

Wildlife Program

Week of August 31 – September 6, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Wolf Advisory Group: Biologist Shepherd presented the conflict section update at the Wolf Advisory Group meeting in Olympia.

Dirty Shirt Pack Area: Biologist Shepherd and Natural Resource Worker Weatherman discussed strategies to protect cattle with contract range riders. Natural Resource Worker Weatherman and Technician Bendixen, and to a lesser extent Biologist Shepherd, worked multiple days and nights in the Dirty Shirt pack area. The collared wolf revisited the cattle remains from earlier kills and moved back to the east into Pend Oreille County.

Range Rider Direction: Biologist Shepherd, Natural Resource Worker Weatherman, and contract range riders discussed strategies in an area with wolf depredations on the Colville National Forest. Range riders are present in the N.F. Chewelah Creek allotments. Natural Resource Worker Weatherman and Technician Bendixen contacted range riders in the N.F. Chewelah Creek allotments keeping them updated on wolf activity and locations.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock (DPCA-Ls): Biologist Shepherd processed invoices for DPCA-Ls. Natural Resource Worker Weatherman obtained invoice signatures from producers.

Livestock Producer Contacts: Biologist Shepherd talked with several grazing permit holders in the Kettle Mountains, North Chewelah Creeks, and other areas on the Colville National Forest.

Huckleberry Chronology Update: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett updated the Huckleberry Chronology. All communications with producers in the area have been compiled in a spreadsheet for Olympia and others. Due to the Carpenter Road Fire, little activity was added.

Reported Horse Injuries in Spokane County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Enforcement Officer Spurbeck responded to a call from a concerned citizen about injuries sustained by a horse and a dead deer near the former Painted Hills Golf Course. Both the horse's injuries and the dead deer were examined. The horse's injuries were due to structural damage from his pen. The deer was determined to have been hit by a car and fed on by scavengers. Advice and additional information was provided to the landowner, neighbor, and concerned citizen.

Few injuries were discovered on a 10 year old Fjord. Injuries were due to structural damage in the enclosure.

Deer Fawn Mortality Concerns in Whitman County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and WDFW Officer King coordinated with a producer near Pullman with concerns that a deer fawn had been killed due to large canid activity. After examination of the pictures sent and the carcass, the deer mortality was attributed to coyotes.



Wolf Related Calls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett participated in three different calls related to wolves this week. Bennett discussed a recent Confirmed Wolf Depredation Investigation Report of a guard dog with members of the Wolf Advisory Group. Another conference call discussed interactions with area producers and communications with additional producers. Finally, Bennett spent time on the phone with a contracted Wolf Facilitator.

Wolf Presentation for the Spokane County Cattlemen: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett presented information about gray wolf biology, ecology, Washington management, legal rights, and depredation investigations to a group of cattlemen this week. A great dialogue was had regarding producer concerns and the next steps.

Monthly Conflict Conference Call: Biologist Earl relayed concerns from cooperators on the viability of collar data from the Tucannon pack. Earl also asked staff to check on the sharing of OR14 collar data south of Dayton.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Fitkin checked a remote camera that has been deployed for several months in the Upper Methow in response to several wolf reports in the general area last winter and in prior years. No wolves have been detected as this site to date, but it is being visited by other large carnivores, including cougars and black bear.



Cougar – Photo by WDFW remote camera

Region 3 Wolf Activities

Wolf Observations: Moore has continued to check WDFW's online reporting and other forums for wolf sightings. One report was found on an online forum that discussed a single wolf observed during the beginning of July. Moore will check these resources more frequently during hunting season.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pre-season Deer Surveys: Wildlife biologist Annemarie Prince teamed with other agency partners this week to complete the August portion of pre-season deer counts on standardized survey transects within District 1. Both white-tailed and mule deer were observed with classifications made for doe, fawn, and buck deer, including antler point category and age class on bucks. Road closures on account of wildfires, smoke, and fire suppression activities impacted logistics in completing deer surveys this month.

August surveys summaries

White-tailed Deer: Total deer observed = 1998, Buck:Doe ratio= 28:100.

Mule Deer: Total deer observed = 345, Buck:Doe ratio = 26:100.

Grizzly Complex Fire: The large fire burning in and around the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness has caused numerous complications for upcoming hunting seasons. As a result, District Biologist Wik worked with Regional and Olympia staff, spending considerable time this past week determining an approach that would allow hunters the opportunity to decide whether their hunt was impacted beyond what might be considered a reasonable hunting opportunity. Numerous special permit holders were contacted by District, Regional, and Headquarters staff. Wik spent a majority of the week talking with hunters seeking information. Assistant District Biologist Vekasy spoke with several hunters regarding draw tags and Grizzly Bear Complex fire impacts.

Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites

SCWA Badger Recon: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer and Natural Resource Technician Jerry "Chris" Christensen surveyed areas with historic American badger activity on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area with Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Annemarie Prince and Area Habitat Biologist Sandy Dotts. Several digs from this year were found, but none with recent activity. Prince and Dotts were able to collect hair from one burrow and deployed a hair snare.

AHB Dotts looks on as ADWB Prince completes the hair snare installation in this badger burrow on SCWA



REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit Capture/Release

Activities: Not surprisingly, but much to the dismay of the technicians, the last two trap events utilized all available release sites in the Beezley Hills Recovery Emphasis Area (BHREA). The team (joined by diversity technicians Andrew and Mariah) worked extraordinarily hard this week putting in new release sites. They installed an amazing 73 new release sites at four locations in the BHREA. This entails burying 146 four foot sections of 4” drainage tubing 18” deep. If any one does not believe this is an amazing job, I challenge you to come out and give it a try! Great job team!! (Sorry, too busy digging to get pictures). This same team also managed to spend some time continuing to move the funnel traps to new locations within the breeding enclosure at SBF to target new rabbits and give the currently targeted areas a break. All of this was accomplished while keeping up with normal husbandry activities. Biologist Wisniewski and Technician Satterwhite downloaded and organized all the new release site locations in ArcMap.

Wildlife Areas

Wildfire Response: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen attended an internal meeting in Omak to discuss the impacts and future management actions related to the ongoing fires. We also spent time evaluating the fire effects on wildlife habitats, and toured some of the affected WDFW



lands with Regional and Olympia staff. For instance, much of the occupied sharp-tailed grouse habitat in Okanogan County burned, including most of the Tunk Valley (see before and after photos below). Of immediate concern is the loss of winter forage in the riparian areas, as evidenced in the photos.

Aspen Lake area on the Big Buck Unit, Methow Wildlife Area – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Tunk Creek on the WDFW Tunk Unit before and after the Tunk Block Fire

Private Lands/Access

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): On September 2, 2015, Manager Cotton attended a Farm Service Agency (FSA) tour to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Manager Cotton accepted the award shown below on behalf of the many WDFW employees that worked with FSA and private landowners on the SAFE project. The WDFW SAFE team includes E. Braaten, T. Baarstad, R. Fox, J. Wisniewski, J. Cotton, S. Dougherty, D. Comstock, R. Stutzman, E. Lewis.



