

January 17, 2017

Jim Unsworth, Director  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
600 Capitol Way North  
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: Proposed fee increases

Dear Jim,

Throughout the 88 year existence of the Vancouver Wildlife League our organization has supported many license and fee increases proposed by the Department of Game and WDFW.

For the first time anyone can recall, the Vancouver Wildlife League membership voted to not support the proposed fee increase package.

For openers, the proposal to charge \$10 each for steelhead and salmon catch cards really got the folks attention. For SW Washington stream fishers that's a twenty buck hit right at the starting gate. Clam license up to \$24...that's absurd. In the past, a license fee increase of around 10% every four to five years has been acceptable.

For years our club has sought to attract new hunters into the sport. We are very active in the pheasant release program and the Youth Pheasant Hunt. We also promote turkey hunting. Turkey hunting in Washington is about as good as anywhere in the country.

Promoting black-tailed deer hunting has basically ground to a halt. There is no shortage of deer in urban areas, but that's not the case in our traditional hunting grounds. Predation is taking nearly 80% of the fawn crop within the first six months. Two years ago, before all of the pay to trespass fees were in place, one could drive the roads from daylight to dark in GMUs 550, 554, 568, and 574 without seeing a deer. The deer population is in trouble and yet the department's Deer Status and Trend Report claims that the numbers are stable. Without a concerted effort to control predators, deer numbers will not rebound.

The elk hoof rot situation seems to be moving along pretty much as hunters expected. We won't go into that here.

Most sportsmen are aware that WDFW is powerless to combat the pay to hunt fees now charged by timber companies. But, WDFW does go to the legislature to ask for fee increases. As part of the fee proposal, how about asking the legislature to change the tax breaks afforded to timber growing companies? If they charge to hunt, a higher tax rate should be the order of the day.

Over the years when fee increases were being sought, key regional staff people would attend club meetings to sell the idea. The regional big game biologist was often in the lead and they were successful with their sales approach. On this particular proposal we have had none of that. The Region Five Big Game Biologist is a non-hunter and doesn't give a rat's rear end about hunters. About the only interaction she has had with the public was during the elk hoof rot meetings.

Sportsmen are being asked to carry the financial burden for wolf lovers, reintroduction of non-games species and whale watchers just to name a few. Furthermore, your package calls for built-in inflationary increases that we cannot support. From the outside looking in, it appears WDFW is top heavy in management with too many Ph.ds to support. Sorry we cannot be of help to you at this juncture.

Sincerely,

Chuck Cheshire  
President

Gene Ritter  
Big Game Committee