

PUBLIC TESTIMONY SUMMARY

I-900 STATE AUDITOR'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT:

Department of Fish and Wildlife Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program (December 10, 2009)

As Heard by the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Sub-Committee on I-900 Performance Audits
on January 5, 2010

The performance audit being discussed at this hearing was conducted solely and independently by the office of the State Auditor, under the authority of legislation approved by the voters in Initiative 900. The State Auditor is elected directly by the people of the State of Washington and operates independently of the Legislature and the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee. Staff to the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee prepare a summary of public testimony on State Auditor reports. These summaries are for informational purposes only, and do not serve as an assessment by committee staff of the findings and recommendations issued by the State Auditor nor do they reflect a staff opinion on legislative intent.

Title: Department of Fish and Wildlife Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program

Audit Scope and Objectives:

The audit reports that SAO audited the performance of the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program from its inception in 1997 through 2008. SAO notes that it did not audit the Western Washington Pheasant Program.

In terms of objectives, the report states that the audit was designed to determine if the Department of Fish and Wildlife uses:

- Effective strategies to improve pheasant harvests in Eastern Washington;
- Sufficiently reliable data to support management decisions.

In addition, the report indicates that the audit addressed the nine elements contained in Initiative 900.

SAO Findings:

The report identifies two audit issues:

Audit Issue 1:
Pheasant populations and hunting opportunities have declined due to loss of habitat;

SAO Recommendations:

The report has nine recommendations to the Department of Fish and Wildlife, abbreviated below:

- 1) The Program should reallocate funds to habitat enhancement and develop pilot projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of specific habitat enhancement methodologies.
- 2) The Program should identify and pursue additional opportunities for partnering with others to leverage habitat enhancement funding.

<p>SAO Findings: (continued)</p>	<p>SAO Recommendations: (continued)</p> <p>3) The Department should increase pheasant hunting opportunities on private lands by addressing landowner concerns.</p> <p>4) The Department should scale down pheasant releases in Eastern Washington with the goal of limiting releases to specific high-demand events such as youth hunts and holidays.</p> <p>5) The Department should provide the Legislature with evidence that reallocating funds from pheasant releases to habitat enhancement and hunter access is an effective use of resources.</p>
<p>Audit Issue 2: The Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program does not have the data it needs to measure the effectiveness of its habitat enhancement efforts.</p>	<p>6) The Department should continue to survey approximately 25,000 small game hunters but should survey a higher proportion of hunters in the groups that harvest more game.</p> <p>7) The Program should monitor pheasant populations on a local basis to measure the success of its habitat enhancement efforts and to strategize various methods to sustain pheasant populations and increase hunting opportunities.</p> <p>8) The Program should analyze the pheasant harvest and roadside count data for Grant and Adams Counties and determine the feasibility of using these data sources.</p> <p>9) The Program should use the data it has started collecting in 2009 on harvest of released pheasants to analyze the effectiveness of pheasant releases in Eastern Washington.</p>
<p>Agency Responses in Audit Report?</p>	<p>Yes, in Appendix B.</p>
<p>Legislative Action Requested?</p>	<p>No</p>

Agencies Testifying:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Steve Pozzanghera, Deputy Assistant Director for the Wildlife Program; Mick Cope, Upland Game Birds Section Manager)

Summary of Testimony from Audited Agencies:

Staff from the Department are available to answer questions. In answer to earlier questions, the Department does have the ability to provide payments to private landowners who make habitat improvements. This is usually provided in the form of an incentive payment once the landowner has accomplished what was agreed upon for that year. It is a payment for a landowner to grow wildlife habitat.

Other Parties Testifying:

(No other parties signed in to testify.)

Summary of Testimony from Other Parties:

(No other parties signed in to testify.)