

WHATCOM COUNTY WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Date: January 12,2024

Location: Zoom and Northwest Annex Conference Room @ Whatcom County Planning and Development Services office at 5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Start Time: 9:35 a.m.

Quorum: Yes X No _____

Members Present		Public Present
Anne Johnson	Y	*Analiese Burns, COB
Barry Wenger	Y	Emily Wirtz
Cris Gonzalez	N	
Erin Deinzer	Y	
Jennifer Plombon	Y	Staff Present
Karen Hardesty	N	Priscilla Drewry
Stephen Nyman	Y	Cliff Strong
Susan Kane-Ronning	Y	
Vikki Jackson	Y	
Kristi Park	N	
Vacant		

I. Announcements, roll call and agenda.

Roll call was taken and a quorum was present. There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

The WAC discussed member, Cris Gonzalez, who has not attended a meeting since August 2023. Priscilla Drewry noted that she has attempted to contact Cris Gonzalez several times with no response. Barry Wenger moved to recommend removal of Cris Gonzalez from the WAC and this was seconded by Vikki Jackson. All were in favor of recommending removal.

II. Review and approval of December 8, 2023 meeting.

The committee reviewed and approved the December 8th meeting summary with minor changes. The motion to approve was made by Vikki Jackson and seconded by Jennifer Plombon.

III. Open Public Comments and Committee Member Comments

Susan Kane-Ronning discussed that she did not send letters around regarding the proposed federal actions pertaining to the Spotted Owl, Canada lynx, and Wolverines because the committee did not have a full discussion at the last meeting and she would like input into the letter. She said that she would draft a letter regarding the Barred Owl/Spotted Owl issue and send it out on January 15, 2024 for those members who want to be involved in responding to the federal proposals. Further discussion was saved until the end of the meeting.

IV. Discussion, deliberation, and decision-making

a) 2025 Comprehensive Plan Review Kick-off: PDS staff will provide an overview of the task and process for the Committee's

Cliff Strong, Senior Planner, discussed the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Review, explaining that the plan will describe the County's goals and programs over the next twenty years. All County committees are being asked to provide proposed updates. The plan should be complete by June 2025. The County recently received State funding and the consultants have been retained. The Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC) has been asked to focus its review on Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Plan. The WAC should consider what we believe are major issues to be addressed and review these items by February 2024. We should compile a master list of issues. Priscilla will provide the list to the consultants.

After the draft Comprehensive Plan is completed in early summer, the consultants will provide it back to the WAC for further review and comment.

Cliff does not want comments from the WAC that are outside of our scope. He commented that recent legislation passed that pertains to the Comprehensive Plan involving climate change and permit processing, but he could not recall anything involving wildlife. He will confirm this with his colleague. Anne commented that several sections of Chapter 10 seem to be beyond the WAC's scope of duty. Cliff said that at least four other committees are reviewing Chapter 10. The WAC should look specifically at the goals and policies identified in sections 10K and 10L of the Comprehensive Plan and read the County Council's Priorities as listed in Resolution 2022-036.

Priscilla Drewry stated that the goals and policies of the Plan are the major focus, and our review is somewhat big picture and less about word-smithing which the consultants will handle.

Stephen Nyman noted that none of us know which goals were met from the existing Plan. Priscilla responded that the long-range planners are actively working through the chapters now. Barry said that appendices and background information are helpful as they lead to greater comprehension of the document.

b) Vote to adjust meeting from 90 mins to 120 mins

The WAC discussed extending monthly meetings to two hours until the 2025 Comprehensive Plan review is complete. All members agreed. The WAC also discussed and agreed to a special meeting from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 26th, 2024.

c) Chapter 10 policy overview and work session

Regarding the meeting on January 26, 2024, Priscilla Drewry stated that she will place committee member comments into one document and send it out prior to the meeting for member review as a Word document. Members will use track changes in reviewing and commenting on the document. She asked that members focus on 10K and 10L goals and priorities. Stephen Nyman agreed but commented that members should not limit their review to these two areas. He also noted that the general statement should not be vague but more detailed than the current language possibly with subheadings listing components, guidelines, decision makers, etc. Barry Wenger, who has experience with policy drafting, discussed the importance of including key definitions in the appendix and the importance of clear language such that it could be defended in court by the County. Priscilla Drewry stated that an example of this could be defining phrases such as “wildlife corridors”. Stephen Nyman suggested that the members highlight words or phrases that appear repeatedly and need to be defined.

Priscilla Drewry asked that all comments and suggestions be provided back to her by 12:00 p.m. on Monday, January 22, 2024.

Priscilla stated that the WAC could form a technical subcommittee to work through the plan revisions and conflicting language. Vikki Jackson and Barry Wenger are interested in working on the subcommittee.

VI. Future Agenda Topics

Susan Kane-Ronning brought up the Grizzly reintroduction letter, that was not done before the deadline to submit. She discussed the Barred Owl and Spotted Owl letter due by January 16th and will draft that letter to send out for individuals to endorse as “Wildlife Advisory Committee Member”. Susan addressed opportunity for a letter regarding the uplisting of the Wolverine and a letter regarding the recovery plan for the Canada Lynx. Susan will draft these letters and send them out to Priscilla to disperse before the next meeting for discussion at the January 26th meeting.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:27 am.