Wildlife Program

Week of October 12 – October 18, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Cattle Depredation: Biologist Shepherd confirmed a wolf depredation injury on a calf in the Smackout pack territory and concluded the investigation report.

District 1 Wolf Management Meeting: Supervisor McCanna and Acting Carnivore Section Manager Becker facilitated the first District 1 wolf team meeting. This will be a weekly meeting to ensure all staff involved with wolves are sharing information and sharing upcoming activities. This coordination will assist in responding to public inquiries or sharing information with WDFW.

Producer Contacts: Biologist Shepherd and Natural Resource Worker Weatherman contacted producers in the Smackout area concerning recent wolf activity. Natural Resource Worker Weatherman contacted producers in other state and federal grazing allotments in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. The discussions centered on the number of cattle removed and remaining on the grazing allotments. Natural Resource Worker Weatherman also reported any cattle observed to the respective producer.

Range Rider Contacts: Range riders were present in the North Fork Chewelah Creek and other US Forest Service (USFS) allotments. Biologist Shepherd and Natural Resource Worker Weatherman contacted range riders in the North Fork Chewelah Creek and other allotments.

Wolf Territory Monitoring: Natural Resource Worker Weatherman patrolled USFS grazing allotments in west Pend Oreille County for any cattle remaining in the Dirty Shirt pack home range.

Meetings: Biologist Shepherd and Natural Resource Worker Weatherman attended three District 1 meetings, including a Wolf Management Meeting, Bear and Cougar Management Meeting, and Grizzly Bear Information and Education Meeting.

Huckleberry Wolf Pack: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett updated the WDFW Huckleberry Chronology after contact was made with two producers in the area. Bennett also contacted Commissioner Dashiell to schedule an appointment to meet to discuss possible producers in Stevens County that may need to be contacted by WDFW.

Representative and Commissioner Wolf Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd participated on the wolf conference call. Several items were discussed, with a potential in-person meeting being held to discuss operator changes due to wolves being on the landscape and how WDFW staff ramped up involvement to assist operators.

Tucannon Pack: Biologist Earl travelled to Dayton to assist Conflict Specialist Rasley with locating and informing landowners in Columbia County who have cattle in the area where the pack was currently located. Earl and Rasley attempted to track the collar on the WDFW web site but it was down as of 12:00 a.m. on October 13.

OR14: While in Dayton, Biologist Earl met with Conflict Specialist Rasley and Sergeant Mosman and assisted them with the investigation in the shooting of OR14.

REGION 1

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

Wildlife Management

Deer Hunter Check Stations: District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base and Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Annemarie Prince prepared equipment and supplies along with staff coordination for operating deer hunter check stations within District 1 on weekend days within the modern firearm deer season. Staff worked with Wildlife Veterinarian Dr. Kristin Mansfield in implementing an experimental procedure for monitoring the incidence of the Bluetongue virus in hunter harvested deer. The first hunter check station of the season occured on Sunday, October 18.

Northeast Washington check station by the numbers:

Deer Park, October 18, 2015
Total hunters: 88
White-tails checked: 19
Mule deer checked: 3
Other game: 1 bobcat and 1 black bear

Chattaroy, October 18, 2015
Total hunters: 74
White-tails checked: 14
Other game: 1 moose and various waterfowl

Deer Park, October 12, 2014
Total hunters: 81
White-tails checked: 8
Mule deer checked: 1
Other game: ruffed grouse, waterfowl, and 1 black bear

Chattaroy, October 12, 2014
Station did not run on this date

For a historical contrast at Deer Park, the check station run on October 15, 1989 had 705 total hunters with 69 deer checked, including 46 white-tails and 18 mule deer. Back then, of course, hunters were legally required to stop at check stations on state highways.

First time deer hunter and her GMU 117 white-tailed doe – Photo by C. Donley

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

Wildlife Management

City Black Bear: Biologist Lowe assisted Enforcement staff with a response to a bear in a tree in a busy residential area of north Spokane. The bear attracted a huge crowd, as well as several news stations. Local Sheriff's deputies assisted with crowd control as the young male bear was darted in the tree. Officers Langbehn and Kirsch climbed up to maneuver the bear through the branches as it was lowered to the ground. Staff took advantage of the media to spread the word about securing food and attractants, especially bird feeders.

Officers Kirsch and Spurbeck and Karelian bear dog Jax educating the public (left), young male bear ready for transport (right), Sergeant Sprecher being interviewed by a news station (below).

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

<u>Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites</u>

Broken Bear Trap: Assistant Wildlife Area Managers Mike Finch and Daro Palmer met at the shop on Thursday morning to assist with repairs for Sgt. Taylor's dysfunctional bear trap. The repairs consist of welding a new piece of mesh screen inside the grate in order to keep the bears from getting their teeth or claws stuck. A new bait door and hitch are also to be welded onto the trap.

The trap before any maintenance

Finch is starting to cut the shape for the mesh to go inside the grate

Finished product, mesh welded in over the grate with the bait door cut open

Hitch welded on with chains, will install a jack stand once the welds are finished

REGION 2

Mount Hull Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Heinlen conducted a site visit after receiving a report of Mount Hull bighorn sheep foraging in and damaging an irrigated alfalfa field, and found 30-40 bighorn sheep foraging in the pasture. In addition, he discovered the bighorns interacting with domestic sheep and goats at this location. Contact between domestic sheep/goats and wild sheep has the potential to transmit pneumonia to bighorns and cause a large scale die off in the herd. Biologist Heinlen and Special Species Manager Harris are investigating long term solutions to this problem. In the short term air horns have been provided to the property owners to help keep the bighorn sheep away from the domestics and the alfalfa field.

Domestic sheep and Mount Hull Bighorn sheep – Photo by reporting party

Deer Check Station: Biologist Heinlen, with assistance from Conflict Specialist Heilhecker and Assistant Manager Dupont, ran the annual deer check station in Winthrop during the first two days of the general rifle season. The general consensus of local district staff suggested the hunting pressure was up this year. However, the number of hunters through the check station opening weekend was actually slightly below last year's tally. Conversely, success at the check station is up this year so far (39%). All told, staff checked 101 hunters with 39 deer, including an interesting non-typical animal.

