Wildlife Program

Week of February 11-17, 2013

LANDS DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Eelgrass Meeting: Dave Heimer attended two meetings to discuss eelgrass issues. The first meeting focused on the process to develop a *Zostera japonica* science forum. The second meeting was about the merits of supporting a funding proposal by Chris Grue (University of Washington-Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit) to Sea Grant to conduct monitoring associated with imazamox applications by the shellfish growers under a future National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Prescribed Timber Thinning: Newport Equipment finished thinning work on the western satellite sections of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area by Coyote Creek. Boise is going to temporarily suspend thinning for Spring Breakup.

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

Wildlife Areas Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP): Paul Dahmer, Mick Cope and Janet Gorrell met with Jennifer Quan to coordinate a response to a request from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to deliver a complete draft of the Wildlife Areas HCP, rather than continuing to focus on specific conservation measures as previously agreed. HCP staff anticipates finalizing an internal draft of the HCP by May 2013. A thorough internal review would follow in June and July with the goal of the draft delivered to the Services in August.

Forest Management Planning: Richard Tveten revised the draft statewide forest management plan based on work group feedback. Revisions include (1) adding a description of how different components of the statewide plan fit together with wildlife area specific plans, (2) clarification of the level to which WDFW forests have been inventoried, (3) more detail regarding forest management history, (4) added descriptions of the geospatial data used along with a discussion about the levels of accuracy and cautions about how data should be used, and (5) integrated climate change concerns pertaining to desired future conditions and prioritizing work.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

Washington Habitat Connectivity (WHC) Project Implementation - Several collaborators recently described how their organizations are using the Washington Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG) products. The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Interim Washington Science Director Sonia Hall described her organization's involvement in the WHCWG and the Arid Lands Initiative (ALI). This Initiative is identifying implementation protection and

restoration priorities for the Columbia Plateau, building upon products of the WHCWG. She stressed the importance of species models to provide connections to landscape-level processes important to ALI and TNC. Karl Halupka of the USFWS described the strong recognition by his agency of the work of the WHCWG. This includes recognition of the values of the group's products by both the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC) and the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NPLCC), the use of connectivity products in the Columbia Plateau for refuge planning, support for prioritization efforts of the ALI, as well as use of connectivity products in HCP and Section 7 consultations. He expressed the value of upcoming analyses in the transboundary region of Washington and British Columbia, for example noting the importance of this region to large carnivores including wolverine which has recently been proposed for listing. Jen Watkins of Conservation Northwest described how connectivity is central to the mission of their organization. The scientific analyses produced by the WHCWG are used as a blueprint to guide their work.

This spring, a webinar series will focus on organizations that are using the scientific products of the WHCWG. These will include presentations by the USFWS, Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), TNC, and others. If you would like to be on the connectivity group's Full Group listserv and receive notices of these presentations please contact Joanne Schuett-Hames (joanne.schuett-hames@dfw.wa.gov).

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Wolf Presentations: Conflict Specialist Shepherd gave a "Living with wolves in northeast Washington" presentation at the Pend Oreille County Conservation District annual meeting. Conflict Specialist Shepherd gave a "Wolves in northeast Washington" presentation to the Spokane-West Rotary Club at the Spokane Airport Ramada Inn. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed elk depredation issues with an Ione area resident. Conflict Specialist Shepherd then discussed elk depredation and deer feeding issues regarding the same landowner with the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council who had discussed feeding assistance with the landowner. A meeting was set for next week with the landowner and Officer Severin Erickson in Pend Oreille County. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed the upcoming livestock meetings with the City of Cusick and Olympia staff, and returned rental agreements via mail. Shepherd discussed a Conservation Northwest - rancher wolf "debate" scheduled for the Colville Junior High School with the science teacher Janey Robinson.

District 3

Livestock Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) Contracts: Biologist's Rasley and Earl met with Asotin County Cattleman Phil Johnson again regarding our DPCA Livestock contract. After a very good meeting, Mr. Johnson signed our contract and asked for the three of us to tour his ranch when the weather improves. We agreed.

Biologist's Rasley and Earl met with Asotin County Cattleman Tom Hendrickson at his calving site along Asotin Creek. We went over all of the non-lethal parts in our new DPCA Livestock contract. After we all came to an agreement, Tom signed our contract.

Biologist Rasley met with Columbia County Cattleman Robert Sterns. Mr. Stern's cattle operation is located south of Dayton along the North Touchet River. After a review of our new DPCA Livestock contract, Mr. Sterns agreed to sign up with us.

Biologist's Rasley and Earl met with Columbia County Cattleman/Farmer Dan Frame. Mr. Frame's cattle operation is located south and east of Dayton along the North Touchet River, Jim Creek, and along the Tucannon River. After we went over everything in the DPCA Livestock contract, Dan said he "would run it by his Dad and would most likely sign the contract."

