

## **Support Fish and Wildlife funding in Olympia this session**

For years, Washington's Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) has faced a significant budget shortfall of more than \$31 million. \$60 million was requested last legislative session to fill the gap and provide improved services and innovative conservation programs.

In a huge disappointment, last year's 2019-20 Operating Budget included only a \$24 million "increase" for WDFW; \$7 million short of filling the funding gap and less than half of what's needed for the agency to meet the demands of Washingtonians for our outdoor heritage. Lawmakers also increased payroll expenses at state agencies, adding another \$13 million to the department's budget need this biennium.

WDFW faces an approximately \$20 million budget shortfall going into the 2020 supplemental session of the state legislature, and that's just to provide basic services. The agency is requesting \$26 million from the General Fund to support the Evergreen State's fish, wildlife, habitat and public lands.

Please send state lawmakers a message that fully-funding our fish and wildlife must be a priority during the upcoming 2020 legislative session!

## **Support Fish and Wildlife funding in 2020 session**

Dear state lawmaker,

Washington's fish and wildlife have been underfunded for years despite diverse challenges ranging from orca and salmon declines to wolf management, elk hoof disease and habitat loss. Please make fully-funding the Department of Fish and Wildlife a priority during the 2020 supplemental session. Our natural heritage depends on it!

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) long faced a \$31 million budget shortfall. With broad stakeholder support from the Department's Budget and Policy Advisory Group, made up of leaders from conservation, fishing, hunting, outdoor recreation and other interests, \$60 million was requested last session (2019) to fill the gap and provide improved services and innovative conservation programs.

In a huge disappointment, the \$52.4 billion, 2019-2020 Operating Budget included only a \$24 million "increase" for WDFW, \$7 million short of filling the agency's funding gap and less than half of what's needed for the agency to meet the demands of Washingtonians for our outdoor heritage. The legislature also increased payroll expenses at state agencies including WDFW, adding another \$13 million to the Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget need during the current 2019-2020 biennium.

WDFW faces a \$20 million budget shortfall going into the 2020 supplemental session, and that's just to

provide basic services. The agency is requesting \$26 million to fully-fund the Evergreen State's fish, wildlife, habitat and public lands.

One of the worst parts of continued underfunding is that the threatened species and habitats most in need of attention will face further cuts. Due to a lack of support from the General Fund, sharp-tailed grouse, lynx, steelhead and other native species identified under State Wildlife Action Plans currently make up less than five percent of WDFW's budget. They need more resources, not less, and they can't wait any longer.

Investing in WDFW also makes good economic sense, as the Department of Revenue estimates that wildlife watching, hunting and fishing contributed nearly \$340 million dollars to the State General Fund in the 2017-19 biennium through related sales tax and business and occupation tax revenues.

Washington's fish, wildlife, WDFW wildlife areas and water access sites, and the rich outdoor opportunities they provide are important for me and my family. Please make fully-funding Fish and Wildlife a priority during the 2020 legislative session by supporting WDFW's \$26 million supplemental budget request.

Sincerely,