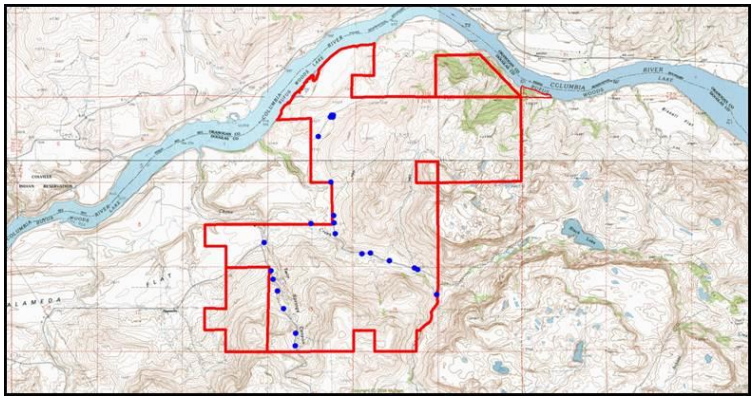
Mule Deer buck; Winthrop Check Station – Photo by J. Heinlen

Non-typical Mule Deer; Winthrop Check Station – Photo by J. Heinlen

Big Bend Wildlife Management Area: Biologist Volsen, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Winegeart, and Officer Steffler were all present on the new Big Bend Wildlife Area for opening morning of the area's first general firearms deer season. The current Big Bend Wildlife Management Area is Phase 1 of the Grand Coulee Ranch acquisition effort by WDFW, and due to the closing date last fall, was not open for deer hunting in 2014. Because hunting access to Grand Coulee Ranch has been restricted for many years, there was a large contingent of hunters anticipating its opening.

By 10:00 a.m. Saturday, we documented 24 vehicles parked or traveling along the Wildlife Management Area's 7.8 miles of open roads, roughly one vehicle every 1/3 mile. Most hunters hiked into the more remote areas of the Wildlife Management Area in the dark on Saturday morning, while a small number hunted along the roads. A large group of vehicles parked at the gate on the northwest corner of the Wildlife Management Area, with hunters hiking into the more rugged parts of the Big Bend. Officer Steffler reported contacting several hunting parties along the Columbia River the day before who were scouting access via boats.

WDFW staff checked one buck early Saturday morning, a mature 4+ point estimated to be at least 4.5 years old. The hunting party was very happy with the harvest of what may be the Wildlife Management Area's first deer harvest under WDFW's ownership.



The location of vehicles (blue dots) encountered along Big Bend's limited open road system on the opening morning of the 2015 general deer season

Chopaka Interpretive Sign: Wildlife Area staff installed a 4' x 8' interpretive sign at the new access site on the Similkameen in the Chopaka Wildlife Area. This was part of the RCO project grant to improve access at the new wildlife area. We would like to thank Peggy Ushakoff in Public Affairs for her assistance with design and layout.

Recreational Opportunities

Weekender: Strong numbers of green-winged teal, an early migrant to the basin, have been observed in the northern portions of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. Conditions at regulated access areas are summarized below:

Winchester Regulated Access Area: There are adequate water levels in the northern portion of the project area but water has not yet reached the south end. Good open water areas exist due to mowing efforts. Opening weekend harvest averaged 3.1 ducks/hunter, which was equal to the average opening weekend success rate since data collection began in 2011.

Frenchmen Regulated Access Area: Full throughout the majority of project. Good open water areas exist due to mowing efforts. Expect better hunting conditions than last year with good moist soil production associated ditches and other areas holding moisture longer in the growing season. Opening weekend harvest averaged 2.2 ducks/hunter, which was just below the average opening weekend success rate of 2.3 ducks/hunter since data collection began in 2011.

Photo of Frenchmen Ponds RAA with an ADA accessible hunting blind in background – Photo by R. Finger

North Potholes Regulated Access Area: Ponds 1, 2, and 4 are holding adequate water for hunting. Ponds 3 and 5 are dry and will likely remain dry until late-November or December. This project area is completely dependent upon Potholes Reservoir operations for filling. Biologist Finger received emails from two hunters who seemed satisfied with the hunt and were appreciative of the new opportunity. Opening weekend harvest averaged 1.7 ducks/hunter.

Regulated Access Areas in the district are strategically placed adjacent to reserves to provide quality hunting opportunities but also to act as a buffer for human disturbance along reserve boundaries. These areas will see an increase of waterfowl activity as hunting pressure concentrates birds into the adjacent reserves. These ducks will fall into a routine of using sanctuary of reserves but must make foraging trips to meet metabolic requirements. For mallards this typically involves trips to nearby corn fields (typically within 10 miles, but flights up to 20 miles do occur). Though corn is a great source of energy, it does not meet all the dietary needs of a mallard. Mallards will forage in wetlands seeking what managers commonly refer to as moist soil vegetation. This is basically any short emergent grass or forb that produces a considerable amount of seed (e.g. smartweed, millet, dock, beggarticks). Managers of Regulated Access Areas attempt to manage wetland cells for moist soil vegetation to provide this critical dietary component to waterfowl and to draw waterfowl into hunted areas to improve hunter success rates.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Dead Duck Diagnostic Report: District Biologist Fidorra received the diagnostic report from National Wildlife Health Center regarding dead ducks found in the last August trapping effort. Hypothermia was the proximate cause of death and disease/poisoning was considered not likely. It is likely that a predator, such as an owl, disturbed and stressed the birds. Fidorra will coordinate with Waterfowl Specialist Wilson to discuss potential ways to avoid future trap mortality.

Deer and Waterfowl Interview: District Biologist Fidorra responded to a request by local KVEW 42/KAPP 35 news for an interview in response to the WDFW press release related to opening day of deer and waterfowl season.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit Status Assessment: District Biologist Fidorra worked on the black-tailed jackrabbit status assessment.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz responded to a call about a dead bighorn sheep from a landowner in the Yakima River Canyon. The ram appeared very fresh, but had been consumed by scavengers. The landowner stated that coyotes had been “testing” the sheep that have been feeding the pasture. There was fluid blood in the nasal cavity. It is possible coyotes killed the ram, but it would be very unusual for coyotes to consistently chase healthy sheep and catch an adult ram on a steep talus slope. Samples were collected for both pneumonia and EHD/Blue tongue testing.

Remains of recently deceased bighorn ram

Testing Samples: Bernatowicz produced and sent letters to late season permit holders in Selah Butte and on Clemans asking for cooperation collecting samples. Selah Butte is being tested as part of ongoing research. Clemans is being tested to make sure the herd is MOVI free prior to a proposed capture/translocation this winter.

