

Wildlife Program

Week of November 23 – November 29, 2015

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northeast Washington White-tailed Deer Survey Pilot Project: Biologists Carrie Lowe, Sara Hansen, and Annemarie Prince finished this year's helicopter surveys of white-tailed deer within GMUs 117 & 124. This is a pilot study testing the efficacy of distance sampling to obtain density estimates for white-tailed deer. Data Analyst Paul Whelan contributed greatly in preparing and troubleshooting the new equipment, as well as with the flight following for the crew.

Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex – Elk Fence: Wildlife Area staff members discovered more wind damaged elk fence this week and worked to repair it. Dave Meisner and Nick Steveson replaced 70' of wire at one location and found another spot where 150' of wire needs to be replaced. Most of the damage was from trees hitting the fence in the Baker's Pond and Iron Springs areas. Staff will be returning next week to resume efforts to fix the fence. Biologist Woodall picked up fencing material from the George Creek Barn and brought it to the Clarkston Shop for easy access.



Elk fence repair job

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

Wildlife Management

Pheasant releases: Biologists Vekasy and Thorne-Hadley released pheasants before the holiday. Forty pheasants were released at the USACE Holobeke HMU.

Last pheasant leaving the box



GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites

SCWA Barn Roof Replacement Project: Work began on the barn roof replacement project at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Within two days the contractor has removed nearly all of the old roofing materials (aluminum over wood shingles) and then sheathed most of the east side (right photo). There is support framing to be replaced before any new roofing material can be installed on the west side of the roof (left photo). This project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year, weather permitting.



Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict

Damage Permits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett issued several permits for deer and turkey in Spokane and Whitman counties to address damage. Permits for turkey damage were primarily issued in north Spokane County to livestock producers experiencing damage. Several farmers near Lacrosse contacted Bennett to discuss the renewal of Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA), Damage Permits, and non-lethal deterrents on agricultural fields. Additional monitoring and follow-up will need to be completed at some locations.

Outreach/Education: Biologist Baarstad participated in the annual career development day for high school students held at Odessa High School. Several area schools attended to learn about career opportunities in Lincoln County. Baarstad and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Natural Resource Specialist Chris Shafer presented information about careers in biology and natural resource management, and the students asked a lot of good questions.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Grant County Mule Deer Health: Biologist O. Duvuvuei responded to a call from a successful late archery season hunter. The hunter shot a deer that had an abnormal hoof. Duvuvuei sent pictures to Veterinarian Mansfield for analysis. Mansfield suggested that the deer suffered from an infected joint but asked that the hoof be submitted for further testing.



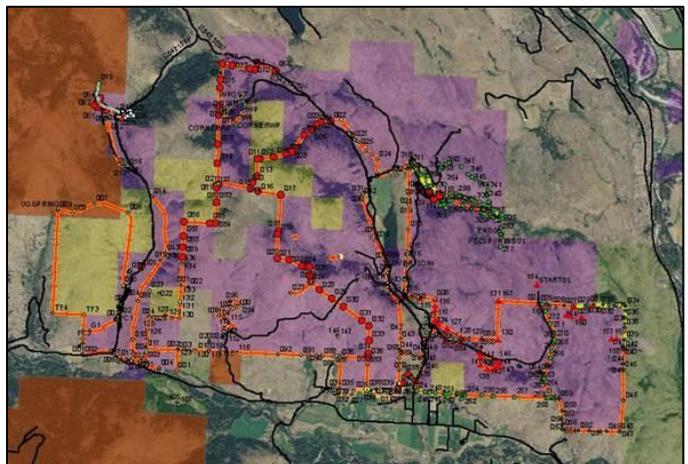
Infected joint that was swollen on a mule deer harvested during the late archery season in GMU 272 – Photo by O. Duvuvuei

Mount Hull Bighorn Sheep Management:

Results from all domestic goats tested two weeks ago for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) were negative. Movi is the infection that triggers bighorn sheep pneumonia outbreaks. These negative results are good news as these goats are in close proximity (nose to nose contact) with the Mount Hull bighorn sheep herd. Biologist Heinlen will continue stay in contact with the domestic goat owners about the interaction between the two herds.

