

# Wildlife Program

Week of November 7 – November 13, 2016

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Range Rider Coordination:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with contract range riders on recent changes to contracts. Bennett also worked with Olympia on contract amounts remaining.

**Damage Claim Follow-Up:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett coordinated with Olympia and three producers on damage claims for livestock losses due to confirmed wolf depredations earlier this summer. All three claims are waiting to hear from Farm Services on initial payments.

**Three Public Disclosure Requests (PDR):** Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked on three different PDRs regarding wolves in District 1.

**Profanity Final Report:** Supervisor McCanna participated on a conference call discussing next steps to complete the Profanity Peak final report.

**Oregon Collared Wolf:** A collared wolf from Oregon (OR-35) returned to the Blue Mountains this week.

**Invoices and Checklists:** Biologist Earl worked on completing the paperwork for invoices received from producers with Damage Preventative Cooperative Agreements for Livestock (DPCA-L).

## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep Surveys:** Biologist Lowe surveyed the Lincoln and Whitestone areas for sheep in advance of next week's annual aerial survey. Only 28 sheep were located, including eight lambs in the Lincoln group. Lowe also talked with a resident and a NPS Ranger about the sheep.



*Two groups of bighorns spotted in the Lincoln area*

**Wetland Management:** After turning on the Z Lake aeration, Finch and Bauer stopped by the restored wetlands just downstream of the lake. They lubricated two of the flood control gates for the anti-seize with penetrating oil for easy operation, and ensured the gates were opened fully to accommodate excess runoff through next spring.



*Mike Finch opening water control gate at a restored wetland, south of Z Lake*

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

**Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA):** Natural Resource Technician Seitz submitted DPCA permits to landowners located in Spokane County. Seitz met with Biologist Base and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett regarding potential changes to the Deer Area 1030 hunts in Republic.

**New Hunting Access Agreements:** After several meetings with landowners in Garfield County, Natural Resource Technician Wade was able to secure two new properties for the Hunting by Written Permission program. Wade gathered all the information and travelled to Clarkston to work on entering the contracts into Novatus with Biologist Earl. These will provide 1,000 acres of new access opportunities for sportsmen.

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

**Cougar Research and Contract Discussion:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett met with several District 1 staff members and a carnivore scientist from Olympia on the upcoming research in the district. Bennett spent time also discussing the creation of a houndsman contract to address cougar depredations and pursuits. Additional follow-up is needed.

**Field Visit:** Supervisor McCanna gave Wildlife Program Deputy Assistant Director Cope and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Robinette a field tour of some of the Hunt by Reservation properties in Whitman County.

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – University of Idaho Students:** David Woodall and Bob Dice spent Sunday working with three wildlife students from the University of Idaho (UI) on a field mentoring day. As a new program set up by UI, the mentoring program allows sophomore level students to spend some time with professionals in the field of wildlife management in order to give them some practical experience and inspiration for future employment opportunities. We spent the day planting shrubs in George Creek and cleaning up a big game guzzler on Smoothing Iron Ridge.



*Shrub planting in George Creek*



*University of Idaho wildlife students planting shrubs for wildlife in George Creek*

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

**Spokane Wildlife Conflict Specialist:** Supervisor McCanna completed reference checks on two candidates, completed hire paperwork, and offered the position to a candidate who accepted the position on Monday after talking with family over the weekend. The candidate will start on January 1.

## **REGION 2**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Pygmy Rabbit Enclosure Vegetation Management:** Coordinator Gallie, along with Private Lands Biologists Comstock and Gibbs, Technician Quayle, and Wildlife Area Manager Peterson, conducted herbicide treatments within the Sagebrush Flat enclosures. Noxious weeds required fall application to reduce infestations going into the winter. We treated approximately 6.5 acres, covering a few large patches, artificial burrows/mounds, irrigation lines, fence line, access road, and parking area.

