

## Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

# 2013 Hunting Prospects

To give hunters the best information available on the “prospects” for a successful hunting season, district wildlife biologists for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Wildlife Program have consulted their local sources and personal observations to make predictions for what the upcoming seasons may hold.

For management purposes, the Department has six regions and a total of 17 Wildlife Districts (see map). Each District has at least one biologist who is responsible for monitoring local wildlife populations and recommending appropriate seasons, based on past hunter success, weather, fire and changing ownership policies. These professional observations are rolled into district observations, aka “prospects,” for what this year’s hunting seasons may bring.

New this year is the inclusion of detailed information on accessing private lands and forest ownership information. Major timber company landowners have varied approaches to allowing hunters to access their properties. These unique conditions are highlighted under the appropriate District.

We encourage hunters to spend some time reviewing all Districts’ information, not just those that are your traditional hunting areas. Washington has an incredible diversity of habitats and game populations; and we recommend that you explore these pages for insights into new locations and new species to hunt. It is your best source for planning your 2013-14 hunts.

We have also developed detailed “how-to” articles on several hunting subjects. For information on how and where to hunt waterfowl in Washington, visit [“Let’s Go WaterFowling.”](#) If your interests are more toward upland bird hunting, you don’t want to miss [“Upland Bird Hunting In Washington.”](#) If you are looking for places to hunt, start with our [“Hunting Access”](#) page. And, of course, get yourself ready by studying [“How to Prepare for the Hunting Season.”](#) We wish you a productive, enjoyable 2013-14 hunting season!

Don’t forget to upload your photos to our [Photo Upload Site](#); you might just join a small, elite group of Washington hunters in a photo competition that began two years ago. For 2012, we conducted a youth hunting photo success contest, and for 2013, it was a Once-in-a-Lifetime hunt success photo contest.

For the 2014 Hunting Regulations pamphlet, we’d like to feature a traditional hunting camp scene. We know that a successful hunt isn’t measured in points or pounds, but in memories. There is nothing like a crisp fall evening, a wall tent, a small camp fire, with meat hanging and cooling from a nearby tree in camp that says “This is hunting.” If this is your experience, capture it in a photograph and send it to” 2014 Big Game Regulations Pamphlet Contest.” Your photo may adorn 650,000 pamphlets next year!

## District 1

### Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties

#### Dana Base, District Wildlife Biologist

#### Annemarie Prince, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist

District 1, in the northeastern corner of Washington, is comprised of seven game management units (GMUs), including GMU 101 (Sherman), 105 (Kelly Hill), 108 (Douglas), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry) (Figures 1 and 2). The topography is dominated by four mountain ranges that run generally north and south, the Kettle, Huckleberry, Calispell and Selkirk Ranges. There are broad valleys in between these ranges that are drained by the Kettle, Columbia, Colville, and Pend Oreille Rivers, all within the Columbia River watershed.

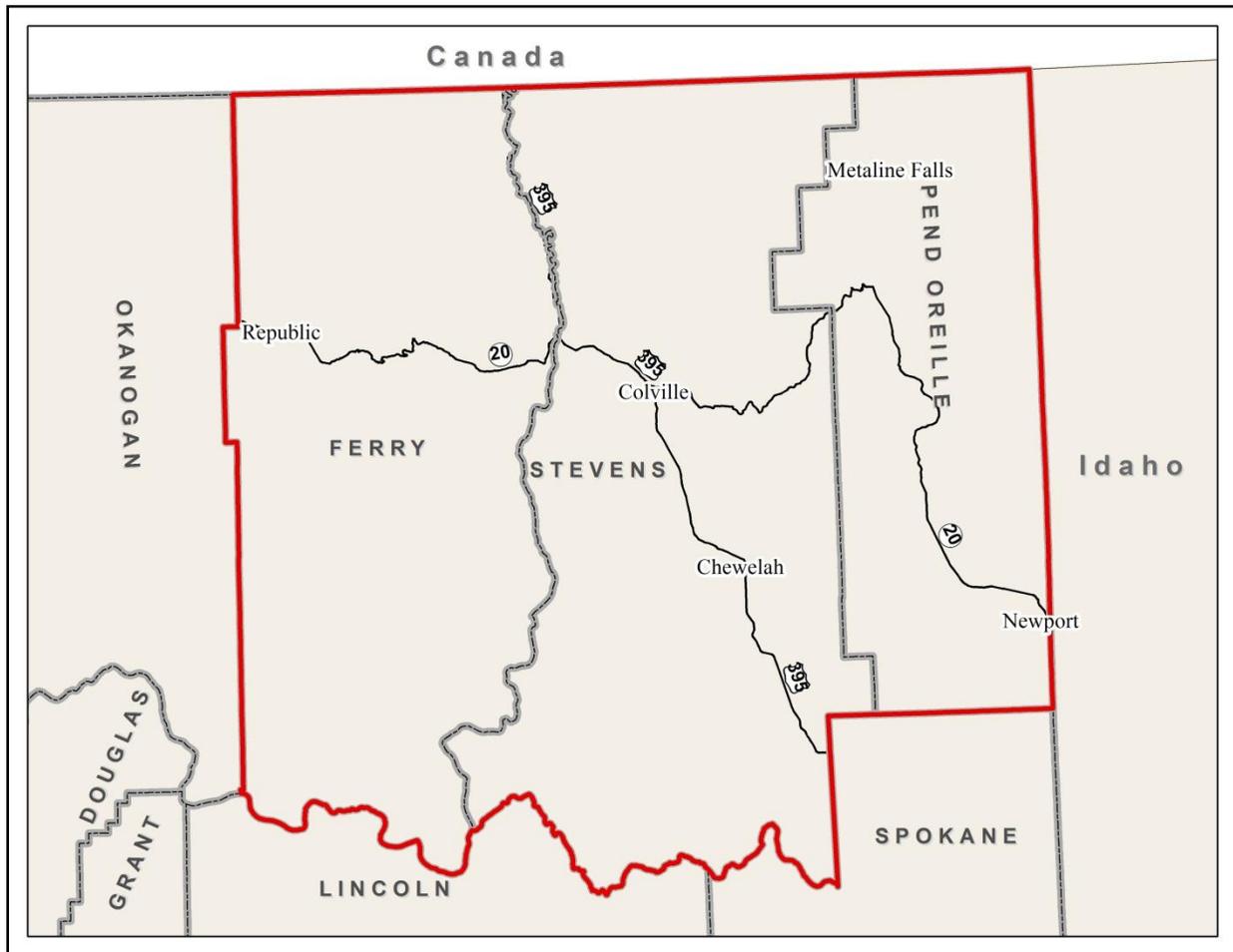
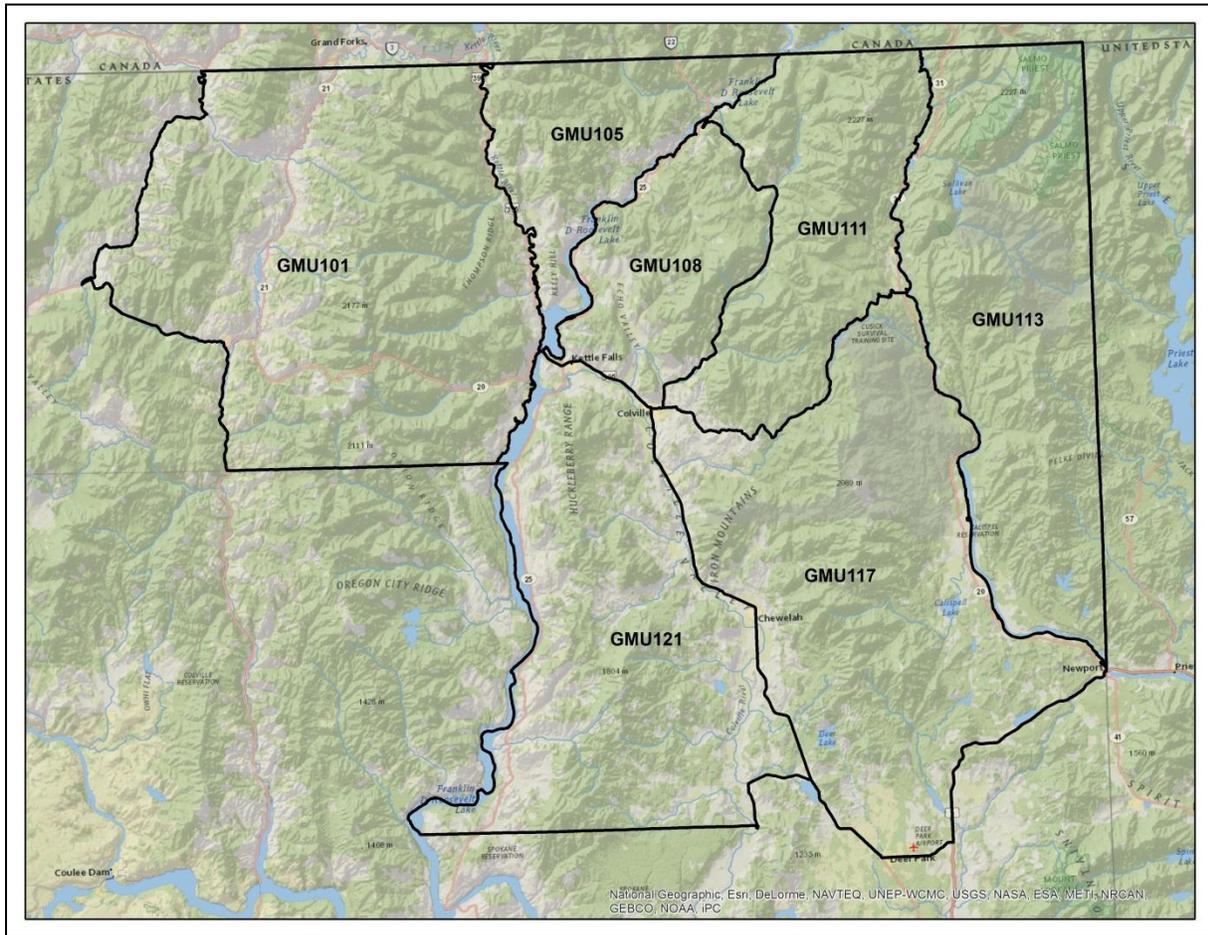


Figure 1. District 1 in NE Washington includes Ferry, Stevens, & Pend Oreille Counties.



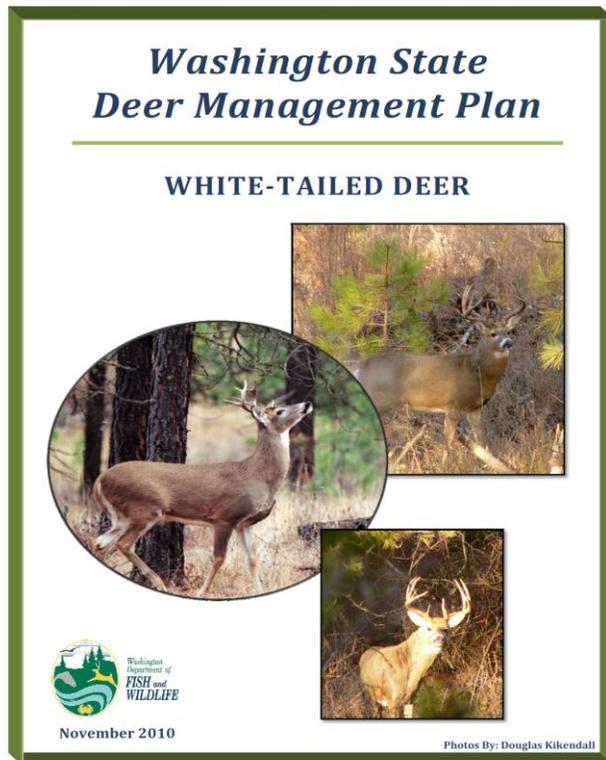
**Figure 2. Game Management Units (GMUs) within District 1.**

Elevation varies from about 1,290 feet at the normal pool level of Lake Roosevelt (Reservoir) to 7,309 feet on Gypsy Peak in the north Selkirk Range. Coniferous forest covers about 68 percent of the district’s landscape. Agricultural land, range land, and water features cover most of the balance.

Approximately 37 percent of the land mass is public, mostly national forest, but also state DNR, federal BLM, USFWS, WDFW, and a few other government agencies. Most of these lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. In addition, there are large timber company lands, also open to public hunting, although not necessarily open to private motorized vehicle access. The public lands tend to be at higher elevations with a shorter growing season, much less agriculture, and in general have a lower density of game animals, especially deer and turkey.

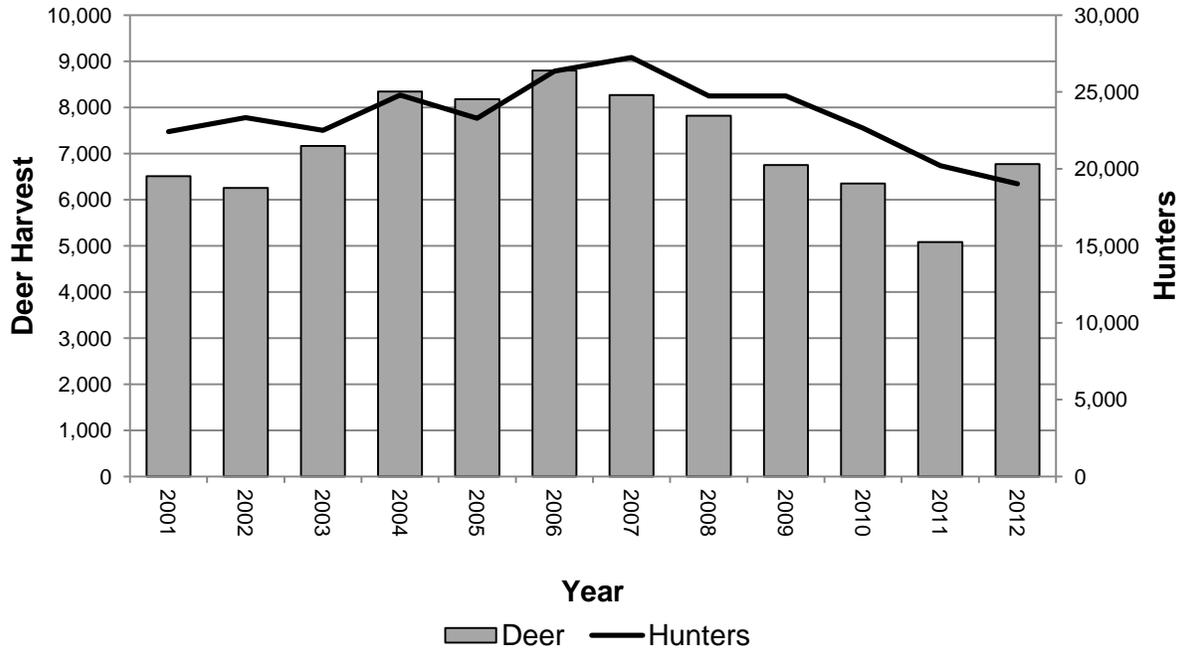
Big game resources in District 1 include white-tailed deer—the most abundant species—mule deer, elk, moose, black bear and cougar. White-tailed deer densities are highest in the valleys and foothill benches bordering the valleys, especially in the farm-forest mosaic within GMUs 105, 108, 117, and 121. GMUs 101, 111, and 113 also have white-tailed deer, but with more localized distributions. More detailed information on white-tailed deer in Washington can be

found in the Washington State Deer Management Plan (2010). The plan includes a section on the Selkirk Zone which is largely comprised of WDFW District 1. The plan is available for download in *pdf* format from the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/white-tailed-deer/>.



**Figure 3. White-tailed Deer Management Plan.**

Mule deer also occur within District 1, but in lesser abundance than white-tailed deer, especially east of the Columbia River. Although mule deer occur within every District 1 GMU, the highest density is in GMU 101. Since 2001, hunter harvest of all deer within the Selkirk Zone peaked in 2006. After a steady decline, largely as a result of 2 severe winters, the harvest rebounded to a substantial degree last year, 2012 (Figure 4).



*Figure 4. Hunter numbers and harvest of white-tailed and mule deer combined, 2001-2012.*

Northeastern Washington is snow country. The severity of the winters drives population trends for many, if not most species of wildlife that occur here, and deer are no exception (Figure 5).

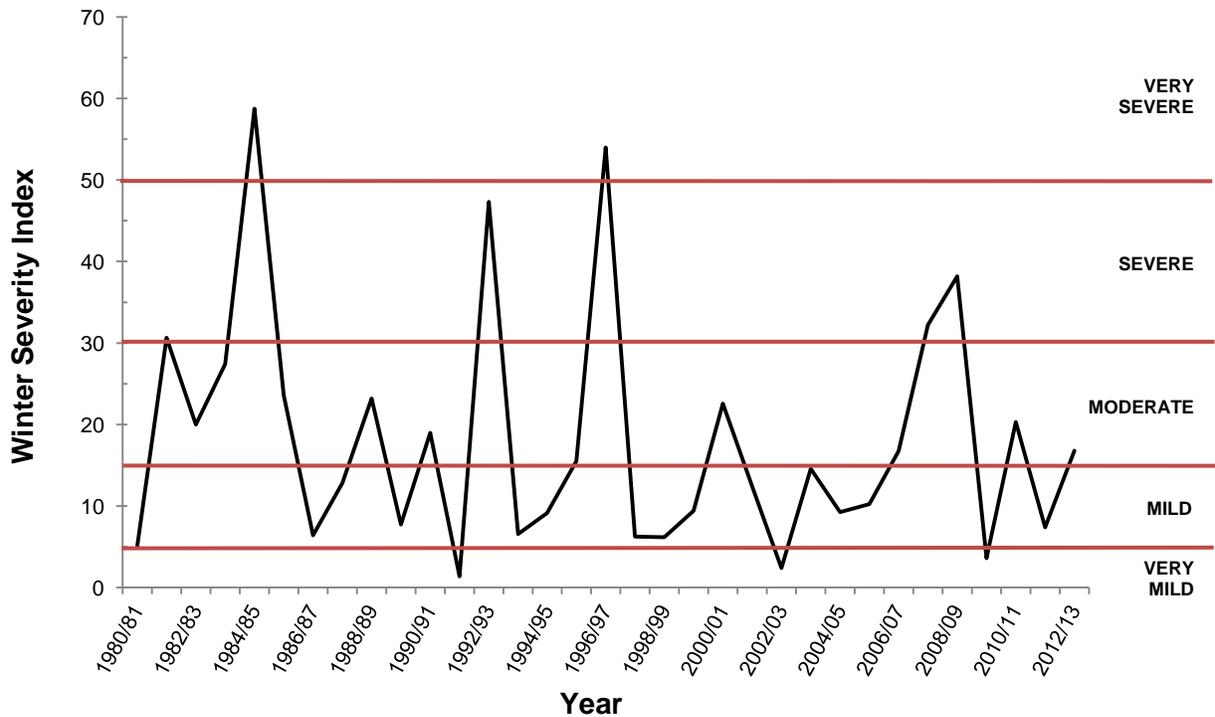
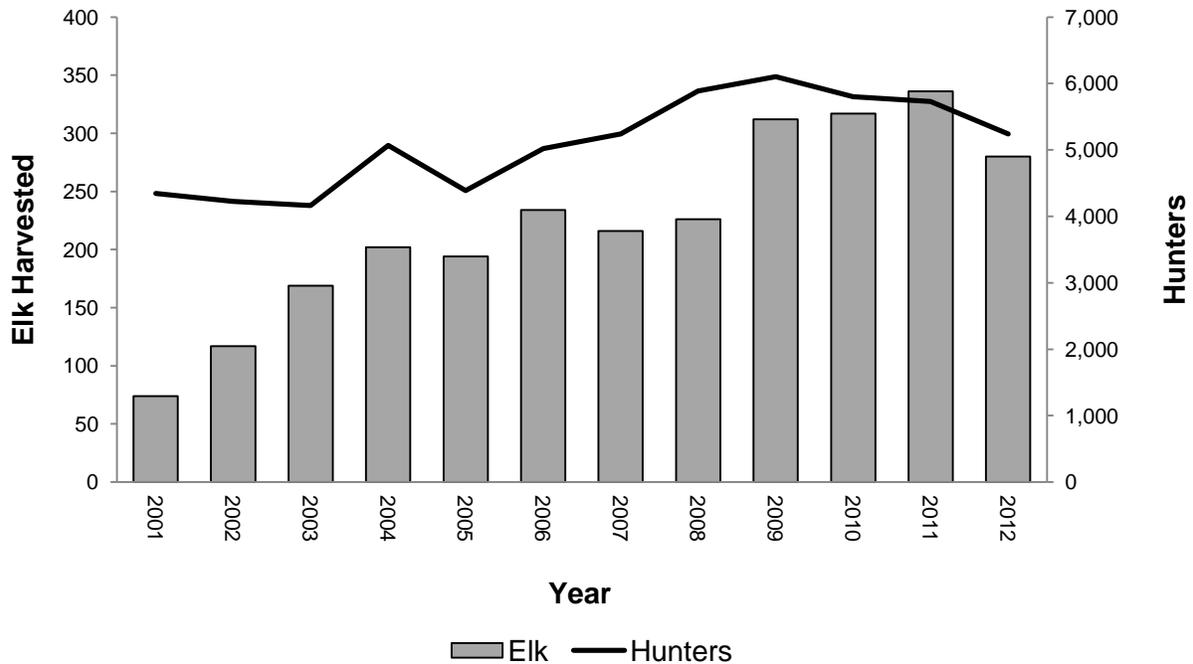


Figure 5. Winter Severity in NE Washington based on weather data reported from 6 weather stations at or near valley bottom locations within District 1, 1980 - 2012.

Elk are scattered at relatively low densities throughout District 1, but are most abundant in GMUs 113 and 117, which typically have the highest annual harvest among the district’s seven management units. The total hunter harvest of elk in District 1 is low compared to other WDFW districts, hovering around 250-300 animals a year since 2009 (Figure 6).



*Figure 6. Number of elk harvested and number of elk hunters within District 1, 2001 – 2012.*

Moose are relatively common and can be found almost anywhere in the district, but are typically most abundant above 3,000 feet elevation on the eastern slopes of each mountain range, which receive more precipitation than the west slopes. Moose can only be harvested by special permit hunt. Both the number of permits allocated and the annual hunter harvest of moose have increased substantially since the 1990's (Figure 7). District 1 has the greatest number of moose and highest harvest in the state.

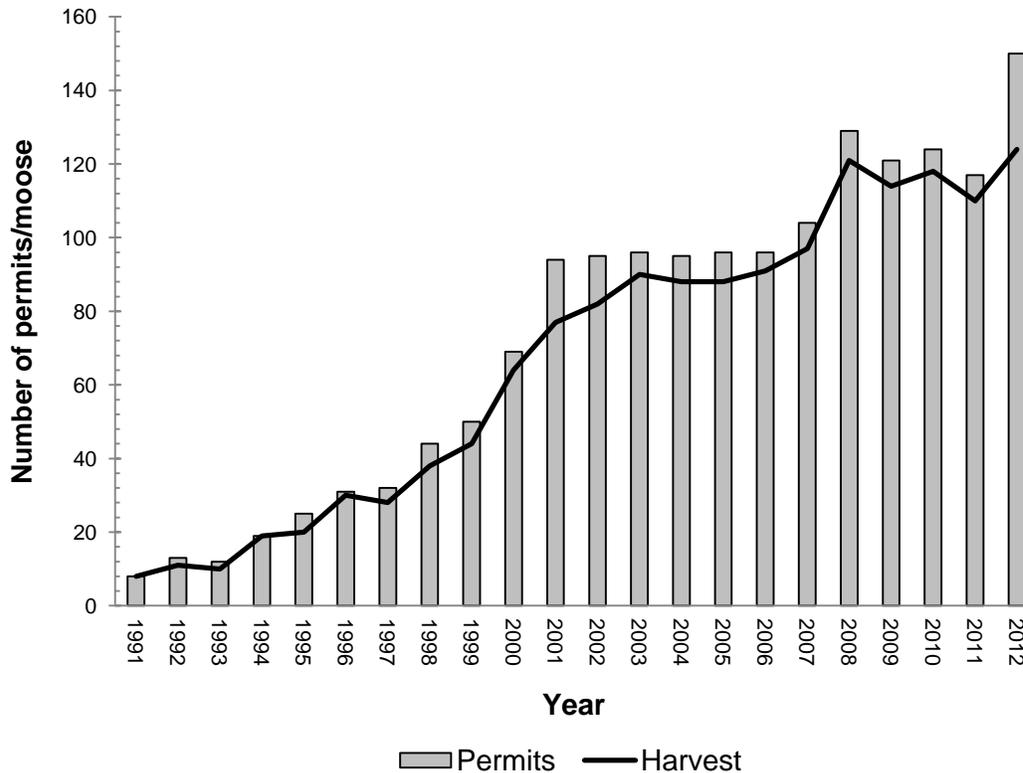


Figure 7. Number of moose hunting permits and moose harvest for Washington, 1991-2012.

Small game in District 1 includes three species of forest grouse, ring-necked pheasant, valley quail, wild turkey (Merriam’s subspecies), a number of migratory game birds including several species of ducks and geese, American coots, Wilson’s snipe, mourning doves, and snowshoe hare. This district has the highest harvest in the state for turkeys, most of which are taken during spring season (Table 1).

Table 1. Hunter harvest of turkeys during the spring season by turkey population unit, 2002 - 2011. P10 is the northeastern turkey population unit (GMUs 101-136) which includes District 1.

PMU	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>P10</b>	3418	3333	3401	3445	3571	3660	2677	2845	2861	3734
P15	533	443	471	480	730	605	578	761	731	827
P20	119	176	209	215	220	258	232	228	412	194
P30	105	123	178	182	169	221	172	245	417	272
P35	300	329	301	345	362	487	370	447	863	464
P40	7	9	15	10	8	9	3	5	13	8
P50	54	52	54	53	77	62	50	65	68	52
<b>Total</b>	4536	4465	4629	4730	5137	5302	4082	4596	5365	5551

**Upland Birds:** The spring of 2013 within District 1 seemed to be conducive in precipitation and temperature for reasonable survival of nest broods of gallinaceous game birds, including forest grouse, turkeys, and quail. Therefore, the fall hunting season for these birds is expected to be average or better.

**Waterfowl:** With a moderate winter and enough precipitation to fill most of the ponds and sloughs in northeastern Washington, waterfowl nest production should be good this year. Most waterfowl hunting in District 1 is concentrated in the Pend Oreille River Valley, including the river itself from Newport downstream to about River Bend and Ruby.

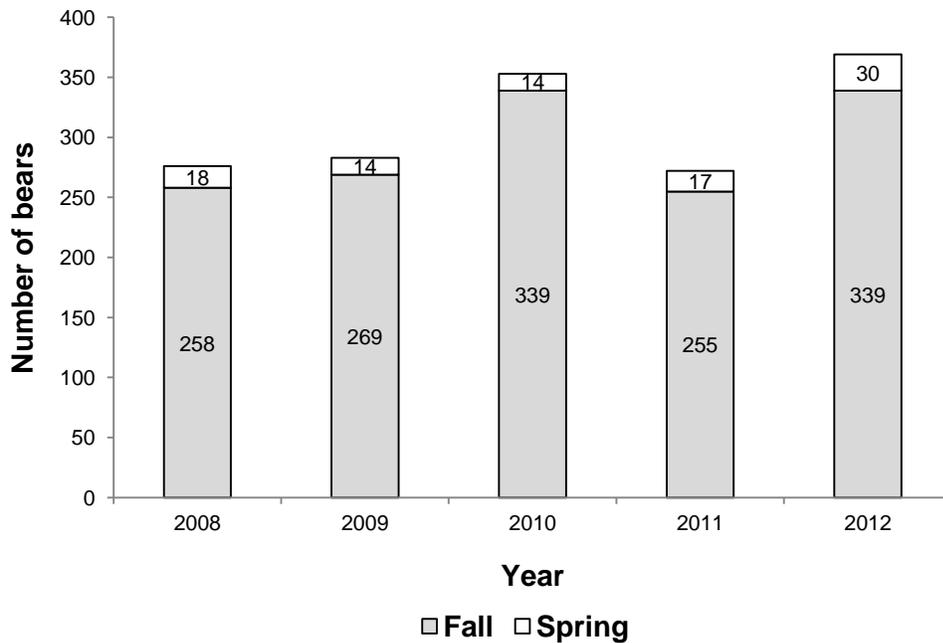
**Deer:** The 2013 season will be the third season in which a four-point minimum antler restriction is in place for white-tailed deer within Game Management Units 117 and 121. Any antlered buck is legal for white-tailed deer in the other five GMUs of District 1 during the general seasons. For mule deer, the general three-point minimum on antlered bucks continues district-wide. One of the best opportunities for Youth, Senior, and Disabled modern firearm hunters to take a white-tailed deer, is the 4 day period from October 17-20 ; during this time these hunters can take either an antlerless white-tailed deer or a legal buck.

**Elk:** The 2013 hunting season will be the second in which only antlered bull elk are legal in the general seasons for all GMUs in District 1. Antlerless elk may still be taken, but only by hunters with special permits. This rule came about by hunter-group request through development of the Selkirk Elk Herd Management Plan.

Drawing a special permit within the quality buck deer and bull elk categories is the ultimate hunting opportunity for Washington big game hunters, and that maxim certainly applies in District 1. The best advice to most hunters who come here is to hunt the general deer and elk seasons opportunistically, but keep applying for special permit hunts and accruing bonus points, so that someday you *may* draw a moose or quality deer permit and already know the country for planning your big hunt.

**Cougar:** A total of 24 cougars were taken in the general hunt for cougars in District 1 (GMUs 101-121) during the 2012 hunting season, which was the highest harvest of cougars for any district in the state. In recent years, the use of dogs to hunt cougars has become generally prohibited. Consequently, in 2011 WDFW made substantial changes to the season. This recently developed season structure is based upon years of accumulated scientific information, including cougar population dynamics, home ranges, social structure, mortality causes, and mortality rates. With the appropriate licenses and tags, you can hunt cougar from September through December using any weapon. Starting January 1, hunt areas (GMUs) where the harvest guideline is met or exceeded may be closed. If you want to hunt cougars after January 1<sup>st</sup>, you need to call the cougar hotline at: 1-866-364-4868 or go online at: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar) to determine if the season is still open.

**Black bear:** District 1 typically supports the highest black bear harvest in the state and we expect ample opportunities to harvest a black bear again this year. The fall general season in this district starts September 1<sup>st</sup> and the best success is often early in the season when the huckleberry crop is being targeted by bears. There is also a spring season on black bears, however, that is by special permit drawing only. Hunters should be aware that northeastern and north-central Washington supports a small population of grizzly bears which are protected by state and federal law. We strongly encourage all black bear hunters to take an [online identification quiz](#).



*Figure 8. Number of black bears harvested in District 1 in the fall general and spring permit seasons, 2008 - 2012.*

## District 2

### Spokane, Lincoln, & Whitman Counties

#### Howard Ferguson , District Wildlife Biologist

#### Michael Atamian, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist

District 2 is located in the eastern part of Washington bordering Idaho. Counties included in District 2 are Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124 (Mount Spokane), 127 (Mica Peak), 130 (Cheney), 133 (Roosevelt), 136 (Harrington), 139 (Steptoe), & 142 (Almota). Hunters can choose from a variety of habitats ranging from mixed conifer forest to shrub-steppe to agricultural lands.

The geography of District 2 includes the edge of the Rocky Mountain Range in the east, the Columbia Basin in the west and the Channeled Scablands and Palouse in between. This diverse geography supports a wide range of habitats that include mixed coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir and larch, dry Ponderosa pine forests, some aspen groves, scabland, sagebrush steppe, and grasslands. Topography varies from ~500ft above sea level along the Snake River in the south to 5883 foot Mt. Spokane in the north. Dominant river drainages include the Spokane, Palouse, Columbia, & Snake Rivers.

The majority of the district is privately owned, however WDFW and BLM own ~60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County; there are a several timber companies that allow hunting in Spokane County; and throughout the district there are private landowners enrolled in WDFW hunt access programs (see “Private Lands Program” below and visit the [WDFW Private Lands Access web site](#)). Riverside State Park and Mt Spokane State Park, along with many county parks in Spokane County are open to public access, but NOT to hunting. [Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge](#) (TNWR) has a limited entry youth waterfowl hunt (details available through TNWR) and allows elk hunting by permit only (permits allotted via WDFW special permit draw in June).

**Pheasant:** Crow counts were slightly lower this year, but spring weather was good and should lead to good production. It appears that good numbers of pheasants made it through the winter and lots of roosters and hens have been seen earlier this spring in District 2. Since most of the land in this district is private, hunters will need to spend some time “knocking on doors” to get access to the better sites (see “Private Lands Program” below).

We have enrolled many new cooperators in our hunter access program this year in southeast Washington; the locations are mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website.

We will also be releasing game farm produced roosters once again this fall at the traditional release sites, which are also mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website and the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program publication](#). For more information see the 2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#)

**Quail:** Prospects look good relative to last year, with decent spring weather for broods and the population. Good brood numbers were seen in south Whitman County. Access can be a problem, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around towns. For more information see the 2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#).

**Gray Partridge:** Like quail, prospects look good with decent spring weather and good brood numbers have been seen in Whitman and Lincoln counties. Again, access can be difficult with most birds seen in and adjacent to agricultural fields.

**Chukar:** There are very few chukar in District 2, they are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River. Like quail and partridge, chukar populations should be doing well with mild spring weather. Terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above.

For more information on gray partridge and chukar see the 2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Chukar - Statewide and by County](#).

**Forest Grouse:** Numbers appear to be down in District 2, but it's still possible to shoot one opportunistically in the forested portions of the district. For more information see the 2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Forest Grouse - Statewide and by County](#).

**Wild Turkeys:** Observations and reports indicate that the turkey population is doing very well in GMUs 124-133 and expanding into GMUs 136-142. Again the district is predominantly private land and you will need to secure access. But rumor has it that access should be relatively easy to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall seasons. .

**Waterfowl:** Local surveys indicate a poorer brood production this year than last. Precipitation this spring appears to have come too late to enhance local production; however, given the limited number of local nesting ducks, the waterfowl hunting opportunity in this district is mostly dependent upon the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska and how long waters remain ice free. Continental counts this year were down relative to last year's banner year, but are still up 33% from the long term average. For general Waterfowl info see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/index.html> and [Waterfowl Hunting Areas In Region One](#).

**Dove:** Hunting prospects for the mourning dove should be similar to last year. However, District 2 is not a major dove area, with doves occurring at low population densities relative to the Columbia Basin and similar regions. As often as not, cool temperatures just prior to or during the dove season push many doves further south out of the District. It important to note that eastside hunters have an additional dove opportunity – the Eurasian collared Dove. This dove is an exotic dove that has just invaded most of eastern Washington and can be hunted with a license all year round. For more information see the 2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Dove - Statewide and by County](#).

**White-tailed Deer:** High fawn production in 2012 and the mild winter should combine to produce good survival into this year and good fawn numbers. Herds appear to have fully recovered from hard winters of 2008 and 2009. Numbers of mature buck may still be slightly

lower than the 2008 high, but the persistent hunter should have ample opportunity to harvest a legal buck. There is a 3pt minimum regulation in GMUs 127-142 and the late season in these GMUs is by permit only (Palouse Hunt 750 permits offered).

**Mule Deer:** Overall mule deer numbers appear to be stable to increasing in GMUs 130 -142. The bulk of 139 & 142 is private land and buck hunters will have to put in the time to get access, doe hunters should have an easier time given the agricultural nature of these GMUs. We have enrolled many new cooperators in our hunter access program this year in southeast Washington; see the “Private Lands Program” section below and note that the locations are mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website. All GMUs have a 3pt minimum and there are no late seasons.

For more information, visit:

District 2 - 2012 Game Harvest Statistics:

- [Deer General Harvest](#)
- [Deer Special Permits Harvest](#)

**Elk:** There are fewer elk in District 2 relative to District 3. Hunting prospects should be similar to last year, with high success for those who can secure access to private lands. GMU 124 offers some public access on private timber companies’ lands with the largest being Inland Empire Paper. Most of our elk herds are found on private land in GMUs 127 & 130, with the majority found on or around Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR).

Turnbull offers only permitted elk hunts (62 cow tags and 1bull tag) to address habitat damage. For those who missed the permit application deadline, the Turnbull permit hunts should be offered again next year. There have been an increasing number of elk seen in Whitman County (GMU 139 & 142) offering new opportunity if permission is gained from private landowners. Some of these appear to be elk that move back and forth between Idaho and Washington, so timing and access to private lands will be the key to successful elk hunting in these GMUs.

### **Private Lands Program**

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases monetary compensation. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW enforcement staff.

Currently, the private lands access program includes four basic access agreement types: Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Register to Hunt, Hunting Only by Written Permission, and Permit Only Area. More information on where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW’s [GoHunt](#) site and at the [WDFW Private Lands Access web site](#).

### **Whitman and Spokane Counties**

Most of the "Hunt by Reservation" hunts are new this year and are scattered throughout the county. WDFW has worked to offer new access properties along the Snake River in GMU 142 along with clusters of properties in the Riparia and the Steptoe canyon area.

There is a mix of FFTH and Reservation in these areas. Total accessible acreage in District 2 is 53,743 acres – 3,200 in Spokane County, 44,278 in Lincoln County, and 91,456 in Whitman County. A summary of these areas are:

- Whitman County
  - Feel Free to Hunt Program- 12,897 acres
  - Register to Hunt - 320 acres
  - Hunt Only By Written Permission - 26,673 acres
  - Hunt by Reservation (Federal Funds) - 31,538 acres (mostly in St John area)
  - Hunt by Reservation (State Funds) - 20,028 acres (scattered around county)
- Lincoln County
  - Hunt Only By Written Permission – 41,000 acres
  - Feel Free to Hunt Program – 3,278 acres
- Spokane County
  - Landowner Hunting Permit Program (LHP) - the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) - 3,200 acres; access is only available through WDFW Special Permitting and CPWMA Raffle Permit Hunts (see [WDFW Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations Pamphlet](#)).

## District 3

### Asotin, Garfield, Columbia and Walla Walla Counties

#### Paul Wik, District Wildlife Biologist

District 3 is located in southeastern Washington, bounded by the Snake River, Oregon, and Idaho and is comprised of 13 GMUs with a range of 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), 157 (Mill Creek Watershed), 162 (Dayton), 163 (Marengo), 166 (Tucannon), 169 (Wenaha), 172 (Mountain View), 175 (Lick Creek), 178 (Peola), 181 (Couse), and 186 (Grande Ronde).

Hydrologically, the district is comprised of the Wenaha River, Grande Ronde River, Tucannon River, Touchet River, and Asotin Creek, which are all tributaries of the Snake River.

The Blue Mountains are the major topographical feature, located south-centrally in the district along the Oregon border. The lands surrounding the Blue Mountains are comprised of private agricultural land, rangelands, and canyon lands. Elevations range from 300' on the Columbia River at the Oregon State Line to 6,400' in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

Public land within the district is managed by the US Forest Service (Umatilla National Forest), WDFW, Washington DNR, BLM, and US Army Corps of Engineers. Most public lands are located within GMUs 157, 162, 166, 169, 172, 175, 181, and 186, although the USACE manages a large number of acres along the shorelines of the Snake River.

The public lands tend to be at higher elevations with a shorter growing season, less agriculture, and in general have lower densities of game animals, except elk. Elk are predominantly located on public lands except in GMU 154, which is 99%+ private lands, GMU 172 (30% private), and GMU 162 (40% private).

Very little to no public lands are located within GMUs 145, 149, 154, 163, and 178. Hunting within these GMUs requires access to private lands either through the Departments Access Program ([Feel Free to Hunt, Hunting by Written Permission](#), etc) or direct landowner contact.

Big game in District 3 include elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, cougar, and to a small extent, moose and mountain goats. Elk occur predominantly in or near the forested areas on public lands, although small herds are located throughout the entire district. In recent years, the Blue Mountains elk herd has remained stable at 5,000 elk. In addition, recent studies have shown that yearling bull survival is relatively high for a general season, and calf recruitment has increased from the lows of the 1980's and 1990's. This herd is managed under a spike-only general season with branched-bulls by draw permit only. This can be rugged country with some difficulty getting to the elk.

Mule deer are the more common deer species and are located throughout the district. Higher densities of mule deer occur on private lands where rangelands and agricultural areas come together. White-tailed deer occur predominantly in the foothills of the Blue Mountains and along the riparian areas of the lower elevation rivers (Touchet, Mill Creek, and Tucannon). Highest white-tailed harvest occurs in GMUs 154 and 162, with significant numbers in 145, 149, 178 and 181. Post-hunt buck ratios have remained relatively stable in the high teens to low 20's

with fawn recruitment remaining stable with 45-50 fawns per 100 does. Mule deer densities can be quite low on the National Forest lands, but some large mature bucks are taken each year.

Bears and cougars occur predominantly in the forested or shrub type habitats. Bears tend to be much more visible during the spring permit hunting season compared to the fall general season. Cougars tend to be harvested incidentally while deer and elk hunters are in the field, but it is becoming more common for hunters to target cougars during the winter using snow tracking and callback devices. Bighorn sheep hunting is severely limited due to diseases that cause pneumonia in 4 out of 5 herds, which is suppressing these populations.

Small game in District 3 includes Dusky (blue) and ruffed-grouse, ring-necked pheasant, California and mountain quail (mountain quail is closed to hunting), gray and chukar partridge, wild turkey (Rio Grande subspecies), a number of migratory game birds including numerous species of ducks and geese, American coots, Wilson's (common) snipe, mourning doves, and snowshoe hares. Furbearers including coyotes, bobcats, beaver, and river otters are also open to small game hunting or trapping (non-body gripping traps). In recent years, the exotic Eurasian collared dove has become more common, offering year-round hunting opportunities with no bag limits for those interested. The collared dove has been more common near residential areas, limiting access for recreational hunting opportunity.

**Pheasant:** The spring of 2013 has been relatively dry, with some poorly timed rains in June. Since June, temperatures have been extremely high with little to no precipitation. It is unknown what the 2013 upland game bird hatch will be like at this time.

**Chukar:** The 2011 and 2012 chukar seasons were very good compared to the past decade. Although it is unknown what the 2013 hatch will be like, good numbers of adult birds should be carried over from the previous year, providing good hunting opportunity this fall. The best chukar hunting will likely be in the breaks of Asotin County, which has been the case for the past 40 years.

**Waterfowl:** Little waterfowl production occurs within District 3. Waterfowl harvest is dependent upon production in other parts of the state and Canadian provinces. Most waterfowl hunting occurs along the Snake River, with a majority of waterfowl being harvested in Walla Walla County. The USACE manages most of the shorelines along the Snake River, providing excellent access for waterfowl hunters. Goose hunting is popular in Walla Walla County, but requires access on private lands for ground decoys.

**Big Game:** Most big game seasons have remained consistent in the Blue Mountains, with the exception the cougar season. In the fall of 2013, cougar season opens on Sept 1 and continued through Dec 31 for all hunters and weapon types. In January, harvest levels will be assessed by biological staff to determine whether harvest guidelines have been met. Starting on January 1, hunt areas (see [Hunting Regulations pamphlet](#)) that meet or exceed the harvest guideline may be closed until the next fall season which begins on September 1.

For big game hunters in Washington State, drawing a special permit within the quality buck and bull categories is the ultimate opportunity. That maxim certainly applies to District 3 in the southeast corner of the state. My advice to most hunters who come here is to hunt the general deer, elk and/or turkey seasons opportunistically, but keep putting in for special permit hunts and

accruing bonus points, so that someday you will draw on a quality elk or deer permit and already know the country for lining out your hunt.

**Wildlife Area Access:** WDFW has acquired large parcels of land in southeastern Washington over the past 30 years, providing excellent access for upland and big game hunting. Access to most of these lands require only a Discovery pass or WDFW Access permit (received with the purchase of a hunting license).

All hunting and fishing activities can occur on these lands as described in the pamphlet. The exception to this is the 4-0 Wildlife Area in Asotin County. Deer and Elk hunting on the 4-0 Wildlife Area is managed by special permit, as part of the sale agreement with the original landowner.

For 2013, the special permit holders who drew a permit to hunt on the 4-0 Landowner Hunting Permit program will also be allowed to hunt on the wildlife area. Starting in 2014, permits will be issued specifically for the 4-0 Wildlife Area, as the acquisition has reached a size that will allow for quality hunting opportunity.

## District 4

### Benton and Franklin Counties

#### Sara Gregory, District Wildlife Biologist

District 4 is located in the south central part of the state in Benton and Franklin Counties and administratively is part of WDFW's Region 3.

It lies within the Columbia Plateau Ecoregion with the primary native vegetation being shrub steppe. The District includes three major watersheds drained by the Yakima, Snake and ultimately the Columbia River. In Benton County, large west-east trending ridges, including the Horse Heaven Hills and Rattlesnake Hills, add to the topographic diversity of the district. The eastern Franklin County landscape includes Palouse Prairie with rolling hills and is the southernmost extent of the channeled scablands. Deep canyons associated with the Palouse River form the eastern boundary of the district.

This is the driest area of the state. Precipitation averages only 6 to 9 inches per year and is mostly received in the winter. The large rivers and irrigation projects counteract the lack of precipitation by providing cover and forage for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl.

The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River runs through the center of the District. Intensive irrigated agriculture is a major land use in the Yakima Valley, southern Benton County and western Franklin County. Eastern Franklin County is a major wintering area for mule deer that migrate south to the relatively mild winters near the Snake River, as compared to their breeding grounds further north.

Dryland wheat is a major land use in eastern Franklin County and southern Benton County. Many thousands of acres of this wheat country have been enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) providing important cover for mule deer and other wildlife. GMUs in the district include 372 (Rattlesnake Hills), 373 (Horse Heaven), 379 (Ringold) and 381 (Kahlotus) .

**Pheasant:** This year's growing season was preceded by a very mild and dry winter and early spring. Then we received above average rainfall in May and June. Additionally, temperatures have remained warm, so there should be adequate cover and insects. More roosters have been observed than in recent years indicating good survival over the winter.

Hunters should focus efforts in dense weedy and grassy areas adjacent to wetlands, streams and irrigation waterways. Best pheasant habitat in the District is in north Franklin County on and surrounding WDFW's Windmill Ranch Wildlife Area, Mesa Lake Wildlife Area and the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. Each of these hunting areas

has two parking areas. Hunters are required to park and register at one of the designated parking areas. All areas allow a maximum of 5 vehicles per lot. [Go here](#) for information and maps for Windmill and Bailie, information about Mesa can be found in [this](#) document).

***New for 2013: There is now a 5 vehicle limit at the Mesa Lake Register to Hunt areas.***

Other pheasant habitat areas include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Hanford Reach National Monument (Ringold and Wahluke Units) and [Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge](#) along the Columbia River near the town of Paterson

To supplement wild ring-necked pheasant numbers, 1200 pen-raised pheasants will be released in the District in fall 2013. Release sites include the Army Corp of Engineers Big Flat and Lost Island Habitat Management Units (HMUs) located in Franklin County along the Snake River. Information for these HMUs is available [here](#). Unfortunately a late-spring wildfire destroyed the habitat at the Toothacker pheasant release site in Benton County. It will be several years before birds will be released at Thoothacker again.

***Reminder: As of 2012, WDFW is no longer releasing pheasants at the Ringold Unit of the Hanford Reach National Monument due to US Fish and Wildlife Service policy.***

**Quail:** Numerous California quail have been observed in the District and given the ample cover and insects it should be another good season. Best quail habitat in District 4 is similar to those listed above for pheasant. In addition, anywhere along water bodies where riparian and herbaceous vegetation intersect will provide quail habitat. An ideal setting is where Russian olives or willows are adjacent to black greasewood or sagebrush.

**Waterfowl:** Pair counts for waterfowl in the irrigated portions of the Columbia Basin yielded an estimate of over 17,000 mallards. This is lower than previous years and is believed to be due to conditions that were dryer than usual. Nonetheless there should still be plenty of ducks for the youth season and opening weekend. Hunter success will likely taper off as the local ducks get "educated" and restrict their daytime movements to local reserves and sanctuaries. Then we'll have to wait for the migrants to arrive in the mid- to late-season. Weather patterns will determine when they will arrive and where they will congregate.

There are many places to hunt ducks and geese in the District. Small ponds and lakes can be found on WDFW's Windmill Ranch, Mesa Lake and Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch (see link under pheasants for directions and maps). Scooteney Reservoir managed by the [Bureau of Reclamation](#) can provide good hunting. For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see ["Let's Go Waterfowling."](#)

The Snake and Columbia Rivers and associated water bodies will hold tens of thousands of ducks when the weather gets below freezing. Access can be gained at the McNary and

Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges and the Hanford Reach National Monument (*see link under pheasants for directions and maps*).

Numbers of Canada geese nests counted locally during April were up 10% over last year. In addition, thousands of migratory Canada geese will arrive in the District sometime in October or November. They can be pursued in the farm fields near the Snake and Columbia Rivers. *Most of the land is private so secure permission before hunting.*

We are currently contacting Benton and Franklin County farmers to determine their interest in delaying tillage of corn and wheat stubble and providing hunter access on those acres. We had 600 acres enrolled last year and hope for the same or more this year. Watch the WDFW website for updated maps and directions to these fields in the coming weeks <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/>.

**Dove:** The number of doves counted locally during the annual spring call count survey was below the 10-year average. However, other observations point to 2013 being a very productive dove season. We are having good success at our trapping/banding station and many doves have been observed in Franklin County, even in dryer areas. Weather patterns play a critical role in determining how many doves are present during the season opener. Focus hunting efforts in or near wheat or corn stubble fields in the irrigated Yakima and Columbia Basins. The best combination of habitat includes a stubble field near water and large isolated trees or power lines where doves perch and attract other doves.

**Deer:** Most of the District is private, open country farmland. Highest concentrations of deer (mostly mule deer with a few white-tails) are in the Kahlotus Unit (GMU 381), with a large percentage migrating in from northern units starting in October, right around the opening of the modern firearm general season.

Hunter success rates (avg. = 33% for all hunters) tend to be high due to restricted access for hunters and a lack of cover for deer. There are some “Feel Free To Hunt” and “Hunt By Written Permission” acres where hunters can gain access to deer. Pre-season scouting is advisable in order to learn where to hunt and to obtain permission from private landowners.

The newly revamped [GoHunt](#) application on WDFW’s website is a good place to initially learn where the private lands access areas are located. *It is advised to double check that lands available for hunting previously are still open to the public.*

Classification surveys in December 2012 yielded an estimated 18 bucks to 100 does. This value is comparable to ratios observed over the last five years. There should be a good crop of 3 point or better bucks for hunters. Most of these will be harvested during the first few days of the modern firearm season. Later in November, a late muzzleloader general season opens and provides good opportunity for hunters to harvest a buck or antlerless deer.

**Elk:** Opportunity for elk hunting is limited in the District to lands surrounding the western and southern boundaries of the Hanford Reach National Monument (GMU 372). Hunts are geared toward addressing crop damage on surrounding wheat farms, vineyards and orchards. Elk hunters can pursue elk in Benton County on WDFW's Thorton and Rattlesnake Slope Units of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area north of Prosser and Benton City. Go [here](#) for directions and maps:

On private land, the best way to secure access is to apply for a special permit through the Landowner Hunt Program (LHP). If selected, permit holders are guaranteed a one day guided hunt. Most permits are limited to antlerless opportunity for youth hunters, but a few permits for any elk are issued each year. Surveys in January 2013 yielded a total herd estimate of 668-797 elk with 57 bulls and 23 calves per 100 cows. The high bull ratio is typical for this herd since they can seek refuge on the federal Hanford lands during hunting season.

**2013 Hunting Season Prospects**

**District 5 (Grant and Adams Counties);**

**R. Finger – District Wildlife Biologist**

**O. Duvuvuei – Assistant District Wildlife Biologist**



## DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

District 5 is the heart of Eastern Washington, and is often the destination site for hunters across the state. Five Game Management Units (GMU) comprise what is often called the Ephrata District: 272 (Beezley), 278 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville), 290 (Desert), and 330 (West Bar).

District 5 offers a variety of hunting opportunities but is most renowned for waterfowl hunting throughout Grant and western Adams counties, and mule deer hunting within the Desert Unit (GMU 290). Grant County is ranked #1, among 39 Washington counties, for total harvest of dove, duck, goose, pheasant, and snipe; it is second to Yakima County for quail harvest (Table 1).

Waterfowl and upland bird harvest has been somewhat steady over the last decade (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Pheasant, quail, and mourning dove hunting is popular within the Desert, Potholes, Goose Lakes, Lower Crab Creek, Banks Lake and Quincy Lake Units of the [Columbia Basin Wildlife Area](#) (CBWA; Fig. 3). Other opportunities within the district include chukar, gray partridge, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and both general season and permit opportunities for mule deer.

Mule deer and upland game bird habitat in District 5 is characterized by shrub-steppe, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and agricultural fields (primarily wheat, alfalfa, and orchards). Dominant native plant species include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), and spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*). Waterfowl habitat predominately includes wetlands, wasteways, and reservoirs that were created as part of the [Columbia Basin Irrigation Project](#) (CBIP).

*Table 1. Numerical ranking of District 5 harvest by county (out of 39 total counties) and percent contribution to statewide harvest (in parentheses) based on 5-year average (2007-2011).*

County	Dove	Goose	Pheasant	Duck	Quail	Gray Partridge	Chukar	Snipe
Grant	1 (31%)	1 (24%)	1 (19%)	1 (16%)	2 (13%)	1 (13%)	6 (8%)	1 (13%)
Adams	8 (3%)	9 (3%)	9(4%)	13 (2%)	12 (3%)	12 (3%)	11 (2%)	28 (<1%)

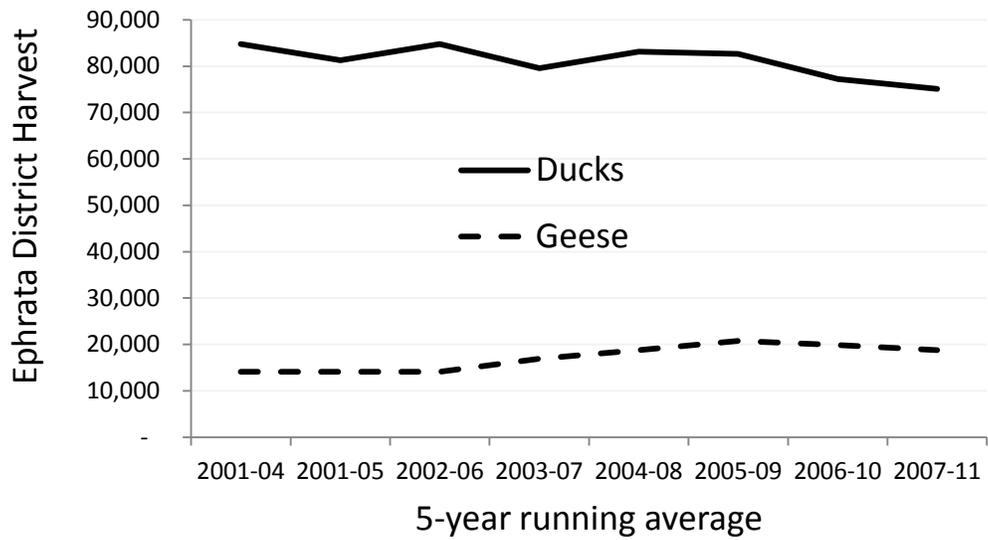


Figure 1. Waterfowl harvest trends for District 5 based on 5-year running averages.

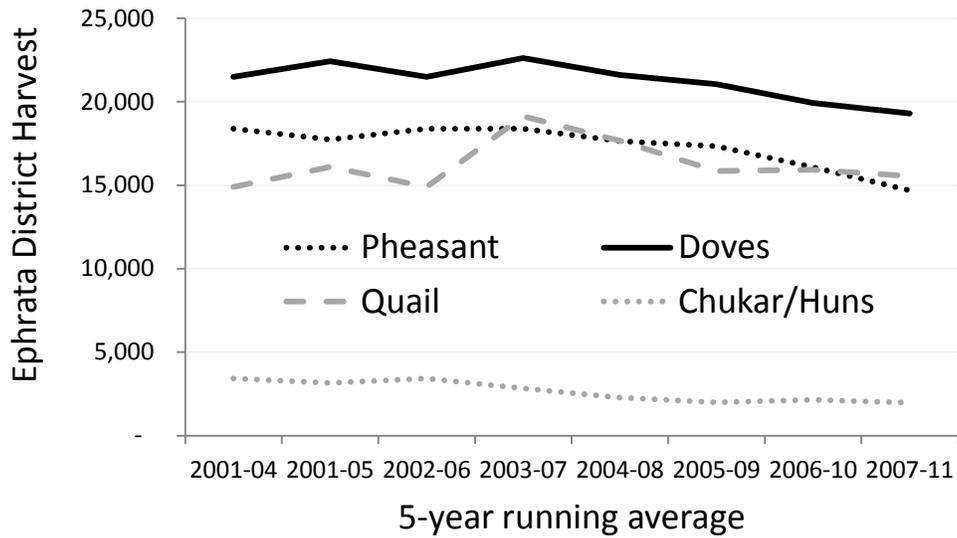


Figure 2. Upland bird harvest trends for District 5 based on 5-year running averages.

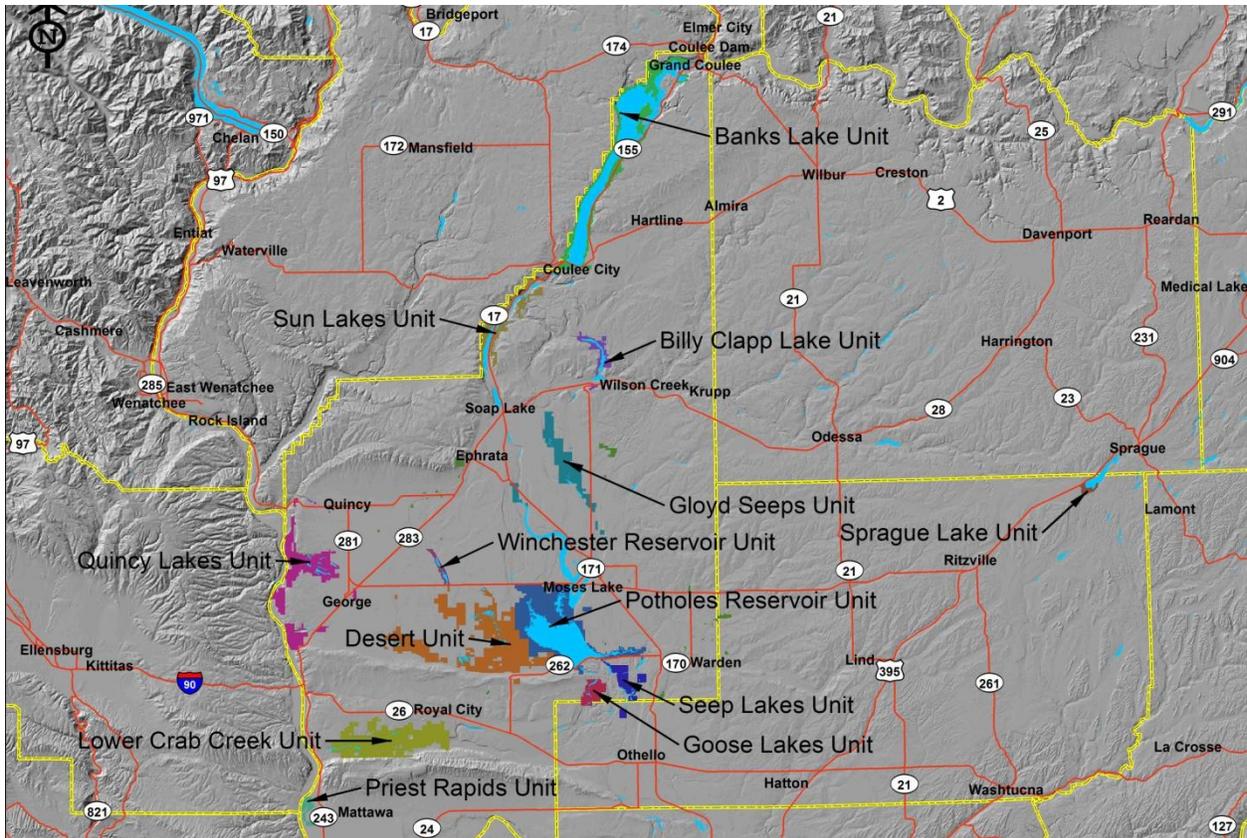


Figure 3. Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Units.

**Habitat Management**

District 5 biologists have traditionally been very focused on wetland project development in the CBWA and have successfully created many wetland projects. Efforts are shifting away from creation of new projects, to managing and maintaining existing projects. Biologists continue working with wildlife area staff to target grant opportunities to gain funding to manage wetland succession, recover wetland projects, and plant a limited acreage of food plots.

