

# Wildlife Program

Week of September 10-16, 2012

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) Riparian Update** – Biologist Azerrad met with officials from Ecology and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC). The meeting was organized by Lisa Veneroso to resolve some concerns regarding the impending funds for updating PHS riparian. We were also interested in using this meeting to help form a better partnership with the tribes. Also in attendance were Margen Carlson and Tim Quinn of the Habitat Program. The meeting ended with a better understanding of the purpose of the riparian recommendations and some next steps to broaden the reach of PHS. The NWIFC representatives in attendance were very interested in the project and wished to make sure there would be tribal involvement in updating the riparian recommendations. Another result of the meeting was that the funding for the update should soon be disbursed.

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**WildWatchcams** – Chuck Gibilisco, Wildlife Outreach, worked with wildlife biologist Mike Livingston and our volunteers and contractors to repair the highly popular burrowing owl cam. Hours after the cam went back online Gibilisco received the following email from an ardent owlcam viewer.

“Dear Mr. Gibilisco, I'm very happy to see that the burrowing owl cam has been fixed. I check on the owls almost every day. It's wonderful to be able to see these animals in their natural habitat and to be able to do this from New York City is astonishing.”

**Washington Outdoor Women** – Chuck Gibilisco, Wildlife Outreach, worked with wildlife biologist Shelly Ament to select and package appropriate Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) publications and display items for the 2012 **Washington Outdoor Women** (WOW). WOW is a program of the Washington Wildlife Federation dedicated to helping women gain confidence and competence in a wide range of outdoor skills through hands-on-workshops. Shelly Ament is a longtime instructor and supporter of WOW. This year's event is booked, so plan to participate in this fun-filled experience in 2013.

**Upland Bird Hunting landing page for the web** – As a companion to the Game Division's expansion of the private land leases for pheasant hunting, primarily in southeast Washington, Outreach has developed a how-to, where-to webpage for upland bird hunting. The page will feature a comprehensive look at pheasant, quail, chukar, (Hungarian) partridge, and forest

grouse. Each section contains descriptions on hunting strategies, guns, ammunition and shooting. There is also a “Where Do I Hunt” section summarizing the best counties for each species, along with descriptions of the Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, and Hunting by Written Permission programs. In all, this is likely to be the most complete write-up about upland bird hunting in recent years. Look for it on our webpage this week.

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

**Citizen Science** – Chuck Gibilisco continued to work with members of the Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM) team to prepare for the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area EIM training and workshop on September 29. The workshop will train up to 20 participants in the areas of scientific methods and protocols to conduct level II ecological monitoring using protocols developed by WDFW science staff.

**Swanson Lakes Wildlife-Citizen Science** – Gibilisco and EIM team members worked to mobilize the recently trained Citizen Science volunteers to assist with collecting visual data of the impacts and recovery of the recent 20,000 acre wildfire that swept across parts of the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area.

Photo-point plot centers with GPS coordinates were established by WDFW science staff months ago. These will be used to study some of the post-fire recovery and demonstrate the value of trained volunteers to help collect WDFW data.

**Wildlife Outreach Volunteers:** Volunteer Management Coordinator James Chandler provided assistance to the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) fund grantees to recruit and register their volunteers.

James provided Community Event Registration and Volunteer Information System (CERVIS) administrative training to WDFW Wildlife Area Manager Belinda Rotton, who is conducting a volunteer pheasant release project, Debbie Oaks with Snoqualmie Steward Partners, Jim Hulbert with Skamania County’s Cavity Nest Box Projects, the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, and the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) Citizen Science Program with Julie Parrish. James is also designing a hard copy of the volunteer project manual to be used when volunteers do not have access to a computer.



A revised terms and conditions for the volunteers to agree to was prepared and added to the CERVIS volunteer registration page. The new terms and conditions is a simple two-page document featuring positive statements instead of “thou-shalt not” orders, summarizing the department’s previous 99-page document.

**Citizen Science:** Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor continued to recruit citizen science volunteers for the Ecological Integrity Monitoring Project Training on September 29, 2012, to be held at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area office. Becky Andrist of the local radio stations KOMW, KNCW and KZBE interviewed Margaret regarding the citizen science opportunity, to broadcast last week.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

#### **District 1**

**Gray Wolf Management:** District Enforcement and Wildlife Program staff including Wildlife Officers Dan Anderson, Pam Taylor, and Nick Parkert along with District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base responded to a report from the Diamond M Ranch on September 12 of a dead Hereford calf in the Wedge. The calf carcass was closely examined and photographed with notes taken, and reports prepared back at the office.

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Apache Pass Fire (total acres=24,531)** - This fire started several miles west of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) on Sunday, September 9, after a lightning storm the night before. Due to high winds on Monday, the fire spread east beyond Hatten and Highline Roads, and continued toward SLWA. Fire moved onto SLWA later on Monday and passed beyond our boundary late Monday night or early Tuesday morning. The portion of the Hatten-Finch unit of SLWA, which lies south of Seven Springs Dairy Rd., was nearly completely burned. However, firefighters saved a residence and outbuildings on SLWA. The total acreage burned on SLWA is 1,069 per the GIS-based map used by the incident command staff. This fire should be completely mopped up by late Friday, September 14.

In addition to good sage and sharp-tailed grouse habitat being burned at SLWA, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) saw 7,648 acres of their ground burned, including crucial sage grouse habitat. SLWA staff and BLM wildlife and range biologists collaborated on Wednesday concerning habitat re-seeding needs. SLWA will only need re-seeding on bulldozer lines, but BLM may procure up to 100 acres’ worth of grass/forb/legume mix for use on SLWA. Wildlife Area staff would use this seed for over-seeding some of the burned areas, possibly thinning the nine-pound mix to cover more land. This reduced rate is possible because the pre-existing grass will come back quite well on its own, as has happened after previous fires in the area.



