



WSGA May Meeting - May 13

Meeting Purpose

Review Skamania County access issues and WDFW budget cuts.

Executive Board Members

President - Doug Saint-Denis - Present
Vice President - Bob Kratzer - Present
Secretary – Patric Gaffney - Present
Treasurer - Jon Blank - Present
Member at Large A - Marc Bush - Present
Advisory Member - Greg Kain - Absent
Advisory Member – Jacob Munden – Present
Advisory Member – Brandon Wedam – Present
Advisory Member – Gabe Miller – Present
Advisory Member - Mark Coleman – Excsued
Advisory Member - Cary Hoffman – Present

Members Present

Ty Wyatt
Mike Aisnworth
Phillip Olson
Chris Parsons
Mike Horne
Nerils Humphries

Key Takeaways

- Skamania County Access: The county's Wind River guide ban is unenforceable. The WSGA is pursuing a legal strategy via attorney Alex Newgard to force the RCO to clarify its grant rules, which the county is misinterpreting.
- WDFW Budget Cuts: WDFW's \$30M deficit threatens Puget Sound coho fisheries. The WSGA is exploring private funding and a future license endorsement to secure monitoring funds, while also organizing a member letter-writing campaign.
- Proactive Strategy: The WSGA is shifting from a reactive stance to a proactive one, focusing on long-term legislative advocacy and presenting itself as a conservation-minded partner to agencies.
- Member Action: Guides are advised to maintain a professional social media presence to avoid providing ammunition to critics. A formal letter to WDFW will be drafted for members to send.

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Agenda

Skamania County Access & Wind River Ban

- Problem: Skamania County banned commercial guide access to the Wind River launch, citing safety and overcrowding.
- WSGA Response: The ban is unenforceable. Guides can legally launch by purchasing a \$40 recreational pass.
- County's Position:
 - Cites safety concerns but rejects WSGA solutions (e.g., temporary speed limits).
 - Presents unsubstantiated data (e.g., 68 empty trailers for 14 parking spots).
 - Has issued 3–8 warnings/day but zero tickets.
- WSGA Legal Strategy:
 - Goal: Force the RCO to clarify its grant rules, which the county is misinterpreting to justify the ban.
 - Action: Attorney Alex Newgard is requesting RCO email correspondence with the county.
 - Rationale: An injunction is risky due to the nearby Stevenson launch; a permanent fix requires RCO intervention.
- Drano Lake Issues:
 - Safety: State Patrol briefly closed the launch due to highway congestion.
 - Enforcement: WDFW issued ~40 tickets for parking on West Hatchery Road before the 4 a.m. limit.
 - Fish Cleaning: Member work parties have successfully improved facilities.
- Port of Stevenson: Commended for maintaining access and professionalism.

WDFW Budget & Fishery Monitoring

- Problem: WDFW's \$30M budget deficit threatens Puget Sound coho fisheries (Snohomish, Stillaguamish, Skagit) by cutting monitoring funds.
 - Impact: Early openers are at risk, despite a forecast of the largest Skagit coho return in 25 years.
 - Context: Cuts are intentional, targeting recreational opportunities (e.g., razor clams) to pressure anglers into legislative advocacy.
- WSGA Solutions:
 - Short-Term: Privately fund monitoring costs via the Washington Fishermen's Alliance.
 - Long-Term: Pursue an RCO salmon monitoring grant (up to \$1.6M) for 2027.
 - Future: Propose a \$25–\$35 license endorsement to create a dedicated, earmarked monitoring fund.
- Volunteer Monitoring: Not feasible due to high training requirements (swift water rescue) and union opposition to volunteers.

Other Business & Member Updates

- Creel Checker Data Collection:

- Issue: A checker scanned a client's e-license barcode.

- Clarification: This is a data check to link interviews to licenses, not to collect personal info.

- North Central WA Sockeye Fishery:

- Issue: High Okanogan River temperatures threaten the Brewster sockeye fishery, potentially reducing it from a robust 4-fish limit to a 1–2 week season with a 2-fish limit.

- Action: Jacob Munden is contacting WDFW Region 2 to get ahead of contingency planning.

- Coastal Bottomfish Regulations:

- Proposal: Cary will propose making descending device use mandatory at the May 20 meeting to reduce rockfish mortality.

Next Steps

- Cary:

- Draft a letter to WDFW for the member letter-writing campaign.

- Investigate WDFW's existing monitoring grants.

- Propose mandatory descending device use at the May 20 meeting.

- Doug:

- Distribute the WDFW letter to members via MailChimp.

- Review social media analytics for the next meeting.

- Jacob Munden:

- Contact WDFW Region 2 regarding the Brewster sockeye fishery.

- Propose a "hoot owl" closure (off the water by a certain time) to mitigate high water temperatures.