

State Environmental Policy Act

Public Comments and WDFW Response on Draft Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan

Public comment period: October 18 – November 17, 2021

Date Name	Public Comment	WDFW Response
10/18/21 Bradley Jarvis	I would like to see Adams rd. Public hunting area restored. It has been choked out by alive and dead olive trees. Along with brush and grasses	Some of this area is Department of Natural Resources land and not managed by WDFW. We are treating the WDFW area for Russian olive and phragmites which will help maintain the wetlands.
10/20/21 Pete Mitalas	Hello I was reading up regarding the Columbia Basin wild life unit and improvements . I'm wondering if theirs any plan to help reintroduce wild pheasant to this area? While I know we have released program it would be nice to see the wild pheasant population get back to a health and thriving population . I no that their less and less cover with farmer expanding their crop land almost leaving no cover what so ever . So my thought is this site could be a go start .	There are wild pheasants on the wildlife area. Our management goal is to improve upland bird habitat, with the goal of supporting more birds, and we have no plans to introduce more wild birds. We release raised pheasants for hunting.
10/20/21 Brandon Wallman	I would love to know more information about the plan to restore wild pheasant/upland game population to the area! Thanks	There are wild pheasants on the wildlife area. Our management goal is to improve upland bird habitat, with the goal of supporting more birds, and we have no plans to introduce more wild birds. We release raised pheasants for hunting.
10/21/21 Wendy Louie	<p>Good morning!</p> <p>I saw the request for public comment regarding the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, and as a licensed master class falconer, would like to request that legal falconry hunting is allowed and brought into consideration whenever permitted hunting activities are created.</p> <p>As most hunters know, access to hunting lands and properties is the one of the most difficult parts of our sport and practice these days, and ensuring public land access is a very important part of helping with this increasing problem.</p> <p>Unfortunately, falconry hunting cannot be safely performed at the same time as firearm hunting for the safety of our raptors, and thus we are even further restricted than gun hunters in where and when we can fly and hunt with our birds.</p> <p>However, since our method of hunting involves a free-flying hawk or falcon and not a firearm, we can often safely hunt in spaces where firearm hunters cannot, such as near buildings/structures or telephone poles.</p>	<p>Hunting is regulated by state laws and is out of the scope of the wildlife area plan. Falconry hunting is allowed. Please go to https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/falconry for more information.</p> <p>WDFW has a goal of providing more access to information about hunting opportunities. Contact TeamEphrata@dfw.wa.gov if you would like more information about hunting opportunities and check out our website: https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting.</p>

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	<p>Typical quarry species pursued in falconry hunting are cottontail rabbits, ducks, doves, and pheasants/quail/upland gamebirds. Rabbit is numerically the most popular species of game animal for falconers to hunt, followed by pheasants and ducks.</p> <p>Falconers - especially apprentice (novice) - falconers also legally capture juvenile raptors from the wild to train as their hunting partners, and this activity too should be permitted where it is possible.</p> <p>Note that the vast majority of these young birds are later released back to the wild after a season or two of hunting with their falconer, as well-muscled, healthy adult birds, ready to join the wild breeding population.</p> <p>Thank you very much for your consideration, and I sincerely appreciate your commitment to help protect our beautiful wild lands and wildlife populations.</p> <p>-Wendy Louie, licensed master class falconer</p>	
10/21/21 Cynthia Muse	<p>Cynthia Muse here...we are equally concerned about habitat management here in Franklin County too. With the ravenous growth here we are losing many of our beloved riparian green zones created by waste/excess water from the South Columbia Irrigation District. Those waters are being eliminated for subdivisions or rerouted through siphons to the river. The wildlife has moved northward or died and the flora has died and is being dozed and hauled away! We are sick at this destruction when comprehensive city and county plans showed these green belts and habitats as part of future growth especially to divide light industries/commercial from residential developments. I know your focus is to the north but the destructive is here and can never be replaced. It includes the city, county, the Bureau, USACE, and the Utility companies. Please help us to save what is left this artificially created wonder. Our plea also went to the Department of Ecology earlier in the season.</p> <p>Thank you, Cynthia Muse, Pasco</p>	<p>This comment, though not directly about the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area, has been forwarded to the manager there.</p>
10/21/21 Dave	<p>I'd like to add my comment on this area. I'd like to see the department team up with the tribes and relocate a population of pronghorn to the wildlife area. I know the department has done habitat assessments in the past to see the feasibility of rehabilitating pronghorns to the state. The Yakima and colville tribes have gone ahead with it and it seems to be quite successful. I believe the habitat of the wildlife area is perfect for them with plenty of room to grow.</p> <p>Thanks Dave</p>	<p>Relocation of pronghorn is outside of scope of the management plan.</p>
11/4/21 John E. Lagerquist	<p>Greetings Patricia Jatczak, Chad Eidson, Rich Finger, and other WDFW Biologists, I have great interest in the current management plan being prepared for the Columbia Basin (CB). My primary concern, and a concern that has been of great importance to me for 20+ years, is the damage to the wetlands caused by the proliferation of Phragmites and Russian olive. In some areas of the CB these invasive species have completely eliminated ponds and/or resulted in most other ponds being unhuntable,</p>	<p>WDFW has been and will continue to manage phragmites and other invasive species to the best of our ability. Until there is biological control or other treatment available, control is not possible. The Wildlife Area has plans to</p>

