

Wildlife Program

Week of March 30 – April 5, 2015

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Puget Sound Prairie and Oak Woodland Conservation: Biologists David Hays, Mary Linders, Ann Potter, and Research Scientist Gail Olson participated in a final proposal evaluation and decisions for the Department of Defense Army Compatible Use Buffer Program for South Puget Sound. The program provides funds for conservation, restoration, research, and monitoring for federally listed species of the south Puget Sound prairies, such as Mazama Pocket Gopher, Streaked Horned Lark, and Taylor's Checkerspot. In 2015, approximately \$865,000 is available for projects by WDFW and partners under the program. Projects likely to be funded include continuing restoration projects, including seed development, prescribed fire, and habitat enhancement. Research and monitoring projects include the development of a population estimation model for Taylor's Checkerspot and evaluating the effects of prescribed fire on Mazama Pocket Gopher. Final decisions on funding will be made by 10 April.

Western Gray Squirrel: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally, Research Scientist Matt Vander Haegen, and Biologist Gary Wiles rolled out (webinar) range-wide expanded survey protocols and a new ArcGIS mapping project to biologists in Districts 6, 7, 8, and 9, as well as our conservation partners at Pacific Biodiversity Institute who will be coordinating a Citizen Science component to this project in the northern portion of the squirrel's range. Class and field training workshops have been scheduled for the south-range participants and biologists, and we are still working on the northern workshop location.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Big Sheep Creek Acquisition Project: District Wildlife Biologist (DWB) Dana Base investigated details regarding the recent large-scale land acquisition (2,440 acres) of the upper Big Sheep Creek watershed by the Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC). This organization negotiates with willing sellers – including corporations, families, and utilities – to purchase outstanding landscapes of superlative fish & wildlife habitat value for conservation. The WRC typically acts as an intermediary in the initial land acquisition, but then transfers ownership to a government agency charged with long term conservation. Big Sheep Creek lies within one of the most critical movement corridors for imperiled mammals, including grizzly bears, lynx, wolverine, and gray wolf migrating between Canada and the U.S. The creek is also home to native redband rainbow trout and possible habitat for bull trout. This acquisition helps secure a significant stretch of the Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail. For more information go to: <http://www.westernrivers.org/projectatlas/big-sheep-creek/>

The upper Big Sheep Creek Watershed looking north into Canada

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

Wildlife Areas

Youth Turkey at SCWA: Sherman Creek WLA staff had report of one successful turkey hunting youth over the weekend. Every year a gentleman from Moses Lake brings a youth from his home town up to the Sherman Creek WLA for the youth turkey hunt. Below is a photo of the successful young hunter from this year.



A successful youth turkey hunter with his nice gobbler from Sherman Creek WLA

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



Wildlife Management

HWY 26 Deer Vehicle Collision Hotspot: Biologist Atamian met with Hoobler (Whitman Conservation District), Kelly McAllister (WA DOT), and Erik Lewis to review the collision data for the area between LaCrosse and Washtucna and discuss potential solutions to the problem. Over 200 deer carcasses were removed by DOT crews this last year along this stretch of highway and this includes only animals that died on the road, so actual mortality is much higher. The best long term solution would be underpasses and fencing. There are several cattle underpasses already that could potentially be expanded on, but this is expensive and takes time. More quickly implemented, but not as effective, is signage with flashing lights to alert drivers to risk.



Cattle underpass along Hwy 26 in area of high deer vehicle collisions

Bull Elk Caught in Fence: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from a farmer this week. While he was fertilizing his wheat he came across a nice set of elk sheds in his wheat crop. That is when he noticed the sheds were from the large 6x6 bull elk that Rasley cut free from a fence last fall. The bull had travelled over seventeen air miles to where he was finally able to shed his antlers. All the locals were very pleased with our decision to not euthanize the bull when we first got the call last fall.



6X6 Bull Elk last fall



6X6 Bull elk sheds found four days ago by a farmer



Elk Shedding Antlers: Wildlife Conflict Specialist received a call last month from a farmer regarding a “large bull elk that was tangled in an electric tape fence”. After meeting with the RP and taking a good look at the bull we decided to just let him shed out and that should take care of the problem. Well our plan worked out and the large bull is doing just fine.



“Mr. Electric Fence” Before



After shedding his antlers and doing just fine

Wildlife Areas

KFES 4th Grade Forest Health: WAAM Palmer spent a morning this week serving as a panel member for the Kettle Falls 4th graders forest management presentations. The 4th graders have been learning about forest health and management, as well multiple uses on public land, over the past few months through class work and field visits to Sherman Creek WLA. The students did an excellent job of learning from mentors and working with their peers to put together management plans and presentations that were understandable, informative, and eye catching. Students in each group were responsible for giving assigned portions of the presentation and then answered questions from the panel of their mentors.



Kettle Falls 4th grade students presenting their forest treatment prescriptions and management plans

Chief Joseph WA –Cultural Resources: Biologist Woodall met with a neighboring landowner and the two hiked up Joseph Creek to look at some petroglyphs. She had known about these petroglyphs for years and wanted to voice her concerns of increased recreational use in the area

and the possibility these petroglyphs could be discovered and vandalized. There was a hole dug at the site that she thinks were probably artifact hunters. Biologist Woodall could not be positive if the hole was dug by persons or animals. WLA staff did not know of these cultural resources so we were excited to talk with Magden and see the site. Biologist Woodall took some pics and a GPS location of the site. We let enforcement know so they could keep an eye on the area and contacted WDFW Archeologist Kelly to get further guidance on our next steps. Most of the petroglyphs are very old and are not really distinguishable anymore.