**Wildlife Area Management Activities (Fig. 4):**

- 1) Gloyd Road 20 sharecropping: grain crops are sharecropped at this site to provide food for pheasants and quail.
- 2) Ephrata Lake acquisitions: to date WDFW has purchased 40 acres of land around Ephrata Lake and is working to acquire another 80 acres. This lake is an important staging area for waterfowl during migration and is also important during the breeding season.
- 3) Middle Crab Creek habitat enhancement: emphasis is being placed on opportunities to improve waterfowl nesting habitat in the Gloyd Seeps Unit to supplement an increase in wetland acreage due to irrigation operations. Approximately 180 acres are currently in fallow condition to control weeds in preparation for seeding to perennial grassland during 2013. Wetland enhancements will also begin in this area once feed water begins.
- 4) Mansfield Pond recovery and maintenance: efforts underway to reduce tall emergent vegetation by mowing, burning, and spraying, particularly along wetland edges, to allow for hunting opportunity and to increase habitat value. This will be a slow process but will ultimately result in improved hunting opportunities in this area. We've observed a

considerable favorable response by smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.) in the area when tall emergents such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) are removed.

- 5) Road 10 Gloyd Farm Unit wetland enhancement: small pond being enhanced to improve forage productivity for waterfowl and hunting opportunity. Smartweed production in this wetland complex has increased tremendously as a result of these management actions.
- 6) Westlake vegetation control: vegetation management, primarily aimed at improving northern leopard frog habitat, has added benefit of improving waterfowl habitat by opening up wetlands from dominance by tall emergent vegetation.
- 7) Winchester Restricted Access Area management: emphasis on mowing vegetation for hunting access and experimentation with food plots. Success of food plots has been variable depending on water conditions and trespass cattle. Experimentation with spring wheat will occur on 10 acres and about 15 acres of moist soil planting are planned.
- 8) Common Reed control: hundreds of acres of common reed are regularly sprayed along Winchester Wasteway (Dodson to Potholes Reservoir) and throughout North Potholes. WDFW has received considerable positive feedback with regards to the “opening” of previously “closed-in” wetlands.
- 9) 239 Drain project recovery: herbicide treatment of common reed to recover shallow excavated wetland basins.
- 10) Harris Ponds maintenance: regular maintenance to maintain open water within shallow excavated wetlands.
- 11) Frenchmen Restricted Access Area management: small food plot planting and control of invasive vegetation. Due to late season rainfall, smartweed and other small seed-producing plants in this area, has been more productive than years past. These plants are an important component of waterfowl diet. We plan to experiment with 4 acres of winter wheat planting during August 2013.
- 12) Buckshot Goose Field: this alfalfa field has an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access pit blind. Contact Region 2 Office in Ephrata for a key.

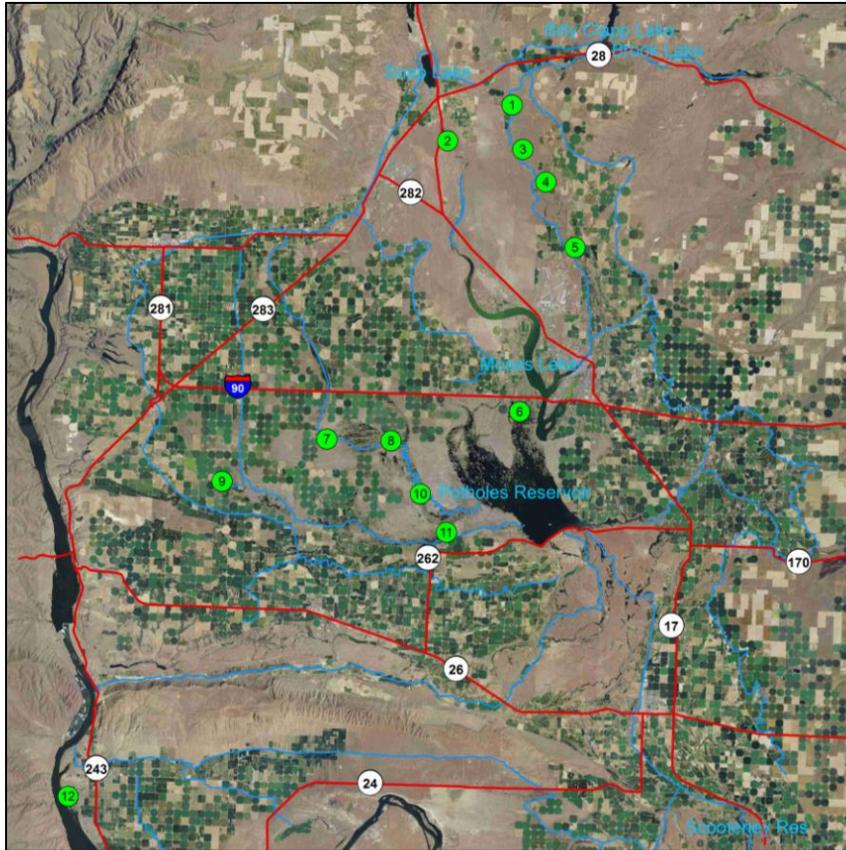


Figure 4. Distribution of waterfowl related work in District 5. Green circles represent project areas.

## BIG GAME

### Deer

#### *Management and Population Status*

Mule deer are the most abundant big game species within District 5. Although white-tailed deer are a small portion (<5%) of deer harvest each year, they occur at very low densities primarily in eastern Adams County. Mule deer numbers in District 5 are relatively low throughout summer months, but increase in October as deer begin to migrate from areas outside the District (see Migration Patterns below). Mule deer habitat in District 5 can most commonly be characterized as small patches of shrub-steppe and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands bordered by cultivated crops (usually winter wheat and orchards).

The abundance of agriculture in District 5 creates the potential for crop depredation complaints if mule deer populations are allowed to exceed social tolerances. Therefore, the primary management goal in all GMUs is to increase deer herds to levels that balance hunting opportunity with agricultural conflicts. Management objectives include maintaining a post-hunt buck:doe ratio of 15:100. WDFW achieves these management objectives by providing general season opportunities for bucks with  $\geq 3$  antler points, providing antlerless harvest during the

general archery and muzzleloader season, and by permit only in areas where crop depredation is a management concern (see Deer Areas below).

The exception is GMU 290 where the primary management objective is to produce a quality mule deer hunting experience. Although quality can mean different things to different hunters, it almost always includes the opportunity to harvest a mature buck. For that reason, primary management objectives in GMU 290 are to maintain a mule deer herd with a post-hunt buck:doe ratio of  $\geq 50:100$  and a post-hunt buck population where adult bucks ( $\geq 2.5$  years old) constitute no less than 50% of the bucks. WDFW achieves these management objectives by providing permit only opportunities and harvesting no more than 25% of the mature bucks on an annual basis.

In addition, WDFW minimizes depredation complaints on agricultural lands by controlling population growth with antlerless harvest, which is also limited to permit only opportunities. The level of antlerless harvest that WDFW allows depends on whether or not the population is increasing, decreasing, or stable. See Appendix A for photos of bucks that were harvested or observed during post-hunt surveys in GMU 290 as well as FAQs for this unit.

Trend data in all District 5 GMUs indicate relatively stable mule deer populations with post-hunt buck:doe ratios that satisfy the management objectives. See the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#) for a more detailed analysis of mule deer population trends in District 5. Damage complaints associated with these herds have also been relatively low in recent years, indicating they have not exceeded the social carrying capacity that exists in agricultural settings. Therefore, current harvest restrictions and season lengths appear to be appropriate for these herds and will likely change little in the near future.

### ***Migration Patterns***

With the exception of the Desert (GMU 290) and Wahluke (GMU 278) units, mule deer in District 5 are largely migratory. Previous radio telemetry studies on mule deer herds detected movements of deer from neighboring GMUs into District 5 (Fig. 5). These movements are largely weather dependent with snowfall likely having the largest effect on fall and winter movements.

Mule deer will reverse this migration and return to fawning grounds during spring. South and east movements of mule deer into GMU 272 from neighboring GMUs such as Big Bend, Saint Andrews, and Moses Coulee are also believed to occur but these movements are not as well understood.

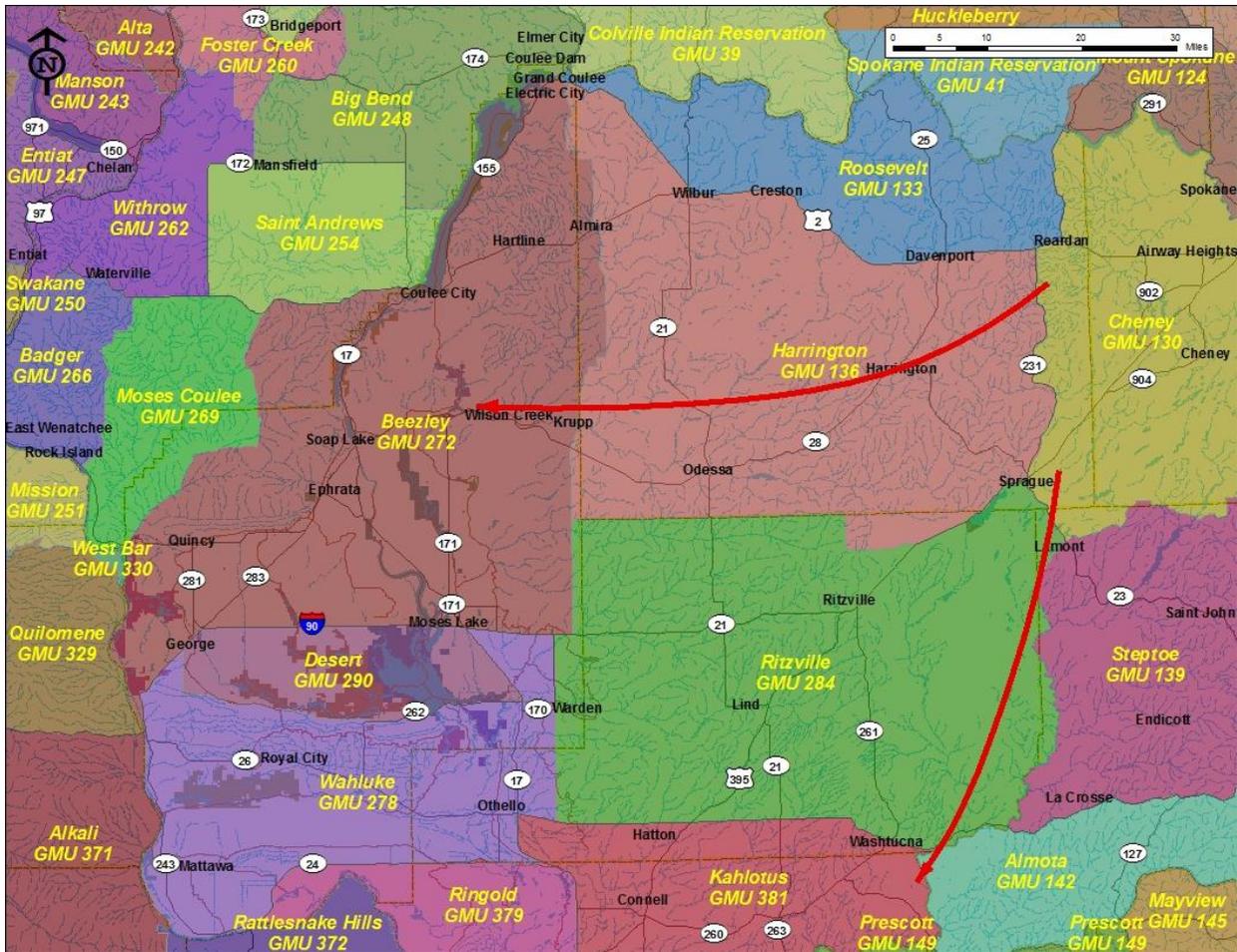


Figure 5. Generalized patterns of fall and winter mule deer migration into District 5.

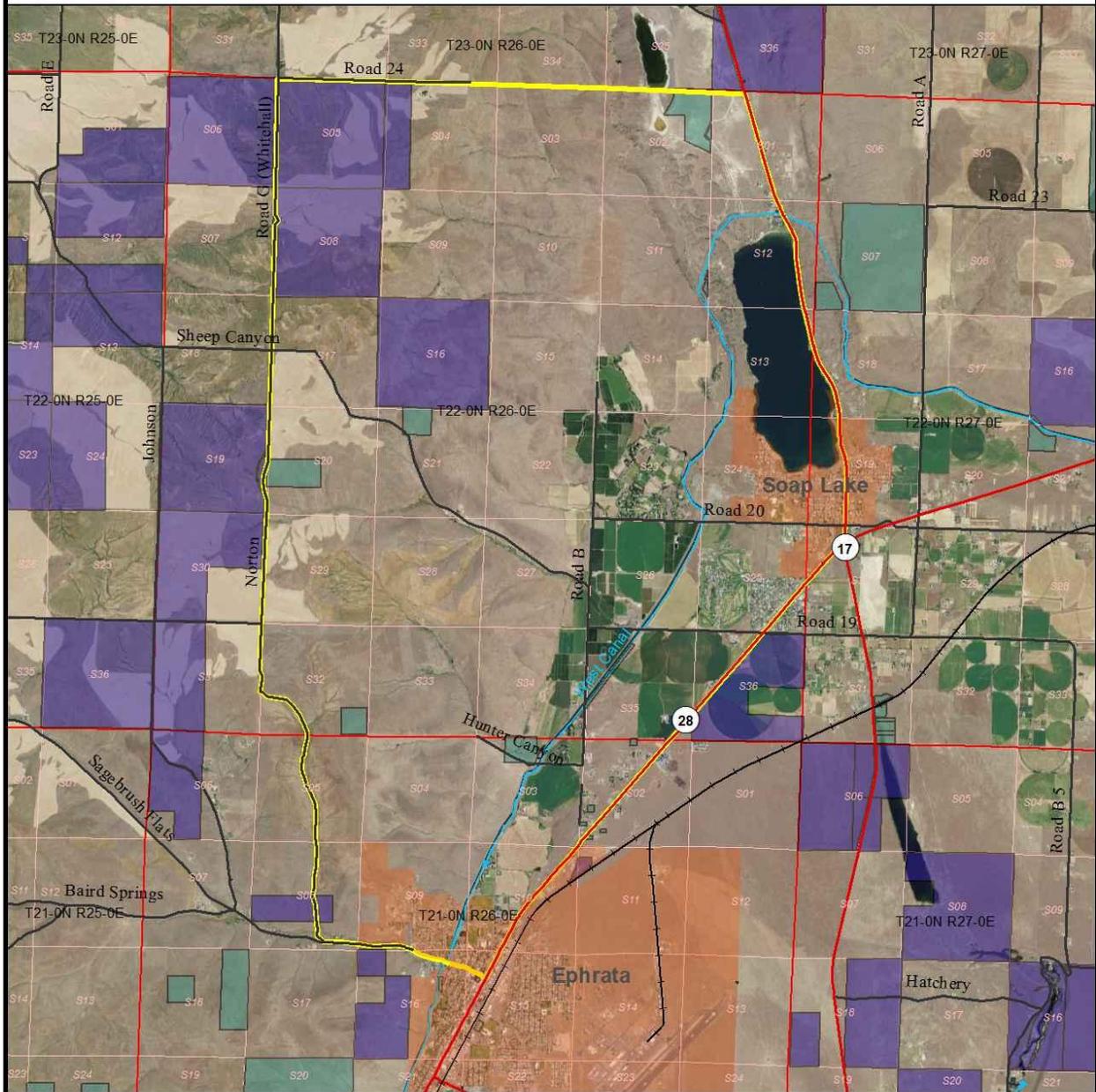
**Deer Areas**

There are localized areas in District 5 where deer congregate during harsh or prolonged winters and have the potential to cause severe crop damage. To address this issue, WDFW provides limited permit only opportunities to harvest antlerless deer that occur in close proximity to these areas. WDFW defines such areas as “Deer Areas”.

By providing these opportunities, WDFW hopes to minimize crop depredation by deterring mule deer from congregating in Deer Areas. Deer Areas that occur in District 5 include Deer Area 2010 (Lakeview; Fig. 6) located in GMU 272 and Deer Area 2011 (Benge; Fig. 7) located in GMU 284. See the most recent [Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations Pamphlet](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

# Lakeview; Deer Area 2011

# Ephrata District



**DISCLAIMER**

Due to the dynamic nature of data and the need to rely on outside sources of information, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions in the data and information contained in and products produced from this application. There are no warranties which accompany the maps and information contained in or produced by this application. For legal definitions of hunting regulations, seasons, and boundaries, the user should refer to Chapters 232-12, 232-16, and 232-28 of the Washington Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

- Highway
  - County
  - Seasonal closure
  - Closed road
  - WA\_Railroads
  - Waterway
- Ownership**
- Federal
  - State
  - City limits
  - Deer area



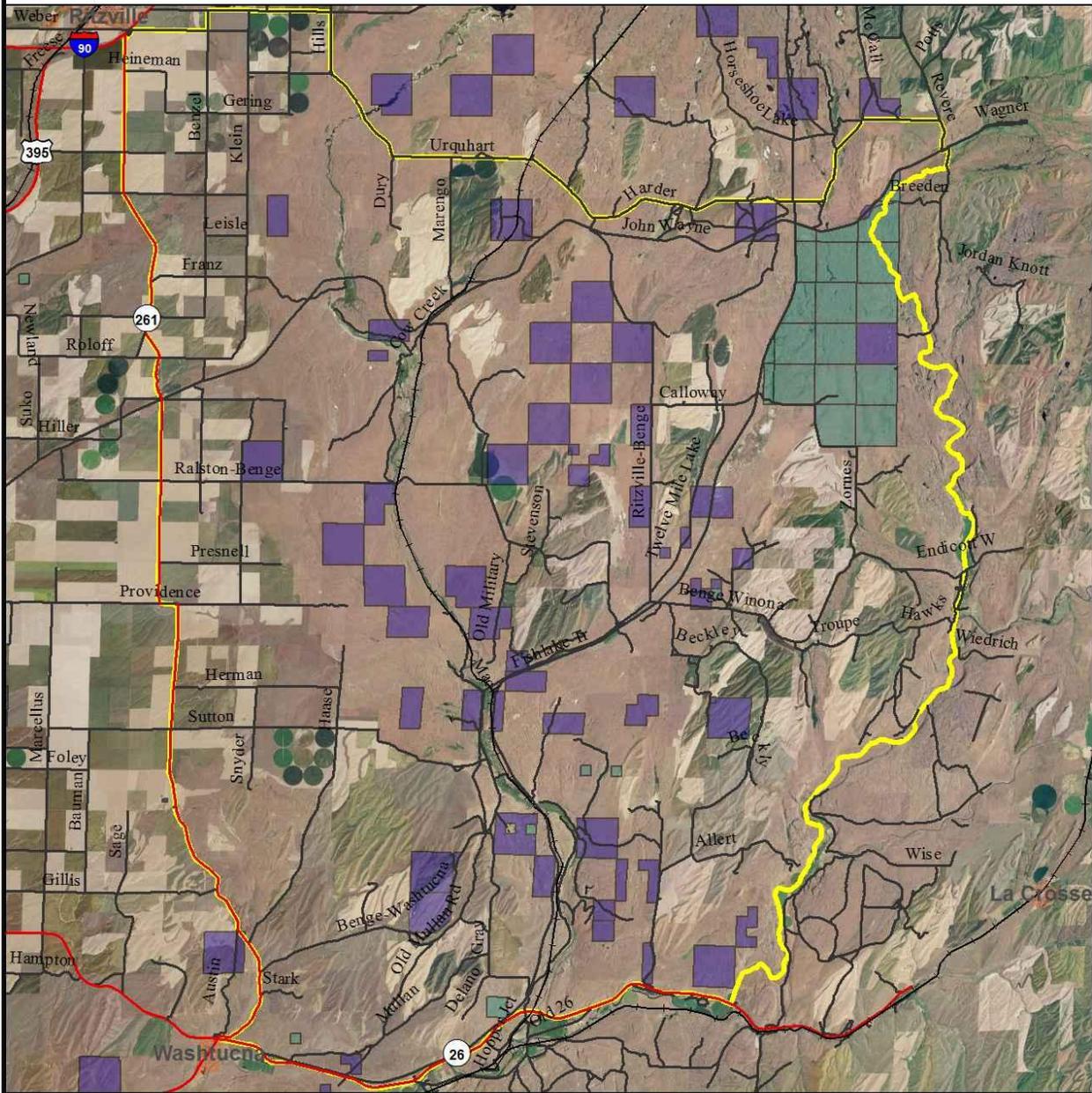
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Figure 6. Lakeview Deer Area map.

# Benge; Deer Area 2010

Ephrata District



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- WA\_Railroads
  - Highway
  - County
  - Seasonal closure
  - Closed road
  - City limits
  - Deer area
- Ownership**
- Federal
  - State



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

1:200,000



Figure 7. Benge Deer Area map.

### ***Hunting Prospects***

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 (Ritzville) where post-hunt buck:doe ratios average 21–26:100. Post-hunt fawn:doe ratios indicate herd productivity was moderate in all surveyed GMUs, and buck:doe ratios remained stable or increased following the 2012 season. With the mild winter conditions in 2012, post-hunt populations are believed to have experienced minimal levels of winter mortality so deer hunters should expect average success rates during the 2013 season.

The number of deer hunters in GMU 272 during 2012 (1,405) was similar to previous years (1,337 hunters in 2010 and 1,410 hunters in 2011), and biologists expect comparable participation rates in 2013. Success rates in GMU 272 were equivalent to the long-term average of 25%. Harvest rates during 2013 are expected to be close to 25% and differ little by user-group (Modern Firearm 24%; Muzzleloader 23%; Archery 20%; 69% Permit).

The number of deer hunters in GMU 284 during the 2012 season (832 hunters) was slightly above the long-term average (775 hunters). Hunter success in 2012 (45%; all weapons combined) was also slightly higher than the long-term average of 35%. Biologists anticipate similar participation with success rates that are closer to the long-term average for this upcoming season. GMU 284 is dominated by private property. Hunters should plan to seek out permission to access private lands and/or plan on hunting lands enrolled in the WDFW Access Program as little Wildlife Area land (~1,600 acres) occurs in this unit.

All hunting opportunities in GMU 290 (Desert Unit) are issued through the permit draw. With average post-hunt ratios of 45 bucks:100 does, and 60% of bucks being classified as >2.5 years old, high success rates are expected to continue in 2013. Forty-one percent of land in GMU 290 occurs as the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, thus public opportunity is widely available. The area consists of riparian areas that are associated with the Winchester and Frenchmen Wasteways, and is surrounded by rolling, sandy dunes with varying densities of shrub cover. The majority of the private agricultural land in this unit occurs throughout the western half.

Harvest in GMU 278 (Wahluke) is again expected to be low in 2013 compared to other general season units in District 5. During the 2012 season, hunters harvested 67 deer, a record for this unit. Since 2001, hunters have averaged 38 deer per year in GMU 278. Hunter success in 2012 (25%) was higher than the long-term average of 18%. GMU 278 offers approximately 36,000 acres of public lands as part of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex, most of which is open to hunting.

### **Elk**

#### ***Management and Population Status***

Elk are extremely rare and have not historically been a management priority in District 5. Resident elk herds do not exist in GMU 272 (Beezley), GMU 278 (Wahluke), and GMU 290 (Desert). These trends are not expected to change in the near future. Because of the significant potential for crop depredation issues, WDFW does not encourage the establishment of elk herds in District 5. WDFW keeps elk herd numbers low by providing any-elk opportunities during the general archery and modern firearm seasons.

In District 5, hunters killed 21 elk last season, all of which were taken by modern firearm hunters. Hunters in GMU 284 (Ritzville) harvested the most elk (16) in this district. Because harvest levels have been extremely low until recently, biologists do not conduct annual surveys for elk in GMU 284.

Elk that are harvested in GMU 284 are most likely part of a herd that is known to occur at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Consequently, harvest in GMU 284 is probably dependent on whether or not that herd migrates to GMU 284 during the hunting season rather than a function of population size and growth. The number of elk harvested in GMU 284 gradually increased from 4 elk in 2005 to 22 elk in 2011 and then declined to 16 elk in 2012. This fluctuation in harvest is further evidence of the dynamic nature of elk migration from Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge.

### ***Hunting Prospects***

Hunters are not encouraged to hunt elk in District 5, due to low elk numbers and success rates. The most likely chance to be successful is in GMU 284. However, the majority of this GMU consists of agricultural and other private lands, so access may be difficult.

## **Cougar**

### ***Management and Population Status***

Modeling efforts suggest a small population of adult cougar in District 5 and annual harvest is very low. In 2012, hunters harvested three cougars in District 5, all of which came from GMU 272 (Beezley Hills).

### ***Hunting Prospects***

District 5 is not an optimal area to target cougar. The most likely places to encounter these cats are the Beezley Hills, Moses Coulee, and adjacent to the Crab Creek drainage upstream from the town of Stratford.

## **Black Bear**

### ***Management and Population Status***

District 5 does not have a resident population of black bears. In 2012, one bear was harvested in the entire district and was taken in GMU 272 (Beezley Hills). The establishment of black bear populations in this district is not expected in the foreseeable future.

### ***Hunting Prospects***

District 5 is not an optimal area to target black bears. An occasional bear may disperse through this district and the most likely places to encounter these dispersers are the Beezley Hills and Moses Coulee.

## UPLAND BIRDS

District 5 is an excellent place to encounter upland birds. Common species in this District include pheasant, quail, chukar/gray partridge, and dove.

**Pheasant** – Grant County was Washington’s top pheasant producing county in 2012. Despite this, harvest in Grant County was down 18% compared to the 2011 harvest. Hunters bagged 8,745 roosters in Grant County and 2,126 Adams County for a total harvest of 10,871 pheasants in District 5.

The largest wild populations of pheasants on WDFW lands in District 5 are likely to be found within the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George (Fig. 8). Mixed bags of wild and released birds are also likely to be had in lower Crab Creek, Gloyd Seeps, Quincy, and Dry Falls units.

For wild birds, dense thickets of Russian olive and cattail associated with Frenchmen and Winchester Wasteways and ponds are likely to hold pheasants. Hunters will increase their odds greatly with a well-trained dog to both flush and retrieve the birds in dense cover. Pheasants are strong runners so moving quickly and quietly can improve the odds of getting a close shot.

Many hunters feel that pheasant release sites are the only areas where they can successfully harvest pheasants. However, in 2012, 2,900 pheasants were released in Grant County while hunters harvested 10,871 pheasants. Thus, released birds would have made up, at most, 26% of the total harvest.

Hunters should not ignore the opportunities to harvest “wild” pheasants, particularly since pheasant releases are being reduced in response to recommendations from the [Performance Audit Report of 2009](#). This report essentially determined that pheasant releases were an inefficient means to increase hunter harvest. The report recommended reducing pheasant releases by at least 10% annually and redirecting those savings towards habitat enhancement. WDFW agreed with the assessment and has been responding accordingly.

Expect similar numbers of wild pheasants as observed during the 2012 season. Most hunters who invest considerable effort and cover a lot of ground will cross paths with wild birds and can increase their chances for a productive hunt by selecting non-toxic shot and diversifying the bag with waterfowl. Hunters may also choose to seek out pheasant release sites, see the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) for details. Non-toxic shot is required at all pheasant release sites.

**Quail** – Quail harvest in 2012 was down slightly in District 5 from the 10 year running average. Hunters bagged 12,998 quail in District 5 in 2012 (10,387 in Grant County and 2,611 in Adams County). The 10 year running average in Grant and Adams Counties are 13,569 and 2,956 quail respectively.

Traditional quail hunting areas on WDFW lands in District 5 include the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George, Lower Crab Creek between Corfu and the Columbia River, Gloyd Seeps between Stratford and

Moses Lake, the Quincy unit near the town of Quincy, and Dry Falls unit at the south end of Banks Lake (Fig. 8). Hunters will increase their odds greatly with a well-trained dog to either flush or point, and retrieve the birds.

Large coveys are difficult to find by mid-season on public lands and successful hunters will attempt to identify multiple coveys to pursue throughout the season. Riparian areas will offer the best hunting and hunters can increase their chances by securing access to private lands where pressure can be considerably lower.

If pressure is high, some coveys can be found settling into shrub cover a considerable distance from heavily hunted areas. Hunters with wide ranging pointing breeds can be most successful at targeting these coveys. Quail hunting is expected to be good this year. Winter temperatures were not far from the norm and the area lacked long periods of snow crust that can result in low overwinter survival. .

**Chukar/Partridge** – During the 2012 season, hunters harvested 809 chukar and 611 gray partridge in District 5. The majority of the chukar harvest was from Grant County. Last year's harvest rates are similar to those from 2011.

Most chukar hunting in District 5 occurs in the Coulee Corridor areas around Banks and Lenore Lakes and along the Columbia River breaks north of Vantage. (Fig. 8) Chukar is a challenging but rewarding game bird to pursue.

Gray partridge occur in low densities in the basin but are rarely targeted by hunters; instead they are taken incidentally while hunting chukar, quail, or pheasant. Most gray partridge will occur on private farm fields, particularly in the dryland wheat portions of Adams and, to a lesser degree, Grant counties. Chukar and Gray partridge are resilient birds and thus likely fared well through the winter. Winter of 2012 was relatively mild and snow depth and crusting was minimal.

**Dove** – Dove hunters were very successful in 2012 harvesting over 19,295 doves. Grant County recorded the highest dove harvest with hunters bagging 17,465. Hunters harvested 1,830 doves in Adams County during the 2012 season.

Dove hunting is expected to be good in 2013 but it is highly dependent upon weather conditions. If conditions are stable, the birds found during scouting should be around during the hunt, but unstable conditions often redistribute birds significantly. Hunters may improve their success by securing access to wheat fields for the morning hunt. Evening hunts can be productive in wheat fields or in traditional roosting areas.

Look for large stands of trees (preferably with dead limbs) adjacent to water and surrounded by agriculture for best roost hunt results. Roost site hunting can be found along the north and west sides of Potholes Reservoir, the east side of Winchester Lake, and throughout the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex. The Gloyd Seeps Unit offers a mix of roost and crop hunting (wheat) on the sharecropped site at the north end of the unit by Road 20 NE (Fig. 8).

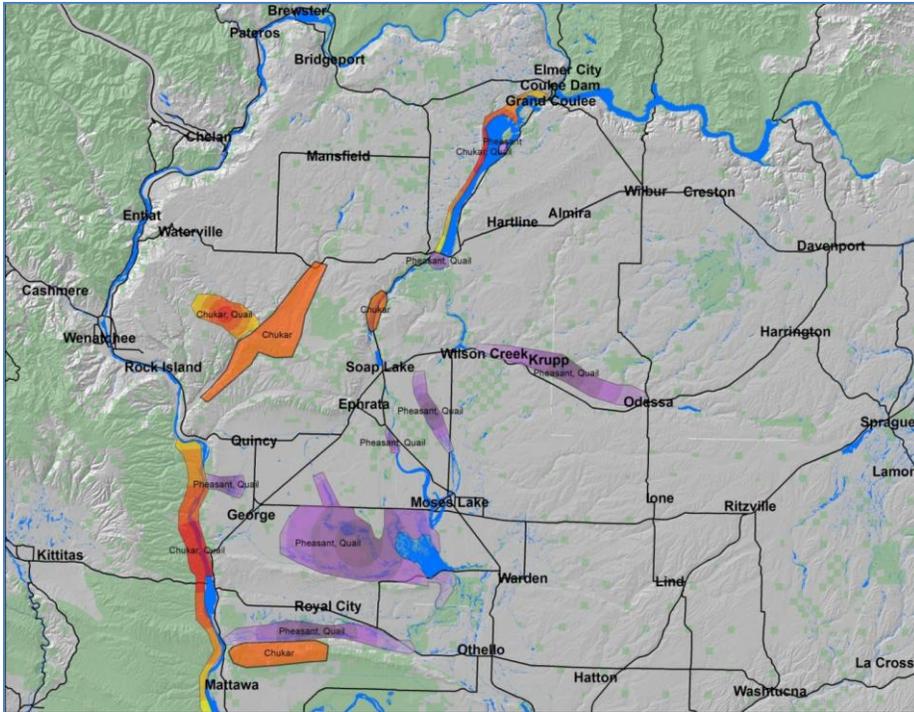


Figure 8. Generalized upland bird concentrations (pheasant, quail, and chukar) throughout District 5.

### Upland Bird Management

Upland bird management in District 5 consists primarily of sharecropping and strategic use of bird feeders to increase over-winter survival. However, efforts are underway to enhance nesting cover throughout the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the CBWA. The area has been selected due to the Bureau of Reclamation’s Supplemental Feed Project<sup>1</sup> which will increase wetland acreage throughout the area dramatically.

WDFW intends to support this increase in wetland acreage with an increase in native perennial nesting and winter cover for wildlife. Wildlife Area staff are currently working to establish 180 acres of nesting cover. These fields will require a fallow period to reduce the seedbed of noxious weeds and invasive vegetation. Seeding of native perennial grasses is planned for fall of 2013. The effort is also intended to stem the advance of invasive species and to reduce erosion to the existing ephemeral streambank. Fifteen linear miles of creekbed has been targeted for riparian plantings of willow, dogwood, and waterbirch, with other native shrubs (serviceberry, hawthorn, currant, rose, etc.) being planted on the adjacent drier sites.

### WATERFOWL

Ducks – Grant County has been one of Washington’s top duck producers since harvest reporting began in 2001. Last year hunters harvested 76,457 ducks in Grant County surpassing harvest in the second highest county by over 24,000 ducks. Adams County hunters added another 13,771 ducks for a district total of 90,228, a 21% increase over the 2011 district duck harvest.

<sup>1</sup> BOR 2007; <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ea/wash/potholes/index.html>

Geese – The District 5 Canada goose harvest was also up from the 2011 harvest totals. Hunters took 20,617 geese in 2012 with 17,939 harvested in Grant County and 2,678 harvested in Adams County. The ten year annual harvest average for this district is 17,116 geese.

**Waterfowl Population Status**

Local waterfowl production has some influence on early season hunting success, but this influence is often minor because by the start of the hunting season migration is in full swing. During the hunting season, most of the waterfowl in the basin come from breeding areas in Canada and Alaska.

Breeding population surveys indicate that waterfowl populations are declining in the Columbia Basin (Fig. 9 and 10). Despite the downward trend in local productivity, hunter success in the basin has remained high and stable which suggests an influx of birds from elsewhere prior to opening weekend.

Areas covered during the waterfowl breeding (Fig. 11) and winter (Fig. 12) surveys . Winter survey data can be located at the following link:

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regions/region2/waterfowl\\_surveys.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regions/region2/waterfowl_surveys.html)

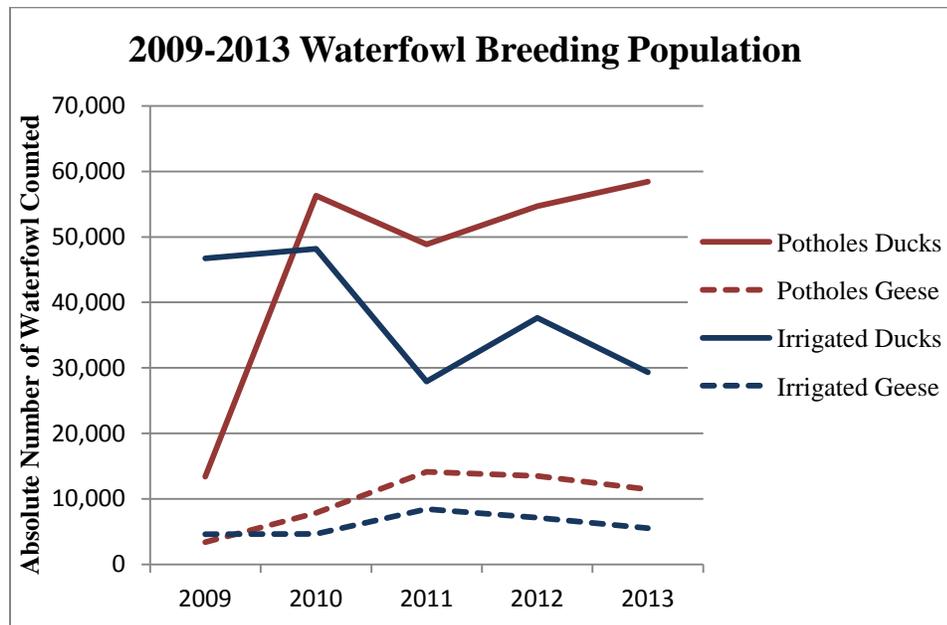


Figure 9. Trends in ducks and geese counted in the Washington’s Potholes and Irrigated waterfowl areas during the annual breeding population surveys.

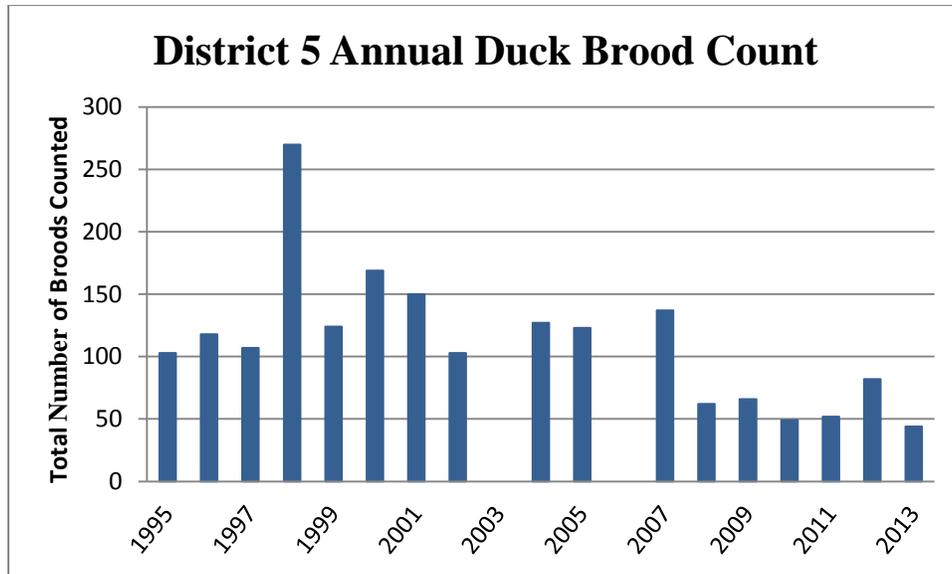


Figure 10. Number of duck broods counted in District 5 during the spring/summer brood survey routes. Data is not available for the 2003 and 2006 surveys.

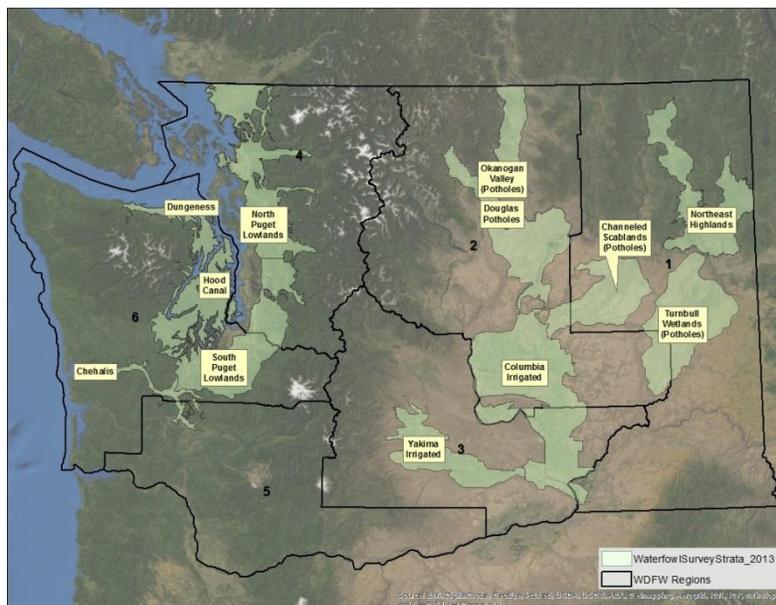


Figure 11. Areas of Washington that are covered during the annual waterfowl breeding population surveys.

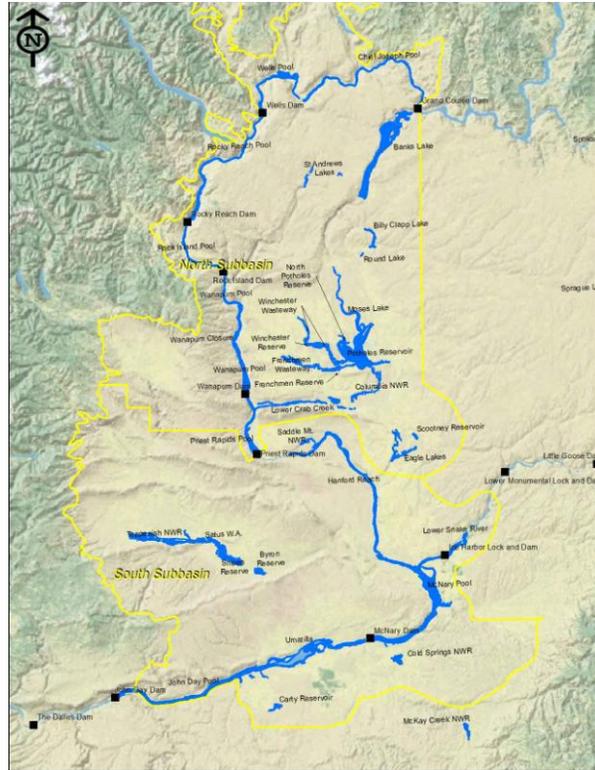


Figure 12. Survey strata used during winter waterfowl surveys. These areas represent locations of potential waterfowl concentrations.

### Waterfowl Migration Chronology and Concentration Areas

Peak migration will bring the best waterfowl hunting in the basin (Fig. 13). November will bring large numbers of mallards, wigeon, gadwalls, teal, scaup, redheads, and canvasbacks. Until this time hunters must rely on early migrants and locally produced birds.

December typically provides the peak of mallards, ringnecks, and canvasbacks, while other dabbling and diving species continue their journey south.

Goose hunting will typically improve in November when early season migrant Canada geese (Lesser and Taverner's) begin to scatter from their initial staging area at Stratford Lake to alfalfa or grain fields within feeding distance from Moses Lake and the Columbia River.

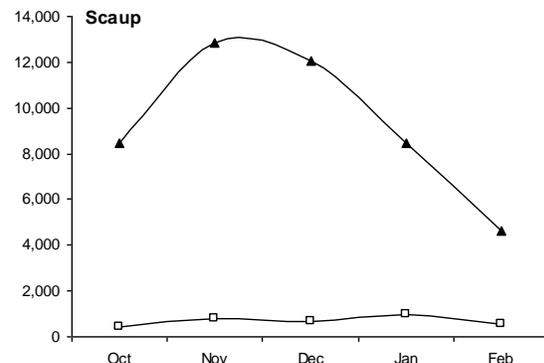
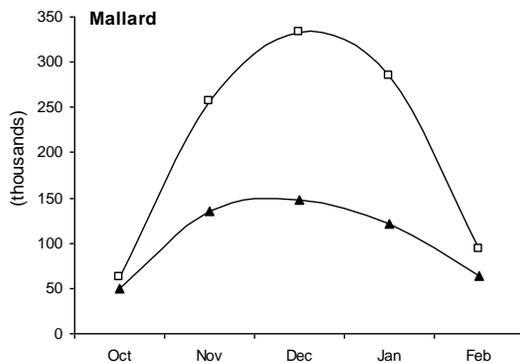


Figure 13. Migration curves for several species which winter in large numbers on the Columbia Plateau. Refer to Figure 12 above for map of subbasin boundaries.

### Understanding Waterfowl Migration

The waterfowl hunting season in District 5 is largely dependent upon bird production in northern breeding grounds (Fig. 14). The first step in understanding the relationship between breeding conditions and the expected harvest is to understand the source of incoming birds. Northern Pacific breeding area (includes: Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon) provides the bulk of the mallards harvested in Washington State. The second most important breeding area contributing to Washington State harvest is Northern Alberta, followed by Southwest Alberta, and lastly by locally produced birds in Washington and Oregon (Fig. 15).

Perhaps the important consideration is that poor breeding conditions on the prairies parklands has been shown to displace birds to the north-northwest to northern Alberta, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories. Birds that are displaced to these areas have a higher likelihood of migrating through the Basin during fall and winter. Alaska will provide large numbers of waterfowl, perhaps mostly to west-side hunters, while British Columbia and Northern Alberta will provide fair numbers of birds to astern Washington.

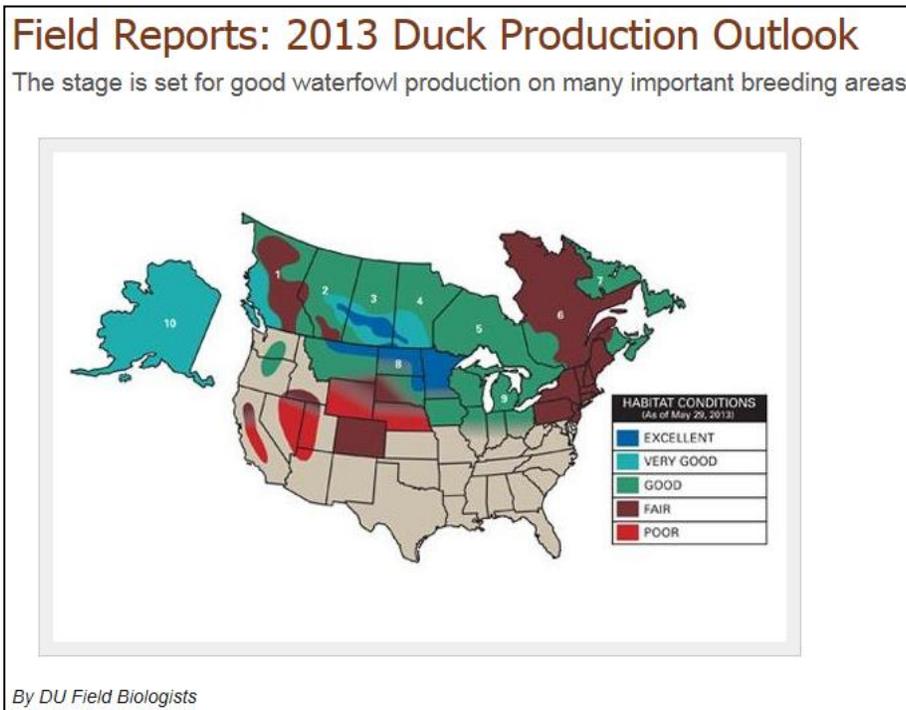


Figure 14. 2013 spring habitat conditions. Source: Ducks Unlimited.

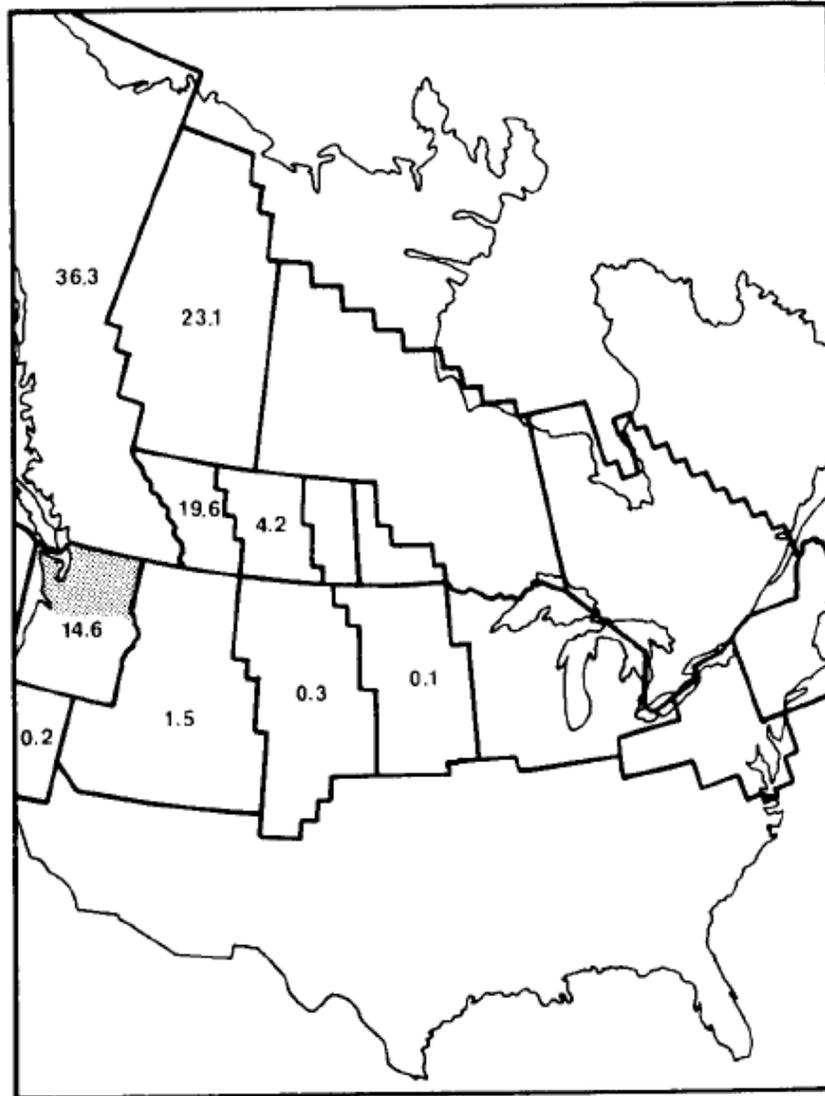


Fig. D-11. Percent derivation of the mallard harvest in Washington (shaded) from major breeding reference areas.

*Figure 15. From Munro and Kimball 1982 - Population Ecology of the Mallard. VII. Distribution and Derivation of the harvest. These data describe where the ducks harvested in Washington State are coming from. Note the importance of northern and southwestern Alberta, and British Columbia.*

### **Hunting**

Scouting is often the key to successful waterfowl hunting. Ample opportunity exists for public waterfowl hunts but hunters should first identify where birds are feeding and roosting. Feeding flights for ducks typically occur very early in the morning and late in the evening and last for an hour or so. There is always good opportunity to harvest waterfowl during opening weekend in the Columbia Basin.

A harvest rate of slightly above three ducks per person is common from year to year for the first weekend of the general waterfowl season. Mallard, teal, American wigeon, and gadwall are among the species most commonly encountered. Also, wood ducks can be found in fair numbers concentrating in stands of flooded Russian olive trees (typically associated with the Winchester and Frenchmen wasteways) in the early season.

Late in the season, when snow is on the ground and conditions are harsh, ducks are likely to feed more during the day while the snow is soft, or will seek out fields that are grazed by cattle, so they can access the snow-buried corn kernels. Knowing when and where ducks are feeding and which direction they depart will help hunters determine the best locations to intercept the duck traffic with a spread of decoys.

Select areas to hunt based on the species you want to target. Diving ducks are typically hunted along the Columbia River, particularly at Wells Pool, Wanapum Pool, and Priest Rapids Pool. They forage over beds of submerged aquatic vegetation such as pondweeds and milfoil. American wigeon will associate with diving ducks because they are *kleptoparasites*, meaning they wait for the diving ducks or coots to bring up a bill-full of vegetation, and then quickly rush in to steal their meal.

Dabbling ducks are more commonly targeted on the plateau where grain corn and wheat fields attract mallards and pintail and shallow wetlands attract teal, American wigeon, and gadwall. Canada geese feed primarily in wheat and alfalfa fields, so requesting permission from private landowners is often necessary to secure good goose hunting.

Setting up a decoy spread on a pond between the feeding and roosting sites will generally result in some good shooting, particularly when conditions are favorable (e.g. wind, snow, fog). Typically the larger roosting sites will be the Wanapum Closure (Columbia River), Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Marsh Units (Fig. 16).

Hunters should be mindful that water (and muck) depths are highly variable and it takes a lot of trial and error to learn where you can and cannot set out decoys. For some areas, boat access is a must. Winchester and Frenchmen Wasteways (the two major drainages entering the west side of Potholes Reservoir) are crossable in some areas with chest waders but use caution as deep holes do exist and patches of muck can be difficult to exit, particularly when packing decoys.

One of the more popular waterfowl hunting areas is Potholes Reservoir. The abundance of small sand dune islands (Fig. 17), where hunters find cover, makes this an attractive area to many hunters. Most hunters use the northern portion of the reservoir where they find shallower water and numerous islands. Hunting pressure and competition for the best locations on Potholes Reservoir is high. Hunters that are new to the reservoir should be aware that potholes reservoir water levels do increase dramatically through the hunting season (Fig. 18).

Winchester Lake is another location where hunters can expect to see good numbers of waterfowl but hunting pressure is relatively high here. Winchester Lake sits in a prime location to get traffic from mallards that feed on grain corn in the surrounding area. Ducks typically come from Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, Moses Lake, and/or the Wanapum Closure to feed in

fields and they occasionally attempt to shorten their commute to the roost by stopping at Winchester Lake instead. This area can be very good at times.

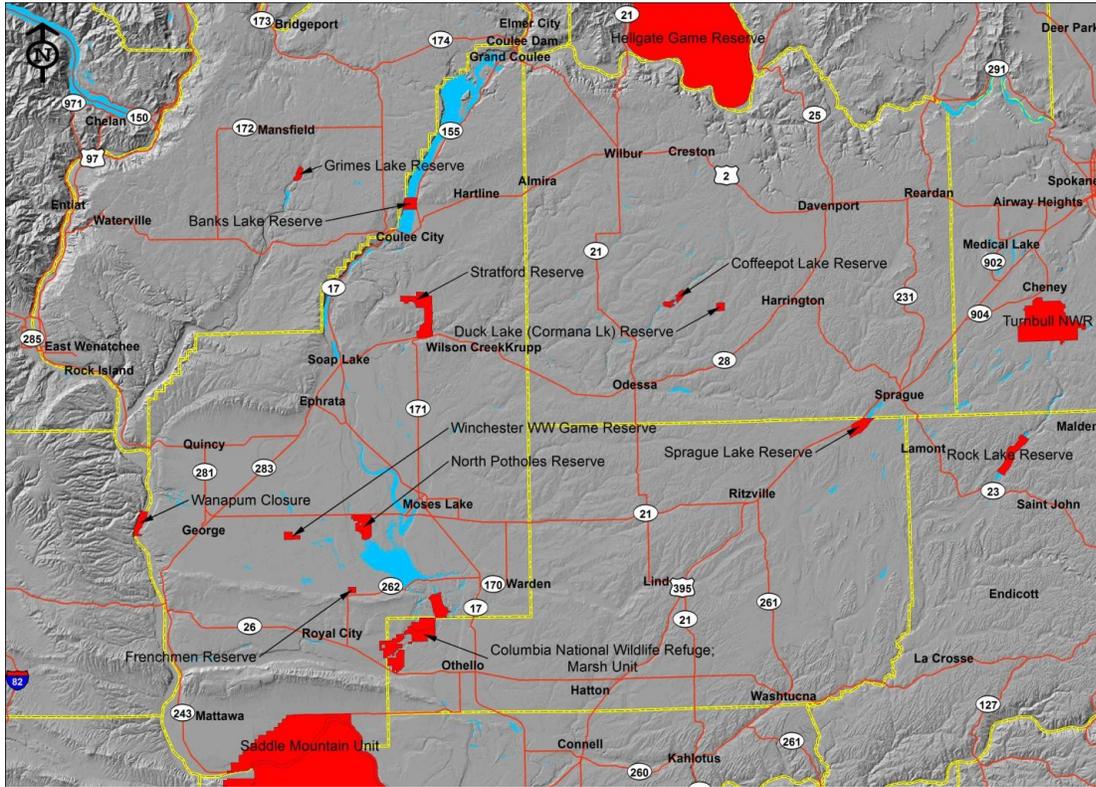


Figure 16. Location of wildlife reserves and closed federal refuge units (in red) throughout and adjacent to District 5.

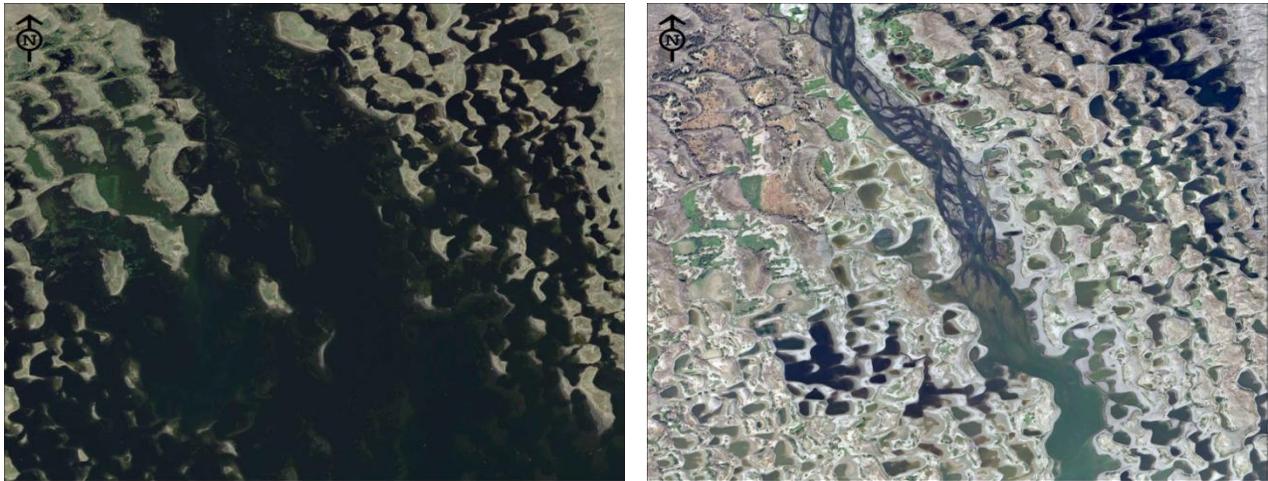
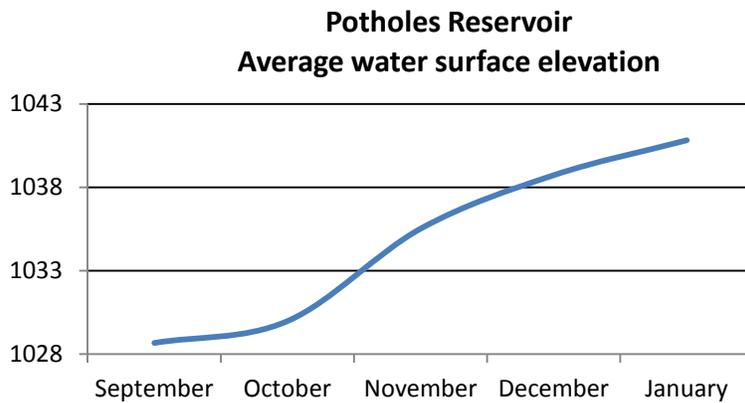


Figure 17. Aerial imagery showing difference between high water (June) and low water (September) levels on Potholes Reservoir.



*Figure 18. Potholes Reservoir water surface elevation (in feet) during waterfowl season. Note that water surface elevation is measured at O’Sullivan dam and some lag in flooding will occur in the upper portions of the reservoir.*

Regulated Access Areas (RAA) occur in District 5 to provide quality hunting opportunity (Fig. 19) Hunters frequenting the Winchester RAA should use caution on pintails, which can be abundant and thus easy to exceed bag limits. Time restrictions and number of vehicles allowed for the RAA can be found in the hunting pamphlet. These sites are now ‘Register to Hunt’ so be sure to register at the box provided in the parking area. See Figure 19 below for a map of RAAs.

