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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 11 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Thurston and Pierce Counties and GMU 667 of Lewis County

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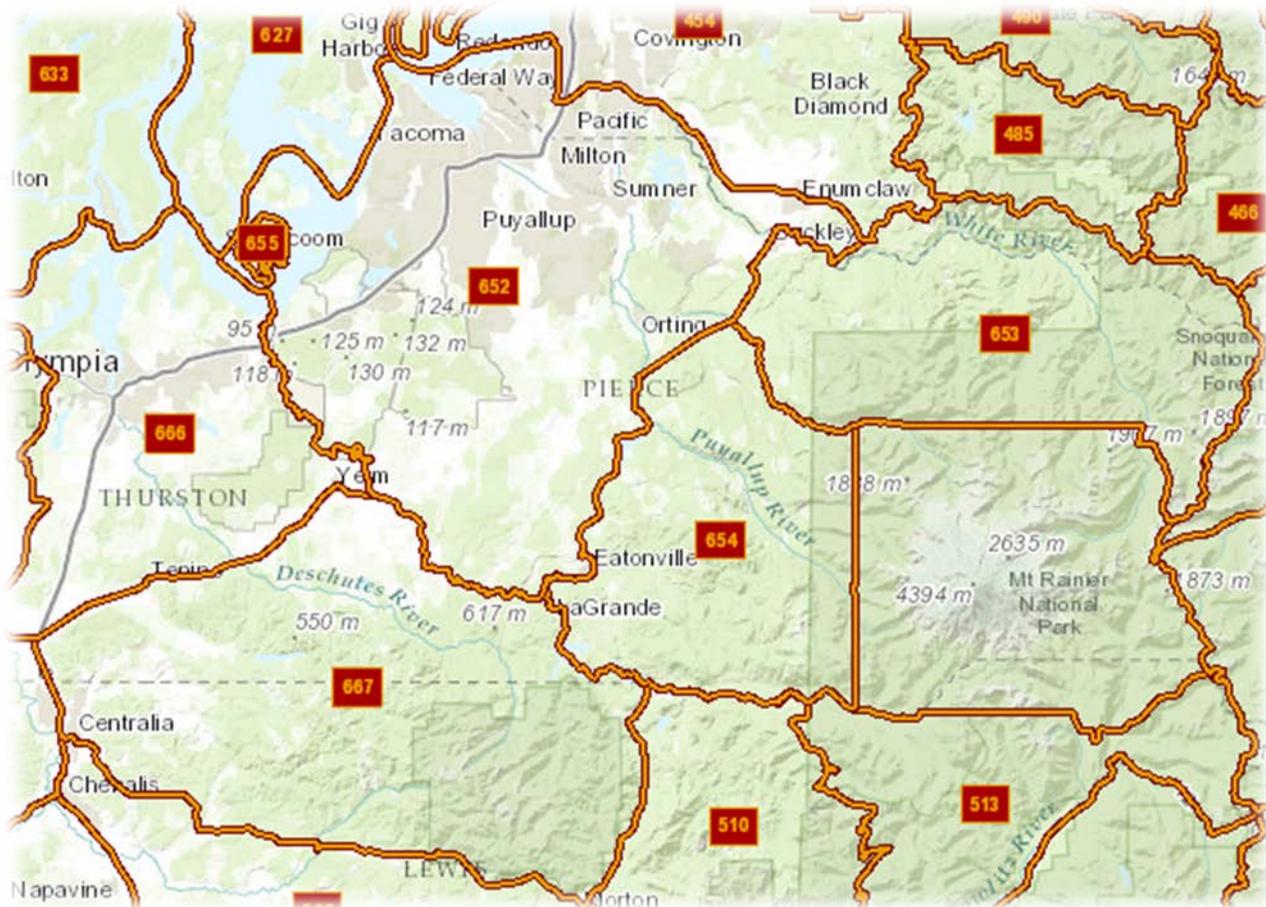
DISTRICT 11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The game management units (GMUs) that comprise District 11 are Puyallup (GMU 652), Anderson Island (GMU 655), White River (GMU 653), Mashel (GMU 654), Deschutes (GMU 666), and Skookumchuck (GMU 667). Land ownership in the district includes private residential and agricultural lands (e.g. GMUs 652 and 666), and both private and public industrial timber lands (e.g. GMUs 653, 654, and 667). The eastern portion of GMU 653 contains higher-elevation alpine conditions bordering Mount Rainier National Park.

Varied hunting opportunity exists within District 11 from waterfowl hunting on waterways of Puget Sound to deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on commercial forest land. WDFW's Scatter Creek (GMU 666), Skookumchuck, and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Areas (GMU 667), and DNRs Capitol State Forest (GMU 663) and Elbe Hills State Forest (GMU 654) provide ample opportunity for small and big game hunting. Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and Hancock Timber Resource and Muckleshoot Indian Reservation (managed by Hancock) properties in GMUs 653 and 654 all provide excellent big game opportunities, but they require the purchase of access permits to enter (obtained thru those respective companies).

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier Elk Herds are partially contained in District 11, providing an opportunity to harvest elk as they migrate out of Mount Rainer high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. Waterfowl hunting on Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, off Anderson Island (GMU 655), and inland lakes in the district are some of the best opportunities in the South Puget Sound Region.

Hunters should be aware of firearm restrictions in certain localities of Pierce and Thurston counties. Maps of Pierce County firearm restriction areas can be seen on the Pierce County website's Public GIS tool at <http://matterhorn3.co.pierce.wa.us/publicgis/> (open Public Safety, check Sheriff's Restrictions) and the Pierce County firearm regulations can be found here: www.co.pierce.wa.us/documentcenter/view/3810. Maps of no-shooting and controlled shooting zones in Thurston County can be seen here: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/sheriff/docs/ShootingZones20090818.pdf>.



MAP DEPICTING THE SIX DISTRICT 11 GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS AND SURROUNDING UNITS IN NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS (400 FOR REGION 4 AND 500 FOR REGION 5).

ELK

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds are partially contained in District 11, providing ample opportunity to harvest elk. Elk availability should continue to increase in GMUs 652, 653, and 654 as the North Rainier Elk Herd continues to recover, having met recovery goals over the past ten years. Antlerless restrictions, winter elk habitat closures, and permit hunt restrictions in GMU 653 continue to benefit herd recovery in that unit. Hunters report a quality hunting experience and quality bulls for those fortunate enough to be drawn for the GMU 653 bull only permit hunt.

The larger portion of each elk herd migrates down from high alpine meadows in Mt. Rainier National Park to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters are encouraged to scout for elk leaving the Mt. Rainier National Park and following the Carbon River northwards into the Clearwater Wilderness Area and the White River into the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Lands surrounding the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort (outside ski boundaries once ski season officially opens) offers good opportunity for high-elevation, rugged elk hunting with plenty of robust elk. The US Forest Service, which permits the ski resort, wants to remind hunters that service roads built and maintained by Crystal Mountain Ski Resort are not open to the public, but hunters may ask for permission from the ski resort to haul out a harvested animal.

The Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests University of Washington Charles Lathrop Pack Experimental and Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest) in GMU 654 are good prospects for deer or elk and can be accessed by boot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Vehicle access during the hunting season in Elbe Hills is allowed only for hunters who possess a disabled access permit (see Disabled Hunting on the WDFW website for more information). UW Pack Forest managers caution hunters to be aware of students conducting research in the forest any time of the year. Maps of Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forest as well as other Washington Department of Natural Resource public lands in the South Puget Sound can be found at <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Pages/PubMaps.aspx>.