The best and most distinguishable of the petroglyphs found in a remote site up Joseph Creek

REGION 2

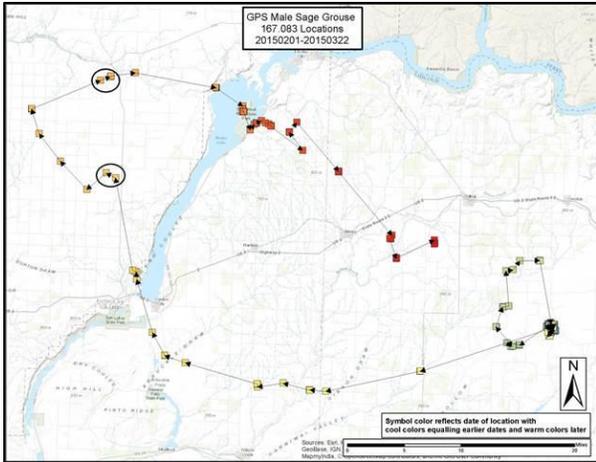
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sharp-tail and Sage Grouse Lek Counts: Biologists Gallie, Schroeder, Peterson, Braaten and Comstock continue lek counts in Douglas County. High counts of males used to index the breeding population (223 so far this year) is slightly higher than this same time period last year, largely from finding new leks. One new sage grouse lek on Pot Hills (four males) was newly found, with some good ground work and following up on locations from GPS males earlier this spring from an adjacent lek site. Another lek that had been inactive for several years was found to be active again with eighteen attending.

Sharp-tailed grouse leks are also being counted and the numbers are similar to last year's (currently around 105). Of note are two leks within the 2012 Leahy-Barker fire perimeter, which had gone vacant since the fire, that have now been relocated and show lekking activity.

GPS collared sage grouse: Most of the males with GPS transmitters are still localized around their lek of capture. We did have one mortality due to raptor predation (the one mentioned above that led us to a new lek site). Two Lincoln County males have made trips into Douglas County. One (pictured) looks to have visited two active lek sites within Douglas County and is now on his way back to Swanson Lakes. Data returned by GPS collars are providing amazing insight into the connectivity between these populations.



Lek sites circled along path of Lincoln County Sage grouse in Douglas County

Male sage grouse on Douglas County lek

Okanogan Spring Deer Classification Surveys: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen wrapped up spring deer classification surveys, classifying almost 3000 mule deer. The final tally yielded a fawn to adult ratio of 38:100, and an over winter fawn mortality estimate of 47% for mule deer in PMU 21. This is slightly below the long-term average of 52%. Interestingly, within the Methow Watershed the fawn ration for animals tallied inside the perimeter of the Carlton Complex Fire turned out to be slightly higher than the ratio for routes outside of the burn (39:100 vs 35:100). The discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the non-burn routes are dominated by those furthest up valley where snow depths tend to be greater. Also of note, the Methow’s unofficial lone elk mascot showed up on one route (see photo). This animal is at least fifteen years old and has spent her entire adult life among deer.



Mule deer on spring green-up – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Methow Methuselah elk and her friends – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Chelan Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie and Bridges have completed spring green-up surveys for mule deer to assess winter mortality, fawn ratios, prevalence of hair-loss syndrome. We anticipate lower rates of overwinter mortality based from our mild winter. Herds look to be in good condition with few incidents of hair-loss. Deer are distributed across snow free areas taking advantage of early green up conditions (away from orchards). Over 1500 deer were observed, with an overwinter F:A ratio of sixty, and prevalence of hair-loss at <1%.

Mountain Goat: Biologist Gallie conducted a winter ground-based goat count. The mild winter conditions, along with the completion of USFS road repairs, allowed access to areas normally inaccessible by road during winter. For the first winter in the past eight years, I was able to survey for Mountain Goats in the Upper Icicle. Twenty-two goats were observed, and records indicate that it was during the 70s when those numbers of goats were last seen in that section of the Alpine Lakes wilderness. The minimum high count of goats observed over the last two winters for Tumwater Canyon and the Enchantments is 117 goats. This summer we will coordinate a volunteer effort with Region 3 to obtain an area wide minimum count. Increasing observations are encouraging and may lead to additional hunting opportunities in the future.



Mountain goats up the Icicle Canyon, Chelan County – Photo by J Gallie

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist E. Duvuvuei looked at past Northern Leopard Frog (NLF) data and determined that we are within the window for possible NLF breeding activities. Egg masses would be the preferred life stage to move during translocation efforts, but the timing of finding these egg masses is critical. Depending on water temperature, it is possible for NLF tadpoles to hatch from egg masses in less than a week. During last year's search effort, no egg masses were found. In order to improve the chances of finding egg masses, Duvuvuei plans to search two easily accessible ponds that consistently have high numbers of metamorphs at least once a week during the breeding season. Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei did not observe any NLF, but several bullfrogs were active and one Pacific Tree Frog was heard. This week, one bullfrog, two tree frogs, and one NLF was observed. The NLF was a brown morph ~65mm long and appeared skinny and sluggish.

