

# Stakeholders Call for Legislators to Fully-Fund Department of Fish & Wildlife for Biodiversity



The below organizations call your attention to 2025 budget needs for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. We support WDFW's request, especially that of \$10M above Governor Inslee's proposed number for items related to recovering Washington's biodiversity.

Among western states, Washington is the smallest in size, has the least public land, and is booming in population and economic activity. Meanwhile, habitat loss and degradation, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and disease continue to accelerate the loss of biodiversity in Washington—threatening species that are vital to culture, public health, and the economy. Despite ready-to-implement plans at hand, biodiversity restoration work in Washington remains underfunded, impeding recovery of iconic species from pinto abalone and the western pond turtle to sharp-tailed grouse. WDFW therefore faces big challenges as steward of our rich natural heritage.

WDFW funding has at times been the first cut and the last restored. In 2017, while the department labored under a budget hole begun by cuts in the 2008 recession, the legislature passed a proviso that directed WDFW to undergo an outside audit and assemble a budget advisory board. That audit gave the department high marks for efficiency and the advisory board has since been an effective vehicle for constituencies to understand the budget and to support WDFW being funded at levels commensurate with its vital mission. The Department of Revenue has found that appropriations to WDFW show a return of 250% to the state through sales tax on people engaging with resources throughout the state, including in the most rural communities.

While WDFW is charged with stewarding our full wildlife heritage, it is funded to overwhelmingly focus on particular parts of its mission. In 2019-21, WDFW was only funded to implement about 5% of the State Wildlife Action Plan, the do-list for protecting 268 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. For the 2023-25 operating budget, WDFW requested \$47.6 million for biodiversity but received only part (\$24 million for the biennium, with \$31 million ongoing beginning in the 2025-27 biennium). The department quickly ramped up excellent work on both the westside and the eastside of the state.

Governor Inslee's budget proposal would slash even that reduced level of biodiversity funding, along with other cuts to WDFW, and return us to levels that have for too long left our agency and natural resources impaired. WDFW needs to sustain at least its current funding level for Recovering Washington's Biodiversity. This will help recover at-risk species and habitats and prevent more species from endangered listings. We thank you for your consideration and urge you to support the department's request.

## Supporting Organizations:



North Central Washington  
Audubon Society

**Ilwaco Charter  
Association**



**EAST CASCADES  
RECREATION PARTNERSHIP**