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Blue Mountains Bighorn sheep/Golden Eagles: District Wildlife Biologist Paul Wik and a volunteer classified a portion of the Black Butte herd while conducting the golden eagle survey along the Grande Ronde River. This survey requires floating a roadless portion of the Grande Ronde River to survey three golden eagle nests. No eagles were observed during the float and the nests did not appear to be recently repaired.

A volunteer assisting District Biologist Wik experienced a close encounter with 12 bighorn sheep from the Black Butte herd along the Grande Ronde River.

Private Lands

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Improvements: Biologist Lewis had meeting with a longtime cooperator with WDFW that has done CRP improvements as shrub/tree plantings in eyebrows and WDFW field borders. Landowner is interested in new CP33 practice to increase his field border width by 30 feet and quality by use of native species. Lewis and the landowner also discussed using the space as a demonstration area for workshops and educational events to promote field border practice and habitat improvements. Lewis assessed plantings with landowner and will use successful methods on new projects with Pheasants Forever.

Pheasants Forever projects: Biologist Lewis attended the monthly meeting for the Inland Empire Pheasants Forever chapter to make plans for upcoming habitat projects. Lewis also proposed a new project on a property in the "Hunt by Written Permission" program. New projects would include shrub plantings on CRP eyebrows, borders of fields, and a three acre forb seeding. The chapter agreed to buy shrubs and trees as well assisting to get the areas planted.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Cameras – Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer pulled all five cameras that were deployed in prescribed burn units this week and processed the photos. Most of the photos recorded white-tailed deer as well as a few mule deer, a coyote, and a bobcat. While retrieving the cameras Palmer saw 21 white-tailed deer and found one winter killed white-tailed buck. Cameras will be redeployed in other units next week.

White-tailed doe and fawn recorded in the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area HQ 2 burn unit.

Bobcat recorded in the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area HQ 2 burn unit.

Water Access Sites

North Region 1 Access Site maintenance: Access Manager Scott Young visited access sites at Waitts, Eloika, Silver, and Hatch Lakes, along with Ruby (Pend Oreille River) and Audubon access sites for general Maintenance. He also checked snow melt levels at West Medical and Clear Lakes for spring maintenance.

Access Manager Scott Young visited access sites for general maintenance, including Eloika Lake where no one was fishing on February 14.

Heller Bar maintenance: Natural Resources Technician Debby Flynn hauled stockpiled gravel from a location along the Grande Ronde River to the Heller Bar access site using our 10-yard dump truck and 6420 tractor. Gravel was applied to muddy areas around outhouses and placed in heavily used parking areas. There were only about four loads worth of gravel available. Terry Folkins assisted Debby with a rake putting finishing touches on the project.

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

Private Lands

Wildlife Conflict: Biologist's Rasley and Jason Earl held an elk damage meeting with nine Asotin County farmers in Cloverland. We were able to go over the entire new DPCA program. All of the farmers' farm the ground around the south and east end of our wildlife area. We were told they have between 200 and 440 head of elk that are coming off of Smoothing Iron (WDFW) from over one and half miles away and causing a lot of damage to a newly seeded canola field. After a very productive meeting all but one of the farmers agreed to sign our DPCA contract. The other one said he would get back to me. After Officer Nelson and I issued them each a DP elk permit to assist them with their hazing efforts most of the farmers said "they would use their permits as the last resort." All of them said "WDFW bought the Schlea Farm for elk and we should be planting things like canola and clovers on Smoothing Iron to assist them with keeping the elk off of their farm ground." I told them we would meet with Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice to see what we could do.

The 100 yard wide elk trail on Mark Greene's farm coming from WDFW Wildlife area.

Biologists Rasley and Earl met with Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice regarding some new ideas to plant some "lure crops" on Smoothing Iron Ridge. After a productive meeting we all came up with some excellent ideas to assist the Cloverland farmers with their elk damage issues. I also followed up with Mr. Greene with the results of our meeting that same night and he was very excited to hear what I had to say.

Strengthening partnerships: Davis assisted Pheasants Forever with a 500 gallon guzzler installation and shrub plantings in Woodward Canyon north of Lowden in Walla Walla County. Habitat enhancements at the Woodward Canyon site include a perennial grass seeding and over 3,000 trees and shrubs have been planted.

Volunteers assisted with the installation of a 500 gallon guzzler at Woodward Canyon.

View of the newly installed 500 gallon guzzler along with the new shrub and perennial grass plantings in the foreground.

Nuisance Turkeys: Biologist Earl met with Asotin County landowner Mark Bogar regarding the growing number of turkeys along Asotin Creek. Mr. Bogar's property is where historic net gunning has occurred to reduce the number of birds in the winter months that funnel down to avoid snow packs in the Blue Mountains. Earl and Biologist Rasley visited the property to check on the potential for hazing efforts. It is a tough place due to the number of houses in the area (see photos). Hopefully the weather will continue to improve so the birds will migrate back up the canyon.

