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Lawmakers, stop underfunding Fish and Wildlife, the agency that protects our lands and water

By Rachel Voss, Mitch Friedman and Butch Smith

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The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is like a wild goose that lays golden eggs. Yet Washingtonians — especially legislators in Olympia — are taking it for granted. We need lawmakers to fully fund the department to fulfill its mission for the Evergreen State's outdoor enthusiasts and natural heritage.

Doing so yields dividends for state and local economies. While the Legislature has been allocating less than \$50 million in tax money annually to WDFW, more than \$170 million comes back to Olympia each year from sales taxes on purchases made to enjoy fish and wildlife. What's more, Washingtonians spend hundreds of millions of dollars fishing, hunting and wildlife watching, often in small towns from Ilwaco to Chewelah — places that really need these dollars and jobs.

Yet, as made plain from headlines about orcas to the grim talk around our campfires, Washington's wildlife are at risk. Underfunding of WDFW since the Great Recession hinders the ability to respond. All told, these natural resources comprise under one percent of the state's overall budget.

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