Waterfowl hunters should also be aware of private land grain fields enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. This program is intended to provide public field hunting opportunity for ducks and geese but also may provide opportunity to harvest pheasants and occasionally gray partridge. Fields are typically identified and enrolled during November, after the fields are harvested; timing of enrollment and field locations will vary annually. Call or visit the Region 2 office in Ephrata at (509) 754-4624 for details about this program and the Regulated Access Areas.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

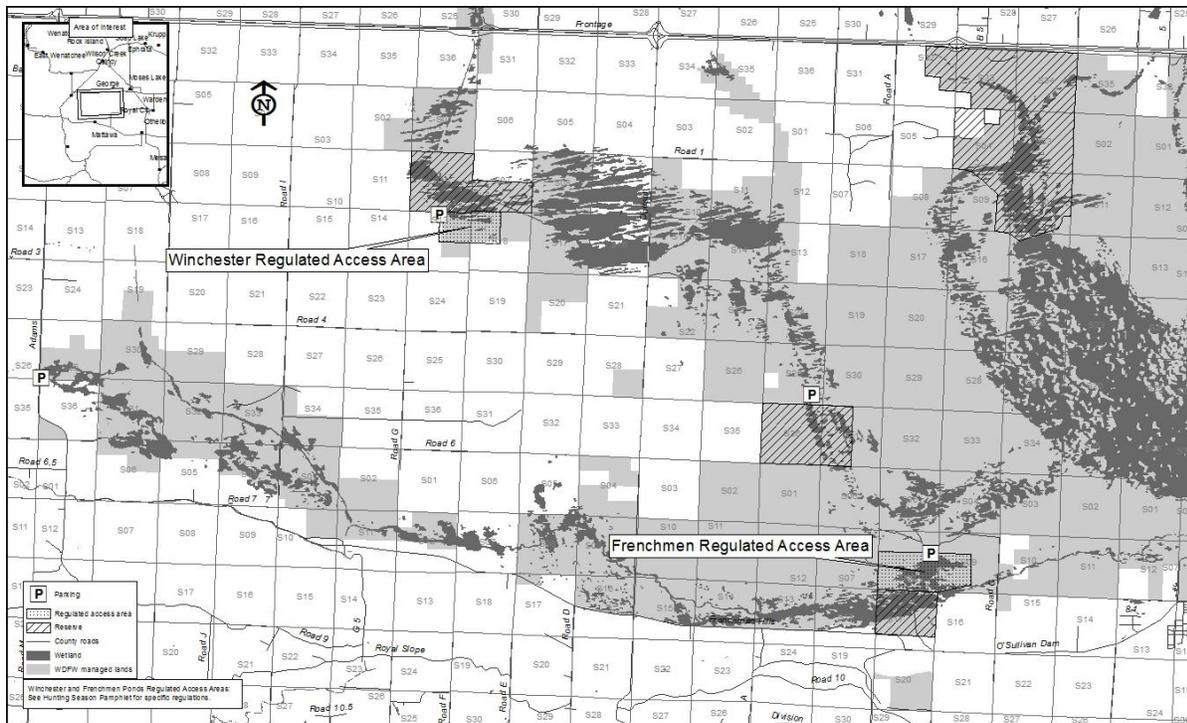


Figure 19. Locations of the Frenchmen and Winchester Regulated Access Areas west of Potholes Reservoir.

## SMALL GAME

### *Distribution and Population Status*

Small game in District 5 consists primarily of bobcat, raccoon, fox, crows, cottontail rabbits, and coyotes. There are no sizeable populations of forest grouse or wild turkey in this district. Bobcats occur in District 5 but harvest is relatively low. Raccoons occur in fair numbers in association with wetlands and residential developments when adequate native habitat exists.

Fox farms occurred adjacent to the Columbia Plateau during the early 1900s but declines in fur prices during the 1950s resulted in fox being released into the wild. A few descendants of these individuals occur within District 5 today, however these introduced fox are still considered uncommon.

Crows are typically hunted in areas where damage occurs, such as orchards (typically nuts), thus hunting opportunities for crows within District 5 are limited. Cottontails are widespread and abundant in areas of optimal habitat. In native landscapes, hunters should look to rock outcrops, greasewood patches, or other thickets where suitable escape cover occurs. Cottontails can be found on farm ground as well, particularly within and around equipment storage areas or rock piles.

There is much opportunity for coyote hunting throughout most of District 5. Yellow-bellied marmots can be hunted but most hunting opportunity occurs on private lands where rock piles

and agriculture are in close proximity. Hunters should also be aware that Washington ground squirrels are protected and they can occur in large numbers in District 5.

## **HUNTER ACCESS**

### ***Land Ownership***

Whether hunting, hiking, or wildlife viewing it is important that we all respect private property rights and ALWAYS ask permission before entering private lands. Fortunately, technology has made this process considerably easier and land ownership can now be ascertained from the internet using the following resources. Simply log on and use the interactive map program to zoom into your area of interest. Clicking on the parcels will reveal land owner information.

<http://adamswa.mapsifter.com/>

<http://grantwa.mapsifter.com/>

The disadvantage of these resources is lack of portability and difficulty scanning a large area for availability of public land. However, these are by far the best available resource for identifying ownership of specific locations. The best resource available for identifying where public land occurs is the Department of Natural Resources public lands quadrangles (1:100k). See the link below to order a copy for a fee.

[http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public\\_land\\_quadrangle\\_maps.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_land_quadrangle_maps.aspx)

### ***Private Lands Program***

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases monetary compensation. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW enforcement staff.

Currently, the private lands access program includes four basic access agreement types: Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, Hunting Only by Written Permission, and Permit Only Area. More information on where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's GoHunt site, <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/gohunt/index.html>. Over 250,000 acres of private property in District 5 are accessible to hunters through these agreements. When accessing these lands, hunters should obey all the rules posted for that specific piece of property. Hunters should also be aware that, unless property is enrolled in these agreements, they may not access private property and they may be prosecuted if they trespass.

### ***Public Land***

#### **WDFW Managed Land:**

Wildlife Areas – The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area contains about 192,000 acres and provides habitat for a multitude of species. For more information on this wildlife area, please visit the wildlife [website](#). Visitors to the wildlife area need to be aware that a Discover Pass is required to access all WDFW lands.

Release Sites – The Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program was designed to help supplement harvest and maintain hunter opportunity in Washington. Several pheasant release sites are found in District 5. For more information on this program and release sites in this district, please visit the Enhancement Program’s [website](#).

**DNR:** The Washington Department of Natural Resources maintains land that is open to the public for recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a [Discover Pass](#) is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found [here](#).

**BLM:** Some BLM land is found in District 5 and is open to public hunting. For more information on BLM property or to order maps, please visit the [blm.gov](http://blm.gov) website.

**The Bureau of Reclamation** maintains property that is open to public use for recreational purposes. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on BOR land can be found [here](#).

### ***Map Book***

Click the image below to access Ephrata District Hunting Maps.



### ***ADA Access***

District 5 maintains some access for Americans with disabilities. These sites occur at Rocky Ford Creek (Drumheller Pond) and Buckshot Ranch. Hunters must have a Disabled Hunter Permit (and in most cases permits from the land managers) in order to access hunting areas behind locked gates by driving on the roads that are normally open only to walk-ins. For additional information, please call or write to Dolores Noyes, WDFW, 360-902-2349, FAX: 360-902-2392 or Email: [Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov).

**Rocky Ford Creek** – Travel south from Ephrata on SR 282 for 7.2 miles. Turn right onto Neppel Rd (Old Moses Lake Hwy). Go 0.1 mile and turn right at the public fishing sign. Continue 0.5 mile to the access site. The access duck blind is on a small pond off the creek. A vehicle can be used to drop off a disabled hunter next to the blind. The ground around the blind is rough and access into the water is best with a small hand launch boat or raft. An accessible vault toilet is in parking lot located nearby for the walk-in fishers. Use of blind is by reservation only. Obtain key from Regional Office, 509-754-4624.

Buckshot Ranch – Drive south on SR 243 along the Columbia River from Vantage toward Mattawa. Turn right (west) onto Road 26 SW and go about 1 mile to the Priest Rapids/Buckshot Wildlife Area. Follow the gravel road into a parking area and turn right between two fence posts. Follow dirt road north 0.25 miles to fence on left side to a locked gate on left. Drive through the gate into the crop field towards the old pump house. Ground level roll-in goose pit blind is available with seasonal success dependent on weather. Call to reserve, 509-754-4624. Obtain gate key from Ephrata Office.

***Bird Dog Training***

District 5 does not currently have any areas designated for bird dog training. Thus all training on WDFW land must occur within the established bird dog training season, August 1 – March 31.

***Target Shooting***

Per WAC 332-52-145, target shooting is allowed in developed recreational facilities (Table 2) or areas with an unobstructed, earthen backstop capable of stopping all projectiles and debris in a safe manner. Targets are defined as ‘items that are commercially manufactured for the specific purpose of target shooting’. Because of extensive misuse of WDFW managed lands (primarily litter related), some areas have been closed to target shooting, particularly in the Lind Coulee, Potholes, and Seep Lakes Units of the CBWA. Information for shooting range facilities is provided below.

*Table 2. List of target shooting facilities in District 5.*

County	Name	Contact
Adams	Lind Golf & Gun Club	509-671-3314
Adams	Othello Gun Club	509-488-3768
Adams	Ritzville Gun Club	Gun Club Road, Ritzville
Adams	Washtucna Gun Club	509-646-3263
Grant	Boyd Mordhorst Memorial Range	509-345-2550
Grant	Coulee City Sportsmen	509-632-5137
Grant	Marlin Trap Club	509-982-2445
Grant	Moses Lake Gun Club	509-765-1382
Grant	Quincy Gun Club	509-787-5506

**APPENDIX A.**

**Desert Unit (GMU 290) Photos**



## **Desert Unit (GMU 290) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: Where should I start looking for a mature buck?**

A: The highest density of mule deer typically occurs between Dodson Road and Potholes Reservoir, bounded on the north by Interstate 90 and on the south by Frenchmen Hills Road. We recommend exploring all access points around this area when getting to know the unit, then branch out from there.

### **Q: What is the area like?**

A: The unit sits within the heart of the Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which delivers water to over 600,000 acres of farmland in the area. As a result many small ponds and streams have been incidentally created in this area. Hunters should be familiar with the orientation of Frenchmen and Winchester Wasteways as they pose a significant barrier and can only be crossed by boat or with chest waders in places. There are many small ponds associated with these wasteways that are used by waterfowl hunters.

The Desert Unit provides a rich source of natural vegetation so, though mule deer utilize agricultural fields such as alfalfa, the crops may not be the best place to seek out your deer. Bitterbrush, which is common within the Desert Unit, is an important mule deer food item during winter. Be familiar with the distribution of bitterbrush patches, particularly during the later seasons if snowfall has occurred.

The Desert Unit sits on deep sandy soils. These soils have been wind-blown, resulting in long east-west running dunes which characterize the landscape (and provide great vantage points to scan for deer). These dunes and sandy soils can make walking difficult at times and will certainly make packing out an animal a lot of work.

### **Q: What size bucks am I likely to encounter?**

A: The typical buck harvested from the Desert Unit is a 4x4 with a 24" spread. Many hunters report having seen larger bucks than the one they harvested.

### **Q: Are there any areas that I cannot hunt?**

A: Hunters need to be aware of the locations and boundaries of Winchester Reserve, Frenchmen Reserve, and North Potholes Reserve (Fig. 19). Private lands within the Desert Unit are only open to hunting if the hunter first obtains landowner permission.

### **Q: Where should I stay?**

A: The town of Moses Lake is the nearest location with many amenities (motels, restaurants, etc.). Camping is allowed on WDFW lands; most folks camp within the parking areas. Expect crowds during the opening weekend of duck and pheasant hunting.

### **Q: Is there any other hunting going on in the area?**

A: The entire unit is open to hunting. Expect to see waterfowl hunters and upland bird hunters throughout the area. However, these hunters are typically associated with the wasteways and associated ponds; once you get far enough into the shrub dominated uplands, you will find far fewer people.

## **District 6**

### **Counties: Okanogan**

#### **Scot Fitkin, District Wildlife Biologist**

#### **Jeff Heinlen, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist**

##### **Summary**

District 6 abuts the Canadian border in north-central Washington and encompasses 10 Game Management Units: 203 (Pasayten), 204 (Okanogan East), 209 (Wannacut), 215 (Sinlahekin), 218 (Chewuch), 224 (Perrygin), 231 (Gardner), 233 (Pogue), 239 (Chiliwist), 242 (Alta).

The western two-thirds of the district, stretching from the Okanogan River to the Pacific Crest, lies on the east slope of the Cascade Range and is dominated by mountainous terrain that generally gets more rugged as you move from east to west. Vegetation in this portion of the district ranges from desert/shrub-steppe at the lowest elevations through various types of conifer forests, culminating in alpine tundra on the higher peaks that top out at almost 9,000 feet.

More than three-quarters of the land base in this portion of the county is in public ownership, offering extensive hunting access. Game is plentiful and dispersed throughout the area for most of the year, concentrating in the lower elevations in winter when deep snows cover much of the landscape.

GMU 204 includes the eastern one-third of the district (from the Okanogan River east to the Okanogan County line) and is moderately rolling terrain, generally rising in elevation as you move east. The vegetation changes from shrub-steppe near the Okanogan River to a mix of tall grass and conifer forest throughout the remainder of the unit. This portion of the district is roughly a 50-50 patchwork of public and private land with the public lands generally being higher in elevation. Again, game is plentiful and dispersed throughout.



## **Pasayten Wilderness, Okanogan County – Scott Fitkin**

Weather in the Okanogan District can be quite variable and capable of changing quickly in the fall. Be prepared for everything from warm, sunny days to the possibility of winter temps and significant snow at higher elevations by the second week of October.

Please be respectful of private land and treat land owners and their property the way you would want to be treated if roles were reversed.

Agency biologists will be running a biological check and information station at the Red Barn in Winthrop both weekends of the modern firearm general deer season. We encourage hunters to stop and provide data to biologists whether you've harvested a deer or not; data collected assists in assessing herd health and shaping population management.

## **2013 Hunting Forecasts**

### **BIG GAME**

#### **Deer**

District 6 supports the largest migratory mule deer herd in the state and Okanogan County has long been prized by hunters for its mule deer hunting. Prospects for mule deer look good this year. Following three consecutive winters of good fawn recruitment, hunters can expect to see moderate numbers of younger bucks; however, the relative availability of older age class bucks should be the best in years. Last year's post season survey result of 34 bucks per 100 does is the highest this ratio has been in decades, indicating excellent buck carryover. Summer forage conditions appear favorable, so deer should be in good physical condition come fall.

During the early general seasons deer will be widely distributed on the landscape and not yet concentrated in migration areas or on winter range. Mature bucks in particular are often at high elevations in remote locations as long as succulent vegetation is available. In general look for deer taking advantage of the rejuvenated summer forage within recent burns including the 2006 Tripod Fire, as well as other areas holding green forage into the fall.

During the late permit seasons, the majority of deer will have moved to winter range areas at lower elevations on more southerly slopes. In District 6, WDFW Wildlife Areas and immediately adjacent federal lands are good bets for high deer numbers in late fall, although in low snow years, some mature bucks may linger at higher elevations.

For those hunters with 2<sup>nd</sup> deer permits in Deer areas 2012 -2016, remember that those permits are good only on private land. Permit holders are responsible for making contact with private land owners to secure hunting access.

Generally speaking, white-tailed deer are significantly less abundant than mule deer west of the Okanogan River but are found in most all drainages up to mid-elevations, particularly those with significant riparian vegetation. The Sinlahekin Valley and surrounding lands in portions of Unit 215 are the exception, supporting a robust whitetail population.

In this area, many white-tailed deer are found on private lands, so prospective hunters wishing to target white-tailed deer may want to seek permission in advance of the season to access individual ownerships. The eastern one-third of the district (GMU 204) holds roughly equal numbers of mule and white-tailed deer and both are widely distributed across the unit on both private and public land.

No new major regulation changes are on tap for the 2013 seasons. Permit numbers have been adjusted slightly, with a few more late buck permits and a few less antlerless permits available overall.

**2012 District 6 Deer Harvest Summary:** General season hunters harvested 2,288 deer from the 10 game management units comprising District 6, a 13% increase over 2011. In addition, general season success rates improved for all user groups and ended up as follows: Modern – 16%, Muzzleloader – 23%, Archery – 33%, and Muilt – 25%. Special permit holders harvested 357 deer in District 6, 226 antlerless and 131 bucks.

Modern firearm hunters accounted for about 65 percent of the general season harvest, and archers took about 53% of the total antlerless harvest. As is typical, GMU 204 (the District's largest unit) yielded the greatest overall deer harvest (825 animals). GMUs 215, 218, 224, and 233 also produced good tallies. These five units combined accounted for 75% of the total number of deer taken in District 6.

2012 District 6 Deer Harvest Statistics: [Deer General Harvest](#)  
[Deer Special Permits Harvest](#)



*Mule Deer and White-tailed Deer – Scott Fitkin*

### **Elk**

Elk are few and far between in Okanogan County, particularly west of the Okanogan River. In GMU 204 where the majority of the District's limited harvest occurs, elk are a bit more abundant and on the increase, but still generally occur only in small groups scattered over the landscape, primarily in the Unit's eastern half. Hunters are reminded that the elk regulations have changed in GMU 204 to an "any bull" general season harvest instead of the traditional any-elk season.

**2012 District 6 Elk Harvest Summary:** Elk are scarce in Okanogan County, and District 6 hunters harvested only 12 in 2012, four more than in 2011. Ten of the twelve came from GMU 204, and all but one were taken by modern firearm hunters.

**2012 District 6 Elk Harvest Statistics:** [Elk General Harvest](#)  
[Elk Special Permits Harvest](#)

### **Black Bear**

Black bears are abundant and well distributed throughout District 6. The population and associated harvest appears to be relatively stable, so hunting prospects in the district should be good. Bears will likely be widely distributed on the landscape and keying in on local berry concentrations where available. This means they will be shifting up in elevation and into moister areas as the season progresses. Berry fields at higher elevations towards the Pacific Crest will ripen latest probably not peaking until sometime in September this year.

For hunters pursuing black bear in the northern Cascades, it is critical for you to positively identify the bear species, as endangered grizzly bears also inhabit these areas. We have posted on our web site some interactive training materials from [BeBearAware.org](http://BeBearAware.org) to help you tell the difference between black and grizzly bears. [Click here](#), then view the Interactive Bear Identification Program and take the Bear Identification Test.

**2012 District 6 Black Bear Harvest Summary:** District 6 hunters harvested 121 black bear last season, a 57% increase over the 2011 tally. Harvest was spread widely across all GMUs. GMU 242 again led the way with 24 animals taken.

2012 District 6 Black Bear Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan BMU Black Bear Harvest](#)  
[Northeastern BMU Black Bear Harvest](#)



*Black Bear – Scott Fitkin*

### Cougar

District 6 cougar populations are healthy and well distributed. Cougars follow the deer herds, which means they will be spread across the landscape through late October and then start to concentrate more on lower elevations as deer move to winter range. Much cougar foraging activity takes place at night, so opportunities to spot the cats on the move is at dawn and dusk.

In District 6, cougars are now managed by a harvest guideline at the individual GMU level to better promote stable population structure and high quality sustainable harvest. Last season's harvest fell slightly short of the harvest guideline in all but one GMU. As a result, cougar hunting opportunities in District 6 should be good in 2013-14. Remember that after Jan 1, individual GMUs close on short notice once the harvest guideline has been reached, and hunters are responsible for knowing if a unit is open or closed. This information is available on the WDFW hotline (1-866-364-4868) or at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar).

**2012 District 6 Cougar Harvest Summary:** During the first year under the new harvest guideline system, hunters harvested eleven cougars in District 6 during the 2012-13 season, and by design the harvest was distributed across several GMUs.

2012 District 6 Cougar Harvest Statistics: [East Cascades North CMU Cougar Harvest](#)



*Cougar with kitten – Scott Fitkin*

## **UPLAND BIRDS**

### **Forest Grouse**

The Okanogan supports strong populations of ruffed, dusky (blue) and spruce grouse, which are found throughout the forested areas of the district. Ruffed grouse are generally associated with deciduous tree cover at lower to middle elevations, particularly in riparian habitats. Dusky (blue) grouse are found in the mid to upper elevation conifer forests, often on ridge tops. Spruce grouse are located in higher elevation conifer forests throughout the district.

Dusky (blue) and Spruce grouse populations continue to remain below historical norms within the boundaries of recent wildfires including the massive 175,000-acre Tripod Fire, which burned in 2006 in some of the Districts best forest grouse habitat. Grouse habitat within the burns is improving annually, and bird numbers outside of burned areas appear to be relatively stable. In general, forest grouse prospects should be fairly good, although spring rains may have negatively affected chick survival in some area locations. Best bets for hunting are USFS lands throughout the district, as well as forested portions of the Sinlahekin and Methow Wildlife Areas.

**2012 District 6 Forest Grouse Harvest Summary:** Despite the lingering effects of recent wild fires, sprawling Okanogan County remained the top forest grouse producer in Washington last year, yielding a harvest of 7,649 blue, ruffed and spruce grouse. While impressive, that number represents an 8-percent decline from 2011 and a 48-percent drop from the five-year average.  
2012 District 6 Forest Grouse Harvest Statistics: [Forest Grouse - Statewide and by County](#)



*Male Dusky Grouse and Female Spruce Grouse – Scott Fitkin*

### **Partridge (Gray and Chukar)**

Improved harvest success indicates Gray partridge and Chukar populations are doing well in District 6. Gray partridge populations are widely distributed and patchy throughout the district's shrub steppe habitats but appear to be increasing in number and distribution over time. Birds are seen frequently on the Indian Dan, Chiliwist, and Methow Wildlife Areas. Scattered groups of chukars are found in the steeper rocky areas in lower elevations of District 6. The steep hills along the Similkameen River in the north part of the Okanogan Valley hold good numbers of birds.

**2012 District 6 Partridge Harvest Summary:** Compared to 2011, both chukar and gray partridge harvest increased significantly in District 6 last year. Hunters harvested 1,313 chukar (a 37% increase), and District 6 was the top producer for Hungarian partridge in 2012 with a harvest of 1,414 birds, a 12% increase over the 2011 total.

2012 District 6 Partridge Harvest Statistics: [Gray Partridge Statewide and by County](#)  
[Chukar Statewide and by County](#)

### **Quail**

Harvest data suggest Quail numbers may be down a bit compared to long-term averages. However, birds are numerous and widespread in Okanogan County, which remains a good choice for hunters pursuing this species. For this season, higher than average snow depths may have increased adult winter mortality in some areas while spring rains appear to have negatively affected early brood survivorship; however, later broods appear to be more successful. Quail can be found in the shrub-steppe habitats at lower elevations throughout the district. The Indian Dan, Chiliwist, and the Sinlahekin Wildlife Areas are good places to start.

**2012 District 6 Quail Harvest Summary:** Quail harvest dipped slightly from the 2011 tally and is still down 20% from the five-year average. Even so, District 6 hunters still bagged over 7,000 in 2012.

2012 District 6 Quail Harvest Statistics: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#)

### **Mourning Dove**

The 2013 dove call count surveys tallied greater numbers of birds than last year, but overall numbers are still 6 percent below the 10-year survey average. Look for doves in planted food crops in the Sinlahekin and Chiliwist Wildlife Areas and at lower elevations on the Methow Wildlife Area. Hunting success will depend on warm weather keeping the birds in the area through the season.

**2012 District 6 Dove Harvest Summary:** Dove harvest increased 49% over 2011, but remained 17% below the five-year average.

2012 District 6 Mourning Dove Harvest Statistics: [Mourning Dove - Statewide and by County](#)

### **Pheasant**

Pheasants occur at low densities throughout the Okanogan portion of District 6, with most wild production coming from private land. Hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private land. Higher than average snow depths may have increased adult winter mortality while spring rains may have negatively affected chick survival in some areas this year. Game farm-produced roosters will once again be released at traditional release sites this fall. These sites are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website. Hunters are reminded that nontoxic shot is required for ALL upland bird hunting on ALL pheasant release sites STATEWIDE.

**2012 District 6 Pheasant Harvest Summary:** Hunters bagged 1,008 pheasants last year in Okanogan County, a drop of 6% from 2012 and 10% below the current five-year average.

2012 District 6 Pheasant Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#)

### **Wild Turkey**

Turkeys are found in scattered groups throughout the district and often concentrate on private land near agriculture areas. Prospective hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private land. The fall turkey permit season occurs within GMUs 218-231, 242, with the majority of the birds being located in the later two units. In recent years, winter conditions and declines in supplemental feeding by private individuals have reduced turkey numbers substantially in the Methow Valley, although most lower-elevation drainages in Unit 242 still harbor birds. For this coming season, last winter's conditions most likely decreased adult

survival and spring rains may have negatively affected early brood productivity; however, later broods may have been more successful.

## **WATERFOWL**

### **Ducks and Canada Geese**

Waterfowl surveys indicate local waterfowl brood production increased 54% in 2013. Abundant water this spring may increase the number of potholes retaining water during the hunting season. Overall, however, waterfowl hunting opportunities are mostly dependent on the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska and how long water remains ice-free throughout the district.

The largest concentrations in District 6 occur at the mouth of the Okanogan River and on the Columbia River. The main stem of the Okanogan River and the larger lakes and potholes in the Okanogan Watershed are good secondary sites. Good public access can be found at the Driscoll Island and Sinlahekin Wildlife areas as well as the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.



*Barrows Golden eye pair* – Scott Fitkin

**2012 District 6 Waterfowl Harvest Summary:** Duck hunters here enjoyed a 2-percent harvest increase in 2012, bagging 8,184 ducks in Okanogan County. Even better, District 6 hunters harvested 1,276 Canada geese in 2012, a 30-percent increase over the 2011 harvest.

**2012 District 6 Waterfowl Harvest Statistics:** [Ducks - Statewide and by County](#)  
[Canada Goose - Statewide and by County](#)



*Canada Geese in a Methow Valley grain field – Scott Fitkin*

## **District 7**

### **Chelan and Douglas Counties**

**David Volsen, District Wildlife Biologist**

**Jon Gallie, Assistant District Biologist**

#### **The Wenatchee District**

Split in two by the Columbia River and composed of Chelan and Douglas counties, the Wenatchee District is centered at the heart of Washington State. From the Crest of the Cascade Range to the shrub-steppe of the Columbia Basin, District 7 offers an incredibly diverse range of habitats and hunting opportunities. Hunters in District 7 have access to a variety of small and big game species, with hunting opportunities ranging from agricultural fields and sagebrush to alpine wilderness.

Douglas County on the east side of the district is a plateau of shrub-steppe and farm lands. It is primarily privately owned yet offers incredible opportunities to hunt a variety of species. Hunters seeking pheasant, quail, doves, gray partridge, chukar and mule deer will find ample areas to hunt across the county. Game Management Units in Douglas County are 248 Big Bend, 254 (Saint Andrews), 260 (Foster Creek), 262 (Withrow), 266 (Badger), and 269 (Moses Coulee).

Chelan County descends from the Cascade Crest in the west to the Columbia River along its eastern boundary. A series of five dominant NW to SE oriented mountain ranges create the terrain in the County; ranging from over 8,000 feet in elevation to below 1,000 ft. in roughly 40 miles.

Home to some of the best mule deer hunting in the state, Chelan County is a destination for many hunters. With its large public land base, the county offers almost unlimited opportunity to find a place of your own. Four of the State's six high deer hunt wilderness areas are in Chelan County, as well as three bighorn sheep herds and an increasing mountain goat population. Game Management Units in Chelan County are 243 (Manson), 244 (Clark), 245 (Chiwawa), 246 (Slide Ridge), 247 (Entiat), 249 (Alpine), 250 (Swakane), 251 (Mission).

#### **Current Species Status**

**Big Game:** Almost all the deer harvested in District 7 are mule deer with a few white-tailed harvested as well. Little known is the fact that in certain areas there are a few black-tailed deer that sneak into Chelan County. Elk are present primarily along the southern and central portions of Chelan County. Our elk are an extension of the Colockum herd further to the south. Black bears roam across almost all habitats in Chelan County, with densities higher in the wetter habitats near the crest of the Cascades, and at somewhat lower densities in more easterly drier

habitats. Few black bears are harvested in Douglas County. Cougars inhabit all areas where deer and elk are present in the district. There are three California bighorn sheep herds in the district. The world's record California bighorn sheep was harvested from the Swakane herd in Chelan County. Mountain goats occupy most all of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County's mountains.

**Upland birds:** Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting is occurs mainly in Chelan County. The hunted grouse species are found in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue blue, spruce, and ruffed grouse across the district. The three other grouse species, sage, sharp-tailed and white-tailed ptarmigan, are not hunted species in Washington State. Chukar partridge are hunted in similar habitats in both counties, as are valley quail. Gray partridge or huns are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves can be found in both areas; however, most of the success is from Douglas County.

**Small Game:** Coyotes are the most widely adapted species in the state, and as such, can be found anywhere. Bobcats are another widely distributed species that are found from high mountains to dry shrub-steppe. Fox are not a species that many hunters pursue, and some hunters may not know that Washington has a species of fox called the cascade red fox that is rare and cannot be harvested. Raccoons are almost everywhere, except the highest peaks and the driest desert. Crows are another small game species that is available, and likely little pursued. Rabbits and hares offer hunting opportunity throughout the district. Snowshoe hares are found at higher elevations in Chelan County and cottontail rabbits in a variety of habitat. .

**Waterfowl:** ducks and geese offer opportunities in different portions of the district. The bulk of the waterfowl hunting is along the Columbia River with ducks being the primary focus. Goose hunting is mainly conducted in Douglas County.

## **Big Game**



**Deer:** Mule deer hunting is the bread and butter of the Wenatchee District. While the district does support a few white-tailed deer, it is mule deer that dominate the attention from hunters. Chelan County has become a destination hunt for many mule deer enthusiasts across Washington, with late season limited entry permits being highly prized. Within the district a hunter has the opportunity to pursue deer across a range of habitats; in high alpine basins along the crest of the Cascades or across expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

2013 should be another great opportunity year for harvesting adult bucks in Chelan County. Our management goal of a minimum of 25 bucks per 100 does post season was met in all our survey areas, along with retaining a high ratio of adult bucks in the population. Across Chelan County, the post season ratio was 28.8 bucks per 100 does, with a range from 26.7 to 30.5 in 2011. Juveniles composed 38 percent of the bucks and fawn ratios were high. Winter conditions were reasonable, with snow levels across most of the winter range at low to normal levels. All these factors point to a good recruitment of yearling and adult bucks into the next hunting season.

Hunters took 1,777 deer off the district in 2012, 1,488 bucks and 289 antlerless. The highest harvest came off GMU 247 in Chelan County at 257 deer and in Douglas County GMU 248 with 208 deer. The percentage of 4-point bucks in the antlered harvest was the same for both counties at 38 %. Douglas County had a greater percentage of 3-point bucks at 48% whereas Chelan had 39%. Chelan County, on the other hand, produced a higher percentage of 5-point bucks at 22%, and Douglas the lower percentage at 14%.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2013. Unlike Chelan County, Douglas County is dominated by private lands, and as such, access to those private lands dictates the amount of impact a hunting season has on the population. Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an established road network. These factors make deer more vulnerable than in the rugged closed canopy mountainous terrain of the Cascades.

Our general firearms seasons seem to have been unseasonably warm and dry over the past few years, making deer hunting tough. The Chelan County mule deer herd is migratory, spending winters on the breaks along the Columbia River, but dispersing into the large expanse of the Cascades during summer.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving downward in elevation and occupying north facing slopes where conditions are cooler and wetter, and forage is of better quality. From mid-September through the onset of winter, deer are responding to changes in the quality of the available forage and utilize those areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November bucks are in a rut condition and focused on breeding, however, before that time (during our October general season) they are focused on food and security.

If we were to observe a typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades over the growing season and through the fall, we would see it change from bright green in the spring and summer to light green to yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches. While we are seeing changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that support deer and give them the opportunity to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year, so as it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy.

While hunting on winter range is appealing because hunters can see long distances, the majority of deer will still be in areas of better quality forage and higher security. Most deer will be in thick cover where the food is better and they are better protected; these are usually the brushy north facing slopes or at elevations much higher than typical open mule deer winter range.

Douglas County offers a similar but different situation for deer hunters. Because of the private lands issue, hunters have less opportunity to freely pursue deer across habitats. The drier nature of shrub-steppe habitat dictates that deer use those areas where forage quality remains higher longer while balancing the need for security. Large expanses of sagebrush, while not providing the best forage, can give the security deer need as well. In the broken coulee county, topography becomes security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become expert at living in small secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters.

**Elk:** Almost the entire harvest of elk in the Wenatchee District comes from Chelan County; part of the Colockum herd. A few scattered elk do get harvested from Douglas County, however, that harvest is not consistent from year to year. Liberal harvest seasons have been put in place in Douglas County to keep elk from becoming established in the farming dominated landscape. The Colockum Herd is currently over its population management objective at an estimated 6,500

elk. While Chelan County elk are the northern extension of that herd, there has not been a dramatic increase in elk numbers, and we feel the population is stable.

Hunters harvest an average of roughly 45 elk each year in Chelan County. Success rates between weapon types vary and overall success varies from year to year. In 2012 muzzleloader hunters had an 11% success rate while archers had a 1% rate and modern firearms hunters 4.5%. In 2012 a total of 45 elk were harvested in District 7, with most (37) coming from GMU 251 and 4 coming out of GMU 245.

The recent change to a true spike rule for the Colockum has shown increases in escapement of yearling bulls, and mature bulls use portion of Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. Recent research has expanded our understanding of the Colockum Herd and there are plans to look deeper into the ecology of the adult bull portion of the population.

Elk in GUMs 245 and 249 occur at low density and in small dispersed bands. Local hunters that live and work the area are often the hunters that prove to be successful in harvesting these elk. Elk hunting in GMU 249 consists of all public land and is within the USFS Alpine Lakes Wilderness. While the GMU offers an opportunity for an over the counter archery tag for a branch-antlered bull, elk are at very low density and occupy extremely rugged terrain that does not allow the use of motorized vehicles.

Game Management Unit 251 offers elk opportunity throughout the majority of the unit; however, elk density is not very high. General seasons fall under antler restrictions that make harvesting spike elk more challenging. Harvest occurs across the GMU; however, the majority of the elk hunting occurs between Blewett Pass to the west, the city of Wenatchee to the east, and the mountainous and timbered habitat south of State Highway 2. The Mission unit does have a significant amount of private lands and hunters are urged to make sure they know where they are when hunting elk in the area.

There are no notable changes in elk hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2013.

**Black Bears:** The bear hunting opportunity in the Wenatchee District should be similar to 2012, as a result of a relatively wet spring and early summer that helped with production of forage species. Bear populations in the district are monitored based on primarily harvest statistics and tooth data. In order to improve our ability to estimate and monitor bear numbers, WDFW's Carnivore Section initiated a black bear population study focused on both traditional trapping and collaring home range models based on GPS data, and genetic modeling using hair snag data.

The project should help us pin down much better estimates of bear densities and allow us to better manage the age class and sex structure of the population. Populations appear to be relatively stable within the district, with year to year habitat quality remaining constant. During years when huckleberry production is poor, bears will often be found searching larger areas for food. These increased forays expose them to higher rates of harvest when they encounter hunters.

Within Bear Management Unit (BMU) 6, District 7 is responsible for a significant amount of the harvest. BMU 6 is comprised of 24 GMUs along the Central Cascades. In 2012, 166 bears were harvested from this BMU. GMU 245 is consistently a high producer of bears each year, and the area of focus for our current bear population study. Since 2001 BMU 6 averages 209 bears per year with a success rate of 4.5% and an average percent of females in the harvest of 34 %. Since 2001 the harvest of black bears has averaged roughly 65% males and 35% females, with roughly 4,900 hunters participating each year. While success relative to effort fluctuates from year to year, it is on an increasing trend since 2005 and points to a good upcoming season.

The vast majority of bears harvested in the district are taken during open deer and elk seasons. Dedicated bear hunters will often hunt early in the season when bears are foraging on predictable annual berry crops and can be located more easily. The incidental harvest that occurs during open deer and elk seasons is much more dependent on bear behavior and how widely they will have to travel for food.

There are no notable changes in black bear hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2013.

**Cougar:** Similar to black bears, cougar management is based primarily off harvest data rather than intensive surveys and population monitoring. In 2012 a total of 15 cougar were harvested in the district, with 13 of the cougars taken during general hunting, and the other two cougars having been removed under a depredation or other situation. Six of the 15 cats harvested were females, eight were males and one was reported as unknown.

The opportunity to a harvest cougar in the Wenatchee District expanded under the new season structure in 2012 that remains in place for 2013. In Chelan County there are four (4) Hunt Areas, which were created by combining existing GMUs. Within each of these new hunt areas, a harvest guideline has been established based on cougar population biology. These new harvest guidelines increased the number of cougar that can be harvested in the county and across the state, while maintaining the integrity of the population.

A two part season is in place, allowing harvest during big game seasons under an early cougar season, and a later season for more focused pursuit of cougar when conditions make hunting easier. If the harvest guideline is reached early, then a decision is made about opening the late season each year. Based on our harvest history in Chelan County, there is a great opportunity to increase the length of and participation in this hunt.

There are no notable changes in cougar hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2013 as a significant change was made in 2012.



**Bighorn Sheep:** Sheep numbers have increased for both the Swakane and Chelan Butte. The Swakane herd survey accounted for 70 sheep in 2008, and increased to a minimum count of 122 sheep in 2013. The Chelan Butte herd produced a count of 74 sheep in 2008, increasing to a minimum count of 136 sheep in 2012. The current count for the Chelan Butte herd is 129 sheep. The Manson herd, which occupies the area along the north shore of Lake Chelan has been the most difficult to monitor due to the lack of access and the rugged terrain that the sheep inhabit. Over the past several years we have had counts from 89 sheep to 119 sheep. Because population numbers have not swung widely, 120 or more sheep is considered to be that herd's minimum count.

For 2013, there are five (5) California bighorn limited entry drawing permits issued for Chelan County. Since 2001 eleven permits have been offered for sheep in the Swakane unit. In those years twelve sheep have been harvested due to the inclusion of an auction hunt in 2002. The record California bighorn was harvested from the Swakane herd in 2010 by a local resident under a drawing permit. Since 2005 the Manson unit has provided 2 drawing permits per year, and over those eight years produced 21 sheep. The additional sheep were harvested by hunters acquiring auction of raffle tags. The Chelan Butte herd has been hunted since 2010 and provides one drawing permit each year. During the first three years of harvest, three rams were harvested.

Overwinter survival for adult sheep remains high. Mortality of lambs of the year is characteristic of most sheep populations where lambs suffer the highest rates of mortality during their first year of life, and the highest mortality of the year immediately after birth. Lamb counts were 24, 22 and 16 for Swakane, Chelan Butte and Manson herds. Sightability and conditions play a large role in these counts. Adult sheep are much easier to count than lambs, especially in the spring when mothers hide lambs in rugged terrain. Counts of 58 ewes and 39 rams were recorded from the Swakane, 63 ewes and 44 rams from Chelan Butte, and 77 ewes and 26 rams from Manson.

There are no notable changes in bighorn sheep hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2013

Hunters selected under these drawing are encouraged to contact District 7 staff for additional information. All hunters harvesting a bighorn sheep in the State of Washington are required to have the horn sets measured and plugged by WDFW.



**Mountain Goats:** While mountain goats occur in many higher elevation areas in Chelan County, they are currently only hunted along Lake Chelan where their population has increased over the years. Opportunistic road surveys done in portions of the district indicate goats are increasing in number in areas where they were once hunted. More formal survey efforts will be conducted to establish numbers.

In the Icicle Creek area a high count of 48 goats was recorded between 2010 and 2013. In the Tumwater Canyon area a high count of 28 was recorded. In the Nason Ridge area there was a high count of 22, and in the White River, a high count of eight.

The Lake Chelan population is surveyed via boat by the Chelan PUD each winter during twelve surveys from late November through March. During the 2012-2013 survey, a high count of 177 mountain goats was made. Counts are made along both the north and south shores of the lake. Seventy-four mountain goats were observed from the south shore and 103 from the north shore.

Year to year counts vary a widely due to snow accumulation and weather conditions along the lake. In general, during heavy snow years, goats concentrate in higher densities along the lake to winter, providing a better opportunity to observe them. During 2012-13, 111 adults were observed, 31 kids and 35 unidentified, with a final ratio of 28 kids per 100 adults. Over the 31-year survey period, the ratio of kids to 100 adults has varied from 11 to 42; with varying numbers year to year.

Three (3) mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. Since 2001, 17 drawing permits have been issued for the north shore, and 13 goats harvested. One of the goats was harvested by an auction/raffle hunter. Four of the 13 were female goats. Every effort is made to educate hunters so they will focus their harvest on male rather than female goats. A significant amount of research work done on mountain goats in the US and Canada indicates that populations with sustained rates of harvest of females will decline significantly over time.

There are no notable changes in mountain goat hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2013.

Hunters selected under these drawing are encouraged to contact District 7 staff for additional information and to bring horn sets in to be measured. In addition, hunters will be asked to help collect biological samples from harvested goats this year to form a baseline of knowledge about mountain goat diseases in Washington State.

## **Upland Birds**

**Pheasant:** The Wenatchee District is not generally thought of as a destination pheasant hunting area in the state, but local hunters harvested from 1,500 to 3,000 birds each year since 2001. On average, both Douglas and Chelan Counties produce roughly the same numbers of pheasants each year. In 2012 the district harvested 1,563 pheasants.

Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites on the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the Colockum Wildlife Area should visit the WDFW hunting web site for more information. The Swakane WMA release site is currently closed while vegetation recovers from the impacts of a recent wildfire. See the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#).

**Quail:** District 7 produces some of the best quail hunting in the state, however harvest in 2012 proved somewhat lower than average with a total harvest of 9,874. Harvest numbers for Chelan County have been consistently higher than Douglas County.

Conditions going into the 2012 winter should have allowed for better over-winter survival of quail in Chelan and Douglas Counties. Winter survival was comparable, with lower snow levels in quail habitat. The amount of insect production this year may have positive effects on broods as grasshopper and other insects are important. Production appears stable this year and harvest should be similar to last year. We had good fall and summer conditions, and a relatively mild winter, especially in Douglas County, we may see numbers on the upswing.

Public lands can be tough places to find larger coveys well into the season. To improve success, seek out those areas without easy access and spend some time seeking permissions from landowners.

**Gray Partridge:** 2012 was a better year for huns with a total of 1,151 birds taken. Douglas provided more birds than Chelan. Since 2007, the high was 654 and the low 114. Within the district, gray partridge are encountered and harvested more in Douglas County. They

occur at low density and coveys are dispersed across larger areas. Look to farmed areas with wheat stubble and grass cover types and ask for permissions from landowners.

Covering a wide range of cover types is the best way to locate coveys. While most gray partridge are taken while hunting other species, with a little focus and dedication, you can be successful hunting for huns. Visit to our [GoHunt](#) application on the WDFW web site and find areas in Douglas County enrolled in our hunting access program. Snow depths were light over the past winter, indicating that over-winter survival may have been good and gray partridge numbers stable.

**Chukar:** More chukar are shot in District 7 than any other district in the state. However, harvest numbers have been declining in recent years and this trend continued in 2012. Harvest of chukar has been declining since 2006, but then again so has the number of hunters and the number of days spent chukar hunting (may be due to winter weather conditions). Since 2001 the ratio of chukars harvested per days hunted has started to increase, indicating that birds are on hills if hunters are willing to chase them. In 2012 we saw a harvest of 1,120 birds.

Winter conditions were mild on average, with low snow accumulation in winter habitat. The low snow levels may have impacted chukar hunting later in the season by allowing birds to stay higher and making hunting tougher. Production appears to be good this spring with insect production being very good.

Opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous within the district due to the large amount of habitat that falls under public ownership. The breaks of the Columbia River provide the majority of the Chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, WADNR and WDFW all control lands that provide chukar hunting opportunities. Along the Douglas County beaks, almost all the appropriate chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and permissions must be acquired.

Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons; without snow and with snow. While trying to negotiate chukar habitat with snow and ice on the ground can be hazardous, there is no doubt that birds become concentrated following the accumulation of snow. We should be seeing an increase in chukar numbers in the district, helped along by fall forage productivity and relatively mild winter snow conditions at lower elevations.



**Forest Grouse:** Harvest remained similar to 2011 at 2,758 birds, but has declined by half since 2007. Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District; blue grouse, spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. There are a few areas in Douglas County where forest grouse are regularly found, however, their densities are relatively low and few hunters concentrate on them specifically. The majority of harvest is incidental during other hunting.

Within Chelan County, forest grouse occupy habitat dominated by coniferous and riparian forests. Ruffed grouse can be found in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and blue grouse will use timbered stringers that extend down into the shrub-steppe. Spruce grouse are restricted to higher elevation conifer forests; usually above the distribution of ponderosa pine.

Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. Popular road systems can provide early season hunting, however, due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds, they often dry up quickly. Chelan County has a relatively limited road system within grouse habitat, and dedicated hunters know where they are, so, hunters can increase the productive length of their season by hunting areas on foot away from roads and the bulk of the other hunters.

**Dove:** Hunting success is expected to be similar to the past several seasons within the district. Success rates were increasing over the past few seasons, but took a dip last year. Harvest was

down to 2,957 birds last fall and only 285 hunters reported hunting. Dove count routes have shown declines over time with numbers down again this year.

Hunters should secure hunting opportunities by contacting growers and getting permission. Look to areas near wetlands with roosting cover and near food later in the season. The amount and distribution of CRP fields (Conservation Reserve Program) has increased in Douglas over the past few years, with new seed mixes providing more diverse forage within stands. Scouting for these habitats can be a productive way to find new unexploited hunting areas.

**Turkey:** Turkey densities in the district are relatively sparse but populations appear to be stable in Chelan County and may be increasing in the northern portions of Douglas County. Hunters should expect population numbers, and harvest success very similar to other years. Surveys over the past 3-4 years indicate that turkey numbers are stable, and that hunter access is a major factor for some of these dispersed bands. A low level of harvest occurs on public lands, with local hunters being the most successful as densities are low and finding seasonal habitat is important.

In Chelan County, the number of turkey the landscape can support is based primarily on the amount and availability of wintering habitat under typical snow depths. When winter snow depths reach 20 inches or more, wild turkeys have a difficult time making it through the winter. In areas where turkey can utilize ranches, barn yards and farms as a source of winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. Chelan County is limited in its availability of such habitat, and as such, the number of turkeys in the county seems to remain at a stable level.

Hunters should look to several of the more consistent turkey producing areas for hunting opportunities. The Stemilt Basin outside of Wenatchee, canyons off the Wenatchee River from the Columbia River and west through the town of Plain have low densities of turkeys. All of these areas are dominated by private lands and hunters need to get permissions prior to scouting or hunting. In the upper portion of the Stemilt Basin there are opportunities on publicly owned lands that hold low numbers of turkey.



**Waterfowl:** Local production of waterfowl is up from previous years based on annual surveys. Hunters should have good opportunities in traditional areas, and where permission to access ponds/lakes can be secured. Hunting along the Columbia River is usually consistent but dictated by local weather patterns.

Most of the harvest in Chelan County (8,310 ducks for 2012) is focused along the Columbia River. In Douglas County, the Columbia River is the primary waterfowl hunting area; however, northern Douglas has a concentration of small lands and ponds that hold waterfowl. The County produced a harvest of 6,647 duck in 2012. As in most years, the success of the season depends on the timing of migration through the area. This year, indicators point to good opportunities during the fall migration.

Local production of Canada goose has increased recently, leading to the re-establishment of the September season. In 2013, the season dates are September 14–15. Regular season hunting harvest has been declining, with numbers since 2002 normally under 2,000 geese harvested, and since 2008, under 1,500. Expect a season similar to 2012.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

**Hunter Access**

Hunter Access Program lands in District 7 are predominately in Douglas County where the majority of rural private lands occur. Chelan County, while having great public land opportunity, does not offer as much in the form of private lands hunting. WDFW lands staff work closely with agricultural producers to provide access for hunting. As a result, thousands of acres in Douglas County can be hunted throughout the season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and many areas are listed on WDFW's Go Hunt Mapping Program.

**Acres of private lands enrolled in WDFW's Hunting Access Program in District 7 for 2013.**

	Douglas County	Chelan County
Feel Free to Hunt	21,999	0
Hunt By Written Permission	106,171	3,280
Register to Hunt	4,040	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>132,210</b>	<b>3,280</b>

**Table 1. District 7 upland and small game harvest, and hunter participation from 2007 through 2012.**

Species	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Harvest	Hunters										
Quail	26,085	2,456	12,898	1,755	13,774	1,876	15,088	1,702	13,169	1,658	9,874	1,162
Chukar	5,258	1,436	3,885	1,110	2,865	1,233	2,452	1,093	2,201	846	1,210	589
Mourning Dove	6,908	696	5,308	521	4,984	484	5,979	447	3,506	402	2,957	285
Forest Grouse	5,636	3,047	6,483	2,579	8,375	3,571	3,290	2,522	2,418	1,412	2,758	1,592
Pheasant	2,423	1,431	1,602	1,092	1,812	1,221	1,768	892	1,506	827	1,563	802
Gray Partridge	654	334	448	320	114	228	444	262	411	279	1151	330
Duck	18,052	1,304	11,511	978	9,626	1,063	13,947	998	14,528	1,123	14,777	1,055
Canada Goose	1,708	664	2,152	471	1,261	475	1,252	519	1,082	526	1,774	525
Sept Canada Goose	321	115	157	65	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	0
Cottontail Rabbit	108	193	136	153	221	212	397	171	375	127	346	158
Snowshoe Hare	38	29	28	46	10	29	0	18	48	47	0	10
Snipe	216	38	0	0	0	0	55	18	5	11	0	7

\* No September Canada goose season was offered during these years.

**Wenatchee District Land Management and Business Contact Information**

**Washington Department of Natural Resources**

Southeast Region

713 Bowers Road

Ellensburg, WA 98926-9301

509-925-8510

509-925-8522

[southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov)

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov>

***Public Lands Information Available***

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**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Bureau of Land Management**

Wenatchee Office

915 N. Walla Walla

Wenatchee, WA 98801

509-665-2100

[BLM\\_OR\\_WN\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_WN_Mail@blm.gov)

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

***Public Lands Information Available***

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**Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters**

215 Melody Lane

Wenatchee, WA 98801

(509) 664-9200

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

***Public Lands Information Available***

**Chelan Ranger District**

428 W. Woodin Avenue

Chelan, WA 98816

(509) 682-4900

**Entiat Ranger District**

2108 Entiat Way

Entiat, WA 98822

(509) 784-4700

**Wenatchee River Ranger District**

600 Sherbourne

Leavenworth, WA 98826

(509) 548-2550

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Figure 1. Upland game hunting areas in the Wenatchee District.

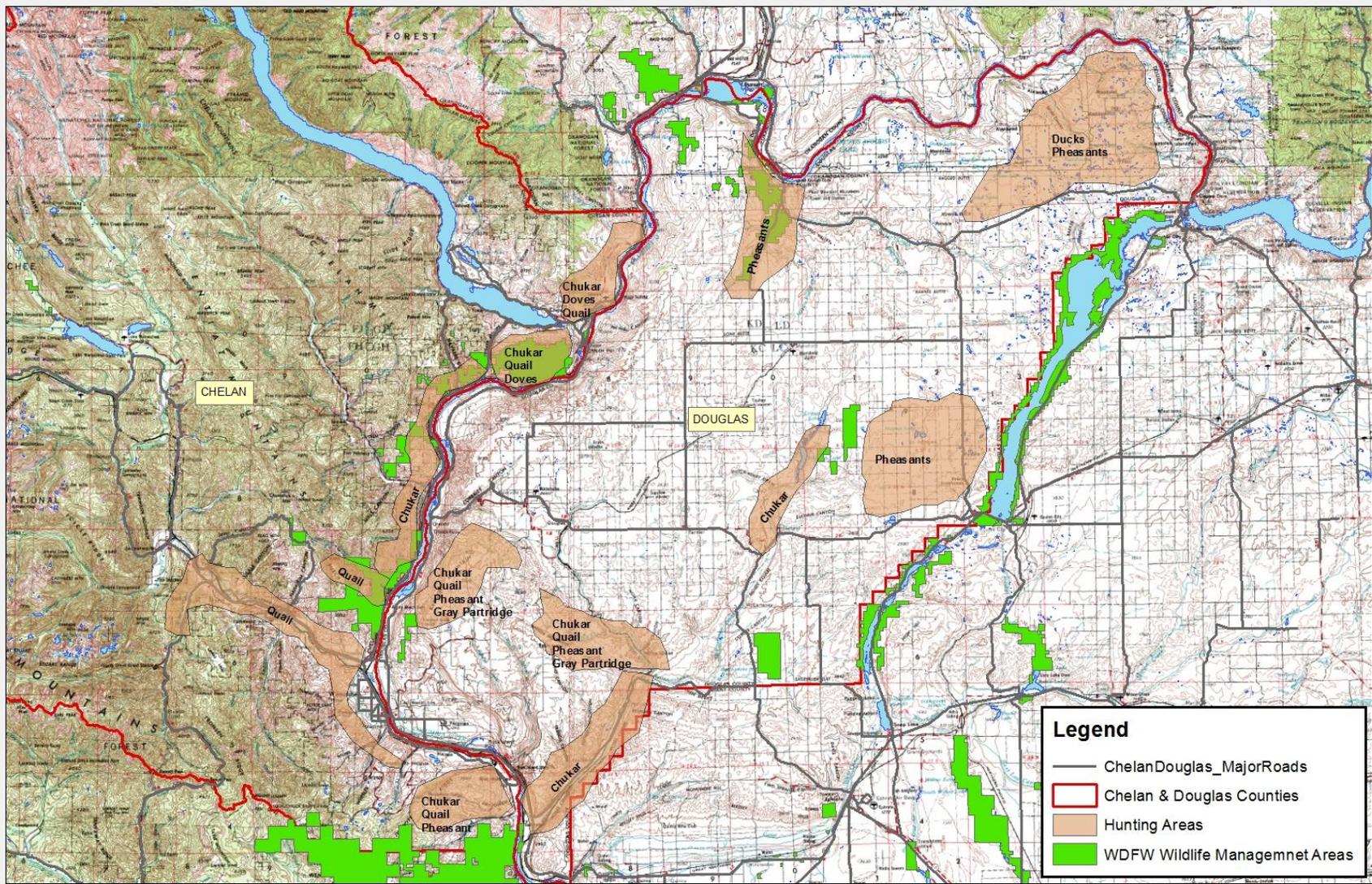


Figure 2. Map of the WDFW Bridgeport Bar Unit, Douglas County.

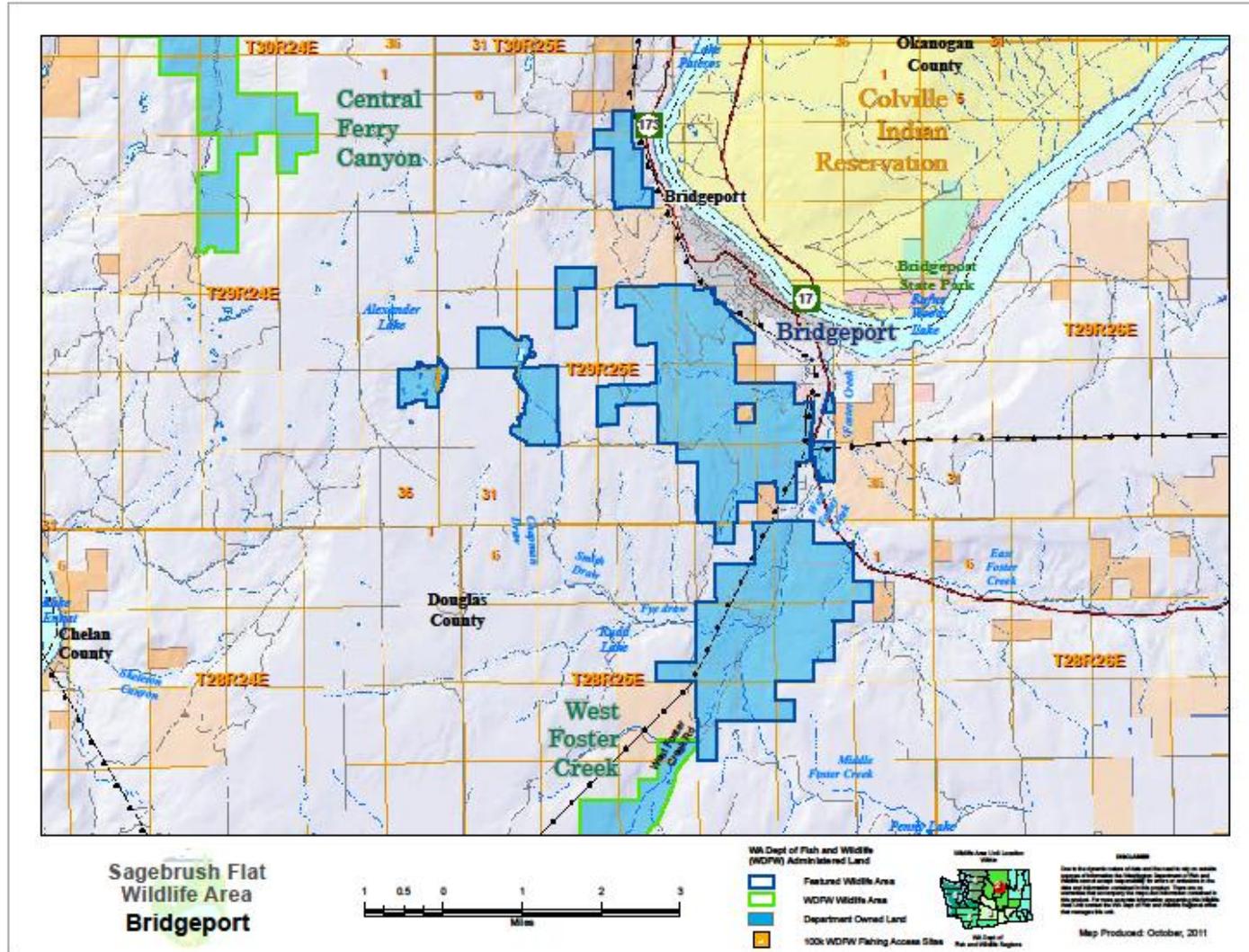


Figure 3. Map of the WDFW Bridgeport Bar Unit, Douglas County.

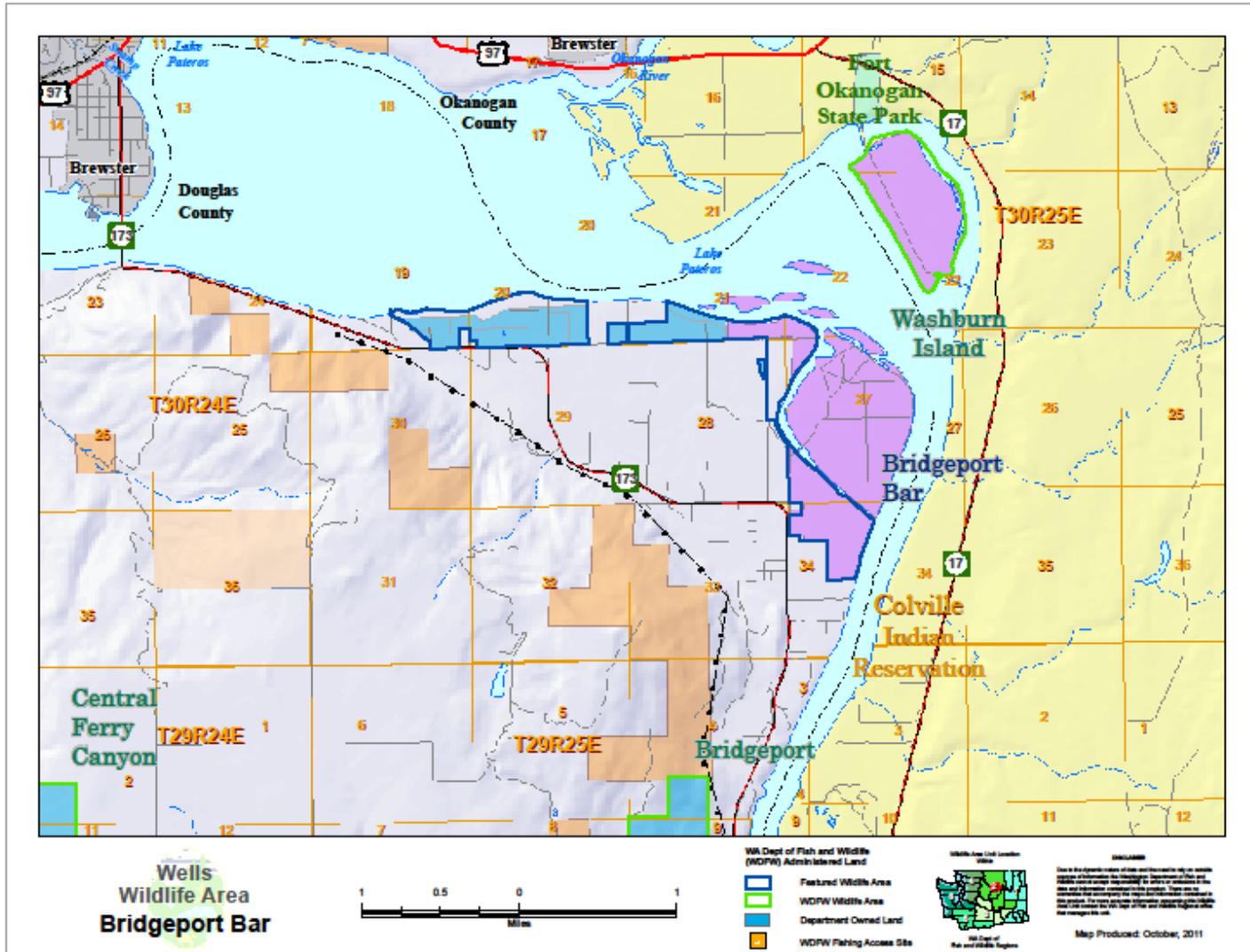
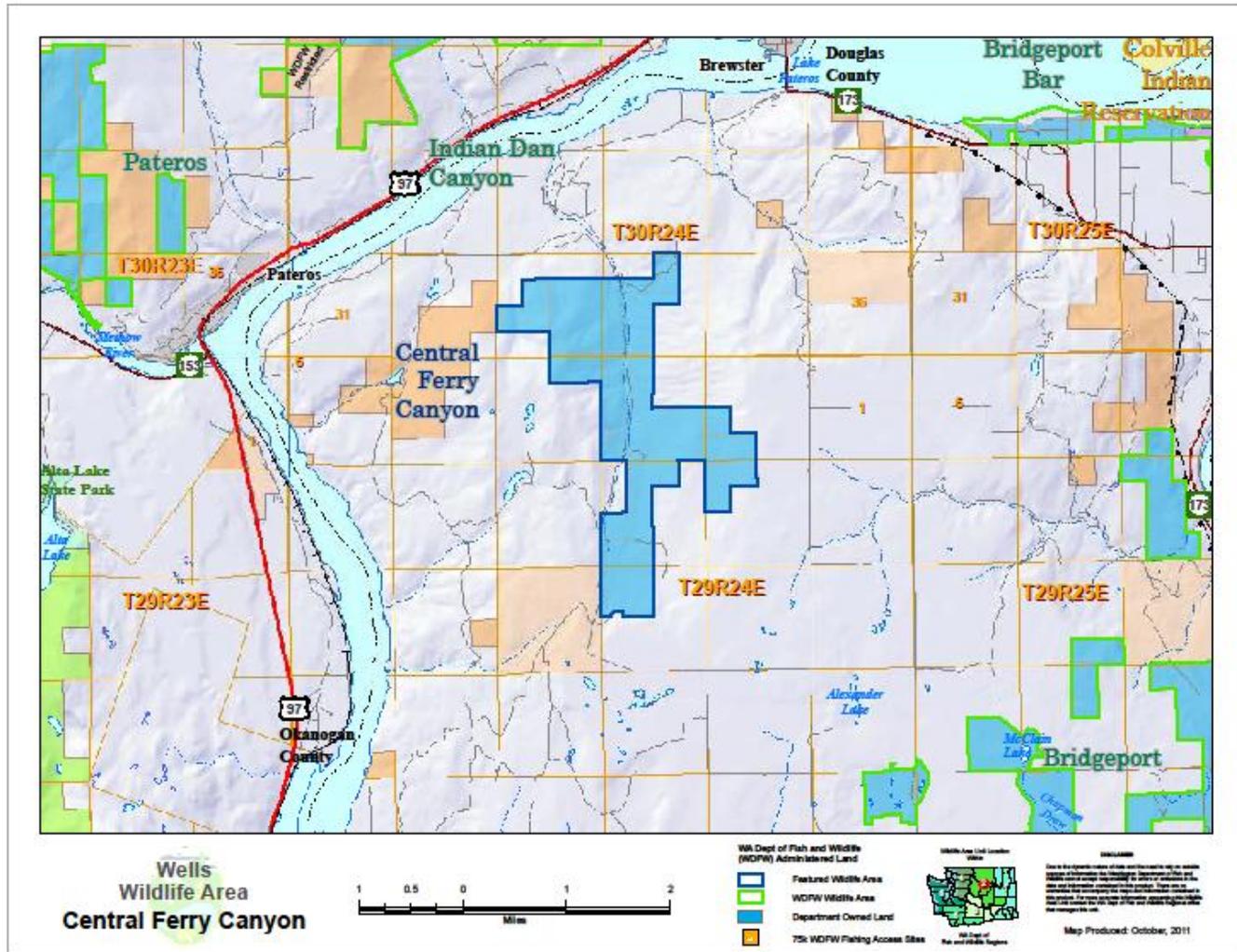
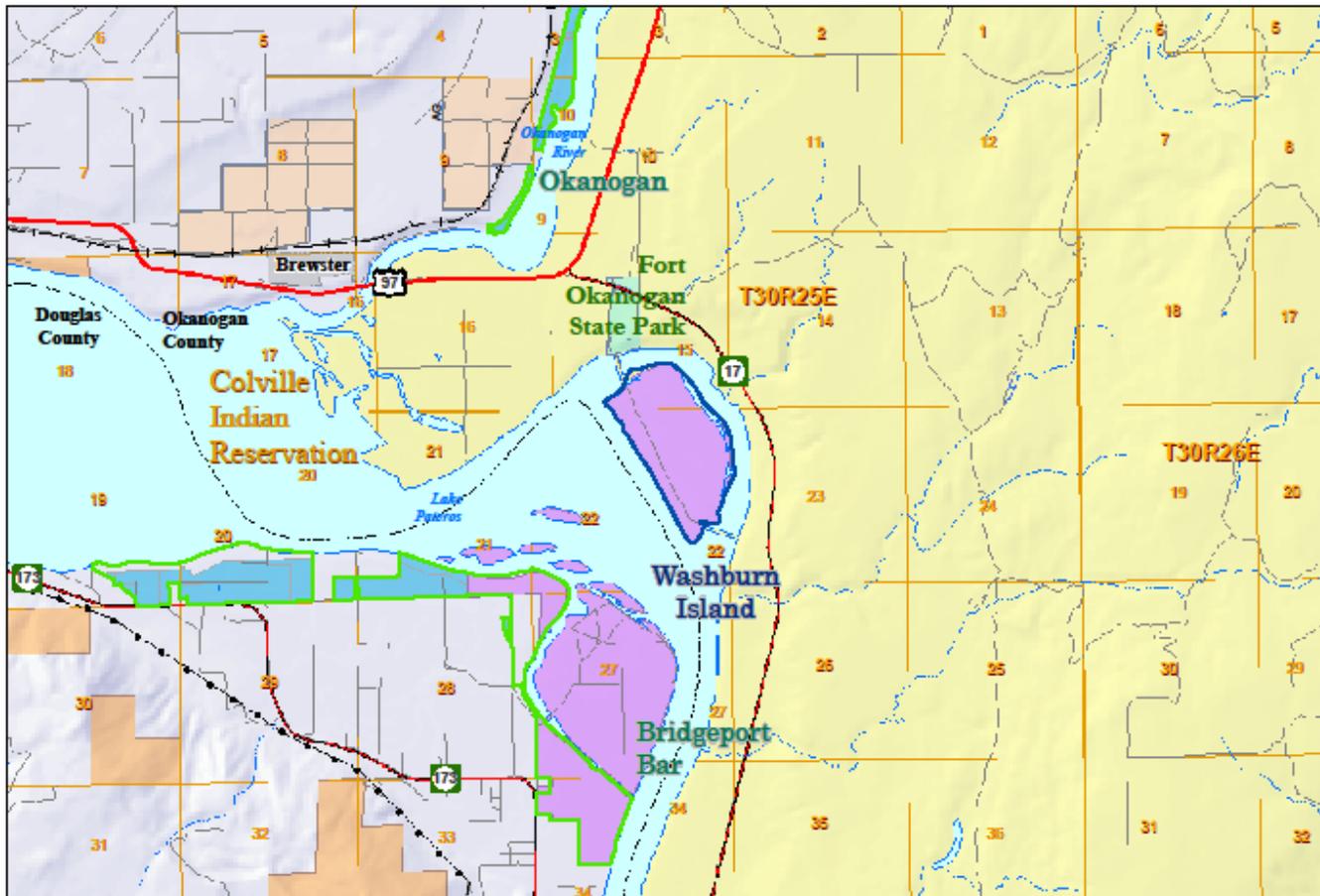
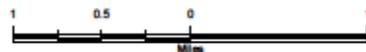


Figure 4. Map of the WDFW Central Ferry Canyon Unit, Douglas County (extensive habitat loss due to wildfire in 2012).





**Wells  
Wildlife Area  
Washburn Island**



WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife  
(WDFW) Administered Land

- Featured Wildlife Area
- WDFW Wildlife Area
- Department Owned Land
- WDFW Fishing Access Site

Wells Wildlife Area Location



WA Dept of  
Fish and Wildlife

DISCLAIMER

This is a general information map and should not be used for legal purposes. The information is provided for informational purposes only. The user assumes all responsibility for any use of this information. The user agrees to hold the Department of Fish and Wildlife harmless for any use of this information.

Map Produced: October, 2011

Figure 10.

Map of the WDFW West Foster Creek Unit, Douglas County (extensive habitat loss due to wildfire in 2012).

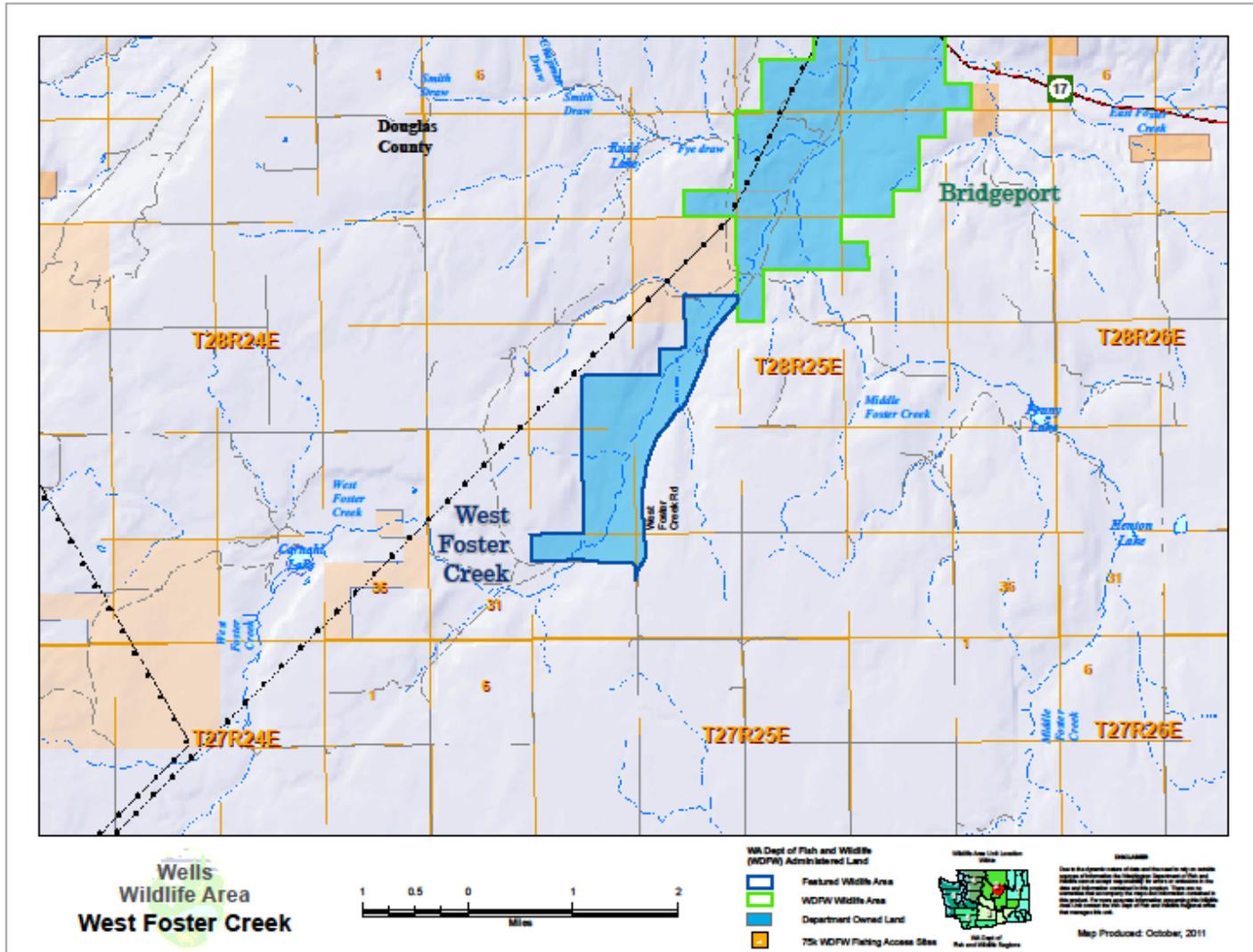


Figure 11. Map of the WDFW Chelan Butte Unit, Chelan County.

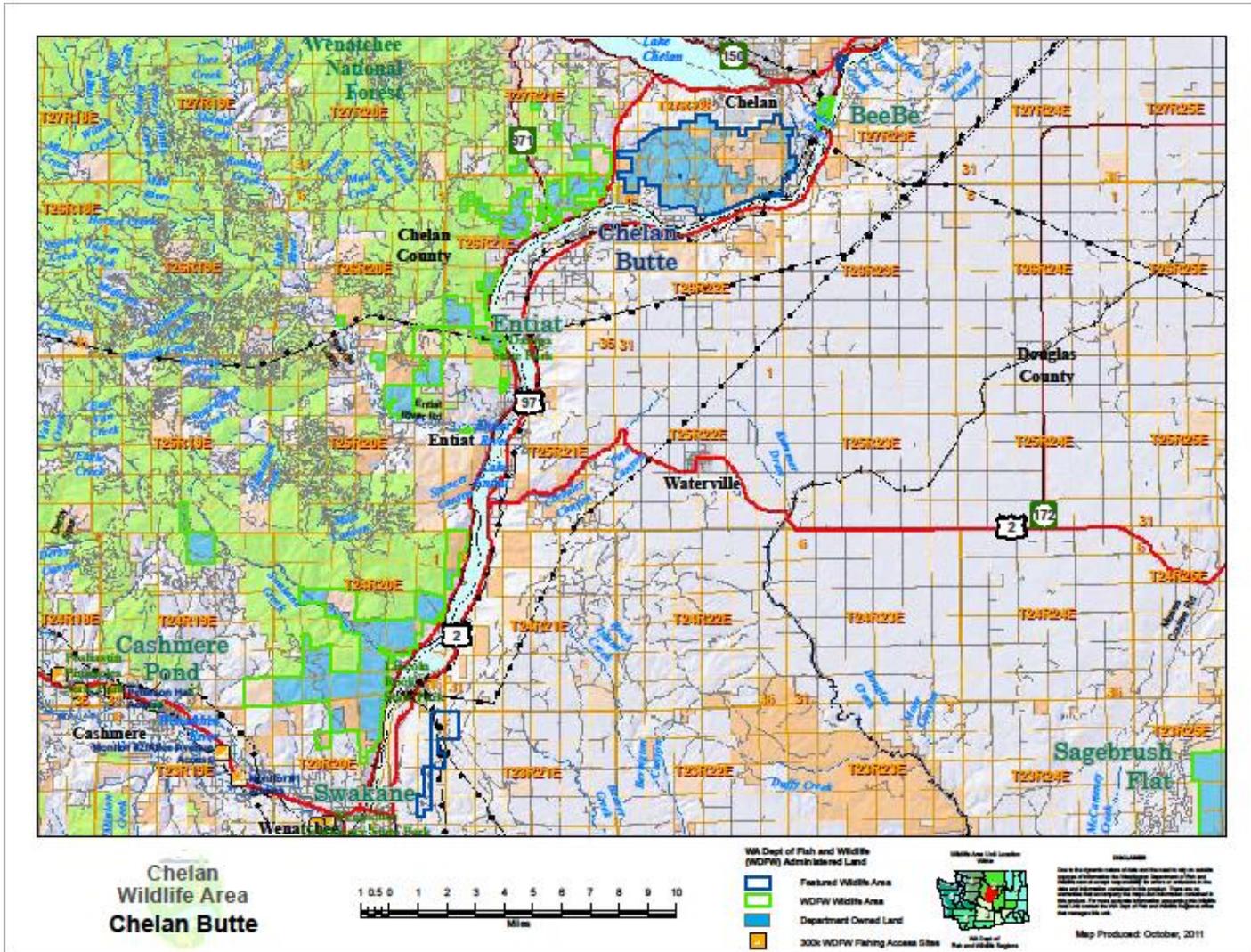


Figure 12. Map of the WDFW Entiat Unit, Chelan County.

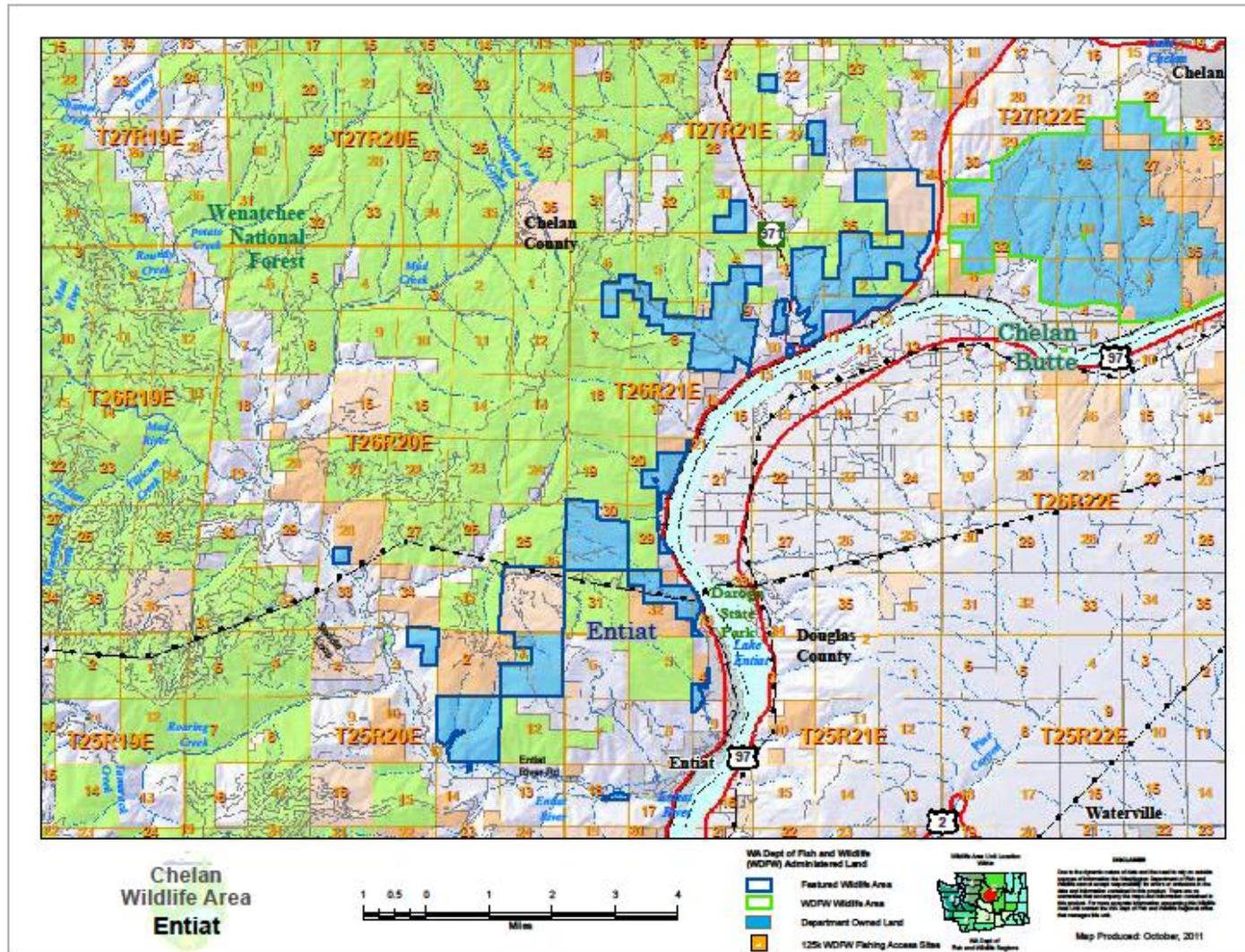
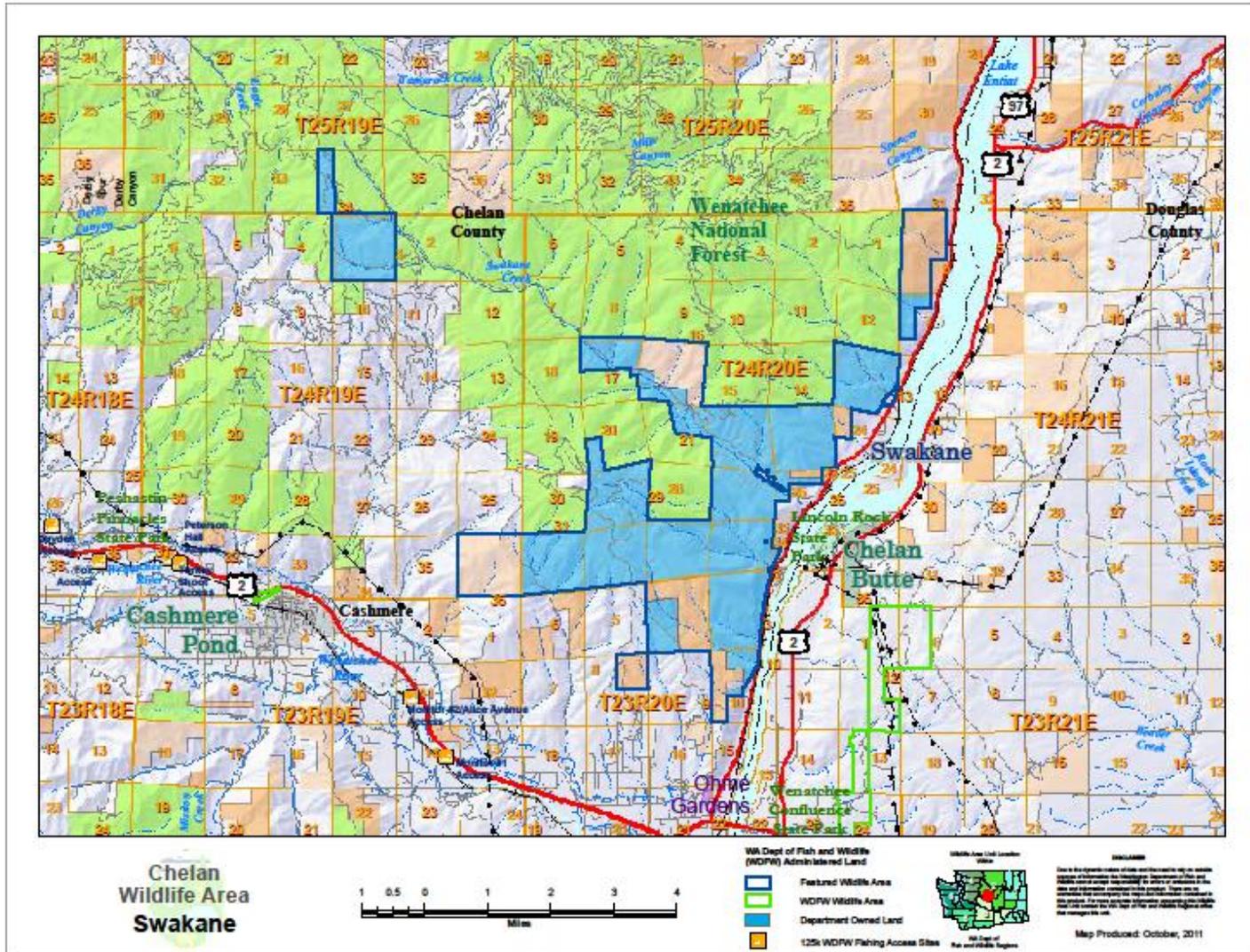


Figure 13. Map of the WDFW Swakane Unit, Chelan County.



*Figure 14. Map of the WDFW White River Unit, Chelan County.*

## **District 8**

### **Yakima and Kittitas Counties**

#### **Jeff Bernatowicz, District Wildlife Biologist**

District 8 is located in the south central Washington. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 8 include 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 330 (West Bar), 334 (Ellensburg), 335 (Teanaway), 336 (Taneum), 340 (Manastash), 342 (Umtaneum), 346 (Little Naches), 352 (Nile), 356 (Bumping), 360 (Bethel), 364 (Rimrock), 368 (Coviche), 371 (Alkali) and part of 372 (Rattlesnake Hills). Hunters can choose a variety of habitats ranging from lowland shrub steppe and farmland to high elevation alpine wilderness.

District 8 is dominated by large blocks of public land and abundant hunting opportunity. The District is probably best known for elk. The Yakima elk herd is one of the largest in the state with over 12,000 animals roaming over 900,000 acres of public land. There are over 5,000 elk in the Colockum herd which inhabit mostly public land north of Ellensburg.

There is also plenty of upland bird hunting opportunity in District 8. Yakima County is near the top of the list in harvest of many bird species; ranking #1 for quail, #2 for dove, #3 for both duck and chukar, #4 for pheasant and #5 for goose. Bird hunters wanting to wander over large areas with low hunter densities have many areas to choose from. Along the breaks of the Columbia, the Yakima Training Center owns 327,000 acres south of I-90 (see current access discussion under the gray partridge section) while WDFW manages another 154,000 acres north of the interstate. West of the Yakima River, hunters can roam the 105,000 acre Wenas Wildlife Area. A motivated upland bird hunter with a good dog could find grouse, chukar, huns, quail, and pheasant in the same day.

Turkeys are a relative newcomer to the District. Birds were first introduced over 30 years ago, but populations remained low. In the late 1990's, a more extensive effort was made to augment existing pockets of birds. Post augmentation, the spring harvest has increased from 60 in 2001 to 413 in 2010. The populations in GMU 335 (Teanaway) have become large enough to allow for a fall permit season. Turkey densities may never reach those found in Northeast Washington, but many hunters are finding decent hunting 4-5 hours closer to home.

District 8 is also home to over 70% of the bighorn sheep in the state of Washington. While it is still difficult to draw a permit to hunt, bighorns can certainly add enjoyment to a hunting trip. Rams are in rut mid-October through November when many hunters are traveling through the area. There are robust population of bighorns that can often be

easily viewed along Highways 821 (Yakima River Canyon) and 410 (Clemans Mountain, north of the junction with Highway 12).

**Pheasant:** There are few wild pheasant outside of the Yakama Nation (YN). Winter weather in the Yakima Valley rarely impacts pheasant populations. Pheasant populations fluctuate with the amount of idle land and the hatch. WDFW does not survey either in District 8. YN conducts production and posts the data in late summer. For information on hunting YN and their surveys, see [ynwildlife.org](http://ynwildlife.org).

Outside of YN, about 2,300 roosters will be released in District 8. Sunnyside Wildlife Area receives the majority of birds. Byron Ponds has been eliminated as a release site. Nontoxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

**Quail:** Quail can be found in most non-timbered portions of the district. The best habitat and highest number of quail can be found in the lower Yakima Valley. This is evident in the harvest statistics as Yakima County leads the state in quail harvest with an average of 24,000 birds over the last 5 years. In Kittitas County, the average quail harvest is only 2,700.

Quail numbers have been relatively high in recent years, but populations can change rapidly if the hatch is poor. YN conducts production surveys mid- July and August. WDFW owns various parcels along the Yakima River that hold good numbers of quail that are part of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. YN runs an excellent hunting program and has great quail hunting opportunity. For information on hunting YN and their surveys, see [ynwildlife.org](http://ynwildlife.org).

**Gray Partridge:** Relatively mild winters and good spring moisture has resulted in increasing hun populations. Huns are often overlooked and the average harvest is only about 600 birds in the district. There is plenty of public land with good hunting opportunity in the district.

WDFW-managed Wenas, L.T. Murray and Colockum Wildlife areas all have decent populations of birds. Huns can also be found on the Cowiche unit of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The Yakima Training Center (YTC) owns over 300,000 acres of potential hun habitat. Large coveys of birds have been noted on YTC the last few years.

YTC used to be a very popular spot for upland bird hunters. Decreased access due to military training and increased rules has limited the number of YTC upland bird hunters the last 5 years. Access to YTC in fall 2013 is unknown at this writing. The fall training schedule was not known and staffing has been reduced due to sequestration. Remaining YTC staff is currently on furloughs one day per week. YTC is planning to accommodate registered hunters through the military police on reduced hour/furlough days. The new federal fiscal year begins October 1 and plans could change. Hunter must go through a brief orientation, pay a \$10 fee, and register their firearms with YTC. For more information on the orientation and rules on YTC, call 509-577-3208 or 3209.

**Chukar:** Relatively mild winters and good spring moisture had resulted in increasing chukar populations. It appears that populations might be reaching peaks of the 9-10 year cycles. There is no information on the hatch in 2013.

There is plenty of public land with good hunting opportunity in the district. WDFW managed Wenas, L.T. Murray and Colockum Wildlife areas all have decent populations of chukar. Chukar can also be found on east portions of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The Yakima Training Center (YTC) owns over 300,000 acres of potential chukar habitat. YTC used to be one of the premier areas for chukar hunters. Decreased access due to military training and increased rules has limited the number of YTC upland bird hunters the last 5 years. Access to YTC in 2013 is unknown at this writing. The fall training schedule was not known and staff has been reduced due to sequestration. The new federal fiscal year begins October 1 and future budgets are unknown. Hunter must go through a brief orientation, pay a \$10 fee, and register their firearms with YTC. For more information on the orientation and rules on YTC, call 509-577-3208 or 3209.

**Forest Grouse:** Harvest has been very low in recent years. In 2012, harvest within the district was 0.25 birds per day. No data is available in the 2013 hatch, but bird numbers are expected to be low. Many “grouse” hunters drive roads morning and evening, especially when the season first opens.

Research suggests brood hens and young are the most vulnerable in early September. Long term harvesting of successful breeding females may suppress populations in areas where open road densities are high. Hunters serious about finding grouse should look for areas with low densities of open roads and hike.

**Wild Turkeys:** Turkey populations had been are doing fairly well in the northern portion of the district, but appear to be declining. The 2012 harvest is not available and no information is available on brood production.

In this district there is a spring general season for bearded turkeys; and new this year is a permit only fall season in GMU 335 (Teaway) for either sex. Most of the harvest comes from GMU's 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), and 335. The best populations are on private lands in the lower elevations of GMU 335.

**Waterfowl:** Waterfowl banding in the district is conducted in August, so no data is available for 2013 at this writing. The USFWS flyway counts indicate total populations are down slightly from 2012, but are still 33% above the long term average. Mallard populations in the flyway were down 2% from 2012, which is insignificant.

Yakima County has averaged over 31,000 ducks harvested the last 5 years, which is 3<sup>rd</sup> best in the state. In 2012, the harvest was 45,000. The high harvest was due to an excellent local hatch and open water throughout the season.

The best hunting is in the lower Yakima Valley. Public hunting can be found on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge. The Yakama Nation (YN) runs a hunting program and has great duck hunting opportunity. The YN managed Satus Wildlife Area often averages over 4 birds per hunter opening weekend. YN is also working on retaining corn stubble on tribal lands. If successful, expect more mid-to-late season ducks in the valley. For information on hunting YN, see [ynwildlife.org](http://ynwildlife.org).

Band returns suggest many locally produced ducks are staying in the Yakima Valley. No data is available on the 2013 production, so it is difficult to predict early season success. Late season hunting can be difficult. Most ponds and side sloughs often freeze over around Thanksgiving. When there are long periods of cold weather, the vast majority of ducks roost in the Lower Toppenish Reserve during legal shooting hours. Even if the Yakima River stays ice-free, few birds are flying around areas with public access. For late season hunting, watch for significant changes in weather. If there is a quick thaw and rain, “new” ducks enter the valley and a week or so of good hunting can be had before the birds find the safety of private land and the reserves.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [“Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

**Dove:** Trapping/banding has just begun at this writing, so no new information is available on survival/hatch. Yakima County ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for dove harvest. The best success is in the lower Yakima Valley. Good public hunting can be found on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and the Yakima Nation (YN). YN grows wheat on portions of their Satus Wildlife Area. For information on hunting YN, see [ynwildlife.org](http://ynwildlife.org).

Hunting success depends on the weather pattern. Warm weather is needed to keep the majority of birds from migrating out of the valley. Cooler weather often hits the area late August or early September. Despite a 30 day season, the average dove hunter only spends 3 days (opening weekend) pursuing doves.

**Deer:** Deer hunting in District 8 has been the worst in the state for a number of years. The average success the last 5 years has been 8%. In 2012, the statewide average was 28%. The 2010-2012 harvests were the lowest in recent history. There have been mild winters and decent fawn production, but there hasn’t been much of a population response.

There are some signs the population might be starting to increase, but don’t expect great hunting. Hunter numbers have declined with the deer population. Many of the remaining modern firearm hunters are probably setting up camp and claiming their favorite spot for elk season. If you are looking for relatively low hunter densities, consider the higher elevations of District 8. Hunter success is typically highest in GMU’s 335 (Teaway) and 342 (Umtaneum), but so are hunter numbers.

**Elk:** This district is the best in the state for elk hunting. However with that distinction comes relatively high hunter densities. Opening weekend is usually crowded. However, a recent trend has been for hunters to pull up camp and head home before the second

weekend. If you are looking for a higher quality experience, consider hunting the last 2-3 days of the season. Surveys in spring 2013 showed increased elk populations and production. Since calves surveyed in March are spike bulls in the fall, bull harvest is expected to increase in 2013. Both the Yakima and Colockum herds are above objective and antlerless opportunity is being increased.

For big game hunters in eastern Washington, drawing a special permit in the quality bull category is the ultimate opportunity. That certainly applies to District 8 in the south-central part of the state where the majority of quality bull permits are available. Our advice to most hunters who come here is to hunt the general elk season opportunistically for spikes, but keep putting in for special permit hunts and accruing bonus points, so that someday you will draw a quality elk permit and already know the country for lining out your hunt.

## **District 9**

### **Skamania, Clark, and Klickitat Counties**

**David Anderson - District Wildlife Biologist**

**Eric Holman – Assistant District Wildlife Biologist**

**Nicholle Stephens – Private Lands Biologist**

District Nine is located in the southwest/central part of Washington and is the only district in the state that includes significant amounts of both west and east-side habitats. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 9 include 554 (Yale), 564 (Battleground), 568 (Washougal), 560 (Lewis River), 572 (Siouxon), 574 Wind River), 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback), and 382 (East Klickitat). Hunters can choose a variety of habitats including areas covered by west and east side season dates and permit regulations.

The geography of District 9 is dominated by the Cascade Mountain Range that divides the district into west and east sides zones. Topography varies from near sea level along the Columbia River and its lower tributaries to alpine habitats associated with Mt St Helens and Mt Adams in the Cascade Range.

Dominant west-side river drainages include the Lewis, Washougal, and Wind Rivers. Major east-side watersheds include the White Salmon and Klickitat Rivers. Rock Creek in eastern Klickitat County is the primary watershed in ponderosa pine/oak and shrub steppe portions of the district. The southern border of the district is bounded by the Columbia River.



*Hunters on horseback on Hancock lands*

District 9 is one of the most diverse habitat areas of the state that include west side coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir and western hemlock. These forests give way to Oregon White Oak and Ponderosa Pine as you travel to the east side of the Cascade Mountains. In eastern Klickitat County, pine and oak habitat transition into shrub steppe dominated by grassland and sagebrush.

The majority of the west-side forest land is dominated by the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources. These are public lands open to public access. Weyerhaeuser owns a block of land in GMU 568 (Washougal) and typically allows motorized access to this area during the general hunting season. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land can be found [here](#).

East-side forest and shrub steppe/grassland habitat is primarily in private land ownership with limited public access. Industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but generally not open to private motorized vehicles. Access to these lands may be impacted during the months of August, September, and in some cases October due to high fire danger.

WDFW maintains Feel Free to Hunt access agreements with Hancock Timberlands in GMU 578 (West Klickitat). These lands are popular for hunting deer, elk, and turkey. More information about hunting on Hancock Klickitat Timberlands can be found at the end of this document.

WDFW also has a Feel Free to Hunt access agreement with Western Pacific Timber in GMU 388 (Grayback). This land is popular for deer hunting. More information about hunting on Western

Pacific Land can be found at the end of this document. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on [WDFW's Private Lands webpage](#) or at our [Go Hunt mapping](#) site.



*Hancock Timber Gated Access – Klickitat County*

**PHEASANT:** District 9 has very little wild production of pheasants compared to other areas of eastern Washington. Essentially all hunting opportunities are associated with pen-raised birds and the formalized release sites in Klickitat County (Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Sites) and Clark County (Western Washington Pheasant Release Sites). Additional information about these sites as well as others in the state of Washington can be found at:

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland\\_birds/pheasant.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/pheasant.html)

A total of approximately 400 pheasants are released at three sites in Klickitat County each year. Clark County pheasant release sites occur on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area managed by WDFW and in Woodland on a block that is partially owned by DNR and partially privately owned. The Klickitat County access sites are listed below.

### **Klickitat County Pheasant Release Sites**

There are three pheasant release sites served by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife in Klickitat County. One is located on department-owned land, and the others are on land owned by a private individual. Please treat the properties respectfully, so that future visitors may enjoy these sites as well. All sites are for day-use only; no overnight camping is allowed. These sites

are relatively undeveloped, with primitive road access. Roads may become slippery when wet, and soil will become extremely soft with fall rains and snow. Be cautious in selecting parking places next to roads in order to avoid becoming stuck. Driving off-road across fields is never allowed regardless of season.

### **Goldendale Hatchery Pheasant Release Site**

This 240 acre site is owned by WDFW. It is bounded by Hill Road on the west side and Fish Hatchery Road on the north side.

Directions: From Goldendale, drive west on Highway 142 approximately 4 miles to the intersection with Hill Road. Drive about 0.5 mile north on Hill Road, across the bridge over Spring Creek, then turn east on a dirt road onto WDFW property. This road goes into the center of the property. Note: The hatchery facilities are located along the east boundary of the parcel. Please stay away from the immediate vicinity of the buildings to protect worker safety.

### **Gun Club Property**

This 480 acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by Rogers Road on the north and Fenton Lane to the east.

Directions: From the intersection with Broadway Street in Goldendale, drive east on the Bickleton Highway 5.6 miles to the intersection with Purvine Road. Turn right (south) on Purvine Road and drive 0.9 miles to the T intersection with Rogers Road. Go either left or right on Rogers Road and look for wire gates accessing the property. There are two gates. Both are marked with signs exhibiting the WDFW logo. Park along Rogers Road, outside the fence, and walk in. Purvine Road may be impassible when wet. For an alternative access go east another 1 mile on the Bickleton Highway, and turn right (south) on Fenton Lane. Follow Fenton Lane south 1 mile to its intersection with Rogers Road. Turn right (west) onto Rogers Road, and drive about 0.1 mile west to a gate and parking area.

### **Finn Ridge Road Property**

This 160-acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by the Finn Ridge Road along the south property line and Ahola Road to the west.

Directions: From Centerville, drive 2 miles west on the Centerville Highway to a 90 degree bend in the highway to the south. Turn right (north) on Erickson Road. Drive 1 mile to the intersection with the Finn Ridge Road. Turn left (west) onto Finn Ridge Road and follow it about 1.5 miles to the first sign marking the corner of the site, on the right. It is marked with green "Feel Free To Hunt" signs.

A separate 160-acre private site, located just to the east, allows hunting by written permission, and is marked with yellow "Hunt by Written Permission" signs. The pheasant release site has

one gate on Finn Ridge Road, and one gate on Ahola Road. Park outside the gates and walk in. Use care when driving on Ahola Road, which can become impassible when wet.

**QUAIL, GRAY PARTRIDGE, and CHUKAR:** Spring conditions have been generally favorable compared to the 2012 hunting season for upland bird populations in Klickitat County. Fall hunting prospects should be average for most areas in central and eastern Klickitat County. Most access for upland bird hunting is restricted to private lands and hunt clubs in eastern Klickitat County. Hunters interested in hunting this area should seek permission in advance of the season to access upland bird hunting areas. Most hunt clubs have waiting lists for new members so access is difficult without membership.

**FOREST GROUSE:** Grouse numbers should be average in 2013 due to mild winter conditions and favorable spring weather in the South Cascades. Most grouse harvest in District 9 is associated with general deer and elk hunting seasons as birds are hunted opportunistically. Prospective hunters should focus hunting efforts on brushy riparian zones or overgrown abandoned logging roads for the best chance at success, especially ruffed grouse. Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. In District 9, the predominance of quality grouse habitat is located on USFS lands in Skamania County.

**WILD TURKEYS:** Wild Turkey populations in Klickitat County continue to be healthy and hunting conditions for the fall of 2013 should be good. Turkeys with broods have been seen throughout traditional turkey areas of Klickitat County. Decent size broods have been seen around the Klickitat Wildlife Area and low elevations around the town of White Salmon.

The majority of quality hunting areas in Klickitat County are below 1,500 ft. Popular hunting areas are generally associated with the Big White Salmon and Klickitat River drainages. East of the Klickitat River, small turkey populations are found in the Simcoe Mountains north and west of the town of Goldendale. Numerous landowners have issues with turkey damage on private property in the lower Klickitat River drainage. Private landowners may be willing to provide access to turkey hunters that ask for permission and practice good hunter ethics.

Skamania county turkey populations are located primarily in the eastern part of the county below 1,000 ft. elevation. Clark County offers little to no turkey hunting opportunity.



*Turkeys in the Klickitat River Drainage*

## **WATERFOWL:**

**Goose Hunting:** Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in area 2A designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those who had their previous year's hunting authorization invalidated for Goose Management Area 2A need to pass an exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current year hunting authorization.

Go to the following WDFW web site for additional information on the examination and the details of the hunting season at: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/canada\\_goose/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/canada_goose/).

Dusky Canada goose populations remain below objectives and liberalization of the hunting season structure is not likely in the near term. Most public goose hunting in Clark County is located in the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Hunter access to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is by reservation.

Very little goose hunting is available in Skamania County. Goose hunting in Klickitat County is limited and primarily associated with private lands. Keep in mind that permission is always necessary for access to these sites. Dusky Canada geese are not found in Skamania or Klickitat counties and fall under more liberal goose hunting regulations. Check the [waterfowl pamphlet](#) for more information on season length and bag limits.

**Duck hunting:** Duck hunting opportunity is dependent on the arrival of migratory birds pushed southward from northwestern Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. Like Canada goose hunting, most public access for duck hunting in Clark County is limited to the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

**DOVE:** Klickitat County has a few areas for dove hunting but the majority of quality areas are found on private hunt clubs. Opportunity is limited as little quality public land exists for dove hunting. Recent surveys in the spring of 2013 indicate a decline in numbers and fall hunting should be below average to poor. Some dove hunting opportunity exists in the Vancouver lowlands, i.e. Shillapoo Wildlife Area.

**DEER:** Deer populations are generally stable in lower elevation units such as Washougal (568) and Battle Ground (564), as well as the Klickitat County GMUs, i.e. West Klickitat (578), Grayback (388), and East Klickitat (382). However, deer populations remain suppressed in the Cascade Mountain GMUs, i.e. Lewis River (560), Wind River (574), and Siouxon (572).

Deer harvest and success is remarkably consistent within District 9 and a general season total harvest of approximately 2,500 bucks representing 15-20% hunter success is again anticipated during the 2013 hunt. Please see both the [Game Harvest Statistics and Game Status and Trend Reports](#) on the Hunting page of the WDFW website for much more information on deer management in District 9.

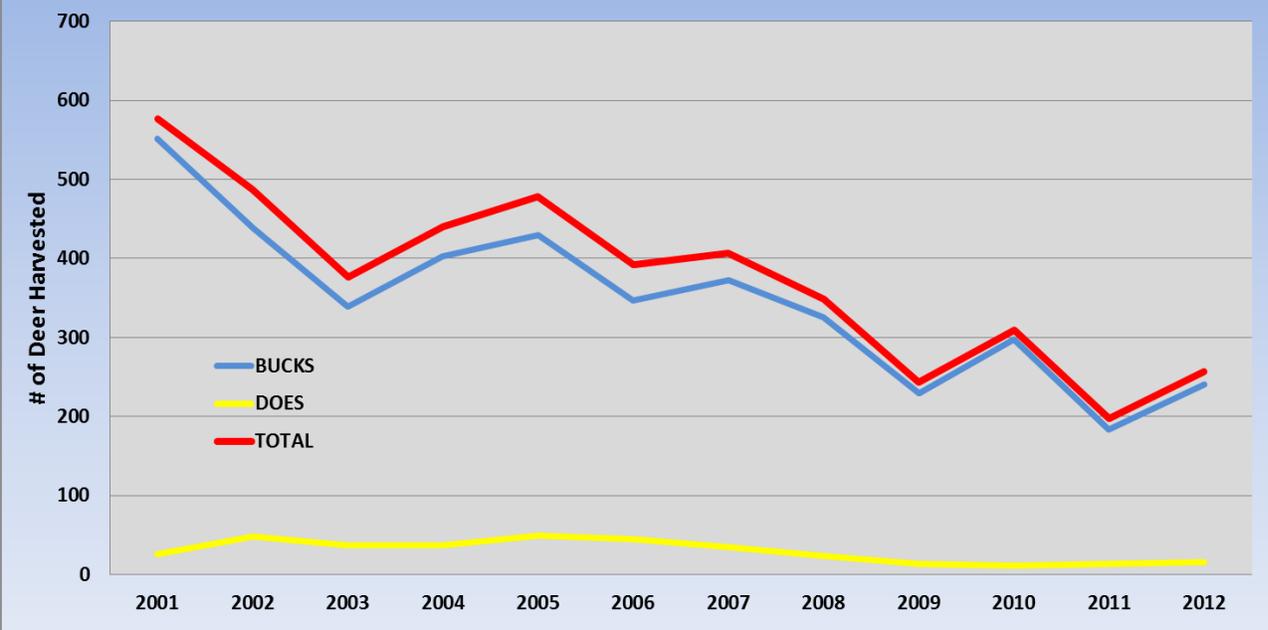
Successful hunting for black-tailed deer is primarily a function of the effort, focus, and energy that hunters put into the hunt. Black-tailed deer thrive in heavily vegetated habitats and are often very nocturnal in nature. This means that successful black-tail hunters must be in position early in the morning and carefully hunt near sources of food and in secure cover.

Bucks travel more during the rut when they cover large amounts of territory searching for does in estrus. This makes bucks more vulnerable as they spend less time hiding and are sometimes found in “open” habitats, i.e., clear-cuts and meadows. Not surprisingly, approximately one-third of the annual buck harvest in Region 5 occurs during the 4-day “late buck” hunt held each November.

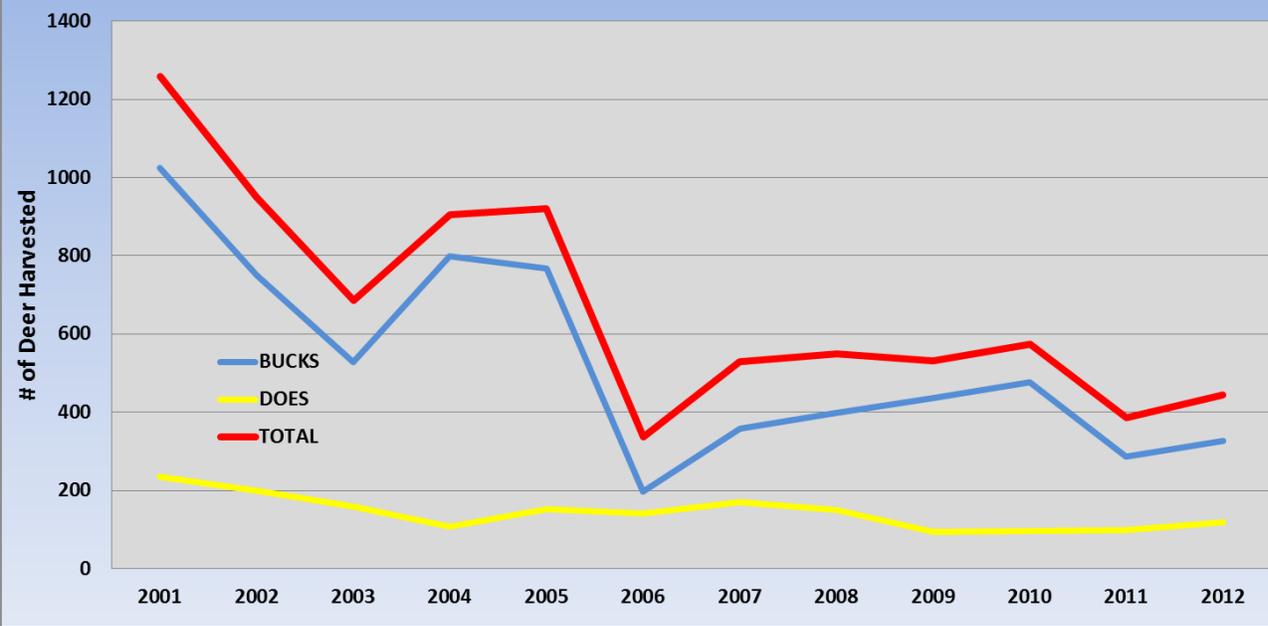
Within District 9, GMUs 554 (Yale), 560 (Lewis River), 564 (Battle Ground), 568 (Washougal), and 572 (Siouxon) offer an attractive general-season hunting opportunity. Hunters should note however, the firearm restrictions in GMUs 554 and 564 (see page 81 of the 2013 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations.)

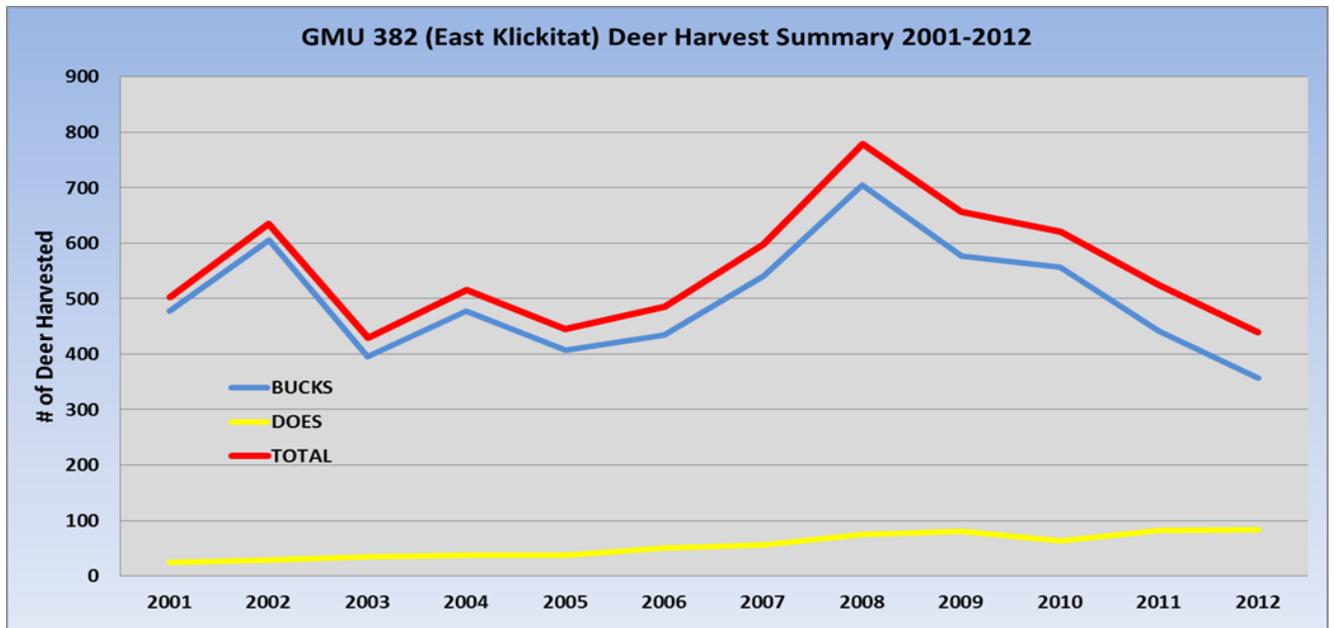
Those interested in a more trophy-oriented deer hunting opportunity might consider any of the Klickitat County Units. GMU 578 (West Klickitat), GMU 388 (Grayback), and GMU 382 (East Klickitat) are all managed under a 3-point or larger antler restriction. Collectively, the Klickitat GMUs support an annual harvest of over 1,000 3-point or larger bucks. Please see the graphics below illustrating the annual harvest in each of the Klickitat Units. Also, please review the deer hunting regulations closely before going afield as the rules differ in each unit and none of the Klickitat GMUs allow general-season late-buck hunting.

GMU 578 (West Klickitat) Deer Harvest Summary 2001-2012



GMU 388 (Grayback) Deer Harvest Summary 2001-2012





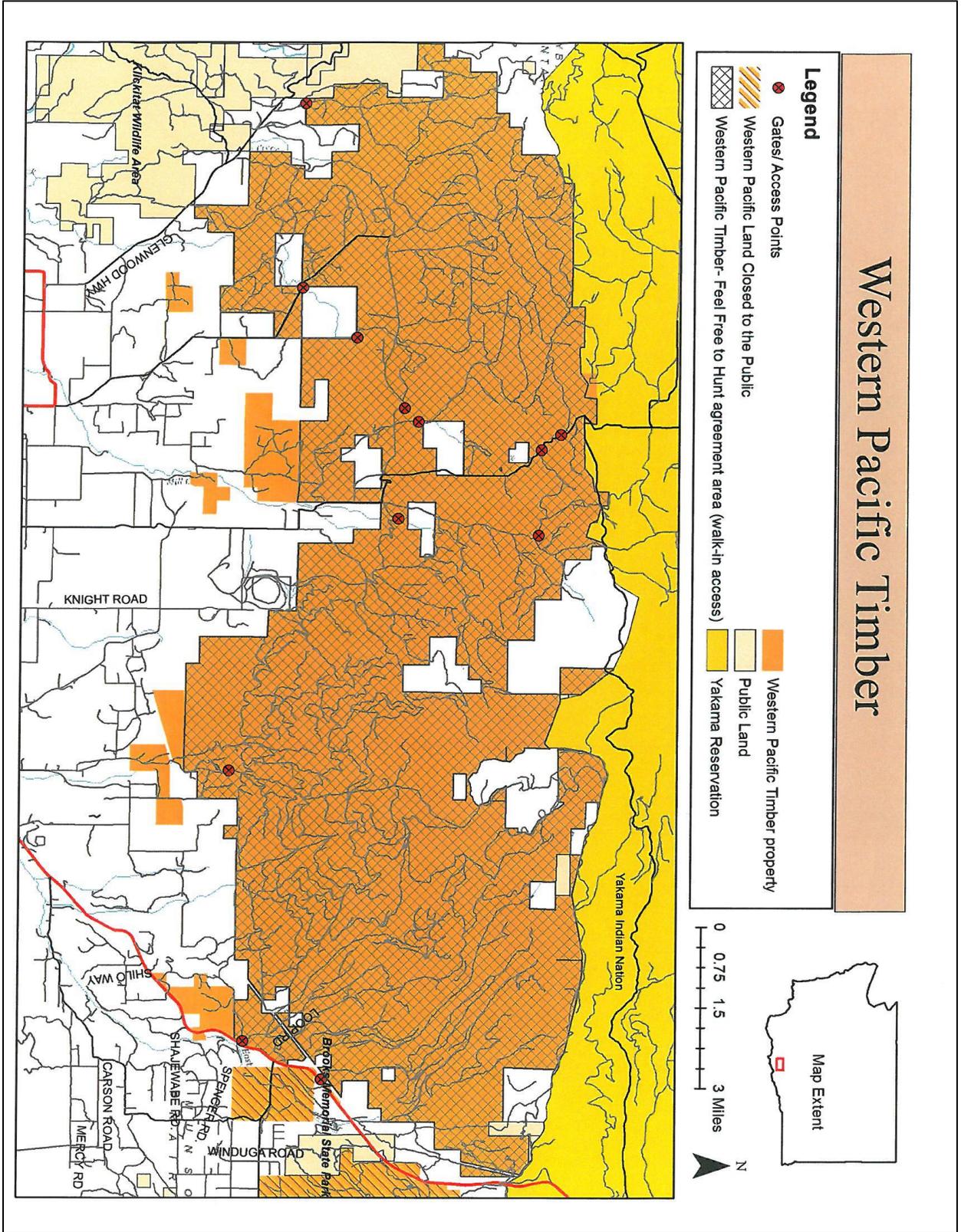
**ELK:** Elk in District 9 are managed as part of the Mt. St. Helens Herd. Please see the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#) available on the WDFW website for more information:

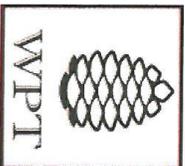
Elk hunting within District 9 is managed under a variety of seasons, so check regulations closely before going afield. Two specific details of elk management include the fact that GMUs 388 (Grayback) and 382 (East Klickitat) require Eastern Washington elk tags while the remainder of District 9 is within the Western Washington Elk tag area. Additionally, GMU 564 (Battle Ground) and 554 (Yale) are Firearm Restriction GMUs.

GMU 560 (Lewis River) offers the most and possibly the best elk hunting in District 9. The majority of this area is public land and within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Access during the modern firearm season and hunter success can be dependent upon early season snow levels.

GMUs 388 and 382 in Klickitat County have very few elk and are more often considered better for deer hunting. GMU 564 in Clark County only has elk in the extreme northern portion of the GMU. This area has a mix of public and private lands and knowledge of ownership is important before planning your hunt in this area.

Information about hunting on Western Pacific Lands





# Western Pacific Timber



## Welcome to Western Pacific Timber

Western Pacific Timber maintains over 65,000 acres of private land open to the public in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Help us all to maintain access to these lands by being a respectful and courteous visitor. Treat them as you would your own property.

- ***Obey road closures. No vehicles are permitted behind gates. Do not block or obstruct gates.***
- ***No firewood cutting is permitted without a written permit from Western Pacific Timber.***
- ***No campfires or other open fires are permitted.***
- ***No littering or dumping***
- ***If you camp, leave no trace, clean your campsite.***
- ***Do not drive nails into trees or shoot at trees***
- ***Drive roads with caution – watch for log trucks and other traffic.***
- ***Western Pacific lands East of US97 are Closed to public entry.***

Help us by reporting vandalism or other violations. The misdeeds of a few may mean loss of access for everyone! For non-emergency poaching/violations call 1-877-933-9847

For other questions or concerns please call Nicholle Stephens, WDFW, (360) 906-6724

**Enjoy your visit to Western Pacific Timber**

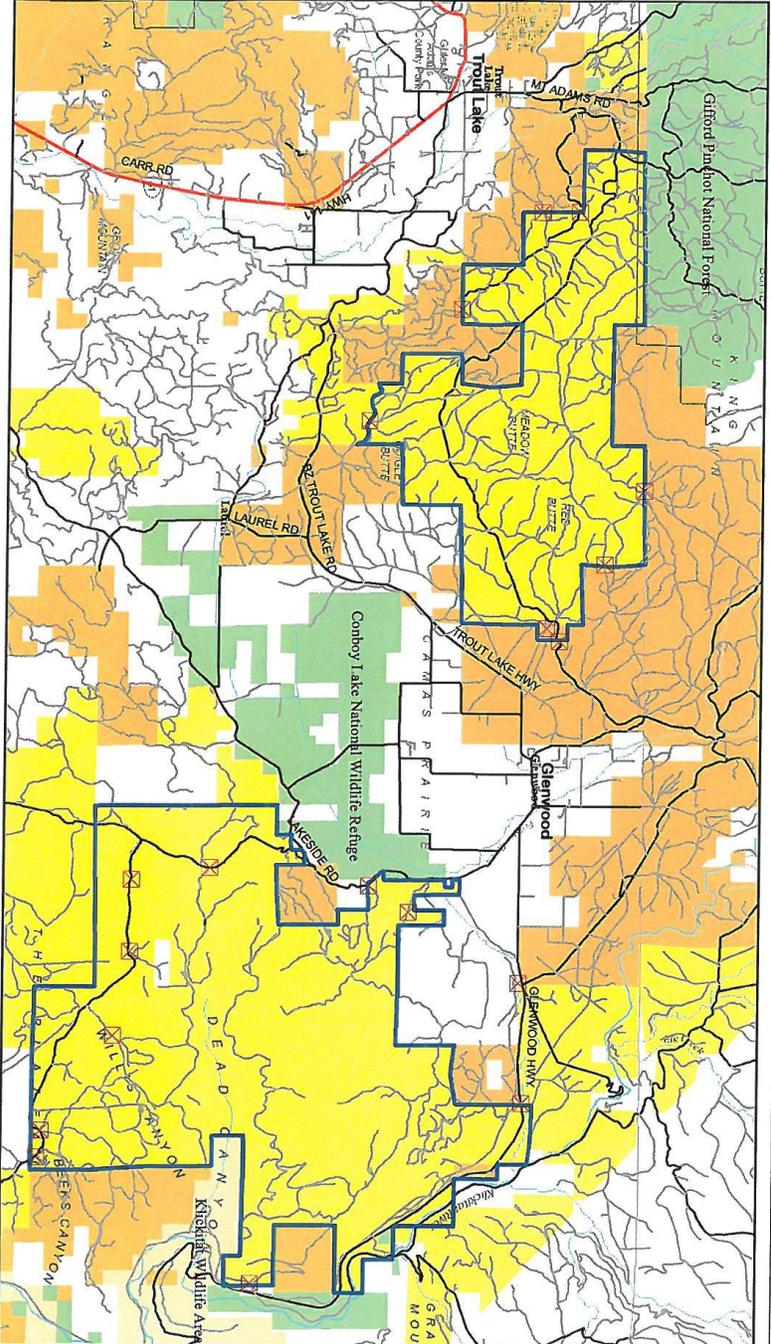
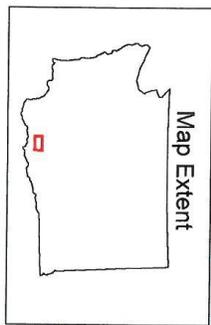
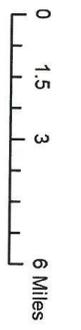
Information about hunting on Hancock Klickitat Timberlands:



# Hancock Timberlands

**Legend**

- Hancock Land
- DNR
- Federal Land
- WDFW
- Feel Free to Hunt Area
- Gates/Walk-in access points





## Welcome to Hancock Timberlands



Hancock Forest Management Klickitat Timberlands maintains over **34,000 acres** open to public hunting, in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Help us all to maintain access to these lands by being a respectful and courteous visitor. Treat them as you would your own property.