Sub-herds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and Skookumchuk Wildlife Area (GMU 667). Hunters are encouraged to



ELK GROUP ON THE CENTRALIA MINE IN GMU 667, DISTRICT 11.

scout the area from the [Skookumchuk Wildlife Area](#) south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667). Hunting on the coal mine is only allowed under specialized permits which require a mining escort (two senior and two disabled permit hunts will be offered in 2015, five permits each, see WDFW hunting regulations). Limited elk can occasionally be found and hunted on the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area in south Thurston County (GMU 666), on JBLM property in Pierce County (GMU 652, see previous discussion on

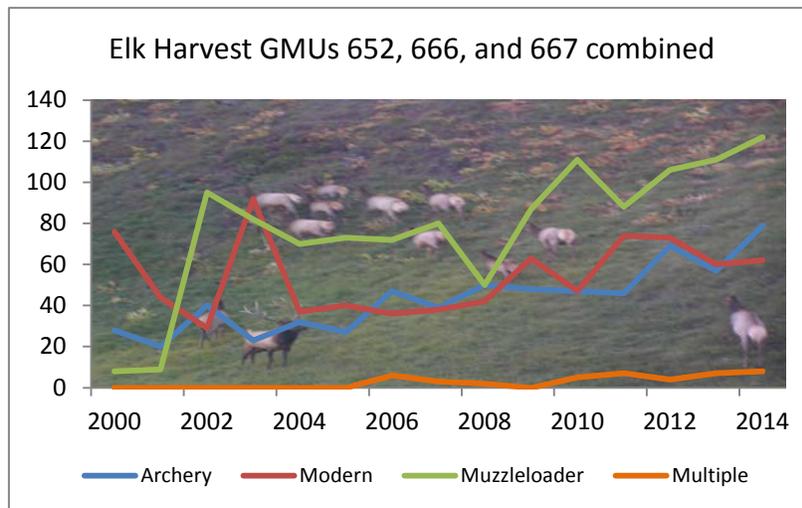
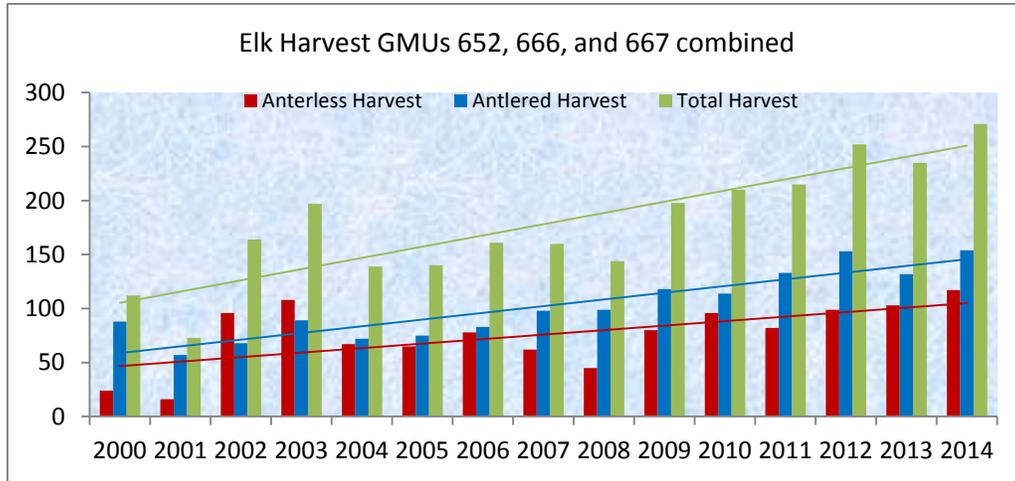
hunting requirements), and off Delphi Road SW in western Thurston County (GMU 666). Elk cannot be hunted on property owned by USFWS in the Black River refuge of GMU 666 (e.g. former Weaks Dairy).

Elk continue to increase on private farmlands and properties in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm and Hanaford area), and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest to Delphi Road SW and Waddell Creek Road SW). However, hunters must request permission to access private lands, and are encouraged to obtain permission weeks in advance of the season from the landowner (e.g. visit property and ask for permission). New in 2015, elk management area 6013 in GMU 652 has been reduced in size to primarily encompass the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation with several new hunting restrictions aimed at conserving elk for tribal purposes on the reservation. In response to increasing elk and elk-associated damage off-reservation in Buckley and Enumclaw, Elk Area 6014 was created in which a 3-point minimum or antlerless general modern firearm season will be provided, as well as three separate winter antlerless hunts allowing up to 10 elk per hunt. Elk Area 6014 is comprised primarily of agricultural lands, hobby farms, and ranch homes, and supports approximately 100-150 total elk. Access can be limited and hunters interested in these hunts are encouraged to seek access onto private property in the hunt area. The WDFW conflict specialist may be able to assist.

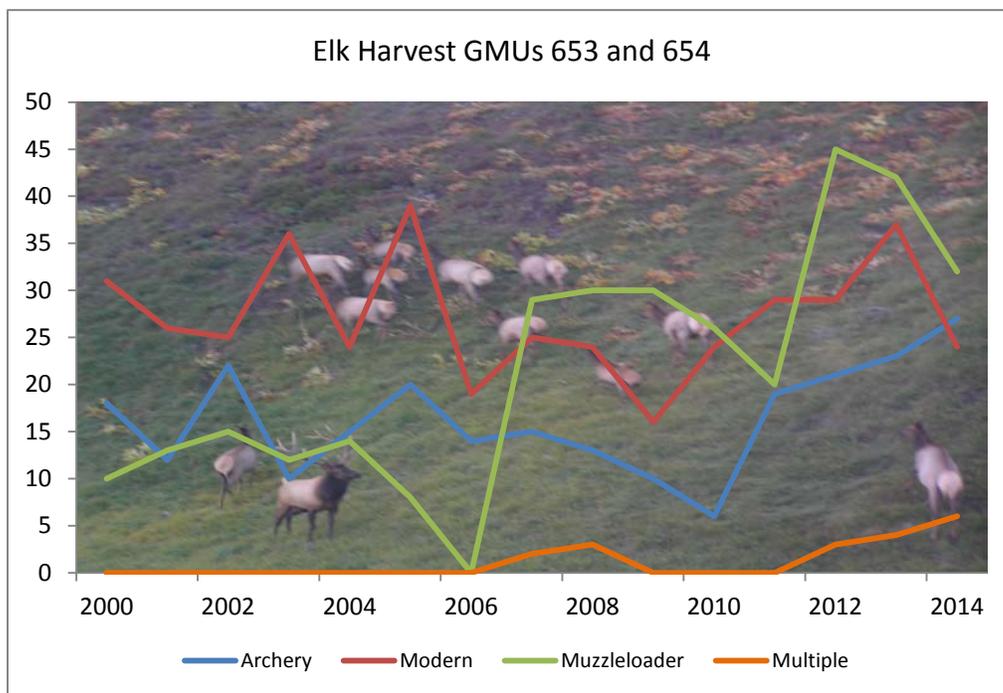
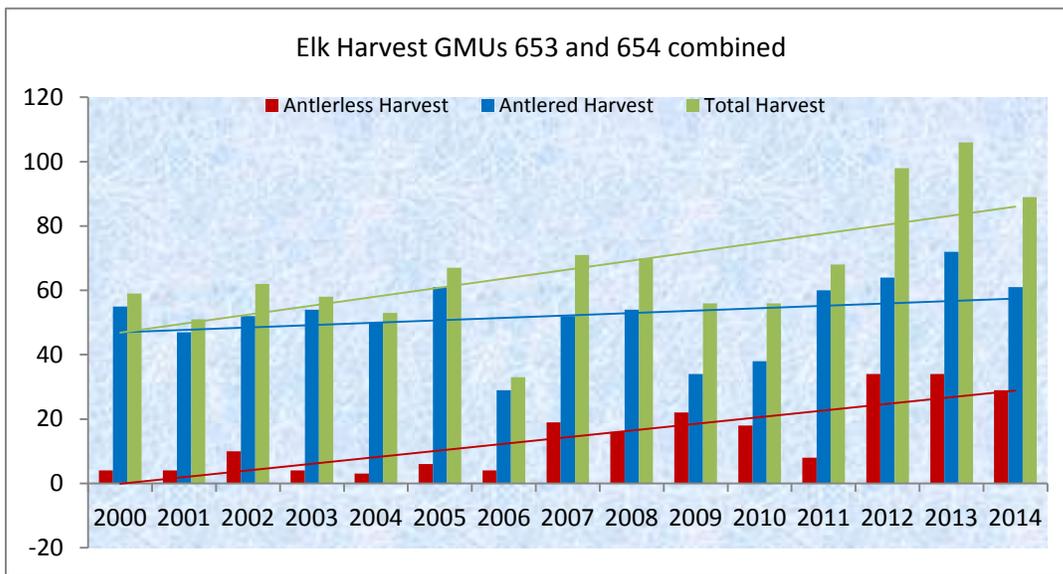
Three damage permit hunts are also provided in the Hanaford area (designated elk area 6069, five permits each). Finally, regional master hunter elk permits (hunt number 2717 in 2015) have