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	<p>with only a small amount of open water that is completely surrounded by 10 to 40 feet of Phragmites, or have unpenetrable groves of Russian olive trees on the shores.</p> <p>I currently am 63 years old. I have hunted in the CB for over 50 years. I have a BS degree in Wildlife Biology. I have seen major changes in the CB in my time, including the vegetation types present, a huge decline in the pheasant population, waterfowl migration pattern changes, and the ever increasing expansion of private hunting clubs. I can't, nor do I have any interest in, competing with the wealthy people who drive their large trucks, pulling trailers filled with full-body decoys. The days of knocking on a farmers door and getting permission to hunt their property vanished years ago. I digress.</p> <p>A prime example of the damage done by invasive vegetation and succession is the Frenchman Hills Game Reserve. I hunted the waterway there until it became a reserve in the 1980s. There were a few cattail islands and a vast amount of open water when we hunted there. Currently there are small pockets of water and this reserve is mostly filled with natural and invasive vegetation species. I believe this reserve would attract much larger numbers of waterfowl if something was done to remove the vegetation, resulting in a large body of water once again.</p> <p>Another area that waterfowl hunting has been reduced to almost zero is the DNR land west of Dodson Road, accessed primarily across the road from the Winchester Wasteway boat launch. The Phragmites in that area is horrendous! There used to be many different options to hunt the area, with many lakes and ponds. Not any more. It's a sea of Phragmites. Something needs to be done by the WDFW and associated agencies to eliminate the invasive vegetation.</p> <p>Please take a few minutes to read the attached documents I have previously sent to the WDFW over the past 10 years that explains and describes my background and experiences in the CB for over 50 years. The attached document dated December 2011 is somewhat prophetic to what is occurring in the CB these 10 years later.</p> <p>I'm a freelance hunter with fewer hunting opportunities every year. I again ask that you briefly take time to read the attached documents. This concern is important to me, but even more important to the waterfowl hunters much younger than me who will be looking for public lands on which to hunt in the coming years, including my sons. They, like me, will want places to hunt, and a reason to continue to purchase a hunting license and associated waterfowl stamps every year. I'm an avid and hardcore waterfowl hunter this is becoming weary of having so few places to hunt and the resulting pressure of hunters being confined to the limited public areas. I believe knowing my own drive and ambition to pursue waterfowl, and if I'm weary of all this, there are many other hunters in the CB (and I've talked with several) who are equally discouraged. There needs to be a much greater amount of open water in the CB to attract waterfowl and disperse the hunting pressure. Most waterfowl hunters give more priority to having a secluded place to hunt rather than how many birds are harvested during that hunt.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention and time to this important conversation concern.</p>	<p>focus on the Frenchman Hills Game Reserve in the future as funding allows.</p>

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	<p>John E. Lagerquist (Three additional letters were attached to this comment. Please see them below in the Appendix.)</p>	
<p>11/8/21 Nathan Page</p>	<p>Hello WDFW Review Board, Thank you for taking the time to review historic and emerging recreational activities within the broad Columbia Basin Management Area (among many other priorities)!</p> <p>I am fully on board with a campground in the Frenchman Coulee area and encourage the capacity and diversity of sites to be thoroughly considered. Camping in the Frenchman area is used by rock climbers, hikers, and increasingly concert-goers from the Gorge Amphitheater. If the campground is too small - it will fill up quickly every weekend and lead to folks spilling over and camping outside the designated areas. If all sites are reservable online - the area will fill up months in advance of every show at the Gorge (in addition to winter weekends). I'd encourage a diversity of available sites from walk ins, reservable, RV only, Bike-only and short hike in (can not drive to site - must walk in a short distance). This will ensure that there is space for the broad diversity of users of the Frenchman Coulee.</p> <p>Secondly, Rock Climbing has been a historically accepted activity within the Quincy Lakes District and it should remain as such. Cliff-nesting raptors are a huge concern and of course, the impact climbers have on these birds should be thoroughly studied! I would encourage specific, granular seasonal closures and research of nesting sites. Collaboration with the Washington Climbing Coalition and the Access Fund would be a great partnership. As both Orgs have a long history of encouraging and respecting evidence-based and specific raptor nesting closures. Climbers and hikers can also be a valuable asset to survey and record the locations and nests of raptors, as has been demonstrated by the North Cascade National Park Complex near Newhalum. Lastly, survey and remediation of social trails used by hikers and climbers would also be an amazing improvement for the area!</p> <p>As climbing grows in popularity, so does it's potential to educate users of fragile environments and appreciate these open wildlife spaces. Like hunting and fishing - the potential for corporate sponsorship abounds, and large projects are possible (look at the two bathrooms at Frenchman Coulee for example!).</p> <p>I would love to speak with you all further on the importance and appreciation we have for these valuable rock climbing recreational resources that we return to time and time again. I believe Climbers care for these spaces and clean them more than other user groups, as we return regularly and see the impact of our increased use.</p> <p>I appreciate you all reviewing this plan and fully recognize how many stakeholders and priorities you all juggle. Keep up the great work!</p>	<p>The goal for camping in the Frenchmen Coulee area is to improve, contain, and eventually expand camping opportunities, and to reduce the impact on the environment. It will be managed the same as other WDFW camping areas and will be primitive, and not be reservable, and only a Discover Pass will be needed to camp.</p> <p>WDFW and the climbers currently work very well together. WDFW will continue to use specific closures and does not plan to do overall closures for nesting raptors.</p>

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	All my best, -Nathan Page	
11/10/21 Daniel Montgomery	<p>Salutations. I enjoy Frenchman Coulee as a climber and am writing as such with concerns and suggestions about the plan for the coulee.</p> <p>The first concern is with management of raptor habitats on cliffs. As climbers, we've seen many great cliffs with a raptor nest get closed indefinitely for years because a bird nest was identified, with little effort to follow up and discover if the birds continued to live there and when the nest was active. It is my hope and many others' that any areas with nests will be monitored closely to discover the actual usage period, and if areas must be closed to climbing, that it is not for some indefinite period of time.</p> <p>The second concern is in regard to campground plans. As it is, Gorge concert goers devour the current primitive campground on concert weekends. A reservation-only campground would lead to zero occupancy but concert goers during those periods. Hopefully, if one must be constructed, it has a variety of sites from reservation to walk in to drive in, as well as the continuation of the free primitive sites that have made Vantage what it is. I would also humbly suggest that the place for a campground is NOT anywhere near the current one as the area is quite overused and cramped for space, but on the coulee basin, where there's lots of space that doesn't infringe up on the trails or cliffs.</p> <p>Appreciate all the trail work you do and plan to do. Thanks, Daniel Montgomery</p>	<p>The goal for camping in the Frenchmen Coulee area is to improve, contain, and eventually expand camping opportunities, and to reduce the impact on the environment. It will be managed the same as other WDFW camping areas and will be primitive, and not be reservable, and only a Discover Pass will be needed to camp.</p> <p>WDFW lands are open to anyone with a Discover Pass. Our understanding is that with the Gorge's change to a festival (weekend) approach to shows, more concert attendees stay on-site at the Gorge.</p> <p>WDFW and the climbers currently work very well together. WDFW will continue to use specific closures and does not plan to do overall closures for nesting raptors.</p>
11/10/21 Nicholas Mayo	<p>I would like to share some comments related to the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan specifically as it relates to the Frenchman Coulee climbing area.</p> <p>I am fully in support of establishing camping areas and removing unnecessary social trails. I also think it's important to consider cliff closures when raptors are present and active. However, I would discourage the permanent closure of cliffs year-round. A good model of seasonal cliff closures can be found in the Tieton area and I hope something similar would be considered here as well.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to provide my feedback. Nicholas Mayo, Snohomish, WA</p>	<p>The goal for camping in the Frenchmen Coulee area is to improve, contain, and eventually expand camping opportunities, and to reduce the impact on the environment. It will be managed the same as other WDFW camping areas and will be primitive, and not be reservable, and only a Discover Pass will be needed to camp.</p> <p>WDFW and the climbers currently work very well together. WDFW will continue to use specific closures and does not plan to do overall closures for nesting raptors.</p>
11/11/21 Dana Ward	<p>To: Lisa Wood, SEPA/NEPA Coordinator and cognizant personnel From: Dana Ward, Conservation Chair, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, Tri-Cities, Washington</p>	<p>Over two-thirds of the wildlife area is owned by the US Bureau of Reclamation and is under a fire protection contract with the Bureau of Land</p>

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	<p>Action: Comments on the WDFW draft Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan</p> <p>The subject conservation plan has been reviewed and found to be in good shape. It appears that most areas of concern regarding habitat conservation, public access and post fire response are well covered to list a few.</p> <p>We are particularly concerned about habitat, particularly sagebrush which supports an abundance of resident and migratory birds (sagebrush obligates). Preserving the habitat is critical since nearly 80% of the state’s sagebrush lands have disappeared.</p> <p>The section titled, “Fire history and response” on page 94 could be a little more robust. Under current climate change it appears that wildlands fires will become more common in the future. With fires becoming more frequent, WDFW needs to become more proactive in how to manage lands to be more fire resistant. It would be more cost effective to fund up front strong fire deterrents rather than to repeatedly pump money into post fire reclamation.</p> <p>Some areas that the WDFW should consider is firebreaks, wildlands fire attack vehicles, aerial attack contracts for both rotary and fixed wing aircraft and lightening detection systems.</p> <p>Using these singly or in combination would provide a complete and complementary system of wildfire response.</p> <p>Thank you for the chance to comment on the management plan. We understand that funding and resources are a limiting factor but every effort should be made to prevent wildlands fire.</p> <p>-Dana Ward, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society</p>	<p>Management, which makes federal resources available.</p> <p>Additionally, WDFW has contracts in place with local fire districts with excellent response.</p> <p>A goal of the draft WDFW Statewide Recreation Strategy is to provide more information and education about recreating safely, which will hopefully help reduce human caused fire.</p>
<p>11/11/21 Arthur Campbell</p>	<p>Chad Eidson November 11, 2021 Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Manager 1550 Alder Street, NW Ephrata, Washington 98823-9699</p> <p>Dear Mr. Eidson: North Central Washington Audubon Society (NCWAS), with approximately 500 members in Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, and Ferry Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to submit the following comments regarding the Draft Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (CBWA) Management Plan.</p> <p>NCWAS and several other Audubon chapters recently completed a 6-year Sagebrush Songbird Survey in cooperation with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). It was designed to determine where shrub-steppe obligate passerines currently occur in Washington. The primary focal species in the study were sagebrush sparrow, Brewer’s sparrow, and sage thrasher, though we recorded all species encountered. With the data in hand, we’re now focusing our attention on devising and implementing strategies to conserve these and other</p>	