**Redistribution of Pygmy Rabbits:** Biologists Gallie, Rowan, and Gibbs, Technician Quayle, and two volunteers trapped at both the Beezley and Large enclosures this week. The purpose of the trapping is to redistribute breeding rabbits within the four enclosures, which currently have disproportionate distribution of total rabbits, sex ratios, and age classes. Our trapping success did not accomplish what we had hoped, but we did manage to catch some rabbits that fit the demographics we were seeking to address. Four kits (two males and two females) were transferred to the Dormeir enclosure. These prime breeders will assist in building up an adequate breeding population again at that site. It has been sparsely populated the past two years due to releasing too many breeders and possibly increased mortality rate from either disease or predation.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Program:** Crews worked on the Scotch Creek and Sinlahekin wildlife areas doing hazard tree removal and fence repairs to improve habitat, forest health, and public safety. The 2015 Okanogan Complex fire destroyed miles of WDFW fence line. Crews have been identifying repair needs, hazard tree removal where trees could damage fence or put people in danger in the immediate area, and brushing and repairing fence lines. Wet weather prohibited most of the burning in October and so far in November. Some pile burning was accomplished in Oak Creek, but consistent rains kept fuels wet enough that prescribed fire was not effective. Planned spring burns will take place in Sherman Creek, Sinlahekin, and Oak Creek.

**Eder Wildlife Area Restoration:** Manager Olson inspected and made fall plans to start restoration on the 90-acre feedlot just north of Nine Mile Creek. There has been a hold up all year due to cultural resource surveys, so no ground disturbance could occur. The acreage is completely weed-infested without any desirable vegetation present. We will start mowing, spraying, burning piles (of Russian olive), and pulling a couple sections of interior fence on the area starting next week.

**Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project Phase 3:** Forester Jamie Bass and Statewide Forester Rod Pfeifle re-marked the commercial units on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Not only had previous marking paint faded beyond recognition, but it was not meeting restoration goals

for spacing and density. In addition, Bass worked with the Forest Management Team to finalize the pulp management during the commercial sale since it will be done according to the Boise PTR contract.

*Twilight comes early down in the Sinlahekin Valley* – Photo by Jamie Bass



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

**Wildlife Management**

**GMU 290 - Mule Deer Surveys:** Biologist Rowan spent days performing an aerial survey in the Desert Unit (GMU 290) with Biologists Eidson and Atamian (District 2). They saw 368 mule deer (fawn:doe ratio 0.36; buck:doe ratio 0.47), with 64 of these being mature 3-points or larger. They also updated the Ephrata District Flight Plan and distributed it to personnel. They made general but extensive preparations for survey flights.

*An interesting 4-point with a strange, maybe broken left antler* – Photo by Biologist Eidson



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Tunk Valley Fence Inventory:** Technician Sklaney finished up the burned fence inventory on the Tunk Valley Wildlife Area. Assistant Manager Dupont entered all the data sheets, GPS points, and photos to the shared drive for Anthony Sanich, Construction Project Manager in CAMP, to process for FEMA reimbursement. All of the inventory on 53 miles of burned fence

on Scotch Creek is now entered, and hopefully it will lead to some construction projects being completed next spring.

**Scotch Creek and Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Management Plan:** Manager Haug finalized the ecosystem mapping for all units of the Sinlahekin and Scotch Creek wildlife areas and updated and finalized version three of the management plan maps. He also edited the goals and objectives section. WDFW Gorester Bass completed the Forest Management Plan for the document and review should be wrapped up early next week. A couple more outstanding items need to be finished and the plan should be ready for review, potentially going out to public review at the end of this week. A public meeting is planned for next month.

### **REGION 3**

#### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

##### **Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Elk hunting continues on the Colockum, with permit hunters still out in the field. Colockum staff members learned of several successful youth Malaga Unit permit holders who bagged elk this week.

***A 15-year old youth hunter with her first elk, Malaga Unit, Colockum Wildlife Area***



**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Babik and Assistant Manager Winegeart toured the Plum Creek 2012 acquisition parcels. Their planning focused on signage, weed treatment, maintaining road closures, and protection of stream banks from recreational impacts.

***Older berm that is not serving as a deterrent to motor vehicles***

**Fence Repair:** Natural Resource Technician Leuck traveled the length of the elk fence between the Robinson and Joe Watt feed sites looking for holes in the fence after hunting season. Leuck found two holes made by elk to get under the fence. Assistant Manager Winegeart assisted Leuck with patching weak points in the elk fence.



**Elk Gates:** Two elk return gates were propped open by the public, allowing elk to escape the Wildlife Area and get down into the neighboring agricultural lands, but no damage was done to the gates. Staff members ensured all return gates are functioning properly.



*Natural Resource Technician Leuck repairing elk fence*

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Staff members completed two days of nested frequency plot monitoring, finishing a total of eight plots for the year. These were all previously established sites that fell within the boundary of the Cottonwood 2 fire.