Biologist Earl also met this week with Dennis Moss who has 60-80 turkeys in his feed lot at the bottom of the Shumaker Grade. Mr. Moss had two calves come down with Coccidiosis. He was

wondering if that could have been attributed to the large flocks of birds (turkeys, ravens, etc.) around his property. Earl contacted Veterinarian Kristin Mansfield to find out if there is that possibility. Dr. Mansfield replied, *"Coccidiosis is very common, especially in young animals in confined muddy areas. The coccidian parasites are very host-specific. The species that infect poultry, including turkeys, do not affect cattle."* Biologist Earl also contacted local enforcement offices to inform them of the growing issues so that they could assist with hazing efforts.

REGION 2

Wolves

A local shed hunter came into the Wenatchee District Office with images of 1.5 year-old female wolf observed in the Entiat Mountains of Chelan County on February 11, 2013. The wolf was captured by Paul Frame in the Teanaway last September as a juvenile too small to collar. Ear tags were placed in both ears and we were lucky enough to read the number off one of the images where the wolf had turned its head. The tag was number 16 and Scott Becker confirmed the wolf's identify from trapping records. The gentleman was able to get images at roughly 20 meters that are stunning for a wild wolf. Her observed location is roughly 43 miles from the heart of the Teanaway pack.

Two images of female wolf number 16 captured in the Entiat drainage on February 11, 2013.

An article on the sighting was published in the Wenatchee World on February 13. We were able to talk with the reporter and give them details of the wolf's history for the story. As is expected, following the article's publication, a number of wolf sightings came in. Two of these, a picture of a footprint and a collected scat, are most likely from a wolf. We have been tracking reports of wolves in the Entiat area for several years and the recent reports and sighting are the most tangible evidence we have received to date. If quality observations continue to be reported it may possibly indicate a pack forming. Until that time, we are assuming that the observation was of a dispersing wolf

Image of female wolf number 16 trapped as a pup in September 2012.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Washington ground squirrels: Biologists Finger and Gregory spent most of the week on another phase of the Washington ground squirrel translocation. Together with Volunteer Becker, they made one more attempt at trapping males. We believe our initial trapping efforts have not resulted in high capture success because squirrels are focusing their energies on breeding rather than feeding. After monitoring 200 traps for about five hours, two females were captured, processed and released and one male was transported to the test enclosure at the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge release site. As of Wednesday, both males were still in the enclosure, but starting to dig escape burrows around the edge. This means the plastic sheeting around the upper edge of the enclosure wire is preventing escape over the top. Biologists Finger and Gregory spent two days at the release site preparing enclosures and constructing artificial burrows and nesting chambers with the Verminator. The nesting chambers are a new addition to the artificial burrow system. They are created by digging an opening at the intersection of two burrows. Nesting material is placed in the chambers and the opening is covered by a plywood "ceiling" and dirt. So, it seems we are ready for the annual Washington ground squirrel trapping festivities scheduled for February 19-22. It should be a lot of fun with 10-12 volunteers signed up each day to help monitor 380 traps and translocate pregnant females.

Biologist Gregory summarized the data collected by Volunteers Michelle and Nils Landis who did an excellent job on raptor surveys around the Washington ground squirrel release site from February 2-3. They traversed a little under 100 miles and identified over 70 birds and four nests. Kestrels were most commonly observed followed by red-tailed hawks. In addition, they observed five northern harriers and two bald eagles. This information will begin to give us an idea of how birds of prey might benefit from the extra food source provided by the newly transplanted Washington ground squirrel population. Thanks again to Michelle and Nils!

Nesting chambers were created by digging an opening, such as this tunnel intersection that was excavated and filled with nesting material. Plywood tops are placed just above the height of the tunnel and backfilled with soil.

New enclosure design for Washington ground squirrels eliminates need to use expensive metal flashing by using six mil plastic sheeting, commonly used to layer crawl spaces. The sheeting is snapped on using vinyl undersill (coincidentally, also used to save sage grouse from colliding with barbed wire fences) which allows for materials to easily be disassembled and reused, which was not an option with the previous metal flashing that was permanently attached.

Mule Deer: Finger provided a response for a local GMU 290 enthusiast unhappy about the regulations of the Desert Unit. A quick summary was provided to assuage this individuals concern about excessive harvest, which has changed little in recent years. Further, Finger provided information about age of harvest that Hoenes summarized from 2011 which shows that folks are harvesting mature bucks.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Buck/100 does	36	44	42	50	32	46	50	54	49	48	30
Fawn/100 does	39	51	44	45	45	41	58	46	40	29	50
% of adult bucks	0.62	0.62	0.64	0.60	0.67	0.59	0.50	0.64	0.64	0.57	0.60
Bucks harvested	18	17	16	19	32	12	17	23	21	21	
Does harvested	17	11	11	12	30	31	28	20	22	22	
Success (modern any buck)	0.85	1.00	0.92	1.00	0.93	0.91	0.86	0.94	0.89	0.95	

