

Historical Overview of the Fish and Wildlife Commission & the Department of Fish & Wildlife



Early History of Fish and Wildlife Management in Washington State

- **1890** - The first Fish Commissioner is appointed.
- **1903** – Washington adopts first statewide game code.
- **1921** - The Legislature creates the Department of Fisheries, with a Fish Division and Game Division.



Creating separate Dept of Game and Dept of Fisheries (1932)

- Initiative 62 passes, Governor appoints the Director of Fisheries, and a 6-member Game Commission appoints the Director of the Department of Game.
- Game Commissioners must have general knowledge of the habits and distribution of wild animals, wild birds and game fish in the state.
- The Game Commission must consist of 3 members each from Western and Eastern Washington.





Referendum 26: Game Commissioner Appointments (1945)

- Chapter 37, Laws of 1945 was enacted declaring Game Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the Governor.
- Referendum 26 was filed on April 3, 1945 challenging the adoption of the new law.
- Voters rejected the measure by over an 86% margin, and Chapter 37, Laws of 1945 did not become law.



Change Department of Game to Department of Wildlife (1987)



- The Legislature enacted HB 758 renaming the Department of Game the Department of Wildlife with the Director appointed by the Governor (no longer appointed by the Game Commission).
- The 1987-89 Omnibus Operating Budget provided \$8 million in General Fund State appropriations to the re-named Department of Wildlife.

Merge Department of Fisheries and Department of Wildlife



- Chapter 2, Laws of 1993 passed creating the Department of Fish and Wildlife by combining the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Wildlife.
- The Governor appoints the Director of the newly created Department.
- The Fish & Wildlife Commission is increased from 6 to 9 members by adding 3 at-large members.





Referendum 45 1995: Modify Fish and Wildlife Management

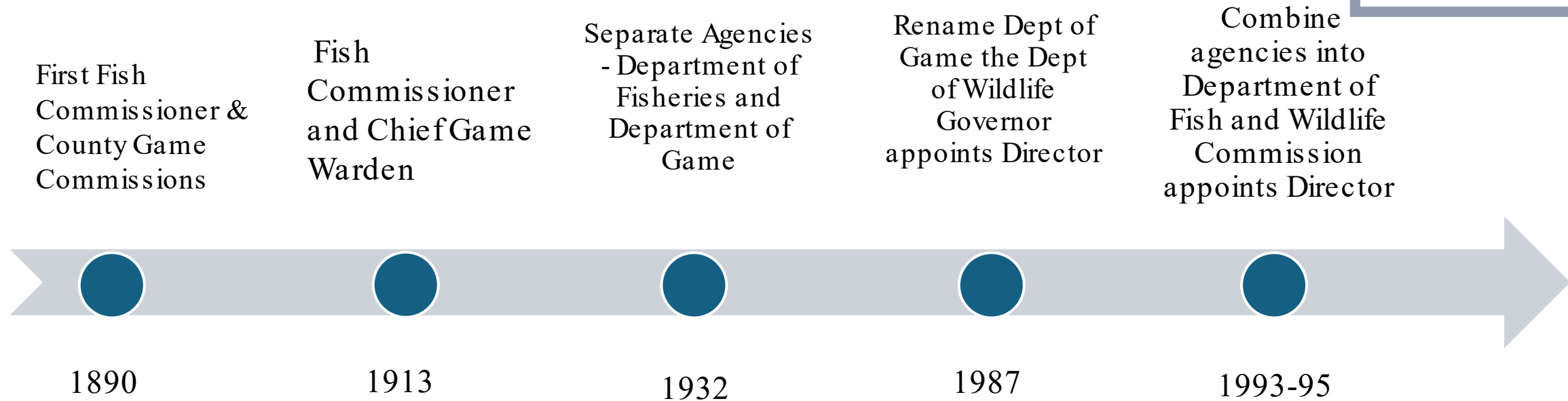
Shall the Fish and Wildlife Commission, rather than the Governor, appoint the Department's Director and regulate food fish and shellfish?

1995 – Referendum 45 (Chapter 2, Laws of 1995)

- Expands the role of the Commission to include food fish and shellfish.
- Gives the Commission authority to appoint the Director, approve budget requests, approve rules, and authority over all Department agreements.
- The Referendum passed with 61% yes vote.