Wildlife Areas

FEMA - Carlton Complex Fire Recovery: Maintenance Mechanic Ed Pierson and Natural Resource Technician Kevin Vallance completed the last of eight spring developments on the Pateros and Chiliwist Units damaged by last summer's fire. In addition to the spring developments, during the month of March, Ed and Kevin also constructed two reader boards and over 100 blue bird and kestrel boxes on the Pateros, Indian Dan Canyon, and Chiliwist Units.



Pateros Unit spring development – Photo by K. Vallance



Pateros Unit bluebird nest box – Photo by R. Fox

Wetland Projects: Biologist Finger, E. Duvuvuei, and O. Duvuvuei continued dewatering and monitoring Mansfield Pond to prepare the soil for moist soil plant growth this spring. O. Duvuvuei applied for an HPA permit to install a beaver deceiver at Mansfield Pond. Biologist Finger, E. Duvuvuei, and O. Duvuvuei visited the Spud Field wetland project site to see how things were progressing with the island construction. Islands will

provide high quality nesting cover for waterfowl, roosting habitat for sandhill cranes, and a location for hunters to utilize this ~90 acre shallowly flooded area.



Excavators at work constructing islands at the Spud Field wetland project site – Photo by Rich Finger



Orrin and Erin checking conditions at the eastern-most pond/island construction, one of four planned for this 70-acre floodplain area – Photo by Rich Finger

Chelan Butte Fields Restoration: Wildlife Area Manager Fox and the Natural Resource Technician spent the better part of day looking at fields seeded the last two years to plan spring weed control on about 400 acres of old agricultural fields that are in varying stages of native plant establishment. The lower elevation fields seeded last fall appear to have good stands of grass emerging along with the usual array of annual weeds like Russian thistle and cereal rye.

Native grasses and Russian thistle emerging on Chelan Butte fields – Photo by R. Fox



Private Lands/Access

Evaluations bird use of circle corner

habitat enhancements:

Biologist Dougherty spent two days in the field conducting point counts that will be used to determine the success of habitat restoration/enhancement in the irrigation pivot circle corners. The point count project has been in development for quite a while and only now has time been available to actually do the point counts, plus Biologist Comstock is very knowledgeable regarding birds and survey techniques, which undoubtedly helps the cause. The initial day chosen by Biologist Dougherty to do the surveys was a bit windy, but through dedication and perseverance all the surveys were completed. Biologist Comstock conducted point counts at four habitat plots in circle corners. The most common birds counted where white-crowned sparrows.

Sage Grouse Initiative Implementation Plan: Private Lands Biologist Braaten participated in a conference call with state and county NRCS staff and WDFW staff discussing future funding and

implementation plans and priorities for 2016, 2017, and 2018. Seventy-five percent of annual allocated SGI funds must be funded within the highest priority area in Washington (Douglas County). Twenty-five percent of the remainder will go to other priority areas (Lincoln, Okanogan, Grant, Kittitas, and Yakima Counties). Available SGI funding will be spent by eleven states over the next three years. The SGI implementation plans from other states, as well as Washington State, need to be submitted by mid-April so funding can be prioritized and allocated. Many issues, like annual staff workload and participation levels by landowners, are being used to structure a realistic implementation plan for the future.

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

Wildlife Areas

Flood Flat ADA Access: Biologists Finger and Duvuvueis prepared the ground and seeded and harrowed the ADA site at the Flood Flat. Proso millet was seeded in the flood flat area and triticale was seeded along the access road and on the berms to stabilize the bare ground and prevent weeds such as Russian thistle from establishing. An additional benefit, if successful, will be a food plot to attract doves for banding. Grasses and forb plantings are planned for the fall.

Private Lands Biologist Steele watering in the triticale seed to ensure germination begins as quickly as possible to take advantage of limited available moisture in the soil profile –

Photo by Rich Finger



Scotch Creek Shrub and Tree Planting: Due to excessive mortality with last year's attempt to plant trees and shrubs along Scotch Creek, staff again made another valiant attempt. 1,000 plants were replaced into existing fabric rows intended to reduce competition, a complete exterior deer fence was erected to prevent deer browsing, and a new drip irrigation system was installed to help the plants get through the long dry summer period. An excellent job was completed by Assistant Manager Dupont and Natural Resource Technician Topping, with help from the prescribed burn crew members and the Wenatchee WCC crew. With a little TLC these plants will fare better than last year.



Private Lands/Access

Hunter's Education Instructor In-Service Training: Biologist Dougherty gave two presentations at the Hunter's Education Instructor In-Service Training on Sunday, March 29th. The first topic was how to use the WDFW GoHunt tool and the second was all about the WDFW Private Hunting Lands Access Program. The private lands talk was well received and great information was exchanged regarding many of the aspects of the Hunter Access program. Biologist Dougherty spent about half of the time talking about and explaining the WDFW Hunt by Reservation system, and most instructors seemed have a much better understanding of that system.

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

Wildlife Management

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival: The 18th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival took place in Othello on March 27-29. Biologist E. Duvuvuei presented a poster about the Northern Leopard Frog Translocation Feasibility project for the WDFW display at the festival. Biologist Finger presented information and led a field tour about Washington Ground Squirrels, and Biologist O. Duvuvuei presented Greater Sage-Grouse research and management strategies. Festival participants were interested in WDFW work and made positive comments about the display and information provided. The coloring books, fishing tattoos, and stickers were very popular.



