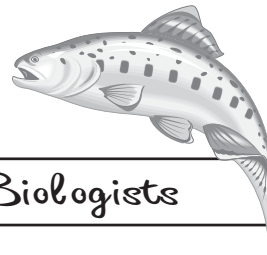
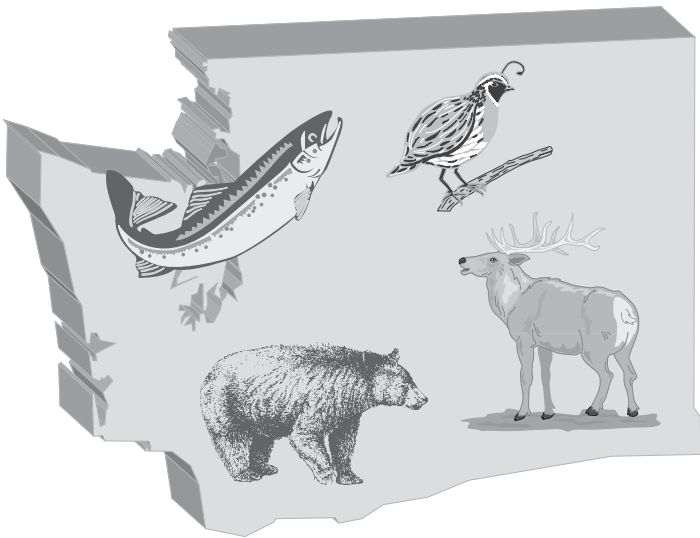


WAPB Newsletter



Washington Association of Professional Biologists

Summer 2004

2004 Annual Meeting Dates

Please make a note on your calendars! The annual meetings are scheduled as follows:

Westside:
August 12th

Olympia Community Center

Eastside:
August 13th

*Hal's Home Center,
Ellensburg*

Directions will be provided on the WAPB website on the Special Events Calendar page and on a post card to be mailed in July. See you there!

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President's Corner *By Steve Bell* The State of the Union

Unions, like fish and wildlife, must adapt to their changing environment. Those that don't are either displaced by competitors or go extinct. Here are some examples of how WAPB is adapting to our changing times.

We have accreted some positions that have not historically been represented by WAPB. In doing so, we have not strayed from our core values in opening the doors to our colleagues in select work groups. We welcome and encourage the participation of our new members. We look forward to drawing on their experience and fresh perspectives.

Our Attorney, Rhonda Fenrich Ph.D., appears to be the only participant in any of the unions that has experience in Civil Service Reform negotiations. Her expertise and efficiency has already saved WAPB time and money in avoiding time-consuming pitfalls that have bogged down some other unions. WAPB has moved forward and is making steady progress. After the new contract has been negotiated, our by-laws will be updated and the structure of the board and number of job representatives may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Last legislative session there were relatively few bills of significance to our membership; however, next session is predicted to be more demanding of our time and attention. WAPB's interests would benefit from having a lobbyist on staff this upcoming session. In order to strike a balance between maintaining our war chest and the cost of professional lobbying, the board has targeted a minimum war chest of \$100,000. It is only after the financial security of our members has been safeguarded that the board will consider appropriating funds for a lobbyist. Barring any unforeseen expenses we should be able to hire a lobbyist next session. Lobbyist or not, the continued direct participation of individual members in educating legislators will continue to be vital to our success in the legislature.

We have two excellent candidates to fill the positions that incumbents Lauri Vigue, Treasurer, and Dave Kloempken, Vice-President, will vacate in August. As always we welcome and encourage healthy competition and diversity in our elections. Any and all members interested in running for either position should notify Election Chair, Bryan Murphie, of their interest as soon as possible.

This is only a snapshot of the current state of your union and some of the ways we continue to adapt and evolve to our changing world. I encourage you to bring your questions and participate in one of the two annual meetings that will be held in Olympia and Ellensburg this August.

Legislative Update

By Adam Couto, Member at Large

This past legislative session, the WAPB Legislative Subcommittee of two (myself and WAPB President Steve Bell) tracked the progress of thirty-eight bills that we determined were of interest to our members. There were environmental bills and labor bills, bills that we were in favor of and bills that we were opposed to. Although Steve and I did not always agree on whether or not we should approve of or oppose a certain bill, there were approximately an equal amount of good, bad, and neutral bills.

Six of the bills we tracked were signed into law, with the rest dying in the legislature. We supported four of these new laws, opposed one, and took a neutral stance on the sixth. All of these new laws were environmentally focused – none of the labor bills that would have improved working conditions for state workers were passed.

We are in favor of the new law requiring recycling of TVs and computer monitors (HB 2488), the new law creating important bird areas (HB 2650), the one outlawing treble-hook baiting for game (SB 6560), and the important new law designed to reduce oil spills in our state (SB 6641). We have concerns about the new law on small forestry operators (HB 2318), which created a (unfunded) mechanism for creating new conservation easements but limited the state's ability to determine certain aspects of their business practices. And, in the interest of avoiding a possible civil war among WAPB members, we took a neutral stance on SB 6118, which created a pilot program allowing for cougar hunting with hounds in Ferry, Okanogan, and Stevens counties.