*Water-dropping helicopters used the field southeast of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area headquarters for a landing zone (above). Grassy flat located south of old Lloyd Hatten residence (below).*



## **REGION 2**

**Wolves:** Wolf technician Spence assisted Biologist Maletzke in trapping efforts within the Lookout Pack territory this week. We currently have 17 remote cameras deployed in Regions 2 and 3. Work this week again refocuses on checking existing camera traps and placing additional cameras in new areas.

### **District Biologists**

**District 5: Grant / Adams District - Rich Finger / Sara Gregory**

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

**Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Survey:** Biologist Gregory worked on survey quad boundaries for phase II of the Columbia Plateau mule deer survey which is scheduled to begin this fall.

**District 7: Chelan / Douglas District – David Volsen / Jon Gallie**

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

### **Wildfires**

Both Chelan and Douglas Counties are being heavily impacted by wildfires started as the result of lightning storms on September 8. Of the 110 or more fires that started in Eastern Washington, eight of those are heavily impacting District 7.

The Barker and Leahy fires in northeast Douglas County are contained, but not before the Barker fire burned 17,000 plus acres and the Leahy fire burned over 73,000 acres. Six different fires are impacting habitat and recreation in Chelan County, with the Wenatchee Complex totaling over 34,000 acres currently.

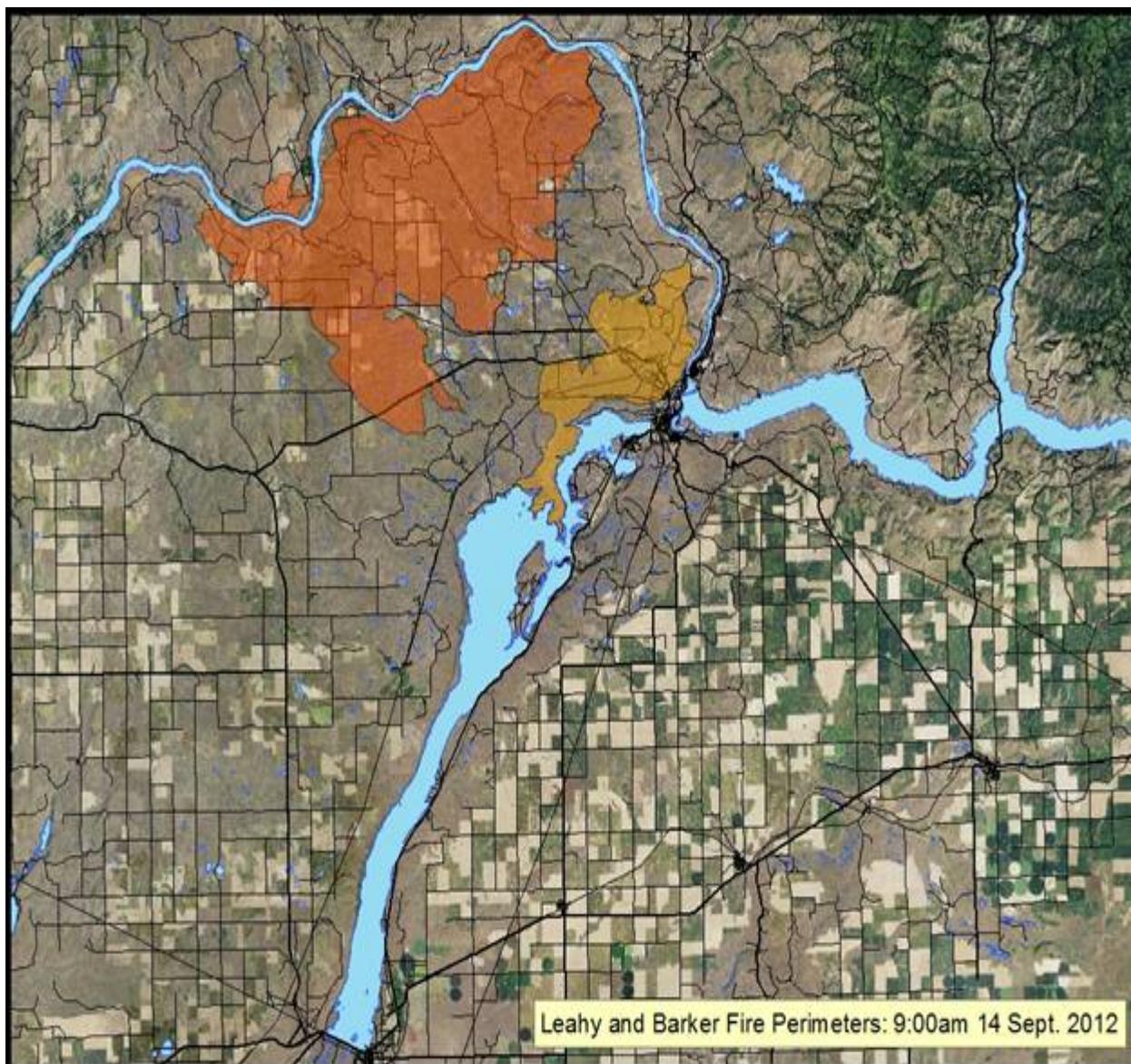
Fire activity has closed a large part of the National Forest in Chelan County. The forest instituted access area closures within the Entiat, Wenatchee River, and Chelan Ranger Districts (see attached map below). Multiple hunting seasons are being impacted as a result and the district office is handling a large volume of calls from hunters.

Most noted are the impacts to the high buck hunts within the Glacier Peak Wilderness and the general archery deer season, both of which are currently open. Closures may affect the upcoming general muzzleloader deer season if kept in place through the end of the month. Hunters pursuing forest grouse are also excluded from a large portion of their hunting areas.