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	<p>shrub-steppe obligate birds in Washington. For that to occur, shrub-steppe habitat needs to be conserved.</p> <p>We've reviewed the Draft Management Plan with this specific focus in mind, and note that it points to serious concerns for the continued presence of healthy shrub-steppe habitat in Washington. Specifically, it states that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The CBWA currently contains approximately 50,000 acres of shrub-steppe habitat. 2. The historic extent of shrub-steppe in Washington has been significantly reduced, and much of what remains is fragmented and imperiled by increasing climate disruption. 3. Stable inter-mountain big sagebrush habitat is projected to decline significantly by the end of the century. 4. Several shrub-steppe dependent species, including sage grouse and pygmy rabbit, are well known <p>examples of shrub-steppe obligate species already in serious trouble, and sagebrush sparrow and sage thrasher are both identified as species of greatest concern and candidates for state listing.</p> <p>The Sagebrush Songbird Survey made clear that substantial tracts of remaining shrub-steppe habitat are unhealthy and, as a result, functionally incapable of supporting its focal species. And much of what remains has been degraded to one extent or another by grazing, incursion of invasive species, fragmentation, etc. Because of this, the situation as it applies to various species is even more dire than the total acreages of remaining shrubsteppe would imply. The survey also revealed that the habitat requirements of sage thrasher, Brewer's sparrow, and sagebrush sparrows vary. Sagebrush sparrow, for example, needs quite large tracts of healthy habitat. They typically avoid areas with substantial cheat grass or other invasive plant species, preferring a more visually open ground surface. Brewer's sparrow, in contrast, seems more tolerant of fragmented landscapes. And sage thrasher is drawn to sites with a meaningful big sagebrush component, with the other two species being more flexible in that respect. All shrub-steppe habitat is clearly not equal.</p> <p>We make these points because they indicate the difficulty of managing shrub-steppe habitat for these three species. They also indicate that a mixed strategies approach will be necessary if these species are to continue in Washington.</p> <p>The draft plan identifies shrub-steppe as a "priority habitat" and does a good job of highlighting fire resiliency and habitat connectivity as important parts of conservation strategy going forward. We agree that a successful strategy must address the fire resiliency and habitat connectivity issues noted in the draft plan. However, without also analyzing the various habitat quality issues and determining specifically where they occur in the CBWA, managing the area to meet obligate species-specific needs will likely be difficult at best.</p>	<p>The shrubsteppe in the wildlife area consists of fragmented parcels (and therefore a lot of edges), and an altered hydrology due to the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which provides opportunities for encroachment of noxious weeds. Acquiring restoration funding for this type of habitat is challenging, but we will continue our efforts. Areas with large expanses of intact shrubsteppe habitat and listed species are more competitive with funding.</p>

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	<p>We suggest adding language expressing the intent to piece habitat back together where possible by seeking land swaps, purchases, and easements. We also suggest the final plan include the stated intent to budget for and pursue the level of funding necessary to implement the strategy we're suggesting for shrub-steppe habitat in the CBWA. To be successful for shrub-steppe obligate species, the draft plan should include a more detailed and multifaceted strategy that provides a much stronger and clearer statement of intended actions to protect, enhance, and restore this habitat.</p> <p>Thank you in advance for your consideration of our comments. Sincerely, Arthur Campbell, President</p>	<p>We will add text in the management plan about WDFW's interest in acquiring lands to connect landscape when possible.</p>
<p>11/13/21 Alex Bond</p>	<p>Hello, my name is Alex Bond and I routinely recreate in the Quincy Lakes unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area as a rock climber, runner, and cyclist.</p> <p>I support the goal of a campground in the Frenchman Coulee area to reduce the impacts of unregulated camping, but I would encourage it to be as primitive and low-cost as possible. If there is a high cost to camp, folks who are accustomed to camping for free may continue to do so outside of the camping area, leading to environmental impact and more division and conflict between land managers and recreational users.</p> <p>I would also like to emphasize how important rock climbing in Frenchman Coulee is to the Washington climbing community. It is one of our only climbing areas reliably climbable in the fall/winter/early spring. Other activities like hiking, biking, camping can be done in a whole lot of places, rock climbing has a lot fewer venues and the Coulee is a very important one.</p> <p>The area has many easy climbing routes and is one of the most popular for instructing beginner climbers - as more folks come into the sport of climbing, access to the climbing in the Coulee is an essential part of making sure that folks are learning to be safe climbers.</p> <p>I believe that Washington climbers have proven that we can be good stewards and that we can work and collaborate well with land managers. As someone who does a lot more than just climbing myself, I hope that rock climbing can be centered as one of the most important recreational activities at Quincy Lakes/Frenchman Coulee.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment! Alex Bond</p>	<p>Anyone with a Discover Pass has access to WDFW lands. While climbing is a popular activity at Frenchmen Coulee, other users have access as well, and we have no plans to change current climbing access there.</p> <p>The goal for camping in the Frenchmen Coulee area is to improve, contain, and eventually expand camping opportunities, and to reduce the impact on the environment. It will be managed the same as other WDFW camping areas and will be primitive, not reservable, and only a Discover Pass will be needed to camp.</p>
<p>11/15/21 Kathy Young</p>	<p>Back Country Horsemen of Washington (BCHW) would like to acknowledge work that has been done on the management plan draft for the Columbia Basin Wildlife Management Area. Many of our BCHW members hunt, fish and recreate in the various units that comprise this landscape. We appreciate the thought and care that WDFW has put into this comprehensive plan, including the work of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Advisory Committee, tribes and recreationalists.</p>	<p>Thank you! We appreciate the involvement of the Back Country Horsemen of Washington in the wildlife area and on the Quincy Lakes trail planning group.</p>

