



Washington Wildlife First
2225 Eastlake Ave. E #101
Seattle, WA 98102
(509) 309-8175
info@wawildlifefirst.org

September 22, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002
Governor.JayInslee@gov.wa.gov

VIA Email and First-Class Mail

RE: New Commissioners Urgently Needed to Reform State Fish and Wildlife

Dear Governor Inslee:

The undersigned write to urge you to immediately appoint two new members to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, which has had one vacant seat and one commissioner serving in an expired term. It is imperative that these seats be filled with commissioners who value and understand science, who have a commitment to preserving fish and wildlife, and who will bring needed reform to the agency.

This week's report from the state auditor, [Assessing the Workplace Culture at the Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), has made the need for new leadership clear. The auditor's report paints a stark portrait of an agency where legal and ethical violations are commonplace, gender-based discrimination and bullying is pervasive, management is not held accountable for its actions, and staff fear retaliation if they voice the need for change.

We need Fish and Wildlife commissioners who will not only follow science, but who will have the dedication and moral compass to guide the agency in a new direction—to build a Department that not only respects and values wildlife, but also respects and values its people.

Last December, you appointed Lorna Smith and Fred Koontz to the Commission, and we appreciate the commitment, expertise, and dedication they have brought to their work. With two more appointments, you can cement your legacy and bring lasting change to the Department, by ensuring that a majority of the Commission will be dedicated to environmental protection and science-based fish and wildlife management.

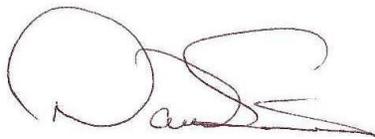
This need is urgent. By appointing two reform-minded commissioners now, you will be sending a message to agency staff that you heard the concerns that they so bravely voiced to the state auditors, and that you are doing what you can to bring needed change to the Department. It will also ensure that a full Commission is in place in advance of important upcoming votes on issues such as spring bear hunting, a new rule to regulate wolf management, a bold new conservation policy, and decisions on Commission leadership.

You are a national leader on the issue of climate change. That crisis is inextricably linked with another catastrophe facing our planet—a rapid and unprecedented loss of biodiversity. You can build on your environmental record and take the lead in battling against the Sixth Great Extinction Event by putting in place a Commission that has the scientific background to understand the challenge that it faces, and which understands the importance of preserving a diversity of species within intact ecosystems.

The fight to preserve biodiversity starts at home. With the right appointments to the Commission, you can transform the Department into an agency that embodies the ideals of conservation and preservation, allowing Washington to take a leading role in the growing national movement focused on wildlife governance reform.

We stand in support of the courageous biologists, enforcement officers, conflict specialists, and other employees who are trying to improve the Department, hold its management accountable, and force it to act as a responsible trustee of the state's wildlife. We ask you to do the same, by appointing new commissioners who will help usher in a new era in Washington's wildlife management.

Respectfully,



David Linn
Interim Executive Director
Washington Wildlife First



Sophia Ressler
Washington Wildlife Advocate
Center for Biological Diversity



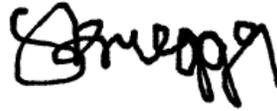
Dan Paul
Senior State Director, Washington
The Humane Society of the United States



Kathleen S. Gobush, PhD
Director, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife



Jocelyn Leroux
Washington and Montana Director
Western Watersheds Project



Samantha Bruegger
Wildlife Coexistence Campaigner
WildEarth Guardians



Brooks Fahy
Executive Director
Predator Defense



Tim Coleman
Executive Director
Kettle Range Conservation Group



Rachel Bjork
Board President
Northwest Animal Rights Network



Nicholas Cady
Legal Director
Cascadia Wildlands



Josh Rosenau
Conservation Advocate
Mountain Lion Foundation



Lynn Okita
Board Chair
Western Wildlife Outreach

cc: JT Austin
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission