## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DONALD KOCH, Director



1416 Ninth Street, 12th Floor Sacramento, CA 95814 http://www.dfg.ca.gov

September 9, 2009

Denby Lloyd, Commissioner Alaska Department of Fish and Game Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies President PO Box 115526 Juneau. Alaska 99811-5526

Dear Commissioner Lloyd

The 2009 plenary session of the Western Association Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) annual meeting highlighted new and on-going challenges associated with energy development, water availability, and conservation of the nation's fish and wildlife resources across the west. These challenges bring a whole new set of opportunities as well as potential conflicts to our responsibilities to protect resources for the public trust. Even though each state, federal, and provincial agency has specific mandates, authorities, and missions, we will all be faced with similar challenges in managing natural resources for uncertain future conditions. In light of this, collaborative efforts across state lines will be imperative to managing natural resources across the west.

The intent of the plenary was to begin seeking ideas for opportunities where our work within WAFWA can support the State Agencies' efforts to work collaboratively to strike a balance between natural resource conservation and energy development and water delivery needs. Major themes that emerged from the presentations and during the question and answer session are listed below and provide some potential future direction for the WAFWA committees and leadership to consider.

## Balancing competing challenges

There is a rush to develop wind and solar energy projects but also a lot of uncertainty in potential impacts. Current expectations for rate of construction are highly ambitious. Impacts result from development of generation sites as well as transmission. As such, protection of wildlife corridors and critical habitat areas requires cooperation and coordination among the Western States and sufficient staffing to deal with these challenges.

## Suggestions for how WAFWA might facilitate the coordination of these efforts

- Coordinate regional renewable energy planning efforts and permit approvals
- Staffing at multiple levels
- Identification and implementation of a decision support system
- Bridging gap on data-pool data resources
- Standardization across states and with Federal partners
  - Habitat definitions
  - Habitat mapping, core areas

- o Mitigation practices, BMPS, stipulations
- o Permit streamlining
- Coordinating research on impacts associated with energy development and how best to focus mitigation efforts.

**Working with partners:** How do agencies engage and leverage all the energy being generated by our partners?

- Support and expand WGA WREZ/Wildlife Habitat Council efforts
- We need a new paradigm on how the States and the Federal Government interact on energy development on public lands.
  - o Flyway system as a model; Federal agencies still make the decisions but there is a structured process for agreeing on the biology and incorporating policy and socio-biological concerns:
    - Technical committee
    - Regional Council
    - Service Regulatory Committee
- Need coordinated efforts with many partners
  - o Engage sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts
  - o Citizen naturalists

## Dealing with Uncertainty:

- · Water-not enough and in the wrong places
  - o Need to increase capacity, flexibility, and efficiency
- Climate Change: Even though plenary did not focus on climate change the topic was interwoven in all the presentations and discussions.
  - o Precipitation and temperature is changing
  - o Sea level rise concerns
  - What conservation actions should the states take now to help species adapt/persist?

It was a great pleasure to serve as the WAFWA President this past year and it is my hope that these themes will be taken under consideration for future efforts the Association may consider. The California Department of Fish and Game looks forward to continued involvement with the Association and all WAFWA member states and provinces.

Sincerely,

Donald Koch, Director Past President-WAFWA