

February 25, 2021

Senator Christine Rolfes – Senate Ways and Means Chair

Representative Timm Ormsby – House Appropriations Chair

Senator Kevin Van De Wege – Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources, and Parks Chair

Representative Mike Chapman – House Rural Development, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Chair

*Re: Support for WDFW's capital and operating funding requests*

Dear Senator Rolfes, Representative Ormsby, Senator Van de Wege, and Representative Chapman:

As representatives of conservationists, anglers, and businesses that fish and recreate throughout the state of Washington, we are writing today in support of the requests from the unions of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement that the Enforcement Program budget be increased by \$3.5 million in the second year of the biennium to hire 10 additional officers.

This is an immediate staffing need identified by a deployment study conducted by the Enforcement Program. These additional funds would increase the overall Enforcement Program budget from \$50.8 million to approximately \$54.3 million. This would have a significant and immediate impact on the effectiveness of the Enforcement Program to protect the natural resources and fulfill the mission entrusted to the Enforcement Program by the Washington State Legislature.

Conservation efforts for our state's fish and wildlife resources need to be increased. Additionally, addressing the changing climate and the impact it has on fragile fish populations is a high priority for our state and WDFW plays an integral role in fulfilling this commitment. This budget increase would expand current enforcement efforts to provide the necessary coverage for the variety of sport fisheries across the state.

The WDFW is the agency primarily tasked with fulfilling the state's responsibilities as co-manager of tribal treaty resources. Because WDFW has been seriously underfunded for many years, the WDFW has often fallen short of its ability to collect sufficient data regarding angler effort and fishery data. WDFW Enforcement Program has also been unable to supply sufficient coverage and officers to enforce state laws and regulations.

An area of high importance to us, the Olympic Peninsula, is a prime example. Jefferson and Clallam Counties only have 4 of their already limited 6 positions filled, which breaks down to each officer tasked with covering almost 1,500-square miles. This unfortunately undermines efforts to recover fish populations. In order to work with tribal co-managers and fulfill treaty obligations, sufficient data must be collected to accurately project run size and effort while concurrently, law enforcement must be present in adequate numbers to ensure compliance with sportfishing regulations.

The organizations we represent work tirelessly on behalf of our state's fish populations and sport anglers, including policy and advocacy efforts for carefully managed fisheries and habitat projects that have a direct impact on fish recovery. Supporting the WDFW Enforcement Program budget increase and providing the necessary capacity to this division will enhance WDFW's efforts to manage our state's fisheries and our tribal treaty obligations having a positive impact for Washingtonians and the fish and wildlife resources we all depend on.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Stumpf  
Wild Steelhead Advocate  
Trout Unlimited

Greg Topf  
Board Chair  
Wild Steelhead Coalition

Jessica Helsley  
Washington Director  
Wild Salmon Center

J Michelle Swope  
Washington Coordinator  
Native Fish Society