Timeline of the structure of Fish and Wildlife Management





Mandate of the Commission & the Department: (RCW 77.04.012)

- Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish.....in a manner that does not impair the resource....
- Promote orderly fisheries and enhance and improve recreational and commercial fishing in this state.



Powers and Duties of the Department of Fish and Wildlife: (RCW 77.04.020 & 77.04.080)

- The Department consists of the state Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Director.
- The Commission may delegate to the Director any of the powers and duties vested in the Commission.
- The Director supervises the Department and performs duties delegated by the Commission.





Powers and Duties of the of Fish and Wildlife Commission

- Review the performance of the Department in implementing fish and wildlife policies.
- Maximize fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.
- Establish seasons and prescribe the time, place, manner, and methods that may be used to harvest fish and wildlife.

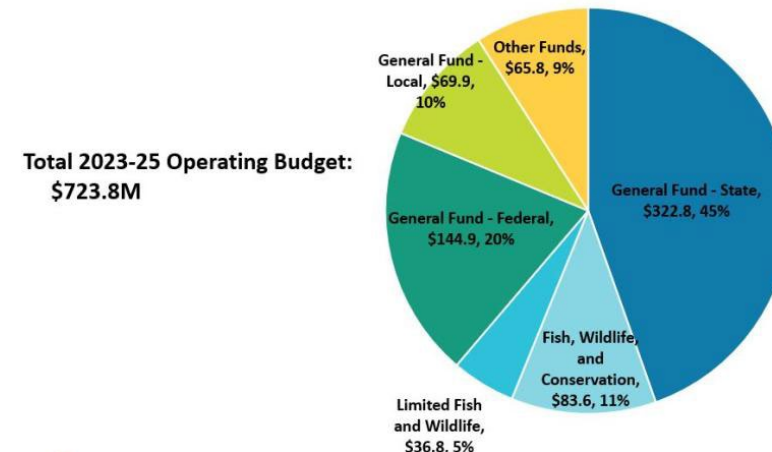




Powers and Duties of the of Fish and Wildlife Commission

- Final approval authority for tribal, interstate, international, and other Department agreements relating to fish and wildlife.
- Adopt rules to implement the state's fish and wildlife laws.
- Final approval authority for the Department's budget proposals.
- Select its own staff and appoint the Director of the Department.

WDFW 2023-25 Operating Budget
(dollars in millions)





Fish and Wildlife Commission

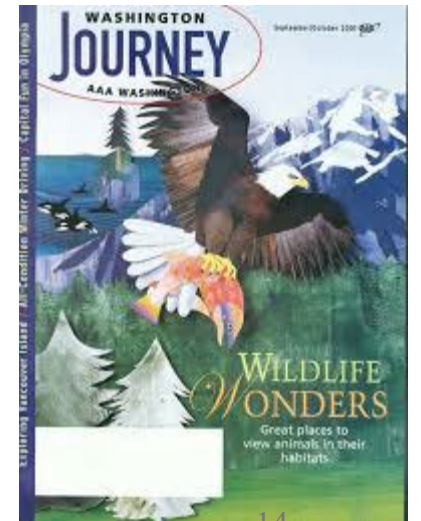
- Consists of 9 registered voters of the state, appointed by the Governor for 6-year terms, with the advice and consent of the Senate.
- Three members shall be residents of Eastern WA, three members from Western WA, and three members at large.
- No two members may be residents of the same county.





Qualification Requirements for Commissioners

- Shall have general knowledge of the habits and distribution of fish and wildlife.
- Shall not hold another state, county, or municipal elective or appointive office.
- In making these appointments, the Governor shall seek to maintain a balance reflecting all aspects of fish and wildlife, including representation from sport fishers, commercial fishers, hunters, private landowners, and environmentalists.



Fish & Wildlife Director Appointments Nationally

Appointment of Fish and Wildlife Director:

- The Governor directly appoints the Fish and Wildlife Director in 30 states.
- Fish and Wildlife Commissions appoint the Fish and Wildlife Director in 20 states.



West Coast States Fish and Wildlife Commissions and Departments

Alaska:

- 7 member Fish Commission & 7 member Game Commission.
- Governor appoints the Commissioner of the Dept. of Fish & Game.

California:

- Five member Commission appointed by the Governor.
- Governor appoints the Director.

Idaho:

- 7 member Commission appointed by the Governor.
- Commissioner appoints the Director.

Oregon:

- 7 member Commission appointed by the Governor.
- Commission appoints the Director for a 4 year term.



Questions?



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