been used in the district when additional harvest was needed. Overall, opportunity to harvest an elk is high in these damage areas considering the increasing trend in elk, with access being the primary limitation.

General season elk harvest has been gradually increasing over the past several years for all weapons within GMUs 652, 666, and 667. This makes for good prospects for harvesting an elk in those GMUs in 2015. Muzzleloaders are experiencing the strongest increasing trend in harvested animals in those GMUs, followed by archery and, to a lesser degree, modern firearm.



Although the overall harvest trend has been gradually increasing in GMUs 653 and 654 since 2000, muzzleloader and modern firearm harvest actually declined. This is partly reflected in changes in hunting regulation opportunity for muzzleloaders over the years.



DEER

Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited. Surveys are not done annually, and when they are done, they have consisted of one survey done in the highest quality location (Vail Tree Farm). Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout regenerating clear cuts. In particular, Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667) and Hancock Timber Resources Group managed properties (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653) continue to be worthy hunting areas for both deer and elk.

A limited access recreation program is in effect for Vail Tree Farm. Hunters are required by Weyerhaeuser to purchase an access permit in order to access Vail Tree Farm. Permits allow access from August 1 to January 31. A maximum of 800 permits will be sold in 2015, beginning May 26, to access the 159,716 acres of the tree farm at a cost of \$250 each. Weyerhaeuser also offers for bid six leases allowing access rights for one full year. All forestry operations will continue during the permit and lease season. Additional information can be found on the [Weyerhaeuser website](#) or by calling 866-636-6531. Hancock Timber Resources also require an access permit for motorized access to the Kapowsin and Eatonville Tree

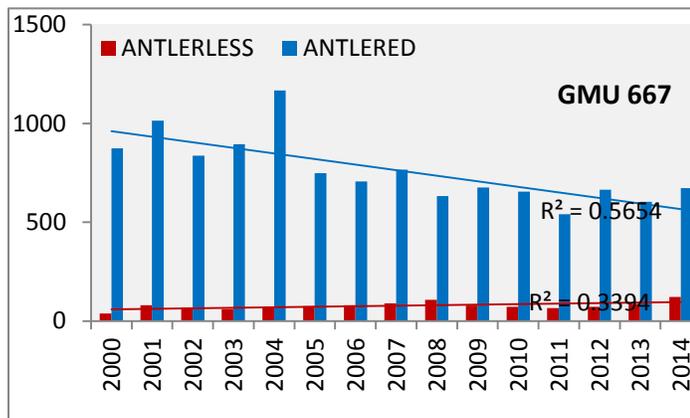
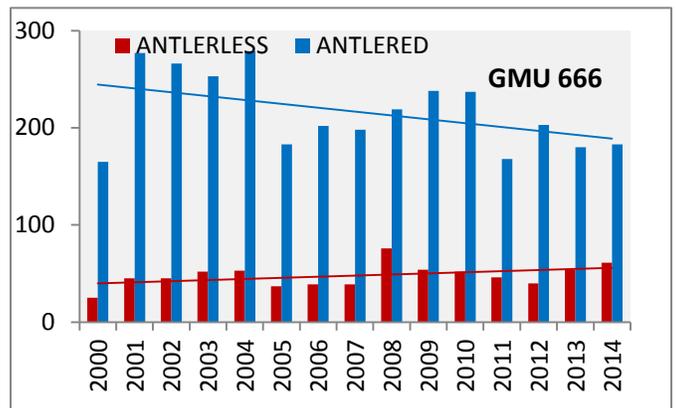
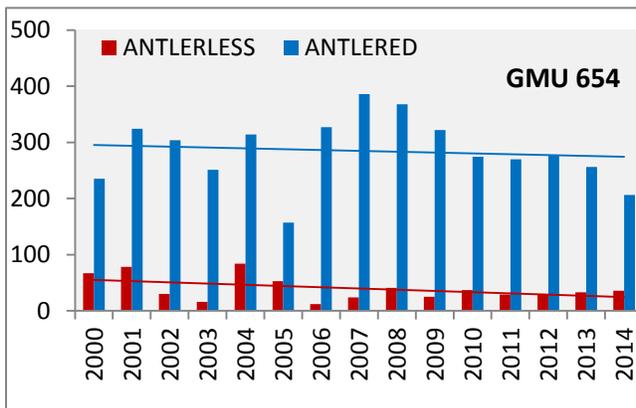
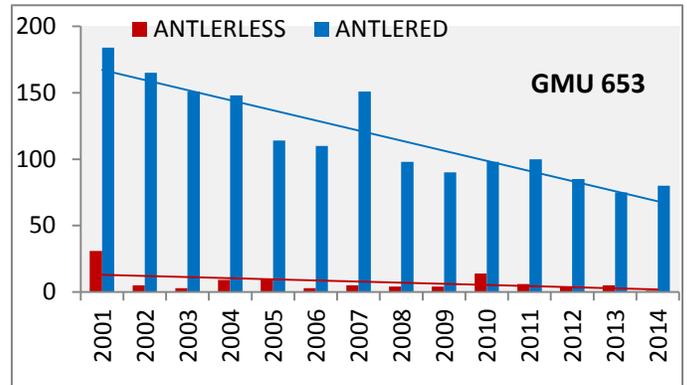
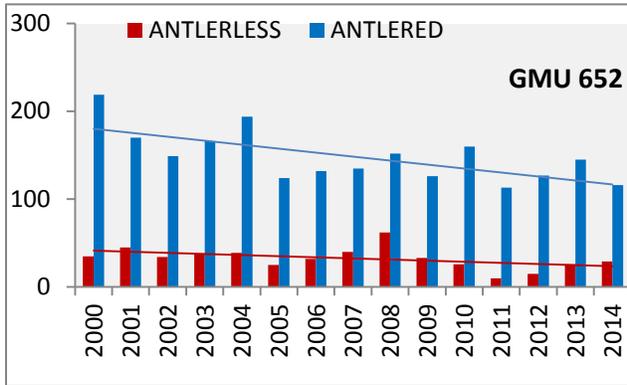