*Vegetation monitoring*

**Wildlife Management**

**Injured Duck:** District Biologist Fidorra received many calls about a duck with an arrow through its chest in Columbia Park, Kennewick. Fidorra attempted to capture the duck, which was a domestic hybrid mallard, but it escaped into the water. Fidorra may try again next week.



**Collaborative Landscapes:** District Biologist Fidorra prepared maps and text for the Region 3 Collaborative Landscapes Project, which proposed the Blackrock area be identified as a state

priority for conservation action and outreach through collaborative partnerships due to its strategic location linking the Yakima Training Center and Hanford National Monument.

**Wildlife Society Newsletter:** District Biologist Fidorra reviewed and organized article submissions for The Wildlife Society Newsletter section on southeast Washington and sent final documents to The Wildlife Society for their fall issue.

**Bighorn Sheep Sampling:** Biologist Bernatowicz pinned three harvested rams and collected samples from Clemans rams. Final details were also worked out with WSU personnel hoping to get samples when the ewe season opens on Saturday.

**2016 Hunting:** Biologist Bernatowicz started working on 2017 permits. One lingering issue has been balancing “opportunity” and “quality.” To some hunters, “quality” equals few other hunters. During the 2016 muzzleloader season, general deer, elk, and antlerless permit all started the same day as quality bull. In 2017, there isn’t as much overlap, but quality bull will overlap with youth antlerless.

**Pheasant Release:** Biologist Bernatowicz worked with the vendor to get birds delivered for Veteran’s Day weekend. The vendor mistakenly thought the contract dates were in error and was planning on delivering Friday (A state holiday). At the last minute, the vendor then called to say the birds would be delivered at 1:00 a.m. After various calls, the delivery was worked out.

Last year, birds were consistently under the minimum contract specification of at least 2.5 pounds per bird. This year some hunters reported “skinny” birds. Bernatowicz weighted boxes and found most crates were under weight. Average bird weight was 2.38 pounds. This is better than last year, but is still not meeting contract specifications.

While releasing pheasant, Bernatowicz noticed a target shooting site getting increasing use in an unsafe location. There is no backstop at the site and bullets would be landing where hunters often pursue pheasant. The issue of target shooting on the Wenas Wildlife Area being unsafe and conflicting with other uses is long standing. Two pheasant release sites have been moved in the past due to dangerous conditions for hunters.

***Unsafe target shooting site in the Cottonwoods Pheasant Release Area***

**Grouse Wing Collection:** The wing collection barrels were checked and 10 wing-only samples came in.

**Colockum Bull Study:** Two collared bulls were harvested by permit holders during the modern firearm season. We still have 10 collars out and functioning.



**Bighorn Sheep Habitat Use Evaluation:** A variety of tasks were worked on during the week. Moore created a final combination of soil classifications to remove forest stands and rock outcroppings from the analysis area. Work was also done on methods to create random points efficiently in each home range. These points will be used to quantify habitat availability. Finally, time was also spent investigating methods to quantify NDVI change during the 16-day analysis window.

*An example, in the Tieton, where soil classifications were used to remove forested stands from the NDVI analysis (soils polygons outlined in yellow)*



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



**Wildlife Areas**

**Wenas Wildlife Area Access:** Access Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker Barbosa removed a 16-foot fiberglass boat insert abandoned at Pond 6.

*Abandoned fiberglass boat insert*

**Painting:** Access Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker Barbosa painted over graffiti on the outhouse at Pond 4.

*Graffiti on vault toilet at Pond 4*

**Gun Safe:** Natural Resource Worker Barbosa reported a gun safe he discovered at Wapato Dam. The safe had been reported stolen earlier that day according to the Deputy that responded.





*Stolen gun safe discovered at Wapato dam*

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Babik and Wildlife Biologist Moore released pheasants in the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area. A master hunter and his daughter assisted with the release.



*Releasing pheasants in the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area with volunteers*



*Patiently coaxing a pheasant out of its transport box in Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area*



**Wildlife Management**

**Pheasant:** District Biologist Fidorra and Natural Resource Technician Marchand planted pheasants at three sites in Franklin County this week.

