

WAFAWA Survey Questions:

December 2020

1. Does your agency give landowners big game permits or vouchers that they can use or sell to compensate landowners or offset crop damage? If so, are the permits for antlerless animals, bucks/bulls, or both? Please explain the details of these permits or vouchers?

No, WDFW does not provide permits to landowners to compensate for damage. Damage Prevention Permits may be issued to landowners who are participating in a damage prevention cooperative agreement with the department. These permits are for antlerless animals only, with some exceptions. The landowner may issue these to hunters who purchase a damage tag. While these permits cannot be sold, landowners can charge for access to their property to offset damage.

2. Are landowners allowed to remove big game animals depredating on private lands in an effort to protect their agricultural resources? If so, under what circumstances?

Yes. If a landowner has attempted nonlethal damage control techniques and acquires verbal or written approval from the department, they may kill an individual (one) deer or elk during the physical act of damaging commercial crops within a twelve-month period. The owners must notify the department within 24 hours of kill.

Multiple deer or elk may be killed if the producer is issued a kill permit or damage prevention permits under a damage prevention cooperative agreement.

3. Does your agency call depredation hunts to target populations on private lands?

Population management hunts are conducted through a special permit drawing for certain game management units or special hunt boundaries. Hunters who draw these tags are called upon by Wildlife Conflict Specialists on an as needed basis.

4. Does your agency have “private lands only” permits that are issued to the public, or a similar program that promotes hunting on private property?

WDFW has a Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) program. It is a private lands access program that provides public hunting access to private property, allows for specialized hunting seasons on LHP cooperator lands, and helps landowners manage deer and/or elk damage to agricultural crops. Landowners are allocated permits based upon geographical area, population management goals and/or damage issues. Under this program, permits are available to the landowner and WDFW. The landowner can use their permits in various ways (Public Raffle, Personal Use, Auction etc.) WDFW's permits are a special draw opportunity.

5. What type of landowner incentive programs does your agency have that promotes wildlife and allows public hunters on private property (e.g., ranching for wildlife in CO or CWMU's in UT - programs where landowners financially benefit from big game)?

WDFW offers several programs through its Private Lands Program with a monetary incentive to allow public access to private property (below). In most cases, these programs are offered to landowners experiencing damage to crops from deer and elk and are seeking assistance from WDFW and have a damage prevention cooperative agreement.

- Feel Free to Hunt, where hunters are not required to gain additional permission when hunting on lands posted with department provided and maintained Feel Free to Hunt signs.
- Register to Hunt, where the department provides signage and direction to hunters to register and works with the landowner to develop designated parking areas.
- Hunt by Written Permission. WDFW provides the landowner signage and perforated permission slips to issue to hunters.
- Hunt by Reservation. In this program, hunters reserve hunt dates/times through an online reservation system administered by WDFW

6. Does your agency provide damage payments or fencing for big game on private lands? If so, how much per year is paid and how is it funded?

WDFW provides damage payments for commercial crops to eligible farmers and has a cooperative fencing agreement program.

Damage payments vary each year and are funded from a combination of general funds (\$30,000) and the state wildlife account (\$120,000) totaling \$150,000 annually.

The cooperative fencing program is subject to legislative funding each biennium. Landowners receive fencing materials from the department under an agreement to install and maintain the fence for a period of 15 years, during which they waive their ability to file damage claims.

7. What mitigation measures does your agency employ to reduce big game damage (e.g., provide temporary fencing, hazing animals, agency removals of big game)?

WDFW employs biologists as Wildlife Conflict Specialists. These professionals are deployed across the state to engage the public and provide expertise, technical advice and a variety of tools to citizens experiencing negative wildlife interactions from nuisance wildlife species causing damage or concern to ungulates and large carnivores

causing loss to commercial crops and livestock. These tools consist of the entire spectrum from brochures, information on the website, the management of a wildlife control operator program, fencing and hazing materials, cooperative agreements to agency lethal removal.

8. Does your agency have an urban deer program? If so, what does that entail?

The WA Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have an urban deer program.

9. What other programs does your agency have in place to promote tolerance of big game on private lands?

WDFW offers a suite of damage prevention cooperative agreements (DPCAs) to promote tolerance of bog game on private lands:

- DPCAs offer kill permits, damage tags and claims eligibility as well as technical advice, materials, and opportunities to enroll in private lands access agreements.
- DPCA for Lure Crop offers cost-share for seed fertilizer and pesticide for crop perimeter plantings to mitigate deer and elk damage in the Blue Mountains of SE Washington.
- DPCA for Pasture/Hay Mitigation offers cost share to for seed, fertilizer and pesticides to offset damage caused by elk in the Skagit Valley.
- DPCA for Livestock offers cost-share for non-lethal deterrence materials, tools and range riding to producers operating in areas inhabited by wolves.
- Contracted Range Rider Program. WDFW contracts with private individuals or companies to provide range riding on public grazing allotments to reduce wolf-livestock interactions.

10. Does your agency respond to all wildlife conflict calls or is it limited to specific species or guilds of species?

WDFW responds to all wildlife calls, nuisance species are generally handled through self-help sources such as the “Living with Wildlife” page on the agency website or referral to trappers enrolled as Wildlife Control Operators.

11. What program(s) in your agency provide response to negative wildlife interaction (wildlife conflict) complaints and depredation. If the responsibility is split or shared between programs (i.e. Wildlife Program/Enforcement Program) or contracted or referred to another agency or private party, please describe how the work is assigned or shared. (e.g. by species, commercial agriculture versus residential, public safety versus property damage, etc.)

The Wildlife Program and the Enforcement Program both respond to wildlife conflict complaints in Washington. The Enforcement Program is the primary program (with Wildlife Program secondary) to respond to conflict associated with bear, cougar, wolf, and moose. If these conflicts involve depredations, the Wildlife Program conducts the depredation investigation, loss claims processing, and follow-up with landowner for abatement techniques. The primary response for commercial agriculture damage and most other wildlife conflict is from the Wildlife Program. Some contracting with USDA Wildlife Services occurs, and nuisance wildlife species removal is referred to USDA and private Wildlife Control Operators.

12. Please describe what funding sources support wildlife conflict response and depredation payments if applicable in your agency. Please include specifics regarding where the funding comes from for expenses such as staff and equipment, commercial crop loss compensation, livestock predation compensation, non-lethal deterrent programs, outreach and education, or any other services or materials provided in response to wildlife conflict issues.

Except for certain funding from the legislature for particular pilot projects or purposes like non-lethal deterrence and other costs associated with wolf recovery efforts, WDFW does not have a dedicated fund source for wildlife conflict response. Instead, these efforts are supported by using funds from numerous sources including PR, license fees, specialized license plates and state general funds.