Wildlife Program
Week of October 15-21, 2012

**LANDS DIVISION**

**Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Addition:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) completed the purchase of 373.35 acres for the Okanogan – Similkameen Watershed Project. This property is located in Okanogan County, approximately two miles southeast of Conconully and adjacent to WDFW’s Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. The property is primarily natural grasses and shrub-steppe habitat, which provide habitat for mule deer and sharp-tailed grouse. The Scotch Creek Wildlife Area is critical to the recovery of Sharp-tailed grouse populations. This purchase is being funded by grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Section 6 program and from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The property will be managed within the Wildlife Program by Jim Olson as part of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

**More State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Allocated to Washington:** On October 8, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the allocation of 400,000 additional acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) SAFE to successful applicants across the nation. Two proposals from WDFW resulted in Washington receiving 28,900 new acres for the following: (1) A new project targeting 20,000 acres within ferruginous hawk territories in Benton, Franklin and Adams Counties, (2) An additional 8,900 acres added to 7,322 acres already enrolled for a total of 16,222 acres in sage/sharp-tailed-grouse management zones in northern Grant, Lincoln and Okanogan counties.

The 28,900 new acres of SAFE equates to approximately $24 million for targeted shrub-steppe habitat establishment in eastern Washington. Before landowners can sign up for these new acres, however, congress must pass a new Farm Bill re-authorizing CRP.
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Several Wildlife Program staff (Michael Schroeder, Matt Vander Haegen, Andy Duff, Juli Anderson, Margaret Tudor, Chuck Gibilisco, and Lauri Vigue) held a workshop at the Swanson Lakes Wildlife area on October 20 for training of approximately 27 citizen scientist volunteers. The effort was designed to encourage citizen science involvement in the collection of ecosystem data on state-managed wildlife areas.

Mike did a presentation on the goals of the project (birds, photo points, and ecosystem assessments) and conducted most of the assessment training. Matt trained the volunteers on the GPS technology and Andy trained them on the tools needed for interfacing with the computer and online resources. Juli Anderson (manager of Swanson Lakes) was there to provide insight into management of the wildlife area and Margaret Tudor (and others) did an amazing job of organizing the event and encouraging participation. Because of the large size of the group, it was necessary to divide into three separate groups during portions of the training.

This was the third event of this type in 2012 and should provide a foundation for ecological integrity assessments on the Swanson Lakes and Sinlahekin wildlife areas (two pilot projects) as well as providing insight into future training efforts.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Several staff made presentations at the annual meeting of The Wildlife Society in Portland, Oregon during October 14-17.

Mike Schroeder was invited to give a presentation during the special symposium titled “Prairie Grouse Management: Doomed to Repeat the Past?” Mike’s presentation was titled “Declines in distribution and abundance of prairie-chickens; lessons applicable to sage-grouse.”

Abstract: Some of the earliest efforts to manage wildlife populations in North America were initiated in 1791 when legislation was passed to protect the heath hen (*Tymanuchus cupido cupido*), a subspecies of greater prairie-chicken, from market hunting. These conservation efforts ultimately failed when the heath became extinct in 1932. A second subspecies, the Attwater’s prairie-chicken (*T. c. attwateri*) has been federally listed as endangered since 1973, with current populations largely supported by captive breeding. The third subspecies, *T. c. pinnatus*, is not federally listed, but its distribution and abundance have been dramatically altered, with many localized populations facing severe risks. This long history of greater prairie-chicken management provides considerable insight into the relative effectiveness of different types of conservation activities as well as the ‘cost’ of inaction. In contrast to the greater prairie-chicken, the management history for the greater and Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus* and *C. minimus*) is relatively recent. In 1916, William Hornaday wrote about the need for protection of sage-grouse. Hornaday’s concerns were largely unheeded. The distribution and
abundance of sage-grouse declined throughout most of the last century to the point where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that they were warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Many of the trends reported for sage-grouse populations are similar to those observed for greater prairie-chickens decades ago. Populations are becoming increasingly small and isolated, lacking long-term viability. It is imperative that we learn from the earlier management efforts with prairie-chickens to improve management direction for sage-grouse, before the declining trends become irreversible.

Mike Schroeder also was a co-author on a poster presented at the conference titled “Validation of greater sage-grouse landscape resistance models using telemetry, genetic, and lek persistence data.” The lead author was Andrew Shirk of the University of Washington.

Abstract: For species that have experienced dramatic habitat loss and fragmentation, functional connectivity of remaining population remnants is vital to their persistence over time. For this reason, connectivity conservation is now a major focus of conservation biology. Connectivity analyses often rely on spatial models of how a landscape resists dispersal and migration. Often, these landscape models are parameterized by a combination of expert knowledge and limited empirical data. In this study, we evaluated the relationship of a largely expert-based landscape resistance model for greater sage-grouse (\textit{Centrocercus urophasianus}) to three empirical datasets, including telemetry locations of migrating birds, microsatellite genotypes, and lek activity since 1954. We varied the resistance of roads, agriculture, slope, population density, and elevation in the expert model to systematically generate 50 alternative hypotheses. We found that alternative models that had lower resistance values (relative to the expert model) for roads, agriculture, and population density showed stronger relationships to migratory movements, genetic differentiation, and patterns of lek activity over time. We found ambiguous evidence for alternative resistance values assigned to elevation and slope. Together, these results suggest ways to improve the accuracy of a landscape resistance model for greater sage-grouse and thereby provide a more robust basis for conservation of habitat connectivity for this species.

John Pierce and Joanne Schuett-Ames were invited to give presentations in a symposium on the importance of connectivity planning across political borders. John presented an overview of the Western Governors’ Association Wildlife Corridor and Crucial Habitat Initiative (http://www.westgov.org/wildlife). Joanne presented an overview of the success and accomplishments of the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (http://wawired.org/).

Andy Duff co-organized a workshop on the conducting spatial analysis using “R” programming language. The goal of this workshop was to familiarize participants with current techniques in the analyses of spatial data and show how the R Statistical Computing Environment can be used as a flexible and powerful tool for modeling spatially referenced data. The workshop was well attended received excellent reviews.