WDFW booth set up by Finger and Duvuvueis – Photo by Rich Finger



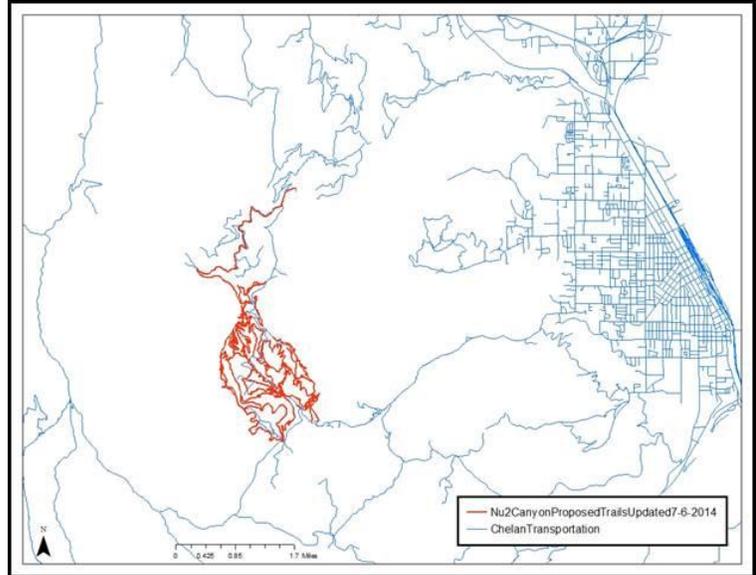
Washington ground squirrel tour for the Sandhill Crane Festival – Photo by Rich Finger

USFS Mountain Bike Trails: Biologist Volsen met with USFS and Chelan PUD staff to discuss the proposed mountain bike trail system planned for the upper Number Two Canyon behind Wenatchee. The discussion revolved around the trail system's location within mule deer winter range and levels of use within and without the area. Of particular concern is the linking of the trail system to lower elevation trails on Chelan PUD and Chelan/ Douglas Land trust areas closed during winter to minimize disturbance on mule deer.

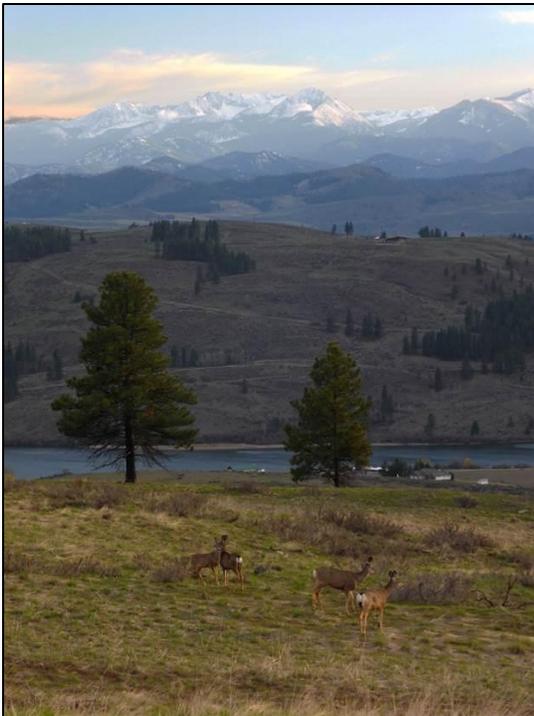
Wildlife Areas

Methow CRM-Grazing Permits:

Manager Furnari, Sinlahekin Assistant Manager Wehmeyer, and representatives from DNR, USFS, NRCS, Okanogan Conservation District, State Parks, and Methow Conservancy met individually with five grazing permittees. Most members stayed throughout the CRM discussions to review anticipated seasonal on/off timelines for cattle, infrastructural needs, on-going wildfire related issues, scheduled vegetation evaluation dates within the burn zone (June 9-11), the fence repair/replacement timeline, and grant/funding sources for an entire day.



Chiliwist, Ruby and Methow Coordinated Resource Management Meetings: Assistant Manager Wehmeyer attended three Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) meetings this past week. The objective of these CRM meetings is to meet with grazing permittees who utilize department lands for pasturing as well as other state and federal agencies who share similar



Methow Valley mule deer – Photo by Scott Fitkin

permits in this same geographic area to discuss the coming year's activities. Wehmeyer discussed issues with last year's grazing season and presented ways to resolve them as well as projects that WDFW staff can implement to improve the permitted area. These meetings are mediated by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.



The Douglas County sunrise makes the 3:30AM alarm tolerable

Methow River Bank sloped and project at planting stage – Photo by Sherry Furnari

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman drove through the Worrell Ranch property on the Cowiche Unit prior to livestock turnout. Things look pretty good with wildflowers in full bloom (pictures below). The water situation is not the best with several springs not flowing very well and dry ponds (picture below). Usually the stock ponds are full from runoff this time of year.



Wildflowers in bloom on the Worrell Ranch, Cowiche Unit, Oak Creek Wildlife Area



Dry stock pond on the Worrell Ranch, Cowiche Unit. Usually this pond is 3/4 full in early spring.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Buser mowed the levy around the East Pigeon Pond and was able to get the tractor and disc into the dry wetland to prep for additional dirt work and planting. Buser continued to manage water levels of area wetlands.

