

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

Department of Fish and Wildlife: Workplace Culture

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is responsible for conserving native fish and wildlife and their habitat, while also supporting sustainable fishing, hunting and other outdoor recreational opportunities for Washington residents and visitors. To help achieve its mission, DFW established goals to encourage more collaboration among programs, to build an effective and efficient organization by supporting its workforce, and to ensure its workforce is diverse and robust. However, some comments made by stakeholders and several incidents of sexual harassment suggest problems may exist with DFW's workplace culture. The State Auditor's Office is planning an independent audit to look into these and other concerns.

DFW's complex organizational structure and silos between programs may have produced varied cultures and workplace dynamics across the organization. DFW is organized into six programs located in six regions across the state, each with its own specialized policy issues to manage. Stakeholders suggest that the geographic separation of programs and silos between those programs may contribute to inconsistencies in the way employee complaints and disciplinary actions are handled.

Stakeholders and agency leadership indicate the agency may also struggle with promoting diversity in its workforce. While DFW has taken some steps to increase diversity, results of the statewide employee engagement survey show the agency scored lower than the state average in the category "My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce." Only 27 percent of the human resources division, which has direct knowledge about hiring decisions and employee complaints, responded "Always" or "Usually" to this question. Some stakeholders suggest that non-inclusive hiring and promoting practices, as well as inadequate training, may have led to fewer qualified employees and a lack of diversity in leadership.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will also review recently implemented initiatives, and assess the agency's culture, to identify ways agency leaders can promote a more respectful and productive workplace to better serve the public. This performance audit is designed to answer the following questions:

- What factors at the Department of Fish and Wildlife shape its workplace culture?
- How does the agency's culture affect its performance and ability to achieve its mission?
- What steps could leadership take to improve the agency's workplace culture?

Timing Work on this audit has been delayed by issues surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. We plan to publish the audit results in spring 2021.



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