Jim Watson was an invited speaker to two recent symposiums where he presented a paper entitled “Breeding range and resource use of golden eagles in Washington: implications for windpower development.” The paper was given at the annual Avian Interactions with Powerlines
Conference (APLIC) in Great Falls, Montana on October 11, and at The Wildlife Society Conference in Portland on October 17.

Abstract: Preventative measures to reduce susceptibility of nesting Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) to wind turbine strikes or habitat displacement must be based on a sound understanding of eagle home range characteristics and resource selection. Best advisement for turbine siting can be accomplished by identifying the types and nature of landscape and topographic features used by eagles and the spatial scale relevant to their daily and seasonal range use patterns. From 2004-2011 we deployed 16 satellite platform transmitter terminals on nesting Golden Eagles in Washington and monitored their range use patterns for up to seven years. Home range and resource use models were developed from GPS fixes and flight paths of nine eagles that nested primarily in low-to-mid elevation Columbia Basin foothills. Eagles were resident and occupied multi-year ranges that averaged 125.5 ± 104.6 km² (99 percent contours estimated with Brownian Bridge Movement Model). Ranges used during the non-breeding period averaged twice the size of non-breeding ranges, were more fragmented, and averaged 82.3 ± 19.0 percent overlap with breeding ranges. Resource Utilization Functions (RUF) were modeled using fixed-kernel range utilization distributions and evaluated using three GPS data sets from adult Golden Eagles nesting in similar habitats in Oregon. Eagles selected ridge tops and upper slopes, rugged terrain, and native shrub/steppe and grassland types. Distance-to-nest was a strong influence on overall selection. Landscape management strategies to avoid conflicts with turbines can best define eagle ranges of 12.9 kilometers (km) buffers from nests. More conservative strategies based on smaller buffers of 9.7 km (six miles) must include identification and management of upper slopes, ridge tops and areas of varied terrain 9.7 - 12.9 km (six–eight miles) from nests. Intensity of year-round eagle flight and perch use within 50 percent contours (average 3.2 km or two miles from nests) dramatically increases probability of eagle conflict with wind turbines.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Professional Development, Coordination and Technical Interaction – Staff participated in the technical program at the 19th Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society in Portland, Oregon. Substantial opportunities were available for awareness building on topics related to Section and Division responsibilities such as Conservation and Management of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, Monitoring, New Technology and Applications in Wildlife, Conservation of Communities, Ecosystems, Landscapes, Mitigating Impacts of Wind Energy Development on Golden Eagles, Operationalizing Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation, and numerous Symposia on wildlife and habitat investigation techniques.

Sessions were especially informative about assessing status and trends at regional and national spatial scales. The conference also provided staff training opportunities and interaction with nearly 70 vendors for equipment and information supplies.
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Tricia Thompson, Joanna Eide, and Andy Carlson met to discuss and refine the revision language in the Wildlife Rehabilitation rule. Oiled wildlife is an important part of the wildlife rehabilitation Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and we are working to modify the rules to accommodate both the specifics of oiled wildlife and the general wildlife rehabilitation regulations.

The grant to Wildlife Rehabilitators is opening this fall. Thompson reviewed the database for all past grantees and applicants to organize the paper files, electronic files and databases to make the review and management of the grant more efficient.

Falconry: Thompson submitted a new falconry form for the web. Non-resident, out-of-state falconers who wish to capture a Washington raptor for falconry must fill out an application for a permit to do so. The issuance of the permit will be at the discretion of the Department.

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

The 2012 Wildfire Impacts on Wildlife – A summary of the fires from this summer and fall were compiled, indicating size of the fires, impacts to WDFW lands and fences, and predicted impacts to wildlife (particularly deer, elk and bighorn sheep). A companion Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was written describing the impacts to wildlife and addressing the issue of supplemental feeding. Both pieces will soon be available on the agency webpage.

Grizzly Bear Outreach Project (GBOP) – Contract staff with GBOP distributed 15,000 bear/cougar/wolf brochures at tabling events at the Skagit River Salmon Festival, Cabela’s Marysville, Lake Chelan, Puyallup Fair, Mountaineers OutdoorFest, Leavenworth Salmon Festival, and Woodland Park Zoo carnivores in the classroom project. Staff also completed a cougar Public Service Announcement featuring Chris Morgan to air this fall, initiated a Living With Carnivores in Ranch Country partnership with Washington State University, conducted two radio shows on living with carnivores and wolves, created and distributed cougar door hangers, and helped expand the Facebook presence to 1,000 followers.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

 Citizen Science, Ecological Inventory Monitoring (EIM) – WDFW members of the Ecological Monitoring Team from Wildlife Outreach, Science and Lands met with 25 eager EIM workshop participants for the second EIM training of citizen scientists for the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area and third EIM workshop to pilot a citizen science Level II rapid assessment of select WDFW Wildlife Areas. The all day workshop consisted of group introductions and a thorough explanation of the EIM project, long-term goals, and expectations. Additional morning topics included discussions on the scientific protocols, standard project operations of GPS and
digital cameras, standard safety practices, updates about the Community Event Registration and Volunteer Information System (CERVIS), and recording hours credited for next year’s ‘earned’ Discover Pass. Afternoon sessions were small breakout groups in the field with Mike Schroeder reviewing and practicing field methods and protocols, honing plant identification skills on key indicator plant species, and being buffeted by 45 mile per hour winds. Groups rotated from field sessions to indoor data entry training with Andy Duff. Group evaluations and wrap-up comments were all constructive. Some of the more common under the Workshop Challenges were need more prior to workshop information, control wind and weather. Under I Recommend came comments like need more eastside volunteer opportunities, create Facebook and Twitter, need better plant ID photos, and need advanced refresher training in 2013. Under What Worked Well was group support of small breakout groups, hands on field, GPS experience, and the “all day was a great learning experience.”