*Natural Resource Technician Marchand releasing pheasants at the Big Flat Habitat Management Area*

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

**Wildlife Management**

**School Science Project:** District Biologist Fidorra met with the Mid-Columbia Partnership School elementary school group to discuss their science project in which they will be building and placing a bat box and also conducting a skit and outreach event to promote bat interest in the area. Fidorra provided bat house plans and discussed options for outreach events. The kids were



really enthusiastic and performed their skit, which featured one student playing the part of a WDFW Biologist!

*Biologist Fidorra with some of the Mid-Columbia Partnership students of the self-titled science group, the Bionic Bat Wings*

**Deer Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met a landowner and toured an orchard with deer damage in the Benton City area. Both browsing and antler rub damage was observed. Multiple nonlethal strategies were discussed and will be utilized, as well

as damage permits.

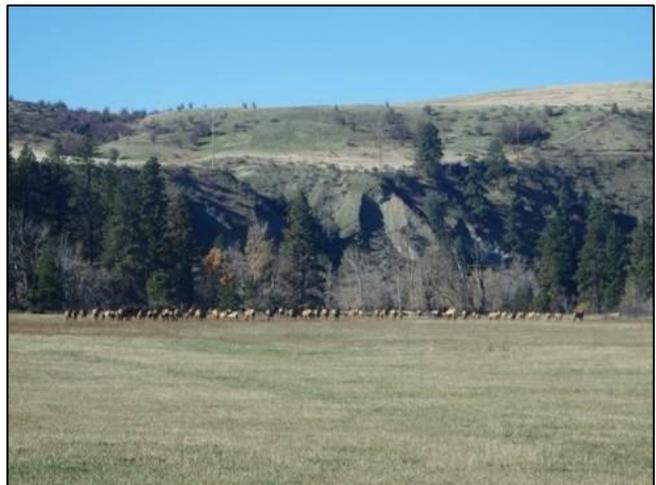
**Rattlesnake Mountain:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk activity and exclusionary fencing at a newly planted orchard on Rattlesnake Mountain. A few minor repairs were made to the turbo fladry fence being used.

**Deer Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to work with a landowner in the Kahlotus area who has a history of deer damage to his wheat fields. A new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement was discussed and will be developed to address both lethal and nonlethal hazing techniques.

**Elk Hazing:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed elk from sanctuary areas in Thorp this week. The large group that lives in the area is beginning to stay anywhere they are not actively hunted.

*Elk group, Thorp area*

**Wildlife Services:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel coordinated with Wildlife Services on an operating plan for next week.





**Elk Conflict:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel spent most of one day trying to deter elk from crossing into traffic on I-90. Eventually the elk moved away from the roadway and back to the Yakima River.

*Part of an elk group trying to cross I-90*

**Fencing:** Fencing materials were delivered to a location on Ellensburg Pass experiencing fence damage from elk. A 3D design will be used at that location as a trial experiment looking at the feasibility of 3D fencing on elk movements.

*3D fencing materials delivered for elk fence experiment*

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Roads on the Colockum are wet and slippery with recent rains, poor drainage, and heavy vehicle traffic from elk hunters.

*The Cross-Over Road, Colockum Wildlife Area*

**Drainage Work:** Manager Lopushinsky continued to communicate with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) RMAP Coordinator regarding the drainage work on the Brewton and Cross-Over Roads. Colockum staff members recently cleaned culverts and ditched water off the road in a temporary effort to reduce water impacts from the roads. A contractor has been selected by CAMP to do the required RMAP work, which will hopefully occur this fall.

**Colockum Fence:** Colockum staff members continued work with Wildlife Program to find funds to finish up the south boundary fence project. CAMP currently has a contractor working this project, but will run short of funds due to difficult working conditions and a more than expected number of holes needing to be drilled into solid rock.





**Fence Progress:** Assistant Manager Hagan met with CAMP fence inspector Chris Alston to inspect progress on the southern boundary fence.

*Newly constructed Colockum southern boundary fence, complete with fence markers*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman attended the Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) monthly meeting. Huffman answered numerous questions and talked with the volunteers about the new Discover Pass sales plan, as well as the new tour trucks. Assistant Manager Berry completed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sheet for the volunteers to review. Berry pulled the trucks out for the volunteers to spend some time getting familiar and then let them take a test drive around the feed site. Driving tests will be set up once volunteers are familiar with the trucks.