Wildlife Areas

Okanogan Complex - Twisp River Fire: Manager Furnari went out to ground truth an area regarding deer vs. wire fence along a southern boundary line. She met with two adjacent neighbors and walked the boundary line to locate survey pins and GPS fence types. She updated Big Buck's GIS shapefiles, including gates, signs, fence, fire lines, watering points, and other damaged items, and organized & renamed sample photographs based on FEMA's documentation requirements. She created more than 20 maps and submitted all materials (.gpx files, photos, maps) to CAMP's Anthony Sanich. She also submitted the 2015 Fire Damages Spreadsheet CAMP Master file with the Methow Wildlife Area's updated information and an equipment rental invoice for fire line rehab work. She spent some time updating her daily FEMA logs as well.



Big Buck Unit's FEMA project overview map – Photo by Sherry Furnari

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

Wildlife Areas

Quality Waterfowl Hunting Areas: Conditions at regulated access areas summarized below.

Winchester RAA – Adequate water levels in northern portion of the project area. Shallow ponds such as these are beginning to freeze as winter kicks in.

Frenchmen RAA – Full throughout project. Shallow ponds such as these are beginning to freeze as winter kicks in.

North Potholes RAA – As of November 17, Ponds 1, 2, 4, and 5 had adequate water for hunting. It appears that Potholes Reservoir is nearly full and water is beginning to seep into these ponds. Pond 3 was still a puddle, but water levels are expected to rise quickly over the next couple weeks.



Moon setting over western Methow Valley – Photo by Sherry Furnari

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman finished checking the section of elk fence along the Naches River, finding no additional holes. Huffman also used loppers to cut back some brush on the road to reduce scratches in vehicles.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Managers Buser and Sak, along with Natural Resource Technician Medina, finished planting the shrubs for the Duck Club Fire restoration. A total of 4500 shrubs were planted within the fire boundary.

Culvert Unplugged: Assistant Manager Sak and Natural Resource Technician Medina worked on unplugging the culvert under the McGee Road. The beaver dam is far enough inside that we can't get any equipment into it. We had to take turns crawling up inside of the culvert and remove part of the dam by hand.

Wildlife Management

Barn Owl Nest Boxes: District Biologist Fidorra met with the Grandview Highschool FFA, which received a grant to construct nest boxes for Barn Owls. Fidorra coordinated with a hay farmer in Benton County and the Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Both are interested in boxes.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit Sample: District Biologist Fidorra collected a genetic sample from a poached black-tailed jackrabbit obtained by Enforcement officers.

Rattlesnake Elk Herd Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra met with a USFWS biologist to discuss the potential of conducting surveys for the Rattlesnake Hills Elk Herd early next year.

Pheasant Release: District Biologist Fidorra released pheasants at three sites in Franklin County prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Many happy hunters were encountered.

Pheasant Release: Biologist Bernatowicz released pheasant at the Cottonwoods site for Thanksgiving weekend. Due to the large number of local people who have learned of the schedule, birds weren't released until after legal hours. There were 20-25 people waiting for the birds. Most were happy birds couldn't be shot out of the box. A few people were angry and decided to hunt even though they were told legal hours were over.

Weighing Boxes of Pheasants: Bernatowicz borrowed scales from Wenas Assistant Manager Taylor to weigh boxes of delivered pheasants. The contract specification is for at least 2.5 pound birds. On previous deliveries, some boxes also appeared to be short. Boxes were weighed on delivery and the lightest boxes hand released. All the light boxes had 10 birds. However, average bird weight was 2.2 pounds.

Bighorn Sheep Trap: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed the condition of the Clemans sheep trap skeleton. The trap is getting older and is starting to deteriorate. Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff recently replaced a rotten/broken post. Trapping will hopefully occur this winter when weather arrives.

2016 Hunting: Biologist Bernatowicz spoke with Wild Horse Windfarm staff and Enforcement about issues that developed this past season. The windfarm issued 800 passes during elk season and had concerns with overcrowding and safety. Various options were discussed and a potential meeting set for next week.

Deer Area Descriptions: Bernatowicz reviewed possible new deer area descriptions for the district. The issue is that deer numbers in the Yakima River bottom near Ellensburg and in the lower valley have risen and damage complaints are increasing. The idea is to provide general season opportunity for antlerless deer for archery and muzzleloader hunters.

Wolf: Biologist Bernatowicz spoke with Biologist Roussin about local wolf activity in the district. There are no known packs south of I-90, but a lot of interest in following up leads. Snow conditions are currently pretty good for both access and finding tracks.

