



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

October 28, 2015

Brad Smith, Ph.D., Chair
Washington State Fish & Wildlife Commission
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Chair Smith:

I am writing to convey a few of my thoughts related to fisheries management. First, I want to acknowledge the important role the Fish and Wildlife Commission plays in setting policies to assure the protection of the state's fish and wildlife resources. I also want to express my appreciation for your service as Governor appointees and public representatives.

One of the more challenging aspects of being a member of the Commission is dealing with fishery science, sound hatchery management and resource allocation issues. Managing salmon and steelhead is made more complex with the Endangered Species Act listing many stocks as threatened or endangered. This challenge is made even more complex with the impacts of climate change, the decline of Puget Sound, ocean acidification and third party litigation that threatens our state's hatchery production.

With over 800,000 recreational fish licenses issued annually and more than 10 million annual angler days, recreational fishing makes a significant contribution to our economy, attracting tourists and providing an opportunity for our children to experience time on the water that sustains our way of life in Washington State. Recreation license fees increasingly represent the largest single portion of revenue for the Department to manage sustainable fisheries and other activities. The Department of Fish and Wildlife's share of the state general fund has declined dramatically over the past seven years, decreasing from \$106 million in the 2007-09 biennium to \$74 million in the current biennium. Over this same period, the share of WDFW's costs supported by recreational fishing license revenue has grown substantially.

In light of the growing social and economic contribution of the recreational fishery across Washington State, the Commission should fully implement the budget policy you recently adopted and seek ways to expand public access to the recreational fishery, promote selective fisheries, implement scientifically credible hatchery practices that ensure hatchery production and consider economic factors when setting seasons for both the recreational and commercial fish industry. I remain convinced that we can prioritize and expand fishing opportunities for the 800,000 Washingtonians who purchase fishing licenses annually while taking into consideration the viability of our state's important commercial fish industry.

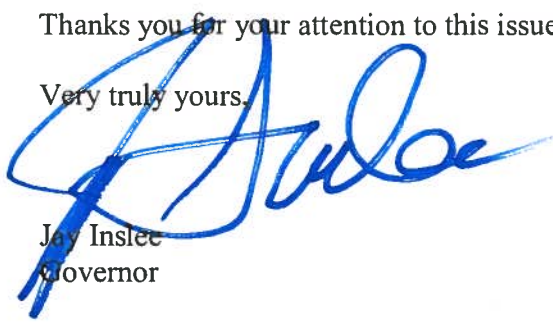


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As always, it is important that we make wise fishery management decisions based upon sound science with the goal of building a sustainable fishery for tribes, the recreational community and our commercial fishery. I am pleased and encouraged that the final capital budget included over \$39 million to rebuild, renovate and construct state hatchery facilities to benefit recreational, commercial and tribal fishers. In addition, over \$118 million was provided for habitat projects that will directly benefit salmon habitat. I would hope the Commission and the Department can work effectively with the legislature, tribes and stakeholders to continue enhancing our state's fisheries. I stand ready to work with you on protecting one of our state's most important resources, and I look forward to hearing of your progress in our annual meeting.

Thanks you for your attention to this issue.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee", is written over the typed name and title.

Jay Inslee
Governor