2011 Age Data	
Total Buck Harvest	21
# of Teeth	16
% of teeth submitted	76%
Mean Age	4.5
# of bucks ≥2.5	1
# of bucks ≥3.5	15
# of bucks ≥4.5	11
# of bucks ≥5.5	6
% of bucks ≥3.5	94%
% of bucks ≥4.5	69%
% of bucks ≥5.5	38%

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

Wildlife Management

Waterfowl: Biologist Finger assisted Waterfowl Section Manager Kraege with phone interviews for the Waterfowl Specialist position stationed in Ephrata. Biologist Finger and Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Carpenter visited Winchester and Frenchmen Regulated Access Areas and the Mansfield Pond Project to check on the status of the areas, tally waterfowl use, and discuss next steps for habitat management work. Winchester Regulated Access Area had 14,000 dabbling ducks, mostly pintails. Frenchmen Regulated Access Area had 2,200 dabbling ducks, evenly split between mallards and pintails. Mansfield Pond had 4,600 dabbling ducks (mostly mallards), 15 swans, and a handful of diving ducks.

Mallards and Pintails at Winchester Regulated Access Area (above). Pintails lift off from in front of a blind at Winchester Regulated Access Area (below). WDFW will plant basin wildrye (grown by volunteers) and wild rose around these blinds during mid-March to help conceal them and hopefully reduce problems associated with trampling.

Chesaw Forest Thinning Project: Pioneer has completed harvest on approximately 140 acres of the 240 acre project area. Two trucks haul two loads daily to Boise Cascade in Kettle Falls or Vaagen Bros Lumber in Colville. The trucks start loading at 2:00 am and return for their second load at 9:30 am. Approximately 80 loads have been delivered. Okanogan County is under road restrictions at lower elevations, so crews are working quickly to remove existing log decks before the restrictions are put into effect at the higher elevations.

Access

March 1 Opener: Access Manager Joe Graves led a group of volunteers in preparing for the crowds that annually descend on the Quincy Lakes Wildlife Area for the March 1 Fishing Opener. Joe and the volunteers cleared rocks and brush, repaired the foot bridge on the Dusty Lake Trail, and picked up litter from the trail and shorelines of the lakes. The Quincy Lakes Wildlife Area warms early in the spring and is extremely popular for early spring recreation, attracting fishermen, horseback riders, hikers, campers, mountain bikers and rock climbers.

Access Manager Joe Graves led a group of volunteers to the Quincy Lakes Wildlife Area to repair the foot bridge (left) on the Dusty Lake Trail and pick up litter from the trail (right) and shorelines of the lakes.

REGION 3

None

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Research

West Cascades Cougar Project: The first season of capture effort is underway for the West Cascades Cougar Project. The West Cascades Cougar Project is a long-term study of the relationship between cougar population dynamics and cougar-human interaction. Capture efforts have been focused on the Snoqualmie Forest and Marckworth Forest portions of GMU 460, and despite the continued occurrence of less than favorable weather conditions (i.e., lots of heavy rain and no snow), Research Scientist Kertson and Project Houndsman Mel White have managed to capture and collar seven cougars to date (three adult females, one adult male, and three sub-adult males) using a combination of trained dogs and live traps.

Adult female, F4, in a tree during the first season of capture effort for the West Cascades Cougar Project where Research Scientist Brian Kertson and Project Houndsman Mel White have managed to capture and collar seven cougars to date.

Adult male, M5, waiting patiently to be released from a live trap was previously captured and collared with the aid of dogs and was released (very carefully) from the trap on this morning.

An unintended (and highly entertaining) consequence of trying to capture cougars in a snow-free environment is the capture of non-target bobcats. To date, Scientist Kertson and Houndsman White have captured 37 bobcats 48 times. That was not a typo, 37 bobcats in slightly more than two months of cougar capture effort (dogs: 17 captures; traps: 20 bobcats have been caught 31 times). Whether treed by the dogs or caught in a trap, bobcats are released at the capture site without any handling and sent on their way.

Bobcat sized up Research Scientist Kertson prior to being released from a live trap.

Wildlife Management

Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District Biologist (ADB) Cyra began transcribing aerial survey data collected during last week's flights. Flights continued this week with Assistant District Biologist DeBruyn replacing ADB Cyra as one of the observers. Flight will conclude this week weather permitting. SDJV is funding structured waterfowl surveys along the Pacific coast of North America in conjunction with similar surveys on the east coast. Previously, surveys were flown along the outer coasts of Oregon and Washington. Additional information is available at http://seaduckjv.org/

Upcoming Survey Projects: Biologist Danilson conducted the remaining interviews and selected candidates for the two seasonal positions for the upcoming Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) project. Danilson also conducted GIS work to develop new landowner contact list, made final arrangements for a project vehicle, and ordered field equipment. Biologist DeBruyn made one landowner contact to get permission to conduct surveys at a site where OSF were located in 2012. This will be the third year that District 14 personnel have conducted OSF surveys in Skagit and Whatcom counties. The objective of the project, funded by the USFWS, is to further delineate the geography range of this sensitive species to inform the Endangered Species Act listing process. Surveys will be conducted from late February through mid to late April.