At the Ecological Inventory Monitoring training Margaret Tudor (below) and Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson (above left) participates in a small group discussion, while Mike Schroeder leads a field session to provide a protocol demonstration (above right).
REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Biologist Shepherd and Rancher Jeff Dawson searched a wolf location cluster for cattle depredation evidence in Smackout Meadows. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf sightings south of Northport and east of the Columbia River with multiple Stevens County residents and WDFW enforcement. Biologist Shepherd checked and removed the final cameras in the Wedge to determine if and where wolves are still present. Biologist Shepherd de-scrambled, mapped, and texted Smackout wolf locations to range rider Leisa Hill everyday of the week. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf sightings and detection strategies with Contractor Jeff Flood and U.S. Air Force liaison Todd Foster. Biologist Shepherd discussed landowner/wildlife damage agreements with ranchers Pete Guglimino and Myrna Olson. Biologist Shepherd met with Biologist Maletzke and delivered the equipment used in the Wedge pack removal to the Spokane Regional Office.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) and vicinity - Volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn tracked radio-collared sage and sharp-tailed grouse on Tuesday, October 16. The highlight of her tracking report is as follows: “I saw two full-grown male sage grouse. I blinked and they were still there. They walked away, checking on me frequently so I got excellent looks and quite a few not-so-great photos (the light was weird). I attached a few photos, mostly to show the legs. They were uncollared and I did not see leg bands. I believe they were local offspring. Clearly, dispersal is happening now.”

Two male sage grouse spotted near the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area on Tuesday, October 16, 2012. Dr. Kim Thorburn photo.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES
Wildlife Management

Northeast Washington Deer Check Stations: Biologists Base, Shepherd, and Myers operated hunter check stations at Chattaroy and Deer Park on both Saturday and Sunday. Activity was light at the Chattaroy check station with 67 hunters and seven deer (10.4 percent success). The Deer Park check station had 196 hunters and 53 deer (27 percent success) over the same two day period. By comparison, in 2011 the Deer Park check station had 177 hunters and 29 deer (16.4 percent success). Students from North Central High School in Spokane are at the check station this year assisting WDFW staff and volunteers by collecting deer tissue and hair samples for genetic analysis.

North Central High School Students assisted at the Deer Park Check Station by collecting deer tissue and hair samples for genetic analysis.

Wildlife Areas

Hunting on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area: Staff visited with hunters on the wildlife area this week. To the right is a picture of opening day success on Saturday, October 13. This buck was caught out feeding in a harvest unit of the current thinning project at 3:00 p.m.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE
Wildlife Areas

New forklift/cross-wildlife area coordination - Bob Dice, Wildlife Area Manager (WLA) at the Blue Mountains WLA Complex, picked up a nice military surplus forklift from Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) on October 15, for Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA). Blue Mountains Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Debby Flynn delivered it to SLWA on Monday after changing the oil and having the carburetor cleaned. Natural Resource Worker Bauer flushed and refilled the radiator on Tuesday. The forklift works great and only needs some paint touch-up. SLWA staff thanks Dice and Flynn for their efforts!

Used forklift acquired by Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area on October 15, 2012.

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Hartsock Project:  Wildlife Area Staff finished up a building removal project on the Wooten Wildlife Area. Dave Meisner and Greg Heimgartner finished hauling loads of the leftover demolition debris to the Asotin County landfill using the one-ton flatbed Ford. Assistant Area Manager Dingman and Dave Meisner worked with Habitat Biologist Dave Karl to fix the stream crossing where the culverts were removed and add some structure to stabilize the crossing (photo below). Dave Meisner hauled the rest of the scrap metal from the Hartsock up to the recycling bin at the Headquarters.
REGION 2

Wolves: Wolf Technician Spence is winding down field activities as his position will end on October 31. All remaining cameras were recovered from Okanogan County over the past week. Camera sets within the territory of the Lookout pack yielded video of two wolves within the area. One of the cameras recovered video of a lynx, making our capture of Washington carnivores almost complete, with only three mustelids (wolverine, marten and fisher) missing from our videos. This week Technician Spence will work with Biologists Becker and Moore in an attempt to document numbers of the Teanaway pack prior to winter. He will remove the remaining camera sets in Kittitas and Yakima counties and then start final documentation of the seasons work. A summary report will be produced of monitoring efforts in Regions 2 and 3. Imagery and videos from all camera sets have been retained and will be transferred to Olympia for archiving.

District Biologists

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

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

Okanogan Deer Harvest: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen ran the Winthrop deer check station for the second weekend of the general modern firearm season. For both weekends combined, they checked 253 hunters with 49 deer. These numbers are both slightly higher than last year. More noteworthy, the last deer checked for the season turned out to be a very large 9x10 point mule deer with a 33+ inch antler width. This is likely the largest set of antlers seen at the check station in at least the last 17 years. The lucky hunter harvested the estimated four and a-half year-old animal in the Tripod Burn area which appears to be producing excellent summer deer forage six years after the fire.

A potential record book Methow mule deer buck harvested in the Tripod Burn area.
**Bighorn Sheep Harvest:** Biologist Heinlen pinned the Mt Hull Bighorn ram harvested this season. The hunter was very pleased and excited with his once in a life time harvest.

**Pheasant Management:** Biologist Heinlen with assistance from WDFW Brian Lyons conducted the pheasant releases on the three release sites throughout the Okanogan Valley.

*Okanogan pheasant release.*
District 7: Chelan / Douglas District – David Volsen / Jon Gallie

Weather Conditions: Cooler weather and rain have almost completely abated the fire risks in Chelan and Douglas Counties at this point. The predicted weather this week will be for colder temperatures with a continuous chance of rain at lower elevations and possible snow at higher elevations.

Weekender Opportunities: Hunters will still need to be aware of entry closures that remain in place in some areas due to wildlife dangers. In Chelan County, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands south of Highway 2 and east of Highway 97 are still under a closure order. This will impact elk hunting opportunity as Game Management Unit 251 is our prime elk habitat in the county.

Bighorn Sheep: Two adult bighorn rams were killed in vehicle collisions along Highway 97A this week despite the presence of the wildlife fence. Bighorns are rutting at this time and rams come out of more remote habitat to interact with ewes.