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	<p>The Quincy Lakes Unit in the Columbia Basin Management Area is highly valued by horseback riders for its recreational opportunity, and for its landscape. BCHW was invited as an interested stakeholder to participate in a group to consider the need for a designated trails system for the Quincy Lakes unit. BCHW appreciates the opportunity to represent equestrian users as the plan for a sustainable trails system in the Quincy Lakes is developed. We look forward to continuing our participation in this work.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan for the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area.</p> <p>Kathy Young , Public Lands Chairman, Back Country Horsemen of Washington</p>	
<p>11/12/21 Zach Heflin</p>	<p>I would love more hunting and fishing opportunities in Washington state and I'm also curious about the Columbia basin 191,xxx acres. I have been purchasing out of state points to have a chance of getting a quality size deer because I don't feel like it's that great of a chance for me in my home state of WA.</p> <p>I would also love to have more bass fishing improvements in western washington. I love doing catch and release bass fishing with my wife.</p>	<p>Hunting and fishing regulations are outside of the scope of this plan. The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area has many hunting and fishing opportunities as listed in the management plan and on the website. Please contact TeamEphrata@dfw.wa.gov if you would like more local information, as well as https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting and https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/locations.</p>
<p>11/16/21 Dept. of Ecology</p>	<p>November 16, 2021 Lisa Wood, SEPA Responsible Official/HPA Appeals Coordinator Habitat Program, Protection Division Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504</p> <p>Re: Draft Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan, File: 21-052 Dear Lisa Wood: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Determination of Nonsignificance regarding the new ten year management plan for the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, located in Grant and Adams Counties (Proponent: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). After reviewing the documents, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) submits the following comments:</p> <p><u>Water Quality Program-Amanda Richardson (509) 329-3585</u> Water quality in Moses Lake has been a long-standing concern. In the last several years, prolonged Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) have impaired the public's use of the lake. Ecology studies have identified groundwater inflow as the major component of the annual phosphorus loading to Moses Lake (Pitz, 2003 and Carroll, 2006). A current study by Ecology and USGS is testing the hypothesis that the source of phosphorus in discharge from Rocky Ford Spring is</p>	<p>Please contact us when you have the results of the study. While water flows through the wildlife area units, WDFW management activities are not sources of phosphorus.</p>

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	<p>seepage of streamflow from distant reaches of Upper Crab Creek. There is existing evidence of surface-groundwater interactions in Crab Creek; when the USBR releases water in Crab Creek, there is flooding along Rocky Ford Creek. Given this, land uses in the Crab Creek Watershed are of importance to the management of Moses Lake. Many of the sources of phosphorus contributing to HABs in Moses Lake originate in the watershed and are transported via shallow groundwater. We recommend that the Draft Management Plan acknowledge this connection for the management unit's Upgradient of the lake where management activities have the potential to impact surface and groundwater - Gloyd Seeps, Rocky Ford Creek, and Billy Clap Lake.</p> <p>Wetlands in the watershed provide critical phosphorus uptake and have been identified as a potential phosphorus-removal mechanism. Wetland vegetation must be managed in a way to remove the phosphorus from the system, rather than contribute to nutrient cycling. Wetland enhancement and restoration are important practices that assist with improving water quality in Moses Lake.</p> <p>Cattle grazing in the Crab Creek watershed can have significant impacts to surface waters and rangelands if not actively managed. We recommend managing grazing leases to reduce the impact to surface waters as well as riparian and wetland vegetation. WDFW should consider how grazing tracts are managed to prevent degradation to surface waters and riparian and wetland habitats, provide language in leases that is protective of these resources and infrastructure to minimize cattle access to surface water</p> <p>For more information, please contact Amanda Richardson at (509) 329-3585 or via email at Amanda.Richardson@ecy.wa.gov.</p> <p>State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Ecology bases comments upon information submitted for review. As such, comments made do not constitute an exhaustive list of the various authorizations you may need to obtain, nor legal requirements you may need to fulfill in order to carry out the proposed action. Applicants should remain in touch with their Local Responsible Officials or Planners for additional guidance.</p> <p>To receive more guidance on or to respond to the comments made by Ecology, please contact the appropriate staff listed above at the phone number or email provided. Department of Ecology, Eastern Regional Office (Ecology File: 202105611) Cc: Patricia Jatczak, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife</p>	<p>WDFW manages wetlands for wildlife habitat. If Ecology has information about how wetland vegetation management can help remove phosphorus, please provide that information for our consideration</p> <p>WDFW does not have any grazing leases in the Crab Creek watershed. Grazing is allowed under certain conditions on the wildlife area, subject to specific grazing management plans, and in accordance with WAC 220-500-200 and the Fish and Wildlife Commission Policy C-6003, Domestic Livestock Grazing on Department Lands.</p>
11/16/21 Jenna Gilman	<p>I would like to offer a few comments on the Draft Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan. First, as a long-time recreationalist on virtually every individual unit of the Wildlife Area, I would like to see a little more prominence paid to non-consumptive/low impact uses of the Wildlife Area. Hiking should be mentioned in the Executive Summary along with the other uses</p>	<p>The plan has been updated to include more references to hiking and other non-consumptive activities.</p>