Bills that would have further privatized public employee personal information (home address, home phone number, etc), clarified the family leave law, and allowed seniority benefits to accrue while on family leave all failed to pass, as did bills that would have codified in-stream flow requirements and specifically provided HPA stop-work authority to WDFW Habitat Biologists. On the flip side, two different bills that would have deregulated small-scale mining on public lands (including HPA exemptions) and a bill to increase ORV access to public lands also died.

Since the last session did not include a biennial budget, we weren't expecting much in the way of legislation. But next year may be a different story. So the question to our membership is, what would you like the Legislative Subcommittee to do for you? Do you want us to simply update you on legislation, and if so, how often? Or would you like a more proactive approach, one that includes providing testimony on bills or even promoting bills that our membership would like to have passed?

Member input on this past session was very limited, which made it difficult for Steve and myself to determine the position you would want us to take as your representatives. And let's face it, a subcommittee of two people is barely a committee. Virtually all of our work was done by computer, so anyone, anywhere could participate. So, if you have any comments on our past efforts, would like to make suggestions about next year, or would like to participate in the legislative subcommittee, please e-mail me at adam_c19@hotmail.com.

Offices Up for Election

Vice-President

Mark O'Toole, from the Marine Program, will be running for the office of Vice-President in the next election. Unfortunately, at the time of printing this newsletter we hadn't put together a bio for him. Look forward to hearing more from him prior to the elections.

Treasurer

My name is Kirt Hughes. I am a native Washingtonian, born and raised in Colville. My upbringing centers on agriculture and forest products. I was very active in 4-H and Futures Farmers of America. I held many offices in both those organizations; from those activities, among others, developed a strong sense of leadership and solid work ethic.

After graduating from high school in 1989, I spent two years at Spokane Community College, earning an Associate of Arts degree then matriculated at the University of Washington, College of Ocean and Fisheries Science. While at the School of Fisheries I worked part time in the Fish Collection, as a curatorial assistant. After completing my Bachelor of Science degree in fisheries biology, in 1995, I interned at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Upon returning to the Puget Sound region I took a project position in the Marine Molecular Biology Laboratory. Subsequent to the completion of that project I was fortunate enough to secure a contract position with NOAA Fisheries, National Marine Mammal Laboratory in Seattle. Exciting, educational, and abundant with diverse opportunities; I spent four years working with various projects associated with seals, sea lions, porpoise, and whales. From there I shifted gears and went back to fisheries biology by taking a position with the Makah Tribe. Primary emphasis of this work was related to recovery of ESA listed Lake Ozette sockeye salmon, salmon population assessment and harvest management. After two years in Neah Bay I decided I needed a change, at that point I was privileged enough to be hired by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. I am currently an area fisheries management biologist for the drainages associated with Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay.

On the personal side, my wife (also a department employee in the Wildlife Program) and I have two young children (Greggory, 3 and Danae approaching 2). These little characters keep us busy, while providing hours of entertainment and ever increasingly assist with taking care of our assortment of animals on our little farm near Port Orchard.

Stress Reduction Initiative

By Adam Couto, Member at Large

On the afternoon of January 14, 2004, several WAPB board members and representatives of PRO-S and WPEA met with WDFW Personnel staff and PERC members to discuss the specifics of competing accretion petitions. During the meeting I had the good fortune to sit next to my friend Howard Fuss and catch up with him. After the meeting completed, Howard and PRO-S member Susan Cerebeij-Kanzler walked from the meeting site on CapitolWay (across from Sylvester Park) up the hill to the NRB. As most of you know by now, Howard never reached the

Continued on page 3

NRB, but succumbed to a fatal heart attack two blocks shy of the office.

As tragic as this was, and personally disturbing to me and others in the meeting, Howard's death was simply the latest in a series of stress-related deaths to WDFW employees. In discussing this with my fellow WAPB board members we were able to name 4 or 5 other WDFW employees who have died in the past few years to stress-related causes, and this doesn't begin to capture the non-lethal injuries and chronic conditions caused by stress. Given the state of our operating budget, the annual cuts and RIFs (the agency has lost around 100 FTEs since 2001), we only anticipate this getting worse.

Howard's death inspired Susan and myself to form a joint WAPB / PRO-S committee to help our members reduce their stress and deal with it in a healthy way. We've raised the issue with the agency's Safety Office staff and we've met with Penny Cusick to discuss options. Of their own volition, Scott Loerts and Katherine Waldrop (Safety Office staff) brought the issue to the agency's Executive Management Team. Although no concrete solutions were forthcoming, it is encouraging to know that the issue is being discussed at that level.

In our meeting with Penny, we were told that the greatest impediment to developing a stress reduction program is, as it always seems to be, a lack of funds. Which leaves it to us to develop a program that is both free and effective. Susan and I discussed what such a program might look like, and we came up with the following:

- We want the agency to take a pro-active approach to help and encourage staff to take stress-reducing actions – the current passive approach is no longer sufficient
- Any program we develop must be available to all WAPB and PRO-S members statewide. This cannot be an Olympia-only solution
- Costs to members should be as low as possible.