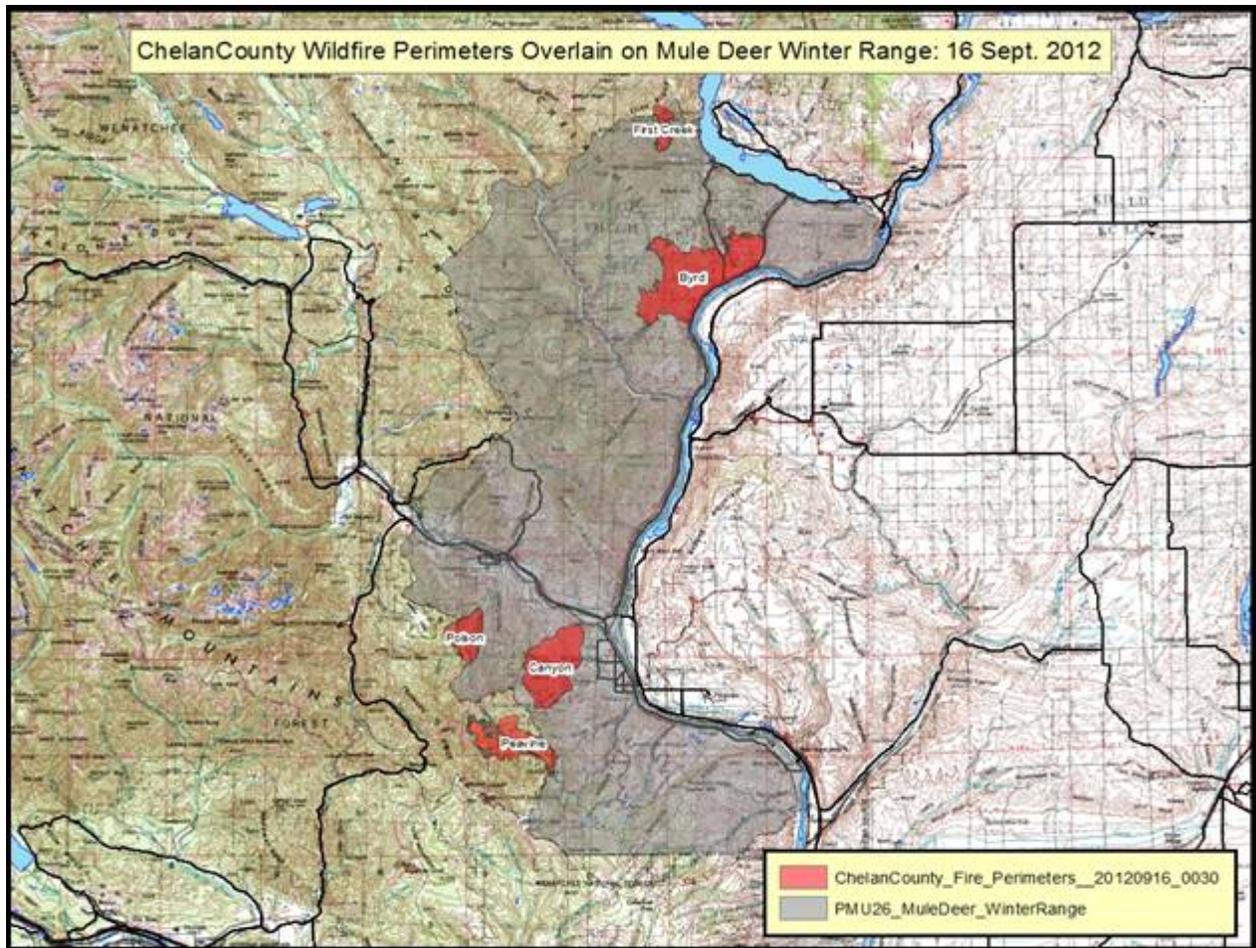
**Douglas County:** Fires in Douglas County have heavily impacted important sharp-tailed and sage grouse habitat. At this point, little information is available on the intensity of the burn across its entire range, so the final impact to grouse and habitat is not known. The long term fate of the areas depends on several factors that we are not yet able to assess.

The fires directly impacted nine sharp-tailed and sage grouse lek sites by burning habitat at the sites. Other lek sites may also have been affected. The leks themselves represent the suite of habitat that support grouse populations, therefore, by referring to leks, we are speaking about the complex of nesting, brood rearing, and wintering habitat associated with a lek site, and the grouse inhabiting that area. One active and one inactive sharp-tailed grouse lek was burned over in the Barker fire. Within the Leahy fire perimeter, one active and one inactive sage grouse lek was burned. Sharp-tailed grouse lost four active and three inactive lek sites within the Leahy perimeter. There are four active sharp-tailed grouse leks that remain directly between the two fire perimeters that were unburned. A map of the Douglas fire perimeters is attached below.



**Chelan County:** Six major fires are impacting Chelan County currently. The Canyon, Poison, and Peavine fires are all threatening residences in the Wenatchee area and as such are receiving focused firefighting efforts. Fires in the Byrd Canyon, First creek, and Pyramid Mountain areas are all active, with some receiving fighting efforts and others burning in rugged remote terrain.

Four of the six fires have directly impacted mule deer winter range. We received the first perimeter maps this weekend, so no formal evaluation has been conducted. The final assessment of potential impacts to winter range and the Chelan County mule deer herd will come only after we have the chance to fully understand the size and severity of the fires. Wildfires are a historic and often occurring event within these habitats. Our existing vegetation communities are here as a result of the region's fire history, and our mule deer herd continues to persist given the frequent periodicity of fires within its ranges. A map of the fire perimeters and mule deer winter range is attached.