Colockum Elk Body Condition Sampling: Biologist Moore ran the 2014 complete samples in R to create preliminary results of ingesta-free body fat percentage and gross energy. The equation for partial samples still needs to be found, but hopefully we'll have those by next week. Moore also worked on the dataset structure to enable easy data selection when performing this analysis.

Pheasant Release: Biologist Moore released 120 pheasants at the Whiskey Dick release site.

Quilomene Ram: The final MOVI results came in and were negative.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Grant County PUD installed an informational sign at the Yoyo Rock Boat Launch this week. The signage is a FERC requirement for all access points to the Wanapum Reservoir. Colockum staff coordinated sign design and placement with the PUD.

New Grant County PUD signage at Yoyo Rock Boat Launch, Colockum Wildlife Area



Wenas Wildlife Area: Staff posted safety zone signs along Hardy and Newland roads and the Mellotte elk fence, as well as maps at four entrance points, before the start of the late archery season.



Safety Zone posted around Mellotte area



Turkeys at Mellotte found the safety zone

Maps delineating the area posted at each entrance point

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris did a phone interview with K-Love radio station for a public service segment on the Wenas Wildlife Area. The 20-25 minute segment should

come out in December and will air five to six times over the coming year. It was a great opportunity to reach a local audience and highlight activities and issues on the wildlife area.

Wildlife Management

Deer Damage Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a deer damage complaint from an orchardist near the Yakima River in Benton City. Several newly planted cherry trees have been browsed or raked upon. Several non-lethal techniques were discussed, including fencing, hazing, and the use of Sea Dust to reduce deer activity.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the crop adjuster handling a 2015 elk damage to wheat claim in the Rattlesnake Mountain area. Although substantial elk damage was observed in multiple wheat fields, Multi-peril Federal crop insurance may cover the loss from elk, so the claim to WDFW will not meet the minimum \$1,000 threshold to file a claim.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Hunt Master Kiesel hazed and used master hunters to move a group of 300 elk out of the Reecer Creek area. Elk appeared a few days after the archery season started and after a short time in the area some have been observed moving east and onto better winter range. New elk are appearing in that area every few days.

Depredation: A cattle owner near Cook Canyon called to report a newborn calf killed by coyotes or wolves. Officer Scherzinger and Conflict Specialist Wetzel investigated the incident and found a newborn calf that had been killed by coyotes at the location. A search of the area in good snow found only coyote tracks around the dead calf and in the surrounding field. The reporting party also indicated that they saw and shot at four coyotes feeding on the dead calf prior to reporting the incident.

Sighting: A cattle producer in the Reecer Creek area called to report that some Master Hunters had seen three wolves in the Crinklewood area. Assistant Biologist Moore and Conflict Specialist Wetzel investigated the report and found two coyotes feeding on an elk carcass at the reported location. No tracks other than elk and coyote were found during a search of the area.



Coyote tracks near elk carcass

Elk Fencing Project: A landowner near Tampico called to request 12 more posts needed to complete one of his elk fencing projects. Conflict Specialist Wetzel delivered the posts and helped the orchardist haze over 100 elk that had recently crossed Ahtanum Creek from the YIN. Several master hunters were posted in the area to try to keep the elk out of the orchard until the new fence is completed.

New cost-share fencing that is nearly completed for an orchard near Tampico. Salvaged wire and posts from the Wenas Wildlife Area were used in construction.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY



Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Forester Mackey conducted contract administration work on the Oak Creek Commercial Thinning Project. The last load of saw logs was hauled out. Road abandonment work was completed for a total of about 3900 feet of abandoned road. If weather holds, a couple more loads of hop poles need to be delivered.

Thinning: Forester Mackey met with the Washington Conservation Corps crew and John Marvin of Yakama Nation to go over thinning being conducted on WDFW managed land for wood placement in Oak Creek this winter.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

East/West Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Carnivore Specialist Maletzke with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollaring/adjusting collars on sub-adult males, and potentially collaring yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present will be limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.

Young female bear in a den during recent East West Bear Project work



Bureau of Land Management National Monument Plan: District 13 staff worked with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff members to figure out who to contact and what sort of non-PHS data WDFW might have that could help inform the planning process. This will be ongoing, as BLM is preparing shape files so we know their ownership boundaries.