Wildlife Management

Canada Goose Nesting Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra coordinated with WDFW Waterfowl specialist Wilson, Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore, and USFWS staff to plan for the Canada Goose nesting surveys to be conducted next week. Volunteers from the Richland Rod and Gun Club will assist during the surveys.

Sunnyside WMA Enhancement: District Biologist Fidorra met with Wildlife Area Manager Bjornstrom at Sunnyside WMA to see recent wildlife enhancement projects and discuss potential future biological monitoring projects that could be implemented.

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Survey: District Biologist Fidorra reviewed and submitted comments to the USFWS on the draft report from the Rattlesnake Hills Elk Survey that was completed last month in conjunction with WDFW staff.

2016 Ferruginous Hawk Survey: District Biologist Fidorra discussed plans and protocols with Research Biologist Hayes regarding 2016 statewide Ferruginous Hawk surveys.

Yakima County Sage Grouse Lek: Biologist Stutzman surveyed the Yakima County sage grouse lek again this week. Ten males were observed displaying.



Wildlife/Pollinator Projects: Stutzman met Benton Conservation District staff to discuss potential wildlife/pollinator projects. Four interested landowners were identified and Stutzman will work with BCD staff to take applications and design the projects in the coming weeks.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz responded to a sighting by Wildlife Area Tech Kass of four bighorn sheep below the fence in Kelly Hollow. There are a fair number of domestic farm flocks in the area, so there is significant risk of disease transmission. Conflict Specialist Wetzel and contractor Leuck were in the area and were able to spot the sheep. However, the sheep ran as soon as staff exited the vehicle and were never seen again. Biologist Bernatowicz helped search the area and contacted the closest landowner with domestic sheep. Another ground search and aerial survey failed to find any bighorn sheep below the fence. The landowner in Kelly Hollow indicated bighorns had been through the fence in the past. Assistant WA Manager Taylor and Tech Kass had walked the fence recently and had ideas on where the bighorn might be getting through and how to improve the barrier.

Western Gray Squirrels: Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore participated in a WebEx conference to discuss survey protocols for the Western Gray Squirrel (WGS). WGS will be an emphasis the next three years for the Diversity Program.

Harvest Data: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed draft final harvest data products. The goal is to have the data online soon.

Quilomene Bighorn Sheep Survey: Biologist Moore reviewed flight data to ensure an accurate count took place after having an interrupted survey in early March. We were approximately 2/3 through our survey when the Department of Ecology requested emergency helicopter assistance for an oil spill near Sunnyside. The remaining 1/3 of the survey was completed three days later. GPS waypoint and tracklog data were used to evaluate the likelihood of double counting. Overall, these data suggest the chances for double counting were extremely low. The raw Quilomene observations were:

160 Total, 93 Ewes, 20 Lambs, 16 Rams <3/4, 31 Rams >3/4

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff completed the installation of green dot markers on the new Stray Gulch Road.

Yoyo Rock Boat Launch: Colockum staff removed the signs at the Yoyo Rock Boat Launch and opened it for public use. There was immediate use by the public, who were anxious to fish for walleye below Rock Island Dam.

Youth Turkey Season: Several young hunters participated in the youth turkey season on the Colockum on April 4 and 5. Birds were available for harvest in the drainages of Colockum Creek, Tarpiscan Creek, Stray Gulch, and Tekison Creek.

Eight-year old Levi McPherson with his first turkey on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Levi completed his hunter safety training last year.



Naneum Recreation Plan: Manager Lopushinsky travelled to Ellensburg to participate in a Naneum Recreation Plan implementation meeting with WA DNR.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris met with Gary Hanna, Selah Fire Chief, to discuss the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. Chief Hanna was very supportive of the location of Alternative 3. He liked that we could put a solid fire break around it and that it was close in with a decent road to that point. So if a fire did happen to get past the fire break, they could respond quickly to the site. We also discussed Alternative 4, which is outside the fire district boundary, and whether the district would be willing to annex the site. He couldn't see any

benefit to the fire district, particularly since they wouldn't receive any additional funds, just additional responsibility located out on the edge of their district. He said he would mention it to his fire commissioners, but didn't expect them to be interested. Chief Hanna or his 2nd in command will attend the Selah public meeting on April 29.

Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting: Manager Confer Morris spoke with Scott Sandsberry, reporter with the Yakima Herald Republic, regarding the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. The article came out in Saturday's newspaper, making the front page.

Yakima Backcountry Horsemen's Meeting: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor attended the Yakima Backcountry Horsemen's monthly meeting and presented the Wenas WLA target shooting proposal and took feedback. The group was supportive of the idea, particularly providing a safer area to ride.

Access Program

NRW2 Barbosa serviced the following access areas: Hyde, Snively, Duportail, Ringold, Tim's Pond, Oak Creek, Woodhouse, Lavender Lake, Teanaway junction, Thorp, King horn Slough, Mattoon, Fio Rito, MP 8 & 10, and the Masterson Property. At Zillah Bridge, he put a coat of paint on a bathroom and picked up trash. Due to the high weekend use he also serviced toilets at Ponds 2, 4, and 6.

Tuesday and Wednesday NRW2 Barbosa had Jonathan Umana, Yakima County Juvenile Courts, with a few kids performing community service in the lower valley. They were able to hit all the sites and the kids did an awesome job, removing 440 pounds of garbage in two days.