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Youth Hunt: Biologist Finger participated in the Columbia Basin Chapter of a Pheasants Forever meeting to discuss the upcoming youth event being hosted at B&G Farms. Finger coordinated with the Public Information Officer to get this event, as well as updates to the districts regulated access areas (which are now posted on the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program section of the website), advertised to the public.

Wildlife Areas

North Potholes Regulated Access Area: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei began work on trail development to the five hunt sites on this new regulated access area. Because the ponds are rimmed with dense tall emergent vegetation, including the invasive narrow-leaved cattail and the native and desirable coyote willow, some investment in mowing narrow trails will likely save us phone calls from disgruntled hunters. Trails will be marked and specific hunt sites posted where hunters can set up within 50' of the designated site.

Recreational Opportunities (Weekender): Dove hunting has been very good for most folks, though some reports are more discouraging. Hunters who scout and invest time in preparing for the hunt typically do very well. Youth hunters should research available opportunities. The Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever Chapter is hosting a youth event in Royal City. Also, the regulated access areas should provide some opportunity. See <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/wqhp/> for a description of regulated access area opportunities in the Ephrata District. We anticipate the Winchester Regulated Access Area will have enough water for at least three parties. Frenchmen Regulated Access Area will likely have little to no water until early October. North Potholes Regulated Access Area will have water on all five designated hunt sites. See http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/hunt/585/ for details and to make reservations.

ADA Hunting Access Bear Mountain: Assistant Manager Sample has been coordinating with ADA Program Manager Dolores Noyes about facilitating access to permit holders once the fire activity near Bear Mountain decreases. The first week of the hunt has been cancelled and further hunts are currently on hold. Assistant Manager Sample located the entrance gate of the hunt area and added a lock on the chain that also included USFS and WDFW locks. Permit holders will need to pick up a key from the Methow Wildlife Area Headquarters in order to access this area for their hunt.

ADA Access lock installed on the Bear Mountain ADA Road Access Entry Program hunt area – Photo by Anna Sample, September 3, 2015

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE



Wildlife Areas

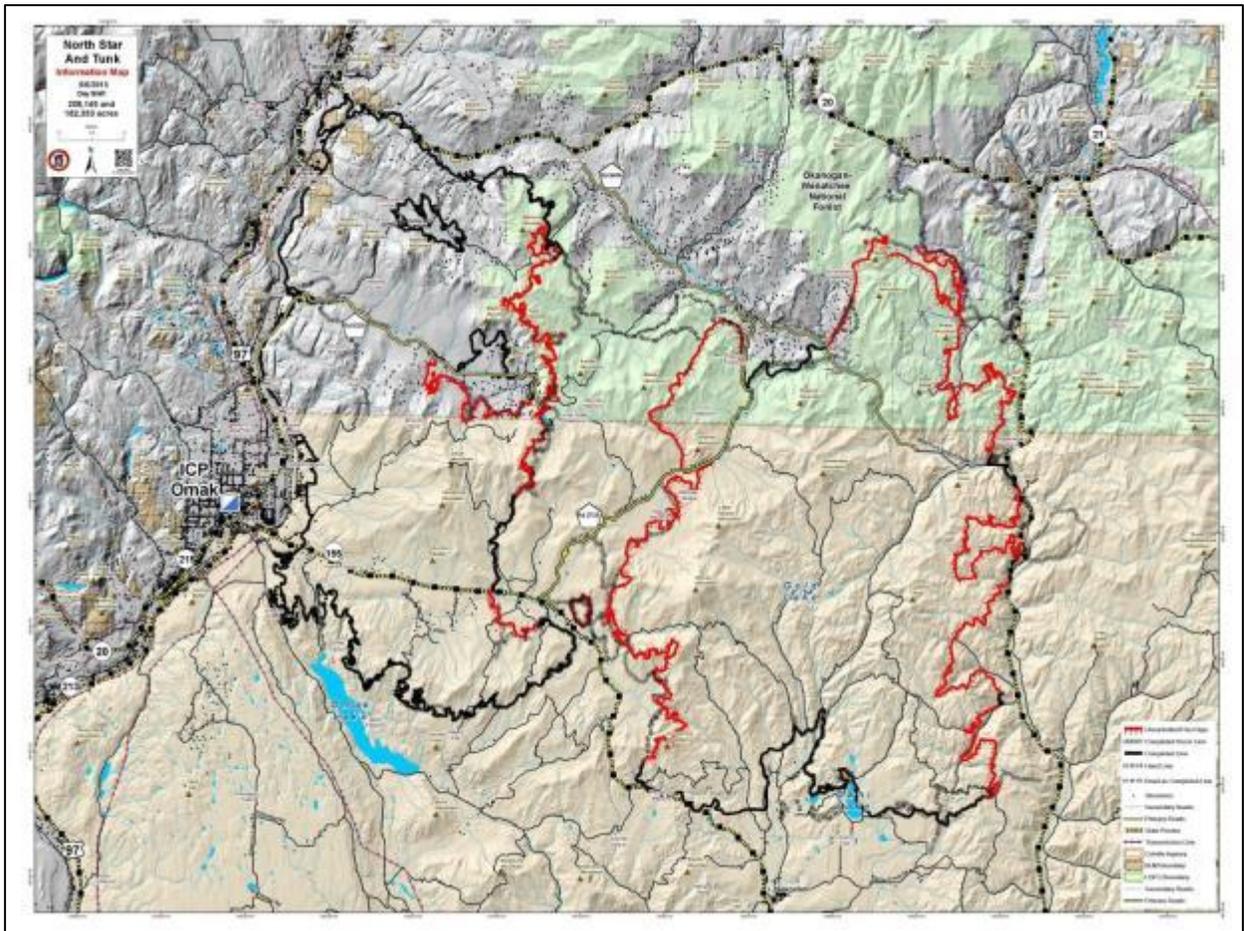
FEMA/Carlton Complex: Manager Furnari met again in the field with an adjacent landowner, Charlie Lehman, to review a “missed” fence to finalize the Methow SSW project fence area. She provided additional fence info and made comments about the final fence draft. She provided CAMP’s Scott Allen and a GIS tech with GPS, photo, and written details about the areas in question. This task should allow staff to create a draft set of fence plans for contractors to bid on. Manager Furnari met with Vic & Kent Stokes to review a draft map of interior fences at the Fraser Creek unit. She sought input from Stokes to remove unnecessary fences/gates and to incorporate improvements for cattle grazing operations in areas with higher public use. She emailed them a copy of the map with their feedback. Manager Furnari spoke with Craig Boesel, who needed some metal T-posts to make temporary repairs to the burned “USFS & WDFW” boundary fence in the Beaver Creek Campground. This should prevent cattle from invading the campground area.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

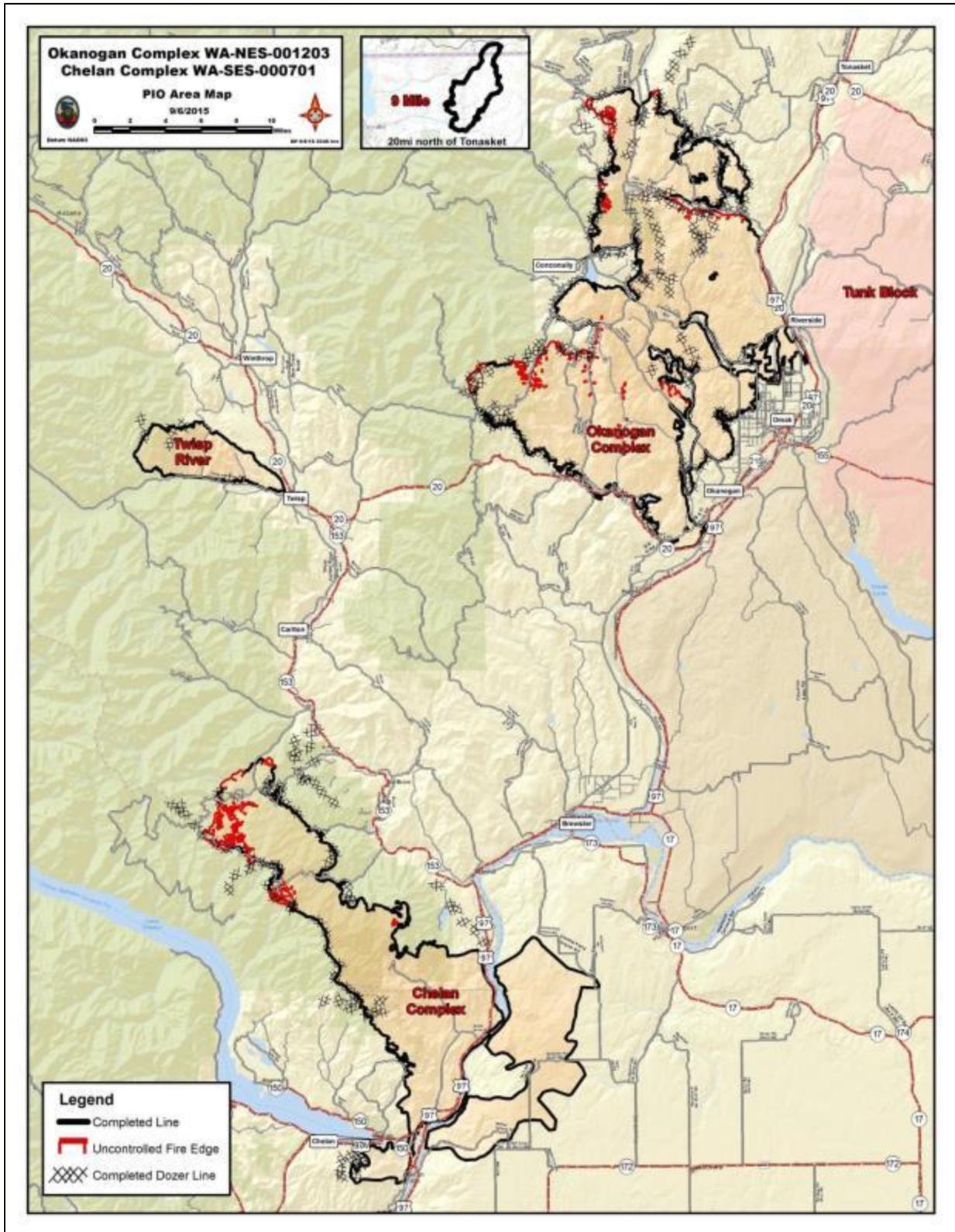
Okanogan Complex and North Star Fires: With this past week’s patchy rain, higher humidity, and lower temperatures, fire fighters were able to get better containment on the Okanogan Complex, Tunk Block, and North Star fires. As of Monday, September 7, 2015, the Okanogan Complex is 70% contained, the Tunk Block is 60% and the North Star is 37%. Although much containment work remains, conditions have improved considerably in Okanogan County. Several changes to evacuation levels were made this weekend. For the most current evacuation information, please contact your closest Emergency Operations Center (EOC): Colville Tribal Emergency Services [509-634-2105](tel:509-634-2105), Okanogan County EOC [509-422-7206](tel:509-422-7206), or Ferry County EOC [509-775-3132](tel:509-775-3132). Highway closure information is available online at <http://www.wsdot.com/traffic/trafficalerts>.

Several hunting seasons are now in full swing and hunters need to be aware of fire-related area closures within Okanogan County. Several closures are currently in effect on National Forest Lands, the largest being on the Tonasket Ranger District south of Highway 20. Other USFS closures can be found at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/okawen/alerts->

[notices/?cid=stelprdb5308168](https://www.fws.gov/colville-tribe/tribe-notice-2015-09-06). Forest and Recreation Area closures are also in place on the Colville Indian Reservation.



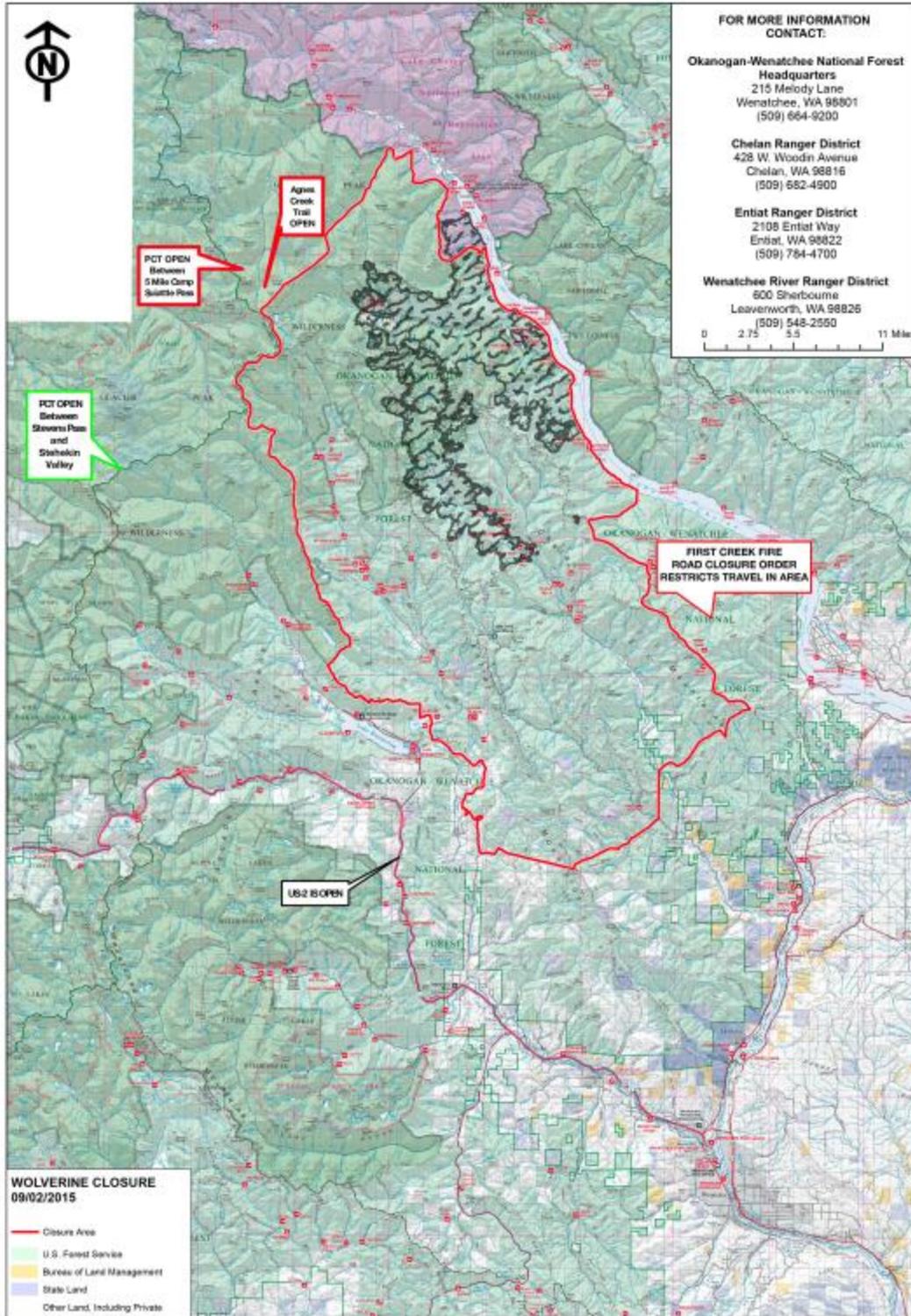
Tunk Block and North Star fire boundary map as of September 6, 2015



Okanogan and Chelan Complex fire map as of September 7, 2015



WILDFIRE CLOSURE





Black bear scent marking or just scratching that itch – Photo by WDFW remote camera

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart checked Parke Creek gates in an attempt to minimize trespass livestock this fall. On the way, a small disturbed area was noted along Parke Creek road. The area had been wetted down, but there was still a hotspot sending up smoke. Winegeart spread the burning duff and mixed in soil, but contacted DNR. It turns out there had been a small fire there Saturday, likely from a vehicle parked in the dry grass. Winegeart requested an engine revisit the site to wet down the area again.

Hay Delivery: Assistant Manager Hunt monitored hay delivery from Addy, WA last Saturday and this Tuesday. Natural Resource Technicians Leuck and Hill rolled back the tarp to accommodate the last of Tuesday's delivery, and Leuck leveled some area at the end of one stack to allow for another row. All hay is in now, and Hunt was able to get Tarp-it to cover it without any rain damage. Now we just need a normal winter and hungry elk, but not until mid-December thank you.

Wildlife Management

Duck Banding: District Biologist Fidorra, Private Lands Biologist Stutzman, and Lands Tech Kaelber banded ducks this week on Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area. Fidorra entered and reviewed duck banding data and submitted banding data to Waterfowl Specialist Wilson. Trapping has been successful, with 132 new bands put out this week. So far this season, 298 mallards have been banded in District 4.

Dove Banding Data: District Biologist Fidorra entered dove banding data from the Ringold Hatchery site and submitted data to Waterfowl Specialist Wilson.

Bat Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra retrieved a bat detector from Adams County, which completed bat survey efforts for 2015. Fidorra sent the final batch of data to Biologist Buchannan.

Mule Deer Sightability Survey: District Biologist Fidorra attended a meeting in Spokane to plan the 2015 Columbia Basin mule deer sightability survey. The survey will be conducted, weather permitting, in the first week of December. This will be the first follow-up to the initial “Phase 1” survey completed in 2009-2011. Fidorra prepared a summary of current hunting regulations across the three districts to facilitate a discussion of coordinating future management action, and also reviewed past data and reports in preparation for the meeting.

Falconer Inquiry: District Biologist Fidorra received an inquiry from an out-of-state falconer requesting a collection permit, and after some research, directed the individual to the WDFW permit coordinator.

Duck Trapping: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman, Waterfowl Specialist Wilson, and Access Tech Kaelber trapped ducks at the Windmill Ranch and Baillie Youth Ranch on Friday. Stutzman also baited the duck traps one afternoon.

Western Gray Squirrel: Biologist Bernatowicz entered data for the eight transects run west of Yakima this year. No western gray squirrel hair was found, and only 17 samples from small mammals were detected. Twenty-three tubes were hit by either bear or elk.

Waterfowl Banding: Biologist Bernatowicz worked with Sunnyside Wildlife Area staff and Waterfowl Specialist Wilson to band ducks on the Sunnyside most of the week. Former WDFW employee Oscar Medina helped out one day. Approximately 170 new ducks were banded. Fairly large numbers of northern pintail were captured this week. Most years the total northern pintail capture is less than five. This week close to 50 were banded.

Yakama Nation Waterfowl Seasons: The Yakama Nation (YN) has posted 2015-2016 regulations that include: 1) a shorter and lower bag limit dove season, 2) an early goose season that is longer and has a higher bag limit than the state season, and 3) a duck season that starts and ends one week earlier. The YN biologist confirmed that seasons were not printing errors. The different State/YN seasons will cause a fair amount of confusion. By federal law, all refuges follow state seasons. Non-tribal lands may also fall under state law for migratory birds. Tribes

can request different seasons than states through the federal process (50 CFR Part 20.110). There is no record of YN using the process, so it is unclear how the USFWS will handle the YN seasons.

Finally, YN opened all upland bird seasons Oct. 10. WDFW defers to YN on upland birds season within reservation boundaries. The YN pheasant season starts two weeks before the state season and one week before waterfowl. On USFWS refuges, upland bird hunting is only open on days waterfowl season is open. Technically, the first week of the YN season, upland birds can't be hunted on USFWS lands.

Colockum Antlerless Body Condition Sampling: Biologist Moore continued making all the necessary arrangements to collect samples from successful hunters during the muzzleloader and modern firearm antlerless permit seasons.

Colockum Bull Study: Moore has continued to check for mortalities on our collared elk. We still have 14 collars online.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff spent another day cleaning up garbage along the shoreline of the Columbia River. They used the Colockum boat to access the sites and haul garbage back to the headquarters.



Natural Resource Worker 2 Jeremy Adams works to dig an abandoned boat out of the sand at West Bar, Colockum Wildlife Area



Natural Resource Worker 2 Zach Johnson after loading pieces of the derelict boat into the Colockum boat

Washington's Wild Future: Manager Lopushinsky, along with all other Region 3 Wildlife Area Managers, contacted Colockum WAAC members to make sure they were aware of the upcoming public meetings on the Director's Initiative, "Washington's Wild Future, a Partnership for Fish and Wildlife."

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris exchanged e-mails with the contractor and Olympia staff regarding the layout of Alternative 4, Bull Pasture, shooting range. A site visit is set for September 10 to address the layout issues and stake the proposed location in the field.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand conducted one late evening hazing patrol near irrigated tree fruit and vineyard operations on Rattlesnake Mountain to monitor elk activity and associated damage. Abundant elk sign was located in a few areas, but overall elk damage appeared to be light.

Elk Damage Claim: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to work with a landowner in the Rattlesnake Hills area complete his 2015 elk damage claim.

DPP Permit Harvest: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored the harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. Two antlerless elk were reported harvested this week. The total harvest for the current permit season is 17 antlerless and eight spike bull elk.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Staff provided wood panels, a truck, and a stock trailer to Oak Creek Wildlife Area for their trespass horse round up. Assistant Manager Taylor also assisted Oak Creek staff with loading the horses into a trailer for their trip to Toppenish impound yard.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Technicians Lueck and Hill realigned and raised the public entry gate at Joe Watt. It had been hit by a vehicle (probably more than once), causing the hinges to twist and slide down the posts, and dropping the gate's leading edge to the ground.



Watt public entry gate before fix



Watt public entry gate after fix

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman, Assistant Manager Berry, Wenas Assistant Manager Taylor, and Forester Mackey spent time during the week trying to round up trespass horses on the wildlife area. The first attempt was unsuccessful, with the horses uninterested in following the feed bucket down the hill to the corral and with none of the horses calm enough to take a halter. Huffman then began work on round two, which was organizing horseback riders to bring the horses down off the hill this coming week. Berry transported several large panels from the Wenas Wildlife Area to assist in loading the horses. On Thursday, Huffman and Berry gave it one last attempt to get the horses in with food. They came right up to the truck and followed Berry down the hill all the way into the corral. Huffman then organized a group to load and haul the horses to the Toppenish Sales Yard for impoundment. On Friday, Huffman, Berry, Taylor and Mackey were able to get all six horses loaded into two trailers without incident. Huffman contacted the Yakima Sheriff's Office (YSO), who sent out a deputy to complete the impound paperwork and notify the owner his horses had been impounded. The horses were transported to

Toppenish and the WDA Brand Inspector completed the impound paperwork. The horses will be auctioned on September 19. Thank you to Jody Taylor and Greg Mackey for providing stock trailers to transport the horses.



Trespass horses following Assistant Manager Berry down to the corral on the Cowiche Unit



The six trespass horses in the old stock corrals on the Cowiche Unit



Horses loaded onto a trailer awaiting transport to the Toppenish Sales Yard



This is the pasture where the horses had been kept before continually leaving. They were provided minimal food and little access to water. The property in the foreground is actually WDFW land, which came from DNR in the land exchange with a grazing lease.

Furnace Repair: Manager Huffman worked on furnace repair issues at the residence after something malfunctioned and the air conditioner filled the house with a burnt smell. A local technician found a large draft from the fire box, which would cause smoke and fumes to be in

the duct work if the furnace was running. The furnace will need to be replaced before winter. Huffman began gathering cost estimates to better define the funding needs.

Replacement Pads: Manager Huffman ordered replacement pads for the AED in the visitor's center after discovering they expired several months ago. Huffman also contacted the sales rep about doing training with Wildlife Education Corp volunteers this winter.

Elk Fence Inspection: Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry checked elk fence in the French's Canyon area after getting reports of elk below the fence. No elk were observed and the fence was intact and all the gates were closed. Huffman located a missing Discover Pass sign in the bushes, and Berry reinstalled the sign on a post. Additional inspection will be needed south of the area where a neighboring landowner cuts holes in the fence to let elk out.

Assistant Manager Berry reinstalling a Discover Pass sign in French's Canyon on the NF Cowiche Creek Road



Oak Creek Large Wood

Replenishment Project: Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey went on a site tour with Yakama Nation, the WCC crew lead, and a prospective contractor looking at units proposed for harvest for the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment Project. WCC crews will log the area this fall and a contractor will haul the logs to the placement area along Oak Creek. The group discussed harvest methods and roads to use for hauling.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Program Manager Russ Link (not in photo), Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw, and Skagit Wildlife Area staff (Greg Meis, Curran Cosgrove, and Belinda Rotton) toured the ongoing restoration and enhancement projects (Samish and Samish River Wetland Enhancements and the Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration) on the Skagit Wildlife Area



Wildlife Management

Deleterious, Exotic Wildlife:

Biologists Milner and Anderson followed up on a lead regarding the establishment of a deleterious frog in a retention pond/wetland system near the Mill Creek headquarters office. An example frog was brought in for identification and the credible individual stated there are many more living at the site. Milner and Anderson spend part of one day fishing for the frogs in order to confirm the sighting and obtain more specimens for disease sampling. However, the day was cool and the frogs weren't biting. More follow-up work will occur in the coming weeks at the site.

Biologist Anderson fishing for frogs...

Wildlife Areas

Restoration Project Site Visits: Program Manager Link, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Projects Coordinator Brokaw visited three restoration construction sites on the Skagit Wildlife Area at the Fir Island Farm Unit, Samish Unit, and Samish River Unit. After this busy construction season, WDFW staff look forward to improved habitat and recreation at these sites.



Habitat Planner Jenna Friebel points to the area that will be newly restored estuary habitat at the Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration project while Program Manager Link and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton stand atop the new setback dike.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER

WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit Wetland Restoration Project: The WDFW construction crew from the Lacey shop completed set up of erosion control materials and a subcontractor completed mowing of the site. Following this, the WDFW crew built a temporary access and staging pad and then began excavating the swales in the project area. Construction will continue on this project for the next several weeks and will result in improved wetland habitat on the 100-acre site.

Access/staging area and excavation spoils from swale construction at the Samish River Unit



Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Construction on the project is nearing completion and will continue into this week. The contractor has cleaned drainage ditches, installed 11 water control structures within the drainage ditches, and excavated swales to connect some of the existing ponds on the property to the ditches. Upon completion, Skagit Wildlife Area staff will have more control in water management on the site to benefit waterfowl habitat and agriculture.

A swale and pond constructed during the Samish Unit Enhancement Project



A cleaned ditch and an Agridrain water control structure on the Samish Unit if the Skagit Wildlife Area

Skagit Acquisition Team Meeting: Region 4 staff working in Skagit County met to coordinate and plan the next steps to secure additional land to support waterfowl hunting and forage in the area. The team discussed evaluations of properties that are for sale, an upcoming Lands 20/20 round, and potential funding sources for acquisition.

Island Unit: Cosgrove repaired a popular hunting blind on the Island Unit. Cosgrove and Meis secured a newly installed footbridge near the blind. Meis cleared vegetation back away from bridge approaches on the Island Unit.

DeBay's Slough: Meis and Cosgrove measured and marked the 16 acres of corn to be left standing after harvest at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit.

Big Ditch Access: Cosgrove coordinated with a local metal fabricator to have an old lock removed from the dike access gate at the Big Ditch Unit. A WB lock was put on the gate. The North Sound Weed Crew had requested this be done to allow for access to the South Fork Skagit River estuary for weed control projects.

Samish Unit: Manager Rotton met with Ducks Unlimited Engineer Steve Liske to discuss and review progress of the work on site at the Samish Wetland Enhancement project. Meis and Cosgrove monitored progress and toured the Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement Project. Cosgrove posted a "Hunt Area" sign at the Samish Unit to inform area users of current and upcoming hunting activity at the site.



New waterfowl hunting blind on Samish Unit pond completed as a part of an Eagle Scout project



Concrete forms for the tidegate on Dry Slough on Fir Island Farm Restoration Project



Retention pond and pump station construction on the Fir Island Farm Restoration Project

British Petroleum Unit Hunting Access: Manager Kessler met with the head of security for British Petroleum on the upcoming hunting seasons. They reviewed the safety zones on the unit to make sure they protect the refinery workers, and updated hunting season information posted on the reader

boards. Last year's hunting seasons went off with no problems and we are looking forward to another successful and productive pheasant and waterfowl season this year.

