

Overview of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game February 2, 2009

Background

Alaska Constitutional mandates: Article VIII (Natural Resources) reads in part:

The legislature shall provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural resources belonging to the State, including land and waters, for the maximum benefit of its people.

Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

Mission of the department:

To protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state, and manage their use and development in the best interest of the economy and the well-being of the people of the state, consistent with the sustained yield principle.

Goals of the department:

Optimize economic benefits from fish and wildlife resources
Optimize public participation in fish and wildlife pursuits
Increase public knowledge and confidence that wild populations of fish and wildlife are responsibly managed

Core Services of the Department

1. Harvest Management: provide opportunity to utilize fish and wildlife resources
2. Stock Assessment: ensure sustainability and harvestable surplus of fish and wildlife resources
3. Customer Service: provide information to all customers
4. Public Involvement: involve the public in management of fish and wildlife resources
5. State Sovereignty: protect the state's sovereignty to manage fish and wildlife resources

In support of these core services, the department conducts the following activities:

6. Habitat Conservation: protect, maintain, and improve Alaska's fish and wildlife habitat
7. Workforce Development: support a professional staff to deliver other core services

Ambitions within core services:

1. Harvest management: provide opportunities to utilize fish and wildlife resources
 - Expand existing and develop new programs to increase harvest opportunities (e.g., abundance-based management initiatives)
 - Protect and improve access to fishing and hunting opportunities and resources
 - Optimize participation in hunting and fishing activities
 - Improve harvest monitoring and assessment
2. Stock assessment: ensure sustainability and harvestable surplus of fish and wildlife resources
 - Improve existing fish and wildlife stock assessment capabilities
 - Expand stock assessments
 - Invest in new technologies*
 - Anticipate changing conditions (e.g., climate change, invasive species)

*Idea of investing in new technologies applies to several of the core services.

3. Customer service: provide accurate and meaningful information to all customers
 - Enhance public communications materials and delivery (e.g., web capacity, multimedia, technical and lay reports)
 - Increase publication in peer-reviewed scientific literature
 - Improve management and scientific reporting
 - Improve licensing and permitting services (including unique identifier for each user)
 - Better coordinate and improve education and viewing programs throughout department and better integrate CF and Subsistence into education programs.
4. Public involvement: involve the public in management of fish and wildlife resources
 - Improve BOF/BOG and other regulatory processes (e.g., Federal Subsistence Board, North Pacific Fishery Management Council)
 - Effectively involve (optimize) public in specific decision making processes (legislative, EVOS, task forces and advisory groups)
 - Evaluate further and enhanced opportunities for public involvement
5. State sovereignty: protect the state's sovereignty to manage fish and wildlife resources
 - Reassess strategies for state/federal agreements and initiatives
 - Evaluate and improve effectiveness in interacting with other government agencies and forums (e.g., ESA, Magnuson-Stevens Act, NPFMC, Pacific Salmon Treaty, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, ANILCA, FSB)
 - Strengthen state's role in dual management for subsistence
 - Strengthen state's interests in partnerships with other governmental agencies
6. Habitat conservation: protect, maintain, and improve Alaska's fish and wildlife habitat
 - Strengthen department involvement in resource development and land use project reviews
 - Improve technical capabilities (e.g., geographical information systems, GIS) to inform environmental reviews of development projects

- Maintain, restore and improve habitats in the face of other resource development and land use

7. *Workforce development*: support professional staff to deliver other core services

- Re-establish ADF&G as premier employer among nation's fish and wildlife agencies (e.g., compensation, benefits, training, workload management, motivation, initiative, recognition)
- Improve and increase employee training opportunities
- Enhance and improve administrative support
- Stabilize and increase funding for divisional programs and employee development

Structure and Budget

The Department of Fish and Game comprises six divisions (Commercial Fisheries, Sport Fish, Wildlife Conservation, Subsistence, Habitat, and Administrative Services) plus the Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game, the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Two deputy commissioners, an assistant commissioner, and special assistants support the Commissioner in managing the state's fish and wildlife resources.

The department's FY 09 operating budget is \$180.0 million, from sixteen funding sources, including \$55.0 million in federal funds, \$58.1 million in state general funds, and \$26.2 million in fish and game funds. In FY09, the department has 917 permanent full-time, 764 permanent part-time, and 62 non-permanent positions for a total of 1,743 positions.

The department's FY10 operating budget request is \$180.0 million from sixteen funding sources, including \$54.6 million in federal funds, \$58.7 million in state general funds, and \$26.1 million in fish and game funds. In FY10, the department has requested 910 permanent full-time, 767 permanent part-time, and 62 non-permanent positions, for a total of 1,739 positions.

Other Designated Responsibilities for the Commissioner

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Pacific Fishery Management Council—non-voting seat

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

University of Alaska-Fairbanks School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (SFOS) Advisory Council

Alaska Sea Grant Advisory Council

Alaska Board of Fisheries—as ex officio secretary, not a voting member

Alaska Board of Game—as ex officio secretary, not a voting member

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council

Federal Subsistence Board—non-voting seat

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)—incoming president

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)

Alaska Migratory Bird Comanagement Council

The Pacific Flyway Council

The North Slope Science Initiative Board of Directors