**Pesticide Training:** Manager Huffman completed an online training course for his pesticide license recertification credits. Pesticide license renewal information arrived in the mail and Huffman was one credit short of the required training. One credit online courses are offered through Washington State University (WSU).

**Oak Creek Forest Restoration:** Forester Mackey conducted pile burning on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration commercial harvest units and checked in with WCC crew yarding trees cut last year for placement into lower Oak Creek this winter.

*Sun obscured by pile burning smoke on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project*



## **REGION 4**

### **GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE**

#### **Wildlife Management**

**White-nose Syndrome Monitoring, Bat Health, and Bat Conservation:** District 12 retrieved specimens for testing and passed them off to volunteers for transport to Olympia. District 12

worked on equipment and planning with landowners and internal staff members regarding monitoring site maintenance or switching of areas.

Please report bat roosts and/or sick or dead bats here (**PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD OF THIS WEBSITE AND NEED TO REPORT ROOSTS, DEAD OR SICK BATS IN WA**):

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/wn>

**Judson Lake Swan Exclusion Zone:** Biologist DeBruyn organized materials and personnel to erect 2400 Bamboo poles with mylar streamers in Judson Lake to dissuade swans from occupying a portion of the lake deemed to be contaminated with lead. Volunteers attached **4800** pieces of mylar holographic scare tape to cable ties for attachment to the poles. Old bamboo will be removed and new poles put in place this coming week.



*Volunteers from Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife making mylar streamers*

**Black Bear Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman, Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Assistant District Biologist Smith, and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell attended the Black Bear Conflict Management sub-committee meeting in Issaquah to discuss annual feedback and critically review management progress. Supervisor Caldwell prepared and gave a brief presentation to attendees regarding Region 4 needs and concerns.

**Invasive Species:** District 13 is preparing a briefing paper on recent initiatives performed by regional staff members in tracking and trapping prohibited invasive species in the region.



*Mega-trap in use for trapping of prohibited invasive amphibian species*

**Shorebirds:** Biologist Milner participated in a meeting of the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring.

**Whidbey Island Naval Station Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) Follow-up:** District 13 staff members attended an additional INRMP meeting at the request of the Base Commanding Officer.

## Wildlife Areas

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm was contacted by WDFW Enforcement over concerns that there is potential for baiting issues at the Stillwater Unit. Manager Boehm coordinated a volunteer/staff cleanup effort to avoid possible closure of the unit for hunting.



*Clean up crew at Stillwater*



*Ton of corn cleaned up*

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a conference call with the PSNERP Steering Committee to learn updates about the status of the project. More information about PSNERP is available at [www.pugetsoundnearshore.org](http://www.pugetsoundnearshore.org).

**Skagit Forks District Review Team:** Several Region 4 staff members in the Habitat, Wildlife, and Fish programs met to discuss a floodplain restoration project on WDFW land near where the Skagit River splits into the North and South Forks. A conceptual design for the project has been developed, and grant funding is now being sought for further design and studies.

**Spencer Island Estuary Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw had a meeting with Habitat Biologist Lindsey Desmul and Habitat Planner Jenna Jewett to begin developing a plan for an upcoming open house, which will be an opportunity for stakeholders and neighbors to learn more about the project and provide input.

**Lake Terrell Dam Monitoring:** Manager Kessler monitored the water flow through the overflow structure and the Lake Terrell Dam to make sure there was flow into Terrell Creek. The water flow will be managed to help the Coho salmon coming up Terrell Creek and into Lake Terrell and Butler Creek.

**Rainbow Pond Water Control:** Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Technician Deyo examined the low water conditions in Rainbow Pond on the Lake Terrell Unit. The new water control structure installed last year appears to be working, but may be leaking water through the riser boards in the stand pipe. They worked to seal the boards by repositioning them, but were not successful. It may end up that the single width boards will need to be completely replaced with double tongue and groove boards in the spring.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Hunting and Harvestable Species Management:** District 12 responded to regulation and season questions posed by hunters. District 12 also discussed ongoing work and needs for upcoming WAC changes with Regional staff members. District 12 provided identification of harvestable species at the request of hunting parties and worked with Research Scientist Kertson to provide a second opinion on domestic canid sign that was reported otherwise.

