



# Washington's **WILD**Future

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## HUNTING



## Improving the hunting experience

In 2015, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) asked Washingtonians to comment on what the department is doing well, where it needs to improve, and what its priorities should be in the future. Thousands of people participated in this initiative, called "Washington's Wild Future: A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife."

Hunters focused on several themes, including a desire for greater access to private recreation lands, simplified hunting regulations, and mobile technologies to inform them when they go into the field.

The department drew on this feedback in developing the proposals described below, which were submitted to the Governor's Office in September for consideration during the 2017 legislative session. Most of the proposals would be funded through the State Wildlife Account, which receives revenue from the sale of resident and non-resident hunting licenses.

### **Increase investment in private lands access**

No issue has drawn a greater response from hunters than the loss of free recreational access to private hunting lands.

WDFW is developing several alternatives for addressing this challenge, including an increase in the number of agreements with property owners who allow hunting on their lands.

The department's goal during the next two-year budget cycle is to expand the Private Lands Access Program, including the "Feel Free to Hunt" and "Hunt by Reservation" initiatives that have opened more than 600,000 acres of privately owned land to public hunting. This proposal also would add four full-time enforcement officers to patrol private lands where free or low-cost public access is allowed. (\$4.5 million from the State Wildlife Account)



### **Develop mobile app for hunters**

The department is seeking funds to develop a mobile hunting app – free for all hunting license buyers – to provide easy access to hunting rules and information on mobile devices. (\$250,000 State Wildlife Account)

### **Develop safe target-shooting range in central Washington**

Informal target shooting within the boundaries of some WDFW wildlife areas has been a chronic challenge. The public supports target shooting in central Washington, but the lack of suitable facilities has contributed to significant litter problems, and costly wildfires have been sparked by dispersed target shooting in dry landscapes.

To address these issues, the department is requesting funds to develop a contained, regulated shooting range in central Washington that could be used for general target shooting, hunter education, and law enforcement training. (\$500,000 capital construction funds, \$260,000 State Wildlife Account)

### **Increase habitat management to support game animals**

The department plans to seek funding for two habitat biologist positions to ensure critical habitats, such as deer and elk winter range, are protected into the future. (\$432,000 State Wildlife Account)

# License fee increase would help maintain and expand hunting opportunities

To help pay for hunting improvements and to bridge the gap between future expenditures and projected revenue, the department is proposing a 10-percent increase for all hunting license fees.

The proposal also would:

- Provide students who pass an approved hunter education class with a \$20 discount on their first hunting license.
- Authorize the department to charge a modest fee to support the increasingly popular Hunt by Reservation program, which enables hunters to reserve a space to hunt on selected private lands.
- Expand administrative penalties for hunters who fail to submit harvest reports. Currently, hunters who fail to report across all tag types are assessed a single penalty. The proposal would set penalties for each species.
- The migratory bird permit fee would increase from \$17 to \$28. This revenue is used to buy and develop migratory bird habitat and to produce and protect migratory birds in Washington. The proposed rate would match the cost of the federal duck stamp, which was recently increased.
- In the future, fees for most license types would be adjusted for inflation every two years. This would enable the department to maintain hunting opportunities without experiencing the loss of buying power that occurs when inflationary impacts compound over time.
- Provide funding for the department to improve stewardship of WDFW lands, an issue that has drawn strong public support from hunters and conservationists.

## Examples of proposed hunting license fee increases

Resident hunting license fees - 10% increase	Current	Proposed
<b>Big Game Hunter</b>		
Purchases a Deer, Elk, Bear, Cougar License	\$95.50	\$104.85
<b>Big Game and Small Game Hunter</b>		
Purchases Deer, Elk, Bear, Cougar and Small Game	\$117.50	\$129.05
<b>Turkey and Migratory Bird Hunter</b>		
Purchases Small Game, Turkey Tag and Migratory Bird	\$73.40	\$87.29
<b>Deer and Turkey Hunter</b>		
Purchases Deer, Small Game and Turkey Tag	\$82.80	\$90.83
<b>Canada Goose Hunter (SW WA)</b>		
Purchases Small Game, Migratory Bird Hunt Authorization	\$70.70	\$84.37

**Note:** All prices are “out the door” – including dealer and transaction fees