Mule Deer Plan: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed the Mule Deer Plan and district harvest/survival data, and also attended an evening public meeting in Ellensburg. Less than 20 members from the public attended the meeting, but they had a lot of good questions.

Land 20/20 Grant Applications: Biologist Moore completed his individual scoring of all the Lands 20/20 grant applications and attended the Technical Team meeting. The Lands 20/20 Technical Team reviewed and ranked the 2016 applications and provided comments on the individual applications and the review process.

Mule Deer Management Plan Public Meetings: Biologist Moore, along with other WDFW district managers, attended the open house public meeting in Ellensburg. The meeting was set up and lead by WDFW's Deer and Elk Section Lead, Jerry Nelson, with Research Scientist Woody Meyers presenting an overview of the Mule Deer Management Plan. Overall the meeting went well with a first-rate discussion between WDFW staff and the attendees.

Colockum Elk Body Condition Sampling: Biologist Moore ordered materials in preparation for the upcoming Modern Firearm Antlerless Permit seasons.

Teanaway Depredation Search: Biologist Moore assisted Conflict Specialist Wetzel with a search for a reported domestic cow carcass in the Teanaway. The carcass was not found during this effort.

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

<u>Wildlife Management</u>

Modern Firearm Season Opener: Stutzman was in GMU 381 talking to hunters and landowners both days of the modern firearm season opener. Hunter numbers seemed down again this year as the late muzzleloader season gets more popular. Stutzman talked to 12-15 groups of hunters over two days, and while there was some frustration over the lack of legal bucks, most were appreciative of the private lands access program.

Hunter Calls: Unsurprisingly, it was another big week of hunter calls. Stutzman responded to calls or emails from about 20 hunters with access questions, including three disabled hunters. Stutzman contacted landowners to make arrangements for the ADA hunters.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hagan cleared downed trees from the North Fork Tarpiscan and Brewton roads after a weekend wind storm dropped numerous dead trees across them. One group of hunters in the Tarpiscan area was trapped at in their camp and requested clearing of the roads. They were very appreciative of Hagan's work.

Downed trees blocking roads after a weekend windstorm, Colockum Wildlife Area

The windstorm also blew down dead trees in Robinson Canyon, damaging the wildlife area boundary fence and allowing the neighbor's livestock to enter the wildlife area for about a week or so. Manager Lopushinsky discovered this on the weekend and contacted the neighboring landowner. The landowner removed numerous trees from across the fence, and Lopushinsky assisted the landowner in repairing the fence and with removal of the livestock.

Wildlife Management

Kennewick High School Career Day: District Biologist Fidorra presented information at the Kennewick High School Career Day on Oct 13. Hatchery Manager Erickson was key in providing display salmon and informational materials. Private Lands Biologist Stutzman and Natural Resource Technician Kaelber also covered shifts throughout the day-long event. 500 high school students attended the event.

WDFW staff Kaelber and Erickson at Kennewick High School Career Day

Rattlesnake Mountain Scoping Meeting: District Biologist Fidorra attended the USFWS public scoping meeting regarding access to Rattlesnake Mountain at the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center. A 2014 bill was passed mandating public access to Rattlesnake. USFWS still must honor all existing laws and agreements which specifically exclude access options for off-road vehicles/bikes, camping, and dogs off leash. Attendees at the session were primarily in favor of controlled access, with people raising concerns about fire, invasive plants, erosion, and vandalism. The USFWS was interested in hearing comments and proposals from WDFW. Fidorra will coordinate with Regional staff to identify suggestions in line with WDFW's mission.

Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a crop adjuster after elk damage to a high value apple crop near Rattlesnake Mountain sustained enough damage to meet the minimum threshold for filing a claim. Olympia Conflict Section staff has been notified and a claim packet has been requested along with a notice to proceed for the crop adjuster.

Deer Damage Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a deer damage complaint from a landowner in the Kahlotus area from trailing and browsing by deer in their newly seeded winter wheat fields. Several non-lethal techniques and strategies were discussed and will be implemented, along with hunting pressure, during established special permit and general hunting seasons.

Elk Area 3721 Damage Permit: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted with coordination on a Damage Prevention Permit hunt in Elk Area 3721. Although heavy elk activity is observed in the area, most is occurring during nocturnal hours.

Possible Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a report of a deer that appeared to be injured north of Prosser. The reporting party thought that a mule deer buck may have been involved in a vehicle collision. A search of the area provided no sighting of the deer or evidence of a collision.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel continued working with a landowner in west Ellensburg hazing 105 elk that have been in his alfalfa field and the surrounding area. A landowner meeting is planned for the homeowner's association and Conflict Specialist Wetzel has been asked to attend and explain elk issues to the association. Several of the members have drones and ultralight aircraft and wish to use them to haze elk in lieu of lethal means. Conflict Specialist Wetzel informed the landowners that WDFW may not use drones for any type of work but that

private citizens are not currently restricted. Current hazing at the site has used dogs, snowmobiles, helicopters, ATVs, pyrotechnics, chasing on foot, and shotguns, as well as lethal control on adjacent areas.

Park Creek Elk: A landowner in Park Creek reported 60 elk below the KRD ditch. One landowner asked for additional landowner permits to have on hand (none have been used to date) and another requested fused rope (which currently is still on order).

Trapped Deer: An orchardist called to report three deer trapped inside a fenced orchard. Several days of herding by workers have not been successful in getting the deer out of the area, which has newly grafted trees. The orchardist was advised to keep trying to eject the deer from the area and was provided with permits to remove the deer and deliver them to a local food bank as a last resort.

Taneum Creek Elk Issues: Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Regional Program Manager McCorquodale met with State Representative Dent about elk fence construction and elk issues in the Taneum Creek area.

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

<u>Wildlife Areas</u>

Wenas Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Taylor checked elk fence in the Buffalo area and found several locations where adjacent landowners, or their livestock, are damaging the elk fence. Enforcement was contacted and they will make contact with the landowners.

Elk fence being used as part of target shooting 'stand'

Post chewed on by horses

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry drove into the NF Cowiche Creek in the Ranger to remove a tent structure.