Assistant District Biologist Cyra met with District Biologist Milner to review survey methodology and plan activities related to the upcoming Golden Eagle occupancy and productivity surveys. Accessibility to several sites will be explored as the foothills of the Cascades are still deep in snow.

Winter Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn assisted Biologists Murphy and Evenson with aerial seabird surveys in the Strait of Georgia, Howe Sound and adjacent islands.

Sea Lions in the Strait of Georgia awaiting a major herring spawn as seen from a float plane.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: This week WDFW Technician Anderson responded to calls of sick, injured and dead swans in Skagit and Whatcom counties. This week a total of five swans were collected consisting of three trumpeter swans and two tundra swans. Of the five carcasses collected, three are believed to have resulted from collisions with power lines and two died from unknown causes. The number of swan carcasses collected this week is about half the number of carcasses previously collected on a weekly average during the 2012-2013 seasons. In addition the number of calls into the swan hotline has also decreased noticeably.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Powerline suspect	26	5	26		57
Lead suspect	26	1	13	4	44
Trauma*	6		7	6	19
Unknown	15		3		18
Feather Pile	8		4	6	18
TOTAL	81	6	53	16	156

Everett Herald Shorebird Article: District Biologist Milner toured WDFW Big Ditch site and TNC's Port Susan Preserve with Everett Herald writer Gale Fiege and photographer Mark Mulligan. The focus of the article was the designation of Skagit and Port Susan Bays as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site and the upcoming dedication

event that will take place during the Stanwood Snow Goose Festival. We were fortunate in having dry weather and several great wildlife sightings, including a grand display of 3,000 dunlin exhibiting high tide flight behavior. The Herald staff was delightful to work with and we anticipate a front page article later this week.

Port Susan Snow Goose Festival Planning: Biologist Milner met with festival planning partners and spent many hours dealing with the myriad of details associated with participating in the festival and planning the Saturday evening shorebird celebration, which will be the highlight of the festival this year.

WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) Citizen Amphibian Monitoring Project: Biologist Anderson worked with WPZ to review and finalize a number of media outreach and participant instruction documents.

Anderson contacted a number of area local public land managers to coordinate volunteer citizen amphibian surveys on area public lands.

Additional information on the WDFW-WPZ amphibian survey program can be found here: http://www.zoo.org/page.aspx?pid=2004

Urban Bald Eagle Management Assistance: Biologist Anderson checked on a bald eagle nest activity status and major construction project adjacent at request of USFWS regarding their bald eagle management zone. Anderson provided information of eagle activity and project contacts to USFWS. The project was unaware of the occupied territory, current activity, and that they were within line of sight of the nest adjacent to their project and are in discussion with USFWS regarding potential permit needs.

Wildlife Areas

Nooksack Unit Winter Waterfowl Feeding: Manager Kessler worked with a volunteer who used a GPS to ground truth the corn left standing this year for feeding waterfowl.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Herd Planning: Biologist Danilson coordinated with WDFW managers and tribal representatives to discuss issues associated with upcoming elk surveys and harvest allocation. While not part of the actual herd management plan edits, these discussions/decisions are very much inter-related with unresolved issues associated with comments received during the initial review of the draft plan.

North Cascades Elk Herd Clover Trapping Project: Biologist Danilson conducted trap checks, relocated traps, and responded to multiple capture events. Four different elk were captured from February 13-17. This included two cows, a spike and a young bull. As they are not

being targeted for radio collaring, the two bulls were quickly released. However, the two cows were radio collared, ear tagged, provided with medication, and released. The primary objective of this work is to maintain a broad distribution of radio collared elk in the herd as part of the "mark-resight" methods used to estimate the population during late winter aerial surveys. It is a cooperative project between WDFW the Upper Skagit, Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribes.

A cow elk from the North Cascades Elk Herd is outfitted with a radio collar by personnel from WDFW and the Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle Tribes (above). A radio collared cow elk in the North Cascades Elk Herd being released from Clover trap (below).

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: With the upcoming spring bear hunting season, Biologists Danilson and Roozen met on several occasions to plan actions necessary to implement the hunt similar to how it was conducted in 2012. Region 4 personnel will work in the following weeks to arrange for limited public access to private industrial timberlands for both the North Skagit and Monroe bear hunts, and organize maps, access passes, hunter meetings, and related tasks for the upcoming season.

