

## **Washington State Wildlife Leaders' Forum**

### ***An Invitation to Participate***

#### **The Big Picture**

The Washington State Wildlife Leaders' Forum will be held on November 16-17 (2016) near Seattle at [Cedar Brooke Lodge](#). The purpose of this two-day workshop is to initiate a dialogue among 50 invited stakeholder leaders to develop recommendations that could strengthen fish and wildlife conservation and management in Washington State, including: 1) more effectively protecting and managing the full array of fish and wildlife; 2) incorporating the changing demographics and diversity of Washington citizens to engage and align consumptive and non-consumptive wildlife stakeholders that live, work and recreate in Washington; 3) creating strategic directions based on a review of state mandates, funding, and current and potential collaborators with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and other state agencies; and 4) understanding and considering results from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recent "Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources" (Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, 2016). A forum report recommending a pathway forward for strengthening the conservation and management of Washington's wildlife will be prepared and made publicly available by May 2017. Our intent is to create a team of thoughtful, diverse stakeholders who work together to help ensure that Washington's wildlife thrives in the social, economic, and political context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### **Background**

A growing group of wildlife professionals, policy makers, and citizens in Washington State and throughout the USA are reviewing missions and available resources of state agencies responsible for fish, wildlife, and habitat management (e.g. Decker et al., 2011; 2015). A concern sparking these discussions is that their historical role of managing game and commercial species, and in recent decades the additional task of restoring endangered species, are alone not sufficient to conserve the full array of fish and wildlife species. Addressing this concern is rapidly rising in priority because of the growing appreciation that the totality of fish, wildlife, and habitat provides essential ecological benefits to people and must be protected in order to sustain healthy, economically viable human communities. Additionally, recognition of changing public demographics and the challenges of maintaining people's connection to nature creates the need to develop innovative solutions to address these concerns. In order to serve the state fully and remain relevant, it seems inevitable that the scope of work of agencies like WDFW will expand as the importance of biodiversity for sustainable living and high quality of life is recognized more broadly, and the demographic makeup and connections to the outdoors of the public changes. It is widely recognized that this expansion must not diminish the department's ability to also fully and effectively manage fish and wildlife for recreational and commercial purposes.

In September 2014, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies launched a "Blue Ribbon Panel" of 20 leaders -- including representatives from the outdoor recreation retail and manufacturing sector, private landowners, educational institutions, conservation organizations, sportsmen's groups, and state fish and wildlife agencies -- to work together to produce recommendations and policy options

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on the most sustainable and equitable model to fund the conservation of the country's full array of fish and wildlife species. In March 2016, the Panel issued their Final Report (Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, 2016) that among other ideas, called for: 1) Congress dedicating \$1.3 billion annually to help fund State Wildlife Action Plans; and 2) examining the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation and make recommendations on how agencies can transform to engage and serve broader constituencies.

We hope that the work of the Blue Ribbon Panel will lead to increased federal funding and other improvements for WDFW and all U.S. state wildlife agencies. It is our perspective, however, that changes in WDFW will require additional financial resources and structural readjustments to include, among other things, broader citizen support and participation in wildlife conservation. Especially important will be a greater reliance on science and implementation of more effective public-private partnerships between state wildlife agencies, citizens, academia, businesses, and non-profit organizations. In short, a growing group of stakeholders are suggesting Washington State needs to adopt a wildlife management paradigm of "all species, all constituents."

Because of the complex and special status of salmon and shellfish management in Washington State, the forum will not address issues related to these species or the well-established legal agreements and authorities surrounding their conservation and allocation. Our efforts intersect with salmon and shellfish, however, in protection and conservation of their habitat and the web of life of which they are an essential part.

### Forum Details

Date: November 16-17, 2016 (Out of town guests arrive November 15).

Location: [Cedar Brooke Lodge](#), SeaTac, Washington (near Seattle).

Cost: No charge. Lodging, food and registration fees are provided by [Woodland Park Zoo](#) and [Wilburforce Foundation](#). Travel for out-of-state guests also is provided.

Meeting Style: The Forum will consist of a few key presentations, but will rely mostly on facilitated discussions, brainstorming, and recommendation-making. The forum is a *working* meeting and full participation of attendees is required for both days.

### Forum Goals and Deliverables

Long-term Goal:

Improve stewardship, citizen participation, and funding for conservation and management of the full array of Washington's fish and wildlife and habitats.

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### Two-Year Goals (2016-2017):

(1) Catalyze discussion among key leaders, and ultimately the public at large, on why fish and wildlife protection is an essential part of building sustainable, resilient communities and it is worthy of greater public investment and participation.

(2) Develop a unified vision and set of recommendations on how wildlife managers and the conservation community, with strategic assistance from other public and citizen sectors, could work more broadly and effectively to meet the challenges of the future by caring for the full complement of the state's fish and wildlife and their dependent habitats.

### Deliverables:

(1) Forum Report: Based on the forum discussions and follow-up communications among participants, a report will be produced detailing a vision and set of recommendations for ensuring effective conservation and management through public support for all state fish and wildlife species. Target date: May 2017.

(2) Wildlife Forum Leaders' Team: A key project outcome is to form a core group of thought leaders that spark a public conversation on the future of wildlife in Washington, and guide forum participants in writing their recommendations report by May 2017, and taking any other next steps as agreed upon at the forum. Examples of potential next steps include taking advantage of opportunities to work with WDFW leadership on efforts to increase and diversify funding for the department.

### **Program Committee**

Harriet Allen, Retired WDFW Endangered & Threatened Species Section Manager; Penny Becker, Wildlife Diversity Manager, WDFW; Helen Engle, Conservationist & Washington Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council Member; Denise Joines, Senior Program Officer, Wilburforce Foundation; Gary Koehler, Retired WDFW Research Scientist for Carnivore Investigations; Fred Koontz, Vice President of Field Conservation, Woodland Park Zoo & Washington Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council Member; Sharon Negri, Director, WildFutures; Bradley Smith, Chair, Washington Fish And Wildlife Commission; and Lorna Smith, Executive Director, Western Wildlife Outreach.

### **Attachments**

(1) Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2016. The Future of America's Fish and Wildlife: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision for Investing in and Connecting People to Nature. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington, DC. 12 pp. [http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Blue\\_Ribbon\\_Panel\\_Report2.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Blue_Ribbon_Panel_Report2.pdf)

(2) Daniel J. Decker, Cynthia A. Jacobson and John F. Organ. 2011. Leaders' Guide: Transformation of State Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Ensuring the Future of Conservation in a Rapidly Changing World. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. 60 pp.

(3) Daniel Decker et al. 2015. Governance Principles for Wildlife Conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Conservation Letters, Society for Conservation Biology. 2015. 6pp.