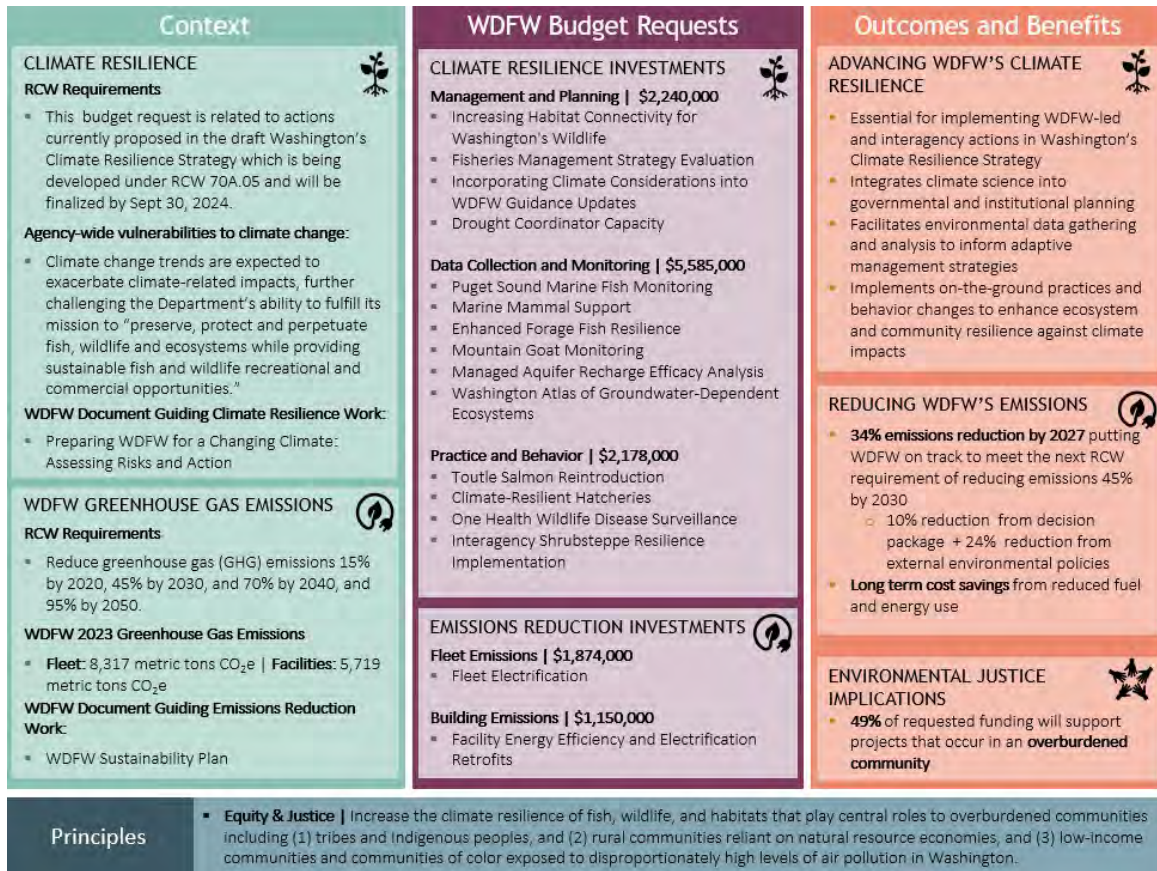


Figure 3: The "Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience" budget request for reducing Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's greenhouse gas emissions and complying with RCW 70A.45.050 emissions limits and building resilience to the on-going and projected impacts of climate change.

This package builds upon previously funded programs to prepare WDFW for climate impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Over the past several biennia, WDFW has increasingly focused resources on climate initiatives complemented by, or in some cases advanced through, this budget request. In 2021, the Department released the report 'Preparing WDFW for a Changing Climate: Assessing Risks and Opportunities for Action,' which identified four aspects of WDFW's mission considered most vulnerable to climate related impacts: (1) Risks to Species Conservation and Recovery; (2) Risks to Harvest and Recreation; (3) Risks to Providing Effective Technical Assistance, Permitting, Research and Planning; and (4) Risks to WDFW Lands and Infrastructure. That same year, WDFW utilized funding from a budget proviso associated with ESSHB 2311 to hire an Environmental Sustainability Coordinator and contract with a consultant to analyze the Department's GHG emissions, develop strategies to reduce emissions, and create the Sustainability Plan.

These reports have served as roadmaps for guiding the Department's climate resilience and emissions reduction planning and the framework for developing the 2023-25 operating and capital budgets, which funded the Department's first true dedicated climate investments. Through the 2023-25 Conservation, Monitoring, Assistance and GHG Emissions Reduction provisos¹, WDFW laid important groundwork for preparing for climate impacts and reducing GHG emissions that the Department aims to build upon in the upcoming biennium. Through this recent funding, the Department advanced its climate initiatives by hiring five FTEs, partnering with WSDOT on the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Action Plan, completing vulnerability assessments at four priority fish hatcheries, restoring shrubsteppe habitat, installing EV chargers at multiple facilities, developing and beginning to implement an EV Fleet Transition Plan developed by the Washington State University Clean Transportation Program, assessing renewable energy opportunities, and launching a CTR incentive program with a dedicated administrator.

Alternatives Explored

WDFW's successes in climate resilience and mitigation, while meaningful, are just a starting point and are not expected to reduce enough emissions to meet RCW requirements nor effectively address the Department's vulnerabilities to climate impacts. WDFW needs additional resources to build upon the momentum created to date. The Department has successfully pursued grant opportunities to advance its climate work, including successfully securing approximately \$500,000 in grant funding for EV chargers in the 2023-25 biennium, and will continue to do so to supplement legislative funding in the years ahead. However, given the magnitude of the threat that climate change poses, the Department cannot afford to delay; effective climate action requires an immediate and robust response. If this package is not funded and status quo operations continue, the Department's work will be increasingly at risk from costly climate impacts that might have been mitigated through proactive resilience planning. WDFW will also lack the resources needed to implement the Sustainability Plan to meet RCW emissions limits and will continue to emit GHG emissions at current levels, which will worsen the same climate change impacts that threaten the Department's mission.

Another alternative is to fund all of the Climate Resilience Investments in this budget request using funding from the Natural Climate Solutions Account (26D).

¹ These budget requests are available to review on the [OFM website](#) under the titles: BC-Building a Climate Resilient WDFW and CN-Building a Carbon Neutral WDFW.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This budget request is comprised of establishing new programs and initiatives and expanding existing Department work. In the 2023-25 biennium, WDFW received \$7,702,000 for implementing the Department's climate resilience and emissions reduction initiatives (\$4,424,000 in the Conservation, Monitoring, and Assistance proviso, \$1,026,000 in the Local Government Climate Planning Proviso, \$1,752,000 in the GHG Emissions Reduction proviso, and \$500,000 in the capital budget). Through this funding, WDFW laid important groundwork for reducing GHG emissions and preparing for climate impacts that the Department will build upon with this 2025-27 budget request. Key funding and outcomes from previous funding related to this 2025-27 budget request include:

- **Climate resilient comprehensive planning capacity** (*ongoing operating funding*): Hired 2.0 FTEs focused on development of state guidance to assist cities and counties to incorporate climate resilience and associated protection of natural resources into comprehensive plans.
- **Whale Monitoring and Climate Change** (*ongoing operating funding*): Hired 1.0 FTE focused on supporting the implementation of an entanglement risk and by-catch monitoring program to support cross-program marine wildlife recovery efforts and marine fisheries.
- **Habitat connectivity planning** (*one-time operating funding*): Partnered with WSDOT to develop the statewide [Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Action Plan](#).
- **Hatchery vulnerability assessments** (*one-time operating funding*): Completed climate vulnerability assessments at four high priority fish hatcheries.
- **Shrubsteppe resilience planning** (*one-time operating funding*): Restored habitat in Washington's shrubsteppe landscape by treating weeds and installing native grasses, forbs, and shrubs to restore habitats to native condition, increasing resilience to wildland fire, and supporting both rare and common wildlife species.
- **EV charger installations** (*one-time capital and operating funding*): Hired the Department's first Facility Sustainability Planner to lead EV charger installations and energy projects, including installing EV chargers at nearly 20 facilities around the state by the end of the 2023-25 biennium.
- **EV transition planning and staff engagement** (*one-time operating funding*): Developed an EV Fleet Transition Plan and has expanded the WDFW fleet of EVs from zero to 26 vehicles; more vehicles will transition in the coming months.
- **Renewable energy and energy efficiency feasibility assessments** (*one-time operating funding*): Assessed renewable energy opportunities and identified high priority energy efficiency retrofits at facilities and hatcheries around the state.
- **CTR incentive program** (*ongoing operating funding*): hired a CTR administrator and launched the Department's first CTR incentive program.

Past work on emissions reduction was funded through a budget proviso associated with ESSHB 2311. In a prior proviso, WDFW received \$386,000 for ongoing fleet electrification and Sustainability Plan implementation.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

This budget request totals \$6,810,000 in fiscal year 2026, \$6,217,000 in fiscal year 2027, and \$4,171,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing; the

Department proposes funding the package through climate commitment act (CCA) funding. Costs for each budget category are summarized below.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE INVESTMENTS

Management and Planning | 4 projects (Increasing Habitat Connectivity for Washington's Wildlife, Fisheries Management Strategy Evaluation, Incorporating Climate Considerations into WDFW Guidance Updates, Drought Coordinator Capacity); Total costs are \$1,120,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and \$855,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing.

- \$607,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 4.3 FTEs, Objects A and B:
 - 2.3 FTEs (2.0 Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1; 0.3 WMS 2) to conduct fishery management strategy evaluations, write fishery management plans, and guide integration with statewide Fish Program policy needs and projects.
 - 1.0 FTE (Environmental Engineer 5) to integrate climate considerations into WDFW infrastructure design guidance updates.
 - 1.0 FTE (Environmental Planner 4) to serve as a drought coordinator to enhance drought capacity and coordination at WDFW.
- \$200,000 in fiscal year 2026 and 2027 to implement the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Plan; contracts focus on (1) identifying county-level priorities and (2) developing a communication and outreach strategy for the plan, Object C.
- \$2,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for travel to meetings and workshops with other agencies to support the development of climate-ready fishery management plans, Object G.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Data Collection and Monitoring | 6 projects (Puget Sound Marine Fish Monitoring, Marine Mammal Support, Enhancing Forage Fish Resilience, Mountain Goat Monitoring, Managed Aquifer Recharge Efficacy Analysis, Washington Atlas of Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems); Total costs are \$2,909,000 in fiscal year 2026, \$2,676,000 in fiscal year 2027, and \$2,178,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing.

- \$1,272,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 12.5 FTEs, Objects A and B.
 - 3.0 FTEs (1.0 Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1; 1.0 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2; 1.0 Data Consultant 3) to research how climate change is affecting mountain goat survival in the Cascades.
 - 1.0 FTE (Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1) to research the impacts of climate change on marine mammals.
 - 3.5 FTEs (1.0 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2; 1.5 Scientific Technician 2; 1.0 Scientific Technician 3) to lead biological sampling and analysis of forage fish.
 - 5.0 FTEs (1.0 Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1; 1.0 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2; 1.0 Scientific Technician 4; 2.0 Scientific Technician 3) to design, implement, and analyze surveys of Puget Sound marine fish.
- \$66,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for forage fish contract vessel and survey equipment, Objects C and E.
- \$97,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$21,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for Puget Sound marine fish surveying equipment, Object E.
- \$95,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for equipment to monitor the impacts of climate change on Washington marine mammals, Object E.
- \$238,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and \$13,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing for mountain goat monitoring equipment and support including: \$88,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to purchase 70 radio GPS collars; \$137,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to locate, capture, and collar mountain goats; and \$13,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for a mountain goat collar data management subscription, Objects C and E.
- \$100,000 in fiscal year 2026 to research aquifer characteristics necessary to identify suitable basins for managed aquifer recharge programs, Object C.
- \$150,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to develop a Groundwater Atlas of Washington State, Object C.
- \$67,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for travel needed for data collection and collaboration across projects, Object G.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Practice and Behavior | 4 projects (Toutle Salmon Reintroduction, Climate-Resilient Hatcheries, One Health Wildlife Disease Surveillance, Interagency Shrubsteppe Resilience Implementation); Total costs are \$1,269,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$909,000 in fiscal year 2027 and

ongoing

- \$294,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 2.4 FTEs, Objects A and B.
 - 1.0 FTE (Natural Resource Scientist 4) to implement the Toutle salmon reintroduction and recovery plan.
 - 1.4 FTEs (0.5 Environmental Specialist 3; 0.3 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3; 0.6 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4) to track and report relevant hatchery production metrics to support hatchery climate change vulnerability assessments.
- \$50,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to coordinate Toutle salmon reintroduction into existing watershed planning processes, and for ongoing monitoring equipment to track fish and adaptively manage after the initial years of reintroduction, Object C.
- \$150,000 in fiscal year 2026 to complete a hatchery climate change vulnerability assessment, Object C.
- \$207,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$54,000 in fiscal year 2027 and ongoing for equipment to continuously track hatchery climate vulnerabilities, Object J.
- \$181,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for laboratory diagnostics for wildlife health, Object E.
- \$100,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing to establish and sustain a partnership with a native seed grower to increase shrubsteppe restoration, Object E.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION INVESTMENTS

Fleet Emissions | Total costs are \$937,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and \$229,000 in fiscal year 2028 and ongoing

- \$172,000 in fiscal year 2026 and ongoing for 1.0 FTE (Construction Project Coordinator 3) electrician to support EV charger installations and ongoing maintenance, and to reclassify the Sustainability Project Coordinator position (Environmental Planner 3) to further advance fleet electrification, Objects A and B.
- \$305,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to complete electrical capacity assessments of WDFW facilities to support long-term EV charging needs Object C.
- \$64,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to lease EVs to serve as pilot vehicles to provide employees with opportunities to test electric vehicles, Object E.
- \$150,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to install EV chargers at leased facilities with long-term leases, Object E.
- \$15,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to purchase e-bikes to serve as alternatives to ATVs in wildlife areas, Object E.
- Goods and services, Object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Building Emissions | Total costs are \$575,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027

- \$336,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to complete energy efficiency audits at high priority owned WDFW facilities, Object C.
- \$99,000 in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to identify a pathway for electrifying the Department's highest natural gas consuming facilities, Object C.
- An infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in Object T and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Management and Planning | 4 projects (Increasing Habitat Connectivity for Washington's Wildlife, Fisheries Management Strategy Evaluation, Incorporating Climate Considerations into WDFW Guidance Updates, Drought Coordinator Capacity)

- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 to conduct climate-enhanced management strategy evaluations for specific salmon and steelhead populations and support the writing of fishery management plans.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 2 to serve as the statewide programmatic lead for developing climate-enhanced management

strategy evaluations for fisheries.

- 0.3 FTE WMS2 to serve as the statewide fish program data science lead.
- 1.0 FTE Environmental Engineer 5 to incorporate climate considerations into WDFW's design guidance for infrastructure standards.
- 1.0 FTE Environmental Planner 4 to ensure ongoing drought capacity and coordination throughout the year.

Data Collection and Monitoring | 6 projects (Puget Sound Marine Fish Monitoring, Marine Mammal Support, Enhancing Forage Fish Resilience, Mountain Goat Monitoring, Managed Aquifer Recharge Efficacy Analysis, Washington Atlas of Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems)

- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 to serve as the science lead for monitoring surveys and spatial analyses.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 to lead acoustic surveys, support report writing, oversee small vessel operators, and supervise Scientific Technicians.
- 1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 4 to serve as a required second operator of a 52-ton vessel to conduct large vessel-based survey work.
- 2.0 FTE Scientific Technician 3 to collect water samples for eDNA analysis, maintain acoustic monitoring equipment, and coordinate eDNA sample processing.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 to monitor the impacts of climate change on marine mammals in Washington's waters and identify management options.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 to lead a biological sampling team in employing advanced survey methods, including acoustic surveys and mid-water trawls, to identify key areas where forage fish aggregate and interact with predator species.
- 1.5 FTE Scientific Technician 2 to complete field work and lab analysis to provide insight on how climate change and fisheries impact forage fish populations.
- 1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 3 to operate a vessel and assist with biological sampling.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Research Scientist 1 to research how the changing climate is impacting mountain goat survival in the Cascades.
- 1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 to complete an expanded survey of mountain goats via a helicopter and GPS tracking collars.
- 1.0 FTE Data Consultant 3 to lead advanced data analysis and coding to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of climate impacts on mountain goat survival.

Practice and Behavior | 4 projects (Toutle Salmon Reintroduction, Climate-Resilient Hatcheries, One Health Wildlife Disease Surveillance, Interagency Shrubsteppe Resilience Implementation)

- 1.0 FTE Natural Resource Scientist 4 to coordinate within WDFW and implement the North Fork Toutle River reintroduction and recovery plan. This position will conduct scientific analysis, manage professional service contracts, adaptively manage restoration activities, and work with state, federal, and tribal partners to find additional resources for reintroduction priorities.
- 0.5 FTE Environmental Specialist 3 to supervise and train hatchery staff and oversee water sampling at hatcheries to better track climate metrics for hatchery production.
- 0.3 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3 to collect and analyze water quality data.
- 0.6 Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4 to oversee water quality monitoring and reporting.

Fleet Emissions

- 1.0 FTE Construction Project Coordinator 3 to support EV charger installations at WDFW facilities.
- Position reclassification to Environmental Planner 3 to advance the Department's EV transition.

Historical Funding:

FY2026 • FTE = 17.0 FTE • Total Funds = \$2.9 million • Near General Fund = \$0.6 million • Other Funds = \$2.3 million

FY2027 • FTE = 17.0 FTE • Total Funds = \$2.9 million • Near General Fund = \$0.6 million • Other Funds = \$2.3 million

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington & Statewide Priorities

This package aligns with the Results Washington "Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment" goal to combat climate change, directly responds to the RCW 70A.45.050 (ESSHB 2311) mandate for state agencies to reduce GHG emissions, and is directly related to implementing [Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy](#).

WDFW Strategic Plan

Climate resilience and emissions reduction is central to [WDFW's 25-Year Strategic Plan](#). This package supports the plan's 25-year performance goal to achieve a "90% reduction in WDFW's carbon footprint" and the following strategies and actions.

- **Strategy 1: Proactively address conservation challenges** | This package will address near-term action 7: develop and implement a WDFW Climate Resilience Plan; action 2: Vastly expand current efforts to manage and recover at risk fish and wildlife species; and action 5: Ensure that land-use planning and decision are contributing to the conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife.
- **Strategy 3: Deliver science that informs Washington's most pressing fish and wildlife questions** | This package will address near term Action 2: Implement effective science communication training/strategies.
- **Strategy 4: Model operational and environmental excellence** | This package will address near-term action 8: Develop and implement a WDFW sustainability plan; longer-term action 1: Continued implementation of an environmental sustainability plan; and the strategy's 25-year desired outcome: "Department operations set the example for environmental sustainability among state agencies with a reduced carbon footprint."

Agency Activity Inventory

This funding request supports the following agency activities:

- Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitat & Species – Total costs are \$2,402,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$1,187,000 ongoing.
- Preserve & Restore Terrestrial Habitat and Species – Total costs are \$1,458,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and 928,000 ongoing.
- Manage Fishing Opportunities – Total costs are \$3,649,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and 3,548,000 ongoing.
- Produce Hatchery Fish – Total costs are \$912,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$552,000 ongoing.
- Manage Hunting Opportunities – Total costs are \$1,584,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$986,000 ongoing.
- Business Management & Obligations – Total costs are \$3,022,000 in the 2025-27 biennium and \$456,000 ongoing.

Performance Outcomes:

The **Climate Resilience** projects in this package advance the following performance outcomes:

- Acres of protected fish and wildlife habitat;
- Threatened and endangered species population increases;
- Technical assistance interactions;
- Mass marked hatchery produced coho salmon;
- Mass marked hatchery produced Chinook salmon; and
- Miles of fish habitat opened.

Details:

- The **Management and Planning projects** advance the performance outcomes related to [acres of protected fish and wildlife habitat](#) and [threatened and endangered species population increases](#) by supporting the movement of climate-sensitive species through implementation of the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Action Plan, advancing salmon conservation through climate informed fishery management, and addressing threats from water scarcity through drought research and coordination.
- The **Data and Collection and Monitoring projects** in this package will also advance the performance outcomes related to [acres of protected fish and wildlife habitat](#) and [threatened and endangered species population increases](#) by facilitating data collection and analysis that will inform adaptive management strategies and support policy decisions aimed at enhancing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation. Additionally, these projects will increase [technical assistance interactions](#) by providing new tools and improved data

management to track forage fish, monitor mountain goats, and track and analyze valuable water resources that will support WDFW in engaging with stakeholders across the state.

- The **Practice and Behavior** projects in this package will also advance the performance outcomes related to acres of protected fish and wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species population increases through management practices, infrastructure upgrades, restoration activities, and other interventions aimed at increasing climate resilience of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. The One Health Wildlife Disease project will also enhance technical assistance interactions by filling a key research gap in wildlife health and climate resilience by increasing capacity for disease surveillance of emerging pathogens. Additionally, by restoring salmon and steelhead habitat, the Toutle Reintroduction project will increase miles of fish habitat opened. Lastly, making hatcheries more climate resilient aligns with performance outcomes to increase mass marked hatchery produced coho and Chinook salmon. Identifying and addressing climate vulnerabilities at hatcheries will support and enhance hatchery operations broadly, helping ensure that WDFW can sustain production of valuable fish species, including coho and Chinook salmon.
- The [Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy](#) includes a suite of indicators and metrics to evaluate progress on action implementation and assess progress towards the strategy's goals. Every two years, the Department will report on the following progress metrics for each of the Department's action included in the plan:
 1. Number of FTEs focused, in part or entirely, on climate change resilience.
 2. Number of resilience policies, plans or procedures that involve interagency coordination.
 3. Number of plans or assessments completed to understand and manage climate risks.
 4. Number of climate resilience projects implemented.
 5. Number of new studies or monitoring programs developed to inform climate resilience decision making.