Seattle Goodwill GreenCorp Training – Urban Wildlife Management: Biologist Anderson collaborated with the WA Native Plant Society (WNPS), Seattle Parks and Recreation, and Seattle Goodwill to provide a WDFW Urban Wildlife Management class to Green Corp students. WNPS is conducting a basic environmental restoration training/orientation for Green Corps students. The Green Corps Program – a partnership with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation – is a nine-month program aimed at engaging young adults, ages 18 to 24, who are seeking to further their education and are currently unemployed. Corps members spend 12 hours a week in Goodwill classes learning computer skills, preparing for their GED, and developing job search and college navigation skills. They spend another 24 hours a week on Seattle Parks lands receiving on-the-job training and work experience in environmental restoration and trail maintenance. Educational field trips expose Corps members to various work environments, career opportunities and college campuses. The Program offers a monthly stipend, transportation help and support services for the duration of the program.

The class of 15 or so young students (18-24 years of age) had many questions about wildlife. Topics of discussion were general ecology of common wildlife in area, how to avoid conflict in habitat enhancement work with wildlife (e.g. wildlife damage of plantings, avoiding disturbance of breeding wildlife), and the best question of the day…do rats have bones….yes.

Private Lands/Access

Private Land Wildlife Viewing Opportunities: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto met with Whidbey Camano Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy staff to discuss viewing opportunities on select properties in the Region. If staff remains on schedule and agreements can be made, program development will continue into spring and small-scale wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands will commence. As the program takes shape, Department staff will provide unique wildlife viewing opportunities throughout the Region.

WDFW construction crew finished installing a new boat launch at Lake Samish in Whatcom County on February 15, 2013. The project will also include paving the parking area and installing an ADA loading ramp later in June.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Link participated in a meeting with the Groundwater Technical Review Team. The purpose of the meeting was to address comments on the most recent groundwater study to aid the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in determining whether or not the study met their protocols. EPA is currently requesting support from one of their staff geohydrologists to review the study and comments to make the final determination.

Samish River - Welts Property Wetland Enhancement Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a draft JARPA permit application that is required to schedule a pre-development meeting with Skagit County. This meeting is required to identify which County permits need to be acquired for the project.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: The project sponsor, Wild Fish Conservancy, provided project details to Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw so that Property Acquisition Specialist Iris can begin drafting a land use agreement. Public meetings for this project are scheduled for February 27 and March 7.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Watershed Steward Warriner briefed Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw on a conceptual project at Telegraph Slough, which is included in the PSNERP project package. They identified key people to attend a project coordination meeting that will take place in the next two weeks.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Photography Assistance: Biologist Danilson assisted wildlife photographer Chuck Bartlett to identify reasonably accessible sites for photographing mountain goats in winter conditions. Photographs taken by Chuck and his wife Grace have been displayed on the covers of WDFW's annual big game hunting pamphlets.

Assistance to state Wildlife Rehabilitation: Biologist Anderson provided management advice regarding rehab efforts with waterfowl to a local rehab outfit, per their request regarding the ecology of the species they have in captivity.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Technicians Otto and Deyo continued unit removal and cleanup. Otto and Deyo sorted, organized, and inventoried blind materials and discarded unusable materials.

View of a Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program unit before removal. Note the ducks behind the blind and the unit parking area. Staff arranged for the landowner to add more material to the parking area to allow for additional hunter parking next season.

Private Lands Payments: Private lands staff continued meeting landowners to review and sign cooperator payment documents for Whidbey Island hunting deer hunting access, and both the Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt Programs. Private lands staff will meet the few remaining landowners when they become available.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Radio Communication: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio communication training and assistance to several program staff to meet our contract obligations with DNR.

Lynden Outdoors Club: Technician Otto and Biologist Roozen attended an annual wild game dinner fundraiser for the club. This was the third year private lands staff attended the evening event to inform locals on current and developing private lands programs in the Region and answered questions by the group.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagles: Biologist Anderson continued with early season golden eagle surveys in eastern Klickitat County. This week the Goodnoe Hills and Stegman Canyon sites were visited for the first time as mild weather allowed access to areas generally more difficult to get to. No incubation has been observed yet at any site, but birds are active in courtship and nest building.

Elk Management: Biologist Anderson discussed elk management options with two different landowners that have had long term damage related problems. Both landowners are in Klickitat County and are in areas that get spring elk use on their property. Further discussions will take place with the Enforcement Program to decide if creating and or modifying existing elk areas will benefit the situation.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Relocation: Biologists Miller, Stephens, and Holman assisted U.S. Fish and Wildlife with the on-going effort to relocate Columbian white-tailed deer from the Julia Butler Hansen Wildlife Refuge (JBH), near Cathlamet to Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The JBH Refuge is in danger of being flooded due to the imminent failure of a levy, which keeps the Columbia River from entering the Refuge. Ridgefield Refuge has suitable habitat (riparian forest and low elevation shrublands) for the deer. To date, 12 white-tails have been moved upstream to Ridgefield Refuge and released.

Townsend's big-eared bat hibernacula surveys: Biologists Holman and George assisted U.S. Forest Service Biologist Wainwright and Cowlitz Indian Tribe Ecologist Reynolds with surveys of Townsend's sites. Caves on USFS lands harbor the wintering bats and surveys are conducted every-other winter to document changes in the population. Survey results indicate a stable population of this State Candidate species.

