

Talking Points

Urge Governor Inslee to Immediately Appoint Pro-Wildlife Fish and Wildlife Commissioners Who Will Represent all Washingtonians

- Governor Inslee should immediately appoint three Commissioners to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission who will reflect the interests and values of all Washingtonians, understand and respect science, prioritize conservation and preservation of intact ecosystems, and humanely and ethically manage the state's fish and wildlife populations.
 - The only entity that can reform the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is the [Fish and Wildlife Commission](#), a nine-member citizen Commission appointed by Gov. Jay Inslee, which has historically been dominated by people who serve hunters, fishermen, and commercial special interests.
 - One seat on the Commission has been vacant for about a year (since December 31, 2020). A second seat became vacant when Commissioner Fred Koontz resigned on December 13, 2021. A third seat is being filled by Chairman Larry Carpenter, whose term expired more than a year ago—on October 31, 2020.
 - The longer Governor Inslee continues to delay making appointments to the Commission, the more damage that will be done to our fish and wildlife by a Commission that is dedicated to satisfying special interests, rather than conserving fish and wildlife for future generations.
- Washingtonians care about conservation, science, and ethics, and it is time for us to demand that WDFW reflect our values.
- By making three pro-wildlife appointments to the Commission, Governor Inslee has an opportunity to cement his legacy by showing his commitment to the environmental health of Washington State.
 - Governor Inslee's proposed budget has increased funding for fish and wildlife conservation, but that money will be wasted if he does not take steps to ensure that he has a Fish and Wildlife Commission that is dedicated to conservation, and who will make sure that WDFW spends the money wisely.
 - Governor Inslee has proclaimed that preserving the environment is one of his primary goals. This must involve not only fighting climate change, but also maintaining an environment with healthy ecosystems and thriving wildlife populations. The Governor must start to pay as much attention to what is happening to the fish and wildlife in his state as he does to national and international environmental issues.
 - You cannot have a healthy environment without having healthy fish and wildlife populations. Washington's fish and wildlife populations are being threatened by

climate change and the global loss of biodiversity, and we need Commissioners who can understand these challenges and are prepared to face them.

- In making his next appointments, Governor Inslee must find candidates who will (1) serve the interests of all Washingtonians, not just the small number who hunt and fish; (2) prioritize science in the management of wildlife and preservation of healthy ecosystems; (3) prioritize the reform of WDFW, to correct a toxic workplace culture that prevents employees from doing their best work; and (4) be dedicated not only to conservation, but also to humane and ethical wildlife management.
 - Only about 2% of the Washington population hunts, and about 8% fish, while more than 90% of Washingtonians do neither. Meanwhile, millions of Washingtonians enjoy the state's wildlife and wild spaces through hiking, camping, wildlife-watching, and photography. WDFW has a responsibility to reflect the values of all Washingtonians, rather than disproportionately emphasizing the interests of the tiny percentage that hunt and fish.
 - The old mindset is that hunters and fisherman should control WDFW because they pay for it. But roughly two-thirds of WDFW's budget comes from the general fund. All Washingtonians pay for the management of our fish and wildlife, and we all deserve to have a Commission that will fairly represent our interests and values.
- We need people on the Commission who will understand science, and be able to objectively evaluate the scientific assertions made by WDFW management.
 - Current WDFW management pretends that it bases its decisions on science, but in reality, administrators have an agenda, and as one former WDFW biologist said, they [“launder the scientific evidence to fit that agenda.”](#)
 - In a [2020 survey](#), only 20% of WDFW's professional staff said upper management regularly makes decisions based on science.
 - In a [2021 report by the state auditor](#), more than two dozen employees interviewed by the auditors described decisions that WDFW had made on hot-button issues based on purely political considerations, ignoring the Department's own research and expert recommendations.
- Governor Inslee must appoint people to the Commission who are committed to reforming the toxic work culture within WDFW, so that the hundreds of dedicated biologists, enforcement officers, conflict specialists and other employees can do their best work on behalf of our state's fish and wildlife.
 - A recent audit of workplace culture at WDFW found a toxic culture where unethical and illegal behavior was common, employees regularly suffered retaliation from

their supervisors for speaking out about poor behavior, and employees were frequently bullied, often on the basis of gender. Some of the key findings:

- One in ten WDFW employees has directly witnessed a WDFW employee or supervisor commit a legal or ethical violation in the past year;
 - More than 10% experienced retaliatory behavior as a result of reporting unethical or illegal behavior, challenging a supervisor, or talking to the auditors;
 - Only 44% of employees reported that managers were held accountable when they behaved inappropriately;
 - More than 20% of WDFW employees have been the victim of workplace bullying, including yelling, demeaning comments or intimidation in the last year, which are often based on gender, while 30% have witnessed such bullying.
 - 25% of the employees interviewed reported gender discrimination at the Department, where only 33% of the workforce are women. Of the 172 survey respondents who said they experienced aggressive behavior, 20 percent said they believed gender was a factor.
 - 71% of employees responded in a negative way to questions about their wellbeing at the workplace, including levels of stress, impact on their health, and employee morale.
- Without new Commissioners, WDFW's war on carnivores will continue.
 - The Commission will continue policies that have resulted in the increased trophy hunting of cougars, which resulted in 335 cougars reported killed in the state during the 2020 season, a 25% increase over the previous five-year average, and a 40% increase over the ten-year average.
 - The Commission will continue policies that have resulted in increased trophy hunting of bears, which resulted in a 50% increase in bears reported killed over the past two seasons, even while WDFW has substantially decreased its estimate of the number of bears in the state.
 - WDFW will continue its work to take wolves off the state endangered species list, so that it can join states like Idaho and Montana in opening wolf hunting seasons.
 - Washingtonians will lose the little progress they made in defeating the spring bear hunt this November.
 - In November 2021, a sharply divided Commission responded to an outpouring of public opposition to spring bear hunting, and defeated a management proposal for a spring bear hunt in 2022 with a tie 4-4 vote.
 - Spring bear hunters were furious at this vote, and brutally attacked the Commissioners who voted against their spring trophy hunt, calling publicly

for their dismissal, and commenting on their blogs that they should be “hanged.”

- Bear hunters have also submitted petitions to reverse the spring bear vote, which will be voted on at a January Commission meeting. With Commissioner Fred Koontz’s resignation, the likely vote would be 4-3 to reverse the November decision and reinstate the spring bear hunt.