- Obey road closures. No unauthorized motor vehicles behind closed gates. Do not block or obstruct gates.
- No fires permitted between April 15 and November 1 unless otherwise posted.
- Firewood cutting by permit only. Firewood cutting for *campfire use only* is allowed without a permit.
- No littering or dumping.
- Camping is limited to 14 days except October 15 to December 15.
- Camping sites must be temporary with no permanent structures. Do not use nails or wire, shoot at trees, or otherwise damage trees.
- Leave clean campsites. Pack it in, pack it out.
- No mushroom picking is allowed on Hancock lands.

Help us by reporting vandalism and other violations. The misdeeds of a few may mean the loss of access for everyone! For non-emergency poaching/violations call 1-877-933-9847

**Enjoy your stay on Hancock Timberlands**  
**509-364-3331**  
**In case of emergency, call 911**

## District 10

### Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

#### Pat Miller, District Wildlife Biologist

#### Stefanie Bergh, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist

District 10 is located in southwestern Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. GMUs in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 Toutle). This wide area includes maritime rolling hills in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

A high percentage of this district is in private ownership, which presents a variety of access options and challenges. The recent trend is for private forest land to become more limited to public access and in some cases not open at all or leased for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants. Contacting the landowner is the first step in understanding their programs and how it might impact your hunting. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt if one is available.

Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10 and typically allows motorized access to this area during the general hunting season. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land can be found [here](#) or by calling 1-866-636-6531. Guidelines for the St. Helens Tree Farm and locations where their maps are sold can be found [here](#).

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but generally not open to private motorized vehicles. Other major industrial forest landowners include Hancock, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond, and West Fork. Access to these lands may be impacted during the months of August, September, and in some cases October due to high fire danger. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on [WDFW's Private Lands webpage](#), on page 96 of the pamphlet, or at our [Go Hunt mapping](#) site.

Public land in the district includes WDFW's [Cowlitz](#) and [Mt St Helens](#) wildlife areas, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources scattered throughout all three counties. These are public lands open to public access. Contact the USFS Cowlitz Valley Ranger District at 360-497-1100 and the Castle Rock DNR office at 360-577-2025.

**St. Helens Land Access Program:** The St. Helens Land Access Program is a cooperative effort between many volunteer organizations, Weyerhaeuser, and WDFW to provide additional weekday motorized access to the majority of the Weyerhaeuser St. Helens Tree Farm during special elk permit seasons. Thanks to the hard work of participants, this program has been very successful in providing access to approximately 80% of the St. Helens Tree Farm for the past 6 years.

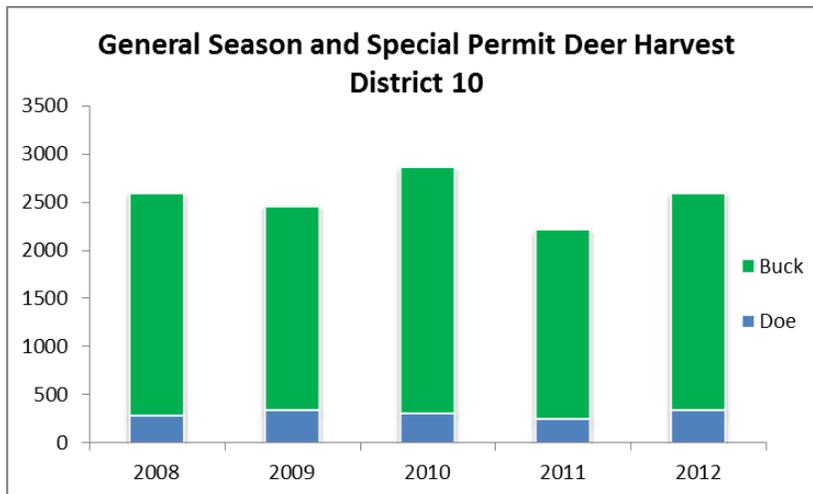
Volunteers are paired up and assigned to road junctions to direct hunters to open areas on the tree farm. The number of volunteers that sign up is directly related to the amount of land that can potentially be opened up. Because of the volunteer presence, Weyerhaeuser chooses to open much of their land to motorized access knowing there is a reduced risk of dangerous encounters with hunting traffic near active logging operations. You can help to provide access by signing up as a volunteer [here](#).



*St. Helens Land Access Program Volunteers*

**Deer:** Several GMUs in this district are tops in the state for black-tail deer harvest. The highest general season harvest in 2012 occurred in 501 (Lincoln), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). The majority of the antlerless harvest occurs during the general archery and muzzleloader seasons since there are very few antlerless special permits.

Deer hunting is often best at the end of the general season as conditions in the heavily vegetated west-side improve for stalking and moving through the woods quietly. The best conditions often are at play during the late buck hunt--consult the pamphlet for unit listings and dates. Deer are "edge" animals and finding places with good forage and hiding cover nearby is a great starting point. Hunting just before or after a heavy storm can be a good strategy, as animals will reduce feeding during storms. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.



**Elk:** This district is always either number one or two in statewide harvest for elk. The highest general season harvest in 2012 occurred in 506 (Willapa Hills), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). Additionally, there are many permit hunts in District 10; the majority of which are antlerless permits to support the goal of reducing the Mt. St. Helens herd. Three GMUs-522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), and 556 (Toutle)-are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In this district in 2012, 1,458 elk were harvested by permit and 1,728 during the general season. Generally, a 5-point elk would be a nice trophy in this district as 6-point bulls are few and far between.

Big game populations in Cowlitz and Lewis counties were influenced by late spring storms in 2013. The survey index that was conducted for winter elk mortality showed high loss in 2012/2013, indicating a reduction in yearling animals and some loss of older animals as a result of the winter conditions. The influence of these winter losses may impact elk numbers for a few years as the reduced recruitment impacts the population over time. The lowland areas of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties probably did not see such losses and those might be good areas to focus on during the 2013 season. Those units include 530 (Ryderwood) and 506 (Willapa Hills).

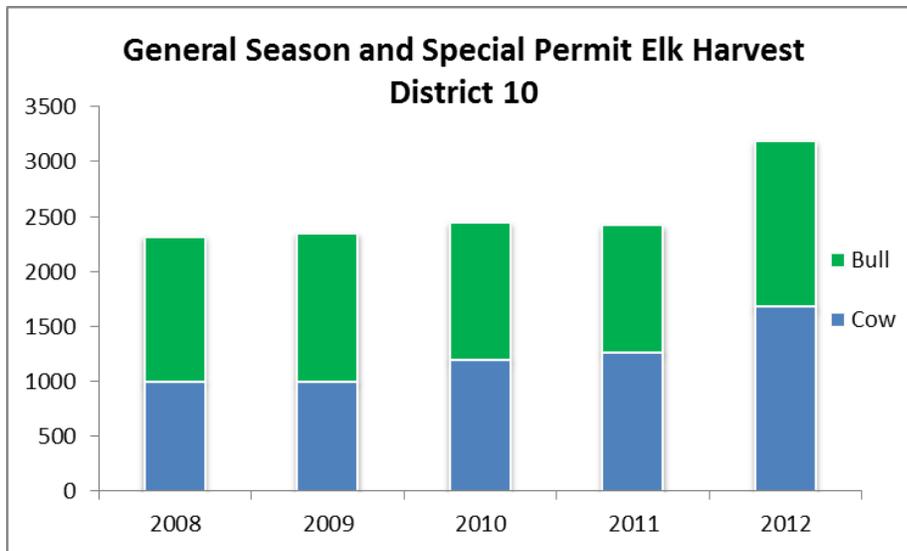


*Bull group in the St. Helens herd*

Early hunting season access for archery hunters is often complicated by hot weather and fire access closures. If that occurs, hunters should consider going west to the Willapa 506 GMU or to any of the GMUs with state or national forest lands. These areas often stay open during times of high fire danger on the west slope of the Cascades.

Using the [Go Hunt mapping](#) online tool to look at aerial photos to identify recent clearcuts and drainages is a good start for identifying areas to hunt. Pre-season scouting on the commercial tree farms is usually done by bike or on foot as most areas will not be open to motorized access at that time. Motorized access and camping is available on state DNR lands unless there is high fire danger.

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer and elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.



**Elk Hoof Disease:** Reports of lameness and deformed hooves in elk have been observed in southwest Washington since the mid 1990's. This problem seems concentrated in the lowlands in the lower Cowlitz River Valley, but reports have been increasing in number and geographic scope, and hunters are regularly seeing and sometimes harvesting an elk with this condition. It has been noted in both males and females; old as well as very young animals, and in any hoof.

The type observed in southwest Washington elk does not appear to match with any known hoof diseases in domestic or wild animals. The most recent results from testing of affected elk are not currently complete, but as of summer 2013 the findings so far indicate: no significant viruses isolated, no evidence of significant inflammation or infection above hooves, other tissues (including meat) are not affected, no abnormal parasite loads, and low selenium and copper levels (not unusual for elk herds, but could indicate possible impacts on general health and immunity).

Current diagnostic efforts are focused on specialized bacteriology testing to rule out infectious organisms including the bacteria *Dichelobacter nodosus* and the bacteria in the genus *Treponema*, which are the most common causes of infectious hoof disease in sheep and cattle, respectively.

Elk hunters in this district are encouraged to use extreme caution when deciding whether or not to harvest an elk that looks sick or is travelling in a herd with affected animals. More information can be found on page 95 in the pamphlet and on the department's [webpage](#). Hunters are encouraged to use the [online reporting tool](#) on that webpage if they observe or harvest elk that are suspected of having this hoof disease.

**Black Bear:** District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades (GMUs 503, 505, 510, 513, 516, 520, 522, 550, and 556) and Coastal (GMUs 501, 504, 506, and 530) black bear hunt zones

for the fall bear hunting season, which runs from August 15-November 15. Many of the commercial timber companies experience tree damage from bears and encourage bear hunting on their land. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2012 in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 141 (3.7% success) and 229 (6.5% success), respectively. In 2011, harvest and hunter success in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 182 (4.4% success) and 277 (7.5% success), respectively.

A spring bear damage special permit hunt also occurs in portions of the 501 Lincoln GMU where Weyerhaeuser and other commercial timber companies designate the hunt area. Hunters interested in this hunt should contact the [Weyerhaeuser Pe Ell tree farm](#) before submitting a special permit application to find out details on access.

All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 63 of the pamphlet for more details.

**Cougar:** In 2012 one cougar was harvested in each of the following GMUs: 530 (Ryderwood), 516 (Packwood), and 556 (Toutle). Beginning in the 2012/2013 season a harvest guideline system was initiated, which closes hunt areas after January 1<sup>st</sup> if the harvest guidelines have been met or exceeded. For more information on these new guidelines and to check if the area you are interested in hunting is closed or not please see the [cougar webpage](#).

**Mountain Goat:** The Goat Rocks/Tieton River goat hunt area has 3 special permits and is one of the premier spots in the State for mountain goat hunting. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%. A voluntary program begins in 2013 where successful mountain goat hunters are encouraged to bring the head and horns of their animal to the closest WDFW regional or district office for biological sampling as soon as feasible after their hunt. Successful draw applicants will receive a letter with additional details.

**Upland Birds:** Upland birds are impacted by spring conditions during the hatch, which directly affect chick survival. We had a relatively dry spring, which should improve chick survival and boost numbers of young available to hunters this fall. Pheasants will be released at locations throughout the district—please consult [our webpage](#) for details.

**Forest Grouse:** This district supports significant forest grouse populations and is one of the top producers for western Washington. Our spring conditions were favorable this year for good chick survival and insect production, which should translate into better grouse populations this fall. Hunting riparian areas with mixed forest species might be a good bet to scare up a grouse or two.

**Waterfowl:** Duck and goose hunting will be good this fall after the rains in November and December encourage birds to come south to our area. Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details on the goose seasons and any changes in duck bag limits. For example, the daily bag limit for scaup is reduced to 3 this year as a result of poor production in

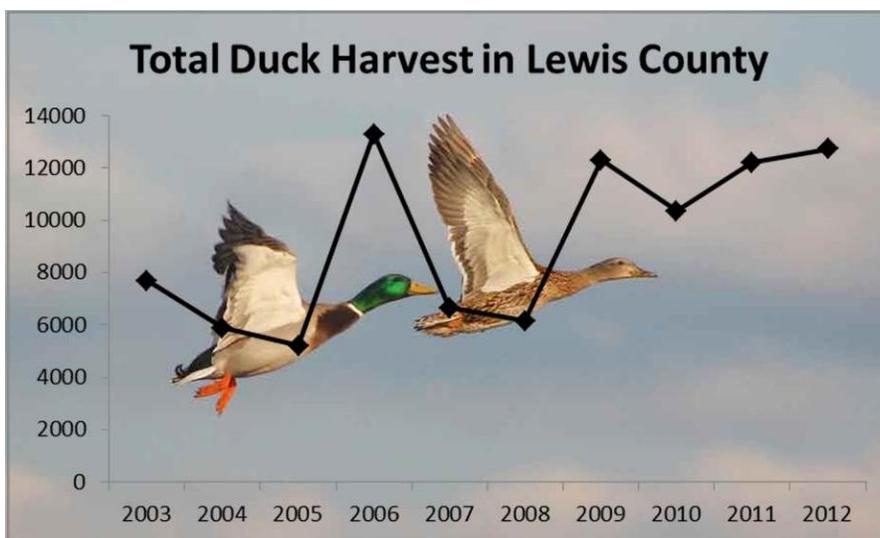
the breeding grounds. Early hunting also might require hunters to examine the birds more carefully; often ducks are not in full plumage and confusion on species ID can be challenging, *especially for pintails as they have a restricted bag limit.*



*Duck hunting on the Columbia River*

Hunting early season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. Remember that the Columbia River is tidal in flow and watch for outgoing tide conditions to avoid having your boat get stuck. Remember to be careful on the water and always have your PFD on! Later in the season when high water might disperse birds, having access to farmlands is a great way to adapt to changing behavior patterns of birds. More information can be found on the Department's [waterfowl webpage](#).

Duck harvest in 2012 was 6,661 in Cowlitz county (up from 2011), 12,740 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 3,327 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011).



Goose hunting in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2A, which are in place to protect the dusky subspecies. In order to goose hunt in this area hunters will need to pass a goose identification test. Identification guides and test information can be found [here](#). More details on season dates and bag limits can be found in the waterfowl pamphlet.

There is also a special late goose season in this area that is open to Master Hunters and youth hunters accompanied by a Master Hunter. Master Hunters will be mailed an application for this hunt in January and qualified applicants will be placed on a list to participate in this hunt, which occurs on goose damage areas in February.

Goose harvest in 2012 was 787 in Cowlitz county (down from 2011), 2,016 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 113 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011). Harvest during the 6-day long September season in 2012 was 190 in Cowlitz county (down from 2011), 448 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 56 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011).



*Zone 2A goose check station*

## District 11

### Thurston and Pierce counties and GMU 667 (Skookumchuck) of Lewis County

#### Michelle Tirhi, District Biologist

The core Game Management Units (GMUs) that comprise District 11 are Puyallup (GMU 652), White River (GMU 653), Mashel (GMU 654), Deschutes (GMU 666), and Skookumchuck (GMU 667). Land ownership in the district includes private residential and agricultural (e.g. GMUs 652 and 666), and both private and public industrial timber lands (e.g. GMUs 653, 654, and 667). The eastern portion of GMU 653 contains higher-elevation alpine conditions bordering Mount Rainier National Park.

Varied hunting opportunity exists within District 11 from waterfowl hunting on waterways of Puget Sound to deer, elk, bear and cougar hunting on commercial forest land. WDFW's Scatter Creek (GMU 666), Skookumchuck, and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Areas (GMU 667) and DNRs Elbe Hills State Forest (GMU 654) provide ample opportunity for small and big game hunting. Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and Hancock Timber Resource properties in GMU's 653 and 654 all provide excellent big game opportunities but require the purchase of access permits to enter (obtained through those respective companies: [Vail](#) and [Hancock](#)).

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier Elk Herds are partially contained in District 11, providing an opportunity to harvest elk as they migrate out of Mount Rainer high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. Waterfowl hunting on Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and inland lakes in the district are some of the best opportunities in the South Puget Sound Region.

Hunters should be aware of firearm restrictions in certain localities of Pierce and Thurston County. A map of Pierce County firearm restrictions can be seen on the [Pierce County website's Public GIS tool](#) (choose Public Safety then Sheriffs Restrictions). Thurston County no shooting and controlled shooting zones can be [seen here](#).

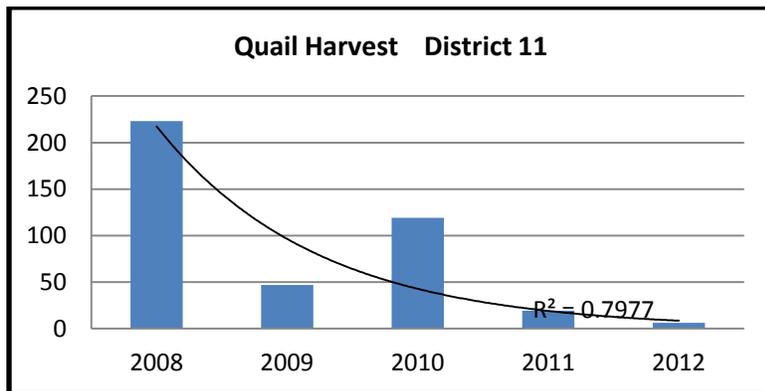
**Pheasant:** Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). The release program utilizes state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands. There are special access processes in place for [JBLM](#), so please visit their web site. Note that [nontoxic shot](#) is required on all pheasant release sites, statewide.

The general pheasant season is open from 8:00am to 4:00pm September 28 to November 30, 2013 with a daily bag limit of 2 (either sex) and a possession limit of 15 (either sex). An extended pheasant season is also provided in District 11 at Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas from December 1-15 under the same hours and daily/possession limits as general season. Pheasants are not released as part of the extended season. Hunters need a western Washington pheasant license to hunt pheasants. An overview of [the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#) including a description and maps of all release sites can be found on the WDFW website.

Approximately 1900 pheasants will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning September 17 through Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3700 pheasants will be released at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area with 60-70 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Some areas of Scatter Creek are off limits to hunters due to endangered species recovery work so please obey all posted signs. Approximately 5000 pheasants will be released on JBLM. Military training dictates which fields will be open in any given week for both release and hunting access on JBLM. Hunters must register to hunt on JBLM through NW Adventure Center (253-967-8282 or 253-967-7744) at which time they will be informed about the pheasant hunting process including which fields are open for hunting.

**Quail:** Quail are limited in District 11 as they are throughout western Washington. Quail harvest in District 11 has been trending downwards since a 5-year high in 2008 with only 19 birds reported harvested in 2011 and 6 birds harvested in 2012 in Thurston County (none in Pierce County for both years). Regardless of this trend, quail harvest in Thurston County ranks equally with the other 10 counties in western Washington that support a quail harvest.

California quail can be found in scattered locations throughout District 11 with the greatest opportunity in grasslands and woodlands of south and east Thurston County. Mountain Quail are more prevalent in the brushy areas of Key Peninsula, Pierce County and southeast portions of Thurston County. However, access maybe limited. The western Washington California Quail season runs 28 September through 30 November with a daily mixed bag limit of 10 and possession mixed bag limit of 30. The Mountain quail season runs September 28 through November 30 with a daily bag limit of 2 and possession limit of 4.

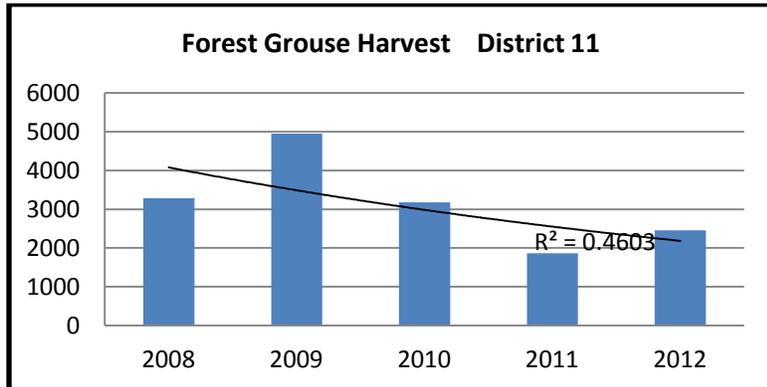


**Forest Grouse:** Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 11. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along logging roads, trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands. The best hunting will be near fruiting shrublands such as huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, elderberry, and other species. Logging roads are particularly good locations since they provide the sand that grouse need to eat for digestion and the dust grouse seek to discourage mites and other biting infestations. In particular, look for inaccessible or closed roads and walk behind gates (with permission by owner) to get the best chance of finding grouse.

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on JBLM (GMU 652), Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), and Capitol State Forest (GMU 666). Forest grouse have been experiencing a weak downward trend in

District 11 over the past 5 years. Regardless, Pierce County provides an average of 2,000 grouse harvested per year while Thurston County averages 1,000 annually.

A hunter must purchase a small game license to hunt grouse; grouse hunting is also included in the purchase of any big game license purchase. Forest grouse season in District 11 runs September 1 through December 31 with a daily bag limit of 4 of any species and a possession limit of 12 of any species.



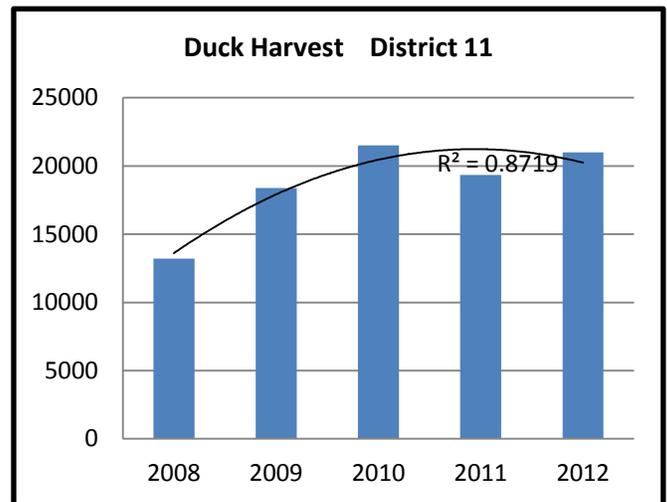
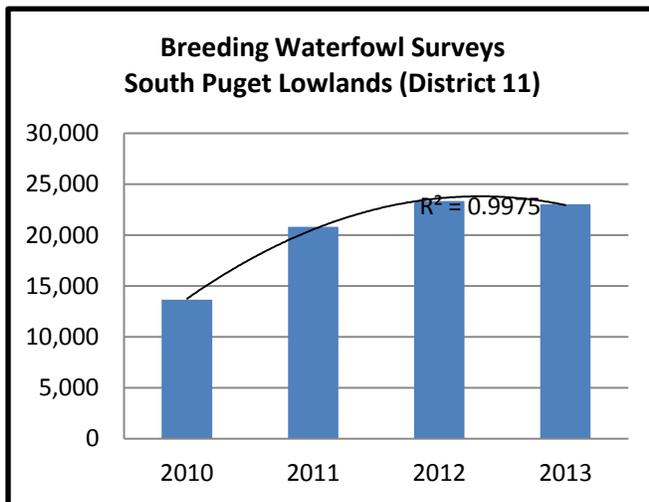
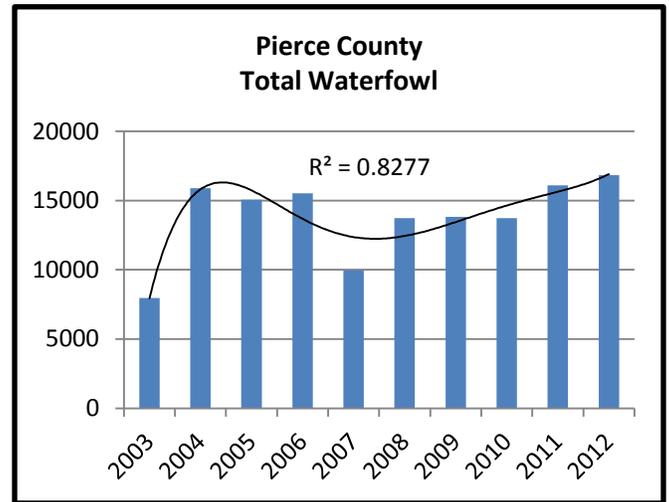
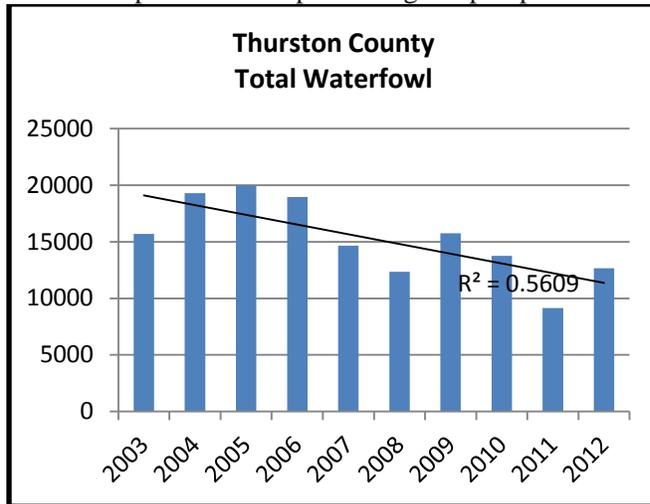
**Wild Turkeys:** District 11 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. WDFW receives occasional reports of individual or small groups of turkeys in Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula, Pierce County; Rochester, Thurston County; and along the Johnson Creek Corridor, Lewis County. However, the overall scarcity of turkeys in District 11 equates to extremely poor prospects for harvest. The statewide turkey season runs April 15 through May 31. Male turkeys and turkeys with visible beards only are legal with a western Washington limit of one (except two turkey limit in Klickitat County).

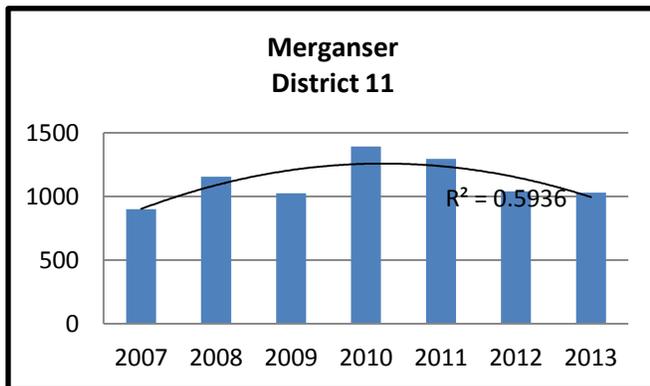
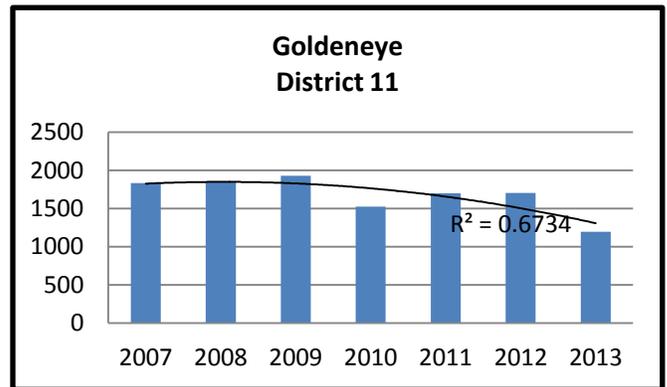
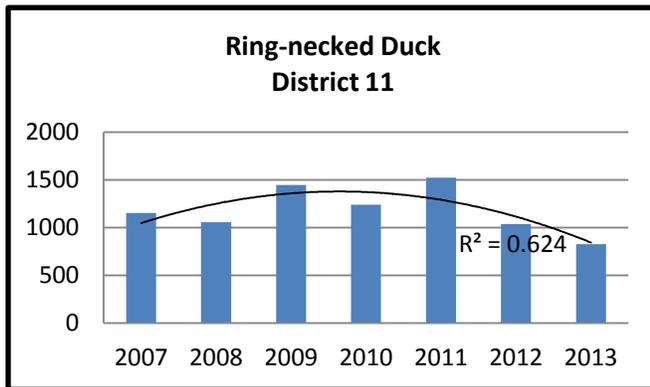
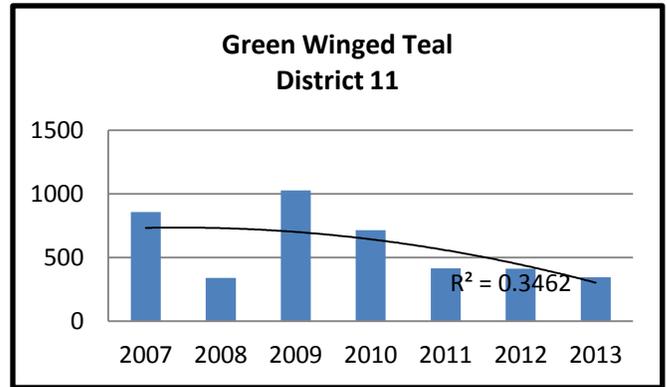
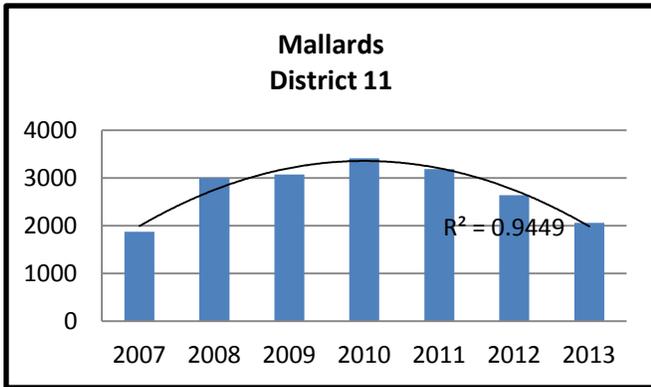
**Waterfowl:** The majority of [Pacific Flyway](#) waterfowl are born on the prairies of the United States and [Canada](#), as well as in [Alaska](#), northwestern Canada, and other western states. In recent years, waterfowl numbers have been on the upswing, but 2013 saw a 6% decline in overall duck breeding population estimates in the traditional survey areas. Regardless, this is still 33% higher than the long-term average according to USFWS. Additionally, the breeding population estimates for the 6 most abundant species increased from 2012 to 2013 in the primary North American breeding areas as follows (USFWS): mallard (+22%), green-winged teal (+12%), ring-necked duck (+24%), goldeneyes (+17%), and mergansers (+11%) .

District 11 continues to see a decline in mid-winter waterfowl counts in Thurston but not Pierce counties. This may be a result of changing hydrology patterns that have resulted in less water on historically flooding agricultural fields and more water on smaller sized ponds in Thurston County. In general, most of our most productive waterfowl sites in the district with the longest history of data collection show fluctuating trends over the years with no clear pattern, likely a result of annual weather fluctuations.

Overall, the South Puget Sound lowlands support almost twice as many waterfowl as any other Western Washington location. Breeding season waterfowl surveys for the South Puget lowlands continue an increasing trend. District totals for the five species counted as part of USFWS breeding surveys have also remained stable which should result in good hunting prospects for this season.

Duck harvest in Pierce County increased 17% from 2011 to 2012 and 21% over the previous 5 years. Combined duck harvest in the district mimics the annual breeding survey results. Unfortunately, there was a 3% decline in harvest of Canada goose from 2011 to 2012 although the 5 year average in the district is up 27% which provides good prospect for duck and goose hunters.





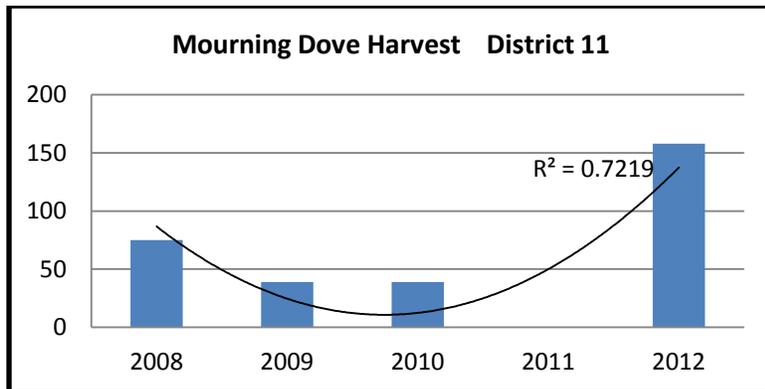
Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies in the district that are surrounded by housing; hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area. Rapjohn Lake in Pierce County has a register-to-hunt program and requires hunters to hunt from two established blinds. Registration for the blinds is on a first come basis and is established by parking in one of the two mandatory parking lots at [the WDFW Rapjohn Lake Access Site](#).

Best waterfowl hunting areas: Puget Sound including [Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#); western islands of Pierce County; and Henderson, Budd, and Eld Inlets of Thurston County. Note that a majority of the

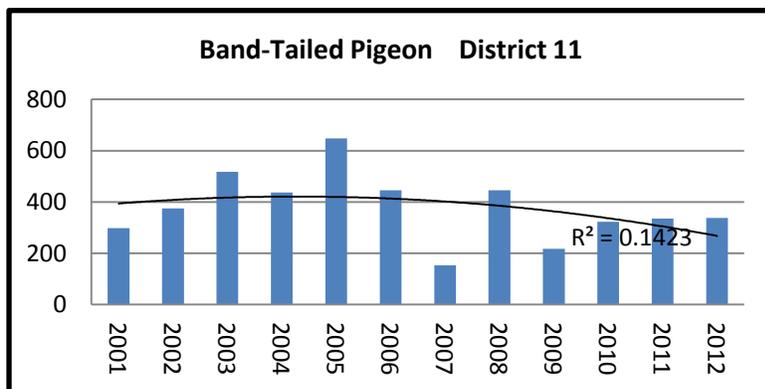
water bodies on Key Peninsula, Pierce County, are within a firearm restriction zone, thus prohibiting waterfowl hunting. Flooded agricultural fields in the western half of the district are good prospects for waterfowl hunting; hunters must seek landowner access permission prior to hunting these sites. The Centralia Coal Mine has a limited, high quality hunt; hunters are urged to contact TransAlta directly with questions regarding participation (360-736-9901).

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

**Mourning Dove:** District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area, although harvest significantly increased in 2012. Average harvest was 38 birds a year from 2008 to 2011 and then spiked to 158 birds in 2012 with twice as many birds harvested in Pierce County than Thurston County.

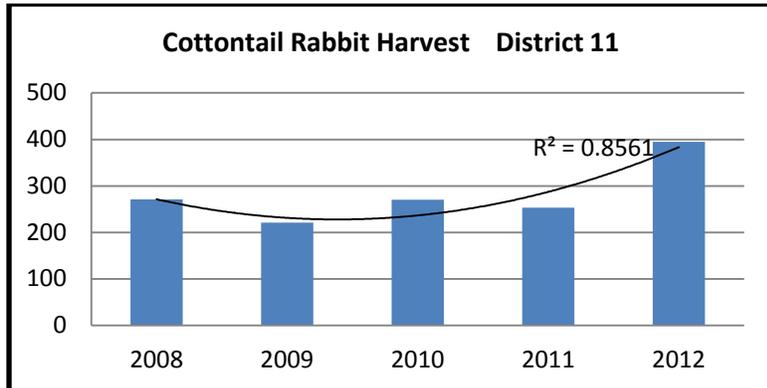


**Band-tailed Pigeon:** Pierce County (District 11) provided the fourth highest band-tail harvest in the state for the past 10 years averaging 57 birds harvested annually. Harvest statewide has been increasing annually which should provide good opportunity for hunters. The best hunting locations for band-tails in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (Pierce County), Mud Bay (Thurston County), Totten Inlet/Oyster Bay (Thurston County) and along marine shorelines.



**Cottontail Rabbit:** District 11 provides some of the best cottontail rabbit hunting opportunity in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce and Thurston counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest remained stable from 2008 to 2011 and the spiked in 2012 to 395 rabbits harvested across the district. Most of that increase was driven by harvest in Thurston County (Pierce County has been experiencing an 11% decline over the past 5 years). Thurston County provided

the 6th highest cottontail harvest in the state in 2012 while Thurston County provided the 10<sup>th</sup> highest harvest.

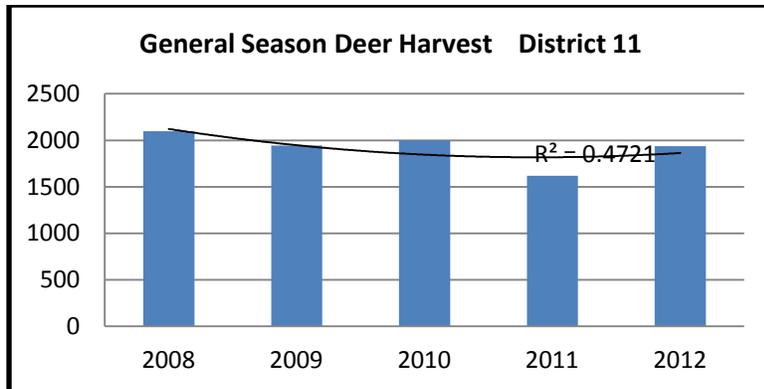


**Black-tailed Deer:** Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited and consist of one survey done in the highest quality location. Branched antler, spike, doe and fawn ratios are stable to increasing over previous years. Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout regenerating clear cuts. In particular, Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667) and Hancock Timber Resources Group ownership (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653) continue to be worthy hunting areas for both deer and elk.

A new limited access recreation program for Vail Tree Farm begins August 1 2013. Hunters will be required to purchase an access permit in order to access Vail Tree Farm. Vail permits are \$150 each with a maximum of 750 permits to be sold with two vehicles allowed on each permit. Recreational leases are also available which allow a group to bid on a leased area; two leased areas are being offered on Vail in 2013. Additional information can be located on the [Weyerhaeuser website](#) or by calling 866-636-6531.

High elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences can be found in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 (White River) and 654 (Mashel) accessed by US Forest Service road and trail systems that lead to high mountain hunting areas, including portions of the Norse Peak, Clearwater, and Glacier View Wilderness Areas and Crystal Mountain Resort (outside ski boundaries). A permit must be purchased to access Hancock timberlands; information can be obtained by calling 800-782-1493.

Warm weather over the past four hunting seasons, in particular over weekends, has resulted in lower harvest than expected. Hunters' best option is to wait for cloudy, colder weather. General season deer harvest in District 11 has been relatively stable over the past five years with a weak decline. In 2012, archery hunters enjoyed a 17.6% success rate, modern firearm hunters a 20.8% success rate, and muzzleloaders a 10.9% success rate during general season within the district.



**Elk:** Both the North Rainier and South Rainier Elk Herds are partially contained in District 11, providing ample opportunity to harvest elk. Elk availability should continue to increase in GMUs 652 (Puyallup), 653(White River) and 654 (Mashel) as the North Rainier Elk Herd continues to recover, having met recovery goals over the past 10 years. Antlerless restrictions, winter elk habitat closures, and permit hunt restrictions in GMU 653 continue to benefit herd recovery in that unit. Hunters report a quality hunting experience and quality bulls for those fortunate enough to be drawn for the GMU 653 bull only permit hunt.

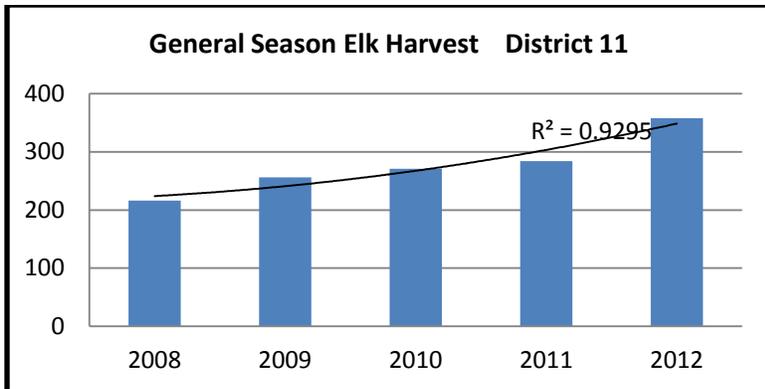
The larger portion of each elk herd migrates down from high alpine meadows in Mt Rainier National Park to lowland winter range; public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters are encouraged to scout for elk leaving the Mt Rainier National Park and following the Carbon River northwards into the Clearwater Wilderness Area and the White River into the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

The Elbe Hills State Forest and UW Pack Experimental Forest in GMU 654 is a good prospect for deer or elk and can be accessed by boot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Vehicle access during the hunting season in Elbe Hills is allowed only for hunter's having a disabled access permit. Elk continue to increase in GMUs 666 (Deschutes) and 667 (Skookumchuck) as sub-herds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and Skookumchuk Wildlife Area. Hunters are encouraged to scout the area from the [Skookumchuk Wildlife Area](#) south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667).

Non-migratory elk continue to increase on private farmlands in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm area) and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest). However, hunters must request permission to access private lands, and are encouraged to obtain permission weeks in advance of the season from the landowner (e.g. visit property and ask for permission).

A new permit hunt is being offered within a select area of GMU 652 (Puyallup) in the elk damage area 6013. Ten antlerless elk permits (any weapon) are provided for the dates 1 through 20, 2014. Elk Hunt Area 6013 is comprised primarily of agricultural lands, hobby farms, and ranch homes and supports approximately 100-150 total elk. Access can be limited and hunters interested in this permit are encouraged to seek access onto private property in the 6013 hunt area.

General season elk harvest has been gradually increasing over the past five years across District 11. Archery hunters experienced a 12.8% success rate in 2012, modern firearm hunters a 13% success rate, and muzzleloaders a 16.7% success rate (as compared to the statewide average success rate of 13.5%)

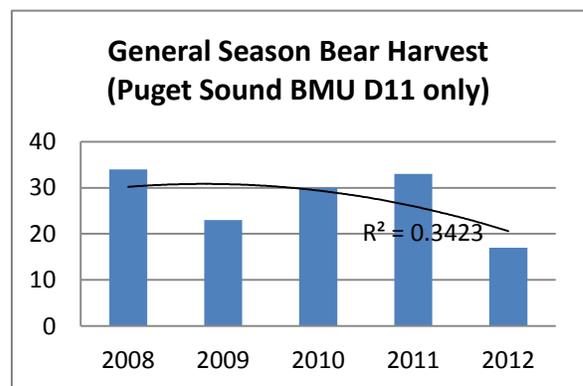
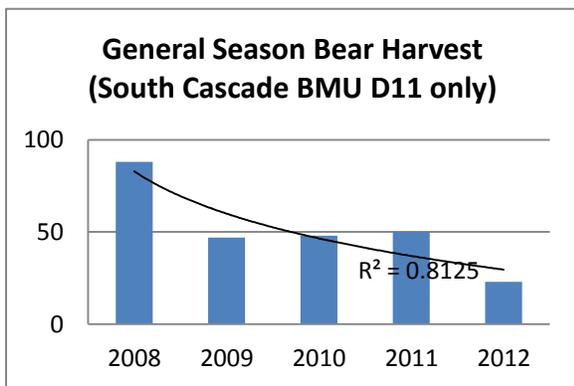


**Bear:** District 11 comprises GMUs in two Black Bear Management Units: Puget Sound (GMU 652, 666 and 667) and South Cascades (GMU 653 and 654). There is significant opportunity within District 11 to hunt bear both in the fall general and spring special permit hunting seasons.

Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), Hancock Timber Resources Group ownership (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653), Capitol State Forest (GMU 666) and Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Parks (GMU 654) are very good prospects for bear hunters. (See comments earlier regarding access permit requirements for Weyerhaeuser and Hancock properties).

A spring black bear special permit season is provided on Hancock’s Kapowsin Tree Farm within GMUs 653/654. A total of 150 permits will be available for the April 15 to June 15, 2014 season. Ninety three hunters successfully harvested eight black bear in 2012 under the spring permit hunt for a hunter success rate of 8.6%.

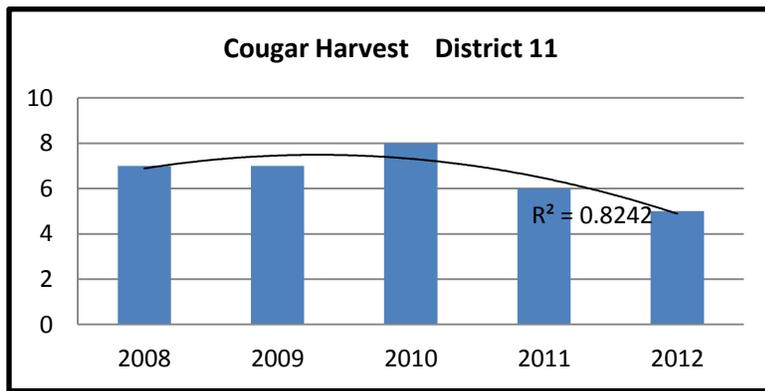
General season bear harvest trend in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BMU (e.g. GMUs 653 and 654) has been generally declining over the past five years with a 52% decline in harvest from 2011 to 2012. General season bear harvest in District 11 portion of the Puget Sound BMU (e.g. GMUs 652, 666, 667) shows a weak declining trend over the past five year period with the largest decline between 2011 and 2012 (46%).



**Cougar:** Cougar are widespread in the forest lands of District 11; areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk also provide great opportunity for cougar. WDFW changed cougar hunting season design in 2012

with a liberalized season coupled with harvest guidelines (see [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar)). Cougar seasons will run from September to December for any weapon, and may close after January 1 if harvest meets or exceeds the harvest quota in particular GMUs as specified in the game pamphlet. GMUs 652 (Puyallup) and 666 (Deschutes) have no quota limit, GMUs 653 (White River) and 654 (Mashel) have a quota of 4-6 cougar, and GMU 667 has a quota of 3-4 cougar.

In general, cougar harvest in District 11 slightly rose in 2010 followed by declines in 2011 and 2012. A total of 5 cougar were reported legally harvested within the district in 2012, which may represent significant under-reporting. This total does not include dangerous cougar removals, poached animals, and road kills.



## District 12

### King County

#### Chris Anderson, District Biologist

#### Mike Smith, Assistant District Biologist

District 12 is comprised of six Game Management Units (GMUs) including GMU 422 (Vashon/Maury Islands), 454 (Issaquah), 460 (Snoqualmie), 466 (Stampede), 485 (Green River, open to appropriate deer and elk permit holders only), and 490 Cedar River, (currently closed to hunting). Land ownership in the district is a checkerboard of private, state, and federal holdings. The densest private (urban and suburban) developments are found in the Issaquah (GMU 454) unit, while private agricultural holdings are primarily located in the northwestern part of the Snoqualmie (GMU 460) unit.

The cities of Tacoma and Seattle each own and operate a municipal watershed in southeast King County totaling about 188,220 acres that supply the drinking water for their cities; one in the Green River drainage (GMU 485), the other in the Cedar River drainage (GMU 490).

The largest percentage of huntable area is U. S. Forest Service land, but industrial timber companies have large land holdings in the area. Private, state and federally owned lands are managed primarily to produce timber. U.S. Forest Service lands are managed for multiple uses, including timber, recreation and wildlife with a current emphasis on growing and managing old growth forests.

**Black-tailed Deer:** Population surveys have not been conducted for several years throughout District 12, but hunting prospects are believed to remain largely unchanged from last year based on anecdotal observations.

GMU 422 is newly designated this season and covers all of Vashon and Maury Islands. Hunting access on Vashon and Maury islands is largely on private agricultural and hobby farm properties. Hunters must take time to network with communities and property owners for opportunity and access.

Deer in GMU 454 (Issaquah) continue to be managed with liberal seasons designed to prevent road kills and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly-developed areas. This unit is approximately 90% private land and access continues to be a problem for hunters. Success in this unit may well depend on getting to know your neighbors and broaching the subject of hunting as a means of protecting their fruit trees and vegetable beds. Firearm restrictions are in

place because landowners are concerned about safety. Bow hunters should have an advantage in gaining permission.



*A black-tailed deer buck in GMU 454, damaging landscape plantings. Photo submitted to WDFW Image gallery.*

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) provides good hunting opportunities throughout most of the unit. However, hunters are advised to scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated, with restricted access. Forest management on these lands is largely favorable to deer and high quality opportunities are available for those willing to lace up their boots. Hunters should focus on early seral forests (< 30 years old) adjacent to mid (40-80 years old) or late successional (> 80 years old) stands. Additional emphasis should be placed on riparian forest habitats that provide ample forage and cover.



*A young buck on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, GMU 460. Photo By Chris Anderson.*

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a patchwork of private land, State lands, and Forest Service lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). It consists largely of second growth timber with some old growth on Forest Service lands. This unit consists of a lot of steep ground, with about 2,500 feet in elevation change. Be prepared for early winter snowfall, which has the potential of stranding hunters, but also the potential to improve success.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Deer Harvest Reports](#).

**Elk:** Elk hunting prospects throughout District 12 should be similar to last year. Many of the above comments for deer hold for elk as well. However, hunters should place greater emphasis on riparian forest habitats and agricultural areas throughout the district. Many of District 12's elk reside on private land; please make sure you have permission before you hunt.



*Elk in GMU 485. Photo by Chris Anderson.*

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Elk Harvest Reports](#).

**Bear:** Bears inhabit areas of district 12 but, like elk, many are on private ownership. Hunters should insure they have the proper permissions to hunt the area they are interested in. Berry production throughout the district has been adequate this year. Bears may be found at lower elevations earlier and moving higher as the season progresses. Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics can be found at [Bear Harvest Reports](#).

**Pheasant:** Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website. Nontoxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

Hunting hours from 8am to 4pm have been reinstated for all hunters on the Stillwater, Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. This will be in effect during the Western Washington Pheasant Season. For the rest of the hunting season normal hunting hours, half hour before sunrise to half hour after sunset, will apply.

**Quail:** There are relatively few quail in District 12.

**Forest Grouse:** Ruffed and sooty (blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forests of District 12. Warmer weather experienced this spring combined with anecdotal observations collected this summer suggests grouse populations increased slightly compared to last year.

Forest management in much of District 12 remains favorable for grouse. Hunters looking to harvest ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', early seral forests (5-25 years old) with ample berry crops present in the understory, and riparian forest habitats. Sooty grouse hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000' and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with abundant huckleberries.



*A male sooty grouse displaying on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, GMU 460. Photo by Chris Anderson.*

**Wild Turkeys:** Wild turkeys remain relatively rare in District 12 and without predictable concentrations of birds. Accordingly, harvest prospects remain low even with considerable effort. Note: Hunters Must use #4 shot or smaller to hunt turkey.

**Waterfowl:** Opportunity may be increased from last year, dependent on weather conditions through the season. The best waterfowl hunting opportunities continue to be found in the lower Snoqualmie Valley with public access provided on WDFW's Snoqualmie Wildlife Management Area (Cherry Valley, Stillwater and Crescent Lake Units). Additional opportunities can also be found in the Kent Valley. Hunters are encouraged to work with local private landowners to secure access in one of District 12's many river and agricultural valleys to improve their waterfowl hunting success. Refer to the [Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Regulations](#) for season dates and hours.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see "Let's Go Waterfowling."](#)

**Miscellaneous comments:**

**Tribal Hunting:** District 12 occurs within the ceded area of several Northwest Treaty Tribes and tribal hunting. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal enforcement personnel ensure that tribal hunting regulations, which are sometimes very different from state regulations, are followed.

**Firearms Restriction Areas in King County:**

Centerfire and rimfire rifles are not legal for hunting in the area west of Hwy 203 (Monroe-Fall City), then Fall City-Preston Rd. to I-90, I-90 to Hwy. 18, Hwy. 18 to I-5, I-5 to Pierce-King Co. line; also Vashon and Maury Islands. For additional information, see page 81 of the [2013 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#). Through King County ordinances, no shooting areas have been established in many areas in the county. Please contact your local sheriff for specific locations.

## **District 13**

### **Snohomish, San Juan and Island Counties**

#### **Ruth Milner, District Wildlife Biologist**

District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish), a portion of GMU 450 (Cascade), and the southern section of GMU 407 (North Sound) in Snohomish County. The islands of the San Juan Archipelago and Island County—GMU's 410 (Islands), 411 (Orcas), 412 (Shaw), 413 (San Juan), 414 (Lopez), 415 (Blakely), 416 (Decatur), 417 (Cypress), 419 (Guemes), 420 (Whidbey) and 421(Camano)—are also part of District 13.

Much of the eastern portion of District 13 is public land managed by the US Forest Service on the Mt Baker Snoqualmie National Forest. Hunters should contact the Darrington Ranger District (360-436-1155) for updates on road and trail conditions in GMU 448 and 450. Many roads have been decommissioned or damaged by floods in recent years. Trail conditions also vary and information on trail conditions can be found at: the [Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Recreation web page](#).

The remaining public land in the district is managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region (360-856-3500). Hunters should be aware that many access roads to DNR lands are gated and should contact the DNR to obtain the latest information about gates and road conditions; additional contact information is found at [DNR Recreation](#) web page. Unusually hot and dry conditions have resulted in camp fire restrictions on state-owned lands; contact DNR for updated fire information.

A number of private industrial timber land owners also manage land in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Many of their roads are closed to motorized vehicle traffic, but walking or biking access is allowed. Hunters are advised to scout their areas early and be aware that parking at access gates may be very limited. Hunters are further advised not to drive beyond any gate that is open unless they are certain the gate will remain open on their return. Active logging is taking place in some areas, so gates may be open in the morning, but closed and locked later in the day. Some access gates on private industrial timber lands will have signs that specify ownership and the rules that apply to the property.

Much the Snohomish County portion of GMU 407 (North Sound) is dominated by homes on small acreages or relatively small farms. Hunters should obtain permission from landowners to hunt on private land and should be very mindful of where houses, livestock and outbuildings are situated in relation to the areas where hunting will take place. Portions of the GMU are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research landownership, and understand firearm limitations prior to hunting. A map showing “no shooting” areas and shotgun only areas within Snohomish County is found at: [http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff's\\_Office/Maps.htm](http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff's_Office/Maps.htm).

**Big Game:**

**Deer:** District 13 includes Game Management units GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and GMU 450 (Cascade and the majority of the harvest comes from GMU 448. In 2012, 850 hunters harvested 118 deer in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Hunter success averages around 14%. In GMU 450 (Cascade), 135 hunters had a success rate of 5% and harvested 6 deer in 2012.

Much of GMU 448 is forested, with trees in a 20-45 year age class on public lands. This results in relatively tightly stocked stands where seeing deer may be challenging. On private timberlands, clear cutting has increased, so more open areas will be available. However, food may be limited in clear cuts, so deer may be harder to find than anticipated. For hunters who enjoy walking or hiking in un-crowded conditions, GMU 448 offers a very rewarding opportunity to get outside and enjoy the season.

Very little public land is available for hunting on any island including Whidbey Island. Hunters should have permission from landowners prior to hunting private property. [The Island County Public Works Department](#) owns a few small parcels on Whidbey and Camano Islands that are open to hunting. Hunters should contact them directly for maps and restrictions.

Limited deer hunting will also be allowed on the Trillium Community Forest property, owned by the Whidbey/Camano Land Trust. Hunters should contact the Whidbey Camano Land Trust for additional information regarding access dates, maps etc. at <http://www.wclt.org/stewardship-trillium-community-forest/>. Note: hunting on this property is for the purpose of habitat improvement, thus hunting is limited to a few specific days within the total deer season. Deer hunting at Naval Air Station Whidbey is restricted to military personnel.

Public access on islands within the San Juan Archipelago (San Juan and Skagit Counties) is also extremely limited. Deer in the islands are plentiful, but typically smaller than their mainland cousins. Most hunting occurs on private property; in San Juan County, written landowner permission is required in order to hunt anywhere in the county. Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island on Bureau of Land Management ownership. BLM lands in the San Juan Islands are administered out of the Wenatchee field office. Hunters should call (509) 665-2100 for information.

Beginning this year, several islands have been designated as a separate GMU. This change will provide more accurate and specific harvest information in the future.

**Elk:** District 13 does not have an established elk herd within GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) boundaries. Elk occur sporadically along Highway 2 at the south end of GMU 448 in small numbers, and sometimes come south of GMU 437 (Sauk) onto the Sauk Prairie in the north end of the GMU. However, few to no elk are harvested from this GMU in a given year. For hunters looking for new opportunities, we recommend scouting the area thoroughly because, although elk sightings have increased, they tend to move around and are not always present in GMU 448.

**Bear:** Bears are plentiful in the area, but hunters should be mindful of the access restrictions discussed above. We expect bears to remain at relatively low elevations early in the season, moving to the high country in search of berries and insects later in the season. Rain throughout most of June provided good vegetation growth and berry production. Unusually dry and hot conditions starting in July may result in more bears moving to high elevations earlier than usual.

### **Upland Birds:**

**Pheasant:** For pheasant and waterfowl hunters, there are 2 access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the north east side of the property. The second access site is just off of Homeacres Road just off of Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 51<sup>st</sup> St SE and pheasants will be released on the west side of the property in addition to the east section. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area are going back to the 8am to 4pm hunting hours during the Western Washington pheasant hunting season.

Two sites will be open on private land on Whidbey Island: Ebey Prairie/Arnold Farm, and Bayview. Directions to these sites are found at:

<http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/>.

The Sea Plane Base (Upper and Lower Game Ranges) and OLF Coupeville on the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will be open this year. Access to the Sea Plane Base pheasant release sites is open to all hunters. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization to access and carry a firearm. Check-in is done at the Torpedo Road gate by signing in and out of the logbook. Pheasant hunting is open to non-military hunters; however civilian hunters may only hunt waterfowl as a guest of a military hunter. For additional information contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873).

**Grouse:** Ruffed grouse is the common species in District 13, and blue grouse may be found at higher elevations. A cold, wet spring, may have negatively affected chick survival this spring. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, for the most likely place to find grouse.

### **Waterfowl:**

Waterfowl hunting in District 13 is expected to be productive if weather conditions are favorable. During mild winters, ducks tend to stay in more northerly areas of British Columbia. However, as colder fronts move in and conditions become colder and stormy, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.

Access on public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is now closed to hunting. Hunters interested in accessing Dugualla Bay should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#), which now owns portions of the upland area, for information on property boundaries and whether or not hunting is permitted on their ownership.

Waterfowl hunting on Naval Air Station Whidbey Island is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization to access and carry a firearm. Duck blinds are accessed by entering the SPB gate and non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For additional information contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873).

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be boat access only until the beginning of November due to construction by the City of Everett. Once construction is complete, parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be a ¼ of a mile back from the bridge to the island near the sewage treatment facility buildings.

There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the north east side of the property. The second access site is just off of Homeacres Road just off of Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 51<sup>st</sup> St SE.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

## District 14

### Skagit and Whatcom Counties

#### Chris Danilson, District Biologist

##### District 14 Description

The core Game Management Units (GMUs) that comprise District 14 are GMU 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo) and 437 (Sauk). Portions of GMUs 407 (North Sound), 448 (Stillaguamish) and 450 (Cascade) are also within the district. Land ownership in the District includes private residential and private agricultural in the lowlands (e.g. GMU 407 and the Nooksack and Skagit River valleys). Private industrial timber lands and lands managed by Washington Department of Natural Resources comprise the majority of the lower elevation foothills, while higher elevation forest lands are in public ownership (i.e. U.S. Forest Service and North Cascades National Park).