Disabled Hunter Access: Manager Kessler coordinated with Dolores Noyes, the ADA Program Manager, on disabled hunter access on units of the Whatcom Wildlife Area. A disabled hunter will be allowed to use his ATV for waterfowl and pheasant hunting on the Nooksack and Lake Terrell units. Manager Kessler also contacted a disabled hunter who has reserved the ADA Accessible Hunting Blind at Lake Terrell for opening day of the waterfowl hunting season.

Private Lands/Access Management

418 Elk Hunt: Natural Resource Technician Otto and Private Lands Biologist Wingard installed hunt unit signage on private timber lands within the 418 unit. While in the unit, they observed recent elk activity and removed a downed tree blocking a road.

Private Lands Access/Hunt by Reservation Hunt in GMU 407: Natural Resource Technician Otto installed parking signs at the new elk hunting site in GMU 407.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technician Otto and Tech Deyo continued preparations for the upcoming waterfowl season. They built blinds in Skagit and Whatcom counties, cut and bundled canary grass, and stored staged layout blinds for the Skagit and Snohomish units. They also monitored crop harvests at hunt unit sites.



Wood chip staging for Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Region 4



*While surveying a new piece of private property for habitat and wildlife and recreational suitability, Biologists Wingard and Caldwell came across several beautifully colored Pacific Treefrogs (*Pseudacris regilla*). They also encountered a multitude of other native Washington wildlife species. Needless to say, the site possessed many of the features that will make it very favorable for upcoming negotiations.*

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to a deer damage complaint in the Sedro Woolley area. Witman met with the land manager of an organic farm that has experienced damage to vegetable crops, making them unmarketable. A damage permit was issued to the landowner and fencing options were discussed to address future damage.

Hunter Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal have been fielding numerous calls from permit holders in GMU 418 and Elk Area 4941 looking for information on private lands access properties experiencing elk conflict. Hunters have been put in contact with private landowners that are allowing hunting access on their properties.

Exclusionary Fence Construction: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell, assisted by Private Lands Biologist Wingard, followed up on a deer conflict on Camano Island. Supervisor Caldwell and Biologist Wingard constructed a temporary fence out of existing materials to mitigate future deer conflict. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal worked on an elk exclusion fencing project in the Day Creek area of Skagit County.



Wildlife Conflict staff began constructing a new elk exclusionary fence in the Skagit Valley this week. The fence should be completed in the next two weeks.



Local elk herd in Skagit Valley

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove and Meis prepared and re-painted Safety Zone buoys used in intertidal areas at the Headquarters Unit. Meis and Cosgrove finished repainting new barge supports and rusty spots on the barge. Manager Rotton assisted with project coordination and bill payment related to ongoing construction projects.

Island Unit: Cosgrove and Meis spent most of Monday and Tuesday cleaning up storm debris at the Headquarters, Island, and Johnson/DeBay's Slough units. The Island Unit was hardest hit, with around 40 trees (alder and cottonwood) falling onto the dike system. No major damage to infrastructure was found.

Hunter Education

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated eight new hunter education classes in Region 4. Dazey assisted Chief Instructor Lance Chaar to hold two online field skills evaluations at the Region 4 office. Chief Instructor Chaar will be conducting evaluations at the Region 4 office each Monday during August and September, except for Labor Day. Coordinator Dazey attended and evaluated two teaching teams. One team teaches at Sedro Woolley and is a long time team. The other team is a brand new teaching team that will be holding classes at NAS Whidbey and is being facilitated by the naval wildlife officer

for the base. Coordinator Dazey fielded questions from Region 4 instructors about the draft policy manual after sending out an email soliciting comments. Dazey answered questions from instructors on the requirements to qualify for the online field skills evaluation permits for instructors who teach two classes during the August-November time frame.

Co-Managers Support: Coordinator Dazey assisted the team at the Upper Skagit in conducting a two day traditional Hunter Education class. This was the Upper Skagit team's first solo class and it went very well, with all students passing the 75 question test and also the skills handling.

Pre Service Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the practical session of training for six new instructor candidates. The practical session was held at Camp Pigott on August 29, with the six instructor candidates assisting in conducting two actual hunter education field skills evaluations. The instructor candidates did an excellent job showing their flexibility by holding the second evaluation after the venue had lost power. All six candidates passed their certification as hunter education instructors and will be joining teaching teams in their area. Dazey also followed up with instructor applicants in South King County, scheduling a Pre-Service Training at the Black Diamond rifle range.

Customer Service: Coordinator Dazey answered questions from a parent about the requirements for his Downs son to obtain a hunter education card. Unfortunately, the parent did not feel that his son would be able to pass the required test that all students must pass by 80% to obtain their hunter education card. Dazey also assisted a disabled student from Yakima to get information about her hunter education class. Dazey answered questions from Compass Housing Authority in regards to salmon for homeless veterans. Sgt. Kim Chandler assisted Dazey in getting the information to relay to the group.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Skagit County Endangered Species Act and Migratory Waterfowl Assessment Team Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard participated in a Skagit County Endangered Species Act and Migratory Waterfowl Assessment Team meeting. The team strategized short-term management actions, and agreed upon several long-term solutions that will also be pursued. Currently, several sites are being evaluated for wildlife and recreational suitability in Skagit and Snohomish counties.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Gray Squirrel Distribution Project: Biologist Anderson reviewed hair samples and entered data from the second visit to the western gray squirrel hair tube survey in the Rock Creek drainage in eastern Klickitat County. These data are being collected as part of the statewide

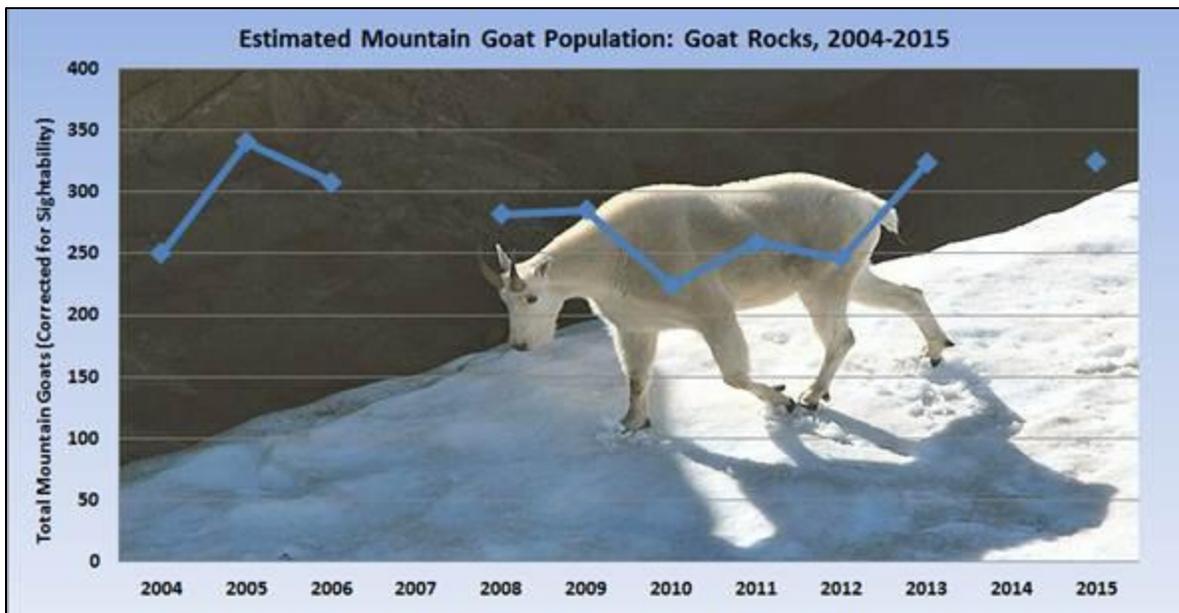


survey to evaluate the current status of the western gray squirrel. The final survey will be conducted later in September and will mark the end of this year's field effort for this project.