These metrics not only quantify Department progress but also align with expected performance outcomes, ensuring that this budget request results in measurable improvement in the State's climate resilience efforts.

The GHG Emissions Reduction projects in this package are expected to result in emissions reduction and long-term operational cost savings, as well as advance the following performance outcomes:

- Percentage of assets maintained to OFM standards.
- Percentage of assets maintained to an adequate operational standard.

Details:

- Broadly, this package — along with complementary projects proposed in the capital budget — is projected to reduce WDFW's GHG emissions 10% by 2027. The Clean Energy Transformation Act mandates affecting the state's utilities are projected to reduce WDFW's emissions by an additional 24% by 2027. Together, these changes would reduce WDFW's emissions 34% by 2027, putting the Department on track to meet the next RCW 70A.45.050 limit of reducing emissions 45% by 2030.
- This package advances the Department's overall implementation of the WDFW Sustainability Plan, which will yield long term cost savings for the state. Analysis of the full plan found that in many cases implementing the GHG reduction strategies will result in long-term cost savings from the reduction in operating expenses from fuel and energy.
- The **Building and Fleet Emissions** reduction projects in this budget request also increase the percentage of assets maintained to OFM and adequate operations standards by (1) advancing energy efficiency projects that are expected to reduce energy use and improve overall building efficiency, (2) expanding EV charging infrastructure at state facilities, and (3) supporting WDFW's transition to electric vehicles, which is expected to yield long term cost savings to the state through lower fuel costs.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The planning process for developing [Washington's Integrated Climate Resilience Strategy](#) included a range of community engagement efforts, including listening sessions for all interested parties, additional focused listening sessions for overburdened communities and vulnerable populations, partnerships with organizations to design tailored engagement opportunities, community surveys, and a Climate Justice and Equity Summit to ensure the draft strategy aligns with the needs and vision of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.² The Department of Ecology, and the broader state agency team co-developing the updated strategy used feedback heard from this engagement to develop the plan's strategies, goals, and actions.

The Washington Department of Ecology (the lead implementer for updating Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy as outlined in Chapter

70A.05 RCW) partnered with Front and Centered, a coalition of organizations and partners that represent the needs of frontline communities, to convene community leaders from around the state. Ecology used the state's Environmental Health Disparities map to guide selection of leaders from communities who are disproportionately affected by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards. The group of leaders completed a visioning exercise about climate resilience from the perspective of the populations and geographies they represent.

In late April and early May, Ecology also held two listening sessions for tribal leaders and staff. These listening sessions provided an opportunity to share information and solicit feedback on draft strategies and actions developed by state agencies. Information about the listening sessions was provided to tribal staff and leaders via email using a distribution list compiled by Ecology's Executive Advisor for Tribal Affairs. Prior to the listening sessions, Ecology provided participants with a summary document that provided a high-level overview of the ten strategy topics and the suite of actions proposed under each. Agencies were specifically interested in whether actions aligned with tribal climate resilience priorities as well as opportunities for ongoing engagement and consultation with tribes through implementation of the strategy.

WDFW is also currently engaged with several shrubsteppe-specific engagement efforts, including supporting upcoming engagement for the Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative. In a parallel effort, the Department is conducting a bilingual (English and Spanish) habitat and landscape survey for local communities in Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, and Yakima counties to better understand how Washington's unique shrubsteppe ecosystem influences quality of life and sense of place. Targeted multicultural outreach services includes WDFW attending Latino-focused community health events where Spanish speakers, people of Indigenous origin from Latin America, and farmworker communities have the opportunity to participate in the survey in-person and share their perspectives.

Looking ahead, the Department is currently developing a WDFW Community Engagement Plan that will outline a framework to assess community impacts from WDFW projects (including whether the project is geographically located within an overburdened community) and plan for appropriate community engagement to address these impacts, including mitigating potential inequities and, when possible, aligning projects with community priorities.

² Washington Department of Ecology. 2023. Climate Resilience Strategy-Engagement Plan. [EngagementPlan_Final.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#)

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Broadly, WDFW recognizes the fact that the benefits that communities and society derive from ecosystem services are deeply intertwined with social and political factors, leading to a distribution that mirrors existing patterns of inequity and injustice across Washington. When implementing projects included in this request, the Department will undertake a concerted effort to evaluate how work funded in this request can address existing disparities by prioritizing equitable access to and distribution of ecosystem services to build resilience, promote social equity, and ensure that all Washingtonians can enjoy the full benefits of our natural resources now and for generations to come.

The Department has also identified at least one specific inequity in this funding request related to the internal Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program. Not all employees have equal access to this program; rural WDFW employees bear higher burdens of travel expense due to greater distances between major cities and limited intercity public transportation. Lower income communities also have less access to safe biking and walking paths. These employees face challenges in participating in incentive programs that rely on public transit infrastructure, walking, or bicycling. WDFW is working to identify and address these barriers to the CTR program through engagement with staff, including regularly surveying staff to gather data on program participation barriers and, when possible, addressing identified barriers by providing additional resources to staff or investing in transportation-related infrastructure, such as bike racks.

Target Communities and Populations:

As described the "HEAL Act Supplemental Questions" section, to understand the specific geographic distribution of WDFW's climate work, the Department used OFM's map of Overburdened Communities³ to complete a detailed spatial analysis of current and proposed climate investments funded through CCA. Based on this analysis, WDFW estimates that approximately 50% of requested funding in this budget request will occur in overburdened communities (Figure 6 - see HEAL Act Supplemental Questions). This funding request is expected to benefit (1) tribes and Indigenous peoples dependent on natural resources for sociocultural and economic purposes, (2) rural communities reliant on natural resource economies, and (3) low-income communities and communities of color exposed to disproportionately high levels of air pollution in Washington.

Broadly, climate resilience and greenhouse gas emissions reduction projects benefit overburdened communities by preserving ecosystem services that benefit these communities and by preparing for and reducing the climate impacts that disproportionately affect these overburdened communities.

The specific projects funded in this request are expected to impact these communities by:

- Advancing climate science needed to build resilience of natural resources throughout the state that Indigenous communities and other diverse communities rely upon for cultural, subsistence, or socioeconomic purposes.
- Mitigating the disproportionate exposure of overburdened communities, particularly people of color and low-income communities, to harmful air pollutants from fossil fuel vehicles and fossil-fuel energy sources by reducing and transitioning away from fossil fuels in Department operations.

See the “HEAL Act Supplemental Questions” section for a more detailed description of how this budget request is expected to benefit these communities in the description of how Climate Commitment Act funding will benefit overburdened communities.

The climate resilience initiatives included in this request are also related to implementing the climate resilience actions identified in Washington’s Integrated Climate Resilience Strategy. Environmental justice was a core component of the strategy’s development, which ultimately aims to lessen the impacts of climate change on the people of Washington, especially those most vulnerable and facing systemic inequities.

³ Office of Financial Management. 2024. Overburdened Communities of Washington State.

https://geo.wa.gov/datasets/e0074300efda47efa6b01e6236bcfe48_0/explore?location=47.044319%2C-120.897341%2C7.00

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Following the visioning exercise led by Ecology for the Climate Resilience Strategy, community leaders reviewed and provided feedback and recommended changes to the list of draft actions proposed by state agencies. Overall, the process revealed a strong desire by frontline communities to be involved in decision making processes related to planning, implementation, and evaluation. Community representatives also noted the need for more explicit equity considerations in the strategy topic areas. Additionally, participants noted that language describing strategies and actions should be more accessible to allow frontline communities to see themselves reflected in the work of agencies, particularly for highly technical topics. Discussion also highlighted the importance of continuing greenhouse gas emissions reduction efforts by state agencies as well as the need to address structural inequities and socioeconomic disparities to support community resilience.

Specific feedback from the listening sessions with tribal leaders and staff included discussing other stressors that exacerbate climate impacts like elevated water temperature and impacts on salmon as well as ocean acidification and its impacts on shellfish and marine vegetation. On implementation and governance, participants noted the importance of coordinating engagement and consultation with tribes across agencies given the increasing requests for tribal comment on environmental issues. Additionally, participants considered making use of existing tribal forums like the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to provide updates and seek feedback on implementation of the strategy actions. Others suggested more direct participation by tribes where a single tribal representative could engage with the governance structure and provide updates to other tribes.

This feedback informed the final strategies and actions included in Washington’s Climate Resilience Strategy; the resilience projects in this request are directly related to implementing this plan.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Portion of funding impacting overburdened communities (OBCs)

Based on a spatial analysis using [OFM’s overburdened communities map](#), WDFW estimates that approximately 50% of requested funding will fund projects that occur in OBCs, as shown in Figure 4. When combined with ongoing funding from the 2023-25 biennium, the Department estimates that approximately 48% of Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding will occur in these communities, as shown in Figure 5.

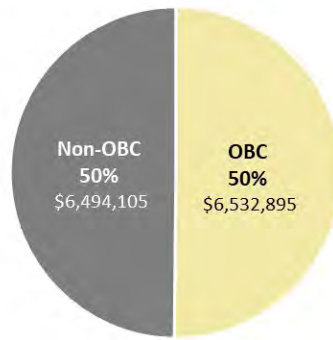


Figure 4: Proportion of requested 2025-27 CCA funding within an OBC.

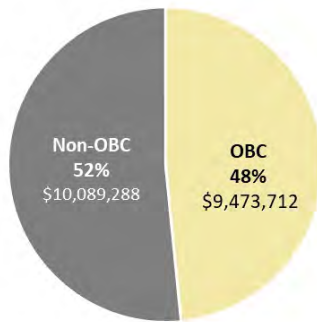


Figure 5: Proportion of requested 2025-27 and 2023-25 ongoing CCA funding within an OBC.

Approximately \$3,200,000 (24% of requested funding) will be invested in projects located entirely or partially within the geographic boundary of an OBC. These projects, which have distinct geographic extents and can be mapped, are represented in the map in Figure 6, showing the spatial distribution of requested funding in relation to OBC boundaries defined by OFM. In contrast, statewide projects that are not confined to specific geographic regions of the state are not shown in Figure 6. However, while these statewide projects are not shown on the map, they still provide direct and meaningful benefits to OBCs. Through the publication of the Overburdened Communities of Washington State map, OFM has identified that 55.23% of Washington state falls within the boundaries of OBCs. Therefore, to calculate the fraction of statewide funding that will occur within OBCs, the Department multiplied the requested funding for statewide projects by 55.23% - the percent of the state characterized as an OBC by OFM. This analysis indicated that \$3,300,000 in statewide project funding in this request (26% of requested funding) is projected to occur in OBCs.

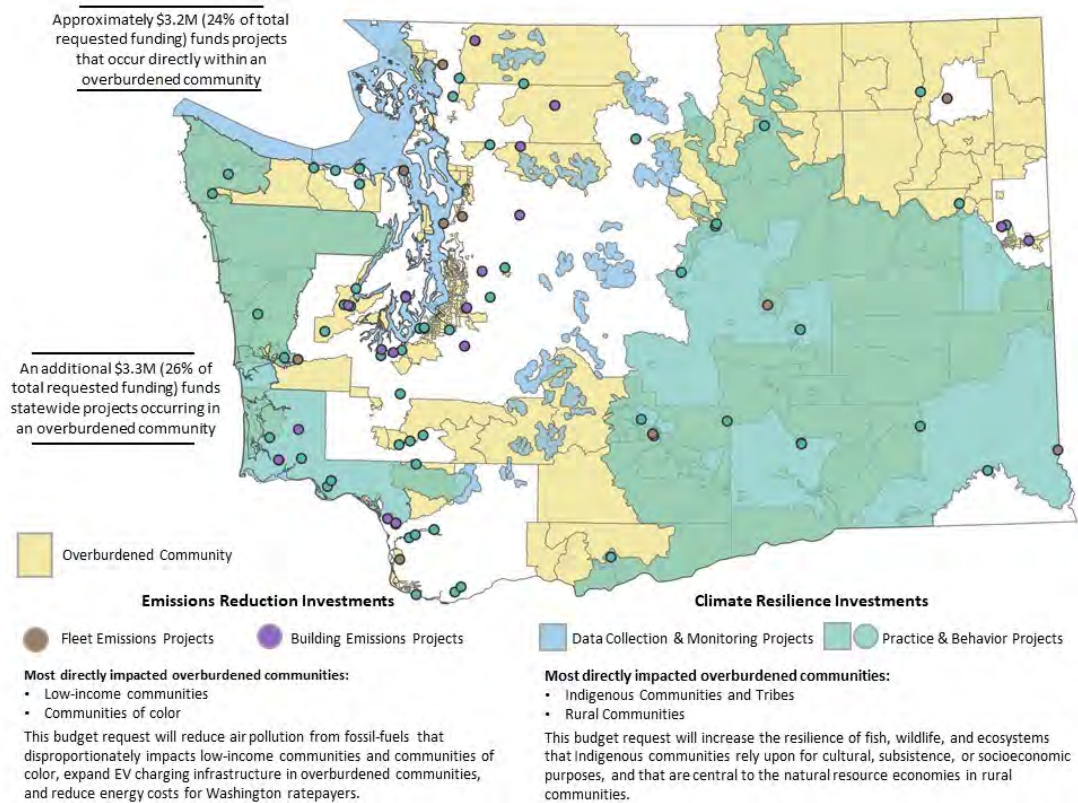


Figure 6: Map shows the distribution of requested CCA funding with a spatial element across Washington state; statewide funding (e.g., FTEs based out of headquarters who will serve the entire state; funding that will support data collection statewide) is not included in this map. Yellow shading indicates Washington’s overburdened communities, as defined by the recently released Overburdened Communities Map published to OFM’s website. The Climate Resilience Investments included in this budget request are comprised of (1) Data Collection and Monitoring Projects shown in light blue polygon shading, and (2) Practice and Behavior Projects shown in turquoise polygon and point shading. The Emissions Reduction Investments included in this budget request are comprised of (1) Fleet Emission Projects shown on the map with brown points, and (2) Building Emissions Projects that are shown on the map as purple points.

Benefits to OBCs

People in Washington benefit from natural resources that are threatened by climate change. Washingtonians rely on the state’s ecosystem and the services they provide, such as food production, clean water, disease management, pollination, erosion control, improved air quality, climate resilience, cultural practices, and recreational activities. To meet the growing demands for access to food, water, timber, land, and other natural resources, the state’s ecosystems have been modified more extensively over the past several decades than at any other time in history. While this transformation has contributed significantly to Washington’s economic development, it has also resulted in degradation of the state’s ecosystem services – the benefits humans derive from nature. Land degradation, biodiversity loss, and the impacts of climate change are straining ecosystems, limiting their capacity to provide these services.

Implicit within the Department’s mission to “preserve, protect, and perpetuate the state’s fish, wildlife, and ecosystems,” is the responsibility to ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services across the state in the face of on-going and projected climate impacts. To fulfill this mission, it is also the Department’s responsibility to reduce its own contributions to climate change by reducing GHG emissions generated by its operations. This funding request supports the Department’s work in both areas.

Climate change is directly affecting the health and wellbeing of communities across Washington and these impacts do not affect all communities equally.

Overburdened communities experience disproportionate climate change impacts such as excessive heat, wildfires, and flooding, as well as higher rates of air pollution and health issues caused by fossil fuels used in vehicles and energy generation. Similarly, the benefits that communities and

society derive from ecosystem services are deeply intertwined with social and political factors, leading to a distribution that mirrors existing patterns of inequity and injustice across Washington. Addressing these disparities is crucial for fostering resilience and ensuring that all communities benefit equitably from the state's natural resources.

Climate resilience and emissions reduction actions are needed to prepare and protect Washington's communities, cultures, ecosystems, and economies for on-going and projected impacts of climate change.

Ensuring access to ecosystem services for Washingtonians requires that areas deemed most critical to providing services are protected and managed. In some instances, managing areas where ecosystem services are provided may indeed conserve localized ecosystem services, such as recreation access. However, not all ecosystem services are localized, due to the scales at which ecosystem processes operate and the spatial relationship with natural resource management. As a result, while projects included in this request may not solely occur within the geographic footprint of an overburdened community, these projects are expected to provide benefits from the ecosystem services provided by these initiatives. **This raises a nuance of natural resource management: to ensure the provision of an ecosystem service in one location or community, it may be necessary to implement resource management practices in a different – or a broader – geographic area.** The conservation and management of salmon populations serves as a useful case study to illustrate this nuance. Salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest are anadromous – born in freshwater rivers, migrating to the ocean to grow and mature, and then returning to natal freshwater habitats to spawn. Effective management of Pacific Northwest salmon requires protecting all habitats that support their entire life cycle and recognizing the spatial subsidies exchanged between different habitats. For example, since freshwater systems are crucial spawning grounds and migratory habitats for young salmon, protecting and managing terrestrial habitats near streams can benefit marine fisheries. While a stream restoration project occurring in the high elevation headwaters is not within the boundary of an overburdened community, increasing the quality and resilience of salmon spawning habitat will help ensure that overburdened communities reliant on salmon harvest will have access to this natural resource in decades to come.

A similar logic applies to emissions reduction initiatives. Not every project will occur directly within an overburdened community in Washington. However, the effects will benefit these communities by reducing emissions and air pollutants that disproportionately impact overburdened communities around the state.

Requested funding is expected to produce specific benefits to overburdened communities.

Climate resilience and emissions reduction projects benefit overburdened communities by preserving ecosystem services that benefit all Washingtonians and by preparing for and reducing the climate impacts that disproportionately affect these overburdened communities specifically. The projects included in this request are expected to benefit overburdened communities by:

- Supporting the generation and application of climate science information that is needed to build resilience of management practices to help ensure the provision of natural resources that Indigenous communities and other diverse communities in Washington rely upon for cultural, subsistence, or socioeconomic purposes.
- Mitigating the disproportionate exposure of overburdened communities, particularly people of color and low-income communities, to harmful air pollutants from fossil fuel vehicles and fossil-fuel energy sources. Transitioning to EVs, promoting alternative transportation options, and implementing energy efficiency and electrification upgrades aim to reduce this environmental and health burden on these communities; projects are also expected to produce additional economic benefits by expanding access to EV charging and reducing energy costs.

This funding request is expected to most directly impact (1) tribes and Indigenous peoples dependent on natural resources for sociocultural and economic purposes, (2) rural communities reliant on natural resource economies, and (3) low-income communities and communities of color exposed to disproportionately high levels of air pollution in Washington. Specific impacts to these communities, organized by project category, is summarized below.

Climate Resilience (Management and Planning | Data Collection and Monitoring | Practice and Behavior)

Indigenous Communities and Tribes

- Climate change threatens traditional practices of Northwest tribes and Indigenous peoples, with warming temperatures affecting fish, wildlife, and ecosystems crucial to the way of life for Indigenous communities. Climate change will lead to continued declines in habitat quality, changes in plant blooming and berry ripening, and altered availability and distribution of "first foods" such as roots, berries, deer, elk, and salmon.

- This budget request will support the generation and application of climate science information that is needed to adapt to these ongoing and projected impacts of climate change and make informed decisions that build resilience of natural resources throughout the state that Indigenous communities rely upon for cultural, subsistence, or socioeconomic purposes.

Rural Communities

- Washington's rural communities, heavily dependent on natural resource economies, face climate impacts like wildfire, flood risk, and declining water availability. Additionally, where individuals live and work are important factors that contribute to exposure and vulnerability to climate change-related impacts. For example, the agricultural workforce in Washington state is roughly 53% nonwhite and 40% Hispanic. In the agricultural sector, upwards of 79% of outdoor farm workers experience a heat-related illness during the summer harvest season.⁴ Industry workers in rural communities produce significant timber, agriculture, and fisheries outputs, crucial for local jobs and sales. However, resilience of these communities is often limited due to geographic isolation and lower political representation.
- This budget request will increase the climate resilience of fish, wildlife, and habitats that are central to the natural resource economies rural communities are reliant upon.

Emissions Reduction (Fleet and Building Emissions)

Low-income communities and communities of color

- Fossil fuel vehicles and energy sources contribute to air pollution that disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color. These communities are more frequently located near highways and other heavy traffic roadways — one of several factors used to rank a community's risk of facing environmental health disparities.⁵ These communities are also more likely to be located near fossil-fuel power plants and industrial facilities, which are major sources of air pollution.⁶
- For many of these communities, in particular communities of color, this proximity to roadways and powerplants stems from historical discrimination and high housing costs that has led to communities of color facing a variety of harmful pollutants at a higher rate than white communities.⁷ This disparity exists at every income level, leading to greater health problems, including higher rates of cancer, lung conditions, heart attacks, asthma, lower birth weights, and high blood pressure.⁸
- Department fleet vehicles travel, and employees commute, through these high-pollution areas; and WDFW powers its facilities with energy generated from fossil fuel power plants. As a result, the Department unintentionally exacerbates health and environmental challenges for the communities that live there.
- Through this requested funding, WDFW will take steps to mitigate these impacts by (1) reducing fossil fuel pollution from fleet vehicle travel and employee commuting by transitioning to electric fleet vehicles and promoting alternative transportation through the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program, and (2) pursuing energy efficiency and electrification upgrades at WDFW facilities that will reduce consumption of this polluting energy.