DISTRICT BIOLOGIST WITH SUCCESSFUL DEER HUNTER IN THE SKOOKUMCHUCK UNIT 667

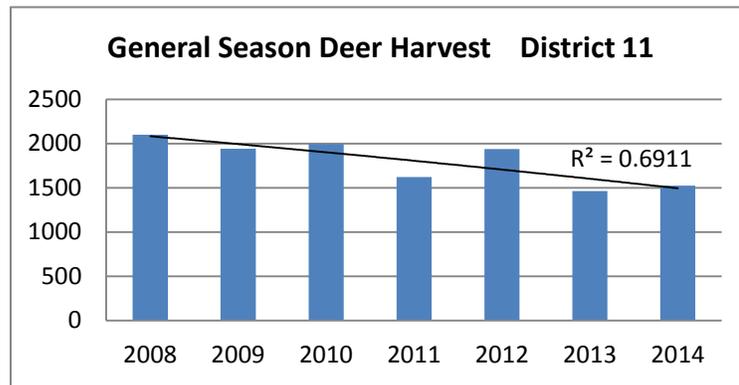
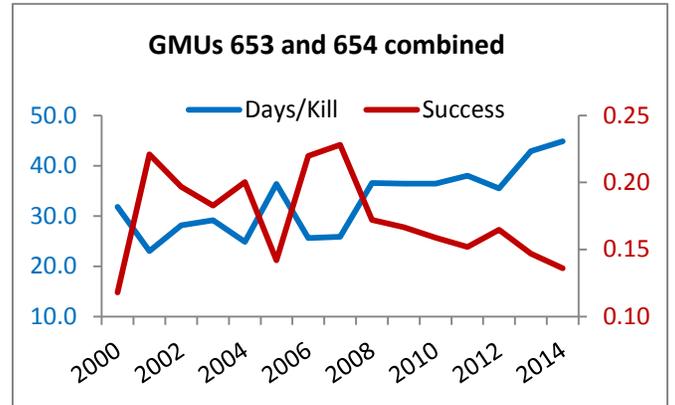
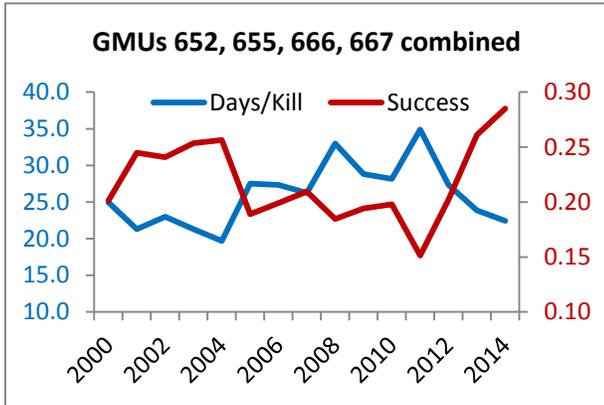
Farms (owned by Hancock) and the White River Tree Farm (owned by Muckleshoot Indian Reservation but managed by Hancock). Prices (total permits) for 2015 are as follows: **Kapowsin** = \$375 (1200), **Eatonville** = \$275 (300), and **White River** = \$250 (500). Note that a “restricted use area” has been implemented on the White River Tree Farm which limits non-motorized access compared to previous years. For more information on hunting/accessing Hancock Timber Resource managed land use their [website](#) or call 800-782-1493.

High elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences can be found in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 and 654 accessed by US Forest Service road and trail systems that lead to high mountain hunting areas, including portions of the Norse Peak, Clearwater, and Glacier View

Wilderness Areas and Crystal Mountain Resort (see description under Elk). Deer harvest has been decreasing in most GMUs in District 11 since 2000, with the exception of GMU 654, which began its decline in 2007. Harvest regulations have been altered somewhat in District 11 GMUs over the years, which plays a role in harvest trends. However, there is a general consensus that overall deer harvest is decreasing throughout the district. This decline is likely attributed to declines in harvest on the Vail Tree Farm in the early 2000s as well as the manipulation of permit availability.



Despite a decreasing trend in harvest, hunter success rates increased and catch per unit effort decreased in the GMUs in the western portion of the district (652, 655, 666, and 667). Unfortunately, the opposite trends are being seen in the eastern GMUs 653 and 654.



HUNTERS'S FIRST DEER HARVEST, GMU 654, LATE SEASON (S PAZ, 2015).

BEAR

District 11 comprises GMUs in two Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs): Puget Sound (GMU 652, 666, and 667) and South Cascades (GMU 653 and 654). There is opportunity within District 11 to hunt bear both in the fall general and spring special permit hunting seasons. However, overall trends in both hunts have been declining and prospects in the district may not be as good as previous years.

Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), Hancock Timber Resources Group managed lands (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653), Capitol State Forest (GMU 663), and Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Parks (GMU 654) offer the best prospects for bear hunters in the district. (See comments earlier regarding access permit requirements for Weyerhaeuser and Hancock properties).

A spring black bear special permit season is provided on Hancock's Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMUs 653/654 within the South Cascades BBMU. A total of 150 permits for the April 15 to June 15 season will likely be available once again in 2016. Those successfully drawn for a permit must purchase an access permit from Hancock (see costs above under Elk). Nineteen hunters

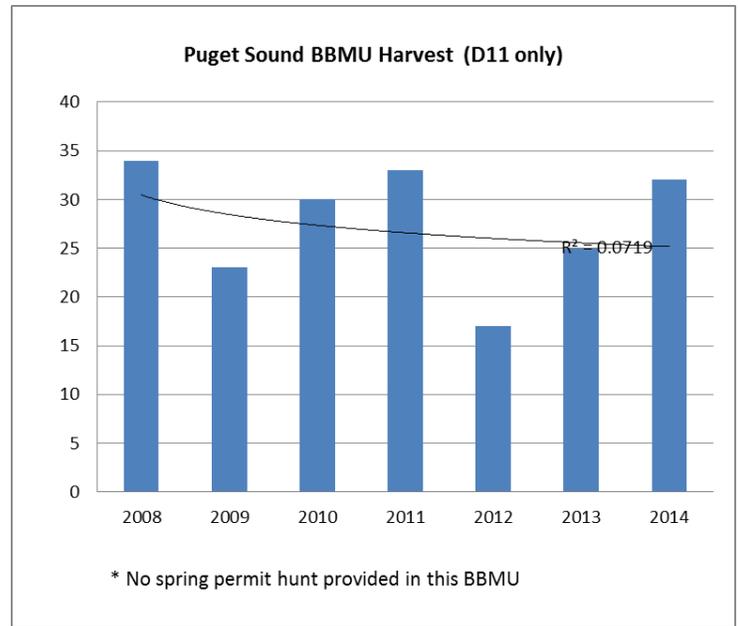
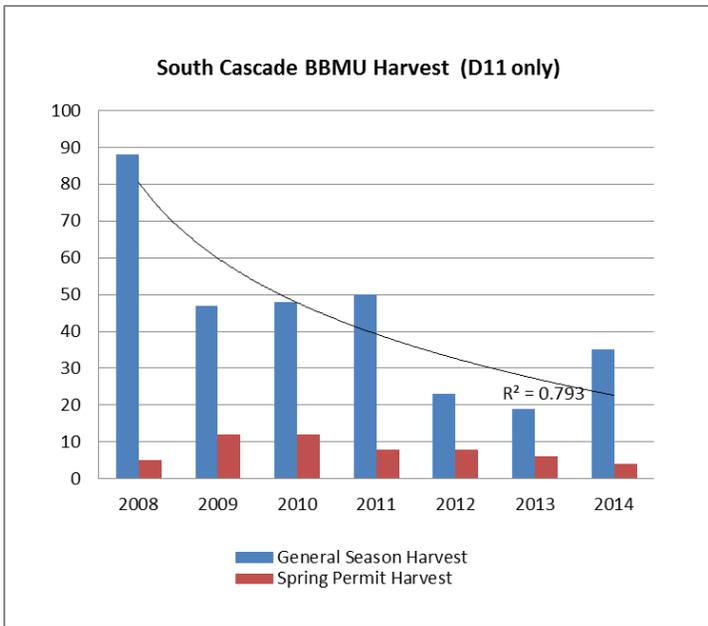
successfully harvested four black bear in 2014 under the Kapowsin spring permit hunt for a hunter success rate of 21.1% (compared to 91 hunters harvesting six bear in 2013 and a 6.6% success rate). The 2014 success rate was the highest since 2009 and comparable to, although on the lower end of, other spring bear hunts statewide whose success rates range from 20-50%.