Marine Waterfowl Surveys: District 13 staff drafted the aerial survey Standard Operating Procedure for the upcoming winter surveys, acquired equipment, and had equipment maintenance performed.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need: District 13 staff worked on producing data maps and other documents for a final report for the low elevation pika survey in the Stillaguamish Valley. As a follow-up to this survey, equipment was procured to establish monitoring stations to investigate pika use throughout the winter months.

A pika at a low elevation site in the Stillaguamish Valley – Photo taken April 18, 2015



Wildlife Areas

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):

Projects Coordinator Brokaw

participated in a conference call with Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) to discuss a grant program they administered that may present an opportunity for WDFW to increase capacity for landowner outreach related to PSNERP projects.

Terrell Creek Salmon Enhancement: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association on Terrell Creek upstream of the Lake Terrell dam. Next spring,



additional gravel will be placed in Terrell Creek to improve the stretch for salmon. Several truckloads of gravel were placed adjacent to the access road to the dam for storage until the project occurs.

Terrell Creek Salmon Enhancement

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

Wildlife Management

Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture: District 13 staff members reviewed and provided comments to a draft newsletter item highlighting a new acquisition on Lummi Island and celebrating the successes of the local land trust and cooperating State agencies in conserving valuable properties on the island.

Wildlife Areas

Waterfowl Season: Cosgrove and Meis continued to monitor water levels, waterfowl use, and hunter use at the Island and Samish units. Cosgrove collected hunter survey cards from the Samish Unit. Cosgrove and Meis noted that ducks have been feeding heavily at night in several areas on the Island Unit, feeding mostly in barley and millet areas, as well as areas of yellow nutsedge. Water levels on the Island Unit are generally lower than last week, but sheet water areas have increased due to the heavy feeding.



Large flock of snow geese utilizing the back fields of the Snow Goose Reserve

Barnfield Tidegate and North Leque Permitting: Projects Coordinator Brokaw received news from the Office of Financial Management that funds in the WDFW 2015-2017 Capital Budget have been approved to fund a project on Leque Island that is north of Highway 532 that will improve tidal flow to the area. This project may be used as compensatory mitigation for a tidegate replacement project in the Skagit delta.

Replacement Lands Team: Team members identified another property in the Samish area that is for sale and could potentially serve as a waterfowl forage and hunting site. Projects Coordinator Brokaw added the property to the list of properties that are under consideration and the team set a meeting date for February to prioritize them.

Pheasant Hunting: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and his two pheasant teams released over 800 pheasant at the four pheasant release units for the final week of pheasant

season. Feedback from hunters in the field reflects a high percentage of support and appreciation for all of the improvements that have occurred over the past few years. Manager Kessler received 420 pheasants from the game farm and released them into the pheasant pens at Lake Terrell. He worked with volunteers to release pheasants on all three sites, including Lake Terrell, Intalco,



and British Petroleum for the last releases of the season. Thanksgiving Day and the whole weekend were very busy on all three sites.

Thanksgiving and the whole weekend were very busy on Region 4 pheasant release sites

Nooksack Unit Parking Area: Manager Kessler met onsite with the Whatcom County Engineer who managed the Nooksack River Bridge repainting project.

They discussed the impacts to the parking area due to the project. The county will reseed grass on the trail to the dike top, fill up all the potholes in the parking area, and replace the cable gate on the dike top trail. This work will be completed as soon as possible.

The Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park Annual Business Meeting: Manager Kessler attended the annual business meeting of the non-profit group, the Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park. The planned events for 2016 were discussed and tentative dates picked. They included the Swan Watch, Skins & Skulls presentation, Elementary School Boardwalk Tours, Bat Watch, and Hovander Barn Tour.

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo conducted use surveys at Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, taking note and resolving any issues.