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Methow Wildlife Area Complex - Tom McCoy / Rob Wottlin / John Haegan**

**Weather Conditions:** Fabulous sunny weather! Highs in the upper 70's to lower 80's and lows in the high 40's to lower 50's.

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

**Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) tour:** Methow staff led a day long tour for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and WDFW HCP staff to look at several management practices on the wildlife area. The tour began with a site visit to a proposed salmon habitat recovery project on the Methow River and continued on to look at a variety of topics including: stream crossings, upland restoration, hazard trees/fire, forest management, livestock, listed fish species interactions, and grazing. While we didn't have the time to look at any one topic in depth, tour participants got a chance to look at a variety of issues on a wildlife area and discuss how to craft the HCP to best meet the needs of WDFW, while still offering necessary protection for listed species.

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

**Fire camp on the Methow, WA:** In response to three separate fires spreading in the lower Methow Valley, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) approached Methow staff asking for permission to use the newly acquired Geestman parcel for a fire camp. After discussing the details, Methow staff agreed allowing the camp to be set-up immediately and brought a tractor and mower down to mow cheatgrass and other weeds.

The camp would be designed to house up to 1,000 firefighters and all associated support infrastructure. Within two days the site had approximately 500 residents and is growing daily. This is quite the operation if you haven't had the opportunity to see one of these camps set up. Command and communication trailers, semi-trailers of food, site watering trucks, and more all rolling in sequentially with the camp fully operational in one day. The site is working so well that the USFS is already asking if they can designate it a permanent site. That will be determined at a later date. Following demobilization, WDFW will receive two to three years of weed control and full site rehabilitation funding; both much needed.



Two of the three fires have been contained and are in the mop-up phase. The remaining fire in the Gold Creek drainage continues to spread. Extremely steep, rugged terrain, high fuel loads, and limited road access are hampering control efforts. USFS personnel believe that they will be working on this fire until the snow flies.

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

**Weather Conditions:** Highs: mid 70's increasing to the low 80's by the end of the week. Nighttime low temperatures reached the low 40's. Light frost was reported by local residents in higher elevation areas.

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

**Clean Up – Foster Creek Fire:** Biologist Ann Winters and Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings removed dozens of old fence posts, both wood and steel, from within the burn area that were now easily accessible. They also collected the remains of damaged drip irrigation lines and plastic deer fencing from an irrigated stand of water birch that had been planted in 2006.

**Fire Rehab – Central Ferry Canyon Unit:** Last week Biologist Winters identified approximately 100 acres for drill seeding within the burn area. This week she began preparing the acreage by mowing the skeletons of sage brush and bitterbrush plants. This is a necessary first step in order for us to safely operate the Truax grass drill on the area.

**Grass/Forb Orders:** Biologist Dan Peterson awarded three separate orders for native grass and forb mixes to BFI Native Seeds for seeding this fall. Two are destined for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funded shrub steppe restoration sites on the Bridgeport and West Foster Creek units, a total of 350 acres. The third mix is intended for the Central Ferry Canyon rehab work mentioned above.

**Meeting with Foster Creek Conservation District:** Biologist Peterson met with Tim Behne and Britt Dudek of the Foster Creek Conservation District (FCCD) to discuss their West Foster Creek headcut repair project. Within the last week, the District was able secure sufficient funding to cover the entire cost of the project. The funding is providing by the Washington State Conservation Commission and is required to be spent by June 30, 2013, a rather tight timeline. Fortunately, as the FCCD has been pursuing this project for some time, they already have design work and Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) completed. What remains are the cultural resource clearance and a wetland delineation.

**HCP Tour:** On Tuesday afternoon, Janet Gorrell's Wildlife Area HCP field trip group visited units of the Sagebrush Flat and Wells Wildlife Areas. Biologist Peterson, serving as tour guide, took them to the West Foster Creek headcut site and this summer's burns at the Bridgeport and Central Ferry Canyon units. The challenges of funding, timing and permits were primary topics at each location.