Several options are being explored and we hope to have some concrete ideas for board consideration later this summer. If you have any ideas, questions, or if you would like to participate in the subcommittee, please contact me at adam_c19@hotmail.com.

Increasing Disciplines and Changing Times

(Re-printed from the Summer 2003 WAPB Newsletter)

By Dave Kloempken

Over the last several years, WAPB has seen an increase in the number of discipline cases brought to the associations attention. While they are predominately from the Habitat program, they are also occurring in both the Fish and Wildlife programs. Some of them have become newspaper headlines while others occur behind the scenes and few folks ever hear about them. The disciplines have been the result of everything from speeding tickets, vehicle accidents, personal use of agency computers and the Internet, to using state vehicles for personal use, and alleged sexual harassment.

While some of these examples may seem petty and were often overlooked in the past, times are changing. We've all seen newspaper articles and opinion letters complaining about state employees alleged and actual misuse of state resources and time and it's obvious the public is going to hold state employees to a higher standard than in years past. The public is also making this known to their elected representatives and it's trickling down to state agencies and their directors. In response to this, our director is making it clear to staff via program managers that staff will "shape up or ship out".

In virtually every disciplinary case, management has cited multiple department policy violations they feel are relative to the case at hand. The position of management is that department policies will be followed and staff can access them via the intranet, so there's no excuse not to follow them. It doesn't seem to matter that there are three sets of policies from three different departments and many of them conflict with each other or are out of date. In some cases the director actively pursued termination of employees accused of wrongdoing. If this sounds a little scary, it should. The director is taking discipline very seriously and going through the disciplinary process can be very stressful to members and their families. So what happened to the staff in these discipline cases you ask?

WAPB LEGAL REPORT

By Rhonda

We have had a busy six months. Below are some of the highlights:

1. Accretion. We have successfully accreted the following classifications into your bargaining unit:

A. Wildlife Program. All Research Scientists, Fish & Wildlife Health Specialists on Westside Research Team and the Lands Agent in Region 4.

B. Habitat Program. Environmental Specialists in Technical Sciences in Regions 3, 4, and 5; all Research Scientists in the Science Division.

C. Fish Program. Scientific Technicians, ITAs and Biologists in Marine Resources Unit, all biologists in Inland Section.

This should result in an increase of approximately 66 additional bargaining unit members. At this point we have until June 30, 2004 to petition to add any additional people to your bargaining unit.

2. Bargaining. We have commenced two phases of bargaining for the successor contract. We are part of a statewide coalition bargaining health insurance premium contributions. This bargaining is going fairly slow, but we anticipate it will pick up speed at any time.

We are also part of a coalition of smaller unions bargaining the "nuts and bolts" of your contract. This bargaining is progressing well and we serve in the role as Chief Negotiator for these unions. We have bi-monthly bargaining sessions scheduled until the end of August in an attempt to reach a settlement. WDFW is represented by Penny Cusick in these sessions.

3. Grievance Arbitration. We successfully overturned a two-week suspension without pay through the grievance arbitration process.

Stay tuned as the contract bargaining progresses we will offer immediate updates. Please see the WAPB web site for updates.

Disciplines in these cases have resulted in everything from corrective letters being placed in personnel files, to employees being reassigned, to two-week suspensions without pay. Here are some tips to avoid disciplinary action:

1. Read and understand those department policies that are relevant to your work. If you don't understand something, ask your supervisor for clarification and get it in writing.
 2. Restrict use of department equipment and resources to official work business only.
 3. Try to resolve work related issues at your level and not elevate them up the chain of command unless necessary.
- One final tip: If you ever become the subject to a disciplinary action, contact your local job representative or one of the association board members. We're here to assist you in the process and see that your rights aren't violated.



WEBSITE:
wapb.olympiaonline.com

Check Us Out!

EMAIL: wapb@olympiaonline.org

WAPB Treasurer Report By Lauri Vigue

As of May 31, 2004:

Cd	\$25,475	Savings	\$4,164
Checking	\$54,707	Balance	\$84,346



Job Reps

- Lynda Hoffman - Habitat Program, Region 2
- Jeff Korth - Fish Program, Region 2
- David Brock - Habitat Program, Region 4
- Julie Stofel - Wildlife Program, Region 4
- Region 5 VACANT
- Dave Kloempken - Habitat Program, Region 6

WAPB Numbers & Emails

- Steve Bell, President
(stevebell@gocougs.wsu.edu)
- Dave Kloempken, Vice President
(dkloempken@centurytel.net)
- Bryan Murphie, Secretary
(bmur7@msn.com)
- Lauri Vigue, Treasurer/Membership
(VIGUE_L@msn.com)
- Adam Couto, Member at Large
(adam_c19@hotmail.com)
- VACANT, Newsletter Editor
- Pat Miller, VP Pilot/Wildlife Program
- Bruce Baker, VP Pilot/Fish Program

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