

WDFW NEWS RELEASE

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WDFW invites public to help identify conservation and recreation priorities

OLYMPIA - State fish and wildlife leaders are asking people to share their views on the values and priorities that should drive the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) over the next several years.

The opportunity is part of WDFW's new multi-year initiative, "Washington's Wild Future: A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife," which is an effort to strengthen the department's relationships with communities, increase support for conservation and outdoor recreation, and help ensure WDFW programs and services meet the public's needs.

People can talk with WDFW managers at six regional forums in September and October. Comments will also be accepted through Oct. 31 on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildfuture/> and by email to WildFuture@dfw.wa.gov. People may also participate in the conversation through the WDFW Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonFishWildlife>.

Public comments and proposals will help determine priorities for conserving and managing Washington's fish and wildlife in the coming years, said WDFW Director Jim Unsworth, who was hired to lead the agency in January.

"Since I joined WDFW, I have been asking people, 'If you could tell the director of Fish and Wildlife one thing, what would you say?'" Unsworth said. "This is a great opportunity for people across the state to do just that. I want to hear about what we are doing right, where we need to improve, and where we should focus our efforts and our funding over the next five to 10 to 20 years."

Unsworth, senior WDFW managers, and regional staff are scheduled to attend the meetings, where people can discuss fishing and hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as habitat protection and restoration, licensing, enforcement, and other fish and wildlife management issues.

The meetings are scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

- Sept. 10 - Selah Civic Center, 216 1st St., Selah.
- Sept. 30 - Center Place, 2426 N. Discovery Place, Spokane Valley.
- Oct. 6 - WDFW Mill Creek Office, 16018 Mill Creek Blvd, Mill Creek.
- Oct. 8 - Saint Martin's University, Norman Worthington Conference Center, 5300 Pacific Ave. SE, Lacey.
- Oct. 14 - Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver.

- Oct. 20 - Port of Chelan County Confluence Technology Center, 285 Technology Center Way, Wenatchee.

Each meeting will include a brief presentation from a WDFW regional director about the importance of fish and wildlife management to Washington's quality of life and the economies of local communities throughout the state. Participants will then be invited to talk in small groups with representatives of the department's Fish, Wildlife, Enforcement, Licensing, and Habitat programs, as well as Unsworth and his staff.

Later this year, WDFW will summarize the comments and suggestions from the public, as well as input from outdoor organizations, advisory groups, tribes, and state and local elected officials. The information will be used to help identify potential changes in WDFW's operations and services, and to develop future policy, budget and fee proposals.

"We face major management challenges over the next several years, and for us to be successful we need the public's support and assistance," Unsworth said. "That can only happen if the department has strong relationships with anglers, hunters, outdoor recreation groups, and others interested in fish and wildlife in Washington."

More information about WDFW is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>