Yakima County Juvenile Courts Community service done at lower valley Ponds 1, 2, 4, and 6



Zillah Vault Toilet - newly cleaned and painted after fire was set in it

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt met with Steven Douglas to help him identify WDFW access sites and other State lands in Kittitas County, including Wildlife Areas, boat launches, and State Forests or Parks. Steve's purpose was to assist users with understanding where a Discover Pass is needed.

Wanapum Pool: The Wanapum Pool of the Columbia River has finally been refilled and the public can now access those parts of the wildlife area adjacent to the water. The water level was dropped due to a crack in the dam, so while repairs were underway the public were not allowed to access the shorelines where cultural resources may have been exposed.

LT Murray Use Permits: Assistant Manager Hunt continued assisting Lands Program Manager Leah Hendrix with use permits on the LT Murray. The June LDS Trek group has changed their desired route, and will now use the Gnat Flat area, similar to the July group. Hunt will do a check of the routes next week. Additionally Hunt turned down a request from a large equestrian group to again use this same area in between the two LDS Treks. We are still limiting large event permits to one a month, the first in 2015 being an equestrian Poker Ride in May.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom coordinated with Sargent Fulton to provide renditions of wildlife area signs to a local hunter education classroom. Sargent Fulton spoke at a hunter education class at Griggs in Pasco where they have a dedicated classroom for teaching hunter education. The instructor asked if WDFW had signs they could display in the classroom for educational purposes. Manager Bjornstrom will provide the images to Sargent Fulton to honor the request.

Access Site Cleaning: NRT2 Medina worked with Jonathan Umana and youth from the Yakima County Juvenile Detention Center to clean wildlife area access sites. Jonathan brought a group

of at-risk youth to the wildlife area to complete required community service hours. The group collected trash at four access sites including: Upper Rupley, Lower Rupley McGee, and Holliday Road. They also cleaned out wood duck nest boxes on the Johnson Wetland.

Trash collected at Sunnyside HQ Unit access sites by Yakima County At-Risk Youth Program



Wildlife Management

Hazing Devices: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Cle Elum who reported elk in his new seeding and needed more hazing devices, which were supplied to him.

Elk Harvests: Herder Leuck moved large numbers of new elk out of the Caribou Creek area several days this week. He also coordinated with Master Hunters for the last elk harvests of the year. Hunt master Keisel worked with several Region 3 permit hunters to harvest elk in the Caribou Creek vicinity. Total harvest in this area for March was eleven elk.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel, herder Leuck, and Hunt Master Keisel hazed elk out of several locations in Kittitas County this week. The locations were mainly the Coleman, Caribou, Caitlin Canyon, Reecer, and Lauderdale areas.

Deer Conflict: A homeowner in Ellensburg city limits called to report ten deer in his yard on a regular basis. Conflict Specialist Wetzel looked at the area and discussed options with the Ellensburg Police Department (EPD). The landowner was given advice on living with deer and coordinated with EPD to conduct non-lethal hazing to move the deer away.

Damaged Fence: A livestock operator in the Wenas Area was contacted by Conflict Specialist Wetzel about a damaged fence along Maloy Road. The fence was repaired by Wetzel and Leuck and hazing materials were provided to the landowner. About 300 elk were hazed from that area this week by herder Leuck.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Forester Mackey met with Archeologist Kelly and Yakama Nation Archeologist David Powell to review the RMAP project area.

Rock Creek Unit: Forester Mackey submitted an FPA for further RMAP work in the Rock Creek Unit.

Thinning Contracts: Forester Mackey completed a field review of sites for future non-commercial thinning contracts.

Oak Creek Project Tour: Forester Mackey and Statewide Forester Pfeifle completed a field tour of the Oak Creek Project.

Draft Purchaser Contracts: Forester Mackey received approval from Forestry Lead Tveten to move forward with the draft purchaser contracts as is. Bids will go out to potential purchasers in mid-April.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom contacted Private Lands Biologist Stutzman about the Volunteer Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program being administered through NRCS. Manager Bjornstrom felt this program might provide an additional funding opportunity to help accomplish Regional goals.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hagan spent several days walking and inspecting approximately eight miles of southern boundary fencing that was damaged in the Colockum-Tarps Fire. There may still be funds available for repair of this fence from the legislative appropriation for fire damage. He will be writing up a report and forwarding it on to Ray Berg in Engineering.

Fire damaged boundary fencing on Colockum Wildlife Area



REGION 4

NO REPORT SUBMITTED.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologists Anderson and Bergh conducted three elk hoof disease prevalence surveys over the past two weeks. Their survey points were located west and north of Trout Lake and most of the area surveyed was national forest land. Very few elk were seen and driving was complicated by snow, downed trees, and poor road

conditions. Biologist Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey on a mix of areas visible from County roads and private industrial forestland. One group of elk was encountered during the effort. Biologist Stephens conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey in the Packwood GMU on primarily Forest Service land. A total of twelve elk in three different groups were observed during the effort. Two of these groups were seen above 3,200 foot elevation where the elk were foraging on deciduous trees and shrubs that were already leafing out.

All data generated from this spring effort will be submitted to Hoof Disease Coordinator George and compiled with efforts from volunteers. The survey involves locations throughout southwest Washington, encompassing private and public lands as well as different habitat types. The effort to document any discernible difference in the prevalence of the hoof disease condition geographically will continue through April.