A recently retired Mr. Stick utilizing a waterfowl quality hunt site in Whatcom County



GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with a Skagit County landowner and began finalizing paperwork for elk exclusionary fencing. The fencing contract is anticipated to be completed by December 15. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and District Biologist Yarborough toured elk trapping sites in Skagit County and spoke with landowners about accessing trap sites. They finished the day by assisting Natural Resource Technician Cogdal with elk fencing work in the Day Creek area. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received a complaint of elk damage to fences and crops in the Acme area of Whatcom County. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell responded to a landowner complaint regarding nuisance turkeys at a private residence in Snohomish County. It was determined that the turkeys were not causing damage to the property. Supervisor Caldwell provided the landowner with information on how to mitigate turkey use of their property and referred the landowner to a local Wildlife Control Operator for further assistance. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman monitored the elk activity in the area and visually counted 142 elk in the Acme-Saxon area. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman spoke with the landowner and will be issuing Damage Prevention Permits. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman will also be working with master hunters to repair damaged fences in the area. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received a report from WILDCOMM of a coyote that appeared to be sick or injured on a property in Skagit County. It was reported that the coyote was a potential threat to domestic pets.

Biologist Smith continued to work with a landowner in North Bend with elk damage to grass crops and fencing. Non-lethal measures to deter elk from entering the property and hunting safety have been discussed. An electrified fladry fence line has been unsuccessful at deterring elk as of late, presumably due to the poor condition of the existing fencing below. Smith also monitored remote cameras documenting elk use of agricultural fields in two areas.

Electrified fladry fence line above existing two-strand hot-wire fencing used in an attempt to deter elk from entering pasture



Witman responded to call regarding a coyote under a landowner's staircase

Region 4 Hunting: Biologists responded to many callers with questions about hunting opportunities and upcoming hunting seasons.

Wildlife Areas



DeBay's Slough: Meis and Cosgrove monitored public use and swan use on the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Cosgrove has yet to see swans feeding in the Game Reserve field, but have been using the slough as a night roost. Hunter use of the area has increased after the flooding last week closed the area. Meis created a draft bid packet DeBay's Slough agricultural lease agreement. The site has a share crop lease agreement that is coming up for renewal this season and will be put out for bid.

Island Unit: Rotton, Meis, and Cosgrove attended a meeting regarding continued cattail control efforts on the south fork Skagit River estuary hosted by North Sound Weed Crew supervisor Dave Heimer. During the meeting, the group discussed past activities and the next steps for the project. Rotton and Meis met with representatives from the Island volunteers and Wetland Recovery LLC to discuss the barge lease agreement and the budget needs and construction proposal for the Island Unit tidegate repair.

Skagit Headquarters: Meis and Cosgrove moved three large logs that were lodged in front of the moorage facility on the south fork of the Skagit River. In addition, Meis and Cosgrove moved a log that was blocking one of the pump station flap gates. Rotton continued to monitor Wiley Slough pump station operations. Rotton and RCO Grant Manger Marc Duboiski visited the construction site of the Wiley Slough Tidegate repair project.

Fir Island Farms: Rotton reviewed the Fir Island Farms agreements regarding the process for the transfer of operational control of certain facilities and right of way amendments.

Leque Island: Meis and Rotton checked hunter use, monitored water conditions, and picked up trash on the Leque Island Unit and the Big Ditch access.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued monitoring the Cherry Valley, Stillwater, and Crescent Lake units as flood waters receded this past week. Cherry Valley was hit the hardest, but drained out in time for the holiday weekend hunt. Manager Boehm informed Enforcement and our Customer Service team of the news.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted with a class conducted by Chief Instructor Bill Vincent at the Region 4 office. Demand for classes remains high, as this class had a full waiting list with several students traveling a great distance across the state to take the class. Chief Instructor Vincent did a good job and was supported by a good team of instructors. Coordinator Dazey answered a new instructor's question on what supplies were needed to conduct a hunter education class. Dazey activated one new class during the week. Dazey sent out one new instructor applicant packet and responded to a request from a possible new instructor for an application. Dazey met this possible applicant while traveling to assist the Chief Instructor on Lopez Island and, after a long conversation, he showed great interest. Dazey left his card and he emailed two days later requesting the application. He is in the Vancouver area so follow up will be from the Region 5 coordinator.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Aircraft Egress and Underwater Breathing Apparatus training:

District 13 staff members joined other WDFW staff members for an egress training session in preparation for winter aerial surveys.