Additional expected economic benefits

- Recent research has indicated that the public EV charging infrastructure is not equitably distributed across the United States and some overburdened communities, namely lower income communities, face less accessibility to public EV infrastructure in both urban and rural geographies.⁹ WDFW is exploring ways to right size this disparity through the expansion of the charging infrastructure at Department facilities, including potentially allowing public access to Department chargers located in overburdened communities.

Certain demographics, including low-income communities, Indigenous communities, and people of color, have also historically faced a disproportionately high energy burden (the percentage of household income spent on energy bills), which can strain households and exacerbate other inequities.¹⁰ Energy efficiency upgrades like those advanced through this package, reduce the need for expensive peak power and lower overall electricity demand, which can lead to decreased energy costs for all ratepayers and indirectly reduce this energy burden.¹¹

⁴ UW Climate Impacts Group, UW Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, Front and Centered and Urban@UW, 2018. An Unfair Share: Exploring the disproportionate risks from climate change facing Washington state communities. A report prepared for Seattle Foundation. University of Washington, Seattle.

⁵ Washington State Department of Health. 2022. Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map. <https://doh.wa.gov/data-and-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/washington-environmental-health-disparities-map>.

⁶ Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. Progress Report – Affected Communities. <https://www.epa.gov/power-sector/progress-report-affected-communities>.

⁷ Pinto de Moura, M.C., Reichmuth, D. 2019. *Inequitable Exposure to Air Pollution from Vehicles in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic*. Cambridge, MA: Union of Concerned Scientists. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/inequitable-exposure-air-pollution-vehicles>

⁸ Tessum, C. W., Paoella, D. A., Chambliss, S. E., Apte, J. S., Hill, J. D., & Marshall, J. D. (2021). [PM2.5 polluters disproportionately and systemically affect people of color in the United States](#). *Science Advances*, 7(18), eabf4491.

⁹ Lou, J., Shen, X., Niemeier, D.A., Hultman, N. 2024. Income and racial disparity in household publicly available electric vehicle infrastructure accessibility. *Nature Communications* 15, 5106. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-49481-w>.

¹⁰ Dreihobl, A., Ross, L., and Ayala, R. 2020. How high are household energy burdens? Washington, DC, USA. *American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy*. [How High Are Household Energy Burdens? An Assessment of National and Metropolitan Energy Burdens across the U.S. | ACEEE](#)

¹¹ Baetz, B., Barrett, J., Stickles, B. 2018. Estimating the value of energy efficiency to reduce wholesale energy price volatility. Washington, DC, USA. *American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy*. <https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/publications/researchreports/u1803.pdf>

Puget Sound Recovery:

Climate change threatens the health and wellbeing of Puget Sound and its inhabitants, as well as our ability to achieve recovery targets and goals. This multi-faceted decision package dramatically improves WDFW’s ability to integrate climate science into governmental and institutional planning, facilitate environmental data gathering and analysis to inform adaptive management strategies, and implement on the ground behavior changes to enhance ecosystem and community resilience throughout Puget Sound. Additionally, this decision package improves WDFW’s ability to reduce greenhouse emissions Department wide. This decision package is particularly well aligned with Puget Sound Action Agenda Strategy 20: Climate Adaptation and Resilience, and Strategy 19: Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Carbon Sequestration. While much of this package increases WDFW’s capacity across Washington State, the Puget Sound Marine Fish Monitoring work will increase WDFW’s capacity to monitor key fish species in Puget Sound, including species of greatest conservation need, threatened and endangered species, and species in active fisheries in the context of climate change.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

State Agency Connection | This budget request is related to actions currently proposed in the [draft Washington’s Climate Resilience Strategy](#) which is being developed under RCW 70A.05 and will be finalized by Sept 30, 2024. WDFW also collaborates regularly with other agencies on GHG emissions reduction efforts, in particular fleet electrification. WDFW will use the projects funded through this budget request to share resources and lessons learned with other state agencies both informally and through venues like the Climate Change Response Strategy interagency team, and the Department of Commerce State Efficiency and Environmental Performance Office.

Tribal Connection | As described in “HEAL Act Supplemental Questions” climate change is threatening the traditional practices of tribes and Indigenous peoples across the Northwest. As the climate continues to warm, fish, wildlife, and ecosystems will experience worsening impacts, with consequences for ways of life for Indigenous communities. Climate change will lead to continued declines in habitat quality, shifts in the timing of berry ripening and plant blooming, and altered availability and distribution of “first foods” – foods important for Indigenous physical, mental, and spiritual health including roots, berries, deer, elk, and salmon. This decision package will support the generation and application of climate science information that is needed to adapt to the ongoing and projected impacts of climate change and make informed decisions that build resilience of natural resources throughout the state that Indigenous communities rely upon for cultural, subsistence, or socioeconomic purposes.

Additionally, the Department works closely with tribes to cooperatively monitor and manage mountain goats, a highly valued and culturally important species to many of Washington’s indigenous peoples. The recent decline in mountain goat abundance is a serious concern among both state and tribal wildlife biologists, researchers, and managers. In response, the Department is working with a consortium of tribes to collaborate on efforts to identify causal factors for the decline and, to the extent possible, to identify management strategies to mitigate further population decline; the expanded Mountain Goat Monitoring initiative included in this budget request is among these strategies. The Nisqually Indian Tribe’s Department of Natural Resources will be a partner on the ‘Mountain Goat Monitoring’ project included in this funding request. Please refer to Appendix A, B, and C for letters of support from the Nisqually Tribe’s Department of Natural Resources, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians’

Natural Resource Department, and the Swinomish Tribal Community's Wildlife Program, respectively. For questions related to the Nisqually Tribe's partnership on this project, please contact Steven Borrego, Wildlife Program Manager, at borrego.steven@nisqually-nsn.gov or 360-338-8743.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on climate change, including Conservation Northwest, Wild Salmon Center, and Cascadia Partner Forum are likely to support this budget request. WDFW anticipates that partners will be supportive. The attached letter of support from Wild Salmon Center (Appendix D) further underscores this alignment, articulating strong endorsement of the budget request.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may become problematic. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

The GHG emissions reduction initiatives outlined in this budget request are in response to RCW 70A.45.050 (ESSHB 2311), which requires state agencies to reduce GHG emissions.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 4 - Build climate resiliency; and Strategy Action Area 4d - Technical capacity for climate resilience: This package contains several projects that conserve and protect native salmon and improve the alignment of harvest and hydropower with salmon recovery.

Broadly, nearly this entire budget request advances the salmon strategy by building climate resiliency that supports salmon recovery.

- 39% of requested 2025-27 project funds are directed specifically toward advancing climate resilience of fish species and habitat.
- An additional 5% of funds support hydrological research that will foster climate-resilient waterways around the state. The GHG emissions reduction projects (23% of requested funding) all aim to reduce Department-generated emissions in line with the ESSHB 2311, as specified in the Salmon strategy.

\$3,466,000 of requested 2025-27 funding directly supports priority salmon strategy actions.

- **Management and Planning** | \$916,000 investment in salmon recovery (7% of requested funding) supports the following priority action:
 - **Align harvest, hatcheries and hydropower with salmon recovery** | The Fisheries Management Strategy Evaluation project will advance salmon recovery by improving regional fishery management through climate-informed harvest modeling that aims to quantify the long-term conservation risks for salmon populations from climate and fishing-related impacts.
- **Practice and Behavior** | \$1,432,000 investment in salmon recovery (11% of requested funding) supports the following priority actions:
 - **Protect and restore vital salmon habitat** | The Toutle Salmon Reintroduction project focuses specifically on restoring above-dam fish passage in the North Fork Toutle watershed to reintroduce spring and fall Chinook and expand steelhead and coho salmon into 46 miles of unoccupied tributaries.
 - **Build climate resiliency** | The Climate Resilient Hatcheries project will address climate vulnerabilities at select fish hatcheries to mitigate the effects of climate impacts to stream temperature and water flow that threaten fish production, including salmon.
- **Data Collection and Monitoring** | \$1,118,000 investment in salmon recovery (9% of requested funding) supports the following priority action:

Address predation and food web issues for salmon | The Enhancing Forage Fish Resilience project will advance research into an important salmon food source by using advanced survey methods to identify areas where forage fish aggregate and interact with predators, including salmon, to better understand how climate change is affecting the distribution and abundance of forage fish populations around the state.

Reference Documents

- [ER - Appendix A - Nisqually Tribe Letter of Support.pdf](#)
- [ER - Appendix B - Stillaguamish Tribe Letter of Support.pdf](#)
- [ER - Appendix C - Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Letter of Support.pdf](#)
- [ER - Appendix D - Wild Salmon Center Letter of Support.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,736	\$1,736	\$3,472	\$1,736	\$1,736	\$3,472
Obj. B	\$609	\$609	\$1,218	\$609	\$609	\$1,218
Obj. C	\$1,591	\$1,341	\$2,932	\$64	\$64	\$128
Obj. E	\$976	\$900	\$1,876	\$633	\$633	\$1,266
Obj. G	\$69	\$69	\$138	\$69	\$69	\$138
Obj. J	\$207	\$54	\$261	\$54	\$54	\$108
Obj. T	\$1,622	\$1,508	\$3,130	\$1,006	\$1,006	\$2,012

Agency Contact Information

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Chinook salmon and other key Puget Sound aquatic species are exposed to two emergent, highly toxic chemicals, PFAS and 6PPD-q, that potentially threaten species health as well as the health of Washingtonians who consume contaminated seafood. This investment would allow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to track the presence of these two contaminants in specific juvenile salmon habitats and in key fish species throughout Puget Sound. Results will be used to guide clean-up and pollution prevention efforts to protect threatened Chinook salmon and other sensitive species. Funding would also be used to test edible fish tissues for the Department of Health. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 23P - 1	\$973	\$973	\$1,946	\$973	\$973	\$1,946
Total Expenditures	\$973	\$973	\$1,946	\$973	\$973	\$1,946

Decision Package Description

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and tire-related compounds including 6PPD-quinone (6PPD-q) have emerged as potentially serious threats to aquatic species and people in the Puget Sound region. Salmon, forage fish, and other species in Puget Sound are exposed to these toxic chemicals from the water they swim in and the prey they eat. People can then be exposed when they eat contaminated seafood.

PFAS are a group of thousands of synthetic chemicals used in many common household and commercial products for their ability to resist water, grease, and stains at a wide range of temperatures. Many PFAS show extreme persistence in the environment. There is strong evidence that some of these persistent PFAS can harm human health, with impacts such as elevated cholesterol levels, suppressed immune response, lower birth weights, reproductive problems, liver and thyroid problems, and greater risk of some cancers such as testicular and kidney cancers. [A recent CEC prioritization study for the Puget Sound region](#) identified 15 PFAS as Priority or Watch List chemicals due to their potential to cause biological effects in Puget Sound biota.

6PPD is a chemical commonly used in motor vehicle tires to keep them flexible and prevent rubber degradation. 6PPD on the surface of the tires reacts with ozone in the air to form 6PPD-q, which is toxic to coho salmon, steelhead, and to a lesser extent Chinook salmon. When it rains, tire particles containing 6PPD-q are washed into rivers, streams, and other water bodies, where the chemical causes rapid mortality to salmonid species of cultural, environmental, and economic significance. 6PPD and 6PPD-q have been detected in humans. Although the human health impacts of these chemicals are still being investigated, research in mice has shown that 6PPD may adversely impact reproduction, and 6PPD-q chemicals may be toxic to the liver and lungs.

The Department’s 34-year contaminant monitoring program, Toxics Biological Observation System (TBiOS), conducts ongoing biennial surveys of toxic contaminants in juvenile Chinook salmon, Pacific herring, adult salmonids, and English sole tissues. Recently, the program also added monitoring contaminants in the nearshore using caged mussels. The combined results of these studies are reported as part of the [Toxics in Aquatic Life Vital Sign](#).

Preliminary monitoring results revealed detections of PFAS in Pacific herring and juvenile and resident sub-adult Chinook salmon, sometime at levels of potential concern for the health of wildlife, including Southern Resident killer whales ([Lee et al. 2023](#), [James et al. 2023](#)) and for people who consume these fish. Preliminary monitoring results also revealed detections of 6PPD-q in juvenile Chinook salmon and caged blue mussels sampled from developed sites.

State agencies, including the Department, have insufficient resources to comprehensively manage environmental PFAS and tire-related contamination and ensure the health of our salmon and Washingtonians. With the growing need for a rapid response to PFAS and 6PPD-q, additional long-term funding is needed for focal assessments, defined as in-depth monitoring studies at ecologically sensitive or important sites that have known or suspected contamination.

At the start of the 2023-25 biennium, the Department received funding from the legislature to measure contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) in our historic indicator species. Existing funding allows the Department to identify which CECs, including PFAS and tire-related

compounds, are likely to cause the most harm, and which specific river systems and bays are most at risk from CECs, including limited information on pathways for these CECs. However, for migratory juvenile salmonids, more focal assessments are needed to better manage contaminated sites and protect salmon health. Additionally, to better protect human health, more harvested species must be monitored for these contaminants.

Proposed Solution

WDFW is seeking funding to add capacity to its existing toxics monitoring program for marine and anadromous species to better manage the threat PFAS and 6PPD-q pose to the health of salmon and of Washingtonians. Collectively, this proposal will identify specific sites and species that have high levels of PFAS and tire-related compound contamination, and where interventions would be most beneficial to aquatic and human health.

To manage and protect juvenile Chinook and coho salmon from exposure to PFAS and 6PPD-q, we must understand where these chemicals are entering Puget Sound. In order to obtain this information, WDFW will conduct new focal assessments on the presence and accumulation of PFAS and 6PPD-q in estuarine and nearshore aquatic species, including juvenile salmonids and transplanted caged mussels. Monitoring results show juvenile Chinook salmon, and transplanted caged blue mussels are excellent indicators for assessing the presence of CECs in estuarine and nearshore habitats. These in-depth, site-specific studies will be conducted in juvenile salmon habitats where limited geographic monitoring data indicate a potential threat to juvenile salmon. The Department will then work with collaborators at the Department of Ecology (ECY) and Tribes to identify sources of PFAS and 6PPD-q to waterways based on assessment findings. These source identification studies can direct remediation efforts that will generally improve aquatic ecosystem health, such as installing green stormwater infrastructure or working to address sources of pollution to wastewater systems.

To manage exposure to people, WDFW will conduct new sampling of marine and anadromous species to measure the levels of PFAS and 6PPD-q in edible fish. The Department will coordinate and share data with the Department of Health (DOH) to inform consumption advisories and ensure seafood safety. WDFW will sample at locations identified by DOH and may sample species not currently monitored by WDFW at DOH's request.

Best Option

WDFW's TBiOS program has a long history of successfully monitoring and reporting on contaminant exposure in fish and shellfish and has several ongoing collaborations with state and local governments, Tribes, community groups, and other non-profit organizations to ensure cost-effective and successful implementation of the proposed work. TBiOS scientists are experts in aquatic toxic contamination and have successfully collaborated with DOH, ECY, and Tribes to address contaminants in salmon and other aquatic species in the past.

The new studies in this proposal are complementary to studies proposed by Ecology and DOH as part of the PFAS statewide funding strategy and the [6PPD Action Plan](#). Furthermore, this proposal protects Washington State's current investments in salmon recovery. Salmon restoration projects that restore the physical habitat but fail to remediate the chemical habitat limit the effectiveness of habitat remediation efforts and reduce the survival of natural-origin salmon.

Options to reduce the proposed expenses include reducing the number of samples analyzed for PFAS and tire-related compounds, reducing the number of FTEs hired, and seeking short-term grants or contracts for these detailed focal assessments. Adopting any of these reductions may limit the effectiveness of efforts to restore Puget Sound salmon populations and protect the health of Washington's communities. A minimum number of samples must be collected to determine where and how salmon are exposed to these chemicals during their seaward migration. Hiring fewer staff would delay the timely reporting of information needed to manage contaminated sites. Although WDFW has been very successful in obtaining grants and contracts for previous studies, such as [determining sources of PBDEs in juvenile Chinook from the Snohomish River](#) and [steelhead in the Nisqually River](#), grant funds rarely provide sufficient funds for new staff, again delaying timely reporting of results.

If additional funding is not secured, the Department will not adequately identify sources of PFAS and tire-related compounds to juvenile salmonids and their prey, and DOH will have insufficient data to protect human health. This lack of information will result in uninformed management actions that may:

Miss opportunities to prioritize ecosystem restoration and pollution prevention activities that will help threatened populations recover, such as Puget Sound Chinook salmon and Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Fail to recover or maintain sustainable fisheries.

Unnecessarily restrict fishing or other resource-use opportunities or, conversely, fail to protect the health of Washingtonians who may consume contaminated seafood.

Not funding this request will prevent the state's ability to evaluate whether money spent on cleanup and prevention of contaminants in Puget Sound has been effective in recovering the health of fish and protecting human health.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal expands the scope of the WDFW Fish Program's base budget for its 34-year TBIOS Toxics Monitoring Program. The base budget has been funded in the last two biennia via a direct appropriation to the Department from the Model Toxics Control Operating Account (MTCA Fund 23P). Total biennial allotments for the base program were \$1,926,100 in 2021-23 and \$1,925,049 in 2023-25 of ongoing funding for Tracking Puget Sound Fish Health to monitor legacy contaminants in indicator species. In 2023-25 the Department received an additional direct appropriation from MTCA Fund 23P of \$2,580,000 to increase the monitoring program related to detecting toxics in native fauna of Puget Sound by analyzing collected tissue samples. This is ongoing funding for monitoring to add analyses for CECs to our existing samples collected for analyses of PCBs and other legacy contaminants. PCB Research & Monitoring was funded in 2021-23 via a proviso from Fund 001-C1*. Allotments were \$518,000 in 2021-2023 and in 2023-25 there was a Fund shift from 001-C1* to MTCA 23P in the amount of \$478,000 for ongoing funding for PCB research and Emerging Toxics in Chinook and Southern Resident killer whales.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits for 4.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions totals \$433,000 for fiscal year 2026 and ongoing. Personal Services Contracts, object C, for fiscal year 2026 and ongoing, includes \$140,000 for sample analyses for 6PPD-q from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and \$52,000 for sample analysis for PFAS from SGS AXYS Laboratory. Goods and Services, object E, includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year. Object E also includes \$35,000 for hiring charter boats to collect samples, \$15,000 for lab supplies needed to prepare samples for analysis and \$5,000 for field supplies needed for sample collection. Travel, object G, includes \$13,000 for lodging and per diem for field staff to complete field sampling and \$6,000 for agency vehicle charges, mileage for personal vehicles and fuel & parking for agency vehicles used in sample collection. Indirect, object T totals \$238,000 per year ongoing.

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated startup and ongoing work for FY 26 and ongoing are as follows:

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3 – designs, conducts, and implements detailed assessments on PFAS and tire related compounds in marine and anadromous species and interprets and reports results for studies in coordination with DOH.

2.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 - completes field collection of marine and anadromous species and preparation of samples for chemical analyses of PFAS, tire-related compounds. These positions cover sampling for DOH related work and detailed focal assessments in estuarine and nearshore habitats used by juvenile salmonids.

1.0 FTE Environmental Planner 4 - coordinates and liaises with other state agencies, Tribes, federal agencies, and local governments to create and implement policies to address the impact of PFAS and tire-related compounds.

Historical Funding:

Funding is requested because activities in this specific package exceed the 2025-27 base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will not be able to implement these activities or will need to consider cutting other essential services.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal supports the state's ability to achieve the Governor's Results Washington goals:

World Class Education: The 6PPD-q and PFAS monitoring described in this proposal dovetails with the Department's ongoing, 34-year TBIOS monitoring program. This program regularly invites students, community scientist volunteers, and interns to participate in field and laboratory activities, giving them a first-hand look at how applied science is conducted to make a real difference in achieving important societal goals. TBIOS also partners with higher education institutions to not only benefit from the important input students may have on TBIOS research, but to also foster creating new, high-caliber scientists who can lean into environmental challenges facing Washingtonians.

Prosperous Economy: Supporting remedial actions to reduce harmful 6PPD-q and PFAS will contribute to a prosperous economy by protecting and recovering the natural productivity of the Puget Sound ecosystem.

Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment: All the activities in this proposal are specifically focused on reducing toxic contaminants in the Puget Sound ecosystem.

Health and Safe Communities: Reducing 6PPD-q and PFAS in the Puget Sound ecosystem contributes to physically and mentally healthier communities. Moreover, embedding the diversity, equity, and inclusion values described above will contribute to more equitable access to healthful resources.

Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government: This proposal illustrates efficient, effective and accountable government because it leverages an existing monitoring program to minimize expenses and take advantage of the broad and deep communication network WDFW has developed with sister agencies and other partners in Puget Sound recovery.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This package supports the Department's strategy to proactively address conservation challenges and expanding current species recovery efforts.

This package relates directly to WDFW's objective of achieving healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations, and its vision of abundant opportunities for diverse population to use Puget Sound's living aquatic resources. Connecting the occurrence of 6PPD-q and PFAS with remedial actions for Puget Sound recovery will engender environmental responsibility and personal stewardship, as Washingtonians see the practical results of actions taken to reduce 6PPD-q and PFAS in the environment.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Preserve & Restore Aquatic Habitats and Species, 3.0 FTE and \$730,000 per fiscal year, Model Toxics Control Operating Account, Fund 23P.