It is often the case that in an attempt to avoid pursuit by rams, ewes will find ways to cross the fence and end up on the highway, with the rams following. These October incidents have become relatively common since the completion of the fence, indicating that what we think we know about fencing out wildlife and what bighorn sheep are capable of do not coincide.

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

Firearms deer season: Hunter participation was down during the second weekend as was anticipated from the closures associated with wildfires. Fire closures leading up to the season opener may have pushed hunters into other areas. While closures were relaxed in Game Management Units (GMUs) 247 and 245, hunters appeared to have relocated out of those areas.

The buck harvest was low, with hunters in lower elevation units complaining about not seeing legal bucks. With seasonal changes in weather patterns, our October season is often held under conditions that are warmer and drier than are ideal for hunting. As a result, hunters focusing on lower elevation winter range habitat see fewer deer and have lower success.

Hunting conditions are often much better at the higher elevations in the western part of the county, however, terrain is much more rugged and vegetation much thicker, thereby testing the resolve of hunters. It appears that participation was down in Douglas County as well this year. Since the county’s best deer habitat is on private land, those hunters that have not secured permissions to hunt tend to have a tougher time in Douglas County.

Mountain Goat: One of the two mountain goat permits along the north shore of Lake Chelan was filled recently. The hunter was very happy about finding a billy to harvest and commented how rugged the terrain was and how hard they had to work to find a male.
GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildfires: Activity surrounding wildfires has decreased significantly within the Chelan County. Some areas remain under entry closures as more remote fires burn. These restrictions were downsized in the Entiat (245), Slide Ridge (246) and Chiwawa (245) GMUs, but remained in place in the Mission (251) unit and precluded access from traditional hunting areas on public lands.

An update from the USFS Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) process was released that indicates that the Wenatchee Complex was a relatively low severity fire as we predicted. Their preliminary findings indicated that 47 percent of the landscape within the fire perimeter was unburned and 35 percent of low severity. These data support our interpretation of the fire impacts and further support our recommendations to take a measured and contemplative approach to feeding and harvest. As more data comes available I will summarize and distribute.

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Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association (WSA): Biologist Volsen met with the WSA to discuss issues surrounding the recent wildfires, potential impacts to deer and other wildlife, and what the members might do to help. The association has been a constant source of support to WDFW and
to the district, and they offered to assist wherever they could. Member Bill Stegeman and Biologist Volsen responded to a report that a vehicle had collided with the Highway 97A fence and removed a large section near mile post 204. Mr. Stegeman dropped what he was doing to help Biologist Volsen affect a repair to the fence even before the vehicle involved in the collision had been towed away. WSA provided safety fence for the repair.

Species Recovery

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker / Chad Eidson

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Enclosure Building Preparations: Research Scientist Becker and Biologist Eidson spent time preparing for building an enclosure on Dormaier unit and maintaining the enclosures on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area before winter. Maintenance work will be conducted with staff and a crew of volunteers from October 22-25 and the new enclosure built during October 26-November 2.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Meeting Preparations: Becker sent out notifications for the Pygmy Rabbit Recovery meeting on December 5-6. The first day will include a larger stakeholder meeting and a field visit, and the next day will include a Science Advisory Committee meeting.

Recovery Fund Pre-Proposal: Becker began writing a USFWS Recovery Fund pre-proposal for pygmy rabbits.

Wildlife Areas

Wells Wildlife Area Complex –Dan Peterson / Ann Winters / Fidel Rios

Weather Conditions: Pleasant daytime temperatures with highs in the 60’s, while lows dipped below freezing. Monday night we received the first measurable rainfall since late June with 0.25 inches in the gauge on Dyer Hill.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Summer Fallow Operations - Bridgeport Unit Shrubsteppe Restoration Project: Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings completed the second round of harrow work on the Banrac/Dezellem fields. They appear to be in excellent condition for seeding. The seedbed is firm and there is a surprising amount of moisture in the soil profile given the extreme heat we experienced in July and August. Area Manager Dan Peterson, joined by Lee Hanford, a local wheat grower who has a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lease on the Bridgeport Unit, checked soil moisture with numerous ‘shovel tests’. In most cases there was sufficient moisture within two inches of the surface to ‘hold shape’. Lee is a great source for a variety of information, has a ribald sense of humor and is a wonderful teacher when it comes to farming techniques and skills. We always learn something applicable to our work from him. Following
the first test hole, Lee proceeded to school Dan and Angel on soil science, local geology, equipment operation, and the virtues of “mellow” soil.

Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings completed the second round of harrow work on the Banrac/Dezellem fields (above). Lee Hanford (below), our consulting agronomist said, “Look at that moisture, now that is some mellow dirt.”

Fire Rehab – Bridgeport Unit – Foster Creek Fire: Fidel began mowing areas within the burn that we’ve identified for drill seeding – approximately 100 acres. The mowing is necessary to remove the blackened skeletons of sagebrush which would play havoc with our tractor and Truax drills. We’re renting a Challenger 55, a tracked machine, from Evergreen Implement of Coulee City for this task. While it has a habit of using three gallons of oil per day, it worked quite well
over at Central Ferry Canyon to complete a similar task. By Monday afternoon Fidel had completed nearly 35 acres and he was pretty confident he’d have everything done by Tuesday afternoon. At about 4:00 p.m. while turning up a hill in one of the most remote parts of the burn, the tractor broke down. The left swing-link bushing failed causing the left track to lose tension, resulting in a tractor that could only turn left. Dan Peterson, the Area Manager, happened to be nearby working on treatment and went to offer Fidel assistance. It was quickly apparent that any repairs were far outside their capabilities and after several carefully selected phrases directed at the tractor they rode off together on an ATV.

On Wednesday morning, two mechanics and one salesman from Evergreen Implement arrived. Due to the machine’s location, it was only accessible via a one-mile ATV ride through burned over shrub-steppe. Fidel had to escort them to the site and between the four of them they were able to shuttle enough tools and equipment to begin disassembling the left idler wheel, track tensioner, and other components. After a few hours of crawling around in sandy ash strewn soil they left for parts. Returning Thursday, the mechanics installed a new swing arm and bushings and had the tractor up and running by 7:30 p.m. It was one of the more challenging field repairs they’ve had to contend with.

