

MOOSE HUNTING IN EASTERN WASHINGTON (Updated April 2016)

The moose in northeast Washington are Shiras Moose (*Alces alces shirasi*), which is the smallest of the four subspecies of moose in North America. This subspecies is native to the northern Rocky Mountains and apparently migrated on its own accord into eastern Pend Oreille County, Washington in the 1950s. The first official state documentation of moose in Washington occurred in 1954. In the decades since, moose have dramatically increased both in numbers and distribution and are now common throughout much of northeast Washington.

Hunters should take note that although moose are fairly common, they are by nature a solitary animal, and occur only individually or in small groups scattered over wide areas. They tend to select habitats based on forest successional stage and local climatic conditions. Moose can be found at any elevation in northeast Washington, but are most likely found in the 3,000 to 5,000 foot elevation band. In the fall they seek deciduous browse, primarily willow, serviceberry, ceanothus, and other shrubs in logged over areas or burns that are approximately 15 years old or older. Moose are drawn to north slopes or east flowing drainages, which are cool and moist. They tend to avoid steep (more than 45° slope) and rocky areas. Late fall and early winter snowfall does not seem to deter moose in any way.

Moose rut from mid-September to early-October and some hunters have been effective with calls. Hunters using calls should stay on stand for at least one hour or longer, as bulls come to the call from long distances. Early in the season moose are widespread and snow is usually not present for tracking, but road access is good in October. Usually by some time in November snow is common, and locating moose tracks as well as seeing these dark animals against a white background of snow becomes much easier. However, by late November there is frequently deep enough snow at the higher elevations (> 4,000 feet) to be concerned about having only limited road access into moose range. Inland Empire Paper and other private timber companies will close their roads to vehicular traffic to avoid damage to wet roads. This typically occurs in early November.

Forest Service Ranger Stations located in Newport and Colville are good sources of information on moose, weather, and forest road conditions or restrictions. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also sells maps and has a regional office located in Colville.

Kettle Range – East Okanogan: GMUs 101, 105, and 204

Moose continue to expand their range in the Kettle Range/East Okanogan moose unit, but currently the most productive locations for hunting are in two general areas. The first major area is within GMU 101 and includes the South Fork Sherman Creek drainage, the upper Barnaby Creek drainage, and the east slope of the Kettle Crest under Snow Peak, Sherman Peak, Barnaby Buttes, and White Mountain. There also tends to be a lot of moose sign on the west side of White Mountain up Hall Creek Road, but the dense timber makes sighting them difficult. On the west slope of the Kettle Range, the upper Long Alec Creek drainage typically harbors a good number of moose. North of there the Little Boulder Creek drainage on the east side of the Kettle Crest and west of the Kettle River in Ferry County seems to be an area moose have recently expanded into. The second major area is in GMU 105 near the Canadian border in the vicinity of Churchill Mountain and Lead Pencil Mountain. The creek drainages may be most productive for finding moose, including Sheep Creek, Crown Creek, and Flat Creek.

Access: The majority of the Kettle Range hunt area is owned by the US Forest Service. All of the Kettle Range GMUs have good, but somewhat limited road access for automobiles. In GMU 101, there are roads leading up to the Kettle Crest from both the east and the west, but only three that cross over. Two of these roads are paved and maintained year-round, including Sherman Pass (Highway 20) and the Boulder Pass Road. One other road, Little Boulder, is not paved. During the late hunt, some access may be limited in the higher elevations if there is snow. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended in the late season if there is a possibility of snow.

Maps: Colville National Forest is recommended.

Douglas – GMU 108

Moose are frequently seen in the vicinity of Harrier Creek, upper Onion Creek + tributaries, VanStone Mine, Jump-off Joe Creek, Gillette Ridge (Mountain), and Rogers Mountain.

Access: The majority of GMU 108 is private, but there are a few sizeable pieces of Colville National Forest and Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land along with scattered parcels owned and managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Road access is generally good within this GMU.

Maps: Colville National Forest and/or Department of Natural Resources maps are recommended.

Aladdin -- GMU 111

Moose are more frequently seen in the south and central portion of GMU 111, but some hunters have had luck in the northern portion of the GMU as well. Some specific areas that generally harbor moose in GMU 111 include Big Meadow Lake, Seldom Seen Mountain, Bon Ayre Ridge, North and South Forks Mill Creek, Amazon Creek, and Clark Creek. The O'Hare Creek area north and west of the Deep Lake – Boundary Road also holds moose. However, vehicular access is limited.