Tent structure on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area-NF Cowiche Creek Area

The Nature Conservancy Media Tour: Manager Huffman, Forester Mackey, and Project Forester Dahlgreen attended a media tour put together by The Nature Conservancy featuring the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project. The environmental reporters from KING 5 in Seattle and the Yakima Herald Republic came along. The KING 5 story ran on Friday and turned out really well. The Herald story should run this coming week.

Forester Mackey preparing to be interviewed by KING 5 Report Allison Morrow for a story on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt checked forest roads and drainage structures related to RMAP in T18N, R15E, and Section 9, cleaned culverts, and dug out the inlet on a 36 inch culvert that had been fully engulfed for some time. This is in a large drainage, and will be a recurring problem until it comes out. He and Richard Tveten have it slated for removal and a short stretch of the road to be abandoned. Hunt also provided Tveten with a first draft of our 2015 RMAP Annual Report, and they reviewed it over the phone. Technician Hill located culverts in Section 15 of the Gnat Flat acquisition for an RMAP report. He recorded location, length, and diameter for each culvert.

Technician Hill dropped three sections of lay-down fence on the Skookumchuck fence line. Hopefully migrating elk will have an easier time moving through and not break the fence so often.

Lay-down fence section on the new Skookumchuck fence line

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Bear Sub-Committee Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Smith, and other Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff attended the Bear Sub-Committee meeting in Issaquah. The committee critically reviewed and submitted recommended actions for review. The committee will meet next month to review comments and suggestions from stakeholders and Olympia staff. Once these comments are re-evaluated, the committee will finalize recommended actions.

Black Bear – Photo by Ginger Holser

North Puget Sound Waterfowl Aerial Survey: Biologist DeBruyn flew a survey route to count dabbling ducks from the mouth of the Stillaguamish River to the Canadian border. Duck numbers were typical for a mild fall with many northern ducks still not on the local marine waters.

Aerial Waterfowl Survey - Port Susan to Drayton Harbor

10/15/2015	Plane,PilotQQ Jeff		Observers: Paul DeBruyn	
Weather:50-60 F N wind 0-7 p.Cloudy		Tide @ Beginning: 9.5		Tide @ End: 6.0
Location	Mallard	Northern Pintail	American Wigeon	Green-Winged Teal	total
Port Susan Bay	4395	125	425	355	5300
Livingston Bay	875	0	0	75	950
Skagit Bay	13400	7950	3100	3080	27530
Swin. Reserve	955	1330	280	785	3350
Padilla Bay	2750	2625	16500	2300	24175
Samish Bay	4450	9450	4950	1800	20650
Nooksack Delta/Portage	900	300	660	150	2010
Lummi Bay	900	675	450	225	2250
Birch Bay	1400	1050	700	350	3500
Totals	30025	23505	27065	9120	89715

Protected Wildlife Management: Biologist Anderson continues to provide state consultation for Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive and Protected species, including various Priority or Species of Concern needs – most often nest take authorization and/or habitat consideration recommendations. Anderson continues to work with Habitat, local governments, and landowners to provide documentation and management where appropriate. Current items from this past week include eagle management, nest removal requests, and a meeting with Olympia Headquarters staff regarding nest destruction management. One can assist WDFW with documenting wildlife via reporting at our Wildlife Observation Website:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/

One can find department management recommendations for Priority Habitats and Species here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/

Whidbey Island Naval Installation Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan Annual Review: Biologist Milner assisted with the review, which is required by the Federal Sikes Act. This year, the review panel is working online and communicating via email because of schedule challenges. Milner submitted questions that need to be clarified prior to formally approving the plan review for this year.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need surveys: Staff performed habitat surveys for pika. Areas surrounding the known lowland pika locations are being surveyed to determine if surrounding areas might contain potential habitat that connects to more traditional pika habitat.

High Path Avian Influenza Sampling: Biologist DeBruyn worked opening weekend to sample ducks killed by hunters for high-path avian influenza.

Wildlife Areas

Intalco Pond Water Control Replacement: The construction completed on the Intalco Pond water control replacement. This project replaced a non-functioning water control structure with a new structure and large beaver deceiver pipes. This project was funded with Duck Stamp funds, and was managed by Ducks Unlimited. The project turned out great, with no problems, and we are now just waiting for rain to refill the pond.

Intalco Pond Water Control Replacement

Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Friebel downloaded groundwater and surface water data from all 11 monitoring locations near the restoration site. Following the field day, Brokaw calibrated and graphed the data for analysis. These data will be used to compare pre-project conditions to post-project conditions to detect if there are any changes to water elevations and salinity in drainage sloughs and groundwater.

Projects Coordinator Brokaw collecting water level data at the Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration site

Corson Wildlife Preserve: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with Lake Stevens Boy Scout Troop 360 on the Corson Unit. The troop is celebrating "Conservation Month" and is conducting a number of stewardship projects on the unit. This will include repairing foot bridges, making nesting boxes, clearing trail debris, and similar activities.

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

Wildlife Management

A permit holder was allowed to harvest an elk with a broken leg

San Juan Islands National Monument Plan Meeting: Biologist Milner represents WDFW on the planning review team for the Bureau of Land Management's development of a long range plan for the newly formed National Monument under their jurisdiction. Milner attended the first all-day meeting to go over the process that will be used, learn about progress to date, and meet the planning team.

Wildlife Areas

Region 4 Pheasant Release: 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. Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to release over 500 pheasant a week at the four pheasant release units. Volunteers are conducting most of the work and Manager Boehm fills in

where necessary. 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. Biologist Wingard met with several volunteers and a landowner participating in the Western Washington Pheasant Program on Whidbey Island. The volunteers and landowners reported positive hunting experiences this year, especially on the sites with the best pheasant cover.

Opening Day of Waterfowl Season: Manager Kessler worked to open all locked gates in preparation for the opening day of waterfowl season. He unlocked the gates on the Nooksack and Lake Terrell units, and locked the gate of the Tennant Lake boardwalk. Even with low water on most units of the wildlife area, opening day was well attended.

British Petroleum Environmental Monitoring & Weed Control: Environmental workers with British Petroleum will be performing monitoring and weed control on wetland mitigation plots on the British Petroleum Unit. Manager Kessler made up and posted warning signs to inform hunters of the work and will manage a partial closure of the unit while the work is being performed.