Western Gray Squirrel Survey Preparation: Biologists Anderson, Bergh, Van Leuven, and Doorly, along with Habitat Biologist Johnson, participated in a webinar on protocols for the upcoming western gray squirrel surveys. Surveys in District 9 are part of a three-year statewide effort to assess presence and abundance of this State Threatened species. A field training session will take place later this month and surveys will begin in May.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Band-tailed Pigeon Forage Enhancement: Assistant Manager Hand and Technician Fox completed the protective tree tubing and matting last week at Cedar Creek Wildlife Unit in Cowlitz County. In February, the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area staff planted over 600 fruit bearing trees at Cedar Creek in hopes of providing better forage to migrating band-tailed pigeons. By placing a protective tube and mat on each tree it drastically reduces rodent damage,

deer and elk damage, and shades out encroaching grasses. All of these allow each tree to become established and grow uninhibited. It has been proven to greatly increase their survivability. Assistant Manager Hand and Technician Fox also installed an access gate at Cedar Creek Wildlife Unit. The unit already does not allow access to unauthorized vehicles and there has been some unauthorized vehicle use and dumping/vandalism. Installing the gate now allows staff to control access and deter any future issues.



Cedar Creek Wildlife Unit

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area:

Road Maintenance: Natural Resource Technician Morris has completed roadside brushing on approximately thirteen miles of access/logging roads on the Peterman Hill Unit. Each year certain wildlife area roads are brushed with a hydraulic arm brusher to maintain driving access onto the unit from the encroachment of invasive and noxious weeds. As we move into better weather later in the spring, staff will apply herbicide where needed for continued vegetation control.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Sequim Site: Biologist Ament conducted her first survey of the season at this known TCB site on April 2, 2015. There was a mix of full sunshine and cloud cover during the survey. The temperature was 55 degrees. There was a fairly constant cool breeze from the north but no gusts > 10 mph. A total of 130 adult TCB's were observed during the survey. She was not expecting such a high count since Biologist Ivan Stocker conducted a survey on March 30th and had a zero count. Biologist Ament worked with Ivan to relocate a few flag stakes that came up missing along the survey route. Surveys will continue each week. Survey forms were completed and submitted to Biologist Potter.

Coastal Connectivity Meeting: Biologist Ament participated in a Coastal Connectivity Meeting in Tumwater on March 31st. District Biologist McMillan participated in the first half of the meeting via call in. The meeting was organized by Department of Transportation (DOT) staff. Biologist Ament stayed after the meeting to discuss the camera monitoring project located in the Sequim area. DOT Biologist McAllister expressed his sincere appreciation for Biologist Ament's efforts to maintain the three trail cameras. The cameras will continue to be monitored.

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologists Sundstrom conducted one survey in the Wahkiakum area of assigned survey points. Sundstrom and Scientific Technician Capelli attempted to survey one point each during the work week in the Wahkiakum area, but it became evident neither survey could occur during the weekday due to multiple logging operations and hazardous tree felling that was taking place within the two survey point areas. These points were surveyed during the weekend when there was far less logging activity. Protocol for the surveys requires the observer to begin no earlier than 20 minutes after sunrise.

Biologist Harris continues to work with volunteers and staff conducting the hoof disease surveys.

Snowy Plover: Biologist Sundstrom installed 34 signs on private property at Midway Beach this week. The landowner has allowed WDFW to post the property for several seasons. The property has proven to be a valuable asset for the protection of nesting snowy plovers. While installing the signs, Sundstrom discovered the first nest of the season on this property. A second nest was discovered that same day at Midway Beach on State Parks land by a State Parks employee. This nest is located in a very precarious location and will need to be monitored frequently.



An adult snowy plover sits incubating its three egg nest on privately owned land at Midway Beach

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Survey: Biologists Novack, Michaelis, Harris, and Region 5 staff (Holman, Stephens, and George), spent all week conducting the Willapa Elk Herd Survey. During three days of helicopter flights, we surveyed 15 ½ blocks across four GMUs within Region 6. GMU 658 was surveyed across its entirety. The remaining GMUs are partially sampled. The total elk counted was 1430 animals, of which we classified 1371. The total count for each class was 907 cows, 293 Calves, 154 Spike Bulls, 16 Raghorn bulls, and 1 Mature Bull, with 59 unclassified.

Overall elk herd ratios are well within objectives with 33 Calves per 100 cows and 19 bulls per 100 cows. (see the summary table below for breakdown by individual GMU)

Calf	Cow	Bull	GMU	Total Blocks surveyed
<u>33</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>All</u>
36	100	22	658	7
48	100	18	660	1
27	100	17	672	5
32	100	16	673	2 1/2

The observers also counted nine bears, three band-tailed pigeons, one coyote, and one piebald deer. Limping elk were observed in at least two of our sample blocks.

We greatly appreciate the assistance of Region 5 staff working out of their area to help us keep the ship loaded with observers. Also, kudos to Treg Christopher for our pre-survey Toughbook training and program prep. Flights were contracted with APEX helicopters out of Florence, Oregon and it looks like we have another vendor we can rely upon for the quality of performance we need to conduct these surveys.