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	<p>mentioned. While hiking is mentioned in other areas of the plan, its omission from the Executive Summary is an oversight needing correction.</p> <p>I have been hiking (and climbing) in the Columbia Basin since the early-60s, first with my father. Growing up in Moses Lake, my family took advantage of the proximity of public lands for hiking and, later, in the early 70s my younger brother and I began climbing as well. While I have not lived in Moses Lake since the mid-70's I return to Grant County approximately 10 days a year for hiking and, sometimes, biking. (I'm too old for climbing now.) I have no objections to hunting (or fishing) but want to make sure non-hunting interests are well-represented. There are actually very few conflicts (if any) between hunting interests and hiking interests so I don't see a problem with providing more emphasis to the hiking values in the various units of the Wildlife Area.</p> <p>For the rest of my comments I will key them to Table 4: Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures.</p> <p>Item 4C. Improve target shooting opportunities - I would like to see this activity de-emphasized. I am not sure why it should be a major goal of a Wildlife Area Plan. Target shooting is NOT hunting. Further, the impacts of target shooting in terms of noise far exceeds the impact of the noise of hunting. The occasional reports from a group of hunters has far less noise impact than does the sometimes continual reports from a shooting range. If a shooting range were to be provided it needs to be far from hiking, bird watching, climbing and other activities that depend on a certain degree of SERENITY for enjoyment. I would suggest somewhere in the Desert Unit on either side of Dodson Road South. Certainly not on Lower Crab Creek, Lake Lenore or below Potholes Dam.</p> <p>Item 4E. Develop a Campground at Frenchman's Coulee. This is one area where I feel the Department has underperformed in years past. The climbers and Gorge concert-goers who have trashed the ad hoc camping area in Frenchman's Coulee should have been stopped years ago. I have a better idea anyway. There is private undeveloped land west of the freeway interchange accessing the Coulee. Private enterprise should be encouraged to provide camping facilities and camping within the Coulee should be banned. This is the only way to adequately protect the remaining habitat of Frenchman's Coulee. The Coulee provides one of the most spectacular drives within Department lands outside of Grand Coulee. It and the wildlife it supports should be better protected.</p> <p>Item 6I. Develop and implement a Travel Management Plan. The Department should remain vigilant in keeping ORVs and dirt bikes out of wildlife areas. While the situation is better than it has been in years past, there are continual instances of illegal</p>	<p>WDFW has an interest in providing target shooting in support of hunters and target shooters in locations where it is safe and appropriate, with minimum impact on the wildlife area and other users. Target shooting ranges are developed with these goals in mind.</p> <p>The goal for camping in the Frenchmen Coulee area is to improve, contain, and eventually expand camping opportunities, and to reduce the impact on the environment. It will be managed the same as other WDFW camping areas and will be primitive, not reservable, and only a Discover Pass will be needed to camp.</p> <p>A completed travel management plan for the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area will help address these issues; however, enforcement continues to be a challenge.</p>

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	<p>entry; as an example, the sand dunes just upland of the boat ramp at the bottom of Frenchman’s Coulee still seem to attract motorized traffic.</p> <p>Finally, I would like to see the Department attempt to fill in some of the gaps in habitat connectivity before spreading residential development precludes protecting this connectivity. For instance, there is a gap in WDFW/Federal land south of Sunland Estates that is already experiencing house building. There is still a chance for the Department to acquire the Babcock Bench-level lands west of this development so that habitat connectivity could be maintained. I would encourage the Department to seek funding for this acquisition and work with the landowners to mitigate any developing plans for subdividing these tracts.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my comments.</p> <p>Jena Gilman</p>	<p>We will add a comment in the management plan of WDFW’s interest in acquiring lands to connect landscape when possible.</p>
<p>11/17/21 Keith Watson</p>	<p>SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov 11/17/2021 DRAFT REVIEW COMMENTS: Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan Keith Watson from Conservation Northwest Sagelands Heritage Program</p> <p>Page13: Delivering water to wetlands: The importance and value of the projects mentioned should emphasize that the associated benefits will add significant resiliency under uncertain future conditions. Metrics such as the number of wetland acres improved is not specified. Additional information about the frequency that ditches become compromised would add context to the large cost of this project.</p> <p>Page 46: Agricultural and Grazing Leases: No mention of fencing at all, especially if it consists of traditional barbed wire or improved to wildlife friendly standards. Efforts could be made to identify if the fencing associated with grazing is problematic for wildlife movement. There is no mention of WDFW time and capital required to maintain the leases; is the revenue generated from leases net positive for the agency? There is no example given of “encroachment” leases. It is unclear about the extents, benefits, and future possibilities of this tool to require wildlife enhancements. There are no plans to encourage or require ecologically superior management practices such as targeted grazing.</p> <p>Page 80: Habitat connectivity section mentions no existence of problematic fencing, no indication of the necessity to retrofit existing fencing into wildlife friendly, no plan to require wildlife friendly fencing for any future infrastructure.</p> <p>Page 81: Diversity of species sections should mention historically present species that are missing such as: sharp-tailed, sage grouse, or pygmy rabbits; and any potential habitat that may be suitable for these species to return or be reintroduced.</p>	<p>Text has been added to the plan on the benefits of wetland management to resiliency.</p> <p>Current fencing constructed on the wildlife area is built to wildlife-friendly standards. Derelict fence removal is an on-going management activity.</p> <p>WDFW grazing policy is geared toward benefits to wildlife and the community. Grazing is allowed under certain conditions on the wildlife area, subject to specific grazing management plans, and in accordance with WAC 220-500-200 and the Fish and Wildlife Commission Policy C-6003, Domestic Livestock Grazing on Department Lands.</p> <p>These species have been noted in the species table. Decisions about reintroduction of species is outside of the scope of the management plan.</p>