The Skagit Delta is host to abundant waterfowl resources, including the highest concentration of lesser snow geese in Washington. WDFW's private lands access programs are again providing new and improved opportunities for hunters during 2012-2013 hunting season. Further inland, big game species such as elk in the North Cascades and the Mount Baker population of mountain goats offer some of the best trophy animal opportunities in western Washington for those who get drawn for these areas.

##### Current Species Status

The status of all big game and waterfowl species hunted in Skagit and Whatcom Counties remain unchanged from previous years. The growing North Cascades elk herd has garnered the most attention in the district of late. Population growth and expansion has resulted in increased levels of elk-related conflicts in the Skagit Valley and near Acme in Whatcom County. This has resulted in liberalized hunting seasons in some GMUs, expansion of the GMU 418 (Nooksack) limited entry bull hunt, and 20 new archery and muzzleloader tags in Elk Area 4941 in Skagit Valley.

##### Big Game

**Elk:** The North Cascades (Nooksack) elk herd continues to grow and expand into areas of formerly unoccupied habitat. This includes agricultural areas where they cause damage to crops and farming infrastructure. Until recently, data from post-hunt surveys (conducted in late March to early April) indicated that the population was expanding at a rate of 6-7 percent. However, over the past two years, lethal removal of elk in agricultural landscapes by landowners, master hunters, and tribal hunters appears to have slowed this somewhat. The total population size is currently around 1,200 animals. Bull:cow and calf:cow ratios from 2013 surveys were 37:100 and 27:100, respectively, indicating that winter survival was similar to previous years.

Given the limited hunting opportunities for this elk population, hunter success is an inadequate indication of population dynamics. However, it is worth noting that, of the 23 limited entry GMU 418 (Nooksack) bull permit holders, only 16 hunters harvested an elk (8 spikes and 8 branch antlered bulls) resulting in a harvest rate of 70 percent. Since 2007 when this hunt began, hunter success has ranged from 61 to 93 percent.

Elk hunting prospects in District 14 are limited to the North Cascades (Nooksack) herd, with the best hunt opportunity being a limited-entry bull-only harvest in GMU 418. Established in 2007, this hunt continues to produce quality bulls and relatively high hunter success. General season elk harvest opportunities in GMU 407 (North Sound) and that portion of GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) in Skagit County exist on both private and state lands, however elk densities in these two units are low and hunting pressure quickly pushes those animals into adjacent GMUs that remain closed to general harvest. On the positive side, the North Cascades elk herd continues to grow and expand its range, increasingly the likelihood for future harvest opportunities.

Hunting regulation changes for elk in District 14 are intended to address elk-related agricultural conflicts. These include:

- Expansion of Elk Area 4941 eastward to the Dalles Bridge near Concrete
- Inclusion of Elk Area 4941 for the limited entry bull elk hunt
- 10 new archery tags (5 early and 5 late) for antlerless elk in Elk Area 4941
- 10 new muzzleloader tags (5 early and 5 late) for antlerless elk in Elk Area 4941
- Addition of muzzleloader season in GMU 407 (North Sound) with liberal antler restrictions and season dates
- Extension of early archery season in GMU 407 with liberal antler restrictions

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

**Black-tailed Deer:** Black-tailed deer surveys have not been conducted in District 14 for several years; however biologist's observations and other anecdotal reports suggest that deer population numbers and densities are down in GMUs 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo), 437 (Sauk) and 450 (Cascade). Conversely, in portions of GMU 407 (North Sound), the most urbanized GMU in the District, local deer densities can be quite high and can be a nuisance for some property owners and agricultural operations.

From a hunting perspective, GMU 407 unarguably provides the best opportunity for harvesting a deer in District 14. In 2012, 574 deer were harvested in GMU 407, as compared to 119 in GMU 418 and 121 in GMU 437. The key to a successful harvest in this GMU is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions. Also see page 81 of the [2013 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations Pamphlet](#).

Elsewhere in District 14, private industrial timber lands and property managed by Washington Department of Natural Resources are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism and other problems. However, many of these roads can be accessed on foot or with mountain bikes,

allowing those willing to do the work, access to deer that don't get as much hunting pressure. Be sure to check with the appropriate land owner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

Finally, for those seeking a high elevation trophy black-tail hunting experience, areas within GMUs 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo), and 437 (Sauk) that can be accessed by Forest Service road and trail systems lead to high mountain hunting areas such as the Mount Baker Wilderness Area in Whatcom County and northern portions of the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area in extreme southeastern Skagit County. While relatively few deer are harvested in these GMUs (particularly GMU 426), some very nice bucks were harvested in 2012. Quality buck tags for modern firearm hunters currently provide the best opportunity in these GMUs. Of these 60 tags issued in 2012, harvest success rate among those that reported ranged from 45.5 percent (GMU 418) to 57.1 percent (GMU 426).

The only changes proposed for black-tailed deer hunting for the 2013-2014 season are increased access to private lands in GMU 418 for the modern firearm quality buck hunt. This is made possible by a new provision in the annual landowner agreement between WDFW and Sierra Pacific Industries.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

**Black Bear:** Black bear surveys are not conducted in District 14. Instead, hunter harvest and age data gotten from teeth submitted by successful hunters is used to monitor population trends. The total number of bears harvested during the fall of 2012 in GMUs 418 and 437 decreased by roughly 20 percent from the previous year. Only with only 88 bears harvested in these GMUs during the fall, however hunter participation was lower and hunter success rate decreased only modestly. Hunter prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 14 therefore remains good to excellent.

Despite a 50 percent increase in tags allotted and a 15 day extension to spring bear season, only 10 of 30 spring bear permit holders successfully harvested a bear in 2013 within this small damage area. Several hunters who completed a post-hunt questionnaire indicated that they observed several bears while hunting. With exceptionally warm spring and early summer temperatures, berry production has been early and bountiful. While patchy in places, the mountain huckleberry crop should be abundant. Similar to deer, access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike and there are ample numbers of clear cuts with younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in-pack out, can pursue bears in classic alpine environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await.

**Mountain Goat:** The Mount Baker area continues to have one of the largest concentrations of mountain goats in Washington State. Mountain goat hunting in Washington is a once-in-a-lifetime harvest opportunity and is a limited-entry tag that only a few lucky individuals draw in any year. Aerial surveys in late July of 2012 were a welcome contrast to 2011, when it appeared that winter kill hit this population and adversely affected juvenile recruitment for that year. In contrast, the 2012 and 2013 surveys (just completed) are more closely aligned with population estimates and age composition observed since 2005. During this period, the overall population has averaged roughly 300 goats within the Mount Baker survey blocks.

For 2013, four mountain goat tags were issued for this area (one each in the Lincoln Peak and Avalanche Gorge hunt units and two in the Chowder Ridge hunt unit). Statewide harvest success rates for mountain goats are generally 75% or greater in any year and Mount Baker has produced some mature goats of exceptional quality. Given that the statewide mountain goat auction and raffle permit holders may hunt in this area, and unknown levels of harvest by Native American tribes, tag allocation for this unit remains conservative.

**Forest Grouse:** Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 14. Exceptionally warm and dry spring weather should have a positive effect on grouse brood production and survival this season. While neither species are especially abundant in Skagit and Whatcom Counties, higher elevation subalpine habitats support decent numbers of sooty grouse, while ruffed grouse tend to occupy deciduous dominant forest types associated with riparian areas as well as low elevation conifer forests.

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with huckleberry, grouse whortleberry and other species. Because both species utilize gravel, grouse vulnerability, and consequently hunting success, is often highest along abandoned or low traffic forest roads, particularly in the early morning hours.

**Pheasant:** Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). Pheasant release sites in Whatcom County include the Lake Terrell Wildlife Area, and the Intalco and British Petroleum release sites. District 14 personnel will continue to release pheasants at the Bow Hill pheasant release site on Washington Department of Natural Resources lands for the 2013 season. Non-toxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

**Wild Turkeys:** District 14 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. WDFW receives occasional reports of individual turkeys throughout western Washington. Such individuals are invariably a result of accidental escape or intentional release (by private parties), which are not sanctioned by WDFW. The overall scarcity of turkeys in District 14 equates to extremely poor prospects for harvest.

**Quail:** There are relatively few quail in District 14 and most are in developed environments not suitable for hunting.

**Dove:** District 12 is not a major dove area, with only an average of around 30 doves harvested during the season. While not a managed game species, Eurasian collared doves (an exotic species) are increasingly common throughout District 14. This species can be hunted year-round and the best opportunities are in lowland agricultural areas.

**Waterfowl:** More waterfowl are harvested in Region 4 than any other region in the state and District 14 continues to provide some of the best waterfowl hunting opportunities. In 2013, Skagit County was again the state's second best duck producing county in the state (following Grant County), with total duck harvest up slightly from 2011 (49,893 vs. 48,828). Total duck harvest in

Whatcom County was virtually the same in 2011 and 2012. The 2012 snow goose harvest in Skagit and Snohomish Counties was nearly 50 percent from 2011. Lower overwintering goose numbers likely contributed to this. However, a bigger factor is that snow geese in the population have been expanding their distribution and exploiting a broader spectrum of food sources, making them more challenging to hunt.

In western Washington and British Columbia, spring waterfowl surveys indicate that the resident breeding duck population is unchanged from 2011. However, farther north, the delayed spring in Alaska and the Yukon adversely affected available breeding habitat and the total duck estimate was 27 percent lower than 2011. While down 33 percent from 2011, mallard numbers are still near the long-term average. Provided that the weather cooperates, increased duck numbers should equate to increased harvest opportunity in Skagit and Whatcom Counties.

Early season hunting opportunities in District 14 are generally much more favorable on the saltwater marshes. Boat access greatly improves hunting options and prospects. However, the early winter conditions experienced in 2011 illustrate that this is not always the case. Both private and public lands in Skagit and Whatcom Counties with good food resources (e.g. corn, barley) ultimately provide good hunting prospects when winter conditions ultimately arrive.

Among the WFDW owned and managed lands in District 14, waterfowl hunters should look to the Skagit Headquarters Unit, Samish Unit (also known as the Welts property), Debay Reserve, Lake Tennant and Lake Terrell Wildlife Areas. All of these sites are managed for waterfowl and provide walk-in and/or boat access and some blinds available. The Private Lands Access Program working out of the La Conner Field Office has once again negotiated access for hunter on dozens of private properties throughout Whatcom and Skagit Counties.

Given changes in snow goose distribution and feeding habits, the hunt units in Snow Goose Quality Hunt Program in 2011 were not very productive. As a result, the number of snow goose quality hunt units and where they will be located remain undecided at this time. Agricultural lands on Fir Island, northwest of Burlington, and south of Edison are currently the most favorable locations for snow goose hunting. Most of this is on private land, but in some instances coincides with properties that WDFW has enrolled in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

For a thorough discussion on how and where to hunt waterfowl, see [“Let’s Go Waterfowling!”](#)

### **Hunter Access**

Hunter access on private lands for big game hunting opportunities remains limited. Because of past experience with theft, vandalism, dumping, and other problems, private industrial timber companies generally do not allow vehicular access. Many limit access to walk-in only, while some do not allow access of any kind. With less hunting pressure, this can result in good hunting opportunities for those willing to use bicycles or hike behind locked gates. One exception to this is Sierra Pacific Industries, which owns significant private industrial timber lands in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. A landowner access agreement between Sierra Pacific and WDFW continues to facilitate hunter access for limited-entry bull elk and spring bear permit holders. For 2013, WDFW staff will also facilitate access on Sierra Pacific’s lands for modern firearm black-tailed deer quality buck permit holders.

The Private Lands Access Program will once again have 40 to 50 Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites on privately owned lands that offer either “open field” or “blind only” hunting. Currently these sites are managed as first come-first served feel free to hunt sites. However, several of these sites may be changed to reservation only hunting before the season gets under way. The number of Snow Goose Quality Hunt sites is likely to decrease significantly in 2013. This is due to diminished hunt quality associated with expanding snow goose distribution and evolving habitat preferences.

### **Public Lands**

Hunter access in District 14 remains largely unchanged from 2012. WDFW owned lands associated with the Skagit and Whatcom Wildlife Areas will continue to provide similar hunting opportunities for waterfowl and pheasant release.

Hunter access to Washington Department of Natural Resource lands remains unchanged from 2012 with most road networks gated. US Forest Service lands offer some vehicular access throughout Whatcom and Skagit Counties. Many road systems have been closed due to flood related damage and some roads are subject to seasonal road closures. The Forest Service is currently in a planning process to decommission/abandon a significant portion of its managed road network. Ultimately, this will further restrict vehicular access to upper elevation habitats for big game and forest grouse hunting.

## District 15

### Kitsap, Mason and east Jefferson Counties

### Jeff Skriletz, District Wildlife Biologist

#### Summary

District 15 is located along the east side of the Olympic Peninsula. The district covers Mason, Kitsap and the portion of Jefferson County that lies east of Discovery Bay. The Game Management units are quite diverse, with GMU 621 (Olympic) and GMU 636 (Skokomish) bordering the Olympic National Park and offering quite a bit of hunting opportunity on National Forest lands. Game Management Units 651 (Satsop) and 633 (Mason) are comprised of mostly commercial timber lands, private property and some Department of Natural Resources parcels.

The remaining units, GMU 624 (Coyle) and GMU 627 (Kitsap) have some public parcels and commercial timberlands but are comprised mostly of private property, much of which is heavily developed, especially near Puget Sound. Hunting and vehicular access is constantly changing on private property, including the timberlands, so be sure to contact the owners before hunting. The easiest way to determine ownership is to access the County Assessor's webpage on the internet and check the parcel maps for the area where you plan to hunt.

[Kitsap County](#), [Mason County](#), [Jefferson County](#)

The habitat across District 15 is mostly Douglas fir/western hemlock second or third growth with clearcuts scattered throughout. Farmlands are rapidly disappearing due to residential sprawl. Unfortunately, virtually all shorelines in the district are privately owned so access for waterfowl hunting is very limited. However, district staff is currently working on maintaining access through the [Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program](#). Information on this new program including hunting locations and rules is available on the WDFW website.

#### Hunting Forecasts

**Pheasant:** Pheasant numbers should be similar to last year's at this district's three release sites. Nontoxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites. More information is available at the WDFW [GoHunt](#) site and the [Western Washington Pheasant Release](#) brochure.

2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#)

**Quail:** District 15 contains the largest population of mountain quail in the state. Although frustratingly unpredictable, they are most likely to be found in two- to six-year-old clearcuts and tall stands of Scot's Broom throughout Mason and Kitsap Counties. Their tendency to run rather than fly or hold for a pointing dog makes them an especially challenging upland game bird. Locations to try include the DNR property on the Tahuya Peninsula northwest of Belfair and the industrial timberlands between Shelton, Matlock and McCleary.

2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#)

**Forest Grouse:** Hunting on the Olympic National Forest can prove highly successful for a combination of blue (sooty) and ruffed grouse. The Skokomish Valley is another popular grouse location. Populations are expected to be similar to last year. With the high cost of gasoline and limited vehicle access to forest roads, road hunting for grouse has dropped dramatically. However, hunters willing to walk beyond the gates can find some excellent hunting especially when using a setter or pointer.

2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Forest Grouse - Statewide and by County](#)

**Band-tailed Pigeon:** Hunter success should be slightly improved due to higher pigeon numbers observed during July surveys in along Hood Canal. Band-tails are most prevalent in the district along marine shorelines near mineral locations or in the higher elevation berry fields.

**Waterfowl:** Waterfowl hunting should be similar to 2012. Public hunting access exists in the Skokomish and Chimacum Valleys and at the mouth of the Duckabush, Quilcene and Union rivers. Many of the undeveloped lakes and marshes on the Tahuya Peninsula offer an untapped and remote walk-in hunting opportunity for mallards, ringnecks and scaup. Be sure to check the 2013 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin and goldeneye) in Western Washington. District 15 wildlife biologists plan to continue waterfowl hunting opportunities with the [Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program](#). Check the WDFW website for locations and restrictions.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see "Let's Go Waterfowling."](#)

[2012 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics](#)

**Deer and Elk:** Deer hunting opportunities continue to be promising across the district. While many of the commercial timberlands may be gated off to vehicles, walk-in opportunities abound. These clearcuts as well as those on state property produce some of our biggest bucks.

Meanwhile, elk hunting opportunities in District 15 have steadily declined over the past several decades. In recent years, the majority of elk in the district have moved from clearcuts to private pastures and hay fields during the hunting season. Hunters are always encouraged to arrange access before applying for special permits in the district. However, for those who like to get away from the crowds, the rugged terrain of Olympic and Skokomish Units can provide a quality hunting experience for both elk and deer.

### ***Hunting on Private Lands Is A Privilege, Treat Private Lands With Respect***

- ✓ **Ask Permission**
- ✓ **Obey Posted Signs**
- ✓ **Leave Gates As You Found Them**
- ✓ **Pack Out Your Trash**
- ✓ **Be Courteous**

## **Archers and Muzzle loaders**

Private timber companies have traditionally opened their lands to modern firearm hunters during established seasons. Archers and Muzzleloaders may not have full access, and that level of access varies-by year and by land owner. Most often access is influenced by industrial fire classification issued by DNR. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by following that rules.

## **Landownership**

Every GMU is a checkerboard of ownerships. It is the hunter's responsibility to understand ownership before accessing properties, and then to scout for access points. Some of the major landowner(s) in each GMU are mentioned; however, hunters should be aware that there are many additional landowners.

Major public land for WDFW, DNR, and USFS can be located using the ["Go Hunt"](#) mapping feature on the WDFW web site. Additionally, both the DNR and USFS sell maps.

## **Access Ratings**

One of the more common questions is about the level of access. While hunters generally enjoy a high level of access to all GMU's, the level of access varies by motorized and non-motorized. Additionally some GMU's are quite rugged.

In this guide, each GMU is given a rating from 1 – 3.

- A "1" rating means that it has a high level of motorized access. In this case most if not all of the main logging roads are open, as well as most of the spur roads.
- A "2" rating means that there is a mix of open roads and closed roads. Anyone hunting these areas should be aware that they can end up in a situation where it will be necessary to pack their animal several miles.
- A "3" rating means that most of the GMU is accessible by non-motorized means.
- A rating with a "+" indicates that at least a portion of the GMU is very steep and rugged. A hunter could end up packing a harvested animal several miles in very rough country. So while the roads are good for distributing hunters there are some portions that can be a little on wild side!

### **GMU 621 – Olympic** Access rating = 2+

Elk in this unit are generally found on lower elevation private lands along the major river valleys. This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, DNR, and USFS. Access to USFS land is generally allowed year-round. DNR land is accessible to motorized vehicles or walk-in only in most areas. Green Diamond Resources generally opens some of their gates to motorized access from September to the end of December; however, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. For areas behind closed gates on Green Diamond Resources land, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

### **GMU 624 – Coyle** Access rating = 3

Other than the resident elk herd in the Sequim area, the Coyle Unit is usually considered a deer area. Although there are scattered timberlands that are publicly owned by DNR, most forest lands are privately owned. The largest property manager is Olympic Resource Management which is a division of Pope Resources Company. Maps of their properties can be found at

[www.orminc.com](http://www.orminc.com). Although some DNR and private mainlines may be open to motor vehicles, most hunting access is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicle.

**GMU 627 – Kitsap** Access rating = 3

The Kitsap Unit is a highly human developed deer area, with private property throughout. However there is still ample hunting opportunity on forest lands. DNR owns a considerable amount of land in the western part of the unit. Olympic Resource Management (Pope) and Green Diamond Resource Company also have major holdings here. Whether state or private, virtually all access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles. Be sure to obtain permission to trespass if hunting on private property not owned by one of these major timber companies.

**GMU 633 – Mason** Access rating = 3

Although elk are occasionally harvested here, the Mason Unit is best known as an area for deer. DNR has forestland throughout with extensive holdings on the Tahuya Peninsula. But in the Mason Unit, most of the deer hunting occurs on private property controlled by the Green Diamond Resource Company and the Manke Lumber Company. These lands are currently open to public hunting but, other than a few mainlines, are restricted to walk-in or non-motorized vehicle access.

**GMU 636 – Skokomish** Access rating = 2+

This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands and USFS. Elk in this unit are generally found on the lower elevation private timberlands primarily owned by Green Diamond Resources and along the upper Wynoochee River Valley. Green Diamond Resources generally opens some of their gates to motorized access from September to the end of December; however, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings.

For areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year. Upper elevations and those portions of this GMU in the upper Wynoochee River and Skokomish River Valleys are primarily USFS with most areas open year-round for vehicle access. Some USFS land is gated and closed to motorized access to minimize disturbance to elk.

**GMU 651 – Satsop** Access Rating = 2

The primary area accessed by elk hunters is owned by Green Diamond Resources. They generally open some gates to motorized access from September to the end of December; however, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. For areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

District 15 - 2012 Game Harvest Statistics:

- [Deer General Harvest](#)
- [Deer Special Permits Harvest](#)
- [Elk General Harvest](#)
- [Elk Special Permits Harvest](#)

**Cougar:** The big cats can occur anywhere across the district but are most likely to be encountered in areas with high deer and elk densities in GMUs 621 (Olympic), 636 (Skokomish)

and 651 (Satsop). WDFW changed cougar hunting season design for 2012 with a liberalized season coupled with harvest guidelines (see [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar)). This management plan will continue for 2013. Cougar seasons will run from September to December for any weapon, and may close after January 1 if harvest meets or exceeds the harvest guideline in the pamphlet.

### [2012 Statewide Cougar Harvest Statistics](#)

#### **Miscellaneous comments**

**Tribal Hunting:** District 15 is within the ceded area of numerous treaty tribes on the Olympic Peninsula. The WDFW and tribes are co-managers for wildlife populations. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits and hunting often occurs before, during and after WDFW hunting seasons. Tribal enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring that tribal hunting regulations, which may differ from state regulations, are followed. You can find more information about tribal hunting on the [WDFW website](#).

### ***Hunting Results for District 15***

#### ***Upland Bird***

##### **Quail**

Mason County hunters accounted for 70 of the district's 80 quail that were harvested during the 2012 season. Most, if not all, were mountain quail.

##### **Forest Grouse**

Mason and Jefferson County hunters took the majority of the grouse in District 15 last year. Only 27 were harvested in Kitsap County.

#### ***Big Game***

##### **Deer**

District 15 hunters harvested 1,714 deer during last year's season. Of the 1,502 bucks taken, 36 were 5 points or better. Half of those big bucks were taken in the heavily developed GMU 627 (Kitsap) and were evenly divided between modern firearm and archery hunters.

Two units in the district, GMU 621 (Olympic), and GMU 651 (Satsop), produced over 300 bucks each. Modern firearms hunters in the Olympic Unit harvested 346 bucks with a 26.1 percent success rate. Modern firearms hunters took 340 bucks from The Satsop unit and had a 25.7 percent success rate.

##### **Elk**

Elk hunters harvested 30 elk in District 15 during last year's season, 19 of which came from GMU 651 (Satsop). Twenty-seven were bulls and 3 were antlerless.

**Bear**

District 15 hunters harvested 89 black bear in 2012, with the harvest widely spread across the entire district.

**Cougar**

District 15 hunters took eight cougar during the 2012 season, six from GMU 651 (Satsop) one each from GMU 624 (Coyle) and GMU 636 (Skokomish).

***Waterfowl*****Ducks**

Determining waterfowl harvest totals for the district is problematic since Jefferson County is split between two districts and hunters only provide the county where the birds were taken. While most waterfowling occurs in Jefferson County's eastern half, exact numbers cannot be determined. Total duck harvest in 2012 was 2,608 for Jefferson County, 4,423 in Mason County and 430 in Kitsap County. The harvest in Kitsap County is expected to continue to be low due to county-imposed shoreline shooting restrictions and a rapidly increasing human population.

**Geese**

The goose harvest was up from 2011 in Mason County with 179 geese taken. Kitsap and Jefferson saw a drop in their goose harvest with a total of 134 taken in those counties.

## District 16

### Clallam County and western Jefferson County

Anita McMillan, District Wildlife Biologist

Shelly Ament, Assistant District Biologist

#### Summary

District 16 includes Clallam County and the western portion of Jefferson County on the Olympic Peninsula. There are eight Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 16, all bordering Olympic National Park and/or a Tribal Reservation, except for GMU 624 (Coyle) (see maps below). Coyle GMU 624 and Olympic GMU 621 extend into District 15 (Mason, Kitsap & East Jefferson County). Matheny GMU 618 is managed by District 17. A link to a statewide map with WDFW District boundaries and contact information is as follows: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/wildlife\\_district\\_bios.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/wildlife_district_bios.pdf)



*District 16 showing GMUs and adjacent ownerships.*

Each GMU in District 16 has its own unique mix of land ownerships: private residential, private agricultural, private forest industrial, state and federal forest and park lands. Most higher-elevation forest lands are in public ownership (U.S. Forest Service and Olympic National Park (ONP)). Lower elevation foothills in general are Private industrial timber lands and lands managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

East District 16: The eastern ¼ of the District is in the Dungeness Basin (western Coyle and northern Olympic GMUs). The Basin offers a rich diversity of habitats from high elevation, rain-shadow mountains to lower watershed with plentiful wetland habitats dispersed amidst a mix of riparian and bygone prairie/oak forest. The prairie has now been transformed into a rural mix of small and large farms with scattered developments.

In the lower basin there are some choice private duck hunting club ownerships and a few well enjoyed public waterfowl hunting areas. Waterfowl hunting opportunities have been expanded in the eastern portion of the district in recent years.

The Dungeness Basin and the smaller watersheds east of the Elwha are areas where deer are in such high numbers there are frequent complaints by the rural and urban residents. The high visibility of deer in the Coyle and Olympic GMUs extends into the forestlands where there is an ideal ratio of forest openings.

The availability of deer for harvest is enhanced within Deer Area 6020 where harvest of “any deer” during regular seasons is allowed. The main “problem” with hunting in eastern District 16 is the high amount of private ownership, so time needs to be invested into arranging for hunting access on the target private lands.

West District 16: The “West End” (Hoko, Dickey, Sol Duc, Goodman, and Clearwater) has the bulk of the elk in the District, while the deer are sparse in these same GMUs. The eastern portion of the Clearwater (GMU 615) is in DNR ownership and contains higher-elevation areas bordering ONP.

Firearm Restrictions: These diverse mixtures of ownerships and jurisdictions also present different combinations of firearm restriction regulations and ordinances. The three main firearm restriction regulations that are most relevant to hunters are the following:

WDFW – “The portion of the Coyle (GMU 624) in Clallam County” Page 81 in 2013 Big Game pamphlet  
Clallam Co. Code - <http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/clallamcounty/html/ClallamCounty15/ClallamCounty1516.html>  
Jefferson Co. Code - <http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/jeffersoncounty/html/JeffersonCounty08/JeffersonCounty0850.html>

Varied hunting opportunities exist within District 16, from waterfowl hunting on designated shoreline and wetland areas along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to forest grouse, deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on commercial and public forest land. Both state (DNR) and federal (U.S. Forest Service) lands provide hunting opportunities for a variety of species within the district.

Private timberlands have various access and road closure procedures, so it is prudent to determine current ownership for a target location and the requirements to obtain permission to hunt. One company that has retained a consistent access program over the years is Merrill & Ring Pysht Tree Farm in the Pysht (GMU 603). Their permits provide access during most (but not all) hunting seasons.

Various sub-herds of the Olympic elk herd are located within District 16. Many elk herds are year-round residents of the low elevation habitats, others are migrants. There are opportunities to harvest elk as they migrate out of ONP high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season.

Presently there are no pheasant release sites in District 16.

## **Hunting Forecasts**

**Pheasant:** This will be the first year in a few decades that District 16 will not have a pheasant release site. Due to changes in management direction from Clallam County Parks & Recreation, hunting pheasants at the Dungeness Recreation Area ended with the 2012 season. WDFW continues to seek another suitable release site within the district, or in close proximity in District 15. Please contact District 15 & 16 Biologists if you have any suggestions. For information on other pheasant release sites see [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#).

**Quail:** There is a fair abundance of California (Valley) quail in the eastern portion of District 16. They are quite common in the Dungeness Valley but hunting opportunities can be challenging to arrange

because essentially all of the huntable land is in private ownership. Quail, like deer, thrive in the Dungeness habitats that include a mix of open grass, shrublands and forest. Some quail hunting opportunities can be found on public lands located in the lower foothills in clearcuts or any early successional habitats bordering these quail rich areas. Reported harvest of quail is low in District 16 and during 2012 no hunter effort or harvest was reported.

**Forest Grouse:** Hunting within any of the forest lands throughout District 16 should offer good opportunities for harvesting grouse. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on DNR and U.S. Forest Service lands within the district. The harvest of grouse in Clallam County rivals all other counties within Region 6, except for Grays Harbor. On average, 4,495 forest grouse were harvested each year in Clallam County during the 2002 – 2012 seasons; 2,207 grouse for Jefferson County. Annual harvest totals for Clallam County have dropped from the ten year average to 2,247 in 2012; with Jefferson County harvest remaining low in 2012 at 1,174. The harvest per day hunted remains relatively constant between 0.32 and 0.5. The recent drop in total harvest is a result of lower hunting effort (reported hunting days).

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 16. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet within timber stands with huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, and other forage plants. Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types.

**Snowshoe Hare & Cottontail Rabbit:** Most all of the “rabbits” encountered on the Olympic Peninsula will be snowshoe hare (see range maps below). Snowshoe hare are readily observed along forested roads in the western half of District 16, and will be found throughout the District usually along forested edges. Annual district harvest is erratic ranging from zero (~450 hunt days, 2011 report) to over 300 (~800-1200 hunt days, 2005 & 2008 report). The opportunity is always there, with a harvest per unit effort expected to range between 0.25-0.70/day.

**Wild Turkeys:** District 16 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare to non-existent. Some turkeys were transplanted in the Dungeness drainage 30 – 40 years ago but there is no harvestable population present. The WDFW receives occasional reports of individuals or small groups of turkeys within the Pysht (GMU 603). They are likely domestic turkeys that escaped from a farm that raised turkeys in the Joyce area. There are basically no prospects for hunting wild turkeys in the district.

**Band-tailed Pigeon:** Band-tailed pigeons were quite abundant in the district in years past. Local hunters reported seeing “clouds of them” in drainages, such as McDonald Creek, on the east side of the District back in the 1950's.

Band-tailed pigeons have been observed in good numbers throughout the district this summer. They are most prevalent in the district along marine estuaries, shorelines and along open forest roads where they are foraging on berries. Hunters are encouraged to search for areas with elderberry and cascara shrubs present. Band-tail pigeons often congregate around food sources.

The reported harvest of band-tails in this District is relatively low, but the resource is available throughout the District in good numbers. WDFW Enforcement Officers remind hunters that they must have all required hunting licenses, along with the special migratory bird authorization with band-tailed pigeons harvest card. It is mandatory to report all harvest to improve management of the species.

**Waterfowl:** The majority of the waterfowl hunting opportunity in District 16 is east of Port Angeles, centered in the Lower Dungeness Basin. The basin has a high density of wintering waterfowl and holds

7% of the Western Washington Breeding Waterfowl population. District biologists have focused on documenting areas with high waterfowl concentrations in Clallam County during the last seven years, mapping high use areas during breeding and wintering periods. The Dungeness Basin has proven to be an area of consistently high waterfowl concentrations, even amidst the scattered developments. Concentrations of waterfowl in freshwater habitats diminish drastically west of the Elwha and Lyre Rivers.

Waterfowl Population Status: Midwinter waterfowl survey counts in District 16 showed a drop from 14,282 in 2012 to 11,611 in 2013. Mild winter weather conditions may have resulted in migratory waterfowl not moving into and filling these habitats last season. Midwinter populations include resident and migratory populations. The migrant populations that breed in Alaska & northwestern Canada showed a drop of 5-26% in 2013 compared to the 2012 estimates. This link [and map shows the flyways](#):

The local Olympic Mountain snowpack was good this year which after the trickledown effect will result in good water levels this fall in the many wetlands used for wintering habitat. The greatest factor influencing brood production in the district continues to be loss of habitat to development at water bodies and human presence. Provided that the weather cooperates, increased duck numbers should equate to increased harvest opportunity in District 16.

Unfortunately, there is limited access to where you can hunt waterfowl in the district. Some locals in the western portion of the district conduct some “jump shooting” in pools and side channels of the “West End” rivers, along with other small ponds and flooded gravel pit areas. The five year average for ducks bagged by hunters in Clallam County is 7,903 ducks, and 2,786 ducks in Jefferson County.

Breeding population trends in District 16 remain level during 2011 and 2012. In 2011 new methods were adopted for Western Washington Breeding waterfowl surveys, shifting from ground counts to conducting aerial surveys. Final Counts during these aerial surveys were similar for 2011 and 2012 (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01451/>, page 225-226). Washington Breeding Waterfowl population estimates for 2013 were not yet available when writing these prospects:

Hunting Opportunities: Most all freshwater waterfowl hunting areas in the Dungeness Basin are on private lands. Public land hunting opportunities include the newly established Lower Dungeness Unit at the mouth of the Dungeness River. Some hunters find hunting opportunities in the near-shore areas of bays and along the shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, both on foot and by boat.

Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies and along the saltwater shorelines in the District. Hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at sites near residential areas to avoid potential future closures. Be sure to check [the 2013 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet](#) for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin and goldeneye) in Western Washington. The local sea duck populations have been studied for many years and the [Sea Duck Management Strategies](#) publication has just been made available

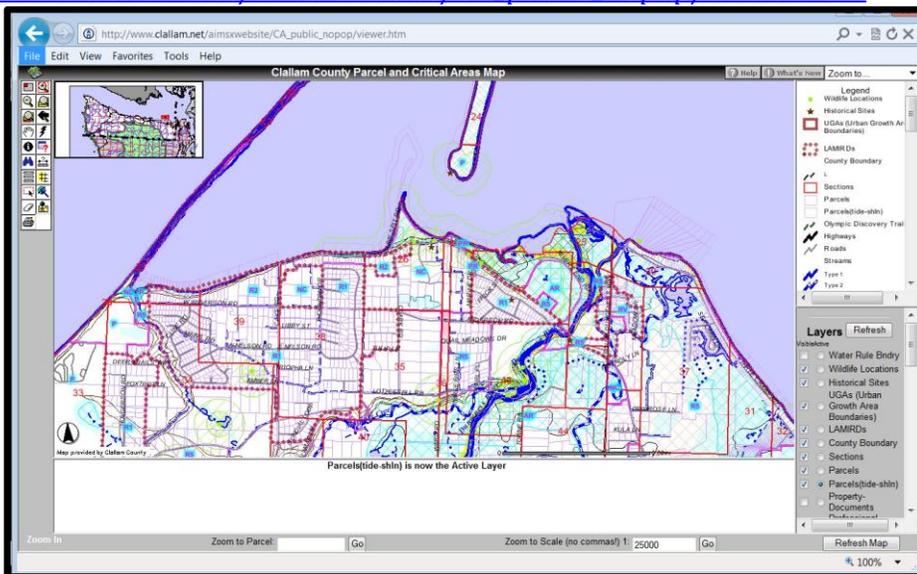
Waterfowl Hunting Challenges: Public saltwater hunting opportunities are more numerous than freshwater options in District 16, albeit more difficult in many ways. The regulations and landownerships, including tideland ownerships, make it necessary for the hunter to have their plan well thought out. Another complication includes the US Fish & Wildlife Service Dungeness Wildlife Refuge. Hunting is not allowed on the Refuge and some of the Refuge boundaries are difficult to determine in the field.

BOAT - When hunting from a boat make sure you do not have your anchor down on private tidelands without permission. You must not go onto private land to retrieve any waterfowl you shoot without prior

permission. So if a hunter on a boat shot a duck and it landed on private land or where they weren't able to retrieve it (because of where & how they were hunting or if they were without a suitable method of retrieval) the hunter would have violated the wastage law. The Local Enforcement Sargent emphasizes that boat hunting is generally not feasible because of these complications and Enforcement staff will be enforcing these laws.

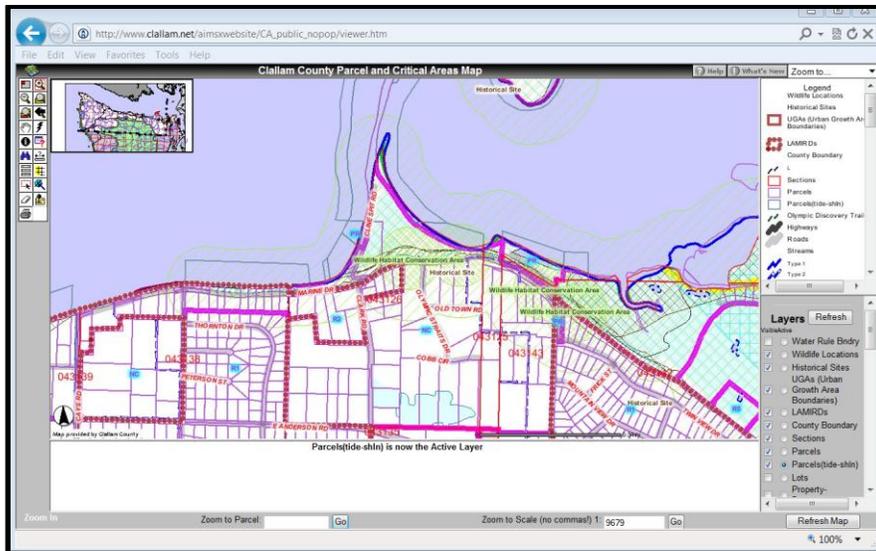
**SHORELINE/TIDELANDS** - There are some private landowners that allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically local signage refers to a phone number or contact information, and in some cases the signage spells out the conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year the hunter must make a tour of the area and find out the current arrangements. Tideland ownership (state or private) can be found on the DNR maps referred to later in this Prospects report. Assessors maps can be retrieved on the internet using these websites; for Clallam County tideland ownership can be retrieved, Jefferson County does not display tideland parcel ownership. Do make sure you will have the ability to retrieve your ducks, keeping in mind the ownerships where you set up and have permission to have your hunt and the adjacent ownership where you don't.

**CLALLAM COUNTY:** <http://www.clallam.net/maps/>  
[http://www.clallam.net/aimsxwebsite/CA\\_public\\_nopop/viewer.htm](http://www.clallam.net/aimsxwebsite/CA_public_nopop/viewer.htm)



*Make sure you have the Parcels(tide-shln) layer checked and Active circle dotted, and scale set at 1 : 25,000 or less.*

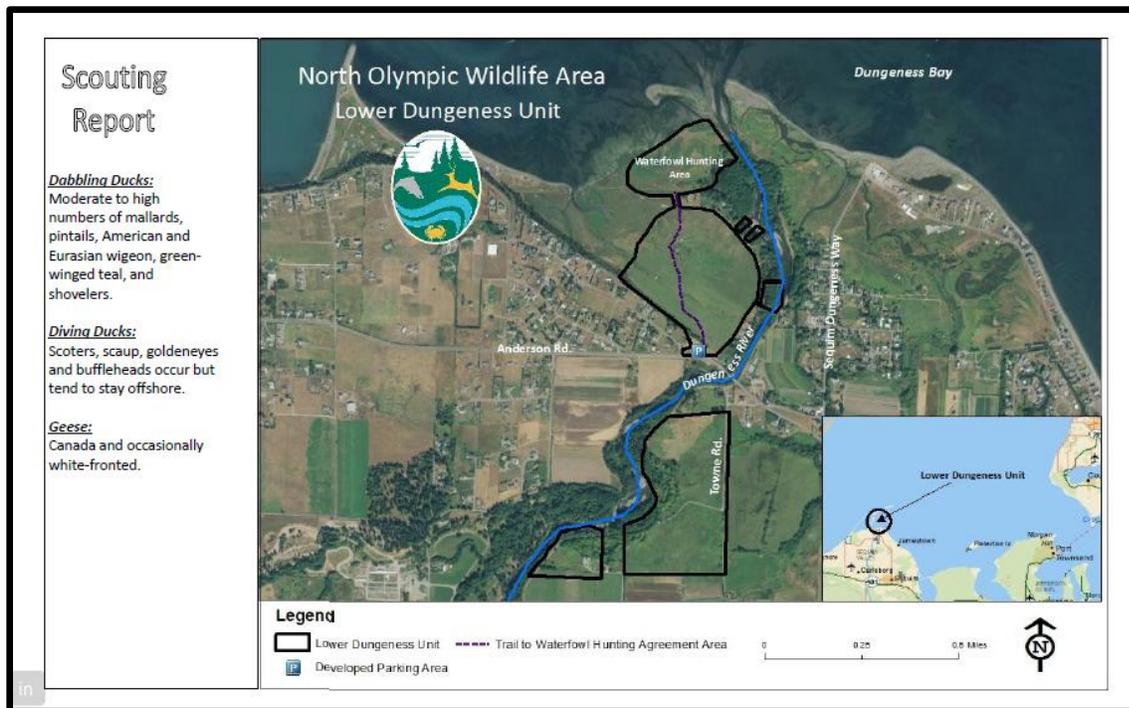
*Use the icons on the top left to zoom in and choose the lightning bolt icon, then select tideland parcels and click on them. The information on ownership should come up.*



*JEFFERSON COUNTY: <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/idms/mapserver.shtml> maps show ownership of parcels, with the exception of tideland ownership. Again you could use the DNR maps reference (and shown above) to identify state tidelands.*

**The Lower Dungeness Unit** is 150 acres in size and is located about 5 miles north of Sequim within Coyle GMU 624. A small parking area is located off of Anderson Road adjacent to the Dungeness River. There is an informational kiosk and bathroom for hunters located at this site with rules and conditions for use of the area. There are freshwater ponds located in the main field located below the parking area; however the main hunting area for this unit is located on the tidelands of Dungeness Bay adjacent to the river's mouth. Hunters are required to "walk-in" to the main hunting area.

Rivers End road is a privately owned road and cannot be used to access the tidelands. It is approximately .55 of a mile to reach the main hunting areas on this unit. Hunting is permitted on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays on this unit throughout the regular waterfowl season. This unit can get crowded and hunters are encouraged to arrive early to secure a quality spot. There is room for 2-3 decoy sets on the tidelands associated with this unit. A variety of dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and geese have been documented at the unit.



<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/WesternWashingtonWaterfowlHuntingAreas.pdf> (page 12-13)

[Waterfowl Status Report 2013 USFWS](#) is some interesting reading that might come in useful in better understanding the waterfowl resource throughout North America.

Trumpeter swan numbers have increased in the Dungeness valley in the past five years and they have been documented near the river mouth. All waterfowl hunters are encouraged to know all identification features for trumpeter swans and snow geese. It is illegal to shoot trumpeter swans and *snow goose hunters should be aware that a special snow goose hunting authorization and harvest record card is required.*

The Dungeness Recreation Area County Park no longer allows hunting.

**Canada Geese:** There is minimal hunting opportunity for Canada geese in District 16; with basically no hunting for Canada geese in GMU's located in the west and north portions of the District. The population of Canada geese on the east side of the District has been increasing in recent years. Most of the hunt opportunities are on private agricultural lands in GMU 624 that contain barley. No "pass shooting" is possible. Local hunters were quite successful last season using a decoy spread and blinds. Permission to hunt on private lands would need to be obtained and all firearm regulations must be followed. Many agricultural fields have residential properties in the vicinity so hunters must be aware of all safety concerns.

**Dove:** District 16 is not a major dove hunting area. The average number of doves harvested annually during the past five years in Clallam County is 17; in 2012 it was 14 (by 14 hunters). Jefferson County has a slightly higher harvest; during 2012 it was 54 (by 20 hunters). Many of the dove populations are present in populated residential areas where hunting is not allowed.

**Black-tailed Deer:** Black-tailed deer monitoring is accomplished by tracking the harvest, hunting effort and gathering data on survivability, recruitment & mortality rates (using collared deer studies and aerial

census methods). One of those rare opportunities is happening where an active research project is occurring in the district allowing district biologists, partner Tribal biologists and volunteers to get some hands on collaring and tracking of the deer including identifying mortality causes whenever possible. See the [Vectronic website describing the study.](#)

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During the capture portion of the study it was difficult to observe the deer west of the Elwha River, which presumably was due to low densities of deer. The detectability of deer was much higher east of the Elwha. Some does captured east of the Elwha on the lower foothills of mixed DNR & Private land were reported to be exceptionally large in size compared to others captured in Western Washington according to Dr. Cliff Rice the lead Researcher.

**WESTERN DISTRICT 16:** Western District 16 is generally sparse of deer. This area includes GMUs 601 (Hoko), 602 (Dickey), 603 (Pysht), 607 (Sol Duc), 612 (Goodman) and 615 (Clearwater). In 2012 a total of 363 deer (360 antlered and 3 antlerless-Pysht permits) were reported to be harvested, 25% being 3pt or better. Biologists, Enforcement Officer observations, and published reports indicate that deer population numbers and density are generally down throughout the district west of the Elwha.

**EASTERN DISTRICT 16:** Eastern District 16 includes the northwestern portion of GMU 621 (Olympic) and the northern portion of GMU 624 (Coyle), with these same GMUs crossing east and south into District 15 (eastern Jefferson County). Because the data on harvest is recorded by GMU, the harvest figures presented here include all of GMU 621 & 624, extending into District 15. The 2012 deer harvest in GMU 621 & 624 was 709 (605 antlered, 104 antlerless = 43 (permit +archery)/621 hunt, 61"any deer" general/Deer Area 6020+624 archery).

The portion of District 16 east of the Elwha River has black-tailed deer populations that are readily observed (presumably due to higher densities) and in many areas can often be observed in groups, especially at low to mid-elevations. In these areas the deer are often perceived to be a nuisance by some property owners and agricultural operations, especially in the Coyle, GMU 624.

Deer Area 6020 was established years ago to allow harvest of does to help curb the trend of "too many" deer, incorporating the area north of Highway 101 between Port Angeles and eastern Miller Peninsula. Doe harvest is allowed within Deer Area 6020 during the general seasons. This area is primarily private land, but it is worth inquiring with landowners about hunting access.

Note that much of the state land on Miller Peninsula, within this Deer Area 6020 is State Parks where hunting is not allowed. The key to a successful harvest is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions.

The mid and lower elevations of Olympic GMU 621 have high densities of deer as well, with some scattered blocks of DNR ownership that offer hunting on public land. Private industrial timber lands and property managed by the DNR are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. However, many of these roads can be accessed on foot or with mountain bikes, giving those willing to do the work, access to deer that don't get as much hunting pressure. Be sure to check with the appropriate land owner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

**Elk:** The Roosevelt elk in District 16 are various sub-herds of the Olympic Elk Herd - one of 10 herds identified in the state. The Olympic Elk Herd is an important resource that provides significant recreational, aesthetic, cultural, and economic benefits to the people of the state.

Much of the elk hunting for GMU's located within the District is restricted to a 3pt minimum bull-only harvest. Some elk herds migrate down from high alpine meadows in Olympic National Park (ONP) to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters are encouraged to scout for elk that may leave ONP and travel along major river drainages. Law Enforcement Officers convey that they are getting reports that elk groups in the Pysht (GMU 603) have increased slightly in the past few years.

Hunting seasons have been established to allow recreational use and as a tool for managing elk populations within the district. The eastern District GMU 624 rarely has a report of elk harvest from the general season outside Elk Area 6071. There are no general elk seasons open in Elk Area 6071. Harvest within Elk Area 6071 is limited to Master Hunter Elk Hunt Damage Hunt Permits (Hunt Choice 2722 for Designated Areas in Region 6 that may include Elk Area 6071) along with some Damage Permits.

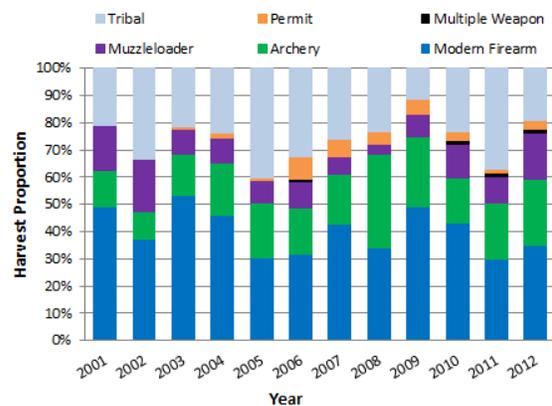
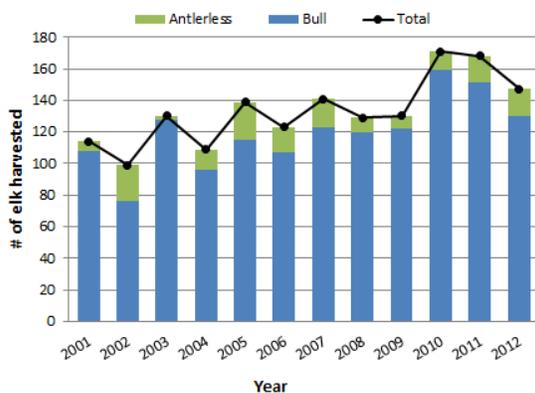
A non-migratory elk herd of approximately 50-60 elk continues to populate private residential and agricultural lands in the Dungeness Valley (GMU 624). Master Hunter damage hunts are used as a tool to help manage landowner conflicts associated with this herd. These hunts are administered by a WDFW designated Hunt Coordinator. Special permit applications are required. Check the [WA Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) or the WDFW website for more information.

The Clearwater (GMU 615), Dickey (GMU 602), and Sol Duc (GMU 607) have the highest elk harvest in District 16. These units contain the largest portion of public land without restricted access. The Hoko (GMU 601), Pysht (GMU 603), and Coyle (GMU 624) have very limited opportunities for General Season hunters. Most of these units contain private land and many of the roads on timber lands are gated. Hunting on DNR lands, U.S. Forest Service lands, and private timber lands in other GMU's within the District can yield good results. However, it is important to note that there are several areas where vehicular access is limited. Hunters must obey all posted signs and regulations.

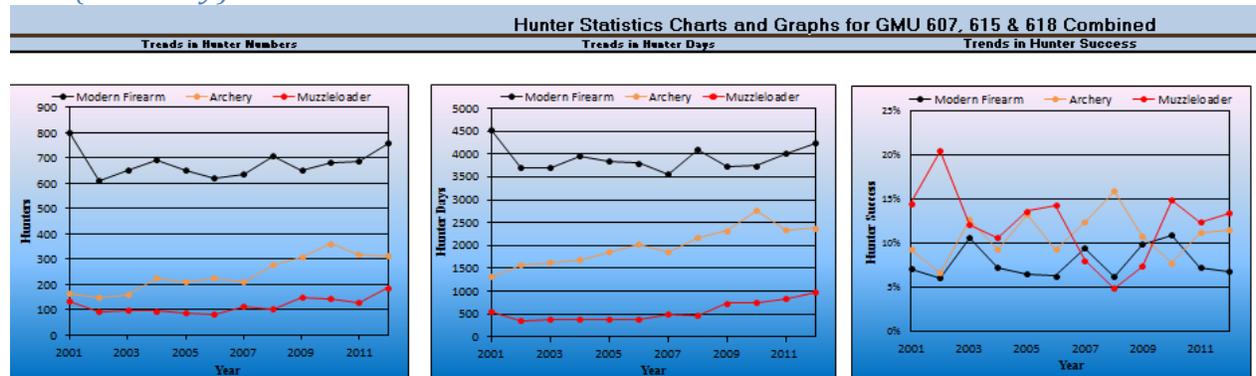
[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

*Summaries of elk harvest activity in GMUs 607 (Sol Duc), 615 (Clearwater), and 618 (Matheny) combined:*

**Harvest Statistics Charts and Graphs for GMU 607, 615 & 618 Combined**



*Summaries of elk harvest activity in GMUs 607 (Sol Duc), 615 (Clearwater), and 618 (Matheny) combined*



**Black Bear:** District 16 is located nearly entirely within the designated Coastal Black Bear Management Unit. There is, however, a small portion of the Coyle (GMU 624) that is within the Puget Sound Black Bear Management Unit. This area is mostly private land with firearm restrictions. There is no spring bear permit hunt season within the District. Fall black bear hunting is allowed in all GMU's within the District. The prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 16 remain good to excellent. Low elevation berry production has been good.

State DNR and federal (U.S. Forest Service) lands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting within the District. Hunters are encouraged to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Similar to deer, access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of clear cuts/younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in-pack out, can pursue bears in classic environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await. The use of hounds and/or bait to hunt black bear is prohibited statewide.

**Cougar:** WDFW changed the cougar hunting season design for 2012 with a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. Cougar seasons will run from September 1 to December 31 for any weapon. After January 1<sup>st</sup>, if the harvest guidelines have been exceeded, the season may close. Hunters should check to see if the season is still open after January 1. See the [WA Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) or WDFW website for more information regarding cougar hunting in specific GMU's within the District. Cougars are widespread in the forest lands of District 16. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk provide great opportunity for hunting cougar. Law Enforcement Officers in the District report low cougar hunting pressure in most GMU's.

**Miscellaneous comments:**

**Tribal Hunting:** District 16 is within the ceded area of numerous treaty tribes on the Olympic Peninsula. The WDFW and tribes are co-managers for wildlife populations. Tribal hunting often occurs concurrent with WDFW hunting seasons. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring that tribal hunting regulations, which may differ from state regulations, are followed. You can find more information about tribal hunting on the WDFW website at: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/tribal](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/tribal).

## Some Private Forest Industry Links

### Rayonier Inc

<http://www.rayonier.com/>

IFP Office (360) 452-1351  
Forks Office (360) 374-6565  
Port Angeles (360) 457-2329

### Green Crow

<http://www.greencrow.com/contact-us/locations/>

Port Angeles (360) 452-3325

### Merrill & Ring

<http://www.merrillring.com/contacts/>

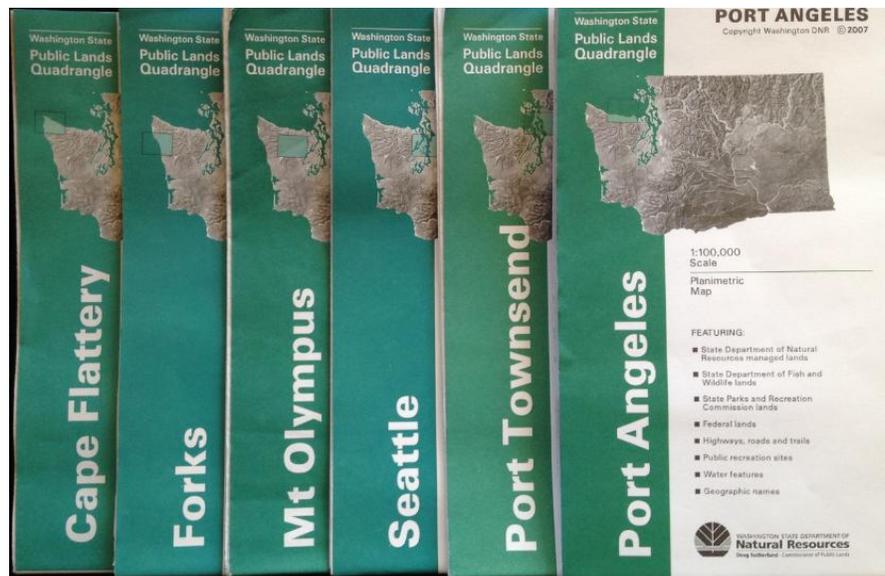
Port Angeles (360) 452-2367

Email: [contact@merrillring.com](mailto:contact@merrillring.com)

### Cascade Timberlands

<http://www.cascadetimberlands.com/>

**Maps for District 16:** Because the land ownership can be very confusing District Biologist McMillan recommends a set of these DNR maps which [can be ordered online](#).



Often these DNR maps are available to buy at Swains & Browns in Port Angeles or at Thriftway in Forks. These DNR maps have the best combination of land ownership and current roads.

Other maps that can be helpful for select areas include:

Forest Service Quadrangle Maps can be obtained free online at

[http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/regions\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6](http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/regions_zoom.php?regionID=r6)  
[http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=47124](http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=47124)  
[http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=48124](http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=48124)  
[http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=47123](http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=47123)  
[http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=48122](http://fsgeodata.fs.fed.us/rastergateway/states-regions/grid_zoom.php?regionID=r6&gridSrc=48122)

Forest Service also sells Forest District Maps that are very useful  
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/olympic/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5195398>

The map for the east end of WDFW District 16 is the Hood Canal Ranger District/North End map.  
 The maps for the west end of WDFW District 16 are Pacific Ranger District/North End & South End maps.

