

Updates to W.T. Wooten sections of management plan

UPDATES / CHANGES

Tucannon Lakes: The 8 lakes on the WT Wooten WLA are in need of serious repair. The dams have needed repair for a number of years, but no funding has been provided to complete the work. A subcommittee of the District Team put together the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*. The subcommittee also submitted a package of projects to the Capital Request process for funding to begin repairing the issues with the lakes.

Tucannon Power Line: Another project submitted as part of the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan* is to bury the power line from the Wooten Headquarters to Camp Wooten. The purpose of burying the power line is to reduce the chances of another fire on the Wildlife Area and to allow the riparian vegetation to grow along the river where the power line clearing currently is.

Tucannon River Large Wood Project: The Habitat Program completed placing 200 full-size trees with root balls into the Tucannon River around the mouth of Waterman Canyon in summer 2012. A sky-crane was used to place the trees into the Tucannon River. The project was done to improve fish habitat and reconnect the existing floodplain. The Habitat Program has received funding for summer 2013 to place engineered log jams in the Tucannon River from the Hatchery Bridge to Spring Lake. The Umatilla and Nez Perce Tribes are working together and have gotten funding for summer 2013 to use a helicopter to place LWD in the Tucannon River from the mouth of the Little Tucannon River to Camp Wooten.

Riparian Habitat: A section on riparian habitat and its importance has been written up to add to the Management Plan. It is attached to the end of this document.

NEW ISSUES

Campground Relocation: There are still 2 campgrounds that are located in the floodplain next to the Tucannon River. Plans are being made to move the last 2 campgrounds away from the river and reconnect the river with the floodplain. Campground 6 is being proposed to be moved across the road and up on the hill from where it currently is located. The old Campground 6 will be removed and rehabilitated into native vegetation and riparian area. Campground 9 is being proposed to be moved and create 2 new campgrounds. One will be in the old log landing north of the mouth of the Little Tucannon, near where WDFW previously had a campground. The second campground will be located just south of the current Campground 9. The old Campground 9 will be removed and rehabilitated into native vegetation. The end result will be 11 campgrounds on the wildlife area.

W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan: A subcommittee of the District Team put together the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan* and the Plan is now being circulated to stakeholders to educate them on our efforts and receive feedback from them.

W.T. Wooten Fire Management Plan: A draft fire management plan has been written up for the Wooten Wildlife Area. The purpose of the fire management plan is to identify fire management priorities and strategies for the Wooten Wildlife Area.

Washington State Forest Management Plan: A draft forest management plan is in the process of being written for the state of Washington. The statewide plan will be used to prioritize wildlife areas and projects for state funding. Future wildlife area management plans will include a section on forest management specific for the wildlife area. The purpose of the forest management plan is to actively manage the forests on state lands to prevent future catastrophic wildfires, such as the 2005 School Fire.

MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Food Plots: The food plot that was created in 2011 was replanted in 2012 using seed donated by the Walla Walla Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Several white-tailed deer were seen using the food plot throughout the year, and pheasants could be found in the food plot in the fall.

STATUS REPORT OF 2012 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2012 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/ 2013 Related Activities/ Comments
Irrigate pastures	Headquarters and Hartsock fields irrigated throughout the summer.	Continue in 2013
Establish and maintain food plots (15 acres)	Hunters Dream and Wildlife Mix seed mixes were planted in the Hartsock fields. Turnips were planted over the existing Hunters Dream seed mix at the Headquarters.	Continue irrigating food plots in 2013. Look at making food plot at Headquarters smaller. Determine if food plots need replanted in 2013.
Maintain 8 lakes	Water level and inlet/outlet structures were maintained weekly. The <i>W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan</i> was written in 2012 to provide direction for restructuring the lakes and reconnecting the floodplain.	Continue maintenance in 2013. Continue subcommittee work.
Maintain Spring Lake dike, repair damage caused by vegetation	DOE conducted a dike inspection in fall 2011, but results have not yet been received.	Look over DOE dike inspection results in 2013 and make necessary repairs.
Maintain four mineral sites	Sites were replenished with new mineral blocks in 2012.	Continue maintenance in 2013
Maintain information kiosks	WLA information was posted throughout the year.	Continue posting WLA activity information
Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence	Boundary fences were checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2012.	WLA staff will continue regular maintenance

