

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.