



WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

NEWS RELEASE

600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

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Public comments sought on proposed hatchery and fishery reform policy; commission briefed

OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is seeking public input on a proposed policy that would guide modifications to state hatchery operations as well as recreational and commercial fishery management.

The draft hatchery and fishery reform policy is designed to advance WDFW's ongoing effort to ensure hatchery operations help conserve and recover naturally spawning salmon and steelhead populations while also supporting sustainable fisheries.

Key provisions of the policy include:

- Increasing the use of methods that allow commercial and recreational fishers to selectively harvest abundant hatchery fish, which are marked with a missing adipose fin, while releasing wild fish.
- Prioritizing improvements to hatchery broodstock management to reduce impacts to wild fish.
- Using the principles and standards developed by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group, an independent panel of scientists established by Congress to evaluate salmon and steelhead hatchery operations in Puget Sound, the Washington coast and the Columbia River basin.

The proposed policy is available for review on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/>.

Written comments on the draft policy will be accepted through June 1. Comments can be emailed to commission@dfw.wa.gov or mailed to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091.

In addition, the commission will take public comment on the proposed policy at its June 5-6 meeting in Olympia. The commission will take final action on the policy during its July 10-11 meeting in Olympia.

The commission, which sets policy for WDFW, received a briefing on the draft policy during its May 8-9 meeting in Olympia.

Also during the May meeting, the commission discussed the search for a permanent director of WDFW. The commission, which has the authority to hire and fire the department's director, continued to develop a job description for the position.

In December, the commission appointed Phil Anderson to serve as interim director, after accepting the resignation of Jeffrey P. Koenings, who had served as director since 1999. Anderson had been the

department's deputy director for resource policy since July 2007.

In other action, the commission approved the purchase of nearly 15 acres of wildlife habitat to be added to the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The land borders the 47,000-acre wildlife area, which is managed by the department to provide habitat for numerous species, including elk, mule deer and big horn sheep.

Four organizations – the Washington Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Mule Deer Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Conservation Northwest – donated money to the department to cover half of the property's \$60,000 purchase price.

The commission also approved an agreement with Whatcom County for improving and maintaining a trail along the Nooksack River.

In other business, the commission received a briefing on proposed updates to state ballast water regulations, and was updated on the boundary description for the Johnson/Debay Slough Game Reserve.

For information about future commission meetings, visit WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/meetings.html>.