Disabled Hunter Access: Manager Kessler helped a disabled hunter in an electric wheelchair who wanted to hunt pheasants and waterfowl on the Lake Terrell Unit. He reviewed the area on the aerial photo map, and unlocked the gate to the wheelchair accessible hunting blind for the hunter. The hunter worked his dog and got shots off for both pheasants and waterfowl and had a great time.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the Crescent Lake foot bridge is under renovation. Volunteers from the Monroe Sportsman's Club and Master Hunters are contributing the labor force and project management. A large portion of supplies were donated by area businesses, including Matheus Lumber in Woodinville and the Duvall Fitness Center in Duvall. WDFW Access Program Manager Derek Hacker donated additional building supplies and Manager Boehm provided the hardware. Construction repairs started last week and culminated with a work party this past Saturday.

Crescent Lake foot bridge is under renovation by volunteers

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo set-up duck blinds on harvested hunt units in Whatcom and Skagit counties. Deyo and Otto checked multiple sites for harvest and consulted with growers about pending harvests. Otto and Deyo prepped supplies for dispersal to hunting units.

Region 4 Private Lands Access staff was able to open 24 Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units for the waterfowl season opener this year. This is the most units ready for an opener since the program start. Favorable weather conditions for growing and harvesting crops along with excellent field conditions for blind construction and unit set-up played a major role for this to happen.

Private Land Access Assessments: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with several other WDFW staff to tour private property and conduct a preliminary land assessment for recreational opportunities. Habitat components were surveyed for wildlife species, invasive species concerns, landscape features, hunting quality, access points, etc. Overall the land had many favorable qualities. Future actions will be discussed amongst WDFW staff in coming weeks.

Access

Access staff spent two days working to replace a total of 16 concrete ramp planks at the Silver Lake public boat ramp in Whatcom County. This project was made possible by the state drought funding for boat ramp repairs.

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Wildlife Management

Wildlife Advisory Committee: Biologist Yarborough was selected to serve on the Whatcom County Wildlife Advisory Committee. The function of the committee is to provide recommendations on integrating wildlife management and protection issues relative to fulfilling Goal 9 of the Washington State Growth Management Act, which is to retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resources and water, and develop parks and recreational facilities.

Mountains to Sound Greenway – Snoqualmie Valley Planning Group: Biologist Anderson met with various representatives, including NGO, the city of North Bend, the city of Snoqualmie, and others, to discuss recreational planning efforts and collaborative opportunities in the

Snoqualmie Valley. Anderson is the wildlife representative for various Mountains to Sound advisory groups, including the Snoqualmie Valley sub-committee.
http://mtsgreenway.org/snoqualmievalley

Private Lands/Access Management

Hunting Season Preparation: Biologists Wingard met with several landowners to discuss the hunting opportunities on their properties. These interactions included contract negotiations for several landowners in both the Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program. Biologist Wingard fielded multiple inquires on the status of the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program in Region 4, he assured the hunters the program was still active and sites would be on the GoHunt website soon. Biologist Wingard submitted a large group of sites to be updated online as these sites will be ready to hunt for the weekend of the October 24.

Washington Waterfowl Association Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard met with the North Sound Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association at their monthly meeting. The biologists gave a presentation providing details about the program this year and received a favorable response. The biologists also made note of several suggestions the members would like to see implemented and addressed concerns.

418 Elk Hunt: Biologist Wingard conducted several tours through the 418 elk hunting unit. Biologist Wingard made contact with several groups of hunters who had varying degrees of success locating the elk. Overall, permit holders and their companions were enjoying the hunting opportunity. Biologist Wingard received a report there was a dead elk calf left beneath one of the gates on Sierra Pacific Land. Biologist Wingard investigated and determined the male elk calf had succumbed to a vehicle collision approximately 1-2 days prior to observation, as there were no other apparent sources of trauma. Given the proximity to the road, Biologist Wingard suspects if this animal was victim of poaching, the animal would have been taken away. With a known age specimen such as a calf, Biologist Wingard did not take tooth samples. Given the circumstances, working alone, and the location of the elk calf, Biologist Wingard decided to leave the elk calf in place.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman coordinated the salvage of two road kill elk that occurred in the Acme area. Witman met with a landowner in the Hamilton area of Skagit County to tour his property and discuss fencing options on the 85 acre property. Witman will follow-up with the landowner after discussing options with co-managers. Witman received information that a potential wildlife damage claim would be filed on a Skagit County crop. Witman communicated with the landowner about the claim process and is working with management analyst Schreiner to address the damage claim.

Wildlife Areas

Waterfowl Opener: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm installed new "Waterfowl Hunter"-focused informational signage at the four pheasant release units. The

signage reminds and informs waterfowl hunters that the unit is closed until 8:00 a.m. and close at 4:00 p.m.

Cross-Program Teams: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked closely with WDFW Enforcement personnel and Snohomish County Sheriff's Office to curtail illegal activity that is occurring on the units. Manager Boehm contacted WDFW Enforcement to report an after-hours hunting violation that resulted in a citation being issued. Manager Boehm also coordinated with WDFW Enforcement and Snohomish County Sherriff Deputies to process a drug-related offense at Crescent Lake. The individual was arrested for outstanding warrants. Snohomish County Sheriffs were also at Ebey Island performing an investigation of suspicious activity and vehicles near the unit parking areas.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with a neighboring landowner to improve an access road to the unit from the south. Manager Boehm provided three loads of gravel and the landowner provided the equipment and operator to spread the gravel. The material was needed to repair the existing road from damages caused by the trucks used to haul corn, wheat, and beans that were harvested earlier this fall.

Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove and Meis posted "Closed Area" signs and maps to keep area users out of the Headquarters Unit during the week, and restrict access to certain areas during the weekend, due to safety concerns with the tidegate replacement project on Wiley Slough. Cosgrove graded the entrance roads at the Headquarters Unit.

Fir Island Farms: Manager Rotton participated in a joint presentation with Habitat Project Manager Jenna Friebel and Skagit River Systems Cooperative Restoration Project Manager Steve Hinton to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Council on the South Skagit River projects completed to date towards the Chinook Recovery Plan goals. The group was meeting in La Conner and then touring project sites in Skagit and Snohomish counties. The Fir Island Farms site was the first on the tour. Cosgrove mowed the small field at the Fir Island Farms Reserve. Cosgrove and Meis repaired fence rails that were broken during the first year of construction this summer.