Aquatic habitats will contribute to a robust ecosystem that supports fish and wildlife in Washington. These healthy habitats will contribute to resilience, strong species diversity, and abundant opportunities for fishing and non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Those fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities will contribute to economic health in rural communities reliant on outdoor recreation.

Business Management & Obligations, 1.0 FTE and \$243,000 per fiscal year, Model Toxics Control Operating Account, Fund 23P.

The Department's deputy director and policy director work together to lead a small team of staff through agency leadership and strategy development to address the environmental concerns of the state while working within the challenging socio-political climate that comes along with natural resource work. This includes agency wide strategic planning, lean process improvement and conflict transformation work.

Performance Outcomes:

This proposal supports the Department's ability to achieve multiple short-term, near-term and long-term Performance Outcomes.

Near-term outcomes include:

- Identifying and documenting high priority sites and potential sources of PFAS and tire-related compounds impacting juvenile salmonids within specific river systems to inform remediation strategies.
- Documenting PFAS and tire-related compounds in seafood to inform potential consumption advisories.

This proposal will fund staff to increase coordination among state and local agencies. In the mid-term, this increased coordination will result in:

- Informed and targeted actions to reduce PFAS and tire-related compound exposure to juvenile salmonids and people.
- More effective and efficient use of State resources for clean-up and remediation of PFAS and tire-related compounds.

Ultimately, coordinating a faster response to known PFAS and tire-related compound contamination will result in the following long-term outcomes:

- Improved health equity and environmental justice for communities overburdened and disproportionately impacted by exposure to PFAS and tire-related compounds.

Improved health for threatened and endangered species and populations as exposures to PFAS and tire-related compounds are reduced below levels known to cause harm. Reducing the impact of PFAS and tire-related compounds on threatened and endangered species will enhance their recovery.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department has already received strong support from treaty and nontreaty Tribes in Puget Sound related to its TBiOS program, and several have expressed keen interest in the 6PPD-q and PFAS work described in this proposal. This proposal was designed to help the State address serious threats to the salmon that Tribal governments depend on for their culture, economy, and safety.

Additionally, this proposal was crafted based on recommended actions outlined in ECY's 6PPD-q action plan. The Department worked with DOH and ECY to draft these recommended actions. An advisory committee with representatives from Tribes, local and federal government, and environmental and industrial advocacy groups also provided input on recommended actions.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The primary goals of this proposal are 1) To provide 6PPD-q and PFAS contamination levels in marine and anadromous species currently not monitored by the Department for use by DOH to determine if they safe for human consumption, and 2) To trace the sources of PFAS and 6PPD-q in juvenile salmonid estuarine and nearshore habitats. Based on the results of the proposed study and results from the Department's currently monitored species, we expect to find inequitable (greater) impacts of these contaminants on specific demographic groups (Tribes, Asian and Pacific Islander communities, and other People of Color). This inequity can only be addressed after 6PPD-q and PFAS are identified in the ecosystem.

Until 6PPD-q and PFAS remediation is completed to protect impacted communities, those communities will be discouraged or prohibited from fishing in areas with confirmed contamination. This could result in a decrease in economic activity for entities who rely on the traffic and activity from fishing. This may also make certain community cultural practices more difficult to perform, especially for Tribes whose usual and accustomed fishing areas are impacted.

By making an investment now to document the levels of 6PPD-q and PFAS in seafood and the sources of these contaminants entering estuarine and nearshore habitats in Puget Sound, the state is able to gather data to help identify areas of pollution to inform decision makers of options to respond to the pollution and begin to formulate remediation and prevention strategies.

With effective remediation plans in place, the positive impacts of reducing 6PPD-q and PFAS in the ecosystem will be most tangible to people living near 6PPD-q and PFAS-polluted areas and those who rely on seafood from these areas. Remediation plans may also impact industries or activities related to the production, use, and management of 6PPD-q and PFAS, including chemical industries that may be required to develop

safer products, wastewater treatment facilities that may need to alter treatment plans to remove 6PPD-q and PFAS from outfall, and stormwater permittees and managers who may be developing best management practices to reduce stormwater contamination. Mitigation efforts could include DOH emphasizing consumption of seafood from uncontaminated areas or recommend species with safer levels of 6PPD-q and PFAS, or the Department emphasizing non-consumptive recreational fishing and boating, which would necessitate proper enforcement to ensure compliance.

Target Communities and Populations:

It is well documented that systemically marginalized communities in the Puget Sound basin, including Tribal, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other People of Color, are disproportionately affected by toxic contaminants in the environment. Contamination poses a significant problem for communities that rely on seafood for subsistence or on Puget Sound’s living resources for cultural practices. These impacted communities would benefit from the primary outcomes of this work – identifying where 6PPD-q and PFAS occur – so that remedial actions can be taken to protect their health and restore traditional cultural resources.

This effort is a key element of the broader initiatives aimed at restoring the health of the Puget Sound ecosystem, which provides benefits to all Washingtonians. Toxic chemical contaminants are reducing the abundance of adult Chinook salmon, thereby impacting the food supply available to Southern Resident killer whales. Additionally, these contaminants are decreasing recreational, commercial, Tribal ceremonial, and subsistence fishing opportunities.

Work funded by this proposal can also directly benefit specific communities that are located near, or that routinely harvest from, waters that are suspected to be contaminated with PFAS or 6PPD-q. TBIOS has previously performed focal studies with input from local organizations in communities that have been impacted by aquatic contamination. Additionally, as part of the proposed work, the Department will work with DOH to identify additional aquatic species for contaminant monitoring that are of cultural, economic, or subsistent importance to disproportionately impacted communities.

Over the long term, successful remediation based on the foundation of this work will expand the availability and accessibility of living marine resources. As contamination is reduced, contaminant-related fishery restrictions will be prevented or lifted. This ongoing effort is crucial for the health of both the ecosystem and for communities that depend on it. By addressing contamination and promoting sustainable practices, we can work towards a healthier Puget Sound ecosystem.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Treaty and non-treaty Tribes in Puget Sound and environmental advocacy groups have expressed interest in the 6PPD-q and PFAS work described in this proposal. Several advisory committee members also expressed interest in expanding the number of aquatic species that are tested for contaminants, citing concerns that potential routes for human exposure would be missed without additional testing. To address this concern, our proposal includes testing additional aquatic species for 6PPD-q and PFAS contamination based on input from DOH. We anticipate DOH will work with disproportionately impacted communities to identify the most important species for testing.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

By increasing capacity at WDFW to identify the location and sources of 6PPD-q and PFAS exposure in order to guide conservation measures to reduce toxic chemicals in Puget Sound, this decision package is aligned with the following 2022-2026 Action Agenda items: Toxic Chemical Pollution, Prioritize, prevent, and manage contaminants of emerging concern by implementing key opportunity Identify, prioritize, and monitor chemicals of emerging concern (CECs) (including integration of human health risk and thresholds). Research and Monitoring: Direct and leverage funding and investments to advance science, monitoring, and adaptive management for Puget Sound recovery. Assess toxic contaminant sources, (both historic and ongoing) and prioritize their cleanup or replacement based on environmental and human health impacts from the 2020-2024 Science Work Plan. This decision package also directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Orca Task Force recommendation: Increase monitoring of toxic substances in marine water and create and deploy adaptive management strategies to reduce threats to orcas and their prey. This decision package also directly implements the Puget Sound relevant Salmon Strategy 6, Address predatory and food web issues for salmon.

State Workforce Impacts:

Job classification and the associated startup and ongoing work for FY 26 and ongoing are as follows:

1.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 3 – designs, conducts, and implements detailed assessments on PFAS and tire-related compounds in marine and anadromous species and interprets and reports results for studies in coordination with DOH.

2.0 FTE Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 - completes field collection of marine and anadromous species and preparation of samples for chemical analyses of PFAS, tire-related compounds. These positions cover sampling for DOH related work and detailed focal assessments in estuarine and nearshore habitats used by juvenile salmonids.

1.0 FTE Environmental Planner 4 - coordinates and liaises with other state agencies, Tribes, federal agencies, and local governments to create and implement policies to address the impact of PFAS and tire-related compounds.

Intergovernmental:

This package will benefit from support provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) pre-existing TBiOS network. This network includes Tribes, city and county governments, other state agencies (such as the Department of Health, Department of Ecology, and the Puget Sound Partnership), as well as federal agencies (including USEPA, NOAA Fisheries, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Geological Survey). Over the last 34 years, the Department's TBiOS base toxics monitoring program has established close working relationships with these entities, fostering mutual support for common goals related to contaminant reductions in the Puget Sound ecosystem.

Contaminant exposure can reduce the survival of juvenile salmonids, and ultimately their abundance, reducing treaty fishing. Exposure to contaminants via edible fish species can also harm the health of Tribal members. The Department has already received strong support from several Tribes in the Puget Sound region regarding its TBiOS program, and some have expressed keen interest in the PFAS, and 6PPD-q work described in this proposal. For example, we are currently collaborating with the Muckleshoot Tribe to address their concerns regarding whether shad in Lake Washington are safe to eat.

The Washington State Legislature recognizes the threat posed by PFAS and tire-related compounds and expressed a strong desire for State agencies to provide a more coordinated threat reduction response. In the 2023–2025 Capital Budget, the legislature directed the Department of Ecology “to develop a multiyear statewide funding strategy for reducing PFAS in the environment.” ECY has been coordinating with staff from the DOH, Department of Agriculture, and Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to develop this statewide funding strategy. A report is due to the legislature December 1, 2024. Reducing harmful exposures to PFAS in Washington requires immediate efforts to find, mitigate, and clean up current exposures of concern. Efforts are needed to halt influx of PFAS from existing uses and sources and to clean up legacy PFAS contamination already released. The work proposed in this decision package is included in the PFAS Statewide Funding Strategy.

The Legislature also provided short-term funding to state agencies to 1) Reduce sources of 6PPD in the environment; 2) Minimize and mitigate the impact of 6PPD in the environment; and 3) Further research on 6PPD's effect on human health and key aquatic species. Long-term funding is needed to better understand the extent of the 6PPD-q exposure in the environment, especially to salmonid ecosystems. Currently, a multi-agency team that includes WDFW is supporting the development of a statewide [6PPD Action Plan](#) that will provide recommendations to fill priority and near-term research needs and data gaps, and in the long-term to reduce impacts of 6PPD and 6PPD-q on people and the environment. Research to understand ecosystem-wide impacts is needed. Sampling for tire-wear particles and contaminants in water, sediment and tissues of multiple species in freshwater and marine environments will help us understand the scope, scale, and legacy of the problem across urban and traffic gradients. The work proposed in this decision package is included in the in the recommendations for the Phase 1 of the 6PPD Action Plan.

The Department anticipates potential impacts on DOH. Contamination data generated from this proposal will be shared with DOH. The Department expects that DOH will respond by evaluating whether human health is at risk based on the data TBiOS provides, and, if appropriate, they may take further action. DOH staff are aware of and are anticipating cooperation from WDFW on these seafood safety assessments.

Stakeholder Impacts:

WDFW regularly interacts with many nongovernmental organizations to conduct field work related to its base contaminant monitoring program, including Bainbridge Beach Naturalists, Fiero Marine Life Center, Harbor WildWatch, Port Townsend Marine Science Center, Sound Water Stewards, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, Seattle Aquarium, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement, Friends of Skagit Beaches, Vashon

Nature Center, and Friends of Burley Lagoon. In addition, TBIOS collaborates and communicates with environmental organizations specializing in contaminant issues, including Toxic Free Future and Zero Waste Washington. These NGOs will strongly support this 6PPD-q and PFAS proposal.

Long Live the Kings (LLTKs), a public 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to restoring wild salmon and steelhead to the waters of the Pacific Northwest, is also likely to strongly support this 6PPD-q and PFAS proposal. As one of the organizations that managed the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, LLTKs highlighted the Department's existing contaminant monitoring and research, which documented that legacy contaminants were affecting fish health and limiting Chinook salmon recovery in urban rivers. Furthermore, the Marine Survival Project's synthesis report recommended that CECs (like 6PPD-q and PFAS) be included in WDFW's future monitoring and supported expanding the geographic scope of contaminant monitoring in Puget Sound.

It is possible some stakeholders will object to monitoring 6PPD-q and PFAS in Puget Sound if they perceive the possibility of being identified as a potential responsible party for 6PPD-q and PFAS contamination. Washington State's Attorney General's Office have used WDFW's TBIOS toxics data in the past to litigate against such parties to recover costs associated with the types of contamination WDFW might observe with this proposal.

State Facilities Impacts:

It is anticipated that positions can be absorbed into existing facilities.

Changes from Current Law:

N/A

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Identifying and tracking 6PPD-q and PFAS in Puget Sound's aquatic life was recommended as a high priority intervention for Southern Resident killer whale recovery by Governor Inslee's Orca Task Force (Recommendation 33). In addition, this proposal will support ECY's development of a Statewide action plan to address 6PPD-q and its implementation of the PFAS Chemical Action Plan published in 2022.

Additionally, the Puget Sound Partnership 2022-2026 Action Agenda holds statutory goals for Puget Sound recovery with a broad range of bold and ambitious recovery targets. For the toxic contaminants already monitored by TBIOS in Puget Sound, these targets are:

- By 2030, 95 percent of the samples gathered across Puget Sound habitats exhibit a declining trend of contaminant levels or are below thresholds of concern for species or human health.
- By 2050, 95 percent of the samples gathered across Puget Sound habitats exhibit monitored contaminant levels below thresholds of concern for species or human health and show no increasing trends.

Although these targets currently focus on primarily legacy contaminants, 6PPD-q and PFAS will likely be incorporated into these targets. In addition, the Puget Sound Partnership Science Panel identified in its recent science work plan Priority Science to Support Puget Sound Recovery assessing sources and impacts of 6PPD-q and PFAS as a high priority Best Management Practice to support articulated policy issues including recovery of Southern Resident killer whales and Chinook salmon.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 2 - Invest in clean water infrastructure for salmon and people and 2a - Toxics reduction: This package expands critical toxics monitoring to identify PFAS and 6PPD-q sources in juvenile salmon habitat and expands assessment of these contaminants in the fish species and locations across Puget Sound that are not currently monitored.

Reference Documents

[TB - Managing Emergent Toxic Threats References and Attachments.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$317	\$317	\$634	\$317	\$317	\$634
Obj. B	\$116	\$116	\$232	\$116	\$116	\$232
Obj. C	\$192	\$192	\$384	\$192	\$192	\$384
Obj. E	\$91	\$91	\$182	\$91	\$91	\$182
Obj. G	\$19	\$19	\$38	\$19	\$19	\$38
Obj. T	\$238	\$238	\$476	\$238	\$238	\$476

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Salmon population persistence in many rivers is threatened by the double jeopardy of climate change and legacy impacts from deleterious habitat, fishery, and hatchery practices. Conservation hatchery programs have proven to be an effective tool for maintaining at-risk populations and increasing genetic diversity. This package will extend this proven technique to address critical salmon conservation needs and complement broader recovery actions for five key salmon populations. An assessment of the risks, benefits, and feasibility of a conservation hatchery program is also proposed for Chehalis Spring Chinook salmon. These actions are supported by multiple tribes, salmon recovery entities, and stakeholder organizations. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation]. [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy].

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	4.2	4.2	4.2	6.1	6.1	6.1
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,426	\$1,168	\$2,594	\$1,252	\$1,252	\$2,504
Total Expenditures	\$1,426	\$1,168	\$2,594	\$1,252	\$1,252	\$2,504

Decision Package Description

Salmon - Icon of the Pacific Northwest

Salmon are a cultural and environmental icon of the Pacific Northwest. As described in the 2022 [State of Salmon in Watersheds](#) report:

“Washingtonians rely on healthy, harvestable populations of salmon to support a robust economy, feed iconic orcas, maintain recreational opportunities, and fulfill obligations to Native American tribes. The federal Endangered Species Act also requires protection of species at risk of extinction, such as many of Washington’s salmon, steelhead trout, and bull trout populations.

Salmon are central to Washington tribes’ cultures, identities, and businesses. Through treaties with the federal government, many tribes exchanged land for guaranteed, perpetual access to hunting and fishing areas. Other tribes in Washington never ceded their claims to ancestral lands and still rely on salmon. Washington State is obligated to uphold fishing rights for tribes and has a duty to ensure salmon are abundant enough for harvest. Tribes and the State co-manage salmon resources, and tribes have led salmon recovery efforts throughout the state.”

Tribal culture has been deeply traumatized by the loss of abundant salmon. The devastation of the salmon runs, now often only 10% - 30% of the pre-European settlement abundance, has resulted in severe fishery restrictions. Even First Salmon Ceremonies, the traditional honoring and welcoming of the return of salmon, have been challenging to maintain.

The challenge of conserving and restoring salmon was poignantly captured by Ed Johnstone, chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, as he reflected on the 50th anniversary of the Boldt decision:

“As we reflect on the past 50 years, we are worried about the next 50. We are stewards of natural resources for the next seven generations, but we’re on the trajectory to having a treaty right to a fish that has gone extinct” (Northwest Treaty Tribes, Spring 2024 edition).

Salmon – a Pacific Northwest icon – at risk of disappearing forever?

At Risk of Disappearing Forever

Climate change and legacy impacts from deleterious habitat, fishery, and hatchery practices are resulting in a high risk of extinction for many Washington salmon populations. Salmon and steelhead from 14 regions in Washington, referred to as Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs), are currently listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). These include Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Hood Canal Summer-Run Chum salmon, and Lower Columbia Chinook salmon. Populations in each of these Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) are targeted in this funding request as well as Cedar River sockeye salmon and Chehalis spring Chinook salmon. The latter population is in the Washington Coastal Chinook salmon ESU, currently under consideration for listing by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Reviews of historical information and analyses of recent data suggest that some salmon populations are at a high risk of extinction absent immediate action. In the Lake Washington basin, for example, July 4 is not only Independence Day, but a day to celebrate the return of adult

sockeye salmon from their 1,000-mile ocean odyssey as they stream through the Ballard Locks. Fall was a time when thousands of the colorful red and green sockeye salmon could be seen spawning in the Cedar River. That is all now at risk. Steelhead are already gone from the Lake Washington basin and sockeye salmon are on a short path to extinction. In an effort to save these species, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe has not fished in Lake Washington for sockeye salmon since 2006.

Similarly, in the Chehalis River basin, tribal, recreational, or commercial fisheries directed at spring Chinook salmon have been severely curtailed for decades. However, some salmon runs have declined as much as 80% from historical levels due to a combination of lost and damaged habitat, changing climate conditions, and development (ASEPTC 2014). Absent substantive action, spring Chinook salmon could be lost entirely from the Chehalis River within 60 years (ASRPSTRT 2017). Interbreeding of spring and fall Chinook salmon, likely related to construction and operation of the Skookumchuck Dam that blocks access to historical spawning areas and alters historical flow and temperature regimes, is contributing to the critical conservation needs for Chehalis spring Chinook salmon.

These examples are indicative of the challenges in conserving and restoring our northwest icon. As stated by Governor Inslee prior to the 2022 legislative session, “There is no time to waste. We have a choice between a future with salmon or a future without them. Salmon need immediate and urgent action to ensure their survival.” ([Inslee Salmon Recovery](#), 2021) While progress was made in the 2022 session, and in the subsequent two years, we have work remaining to ensure we have salmon in Washington’s future..

Conserve Diversity, Maintain and Reintroduce Salmon Populations

Substantial investments in habitat protection, restoration, and removing barriers to salmon migration are providing benefits to salmon and, over the long-term, with sufficient and ongoing efforts, will conserve and rebuild our salmon runs. However, in the short-term, we face the potential to lose additional populations, lose diversity, and miss opportunities to re-introduce salmon to watersheds from which they have been extirpated.

Fortunately, strategies have been developed to use hatcheries effectively to conserve and rebuild salmon runs. Unlike most hatchery programs, conservation hatchery programs are not intended to contribute to fisheries, but rather to propagate fish with equivalent genetic resources of the native stock and with the full ability to return to reproduce naturally in its native habitat or to be reintroduced. Conservation hatchery programs cannot replace habitat protection and restoration but can complement those actions and “buy time” to address the underlying causes of declines.

Summer chum salmon in Hood Canal provide an example of conservation hatchery programs that have proven successful in achieving program objectives. Conservation hatchery programs were initiated for Hood Canal summer chum around 2000 in response to extremely low abundance (or absence) of summer chum salmon in some locations. The number of summer chum salmon spawning in Jimmycomelately Creek, for example, had dwindled to less than 10 fish in 1999 when the conservation hatchery program was initiated. Juvenile chum salmon were first released in the spring of 2000, and the first adult returns occurred in 2003. The conservation hatchery program contributed to a resurgence of summer chum salmon along with habitat restoration and fishery management measures. The 2022 State of Salmon in watersheds concluded that “Hood Canal summer chum populations are approaching recovery goals, showing substantial improvements in abundance, productivity, geographic distribution, and genetic diversity.” A June 2024 editorial in the Seattle Times lauded the efforts to recover summer chum salmon and concluded “Here’s a recipe for success others can emulate.” (see Box 1 for full editorial)

Box 1. Success of Hood Canal summer chum gives hope for salmon recoverySeattle Times editorial board (link [The Seattle Times - Hood Canal Chum](#))

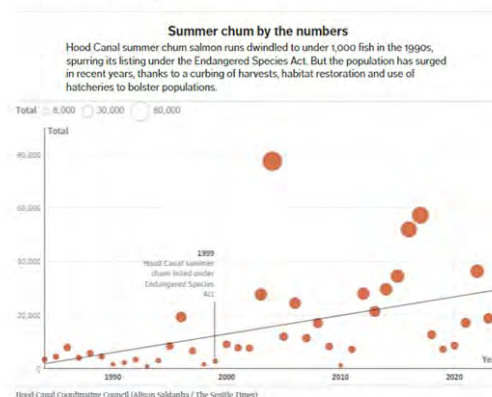
June 6, 2024

In an era of many decimated Northwest Pacific salmon and steelhead populations, one fish has been running counter to a dismal trendline. Hood Canal summer-run chum, among 28 salmonids listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, has made an extraordinary comeback thanks to a coordinated restoration strategy between tribes, the federal government and local agencies. Their work has made “delisting” the chum a worthy goal and serves as an inspiration for other fish recovery efforts in Washington.