WDFW staff experiencing the 'dunker' during egress training



Swan Technician Training:

Natural Resource Technician Otto worked with Scientific Technician Trejo showing him swan mortality and use sites across Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. While working in the field they collected six swans.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Scotch Broom Mowing: Assistant Manager Sample continues to mow standing dead scotch broom plants on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area that had been sprayed last fall with an aerial herbicide application. Mowing this area opens up new ground for native grasses, trees, and shrubs to grow, providing additional forage for wildlife. The majority of the scotch broom plants were easily mowed using the rotary mower. However, very tall (old growth) and green plants could not be mowed due the thickness of the stems and stronger structure of green plants. Mowing these areas uncovered several 4-5 foot tall conifer saplings, which were

previously competing with three to six foot tall densely spaced scotch broom patches. Areas of scotch broom that are still green are now easier to access and will be sprayed with an herbicide application.



Mowing standing dead scotch broom plants on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

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

Wildlife Management

2016 Hunting Seasons: Regional Wildlife Biologists and Conflict Specialists worked with Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker to compile and submit recommendations for the 2016-17 Big Game Season. Adjustments to dates, tag numbers, and hunts designed to address wildlife damage were made. However; changes from the basic structure of the 2015 Big Game Season will be minimal, as 2016 represents the central year within the 2015-17 three year season setting cycle. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will make the final determination to establish the 2016 season during their April 2016 meeting.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Goose Hunt: The 2015-2016 southwest Washington goose hunting season continued this week. WDFW Biologist Butler and Technician Miller traveled throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field. There was a mix of pheasant, duck, and goose hunting activity observed throughout the past week. With clear skies, hunters reported seeing mostly high flying geese. Hunters contacted continue to be by and large very cooperative on both private and public lands. Many have expressed support for the elimination of the check station requirement and are supportive of the field checks.

As of Sunday, November 29, approximately 78 hunters were contacted and 74 geese were checked. A total of six dusky Canada geese are known to have been harvested in the area. Hunter checks will continue to be used to monitor the effectiveness of the 2015-2016 management strategy. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet for further details.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Pheasant Release: Pheasants were released at three sites in Klickitat County this week. Staff members distributed 64 birds to the Hatchery Unit, 24 birds to the Gun Club site, and 16 to the Finn Ridge Road site. Unfortunately, the order was short by at least six birds. A few hunters were present at two of the sites but everyone waited until the release was finished to resume hunting. Volunteers Wheelhouse and Morrison helped with the release once again and we thank them for their assistance.



Pheasant release at the Hatchery Unit

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

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

WDFW Sign Restoration: Last week, Assistant Manager Hand and Technician Fox installed the WDFW wooded sign in the South Unit of Shillapoo Wildlife Area just off Regier Highway. The sign was damaged earlier in the spring due to either vandalism or inclement weather. Assistant Manager Hand, along with help from a local sign shop, was able to repaint it and bring back some new life.



Revamped WDFW wooded sign in the South Unit of Shillapoo Wildlife Area

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a caller reporting heavy elk damage to her property in Randle. She lives in a location that has covenants that protect elk and they are not allowed to even haze them. Conklin will do some outreach to the president of the Home Owners Association to introduce herself and offer some advice. In addition, Conklin met with a land owner in Randle who would like to begin coordinating damage pool hunters during the holiday season. The landowner will be utilizing youth hunters to control elk damage.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle: District 11 staff members began reviewing radiographs and photographs of turtles with early stage Ulcerative Shell Disease. One objective is to determine what percent of young turtles have the disease prior to the onset of clinical signs. A second objective is to review photos from past years of older turtles with late stage Ulcerative Shell Disease to determine at what age the disease first developed. Biologists and veterinarians can then focus research on the appropriate stage of the disease with the goal of having a higher probability of determining its cause.

Goose Area 2B Monitoring: On Saturday, Biologist Michaelis conducted goose hunter bag checks in Goose Management Zone 2B. A total of eight hunters were contacted either by phone interviews or direct contacts. Those hunters reported a total of 10 geese harvested. Pheasant hunters and late archery deer hunters were contacted as well. There appeared to be many more geese in and around Pacific County that day.

Capitol Forest Deer Project: Biologist Michaelis responded to a request from Scientist Rice regarding a marked doe which had ceased sending location data near the end of the modern firearm general deer season. The area where a signal last transmitted was intensely searched and there was no VHF contact with collar. The fate of this individual doe may be unknown.

On the way out along the McLane nature trail, Biologist Michaelis came across a group of Chinook middle school students on a field trip. He gave the group an impromptu radio tracking class and discussed some of the objectives of WDFW deer project. It was a very refreshing experience and quite a pleasant treat since he himself attended the same middle school.