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

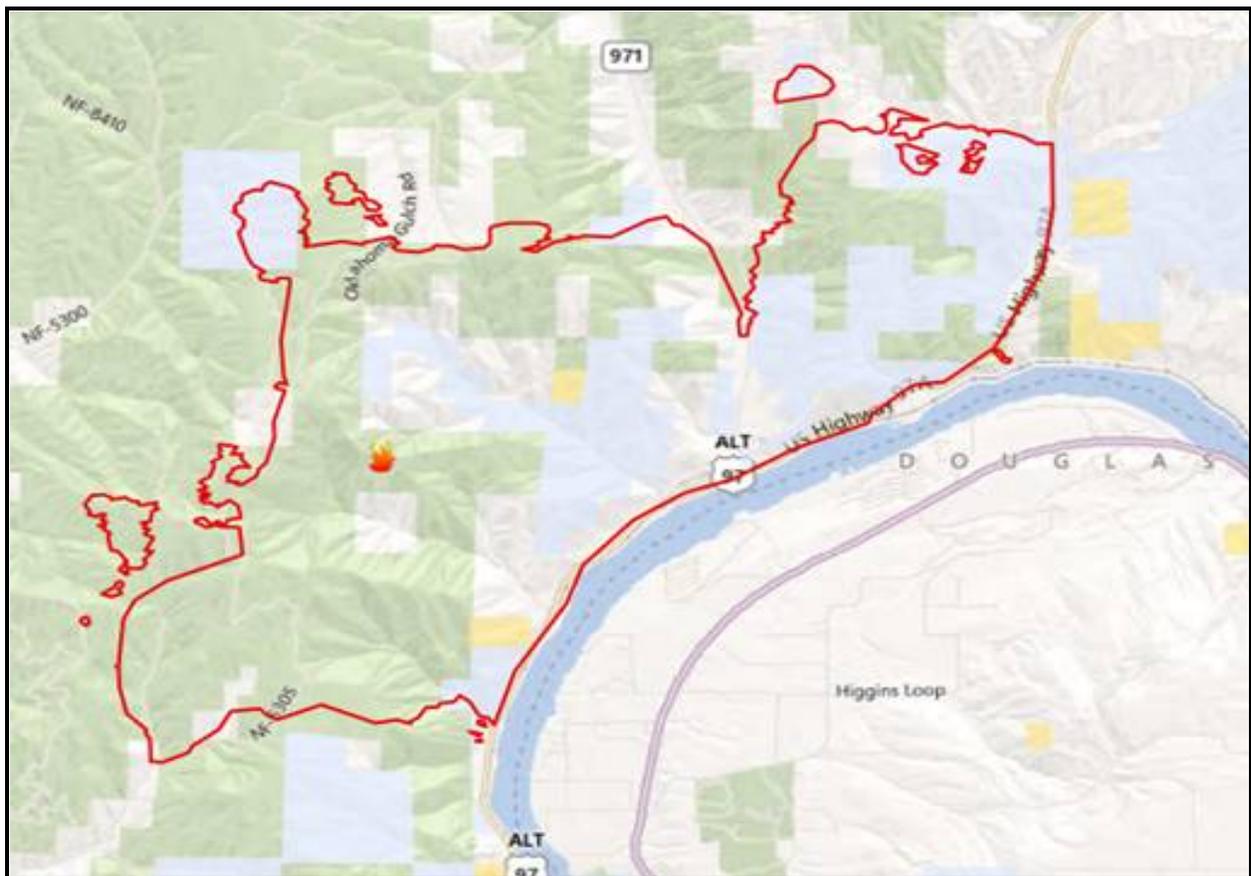
### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Cutchie Irrigation:** Finally, after trying all summer to start up the degraded irrigation system that we purchased with the Cutchie acquisition, we were successful in running water on the north alfalfa fields. Thanks to the Methow Wildlife Area for lending us a 40 hp centrifugal pump. Bryan and Mike were successful this week in installing the new pump and repairing many breaks in the existing main line. The effort this year was important to preserve the water right on this new wildlife area.

## Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

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

The Byrd Fire, part of the Wenatchee Complex, has spread to nearly 12,000 acres and burned right through the Oklahoma Gulch and Knowles areas of the Chelan Wildlife Area. The fires started Saturday evening with lightening storms that swept through central Washington and spread rapidly with high winds on Sunday. The only containment of the fire is along Highway 97A. No assessment of damage on the Wildlife Area has been completed at this time.



***Byrd Fire perimeter September 13, 2012. Light blue: Department of Natural Resources and WDFW, Yellow: Bureau of Land Management, Green: Forest Service.***



*Byrd Fire, September 11, 2012. View of Knowles area to the southwest from Chelan Butte.*

**PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski**

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

**State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE):** Private Lands Biologist Braaten completed marking SAFE leave areas for landowners.

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

**Leahy-Barker Complex Wildfire:** Wildfire in northern Douglas County burnt over 92,000 acres of cropland, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and Shrub-steppe. Thousands of acres of critical winter range for Sharp-tailed grouse and Mule Deer. Private Lands Biologist Braaten and Natural Resource Worker Nachtigal assisted landowners with locating and watering livestock, as well as assisting firefighters with directions to hot spots, threatened structures, and fire containment areas. Several landowners lost homes, outbuildings, equipment, and some livestock. Many of the CRP-SAFE fallow fields to be seeded this fall acted as firebreaks, saving many homes in the area. For more information, see link <http://inciweb.org/incident/maps/3262/>



*Before - Spring.*



*After – Fire.*

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Public Outreach:** District Wildlife Biologist Livingston developed a presentation on shrub steppe ecology and conservation and delivered it to the Spokane Audubon Society. The presentation was well received by 30 or so members and Livingston answered several questions following his presentation.

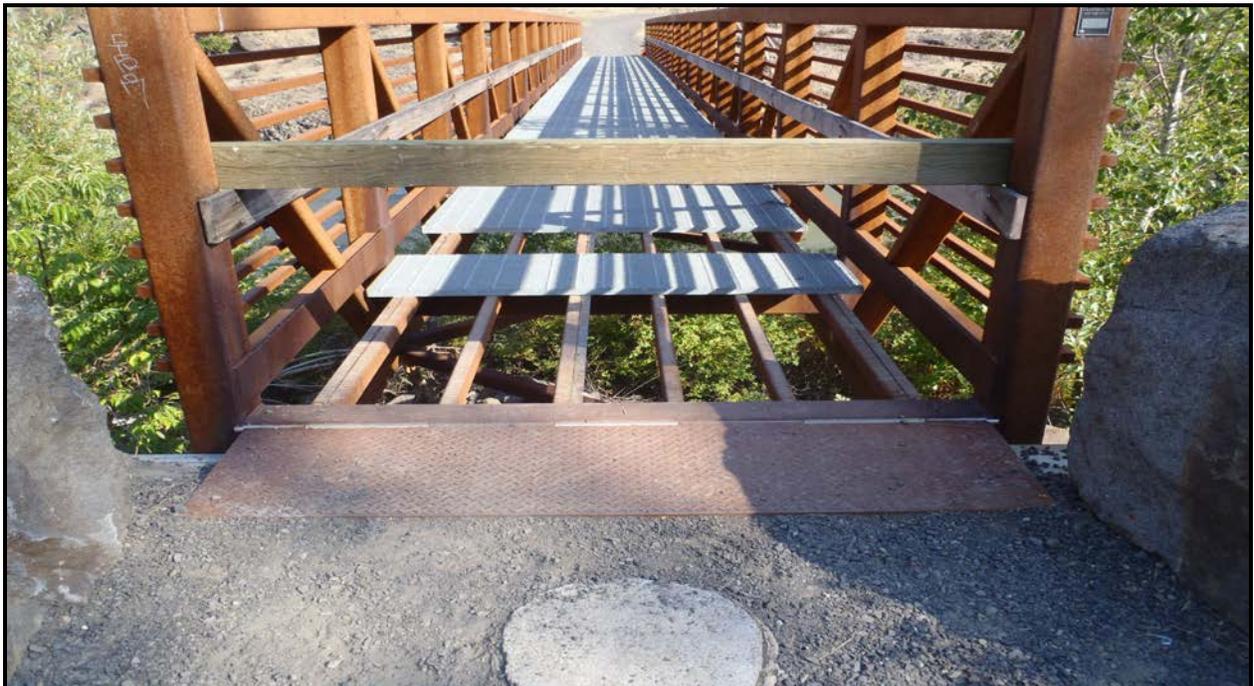
**Burrowing Owls:** The burrowing owl web cam has been down for over a month. District Wildlife Biologist Livingston sent the axis web server to Olympia Systems in Olympia for a bench test and it was operating fine. Livingston reinstalled the server and then escorted a Pocket-I-Net field technician to the site and he determined their radio had malfunctioned. The technician installed a new radio and the webcam is back up and delivering images of the owls.

