

August 22, 2026

Governor Bob Ferguson
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Honorable Governor Ferguson:

This letter is in regard to my position on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. I was appointed April 5th, 2025, and was to continue until the end of 2030, serving from Skagit County in western Washington. In fact, I had applied twice to serve on the Commission before that time, but my health was considered a potential impediment to fulfilling Commission responsibilities as a citizen representative. I was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer almost ten years ago and told I had less than a year to live. Despite this prognosis however, I have lived a particularly rich life, with more experiences in that timeframe than most people have the fortune to enjoy over their entire lives. Among these were the birth of my grandson and serving on the Fish and Wildlife Commission. My gratitude to you is boundless for appointing me to the Commission despite the previous administration's concerns around my health. I hope my service to the Washington public and our magnificent wildlife heritage has met your expectations.

Regrettably, my cancer has returned with terminal intensity, leaving me no choice but to resign from my seat on the Commission with this letter. These seventeen months of service have meant the world to me, having allowed me to hopefully repay some of the debt I feel I owe to nature and to our beautiful region, which have so enriched my life. It has been an honor to support the men and women of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) and the reliable science that they provide to the Commission for critical management decisions.

It saddens me to leave you with the task of having to fill my seat prematurely. I hope you will indulge me in the opportunity to offer my thoughts on the qualities I believe are important for whomever you may consider, to move the Commission and Department forward. I would like to express how deeply impressed I have been by the professionalism and skill of the Department's leadership and staff, and it is my sincere hope that the Commission will position itself strongly in their support. I am also fully supportive of the agency's mission, *"To preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities."* I hope you will seek commissioners who are fully committed to that mission as stated, and I would like to suggest certain litmus tests be met to ensure an effective replacement for my position:

1. The candidate should support the Department's mandate in full and as is—not cherry-pick only the parts that they like—and must acknowledge that any change to that mandate must come from the Legislature. It is not the purview of the Commission on its own to modify the mandate.
2. The candidate must accept the Boldt Decision as the “law of the land” and embrace co-management of fish and wildlife resources with our Tribal partners.

3. They must accept the scientific products of our dedicated Department staff as the foundation of the decision-making process.
4. They must put aside their personal agendas and focus on the total of *species and habitats of greatest concern*—not only on the more iconic or charismatic species.
5. Appointment of a centrist candidate who is willing to work with both sides of an issue and build bridges rather than present roadblocks and lawsuits would alleviate what currently seems to be a state of polarization on the Commission, which is unproductive.
6. The candidate should believe in a collaborative approach to conservation, working with Tribes and stakeholders to find middle ground; this will best serve our species and ecosystems.
7. I firmly believe that Tribes need to retain the authorization and ability to manage wildlife and collect data on their reservations and usual and accustomed hunting grounds in the ways that they see fit (e.g. the Colville Tribe's wolf management program).
8. Candidates should embrace the premise that hunting/fishing and conservation are not mutually exclusive; I would like to suggest that a candidate who has experience in hunting and either sport or commercial fishing brings an understanding of multiple perspectives that can help achieve the best balance.
9. I would hope that a new nominee would take up WDFW's Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Committee (ADAAC) mantle to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens of our State.

The Commission is struggling from lack of public trust, as you well know. I believe the root causes of those struggles are Commissioners and interests not fully aligned with the stated mission, but instead aiming to impose elements of their own belief systems or agendas. This imposition manifests in unproductive disputes that fail to recognize cultural traditions and sovereign Tribal rights. It also results in the Commission (and Department) putting excessive time and effort into controversial or popularized issues such as black bear and gray wolf management, while leaving little time for larger but less-publicized issues of habitat protection and recovery, which support *all* species within an ecosystem. This misdirection of effort undermines efficient focus on the massive list of critical tasks necessary to address the resource and public challenges called for by the mission, such as those enumerated in the State Wildlife Action Plan. I have a hope that animal rights activists and sportsmen can come together to steward the species we all cherish through projects such as wildlife overpasses to promote predator genetic diversity in southwestern Washington. We make the greatest contribution to our natural resources when we collaborate to solve problems rather than engage in copious vanity lawsuits.

Honorable Governor Ferguson, I am at peace with my situation in large part because I had the opportunity to lead a full and meaningful life of public service, including with the Commission. I thank you again for allowing me one of the very richest opportunities to serve and wish you and those at the Department much success.

In service,

Victor Garcia