

# Environmental Groups Urge Governor Inslee to Appoint New Fish & Wildlife Commissioners

*Request Points to Need for Reform After Auditor's Report Reveals Problems in Agency Culture*

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Representatives from twelve environmental and wildlife protection organizations [sent a letter to Washington Governor Jay Inslee this week](#), urging him to immediately appoint two new members to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

“

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*Washington Wildlife First  
Interim Executive Director  
David P. Linn*

One seat on the nine-member Commission is currently vacant, while Chairman Larry Carpenter has continued to serve on the Commission even though his term ended nearly a year ago. The Commission sets fish and wildlife policy and has supervisory authority over the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“We are at a turning point for the direction of the Fish and

Wildlife Commission, and for the survival of many fish and wildlife species within the state,” said David P. Linn, interim executive director for Washington Wildlife First, a new state nonprofit dedicated to reforming the state’s wildlife management.

“In order to effectively cope with the dual threats of climate change and the accelerating loss of biodiversity, we need to have a full Commission in place that values and understands science, has a commitment to ethical wildlife management, and is dedicated to conserving our fish and wildlife species,” Linn said.

This request to the Governor comes a week after [the Washington State Auditor's Office released a performance audit](#) on the workplace culture at the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“The auditor’s report confirmed what people within the Department have long been telling us,” said Claire Loeb Davis, president of Washington Wildlife First.

“There are many excellent scientists, enforcement officers, conflict specialists and other employees within the Department, who have dedicated their careers to protecting and conserving Washington’s fish and wildlife.” Davis said. “But they cannot do their jobs when they

are working in a hostile environment, where unprofessional, unethical, and illegal behavior is rampant, supervisors are not held accountable, employees are bullied, and people fear retaliation for speaking out.”

The auditor found that one in ten WDFW employees has directly witnessed someone within the Department committing a legal or ethical violation in the past year, while a slightly larger number have directly suffered from retaliation after reporting illegal and unethical behavior, disagreeing with a supervisor—and even, in some cases, for talking to the auditors.

More than 25% of employees interviewed reported incidents of sexual discrimination, while more than 20% of those surveyed had been bullied at work, often due to gender. Although women comprise more than half the workforce in other state agencies, less than one-third of WDFW employees are women.

“The good ole’ boys club is alive and well at WDFW,” Davis said. “Employees have been asking Department managers and Fish and Wildlife Commissioners for help for a long time, but nobody has been listening. We are hoping Governor Inslee will show he is listening now.”

Linn said many employees within the Department are desperate for new leadership at the Commission.

“We need Fish and Wildlife commissioners who will not only follow science, but who will have the dedication and moral compass to guide the agency in a new direction,” Linn said. “We are calling on Governor Inslee to take a stand, not only for the state’s fish and wildlife, but for the brave employees who risked their jobs by speaking to the state auditor. They need to know that their voices have been heard.”

Joining Washington Wildlife First in the letter to Governor Inslee are Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society of the United States, Kettle Range Conservation Group, Mountain Lion Foundation, Northwest Animal Rights Network, Predator Defense, Western Watersheds Project, Western Wildlife Outreach, and WildEarth Guardians.

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