First Big Game Harvest (S. Holzngel 2014)

Prospects for harvesting black bear in spring may be improving on the Kapowsin Tree Farm, but remain marginal compared to the rest of the state.

General season bear harvest trends in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU (e.g. GMUs 653 and 654) have been generally declining over the past several years. Harvest declined 46% from 2011 to 2012 and then continued to decline slightly in 2013, but nearly doubled in 2014. Regardless, general season bear harvest in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU shows a continuing strong decline over the past seven years. The Puget Sound BBMU (e.g. GMUs 652, 666, 667) general season harvest trend is also showing a weak declining trend over the past several years, but has shown signs of improving since a low in 2012. The number of hunters hunting this BBMU has declined along with harvest, but their success rate per hunter is slightly increasing each year.



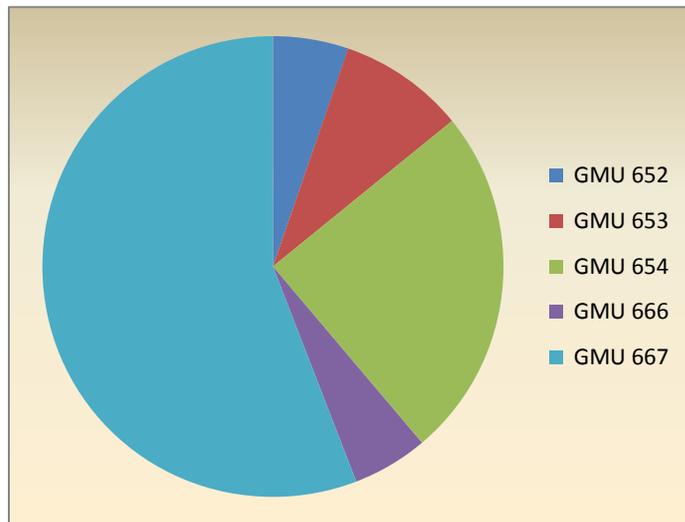
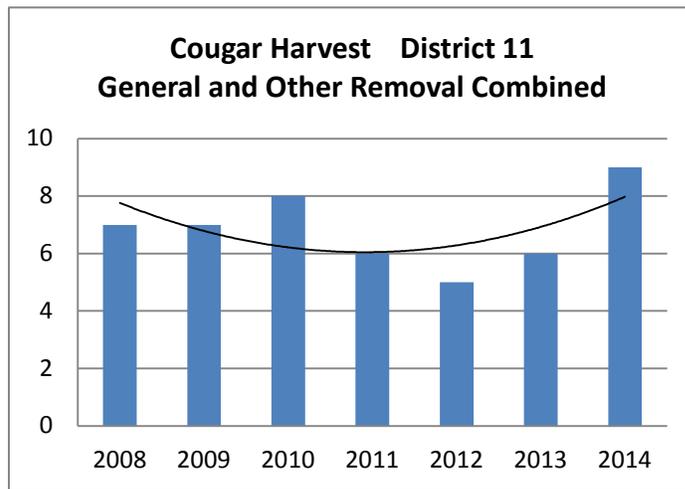
COUGAR

Cougar are widespread in the forest lands of District 11. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk also provide great opportunity for cougar. WDFW changed cougar hunting season design in 2012 with a liberalized season coupled with harvest guidelines (see wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar). Two general cougar seasons are offered:

- Early: Sept. 1 - Dec. 31
- Late: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30 OR when the harvest meets or exceeds the GMU harvest quota as listed in the game pamphlet.

Be aware that a 2016 cougar license is required to hunt the April dates of the late cougar season. GMUs 652 and 666 have no quota limit, GMUs 653 and 654 have a quota of four to six cougar, and GMU 667 has a quota of three to four cougar.

A significant increase in cougar harvest in District 11 occurred in 2014 compared to the three previous seasons, including the highest reported harvest since 2008. A total of nine cougar were reported harvested in the district from all sources in 2014 (compared to six in 2013). The Skookumchuck (GMU 667) annually provides the highest cougar harvest in the district and one of the highest cougar harvests of all western Washington GMUs. Thus, prospects for hunting cougar in the district are very good.



WATERFOWL

The majority of [Pacific Flyway](#) waterfowl are born on the prairies of the United States and Canada, as well as in Alaska, northwestern Canada, and other western states. With the exception of 2013, waterfowl numbers have been on the upswing in the United States and that trend continued in 2015. According to USFWS, the total duck population (includes freshwater and saltwater species) as counted on traditional survey areas was 49.5 million breeding ducks, which is similar to the 2014 estimate of 49.2 million breeding ducks and which is 43% higher than the long-term average.

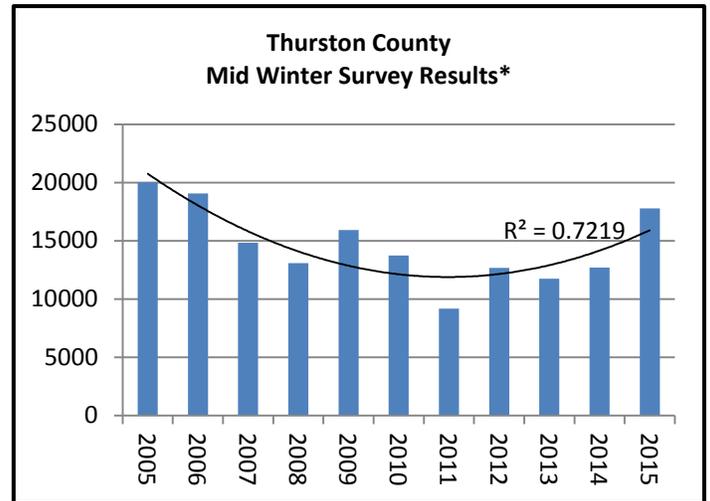
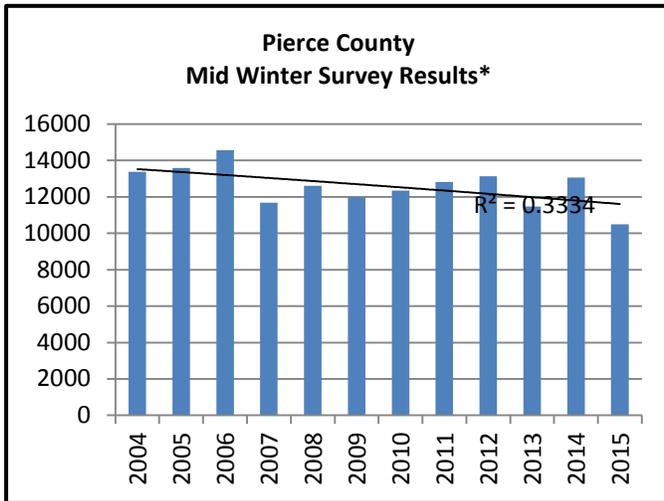
Additionally, most breeding population estimates of several species commonly found in District 11 remained stable from 2014 to 2015 in the primary North American breeding areas as follows (USFWS; <http://flyways.us/content/2015-trends-breeding-duck-populations-report-now-available>):