Leque Island: Meis posted two "No Unauthorized Vehicles Past This Point" at the Leque Unit.

Samish River Unit Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton did a walk-through of the construction site with the construction supervisor and staff from Natural Resource Conservation Service to verify completion of this year's work on the project. Everyone was pleased with the work that was done and the Natural Resource Conservation Service gave approval to begin submitting invoices to reimburse WDFW for project costs. The construction crew will finish up a few final items and will demobilize equipment next week. Following the walkthrough, Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted drainage monitoring reports to Department of Ecology that are required through the Construction Stormwater Permit.

New channels, ponds, planting mounds and large woody debris structures will improve habitat at the Samish River Unit for waterfowl and other wetland species

Newly constructed wetland swale and wood structure installed on the Skagit Wildlife Area Samish River Unit

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated one new hunter education classes in Region 4. Coordinator Dazey assisted Ira Gross to set up a class at the Nile Shrine center. Dazey sent out one new instructor packet to start a new instructor applicant on the process of becoming an instructor. Dazey also reviewed and offered suggestions on how to update the how to become an instructor pamphlet. Dazey reviewed and commented on the revised hunter education instructor policy manual and also helped to correct the answer key for the instructor certification test.

Pre-Service Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the first of two pre-service trainings in Burlington at the Skagit shooting range. Six new instructor applicants attended the first session and are looking forward to teaching a class Oct. 31 to compete their training and becoming certified as instructors. Dazey is continuing to focus on new venues and recruiting instructors to serve the Skagit and Whatcom county area as this is still an underserved part of Region 4.

Customer Service: Coordinator Dazey answered questions from first time hunters who needed to take a hunter education class in order to purchase a license. Questions ranged from class availability, deferral, military exemption, and whether Washington recognized Florida hunter safety cards.

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

Leadership Training: Biologist Yarborough completed Module 4 of Leadership Training I and has completed all of the modules.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Health Team Meeting: Biologist Bergh attended a meeting of the Western Pond Turtle Health Team in Olympia. The health team is comprised of staff from the Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, PAWS, WSU, WDFW, and several subject matter experts across the country. The goal of the team is to determine the cause of Ulcerative Shell Disease and evaluate potential treatments. Results from this year's bone density and morphology assessments were presented, along with preliminary assessments from the treatment of animals at the Oregon Zoo and PAWS. Additional results from the genetic analyses will be presented at the next meeting of the health team. The group also discussed the husbandry practices at both zoos. While the cause of the disease is still unknown, the team will continue to work with the data they have collected and consult with experts who have studied similar health conditions in turtles.

Washington's Wild Future Public Meeting: Region 5 hosted a Washington's Wild Future public meeting this week in Vancouver to solicit feedback from the public on all aspects of WDFW programs. Regional and Olympia staff from all divisions were represented to listen to the public and gather information on their vision for the future of WDFW. Over 100 people turned out for the Vancouver event, providing the agency with a variety of comments on fish, wildlife, habitat, and enforcement programs.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Periodic Status Review: Biologist Holman provided comments on an initial draft of the periodic status review document for the Columbian white-tailed deer to Biologist Azerrad. These documents are produced to consider if the current state listing status for Washington's Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive species are appropriate. The detailed document features sections on Columbian white-tailed deer range, history, life history, habitat needs, management activities, populations, threats, etc.

Dusky Canada Goose Survey: Biologist Stephens conducted a dusky Canada goose survey in several locations in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. No duskies were observed. However, 1500 cacklers were observed in the Woodland bottoms. Dusky surveys will be conducted two times per month from October to March throughout the wintering grounds in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area - Satellite Unit Mowing: Assistant Manager Sample completed mowing four fields at the Hoffstadt Unit and the "ball field" of the Hall Road Unit in the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. Mowing these areas occurs annually to promote the regrowth of existing grasses for wildlife forage. Assistant Manager Sample also completed mowing rows of a tree planting at the Cedar Creek Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to reduce competition with grasses for the planted trees.

Field Mowing in the "Orchard" at the Hoffstadt Unit of MSHWA

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

Klickitat Wildlife Area Deer Season Opening Weekend: Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis conducted hunter success surveys during the first weekend of the modern firearm deer season. Hunter turnout was somewhat lower than usual, with folks who come every year making up most of the corps of deer seekers. On Saturday, 83 hunters were contacted, with eight bucks and two bears taken. One of the bucks was a 4 X 4 with tall, regular antlers. A 4 X 2 buck, four 3 X 3 bucks, and two 2 X 3 bucks were also checked that day. On Sunday, 38 hunters were contacted, with three bucks in possession. One was a 4 X 4, one was a 3 X 3, and one was a 2 X 3. One of the bears was a chocolate brown color. Few problems were found. A party of two that had driven far off road was cited by a WDFW officer. Almost everyone understood that the fire danger remains high, and refrained from lighting campfires.

Opening Weekend of Deer Season at the Klickitat Wildlife Area

Shillapoo Wildlife Area new ADA handicap blind: Wildlife Area staff completed the installation of a new handicap accessible hunting blind in the South Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area this week. The blind is located on a wetland called the South Cell, which most people associate as the wetland in front of the tin shed access site. Hunters who reserve the blind are able to drive onto the Wildlife Area to a wheelchair accessible path that goes from the parking area to the blind, which is about 200 yards away. Other waterfowl hunters may not hunt within 200 yards of the blind while it is occupied by a disabled hunter and may only hunt inside the Disabled Hunter Preference Area after 8 a.m. when the blind is unoccupied. Construction of the blind was a coordinated effort, with funding from the State Migratory Duck Stamp,

Washington Waterfowl Association, and Vancouver Wildlife League. Many hours were put into the building of the blind by Washington Waterfowl Association members and Clark College welding students. A very special thank you goes to volunteers Erickson and Spring, who put a tremendous amount of time and effort into construction and finding donations to get the blind completed for the opening of the 2015-16 waterfowl season. Wildlife Area staff received several positive comments from the public already about new hunting blind.

New Shillapoo ADA waterfowl hunting blind

<u>Wildlife Management</u>

Goat and Sheep Checks: As hunting seasons for mountain goats and bighorn sheep progress, successful hunters are required to visit a WDFW Regional Office to have the animals checked. During the past week in Region 5, Biologists Holman and Stephens checked one mountain goat and one bighorn sheep this week from Region 2 hunt areas. The animals are evaluated for age and sex and detailed measurements are taken of the horns.