Access: Access is best either from Colville north on the Aladdin Road, from Highway 20 between Colville and Ione, or west of Highway 31 in the area of Ione. GMU 111 has very good driving access, with the majority of land either owned by the US Forest Service (Colville National Forest) or the WA Department of Natural Resources. In the northern portion of the GMU, there are fewer roads with more opportunity for walk-in, bike, and/or horse access and/or cross-country travel. Throughout the GMU, one can find closed or decommissioned roads to get off of the main road system.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

Selkirk Mountains – GMU 113

Good areas to hunt in the western portion of the Selkirk Mountains Unit are Skookum Lakes to South Baldy, along with the LeClerc Creek, Harvey Creek, upper Sullivan Creek, and Slumber Creek drainages. On the east side of the unit, the West Branch Priest River, Flat Creek, Goose Creek, Kalispell Creek, South Fork Granite Creek, Cache Creek, Willow Creek, and Gold Creek drainages can be productive.

Access: The northern half of GMU 113 is mostly within the Colville National Forest, but many of the roads are gated, which limits vehicle access. The southern half of GMU 113 is a mix of private timber company, private property, and National Forest. Most timber company gates, as well as some forest service roads, are locked year-round. If hunting the eastern portion of GMU 113, it may be easier to access the area through Idaho. It is likely the higher elevations in GMU 113 will have some snow during the late hunt. A 4-wheel drive vehicle is recommended if there is a possibility of snow.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

49 Degrees North – GMU 117

The 49 Degrees North GMU is divided by a mountain range into east and west drainages. The areas near the crest of the divide or the drainages on the east side have the most moose activity. In the southern portion, good areas would be Boyer, Nelson, and Chewelah Mountains, along with the Calispell, Tenmile, and Gletty Creek drainages. In the north portion of GMU 117, Winchester, Smalle, Ruby, and Flodelle Creek drainages, along with Tacoma, Dirty Shirt, Little Calispell, Calispell, Goddards, and Olson Mountain peaks tend to hold significant numbers of moose. There are many recent and older harvest units in #117 which allow ample opportunity to glass hillsides from a ridgeline or road.

Access: 49 Degrees North is a mix of private property, Colville National Forest, and private industrial timber company land. Road access on National Forest land is fairly good, but most access on industrial timber company land is restricted to non-motorized. In some of the southern portion of #117, all motorized access is restricted within the Buck Creek Road Closure Area, which includes Boyer Mountain and Nelson Peak.

Maps: The Colville National Forest travel map is recommended. The Department of Natural Resources map is also recommended, especially for the southern portion of the unit.

Parker Lake – GMU 117

The Parker Lake Hunting Closure area is approximately 21,000 acres, and is very similar to the surrounding forest, with a blend of timber harvest, mature stand forests, and reproduction/burn units. Outside the summer months (approximately September through May), the USAF SERE (Survival) School will be present in either the Tacoma, Cusick, or Ruby Creek watersheds. Training typically occurs 24 hours per day from Saturday through Thursday of each week, except for an approximate three week period during the Christmas and New Year's Holidays. To aid hunters in their planning and to assist in establishing a pattern of avoidance, Deer or Moose Special Permit holders should receive a map of the SERE Schools area of operation from the USAF Training Area Manager. Moose are found throughout the Parker Lake Closure. However, seasonal timing will dictate elevations, population densities, and hunting opportunities. There are quite a few small ponds and swampy areas throughout the area where moose can be found. Northern slopes and eastern drainages between 3,000 feet and the crest of Timber Mountain should provide reasonable opportunities. The SERE School has very little activity above 3,500 feet in elevation.

Access: There are a few private land holdings within the area, both small private ownerships and larger timber company land. Unlike other nearby areas, hunters can expect to see many forest

roads that allow military movement and winter driving conditions. There are quite a few closed roads gated by the National Forest that will not be available for vehicle access by permit holders. Permit holders must follow the National Forest rules regarding gates and not block access at any time.

Maps: The Colville National Forest travel map is recommended. A map of the road structure can be provided for permit holders by the USAF Training Area Manager.