Species	Breeding Population Estimate Trend
Mallard	similar to 2014 but up 51% over long-term average
Green-winged teal	similar to the 2014 estimate and 69% above the long-term average
Gadwall	19% above the 2014 estimate and 98% above the long-term average
American widgeon	similar to 2014 but up 17% over long-term average
Northern shovelers	similar to 2014 estimates and 114% above the long-term average
Northern pintails	similar to the 2014 estimate and 24% below the long-term average
Scaup (combined)	Similar to the 2014 estimate and was 13% below the long-term average

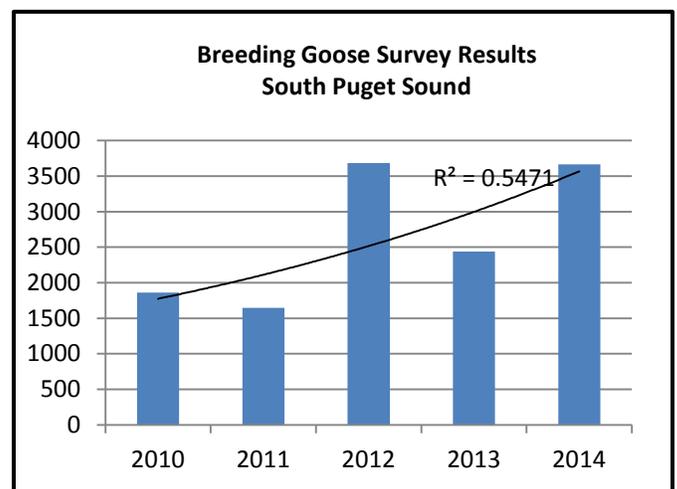
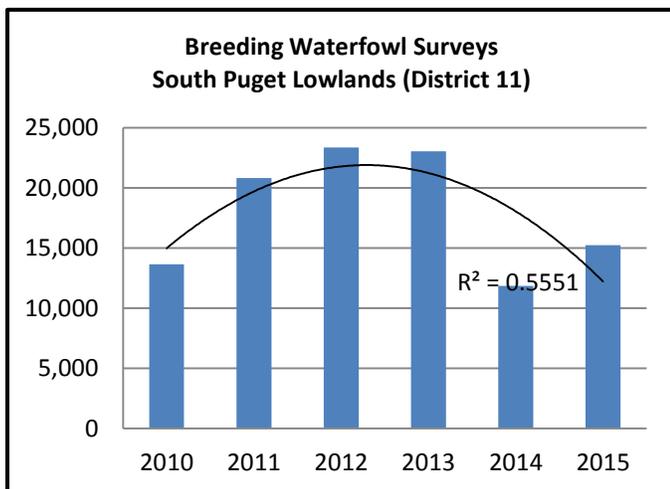
Thurston County supports significantly more waterfowl than Pierce County, primarily as a result of Nisqually Wildlife Refuge and other Puget Sound inlets. However, District 11 continues to see a decline in mid-winter waterfowl counts in Thurston but not Pierce County, which has remained relatively stable. This may be a result of changing hydrology patterns that have resulted in less water on historically flooding agricultural fields and more water on smaller sized ponds in Thurston County. Overall, the South Puget Sound lowlands support almost twice as many waterfowl as any other western Washington location. Breeding season waterfowl survey results for the South Puget lowlands was roughly half the total over the past three seasons. This may be attributed to an earlier than normal spring migration and nest season in 2014, which resulted in a reduction in migratory waterfowl visible during the survey window rather than a true reduction in waterfowl.

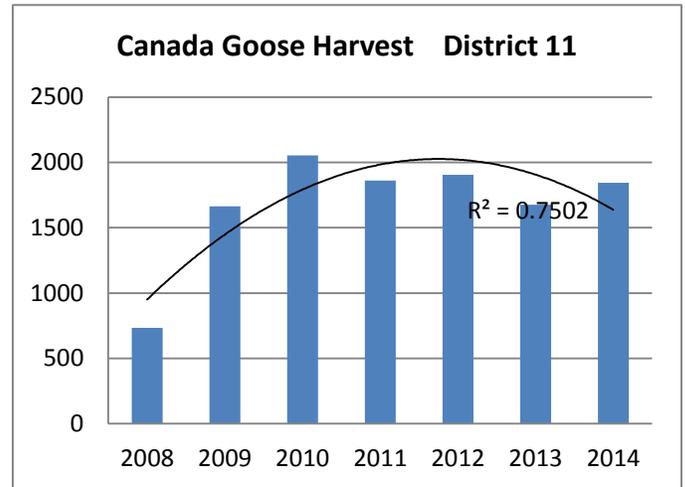
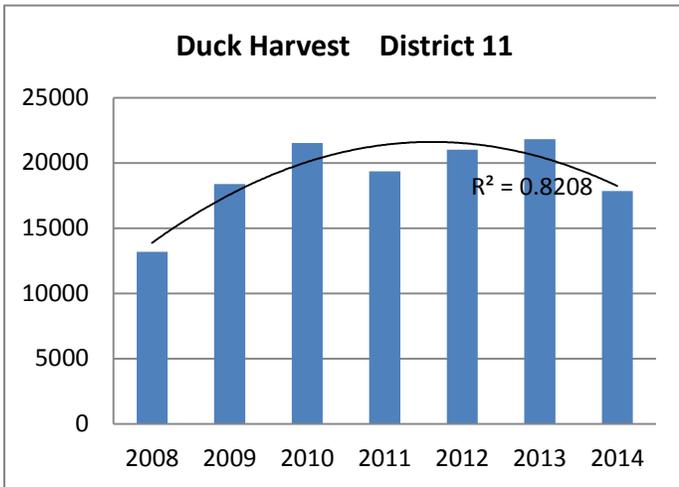
Midwinter counts within District 11 have shown a slight decline over the past ten years in Pierce County. Thurston County's counts declined significantly to a 10 year low in 2011, but appear to be recovering, likely as a result of increasing counts on the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. Breeding waterfowl surveys in the South Puget Sound showed a significant decline in 2014 after a three

year increasing trend, with only a slight increase in 2015. After increasing over the last five years, duck harvest slightly declined in 2014, although it's too early to know if this represents a decreasing trend. Goose harvest in the district remained steady after increasing significantly in 2009. Overall, duck and goose populations in District 11 and their harvest appears to be remaining stable, which should provide adequate harvest opportunity for waterfowl hunters.



*INCLUDES ONLY THOSE SITES THAT WERE CONSISTENTLY SURVEYED OVER THE YEARS REPORTED. ACTUAL WATERFOWL NUMBERS IN DISTRICT 11 WILL BE SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN REPORTED HERE.





Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies in the district that are surrounded by housing. Hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area (see introduction). Rapjohn Lake in Pierce County has a register-to-hunt program and requires hunters to hunt from two established blinds. Registration for the blinds is on a first come basis and is established by parking in one of the two mandatory parking lots at the WDFW Rapjohn Lake Access Site.