The chum had fallen victim to a dwindling supply of habitat, overharvesting and pollution that plunged it toward extinction. Annual counts plummeted from the tens of thousands of chum to just 871 fish in 1993. About half the waterways where it spawned — spanning the Skokomish River on the canal to the Dungeness River near Sequim — lost their entire runs, according to the University of Washington’s Puget Sound Institute.

Summer chum by the numbers

Hood Canal summer chum salmon runs dwindled to under 1,000 fish in the 1990s, spurring its listing under the Endangered Species Act. But the population has surged in recent years, thanks to a curbing of harvests, habitat restoration and use of hatcheries to bolster populations.



Three main efforts appear to have brought the fish back from the brink. First, state and tribal fisheries managers curtailed their harvest, buying time to develop a recovery plan. Next, a coalition of those tribes, state agencies and nonprofits unleashed a limited supply of hatchery fish to boost runs in places like the Big Quilcene River. Biologists also introduced broodstock from adjacent rivers to jump-start runs where there were no fish left.

Then came a public works push. Rivers and estuaries, the fertile meeting grounds of freshwater and saltwater that salmon traverse, have often been plugged with fill for roads and other human structures. Removing blockages like culverts has restored the natural movements of many water bodies, creating new habitat for chum and other species.

Today, the Hood Canal Coordinating Council, a group of local governments and tribes, is spearheading a delisting petition to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Fisheries Division. The council’s hope is to transfer the destiny of the species back to local control. Their effort should proceed — so long as it maintains monitoring and fish population data to ensure the species remains robust.

Make no mistake: This is no time to celebrate salmon recovery. The summer chum are in many ways the low-hanging fruit: They tend to spawn lower in rivers and streams and they emerge from freshwater early in the year when food is more bountiful in the wider Salish sea and Pacific Ocean. But their stunning reversal demonstrates concerted recovery efforts can, and do, yield results. Around Washington, salmon populations are a fraction of what they once were; the restoration of the species can feel hopeless. Here’s a recipe for success others can emulate.

Invest in Salmon Conservation Hatchery Programs

Broader investments in conservation hatchery programs are essential now to prevent further loss of diversity, reintroduce salmon to watersheds where they have been extirpated, and fulfill obligations of biological opinions issued by the NMFS that provide ESA-coverage for hatchery programs. This funding will extend and expand upon proven techniques to address critical salmon conservation needs and complement broader recovery actions for up to six key salmon populations in the Puget Sound, Washington coast, and the lower Columbia River regions.

The proposed locations, characteristics, and benefits of these conservation hatchery programs are described in the following sections. Adaptive management of programs is likely to result in some re-allocation of costs among watersheds and modification of the programs as implementation proceeds.

West Kitsap summer chum salmon (Hood Canal). Conservation hatchery programs, habitat restoration, and fishery management actions together have resulted in a substantial improvement in the status of ESA-listed Hood Canal summer chum salmon. The 2022 State of Salmon in the Watersheds report concluded that the performance was “approaching recovery goals.” However, reintroduction of summer chum salmon to additional watersheds is essential to further increase diversity and a critically important step to recovery of summer chum salmon.

Building upon previous successes, the Point No Point Treaty tribes and WDFW are re-initiating a coordinated conservation hatchery program

initiative for summer chum salmon. The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe is leading the reintroduction of summer chum salmon in the Dungeness River (funding secured by tribe), and WDFW is leading the reintroduction in West Kitsap tributaries (Dewatto River and Big Beef Creek). Using techniques previously proven effective in the Hood Canal region, approximately 300 adult summer chum salmon will be collected from the Union River and either spawned on site or transported to the McKernan Hatchery for holding to maturation. After initial incubation and otolith marking of eggs at the McKernan Hatchery, the eggs will be transported to the Big Beef Creek Hatchery and to a remote site incubator on the Dewatto River. Approximately 330,000 juvenile chum salmon (165,000 at each site) are expected to be released. The conservation hatchery program is expected to be maintained for 12 years consistent with previous summer chum programs and the biological opinion providing ESA coverage for the taking of summer chum salmon for broodstock.

Costs for the reintroduction program are approximately \$126,000 in Fiscal Year 2026, \$84,000 in Fiscal Year 2027, and \$89,000 in subsequent years. Costs for the initial year of the project are higher due to the start-up costs associated with the construction of the incubation vessels (called remote site incubators) in the Dewatto River. Remaining and ongoing costs include transport of eggs and adult summer chum salmon, genetic analysis and otolith marking to monitor the program, and associated staff time. Additional details on program costs can be found in the section “Detailed assumptions and calculations”.

The hatchery conservation program is projected to result in the return of about 2,600 adult summer chum salmon and the establishment of self-sustaining returns to Big Beef Creek and the Dewatto River. The Hood Canal Coordinating Council and Point No Point Treaty tribes support this action as a critically important step forward in restoring healthy and harvestable returns of summer chum salmon to Hood Canal. Tribal and recreational fisheries directed at Chinook and coho salmon have been severely restricted since the early 2000s to afford protection to co-mingled summer chum salmon.

Mill, Abernathy, Germany (MAG) and Grays River Fall Chinook Salmon (lower Columbia River). The Washington tributaries to the Lower Columbia River from the mouth to the Cowlitz River differ substantially from those that existed prior to European settlement. Habitat degradation has reduced the historical production potential by 40% (LCRFB 2010) and genetic diversity of the Chinook salmon has been affected by decades of strays from hatchery programs. Maintaining, much less recovering, Chinook salmon in these creeks and rivers will be extremely challenging.

WDFW is working with NMFS to develop, initiate, and test alternative strategies for conservation hatchery programs under these difficult conditions. Implementation of the innovative experiment is required under the terms of a biological opinion that maintains federal funding for hatchery programs in the Columbia River basin (Mitchell Act programs). Briefly, a 15-year Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) experiment will be initiated to test three strategies.

1. Strategy 1 (Grays River). A three-spawning cycle (15-year) conservation hatchery program will test the use of natural-origin broodstock collected in the Grays River to conserve and rebuild a Chinook salmon population. The objective of the program is to amplify the abundance of fall Chinook salmon that were historically present relative to non-local Chinook salmon that have strayed from hatchery programs. Spawning, incubation, and early rearing will occur at the Beaver Creek Hatchery with a release of up to 350,000 sub-yearlings in the Grays River watershed.
2. Strategy 2 (Abernathy Creek). A one-spawning cycle (five-year) conservation hatchery program will be initiated using Chinook salmon broodstock from the Elochoman River (natural-origin) and Big Creek (hatchery-origin) to reintroduce early-fall timed Chinook salmon to Abernathy Creek. The early-run timing reflects the timing of Chinook salmon that were historically present in this watershed. A potential concern with these broodstock sources is that a history of influence by fish reared in hatcheries may have reduced the potential to spawn and rear in the natural environment (referred to as domestication). If juvenile Chinook salmon migrate to the mainstem soon after emergence from the gravel, survival rates of juveniles is likely to be poor, and the demographic benefits of the conservation hatchery program may be lost before local adaptation can reduce the effects of domestication. To address this concern, up to 50% of the fry collected at the juvenile trap in Abernathy Creek will be transported to the Abernathy Fish Technology Center (pending agreement with USFWS) or the Beaver Creek Hatchery for short-term rearing.
3. Strategy 3 (Germany Creek). Strategy 3 will assess the potential for rebuilding a locally adapted Chinook salmon population by minimizing the number of hatchery-origin spawners spawning in a watershed. This strategy will be

tested in Germany Creek which is located near Germany Creek.

Controls for the experiment have been established in the Elochoman River and in Mill Creek.

Costs for the conservation hatchery programs are approximately \$706,000 in Fiscal Year 2025, \$490,000 in Fiscal Year 2027, and \$702,000 in subsequent years. Costs include the purchase and installation of two 30' round ponds at Beaver Creek Hatchery, transport of eggs and adult Chinook salmon, fish food and therapeutics, coded-wire-tagging of juvenile salmon prior to release, and associated staff time. Additional details on program costs can be found in the section "Detailed assumptions and calculations". Complementary funding for implementation of weirs, monitoring, and other scientific aspects of the program have been secured through federal sources.

Implementation of the conservation hatchery programs is a required Term and Condition of the biological opinion for Mitchell Act funding of WDFW hatchery programs. WDFW currently receives over \$6 million per year of Mitchell Act funding for mitigation hatcheries that support tribal, recreational, and commercial fisheries and contribute to Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs.

Cascade River Spring Chinook Salmon (Puget Sound). The Cascade River is a tributary to the upper Skagit River near the town of Marblemount. Large numbers of natural-origin spring Chinook salmon have likely never returned to the upper Cascade River, but multiple factors reduced the population to about 100 fish by 2020. Addressing habitat degradation, climate change, and other factors that underlie the reduced productivity of natural origin Cascade River spring Chinook salmon remains a priority of WDFW, the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and Upper Skagit Indian Tribe (together referred to as the co-managers). However, in the short- to moderate term, achieving substantive improvements in the productivity and production potential through habitat restoration will be challenging. Under these conditions, a conservation hatchery program can be a valuable tool to maintain genetic diversity within the natural population and preserve future options to restore Cascade River spring Chinook salmon.

The co-managers designed the size and strategy of the conservation hatchery program to align with the productive capacity of the upper Cascade River, limit risks, and promote adaptive management (CWG 2023). The initial release target is approximately 40,000 yearling Chinook salmon. Natural origin broodstock will be collected from the Cascade River (or Skagit River) and transported to the Marblemount Hatchery for spawning. Incubation of eggs and initial rearing of juveniles will occur at the Marblemount Hatchery, with the juvenile Chinook salmon from the conservation hatchery program released into the upper Cascade River and from the Marblemount Hatchery. The diversified release strategy is intended to: a) promote testing of the effectiveness of releases into the upper Cascade River; and b) facilitate annually monitoring and varying the number of fish from the program that spawn in the upper Cascade River.

Costs for the conservation hatchery programs are approximately \$211,000 per year. Costs include transport of juvenile and adult Chinook salmon, fish food and therapeutics, genetic analysis to ensure collection of appropriate broodstock, coded-wire-tagging off juvenile salmon prior to release, and associated staff time. Additional details on program costs can be found in the section "Detailed assumptions and calculations".

Habitat degradation and other factors have resulted in a substantial reduction in the returns of salmon and steelhead to the Skagit River basin. This has resulted in the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe relying upon spring Chinook salmon originating from the Marblemount Hatchery to provide a limited fishery. In addition to the biological benefits of the proposed conservation hatchery program, it is anticipated that implementation will be a Term and Condition for ESA-coverage for continued operation of the Marblemount Hatchery spring Chinook salmon program.

Cedar River Sockeye Salmon (Puget Sound). A combination of factors, including increased urbanization, increased night lighting, new and legacy contaminants, rising water temperatures, disease, and predation have put the treasured sockeye salmon run at real risk of disappearing forever from the Lake Washington Basin. Resolving these issues will require time and a long-term, greater regional commitment. In the short-to medium term, as co-managers of the fishery resource, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and WDFW have tested and implemented new techniques to increase survival rates for both adult and juvenile sockeye salmon. The co-managers have developed a "Sockeye Hatchery Assessment and Restoration Plan" (SHARP), that is intended as a guide for those actions while recognizing that continuous innovation will be essential to rebuild the sockeye salmon run.

A factor contributing to the rapid decline of Sockeye salmon in the Cedar River has been the poor conversion of adult sockeye passing the Ballard Locks to the adults spawning in the Cedar River or at the Cedar River Hatchery. The estimated conversion rate of Cedar River sockeye salmon has declined from an average of over 90% from 1972 -1991 to an average of less than 20% in recent years. Stress from encounters with pinnipeds at the Ballard Locks, high water temperatures and low dissolved oxygen levels in the Lake Washington Ship Canal (LWSC), and increased prevalence and lethality of pathogens associated with rising water temperatures are likely among the contributing factors (Urgenson et al. 2021; Williams et al. 2021).

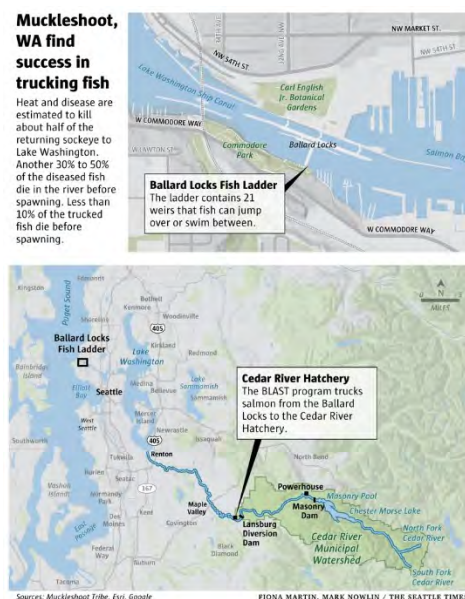
To address this mortality source, the co-managers have tested an innovative strategy to collect adult sockeye salmon at the Ballard Locks and

transport them directly to the Cedar River Hatchery, avoiding the inhospitable waters of the Lake Washington basin. Adult fish were dip netted out of the fishway at the Ballard Locks, transferred to a tanker truck, and transported to the CRSH for holding until spawning. The result from three years of evaluations was an important finding. Pre-spawning mortality could be reduced to less than 3% for adult sockeye salmon held in spring water, and less than 10% for fish held in river water. With the testing complete, SHARP recommends expanding those efforts to ensure that the sockeye salmon can complete their life cycle, spawn, and contribute to increased abundance in the next cycle. The innovative program was highlighted in a November 2023 article in the Seattle Times which noted that “With the success of the last three years, the co-managers are now looking into all the avenues to grow the program from four ponds for trucked fish to 50 ponds, to build the run back to sustainable or harvestable levels as fast as possible so the tribes and sport fishers can get back on the water.” (Box 2)

Box 2. Inside the effort to truck sockeye salmon past Lake Washington

Seattle Times (link [The Seattle Times - Cedar Sockeye](#))

November 30, 2023



The high mortality rate of juvenile sockeye salmon in Lake Washington must also be addressed to rebuild the run. Predation by non-native predatory fish and northern pikeminnow, accentuated by warming lake temperatures and increased night lighting, are resulting in high mortality rates for sockeye salmon and ESA-listed Chinook salmon. Through funding by the Washington legislature and other sources, the co-managers have initiated a program to reduce the number of predatory fish. A second strategy recommended in SHARP is to rear juvenile sockeye salmon for a longer period at the Cedar River Hatchery prior to release. The intent is to reduce the length of time when the sockeye salmon are exposed to predation and, by increasing the size of the juveniles released, to reduce the likelihood of predation.

Costs for the conservation hatchery program are approximately \$176,000 per year. Costs include transport of adult sockeye salmon, fish food and therapeutics, marking and coded-wire-tagging off juvenile salmon prior to release to monitor program performance, and associated staff time. Additional details on program costs can be found in the section “Detailed assumptions and calculations”.

The conservation hatchery program is an element of the SHARP initiative to restore healthy and harvestable returns of sockeye salmon to the Cedar River. It is anticipated that funding provided by Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), associated with the ongoing operation of the municipal water supply facility at Landsburg, and the use of the SPU-owned Cedar River Hatchery will complement the state funding.

Chehalis River Spring Chinook Salmon (Washington Coast). A July 2023 petition proposing an ESA-listing identified multiple existential threats to Washington Coastal spring Chinook salmon (Center for Biological Diversity and Pacific Rivers 2023). Spring Chinook salmon from the Chehalis River figured prominently in the petition, with the spawning run size reported to be less than 10% of the pre-settlement run size. While many of the factors contributing to this decline occur through much of western Washington (e.g., habitat degradation, adult passage barriers), a new and unique source of concern is emerging. Research conducted to support the development of the Chehalis Basin Strategy suggests that interbreeding is occurring with fall Chinook salmon. As a result, spawn timing appears to be shifting later (Zimmerman 2017), and a large

proportion of the juvenile salmon produced have mixed spring and fall Chinook salmon parentage (Gilberston 2023). This dilution through hybridization is reducing the number of Chinook salmon that have the genetic characteristics of spring Chinook salmon, characteristics that evolved through thousands of years to align with the unique environment of the Chehalis River basin. Climate change is and will increasingly exacerbate these genetic impacts through pathways such as increasing thermal stress on returning adult fish and reduced egg-to-fry survival caused by winter storms scouring out eggs that had been spawned in the gravel.

WDFW and the Quinault Indian Nation, as co-managers of the Chehalis fisheries resources, along with other partners, are currently engaged in implementing the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) in the Chehalis Basin. A priority of the plan has been given to restoring habitats used by spring Chinook salmon. These actions, however, will take many years to mature and effectively benefit spring Chinook salmon. While recognizing the necessity of implementing a full restoration strategy for salmon in the Chehalis River basin, the Quinault Indian Nation and WDFW recommend evaluating the feasibility and design of a conservation hatchery program for Chehalis spring Chinook salmon. The project would:

1. Summarize existing information on the current and projected status of the population;
2. Assess the benefits and risks of a potential conservation hatchery program using qualitative and quantitative analyses;
3. If the co-managers conclude that implementation of a program would provide a net benefit to Chehalis spring Chinook, recommend:
 - a. methods and locations to capture, select, manage, and hold adult broodstock;
 - b. genetic analyses of the potential impacts of a conservation hatchery on the genetic integrity and diversity of naturally spawning populations (i.e., not fall-timed or hybrid Chinook salmon);
 - c. fish culture methods;
 - d. the number, age, size, and release location for juvenile fish and the location of incubation and rearing production facilities;
 - e. genetic, coded-wire-tagging, or other marking of juvenile spring Chinook salmon;
 - f. relative merits of a conservation hatchery compared to other measures that might be undertaken to improve the resilience of spring Chinook diversity to uncertainties of environmental change, including ecological processes and interactions with other species; and
 - g. duration of the conservation hatchery program.

WDFW proposes to contract with a consultant with expertise in the Chehalis River basin at a cost of \$200,000 to complete this work.

Alternatives and Consequence of Not Funding

WDFW considered a number of alternatives to the six conservation hatchery programs proposed in this package. These are briefly discussed below as well as the consequences of not funding this package.

1. Larger Funding Request. The proposed package takes a “bare-bones” approach to with limited new staffing, small investments in equipment, and a focus on only six salmon populations. While recognizing that a larger funding request would benefit more populations, we settled on an approach that focused on the highest priorities across all of western Washington. Alternative fund sources have and will continue to be pursued for eastern Washington.
2. Alternative Fund Sources. WDFW has and continues to work with the tribal co-managers to secure additional federal funding for these critically important programs. Five conservation hatchery programs in western Washington are currently supported by Pacific Salmon Treaty implementation funds (North Fork Nooksack River, South Fork Nooksack River, North Fork Stillaguamish River, South Fork Stillaguamish River, and Dungeness River), and a chum salmon conservation program in the lower Columbia River is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration. WDFW has secured approximately \$0.5 million of federal funding to implement broodstock collection facilities for the Chinook salmon conservation hatchery programs in the lower Columbia River. However, we are not aware of any additional federal funding that will become available for the implementation of new conservation hatchery programs.
3. Do Not Request Funding. There are at least five interrelated consequences of not funding this package.
 - a. Lost Opportunity. The status of the Hood Canal Summer Chum ESU has markedly improved since ESA-listing with some biological characteristics now exceeding recovery criteria. Failure to re-introduce summer chum salmon into Big Beef Creek and the Dewatto River may preclude delisting, will reduce the viability of the population, and would result in a lost opportunity to demonstrate a significant success in salmon recovery.
 - b. Extirpation and Loss of Salmon Diversity. Failure to fund this package may result in the extirpation of one or more of the target populations of salmon, with the resulting loss of salmon diversity. At greatest immediate risk of extirpation in the short-term are

- Cedar River sockeye salmon, MAG Chinook salmon, and Grays River Chinook salmon.
- c. Reduced Prey for Southern Resident Orcas. Failure to fund this package would mean fewer Chinook salmon would be available as prey for Chinook salmon in the short-term (3-5 years), and a larger reduction in the future due to re-initiation of consultation for one or more biological opinions (see bullet 3e).
 - d. Maintain or Increase Constraints on Tribal Fisheries. Declines in salmon abundance are resulting in tight constraints on many tribal fisheries. The Cascade Spring Chinook, Cedar River Sockeye, and West Kitsap Summer Chum conservation programs all have the potential to reduce constraints to tribal fisheries.

Re-initiation of ESA Consultations. The conservation hatchery programs in the lower Columbia River are required under the Terms and Conditions of the biological opinion associated with federal Mitchell Act funding. Failure to implement the conservation programs would result in re-initiation of consultation and, likely, a significant reduction in allowable releases of Chinook salmon. Since these fish contribute heavily to Washington's coastal salmon fisheries, there would be a substantial reduction in tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The Cedar River conservation hatchery program is the only one of the proposed programs that previously occurred at a reduced level. State funding was less than \$10,000 per year in FY22 through FY24.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 4.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total 348,000, in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and FY 2027. Beginning in FY 2028, objects A and B total \$489,000 for 6.1 FTE, ongoing. One-time Personal Service Contracts, object C, total \$100,000 in FY 2026 and FY 2027. Goods and services, object E, total \$357,000 in FY 2026 and FY 2027, and then ongoing at \$381,000 beginning in FY 2028. Object E includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year.