Maintain western half of elk fence (10 miles)	Elk fence was checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2012	Maintenance will continue in 2013
Maintain or improve 2 seeps on Abels Ridge	The spring at the head of McGowan Canyon was tapped and a new trough installed in August 2011.	Maintain McGowan spring in 2013. Work on improving another seep in 2013.
Reestablish food plot on Abels Ridge	Hunters Dream seed mix was planted in the food plots on Abels Ridge in October 2008, but the planting failed. The food plots were replanted in October 2009 with a red clover mix.	Food plots will be monitored in 2013 and replanted if necessary
Modify Wooten campgrounds	Fire rings were leveled and set in concrete and designated campsites were created in 2011. Campgrounds were renamed with numbers (ex Campground 1).	Campground maintenance will continue in 2013
Monitor existing CREP project	Monitor riparian planting success and maintain existing CREP project.	Continue monitoring in 2013.
Annually spot treat 50 acres of weeds along roadsides and access sites	WLA staff sprayed weeds along Tucannon Road, Hartsock Grade, Blind Grade, and Cummings Creek road. Also treated Hartsock fields, Blind Grade fields, Blue Lake field, and campgrounds. Grant funds were used to aerially treat 1,000 acres of yellow starthistle on the Russell Unit and in Cummings Creek.	Continue weed treatments in 2013
Seek funding to bury the Columbia REA power line	Burying the power line will reduce the chances of another fire on the Wildlife Area. An RCO grant request form was submitted in January 2012.	Continue looking for matching funds to bury power line. Power line burial was included in the <i>W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan</i> .
Maintain 12 guzzlers and 6 troughs	Several of the guzzlers were damaged during the School fire and others have been damaged from high winds.	This task will be pursued in 2013. Need to find location information and determine if some guzzlers should be replaced or removed.
Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photopoints	Photopoints were established following the 2005 School Fire to monitor vegetation regeneration. WDFW has started visiting the photopoints every other year. Photopoints were visited in 2012.	Visit sites in May 2014
Maintain/install 25 bluebird boxes and	Two wood duck boxes were built and installed near Deer Lake in 2009. One old	Continue this task in 2013

10 wood duck boxes	wood duck box was refurbished.	

NEW STRATEGIES

Objective: Improve and Maintain Fish Populations

1. Work cooperatively with other watershed managers to identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area.
2. Improve one passage barrier annually as funds allow.
3. Identify and enhance one riparian area annually as funds allow.
4. Look for options to add large woody debris to streams, and do so as time and funds allow.
5. Identify ways to decrease or minimize soil erosion and/or soil delivery to streams. Close roads, reseed roads, or rock roads as necessary to achieve goal.
6. Continue work with the subcommittee to conduct public meetings and get input and comments on the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*.

Objective: Provide sound operational management of WDFW lands

1. Pursue funding and support to bury the power line that runs from the Tucannon Hatchery up to Camp Wooten.
2. Look at options to utilize wildlife friendly fence when replacing existing boundary fences. Remove old and/or unnecessary barbed wire fences.
3. Implement a permanent annual sensitive period closure in Cummings Creek to reduce stress on wildlife during critical time periods.

Objective: Protect, enhance and restore function and structure of native habitats

1. Biennially revisit 33 photo-monitoring sites to assess post-fire and post-logging habitat recovery.
2. Identify and restore upland habitats that are in poor condition due to past land practices. Rehabilitate one area annually as funds allow.