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	<p>Page 95: Post-fire shrubsteppe rehabilitation: states that there is a barren landscape after 2018 fire, that there was/is money available, yet the entire section only mentions herbicide as the action taken. Extensively describes herbicide effectiveness study, but no plan to plant any native species. No indication of a history of successful replanting, no specifics of any plan to replant current burned areas, and no accounting for the necessity of local seed collection to create nursery stock to ramp up planting efforts under projected future conditions. This section could benefit by spelling out future goals of large-scale sage and bitterbrush restoration nursery programs.</p> <p>Page 96: Invasive species section indicates no potential use of targeted grazing or other management actions other than herbicide.</p> <p>Page 98: Projected Climate change impacts: "Shrubs will largely be replaced by woodland vegetation" this seems to not apply to these units at all. I believe it should say: "Shrubs will likely be replaced with grasses and invasive species." This section clearly identifies known vulnerabilities under future conditions but proposes no plan to mitigate or account for these changes with management actions.</p>	<p>Any ground disturbing activities require cultural resource consultation which generally takes several months to complete and is very expensive. The timeline for getting the cultural resources survey completed, timing window successful planting, and funding availability were all considerations in our decision. Therefore, weed treatment was the best option we had at the time. As a long-term goal, outside of this management plan, WDFW is exploring options to remedy this situation.</p> <p>Any new grazing leases need action from the WDFW Fish and Wildlife Commission. Currently, targeted grazing is not a reasonable option.</p>
<p>11/15/21 Joan Fleming</p>	<p>I am a horseback rider and member of Backcountry Horsemen of Washington. I have recreated on these lands with my horse and friends on horseback numerous times over the years - most recently in the spring of 2021. I have reviewed this plan and have these comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horseback riding is mentioned generally in the plan but is missing in key areas as mentioned below: - Page 29 - Quincy Lakes Unit - Horseback riding is mentioned as a Recreation highlight, but not included in the written description. - Page 51 - Sentence before Quincy Lakes Trail Planning heading - does not include horseback riding - Table 3 - Recreation activities - horseback riding is not mentioned. - Table 4 - Item 4D - Develop Trails - please include horseback riders in developing trail plans - Camping - horseback riders frequently camp on these lands but there is nowhere a designation of where they are allowed to camp. If any spot is designated as camping, it needs to be clear that this applies to all recreation activities. <p>In general, please keep in mind that horseback riders enjoy and appreciate the use of these lands and would want to ensure that they continue to be available to horseback riding. Thank you. Joan Fleming, Rochester, WA</p>	<p>The plan has been updated to include horseback riding where appropriate.</p>
<p>11/17/21 Johnny Buck</p>	<p>Hi SEPA desk 2-No.21052 , The Wanapum have been deeply connected to the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area for numerous generations through camping, the gathering of traditional foods and medicines, and ceremony. They wish to pass these practices, traditions, and ceremonies on to younger generations. They</p>	<p>As noted in the management plan, WDFW is undergoing a travel management planning process at this time. We invite you to participate in this process with us. Staff will be</p>

Date Name	Public Comment	WDFW Response
	<p>will need access to this area to ensure these connections are perpetuated. The Wanapum have been stewards of these lands for many years and access to the roads of this area; will help strengthen Wanapum Heritage and achieve the goals, objectives, and performance measures in the management planning.</p> <p>What will the Wanapum need to have access to the roads of this area?</p> <p>Warmly, Johnny Buck</p>	<p>in contact with you to discuss your comments directly.</p>

Appendix to the Comment and Response

On 11/4/21, John E. Lagerquist (see above) provided comment to WDFW that also included three letters. WDFW's response includes consideration of these letters. The three letters are copied below:

LETTER #1: John E. Lagerquist, 11/4/21

December 16, 2011

WDFW:

I have a concern about the rate of plant succession in the Columbia Basin that is choking off ponds and waterways, resulting in them being unusable for waterfowl and waterfowl hunters. It is a concern I assume that the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife is aware of and I hope is in the planning stage of taking action upon in the very near future.

I am 53 years old and I have been hunting in the Columbia Basin since I was 10 years old, from Vantage to Othello and from Ephrata to the Saddle Mountains. A majority of my hunting experiences have taken place in and around the Winchester and Frenchman Hills wasteways, including hunting in what presently are the Winchester and Frenchmans waterfowl reserves.

The biological control applied several years ago to control the spread of purple loosestrife in that region has worked amazingly well and has been very successful! I was very pleased to see the quick results after application of the insects.

The current problem is the natural succession of cattails and bulrushes in the wasteways and surrounding ponds, and the rapid spread of pampas grass (I may be incorrect in identifying the tall grass that is particularly prevalent in the Winchester wasteway). The wetlands in the surrounding areas where the Winchester wasteway crosses under Dodson Road, both east and west of the road, are becoming entirely choked off by the ever expanding rate of

succession, rendering the once productive nesting and hunting ponds unusable since the surface water is at the very least diminished and in most instances disappeared entirely.

My two teenage sons, who are following in their Grandfather's and my hunting footsteps in the Columbia Basin, have seen a rapid change in hunting sites in this region in their relatively short lives. Ponds on which we have enjoyed great hunts as recent as two years ago are now unhuntable due to the encroaching plant life. The same situation is occurring on the Winchester wasteway and associated ponds in the Desert Wildlife Habitat Area, primarily accessed from gravel road C SE.

Something needs to be done to remove the cattails, bulrushes and Phragmites grass to open the ponds and wasteway(s) in the Columbia Basin. With private gun clubs and guides increasingly locking up more and more land each year, the free lance hunters, myself included, have less and less land to hunt, and that which is open to the public, becomes increasing crowded and less desirable to hunt. Left with few places to hunt and overcrowding in those places, my sons and I will be less enthused about hunting and may join the ranks of the "I used to hunt" club. I don't want that to happen.

Back in the mid 1980s I did volunteer work with then WDFW biologist Jim Tabor when he was overseeing the excavation of ponds along the Winchester and Frenchman Hills wasteways. The result of this work for many years was a lot of open ponds that were carp free and very attractive to waterfowl. This work increased the hunting (and waterfowl nesting) opportunities in that area for many years and I personally had many productive hunts directly resulting from this work.

Prior to the Winchester and Frenchman Hills waterfowl reserves being set aside, I hunted extensively in both areas. It saddens me every time I drive the Frenchman Hills road, view the Frenchman Lake reserve, and see that the former lake which I hunted is almost entirely covered in cattails and bulrushes with only a tiny bit of open water still visible. This is another area of the Columbia Basin that needs attention to make it more attractive to migrating and nesting waterfowl.