**Hanford Elk:** District Biologist Livingston met with USFWS Refuge Manager Larry Klimek to discuss the permits issued to hunters for the Hanford ALE hunt. USFWS has been receiving several calls from hunters asking about the status of the hunt. Livingston shared with Klimek that WDFW has been telling hunters the hunt is not going to happen this fall. Klimek confirmed this was the case and asked several questions about what information WDFW provided the permit holders.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Fire Management:** Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Huffman drove through parts of the wildlife area on Monday morning checking for any fires from the weekend's thunderstorms. No new fires were located, but one fire (Wild Rose) was burning to the west of the wildlife area and continued to grow during the week. Later in the week, Manager Huffman contacted the DNR complex manager about all the fires in the area, after hearing about several fires in the Rock Creek Unit. Those Rock Creek fires were determined to be on U.S. Forest Service and were small. The Wild Rose fire continues to grow and is approaching the wildlife area in the Tieton Township. DNR will contact wildlife area staff if the fire spreads onto WDFW.

**Tieton River Bridge Vandalism:** On Tuesday, Manager Huffman received a phone call from a local resident inquiring about missing decking panels on the Tieton River footbridge. Upon inspection, Manager Huffman found three panels removed/stolen from the bridge, making it unsafe for public use. Manager Huffman reported the theft to Enforcement and started the process for a temporary closure for public safety. The PAM form was submitted to the Regional Program Manager Clausung, Captain Mann, Public Affairs, and the Region 3 customer relations. A barrier and signs were placed across the bridge entrance. New decking is being ordered through Capital and Asset Management Program (CAMP).



*Tieton River Nature Trail bridge with stolen panels.*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Boulder Cave Bat Gate Installation with USFS:** Biologist Anderson, Wiles and Rowan all provided WDFW assistance to install a bat gate on a second hibernaculum chamber at Boulder Cave, near Naches, WA. The cave has two main chambers which provide hibernation space for a large number of Townsend's big-eared bats. This bat is extremely sensitive to human intrusion and disturbance. One chamber was gated back in the late '90s and at some point earlier it is understood it functioned as a maternity colony space as well. There is no longer maternity activity there, but the entire cave continues to provide for hibernation. The second chamber is now gated, reducing potential human intrusion for both main areas that the bats use in winter. Jim Nieland, retired USFS employee, led the effort. Jim has installed upwards of 1,000 bat gates nationwide and is an expert in design and installation of these conservation features. The crew collectively lifted over three tons of steel down a hiking path into the cave to provide for the new gate. See attached photo of one end of the gate nearing completion. Also, see below Yakima Herald coverage of the effort: <http://www.yakima-herald.com/stories/2012/09/13/volunteers-and-biologists-are-constructing-metal-gates-at-boulder-cave-to-protect-bats>



***Biologist Anderson provided assistance with the installation of a bat gate on a hibernaculum chamber at a cave near Naches, WA. The cave is occupied by Townsend's big-eared bats which are extremely sensitive to human intrusion and disturbance***

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Cherry Valley Unit Waterwheel Creek Restoration Project:** The Waterwheel Creek Restoration project is coming close to an end. The Wild Fish Conservancy diverted water from Lateral B to the newly formed Waterwheel Creek. After the diversion, construction crews filled Lateral B with the dirt that came from the formation of Waterwheel Creek.

**Lake Terrell Dam Remodeling Project:** The Lake Terrell Dam is almost complete. The existing dam has been removed and replaced with cement planks, then filled in around it with gravel base. The access road culvert has been replaced and the side water level control is almost complete. The Terrell creek channel now has a gravel substrate and wood debris. Final work and native tree plantings will occur this week.



*The Lake Terrell Dam on the Whatcom Wildlife Area is nearly complete. The existing dam has been removed and replaced with cement planks, then filled in around it with gravel base.*



*The access road culvert associated with the new dam on Terrell Creek has been replaced and the side water level control is almost complete.*

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

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Biologist Roozen met with Quality Hunt partner landowners to review agreements and discuss their levels of participation in the program. Roozen created multiple hunt unit maps, continued drafting landowner agreements, and scheduled meetings with partner landowners.

**WDFW Online Reservation System Trial:** Biologist Roozen completed data entry form designed to provide the public with site information on private land properties managed by the Department. Roozen submitted verification of completed data entry to Small Game/Furbearer Section Manager Calkins.

