



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

June 17, 2009

The Honorable Brian Sonntag  
State Auditor  
P.O. Box 40021  
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor Sonntag:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the performance audit of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW's) vehicle usage in compliance with state policy. Like Governor Gregoire, we strongly support the use of performance audits as an important tool to improve state government, which is why we worked closely with the Auditor's staff on this audit.

We agree with the suggestions in the report and have already conducted a review of many of the vehicles in the fleet. It is important to note that vehicles the audit identifies as not used for driving provide parts for other vehicles in WDFW's aging fleet. We also wish to clarify that vehicles driven fewer miles annually than state guidelines specify are standard agency vehicles adapted for intermittent use for fish and wildlife management needs, such as feeding fish, using snow plow attachments, and maintaining wildlife areas. Many department activities are performed on rough terrain and using personal vehicles would pose safety and/or state liability concerns.

A full review of all vehicles in the fleet will be completed within the next few months to determine the appropriate number and use of vehicles to be consistent with both state policy and the agency's mission. The WDFW will work with the Office of Financial Management to seek waivers to state vehicle usage policy, where justified.

We appreciate the Auditor's commendation on establishing an equipment revolving fund, as requested by WDFW and recently approved by the Legislature. As mentioned in the audit, this is a best practice for fleet management as is the Department's fleet information system. Also noted in the audit, as WDFW fully implements the revolving fund, it will be possible to sell vehicles more quickly, in turn generating cash for that revolving fund.

Enclosed is a joint response. We will track and report our progress on completing these tasks to the Governor.

Sincerely,

Joe Stohr, Deputy Director, Operations  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Victor A. Moore, Director  
Office of Financial Management

Enclosure:

cc: Cindy Zehnder, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Joyce Turner, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Kimberly Dutton Cregeur, GMAP, Office of the Governor

**Official Response: Performance Audit of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife  
From the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Office of Financial Management  
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Agency staff of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) have provided a coordinated response for the audit issue. OFM jointly responds to performance audits to provide perspective on potential statewide issues, including policy, strategic planning, performance management, budget, accounting, purchasing, human resources, information technology, labor relations, and risk management. We prepared this document in response to the final audit report delivered on June 2, 2009.

**Issue 1: The Department could generate up to \$171,000 if it sold 69 under-used vehicles. If it chooses not to replace these vehicles, it could avoid spending up to \$1.2 million.**

AGENCY RESPONSE: The exact number of vehicles to be sold as surplus and thus the potential for dollars recovered or saved is unknown until after the review of the entire fleet. WDFW will review its entire fleet with a focus on under-used vehicles to assess if such vehicles should be re-assigned, serve unique roles or special needs where waivers are appropriate, and/or will be sold as surplus. The goal of the review will be to determine the appropriate level of vehicles consistent with the mission of the agency to include any waivers granted by OFM.

WDFW will also establish the policies and procedures necessary to make operational the recently legislatively authorized equipment revolving account. This account will allow the recovery of resources from the sale of surplus vehicles and equipment and provide for better management of these assets. As recommended in the audit, WDFW will strengthen the mileage reporting and tracking system to ensure accuracy of the data.

It is important to note that vehicles identified as not used for driving provide parts for other vehicles in WDFW's aging fleet. Vehicles that are driven fewer miles annually than state guidelines specify are standard agency vehicles adapted for intermittent use for fish and wildlife management needs, such as feeding fish, using snow plow attachments, and maintaining wildlife areas. Many department activities are performed on rough terrain and using personal vehicles would pose safety or state liability concerns.

**Action Steps and Timeframe:**

- Review the remainder of the vehicles not examined under the audit - by December 2009.
- Meet with OFM on waiver requests - by January 2010.
- Submit waiver requests to OFM - by February 2010.
- Establish equipment revolving account policies and procedures - by December 2009.
- Establish a policy on vehicle reporting - by December 2009.

OFM RESPONSE: OFM agrees that WDFW should undertake an examination of whether the entire fleet is meeting their needs as safely and efficiently as possible. This review is necessary before making any determinations about whether changes to the fleet composition or assignments are needed.

A preliminary review of the vehicles identified as below the state's mileage per year standards revealed that many may be eligible for a waiver. The current policy on vehicle usage is designed to apply broadly to state employee travel, and so it does not take into account every legitimate need of each unique agency. The seasonal nature of WDFW's work and the environment in

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which many of the vehicles are used (e.g. off-road, in severe weather conditions, in remote areas) are likely to result in a higher than average percentage of waivers to the state's minimum mileage standards. OFM will work with WDFW to ensure that policy does not keep WDFW from accomplishing its mission and waivers are properly applied for and granted where necessary.

Employee safety and state liability should also be considered as factors in whether WDFW employees should be encouraged to use personal vehicles. Unlike many other agencies, WDFW employees use vehicles in off-road and remote areas and in severe weather. In these cases, it may be advisable to use a properly-equipped state vehicle in place of a personal vehicle.

We commend WDFW for working with the Legislature to establish of a revolving fund and for using a fleet information system, which are identified by the audit as fleet management best practices.

**Action Steps and Timeframe:**

- Review waiver applications from WDFW and issue waivers as appropriate.