Western gray squirrel – Rock Creek Survey Site

Goat Rocks Mountain Goat Survey: In July, Biologists Holman, Bergh, and Stephens conducted a survey of mountain goats in the Goat Rocks Wilderness area. Goats were observed, counted, and classified as adults or kids from a helicopter. More recently, Biologist Stephens corrected the raw survey counts to account for animals not seen on the survey (sightability) and summarized the data. The 2015 estimate for the Goat Rocks is 325 total goats. This estimate indicates stability in the goat population and is essentially identical to the 2013 estimate for this area. See the figure below for long-term illustration of mountain goat populations in the Goat Rocks Wilderness.

Goat Rocks Mountain Goat Survey: In July, Biologists Holman, Bergh, and Stephens conducted a survey of mountain goats in the Goat Rocks Wilderness area. Goats were observed, counted, and classified as adults or



Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Regional Wildlife Program Managers, District Biologists, the statewide elk specialist and Veterinarian, and Westside data managers met this week to discuss the results of a first year study attempting to determine the prevalence of elk hoof disease in southwest Washington. This study was a citizen science based project designed to identify and record the number of limping elk observed while conducting a road based survey throughout 10 counties. Over 200 volunteers recorded 283 observations of approximately 2,600 elk while conducting 141 surveys during the period of March and April. The meeting resulted in many discussions involving the interpretation of results, upcoming project feasibility, and next steps. Results will be available to project participants and on the hoof disease webpage in the near future.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Grazing Permit Monitoring: Technician Davis checked on the grazing permit on the Fisher Hill Unit to verify that cattle were off the pasture, as required under the terms of the permit. No issues were discovered.

Water Levels in Sondino Ponds: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis visited the Sondino Unit to check on a variety of things, including weed infestations and water levels in ponds, and evaluate access to the edge of one pond by truck. They met with the neighboring landowner to discuss the possibility of hauling logs to the ponds to increase basking places for turtles. In the course of visiting the ponds, two water gauges were cleaned for easier reading from shore.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Access

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes met with the Corrections crew to help load a hot tub, couch, and a lot of other junk from two separate dump sites.



Vancouver Lake illegal dumping

I-5: A large branch from a cottonwood fell into the ADA restroom parking area blocking the path to the restroom. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes used chainsaws, cables, and winch to pull pieces into the woods.



GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

2015 Hunting Seasons Begin: Regional Wildlife Biologists and Customer Service staff fielded many contacts from the hunting public related to the start of various hunting seasons. Specifics on where and how to hunt, questions about regulations, concerns about fire related closures, and confusion over access to private industrial forestlands were all common topics of conversation over the past week. Hunters are reminded to review the Hunting Prospects, located at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/prospects/> on the WDFW website. The prospects detail information about game species populations, access information, changes to regulations, and more. Additionally, hunters may want to review the September 2 WDFW News Release located at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/news/sep0215c/>. The news release offers information related to fire, access, and special permit hunts.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management:

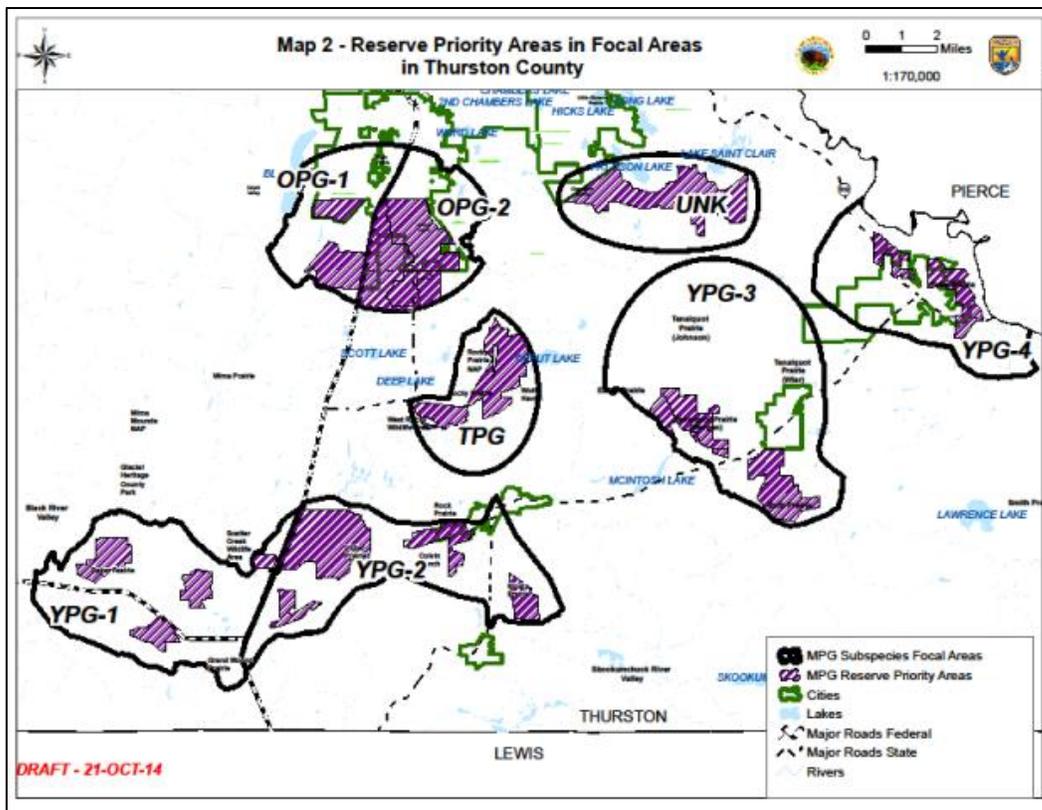
Western Pond Turtle: District 11 staff checked the 15 remaining turtle nests for hatchlings. Six nests laid in May produced 14 hatchlings, 39 eggs (22 eggs cracked/rotten and removed; 17 unhatched eggs were re-covered). Hatchlings ranged in weight from 5.2 grams to 7.3 grams. Biologists continue to monitor these nests plus nine nests laid in June/July for hatching activity.

Oregon Spotted Frog: Wildlife Area Manager Belson and District 11 biologists worked to remove reed canary grass from breeding sites along Salmon Creek. The property is managed for Oregon spotted frog recovery using several methods of vegetation control and breeding area enhancement. Staff completed a first cutting of the invasive reed canary grass in 16 breeding plots. Future September work will include a second cutting and removal of the biomass from all plots in order to provide areas with emergent aquatic vegetation next March/April which Oregon spotted frogs prefer for laying eggs.

