

Reasons to Oppose the Reappointment of Molly Linville and Jim Anderson to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

1. Senate Agriculture Committee Should Not Blindside the Public with Confirmation Hearings Scheduled at the Last Minute

- Confirmation hearings for Governor Ferguson's three commission appointments were scheduled for Wednesday, April 23 with less than two days' notice, to be followed two days later by an executive session to vote on the nominees at the tag end of the session.
- These surprise hearings seem intended to blindside the Washington public and prevent it from having the opportunity to voice its concerns prior to the vote. It shows fundamental disrespect for the large portion of the Washington public that is deeply concerned about these appointments and what they say about the direction of state fish and wildlife policy, including the thousands of Washington voters who wrote in to Governor Ferguson about these appointments.

2. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Reverse Progress Toward a Commission that Represents Washington Values and Prioritizes the Protection of Wildlife

- Washington had been a beacon of light in a world growing progressively darker for fish and wildlife. We were making progress toward an independent fish and wildlife commission that would be more than just a rubber stamp for a regressive department, would prioritize the future of Washington's fish and wildlife over the demands of consumptive special interests, and would strive to represent the values of all Washingtonians.
- The reappointment of Jim Anderson and Molly Linville and dismissal of Dr. Tim Ragen and Lynn O'Connor flips the balance of the Commission and returns it to the control of consumptive and commercial interests.
- Anderson is a lifelong angler and hunter who used to serve as the executive director of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, while Linville is a hunter and a rancher.
- Both Linville and Anderson have consistently voted in favor of commercial and trophy hunting interests, even when it resulted in the overexploitation of state fish and wildlife. This has included voting to weaken protections for endangered and threatened state species, including salmon and steelhead, the gray wolf, white pelican, and Columbia River white-tailed deer.
- These positions run counter to Washington values. A 2023 [poll](#) revealed that 69% of Washingtonians believe wildlife has intrinsic value beyond its use to humans, and 59% say that the state's primary goal for wildlife policy should be to preserve and protect fish and wildlife, with only 25% responding that it should be to maximize hunting and fishing opportunities. More than 90% of respondents said they care moderately or deeply about wildlife issues.
- This shift plays into the hands of the Trump administration, which is waging a national war to weaken wildlife protections to benefit commercial special interests and trophy hunters.

3. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Show the Senate's Disregard for the Safety and Welfare of State Employees

- The Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals, the largest union of Department employees, [wrote Governor Ferguson](#) to ask for the appointment of strong, independent commissioners like Dr. Ragen, who would defend the safety and well-being of state employees.
- Linville and Anderson ignored employee concerns about workplace safety issues that led to two tragic employee deaths over the last 18 months and multiple citations by the Department of Labor and Industries for "serious" and "willful serious" violations of safety regulations.

- Linville and Anderson ignored a [2021 state auditor's report](#) that found alarmingly high levels of legal and ethical violations within the department, bullying, retaliation against those reporting misconduct or mismanagement, gender discrimination, and a lack of leadership accountability.
- Last August, Linville publicly defended the Department's failure to address safety concerns, confirming that Department management and the Commission were aware of the dangers to its staff back in 2019 but failed to address them before the two deaths in 2023 and 2024 (watch [here](#) at 1:11.17).

4. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Elevate the Demands of Special Interests over the Values and Interests of Washingtonians

- These appointments ignored the opinions of hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians, who either wrote to Governor Ferguson directly or are supporters of the dozens of state and national fish and wildlife advocacy organizations that pleaded with Governor Ferguson to appoint commissioners who would prioritize wildlife protection.
- The decision to reappoint Jim Anderson and Molly Linville and dismiss Dr. Tim Ragen and Lynn O'Connor was made in response to the demands from out-of-state special interests aligned with the NRA, including the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and HOWL for Wildlife. These far-right radical groups mounted national campaigns to block former Governor Inslee's reappointments and reverse the progress the Commission has made over the last few years, fueled by hundreds of letters from out-of-state trophy hunting activists.
- This reshuffle means that five of nine commissioners will be hunters, a demographic that comprises less than 3% of the Washington population.
- In a [2022 poll](#), 67% of Washington voters believe that all Washingtonians should have an equal say in fish and wildlife management, with only 25% believing that hunters and anglers should continue to control fish and wildlife policy, as they have historically. Also, 75% believed the governor should appoint conservationists who will protect wildlife and diverse people who will reflect the values and interests of all Washingtonians.

5. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Increase Dysfunction and Signal a Return to the Days of a Rubber-Stamp Commission

- These appointments increase Commission dysfunction by returning it to a rubber-stamp body; taking steps to eliminate healthy disagreement, debate, and diversity of opinion on the Commission; and providing no transparency into the rationale for appointments.
- During their six-year terms, Commissioners Linville and Anderson have never opposed a recommendation made by Department management. By dismissing Dr. Tim Ragen, Governor Ferguson eliminated one of the strongest voices pushing back against management when it misrepresented science and proposed policies that harm wildlife.
- Governor Ferguson has said he wanted to solve Commission "dysfunction" identified by some of the people interviewed by the Ruckelshaus Center, but failed to explain how reappointing two long-time Commissioners could accomplish that.
- Governor Ferguson also said he wanted to provide a more transparent selection process, but his office refused to provide any information about the criteria he used to select Commissioners, the balance he was seeking to achieve, or whose advice he was following.
- Governor Ferguson reappointed Linville even though he was warned that her reappointment would be illegal. Linville also sits on the local school board, and [RCW 77.04.040](#), forbids a fish and wildlife commissioner from holding another elected or appointed office. Ferguson litigated this issue as attorney general and lost, in a lawsuit brought by the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance.

6. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Undermine Efforts to Protect Endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and Wild Salmon

- Washington’s Southern Resident killer whales are critically endangered, largely due to declining populations of the wild Chinook salmon on which they depend.
- More than 70 scientists, marine biologists, and orca advocates signed a letter to Governor Ferguson urging him to retain Dr. Tim Ragen, the former head of the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission and an internationally recognized scientist who has spent his career working to protect and recover endangered species. These experts said retaining Dr. Ragen was essential to any hope of saving the Southern Residents.
- By contrast, Anderson and Linville supported the 2024 Hatchery Co-Manager Policy, which eliminated prior safeguards on hatchery production to protect wild fish and erased the Department’s commitment to prioritizing the protection and recovery of the wild salmon population. This vote ignored decades of scientific evidence showing that hatcheries can inflict serious harm on threatened and endangered wild salmon populations if not managed carefully.
- Anderson and Linville [supported a 2020 change](#) to the Columbia River Salmon Fishery Policy, which increased the allocation for commercial fishing and restored the use of non-selective commercial gill nets, which can cause significant mortality of protected salmon and steelhead.

7. Confirmation of these Reappointments Would Reinforce Historic Hostility to Wolves, Cougars, Bears, and a Disregard of Ethical Considerations and Long-Term Interest of Wildlife

- In 2024, Linville and Anderson supported prematurely downlisting wolves, despite the fact that they had not met the benchmarks for downlisting set by the state wolf management and recovery plan. Such a move was proven premature earlier this year, when the Department reported a 9% drop in the wolf population and a 25% drop in breeding pairs from 2023 to 2024 amid record levels of human-caused mortality—the first drop since wolves returned to the state in 2008.
- Linville and Anderson opposed the elimination of recreational spring bear hunting, which only 8% of Washingtonians support and 80% oppose. Washington was one of only eight states to allow spring bear hunting, which hits the bear population when it is most vulnerable and results in the orphaning of cubs. After recreational spring bear hunting was eliminated, Linville and Anderson voted at least five times to reverse that decision.
- Linville and Anderson voted in favor of a program allowing commercial timber companies to kill hungry bears that damage trees in the springtime, largely because the companies have eliminated available springtime forage. Based on a [2014 poll](#), 70% of the public opposes killing bears for damaging commercial timber, while only 17% support the practice.
- Linville and Anderson voted in 2019 and 2020 to boost bear and cougar hunting beyond the levels that Department scientists had long said were sustainable and opposed a 2023 rulemaking petition aimed at reducing bear and cougar hunting to sustainable levels.
- In 2022, Linville and Anderson opposed a petition to ban deer and elk baiting, a practice that significantly increases the danger and spread of Chronic Wasting Disease, based on their fears of how hunters would react. The horrific disease was confirmed in Washington in March 2025, and only then did the Department take action to ban deer and elk baiting—after the disease already had a foothold.