**Marine Waterfowl Surveys:** District 13 discussed staffing, scheduling, and equipment needs with fellow observing staff members and the marine waterfowl specialist for the upcoming winter marine waterfowl survey season. These long-term surveys are used to collect trend data on hunted and non-hunted marine waterfowl species for use in management decisions.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Pheasant Team:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with staff members and volunteers to continue managing the pheasant program for the 2016 general pheasant season. The volunteer effort continues to be a challenge, as few people have responded to the call for help and those that have are unavailable due to various family requirements. Manager Kessler monitored the pheasants in the pheasant pens at the Lake Terrell headquarters. He received 375 pheasants for this week's releases. Kessler and volunteers performed the releases Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.

**Lake Terrell Handicapped Hunters:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Enforcement on a handicapped hunter using an ATV to hunt pheasants who repeatedly violated his special access permit. He was again witnessed and documented violating his permit by hunting past the 4:00 p.m. pheasant hunting hours.

**Island Unit:** Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove monitored water levels, waterfowl use, and hunter use on the Island Unit.

**Samish Unit:** Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove and Natural Resource Scientist Meis monitored water levels and checked perimeter water control structures at the Samish Unit.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo built and opened up waterfowl quality hunt units in Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish Counties. There are 69 waterfowl quality hunt sites currently available for hunting.



*Improved Waterfowl Quality Hunt site in Whatcom County. Each season, staff members mow and spray areas not conducive for farming. These areas hold water well and improve hunting conditions.*



*Improved Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site in Whatcom County. The conditions are looking very good for drawing waterfowl in for a closer look.*

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Hunting Season Questions:** Biologists responded to multiple contacts from the public inquiring about potential hunting opportunities throughout Region 4.

**Ungulate Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with a landowner in the Day Creek area and discussed recent elk activity in the area. The landowner was also informed on fencing materials available to assist with keeping elk off his property. Witman received an elk damage complaint in the Sedro Woolley area from a landowner who has had 40-50 elk grazing on his property. The landowner was provided a copy of the damage prevention cooperative agreement for review. Additional discussions on how to best mitigate elk related damage for the property are ongoing.

Biologist Smith met with local landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops. General season hunting, potential landowner damage permits, and the use of master hunters were all discussed. Several landowners are contemplating entering into Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements. Smith also inspected temporary electrified fladry fencing being used to exclude elk from agricultural properties in the Enumclaw area.

**Black Bear Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received a call from a golf course manager in King County inquiring on how to best mitigate bear damage to a Mason Bee project started last year. The manager was provided information on prevention techniques

and also referred to Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Assistant District Biologist Smith for further consultation.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Wildlife Management Plan Update Meeting:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm participated in a planning team meeting focused on advancing the progress on updating the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Management Plan.

**Johnson DeBay's Slough Unit:** Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove noted swans for the first time this fall in the Nookachamps area. A large group of swans, snow geese, and Canada geese were feeding in a field near the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Natural Resources Specialist Meis toured the DeBay's Unit and performed a swan survey of the unit and adjacent farm fields.

**Skagit Headquarters Unit:** Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove checked pumps at the Wiley Slough pump station and filled oil reservoirs. Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove continued daily car counts at the Headquarters Unit parking areas and boat launch and the Conway boat launch. Manager Rotton participated in a conference call regarding the Skagit Forks Restoration project, which will examine the potential to create off-channel habitat for salmon on the Cottonwood Island and Skagit Forks parcels. The Skagit Forks project is located outside of the dikes at the forks of the Skagit River.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Public Questions:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell answered questions from hunters regarding the Region 4 Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program and the GMU 418 Special Permit Black-tailed Deer Quality Hunt. Biologist Caldwell provided people with maps, access information, website instructions, and other important information.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Management Procedures Review:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman, and Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Assistant District Biologist Smith reviewed and provided feedback to management staff regarding language and concerns within a draft Wildlife Conflict Damage Waiver review document.

**Uniform Committee:** District 13 staff members worked on Uniform Committee items, including draft policy language.

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Pheasant Program:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with Game Farm Manager Chris White to plan the remaining pheasant deliveries for the season. Birds will be delivered prior to the week of Thanksgiving to ensure birds are on hand and released onto the hunting units for the final weeks of the season. This will eliminate a delivery the week of Thanksgiving.

**Crucial Conversations Training:** Several Region 4 staff members participated in a training course that taught how to communicate more effectively with other people.

## **REGION 5**

No report submitted this week.

