

WDFW Commission Hears Hunting Rule Comments, Draft Wolf Statement

Local News

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Moses Lake, WA - The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission heard public comments on proposed hunting rules, and approved a water-rights transfer in Okanogan County during a public meeting here March 9-10. More than three-dozen people testified on new hunting rules proposed for the 2012-14 seasons. Those proposals range from a measure allowing waterfowl hunters to use electronic decoys to one that would add a day to western Washington elk seasons. The commission, a nine-member citizen panel appointed by the governor to set policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is scheduled to take action on more than a dozen proposals at a public meeting April 13-14 in Olympia. The proposals are posted at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/> on WDFW's website.

In other action, the commission approved transferring a future water rights interest on a unit of the state's Scotch Creek Wildlife Area in Okanogan County to the Washington Department of Ecology's Trust Water Right program. The transfer is designed to improve stream flows for threatened steelhead and maintain irrigated agricultural production. State wildlife managers also briefed the commission on steps taken by WDFW to implement the state's wolf conservation and management plan. That plan, approved last December after extensive public review, is designed to re-establish a sustainable wolf population in Washington, while outlining management options to address conflicts with livestock and elk and deer populations. Steve Pozzanghera, WDFW eastern region director, briefed the commission on a new online reporting tool on the department's website that allows the public to report wolf activity, including sightings, howls, or tracks. The new reporting system is available at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/reporting/. He also outlined WDFW's ongoing work with livestock owners and county officials in northeast Washington to address potential conflicts with wolves. Wolf management is a priority for us and we are closely following the department's implementation of the state's wolf management plan. We need everyone's cooperation to learn where wolves are dispersing and encourage our fellow citizens to use our new online reporting tool to report their observations. - Commission Chair Miranda Wecker Also discussed at the meeting was a draft Statement on Wolves in Washington developed by the commission to guide WDFW's implementation of the state's wolf plan. The draft statement is available on the commission's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/>.