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

**The 2012 Deer Season:** Hunter participation on the Wells Wildlife Area declined by 25 percent compared with 2011 (102 versus 137). Hunter success, however, nearly tripled with 13 deer taken as compared with only five in 2011. Although 90 percent of Central Ferry Canyon burned this summer as a result of the Crane Road Fire, 27 hunters registered there and spent a total of 141 hours working the area for the three deer that were taken. Hunters contacted this week generally reported seeing fewer hunters in the field.

*Hunter success nearly tripled on the Wells Wildlife Area, with this shot taken from Bridgeport Bar unit.*
2012 Waterfowl Season: This first week of the season started off very nicely. Between the Bridgeport Bar and Washburn Island unit, a total 24 hunters were in the field and took 105 ducks. Species included green-winged teal, American widgeon, ring-necks, pintails and surf scoters.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex – Greg Fitzgerald / Brian Cole / Vacant

Weather Conditions: Temperatures from the mid-30’s to mid-60’s, with some much needed rain, totaling approximately 0.20 inches, and blustery with gusts to 40 mph on Tuesday.

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

Regulated Access Areas: Natural Resource Technician Will Carpenter checked and adjusted water levels in the managed wetland cells in the Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area (FRAA) and Winchester Regulated Access Area (WRAA) as they continued to fill.

Will also picked up the registration slips deposited over the waterfowl hunting opening weekend, delivered them to Assistant District 5 Wildlife Biologist Sara Gregory, and replenished the registration boxes with blank slips. Will cleared Russian olive limbs encroaching on the access road near Harris parking area two and the FRAA parking area.

Signing: Will checked and re-signed the Frenchman Hills Wasteway Game Reserve, and removed Emergency Wildfire Restrictions signs on the Desert Wildlife Area. Wildlife Area
Assistant Brian Cole checked and posted boundary and regulatory signs through the Gloyd Seeps Wildlife Area.

**GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Public Safety:** A hunter reported finding an old hand-dug well on the Lower Crab Creek Wildlife Area. Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald contacted the hunter and was able to pinpoint the location on an aerial photo. Will took fencing material to the site located by GPS and built a smooth wire fence around it to prevent someone from falling in. Information was forwarded to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the landowner, and after cultural resource review, will fill or cover the well.

**Acting Regional Wildlife Program Manager:** Greg sat in for Regional Wildlife Program Manager (RPM) Matt Monda for the first week Matt is on annual leave. Duties included submitting the Regional Weekly Report, Total Time approvals, representing the RPM at the weekly Regional and Program Coordination Meetings, and providing Regional input on some administrative assignments.

**Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Complex - Jim Olson / Brian DuPont / Mike Nelson**

**Weather Conditions:** Highs in the upper 50’s, with lows in the lower 30’s, with a heck of a wind storm Tuesday. We received wind gusts to 50 mph, but no significant damage to any units. We have had a couple of hard frosts in the Conconully area.

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

**Weed Control:** Natural Resource Technician Topping chemically treated five acres of Russian Knapweed in the upper Eder WLA by backpack spraying, while Assistant Manager DuPont sprayed four acres of Canadian Thistle on the Scotch Creek unit. Fall is the best time to treat these persistent perennial weeds.

**Great Grey Owls:** Bryan assisted Jeff Heinlein, Doug Kuehn, and Kent Woodruff at the Chesaw WLA, selecting locations for the Great Grey Owl nest platforms. Bryan still has two more platform locations that need to be selected on the backside of the Big Hill unit. He worked on platform construction and filled with chips in preparation for installation.

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

**Emergency regulations lifted:** WDFW and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have lifted the emergency restrictions on campfires, chainsaw use and off road driving this week. All posted signs were removed from wildlife area reader boards on the Scotch Creek complex.

**GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.**
Wildlife Area Maintenance: Wildlife Area staff worked this week on the Chesaw unit repairing boundary fence and patching the leaks in the stock tank with hydraulic cement. Irrigation systems on the Scotch Creek unit were drained and put away for the winter, and the Headquarter underground sprinklers blown out. Lots of branches, limbs and debris needed to be cleaned up after the wind storm of Tuesday night. Bryan winterized the Coulee Creek.

REGION 3

None

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Puget Sound Lesser Snow Goose Study: The second week of the lesser snow goose project ended on a high note with a large capture of 110 geese. At this point, a total of 142 snow geese have now been captured, marking approximately 45 percent of the desired capture objective. All geese have been banded and most are outfitted with a brown neck collar with a three figure alphanumeric identification code (see picture below). A subset of geese are being equipped with collar mounted VHF radios instead of the brown neck collars (see picture below) to provide information on goose movements and habitat preferences.

In addition to ongoing capture efforts, Biologist Danilson and Waterfowl Specialist Evenson conducted the first aerial photography survey and radio telemetry search. Geese were observed at several locations in Skagit and Whatcom counties, and at several locations along lower Fraser River Valley in British Columbia. All radio collars (seven at the time of the flight) were relocated. Two radio collared geese were located up in the Fraser (one having been banded the previous day on Fir Island). Two radio collars were found to be in mortality mode and were later recovered by Evenson. Unfortunately, the carcasses had been disturbed or eaten, so it is impossible to determine cause of death.

Biologist DeBruyn took liver samples from hunter harvested snow geese for lead level sampling by the University of Washington. DeBruyn also conducted age ratio sampling of snow goose flocks incidental to trapping operations. The last count yielded a 27 percent ratio of first year birds which indicates good productivity on the breeding grounds in Siberia.

With trapping efforts still under way, this project continues to demand lots of attention from Region 4 staff, waterfowl section staff, and representatives the University of Washington Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. Cooperation and support from local agricultural producers and other community volunteers have been critical to the ongoing success of this project.
Aerial photograph moments after the capture team successfully rocket netted 115 snow geese near Port Susan Bay in Snohomish County.