## **REGION 6**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Snowy Plover:** Biologist Sundstrom attended the annual Snowy Plover Recovery Unit 1 (RU1) meeting. RU1 is defined by USFWS as coastal Washington and Oregon where snowy plovers nest. The meeting was held in Astoria, Oregon this year to help accommodate the attendees from Washington State who typically must travel to Salem, Oregon for this meeting. An additional component was added this year, with a field trip to Leadbetter.

Biologists Ritchie and Sundstrom presented the data from Washington State that reflected the tentative results from the breeding season. Raw data indicates that 42-52 chicks fledged from Washington from three locations: 9-10 fledged from Midway Beach, 14-18 from Leadbetter, and 19-24 from Graveyard Spit. Fledging success was down from 2015 (68-77) and only Graveyard Spit met the 1.0 chicks fledged per male (metric used to determine that the population is stable). Data analysis has not been completed to determine the statewide overall chicks fledged per male at this time.

Oregon reported a very difficult season as well. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the nearly 700 nests were lost due to predation. Forty-five nests alone were lost at Coos Bay North Spit by Northern Harrier depredation. Other sources of Oregon's predation were attributed to crows, ravens, gray fox, red fox, northern harriers, gulls, coyotes, and other unknown mammalian and avian predators. Despite the alarming loss numbers, 197 chicks did fledge, but Oregon also fell below the threshold of 1.0 chicks fledged per male at .78.

The field trip to Leadbetter was attended by USFWS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Oregon Parks and Recreation (OPRD), US Forest Service (USFS), Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and

WDFW personnel. The focus was on habitat restoration areas and what has worked and what has been done to change those elements that didn't work in the past. The weather cooperated for this half-day tour.

***Willapa Refuge Biologist Ritchie explains the need of signing and roping trail corridors through the HRAs on Long Beach, WA. This area is slated for both mechanical and chemical alteration to expand the snowy plover nesting habitat restoration areas at Leadbetter.***



**Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction:** Biologist Randolph converted Taylor's checkerspot butterfly distance data collected at Range 76 in 25-50 meter segments to improve comparison of distribution data between years. By comparing maps from 2014-2016, a notable and disturbing decline in both abundance and distribution is revealed across the Range 76 survey area, the sole source site for current and future recovery efforts. Biologist Randolph also spent time preparing distance data for the next stages of analysis by calculating transect line lengths for all surveys, identifying surveys possibly impacted by non-protocol weather, and cleaning out all survey equipment in preparation for the next field season.

Biologist Linders completed the final version of her annual report for the project and distributed it to all funding agencies and conservation partners.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Rapid Habitat Assessment:** Biologist Randolph completed metadata development for all RHA geodatabases to document prairie vegetation attributes and categories collected from 2013-2016. Randolph also developed layer files for 2016 RHA data and updated a table of all RHA attributes and coded value domains.

Biologist Linders completed 5-ac reintroduction readiness assessments for five prairies surveyed in 2016, which were also surveyed three years ago. All prairies showed improved conditions, although progress was more evident on some sites than on others. Additional comparisons are underway.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Working Group Meeting:** Biologists Linders and Randolph attended the annual Taylor's checkerspot butterfly working group meeting at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge on November 2, where Linders presented on 2016 checkerspot reintroduction and monitoring efforts. Biologist Linders also participated in the second day of planning and prioritizing recovery tasks for the 2017 Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Action Plan.

**Creating a Multi-Agency Spatial Database and Content Management System:** As part of a multiagency effort to engage regional Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) cooperators in sharing GIS information about ongoing and completed prairie restoration projects and studies,

Biologist Randolph uploaded DNR soils data from Pierce and Thurston counties to Data Basin, an online science-based mapping analysis platform. The goal of this project is to foster collaboration among land managers, increase efficiencies, and facilitate new forms of research by making data readily available.

**Streaked Horned Lark, Airports and Federal Lands Working Group:** Biologist Tirhi and Butler co-lead the fall working group meeting held at the Port of Olympia. This working group, formed in 2014, is focused on cooperative management of federally and state listed larks on airfields and federal lands of the South Puget Sound. Participants included WDFW, USFWS, JBLM, WSDOT, FAA, CNLM, and representatives from Sanderson Airfield, Pierce County Thun Field, Olympia Airport, and SeaTac. The objectives of this meeting were to continue developing best management practices for site management. The group made it through capital improvement projects and mowing. A fall meeting is held in Washington for South Sound specifically, and a joint Washington/Oregon meeting is held at Portland Airport in the spring.