Mazama Pocket Gopher: District 11 staff began working with WDFW Research Division on a research project to develop site evaluation procedures for Mazama pocket gophers, building upon occupancy modeling completed previously. Field work will begin this week on prairies within Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM).

Molting Scoter Survey Project: Biologist Murphie conducted surveys for molting scoters in areas near Port Orchard, Hood Canal, and south Puget Sound. He reports encountering several groups of molting scoters, mostly in southern Puget Sound.

Prairie Conservation: Biologist Tirhi attended the monthly Sentinel Lands meeting, a collaboration of agency staff working on prairie and prairie species conservation in southern Puget Sound. The working group is comprised of members from WDFW, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Thurston County, JBLM, Capitol Land Trust, Nisqually Land Trust, and the Center for Natural Lands Management. Currently, the group is using its draft Mazama pocket gopher reserve design map to identify private properties within the reserves which may have an interest in sale or easement and which are a priority for conservation. WDFW regions are currently constructing their list of project sites that will be approved for various grant applications for purchase/easements through its Lands 20/20 process (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00726/>). Tirhi's District 11 is considering several properties within the reserve network which may go forward for application through the 2016 round of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program administered thru the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC).



Treponeme Associated Hoof Disease meeting: Biologist Harris, Biologist Novack, and RPM Calkins attended a meeting on elk hoof disease with Wildlife Program staff from Region 5 and Headquarters. Topics discussed included a review of the spring volunteer work, a review of the elk survival study by Elk Specialist Hoenes, ideas for obtaining hooves, and better prevalence data. The group collectively decided to move forward with trying to obtain hooves from antlerless elk permit hunters in portions of the two regions.

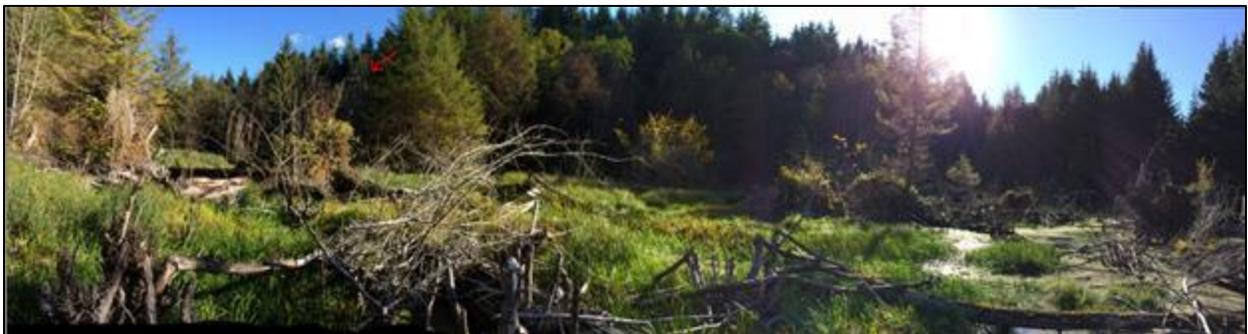
Bat Acoustic Study: Biologist McMillan continued to work the bat acoustic detector equipment at the two surveyed sites:

Cell 513 – Hoko site – Replaced batteries and memory cards on September 4. Copied recordings for the August 26 to September 4 time period and downloaded them onto the S: drive. Water had returned to the small creek adjacent to the clearcut where the detector was set up.



Red Arrow indicates placement of detector

Cell 4177 - Deep Creek site – Set up detector at beaver pond, near the previous location. Due to rain and the water level rising at the site, it made placement on another stump a better choice.



Deep Creek site – adjusted set up location (red arrow)

Records from Bat Surveys: Biologist Ament prepared a summary report for a bat exit count conducted in August at a bunker located west of Port Angeles. She reviewed and provided some edits to the summary reports from surveys conducted the past few years. She also updated a spreadsheet that summarizes all surveys conducted at the site. Surveys were initiated at the site in 1995. All records will be provided to staff in Olympia who are involved with statewide bat monitoring and managing the bat survey data. Biologist Ament plans to do some investigating

with District Biologist McMillan and Olympia staff to make sure that all known survey data is actually included in the summary spreadsheet.

Fisher Surveys: In a multi-agency collaborative effort to document fisher presence on the Olympic Peninsula, Biologist Murphie established three camera stations within a survey block located near the town of Matlock, WA. Biologist Murphie conducted his second check of these camera stations this week and reports taking photos of only opossum, a turkey vulture, and a bear. Camera sets were refreshed and left in place.

Biologist Michaelis installed fisher camera traps at a new location.

Biologist Ament spent time last week conducting various tasks associated with the fisher monitoring project.

Hex 563: Biologist Ament spent some time last week reviewing the completed forms for set-up and check visits to all stations in Hex 563. The equipment was pulled from this hex on August 13 and has been prepared to be returned to ONP staff. Computer files have been established for all photos taken during each two week monitoring period. All photos and copies of forms will be provided to ONP staff on a thumb drive.

Hex 565: Biologist Ament and Point No Point Biologist Tim Cullinan conducted the third and final check of all stations for Hex 565. This hex had been monitored during the 2013 season and no fisher had been detected at the stations. All cameras and other items were found to be secure at each station during the check. There were no detections of fishers at any of the stations. All cameras were working properly. A Douglas squirrel and raccoon visited Station 1. No distinct mammals or birds were identified in the photos for Station 2. One unusual brush of light was seen in one photo but was unable to be identified. A curious coyote investigated Station 3. A pair of dogs also visited this station on August 31, 2015 and ate all the bait from the site and moved the cubby from the base of the tree. There were hairs found on three of the cubby brushes but they were definitely from the dog that consumed the bait.



Unusual flash of light at Station 2 (left view w/ light, right view w/out)



A young coyote poses at Station 3



District 16 Fisher Project Team 2015

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Private Lands /Conflict:

Hunting Access: Biologist Harris communicated with two large timberland owners about public access agreements. They both expressed interest in working with the agency. Harris also prepared and sent three waterfowl hunting access agreements and one pheasant hunting access agreement to landholders for signature.

Deer and Elk Damage: Biologist Harris issued Damage Prevention permits for elk that are causing problems on cranberry bogs in the Long Beach Area. Harris also submitted two DPCA's and wrote a new DPCA for another cranberry grower.

Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist Blankenship met with two landowners in the Skokomish Valley regarding elk damage to their property. Blankenship discussed elk damage mitigation and management strategies for elk in this area.

Elk Hazing: Elk damage to a cucumber crop in Orting was reported to Conflict Specialist Blankenship. Blankenship was able to send out Master Hunter volunteers to help haze the elk while harvest of the cucumbers is finishing up.

Bear Depredation Investigation: Biologist Harris responded to a report of a bear depredation on a beef cow in the Hoh River area. The bear was harvested and tagged by a friend of the owner. The owner assumed the bear had killed the cow. The cow was partially consumed and in advance stages of decomposition. The neck, rostrum, and upper back were still intact. Skinning of these areas resulted in no trauma observed. Cause of death was determined to be unknown. Biologist Harris and Officer Davidson suspect that the cow died of natural causes and the bear just happened to find it. The owner was not aware that they were missing a cow until the friend harvested the bear. The cow was not easily visible from the trail and just the bear was observed at first.