Skokomish Elk Collaring: As part of an ongoing monitoring effort, Biologist Murphie provided aerial darting assistance to Skokomish Tribal biologists while collaring elk in the Skokomish GMU. Our objective was to deploy two collars in each of an expected four herds. Six adult cows associated with three herds were fitted with either a standard VHF or GPS collar and released. No other herds were sighted.

Elk Hoof Disease: The hoof collection effort in Williams Creek (GMU 673) was pretty successful. The final tally from the Williams Creek sampling effort is 22 samples submitted by 45 antlerless elk permit hunters (In 2014, 29 elk were reported as harvested under the same permit). Some minor improvements to the sampling logistic were discussed and may be implemented in future years.

Taylor's Checkerspot Recovery Activities: Biologist Linders has been deeply engaged in preparing presentations for and participating in numerous lengthy meetings (CPOP conference, Taylor's checkerspot WDFW Science Team, Taylor's checkerspot working group, Taylor's host plant research, internal grants process, etc.) related to annual reporting, strategizing actions for

2016, and identifying high priority projects for grant proposal submission. All told, Linders wrote and presented six presentations over a four week period. In addition, she has researched and presented two new grant proposal ideas along with the existing projects. All annual reports for the Taylor's checkerspot reintroduction project from 2007-2015 have been submitted for uploading to the CPOP web site (<http://cascadiaprairieoak.org/technical-library>).

Taylor's Checkerspot Genetics: Biologist Linders met with Todd Seamons, who recently replaced Ken Warheit as the lead for WDFW's genetics lab. They met to discuss a proposal to look at the degree of genetic transfer between the source population of butterflies at Range 76 and the reintroduction site at Range 50, as well as the balance of matriline in the existing population relative to what was transferred via captive rearing. The population at Range 76 is the only available source in South Puget Sound, so transferring the available genetic diversity to reintroduced populations is an important final measure of reintroduction success. Range 50 is expected to reach its population target for the fifth consecutive year in 2016, making it the first reintroduction site to meet the definition for an established population.

Private Lands /Conflict

Deer Wrapped in Wire: Conflict Specialist Blankenship and Enforcement personnel received reports of a juvenile blacktail buck with a metal wire wrapped around its chest near the town of Steilacoom. Specialist Blankenship was able to locate the deer and found that the metal wire was wrapped tightly around its chest and would be unable to remove it on its own. Blankenship advised that the wire, if not removed, could cause serious health complications in the near future. Enforcement Officer Prater and Specialist Blankenship remained in contact with the homeowner to know when the deer was in the area. A week had passed by the time the deer presented an opportunity for immobilization and removal of the metal wire. When the wire was removed, the deer had suffered several minor lacerations from the wire rubbing on its hide. The homeowner was very appreciative of the coordination and efforts by WDFW staff members to help remove the wire from the deer.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance (PCBA)—Lower White River Biodiversity Management Area (LWR BMA): Biologist Tirhi and members of the PCBA hosted a presentation attended by King and Pierce counties, as well as the cities of Auburn, Pacific, Sumner, and Buckley, to present the final draft Lower White River Biodiversity Management Area Stewardship Plan. The Plan highlights the science that went into designating the Pierce County Biodiversity Network and the LWR BMA in particular. It includes short and long term actions those communities and jurisdictions can provide to preserve and enhance biodiversity. The 45 minute presentation was followed by a 45 minute open discussion in which the jurisdictions discussed activities currently taking place that impact biodiversity and actions they'd like to collectively work on towards biodiversity conservation in the LWR. The meeting

was very productive and the group expressed an interest in meeting quarterly to plan on the ground actions.

Prairie Species Habitat

Conservation Plan: Biologist Tirhi spent considerable time reviewing the Kaufman Habitat

Conservation Plan for various prairie species. This is the first HCP for state and now federally listed prairie species in the South Puget Sound region. The draft proposes to replace some 200 acres of impacted habitat with approximately 80 acres of prairie reserve. While the concept is worthy, Tirhi had some concerns with the means by which impacted habitat was calculated, and the authors attempt to “sell” the inadequacy of the impacted habitat. Regardless, Tirhi felt the establishment of larger, contiguous blocks of reserve have high value, especially once restored for prairie species.