Huckleberry – GMU 121

Good areas to hunt in the Huckleberry Range are the mountains extending north and south of the Springdale - Hunters Pass off the Springdale - Hunters Highway. The east side of the pass has the majority of the moose habitat, especially the headwaters of the forks of Chimokane Creek and Deer Creek. Moose sightings are also common east of the Fruitland area, with access to the mountains through the Fruitland Valley or up the “O-Ra-Pak-En” Creek drainage.

Access: Hancock Timber owns much of the forestland in this area.

Maps: Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maps are recommended.

Spokane West – GMU 124 West of Hwy 395

WDFW recommends that you NOT apply for this hunt unless you have private lands access or are able to remove a moose without use of a vehicle from private timber company lands.

This hunt unit consists of agricultural lands in the east, forested lands in the west, and dense suburban and urban development in the south. Moose are found predominantly in the Five Sisters mountain range south of Loon Lake, but do come down into the agricultural lands sporadically.

Access: The majority of the Five Sisters mountain range is owned by Hancock Timber, which does allow hunting, but does not allow motorized access. There are also scattered sections of DNR and Stimson Lumber Company, but many of these also do not allow motorized access or are landlocked by private lands.

Maps: DNR maps are recommended. Spokane & Stevens County assessor websites can be used to piece together private timber company land ownership (<http://maps.spokanecounty.org/> & <http://propertysearch.trueautomation.com/Map/View/Disclaimer/0>).

GPS hunting microchips with private land ownership are also very helpful.

Mount Spokane South -- GMU 124 East of Hwy 2 and South of Blanchard Creek Road

This hunt unit consists of agricultural lands in the west, forested lands in the east, and dense suburban and urban development in the south. Most moose taken in past seasons have come from two areas: Brickel and Fish Creek on the east side of Mount Spokane State Park, and Thompson Creek north of Newman Lake. Moose are regularly found in Orchard Bluff, Green Bluff, Peone Prairie, Pleasant Prairie, and Newman Lake. However, these areas are in small acreage private ownership, making access difficult.

Access: The access to this unit is largely through Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) and requires an access permit. Refer to their website for more details, including rules, basic maps, and where to purchase a permit (<http://www.iepco.com/recreation.htm>). Motorized access is usually available earlier in the season, but IEP will close their roads to vehicular access once wet weather sets in. Non-motorized access is typically available year round. Quality Services manages access and provides security for IEP. Be sure to check with them for road closures at <http://www.quality-service-inc.com/inland-empire-paper-company/> before heading out. Permit holders should exercise caution, know where they are at all times, and NOT hunt in Mount Spokane State Park or across the state line in Idaho.

Maps: IEP offers maps of their main land holdings and entry gates in the Mount Spokane area on their website. This is not the best map for hunting, but it is good for marking IEP ownership on a USGS topo map, gazetteer, or whatever your preferred hunting map is. DNR maps are recommended along with the Spokane County assessor website to piece together private timber ownership (<http://maps.spokanecounty.org/>). GPS hunting microchips with private land ownership are also helpful.

Mount Spokane North -- GMU 124 East of Hwy 395 and North of Blanchard Creek Road

This hunt unit consists of agricultural lands in the west, forested lands in the east and north, and dense suburban and urban development in the southwest. The majority of moose are harvested out of the east and north of this unit in the forested mountains and foothills around Blanchard hump and Lake of the Woods. The major land owners in this area are IEP, Hancock Timber, and WA Department of Natural Resources. Moose are regularly found in the low lands around Elk, Milan, Diamond Lake, etc. However, these areas are in small acreage private ownership, making access difficult.

Access: The access to this area is largely through Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) and Hancock Timber. IEP charges an access fee. Check their website at <http://www.iepco.com/recreation.htm> for more details and maps. Quality Services handles security for IEP, and additional information can be found on their website at <http://www.quality-service-inc.com/inland-empire-paper-company/>. Motorized access is usually available earlier in the season, but they will close their roads to vehicular access once wet weather sets in. Non-motorized access is typically available year round. Hancock Timber has an MOU with WDFW to allow **non-motorized** hunting access for free on their lands in this unit. In return, WDFW Enforcement patrols their land. Main entry gates for Hancock lands are Blanchard Hump and Lake of the Woods. Also, WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has several sections of land just south of Blanchard Road.

Permit holders should exercise caution, know where they are at all times, and NOT hunt in Mount Spokane State Park, across the state line in Idaho, or on private land where they do not have permission.