Biologists DeBruyn and Danilson take morphological measurements of an adult lesser snow goose captured on the snow goose reserve on Fir Island in Skagit County.
Biologist Danilson displays an adult goose outfitted with neck collar.

Biologist Evenson putting the final touches on a neck collar mounted VHF radio.
Wildlife Areas

Manager Kessler, Whatcom Conservation District Manager Frank Corry, and Rachael Vasik from the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association held a tour of the Lake Terrell Dam project site.

Elk Damage Management – Enumclaw Plateau: Biologist Anderson met with Officer Richards and Biologist Tirhi to discuss areas of resident elk on both sides of the White River. These elk are generally in subherds of 25-50 animals and creating issues with agricultural damage. Anderson will continue to work with Enforcement and Biologist Tirhi to examine Master Hunter opportunities to assist in alleviating damage where possible. Information on the WDFW Master Hunter Program can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/masterhunter/

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Herd Agricultural Damage Field Tour: Assistant Wildlife Program Director Pamplin, Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson, Wildlife Program Manager Link, Enforcement Captain Hebner, Sergeant Phillips and Biologist Danilson attended an all day field tour with Washington Farm Bureau representatives and members of the agricultural community. The purpose of the tour was to visit various farms and small timber management operations that are being impacted by the growing population of elk along the Skagit River Valley. WFB has been particularly vocal about elk related agricultural conflicts and, having reviewed and commented on the draft North Cascades Elk Herd plan, requested an opportunity to meet with Wildlife Program personnel. In addition to field tour, a kick off discussion/orientation and
“working lunch” provided an opportunity to discuss the draft and proposed strategies aimed at addressing elk related damages.

North Cascades Elk Herd Forage Enhancement Site Evaluation: Biologist Danilson attended a field tour to discuss and evaluate opportunities to improve elk forage on lands owned by Seattle City Light within the South Fork Nooksack River drainage. This site visit stems from an earlier meeting coordinated by Danilson and Doug Couvlier from the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. Representatives from Seattle City Light, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Sierra Pacific Industries, and a forestry consultant were present. All attendees agreed that the two sites that were reviewed were excellent candidates for forage enhancement. A Seattle City Light project review board must approve such proposals, so next steps are to develop a budget and project justification for one (or both) site.

Trillim Woods Management Plan Review: District Biologist Milner reviewed the management plan that the Whidbey Camano Land Trust has developed for the Trillium Woods property on Whidbey Island. This site will be managed for wildlife and habitat first, people second and is a shining example of working hard to assure public access with a habitat focus.

Skagit Bay Important Bird Area (IBA) Designation: Biologist Milner met with a representative from Skagit Audubon to work on the nomination form for Skagit Bay. This project has been underway for several months as a result of shorebird counts and research that
occurred in the area. Neighboring Port Susan Bay has been designated as an IBA for many years, but Skagit Bay never received the recognition. Now there is interest and momentum in getting this important site recognized.

**Annual Navy Resource Management Plan Review:** Biologist Milner met with partners from Naval Air Station Whidbey and the Everett Naval Base to review their management actions over the last year. This review is part of the Navy’s integrated Management Plans for their lands. Other partners include US fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, and NMS.

**Seattle Parks and Recreation Wildlife Management Planning:** Biologist Anderson represented WDFW in providing wildlife management recommendations and planning related to a Neighborhood Grant that Heron Habitat Helpers has received from Seattle. The grant is to examine expansion of interpretive opportunity related to the WDFW/HHH/Critterzoom heron camera in Kiwanis Ravine, as well as feasibility of citizen monitoring of the heron colony – what it would take, equipment costs, web design for data entry, etc. Eventually, HHH would like to have interpretation stations at Discovery Park and at the Hiram M. Chittenden (Ballard) Locks that discuss urban wildlife and the nearby Kiwanis Ravine heron colony, as well as satellite television stations streaming the heron camera activities.

The WDFW heron camera, as well as other wildlife cameras, can be found here: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/)

**Wildlife Areas**

**Pheasant Release Program:** Manager Belinda Rotton and Access Area Manager Derek Hacker have been coordinating with Snoqualmie Wildlife Area pheasant release volunteer to insure that the releases are covered and communication with staff and volunteers is connected during this transition period between managers.

Manager Rotton is continuing to compile comments received regarding on the Bow Hill Road Pheasant Release site for later review.

Manager Rotton contacted CAMPS engineer Kristin Kuykendall regarding the status of the Cherry Valley restoration project. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the month and Cherry Valley will be reopened to hunting during the week.

**Samish Unit:** Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove closed the water control structures on the Samish Unit. Limited water is on the area at this time and much of the waterfowl hunting is on the bay front portion of the property.

**DeBay’s Slough Hunt Unit:** Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove met sharecrop farmer to discuss the corn harvest on hunt unit. Harvest should be completed this week improving hunting conditions and assess on the site.
Tennant Lake Hunter Access: Manager Kessler checked and cleared the beaver dam on the access channel to Tennant Lake. The dam has prevented boats from being able to get into Tennant Lake and access the three waterfowl hunting blinds.

BP Unit Field Plans: Manager Kessler coordinated with the BP Environmental Manager on future land management activities. BP will be holding off on anymore field mowing until next year.

Pheasant Release: Manager Kessler and volunteers released 420 pheasants for the regular pheasant hunting season.

Nooksack Unit Disabled Hunter Access: Manager Kessler met with ADA Manager Delores Noyes and a disabled hunter to work out the disabled hunters access on the Nooksack unit. They also discussed other future ADA accessible projects on the wildlife area.

**GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Wildlife Management**

Western Bat Working Group Newsletter: Biologist Anderson sent a summary of District 12 bat survey activities for submittal to the Western Bat Working Group upcoming newsletter of bat work in the western states. WDFW is currently partnering with Bats Northwest to develop an acoustic bat “blitz” protocol to assist in determining bat activity and species status in given areas. The pilot work has been conducted in the lower Snoqualmie River Valley on WDFW lands. Western Bat Working Group information can be found here: [http://www.wbwg.org/](http://www.wbwg.org/)

**Wildlife Areas**

Wiley Slough: Manager Rotton coordinated with Capital Asset Management Program Engineer Ray Berg and Crew Supervisor Tom Whartman regarding the Wiley Slough Dredging project. The CAMP crew is scheduled to start clearing brush on site this week.