Travel costs, object G, total \$11,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing (details provided below). One-time Equipment costs, object J, total \$216,000 in FY 2026 and include \$84,000 for the purchase of two 30' round ponds to be installed at Beaver Creek Hatchery, \$100,000 for round pond installation components, and \$32,000 for six Remote Site Incubator units with alarm systems. Pass-Through costs, object N, total \$100,000 beginning in FY 2026. And finally, an infrastructure and program support rate of 32.37% is included in object T, for all but the equipment purchase and pass-through funding, and is calculated based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

West Kitsap Summer Chum Salmon (Hood Canal) Travel Detail

Mileage costs for this program total \$1,566.72. It is assumed there is the need for eight egg transport trips between Union Trap and McKernan Hatchery which is 86 miles round trip and will require the use of an agency planting truck with a rate of \$1.53/mile. It is further assumed that two trips will be required between McKernan Hatchery and Big Beef, 84 miles roundtrip, and two trips will be required between McKernan Hatchery and Dewatto, also 84 miles roundtrip. (8 egg transport trips x 86 miles per trip x \$1.53/mile = \$1,052.64) plus (4 trips x 84 miles roundtrip x \$1.53/mile = \$514.08).

Mill, Abernathy, Germany (MAG) and Grays River Fall Chinook Salmon (lower Columbia River) Travel Detail

Mileage costs for planting juveniles and hauling adults total \$6,149.07 in FY26 and ongoing. Due to limited broodstock, it is assumed daily trips will be required August 15 – October 31 to haul adults from trapping location in an agency owned planting truck. Mileage per trip is calculated to be 47 miles roundtrip and at a rate of \$1.53/mile. Planting juveniles is estimated to require 10 trips, 40 miles roundtrip each, with the mileage rate of \$1.53/mile. (77 trips x 47 miles x \$1.53/mile = \$5,537.07) plus (10 trips x 40 miles x \$1.53/mile = \$612).

Cedar River Sockeye Salmon Travel Detail

Mileage costs for adult trapping and hauling total \$3,304.80. It is assumed a Fish Hatchery Specialist will be required to make 30 daily trips in June for adult trapping and hauling. Each trip will be 72 miles roundtrip and will require the use of an agency planting truck which has a mileage rate of \$1.53/mile. (30 trips x 72 miles per trip x \$1.53/mile = \$3304.80).

Workforce Assumptions:

Job classification and the associated work for 4.2 FTE in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 are as follows:

West Kitsap Summer Chum Salmon (Hood Canal)

0.3 FTE FISH HATCHERY TECHNICIAN (\$67,945 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Four-month non-permanent FHT position needed to assist with hatchery operations due to increased production.

0.1 FTE SCIENTIFIC TECHNICIAN 4 (\$96,773 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One month of time will be required to cover incubation and rearing at Big Beef.

0.1 FTE SCIENTIFIC TECHNICIAN 3 (\$89,170 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One month of time will be required to cover incubation and rearing at Big Beef.

Mill, Abernathy, Germany (MAG) and Grays River Fall Chinook Salmon (lower Columbia River)

FY 2026 and FY 2027:

1.0 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE) – New full-time FHS2 position will be required to meet increased production with installation of temporary ponds. Position will assist with maintenance and operation of facility and fish production

FY 2028, ongoing:

2.0 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE – Additional new FHS2 position will be required once permanent round ponds are installed to meet the greater production. Position will assist with maintenance and operation of facility and fish production

0.9 FTE FISH HATCHERY TECHNICIAN (\$67,945 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Two five-month non-permanent FHTs to assist with hatchery operations during peak seasons of adult collection and spawning after permanent round ponds have been installed and are operational.

Cascade River Spring Chinook Conservation Program (Marblemount)

0.1 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 4 (\$103,001 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Supervise and support hatchery staff and manage budgets

0.2 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 3 (\$90,979 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Maintenance and operation of facility and fish production

0.3 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE) - Maintenance and operation of facility and fish production

0.5 FTE FISH HATCHERY TECHNICIAN (\$67,945 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One six-month non-permanent FHT to assist with hatchery operations during peak seasons of adult collection and spawning

Cedar River Sockeye Salmon

0.1 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 4 (\$103,001 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Supervise and support hatchery staff and manage budgets

1.0 FTE FISH HATCHERY SPECIALIST 2 (\$80,627 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Maintenance and operation of facility and fish production

Fish Health

0.3 FTE SCIENTIFIC TECHNICIAN 3 (\$89,170 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Due to increased production, a four-month non-permanent ST3 will be needed to assist the WDFW Microbiology Laboratory during peak season.

0.2 FTE EPIDEMIOLOGIST 1 (\$122,107 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Increased production and sampling requirements from conservation programs will require more field time for regional EPI1s.

Historical Funding:

Funding is requested because activities in this specific package exceed the 2025-27 base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will not be able to implement these activities or will need to consider cutting other essential services.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

The proposed hatchery conservation address two goals of Results Washington:

Goal 2. Prosperous economy: Fostering an innovative economy where businesses and, workers and communities thrive in every corner of our state.

Rural communities in the Skagit River basin, Chehalis River basin, lower Columbia River, and on the Washington Coast historically depended on tribal, recreational, and commercial fisheries for salmon as a source of revenue. This proposal seeks to restore that source of revenue by contributing to the conservation and recovery of salmon.

Goal 3. Sustainable energy & a clean environment: Building a legacy of resource stewardship for the next generation of Washingtonians.

Reintroducing salmon, maintaining, or increasing salmon diversity, and preventing extirpation of salmon, as requested in this proposal, is essential to ensure that we have a legacy of salmon to pass on to future generations.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

The WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan promotes building that legacy of resource management by identifying a strategy to “Proactively address conservation challenges.” Linked to that strategy is a near-term action to “Vastly expand current efforts to manage and recover at-risk fish and wildlife species.” Three pertinent 25-year desired outcomes identified in the strategic plan are: 1) “State and federally listed species are recovering”; 2) “The quality and/or quality of harvest opportunities are sustainable”; and 3) “WDFW is viewed as a leader in salmon recovery”.

The requested funding is a “proactive” action directed at achieving those very outcomes.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Produce Hatchery Fish 4.2 FTE \$1,426,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,168,000 fiscal year 2027, General Fund State.

This package supports our activity inventory item “Produce Hatchery Fish” and applicable support strategy:

- Produce salmon and steelhead.

The Department owns and/or operates 80 hatcheries for fish production that benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and fulfill obligations to maintain tribal usual and accustomed fishing rights. Production at hatcheries is conducted consistent with ESA requirements and hatchery reform goals. This activity includes the entire fish production cycle for salmon and steelhead, raising fish from eggs until release age, sometimes transporting them to their release location, and then collecting more eggs upon their return.

Performance Outcomes:

Outcomes and performance metrics are provided below for each of the conservation hatchery programs.

West Kitsap Summer Chum Salmon (Hood Canal)

Outcome: Self-sustaining summer chum salmon spawning aggregations established in Big Beef Creek and the Dewatto River by 2035.

Performance Metric: 330,000 juvenile summer chum salmon are released into Big Beef Creek and the Dewatto River beginning in 2026.

Mill, Abernathy, Germany (MAG) and Grays River Fall Chinook Salmon (lower Columbia River)

Outcome: An average of 800 local-origin (i.e., originating from natural spawners and the conservation hatchery program) spawn in the Grays River from 2029 through 2034.

Performance Metric: 200,000 juvenile Chinook salmon originating from the Big Creek Hatchery or Elochoman River are released into Abernathy Creek in 2026.

Cascade River Spring Chinook Salmon (Puget Sound)

Outcome: An average of 500 local-origin (i.e., originating from natural spawners and the conservation hatchery program) spawn in the Cascade River from 2029 through 2034.

Performance Metric: 40,000 juvenile Chinook salmon originating from the Cascade conservation hatchery program are released into the Cascade River in 2027.

Cedar River Sockeye Salmon (Puget Sound)

Outcome: The Cedar River sockeye salmon run exceeds 60,000 fish by 2035.

Performance Metric: At least 2,500 sockeye salmon are collected for broodstock at the Ballard Locks in 2025.

Chehalis River Spring Chinook Salmon (Washington Coast)

Performance Metric: Feasibility report for a conservation hatchery program for Chehalis spring Chinook salmon completed by December 31, 2026.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

We worked extensively with multiple tribes (see discussion above) to develop the conservation hatchery programs described in this package. This culminated with providing the tribes an opportunity to review the draft decision package for conservation hatchery programs, and with a series of three meetings with the tribes in April, June, and July 2024 to review all agency budget requests. The primary change resulting from Tribal feedback was to provide more flexibility in the design and implementation of the conservation hatchery programs, and to note the importance of adaptive management.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

No target populations or communities would be marginalized or disproportionately impacted by this proposal. This proposal will reduce barriers to communities, including rural communities, who have been historically marginalized and excluded from opportunities to engage in recreational fishing activities. Investment in hatchery conservation initiatives promotes more access and opportunities.

Target Communities and Populations:

This package promotes equity by increasing the abundance of salmon to populations and communities that historically relied upon salmon as a source of food, for jobs, and as a cultural foundation for the community. Additionally, families with limited socio-economic standing currently experience economic barriers to afford salmon at market price. Recreational fishing provides opportunities to integrate this source of food into their lifestyle.

Native Americans residing in the Chehalis River basin, Lake Washington basin, Skagit River basin, and the watersheds of Hood Canal have been disproportionately impacted by declines in salmon abundance resulting from climate change and habitat degradation. Tribes that will benefit from this package include the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, the Quinault Indian Nation, the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, the Skokomish Tribe, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe.

The Washington legislature has defined an overburdened community as a “geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in RCW [19.405.020](#).” This package is directed at several of those communities including parts of Skagit County (53057951100), Mason County (53045960200), King County (53033031202), and Grays Harbor County (53027000700, 53067012720, 53041970400, 53041970700, and 53041970900).

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The primary change resulting from Tribal feedback was to provide more flexibility in the design and implementation of the conservation hatchery programs, and to note the importance of adaptive management.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

This decision package implements the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 Salmon Recovery Action #205 as well as the draft Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Region Chapter Addendum Action Smolt: 1.7.3 When applicable, use hatcheries as a conservation tool to reestablish or boost at-risk populations. Implementation of the proposed conservation hatchery programs in Hood Canal will increase the spatial structure and diversity of ESA-listed summer chum salmon in Hood and provide a strong basis for recovery. Similarly, the conservation hatchery for spring Chinook salmon in the Cascade River is a proactive measure designed to maintain diversity and reduce the likelihood of extirpation of that population. This also implements the Governor’s Statewide Salmon Strategy Action 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

This project will contribute to healthy and harvestable salmon runs and, as such, is of interest to many of Washington's tribes. In particular, the following tribes were contacted regarding this request to fund conservation hatchery programs and are believed to be supportive:

1. Cascade River Spring Chinook. Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, and Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
2. Cedar River Sockeye Salmon. Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
3. Chehalis Spring Chinook Salmon. Quinault Indian Nation
4. West Kitsap Summer Chum Salmon. Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Skokomish Indian Tribe.

As the Regional Recovery Organization for Hood Canal summer chum salmon (RCW 90.88.030(1)(a)), the Hood Canal Coordinating Council has a strong interest in the recovery of the Hood Canal Summer Chum ESU and, in particular, with the reintroduction of summer Chum salmon in Big Beef Creek and in the Dewatto. Our understanding is that the HCCC is supportive of the request for funding to initiate the summer Chum salmon conservation hatchery programs.

The Office of the Chehalis Basin and Chehalis Basin Board (created under House Bill 2856) are tasked with developing and providing long-term oversight of the Chehalis Basin Strategy. The Strategy is a "network of partners and projects hard at work to make the Chehalis Basin a safe, healthy, and abundant place to live – for people, fish, and wildlife." The Chehalis Basin Board anticipates that the co-managers will take the lead in the discussion and development of a conservation hatchery for Chehalis spring Chinook salmon. (Office of the Chehalis Basin, Spring Chinook Conservation Hatchery Factsheet, January 11, 2024).

The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board is the Regional Salmon Recovery Organization and Lead Entity for salmon habitat restoration for the lower Columbia River in southwest Washington. The LCFRB is aware of this package but has not taken a position on the request as of July 2024.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Non-governmental stakeholders that may be affected by this request include those with an interest in salmon recovery and Southern Resident Killer Whales as well as recreational anglers and commercial fishers. In previous discussions, these stakeholders have expressed a wide variety of perspectives on hatchery programs. However, we anticipate broader support for this package because of the conservation focus, the science-driven approach, and the limited duration of most programs.

State Facilities Impacts:

The proposed conservation hatchery programs will increase utilization of the Marblemount, Cedar River, McKernan, Beaver Creek, and potentially other hatcheries. Funding is requested for equipment associated with increased egg incubation at the Skookumchuck Hatchery. Final design and permitting are currently underway for a substantial renovation of the Beaver Creek Hatchery. Capital funding for construction has been requested for the FY25-27 biennium.

While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

The Southern Resident Orca Task Force (2018) included the following recommendation:

"Recommendation 6: Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restorations measures."

The proposed conservation hatchery programs will release approximately 900,000 juvenile Chinook salmon with conservation benefits to salmon.

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5 - Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery and 5b - Hatchery investments: This package directly addresses the biggest hurdle remaining before Hood Canal Summer Chum may be eligible for delisting from the ESA. It also helps ensure the persistence of Spring Chinook in the Chehalis River basin.

Reference Documents

[HC Reference Document.pdf](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$242	\$242	\$484	\$337	\$337	\$674
Obj. B	\$106	\$106	\$212	\$152	\$152	\$304
Obj. C	\$100	\$100	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. E	\$357	\$357	\$714	\$381	\$381	\$762
Obj. G	\$11	\$11	\$22	\$11	\$11	\$22
Obj. J	\$216	\$0	\$216	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. N	\$100	\$100	\$200	\$100	\$100	\$200
Obj. T	\$294	\$252	\$546	\$271	\$271	\$542

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Agency Recommendation Summary

Accurate and timely reporting of harvest is required for sustainable fisheries management. Further, WDFW is obligated under federal court order to provide accurate and timely catch accounting to tribal co-managers. Seeking to develop mobile harvest reporting tools which best accomplish these objectives, WDFW has developed mobile harvest reporting applications allowing the recording and submission of harvest information into an electronic catch-record-card (eCRC) - at real time. The applications, through mobile devices, accomplish these objectives and incorporate the ability to support the development and implementation of new tools in the future. This decision package includes support for a comprehensive suite of staff necessary to successfully implement mobile harvest reporting including biometrician, field technician, biologist, and technical and customer service support. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy]

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Staffing						
FTEs	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$3,107	\$3,096	\$6,203	\$3,096	\$3,096	\$6,192
Total Expenditures	\$3,107	\$3,096	\$6,203	\$3,096	\$3,096	\$6,192

Decision Package Description

The benefits of an updated and modernized recreational harvest reporting system will only be realized through the support and implementation of this new electronic catch-record-card (eCRC). Implementation of mobile harvest reporting for recreational harvesters via an eCRC is an integral feature of WDFW's new electronic licensing system (ELS). This will represent the biggest change to the department's recreational harvest monitoring and assessment programs in over 30 years. Doing so will benefit harvest assessment and accounting for several species statewide; including: salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, halibut, and Puget Sound Dungeness crab fisheries. This decision package builds upon recent work funded by the legislature to create the benefits which will only be realized with the requested support in this decision package; these investments to modernize our data reporting infrastructure are imperative and beneficial to staff in multiple divisions and programs within the agency.

For statewide salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, halibut, and Puget Sound Dungeness crab fisheries, transitioning to mobile licensing and eCRCs is an irrevocable commitment to the use of new mobile harvest data. This change requires development of new databases and harvest estimation programs, and the immediate implementation of new data validation procedures. Estimating recreational harvest using the new eCRC system will require revamping or instituting new field creel monitoring surveys in freshwater and marine fisheries, as part of the new estimation procedure (to determine what portion of catch is being reported electronically). It will also necessitate the development of novel analytical methods. For Puget Sound Dungeness crab, additional creel staff are necessary to determine the total number of paper vs electronic CRC users daily. Currently, the Puget Sound Shellfish team and Fish Program lack sufficient staff capacity to creel survey Puget Sound adequately. Building on initial investments in 2022, additional staff capacity will expand Puget Sound crab creel coverage, which is consistently requested by tribal co-managers and by recreational fishers themselves. The ability to estimate harvest more accurately, and in near real-time, will enable managers to maximize fishery opportunity, better implement fisheries negotiated with tribal co-managers, and avoid unintentional overfishing.

In 2023, WDFW sold ~685,000 catch record cards across statewide salmon/steelhead, sturgeon, halibut, and Puget Sound Dungeness crab fisheries. All recreational harvest is recorded on paper catch-record-cards and the vast majority of cards are submitted to the agency via mail. Shifting to the new electronic reporting system will lessen the barriers of reporting harvest to WDFW, leading to more catch records being returned to the department and that data will be available to fisheries managers in near real-time – low CRC reporting rates are a key concern of tribal co-managers. In addition to mobile harvest reporting, the new applications will allow users to purchase and manage their recreational fishing and hunting licenses via their mobile device. In 2023, ~75% of license sales took place at local authorized dealers who sell WDFW licenses. The increased convenience for fishers to purchase their licenses online will lead to more enquiries to WDFW customer service staff, necessitating the additional IT and licensing customer service staff.

This decision package reflects the staff and funding necessary to implement mobile harvest reporting/eCRCs statewide. Additional staff capacity across Licensing, Information Technology, and Fish Program is necessary to support the anticipated workload following implementation and adoption of eCRCs. We anticipate customer service inquiries to increase dramatically following the rollout of the new mobile applications and without additional biometrician and IT development support, the agency will not have the resources necessary to develop the data infrastructure

and harvest estimation methods needed to turn new mobile harvest data into actionable information for fisheries management.

Without additional investments in customer and technical support staff, biometrician, IT /database development, and shellfish creel capacity, the department cannot successfully implement mobile harvest reporting and eCRCs statewide. Predicted consequences of not funding this package include:

- An inability to satisfy co-manager agreements, federal fishery permit requirements and conservation needs, some fisheries would need to close or be restricted immediately and indefinitely.
- WDFW's ability to make Puget Sound Crab catch estimates will be disrupted with no viable alternative.

WDFW will breach commitments made to tribal co-managers over several years to migrate to mobile harvest reporting/eCRCs.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

The 2022 Legislature provided funding in budget item "Electronic Catch Record Cards" with a legislative budget note stating, "Ongoing funding is provided to develop and implement a mobile-based electronic catch record card system for fisheries management." Annual funding of \$372,000 General Fund-State was provided beginning in fiscal year 2023 and ongoing. These funds supported the development of the mobile harvest applications, which contrast with this decision package that requests the staff necessary to develop databases and data workflow, harvest assessment methods, add creel monitoring capacity, and support customer enquiries.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Salaries and benefits, objects A and B, for 20.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions total \$1,997,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026 and ongoing. Goods and services, object E, a total of \$195,000 in FY26 and \$187,000 ongoing. This includes \$8,000 per FTE and an additional \$1,000 per field FTE, per year, for WDFW standard costs, which cover an average employee's supplies, communications, training, and subscription costs per year, \$5,000 per fiscal year to purchase field gear for creeling staff (boots, waterproof jackets, safety equipment, and miscellaneous supplies to assist with data recording), and finally onetime funding of \$8,000 in FY 2026 for the purchase of iPads for creeling staff (10 iPads at \$800/iPad).

Personal Service Contracts, object C, total \$90,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing to conduct phone/email survey to validate CRC bias correction calculations. Travel costs, object G, total \$64,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing, and cover \$43,000 for DES rental of 8 vehicles (8*\$450*12 months), \$10,000 for fuel (8*900 miles/month*9 months*\$0.15/mile), 11,000 for per diem (Meals - 11 staff, 1 meal/week*\$36/meal x 24-week season = \$9504 and Lodging - 11 staff, 1 overnight stay/season @\$135 = \$1485). An infrastructure and program support rate is included in object T and is based on WDFW's federally approved indirect rate.

Workforce Assumptions:

Total salaries and benefits (Objects A+B) for all 20.5 FTEs totals \$3,994,000 ongoing, for the 25-27 biennium. A personal services contract of \$180,000 ongoing, is requested for phone/email validation surveys. Goods and services (Object E) totals \$382,000 in the 25-27 biennium and \$374,000 ongoing. Travel (Object G) includes \$128,000 ongoing for vehicles leases, fuel, and creel staff per diem.

Harvest Estimation (4 FTE)

- 1.0 FTE FW Research Scientist 2 (\$142,196 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Statewide freshwater creel catch estimation lead, work with species leads to develop study design, catch estimation, and eCreel protocols.
- 2.0 FTE FW Research Scientist 1 (\$130,258 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One position to support coordination of eCreel implementation for eastern Washington and one position to support eCreel implementation for marine fisheries, including Puget Sound Shellfish
- 1.0 FTE FW Biologist 2 (\$96,73 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One position to support catch accounting, QA/QC, analysis and reporting for both WaTix and the Guide logbook application.