Best waterfowl hunting areas: [Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#), Puget Sound marine inlets associated with western islands of Pierce County and Henderson, Budd, and Eld Inlets of Thurston County, and the Centralia Mine in Lewis County. Flooded agricultural fields in the western half of the district can be good prospects for waterfowl hunting. However, hunters must seek landowner access permission prior to hunting these sites. Note that a majority of the water bodies on Key Peninsula, Pierce County, are within a firearm restriction zone, thus prohibiting waterfowl hunting. The Centralia Coal Mine has a limited, high quality hunt. Hunters are urged to contact TransAlta directly with questions regarding participation

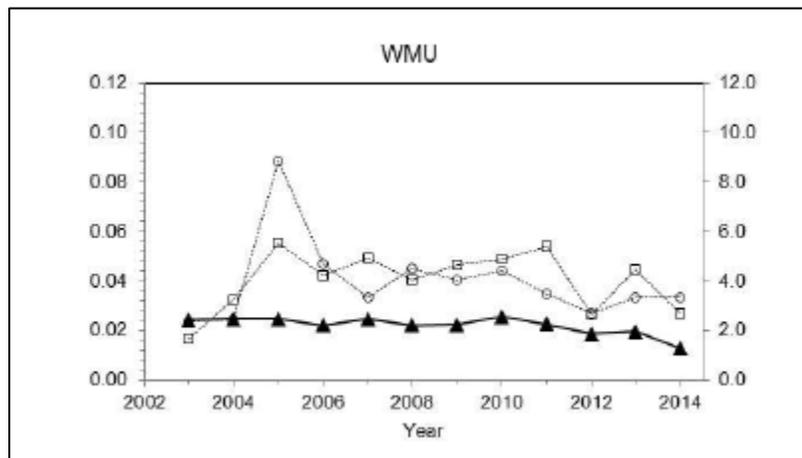


YOUNG HUNTER WITH HER COLLECTIONS IN THE BLIND (PHOTO BY T. FRANK, WEST RICHLAND, WA)

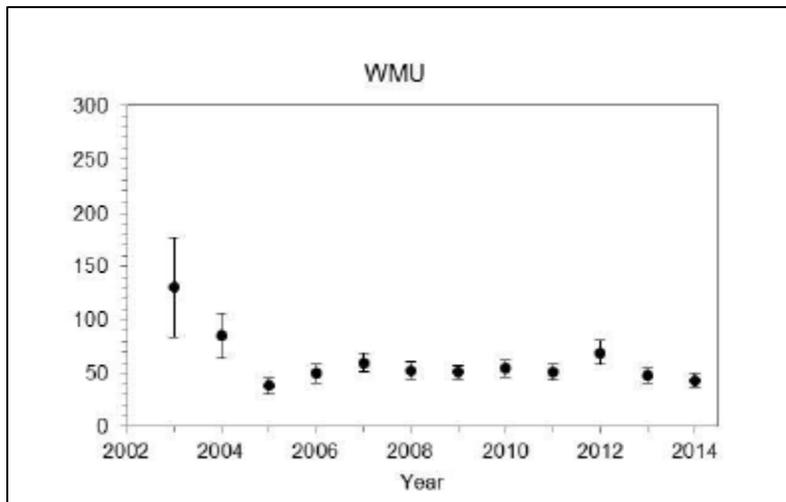
(360-736-9901). For information on hunting Nisqually Wildlife Refuge go to http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Nisqually/visit/visitor_activities/hunting.html or call (360) 753-9467.

MOURNING DOVE

The Department uses the annual USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status Report to analyze trends in mourning dove populations. The report summarizes trends in the number of doves heard and seen per route from the all-bird Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), and provides absolute abundance estimates based on band recovery and harvest data. Harvest and hunter participation are estimated from the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). BBS data suggested that the abundance of mourning doves over the last 49 years decreased in the western management unit, which is composed of the seven western states including Washington. Estimates of absolute abundance varied among management units in 2014, with the western management unit having the least doves nationally at 43,697,391 (SE=3,252,203). Approximately 1,265,000 ± 52,600 birds were hunted by 102,300 dove hunters across the western management unit. Hunters reported 261,800 ± 10,500 days spent afield hunting doves.

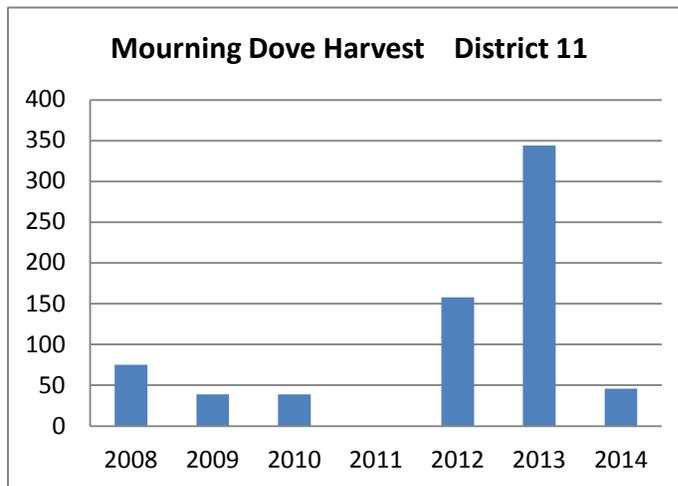


ESTIMATED HARVEST (▲) AND HARVEST RATES OF MOURNING DOVE 2003–2014 IN THE WESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT. HARVEST RATES PRESENTED SEPARATELY FOR HATCH-YEAR (■) AND AFTER-HATCH-YEAR (●) (USFWS 2015)



ESTIMATES AND 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS OF MOURNING DOVE ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE IN THE WESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT, 2003–2014. ESTIMATES BASED ON BAND RECOVERY AND HARVEST DATA (USFWS 2015).

District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area in Washington and averages approximately 100 doves harvested per year. A significant increase in dove hunting was reported by hunters in the district in 2013, but it declined in 2014 to normal levels. Lewis County traditionally provides higher harvest numbers in the district, with Thurston and Pierce County far behind. In 2014, harvest was 89, 15, and 31 for Lewis, Thurston, and Pierce counties, respectively.

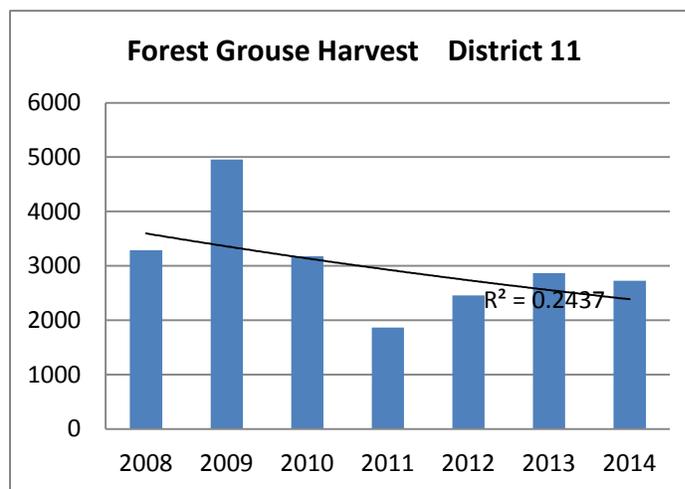


FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 11. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along logging roads, trails, and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands. The best hunting will be near fruiting shrublands such as huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, elderberry, and other species. Logging roads are particularly good locations since they provide the sand that grouse need to eat for digestion and the dust grouse seek to discourage mites and other biting infestations. In particular, look for inaccessible or closed roads and walk behind gates (with permission by owner) to get the best chance of finding grouse.

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on JBLM (GMU 652), Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), and Capitol State Forest (GMU 663).

Forest grouse experienced a weak downward trend in District 11 over the past seven years, caused primarily by a spike in harvest in 2009. Removing the 2009 spike, an average of 2,700 grouse are harvested annually in the district. Pierce County provides an average of 2,000 grouse harvested per year, while Thurston County averages 1,000 annually.



A hunter must purchase either a big game license or a small game license to hunt grouse. Grouse hunting is also included in the purchase of any big game license purchase. Forest grouse season in District 11 runs September 1 thru December 31, with a daily bag limit of four, but not more than three of any one species.