Elk group seen from helicopter on 4/1/2015 during the flight survey

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Annual Report: The Department completed the annual wolf report required by USFWS. The report has been submitted to USFWS and was made available both on WDFW's and USFW's websites on April 3. The report includes information on wolf population trends, wolf-livestock conflicts, and ongoing research.

Sharing Wolf Locations: Sharing of location data from collared wolves with livestock producers (signed up on data sharing agreements) is temporally stopped during the denning season. The purpose of temporally stopping the data sharing is to protect the location of the den and early rendezvous sites. Sharing collar data will resume on June 1. Conflict staff may still share general locations of wolves verbally with producers during the black-out period.

Deterrence Plans: Since the last Commission meeting, Region 1 staff have met with several producers to discuss damage prevention agreements and wolf deterrence plans. Draft deterrence plans have been developed for the Diamond, Goodman Meadows, Dirty Shirt, and Carpenter Ridge packs. Additional deterrence plans are scheduled to be completed prior to June 1, 2015.

Grazing Plan Best Management Practices: Region 1 Conflict staff worked with Hancock Timber Company on potential Best Management Practices for domestic sheep grazing in occupied wolf areas.

Range Riders: Conflict Section staff are currently recruiting for seasonal range riders. The Department hopes to hire, via contract, up to four range riders for the northeastern part of the state. There were two contracted in 2014.

Interagency Wolf Committee: The Interagency Wolf Committee held their first meeting since the development of the wolf plan on March 25, 2015. Twenty participants attended, including representatives from WDFW, USDA Wildlife Services, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, North Cascades National Park Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Colville Confederate Tribes, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Yakama Indian Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Quileute Nation. Items discussed included an update on wolf population status, state and tribal wolf monitoring plans, data sharing, an update on wolf-livestock management, grazing plan best management practices, improved communications, and wolf-woodland caribou interactions. The next meeting will likely be scheduled for May 2015.

WDFW-USFWS Coordination: Department staff met with USFWS on March 11, 2015 to continue discussions on the coordination of wolf management issues in the western portion of Washington where wolves are federally listed under the ESA. The primary focus of the ongoing discussions is the coordination surrounding the response to reports of wolf-livestock conflict and the potential management actions that follow.

Wolf Management Assessment: Francine Madden with Human-Wildlife Conflict Coordination (HWCC) completed her third party neutral assessment of multi-stakeholders in wolf management. Her report captures the intensity of deep-rooted conflict among and between stakeholders, including the Department. The recommendations include working to address the conflict both among stakeholder groups and then across groups facilitated through the Wolf Advisory Group. The Department has asked those who were interviewed by Ms. Madden if they would like her to continue the multi-stakeholder process. To date, the level of support has been strong, but only about a third of those interviewed have participated in the survey. The survey closes next week.

Wolf Bills in Legislature: There are four wolf bills remaining in the Legislature, with three of those included in the budgets from the House and Senate. One bill provides funding to the University of Washington to evaluate the current status of wolf impacts on ungulates. A proviso in the House budget also provides funding for ongoing research on wolf-livestock conflict. The other two bills funded are to review and amend the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. While these bills both instruct the Department to amend the Wolf Management Plan, they

are quite different in content and funding level. They will need to be reconciled during final budget negotiations.

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

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Wildlife Management

Smackout Working Group: Biologist Shepherd had a meeting with Smackout Working Group members. Wolf issues were discussed.

Huckleberry Area: Biologist Shepherd discussed data sharing, including the breeding season blackout, with multiple people in the Huckleberry area. Biologist Shepherd discussed fox lights with a rancher in the Huckleberry Mountains. Biologist Shepherd discussed Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock with Huckleberry producers.

Colville National Forest Range Program: Biologist Shepherd discussed wolves and related issues thoroughly, including the three spring permit holder meetings, with the Colville National Forest Range Program Lead. The meetings may allow for a more complete formulation of deterrence plans in areas with new, unknown pack activity and lack of understanding of producer use.

Wildlife Conflict Spring Training/Wolf Deterrence Plans: Biologist Shepherd attended the Wildlife Conflict Spring Training in Ellensburg and presented wolf deterrence plans.

Meeting with Whitman County Producer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett met with a producer near Lamont to finish a Damage Claim.

Columbia County Cattleman's Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley coordinated a wolf update presentation for Supervisor McCanna to speak on April 14th in Dayton. The Cattlemen are looking forward to the presentation just like they have in the past.

Collar Data: Biologist Earl received a call from a rancher who has a grazing allotment in the forest. He would like to get approval to receive the collar data starting in June.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Nothing to report

Region 3 Wolf Activities

Conflict Monitoring: Conflict Specialist Wetzell was contacted by a WSU PhD student about a new study design for sheep and wolf conflict monitoring in the Teanaway and Naneum wolf

areas. Contact with the livestock producer and follow up will be needed prior to stock turnout this grazing season.

Cougar Conflict: A livestock owner in Liberty contacted Conflict Specialist Wetzel about a missing Angus calf killed by a wolf. The landowner reported that he saw wolf tracks in his calving pasture and his calf was missing. Conflict Specialist Wetzel and enforcement contacted the landowner and searched the area for calf remains and any signs of wolf activity. No wolf tracks or signs were found, and several fresh cougar tracks were located in the calving pasture. The missing calf was recovered in the area the next day, unharmed. The landowner was advised to keep livestock in observable areas and was also given advice on living with cougars.

One of several different cougar tracks located near calving pasture