I am aware that in this day of spending cuts and reduced budgets it is difficult to get done all the work and projects that present themselves. The region and issue I shared above are in need of immediate attention and should be, and hopefully are, at the top of the WDFW "To Do" list.

I look forward to your reply regarding the issue of plant succession in the Columbia Basin and the steps you are planning to address this issue.

Sincerely,

John E. Lagerquist
1135 NW Eden Drive
Pullman, WA 99163
(509) 432-9078

LETTER #2: John E. Lagerquist, 11/4/21

Phragmites (Common reed) in the Columbia Basin

October 24, 2018

I talked with Chad Eidson at the WDFW Moses Lake office (509-765-6641) about the Phragmites situation.

6785 Rd K NE A, Moses Lake, WA 98837

Phone: (509) 765-6641

- DNR owns the land West of Dodson Road. The DNR allows cattle grazing in that area to hopefully have impact on the Phragmites
- DNR does not do any herbicide treatment to the Phragmites
- BOR owns the land East of Dodson Road and many other areas in the CB that WDFW manages
- WDFW does Fall aerial (helicopter) herbicide spraying east of Dodson Road. This project somewhat keeps the Phragmites from advancing but doesn't eliminate it by any means
- Tillage and mowing options are not effective due to the Phragmites tubers that grow underground
- WDFW treats 700 to 1000 acres each year on a rotating basis. The cost is about \$20,000 per year
- WDFW has looked into biological control and hopes for advances in chemical treatment of Phragmites
- Burning of Phragmites East of Dodson Road in the Spring has been somewhat effective, but that has been shut down until the WDFW complies with proper controlled burn regulations
- WDFW plans to re-excavate the ponds north of the Winchester Reserve in the next year or so, the work done by Jim Tabor in the 1980's
- WDFW is currently excavating in the Winchester Reserve to once again open the flow of water from the wasteway through this reserve. The flow channel changed and there has been only a "trickle" of water through there for a couple or more years.

WDFW contacts

Chad Eidson – Moses Lake office 509-765-6641

Eric Pentico – Ephrata office 509-754-4626 (ext. 215)

Sean Dougherty – Ephrata office 509-754-4624 (ext. 252)

LETTER #3: John E. Lagerquist, 11/4/21

November 20, 2019

Greetings WDFW,

I have lived in the state of Washington all of my 61 years of life. I have participated in various outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, clamming, crabbing, camping, backpacking and more. I have a degree in Wildlife Biology. My primary interest amongst outdoor activities and what gets most of my time and attention is waterfowl hunting in eastern Washington.

The purpose of this letter is to stir interest and action within the WDFW regarding the Phragmites (common reed) problem in the Columbia Basin. The Phragmites infestation is a huge problem that needs immediate attention and action now. During the past several years, I have talked to various personnel within the WDFW, primarily in the Ephrata office, about eradicating Phragmites. Current efforts, if any, are producing little or no change in the abundance of Phragmites, and this invasive species continues to spread, choking off waters in the Columbia Basin.

I have hunted waterfowl in the Columbia Basin for 50 years and have seen a great many changes including the migration routes of waterfowl and waterfowl distribution, decreasing numbers of waterfowl present, changes in the flow of the Winchester and Frenchman wasteways, the creation of dikes to isolate ponds from the wasteways, and ponds and lakes drying up and disappearing. In the mid-1980s, I assisted then WDFW biologist Jim Tabor with the dike projects along the Winchester wasteway.

The lakes and ponds along the two wasteways have a very small amount of open water compared to what was present 10+ years ago, primarily due to the rapid spread of Phragmites. Most of those waters are not conducive for waterfowl hunting due to the vast amount of Phragmites. Where Phragmites is present, there is often 20 feet or more of vegetation one must vigorously and with great effort push through to get to open water. Jump shooting along vast stretches of both wasteways has been eliminated due to the dense and tall stands of Phragmites.

This results in concentrating hunters in increasingly fewer and smaller areas to hunt. Although this is a problem throughout the entire central Columbia Basin, the issue is at its worst along the Winchester wasteway east of Dodson Road and on the DNR land west of Dodson Road.

The WDFW gives a great deal of attention and funding to the wolf situation, salmon and orcas. I realize these issues are highly political and therefore get much more funding than is sensible. Unfortunately, other issues of importance take a back seat or are left out completely. The eradication of Phragmites in the Columbia Basin is one example.

I personally hope to have the incentive to continue to hunt in the Columbia Basin with my two sons for many years, and for them to continue to hunt there with each other and their own children some day. But every hunting season I find less enthusiasm to pack decoys into Phragmites-infested ponds or try to navigate a small boat to a puddle of open water.

I recently read that the WDFW will begin a 25-year strategic plan and has created a new position to oversee this plan, a Director of Conservation Policy. That's all fine and good, but the Phragmites problem in the Columbia Basin needs immediate attention and funding for the WDFW to take action now. A high priority short-term plan must include taking measures to eradicate Phragmites, to continue to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities in the Columbia Basin.

Please make the eradication of Phragmites a present issue to take immediate action upon, not something that is put off for another five, 15 or 25 years. Several years ago, Purple Loosestrife began to invade the waterways of the Columbia Basin. The biological control of that invasive species was a huge success. I am discouraged by this infestation of Phragmites and the decreased waterfowl habitat, but I am hopeful that the WDFW will take immediate and aggressive action to eradicate Phragmites in the Columbia Basin. Waterfowl and waterfowl hunters are counting on you.

Very concerned waterfowl hunter and outdoorsman,

John Lagerquist
9523 W Ballesteros Ct.
Cheney, WA 99004
509-432-9078