Bighorn sheep, founder animal from Chelan Butte population

Skull and horns from mountain goat with 10"+ horns

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

D-9 Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist Peterson met with a landowner in Goldendale with an active DPCA. Peterson and the landowner discussed the opportunity for public hunting on his land currently under the DPCA and are taking the initial steps to enter an additional 1500 acres of prime deer habitat into the Hunt with Written Permission program. Conflict Specialist Peterson also met with a Skamania County bee keeper who has been testing out a department

owned solar charger and electric fencing to protect his hives from bears. The landowner was very pleased with the results, but has had continued damage from raccoons. Peterson suggested an electrified net stile fence for the next season.

D-10 Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist Conklin received a call from a landowner in west Cowlitz County who just lost another sheep. Conklin immediately called a local hound hunter and responded to the location. A necropsy was performed. Based on results of necropsy it is believed that sheep most likely was killed by a cougar. Hounds were deployed at the scene but the hunt was unsuccessful. A depredation permit was issued to remove one cougar from the property.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

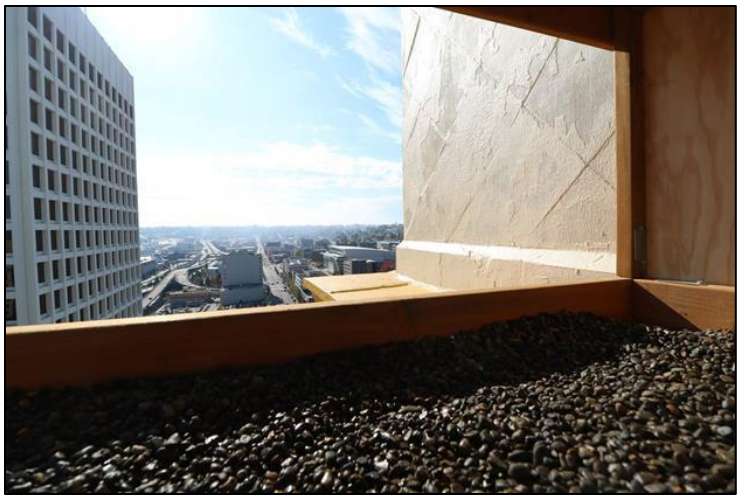
Wildlife Management

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Sundstrom conducted the October dusky goose survey in Grays Harbor County and the northern portions of Pacific County. Numbers appear to be average for this time of year, but geese were located in fewer of the typical locations, meaning where geese were found their concentration numbers were higher than normal.

10/15/15 Location	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/Other	Totals
Grays Harbor County	3,081	1	2		360		4		415		0		33	3	1	3,899
North Pacific County	1,286	2	62		371		4		384		0		81	3	0	2,191
Totals:	4,367	3	64	0	731	0	8	0	799	0	0	0	114	6	1	6,090

Cackling geese concentrating in a corn field with more cacklers joining the flock

Peregrine Penthouse: Local volunteers and peregrine enthusiasts completed construction and installation of a new peregrine box on a Pacific Avenue building in Tacoma. The resulting product was both high quality and attractive and should provide a secure nest location for years to come.

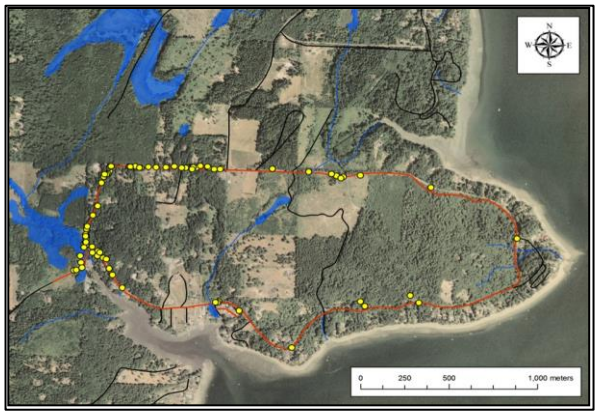


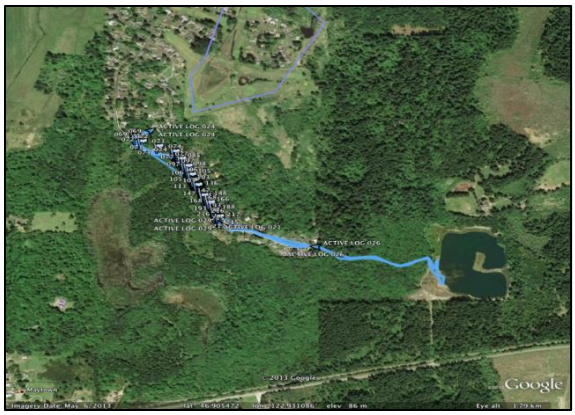
View from the peregrine box

Satsop/Mason Deer Project: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. An objective of this study involves determining sources of mortality among all radio-collared deer. The radio-collars in the Mason cluster have remote monitoring capabilities and text messages are sent when certain events occur, although periodic field checks are recommended. The Satsop collars require field monitoring to determine status. Additionally, the doe collars store location, activity, and other data on-board to ensure no data is lost due to loss of contact with the collar. Periodic downloads of these data are required.

Biologist Murphie reports that two doe mortalities occurred recently. One in the Satsop contributed to cougar predation and one in Mason with the cause, as yet, undetermined. The Mason cluster now includes six GPS collared does, while the Satsop cluster has two. Eight fawns are still being monitored between the two clusters and no mortalities have occurred among this cohort since July. Two collars deployed on fawns (now yearling does) in 2014 remain active. Biologist Murphie was able to connect and download data from five does last week.

Amphibian Road Mortality Project, Thurston County: Biologist Tirhi, along with the City of Olympia Stream Team and two independent researchers, conducted a citizen science training event to approximately 20 individuals who signed up to assist with this project. The project is designed to train citizen scientists to conduct data collection on amphibian road mortality at various predicted hot spots for amphibian migration/road mortality. The data will be used to work with Thurston County on mitigation measures. Two key areas are Champion Drive and Kaiser Road, both of which have significant amphibian habitat on either side to go with increasing road traffic.