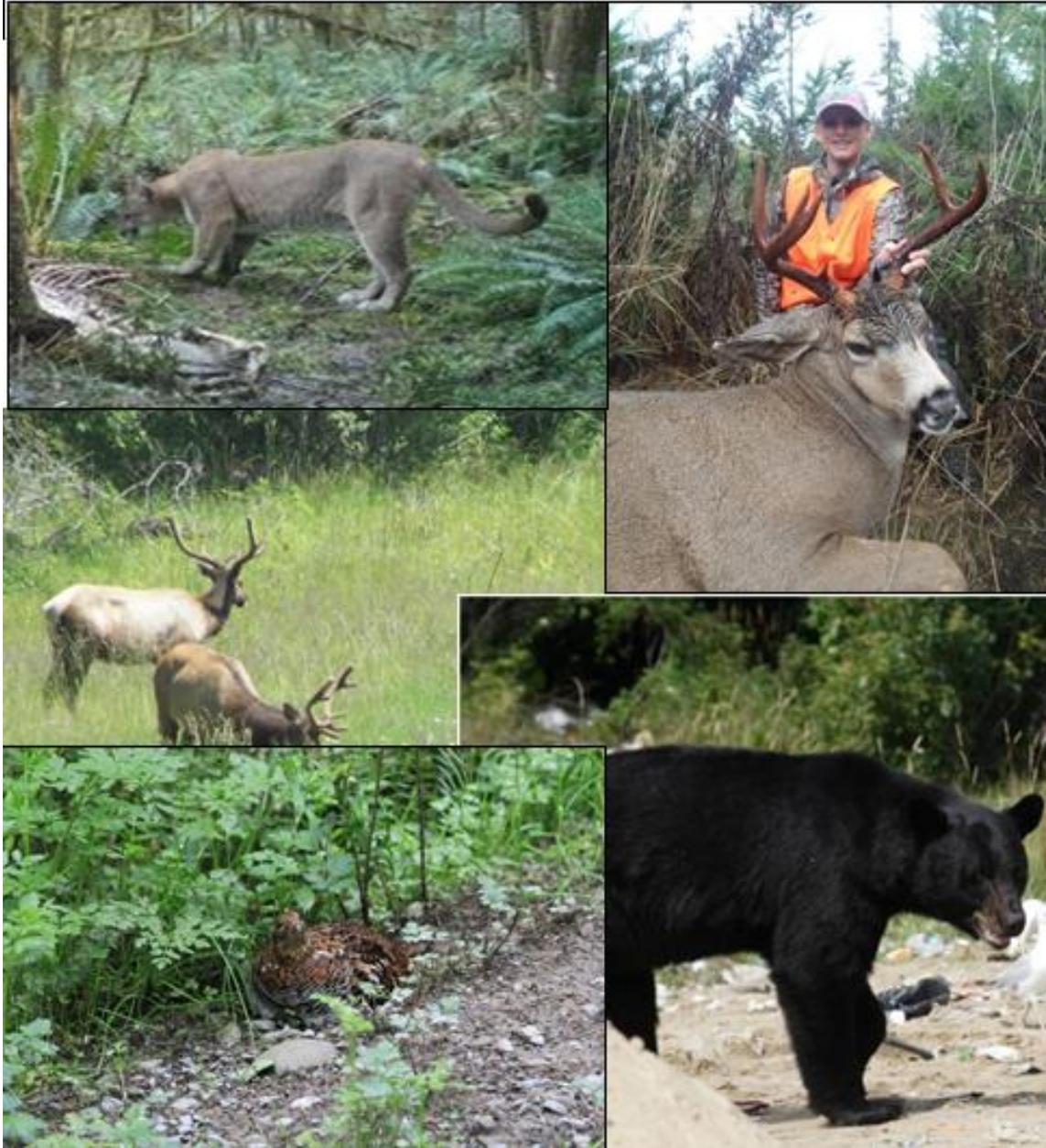
Hood Canal Ranger District/North End	14484	\$5.00
Hood Canal Ranger District/South End	14483	\$5.00
Pacific Ranger District/North End	14482	\$5.00
Pacific Ranger District/South End	14481	\$5.00

2013

BROCK HOENES, District Wildlife Biologist  
SCOTT HARRIS, Private Lands Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# DISTRICT 17 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Pacific and Grays Harbor Counties

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# Hunting Season Prospects 2013

# District 17--Pacific and Grays Harbor Counties

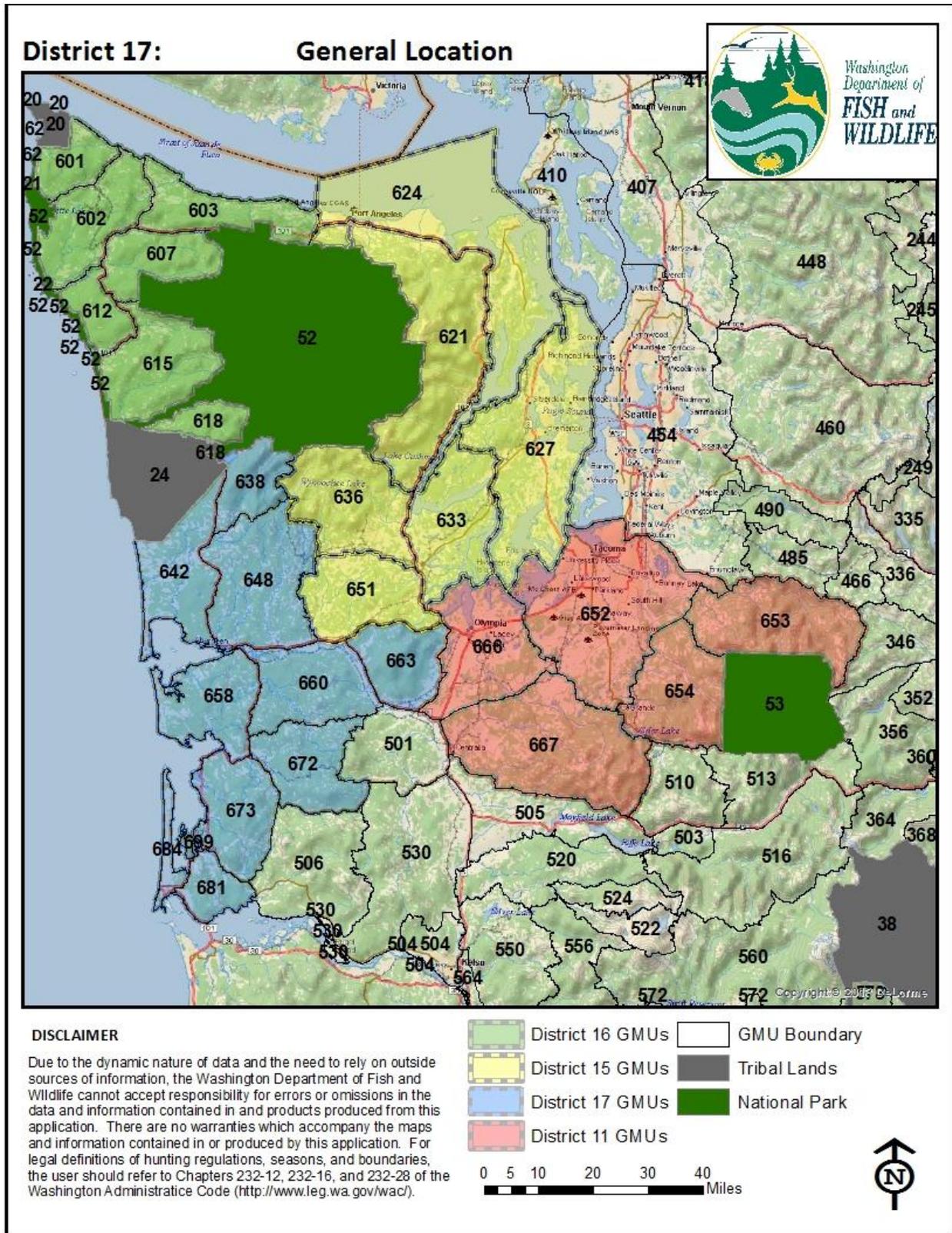
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## **DISTRICT 17 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

District 17 is located in southwest Washington and consists of 11 Game Management Units (GMUs): 638 (Quinault Ridge), 642 (Copalis), 648 (Wynochee), 658 (North River), 660 (Minot Peak), 663 (Capital Peak), 672 (Fall River), 673 (Williams Creek), 681 (Bear River), 684 (Long Beach) and 699 (Long Island). Administratively, District 17 includes Pacific and Grays Harbor counties and is one of four Management Districts (11, 15, 16, and 17) that collectively comprise WDFW's Region 6 (Figure 1). The northern part of District 17 (north of Highway 12) includes the southwestern portion of the Olympic Mountains while the southern part of the District is situated in the Willapa Hills.

The landscape in District 17 is dominated by industrial forest land and the most common habitat is characterized by second and third growth forests consisting primarily of Douglas fir, western hemlock, and red alder. However, other habitats do occur and range from sub-alpine habitat in areas adjacent to Olympic National Park to coastal wetlands along the outer coast.

District 17 is most well-known for its elk hunting opportunities in the Willapa Hills and waterfowl hunting opportunities in Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys. However, quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species including black-tailed deer, black bears, and grouse. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and catch-per-unit



effort for most game species in District 17 during the 2012 hunting season and how those estimates compare to the 2011 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

**TABLE 1. HARVEST AND CPUE ESTIMATES FOR MOST GAME SPECIES FOUND IN DISTRICT 17 DURING THE 2011 AND 2012 HUNTING SEASONS. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE AND A COMPARISON OF 2012 ESTIMATES TO 2011 ESTIMATES AND THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE. CPUE IS EXPRESSED AS DAYS/KILL FOR ELK, DEER, AND BEAR AND AS THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY FOR ALL OTHER SPECIES. NH = NO HUNTERS.**

Species	Harvest					CPUE				
	5-yr avg.	2011	2012	% change (5yr)	% change (2011)	5-yr avg.	2011	2012	% change (5yr)	% change (2011)
Elk	612	660	622	2%	-6%	54	48	48	-11%	0%
Deer	1,574	1,316	1,583	1%	20%	32	37	28	-13%	-24%
Bear	115	95	97	-16%	2%	147	154	131	-11%	-15%
Cougar	6	7	5	-17%	-29%	Not estimated		**	**	
Ducks	23,604	23,758	23,495	0%	-1%	2.33	2.33	2.59	11%	11%
Geese (late season)	2,668	2,349	2,342	-12%	0%	0.75	0.79	0.82	9%	4%
Geese (early season)	344	363	382	11%	5%	1.09	1.06	1.37	26%	29%
Forest Grouse	6,758	6,579	4,700	-30%	-29%	0.26	0.31	0.23	-12%	-26%
Mourning Dove	140	7	0	-100%	-100%	2.72	0.54	NH	**	**
Quail	130	101	89	-32%	-12%	1.98	0.78	1.09	-45%	40%
Band-tailed pigeons	155	48	139	-10%	190%	Not estimated		**	**	
Rabbits	263	135	247	-6%	83%	0.3	0.16	0.35	17%	119%

## ELK

### **GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS**

All elk that occur in District 17 are Roosevelt elk. Unlike other areas in western Washington, Rocky Mountain elk have not been introduced into the area and resulted in Roosevelt-Rocky Mountain elk hybrids. There are 10 elk herds in Washington and District 17 contains portions of two of them; the Olympic elk herd: GMUs 638 (Quinault Ridge), 642 (Copalis), and 648 (Wynoochee); and the Willapa Hills elk herd: GMUs 658 (North River), 660 (Minot Peak), 663 (Capital Peak), 672 (Fall River), 673 (Williams Creek), 681 (Bear River), 684 (Long Beach), and 699 (Long Island). The quality of elk hunting opportunities in District 17 vary from marginal to excellent depending on the GMU, but in general, opportunities are very good. The best opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Willapa Hills elk herd area and include 658 (North River), 672 (Fall River), 673 (Williams Creek), and 681 (Bear River).

In Washington, elk are managed at the Population Management Unit (PMU) level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. In general, each PMU consists of several GMUs that collectively define the range of a population that minimizes interchange with adjacent elk populations. Population objectives are set at the PMU level—survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 17 contains all of PMU 61 (GMU 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, and 699) and portions of PMU 63 (GMUs 642 and 648) and PMU 65 (GMU 638).

All PMUs in District 17 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing elk herds while also minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds that have a minimum of 15 bulls:100 cows in the pre-season population and a minimum of 12 bulls:100 cows in the post-season population.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor elk populations in District 17. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and CPUE (days/kill) are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate. However, WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and we hope to begin monitoring populations using formal sampling designs during post-hunt surveys in spring 2014.

All available harvest data indicates elk populations are increasing in PMU 61, slightly declining in PMU 63, and are stable in PMU 65. For more detailed information related to the status of Washington's elk herds, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report which is available for download on the Department's website or by [clicking here](#).

### **WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT IN?**

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt in?" This is not always an easy question to answer because it depends on what weapon is going to be used and what type of hunting experience the hunter is looking for. For example, not all GMUs

are open to muzzleloader hunters, and archery hunters are not allowed to harvest antlerless elk in every GMU.

In addition, some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature bull. Although large mature bulls do exist in District 17, they are not very abundant and we usually advise hunters seeking a mature bull to spend their efforts in District 16 in either the Matheny (GMU 618) or Clearwater (GMU 615) GMUs. Both GMUs are adjacent to Olympic National Park (ONP) and have the reputation of holding some very nice bulls.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have high densities of elk, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 17. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest elk densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of elk. For other hunters, they would prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of elk if that means there are also very few hunters.

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 17 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are the 5-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

This approach was taken because comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison because GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of elk harvested over the past 5 years during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 681 (Bear River) and 673 (Williams Creek) has been 109 and 266 elk, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests a much higher density of elk in GMU 673 compared to GMU 681. However, when harvest is expressed as elk harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, we come up with an estimate of 0.425 in GMU 673 and 0.303 in GMU 681, which suggests elk densities are probably more similar between the two GMUs than total harvest indicates.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 11 for elk harvested/mi<sup>2</sup> (bulls and cows), hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of least rank sum to largest. The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

For archery seasons you have to consider that antlerless elk may be harvested in six GMUs and 4 GMUs are open during early and late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. For muzzleloader comparisons, some seasons are open during the early muzzleloader season and others during the late muzzleloader season. Hunters should keep these differences in mind when comparing and interpreting the information provided in Table 2.

**TABLE 2.** RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER SEASONS. GMUS BOLDDED IN THE ARCHERY SECTION ARE OPEN DURING EARLY AND LATER ARCHERY SEASONS, WHILE GMUS WITH AN ASTERISK INDICATE GMUS THAT HAVE 3-PT. MINIMUM OR ANTLERLESS HARVEST RESTRICTIONS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A 5-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	3	0.059	7	33	0.65	3	11%	2	12
681	109	33	0.303	2	239	2.19	9	14%	1	12
642	278	8	0.029	9	76	0.27	1	10%	3	13
638	153	11	0.072	6	110	0.72	4	10%	3	13
658	257	58	0.226	3	543	2.11	8	11%	2	13
673	266	113	0.425	1	1048	3.94	10	11%	2	13
660	302	24	0.079	5	280	0.93	5	9%	4	14
672	257	33	0.128	4	327	1.27	7	10%	3	14
663	210	2	0.010	10	68	0.32	2	3%	6	18
648	431	21	0.049	8	443	1.03	6	5%	5	19
ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
658	257	16	0.062	5	104	0.40	6	15%	2	13
673*	266	81	0.305	3	493	1.85	9	17%	1	13

638	153	6	0.039	7	53	0.35	3	12%	5	<b>15</b>
<b>681*</b>	109	50	0.459	2	351	3.22	10	14%	3	<b>15</b>
<b>699*</b>	8	11	1.375	1	80	10.00	11	13%	4	<b>16</b>
<b>672*</b>	257	50	0.195	4	476	1.85	8	11%	6	<b>18</b>
642	278	2	0.007	10	18	0.06	1	8%	8	<b>19</b>
660*	302	12	0.040	6	133	0.44	7	9%	7	<b>20</b>
684*	51	1	0.020	8	19	0.37	4	5%	9	<b>21</b>
663	210	1	0.005	11	32	0.15	2	3%	10	<b>23</b>
<b>648</b>	431	4	0.009	9	164	0.38	5	2%	11	<b>25</b>

**MUZZLELOADER**

GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
642	278	3	0.011	6	19	0.07	1	17%	2	<b>9</b>
<b>684</b>	51	12	0.235	1	49	0.96	7	25%	1	<b>9</b>
672	257	9	0.035	3	98	0.38	5	9%	3	<b>11</b>
660	302	8	0.026	4	97	0.32	4	7%	4	<b>12</b>
638	153	3	0.020	5	36	0.24	3	7%	5	<b>13</b>
658	257	11	0.043	2	189	0.74	6	6%	6	<b>14</b>
663	210	1	0.005	7	17	0.08	2	3%	7	<b>16</b>

**WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2013 SEASON**

It is typically uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 17 where severe winter weather conditions do not occur, that result in large winter die-offs. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in

size compared to the 2012 season. Hunter numbers also typically do not change dramatically from one year to the next. What can change from year to year, and in doing so has the potential to influence harvest rates, is weather.

For example, 2012 was a hot and dry summer by western Washington standards, which produced extreme fire danger warnings and caused many Timber Companies to close all their land to public access during the latter part of the general early archery season and the entire early muzzleloader season. Nonetheless, we are not able to predict weather events that far in advance so the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons are trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Figures 2 through 4 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt in District 17.

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## HOW TO FIND ELK

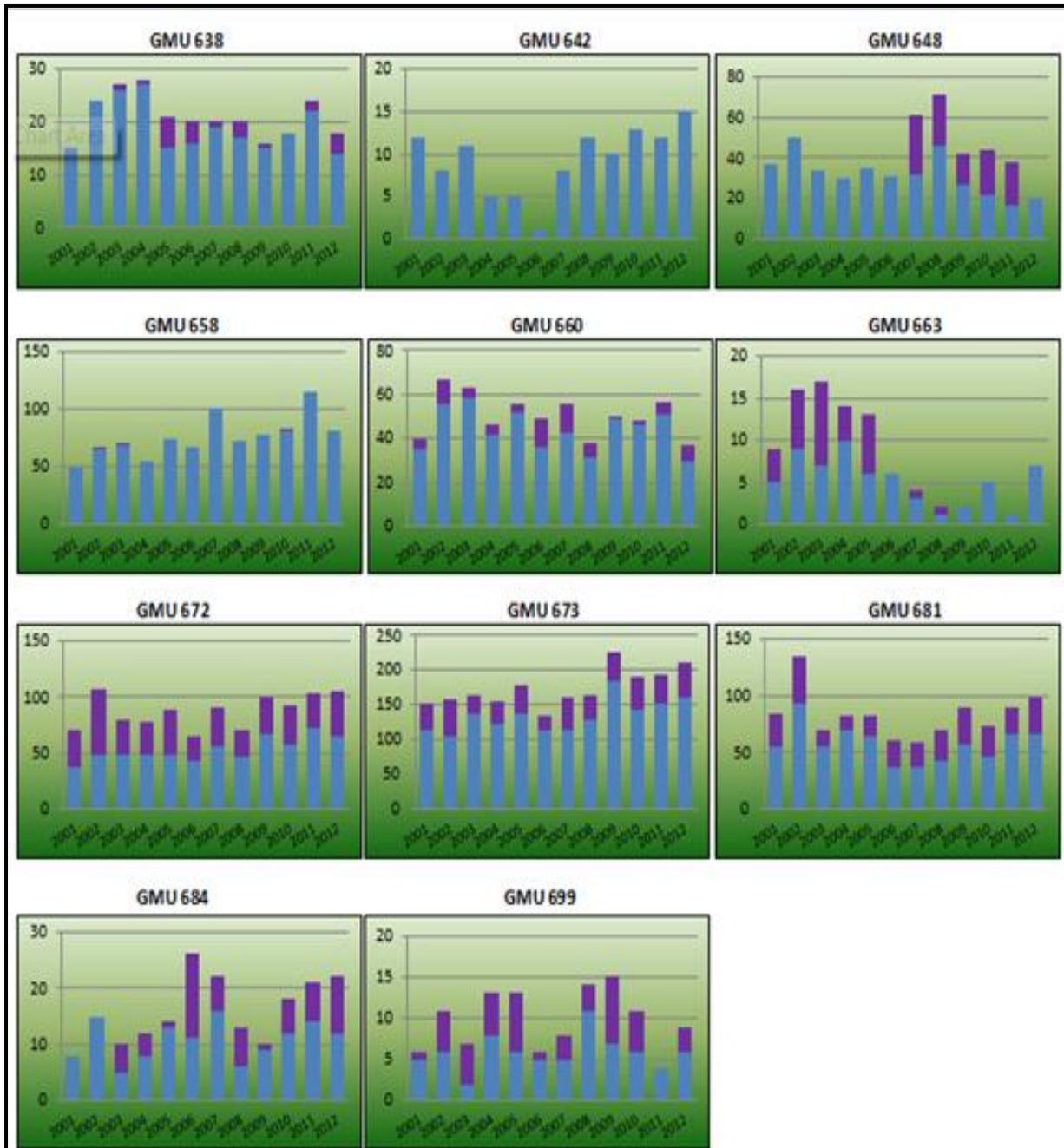
When hunting elk in District 17, hunters need to do their homework and spend plenty of time scouting before the season opener because it is often difficult to predict where the elk are going to be, especially after hunting pressure increases. The majority of hunters spend most of their time focusing on clearcuts, which makes a lot of sense because elk often forage in clearcuts and are highly visible when they do. However, there are many elk (especially bulls) that do not frequent clearcuts during daylight hours. Instead, they spend most of their time during the day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or “reprod”. Moreover, those highly visible elk often attract many hunters and clearcuts can get crowded in a hurry.

From a landscape perspective, some generalities can be made that will help increase the odds of locating elk. When going to a new area, hunters will benefit by covering as much ground as possible and making note of areas where they are seeing sign along roads and landings. Landings are an especially good place to look for sign because they are often not graveled, which makes it easier to see fresh tracks. This scouting approach will give hunters a good idea of what areas hold elk and where to focus their more intensive scouting efforts.

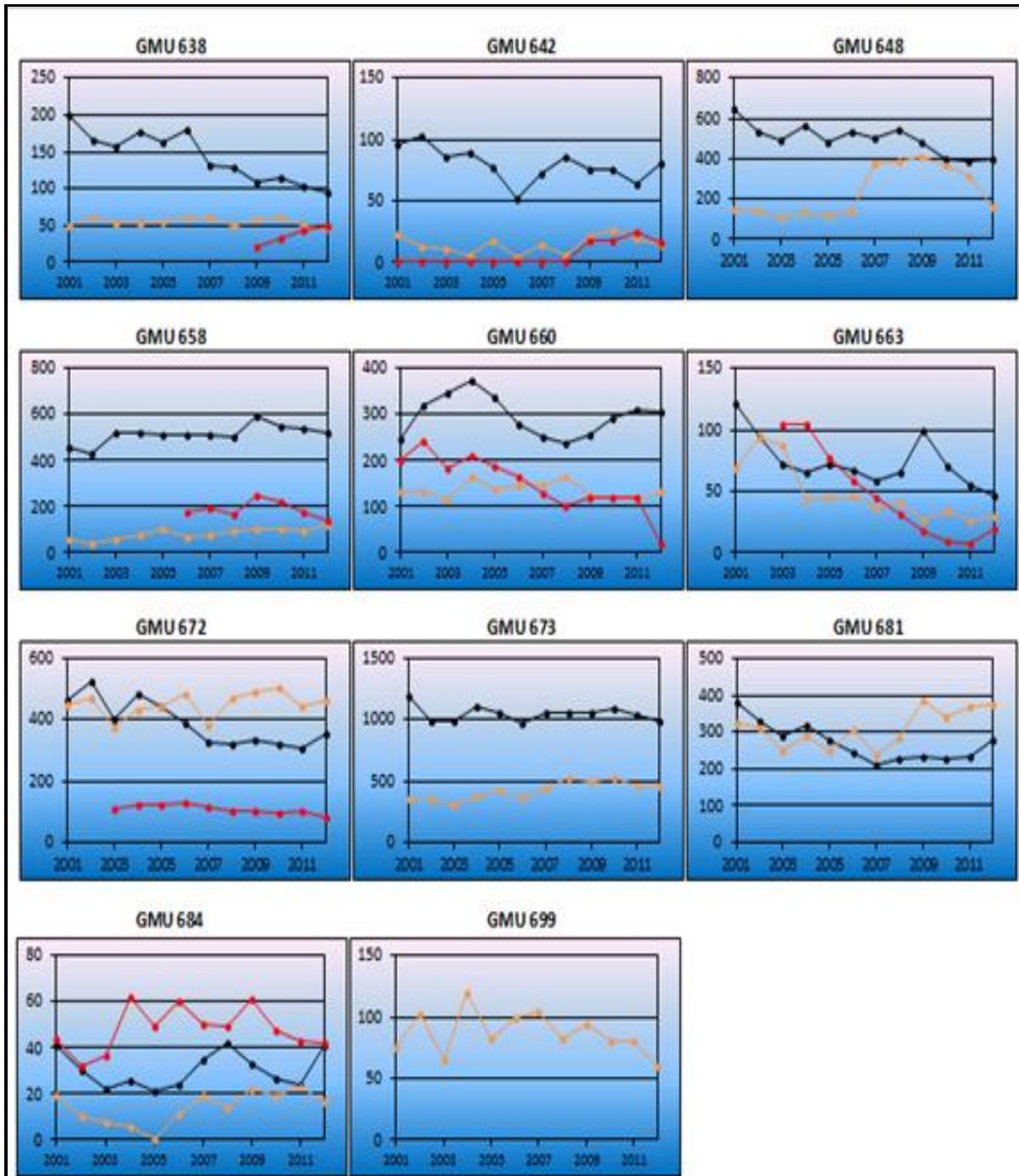
After those areas with abundant elk sign have been identified, hunters should focus in on stands that provide cover and are adjacent to clearcuts. During early seasons when it is warm, these areas often include swamps, creek bottoms, river bottoms, or any place that is near water. Once the season progresses and temperatures cool, elk are not as attracted to water and the challenge of finding them becomes more difficult. Hunting pressure also has an effect and will force elk to use areas that provide thicker cover or are more inaccessible to hunters because of topographical features.

Later in the season, it is a good idea to consult a topographic map and find “benches” that are located in steep terrain and thick cover because elk often use these areas to bed down during the day. Lastly, hunters should not let a locked gate (provided that non-motorized access is allowed) keep them from going into an area to search for elk. More often than not, these areas hold elk that have not received as much hunting pressure, which can make them less skittish and easier to hunt. A very popular approach to hunting these areas is to use mountain bikes and trailers,

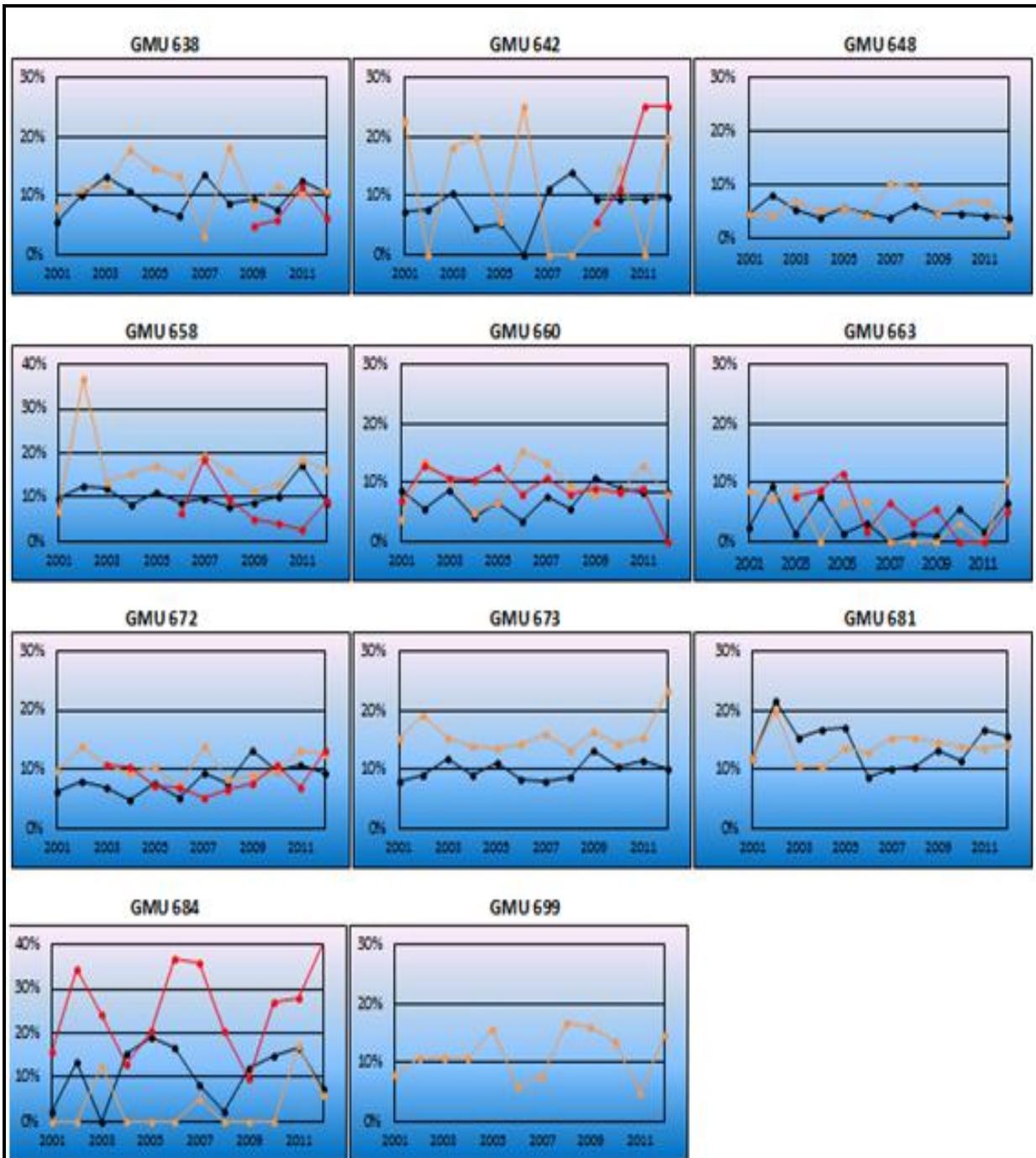
which is not difficult given the density of maintained gravel roads that occur on timber company lands.



**Figure 2.** Trends in total number of bull (blue) and antlerless (purple) elk harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons combined, 2001–2012. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or elk harvested during permit seasons.



**Figure 3.** Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (black), archery (orange), and muzzleloader (red) seasons in District 17 GMUs, 2001–2012.



**Figure 4.** Trends in hunter success during general modern firearm (black), archery (orange), and muzzleloader (red) seasons in District 17 GMUs, 2001–2012.

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**ELK AREAS**

There are four Elk Areas that occur in District 17: Elk Area 6010 (Mallis or Raymond), Elk Area 6064 (Quinault Valley), Elk Area 6066 (Grays Harbor), and Elk Area 6067 (North Minot). Nearly all permit opportunities in District 17 are antlerless elk hunts and are associated with these Elk Areas. Elk Areas 6010 and 6067 were established in locations with chronic elk damage problems and their primary intent is to provide antlerless harvest opportunities that help control the growth rate of herds in localized agricultural areas.

Elk Areas 6064 and 6066 were established to help alleviate problems landowners were having with elk hunters. Because of their primary intent, special restrictions apply in each of these Elk Areas. In Elk Area 6064, only Master Hunters are allowed to hunt elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. In Elk Area 6066, there is a firearm restriction during the general modern firearm elk season, which makes it unlawful to hunt with centerfire or rimfire rifles.

The intent of Elk Areas 6010 and 6067 is to alleviate elk damage on private agricultural property. However, both areas contain tracts of public or private timber company lands where elk do not cause problems. Hunters that draw a permit in either of these Elk Areas are encouraged to call the Private Lands Biologist (Scott Harris) in the Region 6 Office (360-249-4628) because he may be able to put them in touch with a landowner that is having problems with elk.

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**NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

1. Weyerhaeuser Timber Company has made their Pe Ell Operating Area a permit access area and will no longer be allowing general hunter access. The Pe Ell Operating Area includes portions of GMUs 672 and 506. There will be 650 permits available at a cost of \$200 per permit. For more information go to the Weyerhaeuser's website at <http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/> or [click here](#).
2. Muzzleloader permits in Elk Area 6067 were discontinued for the 2013 season because this permit hunt was initially offered to help alleviate elk damage to agricultural crops in the Chehalis River Valley, which has not been a management issue since the early 2000s.
3. Master Hunter permits in Elk Area 6010 were discontinued for the 2013 season because there is no longer a need for Elk Area specific permits with the new Region 6 Master Hunter Permits that allow WDFW to assign Master Hunters to any area in Region 6 that is experiencing elk damage issues.

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**ELK HOOF DISEASE**

The number of reports received by the Department pertaining to elk with hoof deformities in southwest Washington increased sharply in 2008. Elk afflicted with hoof disease commonly show severely overgrown and deformed claws, and marked emaciation. The cause of this

condition has not yet been determined. Most reports have been concentrated in GMUs 504, 506, and 530, as well as in neighboring GMUs associated with the Mount Saint Helens elk herd (GMUs 520, 550, and 556 – also see District 10 Hunting Prospects for more information on hoof rot disease).

However, more recent observations of this condition have also included GMUs in the northern portion of the Willapa Hills elk herd area (e.g. GMUs 660 (Minot Creek), 672 (Fall River), and 673 (Williams Creek)). In response to the increasing trend in hoof disease reports the Department is currently working with specialists from a variety of state and federal agencies to identify the cause and anticipated impacts of this condition.

Hunters that see limping elk are encouraged to report their observations using the WDFW online reporting tool. The reporting tool can be located on WDFW's Wildlife Health website ([http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_rot/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_rot/)) or by clicking here [clicking here](#).

## **DEER**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS**

All deer that occur in District 17 are black-tailed mule deer (or “black-tails”). Deer hunting opportunities in District 17 vary from marginal to quite good, depending on the GMU. The best opportunities to harvest a black-tail in District 17 likely occur in GMUs 663 (Capitol Peak), 648 (Wynoochee), 672 (Fall River), and 660 (Minot Peak).

In Washington, black-tails are managed at the Population Management Unit (PMU) level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. In general, each PMU consists of several GMUs that collectively define the range of a population that minimizes interchange with adjacent deer populations. Population objectives are set at the PMU level—survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 17 contains all of PMU 61 (GMU 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, and 699) and portions of PMU 63 (GMUs 642 and 648) and PMU 65 (GMU 638). All PMUs in District 17 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing deer herds while also minimizing negative deer-human interactions. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds that have a minimum of 15 bucks:100 does in the post season population.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 17. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and CPUE (days/kill) are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and we are currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring black-tailed deer populations that are independent of harvest data.

However, determining the most effective way to monitor black-tail deer populations has been an ongoing management dilemma because of their secretive nature and use of densely vegetated

habitats, which substantially lowers the probability of detecting them during aerial surveys. Standard aerial survey approaches were attempted in the past, but very few deer were seen which resulted in small sample sizes that were of little utility when monitoring population trend or herd demographics (e.g. buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios).

All available harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable or slightly declining in all PMUs associated with District 17. For more detailed information related to the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report which is available for download on the Department's website or by [clicking here](#).

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### **WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT IN?**

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt in?" This is not always an easy question to answer because it depends on what weapon is going to be used and what type of hunting experience the hunter is looking for. Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature buck, while others just want to harvest any legal deer in an area with few hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have high deer densities, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 17. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest deer densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of deer. For other hunters, they would prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also very few hunters.

The information provided in Table 3 provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the 5-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of deer harvested and hunters per square mile. This approach was taken because comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison because GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of deer harvested over the past 5 years during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 663 (Capitol Peak) and 648 (Wynoochee) has been 245 and 284 deer, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests deer densities are quite similar between the two GMUs. However, when harvest is expressed as deer harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, we come up with an estimate of 1.167 in GMU 663 and 0.661 in GMU 648, which suggests deer densities are probably much higher in GMU 663 than they are in GMU 648.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 11 for deer harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of least-ranked sum to largest. Comparisons are pretty straightforward because

bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that are present and should be considered are:

1. GMU 681 has a 2-pt. minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons.
2. GMU 673 has an any buck harvest restriction during the general archery season, while all other GMUs (except 681) have an any deer harvest restriction.

**TABLE 3.** RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS. GMUS BOLDDED ARE OPEN DURING EARLY AND LATE SEASONS FOR THE RESPECTIVE WEAPON TYPE. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A 5-YEAR AVERAGE.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	18	0.353	7	60	1.18	3	30%	1	<b>11</b>
642	278	76	0.273	8	306	1.10	2	25%	2	<b>12</b>
660	302	158	0.523	4	766	2.54	6	21%	3	<b>13</b>
672	257	156	0.607	3	744	2.89	7	21%	3	<b>13</b>
673	266	114	0.429	6	613	2.30	5	19%	4	<b>15</b>
648	431	285	0.661	2	1500	3.48	9	19%	4	<b>15</b>
663	210	245	1.167	1	1335	6.36	10	18%	5	<b>16</b>
638	153	15	0.098	10	108	0.71	1	14%	7	<b>18</b>
658	257	121	0.471	5	750	2.92	8	16%	6	<b>19</b>
681	109	25	0.229	9	172	1.58	4	14%	7	<b>20</b>
ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	10	0.196	3	28	0.55	5	37%	1	<b>9</b>
642	278	15	0.054	7	70	0.25	3	22%	2	<b>12</b>

663	210	83	0.395	1	420	2.00	10	21%	3	14
660	302	36	0.119	4	194	0.64	7	19%	4	15
638	153	3	0.020	8	25	0.16	1	15%	6	15
648	431	43	0.100	5	260	0.60	6	17%	5	16
672	257	61	0.237	2	359	1.40	9	17%	5	16
658	257	5	0.019	9	42	0.16	2	13%	7	18
681	109	9	0.083	6	101	0.93	8	9%	9	23
673	266	5	0.019	10	120	0.45	4	4%	10	24
699	8	0	0.000	11	25	3.13	11	0%	11	33

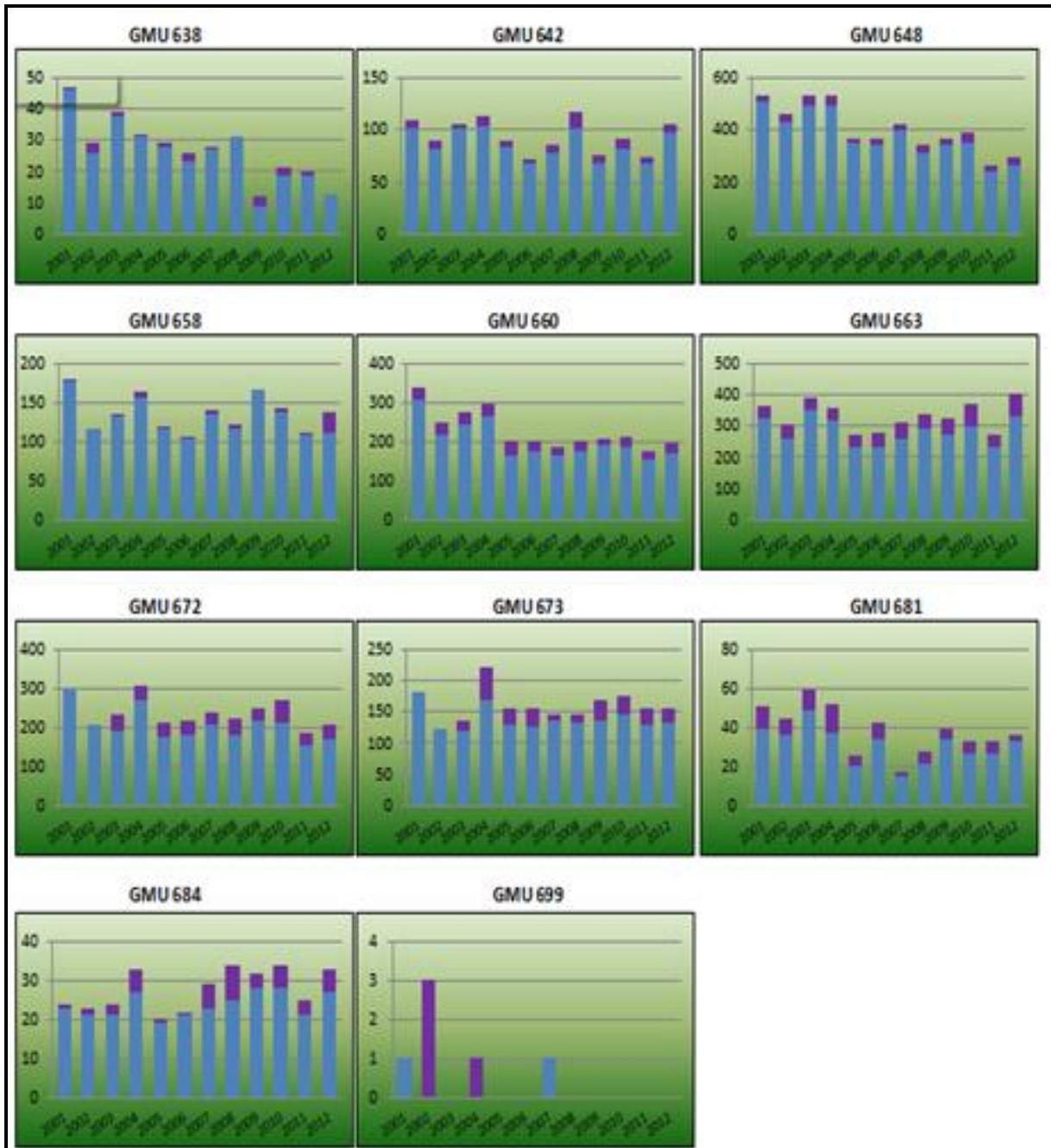
**MUZZLELOADER**

GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
673	266	16	0.060	1	122	0.46	8	32%	1	10
648	431	3	0.007	6	20	0.05	3	16%	2	11
663	210	6	0.029	3	47	0.22	6	13%	3	12
684	51	2	0.039	2	28	0.55	9	12%	4	15
672	257	3	0.012	5	42	0.16	5	7%	5	15
642	278	1	0.004	8	5	0.02	1	6%	6	15
660	302	2	0.007	7	29	0.10	4	7%	5	16
658	257	4	0.016	4	62	0.24	7	5%	7	18
638	153	0	0.000	9	6	0.04	2	0%	8	19

**WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2013 SEASON**

It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 17 where severe winter weather conditions do not occur that result in large winter die-offs. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2012 season.

Hunter numbers also typically do not change dramatically from one year to the next, unless there is a dramatic shift in hunting regulations. Consequently, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Figures 5 through 7 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt in District 17 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.



**Figure 5.** Trends in total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (purple) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2001–2012. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or deer harvested during permit seasons.

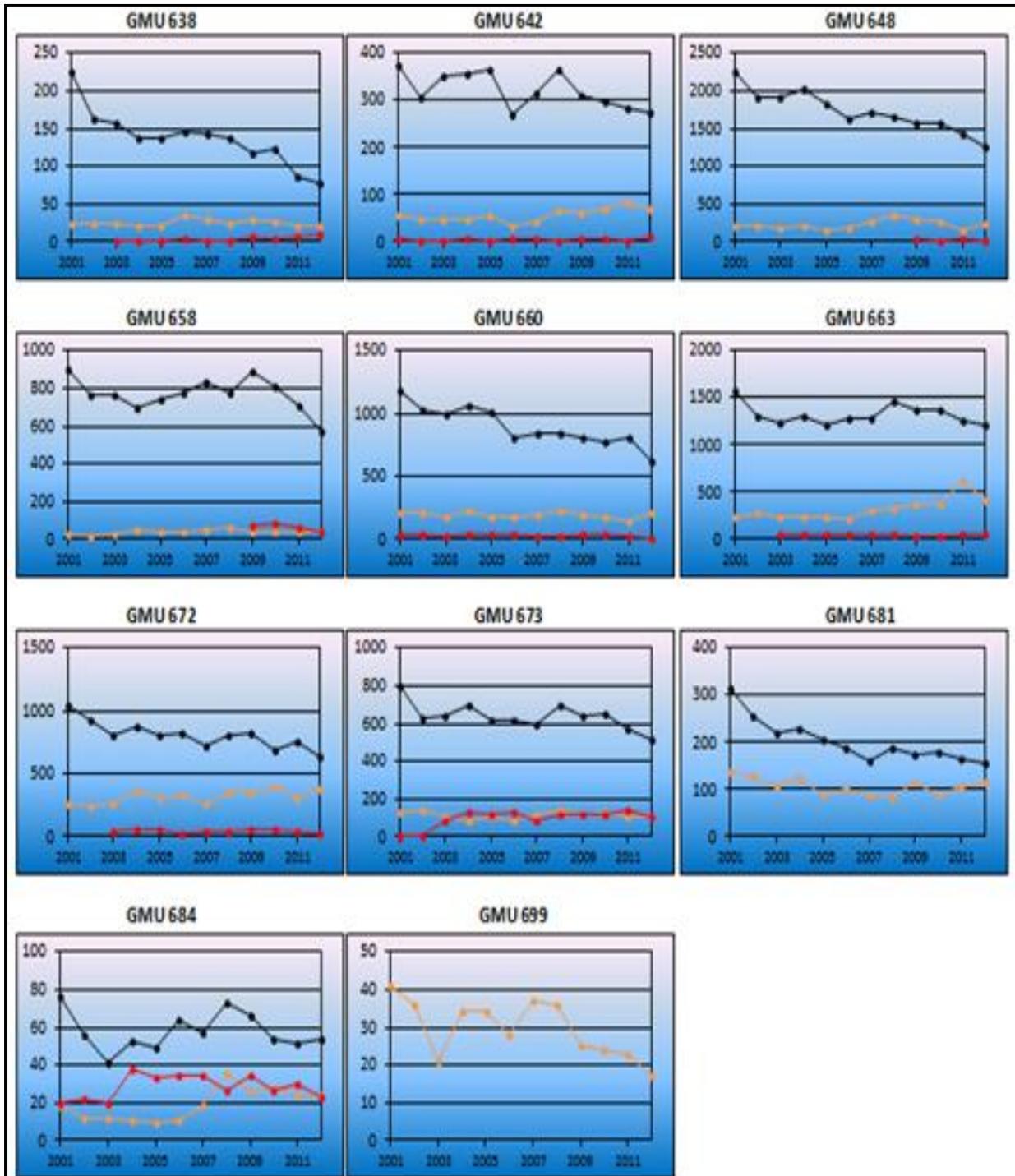
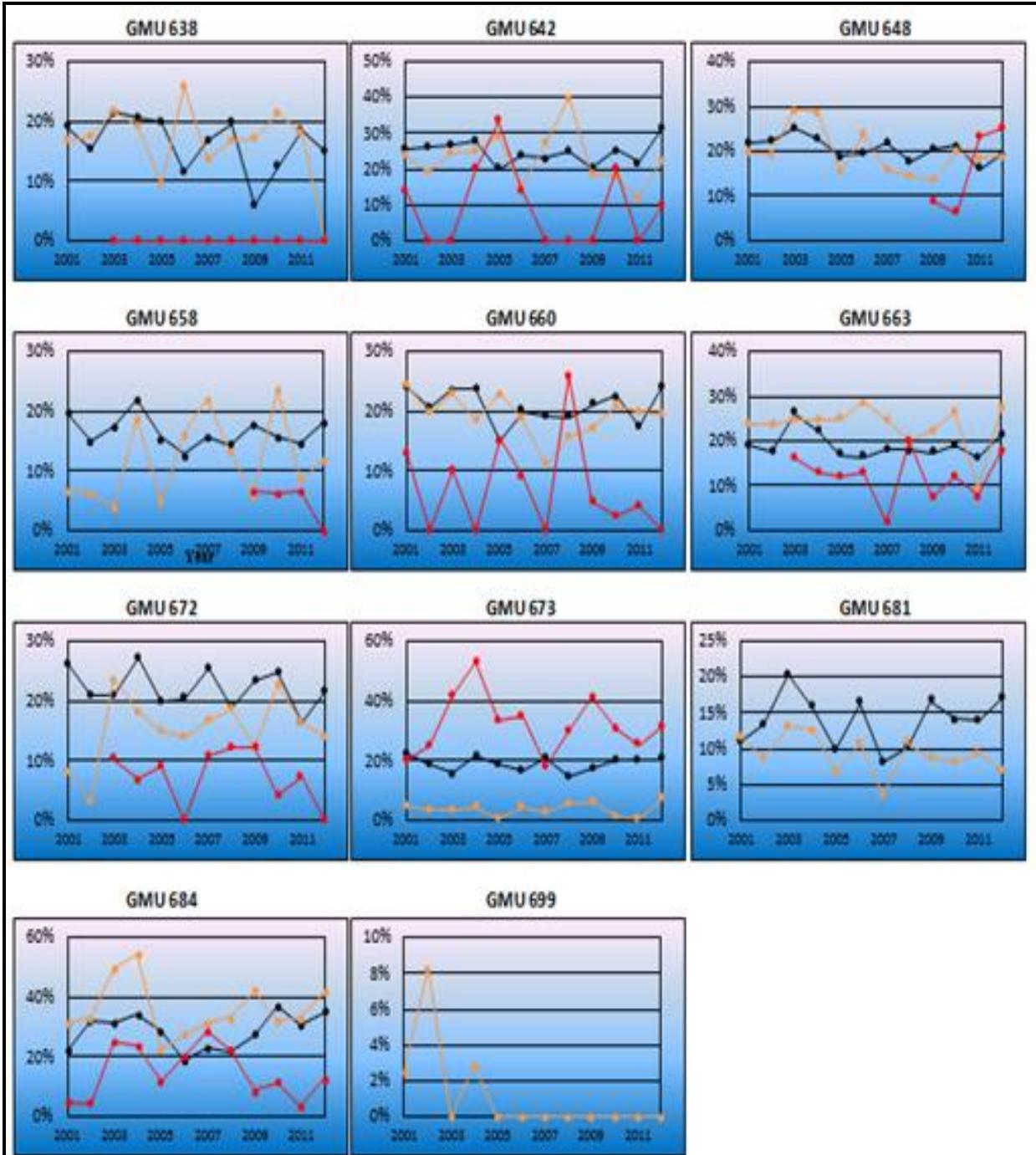


Figure 6. Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (black), archery (orange), and muzzleloader (red) seasons in District 17 GMUs, 2001–2012.



**Figure 7.** Trends in hunter success rates during general modern firearm (black), archery (orange), and muzzleloader (red) seasons in District 17 GMUs, 2001–2012.

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## HOW TO FIND AND HUNT BLACK-TAILS

As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a black-tail in District 17 is scouting. Black-tails occur throughout the District and occur in nearly every habitat type that is present. However, densities do differ among habitat types and the highest deer densities are typically associated with 5 to 7-year old clearcuts because these stands provide large amounts of both cover and food.

Most hunters you see will be hunting in new clearcuts because when deer are present, they are much more visible than in adjacent habitats. However, the deer know that as well and typically only use these stands at night and at dawn and dusk. Therefore, it is advantageous for hunters to seek out areas adjacent to these openings that provide more cover because more likely than not, that is where deer are spending the majority of their day.

If a hunter is seeing large amounts of deer sign in an area, then odds are those deer are not far. To illustrate that point, consider this. Over the past 4 years there have been 15 deer in Capitol Forest that were fitted with GPS collars as part of a larger study throughout western Washington to better understand the effect timber management practices are having on deer survival and recruitment rates. The GPS collars automatically download the deer's location several times throughout the day giving biologists a very in-depth look at their habitat use patterns.

During that time, no deer has used an area larger than 0.38 mi<sup>2</sup> (243 acres) and the average home range size was just 0.14 mi<sup>2</sup> (86 acres). In an entire year's time, there were even some deer that used an area no bigger than 45 acres in size. Thus, if a hunter is seeing sign in an area, but isn't seeing deer, then they need to be patient or change up their approach.

The traditional approaches to hunting black-tails include still-hunting or sitting patiently in high use areas (clearcuts, highly traveled trails, funnels, etc.) until the deer show up. Although these two approaches are highly effective, there is another technique that is not as well-known or utilized as much as it should be. This includes rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks that are fighting over a "hot" doe. This technique is more common with Midwest and eastern white-tailed deer hunters, but can be effective on black-tails as well. A quick Google search on this topic will yield plenty of evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of this technique when conditions are right.

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## DEER AREAS

There are no Deer Areas in District 17.

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## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. Weyerhaeuser Timber Company has made their Pe Ell Operating Area a permit access area and will no longer be allowing general hunter access. The Pe Ell Operating Area includes portions of GMUs 672 and 506. There will be 650 permits available at a cost of

\$200 per permit. For more information go the Weyerhaeuser's website at <http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/> or [click here](#).

## **BEAR**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS**

Black bears occur throughout District 17, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 648 (Wynoochee), 658 (North River), and 660 (Capitol Peak).

District 17 consists of GMUs that are part of the Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU), which is one of ten BBMUs defined by WDFW. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Coastal BBMU are designed to maintain black bear populations at their current level, which is not expected to result in increased impacts to big game herds. The metrics used to direct black bear harvest include: proportion of harvested bears that were female, median age of harvested females, and median age of harvested males.

WDFW does not conduct annual surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size. Instead, we use trends in harvest data as surrogates to formal population estimates or indices. Currently, black bear populations are believed to be stable in District 17.

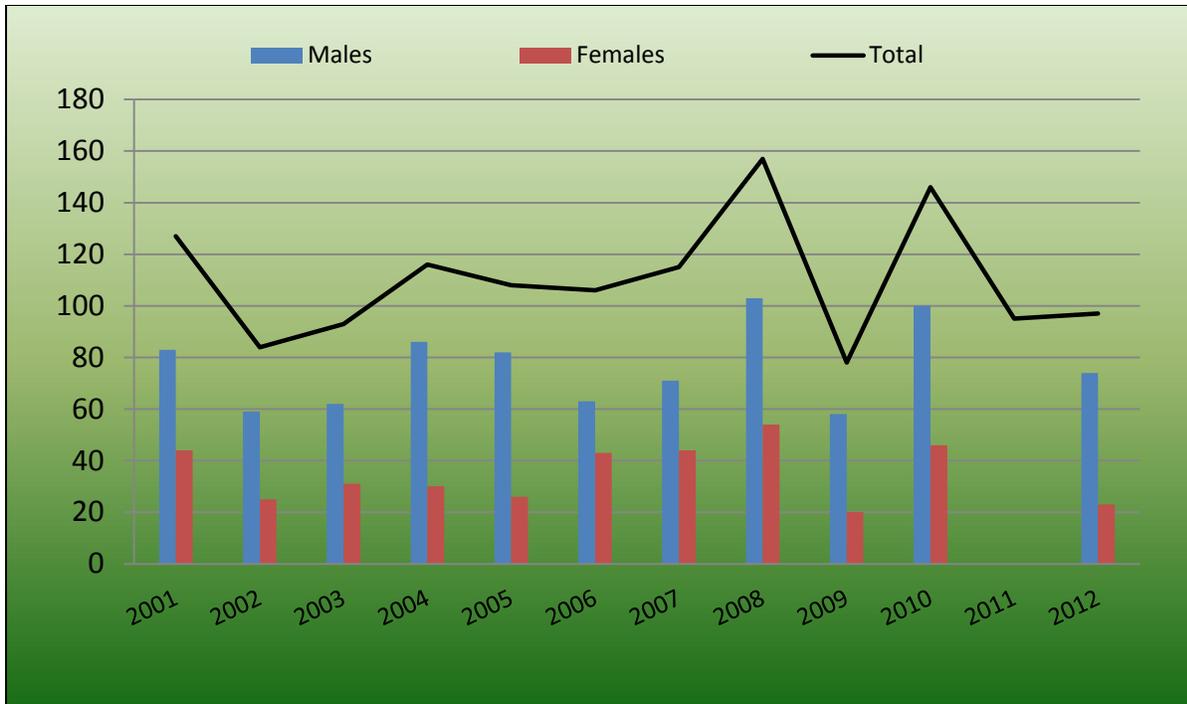
### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2013 SEASON**

Although there are hunters that specifically target black bears, it is suspected most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest can vary quite a bit from one year to the next and overall hunter success is quite low. Since 2001, hunter success in District 17 has averaged just 6% and has never been higher than 7%. However, hunter success is likely higher for those hunters that specifically hunt bears versus those that buy a bear tag in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Overall, annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 17 showed an increasing trend from 2002 to 2008 before it declined sharply during the 2009 season. It rebounded during the 2010 season and was nearly identical in 2011 and 2012 (Figure 8).

At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 648 (Wynoochee), 658 (North River), and 660 (Minot Creek). Harvest numbers during the 2012 season compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages suggests bear harvest has been increasing in GMUs 648 and 658 and stable in GMU 660 (Figure 9).

Hunters should expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2013 season.



**FIGURE 8.** TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 17, 2001–2012. HARVEST ESTIMATES DO NOT INCLUDE BEARS HARVESTED DURING SPRING PERMIT SEASONS IN GMU 642 OR BEARS THAT WERE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY WERE CAUSING DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

### HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

Scouting is an extremely important factor hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 17. Although black bears are extremely common and occur in some areas at very high densities, they are seen infrequently because of the thick vegetation that dominates the landscape.

Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. Hunters should focus their efforts in more open terrain (e.g. clearcuts) because bears have an incredible sense of smell, and in habitats with dense vegetation a bear is likely to smell a hunter well before the hunter knows the bear is there.

Bears can often be located in clearcuts that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs including creeping black berries, alder berries, salmon berries, huckleberries, black berries, and salal berries. During the fall, hunters need to find clearcuts with these characteristics and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If they do find fresh sign, odds are there is a bear in the area that is frequenting that stand often. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they will more than likely get a chance to harvest that bear. Patience is the key.

**NOTABLE CHANGES**

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

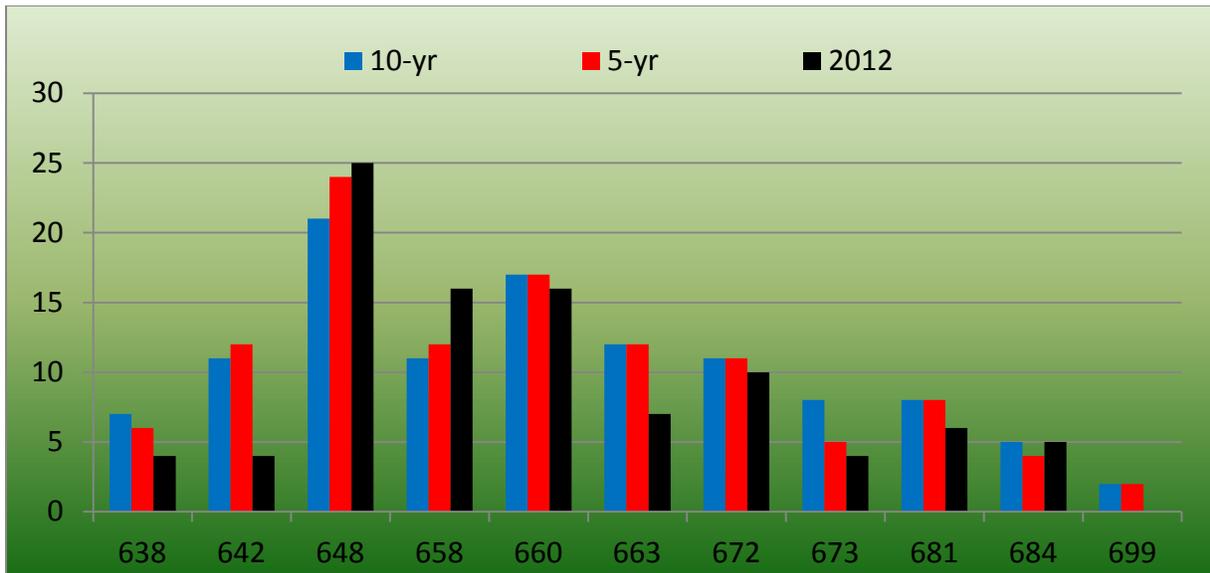


Figure 9. The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2012 general bear season in District 17. Also included is the 10-year and 5-year average for total number of bears harvested in each GMU.

**COUGAR**

**GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS**

Cougars occur throughout District 17, but densities likely vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 17 are managed with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar

population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed the way it managed cougar harvest in Washington. The biggest change was associated with shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougar harvested, and instead use a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to have a longer season, without any weapon restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

To accomplish harvest goals, WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard season dates of September 1 through March 31. Harvest numbers are examined starting January 1 and any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed. If you plan on hunting cougar after January 1, please take a moment to confirm that the cougar season is open in the area you plan to hunt. Harvest quotas for each Hunt Area located in District 17 are provided in Table 4.

For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW’s website or [click here](#).

**TABLE 4. HARVEST GUIDELINES AND 2012 HARVEST LEVELS FOR THE 3 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 17.**

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2012-2013 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	2
642, 648, 651	6-8	10
658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699	9-12	1

**WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2013 SEASON**

Cougar harvest in District 17 is quite variable from year to year (Figure 10). This occurs partly because hound hunting and trapping are not allowed and most cougars are taken opportunistically by deer and elk hunters. Since 2001, the number of cougars harvested in District 17 has averaged just 6 cats and young males typically dominate the harvest. Biologists are unsure of the exact reason, but most cougar harvest in District 17 occurs in GMU 648. In fact, since 2001 cougar harvest in GMU 648 (Wynoochee) has, on average, accounted for 57% of the harvest in District 17. During 2012, there were 10 cougars harvested in GMU 648 which accounted for 83% of the harvest in District 17.

**NOTABLE CHANGES**

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

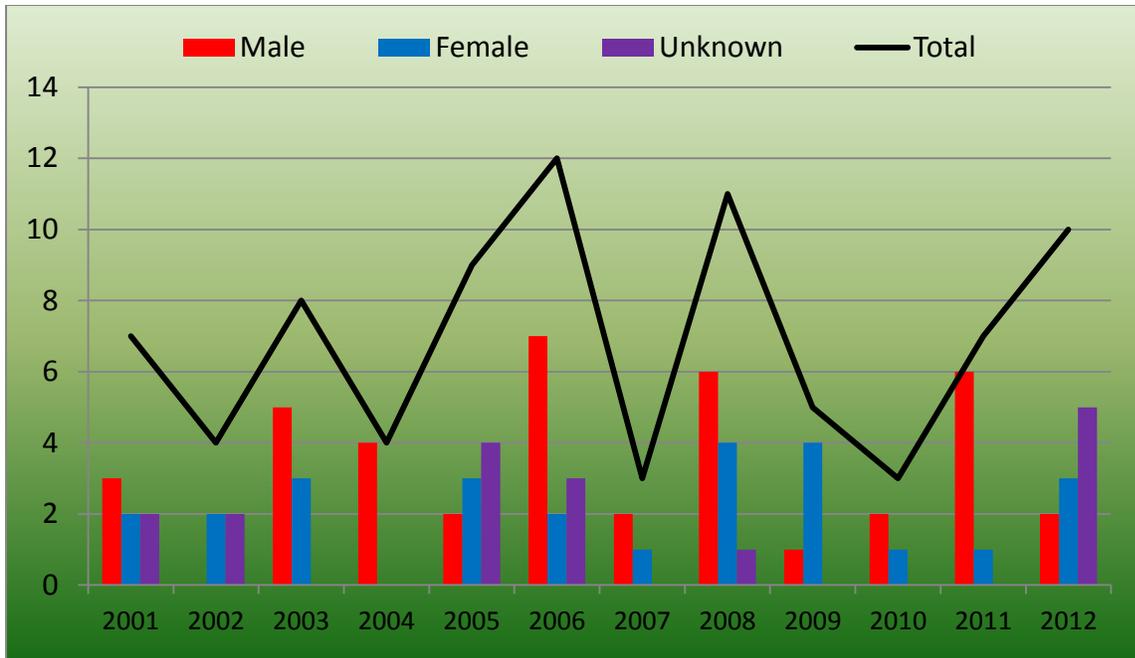


FIGURE 10. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF COUGARS HARVESTED IN DISTRICT 17, 2001–2012.