Resident Dark Geese: Biologists Bergh, George, and Miller conducted an evaluation of the Lower Columbia River Resident Dark Goose Program. Representatives of WDFW, USFWS, and ODFW met to discuss the evaluation report. Discussions are still on-going to guide future direction based on the information presented in the evaluation, but 2013 activities were proposed. Regional staff will continue with an abbreviated nest search focusing on dark geese and banding in the summer. Waterfowl Program staff will develop a new survey methodology for aerial surveys in the fall.

Biologist George presented a poster of the Resident Dark Goose evaluation (authored by Biologists Bergh, George, and Miller) at the joint Washington and Oregon Chapters of The Wildlife Society Meeting last week. Attendance at the poster session was good and Biologist George fielded many questions related to this population of dark geese.

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

Private Lands/Access

St. Helens Land Access Program: Regional Program Manager Jonker, Private Lands Biologist Stephens, and Natural Resource Technician Sample hosted a thank you luncheon for the volunteers of the St. Helens Land Access Program. Fifty-four volunteers donated 2,425 hours during the 2012-2013 special elk permit seasons to facilitate weekday motorized hunting access to the Weyerhaeuser St. Helens Tree Farm. This program could not be implemented without all these hours and the volunteers were recognized for their generous help.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Welcome: We are very excited to welcome Natural Resource Technician Anna Sample to the Region 5 Team. Anna will be working with Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Private Lands Biologist Stephens to implement St. Helens Wildlife Area and Private Lands Program activities in District 10. Anna earned her Bachelor's at Rocky Mountain College in Montana and has a diverse experience working with multiple species and landscapes in several places including North Carolina, Oregon, California, and Washington. Welcome aboard Anna!

Other

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: January temperatures and precipitation were both below average for the month. A cold dry period of weather persisted throughout the month with low snow levels, but no significant snowfall below 1,000 feet.

Short-Term Forecast: The 6-10 day and the 8-14 day forecasts are for below normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The one month forecast model shows an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal temperature and precipitation. The three month forecast model is for below normal temperatures and an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at lower elevations, while most areas above 2,500 feet currently have some snow cover, and areas above 3,000 feet have significant snow cover.

Snow Depths: See attached table for detailed information.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations of elk noted to date. On February 5, 2013, a total of 142 elk were present on the Mudflow Unit monitoring area.

Animal Condition: Animals observed to date appear to be in good to fair condition.

Mortality: None to report.

Public Contacts: None to report related to winter conditions.

The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Mild winter conditions dominated District 9. Dry conditions continued throughout the District this week.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to be mostly free of snow and eastern Klickitat County is generally snow free and early green up has started. In the southern Cascades, snow levels retreated this week as mild weather continued.

Habitat: Habitat continues to be open below 2,000 feet in the south Cascades, and precipitation has been below normal levels.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations have been reported for big game this past week. Deer numbers are low in eastern Klickitat and animals are dispersed.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in very good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported this week. Multiple groups of deer and elk observed by WDFW staff this week and all animals appeared healthy.

Mortality: None reported this week.

Public Contacts: None.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD
2012/2013 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH,
NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK
From web pages: http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91
http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3_pl
http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html

SNOWPARKS:

Name	Elevation	12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013	02/01/2013	02/08/2013	02/15/2013
TRAIL OF TWO FORESTS	2,200'	No report	Trace of new snow	2ft of snow	More than 2ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new report	10" new and 2 ft base	No new snow. 2ft total.	No new snow
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No new report	5" new snow	4ft of snow	More than 4ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow. 72 inch base.	14" new and 80" base	No new snow. 84" base.	No new report
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No snow	5" new snow	42" of snow at the sno-park	More than 42" of snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report

SNOWTEL STATIONS:

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-215
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	**Avg Snow Depth (inches)**	12.3	26.8	68.8	103.3	101.6	97.3	93.3	88.4	103.1	98.2	98.4
		Min Temp (F)	30.9	27.5	25.7	27.5	18.7	23.7	17.2	28.6	29.3	26.2	24.6
		Max Temp (F)	43.9	37.8	35.2	34.5	35.1	40.3	47.1	63	39	49.6	42.4
		Avg Temp (F)	36.6	32.7	29.9	31.1	27	33	28.8	44.9	33.8	36.4	33.1
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	68	72	82.9	84.6	85.9	86.3	98.6	97.2	106.3	109.3	109.8

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	**Avg Snow Depth (inches)**	1.1	9.6	19.1	27.8	26.1	19.7	20.1	18.1	25.9	24.7	25.3
		Min Temp (F)	31.5	19	19	22.3	20.3	25.3	9.9	27.7	28.6	12.7	23.2
		Max Temp (F)	48.4	41.9	44.4	35.6	41.7	46	54.4	54.3	42.1	48.2	43
		Avg Temp (F)	37.9	32.7	30.2	31.6	29.2	34.5	28.2	39.1	34.4	35.9	33.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	34.4	37.6	42.2	45.2	45.6	47.7	47.8	48.4	56.2	57.2	58.1