**New Skagit County Pheasant Release Site Preparation:** Biologist Roozen completed the hunt area map for the Bow Hill Road pheasant release site and submitted it to Small Game/Furbearer Section Manager Calkins for final review. Manager Belinda Rotton prepared a notification letter for the neighbors to the new Bow Hill Road pheasant release site to be mailed early this week.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**DeBay Slough:** Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis, Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Curran Cosgrove, and Natural Resource Technician Nick Marlatt from the North Puget Sound Weed Crew, treated the blackberry re-growth on the DeBay's Slough planting sites in preparation for tree and shrub planting this fall. Other noxious weeds such as knot weed and tansy ragwort were also treated.

**Fir Island Farms:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove mowed the parking area at the Snow Goose Reserve. Individual snow geese have been spotted with groups of Canada geese, but no larger groups have been reported.

**Pheasant Hunting:** The Snoqualmie Wildlife Area received 400 pheasants for the youth and senior pheasant hunt. The Whatcom Wildlife Area received 510 pheasants for the youth and senior hunting season. The youth pheasant hunt starts September 22 and the senior hunt runs from September 24-28.

**Tennant Lake Unit:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Port of Bellingham's managers on the Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement project. Phase one work is coming to completion for this year. The swale area has been completed and hydro-seeded with native seed. Manager Kessler mowed reed canary grass in the phase two area.

**Whatcom Wildlife Area:** Manager Kessler completed updating all hunting season information on all the reader boards of the wildlife area.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Samish Unit:** Skagit Wildlife Area staff continues to coordinate with volunteers for waterfowl blind and raptor perch installation. Raptor perches have been installed and the Eagle Scout project has been set up on the new volunteer system. Safety zone and property boundary signs were installed and foot bridges were repaired.

**Wiley Slough:** Manager Rotton met with Land Agent Kye Iris to discuss landownership issues related to the development of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Skagit County Dike District #22. A long term maintenance and operation agreement will be developed for the dike and drainage infrastructure from the Wiley Slough Restoration project.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Hunter requests for information increased this week. Questions regarding locations to hunt and access locations to the marsh have been the focus this week.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Provide Program Radio Training:** Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio training and wildlife radio call numbers to staff in preparation for their use of state radios.

**Wildlife Capture Training – Rocket Netting:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra along with other Region 4 and 6 Wildlife Program staff participated in rocket net training at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The training was put on by the USFWS, which requires training before rocket netting on USFWS lands. The training was assisted by WDFW's Brad Otto who covered material necessary to obtain the Washington State license for handling the rocket charges. Rocket netting is an effective way to catch large numbers of birds, especially waterfowl.



***Assistant District Biologist DeBruyn setting up rocket net charge launched from a standard.***

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Black-tailed Deer Annual Productivity Surveys:** Biologist Holman and volunteers from the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club conducted two evenings of spotlight surveys for deer in Game Management Unit 568 (Washougal). Conditions were unseasonably warm, very dry and windy. Only 66 deer were located and classified during the two-night (five hours per night) effort. Additional surveys will be conducted and data will be compiled for inclusion in the annual Pittman-Robertson report and incorporated into the Regional Sex, Age, and Kill population estimation model for black-tails. Thanks to the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club for their ongoing efforts to promote hunting access, hunter education, and aid in wildlife surveys.

**Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA):** Biologists Anderson and Van Leuven met with representatives of several natural resource agencies to discuss recreation and impacts to key natural resources in the CRGNSA. The meeting was hosted by the U.S. Forest Service and the goal of the meeting was to develop a long term approach to planning recreation in association with important fish and wildlife resources. Since the creation of the CRGNSA, pressure from recreational groups to use state and private lands have escalated beyond initial planning efforts. The multi-agency group was invited to attend this workshop to find common goals and objectives for planning key land use activities.

**Lower Columbia River Dark Goose Analysis:** Biologist Bergh met with Waterfowl Section Manager Kraege and Wildlife Biometrician Knapp to continue work on analysis of the resident dark goose population in the Lower Columbia River. The analysis uses capture, re-sighting, and band return data from 2006-2012. Program MARK was used to estimate survival rates for males, females, those with white neck collars, and those geese without neck collars. Additional analysis and a summary of results are forthcoming and will be used to make decisions about activities for the 2013 field season.

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Watchable Wildlife at Shillapoo:** This past week Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald observed the first Sandhill cranes of the season returning to Shillapoo. Only a couple of small flocks were observed each day, but in the weeks to come visitors should be able to see hundreds of them in the harvested corn fields and pastures on the Wildlife Area. Hauswald also observed a large flock of 70-80 White pelicans flying over the area as well.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**Fire Danger Closures:** Most industrial forest lands were closed to public entry this week due to fire danger. Biologist Bergh coordinated with disabled special permit hunters whose access to the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area was affected by these closures.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Mazama pocket gopher surveys (MPGs)**

Of the 58 multiple-parcel ownerships (corporate/governmental/multi-parcel ownership) assigned to District 11 as part of the five-county pocket gopher distribution and habitat study, Biologist Tirhi has made contact with all that she was assigned and has sent access permission letters to each. Through that process, Tirhi received a total of four “no access” and is awaiting response on remainders. Tirhi will follow up with a second contact, as needed, once directed from the regional program manager. Wave 2 assignments for District 11 are complete and Tirhi and Schmidt are continuing with Wave 3 assignments this week. Biologists Linders and Walker completed 20 survey plots on Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) this week. The majority of plots returned positive results. Access has already been acquired for an additional 17 plots. However, work on the Artillery Impact Area (AIA) is pending Range Control approval due to the unusual location of these plots. Access to Range 50 is approved for Sunday, September 30, and we hope to utilize that date to complete the majority of work on the AIA. Access to the nine remaining plots is pending.

Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis continue to complete surveys in Grays Harbor, Thurston, and Mason counties as part of WDFW’s effort to improve its understanding about Mazama pocket gopher distribution.