Example data collection efforts [Gravelly Beach Loop Road (J Schuett-Hames; Champion Drive (B Blessing)]

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi and Biologist Hays met with USFWS, Thurston County Public Works staff, and county consultant Applied Ecology, who are developing a county Habitat Conservation Plan, in response to various federally listed species in the county. This meeting focused on county public works management and response plans regarding beaver dam removal and various public work responsibilities that might directly or indirectly impact federal and state listed Oregon spotted frogs. Tirhi reviewed draft plans and helped brainstorm response actions the public works department could use to allow work to proceed without impacting spotted frogs. The consultants will now create two sets of Standard Operating Procedures for public works, one directed at emergency response and one directed at non-emergency ongoing maintenance work.

Fisher Monitoring: Biologist Michaelis checked fisher camera monitoring stations from two hexes located along the Humptulips River drainage. Not one fisher was detected but a "ghostly" cougar and Stellar's jay made appearances.

If you look carefully, behind the tree you can see a long tail and head of a fairly large cougar

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

Wildlife Management

Deer Hunter Checks: As an opportunity to meet local District 15 deer hunters, Biologist Murphie conducted a roving hunter contact activity during the season opener for modern firearm deer hunters last weekend. He reports meeting 22 hunters in GMUs 651, 636, and 621. All interactions were positive and all hunters were enthusiastic for the 2015 deer season. Biologist Murphie checked one 2-point buck harvested in GMU 651. Additional time was spent with local enforcement officers at their check station.

Biologist Michaelis contacted a few rifle deer hunters in Game Management Unit 648 (Wynoochee). No deer were checked and it appeared that there was fairly good participation of hunting activity.

Dusky Goose Closure Compliance: Biologist Sundstrom worked the Pacific County area with Sergeant Leonetti on Sunday checking waterfowl hunters for Canada geese harvest. Hunter participation was low and only two goose hunters were contacted. One hunter had no geese and the other had two. Sundstrom performed a quick check of several areas in Grays Harbor County later in the afternoon to find no hunters at that time, other than those within the confines of private hunt club land, where field checks cannot be performed.

Waterfowl Flight-Chehalis River System: Biologist Michaelis assisted Sea Duck Specialist Evenson on a helicopter survey for waterfowl along the flood plain areas of the Chehalis River. The flight started at the Chehalis airport and consisted of a series of 400 meter wide transects spaced a mile apart. Waterfowl numbers were down considerably. This flight was intended to monitor waterfowl numbers in the Chehalis in order to document potential affects a proposed dam in the upper south fork would have.

Wildlife Areas:

Mowing for Waterfowl and Elk Habitat: As the summer months come to a close, the Olympic Wildlife Area crew is wrapping up summer work. Manager Gerchak and Robert Van Blaricom are happy to finish the Chinook Wildlife Area mowing. Mowing is to control invasive species and weeds that include reed canary grass, bull rush, bull thistle, and sour dock. In addition to mechanical control, some scattered tansy ragwort plants were hand pulled. The acreage of Chinook Wildlife Area has increased since the acquisition of the Goulter property, and mowing has gone from approximately 300 acres mowed to over 550 acres. The weed control mowing provides for excellent waterfowl hunting with the low areas providing standing sheet water during the winter.

Meanwhile, Assistant Manager Gallegos and Denny Van Blaricom finished mowing Chehalis and John's River Wildlife Areas consisting of 300 plus acres. This mowing is for wet soil management, as well as controlling reed canary grass and providing sheet water in low areas for dabbling waterfowl. Winter fertilizing got underway at the end of September and is near completion. Over 250 acres have been fertilized in the Wynoochee and some 150 acres on the Olympic Wildlife Area. Winter fertilizing takes place at the end of summer to ensure quality winter elk forage. Wildlife area staff generally tries to stay out of the hunters' way, which we did for early archery, but were caught off guard with GMU 648 being opened to muzzleloader season. Staff was contacted several times by hunters, each time trying to ensure we would move through as quickly as possible. Although not every hunter was happy to see us, they all had the same questions and concerns about limited access areas, how and why?

<u>Private Lands /Conflict</u>

Private Land Hunting Access Site Prep: Biologist Sundstrom signed all 'Feel Free to Hunt' and 'Reservation Hunt' locations throughout the Brady flats area this week. Because of the lack of ponded water, no hunting blind is being installed at the Willis Road Reservation Hunt site this season. Hunters must bring their own laydown or other blind materials. This site typically supports decent goose hunting, but the stationary placement of the department provided blind may not always be the best location for geese. The blind was always geared towards ducks if and when the field would flood, which hasn't happened in the past two seasons.

Elk Hunt Coordination: Conflict Specialist Blankenship has been working closely with landowners in Elk Area 6014 to coordinate hunting access for antlerless elk permit holders in this area. Conflict Specialist Blankenship and other WDFW staff members in Region 4 will discuss further private lands access opportunity for these permit hunters in the upcoming weeks.

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

Private Lands /Conflict

Elk Conflict Management: Conflict Specialist Blankenship met with landowners in Graham and Buckley regarding elk damage complaints to fencing and hay production. Blankenship advised landowners to continue allowing general season hunters during all of the general elk hunting seasons. Blankenship will meet with these landowners after the hunting seasons to discuss further options for minimizing elk damage.

Conflict Specialist Blankenship sent out an email correspondence to the Pierce County Sheriff's department to address County Ordinance 2015-45, which allows the coordinated discharge of firearms in no-shooting zones by Department of Fish and Wildlife personnel to address wildlife damage. The Pierce County Sheriff's office was notified of two areas in no shooting zones where firearms will be discharged to address elk damage complaints.

Pumpkins: Conflict Specialist Blankenship spent a day out in Buckley assisting a landowner with a damage claim to his pumpkin crop. Turbo fladry fencing was taken down on two of the fields that have been harvested. Blankenship and the pumpkin farm will continue working together to finish weighing damaged and undamaged pumpkins for the claim process in the upcoming weeks.

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

Other

Tick Study: Washington Department of Health provided the 2015 results of tick sampling and reported that six of the submitted ticks from District 16 had the Lyme's disease pathogen *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and one tick had the *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* pathogen. In 2014, the District 16 tick sample included one positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, two positive for *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* and one positive for *Borrelia miyamotoi*, a pathogen that had not been reported in Washington prior to this discovery. Most of the District 16 ticks are being collected at the Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly survey sites west of the Elwha River.