Maps

Important: North Blanchard Creek Road is the southern boundary for this unit, NOT East Blanchard Road. Several hunters in previous years have confused the two. DNR maps are recommended, along with Spokane and Pend Oreille County assessor websites, to piece together private timber company ownership (<http://maps.spokanecounty.org/> & <http://pendoreilleco.org/your-government/gis/interactive-map/>). IEP offers a map of their main land holdings and entry gates in the Mount Spokane area on their website. This is not the best map for hunting, but is good for marking IEP ownership on a USGS topo map, gazetteer, or whatever your preferred hunting map is.

GPS hunting microchips with private land ownership are also helpful.

Mica Peak – GMU 127

WDFW recommends that you NOT apply for this hunt unless you have private lands access or are able to remove a moose without use of a vehicle from private timber company lands.

This hunt unit is predominantly agricultural lands in the south and suburban and urban development everywhere else. Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) owns some land on Mica Peak and DNR owns a couple of sections in the Mica Peak area. However, in recent years the majority of moose harvested on this hunt have been taken on these lands, and their number appears to be decreasing—at least during the hunting season and on the lands open to public access. WDFW still receives many calls regarding moose damage on the private lands surround Mica Peak.

The private lands surrounding Dishman Hills also generate many calls to WDFW regarding nuisance moose. The County and Conservancy lands on Dishman Hills do NOT allow hunting, but the few hunters that have obtained private land access around the hill have harvested some of the largest bulls. Moose are also regularly found in the Tekoa Mountain area, along Latah Creek, and in the agricultural lands in the south of this unit, but are at a lower density than in the areas mentioned above.

Permit holders should exercise caution, know where they are at all times, and NOT hunt in Spokane County Parks, across the state line in Idaho, or on private land where they do not have permission.

Access: Access to hunting in this area is largely on private property and WDFW strongly recommends not applying unless you have secured access. IEP owns some land, but does charge an access fee. Check their website at (<http://www.iepco.com/recreation.htm>) for more details. Quality Services handles security for IEP, and information can also be found on their website at (<http://www.quality-service-inc.com/inland-empire-paper-company/>). IEP lands in this unit have been closed to motorized access and DNR lands are typically closed as well. Non-motorized access is typically available year round.

Maps: DNR maps are recommended, along with the Spokane County assessor website, to piece together private timber ownership (<http://maps.spokanecounty.org/>). IEP does not supply a map of their lands in this unit. However, Quality Services, which handles security for IEP, does. GPS hunting microchips with private land ownership are also very helpful.

Cheney – GMU 130

WDFW recommends that you NOT apply for this hunt unless you have private lands access.

This hunt unit is predominantly agricultural lands in the south and west and suburban and urban development everywhere else. DNR owns scattered sections throughout, but many lands are leased for wheat production. Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is in this unit, but does NOT allow moose hunting. Moose are scattered and at very low densities throughout this unit. WDFW receives many calls regarding moose damage on the private lands around Marshall, Four Lakes, and 7 Mile. However, these areas are in small acreage private ownership, making access and hunting difficult.

Permit holders should exercise caution, know where they are at all times, and NOT hunt in Spokane County Parks lands, Riverside State Park, Turnbull NWR, or on private land where they do not have permission.

Access: Access to hunting in this area is largely on private property and we strongly recommend not applying unless you have secured access.

Maps: DNR maps are recommended and can be ordered through DNR. The Spokane County assessor website is helpful to piece together land ownership (<http://maps.spokanecounty.org/>). GPS hunting microchips with private land ownership are also very helpful.

Hangman Unit -- GMU 127 & 130

See information in the Mica Peak and Cheney descriptions above. This unit is a combination of the two GMUs in order to increase the area that once in a lifetime 'Any Moose' permittees may hunt.

WDFW recommends that you NOT apply for this hunt unless you have private lands access or are able to remove a moose without use of a vehicle from private timber company lands.

If you have further questions please contact the WDFW Regional Office in Spokane Valley at (509) 892-1001. Your questions will be routed to the appropriate personnel. Please understand, however, that field biologists are very busy during the summer months and may be difficult to reach during this time period. In addition, we highly recommend you take a scouting trip to the area and only then contact local biologists with specific questions.

Other resources:

WDFW Hunting Prospects (harvest data and other details):

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/prospects/>

GoHunt (WDFW online interactive mapping): <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>

This information leaflet is also available online at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/permits/>