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	**Avg Snow Depth (inches)**	0	0.17	14.7	24	24.6	23.8	22.8	23	28.9	25.4	23.3
		Min Temp (F)	32.4	30.4	30	30.4	21.6	27	12.9	23.9	33.1	28.4	23.7
		Max Temp (F)	48	43.2	36.9	36.9	39	41.4	43.5	55.2	43.7	53.8	45.9
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.4	33	33.8	28	33.3	26.5	33.4	35.4	36.2	35.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	22.2	23.7	29.9	31	31.3	33.8	33.8	34.3	37.3	38	38.2

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	**Avg Snow Depth (inches)**	12.6	25.7	61.3	96.3	93.6	88.4	84.7	81.4	102.7	102.5	103.4
		Min Temp (F)	29.1	21.9	23.4	25.5	20.5	23.7	14.5	25.5	28.2	24.1	23.9
		Max Temp	42.6	36.5	33.8	33.6	39.9	39.4	54.4	58.5	37.8	52.5	39.2

		(F)										
		Avg Temp (F)	35	30.7	28.2	30.2	28.4	32.3	29.1	43.6	32.3	35.3	31.7
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	60.4	63.8	69.6	77.3	81.7	86.3	86.3	87	95.9	98.3	98.9
Name	**Elevation**	**Stats**	**12/1-12/7**	**12/8-12/14**	**12/15-12/21**	**12/22-12/28**	**12/29-1/4**	**1/5-1/11**	**1/12-1/18**	**1/19-1/25**	**1/26-2/1**	**2/2-2/8**	**2/9-2/15**
CALAMITY	2500'	**Avg Snow Depth (inches)**	0	0	13	22	18.7	17.7	15.3	15	15.9	14.2	11.2
		Min Temp (F)	33.8	32.5	29.1	31.3	23.7	28	21.2	32.5	32.4	31.3	30
		Max Temp (F)	47.7	41.2	40.3	36.3	36.1	43.5	56.7	62.1	43.2	48	42.3
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.6	32.8	33.4	29.1	36	32.2	47.2	36.3	39.2	35.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	42.1	44.5	52.2	54.6	54.8	59.2	59.4	60.1	66.4	67.5	68

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	**12/07/2012**	**12/14/2012**	**12/21/2012**	**12/28/2012**	**01/04/2013**	**01/11/2013**	**01/18/2013**	**01/25/2013**	**02/01/2013**	**02/08/2013**	**02/15/2013**
JUNE LAKE	no data	no data	180%	134%	no data	no data	147%	139%	149%	no data	140%
SPIRIT LAKE	no data	200%	410%	134%	447%	371%	350%	286%	414%	535%	486%
SHEEP CANYON	86%	91%	151%	165%	170%	184%	169%	145%	164%	173%	160%

REGION 6

2013 Deer Capture and Collaring: Research Scientist Rice along with Biologists Ament and McMillan successfully collared eight does in two days thanks to the capture team from Northwest Helicopters and ideal weather conditions. The capture two years ago was much less successful due to low visibility of deer in the original target zone, the Pysht GMU, which we presumed to be due to low densities of deer. Another complication to the capture has been that DNR leave trees that can make helicopter maneuvering difficult when in pursuit of deer. During the capture attempts two years ago the Pysht Cluster (DNR managed cluster) capture zone was expanded to include the Olympic GMU between Port Angeles and Sequim where the visibility of deer is much higher. This year the capture zone was entirely within the Olympic GMU between the Elwha and the Dungeness Rivers, south of Highway 101. The visibility of deer is much lower in the western portion of this GMU and higher in the vicinity south of Sequim.

District 16 Deer Capture Crew net-gunned and collared eight deer in two days.

Video footage of the crew in action, featuring Research Scientist Rice and a recently revived doe, is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2nRUpgwGRc

Remote Camera System (RCS): Biologist Harris worked with a large industrial forest land owner on maintenance of a RCS deployment. The equipment was deployed on an active wood theft location that was located, by WDFW Officers, on a road that the landowner had opened to motorized access for fishermen to access a popular winter steelhead river. This landowner has now provided their security with a smart phone to receive pictures from the cameras. They are now notified within five minutes of activity in the area. The picture sent assists them in determining if they need to investigate or not. Prior to the RCS installation, security staff was spending long hours observing the area from a distant landing. Their staff can now perform other duties while the cameras monitor the area.

The RCS system is managed by “Eye’s in the Woods” volunteers. There has been a long and difficult learning curve in managing and deploying the systems. WDFW staff working closely with volunteers identified deficiencies in the system from last year and improved procedures. The improvements have resulted in increased efficiency of the system and reduced time by volunteers and staff in maintaining the system. The landowner’s security staff is thrilled that they don’t have to spend a shift sitting on a log landing.