

PDR Response (DFW)

From: Unsworth, James W (DFW)
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 2:15 PM
Subject: Senate budget

To all WDFW staff:

Yesterday you received a message from Joe Stohr that described the legislative budget development process and timetable. Within an hour or two, the chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, Sen. John Braun, released his budget proposal, which received a public hearing yesterday afternoon.

Also yesterday, we received a news release in support of Senator Braun's proposal issued by one of his colleagues, Sen. Kirk Pearson, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee.

Senator Braun's proposal contains a few positive elements, including a \$5 million one-time increase and \$1.5 million for wildlife conflict transformation, both from the State General Fund. But overall, it would not enable us to continue current service levels.

It's important for us to recognize that this proposal represents just one early step in the budget development process. While it presents significant challenges, we are used to responding to budget proposals that require revision.

However, the release from Senator Pearson is in some ways more concerning.

Without citing any evidence, it describes WDFW as an "agency in crisis." It calls into question our performance and claims that we have proposed large license fee increases "without the promise for more opportunities."

In fact, all of our hunting and fishing license fee proposals were developed to ensure the department has the funding needed to ***maintain and expand*** commercial and recreational opportunities in the future. It is simply wrong to suggest otherwise.

This agency has made remarkable strides in recovering from the deep cuts imposed by the Legislature following the Great Recession. We've never fully recovered the lost funding, but through your efforts we have made performance improvements in every area of our operation.

When I meet with you and travel around the state to see your efforts and that of our many partners, I am continually struck by your commitment to the people and resources of this state. You make critically important contributions to our economy, the health of our communities, and to our identity as Washingtonians.

Of course there's always room for improvement, which is one of the primary reasons we initiated the Wild Future initiative. And some of the one-time funding proposed by Senator Braun might make it possible for us to conduct targeted performance reviews, such as an efficiency evaluation of our hatchery operations.

We know the state faces a very difficult budget challenge, and that some spending cuts are quite possible. But it's not right to justify budget cuts by criticizing the people who deliver important services.

I want to assure you that we will continue to talk to the Legislature, the Governor, and the residents of our state in the days and weeks to come.

Sincerely,

Jim

PS: You can stay informed by referring to the resources available on the Wild Future information page on the Staff Communications SharePoint site. Use this link to set the Staff Communication page as a default tab on your browser.