PS Shellfish (10.5 FTE)

- 8.5 FTE Scientific Technician 2 (\$79,013 salaries and benefits per FTE) - Ten new 7-month creel positions (June - Dec) dedicated to sampling recreational crab fishing in Puget Sound (0.58FTE x 10=5.8 FTE hours); Extend our eight 3-month crustacean creel positions to 7-month career seasonal positions to creel winter recreational fishery (+4 months x 8 positions=2.7 FTEs)
- 1.0 FTE Scientific Technician 3 (\$89,170 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One full-time field position dedicated to managing the new creel team.
- 1.0 FTE FW Biologist 3 (\$112,105 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Recreational-focused biologist to manage and analyze new CRC data

streams, manage creel program, support co-management, and data reporting.

Information Technology (1.0 FTE)

1.0 FTE IT App Development – Journey (\$140,905 salaries and benefits per FTE) - WaTix build and eCRC/ eCreel data repository developer and steward, commercial harvest data repository, public facing database/ reports – Two FTEs 6 months/year (0.5 FTE X 2 = 1.0FTE)

Licensing (5.0 FTE)

1.0 FTE IT Support Technician 2 (\$89,170 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One position dedicated to frontline customer service staff to support all of our recreational and commercial customers using agency mobile applications to purchase licenses and report harvest.

3.0 FTE FW Biologist 1 (\$82,142 salaries and benefits per FTE) – Three frontline customer service staff to support all of our recreational and commercial customers using agency mobile applications to purchase licenses and report harvest.

1.0 FTE IT Data Management Journey (\$147,204 salaries and benefits per FTE) – One position to support increased volume of data enquiries and reporting

Historical Funding:

Funding is requested because activities in this specific package exceed the 2025-27 base budget. Without additional funding, WDFW will not be able to implement these activities or will need to consider cutting other essential services.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Governor's Results Washington Goals

This proposal will help achieve two Results Washington goals including Prosperous Economy and Sustainable Energy and Clean Environment.

WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan

This proposal supports two of the Department Strategic Plan priorities, Engage Communities through Recreation and Stewardship, and Deliver Science that Informs Washington's Most Pressing Fish and Wildlife Questions.

WDFW Activity Inventory

Manage Fishing Opportunities: 20.5 FTE with \$3,107,000 in FY 2026 and \$3,096,000 in FY 2027 General Fund – State.

This package supports the Manage Fishing Opportunities activity and applicable supporting strategy: monitor and manage finfish populations. The Department assesses, monitors, and evaluates fish and shellfish populations to ensure harvest and resource management actions are sustainable and based on sound science. The Department staff conduct field investigations to count the number of juveniles migrating to saltwater and adults returning to freshwater, conducts tests fisheries to verify abundance assumptions, and uses fish management harvest models to maximize recreational and commercial opportunities while minimizing risks to wild fish populations.

Performance Outcomes:

The primary performance outcome will be the successful implementation and on-going technical and customer support for the new mobile harvest applications which allow for more timely harvest reporting, the development of new harvest assessment methods for statewide salmon/steelhead, sturgeon, halibut and Puget Sound Dungeness crab, supporting long-term sustainable fisheries management.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

The Department regularly conducts community and public outreach through our Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) division and by Fish program staff, who regularly engage with the public at outreach events and dedicated meetings with angler/fishing groups to discuss fisheries management topics and increase understanding of WDFW's mission. The Department is committed to improving and evolving our community engagement with historically excluded and marginalized communities.

In addition to meetings with fishing groups, WDFW maintains dedicated public advisory groups to provide input on a variety of department decisions and topics. Recreational fishery advisory groups have long requested mobile harvest reporting be implemented for Washington state's managed recreational fisheries and have communicated their strong support. Requests have come from the following advisory groups:

- Puget Sound Recreational Crab and Shrimp Advisory Committee
- Puget Sound Sportfish Advisors
- Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Fund Oversight Committee
- Fishing Guide Advisory Group

Another critical component of WDFW's outreach and education is through one-on-one interactions between recreational fishers and WDFW's fisheries monitoring technicians, who are present at access locations to record important catch, bycatch, and compliance information that is crucial for sustainable fisheries management. Through these interactions, field staff regularly receive requests from the public to provide electronic harvest reporting and license management, via a smartphone.

WDFW plans to conduct dedicated outreach to the public on the function and use of the mobile harvest reporting applications prior to implementation.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

It is expected that there are few, if any, disproportionate impacts from this proposal. WDFW will continue to offer the current paper CRC reporting and fishers will not be required to use the new electronic reporting applications. The Department is committed to its mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems to be sustainable and accessible for all communities.

Target Communities and Populations:

This proposal will impact all recreational harvesters (from rural and urban communities) that partake in fisheries currently using catch record cards including statewide salmon/steelhead, halibut, and sturgeon, and Puget Sound Dungeness crab. We anticipate the streamlined process of recording and reporting recreational harvest on catch record cards, and the ability to purchase and manage your licenses via a mobile device will result in a better user experience and more records/data getting submitted to the department. Paper CRCs will continue to be provided and fishers will be able to choose whether paper or electronic reporting works for their personal needs. Providing multiple means to report harvest to the agency improves equity for all CRC holders.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Department staff have consistently received requests from the public for over a decade, to streamline the CRC reporting process by providing an electronic-CRC (eCRC) and the ability to purchase and manage their hunting and fishing licenses online via a mobile smartphone application, which are key features of the new mobile harvest reporting applications. Additionally, many recreational fishers expressed their continued preference for a paper CRC, and the department will continue to provide paper CRCs as an option, to ensure all user groups preferences are accommodated. Tribal co-managers have long requested for more timely CRC harvest reporting, which currently can take up to 18 months for statewide salmon and steelhead CRCs. The new harvest reporting applications will provide catch data to fisheries managers in near-real time, allowing CRC information to be used to inform in-season fisheries management decisions.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

The Department is not a “covered” or “opt-in” agency and therefore this section does not apply.

Puget Sound Recovery:

Accurate and timely reporting of harvest is required for sustainable fisheries management and WDFW is obligated to provide accurate and timely catch accounting to tribal co-managers. This decision package includes support for a comprehensive suite of staff necessary to successfully implement mobile harvest reporting including biometrician, field technician, biologist, and technical and customer service support. This implements the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Strategy 15 Salmon Recovery. It implements two key opportunities (Promote and improve accurate and timely data reporting and availability; Improve monitoring for in-season management) under Action #206. This decision package also implements Strategy 22 Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship Action # 160 by creating alternatives for reporting and thus increasing the accessibility of reporting. This also implements the Governor’s Statewide Salmon Strategy Action 5 Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery.

State Workforce Impacts:

No impacts to existing collective bargaining agreements or statewide compensation and benefits policy.

Intergovernmental:

Washington state tribal co-managers have been eager to see the state move to mobile harvest reporting, which will allow for more timely reporting for many fisheries. Tribal comanagers were supportive of the 2022 supplemental decision package that funded the development of the two mobile applications, and they are eager to see them implemented. This request will ensure that the application and associated harvest estimation methods are developed and implemented, and there is ongoing technical and customer support for these applications and the users. This ongoing support is necessary to ensure mobile harvest users have a positive experience using the application and ensure the data we are receiving is of a high quality and meets the WDFW’s and tribal comanager’s expectations for scientific rigor.

Stakeholder Impacts:

All constituents we’ve engaged on the mobile harvest reporting applications or heard from through outreach events or interactions with WDFW creel staff, have been very extremely supportive of the new mobile harvest reporting application and the features they include.

State Facilities Impacts:

The Department has limited capacity across the regions for new staff. While this particular decision package may be absorbed within existing facilities in the short-term, the aggregate of multiple decision packages may lead to a space shortage. The Department continuously monitors space use and new needs will be considered in the six-year plan and future facilities decision package requests.

Changes from Current Law:

This proposal does not require any changes to existing statutes, rules, and/or contracts.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Strategy Priority 5 - Align harvest, hatcheries, and hydropower with salmon recovery and 5a - Harvest management: This package enables an key step in aligning harvest with recovery. Real-time management decisions will improve conservation outcomes around salmon and steelhead fisheries.

Reference Documents

[2025-27_IT_Addendum Mobile Harvest App.pdf](#)
[ITaddendumBudget2025-27_MobileHarvestApp.xlsx](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

Yes

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$1,433	\$1,433	\$2,866	\$1,433	\$1,433	\$2,866
Obj. B	\$564	\$564	\$1,128	\$564	\$564	\$1,128
Obj. C	\$90	\$90	\$180	\$90	\$90	\$180
Obj. E	\$195	\$187	\$382	\$187	\$187	\$374
Obj. G	\$64	\$64	\$128	\$64	\$64	\$128
Obj. T	\$761	\$758	\$1,519	\$758	\$758	\$1,516

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Agency Supporting Details



Cutthroat trout swimming in Southwest Washington. Photo by WDFW Staff.



Dollars in Thousands

ABS031 Agency DP Priority (PL)
(List only the program Policy Level budget decision packages, in priority order)
477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025-27 Regular Budget Session
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal

Decision Package Code	Decision Package Title
PL-ST	WDFW Staff & Volunteer Safety
PL-RB	Restoring Washington's Biodiversity
PL-AA	Salmon and Steelhead Monitoring
PL-QZ	Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention
PL-RW	Respond to Wildlife Disease
PL-RS	Riparian Systems Assessment
PL-WF	Wolf Recovery
PL-A9	Streamflow Policy Support
PL-PE	Columbia River ESA Permitting
PL-PD	Pinniped Predation
PL-TS	Toutle and Skamania Hatcheries
PL-AC	Crab Fishery and Humpbacks
PL-FP	Fish Passage Prioritization
PL-LW	Lake Washington Predator Supp
PL-WG	Wolf Advisory Group
PL-EP	Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police
PL-SD	Scientific Data Modernization
PL-HS	Hatchery Investment Strategy
PL-EF	Emerging Fishery Implementation
PL-FH	Forest Health and Fuel Reduction
PL-LM	Invest in Lands Stewardship
PL-WC	Expand Wildlife Conflict Response
PL-F6	Facilities Six-Year Plan Alignment
PL-RE	Replacement Equipment
PL-PS	Fish Passage and Screening Capacity
PL-CS	Coastal Salmonids Management
PL-ER	Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience
PL-TB	Managing Emergent Toxic Threats
PL-HC	Hatchery Conservation Programs
PL-MH	Mobile Harvest Application Support



**ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
 Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Agency Level
 2025-27 Regular Budget Session
 WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal**

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
001 - General Fund							
0312 - Dept of Defense - F							
QZ - Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention	0	0	1,810	1,810			
Total - 0312 - Dept of Defense - F	0	0	1,810	1,810	1,810	1,810	3,620
0315 - Dept of Interior - F							
8U - Utility Rate Adjustments	88	88	0	0			
90 - ML revenue	83,168	83,168	0	0			
CF - Costs without Federal Revenue	(629)	(629)	0	0			
MT - Marking and Tagging Fish	14	14	0	0			
Total - 0315 - Dept of Interior - F	82,641	82,641	0	0	82,641	82,641	165,282
0355 - Fed Rev Non-Assist - F							
CF - Costs without Federal Revenue	(956)	(956)	0	0			
Total - 0355 - Fed Rev Non-Assist - F	(956)	(956)	0	0	(956)	(956)	(1,912)
0541 - Contributions Grants - P/L							
CL - Costs without Local Revenue	(1,095)	(1,095)	0	0			
Total - 0541 - Contributions Grants - P/L	(1,095)	(1,095)	0	0	(1,095)	(1,095)	(2,190)
0549 - Misc. Local Revenue - P/L							
8U - Utility Rate Adjustments	(8)	(8)	0	0			
MT - Marking and Tagging Fish	14	14	0	0			
Total - 0549 - Misc. Local Revenue - P/L	6	6	0	0	6	6	12
0597 - Reimburs Contracts - P/L							
CL - Costs without Local Revenue	(332)	(332)	0	0			
Total - 0597 - Reimburs Contracts - P/L	(332)	(332)	0	0	(332)	(332)	(664)
0599 - Other Tax Dist. - P/L							
90 - ML revenue	34,966	34,966	0	0			
Total - 0599 - Other Tax Dist. - P/L	34,966	34,966	0	0	34,966	34,966	69,932
001 - General Fund - Federal	81,685	81,685	1,810	1,810	83,495	83,495	166,990
001 - General Fund - Private/Local	33,545	33,545			33,545	33,545	67,090

ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 001 - General Fund	115,230	115,230	1,810	1,810	117,040	117,040	234,080
04M - Recreational Fish							
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,744	1,744	0	0			
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	1,744	1,744	0	0	1,744	1,744	3,488
04M - Recreational Fish - State	1,744	1,744			1,744	1,744	3,488
Total - 04M - Recreational Fish	1,744	1,744			1,744	1,744	3,488
071 - Warm Water Game Fish							
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,551	1,551	0	0			
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	1,551	1,551	0	0	1,551	1,551	3,102
071 - Warm Water Game Fish - State	1,551	1,551			1,551	1,551	3,102
Total - 071 - Warm Water Game Fish	1,551	1,551			1,551	1,551	3,102
07V - Fish & Wild E Reward							
0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S							
90 - ML revenue	20	20	0	0			
Total - 0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S	20	20	0	0	20	20	40
0405 - Fines, Forfeits - S							
90 - ML revenue	89	89	0	0			
Total - 0405 - Fines, Forfeits - S	89	89	0	0	89	89	178
07V - Fish & Wild E Reward - State	109	109			109	109	218
Total - 07V - Fish & Wild E Reward	109	109			109	109	218
098 - Eastern WA Pheasant							
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	179	179	0	0			

ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	179	179	0	0	179	179	358
098 - Eastern WA Pheasant - State	179	179			179	179	358
Total - 098 - Eastern WA Pheasant	179	179			179	179	358
09J - WA Coast Crab Pot B							
0237 - Comm Fishing License - S							
90 - ML revenue	157	157	0	0			
Total - 0237 - Comm Fishing License - S	157	157	0	0	157	157	314
09J - WA Coast Crab Pot B - State	157	157			157	157	314
Total - 09J - WA Coast Crab Pot B	157	157			157	157	314
104 - Limited F&W Acct							
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	4,425	4,425	0	0			
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	4,425	4,425	0	0	4,425	4,425	8,850
0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,540	1,540	0	0			
Total - 0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S	1,540	1,540	0	0	1,540	1,540	3,080
0420 - Charges for Services - S							
90 - ML revenue	5,859	5,859	0	0			
Total - 0420 - Charges for Services - S	5,859	5,859	0	0	5,859	5,859	11,718
0622 - Operating Trans Out - S							
90 - ML revenue	(50)	(50)	0	0			
Total - 0622 - Operating Trans Out - S	(50)	(50)	0	0	(50)	(50)	(100)
104 - Limited F&W Acct - State	11,774	11,774			11,774	11,774	23,548
Total - 104 - Limited F&W Acct	11,774	11,774			11,774	11,774	23,548
110 - Spec Wildlife							
0315 - Dept of Interior - F							

ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
90 - ML revenue	261	261	0	0			
Total - 0315 - Dept of Interior - F	261	261	0	0	261	261	522
0415 - Sale of Prop/Timber - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,283	1,283	0	0			
Total - 0415 - Sale of Prop/Timber - S	1,283	1,283	0	0	1,283	1,283	2,566
0441 - Contr & Grants - S							
90 - ML revenue	38	38	0	0			
Total - 0441 - Contr & Grants - S	38	38	0	0	38	38	76
0541 - Contributions Grants - P/L							
90 - ML revenue	1,395	1,395	0	0			
Total - 0541 - Contributions Grants - P/L	1,395	1,395	0	0	1,395	1,395	2,790
0597 - Reimburs Contracts - P/L							
90 - ML revenue	636	636	0	0			
Total - 0597 - Reimburs Contracts - P/L	636	636	0	0	636	636	1,272
110 - Spec Wildlife - State	1,321	1,321			1,321	1,321	2,642
110 - Spec Wildlife - Federal	261	261			261	261	522
110 - Spec Wildlife - Private/Local	2,031	2,031			2,031	2,031	4,062
Total - 110 - Spec Wildlife	3,613	3,613			3,613	3,613	7,226
12G - Rockfish Research							
0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S							
90 - ML revenue	222	222	0	0			
Total - 0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S	222	222	0	0	222	222	444
12G - Rockfish Research - State	222	222			222	222	444
Total - 12G - Rockfish Research	222	222			222	222	444
19W - WL Conflict Account							
0621 - Operating Trans In - S							
90 - ML revenue	50	50	0	0			

ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 0621 - Operating Trans In - S	50	50	0	0	50	50	100
19W - WL Conflict Account - State	50	50			50	50	100
Total - 19W - WL Conflict Account	50	50			50	50	100
200 - Reg Fish Enh Salmon							
0315 - Dept of Interior - F							
90 - ML revenue	2,624	2,624	0	0			
Total - 0315 - Dept of Interior - F	2,624	2,624	0	0	2,624	2,624	5,248
200 - Reg Fish Enh Salmon - Federal	2,624	2,624			2,624	2,624	5,248
Total - 200 - Reg Fish Enh Salmon	2,624	2,624			2,624	2,624	5,248
209 - Region Fisheries Enh							
0237 - Comm Fishing License - S							
90 - ML revenue	82	82	0	0			
Total - 0237 - Comm Fishing License - S	82	82	0	0	82	82	164
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	490	490	0	0			
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	490	490	0	0	490	490	980
0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S							
90 - ML revenue	344	344	0	0			
Total - 0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S	344	344	0	0	344	344	688
209 - Region Fisheries Enh - State	916	916			916	916	1,832
Total - 209 - Region Fisheries Enh	916	916			916	916	1,832
21S - Aquat Invas Spec Mgt							
0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S							
90 - ML revenue	33	33	0	0			
Total - 0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S	33	33	0	0	33	33	66
21S - Aquat Invas Spec Mgt - State	33	33			33	33	66

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	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 21S - Aquat Invas Spec Mgt	33	33			33	33	66
24N - Fish, Wildlife Con Ac							
0237 - Comm Fishing License - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,167	1,167	0	0			
Total - 0237 - Comm Fishing License - S	1,167	1,167	0	0	1,167	1,167	2,334
0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S							
90 - ML revenue	33,301	33,301	0	0			
Total - 0245 - Hunting/Fishing Lic - S	33,301	33,301	0	0	33,301	33,301	66,602
0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S							
90 - ML revenue	3,168	3,168	0	0			
Total - 0299 - Other Licenses Permi - S	3,168	3,168	0	0	3,168	3,168	6,336
0402 - Income From Property - S							
90 - ML revenue	198	198	0	0			
Total - 0402 - Income From Property - S	198	198	0	0	198	198	396
0405 - Fines, Forfeits - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,143	1,143	0	0			
Total - 0405 - Fines, Forfeits - S	1,143	1,143	0	0	1,143	1,143	2,286
0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S							
90 - ML revenue	53	53	0	0			
Total - 0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S	53	53	0	0	53	53	106
0420 - Charges for Services - S							
90 - ML revenue	720	720	0	0			
Total - 0420 - Charges for Services - S	720	720	0	0	720	720	1,440
0499 - Other Revenue - S							
90 - ML revenue	2	2	0	0			
Total - 0499 - Other Revenue - S	2	2	0	0	2	2	4
24N - Fish, Wildlife Con Ac - State	39,752	39,752			39,752	39,752	79,504

ABS 029 Summarized Revenue by Account and Source
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Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 24N - Fish, Wildlife Con Ac	39,752	39,752			39,752	39,752	79,504
259 - Coastal Crab							
0237 - Comm Fishing License - S							
90 - ML revenue	33	33	0	0			
Total - 0237 - Comm Fishing License - S	33	33	0	0	33	33	66
259 - Coastal Crab - State	33	33			33	33	66
Total - 259 - Coastal Crab	33	33			33	33	66
320 - Crab Pot Buoy Acct							
0237 - Comm Fishing License - S							
90 - ML revenue	32	32	0	0			
Total - 0237 - Comm Fishing License - S	32	32	0	0	32	32	64
320 - Crab Pot Buoy Acct - State	32	32			32	32	64
Total - 320 - Crab Pot Buoy Acct	32	32			32	32	64
444 - Fish & Wild Equip							
0402 - Income From Property - S							
90 - ML revenue	1,131	1,131	0	0			
Total - 0402 - Income From Property - S	1,131	1,131	0	0	1,131	1,131	2,262
444 - Fish & Wild Equip - State	1,131	1,131			1,131	1,131	2,262
Total - 444 - Fish & Wild Equip	1,131	1,131			1,131	1,131	2,262
507 - Oyster Res Land Acct							
0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S							
90 - ML revenue	200	200	0	0			
Total - 0416 - Sale of Prop/Other - S	200	200	0	0	200	200	400
507 - Oyster Res Land Acct - State	200	200			200	200	400

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	Maintenance Level		Policy Level		Annual Totals		Biennial Total
	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	FY2026	FY2027	
Total - 507 - Oyster Res Land Acct	200	200			200	200	400
Agency: 477 DFW - State	59,204	59,204			59,204	59,204	118,408
Agency: 477 DFW - Federal	84,570	84,570	1,810	1,810	86,380	86,380	172,760
Agency: 477 DFW - Private/Local	35,576	35,576			35,576	35,576	71,152
Total - Agency: 477 DFW - unknown source title - Z	179,350	179,350	1,810	1,810	181,160	181,160	362,320

8U - Utility Rate Adjustments

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requests funding to meet increased utility costs at all facilities. Without funding to offset increased electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and heating oil costs, key activities protecting Washington’s fish, wildlife, and ecosystems will decline, including salmon and trout production. Moreover, WDFW hatcheries produce fish that support Washington’s tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, contribute recovery efforts for salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and contribute significantly to the state economy. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation] [Related to implementing the Governor’s Salmon Strategy.]