PHEASANT

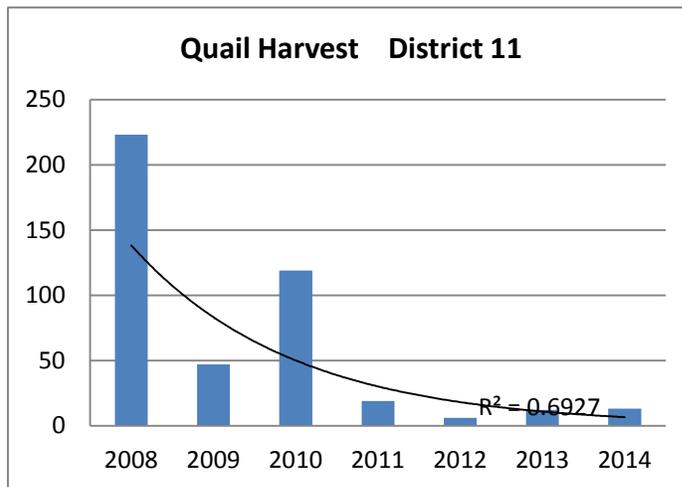
Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). The release program utilizes state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands. There are special access processes in place for [JBLM](#), so please visit their web site. Note that [non-toxic shot](#) is required on all pheasant release sites statewide. The general pheasant season is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., September 26 to November 30, 2014, with a daily bag limit of two (either sex) and a possession limit of 15 (either sex). An extended pheasant season is also provided in District 11 at Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas from December 1-15, under the same hours and daily/possession limits as general season. Pheasants are not released as part of the extended season. Hunters need a western Washington pheasant license to hunt pheasants. An overview of the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, including a description and maps of all release sites, can be found on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/>.

Pheasant production in the South Puget Sound will be similar to 2014, with an estimated 4,500-5,000 pheasants to be released in 2015 across southwestern Washington pheasant release areas. This represents a 2,000 bird increase over 2013 releases. Be aware that total production could still be affected by high temperatures and other mortalities in 2015 and these are estimates only. Approximately 1,500-2,000 pheasants (5% of total production) will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season, with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning September 17 thru Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3,500-4,000 pheasants (10% of total production) will be released at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, with 60-70 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Some areas of Scatter Creek are off limits to hunters due to endangered species recovery work so please obey all posted signs. Approximately 4,000-5,000 pheasants (13% of total production) will be released on JBLM. Military training dictates which fields will be open in any given week for both release and hunting access on JBLM. Hunters must register to hunt on JBLM thru NW Adventure Center (253-967-8282 or 253-967-7744), at which time they will be informed about the pheasant hunting process, including which fields are open for hunting.

QUAIL

Quail are as limited in District 11 as they are throughout western Washington. Quail harvest in District 11 has been trending downwards since a seven-year high in 2008. 2014 harvest was similar to 2013 (13 vs 12 quail reported harvested), with all quail harvested in Pierce County, which had not reported a harvest for the previous three years.

Regardless of this downward trend, quail harvest in the district is not significantly lower than the other ten counties in western Washington in which hunters hunt quail. California quail can be found in scattered locations throughout District 11, with the greatest opportunity in grasslands and woodlands of South and East Thurston County and northern Lewis County. Mountain Quail are more prevalent in the brushy areas of Key Peninsula, Pierce County, and the southeast portions of Thurston County. However, access may be limited. The western Washington California quail season runs September 27 thru November 30, with a daily mixed bag limit of ten and a possession mixed bag limit of 30. The mountain quail season runs September 26 thru November 30, with a daily bag limit of two and possession limit of four.

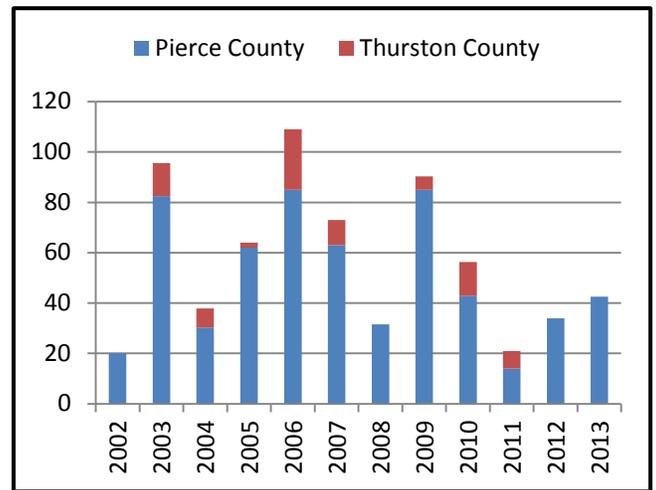
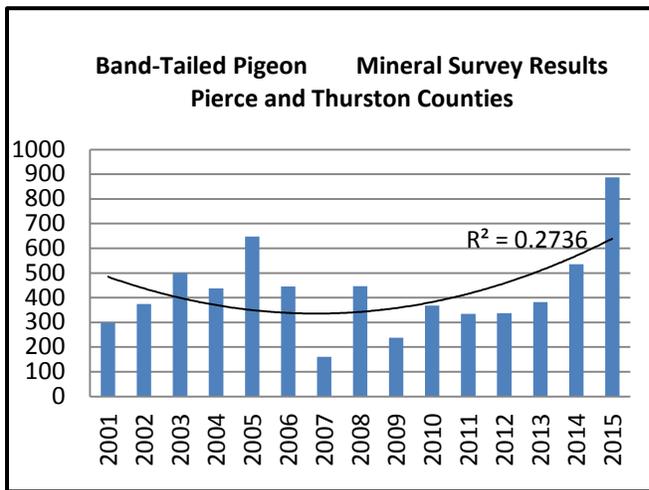


TURKEY

District 11 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. Although 50 hunters reported hunting turkey in District 11 in 2014, only one turkey was reported harvested in the district (GMU 667). This was a significant decline from the average harvest of six per year across the district. WDFW receives occasional reports of individual or small groups of turkeys in Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula, Pierce County, Rochester, Thurston County, and along the Johnson Creek Corridor, Lewis County. However, the overall scarcity of turkeys in District 11 equates to extremely poor prospects for harvest. Annually, the majority of turkey harvest occurs in the Skookumchuck Unit (GMU 667), followed by a few in Deschutes (GMU 666). The statewide turkey season runs April 15 thru May 31 in any given year, with a youth-only hunt the first weekend of April. Male turkeys and turkeys with visible beards are only legal with a western Washington limit of one (except for a two turkey limit in Klickitat County).

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Band-tailed pigeon harvest information for 2014 was not available at the time of this report. Total harvest in Washington in 2013 was 129 pigeons, with Pierce County (District 11) providing the third highest harvest at 42 birds, just behind Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Pierce County also supports the third highest average annual harvest of pigeons since 2002. No pigeons were harvested in Thurston County in 2012 or 2013, and it ranks low in regards to harvest compared to other western counties. Band-tails observed during July surveys at traditional mineral sites rose significantly from 2013 to 2015 across District 11, with the long-term trend showing a weak increase. Thus, prospects remain decent for pigeon hunting in Pierce County, but not necessarily in Thurston County. The best hunting locations for band-tails in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and Luhr Beach area (Pierce/Thurston county boundary), Mud Bay (Thurston County), Totten Inlet/Oyster Bay (Thurston County), and along marine shorelines of District 11.



COTTONTAIL RABBIT

District 11 provides some of the best cottontail rabbit hunting opportunities in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce and Thurston counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest in the district remained stable from 2008 to 2011, then spiked significantly in 2012 and 2014. The average harvest since 2008 has been 284 cottontails harvested across the district annually.

Success (harvest) per unit effort has declined in Thurston County, but increased in Pierce County over the last five years, suggesting that Pierce County offers better prospects for hunting cottontails. Note that some of this trend is likely due to lack of hunter participation in Thurston County. With the increasing trends in Pierce County, it remains one of the best places in the south Puget Sound to hunt cottontails.