**Biodiversity:** Biologist Tirhi attended the monthly meeting of the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance. The meeting focused on advancing the multi-jurisdictional objectives in the Lower White River BMA. Of particular interest in this meeting was the suggestion that the group consider advocating for the creation of a state park along the length of the lower White outside the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation boundaries.

**Western Pond Turtles:** Biologist Butler attended the second western pond turtle health team meeting in Olympia. Staff members from the Woodland Park Zoo and the Oregon Zoo spoke about current husbandry changes and provided a status update regarding the turtles undergoing treatment. The group discussed a new health assessment method and worked to set priorities for the upcoming season.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Elk Hoof Barrel:** Biologist Novack pulled elk hoof samples from GMU 673 and transported them to a freezer at the Naselle Hatchery. Eleven samples were submitted this week.

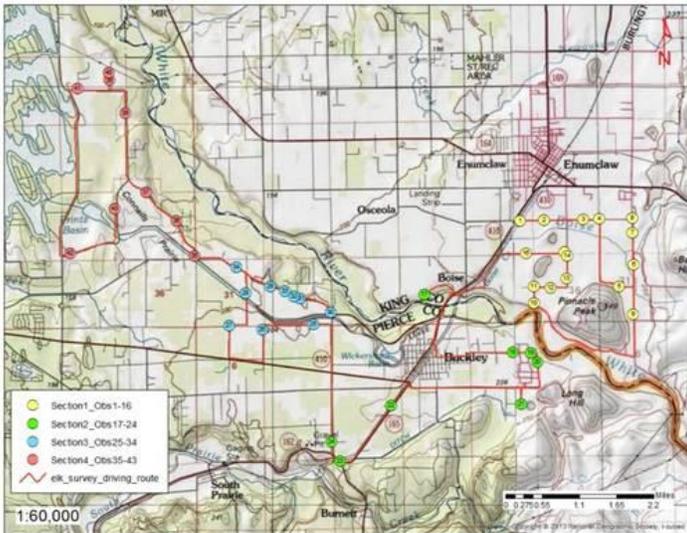
**Cougar Sealing:** Biologist Butler met with a hunter who needed a cougar pelt sealed. The adult female cougar was killed in Yakima County. All required information was collected and a tooth and tissue sample was taken. The collection envelope was sent to Olympia.

**Waterfowl:** Biologist Sundstrom was asked to do ground reconnaissance in Willapa Bay to assess the feasibility of conducting a second aerial waterfowl survey. Based on ground observations, although it appeared the number of dabblers and divers had increased since the first survey, it was decided to cancel the second survey. That time and money will be put toward the mid-winter flight survey in January and will include both Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Citizen Science Elk Monitoring Project, Buckley/Enumclaw:** Biologists Tirhi, Blankenship, and Smith organized the annual training for this project, which started in 2015. The project trains volunteers to identify and record elk by age and sex along a driving survey route in the Buckley/Enumclaw plateau. The route contains observation points where elk have been seen or are expected to use. This project is in response to increasing elk numbers and damage complaints in the area and the need for more unbiased data from which to manage. Twenty-four volunteers participated in the half day training held at NW Trek in Enumclaw, which consisted of an indoor PowerPoint presentation followed by a one hour tram ride where elk could be seen and recorded. The project will occur year-round to track elk use of this landscape.



*Elk Area 6014 citizen science driving route, 2016*



*Biologist Tirhi giving a PowerPoint presentation to 24 volunteers at Northwest Trek*

**Goose Hunter Education:** Biologist Sundstrom received a phone call from a pheasant hunter who witnessed waterfowl hunters shooting at geese in the Brady area. Because the goose hunting season is currently closed until November 26 and the caller is a well-respected member of the hunting community, Sundstrom responded even though it was a holiday. Contact was made with the waterfowl hunters and no geese were found in their possession. Information was given to the hunters about how to obtain authorization to hunt geese in Area 2 once the season reopens. Neither had taken or passed the online test in order to receive authorization to hunt geese.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**RHA Demo Workshop:** Biologists Linders and Randolph are convening a workshop for ACUB land managers to increase the integration of RHA data with restoration planning. This will be a hands-on workshop with relevant examples to encourage greater utilization of RHA data. Logistics are being worked on to ensure enough computing resources will be available to all who have expressed an interest.