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CF - Costs without Federal Revenue

General fund revenue from federal sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for federal authority that cannot be spent.

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Department of Fish and Wildlife
Agency Level
WDFW - 2025-27 BN Submittal
Dollars in Thousands

CL - Costs without Local Revenue

General fund revenue from local sources is not rising proportionally to the increasing compensation line-item cost from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). This package seeks to exchange state general fund authority for local authority that cannot be spent.

MT - Marking and Tagging Fish

The price for Coded Wire Tags has increased. WDFW seeks expenditure authority in state, local, and federal codes to pay the increased costs and continue to mark and tag fish, as required by RCW 77.95.290. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.]

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QZ - Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention

Building on a FY 25 quagga mussel proviso of \$1.81 million in state general funds and leveraging \$1.81 million in federal funds, WDFW will expand mussel activities including detection monitoring, implementing protections for habitat and infrastructure, and reducing impacts to our economy, environment, and species, including salmon and steelhead. WDFW will increase prevention activities, response readiness, public awareness and action, regulatory compliance, and preparation for extended management and mitigation. Through this ongoing investment, WDFW will address the greater than \$100 million annual quagga and zebra mussel threat on the state's doorstep for the benefit of protecting and perpetuating Washington's resources. [Related to Puget Sound Action Agenda Implementation.] [Directly related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy.]

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Decision Packages Related to the Puget Sound Action Agenda

2025-2027 Biennium Budget Request

Policy Level

RB – Restoring Washington’s Biodiversity - \$14,320,000

Habitat loss and degradation, climate change effects, pollution, wildlife disease, and invasive species threaten the state’s biodiversity. Fish and wildlife are public resources, and it is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) mandate to conserve them for current and future residents of Washington. WDFW needs the remainder of the resources we proposed in 2023 to effectively implement the actions in the State Wildlife Action Plan and safeguard and restore Washington’s biodiversity. We aim to develop and implement action plans for 80% of at- risk species and increase public participation in conservation by 25%.

RS – Riparian Systems Assessment - \$2,006,000

Healthy, connected riparian habitat is critical for preserving, protecting, and perpetuating Washington’s fish and wildlife, especially salmonid recovery. A lack of information on riparian conditions has been a barrier in prioritizing riparian restoration and protection. To optimize riparian investments, the Department of Fish and Wildlife was directed by the Legislature to create an online decision support tool - the Riparian Data Engine (RDE). Continued funding is needed for its development. This proposal aims to advance WDFW’s goal of increasing riparian habitat (10% net gain by 2025) and measure progress towards this goal through increased data (66-100%), tool accessibility, and targeted capabilities.

ER – Reduce Emissions, Build Resilience - \$12,978,000

This funding request builds upon ongoing work to enhance the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW’s) response to climate change by building resilience to climate impacts and reducing Department-generated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The request funds initiatives to develop climate science and build capacity for resilience, and achieve meaningful emissions reduction through fleet electrification, energy efficiency, and alternative commuting. The request also advances statewide priorities and mandates; the resilience projects are directly related to implementing Washington’s Climate Resilience Strategy and the GHG emissions reduction projects support the Department in meeting the emissions reduction targets outlined in RCW 70A.45.050 (ESSHB 2311).

TB – Managing Emergent Toxic Threats - \$1,924,000

Chinook salmon and other key Puget Sound aquatic species are exposed to two emergent, highly toxic chemicals, PFAS and 6PPD-q, that potentially threaten species health as well as the health of Washingtonians who consume contaminated seafood. This investment would allow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to track the presence of these two contaminants in specific juvenile salmon habitats and in key fish species throughout Puget Sound. Results will be used to guide clean-up and pollution prevention efforts to protect threatened Chinook salmon and other sensitive species. Funding would also be used to test edible fish tissues for the Department of Health.

PS – Fish Passage and Screening Capacity - \$3,349,000

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is finalizing review of Chapter 77.57 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) (known as the Fishways, Flow, and Screening Statutes) to implement new rules surrounding fish passage and water diversions. Full implementation of the rules will enable WDFW to better protect all fish species. Salmon populations throughout the state are at historically low numbers, due in part to barriers blocking fish passage and improperly designed water diversions. Without change, salmon are unlikely to recover, and Southern Resident killer whales will continue to struggle for lack of their preferred prey. This proposal will implement the new Fishways and Screening Rules on the date they become effective.

FP – Fish Passage Prioritization - \$768,000

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is developing a comprehensive strategy to prioritize fish passage barrier removal statewide. This proposal will continue strategy development first tasked by the Washington State Legislature in 2020 through legislative provisos in the supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 6168), the supplemental Capital Budget (ESSB 6248) and the Transportation Budget (ESHB 2322). A successful strategy will focus efforts of all culvert correction programs into a single approach to maximize the salmon and orca recovery benefits from the public investment.

AA – Salmon and Steelhead Monitoring - \$1,644,000

Robust fisheries monitoring and planning efforts are critical to species conservation and recovery, co-management with Treaty Tribes, and fishing opportunities. This package includes support for Puget Sound freshwater fisheries monitoring efforts, including steelhead spawning estimates and angler surveys, and fishery planning efforts, including preparation of fishery management plans for steelhead fisheries. With ongoing support for monitoring, WDFW can safeguard the health of imperiled fishery stocks, meeting federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and tribal co-management requirements while providing diverse and accessible recreational fishing opportunities for all Washingtonians.

A9 – Streamflow Policy Support - \$1,100,000

Climate change, human population growth, and struggling salmon populations require a long-term, strategic vision for Washington's water management into the future. The historical over-allocation of Washington's rivers and groundwater has negatively impacted fish and wildlife in many watersheds. As the demand for water increases, politically or legally expedient solutions are frequently favored over ecological requirements. WDFW is uniquely poised to provide science-based expertise and policy leadership to the state's understanding of streamflow issues and their ecological implications.

HS – Hatchery Investment Strategy - \$2,217,000

State operated hatchery facilities need additional capacity for current and expanded production, including additional fish health services and mass marking of hatchery salmonids. This funding supports recreational and commercial harvest, tribal harvest, Southern Resident killer whale prey, and conservation efforts for wild salmonids. If not funded, hatchery production goals may not be met, the Fish Health Unit will not be staffed adequately to monitor state and commercial aquaculture, fish

intended for harvest will not be mass marked, and reciprocal marking and tagging for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission may not be achieved.

LW – Lake Washington Predator Suppression - \$1,400,000

Chinook and sockeye salmon returns to the Lake Washington watershed are at historic lows as a result of predation on juvenile salmon by non-native fish species inhabiting the Lake. Climate change and continued illegal introductions of predator fish such as northern pike exacerbate the predation problem. Poor salmon returns in this highly populated watershed disproportionately affects under-served communities and Tribes. Suppression of non-native predators will increase survival for Chinook and sockeye, leading to increased adult returns and fishing opportunities for these species in Lake Washington. Hydroacoustic monitoring of juvenile Chinook and sockeye outmigration via sonar deployment provides a critical validation tool for determining success of predator removal.

LM – Invest in Lands Management - \$9,948,000

The long-term conservation and recreation value of lands managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), representing billions of dollars in public assets, is at risk. The growing costs to steward these lands and increasing demand for the services they provide have outpaced the capacity needed and funding available for maintaining their integrity. WDFW requires funding to address urgent near-term needs and support a transition to a proactive and comprehensive approach to conserving natural and cultural resources and managing recreation on 1 million-plus acres across the state.

PD – Pinniped Predation - \$3,118,000

Seal and sea lion (pinniped) predation in Washington is negatively impacting Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead populations of great importance to endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and to commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. This package supports continued participation in a successful Columbia River sea lion management program partnering with regional states and tribes, as well as ongoing pinniped abundance, diet, and movement monitoring to better understand predation impacts. Without this continued funding, WDFW would have significantly reduced ability to engage in an increasingly controversial issue that is important to Washington's Native American tribes, businesses, and citizens. WDFW's inability to engage on this topic would undermine Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Task Force Recommendations #12 and #13.

QZ – Quagga and Zebra Mussel Prevention - \$7,240,000

Building on a FY 25 quagga mussel proviso of \$1.81 million in state general funds and leveraging \$1.81 million in federal funds, WDFW will expand mussel activities including detection monitoring, implementing protections for habitat and infrastructure, and reducing impacts to our economy, environment, and species, including salmon and steelhead. WDFW will increase prevention activities, response readiness, public awareness and action, regulatory compliance, and preparation for extended management and mitigation. Through this ongoing investment, WDFW will address the greater than \$100 million annual quagga and zebra mussel threat on the state's doorstep for the benefit of protecting and perpetuating Washington's resources.

HC – Hatchery Conservation Programs - \$2,582,000

Salmon population persistence in many rivers is threatened by the double jeopardy of climate change and legacy impacts from deleterious habitat, fishery, and hatchery practices. Conservation hatchery programs have proven to be an effective tool for maintaining at-risk populations and increasing genetic diversity. This package will extend this proven technique to address critical salmon conservation needs and complement broader recovery actions for five key salmon populations. An assessment of the risks, benefits, and feasibility of a conservation hatchery program is also proposed for Chehalis Spring Chinook salmon. These actions are supported by multiple tribes, salmon recovery entities, and stakeholder organizations.

RW – Respond to Wildlife Disease - \$3,180,000

The impacts of climate change on human, animal, and environmental health are consequential, with negative impacts expected for many wildlife species. Though the connections between climate change and wildlife health are complex, there are clear links including a reduced ability of species to adapt to changing temperatures, precipitation, or habitat conditions. Further, climate change enhances the potential spread of zoonotic (diseases spread between animals and people) and vector-borne (e.g., diseases spread by ticks, fleas or mosquitoes) diseases through altered geographic and seasonal patterns of host and disease vectors. Minimizing and mitigating the negative impacts of climate change on wildlife populations and enhancing the ability of species to adapt to these changes are priorities for the long-term viability of many species. If funded, this proposal will continue to expand the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) capacity to assess and track disease outbreaks and proactively mitigate associated wildlife disease risks, including those associated with climate change, and provide action plans and management strategies to preserve healthy and resilient wildlife in our state.

RE – Replacement Equipment - \$4,565,000

A majority of CAMP's heavy equipment fleet has surpassed its useful life in accordance with the State Accounting and Administration Manual (SAAM), Chapter 30.50.10. Breakdowns and roadside repairs are common place and lead to costly delays. Safety is a major concern as the aging equipment does not meet current standards. 20 items have been surplused in the last three years because they were no longer safe to operate or unrepairable due to a lack of repair parts. Most equipment is rented, which is costly and does not generate revenue against the revolving account as all proceeds go towards rental costs.

ST – WDFW Staff & Volunteer Safety - \$9,600,000

WDFW is rapidly scaling its Safety and Training Program to ensure staff and volunteers have appropriate training and tools to mitigate risks inherent in their work. Over the last year, WDFW has overhauled policies, initiated a temporary "stand-down" of specific high-risk activities to train and equip staff, and established an incident command team to prioritize a culture of safety. WDFW initiated this work with investments from the 2024 supplemental operating budget (\$4.8 million per fiscal year ongoing). WDFW seeks to address the next highest risk items for the Department with an additional \$6.5 million in ongoing funds to ensure adequate safety equipment, safety data management, and volunteer safety.

SD – Scientific Data Modernization - \$6,902,000

WDFW proposes an investment in a comprehensive scientific data management program to enhance and streamline conservation of Washington’s fish, wildlife, and wild spaces. With this program, WDFW will introduce cloud storage, a modern data library, and a collaborative scientific data analytics environment. WDFW will research and implement advanced data management technologies to leverage vast scientific data, while an AI Specialist will oversee policy and partnerships to ensure safe and efficient AI integration. Without this investment, WDFW risks falling behind in scientific innovation, compromising data integrity, and failing to meet public and legislative expectations for effective conservation management.

MH – Mobile Harvest Application Support - \$6,153,000

Accurate and timely reporting of harvest is required for sustainable fisheries management. Further, WDFW is obligated under federal court order to provide accurate and timely catch accounting to tribal co-managers. Seeking to develop mobile harvest reporting tools which best accomplish these objectives, WDFW has developed mobile harvest reporting applications allowing the recording and submission of harvest information into an electronic catch-record-card (eCRC) - at real time. The applications, through mobile devices, accomplish these objectives and incorporate the ability to support the development and implementation of new tools in the future. This decision package includes support for a comprehensive suite of staff necessary to successfully implement mobile harvest reporting including biometrician, field technician, biologist, and technical and customer service support.

EP – Expanding Fish & Wildlife Police - \$17,281,000

Washington State, with eight million residents and twice the national growth rate, faces increasing demands on its natural resources. These circumstances necessitate additional Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Officers to ensure public safety and resource protection. WDFW Enforcement Officers are responsible for law enforcement statewide, including state and federal lands and waters, and respond to a variety of related issues from poaching to habitat protection. The Program maintains 171 commissioned law enforcement positions and is poised for the addition of 20 more and six support staff this biennium. More officers mean elevated presence, crime deterrence, and greater natural resource protection statewide.

WC – Expand Wildlife Conflict Response - \$7,365,000

As Washington’s population continues to grow, the potential for human-wildlife interactions and conflicts increases. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) seeks to build capacity for wildlife conflict response by consolidating and expanding response to negative human-wildlife interactions. Funding this request allows wildlife conflict specialists to increase responsiveness to crop and livestock damage and negative human-wildlife interactions, while increasing preventative education and outreach. These changes will reduce agriculture and livestock producer frustrations, decrease costly damage claims, and allow for a seamless response and follow-through to negative human-wildlife interactions with all species including black bears and cougars. This package also supports enhancing the Beaver Relocation Permit Program.

F6 – Facilities Six-Year Plan Alignment - \$3,270,000

The Department of Fish and Wildlife has a deficit of office and storage space throughout Washington. We will be losing leases at two locations, displacing staff, creating inadequate working conditions. The agency has grown by 20%, but its office and storage space has not increased. The lack of storage results in neglected equipment being replaced earlier at an increased cost to the taxpayers. New funding for additional leased office and storage space will enable the agency to safely meet the requirements that the citizens of Washington expect of us. This package will fund the four most critical space needs.

Capital (Major Works)

Soos Creek Hatchery – Construct Phase 3 - \$7,726,000

One of the most important salmon hatcheries in the Puget Sound Region, the Soos Creek Hatchery annually produces 4.5 million Chinook and 1.2 million Coho Salmon which contribute directly to Muckleshoot Tribal fisheries, as well as sport and commercial fisheries in the Green River, Puget Sound, and the Pacific Ocean. The facility, originally constructed in 1901, was costly to maintain and frequently damaged by flooding events. This renovation relocated the hatchery building and rearing ponds out of the flood plain and constructed a new pumped intake and pollution abatement pond, allowing the hatchery to meet federal and state criteria for fish screening, fish passage, and water quality standards, and provide a safer working environment for hatchery staff.

Wallace River Hatchery – Replace Intakes and Ponds - \$4,500,000

This project proposes to build new intakes, fishponds, pre-settling and pollution abatement ponds, reuse and recirculation infrastructure, and residences. New design standards will ensure compliance with Federal and State regulations for fish passage and screening and meet all current water quality standards. New facilities will also protect fish from catastrophic losses due to infrastructure failure and worsening water quality.

Samish Hatchery – Friday Creek Intake and Fish Passage - \$1,964,000

WDFW requests funds to design and construct a new Friday Creek water supply intake, dam, and fishway at the Samish Hatchery and repair the road leading to the intake, including bank stabilization and associated mitigation work to ensure continued access to a reliable water source for the Samish Hatchery. The project will upgrade a WDFW facility (Samish Hatchery) to current state and federal standards for fish passage and screening by replacing current screens with compliant material and cleaning capabilities, adding a fishway that would improve passage conditions for wild fish, restructuring the dam to allow for improved sediment transport, and repair and protect the road leading to the intake using methods outlined in the WDFW publication “Integrated Streambank Protection Guidelines” that enhance the stream habitat.

Minter Creek Hatchery – Replace Intake - \$4,497,000

Beginning in the 2015-2017 biennium, WDFW received capital funds to complete the Predesign for the Minter Creek Hatchery Intake Replacement project, then later received capital funding for design, permitting, and construction. This project is to replace the gravity intakes for the Minter Creek Hatchery

to make them compliant with current federal and state fish screening and fish passage criteria. The Department seeks additional capital funding necessary to complete construction due to recent inflation and escalated costs for materials. Minter Creek Hatchery produces 1.4 million fall Chinook, 800,000 spring Chinook, 500,000 Coho, and 2 million Chum salmon.

Elliott Bay Fishing Pier – \$15,137,000

Fishing Pier 86 is located on Elliott Bay in Seattle. This fishing pier was constructed by the then Dept. of Fisheries (now WDFW) in 1979 with Lands and Water Conservation funds obtained through IAC. To construct the pier, WDFW obtained a lease from DNR to construct the pier on DNR lands, and an operating agreement with the Port of Seattle in which the Port was responsible for the daily operation and maintenance of the pier. That 30-year agreement expired in 2009. Fishing Pier 86 is now in need of much repair to make it a safe and up to-date fishing/wildlife watching facility.

Seki Boat Ramp Acquisition and Development - \$493,000

The purchase of this property by WDFW will ensure long-term public boating access for citizens of WA. The owner of Mason's Resort has indicated interest in selling the facility, which provides the only public boat ramp between Port Angeles and Neah Bay. WDFW is proposing to purchase the four-lane boat ramp and two parking lots.

Eells Springs Renovation - \$1,976,000

The proposed project is located at the Eells Springs Hatchery, the largest clear, clean, cool, and disease-free water supply dedicated to public trout production in the State of Washington. Most of the existing hatchery infrastructure was constructed just after World War II, and it is now simply worn out. WDFW is seeking funds to rebuild the existing facility to ensure the current levels and potentially higher numbers of trout planted throughout western Washington is achievable into the future. WDFW depends heavily on Wildlife Funds that are derived from our resident trout fishing opportunities created with this hatchery's lake plants. Production at Eells Springs Hatchery includes 900,000 rainbow trout, 90,000 cutthroat trout, and 250,000 kokanee salmon.

Deschutes Watershed Center – Construction Phase 1 - \$4,592,000

Construct salmon hatchery facilities with public space and in the Deschutes River Basin, to meet the continued demands for Chinook production in the South Puget Sound Region and meet community desires for educational opportunities on an ecosystem basis. The project will increase Chinook health and survival to release age, and increase adult return, resulting in additional fish available for recreational and commercial harvest. This will provide additional economic activity to local communities and the Puget Sound Region.

Deschutes Watershed Education Center - \$2,500,000

Related to implementing the Governor's Salmon Strategy, the nonprofit Olympia Tumwater Foundation (OTF) is collaborating on a regional approach to support salmon habitat restoration and preservation in the Deschutes Watershed. OTF is seeking a \$2,500,000 grant through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to support the construction of a new History and Nature Center (HNC) on foundation property in a unique riverfront setting located at Brewery Park at Tumwater Falls, Tumwater, Washington.

Marblemount Hatchery Renovation - \$1,275,000

The request addresses the problem by upgrading the hatchery's infrastructure to meet current standards, ensuring efficient broodstocking and rearing processes. Not taking action would result in continued degradation of facilities, increased maintenance costs, and potential loss of hatchery fish due to inadequate conditions. This could negatively impact salmon recovery efforts and the hatchery's ability to return ESA-listed species to the river, which would affect local fisheries and ecosystems.

Kendall Creek Hatchery – Replace Gravity and Pumped Intakes - \$415,000

WDFW requests funding to rebuild the intakes replace screens and baffles at Kendall Creek Hatchery intakes to meet current federal and state fish screening and fish passage criteria. The proposed project consists of replacing the intakes and screens at Kendall Creek Hatchery gravity intake and pump intake.

George Adams Hatchery – Replace Adult Ponds and Raceways - \$905,000

The adult pond at George Adams Hatchery needs to be relocated from the natural stream and updated to allow for species and stock sorting, as well as more efficient adult salmonid handling. The project will include demolition of in-stream structures, and construction of a new adult holding and spawning structure including crowders and fish sorting facility, fishway, and fish weir. Additionally, these ponds will include bird exclusion facilities, and water reuse systems.

Culvert Court Case Fish Passage Barrier Corrections - \$818,000

This project is to comply with the “Permanent Injunction Regarding Culvert Correction” and associated Memorandum and Decision. This is a fish habitat enhancement project to complete designs and permitting to replace five barrier culverts with 100% passable stream crossing structures in the Chehalis Wildlife Area and replacing two barriers and remove one crossing in the Cherry Valley Wildlife Area. All of these crossings are located in low gradient wetland habitat. The crossings in the Chehalis WLA will likely be submerged during high flow events.

Also:

Coulter Creek Hatchery Expansion

Dungeness Hatchery Expansion

Elwha Hatchery Expansion

Samish Hatchery Expansion and Adult Pond Renovation

Fish & Wildlife Health and Biosecurity Facility

2025 Supplemental Budget Request

Policy Level

LF - Limited Fish and Wildlife Adjustment - \$2,428,000

The Limited Fish and Wildlife Account (fund 104) is composed of various revenue sources, with expenditures subject to legislative requirements. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has the capacity for a one-time spend down of the fund balance. The agency requests that one-time expenditure

authority be granted in the 2025 supplemental budget session to fund equipment purchases necessary to fulfill intergovernmental obligations and support the state's economy. If this request is not granted, the fund balance will remain unused, and the department will have reduced ability to provide services and fulfill its mission.