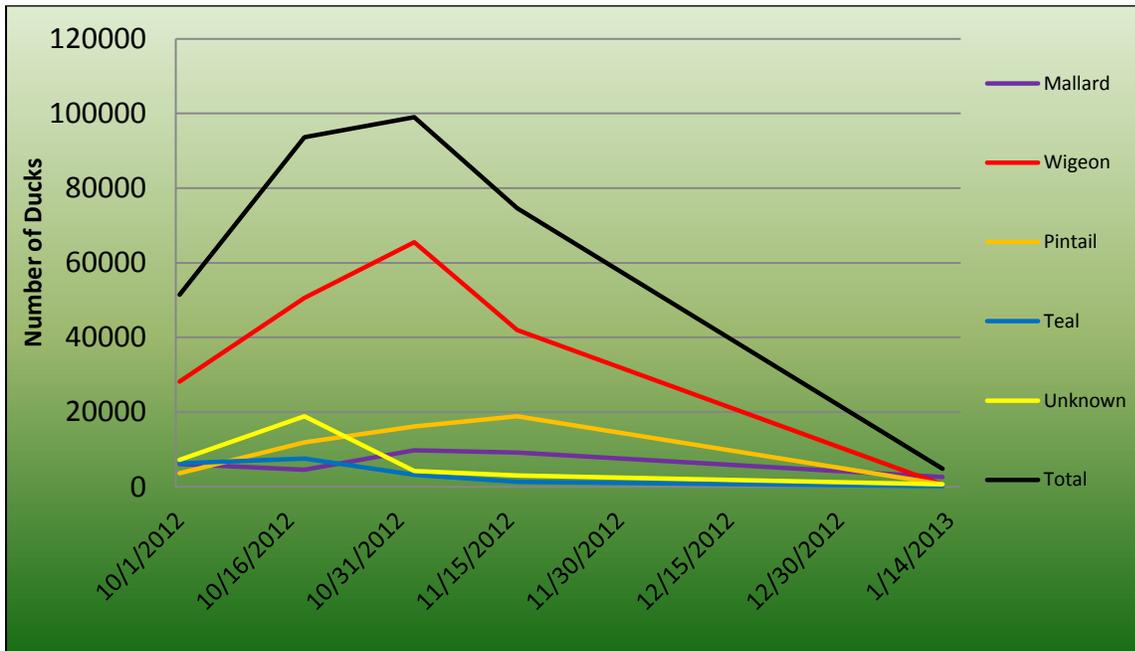
## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 17. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, and common goldeneye are present, but occur in low numbers. Nesting wood ducks can be located in the Chehalis River Valley and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season. Sea ducks including scoters and long-tailed ducks also occur in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, but they are only seen occasionally.

Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically  $\geq 50\%$ ). This is not the case in District 17. Instead, American wigeon is the most abundant species of duck in District 17. During aerial survey flights of Willapa Bay during the 2012 season, American wigeon constituted 50%–60% of the ducks observed (Figure 10), which is representative of what is observed in other parts of District 17. When hunting, hunters should expect harvest opportunities to be dominated by American

wigeon, northern pintail, and mallard. Green-winged teal will also be abundant early in the season but will decrease in numbers as the season progresses.



**FIGURE 11.** TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF DUCKS OBSERVED DURING AERIAL SURVEY FLIGHTS IN WILLAPA BAY DURING SURVEYS THAT WERE COMPLETED OCTOBER 2012 THROUGH JANUARY 2013.

### MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

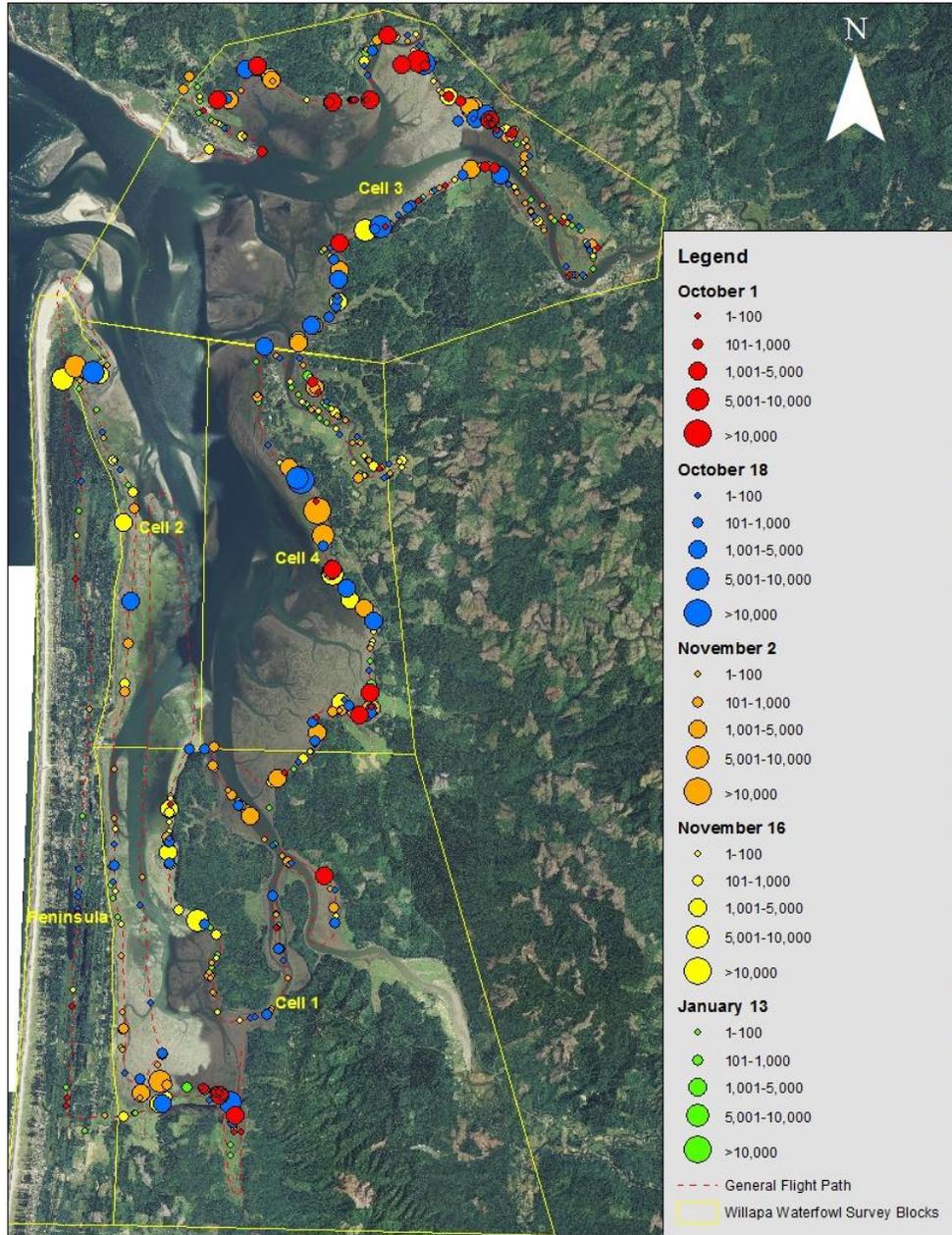
There are very few ducks and geese in District 17 during late-spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds will begin migrating south from Alaska and numbers will continue to increase until they peak in late October and early November. Although migration patterns have not been intensively studied, it is believed ducks use concentration areas in District 17 as resting areas and do not stay in the District for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located in District 17 most likely changes on a daily basis, but begins to decline precipitously when there are no more new migrants coming into the area from Alaska. By the time Christmas comes around, there are typically fewer than 5% of the ducks there were there at the end of October (see Figure 10). In addition, weather does not have the same influence on migration chronology in coastal Washington as it does in eastern Washington. Regardless of the presence or absence of major weather events, duck numbers begin to decline at about the same time each year.

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**CONCENTRATION AREAS**

In general, concentration areas include Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys. Where concentrations occur within these broader areas is dependent on many factors (e.g. hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.) and has the potential to change on a daily basis.

Aerial composition flights were conducted on a bi-weekly basis in Willapa Bay during the 2012 season, and concentration areas occurred in different locations during each of the four flights that were conducted in October and November (Figure 11). Hunters need to spend time scouting a few days before they plan to hunt so they can locate where current concentrations of ducks are occurring.



**FIGURE 12.** THE LOCATION WHERE CONCENTRATIONS OF DUCKS THAT WERE OBSERVED IN WILLAPA BAY DURING AERIAL SURVEY FLIGHTS THAT OCCURRED OCTOBER 2012 THROUGH JANUARY 2013.

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## POPULATION STATUS

Breeding duck populations in western Washington were not monitored until 2010 when WDFW developed and began flying established transects in five select areas of western Washington. Surveys are flown during the month of April. One of the selected areas occurs in District 17 and is associated with the Chehalis River Valley. In 2013, the breeding population in the Chehalis River Valley was estimated at 4,569 ducks and represented a 56% decline from the 2012 breeding population estimate of 10,347 ducks. However, the estimate observed in 2013 was more similar to estimates observed in 2010 (3,875 duck) and 2011 (6,131 ducks).

The number of ducks that occur in District 17 during established hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2013 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 4.5 million ducks which represents a 26% decline from the 2012 estimate of 3.3 million.

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## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2013 PROSPECTS

Even though estimates of breeding populations in Alaska were down in 2013, hunters should still expect great hunting opportunities in District 17 during the 2013 season. Although hunter numbers have remained relatively stable, both the total number of ducks harvested and the number of ducks harvested per hunter day have been increasing since 2009 (Figure 12). Hunters can expect more ducks to be harvested in Grays Harbor County, but there are also generally more hunters and the number of ducks harvested per hunter day tends to be higher in Pacific County.

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## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

How hunters go about hunting ducks is largely dependent on where they choose to hunt. When hunting inland waters associated with ponds and rivers, or feeding areas, traditional setups work the best and birds are most active during early morning and late afternoon as they move from resting areas to feeding areas.

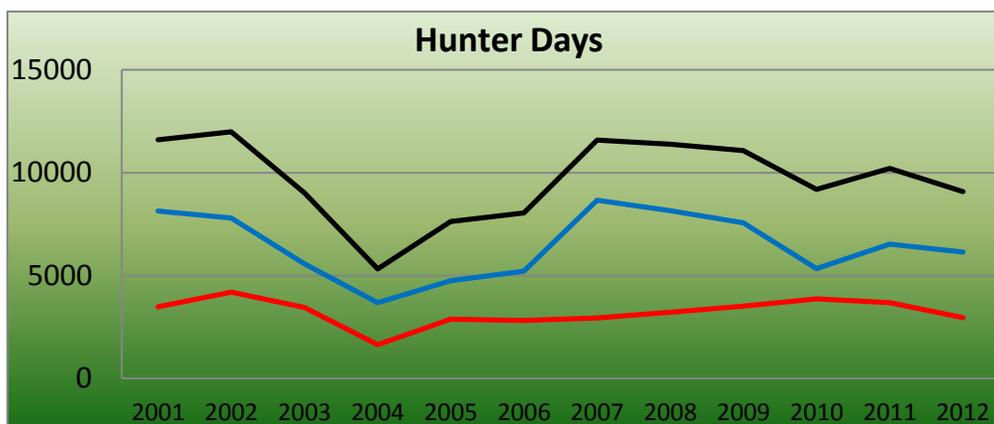
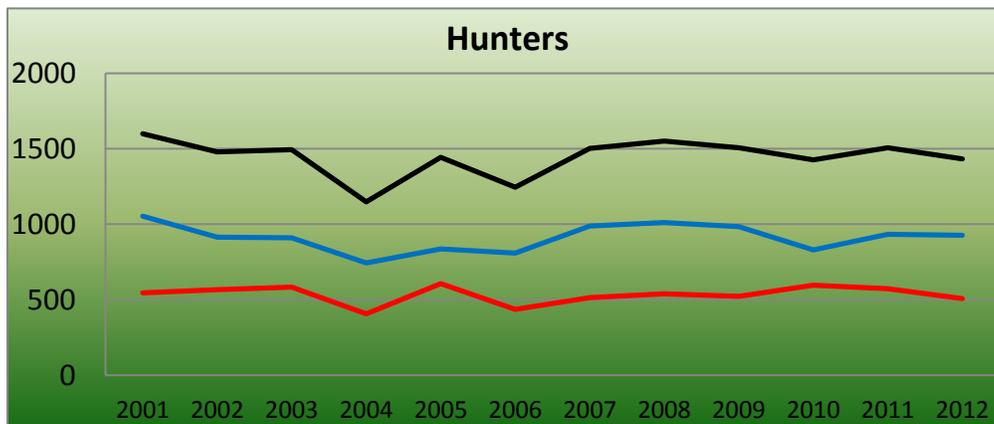
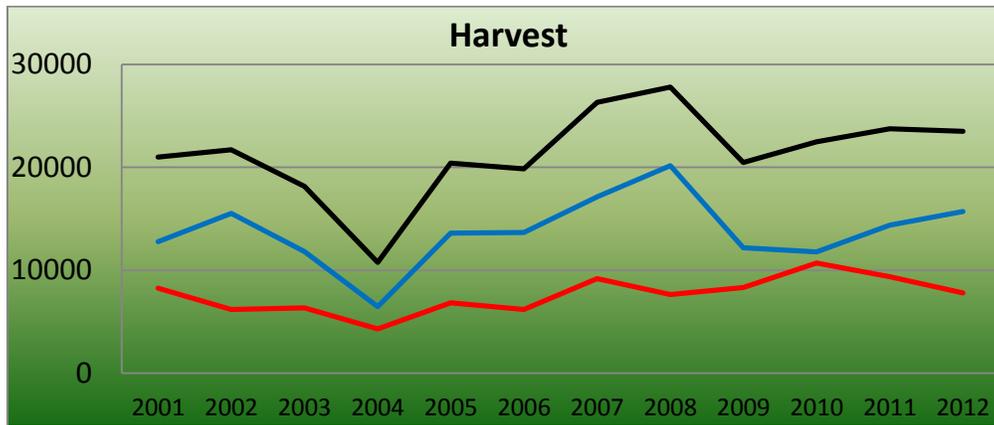
When hunting along the coastline of Willapa Bay or Grays Harbor, hunting success is subject to tidal influences. Birds tend to move very little at low and high tide regardless of what time of day it is, so hunters can expect very little movement at those times. However, also regardless of time of day, bird activity and opportunities increase when the tide is going out or coming in. If the tide is right, hunters can still have a successful hunt at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, which cannot be said in more traditional waterfowl hunting setups where quality hunting opportunities are typically limited to early morning and late afternoon. See [“Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

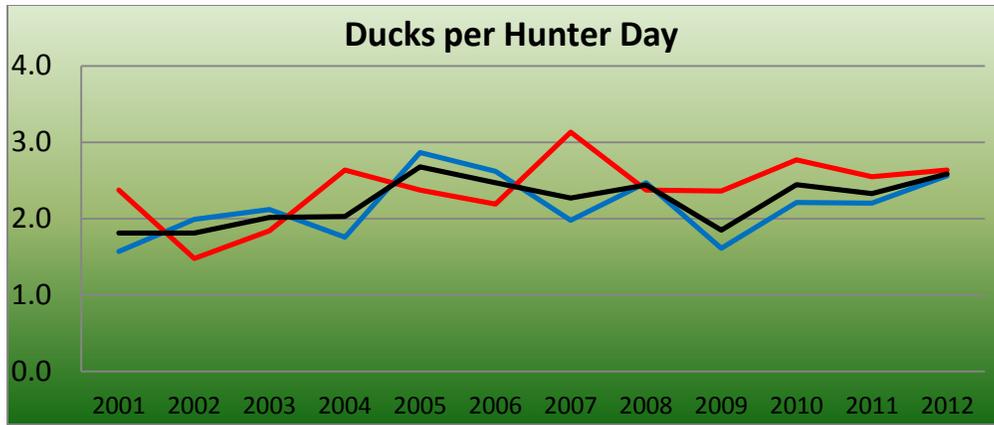
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## PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of WDFW Wildlife Areas in District 17 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities. Figure 13 is intended to provide hunters with the general location of these

Wildlife Areas, but hunters should visit WDFW waterfowl hunting page ([click here](#)) for more detailed information related to their location, current waterfowl management activities, and common species. Other public land opportunities occur on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. For more information about hunting on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, please visit their website or [click here](#).





**FIGURE 13.** TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF DUCK HUNTERS, HUNTER DAYS, TOTAL DUCKS HARVESTED, AND DUCKS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (RED) AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 17 (BLACK), 2001–2012.

FIGURE 14. MAP DEPICTING THE LOCATION OF WDFW WILDLIFE AREAS THAT OFFER WATERFOWL HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES IN DISTRICT 17.





## **GEESE AND BRANT**

### **COMMON SPECIES**

The sub-species of Canada geese that can be found in District 17 include western, dusky, lesser, taverner, Aleutian, Vancouver, and cackler. Large numbers of black brant can be found in Willapa Bay, but usually not until late January and early February.

### **MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS**

The migration chronology of geese in District 17 is nearly identical to that described for ducks with very few geese occurring in the District until migrants begin showing up from Alaska in September. However, one distinct difference between ducks and geese is that goose numbers do not decline as sharply as duck numbers do around the latter half of November. Instead, many geese choose to over-winter in the agricultural areas of the District because there is a consistent food supply. Brant typically are only found in Willapa Bay and do not begin to occur in substantial numbers until the latter half of December or early January.

Goose concentration areas occur in agricultural lands associated with the Willapa and Chehalis River Valleys. Although there are some properties that almost always have geese on them, specific fields where geese congregate to forage changes on a weekly basis. The Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys are not that large so it is not extremely difficult to find where most of the geese are concentrating.

### **POPULATION STATUS**

There are very few geese that breed in District 17 so WDFW does not conduct breeding goose surveys in this part of the state. However, long term goose nest surveys have occurred on portions of the lower Columbia River and have indicated a small, but relatively stable breeding population.

Wintering populations of geese are difficult to survey because they forage in widespread agricultural areas, which make them difficult to locate. Nonetheless the number of geese observed in Washington during the Midwinter-waterfowl survey has been relatively stable since the early 2000s.

### **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2013 PROSPECTS**

Goose hunting opportunities in District 17 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most goose harvest will occur in Grays Harbor County during the late season, but the number of geese harvested per hunter day will be greater in Pacific County

(Figure 14). Hunters should expect to harvest approximately 1 goose during each day hunted during the late season and approximately 1.5 geese during each day hunted during the early goose season. Hunter numbers have been relatively stable since 2008 (Figure 14) and have averaged 2,668 hunters during the late goose season and 344 hunters during the early goose season. There is no reason to anticipate a change in hunter numbers during the 2013 season.

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## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

The techniques employed to harvest geese are pretty standard; find agricultural areas where geese are feeding and set up your spread well before daylight in parts of the fields you expect the geese to concentrate. In District 17, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate are almost exclusively in pastures where there are cow-calf or dairy cattle operations. Because of this, most goose hunting opportunities most often occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting.

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## SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 17 vary by county. Grays Harbor County is part of Goose Management Area (GMA) 3 and Pacific County is part of GMA 2B. In an effort to limit harvest of dusky Canada geese, special regulations apply in GMA 2B which include:

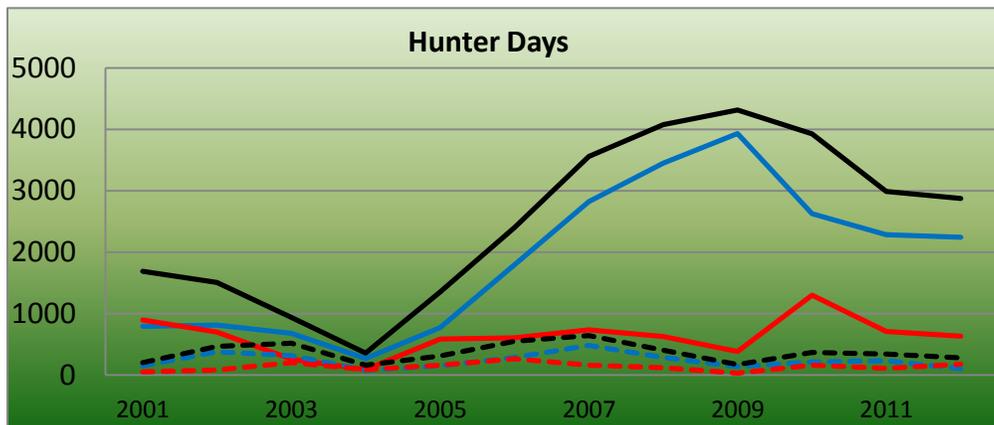
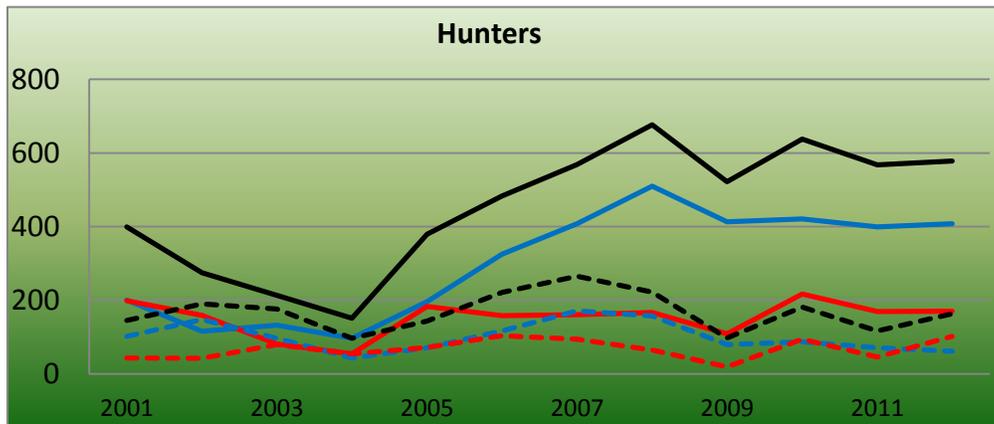
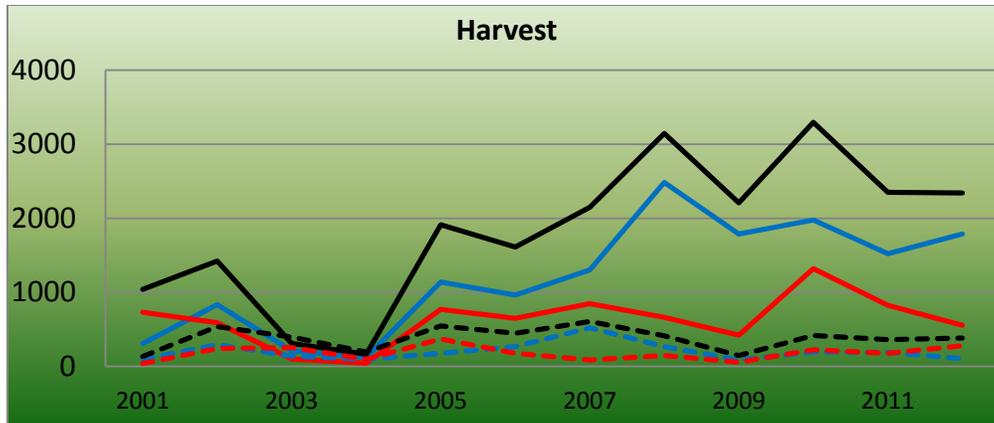
1. Requiring hunters to obtain a special migratory bird hunting authorization which includes passing a goose identification test.
2. Closing the goose season early if total dusky Canada goose harvest in GMAs 2A and 2B, collectively exceeds 40 geese.
3. Requiring hunters to record their daily harvest on a harvest card and having their geese tagged at the nearest check station.
4. Legal hunting hours of 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.
5. Not allowing hunters to hunt once they have harvested a dusky goose.

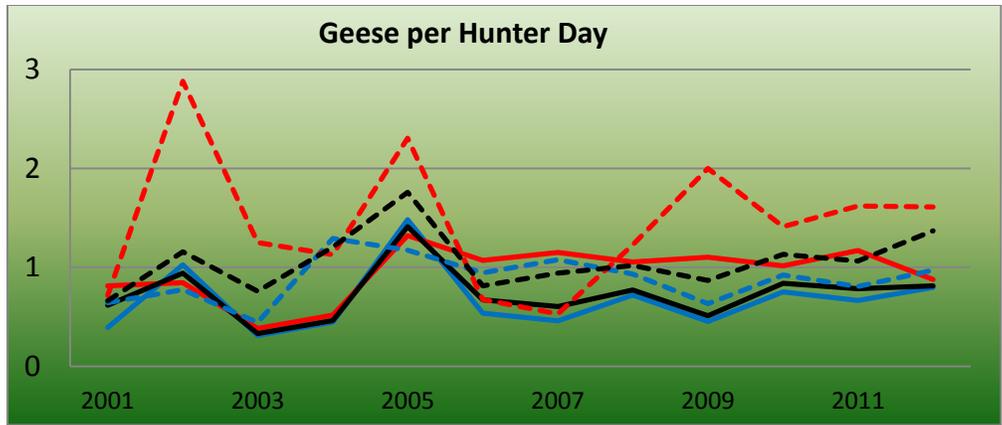
Because these regulations are in place, it is strongly recommended that hunters review the most recent Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet to ensure they are in compliance. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or they can be downloaded from WDFW's website ([click here](#)).

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## PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of Wildlife Areas in District 17 that provide goose hunting opportunities. Please refer to Figure 13 and the Public Land Opportunities in the Duck Section for more details. There are also several landowners that are enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program that provide good opportunities to harvest geese and ducks when the conditions are right. See the Private Lands Access Program section for more details.





**FIGURE 15.** TRENDS IN TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER DAYS, AND GEESSE HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY DURING EARLY (DASHED LINE) AND LATE (SOLID LINE) GOOSE SEASONS IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (RED), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 17 (BLACK), 2001–2012.

## FOREST GROUSE

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are three species of grouse that occur in District 17-- ruffed grouse, blue grouse (sooty), and spruce grouse. Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Spruce grouse can be located in lodgepole pine, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce stands. In District 17, these habitats are only present in parts of the Olympic National Forest located in the northern part of the District (GMU 638). Blue grouse can be found in habitats that occur at elevations between ruffed and spruce grouse habitat, but overlap does occur.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 17. Instead, we use harvest data trends as surrogates to formal population estimates or indices of population size. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trend. In District 17, grouse populations appear to have declined slightly since 2001 as CPUE has slowly declined from 0.32 birds per hunter day to 0.23 birds per hunter day during the 2012 season (Figure 15). However, populations appear to be more stable in Pacific County.

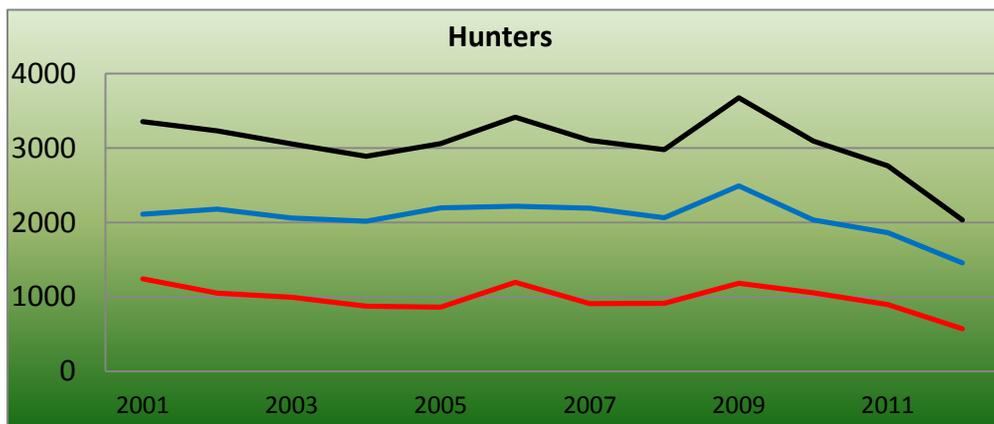
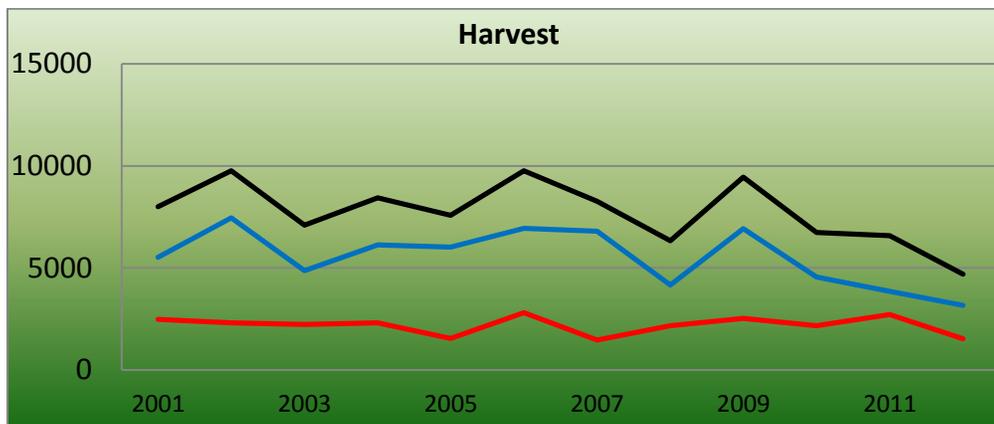
**HARVEST TRENDS AND 2013 PROSPECTS**

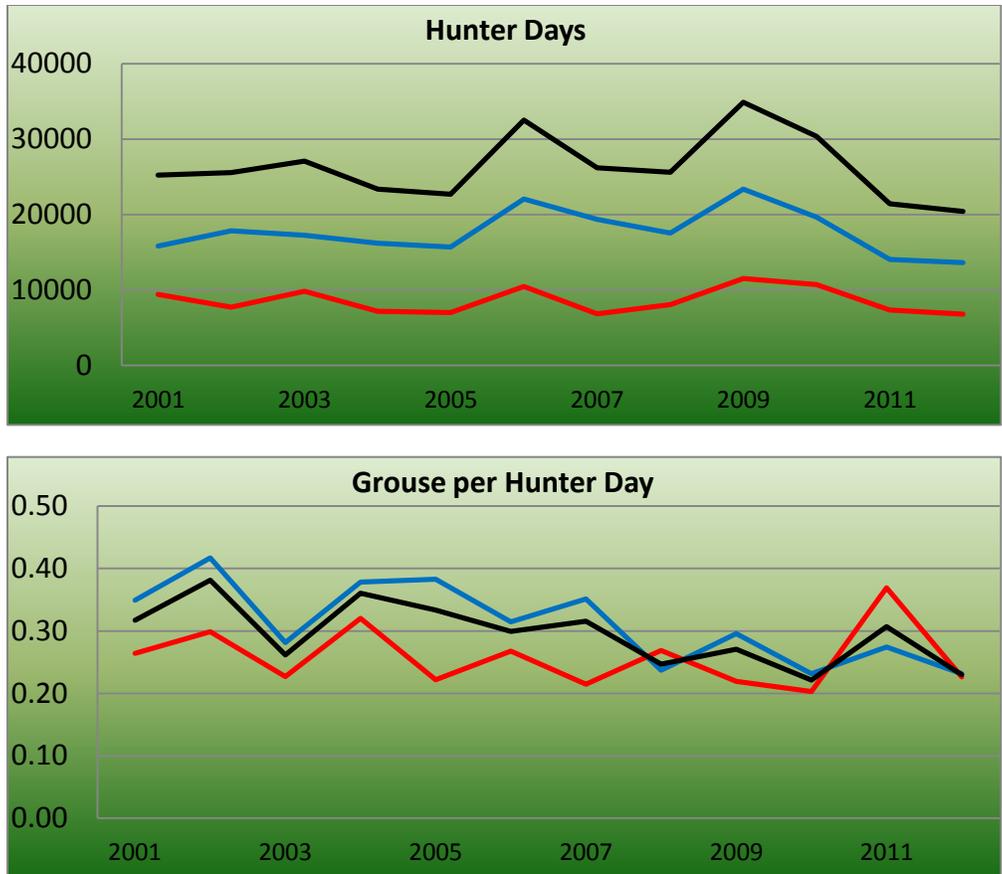
The total number of grouse harvested in District 17 has gradually been declining since 2001. However, so have hunter numbers, especially over the past few years. However, those observed trends are mostly related to harvest and hunter numbers in Grays Harbor County because harvest in Pacific County has varied little over the last decade.

Regardless of where they hunt, hunters should expect to bag somewhere between 0.2 and 0.3 grouse per day hunted.

**HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT**

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 17 is by walking roads and shooting them as they flush or after they roost in a nearby tree. Grouse tend to occur in higher densities along roads that do not receive as much vehicular traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates and roads that have been decommissioned by the respective landowner. To learn more about how to hunt Washington’s grouse species please visit WDFW’s upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).





**FIGURE 16.** TRENDS IN TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER DAYS, AND GROUSE HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY DURING GROUSE SEASONS IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (RED), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 17 (BLACK), 2001–2012.

## PHEASANTS

There are no viable populations of wild pheasants in District 17. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 17 are associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program. The primary intent of this program is to provide an upland bird hunting opportunity and to encourage participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, 30,000 to 40,000 pheasants are released at 25 sites and two of those sites (Chehalis River and Chinook) occur in District 17. The Chinook Release Site is located in Pacific County and the Chehalis River Release Site is located in Grays Harbor County. **As a reminder, the Raymond Airport Pheasant Release Site was closed following the 2011 season.**

Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply when hunting on western Washington pheasant release sites. Most notably, hunters are required to purchase a western Washington pheasant license, non-toxic shot is required, and hunting is only allowed between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. To locate maps for the Chehalis River and Chinook Release Sites and learn more about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program [click here](#).

## QUAIL

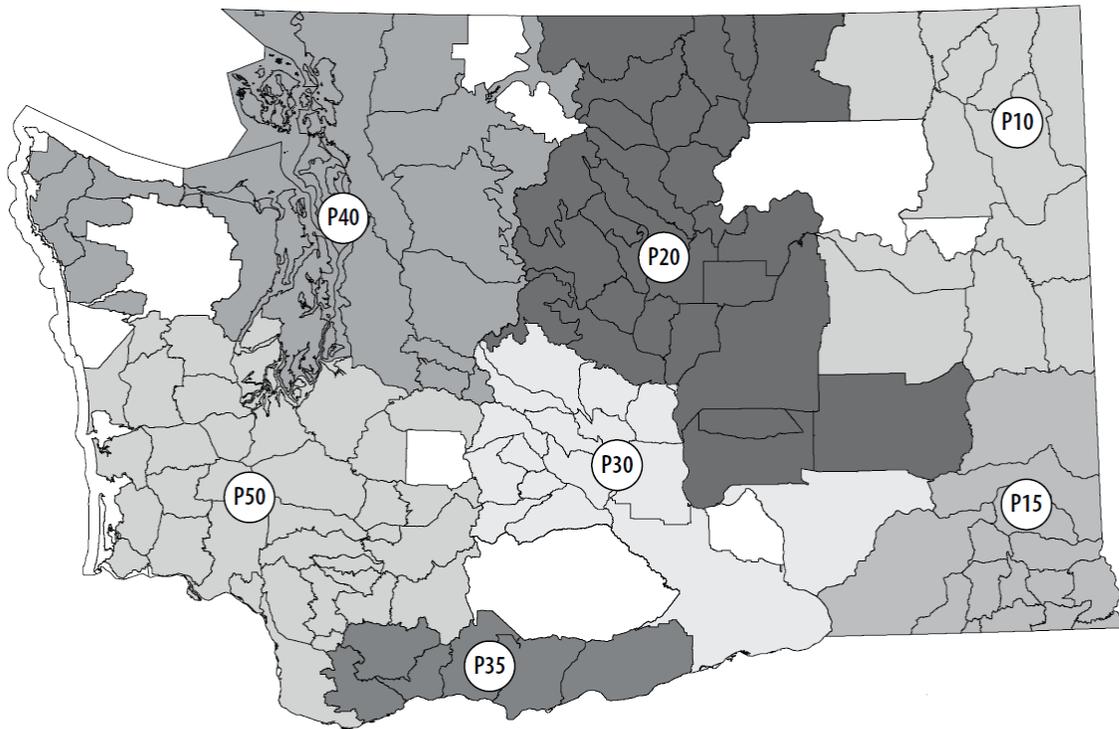
Mountain quail occur in District 17, but there are no sizable populations and sightings are extremely rare. When they do occur, it is usually in 5-10 year old clear cuts that have abundant shrub cover and pine saplings. Other sightings usually occur in association with brushy cover adjacent to agricultural settings. Since 2001, annual harvest and hunter numbers have averaged just 96 birds and 26 hunters.

## TURKEYS

The turkeys that can be found in District 17 are Eastern Wild Turkeys. Approximately, 400 Eastern Wild Turkeys were introduced into southwest Washington from 1987-2000. Introduction programs have been discontinued because populations did not appear to expand and habitat suitability models indicated southwest Washington habitats were not likely to support viable turkey populations.

There are no sizable turkey populations that exist in District 17. In fact, District 17 is part of Turkey Population Management Unit 50, which consists of more than 35 GMUs (Figure 16), but has only averaged an annual harvest rate of 62 turkeys since 2001. If hunters review harvest reports from 2001-2012, they will see hunter success rates have been steadily increasing in PMU 50. However, that trend has occurred because the number of hunters has been declining and not because harvest has been increasing.

If hunters are determined to attempt to harvest a turkey in District 17, the only area known to hold a sizable number of birds is in the Willapa River Valley on Department of Natural Resources lands in the southern part of GMU 672 (Fall River). All other flocks known to occur in District 17 are small (10-15 birds), occur on private agricultural lands, and based on their behavior, are thought to be pen-raised birds that were released by adjacent landowners that no longer wanted to take care of them.



**FIGURE 17.** MAP DEPICTING WDFW’S SEVEN WILD TURKEY POPULATION MANAGEMENT UNITS.

## **BAND-TAILED PIGEONS**

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Band-tailed pigeons (“band-tails”) are the largest species of pigeon in North America. They inhabit mountainous forests in the western U.S., with large coastal populations occurring from British Columbia south to northern California. During the breeding season (April to September), band-tailed pigeons are found below 1,000 feet elevation. In autumn, they feed mainly on berries, nuts, grains, acorns and fruits.

### **POPULATION STATUS AND TREND**

WDFW monitors band-tail populations using a standardized population index survey. These surveys occur at 15 mineral sites where band-tails are known to congregate. Since WDFW initiated the standardized mineral site survey, the population index indicates band-tail populations have fluctuated through the years, but have never declined to levels that would warrant more limited harvest opportunities (Figure 17).

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### **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2013 PROSPECTS**

Band-tailed pigeon harvest in District 17, and statewide, showed an increasing trend until it declined sharply following the 2009 season. However, this decline in harvest was associated with a similarly sharp decline in hunter numbers so harvest declines are not believed to be associated with a similarly sharp decline in population size. Harvest in District 17 has, on average, accounted for 30% of the statewide harvest. Annual harvest in Grays Harbor County has averaged 80 birds since 2002, which is the highest average annual harvest among the 19 counties where band-tails are harvested. The next closest average annual harvest occurs in Pacific County, with an average annual harvest of 52 birds.

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### **WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS**

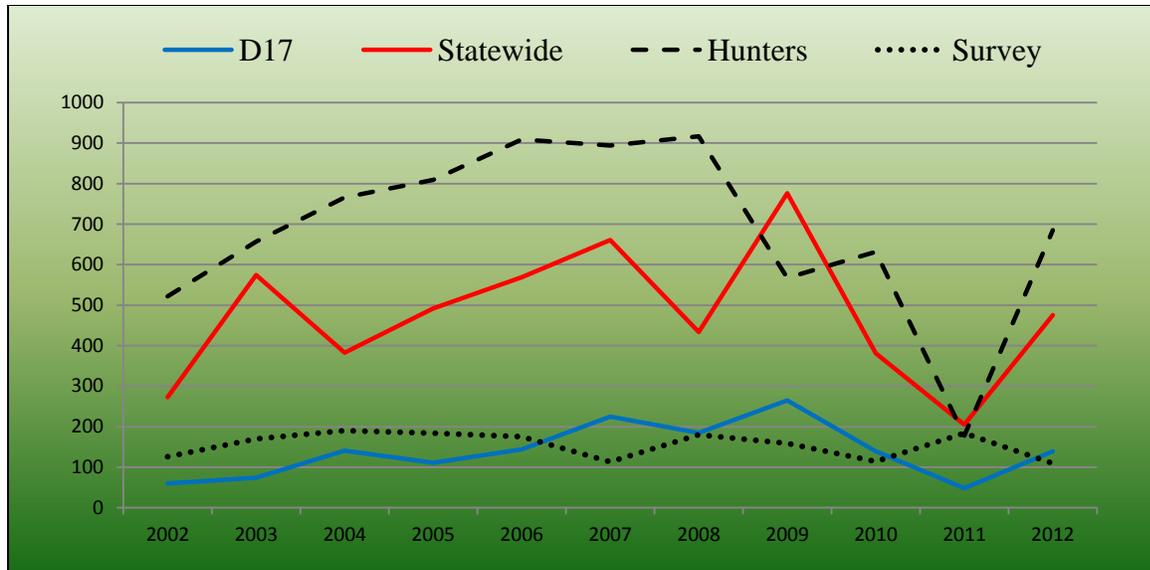
Often times, band-tailed pigeons congregate in areas with red elderberry, which are typically most abundant in 5–10 year old clearcuts. Hunting can be exceptionally good in these areas. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting because it is hard to predict which clearcuts will be used by band-tails. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites and then sit patiently and wait for pass shooting opportunities as they occur.

As indicated by the mineral site survey WDFW uses to monitor trends in population size, band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. In addition, they show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. However, many of these sites are difficult to find because they are not abundant and occur in obscure areas. If hunters are lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails are congregating, they will likely have success hunting these locations for years to come.

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### **SPECIAL REGULATIONS**

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters have been required to purchase a migratory bird authorization and report their harvest using harvest cards and submit that information to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 2013 as well. At the time of this writing, 2013 seasons had not been set, but hunters can expect a 9-day season that occurs in mid to late September, which has been the standard the past several years. Hunters should review the 2013 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet once it becomes available to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.



**FIGURE 18.** BAND-TAILED PIGEON HARVEST TRENDS IN DISTRICT 17 AND STATEWIDE SINCE 2002. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE NUMBER OF HUNTERS AND THE MEAN NUMBER OF BAND-TAILED PIGEONS OBSERVED AT EACH OF THE MINERAL SITES VISITED DURING STANDARDIZED SURVEYS, 2002–2012.

### **OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES**

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 17, but were not covered in detail include cotton-tail rabbits, snow-shoe hares, coyotes, beaver, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional migratory birds include snipe and coot. Crows are also abundant in District 17.

### **MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS**

Unfortunately, District 17 is not well known for its large amount of public land opportunities. However, public land opportunities do exist on lands administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), WDFW, and Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties.

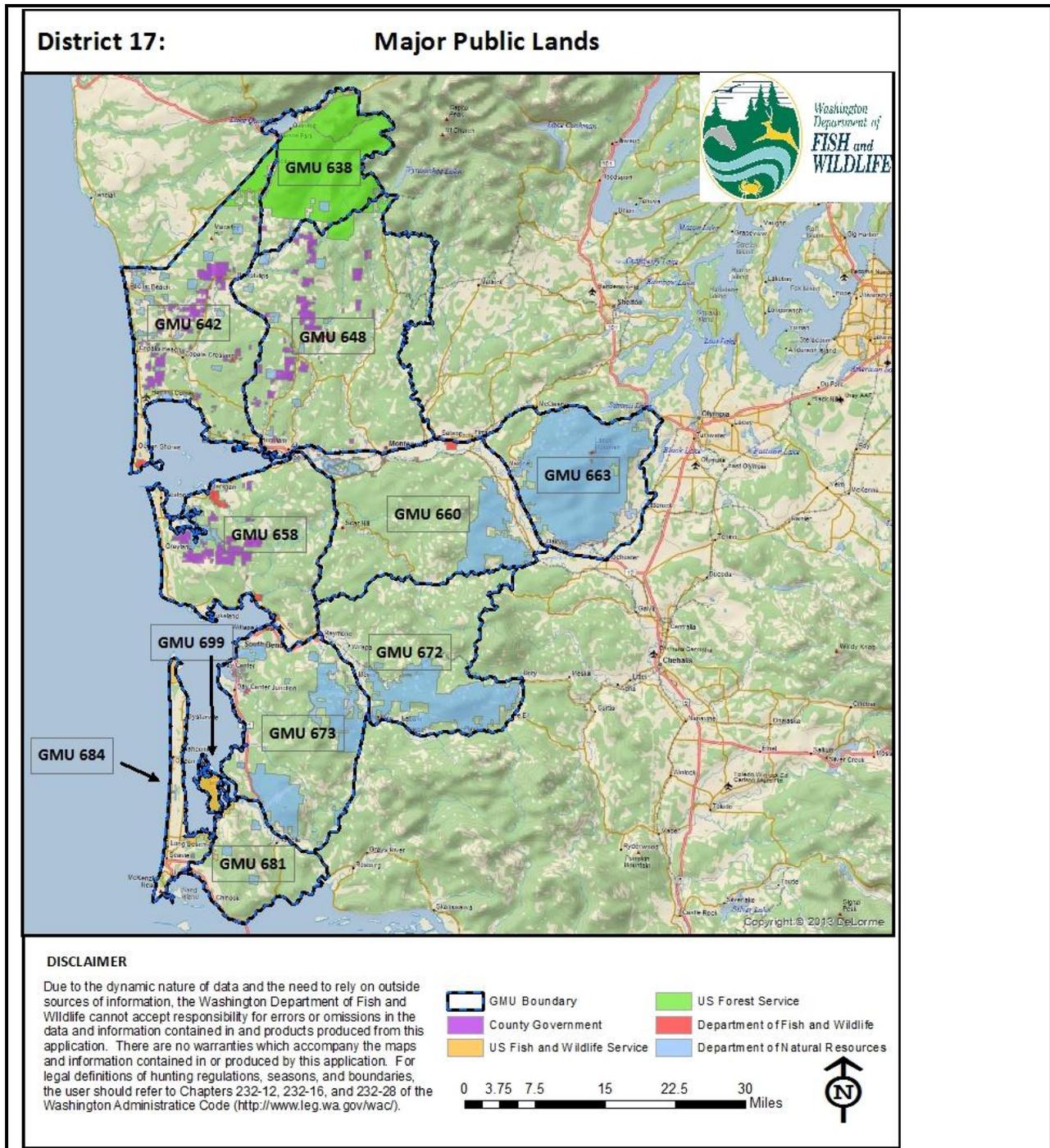
GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include GMU 638 (Quinault Ridge) and GMU 663 (Capitol Peak) (Figure 18). Large tracts of DNR lands also occur in GMUs 660 (Minot Peak), 672 (Fall River), and 673 (Williams Creek). The USFWS Willapa National Wildlife

Refuge occurs in portions of GMUs 681 (Bear River) and 684 (Long Beach). GMU 699 (Long Island) is what its name implies, an island, and the entire GMU is part of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (Figure 18).

The majority of all other public land opportunities in District 17 occur primarily on WDFW Wildlife Areas or on lands managed by Pacific and Grays Harbor Counties. For more information related to the location of WDFW Wildlife Areas, see Figure 13 and visit the WDFWs hunting access website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting\\_access/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/) or by [clicking here](#).

For more information on resources available to locate public lands please see the Online Tools and Maps section below.





**FIGURE 19.** MAP DEPICTING THE LOCATION OF PUBLIC LANDS WITHIN EACH DISTRICT 17 GMU THAT ARE OPEN TO PUBLIC ACCESS.

## **PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big-game and upland birds, occur on private industrial forestlands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Hancock, Green Diamond, Campbell Group, and Bascom Pacific. However, hunters should be aware that there are many other smaller timber companies that have operations in District 17, but are not mentioned here.

WDFW recognizes that some of the best hunting opportunities occur on private industrial forestlands and works cooperatively with private timber companies to maintain reasonable public access during established hunting seasons. Private industrial forestlands have always been open for public access, but hunters should always remember they are being granted access to private property and access to that property is a privilege.

Recently, there has been an increasing trend of timber companies restricting public access and shifting towards a permit or “pay-to-play” system to limit the number of hunters that hunt on their lands. One of the primary reasons for access restrictions and loss of access is hunter disrespect of the landowner’s rules. When hunting on private industrial forest lands, WDFW reminds hunters to remember the following.

#### **HUNTING ON PRIVATE LANDS IS A PRIVILEGE, SO TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT**

- ✓ **Obey Posted Signs**
- ✓ **Leave Gates As You Found Them**
- ✓ **Pack Out Your Trash**
- ✓ **Be Courteous**

### **BASIC ACCESS RULES**

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forestlands vary by Timber Company. WDFW encourages hunters to make sure they are aware of the rules in areas they plan to hunt. Most timber companies provide these rules on their website or will provide them to hunters who call to inquire about access (see below for contact information). However, hunters are encouraged to follow these basic rules if they find themselves in an area they are not familiar with and are in doubt about specific landowners rules. The following are intended to be a general guideline of the basic access rules that are common-place on many private industrial forestlands. Timber companies may have more or less restrictive rules in place and ultimately, it is the hunter’s responsibility to make sure they are familiar with those rules.

- ✓ Respect the land owner and other users.
- ✓ Obey all posted signs.
- ✓ Drive slow with headlights turned on when driving on roads opened to public access.

- ✓ Avoid areas of active logging.
- ✓ No camping, littering, ORV's, off road driving, target shooting or forest product removals. Exceptions: mushrooms and berries for personal use.
- ✓ An open gate does not mean the road is open to public motorized access.
- ✓ Gate closures apply to all motorized vehicles including motorcycles and quads. This includes vehicles with electric motors.

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS ALLOWED BY MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

### **Hancock**

Hancock industrial forestlands have different levels of access based on management area. Hunters should contact the phone number below for the area they are interested in hunting. All Hancock industrial forestlands in GMUs 658 (North River), 673 (Williams Creek), and 681 (Bear River) are only open to non-motorized access. During modern firearm seasons they will open some key main lines to disperse hunters and allow access to interior areas.

### **Rayonier**

Rayonier currently has three levels of access: permit, lease, and general public. For permit and lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and or lease holders and is subject to rules established by Rayonier. People found in these areas that do not have appropriate permission can be prosecuted for trespass and or receive a *Persona non grata* from Rayonier. One misconception that many hunters have is that areas that are part of the lease system that are not leased for the a specific season are open to public access. This is false. All areas under the permit or lease system are closed to non-permit holders for all means of access.

Areas open for public use are managed under the dot system. Overall, hunters have access to over 300,000 acres in region 6 that are not included in the permit or lease system. They will green dot some of the red dot roads for the modern firearms season. District 17 GMU's that have lease and permit access areas include 638 (Quinault Ridge), 642 Copalis), 648 (Wynoochee), 658 (North River), 673 (Williams Creek), and 681 (Bear River).

### **Green Diamond**

Green Diamond manages hunter access using the dot system. All of their lands are currently open to non-motorized public access. As hunting seasons approach they will usually begin opening additional roads to public access.

### **Campbell Group**

Campbell Group also uses the dot system to manage hunter access, but in general, they are very good about posting rules at their gates. The Elk River "A" line in GMU 658 (North River), will normally open after the fall rains start.

## Weyerhaeuser

Weyerhaeuser currently has three levels of access: permit, lease, and general public. For permit and lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and or lease holders and is subject to rules established by Weyerhaeuser. People found in these areas without the appropriate permissions can be prosecuted for trespass and or receive a *Persona nongrata* from Weyerhaeuser. One misconception that many hunters have is that lease areas that are not leased are open to public access. This is false. All areas under the permit or lease system are closed to non-permit holders for all means of access.

Weyerhaeuser has made their Pe Ell Operating Area a permit access area and will no longer be allowing general hunter access. The Pe Ell Operating Area includes portions of GMUs 672 and 506. There will be 650 permits available at a cost of \$200 per permit. For more information go the Weyerhaeuser's website at <http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/> or [click here](#).

Areas open for public use are managed under the dot system. The majority of Weyerhaeuser lands within District 17 will be open to public access with a mixture or roads opened to motorized access.

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## HEADS UP FOR ARCHERY AND MUZZLELOADER HUNTERS

Private timber companies have traditionally opened their lands to modern firearm hunters during established seasons. Archery and muzzleloader hunters should be aware they may not have full access, and access levels during their respective seasons varies by year and by landowner. Most often, access is influenced by industrial fire classification issued by DNR. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by adhering to any access restrictions they have in place.

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## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE "DOT" SYSTEM

The Dot system is used by several timber companies in District 17. Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Green Diamond, and Campbell Group all use this system. The Dot system is a system of colored Dots posted at the start of a road to indicate what level of access is allowed beyond that point. It is intended to give the public a clear understanding of what roads are open to public motorized access.

Normally under the dot system, access is granted for daylight hours only. Landowners usually understand that some hunters will go in an hour or so early to get to their hunting areas and sometimes they may come out a little late. Hunters should always stop and read signs. While several landowners use the Dot system they all have their own minor differences. In some cases landowners will close gates in the evenings to prevent unauthorized access.

- Red Dot – no motorized access
- Yellow Dot – Motorized access on weekends only

- Green Dot – Motorized access for licensed vehicle on maintained roads
- No Dot – Some land owners use this. It means the same as a Red Dot.

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES**

Some landowners have hotline and or web sites where hunter can find information about public access. However, it is important to realize they do not have staff dedicated to answering hunter questions. Hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) if they have questions related to public access on private industrial forest lands.

Timber Company	GMUs	Phone Number	Website
Hancock	658, 673, 681	1-360-795-3653	<a href="https://hancockrecreationnw.com/">https://hancockrecreationnw.com/</a>
Hancock	All other GMUs	1-800-782-1493	<a href="https://hancockrecreationnw.com/">https://hancockrecreationnw.com/</a>
Rayonier	All	1-360-533-7000	<a href="http://www.rayonierhunting.com/">http://www.rayonierhunting.com/</a>
Green Diamond	All	1-360-426-3381	None specific to hunter access
Weyerhaeuser	All	1-800-636-6531	<a href="http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/">http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/</a>

**GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU**

One of the most common questions we get from hunters is “What is hunter access like in GMU [enter GMU number]?” Generally, this question is referring to the amount of motorized access and not access in general. It is important to differentiate the two because in general, hunters enjoy a high level of access in all District 17 GMUs. However, type of access varies between motorized and non-motorized access.

The following rating system was developed for District 17 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they are thinking of hunting. For the purposes of this exercise, access ratings are specific to the level of motorized access that is allowed and does not refer to the level of access in general. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, and poor with the level of access associated with each rating as follows:

- **Excellent**---most if not all of the main logging roads are open, as well as, most of the spur roads.
- **Good**---There is a mix of open and closed roads with most main logging roads open, but many of the spur roads are closed to motorized access.
- **Poor**---Most of the GMU is closed to motorized access, but is open to non-motorized access.

Information provided is a brief description of major landowners and the level of motorized access a hunter can expect. Access rules change through the seasons and vary by year. Information is updated when available. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Region 6

office in Montesano (360-249-4628) if they have questions related to hunter access that have not been answered.

**GMU 638 – Quinault**

Access rating = Good

The majority of GMU 638 is associated with the Olympic National Forest and managed by the U.S. National Forest Service. There are numerous small landowners in areas outside of the National Forest. Much of the more productive areas of this GMU are private lands that are not considered industrial forest lands. The Quinault valley is not recommended for hunters who are not familiar with land ownership boundaries. Rayonier also has some leased access areas that are signed.

**GMU 642 – Copalis**

Access rating = Good

The primary landowner in this GMU is Rayonier and they manage access using the dot system. However, Rayonier also has several leased access areas in this GMU.

**GMU 648 – Wynoochee**

Access Rating = Poor

Overall, GMU 648 consists mostly of private industrial forestlands, but there are also several smaller landowners. Primary landowners in GMU 648 include Weyerhaeuser, Rayonier, Green Diamond, Fruit Growers, Grays Harbor County, and Campbell Group. A portion of the GMU comprises the Hoquiam and Aberdeen watersheds, which are closed to all public access. In addition, several landowners have a cooperative road management agreement with WDFW. . Hunters should be advised to read and follow all posted signs. Rayonier also has a few leased access areas in this GMU that are signed.

**GMU 658 – North River**

Access rating = Good

Primary land owners are Hancock, Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Grays Harbor County, Campbell Group, Green Diamond and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Overall, access is good, but will vary among landowners. The majority of Hancock property will be gated, but some main logging roads will be open during the general modern firearm season. DNR lands in this GMU are surrounded by private forest lands, but are accessible by non-motorized access across private timber lands. Rayonier does have some leased access areas that are signed.

**GMU 660 – Minot Peak**

Access rating = Excellent

The primary landowners in GMU 660 are Weyerhaeuser and DNR. Most roads are open, and access is managed using the dot system. .

**GMU 663 – Capitol Peak**

Access rating = Excellent

The majority (>80%) of GMU 663 is owned and managed by DNR and most roads are open to motorized access. This area also has ORV trails. Hunters are advised to make sure they read and adhere to all posted rules.

**GMU 672 – Fall River**

Access rating = Good

The primary landowners in GMU 672 are Weyerhaeuser and DNR. Beginning in 2013, access to Weyerhaeuser lands in GMU 672 that are associated with their Pe Ell Operating Area will be limited to permit holders. Where Weyerhaeuser allows general public access on other lands in GMU 672, they employ the dot system.

**GMU 673 – Williams Creek**

Access rating = Poor

Access in this GMU is quite variable and depends on the landowner. Primary private timberland owners are Hancock, Rayonier, and Campbell Group. DNR also owns large tracts of land. In most areas, Hancock will limit access to non-motorized access, but will open a few of the main logging roads during the general modern firearm season to disperse hunters and allow some interior access. Rayonier has a permit access only area that is associated with the Salmon Creek drainage.

**GMU 681 – Bear River**

Access rating = Good

Hunters can expect a little lower level of access than in the past. Logging operations on the southern end of the GMU have resulted in roads being closed to motorized access. The private timberlands in the northern portion are open to motorized access. The dot system is used by some owners but it is not consistent because of the checkerboard ownership. Primary private

landowners are Hancock, Rayonier, Longview Fiber, and The Nature Conservancy. Rayonier has some leased lands in this GMU. Portions of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occur in GMU 681 and hunters planning to hunt on Refuge lands should contact the Refuge before doing so because special regulations do apply in some areas details ([click here for website](#) phone: 360-484-3482) .

### **GMU 684 – Long Beach**

Access rating = Poor

With the exception of Leadbetter Point, the majority of this GMU consists is private property. Hunters are advised to make sure they have permission to access private property before they actively hunt in GMU 684. Portions of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occur in GMU 684 and hunters planning to hunt on Refuge lands should contact the Refuge before doing so because special regulations do apply in some areas details ([click here for website](#) phone: 360-484-3482) .

### **GMU 699 – Long Island**

Access rating = Poor

The entire GMU is owned and managed by the USFWS. Access is by boat only, but camping is allowed in designated areas. Hunters should contact the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge for more details ([click here for website](#) phone: 360-484-3482).

## **PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

There are several private landowners in District 17 who are enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. However, at the time of this writing, Cooperative Agreements with these landowners had not been finalized. Even though there are no indications landowners will not renew their Cooperative Agreements for the 2013 hunting season, we were hesitant to provide that information in this document. Hunters are encouraged to call the Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) or periodically check for updated information in this document or on WDFW's Hunter Access website located at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting\\_access/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/) or by [click here](#) .

## **ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS**

Most GMUs in District 17 are a checkerboard of ownerships and sometimes it can be extremely difficult to determine who owns the land where a hunter wishes to hunt. However, there are several online tools and resources that many hunters do not know about, but provide valuable information that helps solve the landowner puzzle. The following is a list and general description of tools and resources that are available to the general public.

Department of Natural Resources Public Lands Quadrangle (PLQ) Maps

The best source for identifying the specific location of public lands are DNR PLQ maps which can be purchased for less than \$10 on DNR's website ([click here](#)).

#### Online Parcel Databases

Technology has come a long way and has made it much easier for the general public to identify tax parcel boundaries and the associated landowner. However, because this technology has not been readily available in the past, there are several hunters who are not aware it exists.

Pacific County tax parcels can be searched using Mapsifter, which is a user-friendly mapping program that allows users to zoom in to their area of interest, click on a parcel, and identify who the owner of that parcel is. The Pacific County Mapsifter tool can be located at <http://pacificwa.mapsifter.com> or by [clicking here](#).

Grays Harbor tax parcels can be searched using GIS mapping software that is available on the Grays Harbor County website located at <http://www.ghc-gis.org/info/GIS/> or by [clicking here](#). Unfortunately, this parcel mapping tool is not as user friendly as the Mapsifter tool.

#### WDFW's Go Hunt Tool

WDFW's Go Hunt Tool has been revamped and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public land within each GMU. The Go Hunt Tool can be accessed on WDFW's Hunting website or by [clicking here](#).