

Madam Chairman and members of the Commission.

I am Ed Wickersham and I am here to speak with you on behalf of CCAWA concerning the proposed crab policy.

The Department has always relied upon user fee revenue to fund its operations. This dependency will only increase as cuts in general fund support deepen. The recreational community has stepped up time and time again to help provide additional funds to the Department, including the \$2.50 crab endorsement which will soon expire. In light of the huge disparity between the license fee revenues generated by the commercial and recreational sector (\$65,000 to \$3.4M) and in harvest share (.30/.70 Puget Sound and .10/.90 statewide) we are left to wonder why we continue to support these efforts within the Department and in the Legislature.

Correcting the imbalance in crab harvest will do more than simply restore fairness. It will also improve conservation. First and foremost, the license fee revenue generated by the recreational sector is paying for WDFW's management and stewardship of this resource. By providing additional opportunity to the recreational fishery, the Department could generate additional revenue to fund needed activities, including biologists, monitoring and catch recording. Additionally, an enhanced and more robust recreational fishery could also generate additional funding to address the removal of derelict crab pots, which are having a major impact on the resource. If the Department had the funding to address this threat it would actually increase the health and abundance of the resource, which would benefit it and perhaps lead to increased opportunity for **both** recreational and commercial crabbers.

For my last point I would like to respectfully offer this thought. When did the idea develop that decisions related to the allocation of public owned resources are supposed to be immune from normal market forces or fiscal realities facing state management agencies? It is entirely appropriate for the state to take revenue needs and economic considerations into account as it struggles with the same economic conditions that are forcing businesses and average citizens to make difficult decisions.

For the reasons stated above I believe it is time for the Commission to begin prioritizing and growing the recreational fishery or make a fundamental shift in fee generation to ensure the commercial users begin providing a proportionate share of the cost of managing this resource not just the benefits.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you and I would be glad to answer any questions.