2013 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 1) Irrigate Headquarters and Hartsock pastures in summer months
- 2) Maintain 8 lakes by monitoring inlet/outlet structures twice weekly and regulating water levels.
- 3) Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence
- 4) Maintain 10 miles of elk fence. Look at ways to provide a fire barrier along fence.
- 5) Maintain or improve 2 seeps on Abels Ridge
- 6) Stock mineral blocks at four sites on Abels Ridge
- 7) Maintain 12 guzzlers and 6 troughs
- 8) Maintain/install 25 bluebird boxes and 10 wood duck boxes
- 9) Annually spot treat 50 acres of weeds along roadsides and access sites
- 10) Seek funding and support to bury the power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten
- 11) Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area. Address at least 1 barrier annually as funds allow.
- 12) Identify and prioritize riparian areas on the wildlife area that can be enhanced. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 13) Identify and restore upland habitats that are in poor condition due to past land practices. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 14) Continue working with subcommittee to conduct public meetings and get input and comments on the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*.

CAG INPUT

- Why are the mountain lion seasons shorter when we are seeing more lions than we ever have? (Marty Hall)
- Will the FMP be updated periodically? There needs to be a section included regarding upland management (revegetation, road decommission, etc). (Steve Martin)
- What is going to happen to Camp Wooten? The public wants to be informed of any changes beforehand and allowed to provide input. (Janet Howard)
- What if the springs aren't enough water to keep the lakes full all summer? Will there be other options for getting water into the lakes?
- Will there be a future salmon season on the Tucannon River?
- What is in the FMP regarding guiding the river under existing bridges to ensure they don't wash out in high water? (Marty Hall)
- Why does WDFW do elk counts in the spring when the elk are dropping their antlers? Why aren't the counts done in January? Public perception is that the biologists are looking for sheds. (Marty Hall)

- Why do we still have the Cummings Creek closure? The elk aren't disturbed by human presence when they are in wheat fields, why would they be disturbed by someone walking up the road? (Marty Hall)
- Why are we worried about the lakes now? They haven't washed out in any of the past floods, why would they wash out now? (Wilbur Eaton)
- What is the plan for the lakes if the funding does not go through in the legislature?

Riparian Habitat

Riparian areas are defined by WDFW as *the area adjacent to aquatic systems with flowing water (e.g., rivers, perennial or intermittent streams, seeps, springs) that contain elements of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems which mutually influence each other.* They include the entire extent of the floodplain and the entire extent of vegetation adapted to wet conditions.

Riparian areas are described in WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) as a priority area. A special report was compiled by WDFW regarding Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats: Riparian (Knutson and Naef 1997), which states the following:

- 1) Riparian areas cover a relatively small area yet they support a higher diversity and abundance of fish and wildlife than any other habitat,
- 2) Riparian areas provide important fish and wildlife breeding habitat, seasonal ranges, and migration corridors,
- 3) Riparian areas are highly vulnerable to alteration, and have important social values, including water purification, flood control, recreation, and aesthetics.

Wildlife occurs more often and in greater variety in riparian habitats than in any other habitat type. Approximately 85% of Washington's wildlife species have been known to use riparian habitat. Riparian areas provide these critical functions:

- 1) Shading and cooling water in summer and warming water in winter
- 2) Filtering sediments and purifying water
- 3) Storage and conservation of water (e.g. raising or maintaining a high water table)
- 4) Stabilization of stream channels (e.g. vegetation roots hold banks together and allow uncut banks to develop and maintain narrow width to depth ratios for stream channels)
- 5) Nutrient (vegetative, animal) inputs to the aquatic system
- 6) Downed woody debris which creates pools that offer deep, low velocity, protected waters with hiding cover, over-wintering habitat, and juvenile rearing
- 7) Provides travel and migration corridors
- 8) Moderates stream volumes by reducing peak flows during flooding and by storing and slowly releasing water into streams during low flows

Riparian habitats are highly sensitive to environmental change, but also respond well to restoration efforts after damage has occurred. There are 7 major land use categories that affect riparian habitats: forest practices, roads, agriculture, grazing, urbanization, dams, and recreation and Knutson and Naef (1997) provide riparian management recommendations for these major land use activities. Their recommendations are made to protect *riparian habitat areas*, which are "areas that exhibit the full range of habitat functions necessary to support riparian-associated fish and wildlife." The Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Management Plan will consider and/or implement these recommendations to protect and enhance riparian habitat areas on the wildlife areas.