Biologist Murphie conducted 11 surveys at designated random plots in Mason County. He reports that the majority of plots had substantial understory vegetation providing dense ground cover and likely low probability of detecting MPGs. He does report that two plots had possible MPG presence. Bio Anthony also conducted gopher surveys and found most plots inaccessible due to fire closure or heavy vegetation. Most gopher survey sites in the district were closed to access this week due to fire danger.

Biologist McMillan conducted checks for pocket gophers at the Obstruction Peak vicinity (up Hurricane Ridge Road in Olympic National Park) and at North Point (in Olympic National Forest west of Lake Crescent about seven miles). No positive signs were seen. Biologist Ament made contact with John Fleckenstein from DNR and had a conversation regarding his pocket gopher project in Clallam County. John has been conducting surveys this season in Olympic National Park. He reported what sites he has surveyed and what he has documented during his efforts. He was successful at trapping gophers at one location in the park. They discussed other

sites (east of the Elwha River) that should be surveyed. John was planning a trip for Seven Lakes Basin this week. Biologist Ament plans to schedule some search efforts for this week.



*Biologist McMillan gets a little help from the family at Obstruction Peak.*

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologist Tirhi attended an emergency meeting of the Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group to determine where 1,500 spotted frogs currently in captivity are to be released this season. The frogs are raised at four partner facilities (Woodland Park Zoo, Oregon Zoo, Northwest Trek, and Cedar Creek Correctional Center) as part of a captive rearing and reintroduction program. The program, now in its fifth year, has annually released captive raised frogs to a re-introduction site on Joint Base Lewis McChord. The working group was notified two weeks ago that Department of Defense has decided not to allow the release of federal candidate spotted frogs onto the facility (despite authority to do so being granted from the base commander). This 12th hour change caused a panic with the partners considering these frogs must be removed from rearing institutions soon. Several options were discussed at the emergency meeting including euthanizing the frogs. At the last minute, Joint Base Lewis McChord changed their original position and the frogs are going to be allowed to be released after all.

**Taylor's checkerspot captive rearing:** Biologist Linders convened a meeting with Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek staffs to review project progress during the 2011-2012 rearing season and discuss potential changes and needs for the 2012-2013 season. In spite of the fact that this was the first season of working with Taylor's checkerspot, Mission Creek did an outstanding job under the tutelage of Oregon Zoo staff, matching the Zoo's survival rates and success throughout all life stages. One potential change to the Mission Creek program will be the elimination of the Painted Lady butterfly rearing due to concerns about the potential to spread Wolbachia bacteria between species. It is not known whether Taylor's checkerspot or Painted lady butterflies carry this naturally-occurring bacterium. However, since the bacteria are still poorly understood and they cause unusual patterns of sterility, the potential cost is not worth the risks at this time.

Biologist Linders co-lead a tour of the Mission Creek captive rearing facility on September 12-13 as part of the National Conference on Sustainability in Prisons, put on with a National Science Foundation grant to The Evergreen State College. Linders also participated in an evening panel discussion as an information specialist along with a broad cross-section of participants from the State Partnership Program (SPP). The panel was well-received by the audience and SPP staff were told it was incredibly useful and informative.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Black-tailed Deer:** Biologists Murphie and Hoenes along with Skokomish Biologist Tropp and Pilot Hagerman conducted aerial composition surveys of black-tailed deer in Game Management Units (GMUs) 621, 624, 627 and 633. Survey conditions were excellent and biologists classified 381 deer and recorded buck and fawn to doe ratios of 37: and 73:100 does, respectively during approximately six hours of survey flights. Several mature bucks were observed during the flight.

**North Rainier Elk Herd:** Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt and Anderson completed the second half of the North Rainier Elk Herd helicopter survey. WDFW conducts surveys and herd monitoring and management as part of a cooperative project between National Park Service (Mt Rainier), Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Puyallup Indian Tribe, and Hancock Timber Resources. Survey results were as follows: 3.1 total flight hours, 11 survey units completed 32 cows, 15 calves, three yearling bulls, five sub-adult bulls, and nine mature bulls.



***Biologist Schmidt conducting North Rainier Elk Herd Helicopter Surveys.***

## Private Lands/Access

**Private Lands Hunting Opportunities:** Biologist Skriletz worked with Phil Thompson from Contracts to finalize five landowners' agreements for waterfowl and pheasant hunting opportunities at 13 sites.

**Quality Waterfowl Hunting:** Biologist Skriletz continued working with two Washington Waterfowl Association Chapters and a Ducks Unlimited Chapter to erect or repair waterfowl blinds for public hunting in Mason and Jefferson Counties.

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

**Washington Outdoor Women's (WOW) Workshop** – Biologist Ament participated in the WOW Workshop in Carnation last weekend. This was the 15th anniversary for the workshop. This is the 12th year that Biologist Ament has taught Wildlife Identification at the camp. All classes she taught were full and one gal was actually taking the class for the second time. The weather for the workshop was simply beautiful. The wildlife trail Shelly set-up (with very fresh samples – scat, hair, tracks, etc.) was thoroughly enjoyed by the students in her classes. Other participants at the workshop expressed their appreciation for the wonderful display that Shelly brings to the workshop. They also conveyed how much they enjoyed the presentation Biologist Ament gave to the entire camp Saturday night on bear/cougar – human interactions. She dedicated her talk (given under the stars at the camp fire) in memory of Rocky Spencer. The gals appreciated Biologist Ament's stories related to first-hand experiences with bears in the wild. There were 120 participants at the highly successful event this year.



*The WDFW display at the 2012 Washington Outdoor Women's Workshop was a huge hit.*



*Biologist Shelly Ament poses with a crew of participants from the 2012 Washington Outdoor Women's Workshop.*