

Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas

2019-2020 Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [2019 Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts and public recreation opportunities at the Asotin Creek, Chief Joseph, and the W.T. Wooten wildlife areas. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising the management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

Management Highlights

Winter Lands Access Closure: Spring 2019: During the extreme winter of 2018-2019, the wildlife areas were closed during the spring of 2019 to all human entry, with a few exceptions such as fishing and river access sites. Big game were in extremely poor shape and with an increasing number of “antler hunters” every spring on the landscape it would be appropriate to

not allow human entry on the wildlife areas, adding additional pressures to a struggling deer and elk population.



Weatherly Unit Forest Thinning: During 2020 a forest thinning project was undertaken to remove diseased trees, fuel loads and improve forest health and wildlife habitat.



Logging at Weatherly before and after.

Cougar Creek Road Seasonal Closure: In 2019 WDFW worked with Asotin County Road Department and neighboring landowners to seasonally close Cougar Creek Road from Dec. 1st-March 31st of each year to protect wintering wildlife from motorized vehicles. This closure is already in place on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Private landowners still have access, and the area is still open to the public for non-motorized use.

Cassidy Land Donation Grand Ronde River Access: In 2020 local resident Mr. Cassidy donated land along the Grande Ronde River to WDFW that would be managed for river access and a popular steelhead fishery. A plaque was placed on a bluff overlooking a popular fishing hole.



WDFW employees after placing the plaque.

New Issues:

February 2020 Tucannon River Flood Event

On February 6, 2020, the Tucannon watershed experienced a rain-on-snow event which caused the Tucannon River to reach flood-stage. The event caused mudslides to cover the Tucannon Road and buried Campground 9 on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area. The high river levels washed out the Watson Lake footbridge and several parts of the Tucannon Road, including a section on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area. The Watson Lake footbridge was replaced in November 2021 and rehabilitation work is ongoing to repair the Tucannon Road. The Tucannon Road is owned and maintained by the United States Forest Service and they are waiting for Federal Highway funding to make the needed repairs.



Tucannon River flowing down the Tucannon Road at Campground 4 on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area (February 7, 2020).

2020 COVID Shutdowns: The COVID pandemic caused the closing of public lands access across Washington state. Signs were posted on the wildlife area at entry points to public use areas, informational kiosks, and access sites. There were disruptions in work due to safety protocols and employee sickness.