Skagit Headquarters: Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove reposted the safety zone signs on the Headquarters Unit. Enforcement has been receiving reports of hunters in the safety zone and requested that the boundary markings be improved for clarity. The property boundary on the neighboring farm was also reposted for the season following the corn harvest.

Skagit Bay Estuary: Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove checked signs and reposted Game Reserves signs on the Skagit Bay Estuary Reserve.

Skagit Plan Update: Manager Rotton received final comments from Citizen Advisory group members and began final edits on the plan update.
Natural Resource Specialist Meis assisted with the Snow Goose Banding Project.

Private Lands/Access

**GMU 418 Elk Hunting Access:** Region 4 private lands staff surveyed the unit for hunter activity, logging operations, and unwanted activity.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Technicians Otto and Deyo continued blind construction on multiple hunt units in the Region.

**GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE**

Wildlife Management

**Wildlife Biologist 1 Hiring Panel:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra spent a day on the interview panel for a temporary Biologist 1 to begin the work of evaluating over 180,000 images taken during last spring’s marine bird detectability flights. Work will consist of evaluating image analysis options, database construction, and then looking at those images. The final result will provide a correction factor for WDFW’s winter waterfowl surveys leading to the ability to generate population estimates instead of the current density trends.

**Wildlife Society Annual Meeting:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra attended the national Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society in Portland – the first time the annual meeting has ever been held in the same city twice. ADB Cyra also attended the previous meeting in 1995.
This being the national meeting the talks had their share of turkeys, feral hogs, and white-tailed deer – but the breadth of the talks were impressive with all day seminars, symposiums, and workshops ranging from Andy Duff’s Spatial Analysis with R to Managing montane wildlife (Pika’s) in the age of climate change. The talks on large carnivores were very well attended as was the all-day session on wildlife ethics. In addition, this was a joint meeting with the American Society for Wildlife Veterinarians and several sessions were held on wildlife and ecosystem health and diseases. Over 300 posters were also presented.

On a local note, Dr. Wielgus of the carnivore lab at WSU presented a paper highlighting the results of 6 field studies on the effects of hunting on the population structure and ecology of cougars in Washington. This included the work of Drs. Koehler and Kertson as well as Rich Beausoleil and Ben Maletzke and resulted in the restructuring of the cougar hunting strategy adopted by WDFW.

**REGION 5**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Jumbo Peak Mountain Goat Survey:** Biologist Bergh joined USFS biologists for a mountain goat survey of the Jumbo Peak area of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Only one billy was seen in an area where normally 15-20 goats are observed. The hot and dry weather may have pushed the goats to an area with water or with vegetation that is not so dry.

![Mountain goat survey Jumbo Peak.](image)

**Mount St. Helens Elk Study Cooperators Meeting:** Several Region 5 staff attended a meeting for stakeholders of the University of Alberta’s Mount St. Helens Elk Study. Graduate student
Andrew Geary and his advisor, Evelyn Merrill, presented the results of their research on forage dynamics related to herbicides and herbivory as well as habitat-elk performance relationships. Preliminary results were presented and cooperators were able to give suggestions and comments. The final report is expected early next year.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Hunter Success Surveys, 2nd Weekend of General Modern Firearm Deer Season:** On October 20th Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven contacted 67 hunters and checked 1 deer (a 3X3 buck from West Klickitat). Additionally, she was shown pictures of a 5X4 buck harvested in GMU 388 by a hunter from White Salmon and learned that a 2X3 buck was taken earlier in the week as well. On October 21st, Van Leuven contacted 39 hunters with 2 deer and 1 small bear. The deer were both bucks, a 3X3 and a 2X3. There was a light dusting of snow in the higher elevations the night of October 20th, and temperatures dropped, which seemed to improve hunters' odds of encountering deer. There were more reports of people seeing deer despite fewer people in the field on October 21st. This is encouraging since deer have been very scarce up to now.

**Private Lands/Access**

Technician White visited the land of cooperator’s Western Pacific Timber, Hancock Timberlands, and Columbia Land Trust during the week. He also visited private pheasant release sites on opening day of pheasant season Saturday October 21. White interacted with hunters, reminding them to respect private lands, maintained signs, and kept a count of vehicles, hunters, and camps. As of October 15, private timberlands in Klickitat County were re-opened to the public, with rainfall lessening the fire danger. Previously, about 100,000 acres in Klickitat County were closed due to the extreme fire danger.

**GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Wildlife Management**

**The Wildlife Society Annual Conference:** Biologist Holman gave an on-site presentation to approximately 75 college students attending the annual Wildlife Society Conference. Pierce National Wildlife Refuge was the venue for an on-site event telling the story of WDFW’s efforts to recover Western Pond Turtles in the Columbia River Gorge. The presentation featured a description of the 22-year history of the program spanning the discovery of turtles in 1990, initiation of the Head-Start Program, development of the State Recovery Plan, introductions of animals to two new locations in the Gorge, documentation of reproduction at Pierce Refuge, habitat enhancement activities, cooperation among the many partners associated with the effort,
etc. The presentation concluded with a tour of the Refuge. Thanks to Rebecca Goggins of Oregon State University for organizing this enjoyable and beneficial part of the conference.

**GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE**

**Wildlife Management**

**The Wildlife Society Annual Conference:** Biologists Bergh, George, Holman, and Stephens attended the Wildlife Society’s 19th Annual Conference in Portland. The conference highlighted the Society’s 75 years of success in the field of Wildlife Management. The four-day conference featured dozens of opportunities to attend presentations, seminars, view posters and equipment relevant to the work and science of managing wildlife.

**REGION 6**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Mazama Pocket Gophers:** Bio Schmidt and crew (Walker, Capelli, and Coven) completed 8 opportunistic surveys and revisited 12 historic sites (all in Pierce County) – logging close to 80 miles walking. Four opportunistic sites were positive for gopher presence and one historic site (McKenna Meadows).

With the fire closure being lifted, Bios Skriletz, Murphie and Anthony conducted directed and opportunistic gopher surveys on private timber lands in Mason County.

*A crowd gathers during a recent gopher survey.*
Biologist McMillan got a lead about a site called “Clark’s Bluff” where another Biologist thought that there was an unusual mound that may be a pocket gopher. The subject location is the Taylor’s Checkerspot site that Biologist Ament surveys and has been the District Lead for management activities. Bio McMillan referred this report to Bio Ament to follow up the possibility of pocket gopher activity at the site.

Biologist McMillan has gathered together several mapped routes to conduct searching surveys in Clallam County, with the primary focus west of Elwha. Eastern Clallam County and Eastern Jefferson County has not been included in very many searching efforts during 2012. Biologist John Fleckenstein (DNR) had inquired with Corey Welch, the pocket gopher researcher that documented many of the Olympic National Park occurrences for the pocket gopher. Biologist McMillan received photos from Biologist Fleckenstein (DNR) and websites from Biologist Tirhi that demonstrate the casting sign that can indicate pocket gopher activity.

*Happy Lake Ridge – Pocket Gopher Castings. John Fleckenstein photos.*
Willapa Bay Waterfowl Surveys: Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis conducted the 2nd of 6 waterfowl survey flights over Willapa Bay. Biologists observed 61,712 ducks with the majority being American wigeon (39,173 or 63%). Other species observed included teal, mallard, gadwall, northern pintail, and scaup. Surveys are being conducted every two weeks until the end of December so biologists can gain a better understanding of the temporal variation in waterfowl usage of Willapa Bay and how it is influenced by the availability of eelgrass.

TC Butterfly Sites Clallam County – Biologist McMillan continued consolidating the TC records for Clallam County, Historic and 2012 season data into one spreadsheet referencing associated files that include forms/maps/gps/electronic records. The focus has been on the Dan Kelly site, to provide a consolidated array of mapped locations of Taylor’s Checkerspots. This should be key for the refinement of the habitat delineations of this site.

TC Butterfly: Dan Kelly Site - Biologist McMillan is consolidating the historic to current survey and searching route data and TC documentation into one ArcMAP product. This will improve WDFW’s ability to demonstrate the current knowledge base of habitat use. Bio McMillan is seeking electronic data records (primarily the gps downloads and/or ArcMAP layers) from the various surveyors including Gary Bell, Shelly Ament, Dave Hays, Mike Walker. The records will be much easier to incorporate if the electronic files can be retrieved. Historic records that aren’t available in an electronic form will be digitized into a new ArcMAP layer.

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

Wildlife Management

Vail Check Station: Bio Harris worked the Vail check station on Saturday the 20th of October. 817 hunters checked a total of 44 deer, 6 ruff grouse, & 2 blue grouse at the Vail main gate. The
E150 near the steam plant was also open this year. Overall Hunter attitudes were very good with just a few on the grumpy side. WDFW enforcement did a great job on emphasis with several agents operating in the area. Overall the effect of the emphasis was interesting. Between 0900 and about 1000 there appeared to be several hunters leaving the area. Many made a comment about the number of enforcement officers. After this the hunter attitudes were great. Kind of makes one wonder?

As usual the volunteers did an outstanding job representing themselves, the agency and hunters. The weather got a little on wet and cold side yet they stuck it out.

Bio Skriletz worked the Vail Check Station on Sunday where 673 hunters were checked with 17 deer and three ruffed grouse. As always, the Eyes in the Woods volunteers were outstanding.

Vail Check Station (left), South Elma Cooperative Road Closure (right).

**South Elma Cooperative Road Closure:** Elma game club volunteers installed eco blocks to block ORV trails around gates and updated signs on the South Elma cooperative road closure. Funding is from an ALEA grant via Eyes in the woods. This road closure is a mixture of WA DNR and private industrial forest lands and is intended to improve habitat quality for elk and deer in GMU 660. Land owners that Bio Harris has talked to are pleased the Volunteers and WDFW have taken a more aggressive approach to managing.

ORV trails around closed gates.
Discover Pass Required on DNR property in Grays Harbor County.

Eco-blocks to keep ORV users from violating the road closure.

Volunteers have created a list of tasks to bring the closure up to their standards. Bio Harris also discussed the volunteer efforts with DNR staff this week. They are please about the volunteer efforts. It is great to have them take an active role in this as this is an area we really need help!

**Private Lands/Access**

**Quality Waterfowl Hunting:** Bio Skriletz continued working with volunteers to maintain waterfowl hunting sites. Thanks to the recent rains, waterfowl use at some sites is already higher than last year’s January numbers.
Bio Harris replaced signs that were blown down during the recent storms and worked with developing agreements with new owners of a register to hunt area.

**Getting the roads open:** Bio Harris spent the better part of two days assisting industrial landowners with getting roads opened for public access. This was a great learning experience. We often do not realize what an effort the landowners make to post signs and manage roads for hunting seasons.

**Firearm Restriction Area in GMU 660 (Elk Area 6066):** While deer hunting with his wife on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands in GMU 660 during opening weekend of the modern firearm season Biologist Hoenes was asked by two hunters to confirm the signs that noted the area as a firearm restriction area only applied during elk season. Hoenes was perplexed by the question because even he as the District Wildlife Biologist was not aware of any firearm restrictions in this area. In addition, the Department issues modern firearm antlerless elk permits in this area which didn’t seem like a sound business practice if in fact the area was a designated firearm restriction area. The signs in question were associated with the South Elma Cooperative Road Closure and said Firearm Restricted Area at the bottom of the sign. When Hoenes returned to work the following week he worked with Private Lands Biologist Harris to clarify this issue. It appeared the signs were outdated and should have been replaced several years ago. Harris responded to the situation promptly and had Eyes in the Woods volunteers switch out the signs.